

In the corner of the crate, Dominika realised that she was not the only cargo. Next to her shoulder lay two extremely large, dark brown, speckled eggs. She pulled one towards her. It felt warm.

Before she could examine it any further in the darkness, the motion of the trolley came to a halt and she was tipped back into an upright position. She heard what she thought was the top crate being lifted off the top of hers and onto the ground, in desperate fear that she was about to be exposed. Then, an aggressive voice spoke again.

Another man had arrived. Dominika peered cautiously out from under the lid and could see the two men exchanging money, which was followed by raised voices – it became apparent that they were arguing.

“You can’t get away with this,” came one shout from the new man as he threw his arms in the air. “These things are rare, precious, priceless even!”

Suddenly, from amongst the trees, a huge winged creature swooped down with outstretched claws aimed at the two men. A squawking and screeching accompanied it then the creature swooped down again from the opposite direction for another attack. It looked like a marvellous bird but bigger than she had ever seen before – and it was not happy! Immediately, a third swoop and this time the men ran, screaming, deeper into the woods. Dominika squeezed out of her box. She saw the back of the two figures flailing their arms, still being pursued by the creature from the air.

Quickly, she turned around with one thought in her mind: three other crates lay around in the small clearing where she found herself. Through horizontal gaps in the crates, she could see small bird-like creatures inside two of them, who appeared to be trying to flap their fragile wings, looking frightened and alarmed. Bulging eyes, which were full of curiosity, rested upon long, curved beaks; they looked more like miniature dinosaurs than birds – but one thing was for

sure, they looked like baby versions of the huge creature that had just swooped down from the sky. Talking of which... in another instant, the big one was back, circling, squawking and swooping down over her head. Dominika ducked but realised it was not aiming at her but at the crates.