

THE STORY OF TYRANNO DE BERGERAC © 1987 by Lincoln Bergman

Once there was a rather strange-looking dinosaur named Tyranno de Bergerac. The other dinosaurs made fun of him because he had a very large and strangely shaped nose.

Tyranno de Bergerac may not have been the most handsome dinosaur in the world—but he could do one thing better than most other dinosaurs. He could write beautiful poems in the sand, using his tail.

Tyranno lived near what today is the city of Paris, France. Of course there were no buildings when Tyranno lived because it was so long ago. But had there been buildings, Tyranno would not have lived in a fancy one. He probably would have lived in some dark room in an old hotel, all by himself.

Even though the other dinosaurs thought he was ugly, Tyranno had a very beautiful soul. He longed to express his feelings of love and friendship in his sand poems, but every time he began to pour out his feelings this big bully dinosaur would come along and stomp all over the carefully written words.

This big bully dinosaur was named Slickosaurus, and there's no doubt about it -- he was slick. He was so slick some people would even say he was sleazy. Of course, he thought he was very handsome and strong. He liked to strut around showing off his muscles, imagining that all the girl dinosaurs were watching him. There was one in particular, a very graceful Brontosaurus named Emily, who Slick especially wanted to impress, but she didn't seem to be at all interested in his strutting.

That's when Slickosaurus decided to stop stomping on the poems of Tyranno de Bergerac. Here's how it happened. One day Slickosaurus overheard a group of girl dinosaurs talking in the marketplace. He wasn't paying much attention, until he heard Emily's voice. She was saying how much she liked a poem she had seen, and that gave Slickosaurus an idea.

He strode out to the lonely ridge where he knew Tyranno de Bergerac spent many of his days. Sure enough, there was Tyrano, gazing at the sky, and wondering whether there would ever come a time when some kind dinosaur would see past his gigantic nose into his sweet and tender heart.

Tyranno was more than a little surprised when Slickosaurus spoke to him in a polite way, saying: "Tyranno, I know I've behaved roughly to you in the past, but that's all over now. I'd like you to be my friend. Perhaps we can discuss your poetry."

Tyranno, who was always ready to give someone another chance, thought for a little while, then replied: "Well, I guess that would be all right, if you promise you'll never again erase my poems from the sand..."

Of course, Slickosaurus agreed instantly, telling Tyranno: "Not only do I promise, but I want to ask you a very special favor, which will show you how much I like your poetry. I would be very

grateful to you if you could write a love poem from me to Emily Brontosaurus, because I want to get to know her better."

Tyranno didn't say so, but he knew very well who Emily was, having seen her from afar. Of course, never in his wildest dreams would he have considered approaching her. Maybe in this roundabout way he could express his feelings. Tyranno was a truthful, honorable dinosaur, and he did not like the idea of tricking Emily, nor he did not like helping Slickosaurus get in her good graces, but it might be a way to at least pour out his love, even if it had to be a secret.

And so, the secret poetry began. Late that night Slickosaurus and Tyranno met near the rock-walled courtyard where Tyranno liked to write his poems. When no one else was around, Tyranno, in his elegant script, wrote:

Emily, your grace to me,
Shines like the sun, so wondrously,
Were you to grant me just one smile
Then my whole life would be worthwhile.

The next day Slickosaurus told a messenger Pterodactyl to find Emily in the marketplace and tell her to visit the courtyard. Then Slicko waited, peeking around the wall, to see her reaction. Of course, Emily was delighted. She wondered who could write a poem as beautiful as that, and of course she was flattered. Not to be outdone, for she too loved to write poetry, she responded:

Thank you for your lovely thought
A smile unto my face it brought
Your lines were written very well
What is your name -- I beg you tell.

The next night, with Slicko standing over him, Tyranno tailed these lines:

What, pray tell, is in a name?
My heart inside still feels the same
Please recognize the song of my spirit
You are so special I know you can hear it.

Well, by now Emily was simply enchanted by the sweet sentiments of her unknown admirer. Who, she wondered, could this be—how could two such sensitive souls not have been aware of each other long before this? That afternoon she smiled as she wrote:

Your poems bring joy into my heart
Why have we been so long apart?
Please solve this mystery for me
Meet here tomorrow—half past three.

When Tyranno de Bergerac read this last poem out loud to him, Slick stomped up and down with glee. At last he would meet Emily and, tricked by the poems in the sand, she would think he was not only a very handsome dinosaur, but a poet besides! As for poor Tyranno, you can imagine how he felt about all this.

That night, as Slickosaurus came with Tyranno to write their answer in the sand, Tyranno was torn by confusion and sadness. Yet he went ahead and wrote this poem:

My heart is rising like a cloud
To think I'll speak your name out loud
That we will meet at last just seems
More wondrous than my wildest dreams.

But unbeknownst to Slick and Tyranno, Emily had suddenly realized that she had a doctor's checkup at 2:30 the next day. If the waiting line of animals with all their various ailments was as it usually was, she would never make it to her romantic rendezvous by 3:30. She wanted to change her poem to read:

Please let this mystery be no more
Let's meet tomorrow -- half past four.

She figured that would give her enough time. So she set out to change her poem. But when she got near the rock-walled courtyard she heard voices. She slowed down to listen. She overheard a rather loud and boisterous voice saying, "now read it to me, read it to me" --- and she then heard a soft and tender voice reading a poem about clouds and dreams and meeting someone. Emily peeked carefully around the wall, and in the moonlight she could see Tyranno and Slick. Then she heard Slick gloating, "that's great, that's great, just the kind of romantic stuff that Emily eats up...I can't wait until tomorrow."

Of course, Emily was hurt and surprised, but she was also boiling mad. She crept away quietly, thinking about the best way to handle this creep named Slick. She wondered how someone as gentle as Tyranno seemed to be could have helped Slick play such a mean trick.

Early the next day, she called her doctor on her dinophone to change her appointment to the next week. Then she went to the courtyard and wrote this poem in the sand:

Suspicion quick within me grows
Who knows whose nose it is that blows
I smell a trick that's very sick
Whose nose grows like Pinocchio's?

Then, at 3:30 on the nose she went to the meeting. There she saw Slickosaurus, all decked out in his finest armor, eagerly awaiting her. She marched up to him and said, "so are you the nice gentlesaur who's been writing me all those lovely poems?" Slick replied with carefully rehearsed lines, making sure he wasn't talking in his usual loud and blasting voice, "yes, dear Emily, I am the poet and I want you to know it. Would you care to accompany me to the ice cream geyser?"

Emily, in a very sweet voice, replied, "certainly, kind saursir, I would be most happy to spend time with such an accomplished individual as the author of the poems I have read, but please before we go, would you please read this last poem I have written out loud to me -- I so want to hear it in your tender voice."

Slickosaurus looked at the letters and words before him in the sand. He started to read, "sus...sus...pieces....uhhh .. .hmm... I've got something in my eye...let's see..q...u.... grrrrr.." and he got so frustrated and angry he started stomping on the ground.

At this point, Tyranno, who was hiding behind a wall hoping to catch a glimpse of Emily, heard the stomping and was so afraid that Tyranno was stomping away a new poem of Emily's that he came running out into the courtyard saying, "I want to read it, please don't erase it!"

Emily said, "aha -- I think the true poet has come out from hiding. Perhaps you would like to read my new poem." So Tyranno read the poem about the nose that grows, and in spite of himself and how embarrassed he felt, he had to chuckle at how clever it was.

And although Emily was very angry, she liked the way Tyranno read each word of her poem as if it were special, and so she said, "well, I still would like to go down to the ice cream geyser with the author of these poems," and, taking Tyranno by the arm, she led him off.

As they walked away, Tyranno nervously began to explain how this had all happened. Finally he said, "and well, I never would have done this if I had thought there was ever a chance for me to get to know you, but, you know, you're so beautiful, and me, well, look at my nose..."

"I don't care about your nose," Emily said, "in fact I think it's very distinguished and special. I sort of like your nose, but what I really care about is the sweet you that must be inside. Your poems in the sand come from the heart, and that's what matters to me." Meanwhile, Slickosaurus, who some people called sleazy, and others thought slimy, slinked away with his tail between his legs. He was sorry that he hadn't paid attention in school when the other dinosaurs learned how to read and write.

It is said that Tyranno de Bergerac and Emily Brontosaurus settled down together in a giant cave, whose gateway was a fantastic waterfall. When the sun shone, as it often did, dinosaur-size rainbows leapt in arches over the life-poem of Tyranno and Emily.

As for Slick, after going through some pretty hard times, he got wise, and decided to go to adult dinosaur school. At last report, he was actually learning to read and write.

Sometimes he visited with Tyranno and Emily and they read their poetry to him. Emily did not stay mad at Slick for very long, because after all, it was Slick whose trick brought Emily and Tyranno together.
