

RIDING THE GIGANOTOSAUR
Michael Swanwick

"How does it feel?"

"It feels great!"

The physical therapist lifted one of George Weskowski's arms and flexed it, to check its range of motion. It took all of her strength to do so, even though George wasn't resisting. She frowned. "No need to roar," she chided.

"Sorry."

"There's a transmitter chip connected to your speech centers. Just subvocalize, and I can pick up what you're saying on this radio. Tell me how your head feels."

He considered. "Fine. Just fine."

"No aches, itches, irritation around the sutures?"

"No."

"Dizziness, nausea, hallucinations, phantom sounds or smells, mood swings, loss of appetite?"
"I could eat a horse!"

The therapist held up a mirror. "Now look at yourself."

His skin was green, mottled with yellow, and covered with pebbly scales. His eyes were small, beady, homicidal. His arms, massive compared to what he had once possessed but puny compared to the rest of his new body, ended in three scimitar-taloned fingers. His legs were enormous. So was his tail. Opening his mouth revealed a murderous array of razor-sharp teeth.

"Oh yes," he cried rapturously. "Yes, oh my goodness, yes, absolutely, yes, yes."

"You like it?"

"It's everything I ever dreamed of being."

"The appearance doesn't bother you?"

"I look terrific!"

He did, too. Giganotosaurus was the biggest, baddest predator ever to walk the Earth -- larger, heavier, and more fearsome even than the old record-holder, Tyrannosaurus rex. "The king is dead," George whispered to himself. "Long live the king."

"What was that?"

"I said I'm eager to begin therapy, Dr. Alvarez."
"Good. Then let's try standing up."

