

# Dinosaurs in the Window Well

by Terri Reinhart



It's raining again and I'm sitting by the open window of our dining room, listening to the large drops falling on the metal window shade. It almost sounds like it's hailing. Hail would not be good. It would be normal for Colorado at this time of year, but it wouldn't be good for our garden.

When we moved to Colorado, my Dad got so excited that he bought raincoats and rain boots for all of us kids. We grew out of them before we had the chance to wear them. Actually, we wore them once. One morning as we were getting ready to walk to school, it started raining. Mom pulled out all the rain gear and we dutifully put it on.

The "storm" lasted ten minutes and we were dry and uncomfortable by the time we arrived at school. We also looked ridiculous. I was so embarrassed that I never wore a raincoat again, not even in a heavy downpour.

I love thunderstorms. Maybe it's because I've spent most of my life living in semi-arid and high desert climates, but rainstorms are a treat. Spending my first school years in Wyoming, rain was something that happened exactly twice in five years. At least, that's what I remember. When it did rain, really rain, it didn't stop for several days. The ground was hard and not used to having to soak up so much water, so it didn't.

The water level rose higher than the sidewalk, then crept up on our lawns, closer and closer to our front door. We watched it, got the sand bags out, and started making plans to build an ark. Before we got too far on our plans, the rain stopped as suddenly as it had begun, and within thirty minutes, everything was as dry as it had always been.

Of course, sometimes we would get something that started out as rain, but finished as snow. That's when we had dinosaurs in the window wells. They didn't start out as dinosaurs. They started out as salamanders and horny toads and other little creatures of the high desert that I loved to catch and bring home as pets.

## Screen door dialogue

My mother always told me the same thing. I could keep them as long as they stayed in the window well. She told me this from the other side of the screen door. We were rarely allowed inside the house during the spring and summer so I rarely spoke to my mother without a screen door between us. She was adamant about my pets, too. They weren't allowed inside, either.

My critters went in the window well and promptly disappeared underground. I was not deterred. The

next day, I'd be out hunting again, bringing home another pet or two. Maybe this one would have taken such a liking to me that it would stay above ground and come out to visit with me every morning. It didn't happen, unless it rained. When it rained, all the little desert creatures in Wyoming came up above the ground to see it for themselves. I think they were looking for an ark and didn't want to be left behind. There is something about a desert rain storm that does that to you.

So, the rain came and the lizards, salamanders, and horny toads came up in the window well. Then the rain turned to snow. The window wells were somewhat protected from the snow but not from the cold. When I went out the next morning, there were all of my pets, frozen solid and looking like a dinosaur display at the natural history museum.

I don't go out hunting for salamanders and horny toads anymore. I only bring home sensible animals like chickens, ducks, geese, goats, and the occasional donkey. My husband is mostly patient with me. He has, however, put his foot down from time to time about my pets. Which made it all the more satisfying when he came running in one day with a large garter snake in one hand and a grin on his face. "Can we keep it?"

He was serious! I looked at him and remembered all my days of bringing home lizards and salamanders. How could I say no? I told him we could keep it as long as it stayed on the front porch.

That's only because we don't have any window wells.

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