

Finders, Keepers

by SARAH JOHNSON



Joe found the dinosaur egg in the washing basket in the laundry. He knew straightaway that the egg belonged to a dinosaur. It was too big to belong to a chicken and not round enough for a soccer ball. "I wonder if I need to keep it warm?" he said to himself.

Joe put the egg in Molly's basket in the kitchen and balanced the cat on top of it. Molly protested at first, but once she got the hang of it, she was happy enough. Joe brought her a regular supply of cat biscuits, and when he checked the egg, it was nice and warm.

"Good," said Joe, "I wonder what type of egg it is?"

Joe went to the library and got out a book called *Dinosaurs of New Zealand*. The book had lots of pictures of dinosaur eggs, but none of them looked like his egg.

"I'll have to wait until it hatches," he said.

In the morning, Joe's sister, Leigh, was in the kitchen baking chocolate fudge cupcakes. The kitchen was covered in flour, cocoa, and icing sugar.



"What's that in Molly's basket?" asked Leigh.

"It's a dinosaur egg," said Joe.

"No, it's not," said Leigh. "You don't know anything. There weren't any dinosaurs in New Zealand."

"Yes, there were," said Joe. He showed her the *Dinosaurs of New Zealand* book. "I found the egg in the washing basket," he said.

"There's never been a dinosaur in our laundry," said Leigh.

Later that day, while Joe was checking the egg, a dinosaur appeared. Joe smelt its breath before he saw it, and when he turned round, there it was. The dinosaur looked a bit like a *Tyrannosaurus rex*, only smaller.

"Hey," said the dinosaur. "That's my egg!"

Joe took the egg out of the basket and gave it to the dinosaur. The dinosaur had little stubby arms, so Joe placed the egg between its feet.

"It's very warm," said the dinosaur.

"The cat was sitting on it," said Joe.

"Was it now," said the dinosaur, glaring at Molly with its small red eyes. "I should eat that cat."

"It was my idea," said Joe.

"Then I should eat you," said the dinosaur.

"I'd rather you didn't," said Joe. "But if you're hungry, you could have one of my sister's cupcakes. They're chocolate fudge."

The dinosaur ate a cupcake. "Hmm," it said. "Needs a pinch of salt."

Joe pointed at the egg. "What type of dinosaur is it?" he asked.

"I don't know," said the dinosaur. "I found it."

"I thought you said it was your egg," said Joe.

"It is," said the dinosaur. "I found it, and you know what they say – finders, keepers. But then I lost it. I put it down for a moment, and I forgot where I put it."

Joe looked at the egg. He'd found it, too, after the dinosaur had lost it, so didn't that make the egg his? Finders, keepers. Then he looked at the dinosaur's sharp teeth, glistening with chocolate. He decided not to argue.

"I'm waiting until it hatches to see what it is," the dinosaur said.





"That's what I was doing, too," said Joe. He showed the dinosaur the book.

"Is that where we are?" asked the dinosaur. "New Zealand? It was called Gondwana when I lived here."

"That was over 80 million years ago," said Joe. "The world has changed a bit since then. What I don't understand is how you came back."

The dinosaur pointed at the cocoa tin. "Through that space-time portal."



Joe peered into the cocoa tin. Leigh had left it on the bench with the lid off. Inside, the cocoa was arranged in dark, chocolatey swirls. "Really?" he said. "You'd never know it was a portal."

"That's the problem with space-time portals," said the dinosaur. "You never do know where they'll turn up. Last time, the portal was in a whirlpool in a box that went round and round."

"That would be the washing machine," said Joe.

The dinosaur picked up the egg. "Anyway, I'd better go," it said. "As they say, 'time waits for no dinosaur'. Is there anything I can do to thank you for looking after my egg?"

"I wouldn't mind seeing the baby," said Joe. "When it hatches."

"I'll bring it back," the dinosaur said. It stuck one stumpy arm inside the cocoa tin, then turned back to Joe. "Do you think I could borrow that book for a while? It might come in useful!"

Joe handed the dinosaur the *Dinosaurs of New Zealand* book. It would be worth paying the library fine, he thought, if it meant he got to see the dinosaur again.

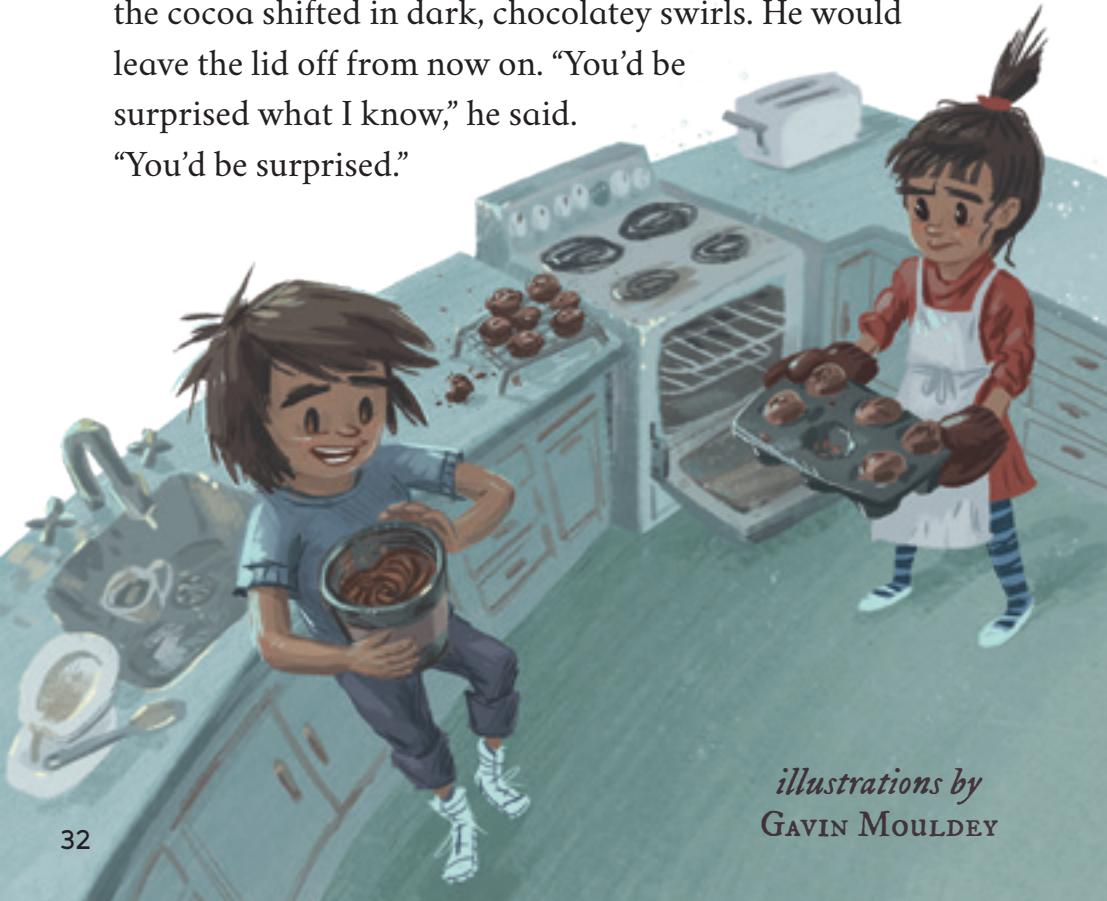
The dinosaur nodded – then it was gone.

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In the morning, Leigh was baking again. When Joe entered the kitchen, she was taking the latest batch of chocolate fudge cupcakes out of the oven. Joe took one, blew hard, and had a bite. “Needs a pinch of salt,” he said.

“Salt!” said Leigh. “You don’t know anything.”

Joe smiled and tapped the rim of the cocoa tin. Inside, the cocoa shifted in dark, chocolatey swirls. He would leave the lid off from now on. “You’d be surprised what I know,” he said.
“You’d be surprised.”



illustrations by
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Finders, Keepers

by Sarah Johnson

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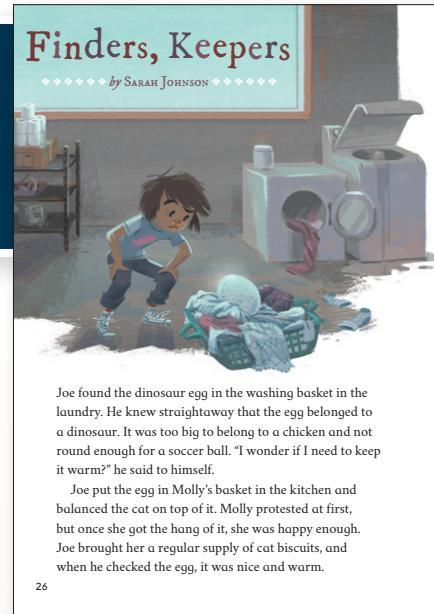
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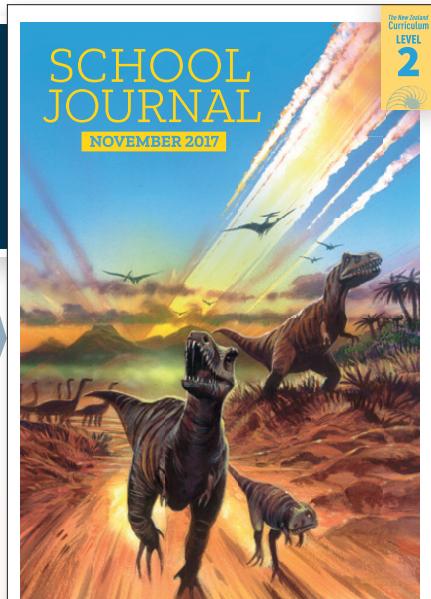
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26



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