

DINOSAUR DANNY

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INT. DANNY'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Four silhouettes of dinosaurs, stock-still in a diorama of a prehistoric jungle. We hear the cries of predators and prey somewhere deeper in the brush, but the family of dinos stand resolute.

The light of a rotating multicolored nightlight passes over them, allowing us to see them in better detail.

Two of the larger dinos are the armored Triceratops and the long-necked Mamechisaurus. Just behind are a smaller duckbilled Corythosaurus and even smaller Stegosaurus.

The rest of this room belongs to a little boy who clearly loves dinosaurs: dinosaur throw-rugs and bedsheets, dinosaur plushies and drapes, and even dinosaur wallpaper give the effect that his room is a microcosm of the dinosaur world.

Paper ferns frame illustrative posters of dinosaurs on the prowl, protecting a clutch of eggs, flying through the air, swimming through the sea -- all very much alive.

Several pictures of dinosaurs drawn by a nine-year-old are pinned to a cork board. They are each signed, "DANNY".

A macaroni adorned framed photo on a desk shows the boy and his father in front of a T-Rex and Triceratops statue.

As we approach the boy tossing and turning in bed, the sounds of the jungle primeval begin to escalate in intensity. DANNY (9) is having a dream of dinosaurs, and it's the best dream of his life.

INT. DANNY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danny, in bed in his dinosaur pajamas, bolts straight up.

He immediately turns and traces a finger over his dinosaur-shaped CALENDAR, which is turned to the month of September. All the days leading up to LABOR DAY are X-ed out, while in that box a sticker of a dinosaur skull is circled.

His mouth curling into an ever widening grin, Danny hops out of bed and hits the ground running.

INT. DANNY'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danny stands on tiptoe in front of his bathroom mirror. He squeezes toothpaste onto a dinosaur toothbrush.

Danny brushes at a brisk pace, his mouth frothing with white foam. He spits and wipes his face with his arm as he leaves.

INT. DANNY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

With his back to the four toy dinosaurs, Danny rifles through a playchest of costume pieces. Pirate striped shirts and cowboy vests are glimpsed but Danny searches with purpose.

We see a couple quick images of Danny pulling out different accessories: a safari hat, khaki uniform and belt, canteen.

INT. DANNY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Danny looks in a full length mirror, seeing himself in full-blown safari-explorer regalia. But something is "off." He spins around to seek the approval of his dinosaur toys:

DANNY
What, too much?

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

At the kitchen table are three place settings, but four chairs. Danny's mother, FRANCINE (mid 50's) is preparing a sack lunch for Danny. Danny, wearing a stegosaurus t-shirt, stalks up from behind.

DANNY
(roaring) IDON'TLIKECARROTS

Francine, gripping the bag of carrots, turns in surprise.

She looks down at Danny's dinosaur shirt and her face falls. Francine bites down on her lip.

FRANCINE
Sorry Danny, I always forget what
meat-eaters like.

DANNY
I'm really omnivorous; just a
little picky.

Danny bounds away to the kitchen table and takes a seat. Francine sits down besides him.

Francine deliberates whether to break the bad news to Danny.

FRANCINE
Danny...

Just then Danny's older sister CLARA (15) steps into the room, texting away with phone and earbuds firmly attached.

DANNY
Morning Clara!

CLARA
No phones at the table, sweetie.

Ignoring them, Clara slides into her seat, all the while still mesmerized by the phone. Danny is smiling cheerfully across from Clara, obscured by the cereal box.

Clara grabs the box, revealing Danny in a snarling lunge.

Clara laughs, pouring mini-wheat cereal into a bowl. Danny smiles, but his face falls when Clara returns to her phone.

CLARA (CONT'D)
(distracted) What are you so excited about?

DANNY
Today's the day Mom takes me to the museum!

The siblings don't see it, but mom gives a guilty look.

Outside, a horn lets off a series of quick beeps. Clara pushes away from the table and gets up.

CLARA
Oh, Eric's here! Gotta go!

Francine places her hand on Clara's.

FRANCINE
Sweetie, wait. I need to ask you something.

CLARA
(annoyed) Right now?

Francine places an authoritative hand on her hip.

FRANCINE
Now.

They get up and walk into the adjacent living room. Danny sneaks over to hear their conversation.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
Your Grandad fell today. I have to visit him at the home.
(MORE)

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
 You need to be the one that takes
 Danny to see the dinosaur exhibit.

CLARA
 But mom! I have to be at Eric's
 pool party today!

Danny is confused and taken aback by this news. Suddenly the world seems to spin as his mother and sister begin to roar and slash at the air, dinosaur-like, in dramatic slo-mo.

Danny watches, open-mouthed.

CLARA (CONT'D)
 I have ZERO interest in going to
 that stupid museum.

FRANCINE
 You know how important this is for
 Danny. He hasn't been there since
 dad died.

Clara grits her teeth at her mom's argumentative trump card.

Danny turns away from them in a daze. His eyes drift over to the empty fourth chair at the table.

Clara storms past Danny out the front door to Eric's red car.

Danny looks through the kitchen window and sees ERIC (17), star athlete, arguing with his sister.

While the "lovers" quarrel, Francine sidles up to her son.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
 Danny, baby, I have some news.

Danny behaves politely, like he doesn't know what's coming.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)
 Granddad needs my help at the home
 today. I'm so sorry, but I can't
 come see the dinos with you today.

DANNY
 So Clara's taking me?

EXT. STREET (THROUGH GLASS) - CONTINUOUS

Clara tries bargaining with Eric to stay but he speeds off. She makes the "phone" hand signal and yells after him.

CLARA
I'LL CALL YOU!!

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

FRANCINE
Danny, do you still want to go?

His sister looks tiny and miserable standing all alone.

DANNY
Yeah; with Clara.

EXT. NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM - DAY

The museum, a mix of greek architecture (with hints of modern extensions) feels institutional and grand, but inviting. Clara and Danny stand outside of Francine's Prius.

FRANCINE
See you back here at five.

CLARA
Four hours?

Danny cheerily rebuts:

DANNY
Actually, three hours and forty-seven minutes.

There is a very slim hope that this will work.

FRANCINE
You two be good.

CLARA
Bye.

DANNY
Love you mom!

Francine drives away. Clara immediately whips out the phone and begins walking to the museum, and Danny trails behind.

DANNY
Do you have a favorite dinosaur?
Mine is the Stegosaurus for sure.

INT. MUSEUM LOBBY - DAY

The interior of the museum is all marble surfaces and tall ceilings. Danny's voice rings out, bouncing off the walls.

DANNY

It used to be the T-Rex before he turned out to be more of a scavenger than a predator. It's been kind of hard to get over that.

CLARA

(on phone) I told you I can't. No, but I could come later? Eric, Eric! I think I'm losing you-- (beat)
Damn it.

Danny looks nervous as Clara heads towards the museum's exit waving her phone around.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Danny, go ahead without me.

Clara is about to leave but Danny stops her.

DANNY

Clara, wait. Let's stay together.

CLARA

Okay, we'll go to the park for a minute. I'll buy you an ice cream!

DANNY

Okay...

Danny shuffles after Clara, slightly bowing his head.

EXT. MUSEUM PARK - DAY

Danny walks alongside Clara. He glances behind to see that they're moving increasingly farther from the museum.

CLARA

(on phone) You're all in the jacuzzi? No way! Who's with you?

Danny gestures to the museum and Clara points at her phone. Danny sighs but carries on.

EXT. PARK BENCH - CONTINUOUS

Danny finds a bench that he immediately sits down on, his legs restlessly kicking. But Clara barely even notices him.

CLARA

(on phone) You don't have to make me feel worse. Do you think I want to be here? I wanna be with you!

Danny looks down at the ground, hurt.

MONTAGE: TIME PASSES

Danny makes a little puppet show for himself with his hands:

DANNY

(as Clara) I don't want to go to the stupid museum, yah-yah-yah-yah-yah! (as Eric) That's great, babe. Let's make out!

He grinds his hands together manically.

Danny sees some birds flying overhead.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Ahh! Pterodactyl attack!

Danny imitates the roars of different kinds of dinosaurs while walking back and forth on the bench.

A couple walking their small dog walks by. Danny lets out a ROAR, and the dog ROARS back. Danny sits right up in shock.

END MONTAGE

EXT. PARK BENCH - LATER

Not too far off, Danny spies an ice cream vendor. He looks at his sister, who's wandered a few steps away from the bench.

CLARA

(on phone) What do you want me to do? I already told you I'm sorry. (seeing Danny) Hold on.

His sister looks upset enough that it's starting to rub off on him, affecting his usually cheerful disposition.

DANNY

I'm getting that ice cream!

Clara makes a gesture of acknowledgement, but it's unclear how much she's really taking in. Danny pushes off the bench and heads down a nearby path.

EXT. PARK CLEARING - LATER

Danny approaches the kindly ice cream vendor.

ICE CREAM VENDOR
And what would you like?

DANNY
(thinking) A Dino Pop. Make it two.

ICE CREAM VENDOR
A good choice.

The vendor hands over two green Dino Pops with gumball eyes.

Danny starts heading to the bench with a pop in each hand, but can see from a distance that Clara is no longer there!

He shakes his head -- could this day get any worse? Danny looks around one last time to confirm that his sister has ditched him.

In his search he spies a sight that is familiar to him and us from the photo in his bedroom: the dinosaur statue of a T-Rex and Triceratops in combat. He is drawn to it.

EXT. PARK BENCH - CONTINUOUS

As Danny walks out of sight, his sister realizes he's gone. She looks around but to no avail!

CLARA
Danny? Danny?! (beat) Shit.

She puts away her cell phone to begin the search in earnest.

EXT. DINOSAUR STATUE - LATER

This is Danny's favorite statue in the world. At first he smiles, remembering his father. Touching the statue even helps to bring him a little closer in his memory.

But in the shadow of the bronze dinosaurs, Danny realizes how utterly alone he really is.

A little BOY (6) comes running around the statue, laughing. His FATHER (40's) follows him with arms outstretched, roaring like a dinosaur. The boy roars back and they playfully carry on their little chase.

Beginning to tear up, Danny looks at the melted dino pops in his hands and throws one to the ground in bitterness.

Clara appears on the other side of the trees surrounding the statue. She sees Danny and follow his gaze to the father and son. For the first time today, she finally understands what Danny is going through.

Clara approaches Danny and touches him on the shoulder.

CLARA

I am so sorry, Danny...

Danny wrestles away from her touch.

DANNY

I thought going to see the dinosaurs would make us both feel better, but it's just made everything worse.

CLARA

We could still see the dinosaurs if we hurry.

DANNY

I don't want to see another dinosaur again. Ever.

Before she can say anything more, the phone begins to buzz.

DANNY (CONT'D)

That's it! Give me the phone.

Clara hesitates. Danny puts a hand on his hip, imitating mom.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Now.

Clara puts the phone in Danny's hands.

DANNY (CONT'D)

(on phone) Eric, you remind me of a T-Rex.

ERIC (O.S.)

What?

DANNY

(on phone) You're a stupid scavenger that doesn't deserve to hang out with my sister!

Danny hangs up definitively. He discreetly pockets the phone. There's an uncomfortable silence between the siblings. Danny waits for Clara to bite his head off.

CLARA

Thank you. (beat) I needed that.

Danny is relieved but still agitated.

DANNY

Now let's go home.

CLARA

Wait Danny, did you really mean what you said? About dinosaurs?

DANNY

I don't know.

CLARA

Last time I checked, Stegosauruses don't give up that easily.

DANNY

Okay.

EXT. NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS

Danny and Clara make their way through the crowds of exiting people up the steps of the museum. Danny checks his watch.

DANNY

We're too late.

CLARA

No; we'll make time.

Danny and Clara run towards the museum's entrance where they are stopped by an elderly TICKET TAKER.

TICKET TAKER

The museum is closed for the day.

CLARA

You have to let us in. Danny... that's my brother. He left his jacket inside. (beat) His favorite jacket. And there was something in the pocket, uh, his asthma medicine, and...

Danny begins wheezing dramatically to complete the charade.

DANNY

(asthmatic) *We need five minutes.*

The ticket taker looks befuddled as Danny and Clara run past.

INT. DINOSAUR HALL - LATE AFTERNOON

The fading light of day cuts through the erect dinosaur bones, cutting eerie shadows on the floor. The mottled bones reflect the light and glow warmly.

The enormous bones dwarf the brother and sister. Danny and Clara behold these ancient giants with reverent awe: Danny's mouth is slightly open, and Clara's even more-so.

CLARA

They're pretty cool, aren't they?

DANNY

(smiling) Yeah.

Danny points out a long-necked dinosaur.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Mamenchisaurus reminds me of mom;
always looking out for us.

The pair observe the armored skeleton of a stegosaurus.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I like Stegos the best 'cause
they're tough. Like me!

Danny points to a funny-looking duck-billed dinosaur. Clara reads a placard under it.

CLARA

Corythosaurus?

DANNY

That's you: the most boy-crazy
dinosaur I know.

Clara giggles. Danny points to a T-Rex skeleton.

DANNY (CONT'D)

And there's Eric the stupid-saurus!

Clara gives a little laugh. Danny slowly walks over to the skeleton of a triceratops.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Triceratops was dad's favorite.

Danny and Clara smile at the memory of dad. Instinctively, Clara put her arm around Danny's shoulder.

CLARA

I can see why you like dinosaurs.
Thanks for sharing it with me.

Clara goes to hold Danny's hand but notices he's holding onto her cell phone.

CLARA (CONT'D)

You little sneak! That's my phone!

Danny runs ahead of Clara, laughing.

EXT. NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM - EARLY EVENING

It's nearly dark by the time Danny and Clara exit the museum. Francine is waiting on the steps, happy to see her children.

FRANCINE

Hey kids, did you have a good day?

They both have to think about it for a second.

DANNY

Yeah.

CLARA

Sure.

Danny and Clara get into the car

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

What was your favorite part? As if we all didn't know.

DANNY

Well, actually...

Danny hands back Clara's phone.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I liked getting to hang out with Clara.

FRANCINE

Hmm! Maybe my little dinosaurs are evolving?

CLARA

Us Corythosaurus gotta learn to adapt. (beat) What? I was paying attention!

Everybody laughs, and all is right in the jungle.

FADE TO BLACK.