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Opening extract from

The Christmasaurus

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Prologue

THE END OF THE DINOSAURS

This story starts like all good stories do, *a long time ago*. Not just a long time ago, but a very, *very*, ***very*** long time ago. Squillions of years ago, in fact. Long before your granny and your granddad were born. Before there were any human beings at all. Before cars and aeroplanes, even before there was the internet, there was something even better . . .

DINOSAURS!

Dinosaurs were the most awesome creatures ever to walk the planet. There were lots of them, and they

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came in all shapes and sizes. There were small ones that were not much bigger than dogs or cats, some with spiky prickle horns on their backs. There were stupendously ginormous ones called Seismosaurus that were longer than five double-decker buses, with necks thicker than tree trunks and skin like the hard rubber tyres of a tractor. I know that sounds hard to believe, but it's definitely true, because this is a book and books don't lie.

I'd like to tell you about two very special dinosaurs. We'll call them Mumosaurus and Dadlodocus (those weren't their real names, of course – that would just be silly).

Mumosaurus and Dadlodocus had been out all day in the hot, hot heat of the prehistoric sun, and were returning home to their tidy little nest. But what they found in its place was something horrendously horrible: an almighty pile of rocks, bones and dust. Their home had been raided by evil scavenger dinosaurs, and these sneaky, scroungy little scavengers had smashed up their home good and proper!

But for Mumosaurus and Dadlodocus the mess was

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the last thing on their minds, because they had left their most precious things alone inside the nest: twelve dinosaur *eggs*, which were now nowhere to be seen!

As you can imagine, Mumosaurus and Dadlodocus were devastated. They stood in the wreckage of their nest, weeping and roaring for a very long time, until the sun went down and the moon and stars filled the sky above the jungle.

That night, a light breeze was blowing through the enormous trees and a sliver of silvery moonlight found its way to the remains of the nest. Suddenly, something caught Dadlodocus's eye. Something smooth and shiny was reflecting a moonbeam from under a pile of bones and mud. He quickly and gently lifted the rocks and rubble, and there it was, gleaming, perfectly unharmed in the moonlight.

It was their one last EGG.

How this one and only egg had escaped the hungry scavengers' rampage is a mystery. Perhaps their greedy tummies were full up, or maybe this egg had rolled out of sight when they were smashing and crushing the others. Whatever the reason, all that mattered was that

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Mumosaurus and Dadlodocus had one egg left. The tiny dinosaur that was curled up safely inside that egg became the most important thing in the world to them, and they weren't going to let anything bad happen to it ever again!

But something bad *was* about to happen – something that would change the world for ever.

Something **big**.

Something **astronomically, intergalactically, outer spacey-wacey big!**

The pearly moonlight that blanketed the dinosaurs' broken nest suddenly seemed to turn yellow. Then the yellow turned orange and then to a hot, fiery red. Mumosaurus and Dadlodocus peeped out from their

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home, staring in disbelief. It was as though the moon itself was on fire!

As they watched, the whole sky turned into a violent firework display of whizzing hot rocks and shooting stars – and not the kind of shooting stars that you and I know, which swoosh prettily over the sky like beautiful little scratches of light in space. These ones didn't swoosh by at all. These ones smashed straight down like red-hot thunderbolts that exploded into thousands of fireballs as they hit the earth!

Panic and chaos consumed the jungle. Flaming trees were uprooted by huge, five-double-decker-bus-sized dinosaurs, and smaller dinosaurs were squished and trampled. The night sky was brighter than the lightest day, and the moon felt hotter than the midday sun – but there was only one thing on Mumosaurus's and Dadlodocus's minds.

Protecting their egg!

They *had* to get their egg to safety!

So they ran. They ran as fast as their dinosaur feet could carry them, desperately clinging on to that last, treasured egg. They joined the stampede of thousands

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of terrified dinosaurs fleeing the danger, but no matter how fast and how far they ran they couldn't seem to escape. After all, how can you run from the sky?

Mumosaurus and Dadlodocus were swept away into the crowd, pulled this way and pushed that way in a great sea of dinosaurs and, as hard as they tried, they just couldn't hold on to their egg any longer!

It slipped from their grip and fell to the ground.

Now, I bet you're thinking that the egg was crushed instantly, right? Well – smartyclogs cleverpants – it wasn't, actually!

A pile of leaves broke the egg's fall, and it rolled into the stampede, unharmed. It was kickerbashed and knockerboshed every which way – but it *still* didn't crack! Mumosaurus and Dadlodocus chased after it as it bounced in between giant diplodocus legs and rolled under stomping stegosaurus feet, narrowly avoiding being squished time after time. It rolled and rolled, as if it had a mind of its own, falling from rocky ledges to treetops and swooshing down slushy mudslides, as Mumosaurus and Dadlodocus chased desperately after it.

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Prologue

If Mumosaurus and Dadlodocus had been looking up at the sky instead of trying to find their egg, they would have seen such a terrifyingly, heart-stoppingly, frighteningly scary sight. The whole sky was on fire above them. What they had thought was the flaming moon was, in fact, a whopping, giganteriffic, planet-smasher of a meteorite. It had travelled from the deepest depths of space, and was about to smash-whack into Planet Earth and wipe out all the dinosaurs for ever!

But just before the meteor did its planet smashing, the lucky egg rolled all the way to the edge of a tall, jagged cliff, high above the ferocious ocean. All Mumosaurus and Dadlodocus could do was watch helplessly as their last precious egg, with their tiny baby dinosaur inside, calmly toppled over the edge of the cliff and out of sight.

Gone for ever.

The egg fell straight down, missing the rocky face of the cliff by millimetres. This was a very lucky egg indeed! It plopped peacefully into the ocean below, like a pebble in a lake, and instantly sank deep into the darkness, leaving the fiery chaos of the world above the waves. Eventually it came to rest on a soft, sheltered spot on the

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ocean floor, as the meteor shower it left behind rained down unforgivingly, destroying every living dinosaur on the planet.

Except one.

The one inside the egg!

Whilst it lay peacefully on the bottom of the ocean, the world continued to burn – and then it froze solid, in an ice age that would last for thousands of years.

There the egg remained, deep in the ice, frozen in time, just waiting to be discovered . . .

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Chapter One

WILLIAM TRUNDLE

This is William Trundle.

There's something you should know about William: William liked dinosaurs. Actually, he didn't just like them. He *loved* them. In fact, he loved them so much I should probably write it in big letters like this . . .

WILLIAM LOVED DINOSAURS!

WILLIAM HAD . . . sorry, William had dinosaur pyjamas, dinosaur socks, dinosaur pants, a dinosaur-shaped toothbrush,