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opening extract from

Dinosaur Cove: Journey to the Ice Age

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Rex Stone

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Special thanks to Jane Clarke

To Barbara and Annette, and library friends everywhere – R.S.

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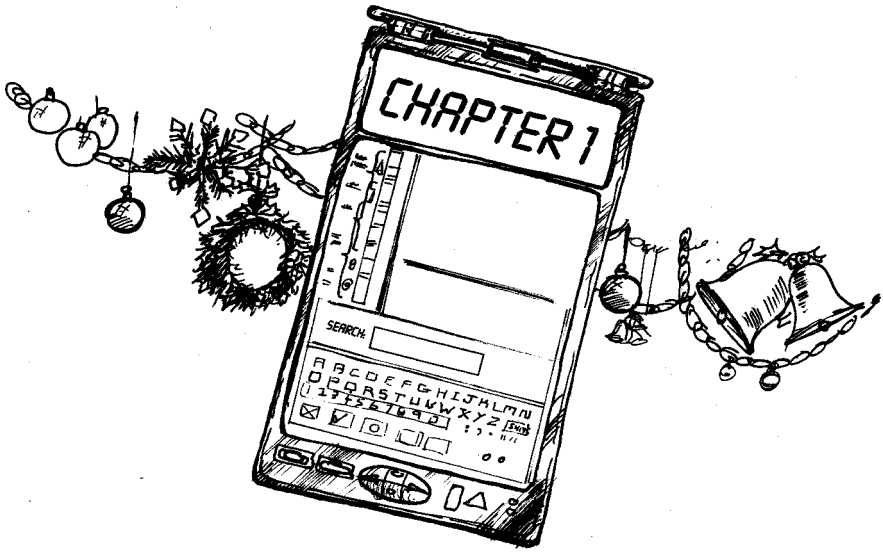
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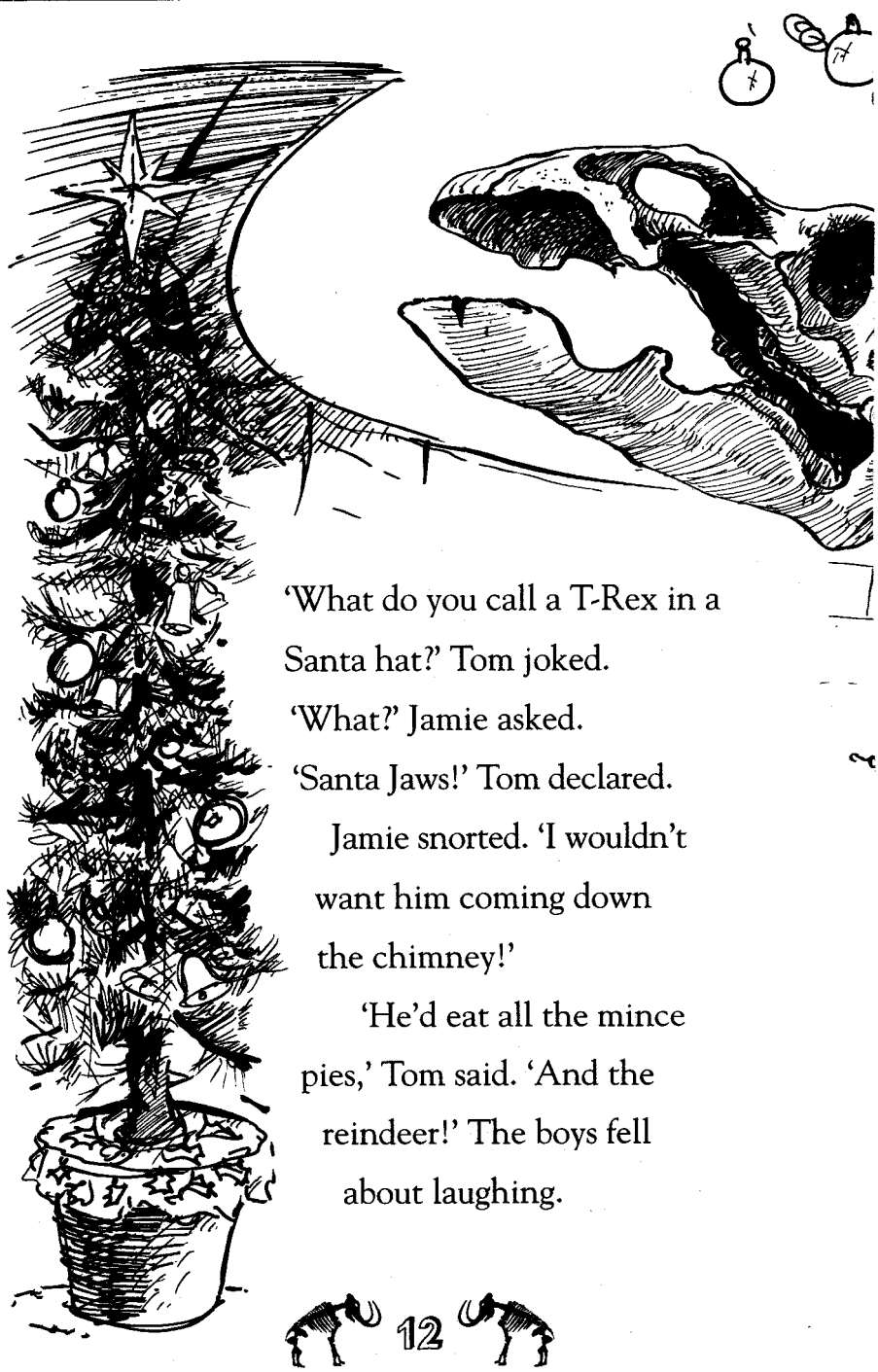
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Jamie Morgan laughed as his best friend Tom Clay perched a red Santa hat on the bony skull of a stegosaurus.

It was Christmas Eve in Dinosaur Cove, and Jamie's dad's dinosaur museum in the old lighthouse sparkled with red and gold Christmas decorations. The huge edmontosaurus skeleton looked as if it was about to nibble the star on top of the enormous Christmas tree.



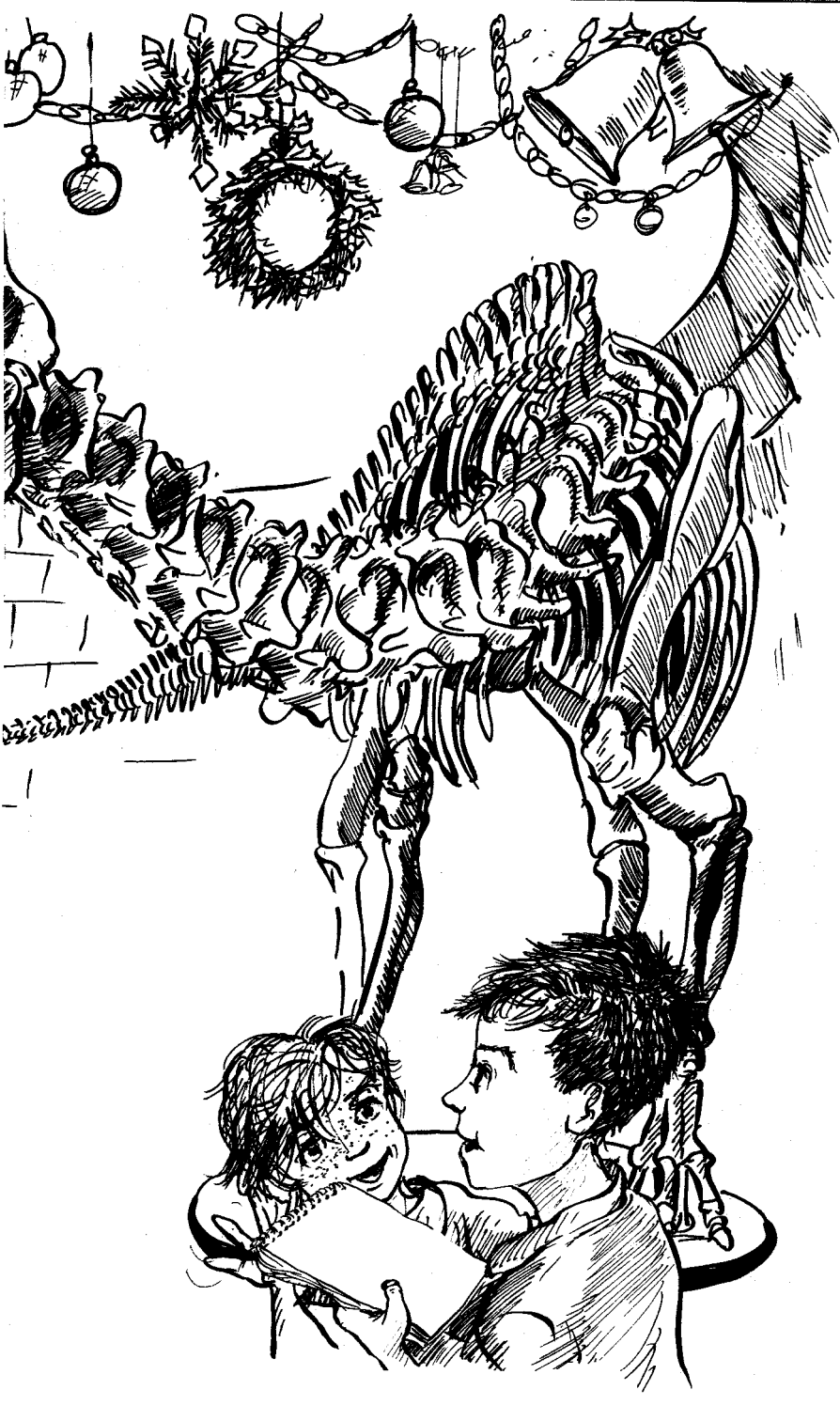
'What do you call a T-Rex in a Santa hat?' Tom joked.

'What?' Jamie asked.

'Santa Jaws!' Tom declared.

Jamie snorted. 'I wouldn't want him coming down the chimney!'

'He'd eat all the mince pies,' Tom said. 'And the reindeer!' The boys fell about laughing.



'Great decorations,' Jamie's grandad said as he stuck his head into the room. 'Perfect for our dinosaur Christmas party this evening. And we just finished the Ice Age exhibition. Come and see.'

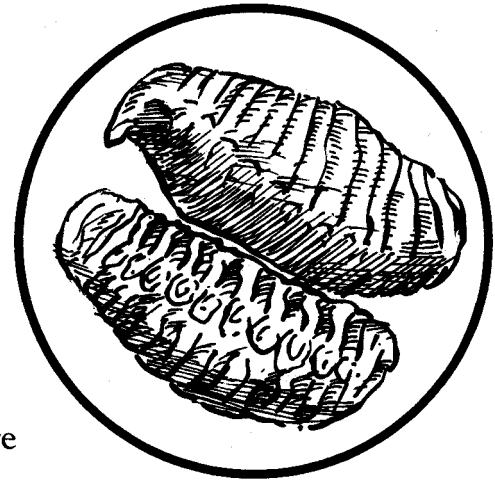
The boys followed Grandad into an artificial snow cave dripping with fake icicles in the corner of the museum. On the back wall, there was a movie screen showing a river of blue-grey ice moving slowly down a snowy mountainside.

'That's a speeded up glacier,' Jamie's dad explained. 'Twenty thousand years ago, there were glaciers all over northern Europe and America.'

'Brrr!' Tom said. 'It must have been cold.'

'It was the Ice Age, you wombat.' Jamie grinned. 'What are these, Dad?' He pointed

to two fossils in a case. They looked a bit like upside-down trainers with deeply ridged soles.



'Teeth from a woolly mammoth,' his dad said.

'Awesome!' Tom said. 'Mammoths were even bigger than elephants.'

'That's right, and they lived on frozen land called tundra,' Jamie's dad went on. 'Early humans followed herds of mammoths and hunted them with weapons like this.' He showed them a replica wooden spear with a tip made of a sharpened antler.

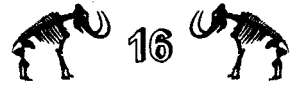
'People were nomads then, searching out the best places to hunt and gather what they needed. I wonder what it was like . . . ' Dad gazed at the worked flint axe heads with a faraway look.

'I've been hunter-gathering,' Grandad said, with a twinkle in his eye. 'I call it Christmas shopping.'

He pressed what looked like a ball of silver tape into Tom's hand. 'Here, my boy. Merry Christmas!'

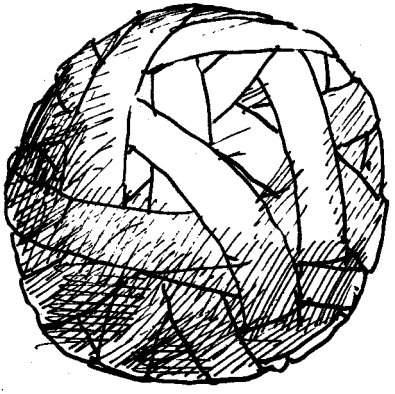
'Wow, thanks!' Tom's eyes lit up. 'Can I open it now?'

'You can't open a Christmas present before Christmas,' Jamie said.



'OK, OK.' Tom reluctantly stuffed his gift into his pocket. 'I'll open it tomorrow.'

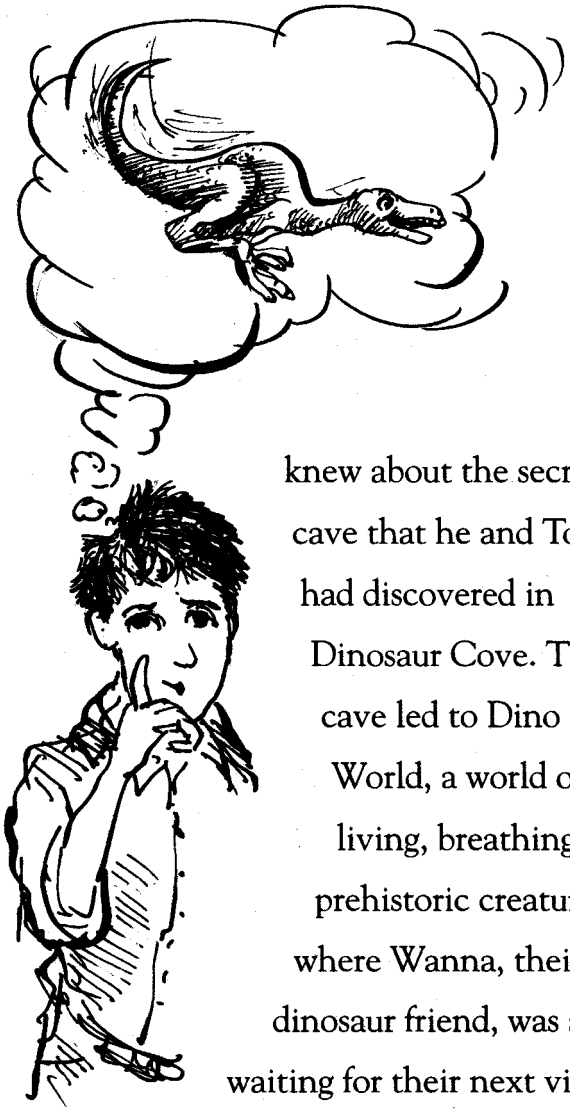
'We should get back to work,' Dad said, straightening the Ice Age brochures on the display table. 'Lots to do before the party tonight.'



'And lots of presents to wrap before tomorrow.' Grandad winked at Jamie and followed Dad out of the ice cave.

'Now's our chance to go to Dino World,' Tom whispered.

Jamie glanced round to make sure his dad and grandad hadn't overheard. No one



knew about the secret cave that he and Tom had discovered in Dinosaur Cove. The cave led to Dino World, a world of living, breathing prehistoric creatures, where Wanna, their little dinosaur friend, was always waiting for their next visit.

'I can't wait to give Wanna his present,'

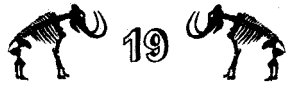
Jamie thought. The boys planned to pick Wanna a feast of stinky gingko fruit for Christmas.

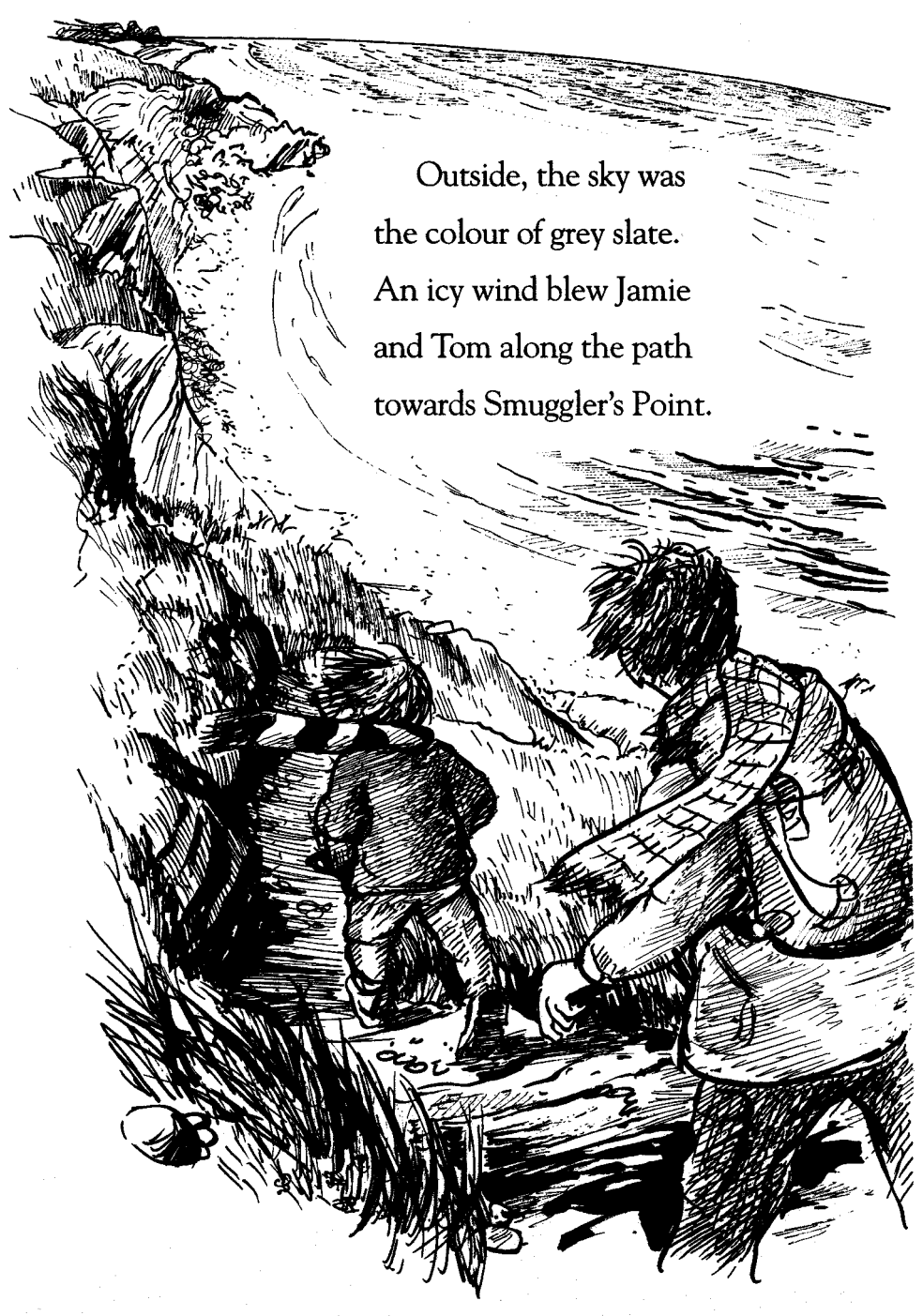
'We're off exploring,' Jamie announced as he grabbed his backpack and headed for the door.

'Wait! You need coats.' Jamie's dad fetched their coats, woolly socks, and gloves. He stood by as the boys put them on.

'Hang on, me hearties.' Grandad disappeared into the kitchen and returned with a couple of foil-wrapped packages. 'Cheese and pickle sandwiches for you, and a slab of birdseed cake. That's my Christmas present to the local wildlife.'

'Thanks, Grandad,' Jamie said as he shoved the supplies into his backpack.





Outside, the sky was the colour of grey slate. An icy wind blew Jamie and Tom along the path towards Smuggler's Point.

Jamie was glad of his warm coat.

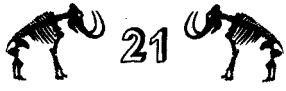
'I hope it snows for Christmas,' Tom said, as they scrambled up and over the rocks.

'That'd be awesome!' Jamie took out his torch, and they headed for the back of the cave and squeezed through the gap into the secret cave beyond. It felt even colder inside the cave than it did outside.

'I'm keeping my coat on.' Jamie shivered as he fitted his left foot into the first fossil dinosaur footprint that led across the cave floor.

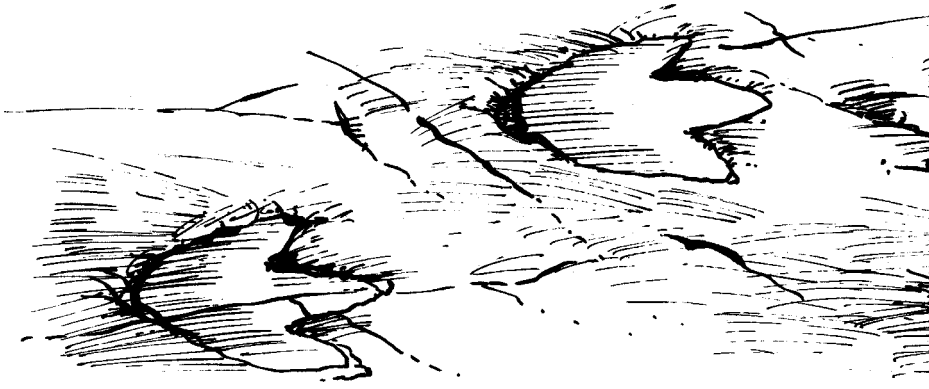
'I can't wait to get into the steamy j-j-jungle in D-D-Dino World.' Tom was close behind him, with his teeth chattering.

'Here we go. One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . ' Jamie counted the footsteps as they stepped towards the rock face.



'Five . . .'

There was a blinding flash of light and suddenly Jamie's foot slipped from under him and he crash-landed on his knee. 'Ouch!' he yelled.



'Owww!' Tom slammed into him.

Jamie picked himself up from the hard cold ground and looked around. 'How strange!' he said. 'Wanna's footprints have turned to ice.' The shallow cave was edged with sparkling icicles.