

Sweet Teeth

Fran Handman

Comic

MARTA: 10 to 15

JOSÉ: 10 to 15

TAYISHA: 10 to 15

CARMEN: 10 to 15

Note: Characters could alternatively be MARTA, JOSÉ, PEDRO, and CARMEN.

Four kids are sitting on a stoop in front of a house.

MARTA: I know how dinosaurs became extinct.

JOSÉ: Marta, are you going to tell us one of your silly stories again?

TAYISHA: Don't bother. We just want to hang out.

MARTA: You guys never want to learn anything. You really want to grow up ignorant?

CARMEN: So, you're going to educate us, right?

JOSÉ: Okay, okay. You're going to tell us anyway, so go ahead. How did the dinosaurs become extinct?

MARTA: You know that dinosaurs were pretty big, right?

TAYISHA: Right, so far.

MARTA: Which made them pretty clumsy.

JOSÉ: Uh-huh.

MARTA: Well, the small, fleet-footed dinosaurs used to throw parties.

TAYISHA: Dinosaurs threw parties? Come on, Marta.

MARTA: Why not? They had birthdays just like anyone else.

JOSÉ: And did they sing "Happy Birthday" to each other?

MARTA: Okay, guys. You don't want to hear this—never mind.

CARMEN: No, go on. We're all ears.

MARTA: Okay, so all the dinosaurs would be invited. But, because the really big dinosaurs were so clumsy, they never got to the parties on time and they always missed the treats. There they'd be, finally at the party, huffing and puffing and no ice cream and no cake.

TAYISHA: Ice cream! Cake! Whoa!

MARTA: Come on. You think you're so smart. You've heard of ice floes. Well, those dinosaurs were pretty inventive. They wanted ice cream. They figured it out. They got ice from the ice floes and they stomped on it

until it was in little chips and then they added shrimp. And there it was. Shrimp ice cream.

CARMEN: What? This story is even crazier than usual. I suppose they had lobster pie, too.

MARTA: They didn't have lobster then. But sometimes they added a green onion and made shrimp-onion ice cream. It gave it a special tang.

JOSÉ: And maybe a dash of paprika.

TAYISHA: And what did they put in the cake—tomatoes?

MARTA: You're getting too wise, Tayisha. I'll tell you about the cake. Where they lived, those dinosaurs, it was very, very hot and the ground got baked and caked.

ALL: Oh, no!!!

MARTA: They would cut out a round chunk of the caked earth, add a few insects and use melted shrimp ice cream for icing. They loved it. It was good for their digestion and it was a cure for wheezing.

CARMEN: So when is the extinct part of the story? So far all we got is some dinosaur recipes.

MARTA: Well, if you weren't so busy criticizing, you would remember that those big, clumsy dinosaurs never got any of that cake and ice cream. You think they just smiled and said, "No problem, that's all right. We came from far away under a hot sun and nobody left nothing for us. Thank you so much." You think they did that?

JOSÉ: So what did they do?

MARTA: Well, first they kicked up a ruckus and, of course, they were never invited to any of the fleet-footed dinosaurs' parties again.

CARMEN: That's it. This is a story about party rejects and that's how they became extinct, because they didn't have shrimp-onion ice cream?

MARTA: Whoa, Carmen. You are really stupid. Would I tell you a dumb story like that?

JOSÉ: Yes.

MARTA: I'll ignore that. Anyway, those dinosaurs might be clumsy but they were smart. They would make their own ice cream—and not with shrimp but with sugar.

CARMEN: Where would they get sugar?

MARTA: You ever heard of sweet-water lakes?

AYISHA: There isn't any sugar in sweet-water lakes.

MARTA: Were you there? Where do you think they got the name of "sweet-water." Well, just by accident, one of the big dinosaurs was swimming in one of those lakes and said, "Wow, this is really sweet water. It would taste better in ice cream than shrimp does. We'll show them. We'll have our own parties." And then they all stood around the lake and breathed on the water until it evaporated, and then they collected the sugar that was left.

JOSÉ: So, now, we have another dinosaur recipe and the dinosaurs are still not extinct. I'm ready to go get some ice cream. [*To all.*] How about you guys?

MARTA: I can't believe you. You've only heard the lead-up and now you're going to miss the big ending?

JOSÉ: One more minute, and then I'm gone.

MARTA: Okay, I'll tell you. When word got around that sweet ice cream had been invented, nobody went to the fleet-footed dinosaurs' parties anymore. They all came for the sweet ice cream—and they not only ate it at parties, but every day.

AYISHA: We're leaving, Marta. So far, no extinct dinosaurs.

MARTA: What happens when you eat sugar day after day?

CARMEN: You get fat.

MARTA: You get cavities. You've never seen anything until you've seen a bunch of dinosaurs running around with toothaches.

JOSÉ: Are you trying to tell us that every last dinosaur died of a toothache?

MARTA: You're joking. Who would believe that? What happened was that they all lost their teeth and then they couldn't eat. It was pretty hard to gum down a mastodon. So they all died. And that's how they became extinct.

T.M.S. (Total Male Syndrome)

Claudia I. Hass

Comic

LIZA: 12 to 13; a perfectionist.

ROB: 12 to 13; a clueless young teen.

HANNAH: 12 to 13; a down-to-earth pragmatic.

JESSIE: 12 to 13; a teen who is tired of doing all the work.

Wrappings and ribbons are scattered in LIZA's living room, as the kids attempt to wrap toys for a holiday service project from school. ROB is playing video games. LIZA holds up a present not beautifully wrapped. There may be other scattered presents—also not beautifully wrapped—as well as some bags of toys.

LIZA: I can't do this! Why is nothing looking pretty? I think we should have a theme.

ROB: What are you talking about?

LIZA: You know, like everything is sparkly gold with matching ribbons—or red and green. Something that ties them all together.