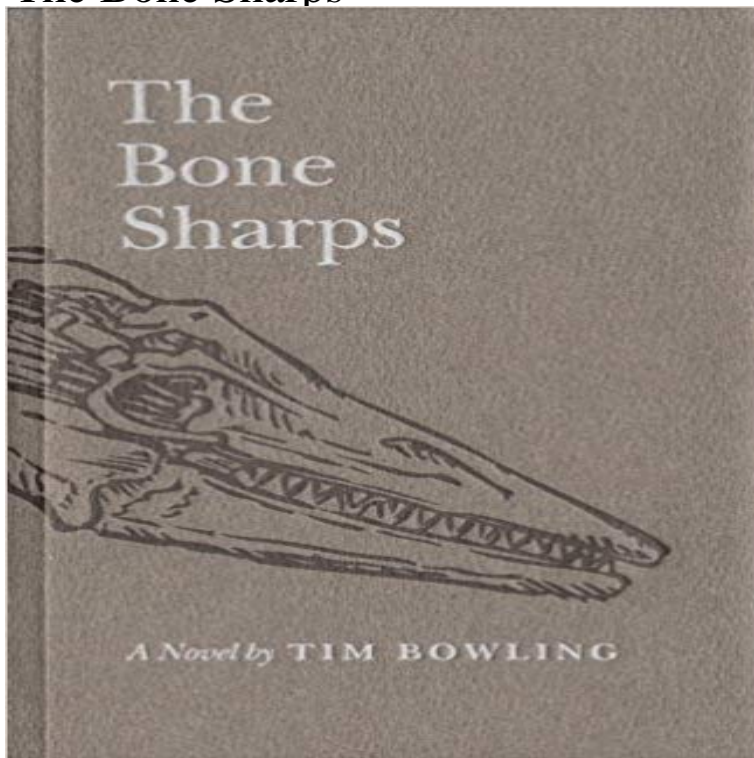


## The Bone Sharps



Tim Bowling's new novel is a fictionalized account of the life and work of Charles Sternberg (1850-1943), student of the renowned American proto-paleontologist Edward Drinker Cope. Contrasting the astonishing discoveries made in the bonefields of the Alberta badlands and the American plains with the chaos and destruction in the trenches of the First World War, *The Bone Sharps* evokes the pivotal transition from the nineteenth-century world of order and faith to the uncertainties of the modern era. As the novel opens, Sternberg leads a new generation into the badlands to collect and identify dinosaur bones. By night he is haunted by his previous exploits and by the ghost of his daughter, Maud, who died while working for one of his colleagues. Sternberg is not the only sleepless soul in the camp. Lily, a young assistant on the expedition, has had no mail from Sternberg's protégé, Scott Cameron, who is fighting in the trenches in France; she fears the worst. As the novel progresses, Bowling brings to life this fascinating period in scientific exploration, reaching back to the Bone Wars that took place between Edward Drinker Cope and his rival Othniel Marsh in the late nineteenth century as the two men criss-crossed the American West in search of new species and the notoriety that came with discovery. In the sun-drenched flats, the violent skirmishes and the candlelight of tents, Bowling brings readers into the world of early paleontology through the life of one of its most prolific forerunners. According to the author: In the spring of 1999, along with my wife Theresa and our seven-month-old son Dashiell, I spent five weeks looking after our friends' eighty-acre ranch just outside of Dinosaur Provincial Park in southeastern Alberta. During those five magical weeks in the ancient, eerie badlands landscape, I began to read some books about the region that our friends kept

on their shelves. Immediately, I was drawn to the tales of the pioneer paleontologists. Their painstaking labours to extract and preserve dinosaur fossils in all that majesty of space and silence at the same time that western civilization was mired in the carnage and cacophony of World War I seemed both heroic and poignant. Especially moving to me was the life of Charles Sternberg, a deeply religious American bone hunter who, with his three sons, had been hired by the Canadian government to find and preserve some of the Alberta badlands rich dinosaur heritage for our countrys museums. Over time, I began to see Sternberg as well as his mentor, Edward Drinker Cope as gatekeepers to a time of faith that twentieth-century science and warfare would effectively destroy. Their struggles to celebrate the spiritual through scientific discovery seemed as ancient and fragile as the bones they hungered to uncover. Such individuals seemed to stand with one foot in the distant centuries and the other in the modern age.

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