

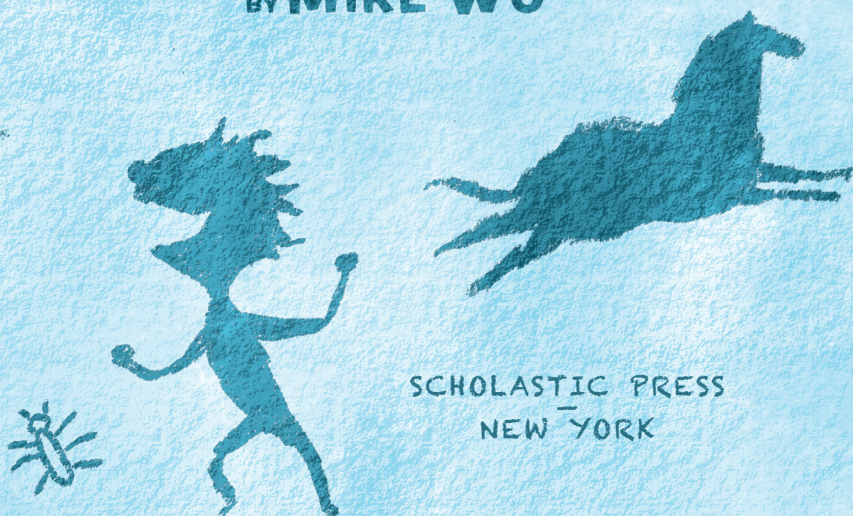
The OODLETHUNKS

STEG-O-NORMOUS



ADELE GRIFFIN

ART BY **MIKE WU**



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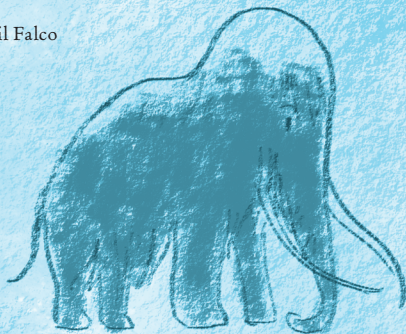
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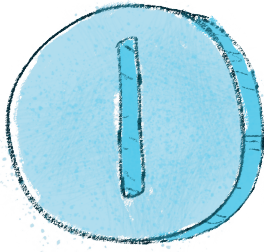
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PLAYDATE!

Can I tell you something? My pet egg hatched into a baby stegosaurus.

I named her Stacy Steg Oodlethunk.

Stacy is the cutest steg I ever saw. She understands every word I say. She *urmp urmps* when she is happy. She sleeps on the end of my sleep ledge and warms my toes at night. Sometimes my toes feel smushed the next day, but how many kids get to keep a steg on the bed?

Stacy is hard work but I don't mind. I'm always learning new things about her. She likes mosses and berries for breakfast. She enjoys walking through Woggle Woods. She cuts her tiny teeth on rocks. And she always stomps over

to No-Name River to check out her back plates in its reflection. She is proud of her plates.

“Stacy is one active little steg,” said Mom one night at dinner.

“She is also one hungry little steg,” said Dad. “Today, while the kids were at school, Stacy got into my zucchini patch. She ate everything.”

“Good job, Stacy!” Bonk banged his Bonk-It club. “Zucchini taste like snot, only without the good boogery flavor!” He leaned down and scratched Stacy behind her ear.



“Wrong answer, Bonk,” said Dad. “We need those zucchinis for winter.”

“Sorry, Dad,” I said. “I’ll find more breakfast for Stacy tomorrow, so she won’t get the munchies.”

But the next day, Stacy ate all of Dad’s kitchen seasonings.

“My cinnamon, paprika, and mint—all gone!” he said. “I think we should tie her up.”

“Nooooo, Stacy won’t like that!” I cried. “She needs to roam!”

“Stacy is only part pet,” said Dad. “She is also part wild.”

“Urrr! I’m part wild, too!” Bonk jumped on the dinner slab and began to dance.

“Bonk, get your stinky feet out of the bone broth,” said Mom. “And yuck, I need to cut your toenails.”

“We’ll keep Stacy on a long leash so she can roam,” Dad assured me.

But the next day, Stacy was in trouble again. This time with Mom.





“Stacy ate my best straw-braided wedge sandals,” Mom said. “That steg does not have good instincts. And she is getting too big.”

“Too big for what?” I asked.

“Too big for here,” said Mom. “Stacy is outgrowing us. Her tail alone is as long as five fruitafossors. She needs to fend for herself.”

“But she can’t survive out there!”

“She’ll be fine out there,” said Dad. “Stacy has no natural predators.”

What crazy Oodletalk! I put my hands over my ears and waggled my head.

The next day was no school.

“And you know what that means, Stace,” I said.

“PLAYDATE!”

Stacy and I didn’t know any other dinos, but she was buddies with Storm,



the fruitafossor of my best friend, Erma Gurd. We tried to get them together whenever we could.

Another thing I'd learned about my steg: She got along with everyone!

I was glad to take Stacy out of the cave for the day. Before we left, I gathered a triple helping of mosses and berries for her breakfast. I also made her a special trail mix: thistles, pebbles, and sunflower seeds. Stace was so happy with her food that she slurped my face completely wet.

"Pelt up today, Oon," said Dad. "Gonna be a cold one, and the Gurd's live pretty high on Mount Urp."

I pulled a pelt over Stacy, too. It only covered her to the middle.

By the time we got to Erma's cave, Stacy had finished her trail mix.

Erma's mom was sitting outside next to a huge mound of moss. "Hi, Oona. Look what I invented." Erma's mom was always inventing new, cute things. "I call these earmuffs," she said. "Here's a pair for you." Then she stuffed



each of my ears full of moss. “To keep out the cold, see? You can have that pair.”

“Thanks,” I said, though they felt kind of scratchy.

I led Stacy through the Gurd cave into Erma’s room, where Erma showed me Storm’s latest trick.

“He can stand and balance a termite on the tip of his nose!”

She tossed him a termite. Storm jumped to his back legs and caught it neatly on his nose. Then he ate it.

“That’s so sweet!” I said. “Stacy doesn’t have tricks yet. Her main trick is eating.”

“Let’s teach her how to sit,” suggested Erma.

“Okay.” I looked Stacy in the eye. She seemed ready for anything.

“Sit!” I told her.

Stacy leaned over and snarfed one of my earmuffs.

“She’s smarter when she’s not hungry,” I said.
“Stace, don’t—”

Before I could finish my sentence, Stacy ate the other one.

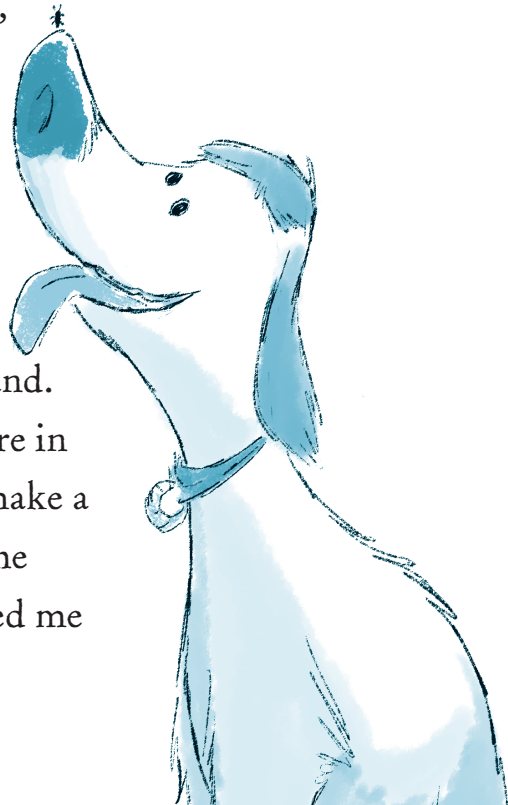
“I guess that was her trick,” I said.

“She’s smart in her own way,” agreed Erma.
“And she’s growing so fast.”

“Too fast! Last night, Mom and Dad told me they want to turn her loose! But where would she go? What would she do?”

We looked over at Stacy, who was now showing Storm how to chew the feathers out of Erma’s pillow.

Erma squeezed my hand.
“Have no fear, Oon. We’re in this together, and we’ll make a plan for Stacy.” I knew she meant it. Erma had helped me







care for Stacy from way back when she'd been a lost orphan egg.

"Time's running out," I told her.

We watched as Storm climbed up on Stacy's head for a nap. "I wish you had a magic recipe for Stace to be small forever." Erma sighed.

Magic? Magic! My idea split straight through me like *boom!* Like how Dad chopped a valley-melon in summertime. "I've got it!"



“What?”

“I think I’ve figured out how we can keep Stacy in our cave!”

“Tell me!”

“I’ll do better than that,” I said. “I’ll show you. Tomorrow, after school!”

“Cool!” said Erma. “It’s on.”