

**POOJA PURI**

# **A DINOSAUR**



Illustrated by  
**Allen  
Fatimaharan**

# **ATE MY SISTER**

UNCORRECTED PROOF

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# A DINOSAUR ATE MY SISTER

Esha Verma is a GENIUS INVENTOR.

And she's just created her most brilliant invention yet:  
A TIME MACHINE.

(Ok, her sidekick Broccoli may have helped. A bit.)

But when her IGNORAMUS big sister Nishi accidentally gets STUCK in the age of the dinosaurs, Esha and Broccoli must face:

- terrifying T-rexes
- mysterious black holes
- glitchy inventions and
- a new recruit for The Office Of Time

on a PREHISTORIC RESCUE MISSION to get her back.

**The first book selected for the  
Marcus Rashford Book Club.**

24th June 2021 • PB

Age: 8+ • Price: £6.99

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## WELCOME TO MY BOOK CLUB.

**I'M SO EXCITED THAT YOU ARE ABLE TO JOIN US.  
I HOPE YOU HAVE A SMILE ON YOUR FACE TODAY.**

The first book I've chosen for you is *A Dinosaur Ate My Sister*. It's the perfect story to escape into, to find adventure and to inspire you to follow your dreams.

I want you to take this book home tonight and write your name in the front because it belongs to you and only you (it's obviously fine to share with friends and siblings but only if YOU want to). Tell your friends that this book was chosen by me for you.

If you're struggling, don't be afraid to ask for help. We all need help along the way – me included. There is no rush to get to the end. Enjoy every word at your own pace.

I'm so excited to hear what you think.

Get that head of yours high and let's conquer the day together.

With love, MR



## A Very Important Note From The (Actual) Author

Dear Reader:

Ever since I was a child, I've always loved the idea of time travel. I think there is a SPINGLY kind of magic in the thought of adventuring across all of time and space. I'd been juggling a few different ideas for a time travel story, but none of them really felt right until, one afternoon, whilst staring out the window, a question flew into my head: what if you *accidentally* sent someone through time? And what if that someone just so happened to be your ANNOYING big sister?

It was the BRAIN-SPARK I'd been waiting for: With lightning-fast speed appeared Esha Verma, genius inventor extraordinaire, her fretful apprentice, Broccoli (along with his evil tortoise Archibald), her weather-obsessed big sister, Nishi, and the righteous Secundus Secundi, New Officer of Time, each fizzing and sparkling across the page.

*A Dinosaur Ate My Sister* is a wacky, funny (I hope) adventure BURSTING with:

1. Time machines (of course).
2. Genius inventions (obviously).
3. Truly terrifying creatures (including dinosaurs).
- ~~4. Exploding Doughnuts.\*~~

At its heart, it is a story of sisters, friendship and never giving up . . . not even when you have to travel all the way to the Age of the Dinosaurs AND BACK before Mum and Dad return home!

I am extremely proud that this story will be launched on the Marcus Rashford Book Club. Growing up, I was fortunate to have access to books. Books that transformed me into a lifelong reader, a dreamer, but most of all, a believer. Every child should have the opportunity to experience the joy of reading and I truly hope that *A Dinosaur Ate My Sister* will be the gateway for a new generation of readers to discover the wonder of books and embark on extraordinary adventures!

With best wishes,

Pooja Puri

\*My publisher has told me I should not reveal the most exciting bits of the story, so you can -ahem- ignore this.

Disclaimer: Reading this book may result in belly-aching laughter and itchy inventing fingers. The author refuses to be held responsible for all consequences arising from these effects now, then and in the future.

## About the Author

Pooja Puri graduated from King's College London with a First Class degree in English Language and Literature. Whilst at university she read for a publishing house and has since worked in the education sector. In 2014, she was chosen as a winner of the Ideas Tap Writer's Centre Norwich Inspires competition. She went on to complete the MA in Writing for Young People at Bath Spa University.

Her debut novel, *The Jungle*, is a brave and beautiful narrative about two teenage refugees in Calais and was published by Black & White's YA imprint Ink Road, in 2017. In 2018, *The Jungle* was nominated for the CILIP Carnegie Medal.

*A Dinosaur Ate My Sister* is her first middle grade novel.



## Note From The Author



Before you start reading, there are a few things you should know:

- ① I, Esha Verma, am a **genius inventor extraordinaire**.
- ② There is **nothing** I cannot invent. This includes words.
- ③ I like lists.
- ④ I did not mean to send my sister back to the Age of the Dinosaurs. That was HER OWN FAULT (Mum and Dad, if you're reading this, please take note).
- ⑤ This book is a chronicle of my adventures. Technically, it is a chronicle of my ADVENTIONING (my inventioning and the adventures that come after).
- ⑥ This book should have been called *The Long and Terribly Twisted Chronicles of Time Travel, Dinosaurs and Other Things That Happened as Told by a Genius Inventor Extraordinaire*. My apprentice, Broccoli, promises he wrote the title correctly, but it mysteriously changed without his knowledge. I told him there is nothing mysterious about it and that he shouldn't have let his tortoise, Archibald, anywhere near this chronicle. If I still

had ~~my~~ our time machine, I could have fixed that. Of course, if I had a better apprentice, it wouldn't have happened at all.

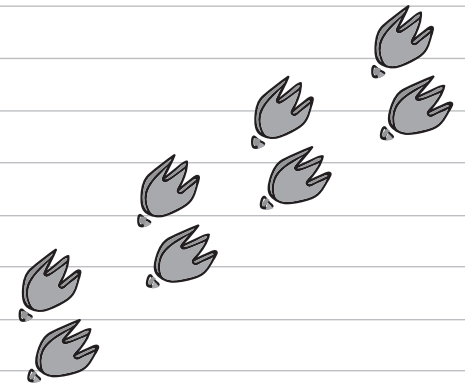
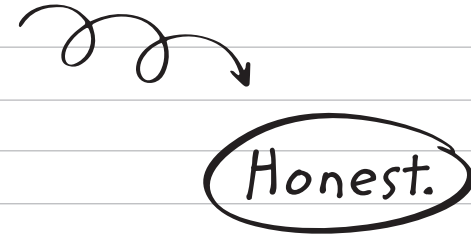
[A note from Broccoli: Archibald had nothing to do with it. Esha is just cross because we don't have our time machine any more.]

Another note from Broccoli: I am an excellent apprentice.]



## A Second Very Important Note From The Author

No dinosaurs were harmed in the writing of this book.



## A Third Even More Important Note From The Author

I am sure that you, the Reader, are foot-hoppingly desperate to know what a **genius inventor extraordinaire** looks like, so I have included a picture:



## The Brain Trophy



This is the Brain Trophy.

Beautiful, isn't it? There is only ONE Brain Trophy in all of existence. Each year, at a special ceremony, it is given to the BEST Young Inventor of the Year.

Winning the Brain Trophy is:

- 1 Extremely difficult (even more difficult than jellybean juggling or sneezing with your eyes open).

② Like walking on the moon - only BETTER.

③ My dream of **DREAMS** ♡♡

You probably can't tell from the picture, but the Brain Trophy is made from the coolest and rarest rock EVER: ZIRBOONIUM. You might think that a lump of rock doesn't sound very cool, but you'd be wrong. Wrong and wrong. Double wrong. A **DRONG** just like my big sister, Nishi. If you've picked up this book, then you're probably not a **drong**... well, I hope you're not. But if you think there is even the tiniest chance that you *might* be a **drong** you can put this book down right now and look for something less exciting to read-

As I'm absolutely sure you're not a **DRONG**, I can tell you that:

- ① Zirboonium was found in a meteorite which fell to Earth from space. This means it is NOT OF THIS WORLD.
- ② Nobody really knows where zirboonium is from. This means it is an UNKNOWN substance.

For inventors, UNKNOWING is one of the best things in the world. Unknowing gives you tickles in your toes, itches in your britches and makes you feel spine tingly all over. Unknowing is where inventing begins. That's why all the ultra-**genius** people of the world decided to turn the zirboonium meteorite into a trophy:

**THE** Brain Trophy.

To enter, contestants have to be between 7-16 years old. The winner is invited to visit the top-secret headquarters of Genius & Extraordinary Inventions Inc (aka GENIE) before going on a special tour to show their mind-boggling, prizewinning invention ALL OVER THE WORLD. Their name is carved on the Brain Trophy with a super-sharp laser pen and they become an inventor legend for all eternity. All the greatest inventor legends are on it; Einstein won it when he was 8 years old (the youngest EVER), Nancy Johnson won when she was 10 and Alexander Graham Bell and Grace Hopper both won when they were 12!

Like them, I, Esha Verma, **Inventor Extraordinaire**, plan to win the Brain Trophy and become an inventor legend FOREVER. From the moment I was old enough to enter the contest, I've had a space ready for the trophy on my table - right next to my extremely valuable first-edition *Inventor's Handbook*, my complete card collection of Genius Inventors through History and my Inventor's Thinking Hat (which I invented myself - obviously).

When I am inventing, the Brain Trophy is all I can think about. If I close my eyes, I can see my name on it next to all the great **geniuses** of this world and I feel so **spingly** that I think



I might explode.



(and a few other things ...)



At first, everyone was really excited about me being an inventor:

'The right invention could make us **rich** enough to buy a **football team**,' said Dad. 'It's all a question of probabilities.' (He is a Maths teacher.)

'The right invention could make us rich enough to buy a football team *each*,' said Mum, picking up the phone. 'Hello, Aunty Usha. Yes, I'm quite sure it's not bunions.' (She is a *podiatrist* and Aunty Usha's favourite niece.)

'Thar nit invenshun coo ba me a noo set of teesh,' grinned Dadaji.

'Or the **iPhone 100**,' said my cousins, Mina and Bina.

'Ice-cream!' said Arjun. He was three.

That was a few years ago.

Now, I think everyone is tired of waiting to become millionaires. Especially Mum and Dad. 'If you spent as much time on your schoolwork as you do inventing, Esha Verma,' says Mum, 'we wouldn't have to keep apologizing to the neighbours about the explosions and the smoke and the **weird** smells!'

So much for perseverance.

Nishi thinks I'm wasting my time. 'You don't really think inventors exist now, do you? Everything you could ever invent has already been invented.' Which just shows what her brain is filled with (clue: **DRONGNESS**).

The only person that really understands the importance of inventing is my apprentice, **Broccoli**.



I guess I should probably tell you about him.

## How Broccoli Became My Apprentice ... A Brief History

Broccoli moved next door exactly three years, five months and eight days ago. The last owners, Mr and Mrs Beesal, left when my Bubbler (a shampoo-powered rocket) accidentally flew into their greenhouse and blew up their prizewinning marrow.

Broccoli arrived a week later with his mum and dad. I was in the middle of inventing Rudolphus 1.0, a pet robot armadillo, when I spotted them getting out of their car. Mum had already warned me to be nice to the new neighbours OR ELSE, so I opened my bedroom window and shouted



in my friendliest voice.

The boy looked at me and sneezed so fiercely that the mysterious box he was holding flew high into the air, sending a green thing whizzing out of it. The even more mysterious green thing landed on my roof with a small CLUNK.

[A note from Broccoli: I didn't mean to sneeze so hard. Esha forgot to mention that she was holding a torch gun and wearing her Ultimate Protector helmet when she opened the window. I was **TERRIFIED!**]

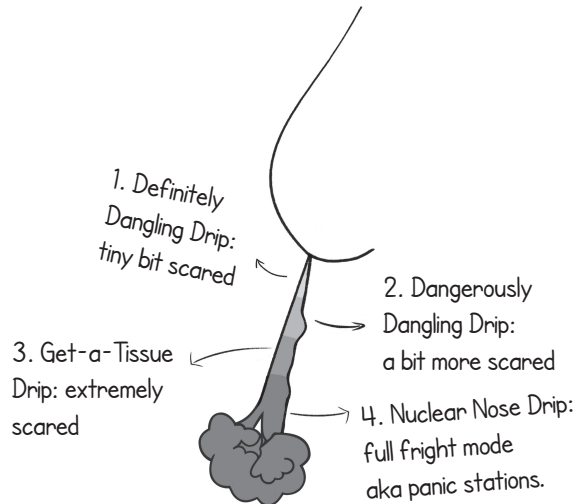
"Archibald!" wailed the boy as he gawped at the roof with a THIS-IS-BAD look.

I leaned out of the window to see who he was talking to. It was a tortoise. Lots of shouting and questions later, I'd invented the first prototype of the Extend-a-Hand and used it to rescue Archibald from **SPLAT**: becoming a tortoise tortilla. Broccoli was so grateful that he promised to become my apprentice **forever**. Even when I refused, Broccoli followed me around until I finally agreed to keep him as my apprentice.

[A note from Broccoli: This isn't exactly how I remember it happening.]

## Ten Important Things You Should Know About Broccoli:

- ① Broccoli's dad fixes telephone lines and his mum fixes people's teeth. They are both very *quiet* and *sensible*. They talk about *quiet, sensible* things in *quiet, sensible* voices. They are not like my family. **AT ALL.**
- ② Broccoli is *exactly* like his mum and dad.
- ③ When Broccoli gets scared, he sneezes. He sneezes so often that he has a permanent trail of broccoli-shaped snot dangling from his nose. It looks a bit like this:

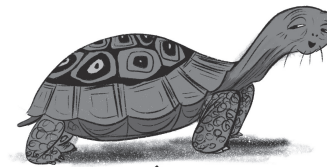


- ④ Broccoli's real name is James Bertha Darwin. He is the grandson of the famously fearless fossil hunter, **Brave Bertha.**

Unlike his grandmother, Broccoli is not brave or fearless.



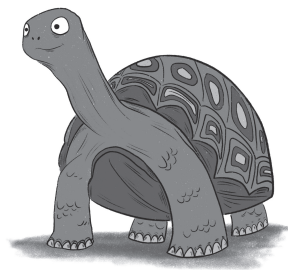
- ⑤ Broccoli is **boggly** about dinosaurs.
- ⑥ Last month, Broccoli's grandmother Brave Bertha discovered a fossil of an UNKNOWN dinosaur. The Fossil Federation was so excited that they named the dinosaur the Berthasaurus. When Broccoli saw his granny on the front cover of *Dinosaur World*, he burst into tears (the happy kind).
- ⑦ Broccoli's grandmother sends him the **BEST** presents. Not boring granny presents like tea sets or perfumed tissues. Dangerous, ferocious presents that **pop** and **snap** and **EXPLODE** without warning. Broccoli is scared of most things, but he loves his grandmother, so he always keeps what she sends him.
- ⑧ ~~The evilest, worst,~~ most *interesting* present that Broccoli's grandmother ever brought him was Archibald. Archibald is the son of Archimedes, Bertha's own tortoise. Like his pa, Archibald is always ready for adventure.



↑  
Archimedes



Archibald



What Archibald  
actually looks like

⑨ The last present that Broccoli got through the post was a Screeching Fizzer Firecracker from somewhere deep in Japan. The Screeching Fizzer Firecracker is so loud that it's banned in twenty countries. Broccoli is so afraid of Archibald accidentally eating/stealing/flying away on it that he always carries it around in his pocket. [It would be helpful to you, the Reader, to remember this for later in the story.]

⑩ Broccoli does not always say very much. This is another reason he is (mostly) a good apprentice.

[A note from Broccoli: I don't say very much because I don't usually get the chance.]

You might wonder why a super-duper inventor like me needs a snott-nosed apprentice. The truth is that an apprentice comes in very handy for doing all the things that an inventor is simply too busy to do, like

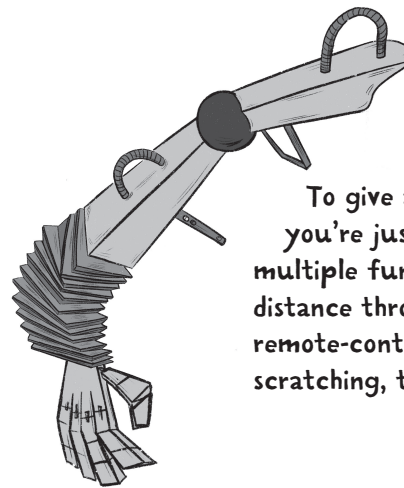
hoovering the carpet (inventing is a messy job), buying fizzpops when you're grounded (which is most of the time) and taking notes about **grand ideas** (when your brain is bursting with so much **genius** it's hard to keep track). In fact, apprentices are so useful that I wonder why everybody doesn't have one. Together, we are



In the last three years, Broccoli and I have entered a grand total of **three** inventions into the Young Inventor of the Year contest:

### INVENTION 1: THE EXTEND-A-HAND

Result: 2nd place.



To give a helping hand for when you're just too busy. Suitable for multiple functions including long-distance throwing, nose-picking, remote-control-lifting, bum-scratching, tortoise-rescuing.

## INVENTION 2: SELF-CLEANING SPECS

Result: 2nd place.



Designed for **ALL** weather conditions, including blizzards, cyclones, hurricanes and sandstorms.

## INVENTION 3: INSTA DE-STICKER SPRAY

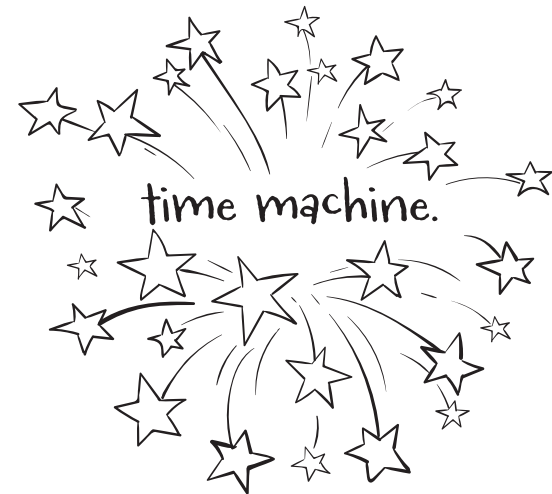
Result: 2nd place.

**Guaranteed** to help you out of every sticky situation.



We're the only inventors in the contest's history to have come second place three times in a row. I checked. But not this year. This year I was absolutely 100% certain that we were going to win the Brain Trophy. Because this year we'd invented something to blow the judges' socks off. Something so brilliant that it would make their hair stand on end and their eyeballs pop out of their sockets at the same time.

This year, we'd invented a





## The Trouble with Grand Ideas (Or: How it ALL Began ...)



The *Inventor's Handbook* says that all great inventions start off as a grand idea. The trouble with **grand ideas** is that they are one in a gazillion. Which is why, eight weeks before the next Young Inventor of the Year contest, I called a Brain-sparking Meeting with Broccoli at

### Inventor's HQ . . . a.k.a. my room.

'What we need,' I told him, 'is to think outside the box. What we need is an idea that's so spingly, so amazing, that the judges have to give me - I mean, us - first place. Last year, we were beaten by an AUTO-DRYING TOWEL. Are you making a note of this?'

Broccoli sniffed and continued scribbling furiously in his notebook. He was perched on the end of my bed with Archibald pretending to be asleep beside him.

It was part of our Apprentice-Inventor Agreement that Broccoli would take notes of all our Brain-sparking Meetings for future reference. I gave him a notebook especially. After all, when I'm a famous millionaire inventor, I'm absolutely sure people will want to read my very important thoughts.

'What we need,' I said, 'is to think of a GRAND IDEA. The question is: **how?'**

Broccoli took an extra-enormous sniff. Next to him, Archibald was sneakily examining the distance between my bed and the open window.

'Well, how did you come up with your other **grand ideas?'** asked an unsuspecting Broccoli.

'Moments of brilliance,' I said, and shut the window. Archibald gave me a villainous glare that I ignored. 'But it's hard to be brilliant all the time.'

'Why don't you check the *Inventor's Handbook?'* he said without looking up from his notebook.

For an apprentice, this was not a bad idea. In fact, it was a very good idea. Maybe some of my **genius** had started to rub off on him.

I turned to the back of the *Inventor's Handbook* and ran my finger over the index until I found what I was looking for:

'Here it is,' I said. 'Inventor's Block. Page four hundred and twenty.'

I turned to the middle of the book and read aloud. '*Stuck in a rut or unsure of what your next big invention should be? Suffering from the effects of a not-so-successful idea? You are not alone! Every genius inventor has, at some point in their life, suffered from what you are feeling right now. But never fear! The dreaded Inventor's Block has a simple cure: The Upside-down Pose.*'

I looked up at Broccoli, who shrugged. I continued reading.

'Research has shown that being upside down can improve blood flow to

*your brain, which can spark off an explosion of brand-new genius ideas.'*

I slammed the book shut in excitement. 'Of course!' I cried. 'Why didn't I think of that?'

'ESHA!' came my sister's voice through the door. 'If I hear you shout one more time, I'm going to come in there and dismantle whatever it is you're inventing.'

I glared at the door.

One word about Nishi: **IGNORAMUS**.

Broccoli has interrupted to tell me that you need to know more about my sister, Nishi. He seems to think that 'she's a **DRONG/ignoramus**' isn't enough information, especially because of what happened with - well, you'll find out soon enough.

After thinking about it, I suppose that he is sort-of-maybe right, so I have made a list of the top six things you need to know about my big sister.

Feel free to skip it entirely.

You can still skip it.



Just miss the next page. It's that easy.

## Top Six Things You Should Know About Nishi:

- ① Nishi is exactly three years, two months, one day, six hours, 2.5 minutes and 0.4 seconds older than me. According to Nishi, this gives her full and total rights to boss me around.
- ② To the rest of the world, she looks like this:



She ACTUALLY looks like this:



③ When Nishi is older, she wants to be a **meteorologist**.

This is just a fancy way of saying she wants to bore people about the weather. She is **boggly** about the weather.

④ Nishi desperately wants to join the Guild of Junior Meteorologists (GUM for short). Unfortunately for her, she can't become a member until she passes the GUM exams, and she has already failed them twice.

⑤ She chews gum all the time. I am not quite sure if this has anything to do with passing the GUM exams. Nishi tells me that it is not, but I am not sure if I believe her.

⑥ Nishi wears the same wellingtons everywhere. They are bright purple and covered with yellow umbrellas. They are also signed by Nimbus Dewey, the world's most famous meteorologist - Nishi's hero (yawn-boring-yawn). Nishi is so in love with these froufrou foot coverings that she wears them **IN ALL WEATHERS**.

This means that they are less wellington and more

**TOXIC WEAPON.**

'I bet Einstein didn't have to put up with a wit-nit of a sister,' I muttered. 'Bet he didn't have everyone interfering with his **grand ideas** every single minute of every single day.'

I passed Broccoli the *Inventor's Handbook*, positioned myself between Sock Mountains 3 and 4 and flipped myself on to my hands. [If you, the Reader, have never tried the Upside-Down Pose, it makes the world appear a little less

**TOPSY**  
and a lot more **TURVEY!**

'Any brain sparks?' asked Broccoli.

'Not yet. I think what I really need is a few moments without anyone -'  
'ESHA VERMA!'

Ever so slowly, I opened one eye and saw Dad's slippers in the doorway. (Clearly, he did not have any respect for the sign that said I was **NOT TO BE DISTURBED.**)



I opened my other eye and looked up at Dad's face. He did not appear surprised to see me **upside down**.

'What do you call this?' he said, holding a T-shirt out in front of him.

Dad's eyebrows **waggled** at me as he spoke. This was not good. Whenever Dad was cross, his eyebrows would start dancing **uP** and **down**. At that moment, they looked as if they were ready to take part in the

H  
G  
I  
H  
Jump.  
Olympic

I stared at the T-shirt. 'Y-E-L-M-U-B,' I said slowly. Dad snorted and turned the T-shirt **upside down**. What it should have said was the name of Dad's favourite football team: Burnley FC. Except there was a giant splodge zig-zagging across the letters.

'BUMLEY FC,' I said.

Dad flinched. 'I found this on top of it.' He waved a plastic bag containing a grape-coloured jelly goo at me. 'It was in the wash bucket. Would you like to explain how it got there?'

Broccoli must have guessed that Dad was about to explode. Right on cue, he sneezed. **Once. Twice. Three times.**

No help there, then.

'Well, I-' I couldn't tell him that the grape-coloured jelly goo was the second prototype of the Insta De-sticker Spray. It must

have accidentally fallen out of my pocket when Mum put my special Inventioning dungarees in the wash bucket. (I have warned her not to touch my stuff but she does not listen.) Quickly, I ran through the list of **Excuses for Parents** that I had memorized from the *Inventor's Handbook* when I was just five years old:

- **EXCUSE 1:** Blame the dog (No good - we don't have a dog because Mum is allergic. I didn't realise that until it was too late, but you live and learn).
- **EXCUSE 2:** Blame next door's dog (Also no good - Broccoli lived on one side and he had exactly **zero** dogs. On the other side was Claudette and her pet canary, Mister E, but he had been cage-bound for the last week because of a cold).
- **EXCUSE 3:** Where no dogs are available, blame a brother/sister/cousin/baby/grandparent.



**BINGO.**

'You should talk to Nishi,' I said.

'Nishi?' said Dad, his eyebrows halting mid-waggle.

'I saw it in her room the other day.' I paused, pretending to think.

'She said it was for a weather experiment.'

The *Inventor's Handbook* calls this **'The Art of Persuasion: a must-have skill for any genius inventor'**.

I call it an **ESHA NINJA BLOW**. For some reason, it appears to work on everyone but my **DRONG** of a sister:

'What kind of weather experiment?' said Dad, his eyebrows returning to full **jiggle** mode.

Before I could answer, Mum poked her head round the door:

*(Honestly, how is a genius inventor meant to get anything done when everyone keeps interfering?)*

'What is happening here?' asked Mum, waving her phone crossly. 'Aunty Usha is trying to give me her shopping list and — Esha why are you **upside down**? Oh, hello, Broccoli, I didn't see you there. I should have some lettuce for Archibald - what is *that*?' she finished, her eyes **poPPing** when she saw Dad's T-shirt.

Broccoli sneezed again.

I was about to move on to **EXCUSE 4** when Mum stopped looking so cross and started **laughing**.

'Bumley FC,' she giggled. 'I couldn't have put it better myself.'

Dad's eyebrows disappeared into his hair:

'They're better than **MAN-CHEESY UNITED**,' he said.

Mum's face turned a dangerous shade of purple.

If you hadn't already guessed, my parents are **BOGGLY** about football. Neither Nishi nor I understand it. It is probably the one thing in the world we agree on. ???

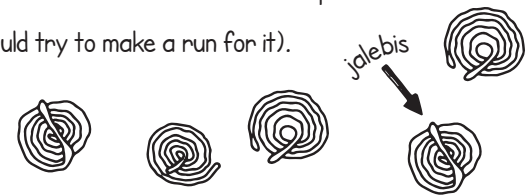
When Mum and Dad start arguing about football, it



is usually a good time to make a quick exit. Unfortunately, that was not possible at that moment because:

- ① They were standing in my room.
- ② I was **upside down**.

I decided to wait. I don't know how long I ended up waiting in the end. Broccoli said it was only a couple of minutes, but I'm sure he lost track of time because I started to feel . . . *dizzy*. Maybe it was the smell of the carpet (sticky sweet jalebis with a hint of mango lassi) or keeping one eye on the door for Archibald (I was quite certain that he would try to make a run for it).



Either way, I'd had enough of the **Upside-Down-Pose** for one day and I was about to flip myself the right way up when Mum said, 'I don't need a time machine to tell you how **BUMLEY** are going to do this year. They'll be **last** as always.'

It was as if I'd been jolted by an electric current.

**A toe-tingling, hair-curling, brain-whizzing spark of**

**PURE  
GENIUS.**

I was so excited that my arms turned to jelly, and I collapsed on to Sock Mountain 3, which let off a blast of toxic fumes.

'I've got it!' I shouted, pulling a spaghetti-encrusted sock out of my mouth. 'A TIME MACHINE! That's what will **win** us the Brain Trophy!'

When Mum had stopped choking from the sock smell, she said, 'Esha Verma, if you do not tidy this room today, you will be in **BIG TROUBLE**.'

When Dad stopped gagging, he said, 'Where's Nishi? I want to have a word with her about my T-shirt.'

And when Broccoli stopped sneezing he simply said, 'A time machine doesn't sound very safe.' Then, with an **extra enormous** sniff, 'Where's Archibald?'

One scheming tortoise rescue later (he'd made it halfway down the stairs), I realized that the trouble with **grand ideas** is not just that they are one in a gazillion. The real trouble with **grand ideas** is that people just *don't* appreciate them.

## Note From The Author (again) ←

Broccoli has just told me that I have spent **too long** getting to the start of this story. He thinks that I should have started with the chapter called **The Big Red Button**. I have told him that I wouldn't have taken as long if he stopped *interrupting* me.

As for you, Reader: you could skip to **The Big Red Button** right now but then you'll never find out how to invent a time machine.

And I'm **SURE** you want to know that,



don't you?



## How to Build a Time Machine - the Top-secret Method

OK, I lied. I'm not going to tell you how to build a time machine. Rule 3 of the *Inventor's Handbook* says that a **great inventor NEVER** reveals their secrets. What I can say is that it took us:

- ① LOTS and **LOTS** of TIME
- ② One hundred and ten visits to the library and the Science Museum
- ③ Fifty-three cycle rides to the rubbish dump
- ④ Three **SECRET** runs to Broccoli's garage
- ⑤ Twenty midnight raids on the kitchen
- ⑥ Ten careful rummages through Broccoli's stash of dangerous presents
- ⑦ Three burnt fingers
- ⑧ Two stubbed toes
- ⑨ Forty-five (and a half) cheese and chocolate sandwiches
- ⑩ Ten oil-stains on the carpet (now carefully hidden beneath strategically placed sock mountains)
- ⑪ One lightly toasted canary (how could we have known that Mister E from next door would fly into my room on the day we were fitting the fuel tank?)



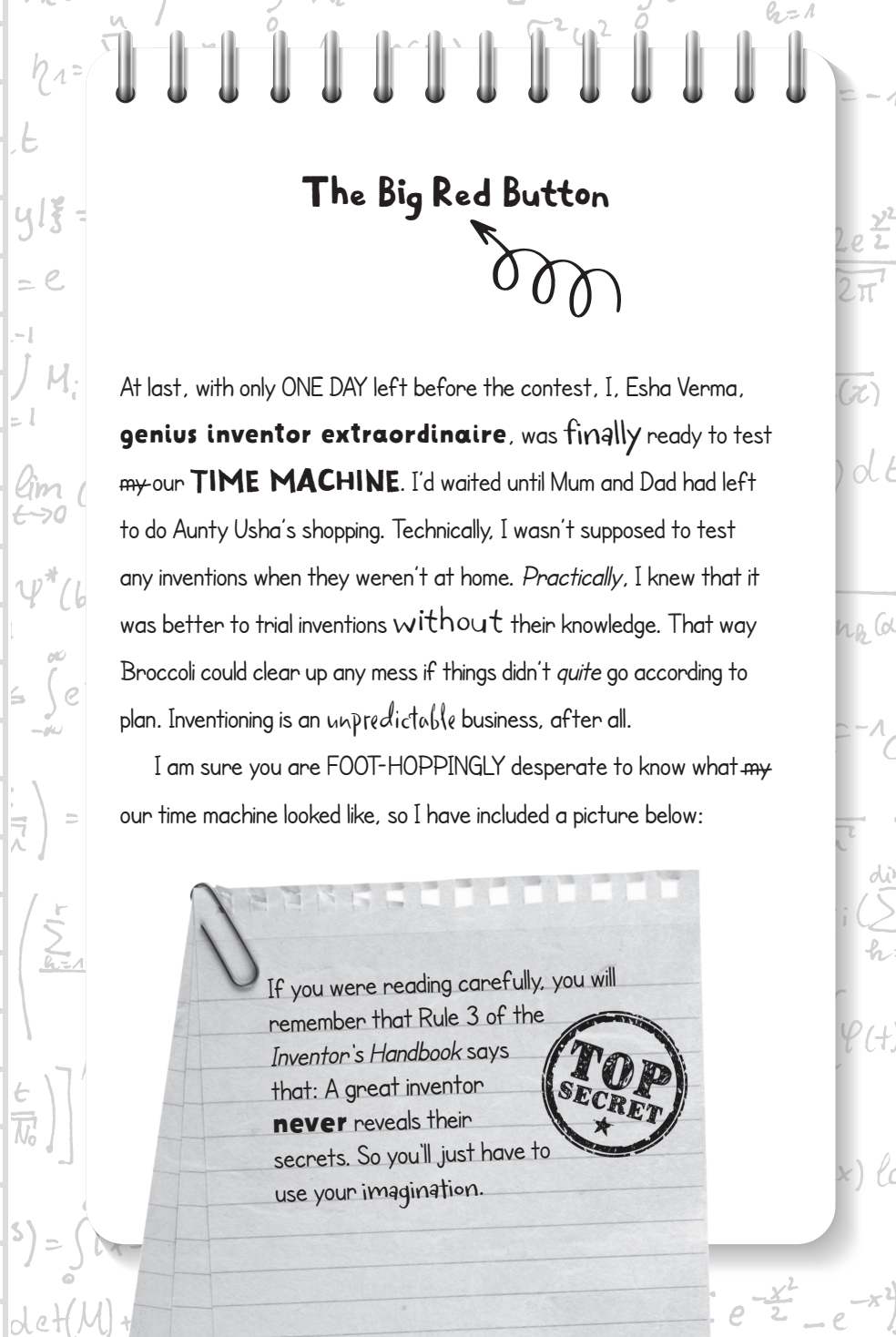
## The Big Red Button



At last, with only ONE DAY left before the contest, I, Esha Verma, **genius inventor extraordinaire**, was finally ready to test ~~my~~ our **TIME MACHINE**. I'd waited until Mum and Dad had left to do Auntie Usha's shopping. Technically, I wasn't supposed to test any inventions when they weren't at home. *Practically*, I knew that it was better to trial inventions without their knowledge. That way Broccoli could clear up any mess if things didn't *quite* go according to plan. Inventioning is an unpredictable business, after all.

I am sure you are FOOT-HOPPINGLY desperate to know what ~~my~~ our time machine looked like, so I have included a picture below:

If you were reading carefully, you will remember that Rule 3 of the *Inventor's Handbook* says that: A great inventor **never** reveals their secrets. So you'll just have to use your imagination.

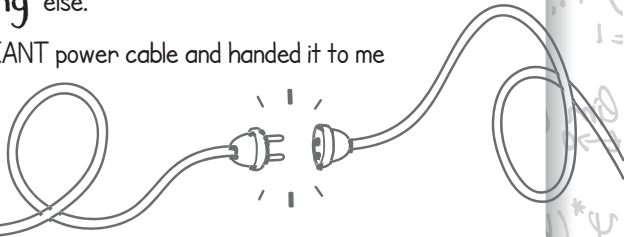


There were only **FOUR** things left to do before the contest

TOMORROW:

- ① Plug in the power cable.
- ② Cross fingers.
- ③ Cross toes.
- ④ Cross **everything** else.

Broccoli uncoiled the GIANT power cable and handed it to me with a nervous glance.



I plugged the wall-end into the power socket and took the other end over to the time machine.

'This is it,' I said to Broccoli, my fingers and toes tingling with excitement. 'If this works, we'll absolutely win the **Brain Trophy** tomorrow.'

'What if it doesn't?' asked Broccoli.

I snorted. 'Course it will. We've double-checked the wiring, triple-checked the connections and quadruple-checked our calculations.'

I took a deep breath and grinned. 'Do you smell that, Broccoli? That's the odour of VICTORY.'

Broccoli sniffed and wrinkled his nose. 'Smells like **SOCKS**.'

I pretended not to hear him. 'This time tomorrow, I'll win the Brain Trophy and NOTHING is going to stop me.' 'Now, are you ready?'

'I don't know,' he sniffed. His eyes were two round puddles and his nose was **dripping like a tap**. He was a walking, talking waterworks. 'What if it sends us back in time? Or forward? Or sideways?'

'We're only powering it up,' I said, waving the cable in the air. 'It won't do anything until we press **The Big Red Button**.'

Archibald yawned, trying his hardest not to look curious.

I touched my Inventor's Thinking Hat for luck.

It was the moment that all great inventors wait for. That spingly second when you're standing on the very edge of a grand discovery of great importance. This was the moment that could turn me into an inventor legend for eternity, I could see it all: the roaring crowds, mountains of money, my very own inventor's workshop . . .

Broccoli sniffed loudly behind me.

~~Maybe even a new apprentice~~ ha ha ha

I plugged the power cable into the time machine and crossed everything.

And waited.

And waited.

And waited some more.

'Are you sure this was the biggest power cable-' I started to say to Broccoli when there was an

**ENORMOUS WHUMP**.

The WHUMP was more than a noise. It was a tidal wave of sonic power. It bubbled the blood in my veins, rattled my teeth and sent Broccoli's snot cascading through the air onto the walls where it slid down with a loud **glop**.

He sniffed and wiped his nose apologetically.

I shuddered. 'EW...'

Before Broccoli could reply, Nishi **stormed** into my room, a **toxic** wellington whiff wafting around her.

'That's IT,' she shouted. 'My first GUM exam is TOMORROW and I can't even THINK about compass navigation when all I can hear is—'

But I wasn't listening to her.

I was looking at the time machine, which was

**whirring and humming**

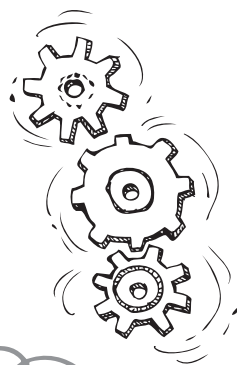
behind her.

I gawped at the spiny dials on the console,

the **swirling-whirling arrows**

and the **twirling-twisting**

**TIME-O-METER.**



My heart did a little **jump**.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Broccoli shrink himself between Sock Mountains 3 and 4.

'I think it's ready,' I whispered.

This was it. My moment of greatn—

'—and Mum and Dad said you weren't allowed to test any inventions when they're not at home,' huffed Nishi. 'Especially after your last **disaster**.'

URGH. Moment ruined.

I glared at her. 'How was I supposed to know that the **Self-Popping Party Poppers** would explode through the kitchen roof?! Besides, the Young Inventor of the Year contest is *also* TOMORROW and I need to begin Trialling and Testing so will you get those toxic weapons—' I pointed at her wellingtons, '—and yourself out of my room? Your **DRONGNESS** is disturbing my **genius vibes**.'

Nishi wrinkled her nose at the time machine as if she could make it disappear with the power of her nostrils. 'What is this junk heap, anyway?' she said. 'A Hoover?'

What did I tell you about my sister? No imagination.

'That is **OBVIOUSLY** a time machine,' I said.

Nishi let out a noise that sounded like a wheezy cat. 'There's **NO** such thing.'



I raised my eyebrows and gave her my best DOES-IT-LOOK-LIKE-I'M-JOKING stare.

Nishi folded her arms and gave me her best 'I know better than you' stare. 'I thought you wanted to win the **Brain Trophy**, not the **Worst Disaster of the Year Award**.'

Sometimes, I wonder if the two of us are actually related.

'Oh, I think you'll win *that* one,' I said lightly, 'when you fail the GUM exams AGAIN.'

I heard Broccoli take a sharp breath behind me.

Archibald made an excited sniggering noise, which sounded like tortoise-speak for 'here we go'.

Nishi's mouth flapped open-closed-open and her eyeballs bulged like an animal about to stampede. I braced myself and prepared to take cover behind Sock Mountain 3.

But she didn't move towards me.

Instead, she leapt the other way.

TOWARDS the time machine.

Before I could stop her, she'd jumped on to the seat (a *borrowed* bike saddle) and started

pressing her fingers


!!  
..  
**ALL OVER**  
**THE CONSOLE.** ?!  
~~~~~

'**STOP!**' I yelled. 'You don't know what you're doing!' I dived forward, every one of my **genius** instincts screaming to push her off, then stopped suddenly - what if we damaged the time machine?

'You don't know what YOU'RE doing,' retorted Nishi. She jabbed another button. 'Just because you've got an *Inventor's Handbook*, it doesn't make you an inventor: Anyone with even a smidge of a brain knows that time travel is impossible.' She fiddled with the dial.

'Not as impossible as you trying to navigate anything with a compass or predict the weather,' I snapped, wondering how I could **wrestle** her off the time machine without breaking the console.

Broccoli whimpered.

Nishi scowled and punched a spiny dial. 'And at least  meteorology is a *real* science!'

'Inventioning is more of a science than silly cloud watching!' I said, glancing around my room for the *Extend-a-Hand*. Wrestling Nishi off the time machine was too risky but maybe I could **BOP** her off it instead. 'Inventioning is -'

'A WASTE OF TIME,' interrupted Nishi.

'**GENIUS**. Isn't that right, Broccoli?' I said, signalling him to find the *Extend-a-Hand*.

Broccoli blinked at me, confused, and held up a sock.

*Honestly.*

'GENIUS?' Nishi snorted. She took a packet of gum out of her pocket and flicked one into her mouth. 'This thing is **useless**'.

I bet you my GUM binoculars -' She waved them in my face as she spoke - 'that your so-called invention won't work.' She pressed another button. The time machine gurgled like a happy baby.

I clenched my fists. 'You're USELESS!'

I knew at once I'd made a mistake.

'Oh, AM I?' said Nishi.

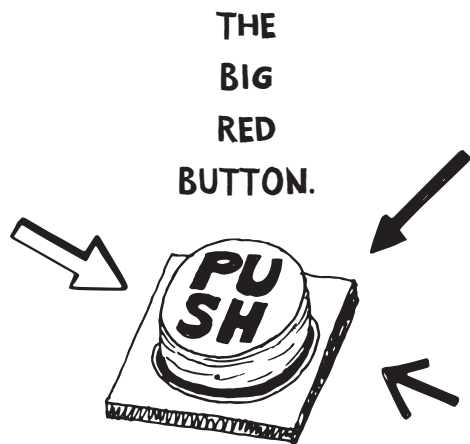
That's when she did something really very stupid.

She put her hand on **The Big Red Button** at the centre of the console.

'Don't YOU DARE,' I said sharply.

Nishi gave me an **EVIL** grin.

Then she pressed



## A note from Broccoli

Dear Reader, if you prefer safe and sensible stories, now would be a good moment to put this book down and forget everything you have read so far. If, like me, you are training to become a genius inventor, then you should continue.

Be warned: the happenings you will read about in the coming pages are not for the faint-hearted. Unfortunately, I had no choice but to face them armed with nothing but my wits and my loyal tortoise companion, Archibald.



## Secondus Secondi

For a moment, nothing happened.

'Ha!' exclaimed Nishi. 'What did I tell—'

Before she could finish speaking, the time machine made a funny gurgling noise like the plug being pulled out of a bath. The power cable **exploded** out of the socket and snapped through the air like a shimmying snake, narrowly missing Broccoli, who dived into the sock mountain beside him.

Then **POP...** Nishi and the time machine were gone.

Only it was not a small POP. It was a very LOUD POP. It was so loud that it flung open the windows, shook the floor beneath our feet and set off the car alarms outside. Sock Mountain 5 *trembled* then disappeared through a hole.

A very **LARGE** hole.

A very **LARGE** hole IN MY BEDROOM FLOOR.

UH-OH.

As inventions went, this should have rated as NUMBER ONE on my list of Accidental Disasters. But I was too excited to worry about that. Besides, I knew Mum and Dad wouldn't be back for hours yet, so we were safe for now.

'Did you see that?' I whispered to Broccoli. I looked at where Nishi had been. The air was still **fizzing** and **sparking**. One moment she'd been sitting on the bike saddle, the next she was GONE.

'I think . . . I think it worked!' I shouted, but then I paused, realizing something not *quite* so exciting.

'SHE'S TAKEN THE  
TIME MACHINE!'

'But,' squeaked Broccoli. 'But-but-but—'

Before he could say anything else, the air in front of us started to do something very strange. It began to **move**. It **rippled** and **shook** like the air on a platform as a train comes in. Broccoli whimpered. I looked around my room for something to arm myself with when, suddenly, the *whooshing* stopped.

A moment later, a strange **oval-shaped thing** appeared in front of me.



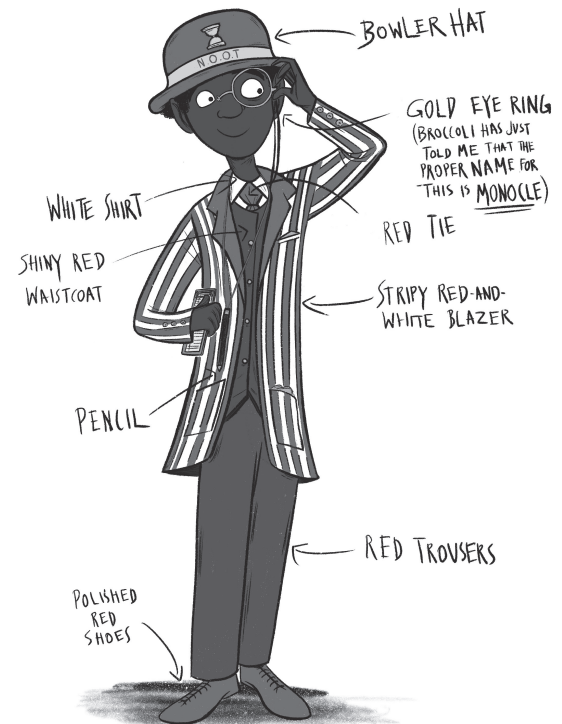
Now, you, the Reader, may be wondering why I didn't just run out of there. But running away never entered my mind, not even for a second. At that moment, I was filled with **UNKNOWING**. My inventor's instincts were **tingling** to **TINGLEDOM** and all I could think about was the **ultra-genius calculations** that someone must have made to invent a thing that could appear in the air like this.

Besides, Chapter 8 of the *Inventor's Handbook* said that inventors must always be ready for shocks and surprises, so I did not panic or

leap down the stairs. To my surprise, Broccoli did not panic or run out of the room, either. But that might have been because he was frozen to the spot in **FEAR**.

*[A note from Broccoli: I did, in fact, faint, for a minute or two.]*

As I looked on, spellbound, a handle in the oval-shaped thing rattled, a door flew open and a boy stepped out.



He lifted his bowler hat, brought out a tiny clipboard and raised his pencil to the page.

'Mission One,' he said, a smile of **satisfaction** spreading across his face. His pencil scratched pompously across the paper. He licked the tip of his finger and held it in the air. 'The twenty-first century. Local time: fifteen-thirty hours.'

I looked at Broccoli. At least, I tried to look at Broccoli. He was still hidden behind a sock mountain. Archibald was watching the boy with a 'finally someone **interesting**' expression on his face.

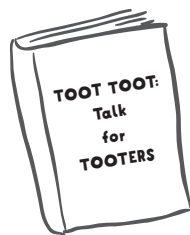
'Local inhabitants,' said the boy. He looked at me, Archibald, then finally the **cowering** Broccoli. 'Two Minor Insignificantants, one domesticated reptile.' He spoke *lightning-bolt fast* as if he had too much to do and not enough time to get it done. 'Let's see now.' He pulled out a shiny red book labelled '**TOOT TOOT: TALK FOR TOOTERS**' and squinted at the first page. Suddenly he swivelled on the spot and lifted one leg in the air.

'Wazooki!' he shouted.

I blinked.

'No?' He turned the page. 'Ah.' Holding his hand in the air, he looked at me and **wiggled** his fingers. 'Howdy, partner!'

I stared at him.



'Hm.' He frowned and turned a few more pages. He scrunched his mouth into a peculiar shape, closed one eye and staggered sideways. 'Ahoj, landlubbers. *Shiver me timbers.* **ARRRRR.**'

I couldn't help it. I giggled. 'What?'

'Salutations and greetings,' said the boy. He scratched his head. 'Funny, the Academy told us they'd work.' He made a note on his clipboard. 'I'll have to speak to T.O.O.T. Talk Tech.'

'TOOT?' I sniggered.

The boy puffed himself up like a balloon and straightened his hat. 'The Office of Time is no joke,' he said sharply. 'I am

*Secondus Secondi,  
a New Officer of Time.'*

'Who?'

'Secondus Secondi,' said the boy again proudly. 'Son of Dayus Secondi and Yearma Secondi, grandson of Epochal Secondi, great-grandson of Centurio Secondi, and so forth.'

I noticed he'd forgotten to ask me who I was. Good thing I'd memorized Chapter 1 of the *Inventor's Handbook: Introducing Your Genius Self*.

'My name is Esha Verma, **genius inventor extraordinaire**, youngest and best daughter of Anita and Rohan Verma, grand-

daughter of Dharam Verma, great-grand-daughter of . . . ' I faltered.

Actually, I couldn't quite remember that far back. It's very difficult to keep track of family trees as big as mine when your mind is full of **genius inventing**.

' . . . Of another Very Important Verma and *this* - ' I pointed to the quivering pile of socks behind me - 'is my apprentice, Broccoli. He's in training.'

A hand appeared in the air and waved shakily. 'Pleased to meet you,' squeaked a muffled voice.

Secondus raised an eyebrow and made a note. 'I'm here because we detected an unusual spike in **TIME ENERGY**,' he said.

'As an Officer of Time, it is my job to investigate and resolve such matters.' He turned round and eyed the space where the time machine had been. All that was left of ~~my~~ our **genius** invention was honey-coloured goop on the carpet.

Broccoli poked his head out from behind the socks to watch.

Secondus bent down beside the goop and sniffed it.

'What are you doing?' I asked.

'Silence, please,' said Secondus as he wrote on his clipboard.

'I am in the middle of an **important** investigation.'

'What kind of investigation?'

Secondus RUDELY ignored me. He took out a thin brass device.

As he held it in the spot where the time machine had been, the device started to emit a loud ticking noise. 'How peculiar,' said Secondus. He made *another* note on his clipboard.

'Because if this is about our time machine then -

'**Time machine?**' interrupted Secondus. He stood up so quickly that his hat wobbled like a runaway strawberry.

'What time machine?'

'The time machine I - I mean, **we invented**,' I said proudly. 'Except now it's gone.'

'That *can't* be right . . .' said Secondus. He flicked through the paper on his clipboard, muttering to himself. 'Time machine - time machine - time - ah.' He squinted at the clipboard then he checked the brass device, which was still ticking. 'Mighty clocks! Energy readings are an exact match. But time machines aren't supposed to have been invented yet. It's too **EARLY!**

'Weren't you listening?' I flicked an invisible speck of dust off my sleeve. 'I am a **genius inventor extraordinaire**. We are always ahead of our time. Isn't that right, Broccoli?'

The sock mountain nodded.

'You must have a permit to build a time machine,' said Secundus.

I blinked. 'What permit?'

He cleared his throat. 'Section 4.2, Regulation 2.6 of Time-travel

Devices: any time-travel devices can only be invented or used *after* obtaining a permit from The Office of Time. Failure to have a permit will result in T.O.O.T.-decreed **punishment**, which may include a **fine**, **imprisonment** or other suitable sentence.'

He nodded at Broccoli, who promptly sneezed. 'These regulations also apply to apprentices.'

Archibald snickered.

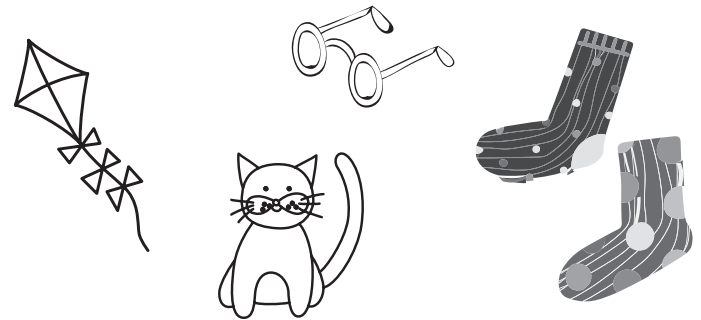
'**A FINE?**' I shouted. (That was about the only thing of his entire YAWN-BORING-YAWN speech that I had understood.) Dad was still recovering from the Self-Popping Party Poppers disaster. What would he say when I told him he had to pay out for a time machine that Nishi had stolen? 'But I didn't know about any regulations. Besides, we can't go to The Office of Time. I want to find my sister.'

OK, so maybe I lied. I didn't really *want* to find my sister:

I could think of many reasons why Nishi being lost in time wasn't a **bad** thing. What I REALLY wanted was ~~my~~ our machine back. There was absolutely **not** enough time to build another one for tomorrow's contest. And there was not a pipsqueakity chance that I was going to lose the

Brain Trophy just because my **DRONG** of a sister couldn't do as she was told.

'I'm afraid the Time Regulations overrule lost siblings, spectacles, socks, pets, pencils, keys, kites, etcetera, etcetera,' said Secundus.



'But she's **LOST IN TIME**,' I said. 'Doesn't The Office of Time have regulations about that?'

Secundus blinked. 'Lost in Time?'

'That's what I said.'

Secundus's mouth opened and closed like a fish. 'You said your time machine was gone,' he squeaked.

'Because my **IGNORAMUS** of a sister, Nishi,

**STOLE IT.'**

☆ ⑥ ☆

## The Lost-in-time Protocol (and a lesson in The Art of Persuasion)

☆

'A "Lost in Time" is a Class Three emergency,' said Secundus hoarsely. He flipped furiously through the papers on his clipboard, muttering to himself. '**Extremely rare, extremely dangerous—**'

'DANGEROUS?' whimpered Broccoli.

'Here it is!' said Secundus. 'The Lost-in-time Protocol.' His eyes darted across the clipboard. 'Step one - speak to local inhabitants to locate the whenabouts of the "Lost in Time".' He looked at me expectantly. 'Do you know when your sister has gone?'

'How would I know that?'

'Did you fit the machine with a time lock? A back-trace? Anything we could use to find her? You built this contraption - didn't you consider these **variables?**'

I scowled. It was one thing for my **DRONG** of a sister to steal ~~my~~ our time machine and ~~my~~ our best chance of winning the Brain Trophy. Now this boy was talking to me as if *I* was an **ignoramus**.



'It's the first one we've ever built,' I said. 'I hadn't even put it through Trialling and Testing yet!'

'**Mighty grand clocks!**' exclaimed Secundus, his hat dancing in outrage.

He dabbed his forehead with a handkerchief and looked down at the clipboard. His lips moved in silent concentration. After a moment, he slipped the clipboard under his hat and stepped over the goop. Holding a monocle to his eye, he moved his head up, down and sideways, as if he were looking for something. 'They'd better be here,' he whispered, his nose crinkled in worry.

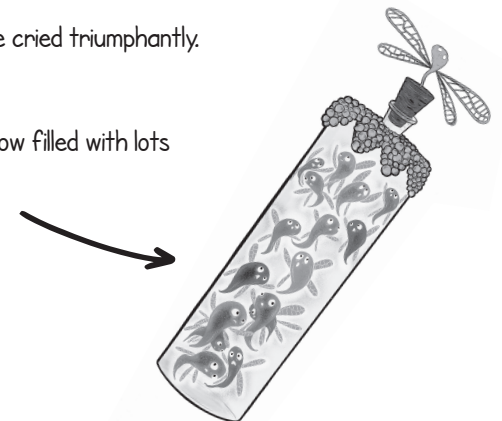
'What are you doing?' asked Broccoli, eyeing the goop *nervously*.

'Quiet,' hissed Secundus. Very slowly, he pulled a tiny glass vial out of his waistcoat. Standing on his tiptoes, he uncorked the stopper and then, in one grand swoop, he swept the vial across the air and hurriedly stuck the stopper back into the vial.

'**Got them!**' he cried triumphantly.

I breathed in sharply.

The empty vial was now filled with lots of wriggling blobs.



'What are those?' squeaked Broccoli. He was still partly hidden behind the sock mountain, a grumpy Archibald held close to his chest.

'They look like glow-worms,' I said, staring at them in wonder.

'Glow-worms?' exclaimed Secundus. 'Don't be ridiculous. These are tocks.' They were tiny, less than half a thumb-length in size. Each tock was a bedazzling, glittering pink and had thin silvery-grey wings. They flew inside the vial, making an angry *trizz trizz* noise as they hit the glass.

'Tocks?' said Broccoli. For someone who was BOGGLY about bloodthirsty reptiles, I noticed he was leaning as far away from these tiny tocks as he possibly could. He was so far back he looked as if he were in the middle of a backwards somersault. 'Are they **DANGEROUS?**'

'Dangerous?' Secundus scoffed. 'Tocks? Mighty clocks! You really don't know much, do you?' He closed one eye and pressed the other to the glass, squinting in fierce concentration. 'When something travels through time, it creates a rush of time energy,' he said haughtily. 'It's invisible, of course, but tocks smell it from light years away. They'll race to feed on it before it disappears and then they'll be gone. You have to be quick to catch them.'

At the bottom of the glass was a small pile of dust. As I looked closer, I realized the dust was coming out of the tocks in thin, shimmering curls.

'What is that?' I asked, fascinated. 'Time trails,' said Secundus, his eye stuck to the glass like a limpet. 'Whatever Tocks can't digest they— There it is!' he exclaimed suddenly, his hat dancing so ferociously I was certain it was about to take off. The dust at the bottom of the glass had started to gleam a brilliant silvery-blue. He whipped out a ruler and held it against the vial. 'Grand clocks!' His eyes widened. 'Your sister's travelled to the **Cretaceous Age.**'



Broccoli made a **strange squealing noise** and leapt out of the sock mountain. My *Extend-a-Hand* flew into the air and landed by my feet. *So that's where it was.* 'Did you say Cretaceous?' he said.

**Cretaceous?** I stared at him in surprise, wondering how exactly he knew something I didn't.

'What's the—?' I started.

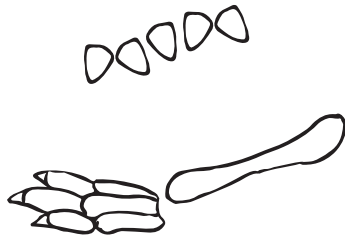
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'The Cretaceous Age,' said Broccoli.  
**'The last and longest period of the Mesozoic Era, the Age of the Reptiles!'**


'The Age of the . . . But that means—'

'**Dinosaurs,**' said Broccoli, his snout bouncing around faster than a jelly in an earthquake. 'That's where Nishi's gone.' He held Archibald in front of his face so that he was looking him in the eye. 'Can you believe it, Archie? **Dinosaurs!** Imagine what Granny Bertha would say!'



Archibald made a noise that could have been 'why the human and *not me*'.

I could not believe my **GENIUS** ears.

I, Esha Verma, **genius inventor extraordinaire**, had invented a time machine that could send someone to the Age of the Reptiles. Of course, I had never had any doubt. Not really. 

I could already see myself winning the Brain Trophy. Hear Mum and Dad boasting about their extraordinary favourite daughter. Smell my beautiful new multi-million-pound laboratory where my **DRONG** of a sister could not —

My daydream **burst** like a **balloon**.

In my excitement, I'd forgotten that Nishi had **TAKEN the time machine**.

'Did you know there are millions and millions of years in the **Cretaceous Age?**' continued Broccoli. '*Dinosaur World* says—'

'That's exactly why I must get this over to the Chief Finder immediately,' interrupted Secundus, scribbling on the clipboard. He shoved the vial into his pocket and straightened his hat. 'Time trails are only approximations. Once I have the exact time-landing coordinates, I'll be able to find your sister . . . as long as she hasn't been . . .

**EATEN.'**

I scoffed. 'No dinosaur would want to eat Nishi. Not in those wellingtons. They'd only get food poisoning.' At least I **HOPED** they wouldn't. The last thing I needed was for Mum and Dad to **ban** me from **INVENTIONING** just because my **DRONG** of a sister had got herself digested.

'Could she use the time machine to bring herself back?' asked Secundus.

I thought for a second. 'Not unless she can find a power socket. I was planning to take batteries with us, but Nishi—'

'Has she been **stabilized?**' he interrupted.

'Stabilized?' I echoed.

'So that's a no,' said Secundus, his pencil thumping the clipboard.

'What exactly do you—'



'How long has she been gone?' he interrupted (again).

I shrugged. He really was VERY rude.

'About five minutes.'

'Five minutes!' echoed Secundus shrilly. He scribbled hastily across the clipboard and snapped it shut, his eyes steely with determination.

'There's not a moment to lose. If your sister hasn't been **chomped** or **crushed**, the Butterfly Ripples could already be taking effect.'

'Butterfly Ripples?' echoed Broccoli, staring at me in **horror**.

'They're real?'

'We've read about those,' I said to Secundus smugly.

'Grand clocks, of course they're real,' snapped Secundus, already hurrying towards his egg-shaped machine. His hat bounced like a jittery bug. 'Certain actions in one Time Zone could affect another in ways you can't even imagine. That's why your sister should have been stabilized before travel!'

'But-but-but we didn't prepare for-' gabbled Broccoli.

'I must find and stabilize her, deactivate the time machine and-'

→ 'DEACTIVATE IT?' I said sharply.

Archibald guffawed, his shell trembling with laughter.

'Section 2, Regulation 4.5 of Time-travel Devices: all illegal time-



travel devices must be deactivated before being impounded. You'll be held here in a Frozen Moment until I return.'

I **goggled** at him. No way was I going to let this bowler-hat-wearing boy DEACTIVATE or IMPOUND my time machine.

'You **CAN'T** deactivate it,' I said.

'Section 2, Regulation 1.1 of Time Policies and Principles: officers have the power to-'

'No, I mean you **CAN'T**,' I said, my brain SPARKING with a HOW-TO-SOLVE-THIS-PROBLEM IDEA. 'The deactivation console is fingerprint controlled.'



'Fingerprint controlled?' said Secundus, halting in his tracks.

'I don't remember-' started Broccoli.

'Only we can deactivate it,' I said, giving Broccoli a 'now is not the time' look.

Secundus scrunched up his eyebrows, his forehead crumpling in worry. 'If I transport it without deactivating it first, its time energy could blow my navigation systems . . .'

I shrugged, preparing my **ESHA NINJA BLOW**. 'Don't say I didn't warn you when everything goes

**KAPOOSH.**'

Secondus was silent for a moment.

'And only the two of you can deactivate it?' he said.

## BINGO.

'It's an Inventor-Apprentice *double thumb lock*. You can read about it in Chapter Eighteen of the *Inventor's Handbook* if you like.'

Archibald widened his eyes in a look that probably meant 'impressive sneakiness for a human'.

'**Mighty grand clocks**,' said Secondus. 'The Academy never told us about those.' He dabbed his forehead again and took a deep breath. 'Very well. Section 2, Regulation 3.5 of Time Policies and Principles allows passengers to accompany officers for mission-critical reasons. You will have to come with me.'

'We will?' I said, hiding my grin.

'**WE WILL?**' squeaked Broccoli in panic.

'We find and stabilize your sister; deactivate and impound the machine, then I take you to Headquarters.'

Of course, I was *obviously* going to save ~~my~~ our time machine, but I nodded. Chapter 58 of the *Inventor's Handbook* said that solving a complicated problem was like peeling an onion. One layer at a time.



'You have one Earth minute to organize any urgent affairs before we leave,' said Secondus, hotfooting

towards his machine. 'These time trails won't give off a smell forever'

'I don't think we should do this,' whimpered Broccoli. 'Maybe he should find Nishi himself.'

'And what about the **time machine?**' I said, pulling him away so that Secondus couldn't hear what we were saying. 'The Young Inventor of the Year contest is **TOMORROW**. We have to find a way to bring it back before then. This is **our chance to win** the Brain Trophy.'

Broccoli's nose trembled. 'What about deactivating it?'

I snorted. 'We're not deactivating it.'

'But how—'

'I don't know yet,' I said, 'but I'm a **genius inventor**. I'll figure it out.'

Broccoli bit his lip. 'It doesn't sound very safe.'

I prodded him in the chest. 'You, James Bertha Darwin, are the grandson of the **bravest** fossil hunter in the world. Do you think she would **refuse** a chance to

## TRAVEL THROUGH TIME?

Broccoli shook his head. 'No, but—'

'Do you think she would **refuse** a chance to travel to the **AGE OF THE DINOSAURS?**'

'**Never,**' said Broccoli, his nose twitching.

'Don't you, James Bertha Darwin, want to see them too?'

Broccoli hesitated, long enough for me to grab his copy of *Dinosaur World* out of his pocket. 'Look,' I said, waving it at him, 'this is your chance to see them for real.'

Broccoli took hold of the magazine and stared at the front cover. 'You're right,' he said. 'And I suppose, if we're careful and sensible—'

Archibald made a rude noise at the back of his throat.

'In any case,' I said, priming my second **ESHA NINJA BLOW**. 'You signed an agreement. Don't you remember the small print? It says that you, James Bertha Darwin, **must** accompany me in all expeditions or adventures required **BEFORE, DURING OR AFTER INVENTIONING.**'

Actually, I couldn't quite remember if the agreement did say this or if there even was any small print. In fact, at that moment, I couldn't even remember where I'd put the agreement, but luckily Broccoli didn't ask for it.

Instead, he took a deep breath and said, 'If we're travelling back in time, we're going to need **supplies.**'

I grinned. 'You're right.'

I picked up my *Extend-a-Hand*, then, looking around the room, I grabbed my *Inventor's Handbook* and jammed my *Inventor's Thinking Hat* on to my head. Finally, I double-checked my pocket to make sure my *Inventor's Kit* was inside. 'Ready.'

'That's your Earth minute,' said Secondus, poking his head out of the machine.

Broccoli sneezed, slid his copy of *Dinosaur World* into his pocket, checked that the *Screeching Fizzer Firecracker* was still in his other pocket, sneezed again then looked at Archibald. 'Are you ready, Archie?'

'We're not taking *him*,' I said.

'Tortoises belong to the same reptile family as dinosaurs,' said Broccoli. 'This is his chance to meet his ancestors. I can't leave him behind.'



Archibald gave me his most **cunning** smile.

I snorted. 'You'll have to keep an eye on him,' I said, hurrying after Secondus. 'I'm not **TORTOISE-SITTING** when I have a time machine to find.'

'We'll be **fine**, won't we, Archie?' said Broccoli, stumbling after me. 'Totally fine. What could possibly **go w**

**r  
n  
o  
g?**'



## A Disclaimer to the Reader of this Chronicle

(included on the instructions of Secundus Secundi, New Officer of Time, representative of T.O.O.T.)

This disclaimer hereby forewarns the Reader. By continuing to read this chronicle, the Reader accepts that neither I, Secundus Secundi, New Officer of Time, nor T.O.O.T., will be held responsible for any and all reactions of amazement, wonder or mind-befuddlement that may arise as a result of reading the information in this book.

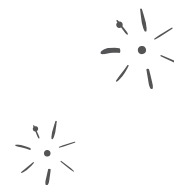
Complaints dealing with such matters will be returned unopened.

We thank you for your cooperation now, then and in the future.

Signed:

Secundus Secundi

## Through the Door



I am absolutely sure that, like me, you, the Reader, must also be **foot-hoppingly desperate** to find out what was behind the door of the machine Secundus arrived in. Unfortunately, Broccoli had forgotten to pack a camera, so you will have to use this drawing to **imagine**

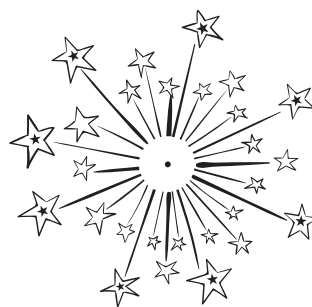
the **gob-dropping**

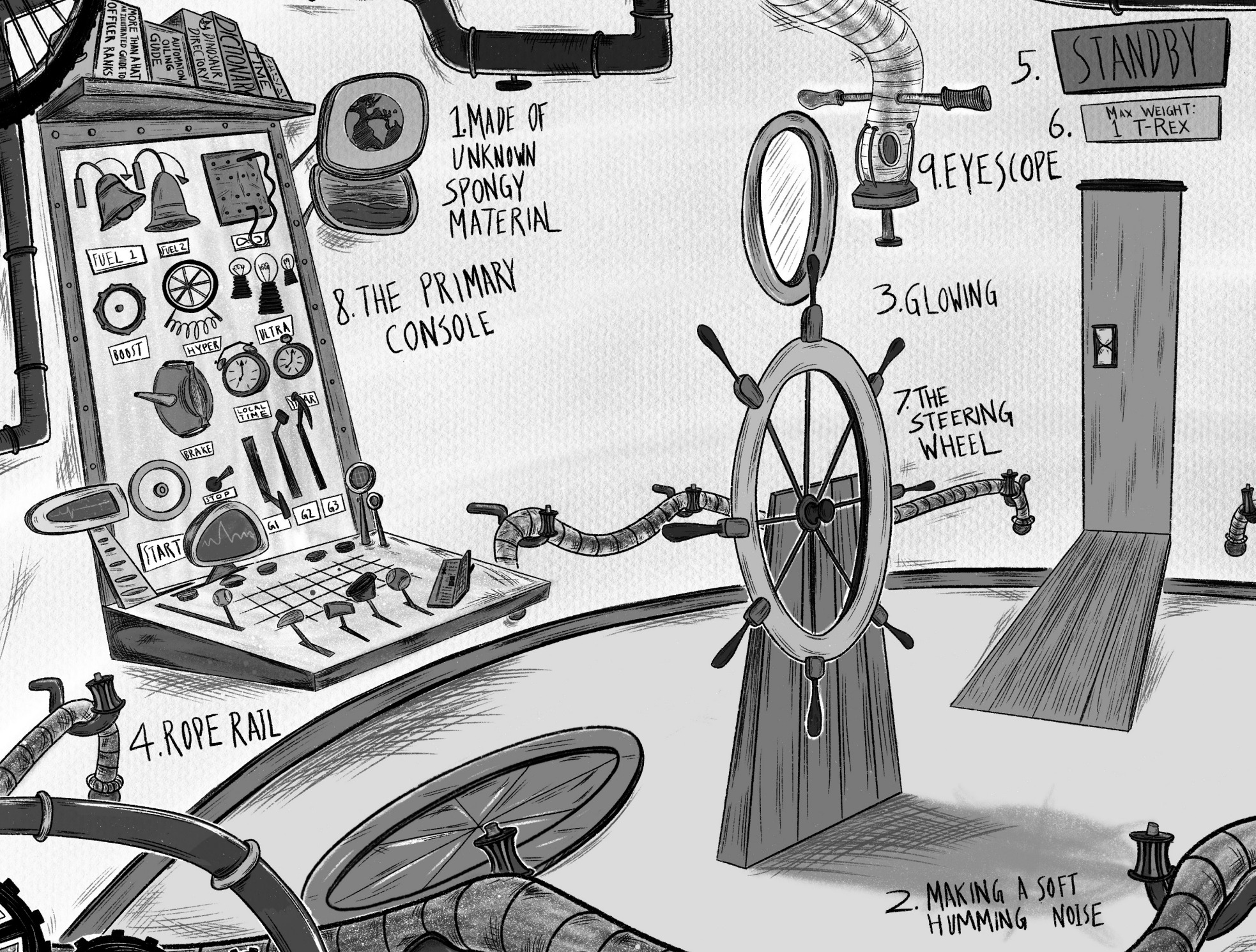
**eye-popping**

**gut-curling**

**hair-whirling**

**WONDERMAZEMENT**  
of what we saw.





1. MADE OF UNKNOWN SPONGY MATERIAL

8. THE PRIMARY CONSOLE

3. GLOWING

7. THE STEERING WHEEL

9. EYSCOPE

5.

STANDBY

6.

MAX WEIGHT: 1 T-REX

4. ROPE RAIL

2. MAKING A SOFT HUMMING NOISE

HOW TO TAKE A HAT OFF WITH RANKS  
AUTOMATION GUIDE TO DIRECTOR'S  
DICTONARY  
M. DINDOUBAI  
DIRECTOR'S  
AUTOMATION GUIDE TO OFFICER RANKS

FUEL 1 FUEL 2  
BOOST HYPER  
ULTRA  
LOCAL TIME  
BRAKE  
STOP  
START  
61 62 63

[A note from Broccoli: I did not forget. I was told we had enough supplies. For any readers still considering a trip in time, I would advise packing insect repellent, Granny Bertha's *Brilliant Book for Extreme Fossil Hunters*, a toothbrush, plasters, toilet roll, spare socks, a crossword for any quiet moments, a—]

## The Perombulator



'Shut the door and **don't touch** anything,' said Secundus, leaping between buttons and switches.

'What is this thing?' whimpered Broccoli behind me.

'My **Perombulator**,' said Secundus proudly.

I **gogled** as I looked around. 'But it's **ENORMOUS**.

How did you get it inside my room?'

'An Officer of Time is specially trained for difficult landings,' boasted Secundus. He jabbed a keyboard that was connected to a clear tube. At the bottom of the tube was a silver dial shaped like a butterfly. Suddenly the dial flashed pink, humming softly. 'Thank the clocks.' His scowl lifted a little. 'No ripples detected across the **Cretaceous Age** yet.' He stopped suddenly as he caught sight of Archibald. 'Is the **reptile** coming too?'

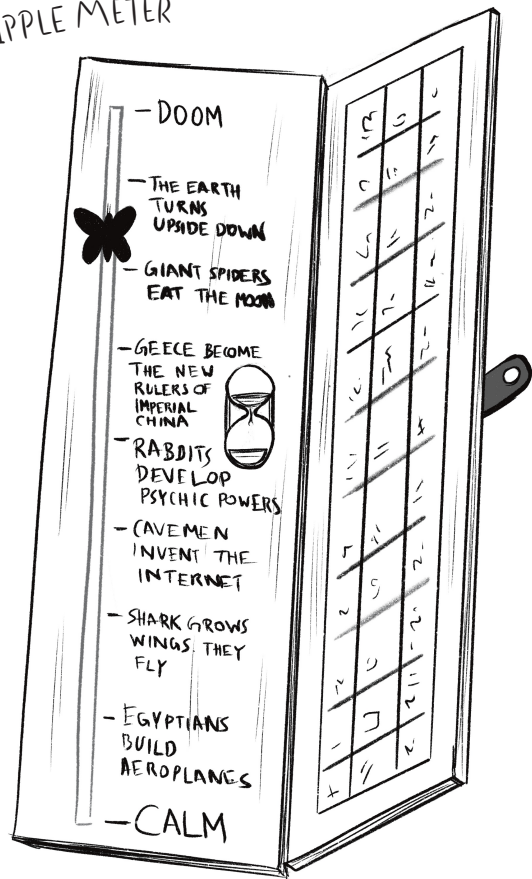
'We can't leave him,' said Broccoli, holding tightly on to Archibald.

'He's my responsibility.'

Archibald made a low snicking noise, which was probably tortoise-speak for 'the human knows nothing'.

'Just keep him away from the Primary Console,' said Secundus with

## THE RIPPLE METER



a dismissive sigh, waving a hand at the bonkers arrangement of buttons and dials and screens behind him. 'Neither The Office of Time, nor I, will offer any replacement pets.'

Archibald made a noise, which could have been 'don't talk to me about human pets. I never wanted one'.

'Replacement pets?' gulped Broccoli. He lifted Archibald to his face and looked him in the eye. 'Don't you worry, Archie,' he said. 'I won't let you out of my sight.'

Archibald flicked his front feet in what I absolutely know to be a **RUDE** gesture.

[A note from Broccoli: It is not.]

'If we're travelling through time, wouldn't it be easier to go back and stop Nishi pressing the red button on the time machine?' I pointed out.

'And create a time paradox?' said Secundus with a LOUD snort.

Clearly, The Office of Time had not taught him how to speak to **genius inventors**.

He pushed a sequence of different buttons. A motor labelled SENSORS began to *spin* above his head. He darted past us and slotted a device into the centre of the steering wheel.

'Sat-Nav,' I read over his shoulder. The device whirred, its edges gleaming. I reached out towards it, my **genius** instincts trembling with *curiosity*. 'What does this—'

'**Grand clocks!**' shouted Secundus, batting my hand away. 'This is a Space and Time Navigation device.' He jabbed a finger at a brass plaque fixed to the top of the device:

**WARNING:  
ONLY TO BE USED  
BY AN OFFICER  
OF TIME.**

I gave him my best **ESHA-LASER GLARE**.

Unfortunately, Secundus was too distracted turning arrows on the Sat-Nav (else he would have started sweating buckets). Before I could try again, a loud hum ran through the **Perombulator's** walls.

'What's happening?' whimpered Broccoli. His face had turned a peculiar porridge-like colour. I wondered if I should have brought a **stinky sock** to wave over his nose in case he fainted.

A moment later, the **Perombulator** began to shake.

'I hope your sister arrived in one piece,' murmured Secundus, frowning at his clipboard. 'Put-backing can be a sticky business.'

Broccoli took a backwards step towards the door.

The sign pinged from **STANDBY** to **ACTIVE**.

The humming grew louder. My **genius** instincts itched with excitement.

Broccoli whimpered and grabbed hold of my arm.

'There's no need to panic,' said Secundus. It's just the **Perombulance**.'

'Shouldn't you be steering?' gabbled Broccoli.

'The **Perombulator** is auto-piloted,' said Secundus.

'Manual control is only needed when—'

'I can't do this!' wailed Broccoli. 'I'm not like Grandma. I don't have a single brave bone in my body.'

Archibald rolled his eyes. For once, I agreed with him.



'Maybe you *should* stay—' I began to say only I didn't finish because at that moment the air **EXPLODED**. It was like the **EAR-POPPING** feeling you get when you're on a plane, only this was a **GAZILLION** times worse.



My teeth **TREMLED**.

My fingers **FUMBLED**.

My skull **SCROMBLED**.

The **Perombulator** shook as if there were a **THOUSAND RHINOS STAMPEDING** over it. The ship's wheel spun left-ways and right-ways. An opera-level **SHRIEK** filled my eardrums as a Broccoli-shaped thing torpedoed past me. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a thrilled tortoise-sized blob slide past in the opposite direction.

The air pressed down on us and I was sure I was going to be turned into a **human pancake** just because my **DRONG** of a sister couldn't listen to instructions when -

**PPRRRRRRWWEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE...**



There was a noise like the air escaping from a balloon. The **Perombulator** stopped shaking. My eyelids flipped back the right way and my stomach lifted itself out from between my toes.

Secondus was peering at a screen labelled **PEROMBLE-O-METER**. 'Speed - quadrillion quatrillion perombles—'

He didn't look as if he'd just escaped from being turned into a **human pancake**. He didn't even have a *single* hair out of place. I glowered at him, trying not to be a *teensy-tiny* bit impressed with his supreme balance.

On the other side of the **Perombulator**, Broccoli was **flat** against the floor; Archibald perched happily on his stomach.

'Urggghhhhh,'



he groaned.

The Primary Console crackled suddenly. 'TOOT TOOT,' said the clipped, nasally voice of a woman. She sounded as if she had a peg over her nose. 'Zonal conditions: Fair. No turbulence expected.

We wish you safe travels. TOOT TOOT.'

I **wobbled** to the window, my heart thudding with curiosity.

Through the glass, I could see a

 gazillion sparks of light. 

I watched as one of them floated closer.

 It was a shifting rainbow of colour.   
 A kaleidoscopic ball of brilliance.  
 A soaring shiny dot of luminosity. 

'Broccoli, you have to come and see these lights,' I murmured in awe. 'They're beautiful.'

'Those aren't lights,' said Secondus without turning round. 'They're **time-space particles**. They're what the **Murkle** is made from.

'The Murkle?'

'All of time and space,' he said in exasperation. 'Do all Minor Insignificantants ask **so** many questions?'

'Of course not,' I said, offended. 'Only **genius** inventors such as myself. In fact, I'm specially trained to—'

'Uggghh,' moaned Broccoli again, a large sprout of snot dangling out of his nose. Archibald tucked his head back into his shell.

Secondus punched some buttons on the Primary Console. A jar to the left of his head began to rattle, a storm of colourful mist collecting inside it. I watched, spellbound, as the mist formed a ball. It dropped into a pipe and popped out of the other end into a slot labelled STABILIZERS. Using a pair of tiny tongs, Secondus held it out to Broccoli. 'Stabilizing sherbet,' he said. 'Effective for one Earth day. You are required to eat it.'

Broccoli stared at the sherbet with a **worried** look on his face.



It was entirely transparent, like the clearest window glass. On one side, in tiny letters, were etched the words: FOR RIPPLE-FREE TRAVEL.

'Ripple-free travel?' I echoed. 'What's inside it?'  
Secondus turned his nose up at me.



'That's **top secret.**'



'Of course,' I said, smiling innocently. If he wouldn't tell me, I'd just wait for the right moment to find out for myself. After all, Chapter 17 of the *Inventor's Handbook* says that all great inventors must be ready to build their **genius** knowledge AT ALL TIMES.

Broccoli turned the sherbet over. The other side was marked

**WARNING:**

**EXCLUSIONS APPLY.**

'What exclusions?' he asked as Secondus turned back to the Primary Console.

'The permanent life-and-death kind,' he said with *utmost solemnity*. The jar rattled *fiercely* and another sherbet popped out of the slot. 'If you're *squashed* by a dinosaur, you'll cease to exist. If you're *fried* by a tunnel dragon, you'll cease to exist. If you're caught in a Time Coil, you'll—'

'- **cease to exist,**' I snapped impatiently. '- cease to exist,' *whimpered* Broccoli.

At the centre of the sherbet was a perfectly round, wrinkly pip. The pip was a brilliant sun-orange, but it slowly swirled into a dangerous plum colour.



'It . . . it . . . *changed,*' *squeaked* Broccoli, holding the sherbet at arm's length. Archibald poked his head out of his shell to give Broccoli a 'you are an embarrassing human look'.

Secondus looked at Broccoli as if he were the biggest **IGNORAMUS** he had ever met. 'Of course it changed,' he said. 'It's a *stabilizing sherbet.*' He held the other one out to me. 'Go on. All travelling species must be *stabilized*. That includes the reptile.'

I watched as it changed from sky blue to volcano red before popping it into my mouth. Broccoli watched me nervously.

'It doesn't taste of anything,' I said, *disappointed*.

'Wait till you reach the pip,' said Secondus.

As I reached the centre of the sherbet, I realized that what I'd thought was a hard pip was, in fact, a thing of velvety, silky, soft goodness. I rolled it around with my tongue then bit into it.

A volcano of dizzying fizziness **burst** in my mouth. I whistled as it touched my throat and travelled from the top of my hair to the tips of my fingers, filling me with a roasty-toasty marshmallow-mushy feeling inside.

'It's AMAZING,' I gasped. 'Almost as good as my Tonic for Throbbing Toothaches, Toes and Thumbs.'

Broccoli watched me a moment longer. When I didn't melt on **pop**, he put the sherbet into his mouth. 'You're right,' he said. 'It doesn't-' Before he could finish speaking, his face suddenly **TWISTED**.

'It *burns*,' he gulped, his cheeks turning a peculiar shade of grape. Beside him, Archibald's face was wrinkled in fizzy delight.

'Only if you bite it straight away,' said Secondus, unimpressed. He turned back to his clipboard. 'Now, where was I?'

I glanced at the sherbet machine. Now that Secondus was distracted, it was the perfect time for a quick investigation. Without a sound, I crept towards it (super-stealth is a **MUST** skill for any **genius inventor**).

'I don't feel so good,' squeaked Broccoli. His eyes were watering, and his nose was producing a **dangerous** level of mucus.

'Neither The Office of Time, nor I, will be responsible for any side-effects or-'



**BANG!**

A fountain of *stabilizing sherbets* exploded into the air and scattered around me like rainbow-coloured hailstones. I caught one and turned it over; the sherbet gleaming golden in the **Perambulator** light.

'It's **brilliant**,' I whispered.

'Get away from there!' yelled Secondus, darting towards me.

Hurriedly, I shoved the sherbet into my Inventor's Kit to investigate later. 'I was just looking,' I shrugged.

'Regulation 2,' said Secondus, glaring at me. 'Insignificants must **NOT** fiddle, touch or-'

Suddenly there was a loud *whirr* behind him.

'The Ripple Meter,' gasped Secondus. 'It's detected a ripple from the **Cretaceous Age**.'