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Opening extract from

Downtown Dinosaurs: Dinosaur Olympics

Written by

Jeanne Willis

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DOWNTOWN
DINOSAURS

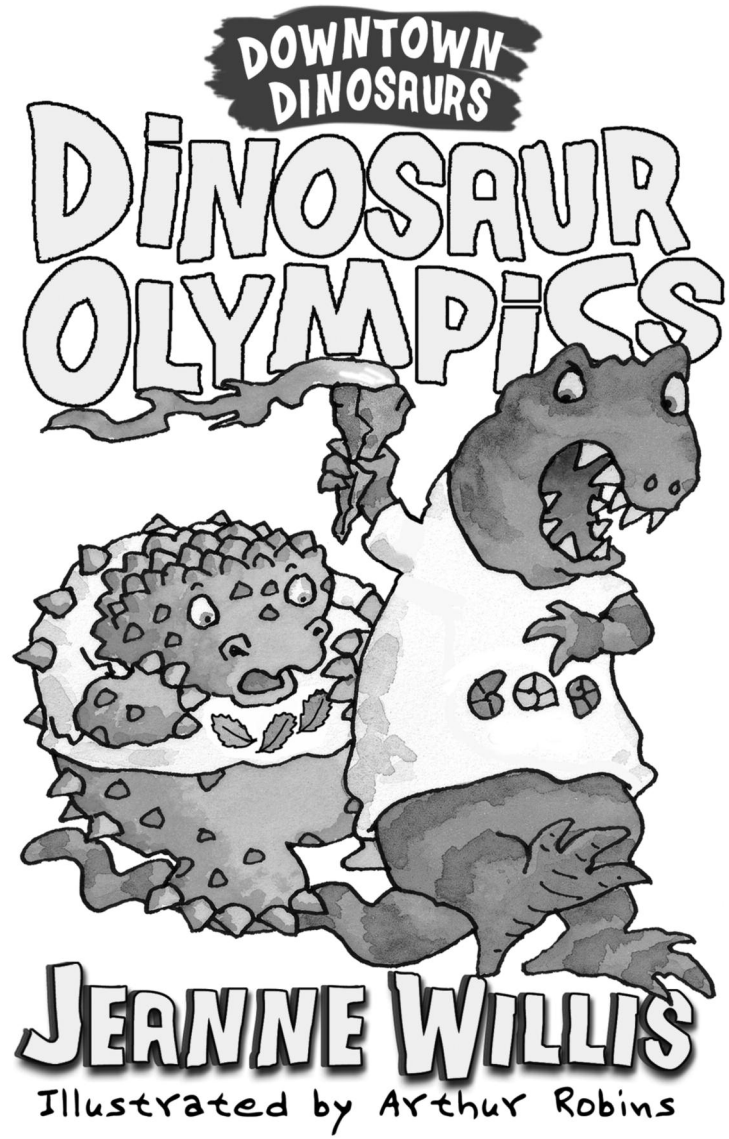
One of the funniest authors for children, Jeanne Willis has been writing since she was five and is the author of many children's books including *Tadpole's Promise*, *Who's in the Loo* and *Bottoms Up* and the hugely popular *Dr Xargle* series.

She has won numerous awards including the Smarties Prize, the Red House Children's Book Award and the Sheffield Children's Book Award.

An enormously popular cartoonist and illustrator, Arthur Robins has illustrated best-selling books by Laurence Anholt, Martin Waddell and Michael Rosen, including *Little Rabbit Foo Foo*, and has even produced some stamps for the Royal Mail.

Downtown Dinosaurs:

Dinosaur Olympics
Dinosaurs in Disguise *(coming soon)*



Piccadilly Press • London

For Dad,
who is now extinct but delighted in dinosaurs.
J.W.

For Ollie
A.R.

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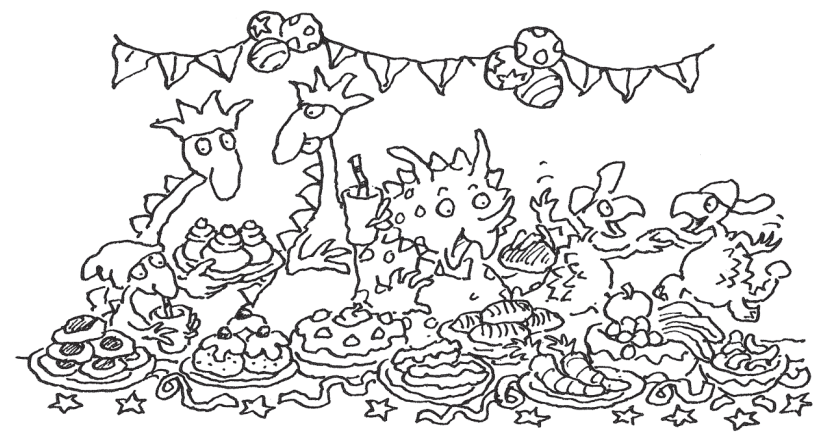
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Chapter 1

Party Time



If there was one thing the Uptown Dinosaurs liked more than anything, it was a good party. Which was the perfect invitation for some rotten beast to come and ruin it.

It had all started off so well. The Stigsons had sent out the invitations and their neighbours in

Fossil Street had been looking forward to the big bash at the stegosauruses' place for weeks.

It was Uncle Loops's one hundred and ninetieth birthday – a ripe old age even for a sauropod and a great excuse for a celebration. Although his brain had shrunk from the size of a walnut to the size of a peanut during the late cretaceous period, and he had no idea which era it was let alone which day, his family wanted this to be a party even he wouldn't forget.

Mrs Stigson was busy putting candles on his gigantic birthday cake when she was interrupted. 'One hundred and eighty-two, one hundred and eighty-three . . .'

KNOCK! KNOCK!

'Oh, fossils! Now I've lost count. Daaarwiiiin! Get the door, son. Our guests are arriving.'

'Can't Dad answer it?' yelled Darwin. 'I'm in the bog.'



'I'll get it,' wheezed Uncle Loops, plodding towards the door with his zimmer frame. Halfway across the hall, he stopped. 'What was it I was getting again?'

KNOCK! KNOCK!

'I'll go,' said Mr Stigson, who was on his knees sorting out the karaoke machine. 'It'll be the next millennium by the time he gets there.'

'Be nice to him, Maurice. It's his birthday,' said Mrs Stigson.

'Is it?' beamed Uncle Loops. 'Again?'

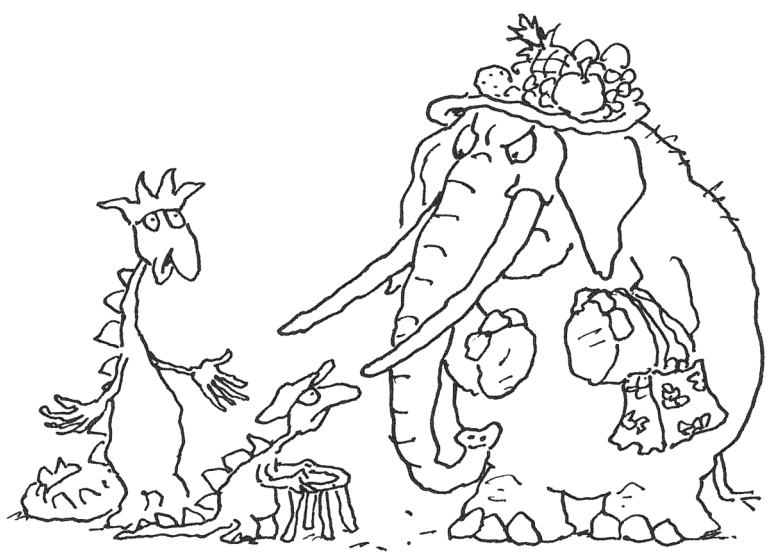
KNOCK! KNOCK!

Uncle Loops frowned. 'Who's there?' he called. 'Is it care in the community?'

'No, it's Mrs Merrick,' boomed a voice.

'Mrs Merrick who?'

Mr Stigson opened the door. 'Ah, Phyllis. Do come in. You remember Phyllis Merrick, don't you, Uncle Loops? She's the mastodon from number four.'



Uncle Loops looked her up and down quizzically and slapped his forehead. 'Oh yes. Fat Phyllis – that *is* what we call her in this house, isn't it?'

Mrs Merrick let out a long, disapproving snort through her trunk.

'His hearing is not what it was,' said Mr Stigson hastily as he led her to the kitchen. 'Goodness, you look so trim, what we actually call you is *Fit* Phyllis.'

There was another knock at the door and Mrs Stigson called out, 'Will someone *please* answer that? I bet it's Fat Phyllis. She's always the first to arrive and the last to leave.'

'I have half a mind to be the first to leave!' muttered Mrs Merrick, huffily.

'You have half a mind? That's twice as much as me,' said Uncle Loops. 'Thank goodness I still have my memory. I'll see you out. You turning

up out of the blue like this, anyone would think it was my birthday.'

But when the matronly mastodon saw the buffet table groaning with more vegetarian delights than a hippy's delicatessen, she decided to stay.

'What a marvellous spread, Mrs Stigson,' she said, hoovering up a plate of vol-au-vents.

'You can call me Lydia,' said Mrs Stigson.

'Very well, Lydia,' said Phyllis. 'And you can call me Mrs Merrick.'

Darwin, who had been left to greet the second guest, announced his arrival. 'Mum, Sir . . . Thingy is here.'

'Sir Tempest Stratford, darlings!' boomed the triceratops, trotting into the centre of the room. 'You may have seen me in my latest film, *Planet of the Grapes* . . . Now where's the birthday boy?'

'I have no idea,' said Uncle Loops.

As the other guests arrived, Mrs Stigson steered Sir Tempest over to the karaoke machine and gave him a glass of champagne and a list of songs.

'Would you like to start us off with "The Birdy Song"?' she said. 'I know you're used to being on the stage.'

The triceratops gave her a long, hard stare. 'I'll have to ask my agent. I'm auditioning for a musical tomorrow. I'm playing the part of the Fartful Stodger and I don't want to ruin my vocal cords.'



'Yes or no, Sir Tempest?' said Mrs Stigson, fiddling with her cocktail cherry. 'I've got some lovely

old tunes here . . . "Let's Get it On", "Do You Think I'm Sexy?" . . .'

Sir Tempest almost choked on a cheesy puff. He looked around to make sure Mr Stigson wasn't listening and lowered his voice to a whisper. 'I do find you oddly attractive but I didn't think it was *that* sort of a party.'

'Ooh, Sir Tempest!' giggled Mrs Stigson. 'Those are the song titles, silly.'

Blushing from his horny frill to his feet, he swept off to rescue Mrs Merrick's hat which had been knocked into a vat of trifle by Frank and Ernest – twin ankylosaurs – who fancied



themselves as swashbuckling types and were fencing with cucumbers.

'Great party, Uncle,' grinned Darwin, swinging the old stegosaurus around to the vibes of Jurassic Jazz.

'Whose is it? Anyone we know?' asked Loops. 'I hear the mayor's coming. Whoever's birthday it is, they must be pretty important.'

'They are to me,' said Darwin.

Uncle Loops had been Darwin's favourite relative since he was a hatchling and the two of them got on like a house on fire – especially the time when Uncle Loops found that bumper box of matches.

Having spoken to his wife, Mr Stigson marched over to Sir Tempest and cornered him by a rubber plant.

'I want a word with you, Stratford.'

'Maurice, before you say anything, I wasn't

flirting with Mrs Stigson,' said Sir Tempest, flustered. 'The champagne went straight to my horns. It was a complete misunderstanding.'

Mr Stigson looked confused. 'What was?'

'Nothing. Nothing at all,' said Tempest, realising he'd got away with it. 'What was it you wanted, dear boy – my autograph?'

'I was going to ask you a favour, actually,' said Mr Stigson. 'I was wondering if you'd say a few words after the mayor has presented Uncle Loops with his birthday gift.'

Sir Tempest gave a sharp intake of breath. 'A few words? Words don't come cheap, you know.'

'Mum, Boris is here!' called Darwin, interrupting them.

The mayor shot down their front path and screeched to a halt on his bike, his robe blowing out behind him, making him look like a mad caped crusader.



'Hello, hellay, no need to bow and scrape,' he blustered as he moved among the guests. 'Let's jolly well get on with the presentation, shall we? Where's the watch? I know I put it somewhere no one would think to look . . . Ah, here it is, tucked inside my cycling briefs. It's all right, Mrs Merrick, they're clean on.'

'I expect that makes a pleasant change,' grunted Mrs Merrick. 'Even so, you might have put it in a gift box.'