

# DINOBALL



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## CHAPTER 4



Two days later, Charlie and Steggy were sitting next to a giant football beside Sabreton's dusty soccer pitch, waiting for Billy and James. School was starting that day, so Charlie had asked them to meet him just after dawn to show them his new invention.

'Ready to play dinoball?' giggled Charlie as the boys and their dinosaurs approached.

'What's *dinoball*?' asked Billy warily.

Charlie stood up and patted the ball in front of them. 'This,' he said.

Charlie rolled the massive ball towards his two friends. It was five times the size of a normal football

and was made of extra thick mammoth-skin leather. James yelped as the heavy ball rolled over his foot.

‘What do you think?’ asked Charlie.



‘I think it’s going to hurt when I kick it,’ spluttered James, hopping up and down on one leg.

‘It’s a good job *they*’re kicking it instead then, isn’t it?’ said Charlie, nodding towards Fing, Fang and Steggy. ‘Listen to this.’

Charlie knocked on the side of the football. It didn’t sound full of air like a normal football, it sounded solid.

Billy smiled – that meant it wouldn’t burst. Perhaps Charlie was on to something after all.

While Fing and Fang sniffed the ball curiously, Charlie explained all about his latest idea. He told them how he had asked Tanya Trader’s school friend to make him a ball that was big and heavy enough to be used by dinosaurs. Tanya’s friend had worked solidly all weekend and this ball was the result.

Billy giggled. ‘This has to be your silliest idea yet. But if it stops Fang misbehaving I’ll give it a go.’

‘Me too!’ agreed James.

Charlie rolled the dinoball towards the centre of the football pitch and began to explain to them how

he thought the game should work.

‘Dinoball is just like football, but for dinosaurs and humans,’ he said.

‘They’ll trample us to pieces!’ protested James.

‘No, they won’t,’ explained Charlie. ‘Because we sit on their backs. Steggy and I practised last night in the garden. You’ve got to make sure you hold on tight though – things can get pretty bumpy!’

Charlie clambered on to Steggy’s back and showed the others. ‘Now you try.’



Fing and Fang crouched down so that James and Billy could climb up. Billy gripped Fang around the neck while James held on to two of Fing’s leathery scales. As soon as James was on Fing’s back, the naughty

dinosaur raced off around the football pitch bouncing him up and down.

‘Ow!’ cried James. ‘He’s bashing my bum!’

Charlie and Billy laughed as they watched Fing run in circles with James clinging on for dear life. When he got back to the centre circle, James climbed off and rubbed his bottom.

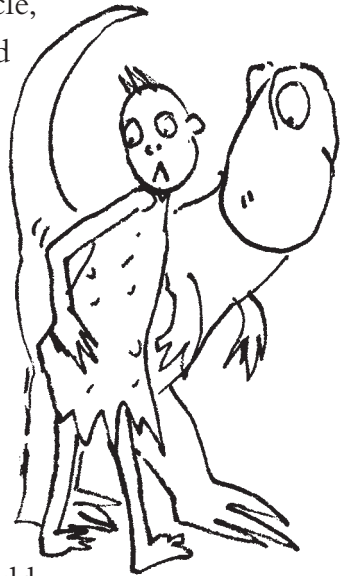
‘I thought you said dinoball was going to be fun!’

‘I had fun watching that!’ said Billy, laughing.

Charlie suggested that the dinosaurs could kick the ball with their feet or head it, and they could also swipe it with their tail. The riders would help them spot opportunities and guide them round the pitch.

‘Let’s see how we get on,’ suggested Charlie as he tapped Steggy softly between the shoulderblades. Steggy swiped the ball with his tail and in an instant Billy and Fang were racing after it.

‘Woo-hoo!’ yelled Billy as he cantered around the pitch. ‘This is brilliant!’



Fing chased his brother. James clung on tight as they galloped towards the ball.

‘What are we waiting for?’ said Charlie, patting Steggy on the head. ‘Let’s get stuck in!’

Steggy didn’t need to be asked twice and soon he and Charlie were charging around the pitch too.

In the early morning sun, Charlie, Billy and James headed, swiped and kicked the dinoball all around the dusty field. It was complete chaos! The dinosaurs had no idea about passing the ball to each other – they just whacked it!



It was so much fun they were all soon absorbed in playing and gradually they began to work out how to control the heavy ball. Fing and Fang were best when using their tails. James and Billy even found ways of telling them what to do next. They tapped them on the

head if they wanted them to head the ball, on the bottom if they wanted them to use a tail-swipe and on the shoulders if they wanted their dinosaurs to kick.

Steggy and Charlie had been friends for so long that Steggy didn't need telling what to do. He instinctively knew what Charlie wanted and the pair chased round the football pitch as if they'd been playing dinoball all their lives.

Natalie Honeysuckle was on her way to school when she heard the commotion from the football pitch, and decided to investigate what was going on. She watched open-mouthed as Charlie and his friends hurtled around the pitch. It looked dangerous, but it also looked exciting, and if there was one thing Natalie loved more than anything else it was excitement.



She dropped her school bag on the dusty ground and ran towards the boys. 'That looks brilliant,' she called. 'Can I have a go?' 'You need a dinosaur to play dinoball,' said James as Fing swiped the ball towards his brother.

Natalie looked at

Charlie hopefully. ‘I could borrow Steggy?’

Charlie shook his head. Nobody rode Steggy but him. It was his one golden rule.

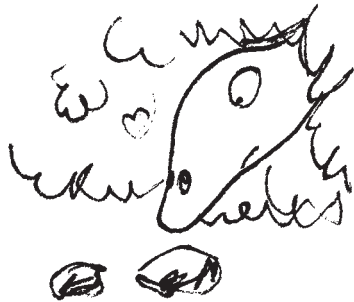
Natalie was about to turn and head for school when she spotted something moving in the bushes on the other side of the pitch – it was a baby maiasaura that was obviously also intrigued by the game. Natalie could tell by the look on its face that it was itching to join in just as much as she was. Suddenly Natalie had an idea – she delved into her school bag and took out the vine leaf wrap her mum had made for lunch. Then she crept around the pitch towards the curious dinosaur. When she got close, Natalie held out the vine leaf.

‘I won’t bite, I promise,’ coaxed Natalie.

The maiasaura sniffed the wrap suspiciously. Then it licked its lips, stretched out a long black tongue and licked the wrap from top to bottom. Natalie tore off some pieces and laid a trail on the ground, luring the dinosaur out of the bushes.

Natalie patted it gently on the shoulder and then nodded towards the football pitch. The dinoball game was still going strong.

‘Fancy a go?’



The dinosaur growled happily and crouched, nodding for Natalie to clamber on to its back.

As Natalie and her new dinosaur friend raced towards the dinoball, the three boys looked up in surprise.

‘Well I never!’ spluttered James. ‘How did she do that?’

‘Never underestimate Natalie Honeysuckle,’ said Charlie, shaking his head with a rueful smile.

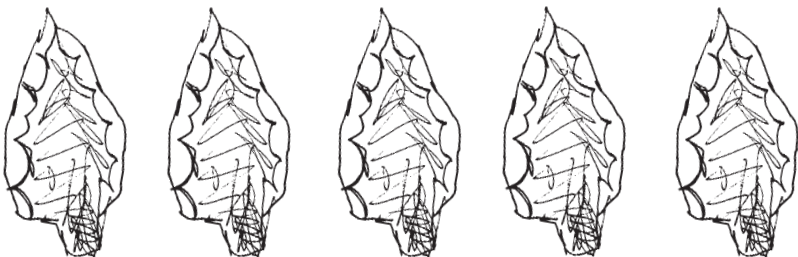
‘Out of the way, boys!’ cried Natalie. ‘What are we playing anyway?’

‘Dinoball!’ shouted Charlie over the noise.

‘Dinoball,’ giggled Natalie. ‘I like it!’

For the rest of the morning, the four children and their dinosaur friends raced up and down the pitch with glee. It was only when a furious Mrs Heavystep arrived to see why Charlie and his friends were late for their first day back at school that they stopped.

She was so angry with them that she gave them all a detention after school. They had to stay behind and polish a hundred flint spearheads each.



James and Billy were worried about what Fing and Fang might be getting up to without their supervision, but as they made their way home later that afternoon, the children found their dinosaur friends still happily kicking the ball back and forth on the pitch.

‘I think this means they like it,’ said Billy with a smile. ‘And they are even behaving themselves too!’

‘At last,’ agreed James.

The friends watched as Fing and Fang skilfully batted the ball back and forth with their tails.

‘I think you’ll finally be getting some sleep tonight, too,’ added Charlie.

Billy and James grinned at their friend.

‘You are a total genius, Charlie Flint,’ Billy said, patting him on the back.

