

TRIASSIC TROUBLE

BY ANDY CHUA

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To Family, Friends and Simin

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Triassic Reptiles

Some of the reptiles that lived during the Triassic:

DINOSAURS

The most famous prehistoric reptiles of all. They ruled Earth for over 150 million years.



PTEROSAURS

Winged cousins of the dinosaurs. They were the first vertebrates to roam the skies.



CROCODYLOMORPHS

An ancient and diverse group of reptiles that later gave rise to modern crocodiles.



PHYTOSAURS

Long-snouted aquatic predators that looked like crocodiles, but were not closely related.



RAUISUCHIANS

A group of large and fearsome reptiles that ate anything they could catch.



ICHTHYOSAURS

Large predatory reptiles that ruled the seas. They had bodies built like fishes or dolphins.



PLESIOSAURS

Marine reptiles with four flippers. Many had long necks with small heads.



TIME CRISIS



The two huge dinosaurs were about to fight!

They eyed each other as they growled and stomped their feet threateningly. But neither would back down.

"Anytime now..." Samuel whispered. From his spying point behind the bushes, he could see everything. He couldn't stop grinning. For so long, scientists had debated over the purpose of these dinosaurs' giant domed skulls. Some believed they were for head-butting, while others thought they were for mating rituals or some yet-undiscovered purpose.

Now, he and his best friend, Anna, would be the first humans to confirm the truth! They would never be able to tell

anyone, though. Nobody would believe them, anyway.

You see, Samuel and Anna were time-travellers. Using Samuel's magic watch, they could go millions of years back in time to a prehistoric past ruled by dinosaurs and other fearsome reptiles. There, they hunted for rare fossils, learnt more about the ancient world, and of course, tried their best not to get eaten.

It was dangerous, but how else could one see real dinosaurs?

"It's starting!" Anna said.

The two Pachycephalosaurus rose to their full heights and howled. They charged, and their skulls smashed together with a tremendous crack.

BAM!

Samuel was rooting for the skinnier one with markings around its eye; it looked as if it was wearing specs like him. BAM! The two dinosaurs head-butted again, but the skinny one faltered from the impact. It stepped back and shook its head. Was it hurt?

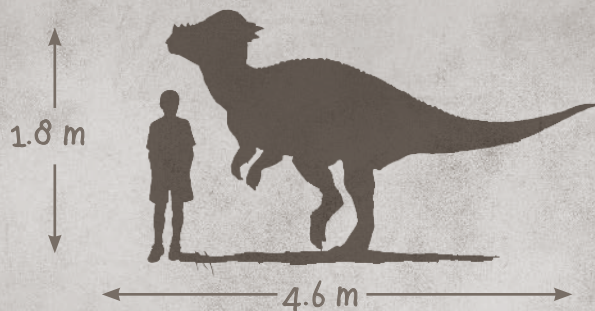
To Samuel's surprise, it snorted in



Pachycephalosaurus

(pronounced pack-i-KEF-al-oh-sore-russ)

Pachycephalosaurus is one of the most popular dinosaurs in the world due to its instantly recognisable skull shape. Surprisingly, we know very little about this unusual late-Cretaceous dinosaur due to poor fossil material. Scientists often speculate on what its enormous domed head was used for. Some believe it was colourful and used in mating displays, just like the way modern birds use their feathers. However, evidence of scars on known skull samples indicates that the Pachycephalosaurus likely used it in head-butting other members of its species!



defiance and rushed its opponent. Over and over their skulls knocked together so loudly he could feel it in his teeth. This was amazing!

"C'mon! Time to go." Anna tapped his shoulder.

"Awww. Can't we stay a little longer?" he said.

"No. We've gotten the pine cone that Norus wanted. It's too dangerous to stay here."

"But don't you wanna see how their fight ends?"

Anna glanced at the two fighters. She loved dinosaurs almost as much as he did. Watching this fight was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

"Nah," Anna said. "Dinner's waiting for me at home."

"You are always hungry," Samuel said.

"Who knows how long they'll continue fighting? Besides, the longer we stay, the greater the chance of a dinosaur spotting us." Anna stood up and walked off.

Grumbling under his breath, Samuel followed...

CRACK!

He froze in mid-step but it was too late. He had stepped on a branch. Oops.

The two Pachycephalosaurus broke off from their duel and stared at them.

“Don’t. Move. A. Muscle!” Anna whispered.

For what felt like forever, they were still as statues, but the dinosaurs’ gaze was fixed on them. Samuel’s hair stood on end. The last time they had intruded on a herd of Triceratops, they would’ve been trampled if not for the appearance of a T-rex. He doubted they would be as lucky this time.

“Oh no...” Samuel said. The Pachycephalosaurus began to snort and stomp. He and Anna probably looked like a pair of very strange upright creatures to the dinosaurs! It was clear they did not like them being here!

“Now what?” Anna hissed. “Do something!”

Samuel racked his brain for ideas. He’d watched tonnes of animal documentaries, after all. He remembered a wildlife photographer who had climbed a tree to safety when he was confronted by buffaloes.

He pointed to the trunk beside them. “We could try to climb one of—”

The two Pachycephalosaurus lowered their heads. They were about to charge!

“Okay. Change of plans. Back off slowly,” Samuel said. Yes, this should work! There was a famous Canadian explorer who used this tactic on moose. As long as he gave the animals space, they’d let him be because he was no longer a threat.

“No way! We gotta run!” Anna would’ve fled, but Samuel gripped her hand (no easy effort, considering how much stronger she was).

“Trust me. Nice and slow.” Sensing no other choice, Anna nodded. They backtracked one



step at a time, never taking their eyes off the dinosaurs. Each time their foot crunched on leaves, Samuel's heart would skip a beat. Thankfully, the dinosaurs did not follow.

Time seemed to stop as they retreated further and further. The dinosaurs were well out of sight. Then...

Crack!

Samuel nearly jumped out of his skin. He turned to run, but Anna said quickly, "Relax! They are fighting each other! We are safe!"

Now he felt silly. It was true; the ear-splitting cracks were from their skulls smashing against each other. Samuel wondered which Pachycephalosaurus was winning the fight.

"Alright. Time to go," Anna said, holding up Samuel's watch hand.

"Huh? But we are safe now!"

"I think I've had enough close shaves today. Norus! Bring us back!" Anna yelled into the watch.

"Wait—" Samuel said, but a flash of light blinded him. Cool air buffeted him, and

when he opened his eyes again, the jungle was gone.

They were standing in a massive exhibition hall. Norus had teleported them back to the present day.

A long-necked Argentinosaurus with a gentle face stood before them. Norus was the last remaining magical guardian of dinosaur history.

To anyone else who visited the Science Museum, Norus looked like a giant dinosaur skeleton. But with Samuel's special watch, Samuel and Anna could see him in his true form as a real life dinosaur. It was his magic that powered Samuel's watch and enabled them to time travel. The fossils they brought back from their trips to the past made Norus stronger.

"Welcome back, my friends," Norus said. "Are you well and safe?"

Anna waved. "Duh! Thanks for bringing us back to the Science Museum."

"Here's the fossil you asked for." Samuel held out the pine cone which they'd picked off the jungle floor. Norus lowered his head and tapped it once with his snout. The cone



trembled as the old dinosaur's magic washed over it. In seconds, its scaly surface shrivelled and turned ash-grey. Now, it looked millions of years old like the fossils all around them!

"Ahhhhh!" Norus sighed as if he'd just had a satisfying meal. "Better, much better. There, place it in the plant exhibit."

"Did that restore your magic?" Anna said.

"It did. I can't thank you enough for doing this again and again. I saw what happened with those two dinosaurs!"

"We got away safely!" Samuel said.

"So you did," Norus said. "But, Samuel, why did you not use your watch's magic to freeze them?"

Anna was staring at him as well. Samuel cleared his throat. "It-it was for your sake, Norus. You have so little power left, I thought I should conserve it as much as possible."

"Oh, that's very thoughtful of you." The Argentinosaurus gave an approving nod. "Your choice of retreating from them



was clever. But remember not to take such risks next time."

"Yes, Norus." Samuel nodded.

"How long will your magic last?"

Anna said.

Norus frowned. "A week, perhaps. Or less."

"What!" Anna said. "That's much faster than we expected!"

"What's going on? Is it the thieves again? Are they stealing more fossils?" Samuel said.

"Not this time. Something odd is happening. There's a time dilation in this reality, which means my power is being leeched every day. It's almost as if..."

"As if what?" Anna said.

Norus glanced around. "As if something that does not belong in this timeline is in the present day. Another dinosaur."

Samuel's heart skipped a beat.

"But, of course, that is absurd. I am the only dinosaur here. Fret not, I will get to the bottom of this myself. Now, it is time for you to go home."

Before them, Norus faded. The skeleton of an Argentinosaurus now stood where he was seconds ago. All around them were dozens of other dinosaur skeletons, along with a few visitors at the far end.

Anna chuckled nervously. "Whew! Thank goodness no one saw us appearing. I'd hate to explain to Mr Tan why we keep getting into trouble at the museum. I wonder if there really is a second dinosaur in our world. Wouldn't it be exciting? And here I thought Norus was all alone. Do you think we should help him find the other dinosaur? Hey, Samuel... are you okay?"

"What? W-why would you ask that?"

"Oh, nothing. You just look so pale. Are you sick or something?"

"Huh? Sick, no - yes! Yes, that's it. I am running a fever. Okay, I gotta go home now. Bye, Anna!"

Before she could protest or say anything, Samuel took off. When he rounded a corner, he sighed in relief. That was too close, way too close!

Neither Anna nor Norus could know about the baby Triceratops in his house!

