

The Outing

It was the middle of summer, and Jesse had decided on an outing for the whole family, including Grace's friend Ariel. They even let me tag along. This trip would be special. Sort of like the trip to the fishing spot last summer, although that one had ended rather badly when a final cast by Jesse had impaled Cole's ear with a worm-laden treble hook. It wouldn't have been too bad, except that Jesse hadn't noticed, thought she'd caught a big one, and was pulling and reeling for all she was worth. She claims she didn't hear the screaming.

Cole's ear survived. The worm, not so much.

No, this trip would be amazing. We were visiting Jurassic Forest, just north of Gibbons. With the realistic animatronic dinosaurs. Who doesn't like dinosaurs?!



Apparently the 40-acre park contained over 50 life-sized dinosaurs of all types, ones that moved realistically and were hidden in the trees ready to pop out and scare the bejeezus out of you! We were all up for that! Especially Jack.

Jack lives and breathes dinosaurs. T-Rex bedding, stegosaurus shirts, raptor slippers, and underwear with large teeth.

"I hope I get to see my favourite dinosaur, the Asteriornis! It looks so cute in pictures I've seen. It even flies!" Jack was ecstatic.

We arrived at the park and made our way to the entrance. Once inside the gate we all headed in different directions. Cole and I stopped to admire a very large Newfoundland dog that belonged to the operator of the concession stand. People were feeding it ice cream cones.

Grace and her friend Ariel headed for the dinosaur rides, hoping to climb on the back of a stegosaurus. Along the way they stopped to admire what looked like a giant pile of steaming poop. Grace was convinced it was from a triceratops. Ariel surmised that it was more likely from the Newfoundland.

We soon ran into Jesse, who was wearing a dinosaur mask that she'd bought at the concession stand. We watched her hide in some bushes, and then leap out with a growl when Cole and Jack walked past. But one of her boots got caught in a branch, and she landed with a howl at Cole's feet. The howl was pretty scary ... some kids coming down the pathway turned around and took off screaming. Maybe they thought she was a velociraptor!

Cole and Jack discovered that you could dig for dinosaur bones, and spent a pleasant half hour digging in the sand. They garnered lots of stares from people passing by. At one point, Cole jumped in the air waving a bone around, yelling "I found one! I found a dinosaur bone!" No-one had the heart to tell him that it was a chicken bone left over from some kid's lunch, and that the real dig site was on the other side of the park.

Most of us ended up at the Albertosaurus pen, where they had the largest dinosaur of all on display; it towered above the treetops. It was weaving its long neck back and forth, and every once in a while, it would lower its head and pretend to steal someone's lunch. Grace wasn't having any of it ... when it happened to her, she gave it a good smack! A few bits of wiring fell out of its nose, but otherwise it didn't look too perturbed as his head rose back up to treetop level.

Suddenly we heard a blood-curdling scream, and had to jump out of the way as Jesse came dashing past. Just around the bend, we discovered what had unnerved her. She'd stumbled upon the Asteriornis enclosure ... Jack's favourite dinosaur! There was a whole flock of them behind the fence. And they resembled nothing so much as a flock of ... chickens! Jesse was at first enthralled. She loved chickens, and had been trying to convince Cole that their back yard really needed a chicken coop, to complement the inflatable hot tub, jungle gym, laser tag enclosure, and multi-level sauna.

But she quickly discovered that what looked like regular chickens from a distance, up close resembled nothing so much as giant feathery very angry ... chicken-sauruses? Huge chickens! Chickens with beaks full of razor-sharp teeth and talons as big as an eagle's, looking very hungry. Snarling chickens from hell!

We ran too!

Later we came across Jesse again, who was studying something that was behind a fence. "I can't figure out what kind of dinosaur this is ..." she explained. "It does look pretty familiar, though!" We kept walking. Maybe she'd realize that it was the moose that lived on the grounds. Or maybe not. She was taking pictures.

Jesse and I met later, and headed off together. We met some of the others as we rounded the next corner on the path, and we were talked into returning to the T-Rex enclosure. "They're about to feed it!" Jack exclaimed excitedly. "It should be fun to watch!" Not sure what feeding a fake T-Rex would look like, we followed him back. When we reached the pen, the T-Rex was pacing around hungrily, looking up at a pallet that was being lowered by a crane. The process seemed to be automatic; we craned our necks to see what would be on the pallet. Maybe an animatronic goat?

No, it was Grace and Ariel, hanging onto the cable and looking down apprehensively at the T-Rex, that now had its mouth open awaiting a rather large meal. "I told you we

shouldn't sit on this pallet" Ariel was complaining. "Look what you've gotten us into!" Grace wasn't listening. She was too busy looking for a way to escape what looked to be a rather grisly fate. Those teeth getting closer were huge, and covered with very convincing blood stains from its last 'meal'.

Fortunately, the automatic sequence came to a stop, and the pallet began to rise back up to where it had come from. We all booed. Grace gave us a dirty look.

Eventually we all made it back to the front entrance. Cole and Grace went into the gift shop to look for souvenirs. I wondered aloud how I could arrange a party here for my next birthday.

Jesse, recovered from her near-death experience with the Asteriornis, went looking for a bathroom. She found it between the back legs of a Triceratops.

On the trip home, Jack was admiring the velociraptor toilet paper he'd talked Cole into buying for him. Grace, seated at the back, was giggling over the rubber T-Rex she'd bought, that pooped when you squeezed it. A fitting end to a fun day!