

Black Excellence in Space, on a Dinosaur's back

I knew my daughter loved dinosaurs, but I didn't think that when one smashed into our living room and devoured our two shepherds that she'd have met her new best friend. My wife was fixing herself a cup of tea. The crash was so violent and loud that she fumbled the whistling kettle, which tumbled directly atop her bare foot, branding it a Marlboro red that immediately bubbled like blossoming roses.

Before I could fold the newspaper I had been reading onto the kitchen table; or make sure my own mug of tea (spiced with pumpkin pie and cinnamon and creamy from almond milk) was set on a coaster; or ask my wife how hot the kettle must've been to ugly up her foot so fast, Olivia stepped over crumbled wall chunks and a cracked family photo and asked "Can we keep him, daddy?"

The tyrannosaurus rex had followed her into the kitchen. One of our soon-to-be-dino-shit dogs' leashes was tied around a scimitar-sized tooth. It ducked its colossal head under the door jamb and pressed forward with frightening ease, blowing the frame out.

Jurassic Park had indeed gotten it wrong—very wrong. The T-rex wasn't leathery and muscled, nor did it shimmer in the light like dragon scales. Its skin was steak-grey and dull, paper-like, offering a thinly veiled view of a fatty abdomen and thick corded veins that snaked up its massive legs. Amber ridges began at the snout and grew wider as they reached its nape, ending in a fuzzy patch of black hair that grew sprouted across its back and shoulders.

What sort of an idiot could even consider allowing... no, even listen to a request from his eight-year-old to keep a randomly-appearing, wall-smashing, door-jamb-bursting T-rex?

Tyler Miles

“He said he’d let her keep it?” one of the suits asked his colleague, who was failing to bury his smile in his clipboard.

“Very funny, guys. When is that ambulance going to be here? And is anyone going to look at my wife’s foot? Hey, where are you going with my wall?” I chased after a man in hazmat gear collecting chunks of my house and carrying them away. They said they needed Olivia too. She was the only one who kept the T-rex calm.

Apparently that old water-stained warehouse on the opposite side of the river, across from our neighborhood, is where they housed specimens of all mysterious sorts: zombies clawing for blood and brains, an alien named James (apparently he was from a mirror Earth and wholly unremarkable), and lastly, dinosaurs, of which one T-rex had escaped.

Olivia spent most of her days at the facility: after school and on the weekends. I or my wife, sometimes both, would sit there while scientists and soldiers hid behind glass walls and our baby was alone in a room with a dinosaur. Sometimes her mom cried. Most times I’d laugh.

As Olivia grew up and went away to college, we stayed with Saur (I know, but she was eight, what do you want me to do?): watched over him, fed him. It was like she left her Labrador with us. When finally she graduated—after several major changes, of course—she took Saur with her to Chicago, and then to Costa Rica, where she studied paleontology. But that was long before the world needed saving, and a space force was created to protect Earth, and select humans were handpicked by the president, and of course, my Olivia was sought after since she had a pet T-rex. Turns out they’re fantastic killing machines.

Tyler Miles

She became a dinosaur-riding, energy sword-and-machine gun-wielding space knight. I thought she was the coolest.

Or maybe it didn't all go down quite like that.

Maybe the T-rex was a stuffed animal and didn't necessarily crash through our living room, but into her heart; and my wife, bless her, didn't burn her foot on the kettle—I can't remember—we split ages ago, it feels like; and maybe my daughter isn't a space knight, but instead works in a museum. She definitely did apply for the space force though—that I do remember.

That story is more likely, but much less fun, so I like to remember it the other way.