



Into the High Country

WE DEPARTED the low country, with its stagnant vapors and biting insects and climbed onward, always higher and colder, into the Forbidden Mountains. The Cenozoic mammals, long departed elsewhere from the earth, thrive here in abundance in this last stronghold of the Ice Age.

We skirted the lower flanks of the Tokta range, and were lucky to find one of the *Paraceratherium* supply caravans on its way from Snailshanks to the steaming valleys of Simang and the high camps of Kangduk. I scaled the greasy rope ladder thrown down to me by the mahout and then hoisted Bix in a sling. The upland trail was steep and narrow, often choked by fallen boulders and gouged by foaming torrents that plunged headlong with a deep and sinister roar.





DINOTOPIA

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Y AND A HALF AGO, Sir Richard coined the word *Dinosauria* to name believed to be "fearfully great lizards." Since then, the earth has given bones faster than paleontologists can put them in marble halls. As we crane our young and old, trying to reclothe the muscle and skin in a kind of vision, we keep asking ourselves: really like?

ved into this earthly abode without meeting the previous tenants. In the previous tenants had a lease of 150 years. They must have gotten along well enough.

A hold in your hands is an odyssey for a check with the nearest eight-year-old. Dinosaurs are real, based on fossil evidence; the rest is real depends on you. It's not a marble hall, not of the museum, but a nation, the other side of the mirror, and in the end more true.



DINOTONIA

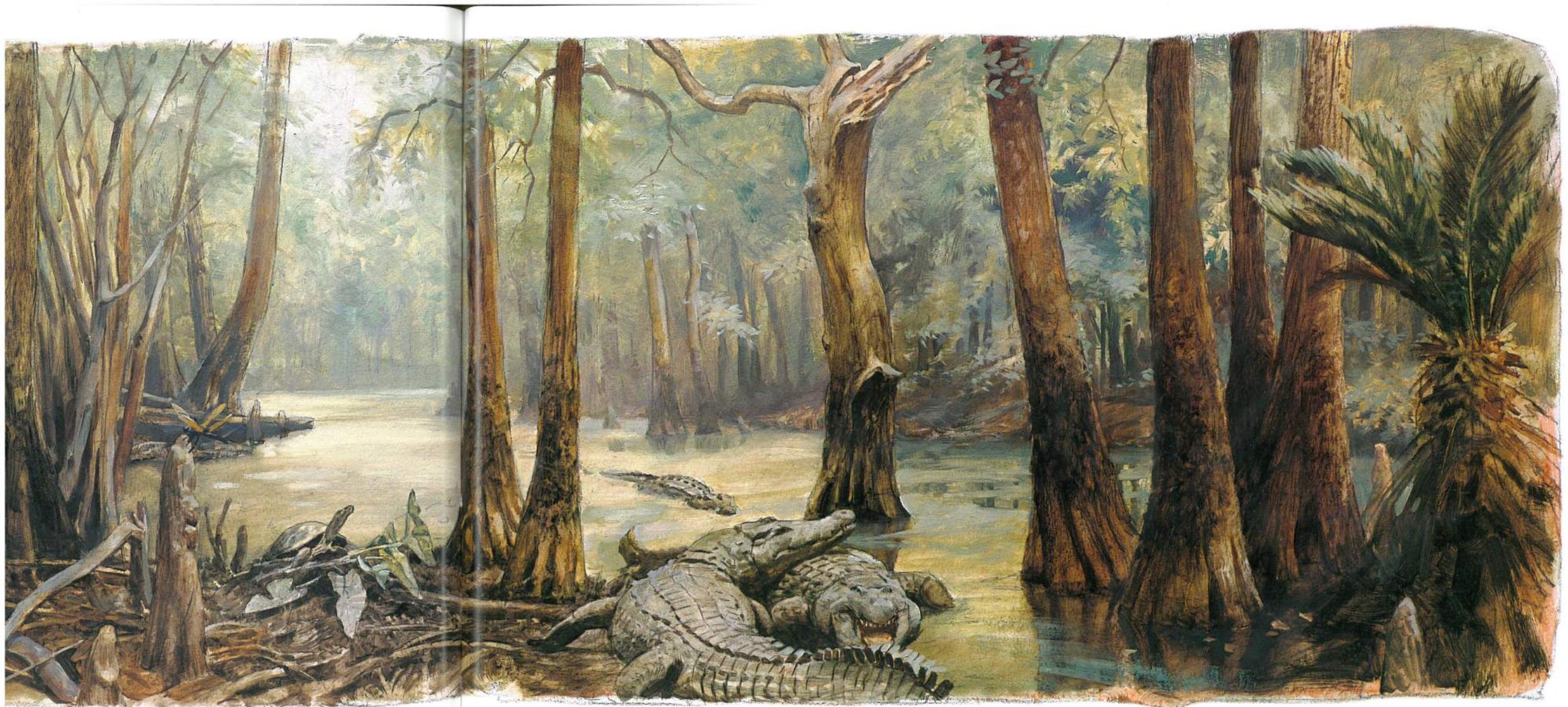




BLACKWOOD FLATS lay between us and the east. If we could make a direct trek across it, we could save time. We had heard reports of big meat-eaters, not just from Will, but from Habitat Partners like Bracken and Fiddlehead. In other places like the Rainy Basin, travelers ward off attacks by moving in armored convoys. Our plan was to go on foot, unprotected, hoping that a light step would draw less attention.

The first half mile of jungle was easy traveling, threaded with a maze of trails leading in all directions. Farther along, the vegetation grew thicker and thornier. Several times the way was blocked altogether by a solid wall of brambles. Bix, probing low to the ground and ducking under branches, found passages that she guessed were made by the piglike *Archaeotherium*. I crawled on my hands and knees, remaining vigilant for snakes.

We followed the compass eastward, and crossed a quagmire paved green with duckweed and infested with crocodiles. In places we sank our knees in mud or broke through decay into fetid cavities. From time to time a deep roar reverberated through the forest, following the eerie, nervous chatter from packs of Caimans. They seemed to follow us at a distance for most of the day, but we never saw more than a morsel.

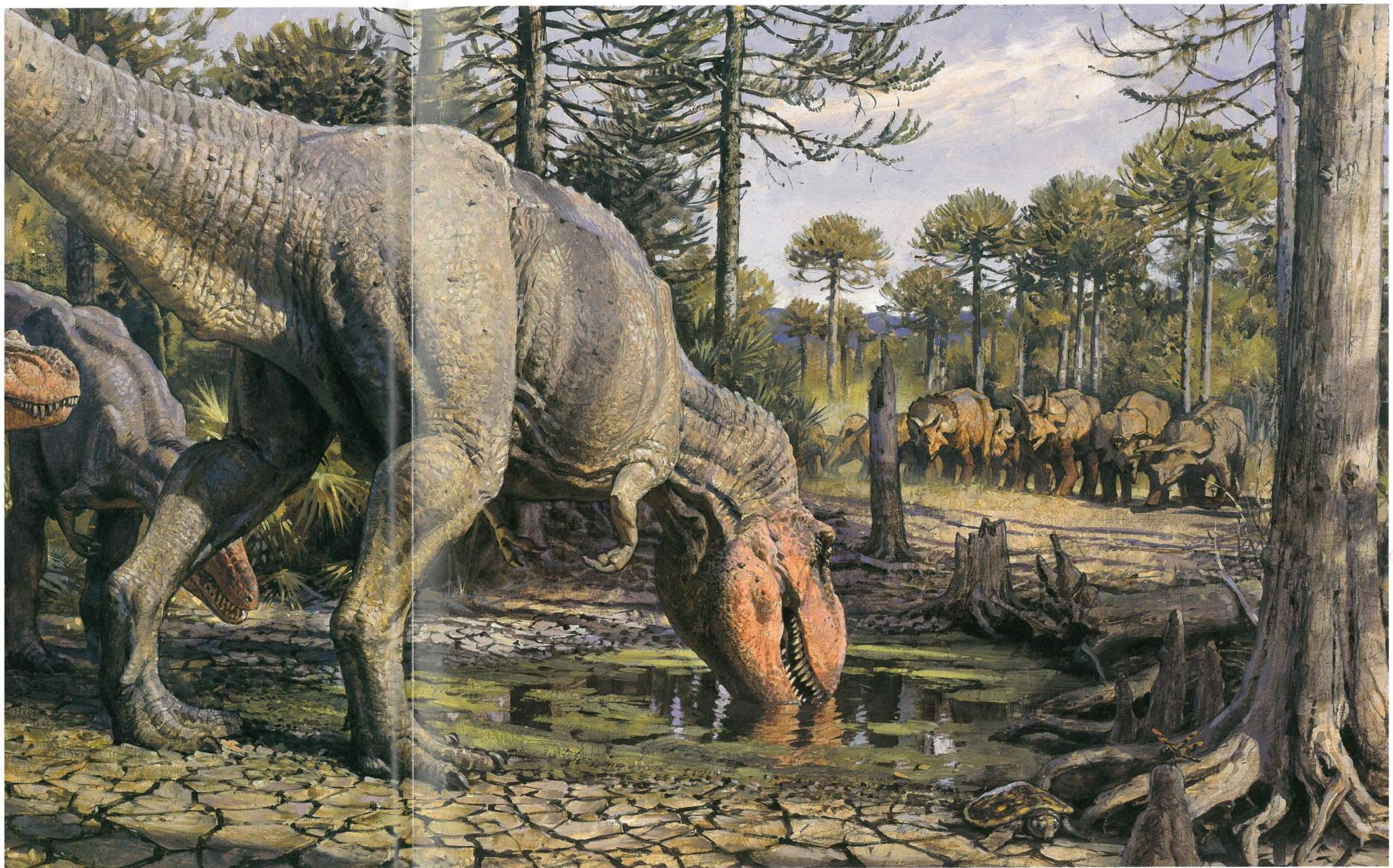


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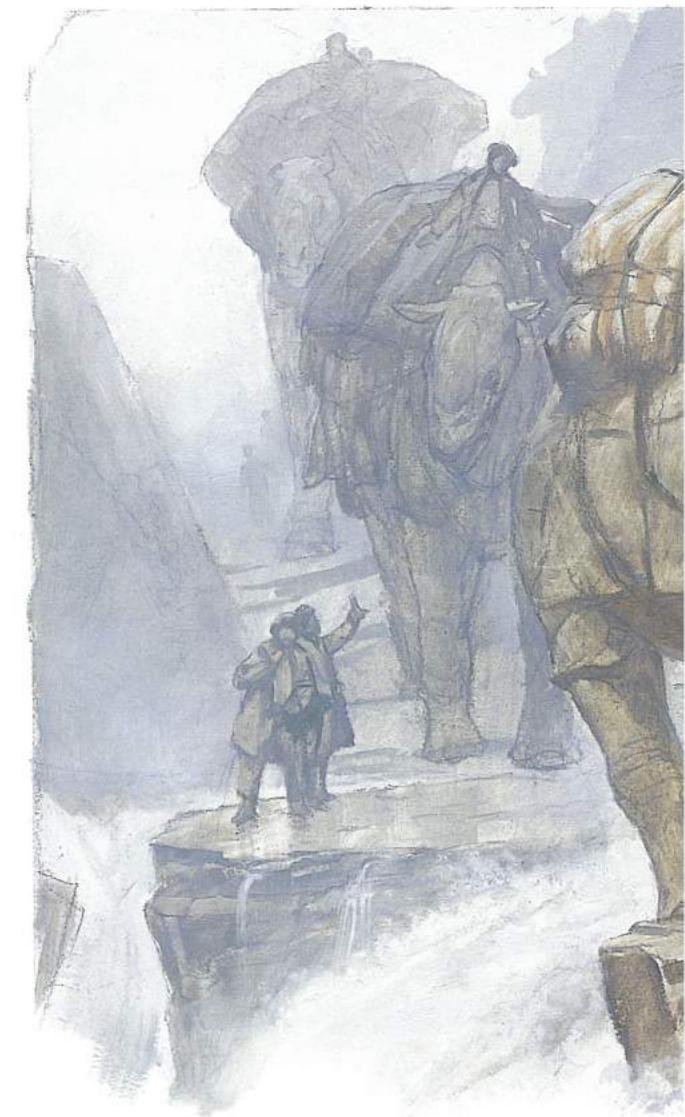
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glimpse of them. At one point a graceful *Camptosaurus* approached us warily, her eyes glistening. But then she stiffened at the sound of something that we could not hear and bounded away in terror.

The way grew more and more swampy and the sound of roaring more ominous. We resolved to change our course, bearing leftward with the goal of crossing over into Chandara by the high passes.

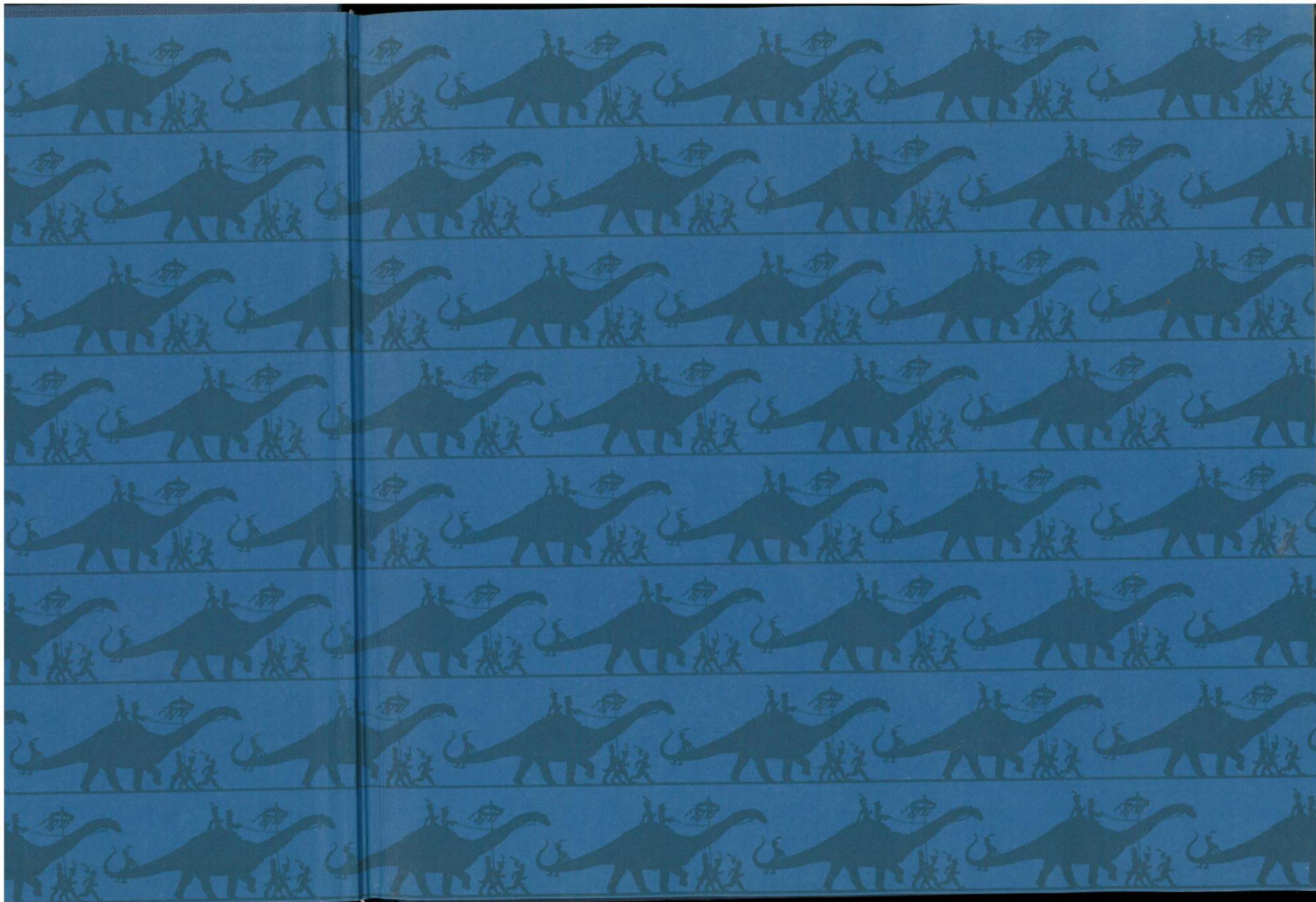






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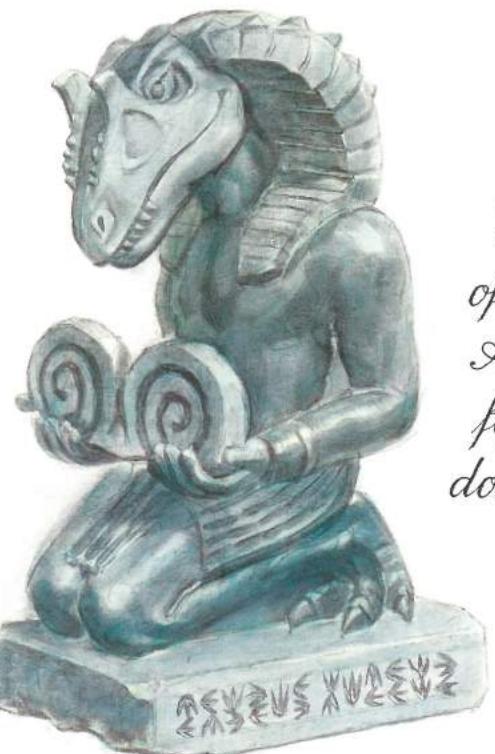
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Artifacts from the World Beneath



Gold cup shows an athlete ready to jump over Triceratops



Statuette of kneeling Allosaurus figure with double spiral



Inlaid pendant of Quetzalcoatlus



Protective amulet of Stegosaurus in defensive posture



Clay portrait of Triceratops with human features

Arthur brought out more artifacts. They glinted in the light as Will turned them in his hands. "Who made these?" asked Will.

"I don't know. I found them near a sunken entrance. Beyond that door is surely the answer to the mystery of this stone and its powers. I've got to get back down there."

"But you and Bix barely made it out alive."

Just then a puff of cigar smoke drifted into the room. "You don't know the highways and byways on this island like I do, Professor. You never know how to get back into those caves."

"Lee Crabb. What are you doing here?" demanded Arthur.

Crabb grinned. "A good hand knows what's needed. I just happened to hear your conversation about the ancient science. I've learned a few things about it myself. And what I've learned can't be found in a library."

"What do you have in mind?" asked Arthur.

"I'm an adventuring man, and I'm having a squall. I've got the kind of sub you'll never know all about the sunken entrance. I can't get there. But many a blighter has gone in and come out. Old Lee can get you out. Or, if you have a mind," he said, studying Arthur's face, "you can get each other off this brig ship of an island. His rough hand, he patted Arthur's shoulder. "The science is worth more in Paris than in Paris."

"I'll think about it," said Arthur. "But I want to find out at the Round Table meeting what the dinosaurs can tell us about the secrets of the world beneath."

Lee Crabb listens from the shadows.