

Andrew's Jungle
1999 words

Andrew had been in a fight. His sister had *said* she didn't want her second cookie at dinner, then changed her mind after Andrew took it and threw a fit. It was her fault, but Daddy didn't care. He didn't listen, no matter how loudly Andrew protested. Instead, he spanked Andrew and sent him to his room for the night. It wasn't fair, but that didn't matter. No one listened, nor did shouting, crying, or kicking the door accomplish anything.

So, on the floor of his room, Andrew created the darkest, most fearsome jungle he could imagine. Out of Legos he assembled an impenetrable mass of trees, interspersed with boulders (rubber balls), pits of quicksand (silly putty), and rushing river (delineated by two rows of pencils). He populated the jungle with deadly creatures: boa constrictors (pieces of shoestring), grizzlies (two teddies), and man-eating crocodiles (plastic figures of the same). And in the darkest corner he built a cave, the home of two ruthless dinosaurs: a T-Rex and a pterodactyl.

Once he was done, Andrew looked over the jungle he had made, but it didn't satisfy him. The jungle wasn't enough until he forced someone to experience it. So into this jungle he threw two hapless characters on an expedition. The leader was King Victor (an action figure with a crown of tinsel), who wanted to survey his realm, including the jungle. With him, the king brought his reluctant advisor, Professor Cleverclogs (a Lego figure in a lab coat).

The party didn't know about the dinosaurs. They remained unaware as the beasts emerged from their cave and smelled human blood. No, the party was too busy fighting. For King Victor was very brave but not very bright, and he quickly got them lost.

"We cannot rest until we have surveyed this entire jungle," declared the king.

Professor Cleverclogs, who was very bright but not very brave, disagreed.

"This jungle is uninhabitable. It is filled with carnivores and perilous natural features. We must turn back," he proclaimed.

King Victor, who hated turning back, refused.

"No. We shall continue," insisted King Victor, marching toward a pit of quicksand.

"No, we must turn back," argued the professor, walking toward the grizzlies' lair.

Meanwhile, on came the dinosaurs. They were highly intelligent, Andrew decided, and very hungry. Hungry enough to swallow the whole jungle. They hunted by driving animals toward the river, which prevented escape. And they hated humans more than anything. Yes, that made the game more satisfying.

The explorers' argument got interrupted by a swarm of alligators, boas, and grizzlies, all racing toward the river. A screech tore the sky, and a roar shook the ground.

"Oh, dear! We are in peril!" the professor cried. One of the grizzlies charged at him, but suddenly a pterodactyl descended from the sky and swallowed it whole.

"Dinosaurs! Run!"

"Run? We must fight!"

While the professor fled with the animals, the king marched toward the approaching T-Rex.

Now Andrew examined the plastic T-Rex. This dinosaur, Andrew decided, was the strongest, most powerful, most cruel beast in the forest. Nothing, not even a king, was a match against it.

The T-Rex saw the king. The jungle shook as it charged toward him. Trees fell under its ear-splitting roar.

"Ha!" exclaimed the king. He drew his sword (a sharp stick). "I shall defeat you, you godless beast!" In answer, the T-Rex lunged forward and bit the king's sword in half.

"Very well. I shall pummel you with my fists!" cried the king. With one swipe of its tail, the T-Rex sent him crashing into a boulder. Dazed, the king stumbled to his feet.

"I shall crush your bones with rocks!" King Victor exclaimed. He lifted the boulder (for he was very strong), and hurled it at the T-Rex. The rock hit the dinosaur's leathery skin and bounced off. The T-Rex bellowed in rage. The king backpedaled and tripped on a log. The shadow of the T-Rex loomed over him, and, for the first time in his heroic life, he felt disheartened.

"I shall..." began the king, but he doubted he could do more. "I shall retreat," Victor whispered.

Andrew felt a tiny bit sorry for King Victor. After all, he had made the dinosaurs too powerful to defeat. It was a little unfair. But he didn't feel that sorry. The game was only pretend, after all.

Working together, the dinosaurs herded the humans toward the river, where they would be trapped. The river, Andrew decided, was rising. He spread the pencils wider to accommodate the fury of the rushing water. The expedition fled toward it. Now they would either drown in the torrent, or else be torn apart. Andrew couldn't decide which. Should they drown? Or be eaten? Or should he let them escape? He couldn't figure out how. It didn't matter, though. It was just a game. Daddy made Andrew go to bed before he could make up his mind.

Andrew woke to the sound of crickets. Except it wasn't crickets. What was it? Frogs? There were no frogs where Andrew lived. Also, his skin felt sticky. The room was hot, even though the fan should be going. He tried to kick off the sheets, but there were no sheets. And the bed was hard and itchy, not like a bed at all.

Andrew opened his eyes. Instead of the ceiling above him, there loomed a carpet of green. Light filtered through it – too much light for nighttime – and in this light swarmed a cloud of shiny flies. One landed on his arm and left a red welt. Andrew swatted it and scrambled to his feet.

He was not in bed at home, but on the ground in a jungle. Trees rose around him, blotting out the sun. A white boa constrictor wound around one of these trees, but the pattern of its scales looked like thread. Andrew stumbled back and lodged his foot in something sticky. Quicksand! But this quicksand was not sandy, but rubbery...

It was the jungle, the same one he had made on the floor of his room, but ten times more horrifying than he had imagined it. Darkness lay in all directions, and he knew that in that darkness hid creatures with teeth. Andrew drew his foot from the silly-putty-quicksand, tripped, and landed in a ditch. Was it a ditch? No, it was a footprint, twice as long as Andrew with three sharp claws.

He had to escape. Where was he? He couldn't recall this place. The only hints were the sound of rushing water and a volcano looming above the trees – he could only assume the volcano had been his toy box in real life. Which meant he must be...where?

Suddenly, a storm of creatures overran him. He was caught in a stampede of crocodiles, birds, bugs, and snakes. A bear crashed past, knocking him to the forest floor. He scrambled upright with a bloody knee. The stampede could only mean one thing. Panicked, Andrew fled with the animals toward the river.

He halted atop a boulder, one foot dangling over a crashing torrent. The river carried with it boulders, trees, and a few hapless animals. It rose as he watched.

Faintly, he could hear people nearby.

"The water is rising! We must turn back!" declared a cultured voice.

"Turn back? The beasts are after us!"

"We may hide from the beasts. These waters are a greater danger. If we do not turn back, we shall drown!"

Andrew looked and saw a man in regal attire arguing with a bespectacled figure in a lab coat. The king saw him first.

"Young man, you must flee!"

As if to confirm this, the ground shook. Over the trees towered the T-Rex, more terrifying than the plastic figure had been. It was taller than a house with teeth as long as Andrew's arm. Above its head circled the pterodactyl. At once Andrew understood that this was no longer a game.

"Flee? This is his fault!" the professor pointed at Andrew. "I ascertain that he is the one who created this absurd jungle! There is nothing natural about our situation!"

Andrew cowered.

"It's true. I want to escape as much as you, though."

"Can you help us? Can we hide? Can we run? Can we defeat these beasts?"

"No," groaned Andrew. "I made the dinosaurs, and they're too powerful. If you hide, they'll smell you. If you run, they'll catch you. And they're too tough to fight."

"Can we outwit them?"

"No. I made them smart. They chased you here on purpose, so you'd either be eaten or drown."

"How dare you! Now we shall perish!" The enraged king reddened.

The professor turned pale.

"Perish? Is there no other recourse?"

"If only Daddy were here," Andrew sighed.

Daddy.

Perhaps, if this jungle really was his room, Daddy would be across the river, where Daddy's bedroom was in real life.

"We have to cross," Andrew declared. "Maybe my Daddy is there. If he's life size, he could throw these dinosaurs into the volcano!"

"Dubious," muttered the professor.

"We shall cross," declared the king. "On the backs of the dinosaurs."

"What!?" cried Andrew and the professor. But the king was right. Only the dinosaurs could cross the torrent.

The king placed himself in the path of the T-Rex. It saw him and gave chase. The king jumped into the water, balancing himself on the back of a crocodile. The T-Rex waded in after him.

"Quickly. Onto its back!" called the professor.

He and Andrew scrambled up the dinosaur's spiny tail and clambered up to the base of its neck. The T-Rex roared angrily and lashed its tail. The pterodactyl swooped lower, and the professor grabbed hold of its claw. He heaved himself onto its back, then pulled Andrew up. Meanwhile, the king struggled further into the water, hopping from crocodile to tree trunk, luring the dinosaurs after him.

"We have to get him out of there," said Andrew.

The pterodactyl dove toward the king, trying to snatch him up. Andrew grabbed him instead and pulled him up.

The pterodactyl soared over the river. The T-Rex followed it. The group passed through a canyon into a rocky place that must have been Daddy's room in real life.

Indeed, atop an impossibly large cliff, lay an impossibly large Daddy, snoring. Andrew's heart sank. How would they ever wake Daddy up?

"We must shout!" cried the professor, "Perhaps our voices will echo off the cliff!"

"Daddy!" Andrew shouted. "Wake up!"

"HELP!" bellowed the king in his most authoritative voice.

Daddy's eyes opened. Meanwhile, the pterodactyl rolled, and Andrew saw below the open mouth of the T-Rex.

"What?" Daddy mumbled.

"You have to stop the dinosaurs!" Andrew sobbed. "I made them too mean and too clever! You have to throw them in the volcano!"

"Volcano?"

Andrew realized that Daddy didn't know where the volcano was. He tried to explain, but everything was becoming fuzzy and confused.

"The volcano is near the jungle I made! But I filled it with beasts and it'll be hard to get through--"

The pterodactyl bucked, and Andrew's hands flew off its back.

"And the river, you have to cross it, but I made it flood!"

The pterodactyl shook Andrew loose. He flew into the air, toward the teeth of the waiting T-Rex.

"Daddy, I'm sorry I got mad at you!"

Andrew landed not in the mouth of the T-Rex, but in the arms of Daddy. They were not in the jungle, but in Daddy's room.

"Hush. I forgive you. What's this?"

On the floor lay a plastic T-Rex and pterodactyl. Daddy gathered them up, walked to Andrew's room, and dropped them into the toy bin. There they lay scattered among other harmless knickknacks. Daddy then picked up the action figure and Lego person and placed them on Andrew's nightstand.

Andrew breathed a sigh of relief.

"Good night, Andrew."

"Good night, Daddy. I promise I won't make any more jungles."

All was well after that.