Ode to Stegosaurus

Roy Jacobstein

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That magnificent cascade of convenient paired plates—not only were they his central heating and cooling, Jurassic to mid-Cretaceous, but countless 20th Century kids passed their lengthy laughing hour in museums great or small or in parks verdant or bare, sequestered snugly there. How many of the adults they’ve become must still possess their bronze or plastic replica, once boon companion that shared bed and board and primal fear (of Allosaurus, T. rex—those implacable, giant-thighed, flesh-devourers, stalactite- and stalagmite-teeth ready to tear the instant Mom turned out the lights).

O Roof Lizard, stalwart walnut-brained ten-ton friend, rotund muncher of fronds and leaves, state fossil of Colorado, what hath they wrought, these paleontologists bent on revision? They’ve made you more sleek, as if you’d been subjected to serial diet fads and they all took. They’ve shrunk your plates, wiped out your stolid symmetry fore and aft by raising your hind legs, jacking up your underbelly from the soft green ground. We’ve lost the promise of your familiar body: *Come, ride me into darkness, I will carry you and protect you with my many-spiked tail and lick your wounds clean with my grass-loving tongue.*