DINO KNIGHTS

PANTERRA IN PERIL

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JEFF NORTON

ILLUSTRATED BY JEFF CROSBY

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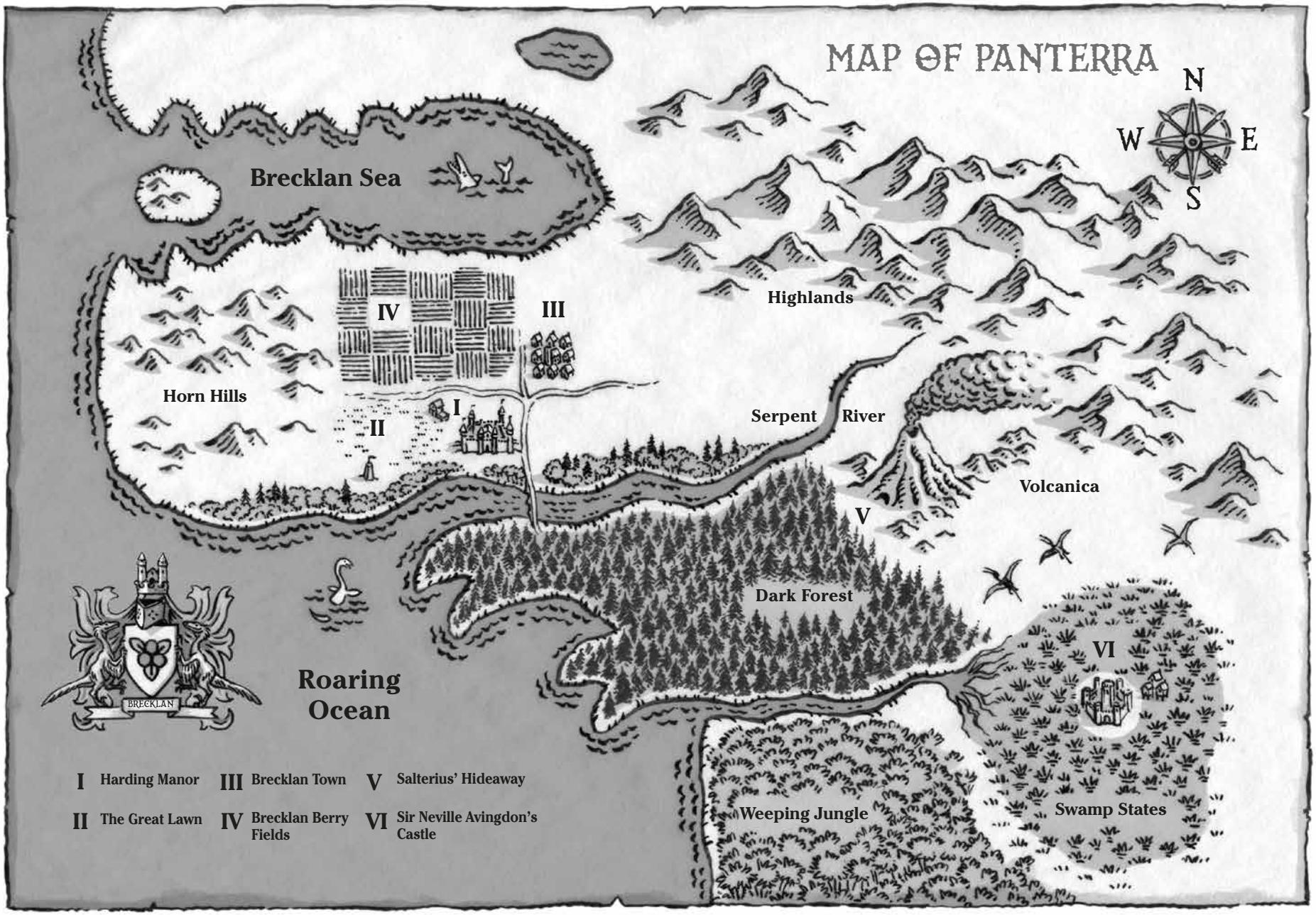
For Torin –
My brave and daring knight.
I love you.
J.N.


MAP OF PANTERRA
N
W
E
S
Brecklan Sea
Highlands
Horn Hills
IV
III
I
II
Serpent River
Volcanica
V
Dark Forest
VI
Roaring Ocean
BRECKLAN
Weeping Jungle
Swamp States
I Harding Manor
II The Great Lawn
III Brecklan Town
IV Brecklan Berry Fields
V Salterius' Hideaway
VI Sir Neville Avingdon's Castle

Galliard

You are about to meet…

Torin

Elspeth

Iyla

Henry

THE DINO KNIGHTS

Galliard

Torin

Elspeth

Iyla

Henry

Lord Harding
Longtime ruler of Brecklan, and Henry's guardian.

Lady Anwyn
Wise co-ruler of Brecklan, and champion of peace.

Sir Neville Avingdon
Evil master of the Swamp States, with his eye on conquering Brecklan.

Queen Ignis
Mysterious queen of Volcanica, a neutral state in Panterra.

Krilla
Chief Guard of the Swamp States, known for her strength and ruthlessness.

Salterius
A kindly, old inventor, now banished from Brecklan.

Henry Fairchild woke to the sound of a ginormous growl. He rubbed his tummy – he didn't feel *that* hungry! Then there was a snort and another growl. The noises were coming from the stables below his bed in the loft.

I know what they want, he thought, easing himself off the thin mattress.

He stood up beneath the eaves, remembering just in time to duck his head. He'd hit his forehead on the loft beams too many times to count and had the bruises to prove it.

Climbing down the rickety ladder, he held his breath against the stench of soiled straw. He jumped from the last step and landed softly on the dirt floor. Turning round, he gazed down the row of animal pens.

"Everybody, up!"

The dinosaurs shifted in their pens, heads twitching at the sound of his voice. They all knew what those words meant – breakfast! Ever since he was a small child, Henry had had a special relationship with the dinos of Brecklan. That's what made him such a good stable boy.

He opened the large double doors to the stables and breathed in a huge lungful of fresh morning air from the green pasture.

Henry grabbed his satchel off its hook and looped it around his shoulder. Then he opened the door of the first pen.

"Good morning, Tribus," he said.

The three-horned Triceratops grunted back at him, slowly rising from the straw. The dino bowed his head so that Henry could give each horn a quick polish with an old rag. Tribus loved to have his horns rubbed!

"Very handsome," Henry said, plucking a purple Brecklan berry from his satchel. He turned it round in his hand. Brecklan berries were like giant blueberries. Henry held it out on the

flat of his palm for Tribus to eat. The dinosaur snaffled up the berry and licked Henry's hand clean, the rough surface of his tongue tickling so that Henry squirmed and laughed.

After Henry gave him a gentle smack on his giant bottom, Tribus lumbered out of his pen, heading towards the pasture.

Henry looked down the row of stalls. "Who's next?"

The Hypsilophodon rose up on her hind legs, showing Henry her soft, white belly. Hyppy purred with contentment as Henry scratched her scales. Henry grabbed another berry and tossed it into the air. Hyppy snatched it before scurrying out to join Tribus in the pasture. Henry fondly watched her leave. Feeding time was the best time!

One by one, Henry greeted his animals and sent them out of the stables. The dinos were about twice Henry's height. He'd heard stories that, in ancient times, wild dinosaurs could be as tall as a castle. But over the generations, Brecklan's dinosaurs had been bred to be smaller than their ancestors. The Brecklan berries made them friendly and tame, so that the dinosaurs lived harmoniously with humans.

In Panterra's other provinces, the dinosaurs were still wild, huge and dangerous. It was only in the tiny province of Brecklan that dinos lived side by side with people.

Finally, Henry arrived at the smallest pen, housing the smallest dino – Henry's favourite friend, Bounce. Bounce was

covered in feathers. They trembled whenever Bounce was nervous – which meant they trembled a lot. As soon as Henry opened Bounce's pen, the creature nuzzled his head into Henry's chest. Bounce had a round body that wobbled on top of skinny legs. Henry thought he looked more like a chicken than a dinosaur, though he'd never tell Bounce that. Henry ruffled Bounce's colourful feathers and the animal let out a *chirp-chirp*. Henry rewarded him with a berry, patting his flank and sending him out to join the others.

He started to muck out the pens, scooping out quivering piles of fresh dino poop to load into a wooden wheelbarrow. Henry took hold of the handles and wheeled it to the bottom

of the field where he tipped the manure onto a compost heap that steamed in the cool morning air. The stench made his eyes water! But waste not, want not – the dino poop would fertilise the most important crop in the province – Brecklan berries.

Henry returned the wheelbarrow and tidied up the stables, finally turning his mind to his own breakfast. He walked towards the servants' entrance at the rear of the imposing stone mansion. His tummy rumbled. *I hope Cook's saved me some sausages!* But as he passed the front of the stately home, curiosity got the better of him.

Despite the early hour, a carriage was waiting on the gravel drive of Harding Manor. The household staff – including

Cook and the steward – were lined up to see it off. Henry definitely wouldn't be getting any sausages today. What were they all doing out here?

Lord Harding and Lady Anwyn appeared at the grand entrance. Working in the stables, Henry hardly ever saw the lord and lady – he opened his mouth to greet them, then snapped it shut. *Never speak unless spoken to*. He'd better not chance it.

Lord Harding's silver hair shone in the morning sunlight, his tall figure stooped over a cane made from polished dinosaur bone. Beside him, Lady Anwyn wore a ruby-coloured cloak. She pulled down the hood and lifted her face to the misty morning. Her dark hair was pulled back in a bun kept in place with

a long dinosaur tooth. Together, they approached their shiny black carriage. As always, it was being pulled by two Parasaurolophuses.

Lady Anwyn noticed Henry. "Oh, there's Henry! Hello, young man."

He was allowed to speak now.

"Good morning," called Henry, stooping to offer a bow.

She and Harding had always been kind to Henry, but most of the time he lived in the care of the steward, Arthur. From his place in the row of servants, Arthur glared at Henry.

"I hope it is," said Lord Harding, glancing nervously towards the south.

Despite Arthur's glares, Henry dared to come closer. "Where are you going so early?" he asked.

Arthur cleared his throat, narrowing his eyes at Henry to tell him to be quiet.

"Brecklan state affairs," replied Lord Harding.

That could mean anything! Henry thought.

Henry knew that Lord Harding and Lady Anywn worked hard to keep Brecklan safe and prosperous. They often hosted important people at the manor house and even threw grand balls to make the visiting officials feel important. Henry liked to listen to the music, but it sometimes spooked the dinosaurs.

Lady Anwyn whispered, "There's been talk of a battle looming on the southern border. We want to negotiate before conflict breaks out."

"Indeed," said Lord Harding. "But talk

cannot always prevent war."

"War?" gasped Henry.

He'd heard a few of the servants talking lately about other provinces battling for control over Panterra. They had been worried the conflict might spill over into Brecklan, which was a peaceful place.

The sound of galloping filled the air. Four armoured knights riding dinosaurs rounded the mansion. Dino Knights! Up till now, Henry had only ever glimpsed the Dino Knights in parades and tournaments! They were brave and strong warriors – he dreamed of being just like them.

Henry's mouth hung open as he watched the dinos trotting towards the carriage. He recognised a teenage

girl with short black hair, who rode a knobbly Ankylosaur. That was Iyla. She winked at Henry as she passed.

Another dinosaur sped past her. This one was famous for his speed and ability to mimic bird calls. The Ornithomimus was ridden by Galliard, a tall lad with long locks of golden hair. Brightly coloured silks peeked out from beneath his polished silver armour. He pulled his dino up to Lord Harding and gave a theatrical bow. Gally took no notice of Henry, but Henry didn't take offence. Everyone knew that Gally never took notice of anyone other than himself.

By his side rode Elspeth. She sat high in the saddle on her spiky Styracosaurus. Elspeth – Ellie for short – had curly red hair.