

*The Tyrannosaurus Who Wanted to Be a Vegetarian*

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***Tyrannosaurus***

*Who Wanted to Be a*  
***Vegetarian***

**Pirates**

When Tom left the house, Sue was ready for him. “A plan is what you need,” she said, pointing to a crude outline in the sand. “This is a crocodile. And this is the crocodile’s brain. About the size of a boiled peanut. Just about there.” She indicated an “X” near the animal’s eyes. “You only need. to hit it once.” Tom imagined his small spear bouncing off the tough crocodile hide.

“These are the teeth,” she continued. “Avoid them.”

Dwight A. Clough

*You're forgetting the tail, thought Tom. One swing from the tail could break a man's legs.*

"I suggest finding one that's asleep. Sneak up on it. It'll make your job a lot easier."

Tom smiled.

"And remember: No fish. No rabbits. We simply cannot eat them any more. Concentrate on crocodiles."

"I see them in my dreams," said Tom, hoping that would end the lecture. Ever since the door-to-door salesman had shown Sue that crocodile purse, her heart hadn't been the same.

When Tom reached the garden, Mary looked up. "You be careful, Tom. Stay in your league."

"I'm always careful," he said, avoiding her eyes. Which sister was worse, he didn't know. Since dad died, they took it upon themselves to tell him how to hunt even though they knew

less about hunting than he knew about cooking. “Makes you wonder,” he said to himself.

When he reached the river, he looked both ways (for crocodile traffic) and then swam across. *It is a war*, he thought to himself, as he reached the other side. *A war between crocodiles and man, between men and women. A war not unlike other wars*, he decided as he shook off excess water. *Fought by ordinary people who should be content to live and let live if it wasn't for those who desire a little more—those who are willing to get others to pay the price for what they want. Agitators. Revolutionaries.*

As Tom thought about this, he began to smile. And then he said to himself, “So tell me: Did you serve in the war?”

“Did I serve in the war?” his answering self answered, sounding indignant. “Did I ever! I served on a galley.”

“On a galley,’ you say?” Tom was skeptical. “Did you see much action on a galley?”

“In a war, there’s no place like a galley. No place at all.”

Tom’s conversation alerted all crocodile-sized animals and they stayed a respectable distance away. Larger animals were bored by it and by him; his feeble spear presented no threat to them.

But the little animals, the fish and the rabbits, were attracted to this talking hunter. When they saw him coming, they moved in as close as they dared, hoping not to miss the story.

“Oh, come on now!” Tom continued, “Give me one advantage to serving on a galley. Just one.”

“Land and sea. There’s one for you. Pirates and enemies and explorations on the side when you can spare the time. Sneaking up in the fog. And

sunrise over the ocean.”

Tom was taken aback. “Over the ocean,’ you say. I’ve never been to the ocean before. What’s it like?”

“It’s just filled with glorious things. Islands and treasures and tidal waves and whirlpools.”

As Tom and his answering self talked on, they positioned themselves over the stream. The fish that came to listen to his story were all a little too young and a little too small for him to spear and take home. So he went on.

“What about pirates? Did you ever have a run in with pirates?”

“I remember the first time we ever ran across the Thievin’ Hoard we called them, though they called themselves the Gentlemen of the Sea. It was my first year aboard. I was hired on as a rower, but when my real talents became evident to the ship’s master, I was taken off that assignment and given the run of the ship with my new

job.”

“Your new job?”

“I was the cook. “

“Didn’t the ship already have a cook?”

“We did, but not a very good one. No one wanted to eat anything he made, so he ended up eating most of it himself. I suppose that’s how he came down with the poisoning.”

“Poisoned himself?”

“I don’t reckon he meant to, but he did. Anyway, after two days with no cook, the crew was getting hungry; we close to had a mutiny on our hands.”

“What did you do?”

“What could I do? I talked to the master myself I did. I said to him, ‘Sir, if you please, you’ll take my advice and get a new cook.’ I said it to him plain and simple.”

“And what did he say to you?”

“He said, ‘You’re hired. You have dinner (mess they called it) ready in twenty minutes. If you don’t, we’re liable to cut you up and fry you for supper. So I became the cook.’”

“What did you cook?”

“All sorts of things. Biscuits and crackers and coconuts and, well, the rest wouldn’t be polite to say in present company.”

The granddaddy trout that was moving in to hear more about pirates and galleys and poisoning came at the last moment to his senses and swam away.

Tom frowned. He would try to steer the conversation away from food.

“So tell me more about these pirates.”

“It was a foggy October day. We were in pirate waters and we knew it. But none of the men had spotted a thing. I was keeping an eye peeled. too, but,

to tell you the truth, it was Abernathy, my cat, that first sniffed them out.”

This caught Tom by surprise. “A cat!” he exclaimed. “They have cats on galleys?”

“I should say so. They never set out to sea without a good cat aboard. It’s one of the things that got me hired originally. I had a cat and he was just right for seagoing.”

“You learn something every day,” said Tom, still incredulous.

“Were these the ... what did you call them?”

“The Gentlemen of the Sea. They certainly were. And it was an awful sight too.”

Tom’s next guest was getting closer. It was a beautiful catfish, big enough to feed three.

Tom’s answering self went on. “The fog was lifting and there was a light



rain coming down. I was looking off the starboard because Abernathy was nailed to that side nose to the wind.. Normally, he would go below at the first sign of a rain. But, no, he was glued. So

I came up to him and I whispered, 'Nathy, what is it?' And he didn't look back to me or nothing. So I just looked out across the water straining my eyes to see what it was he was sniffing out."

"Then what happened?"

"It was then," Tom's self replied, "that the bow of that pirate ship broke through the fog. It was coming straight to us, and let me tell you, they were rowin' hard."

"What did you do?"

"At first, I could hardly talk, I was so surprised. I went to yell, and all that came out was this little squeak. 'Captain,' I said, 'pirates!' We were mighty fortunate that Endraker—he was the

drummer—was walking by at the time. He looked up and, by this time, saw both the bow and the flag. He had a powerful voice, and he loved to use it. ‘Captain,’ he roared, ‘pirates to the starboard.’”

“What did the captain do?”

“The captain, I mean to tell you, was a man of action. He had us rig the cannon right away. We filled it with powder and lead and wheeled it into position. By this time, they were getting close, uncomfortably close. We were afraid they might have a cannon of their own.”

“Are you sure you had a cannon?” asked Tom sounding skeptical.

“If you were to hear the blast from that big gun just once, you’d be sure for life you had a cannon,” Tom’s self replied. “And we did fire, but the shot went wide. Endraker was all for loading up and firing again, but the captain ordered out the grappling hooks. We were going to take ‘em on man-to-

man.”

“What did you fight with?” asked Tom as the catfish moved almost within range.

“Endraker and the captain carried battle axes, but I myself had a sword. They rushed in ahead of the rest, swinging away and shouting as loud as they could. It didn’t matter how ugly the battle got, you could always hear Endraker over the sound of everyone else saying, ‘Come along, ladies, I’ll give you a tune to sing by,’ and then he would swing his mighty axe, laughing all the while.” Tom’s answering self paused for a moment as though deep in thought. “Funny, you know, in all the battles we were ever in, I never saw Endraker get so much as a scratch.”

“What about you?” asked Tom, “What did you do?”

“I had a sword,” self answered also eyeing the catfish, “and at first I was a little shy in its use. But I got rapped a

couple times and I woke up to it. The key is to wait for just the right opportunity. You see a man coming toward you and you know his weak spot. You study it, but you study it quick. And then you dive into it with all you're worth."

Tom's spear went diving into the water. It dived in and stuck to the muddy bottom. And Tom fell in behind it. The fish scattered. The catfish swam easily away.

"Good gravy!" sputtered Tom as he struggled to his feet. "That was one of my best stories."

Tom pulled the spear out of the muck and dragged his feet to the bank. Lying down in the grass he decided to let himself dry before he tried his luck with a rabbit. For a while he watched clouds drift by and wondered to himself what it would be like if a man could ride on a cloud. Would the oak next to him seem so big? Or would it seem like a child's toy, some-

thing to be cast aside by these cloud riders, these rulers of the wind? And where would the rulers go when the day was over? Would they meet the stars? Or have tea with the moon? Or would they just relax, maybe stretch a bit, and fade away into the world of dreams?

### **Malcolm**

Afternoon had started before Tom returned, before he awoke to continue his hunt. From somewhere hot rain fell. Sunshine faded. Darkness descended like a presence that could be felt.

Tom shook his head and opened his eyes.

*Spear. Stick. Some kind of club. Anything.*

He clawed at tree roots and rocks, pulling up grass. Where was his

spear? He scrambled to his feet and fell. He pulled himself up again, steadying himself against the trunk of the oak. *Where was the spear?*

His nails dug into the palms of his hands as he stepped back to face the visitor that towered over him. When he felt the spear in his hand, when he realized it was there all along, at that moment he knew he lacked the strength to use it.

*Not that it would do any good.*

“Talk to them,” his dad had said before Tom became the man of the family. “Talk to them. It doesn’t matter what you say. Let them hear in your voice that you are the master.”

It worked to scare away wolves and wild dogs. With the right story, it worked to lure deer and rabbits and fish into the range of Tom’s spear. *But would it work with this?* There was no other option.

Running was pointless—he would be

eaten alive before he took ten steps. If he swam the stream behind him, the creature would step across and meet him on the other side. Climbing the oak would only put him closer to the dinosaur's teeth. And—as for the spear—at best he could hope to irritate the beast.

*Talk to him.* Tom searched for a voice of courage and spoke. But his words squeaked and whined like the wailing of a small child.

“What do you mean by sneaking up on a sleeping man like that?”

The Tyrannosaurus didn't blink and didn't answer. But, having said something, Tom had a chance to look him over a little better. He took a step back. Another backward step and Tom could see the animal clearly. He was nearly the size of the oak tree Tom had been sleeping under. But, for all his size, the Tyrannosaurus seemed anemic, weak or tired. His skin hung loosely over his body and

his belly seemed shrunken to half its normal size. And his rib cage was clearly visible.

*My guess is that I'm looking at a hungry animal,* Tom thought to himself. Then he noticed that the dinosaur was crying.

Tom was still alive. *Maybe it works to talk to dinosaurs.* “So those were tears hitting me. For a minute I thought you were drooling over me.”

At that remark, the dinosaur sobbed uncontrollably. The Tyrannosaurus wailed loud and long, as though he had just lost his best friend. He wrung his little hands and stomped his huge feet.

Not knowing what else to say, Tom said, “I see that you're crying. Is there something I can do to help?”

“No,” the dinosaur said. “No, thank you. I wish there was. But there's no hope for me. No hope at all.”



“Why, what’s the matter anyway?” Tom said, before he realized the dinosaur had spoken. “Hey ... you ... you’re talking!”

The Tyrannosaurus rubbed his eyes and shook his head. “I’m sorry,” he said. “I really didn’t mean to make such a scene. I didn’t mean to at all. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Malcolm.”

Malcolm bowed and extended his gnarled hand with five sharp claws. Reluctantly, Tom took his scaly hand in a handshake that placed Tom far too close to Malcolm’s enormous teeth.

“It’s nice meeting you, Malcolm,” Tom lied. “I didn’t know that dinosaurs talked.”

“What you have to realize, sir, is that languages are our specialty.”

There was an awkward pause and then Tom remembered his manners. “I’m Tom.”

Malcolm bowed again, and again they shook hands.

As they did, Tom looked at Malcolm's razor sharp teeth. "You must spend a fortune on dental bills," he said. *Maybe they like humor.*

Malcolm's expression changed to one of surprise. He stared at Tom for a long, uncomfortable moment. Then he slapped his side and stomped his foot and roared with laughter. "Oh, you're a fine jokester, Tom, just like your father before you."

The force of Malcolm's laughter nearly knocked Tom over. "Never trust a strange animal," Tom remembered his father saying. But no animal had ever talked to Tom.

"My father? You knew my father?"

"A fine man, if ever there was one. And good to the Company. By that I mean good to the dinosaurs. A man to be respected."

“Dad never mentioned knowing any dinosaurs.”

“Friendship with a Tyrannosaurus is not something that humans talk about—at least, not among themselves.”

“So you and Dad were friends?”

“We talked nearly every day there for a while,” said Malcolm.

“He disappeared, you know.”

“And I was sorry to learn of it,” said Malcolm. “Very sorry.” At that he sniffled a little more.

“But that’s been over two years now,” Tom said. He didn’t talk about his dad to strangers, and he was already angry with himself for being lured into discussing his dad’s disappearance. *The dinosaur knows I’m alone.* The realization wasn’t comforting.

“I suppose it has been two years,” Malcolm said sniffing harder.

Malcolm was about to break into a fresh round of sobs. Tom changed the subject. "How did you get to know our language?"

"Oh, Human isn't hard to learn. I mean once you know Squirrel and Frog and Fish and all the rest."

"Wow," said Tom, not sure whether he should believe Malcolm or not. "How many languages do you know?"

"I don't have an exact count. Two hundred forty-seven, two hundred forty-eight, something like that. I've always been good with languages, even for dinosaurs. Sometimes too good ..." Malcolm's voice trailed off.

"You speak the clearest Human of any foreigner I ever met," said Tom, meaning to be complimentary. *He's telling me stories, just like I do when I hunt. He trying to soften me up. He's toying with me before he comes in for the kill. He's a hunter just like me. Keep him talking.*

“Could you teach me a word or two in Dinosaur?”

Malcolm wrinkled up his nose and laughed again. “Now there’s a good one. Yes, you’re quite a comedian.”

“What’s so funny?” Tom asked, feeling left out of Malcolm’s joke.

Malcolm stopped laughing. “Oh, I’m sorry, Tom, but didn’t you know that dinosaurs have no language of their own. No sir. That’s why they keep learning other tongues. Or at least, that’s one of the reasons.”

“One of the reasons?”

“Well, yeah, at least that’s the best reason, don’t you think?”

“Yeah, I suppose,” said Tom, unsure of what Malcolm was driving at.

There was another awkward silence while (it seemed to Tom) Malcolm was looking him over, and he didn’t like the way it felt. So he searched hard for another subject to discuss. Grasp-

ing for a question, he ended upon a topic he didn't want to discuss. "So, tell me, what did you and dad talk about?"

Malcolm sighed. "I guess you'd say that nutrition was our big topic. Nutrition, diet, that sort of thing."

Tom looked at the skinny dinosaur. "Nothing personal," he said, "but that looks like an area where you might want to be doing some improvement. What do you eat anyway?"

At that question Malcolm let out a long, long sigh. "I was doing pretty good, Tom, there for a while. Up until yesterday I hadn't eaten anything for better than two months. Sixty-five days to be exact. But, I guess it's only reasonable to expect that a Tyrannosaurus has to eat once in a while. What do you think, Tom?"

It was an evil question, and Tom wrestled with how to answer it. Finally, he settled on a diplomatic reply: "I should think that if I were a

Tyrannosaurus, eating would be one of my specialties.”

Malcolm sighed again. “And I suppose it was, I mean when I was young. But I’m not young any more. Tom, do you know what I’m meaning to say?”

Tom didn’t know, but he thought it wise to ask, “How old are you?”

“This March, the twentieth to be exact, will be my six hundredth hatch-day. They’re planning quite a celebration, but I just don’t know if I can go.” Malcolm broke into tears once again.

“Why not?” said Tom, who still wasn’t following Malcolm’s logic. “Is someone keeping you away?”

Malcolm didn’t answer. Instead he explained, “When I was young, a body could get by all right, first of all on snails and crickets and that sort of thing. I got to be a little older and then I’d catch a fish or a rabbit like

you do. Lord knows how many poor innocent rabbits I've eaten, you know, just to fill my stomach."

Malcolm's words unsettled Tom.

"It got worse. The bigger I got, the worse it got. Do you have any idea how many rabbits I'd have to eat now, just to say I've had a decent meal?"

"No sir," Tom said quickly.

"I could eat 'em like popcorn," Malcolm replied.

Tom nodded his head. "Go on," he encouraged.

## **The Crocodile**

"I was still young and foolish when I came across the crocodile. He never told me his name, and, to tell you the truth, I don't believe I ever asked. I was out looking one morning when



the thought struck me that it would be nice to fry a crocodile for breakfast. Now, I had never caught a crocodile before, so I knew nothing of their treachery. But that didn't hold me back at all. I figured I could handle it. In fact, I even passed by a couple of small ones. I told myself I was going to have a big juicy crocodile, all by myself, all for myself.

"Then I found him," Malcolm continued. I knew he was the one right from the start. I had just come over the rise and there he was with a young croc, and they were having words.

"Nobody, I mean nobody, moves into my territory without my say so,' the big one was saying to the young one.

"But the young one needed some education; he was sassing back. 'Show me the sign,' he says, 'what gives you the right to claim this river as your own? I'm just as good as you are, and if I want to fish ...'

"Well, that was all that came from the

mouth of that young crocodile. The big one just got this mean look in his eyes and he crawled around a bit and then with one swing of his tail he sent the little one rolling. He ended up belly up and just lay there for a minute, moaning and pawing at the air.

“But the big croc wasn’t satisfied still. He went over to inspect his handiwork, and then, just for spite, he bit the poor young fellow clean in two. I watched the whole thing.”

“What did you do?” Tom asked.

Malcolm looked at Tom. “First of all I watched. Then I figured. I figured to myself, If ever anybody deserved to be eaten for breakfast, this here crocodile deserved it. And he deserved it bad. So then I moved in.” Malcolm paused. His mind seemed to be wandering.

“What happened next?” asked Tom.

“What happened,” Malcolm said, re-

turning to his thoughts, “what happened was that he showed himself to be a real scrapper. He took a chunk out of my finger before I got a good hold on him.”

Malcolm showed Tom his left hand. One finger was noticeably shorter.

“But I did, out of luck or determination, I did get a hold on him and I knocked him silly. Then I threw him over my shoulder ’til I could figure out what I wanted to do with him.”

“What did you do with him?” asked Tom.

“I said to myself, I said, ‘Malcolm, you fry this and it will be the toughest breakfast you ever ate.

Better hang this one up for a while and let him tenderize.’”

Tom was relieved to find someone else who talked to himself, even if it was a dinosaur.

“I figured on hanging him to dry and

then cutting him up for snack food. So that's just what I started to do. I took him home and got ready to hang him up by his tail when he gave me this sly look.

"What are you looking at?" I said when I shouldn't have said anything. I should have just hung him up and walked away. But I said it and he answered back.

"He said, 'You're a rabbit eater if I've ever seen one.'

"I didn't like him very much so I was pretty snappy in reply. I said, 'I was a rabbit eater. Lately, I've switched to crocodiles.'

"Then I don't suppose you'd be interested in learning the Rabbit tongue, would you?" he said in his sly way.

"From then on he had me hooked. There's nothing a dinosaur loves more than to learn a new language. I've seen times when a Tyrannosaurus would let a good meal spoil

for three days just to get an eagle's dialect down straight."

Tom was amazed. "Don't you get hungry?"

"You get hungry, but you don't think about it," Malcolm answered. "When this crocodile said to me that he could teach me the Rabbit language, I forgot all about breakfast; I forgot all about snacks. All I could think about was how handy it might be to know Rabbit. You know, you could put your ear down to one of those rabbit holes and listen. And, if you listened long enough, you just might hear about when and where those rabbits congregate, when and where they hold their meetings. And, for a Tyrannosaurus, that would be mighty valuable information." Malcolm looked at Tom and Tom thought that maybe he was looking just a little too long and a little too hard.

"So did he teach you Rabbit?" Tom asked.

“He taught it to me all right. And he taught it proper. But not before we did a little bargaining. He wanted to be let go. But I’m sure you realize that would never do. Nothing worse than to wake up in the middle of the night and find yourself surrounded by a pack of angry crocodiles. So I kept him penned but agreed to feed him a chicken from time to time, or maybe an aardvark or a good-sized fish. In return he taught me Rabbit.

“At first I didn’t think he’d know it very well, being a crocodile, you know. But he knew it right, because after every lesson I’d test it, and inside three months I was speaking and hearing Rabbit like I was born with it.”

Tom had never learned a foreign language before, but three months sounded impressive to him.

“I wasn’t what you’d call principled back in those days. After I learned Rabbit, I was feeling hungry again, so

hungry in fact that I was ready to eat that crocodile raw.”

Tom anticipated Malcolm’s words: “But he talked you out of it.”

“I was walking over to the pen where I kept the croc and he said to me, ‘Someone with your abilities is probably an expert in the Sturgeon dialect.’

“That got me thinking. Those Sturgeon get to be over ten feet long. They make a nice supper, even for a big boy like me. And Sturgeon is hard to come by. Up until that point, I had never met an expert in Sturgeon. But I didn’t want to sound desperate. So I said, ‘I know my Fish pretty good.’

“Then the crocodile said to me, he said, ‘I don’t blame you for not being interested. It’s not something that the average dinosaur would want to know.’

“When you’re young, Tom, you don’t know it when people are playing games with you. And that’s what this

crocodile was doing with me. But all I knew is somebody called me average, and I didn't like that at all. So I said to him, 'You ain't looking at no average dinosaur.'

"Do you know what he said then?" Malcolm asked Tom.

"No, what?"

"He said, 'Well, it don't make any difference. Because I refuse to teach it to you.'

"I don't need to tell you that set my blood boiling. I wasn't used to anybody refusing anything. I stomped my feet and I shouted and I told him, 'You're in no position to refuse anything.'

"But he just looked at me and laughed. He laughed loud and he laughed long. And that made me feel mighty uncomfortable. So finally I asked, 'Why are you saying you're refusing anyway?'



“That, of course, was just what he was waiting for. So he turned to me and he said, ‘Wouldn’t be worth my while. I taught you Rabbit and what good did it do me? I’m locked in this cage. You feed me nothing but a scrawny chicken once in a while. I’d rather be dead.’

“I was still steaming, so I said, ‘I can take care of that.’

“But he didn’t answer me at all, not at all. He just rolled over onto his back with his belly up and closed his eyes and waited for me to bite.

“I stood there for a minute, still mad, but, at the same time, the thought was going through my mind, *Malcolm, you learn Sturgeon and you’ll be the first dinosaur in the Company, maybe the first ever, to master it. It ain’t something to be overlooking, especially if you intend to do any courting come springtime.* With those thoughts in my mind I knew, whatever the cost, I had to learn Sturgeon.

So I said to the crocodile, 'You're just lucky I'm not hungry.' Then I walked away."

"He ended up teaching you Sturgeon, didn't he?" Tom rested his spear against a rock and sat down.

"That's right, and I ended up putting him on a leash and tying the leash to a tree down by the river. I don't remember how he talked me into it, but I remember wrapping him up in his leash. I tied it around his neck and then around his arm and then wrapped it around his body four or five times. He kept saying, 'It's too tight; it's too tight.' But he was lying. I came back a day later and there was the leash, sitting in the water, but he was gone. The crocodile was gone for good.

"At first I was mad at myself. It was a dumb mistake and for a long time I never told anyone about it, no one in the Company and certainly no one on the Outside."

“You mean putting him on the leash?” said Tom.

Malcolm smiled. “I was so busy cursing myself for letting a good meal, and more than that, a good teacher, get away, that it took me a long time to realize my real mistake.”

### **Malcolm’s Mistake**

“Your real mistake?” Tom was lost.

“It started with the very next meal. I was pretty hungry, so I caught a water buffalo. I had been watching him for a good twenty minutes. Then I moved in. You know how it is, Tom. I had him just where I wanted him, and I was about to take the first bite, but I started wondering. I wondered to myself. I said, ‘Malcolm, for all you know, maybe water buffaloes might know Fox or Ostrich or maybe even Cheetah. Give it a second thought,

Malcolm.' And as I wondered, I hesitated, just for a split-second, to be sure, but it was long enough to look him straight in the eye.

"I never looked a kill in the eye before," Malcolm continued. "It's bad luck and it's something you learn early on, to watch their eyes before you jump, not after, never after."

Tom nodded. "Good advice for any hunter," he said.

Malcolm sighed. "Good advice I didn't take. I looked straight into those water buffalo eyes. Eyes that should be noble and proud. But he looked at me and all I could see was the pleading, the pleading for life, the pleading of fear mixed with sorrow. And for that split second I wondered to myself if this was a daddy I was looking at. Were there children at home—home waiting? Or maybe a gal.

"But then my better sense caught up with me. 'This is ridiculous!' I said to myself, almost aloud. I got back to

the job at hand and finished it properly. But from the very first bite, it wasn't quite right. I kept wondering if I was eating the best Ostrich teacher alive. That was my main concern. But in the back of my mind was the idea that maybe this water buffalo, 'Fred' I had named him by that time, maybe Fred had a little one or two that was grazing just over the hill. And now maybe they were coming back to talk about the grazing over there, or flowers they had seen, or who knows what. I looked up and all around, but there was no one, nothing. Nothing but a solitary eagle circling high above.

"I took a couple more bites and looked up again. It was quiet. Real quiet. I guess I had never noticed that before, but I've noticed it many times since. And, as I sat there eating, I wished for a little chatter. Maybe a rabbit family talking or a couple of robins singing songs about the weather. But there wasn't anything.

Not a blasted sound.” Malcolm’s voice took on an intensity that Tom found unnerving.

“And then do you know what I did, Tom? Do you know what I did?”

Tom shook his head.

“I did something that I had never done before. I dragged Fred into a ravine. When I got there, I looked all around to make sure that nobody could see me. And then, though he had long since stopped tasting like anything, I ate him all, bite by bite, until there was nothing left, not even a trace.”

This left Tom out of sorts and he wasn’t sure what to say.

Malcolm went on with his confessional, and Tom had no choice but to listen. “The next day I decided that I had to find that crocodile of mine. Once I found him, I figured I’d pen him up good. He’d teach me his languages, and I’d take care of getting

food, plenty of food for both of us. I'd catch him whatever he wanted.

"You see, Tom, by this time I had figured that crocodile knew all the languages. I didn't know that for a fact, but you know how your mind can run away with you."

Tom nodded again.

"That was the start of a long and bad time for me. I caught crocodiles; I caught plenty of them, and I ate a few too. But, mainly, I asked them questions. 'No,' they told me, 'no,' they didn't speak nothing but Crocodile, wished they did, but sorry, they didn't. And, no, they didn't know about my crocodile, except there was a mean one up by Jackal's Creek that kept to himself but nobody had seen him for a while.

"In time I took to asking other animals if they had seen my crocodile. But most of them were so scared they couldn't even talk. So I just let them go and they ran away.

“This was a new thing for me. We dinosaurs love to learn languages, but, except for talking among ourselves, we don’t use them for talking. We use them for listening. For example, I might know Monkey and never say a word to a monkey. But if I’m in the neighborhood of a bunch of monkeys I know just what they’re saying. I’m sure you can see the value in that.”

Tom nodded once again.

“I didn’t know how to deal with this problem of these animals being too scared to talk. At first I just tried to catch them and make them talk. But it didn’t work. They were too scared. I even had a couple die of fright right on the spot; I mean die.

“Then it occurred to me that I had a reputation problem. These animals were scared of me because they figured I was going to eat them clean. They probably figured this was a new Tyrannosaurus game, talk first then eat them right off the face of the



earth. So I said to myself, I said, 'Malcolm, you need to change your image. You got people scared of you and you'll just have to turn that right around.'

"But I found out something pretty quick. I found it's fine to talk about changing your image, but really doing it is something entirely different. It's one of those things that works in theory, but real life presents all kinds of practical problems."

"Such as?" Tom asked.

"For example, Tom, I had to eat. So I tried an experiment. During the day I just talked to animals. At night, I ate them. I never talked to the animals I ate, and I never ate the animals I talked to. I thought it was a pretty neat system."

"Did it work?" Tom asked.

Malcolm shook his head. "It didn't work for them and it didn't work for me. They were still as scared as ever.

Maybe even more scared, because I used to hunt in the daytime only, so once I started hunting at night, they couldn't even sleep. And it didn't work for me either. Every animal I ate at night, I was sure that he was the contact, the missing link to my crocodile. And, when I talked to the ones during the day, my stomach started growling and my mouth started watering and ... ”

“So what did you do next?” Tom asked quickly.

“It was a long time, maybe five years. I tried this thing and that. But none of them worked. I mean really worked. Until one day I stumbled right on what I was looking for. There he was, my crocodile, lying on the side of the river, right where I had found him that very first day. He carried in his body ... I must have counted five or six spears, spears about the size of yours there beside you. I imagine he took a couple of them with him before he left to swim

home, to crawl up on the bank, to crawl up on the bank for the last time.”

Malcolm’s voice trembled. “I knew right then that there was at least one language he didn’t know; he didn’t know Human and the humans didn’t know him. I stood there over him and I tried to laugh, but I couldn’t. ‘It serves you right,’ I said to him. ‘It serves you right,’ I repeated. But he never answered me.”

Malcolm wept.

His next words came haltingly. “And it was then ... for the first time ... I realized what I know now ... that I wasn’t looking for that croc ... that stupid crocodile ... because I wanted to know Ostrich or Impala or the fine points of Chimpanzee. I was looking for him because I missed him. I missed the old double-crossing, two-faced ... I realized that I liked catching chickens for him. I stayed out extra long looking for the best chicken I

could find. And I liked listening to the sound of his voice. I can still hear it in my mind. It's hard to explain. It was like losing a pet, but it was more than that, it was like losing a friend.

"I had never lost a friend outside the Company before, and it weighed on me. It really set me thinking. Here was someone who had cheated me, who had lied to me, who had played me for a fool, and yet I was crying over him as though I had lost my own brother. Yet every day I was eating creatures who never meant me any harm at all. Creatures who just wanted to live their own lives, have their own families, enjoy God's earth just like all the rest of us.

"And I decided right then and there that I would never, never eat another living animal unless I had a chance ... a chance to ... " Malcolm's voice trailed off.

"A chance to what?" Tom asked.

Malcolm hesitated. Then he said,

“Can you see, Tom, how a dinosaur might be driven to want to make some changes in his life?”

Tom nodded understandingly.

“At first I tried just finding and eating animals who had died on their own, you know, like the vultures do. I gave it an honest try, but I didn’t have the stomach for it. I couldn’t keep any of it down. Have you ever tried to eat an animal that you found dead, maybe a day or two old?”

Tom wrinkled up his nose and shook his head.

“I even thought of having someone else in the Company do my hunting for me. But that wouldn’t have been right. You can probably see that. I could have done it in exchange for teaching a language or two, but that would have broken an old unwritten code—you never charge another member of the Company to teach him, or her, another tongue. And, I guess, even more importantly, I just

would have had someone else doing my dirty work for me. In the end, that would have weighed on my conscience just as much as having done it myself.

“It took a long time before I mentioned any of this to any of the Members. Then one day I was talking to Brother Gregory, the Apatosaurus. He’s a friend of mine, loosely speaking. And he said to me, he said, “Malcolm, you’re starting to look pretty thin. It’s a sign of stress, you know. Something’s bothering you, and the sooner you get it out, the better off you’ll be.’

“I thought for a minute and then I saw where that was solid advice. So I told him. I told him the whole story, from beginning to end. And he listened to it. Every so often he’d go chewing on leaves in his casual sort of way, but he listened. And when it was all over, he had a long chew. And then he said to me, ‘Malcolm, you’ve been a friend for a good many years.

And I wouldn't tell this to just any Tyrannosaurus, but I can see you're ready for it. It'll be a tough row to hoe, but you need a change of diet. I'll work up a plan that will keep you in good shape.'

"As you can probably guess, he was talking about vegetables. And, at the time, it was a strange, yet exciting idea. I could hardly sleep that night waiting until the next morning when I could come back and see what he had mapped out. The next day, he had the whole elaborate plan worked out. It took him a good hour to explain it all—between chews, that is.

"I went to work that same day. And, before long, I had tried everything on his list and then some.

But it didn't matter what I tried, or how I ate it, the result was always the same. I got sick. One way or another, I just got sick."

"Wow, that's too bad," said Tom sincerely.

“I ... I was pretty depressed,” said Malcolm. “And then, I’m ashamed to admit it, I just went crazy for a while. I must have eaten nearly two hundred animals in the next three weeks. I gained over two tons. I don’t know what happened. I guess I just snapped, that’s all. Then one day (I had eaten so much I could hardly move) I went down to the river for a drink. It was one of those calm days and the sun was shining. I stood there on the edge about to get my drink, but then I stopped and looked at my reflection there in the water.

“I don’t know why, but I just started crying. And I said to myself, ‘Malcolm, old boy, you’ve got to get a hold of yourself.’ ... ” Malcolm paused and looked at Tom. “Am I boring you with this?” he asked.

“No, not at all,” Tom said quickly.

“I did some thinking that day. And I came up with a plan. I decided I’d eat as few creatures as possible, as sel-



dom as possible. Meanwhile, I figured I'd tell as many as I could about my problem and maybe somebody could come up with a solution."

"Have you tried corn?" Tom asked.

"Pardon me?" Malcolm said.

"Have you tried eating corn or lettuce or sweet potatoes?"

Malcolm nodded. "All of those. I think every fruit and vegetable that's ever been thought of I've tried. Word of my problem even got out to the Company, and, to my surprise, the Members, I mean the other Tyrannosauruses, have even been giving suggestions."

Malcolm shook his head sadly. "No," he said, "there's no hope for me. Or almost no hope."

"Almost?" Tom asked.

Dwight A. Clough

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