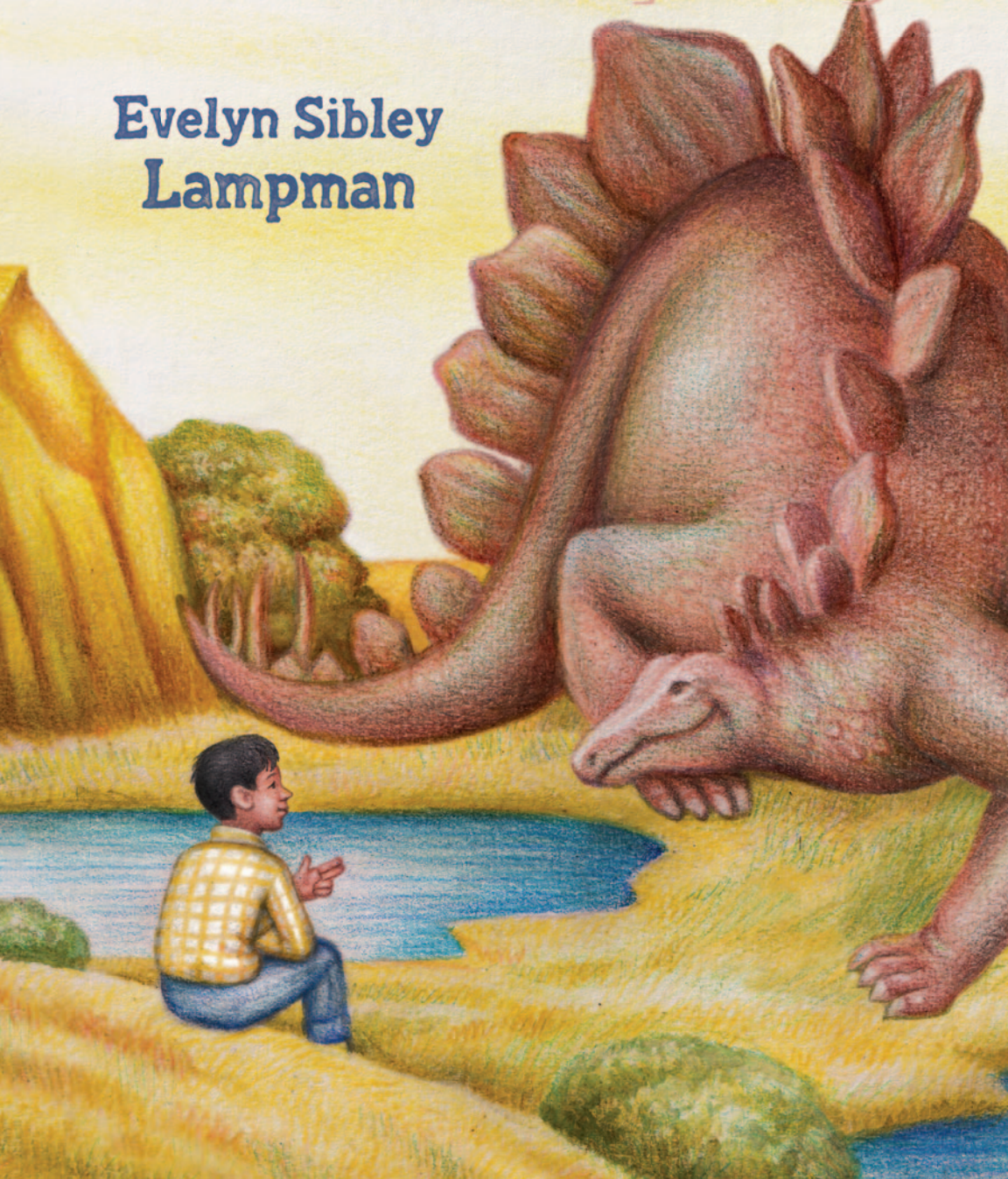


The Shy Stegosaurus of Indian Springs

Evelyn Sibley
Lampman

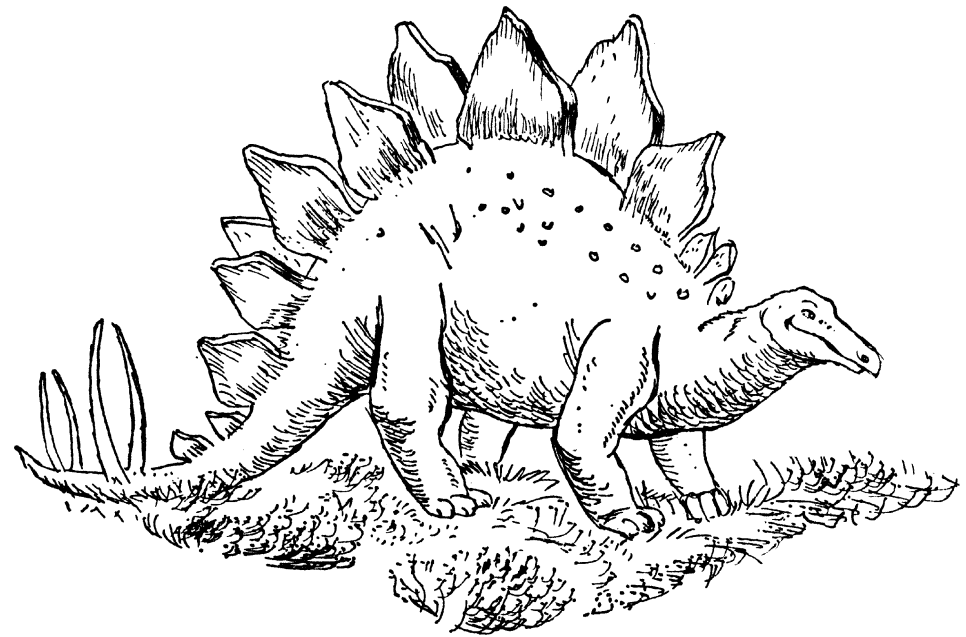


**The Shy Stegosaurus
of Indian Springs**

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Summary: Huck, an Indian boy living on a reservation in Oregon, and his friends Joan and
Joey Brown, find that knowing a supposedly extinct stegosaurus can be very helpful.

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Chapter 1

LARD AND FLOUR AND SALT.” On gnarled brown fingers Grandfather counted off the items which Huck must purchase at the agency store. “And oil for the lamp.”

“And a sweet?” coaxed Huck hopefully.

Old Opalo’s gray braids flapped from side to side with the motion of his head.

“We can do without a sweet. The other things we must have. Salt to season fish and the rabbits and squirrels. Lard, because it has been long since we had bear or venison to render our own fat. Flour, because it is not fitting that the medicine man or his great-grandson, Weewino, should stoop to the squaw-work of grinding meal. Only the coal oil for the lamp is a luxury.”

Huck smothered his disappointment. He should have known it was useless to ask. Except for fruits and berries, Grandfather didn’t care for sweets, and here on the reservation even those were in limited supply.

Occasionally fruit was brought in to the agency store, but Grandfather seldom bought produce of the land. Many of the more progressive Indians had planted fruit trees, apples and peaches and cherries, on their individual farms, and in the irrigated flats at Simnasho they had plots of strawberries and raspberries and melons. But Grandfather’s acreage was not irrigated, and even if it were, Huck doubted if Opalo would lower himself to the planting and tending of crops. He expected nature to do that for him, as she had for his forefathers.

In the spring he diligently dug roots—*loosh*, *koush*, and *piachee*—some of which he cooked fresh, others of which he dried and stored for later use. In late summer, when the scouts had returned from the mountains with the news that the *weewinos*, the huckleberries, were blue and ripe on the bushes, and after the proper ceremonies had been observed at He He Longhouse, Opalo scurried off with his toting baskets, eager as any squaw to gather his share. But from one season to another, he could forget sweets and live on fish and game.

Huck couldn't. Dessert with dinner was the one thing which made him glad that he attended the agency boarding school nine months out of twelve. Otherwise he would have much preferred spending all the year with his grandfather in this rough, unpainted shack, set on arid, rocky ground which supported only sagebrush and occasional juniper. Grandfather was often stern, of course, and he refused to speak English, using only his tribal Klickitat, which sometimes was a little difficult for Huck, since he heard it only three months out of the year, and Grandfather did have some queer ideas, but he was kind. He didn't laugh at Huck, as did most of the children at the agency school, and call him a "blanket Indian." And when Grandfather addressed him as Weewino, it didn't sound degrading as when Bob Catchum and Nappy Post called him Huckleberry, even though it meant the same thing. Those two were the only ones who called him that. Everyone else, even his teachers, settled for Huck, which wasn't quite so bad.

By now Grandfather had finished counting out the money for the supplies from an old deerskin pouch, and he put the silver in Huck's hand.

"Buy yourself a sweet," he said gently. "I have given you extra for that."



“A candy bar?” cried Huck joyfully.

Opalo frowned slightly at the English words. There was no Klickitat translation, and Huck had spoken impulsively.

“Buy what you will,” he said severely. “You are a good boy, Weewino. Go now. It is a long way, and Paint is old. He cannot gallop as he once did.”

Although it was still early morning, the sun was already warm. It just cleared the flat crest of the rimrock cliff which rose a short distance behind the shack and ran on for a few miles like a great protecting wall. Because it was still in shadows, the cliff looked gray this morning, streaked with mauve and blue where the rock was cut in great slashes and gullies; later, when the sun had climbed a little higher, it would be brown and gold and orange. Nothing grew on the steep sloping sides, and nothing grew on the top, which was so flat that Huck could imagine someone slicing it neatly with a knife. But at the very foot the sagebrush began, scattered clumps which sometimes widened to sizable stands as big as a good-sized flower bed.

It was too bad you couldn't eat sagebrush, Huck thought as he crossed over to the corral. But nobody could. It wasn't good for anything except to keep the land from blowing away. At school last year they had studied soil erosion, and maybe that was the reason why people just left sagebrush alone and didn't try to clear it out.

As he reached the fence, however, he saw that someone had been clearing sagebrush. Yesterday there had been a high stand of it just beside the gate, but now it was gone. Grandfather must have decided it was in the way and pulled it up. But how could it have been in the way? The gate swung back in the opposite direction. There must have been another reason why Grandfather hadn't wanted it there. Of course, it was his land and his sagebrush, and he was entitled to do

with it as he pleased, but just the same Huck didn't like to think of him doing silly, futile things like digging up sagebrush.

Bob Catchum and Nappy Post said everyone thought that Old Opalo was crazy, that he ought to be put away. At the time, Huck had torn into them both, and one of the teachers had come running to separate them. He had been too proud to tell what had started the fight, and neither Bob nor Nappy admitted saying anything out of the way, so Huck didn't really know whether everyone thought that about his grandfather or whether Bob and Nappy were only teasing. But ever since he had been careful to conceal as many of the old man's oddities as he could from the rest of the reservation.

He slipped off the leather thong which held the sagging gate in place, and Paint started galloping toward him. Usually the cayuse stood quietly in one spot, hardly seeming to notice when Huck threw the blanket over his back, but today he could hardly wait to cross the corral. His eyes rolled, showing the whites, and he thrust his soft nose into Huck's hand, seeming to beg for reassurance.

“What's the matter with you?” demanded Huck in amazement.

Paint's eyes rolled again. He stood trembling while the blanket was thrown in place, and as soon as Huck had leaped on his back he raced out of the open gate, as though pursued by a swarm of bees. He did not reduce his speed until a good mile had been put between them and the corral, but by that time he was wheezing so hard he had to stop.

“What's got into you?” Huck was worried. “You want to kill yourself off?”

Paint's spotted sides were wet, and his eyes continued to roll, but apparently he, too, saw the need for pausing to rest. He stood quite still on the narrow, rutty road, and

after a moment his head drooped low, as though he might be contemplating the saffron dust underfoot.

Huck jumped down. He couldn't imagine what had got into Paint to make him behave that way. Maybe he'd been dreaming and thought he was a skittish young stallion again. Maybe he'd grown tired of his solitary life in the corral and of his occasional chore of hauling Opalo in a wagon or Huck on his back to the agency store and home again. Perhaps this was his way of revolting, of proving to his masters that he was as good a horse as he had ever been and was worthy of a more exciting existence.

Poor old Paint! If that were so, it must be a big letdown. He was so winded now that it would take him a good while before he could go on. There was nothing to do but wait.

Huck told himself that it was too bad that he hadn't thought to bring the washing. Paint had given out close by the hot spring which Opalo used for that purpose, on the rare occasions when he felt it was necessary to wash anything. In the summer months that Huck lived with his grandfather, he did a washing every week, for cleanliness was a virtue greatly stressed by the agency school. He always gathered up his own soiled garments and as many of Opalo's as he could persuade the old man to part with, carried them here, and washed them as he had seen the older squaws wash theirs in the many hot springs closer to the agency. He was grateful that this particular spring was on his grandfather's property and too far away for anyone to see him at this woman-work.

Yes, it was a shame that he hadn't brought the washing. His other pair of jeans was dirty, and so were both of his shirts. He hadn't owned a clean one to wear to the agency this morning and had been forced to put on the one which showed fewer stains. Perhaps there would be time to wash it

now. It would dry quickly in the sun. He looked critically at Paint's still-heaving sides and decided there would be plenty of time.

The hot spring was off the road and concealed from view by a rocky spur which separated from the main cliff and fanned out in a crescent. There were many springs like it on the reservation, some, like this, erupting singly from the barren ground and others, like those closer to the agency, clustered in groups of five or six. In cold weather they gave off clouds of white steam, but in the summer the water bubbled up clearly, scenting the air with a sharp tang of minerals. The ground on one side of the spring had been worn away, so that the water spilled over in a little stream, collecting below in a shallow pool. Eventually, it must have been absorbed by the thirsty ground, for the depth and size of the pool remained constantly the right size for a washtub.

Peeling off his shirt as he walked, Huck circled the spur of rocks which rose higher than his head and entered his private laundry. Then he stopped short, and his black eyes filled with suspicion as they observed the spring, the adjacent pool, and the surrounding area. Someone had been here since he had! Someone had been digging great holes in the hard, rocky ground. Why, one of them was as big as a wheelbarrow!

His heart sank as he stared at the pitted ground. It was Grandfather, of course. No one else ever came here. And even if they did, they certainly wouldn't dig holes in a place where there was nothing to find. He remembered the sagebrush which had disappeared from behind the corral fence. Even that made more sense than this. It was Grandfather's right to remove sagebrush if it offended him, and it was his right to dig holes. But why would he do it? Why would anyone in his right mind dig holes when there was no reason to do so?

Automatically he continued on to the pool, knelt down, and dipped his soiled shirt into the warm water. He rubbed it back and forth between his hands, and the minerals brightened the fabric, cleaning it of grime. As he worked, his mind worried over the problem of Grandfather's latest peculiarity.

Bob and Nappy couldn't be right. He refused to believe it. Grandfather was old and determined to cling to the ways of his forefathers, but he was all right. He was good and kind. Hadn't he understood that Huck had wanted some candy more than anything and given his permission and the money to buy some? He patiently tried to teach Huck everything he knew—how to make snares and traps, how to dress hides, how to recognize signs so you were never lost, no matter where you were. What did it matter if he sometimes talked with spirits Huck couldn't see or cooked little dabs of roots and bark and then poured them on the ground as an offering to forgotten gods? Grandfather wasn't crazy. He was smart. Smarter than lots of people who laughed at him. But why did he have to go around digging meaningless holes in the ground? Huck was glad that no one ever came out here to their farm, where they might see these gaping excavations.

When the shirt was clean, he stood up and wrung it out. It was necessary to leave the secluded area of the spring to find a juniper to serve as a clothesline, and today he went, as always, to the same bush.

The bush grew on a ledge overlooking what was, to Huck, a most fascinating view. The boundaries of the reservation ended here, and down below, in a flat area below the cliff, was a rustic summer resort. He could see a row of cabins; a large, white-painted building, which presented only its back, so he didn't know what it was used for; and a large, tiled swimming pool filled with sky-blue water. On Saturdays and Sundays, the pool was always crowded with bathers in bright-colored suits, and the parking lot behind the white building was full

of cars. During the week, there were few customers for the pool, which Huck considered strange, because he thought that the whole resort—especially the pool—was beautiful and that people who could frequent such a place must be very rich.

Every week, when he finished his washing, he spread it out on the juniper, then lay down on his stomach on the ledge to watch the bathers. They were all strangers to him, for the Indians on the reservation swam in the river and did not patronize the pool. But sometimes, if the guests were hardy enough to withstand the spartan cabins longer than a week, Huck began to recognize them.

For two weeks he had watched a boy and girl about his own age. He guessed that they were twins; they were so close to a size, and they seemed to enjoy each other's company. The boy wore blue trunks and the girl a blue suit, and they both had red hair. They were only fair swimmers, but they were always chasing one another around the pool and ducking each other underwater. It looked like fun. Huck wished he had a twin, or at least a brother.

He spread his dripping shirt carefully across the spiny juniper, then walked over to the ledge. There lay the pool, blue and sparkling in the morning sunlight, and for a moment he thought it was deserted. Then a small figure in blue bathing trunks popped out from under a beach umbrella which had been anchored in the gray facing about the pool. It was followed immediately by a second figure in a blue suit. For a moment the two stood staring directly up at him; then, surprisingly, they both began to wave.

Huck looked behind him. They were waving at him, for there was no one else around. A little shyly, he waved back. He hadn't known that all the time he had been spying on them, they had been watching him.

The boy stopped waving, and his arm made a circular motion. He was inviting Huck to come down, to join them

at the pool. But Huck was too shy. Besides, he had to get Grandfather's supplies from the agency. He shook his head no, he couldn't come.

The distance was too far for voices to carry, but the twins understood. The boy stopped beckoning. He saw them speaking together; then both began a more involved pantomime. They were trying to tell him something, to give him a message. He couldn't understand, and he thrust out his hands helplessly to tell them so.

This time the girl did the pantomime alone. She motioned to herself and her brother. Then she pointed to one of the cabins. They were going there, but they weren't going to stay long, for by gestures she made him understand that they would return. Then they could climb the cliff and join him.

For a moment Huck was pleased. He would have liked to know this boy and girl, to talk with them. They seemed friendly, and it would be good to have a friend. He had none at the school. Although Nappy and Bob were the only ones who said it aloud, he knew that the others thought him strange. They avoided him whenever they could, left him out of everything. Perhaps it was because he was the great-grandson of a medicine man and no one believed in such things anymore.

Then he remembered those gaping holes around the hot spring. Anyone who saw them would ask questions.

He shook his head violently. By motions he tried to tell them that they mustn't come up here. The cliff was too steep, too dangerous. Besides, he wouldn't be here when they arrived. He had to go away. He had to go right now.

Without even stopping to make sure they understood, he turned and hurried off. He and Paint were halfway to the agency before he remembered that he had left his wet shirt on the juniper bush.

A supposedly extinct dinosaur, who looks like a mountain in motion, can be an alarming kind of friend. But Huck and his friends, Joan and Joey Brown, found that George, the shy stegosaurus, could be very helpful.

Huck lived on an Indian reservation in Oregon with his great-grandfather Opalo, the tribe's former medicine man. He was a lonely boy until a banana and a resort vacation brought the four friends together. From that day on Huck had no time to be unhappy, the friends stayed busy with picnics, fishing, and Indian wrestling—which they always let George win!

Join the friends on their adventures with George, the shy stegosaurus with the pea-sized brain, in this sequel to *The Shy Stegosaurus of Cricket Creek*.



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