

TREASURES  OF THE EARTH

SET *in*
STONE



KIMBERLEY
WOODHOUSE

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Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

This is a work of historical reconstruction; the appearances of certain historical figures are therefore inevitable. All other characters, however, are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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This book is lovingly dedicated to:

My dear friends,
Jeni and Gary Koch

Two people who have walked the road of life with Jeremy and me for a decade plus, and we love you dearly.

GARY—you're awesome. Plain and simple. I could write paragraphs about you but you'd probably get mad at me, so I will refrain. Your zest for reading thrills me and you always know how to make me laugh.

JENI—dear friend, fellow crafter, Bible study partner, prayer partner, and my research buddy. Thank you for sacrificing so much time to journey with me to Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, and allllllll the museums so I could write this series. Your willingness to step off the beaten path and trek with me into the middle of nowhere to find just the right spot to set a story shows how much you must love this crazy author.

Thank you both for sticking with me all these years. For praying. For loving on us. For reading. And most importantly, for being our friends.



DEAR READER

I gave the heroine in this story her first name in honor of my dear friend, prayer partner, and golfing buddy—Martha Ilgenfritz.

If you haven't read the first book in this series, *The Secrets Beneath*, that's all right (though you really should go pick it up—no pressure). But allow me to give you a little context and set the stage. Dinosaur National Monument is in the northwest corner of Colorado and the northeast corner of Utah. Earl Douglass—a paleontologist for the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh—found the first bones in 1909, which were the beginning of the dinosaur quarry which is now famous around the world. Earl was a fascinating man and dreamed of having a place where people could see the bones in the actual rock for all time. His dream became reality.

It's because of him that Dinosaur National Monument is there. And it's amazing.

The idea for a series about women in paleontology and dinosaurs came because I threw out a question to my readers on my Facebook page about things (topics, people, historical events) they would like to see next in my books. Laura Flint tossed out "The Bone Wars." Now, if you don't know anything about that, you'll learn about them through this series,

but you can also look them up online. I'll give links in the Note from the Author at the end of the book. But through our chats, Laura connected me with Diane Douglass Iverson, Earl's granddaughter. Isn't that awesome?

Through this amazing friendship, I learned incredible things about Earl. That's why you'll see quotes from his personal journals throughout the book. I hope they inspire and intrigue you as well. Diane has graciously given us permission to use Earl's words and poems and has helped me immeasurably throughout my research and writing of this book.

I spent almost two weeks out in Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah doing research. Meeting with real-life paleontologists like Dr. Sue Ann Bilbey, going to museum after museum, and visiting site after site. When it came down to figuring out the timeline for my novels, I wanted to show the progression in paleontology over the years. Book one showed the beginning of the Great Dinosaur Rush era. Women were also fascinated with paleontology, but it wasn't seemly for a woman to dig in the dirt back then. Anna—the main character of *The Secrets Beneath*—spent her life sketching all the finds at her father's digs, jumping in to save his find when his health fails.

Set in Stone brings us to the height of the Bone Wars. We're going to journey with Martha Jankowski, who dreams of becoming a full-fledged paleontologist with her name on a display at a museum.

Thank you for joining me as we travel once again through history to the bone quarries.

Until next time,
Kimberley

“Go forth into nature and see what she has to show thee. Enter the silent wood and lose thyself in thoughts unthought before. Let fancy construct worlds unknown—fairy worlds of the mind. All this is wonderful, but the wonder is of thyself the mystery of the mind and that matter can arrange itself, know to perceive, to perceive other forms, other arrangements of matter and then to think beyond, to construct a new world of its own yet of fragments of the old.”

~Earl Douglass—Saturday, January 28, 1888

one

“It is hard to establish a philosophy that is optimistic and yet will fit with the terrors of this world.”

~Earl Douglass

| 1872 • COLORADO TERRITORY

“Martha! Step away from the ridge.”

At Father’s deep voice booming behind her, Martha startled and backed away from the edge of the mesa. Two strong arms wrapped around her small frame and swept her to safety. Father shifted her around to see him, his eyes dark and serious.

“You must listen to me, Martha. If I am to teach you to dig, there are rules to follow. We need to keep you and the workers safe. Understand?”

She nodded, her fingers picking at the light cotton collar of Father’s work shirt. Tears threatened to fall, and she could feel her bottom lip trembling. “I’m sorry.” The thought of falling into the great chasm below them was almost as bad as hearing the fear in her father’s voice. Everything inside her shook.

“You’re safe, not to worry.” He nodded and set her down

next to him, holding her small hand in his. “Now. I have a surprise for you.”

“A surprise?” All the turmoil stopped as she hopped from one foot to the other. “What is it? I want to see!” Father’s surprises were the best.

He chuckled as he led her down a small packed-dirt path. “You will, my dear. Are you ready to see the bones we discovered?”

Martha nodded as visions of long tails, ferocious teeth, and giant feet filled her imagination. “Is it a *Mega . . . Miglo . . . Megalosaurus*”—she forced the big word out slowly—“like Mr. Owen talked about?”

“No. And to my knowledge, those have only been found in England.” Father squeezed her hand, his brown eyes warmed by the sunlight. “We are not quite sure what we’ve found. But that is part of the fun. Digging for bones gives us the chance to learn about the animals that roamed the earth thousands of years ago.”

They rounded a corner down into the valley, where the excavation was taking place. The sharp sound of metal on metal echoed off the rocks. Red dirt swirled in thick clouds over some men as they dumped large wheelbarrows of dirt into a pile. Several wagons sat in the center, covered with tarps.

“What are those wagons?”

He glanced over to where Martha pointed. “Ah. Those are our transport wagons. The smaller bones we find on any dig are carefully placed first in crates and then in those wagons. The bones are covered so the sun does not dry out or damage them. Once the crates are full, they are transported to the nearest train station, where they are then shipped to the museum that purchased them. However . . .” Father turned them away from the bustling men to a smaller, quieter area. “This is where I am working. And this is where your surprise is.”

Martha clapped her hands, a wide smile on her face. Today

was her favorite day. Her father wasn't around much because he was often away on trips. But this dig had kept him close to home. To watch him dig and find bones in the ground was a treat far greater than hearing the stories when he came home. This was real—not just in her imagination.

She skipped along beside him, kicking up dust around her sturdy work boots. Another gift from Father. They were thicker and plainer than the shiny patent leather shoes Mother made her wear. But they were comfortable and didn't pinch her feet.

He slipped his jacket off and draped it on a nearby boulder. Then picked up a large wooden box with a big handle and put it on a small table. Martha peeked over the edge of the box as he pulled out several tools. A pointy triangle, a big hammer, a magnifying glass, a brush with stiff bristles, a skinny metal pole with a pointy end, and a flat metal rod with a round bottom were laid out on the small wooden table beside the boulder.

She pressed into his side. "Do you use all of these?"

"I do, every day. Let me tell you what they are." Father picked up the pointy pole and the metal rod with the flat edge. "These two tools are called chisels. They work in different ways. The flat edge can help break up rocks that are tucked along a bone without damaging it. The pointed chisel helps break up stones in areas that a flat chisel can't get into. You use them by tapping the hammer on the flat bottom of each tool. But you must be careful not to hit too hard or you risk damaging the bone." He set them down and picked up the brush. "This clears away dirt and debris so you can better see where you are working." He held the brush out to Martha. She took it and almost dropped it. It was heavier than it looked. The worn wooden handle was too big for her hands. She ran her fingers over the soft end of the stiff bristles, sending dust swirling around her fingers.

She sneezed.

Father smiled at her and took the brush from her, then picked up the magnifying glass. Holding it in front of his face, he crossed his eyes. She let out a loud giggle. His eyes were large and funny looking behind the glass. He handed it to her. “Now, let’s see what fun we can have with this.” He knelt in the dirt and motioned for her to join him. “Hold the glass over this hole here and tell me what you see.”

Crouching down, she held the glass over the dirt and peered at the red clay. “Father, look!” She giggled. Tiny ants scurried over pebbles and disappeared into small holes. Bits of silver glinted from several rocks. She pulled the glass away and blinked. Everything she saw looked so small again.

“That magnifying glass helps me see little details in bones and rocks.” He guided her hand back over the sparkling rocks. “You see that shiny substance?”

She nodded.

“That’s called marcasite. It shows up in many rocks here at the dig. When someone finds it in big chunks, it can be worth a lot of money. Maybe today we will find a small chunk to save for good luck.” He took the magnifying glass from her and stood. Oh, how she loved the sound of his voice. At home, it was his excitement as he told her the stories of his digs. But here? His love for the work colored every word he said. He was such a smart man—probably the smartest man to ever live. She smiled just thinking about it. One day, she wanted to be as smart as him and dig beside him. Wouldn’t that be grand?

A moment later he was by her side again with a small cloth roll. A bit of twine wrapped around it in a simple bow. “Now. It’s time for your surprise.”

Martha took the roll from her father and pulled on one of the strings. The bow unraveled and she tugged it off the cloth, then unwrapped the roll on a boulder. Oh! There, tucked in small pockets, were the same kind of tools he had just shown her! But instead of being too big, they were just right for her

hands. She pulled out the flat-headed chisel and clutched it in her hand. It wasn't heavy like Father's, but light and easy to hold. There was a small brush, hammer, pointed chisel, and . . .

Martha pulled on the dark brown handle sticking out of the last pocket. Her very own magnifying glass!

"Thank you!" she squealed. With careful movements she tucked the magnifying glass back in its pocket then threw her arms around his shoulders. "Thank you, thank you!"

His laughter rumbled in his chest. "You are welcome, my dear girl. You are a big six-year-old now. These tools aren't just for show. How would you like to help me dig a little today? We might even find a treasure to take home to your mother."

Martha nodded against his shoulder, basking in the warmth of his hug. "Let's try to find some marc . . . I don't remember the name."

"Marcasite."

"That's it. It's so pretty and shiny, I know Mother would love it."

He pulled back and brushed her dark hair away from her face. "You are right. She would love something pretty and shiny." He let her go and turned to the large rocks where treasures hid. "Well, Martha Jankowski, are you ready to work on your first dinosaur dig?"

She stood and straightened the canvas smock that covered her brown dress. "Yes, sir." She rolled her tools back up and held them close to her chest. Her heart pounded hard, and her smile grew so big that her cheeks pinched.

This really was her favorite day *ever!*



1872, TWO WEEKS LATER • OUTSIDE DENVER
CITY, COLORADO TERRITORY

The light dimmed in the man's eyes as the pool of red around him grew.

Such a shame that he had to die. He'd been rather nice to look at. When his mouth was closed.

She tilted her head. Her gaze swept him from head to toe. The odd way his crumpled form was situated on the ground was rather . . . pathetic.

She stared for a while longer and then bowed her head. How long to wait? The scent of blood and death would soon draw wild animals and birds, which was just fine. They could finish the job. The man would disappear and be out of her life forever.

Still. Death deserved respect. She gave the man what he refused to give her the last few months of his life: a moment of silence. That was surely sufficient. It was more than he deserved. All his threats about exposing her plans to Marsh. His pitiful attempt to sabotage her.

What a fool to underestimate her passion and drive.

But then, they all did. Her father's associates. Her society friends. She was beloved for her beauty. A delicate ornament on some businessman's arm. They all acted like a woman couldn't be beautiful *and* clever.

The joke was on them.

With her left hand, she laid a four-button, white kid glove on his chest.

A hawk screamed, and she jumped. Pressing the same hand to her heart, she glanced at the sky. The sun slanted toward the Rocky Mountains.

Oh dear. She'd wasted too much time.

If she thought about taking his life, it made her head hurt. And he wasn't worth wasting a headache on. He didn't deserve . . . life.

With her back straight and her chin high, she turned on her heel and faced the magnificent mountains. Nothing but beauty and a fresh future ahead, one that would be in her complete control from now on. She inhaled a quick breath and allowed a smile to stretch across her face.

Now. Things could finally get back to the way they should be. After all, no one would even know he was gone. She had made sure of that.

But the weight in her right hand brought her attention down. The knife dripped blood onto the rocky soil. Her clothes were stained too. Reaching for the handle of her reticule with her clean hand, she forced herself to release her ironclad grip on the knife's leather handle. The weapon clattered to the ground.

Where was that rag? It had to be in there somewhere. After a few moments of digging with her untarnished hand, she pulled out the rag she'd torn from one of his old shirts. She swiped the cloth back and forth over the blood and dirt caking her right hand until no blood remained. Pressing the cloth between her clean and dirty palms, she rubbed until all reminders of the man—and what she'd done to him—were absent from her skin and the knife.

She tucked the rag-wrapped blade into her reticule and walked back over to her horse. In her saddlebags, she had a change of clothes. A glance around in all directions confirmed there wasn't another soul for miles. The tumbleweed-covered gulley was wide and desolate.

She changed into clean garments, then retrieved the matches from her bag. Gathering the soiled clothes and rag together, she tossed them on the parched ground. The match crackled as it ignited, and she threw it on the pile. She lit another one and threw it on the other side. In seconds, the flames licked up every corner of the pile and she watched it burn until a mound of black and gray ashes remained.

She took her canteen and poured a bit of water on them. They disintegrated into the dirt in a tiny sizzle and puff.

There.

It was done.

All was right with the world once again.



1872, THREE MONTHS LATER • DENVER CITY,
COLORADO TERRITORY

“What time is it, Nurse McGee?”

The older woman glanced at the large grandfather clock in the corner of the sitting room. “It is two in the afternoon, Miss Martha. Asking me the time won’t make it go any faster.”

Martha sighed and leaned back into the stiff back of the settee. Her legs swung back and forth, swirling the white ruffles of her dress up in the air. Waiting was boring. Dressing like a proper girl was boring. She missed the dirt and going to Father’s dig site. Looking at pretty rocks and finding old bones was better than learning how to sit right.

“Enough of that, miss. If your mother saw you acting like this, she’d be upset for sure.” Her nurse came over and smoothed Martha’s dress back over her knees. With deft fingers she tightened the pale pink bows around the curly pigtailed draped over Martha’s shoulders. “Back straight. There’s a good girl. Looking pretty like a fine miss. Won’t that make your mother and father happy?”

Martha nodded. “What time are they coming?”

Nurse sat down next to her. “Two thirty. Only twenty more minutes. How about we read to pass the time?”

“No, thank you. Can I sit by the window and watch for them? I’ll sit very still like a good girl and not kick my legs.” She folded her hands under her chin. “Please?”

Nurse McGee studied her for a moment, green eyes narrowed as if she were searching for any trace of a lie in her face. Martha made her eyes wide and innocent.

“All right. You may. But the first sign of kicking and it’s back in the chair. And when you hear the carriage, you come sit right back in this chair like your mother wants.”

Martha jumped out of the chair and threw her arms

around Nurse's waist. "Thank you!" She skipped to the chair by the big picture window, ignoring the reprimanding cough. She hadn't promised not to skip. She sat in the chair, adjusting the ruffles over her knees, and folded her hands in her lap. The large trees in the front yard hid the activity of the street from view. But there were still plenty of things to see.

Two monarch butterflies danced in and out of the delicate purple blooms of wisteria just outside the window. A small hare bounded across the grass, pausing only to sniff a patch of white columbines. A squirrel darted up the maple tree—the one Mother insisted on planting so she could have a color other than yellow in the fall—and then disappeared into its large green leaves. Soon those leaves would turn the most beautiful shade of red. A color Martha adored.

The clapping of hooves drew her attention away from the animals in the front yard. Her parents' large black coach pulled up to the wrought iron gate. The coats of the black Clydesdale horses gleamed in the afternoon sun. Maybe if she was a good girl, and Mother was happy with her manners, Nurse would take her to the stables later to feed the horses carrots and sugar cubes.

She slid from the chair and raced back to the couch. "They're here! They're here!"

"Miss Martha! Lower your voice, child. They probably heard you all the way in Wyoming Territory," her nurse hissed, fussing over her dress and hair once more. "If Mrs. Jankowski saw you like that, I'd be fired for sure." With one final look, Nurse McGee nodded. She made her way to the small chair in the corner of the room and picked up her embroidery hoop.

Muffled voices filtered through the partially open drawing room door. Martha resisted the urge to peek. Mother was constantly telling her that ladies didn't listen in on the conversations of others. She was determined to be proper

today. Make her parents proud. The door swung open, and she stood, her trembling fingers pressing into the folds of her dress.

Mother entered the room, the train of her dark blue traveling gown swishing over the carpet. She approached, and Martha stared.

Mother was smiling!

“Hello, my dear. How pretty you look today. That pink in your hair is lovely.” She sat down on the couch and patted the cushion. “Your father will come to tea in a moment. Sit for now.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Martha swallowed. “You look lovely today as well.” Her mother loved compliments. Martha gave her mother a small smile, careful not to show her teeth. A lady never showed her teeth. She sat on the edge of the couch, keeping her back straight. “Did you have a nice journey?”

Mother’s smile grew, and she took Martha’s hand. “These are very nice manners, my dear daughter. I am proud of you.”

The words warmed Martha almost as much as Mother’s hand holding hers. “Nurse has been helping me be proper every day since you left.”

“I can see that. You have done well. Now”—Mother shifted and brought her face close to Martha’s—“I have something to tell you that might be upsetting. But I need you to be a brave girl.”

She nodded, the words making her insides quiver. Stiffening, she pinched her lips together and chanted in her mind *Be brave, be brave* over and over. Mother’s breath smelled of mint, and Martha could see the small mark above Mother’s lip that she tried to hide with powder.

Martha’s heartbeat felt like a drum she once saw played in a parade. *Boom. Boom. Boom.* “I will try.”

“Good. Now your father is home, but he has had an accident. A very bad one.” Mother licked her lips and looked

down at their joined hands. “He does not look the same, and you will have to be calm when you see him.”

Father hurt? How? When?

Martha’s questions died on her lips when another figure entered the room. A man walked in, his black suit slightly wrinkled. His black tie was askew, a small diamond holding it in place. His dark brown walking stick thumped the floor as he came toward her.

Her eyes grew wide. Her mouth went dry. “Father?”

This man lowering himself into the chair opposite her could not be her father. Three deep scars ran down the right side of his face, one of them tugging his mouth upward. It almost looked like he was smiling. Another scar ran from the side of his nose and cheek in a jagged pattern. It dipped down the left side of his jaw and disappeared behind his ear.

Tears pooled in her eyes. No. This could not be Father! He was handsome. His eyes were kind and warm, not distant and cross like this man’s.

Martha shifted in her chair and looked up at Mother. Couldn’t she see it wasn’t the right man?

“Go greet your father.”

Mother’s tone was firm.

Martha knew better than to argue.

She stood and shuffled over to the chair. Her teeth pressed into the side of her cheek. The scars were even worse close up, but she would get a scolding if she was not polite. “Hello, Father.”

His dark eyes focused on her, and Martha dropped her head, reluctant to meet his gaze. What would she see there?

“Hello, Martha.”

His voice had the same deep rumble she remembered. Maybe it *was* him. Her shoulders relaxed a bit.

“How are you, Martha?”

“I am well. How are you? Did you have a pleasant journey?”

Martha asked the question Nurse had told her was appropriate to ask and glanced at her mother, who nodded and gestured for Martha to move closer.

She leaned against the arm of the chair, her fingers brushing the wool of Father's suit. The scent of dirt and pine needles clung to him. Father always smelled like that. It reminded her of digging for bones with him.

"The journey was long, but we have returned home." He toyed with the bulbous silver top of the walking stick. "I . . . I have a small present for you."

Martha looked up at him, trying to ignore the differences in his face. "You do? Are they tools for another dig?" She clasped her hands together under her chin.

Father's eyes narrowed to slits. "No. And there will be no more digs. Your mother and I have decided that you must focus your time on other pursuits."

No more digs? She stepped back and glanced at Mother then back to Father. The digs had been her special time with him. Why was he taking that away? "Why? I want to dig with you."

He gripped the walking stick in his fist and tapped the floor with it. "No. It is not ladylike. You must learn how to become a lady fitting your station. We will hear no argument, Martha. And you will not ask to dig with me ever again. Do you understand?"

Tears burned her eyes and one slid down her cheek. She swiped it away with the back of her hand and nodded.

"Good girl," he murmured. He stuck his hand in his pocket and fished out two sticks of candy. "I brought you back your favorite sassafras sticks and this." He put the sticks in her hand as well as a small round circle of gold. It was a coin. Small ridges lined both sides of the precious metal. *Three dollars* and the year 1870 were inscribed on one side. Martha flipped it over and found a woman with a funny crown and the words *United States of America* stamped on it. "This coin has given

me lots of good luck in my life,” Father said, his voice softer now. “And I want you to have it. I hope it will bring you as much luck as it brought me.”

Martha clutched the candy and the coin close. “Thank you.”

“Yes, well . . .” He coughed and patted her head. “That’s a good girl.”

Martha could feel tears in her eyes again. She was unsure what to do. He appeared to be dismissing her. Did she go back and sit with Mother? Or was she expected to talk with him some more? Her eyes darted back and forth between her parents, sweat making the candy in her hand sticky.

Suddenly, Nurse was beside her, a firm hand in the middle of her back. “Give your regards to your parents, miss. We will have tea in the nursery.”

Martha gave her parents a small curtsy. “Thank you for the afternoon.” Her voice was just above a whisper. Neither responded, and Nurse ushered her out of the drawing room and upstairs to the nursery.

A small tea tray with her favorite raspberry tarts and sandwiches was waiting on the table, but Martha wasn’t hungry, not even for tarts. She dropped the sassafras sticks and coin on an empty saucer and ran to her bed, throwing herself into the soft safety of her pillow. The tears she held back downstairs now unleashed in full force.

What happened to her father? Why couldn’t she dig with him anymore?

She sobbed into the fancy pillowcase. She didn’t *want* to be a lady. She wanted to be in the mountains, getting bones out of rocks.

The feather mattress dipped as Nurse sat down next to her. “Come now, Miss Martha. It isn’t as bad as all this fuss. Your parents are home. And they have grand plans for you. All will be well.”

Martha pulled her face out of the pillow, a hiccup rattling

her ribs. “Did you see Father? What happened to him? Why does he look like that?”

Nurse sighed and patted her hand. “Those bone digs your father has done can be dangerous. All kinds of things can happen. Rockslides, floods, bandits.” She pressed her lips together and looked at Martha with a sad smile. “But you know it doesn’t matter what a person looks like on the outside. It’s the inside that counts. Besides, he gave you this pretty coin. Right? He was thinking of you while he was away.”

“It is a pretty coin.” Martha sniffed, plucking it out of Nurse’s hand. The ridges pressed into her palm as she traced the designs again. Father’s lucky coin. How lucky could it be if his face had so many scars and he now walked with a stick and a limp? Her fingers closed over it, pressing it deeper into her skin. Maybe it was lucky because it kept him alive. And he’d given it to her.

Her stomach rumbled, and Nurse laughed. “There you go, Miss Martha. No more tears. Dry your eyes and let’s have tea. There’s a good girl.” She patted the little girl’s shoulder.

Martha walked to the table, the tantalizing smell of raspberry too hard to resist. Nurse McGee was right. Father had given her a lovely present. His own lucky coin. She would keep it close, always.

Everything was going to be fine.



| 1877 • DENVER, COLORADO

The sky was as dark as the strip of black velvet Mother sometimes wore around her neck. The stars twinkled against the darkness like the marcasite in rocks. Martha sighed, her cheek resting against her hand. It was almost bedtime, and Phoebe would be in soon to read with her and put her to bed. She loved her governess and their evening routine.

However, she missed her father.

He was the one who began the tradition of reading to her, but it had been years since he'd come to read her a story. If she closed her eyes, she could feel the rumble of his deep voice against her shoulder as he read *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. His silly high-pitched voice for the White Rabbit and the perfect snobbish and abrasive voice for the Queen of Hearts were vivid memories. Happy memories and silly tales.

There had been no made-up voices since his accident. The scars had not only taken away his smile, but his zest for life. Gone was the man who'd taught her about digging for fossils. The man who gave her small tools that fit her small hands. The man who loved to tell her stories.

But she didn't need a bedtime story anymore. She would be twelve next year. Mother said she was a young lady. Young ladies didn't read stories.

Martha agreed a little bit. She didn't like the little rhyming tales for children. However, reading was still one of her favorite things to do. And novels were her favorite. Thankfully, Phoebe loved to read almost as much as she did. They were halfway through *Little Women*, and Martha was eager to see where life would take Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy.

Her bedroom door creaked open, and Phoebe's head popped around the corner. Her brown eyes creased at the corners with her smile. "What are you doing, dear? You should be in your nightgown."

Martha got up from the window seat and looked down at the wrinkles in her green dinner dress. It was a good thing Mother had already gone to her room. Martha would get another reprimand for being so disheveled. "I was just looking at the stars. They're very clear tonight."

Her governess crossed the room and slipped an arm around her shoulders. "I love looking at the stars too. Maybe, once we're ready for bed, we can have one more look." She wiggled her eyebrows, and Martha let out a giggle.

“Yes, please!”

Fifteen minutes later, Martha was snuggled on the cushions of her window seat. Phoebe was opposite her, the large black Bible she always read from at bedtime on her lap.

“The stars do look spectacular tonight. They remind me of a verse from the book of Psalms. ‘He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.’” Phoebe glanced at her. “Isn’t that fascinating to think about? God knows the name of every star.”

That *was* fascinating. Martha traced a pattern on the windowpane, and sudden tears burned her eyes. She sniffed and glanced at her favorite person in all the world.

The older woman held a lace handkerchief out to her, eyebrows dipped low over her eyes. “What is it, sweet one?” Phoebe’s voice was soft and low.

“I don’t know!” The words burst out of her. “I miss my father. He doesn’t come say good night to me anymore. Mother is so busy with her society friends that I never get to see her.” She wiped at her eyes and blew her nose into the scrap of cloth. It smelled like lavender, Phoebe’s favorite.

Phoebe shifted across the window seat to sit next to her and took her hand. “It’s okay to miss your parents. They are very busy, but I’m sure they love you very much.”

“Everything has changed so much since he came back all . . .” She choked back the words even as the tears fell. With another sniff, she looked down at her nightgown. Soft pink flowers dotted the light cotton garment. It had ruffles down the front, just like one she’d seen Mother wear. It was her favorite. “I’m sorry for crying, Phoebe. I know it’s not ladylike.”

Her governess squeezed her hand then let go. “Tears are nothing to apologize for, dear. Sometimes, when it’s just you and the Lord, tears are a precious gift.”

Martha chewed the inside of her cheek for a moment. “God doesn’t think crying is for babies?”

“Of course He doesn’t! Now, does this mean that we weep and scream and make a scene all the time? Certainly not. But—” Phoebe stood and picked up her Bible. She settled back in her chair and opened it, flipping the thin pages until she found her place. “Here is what God’s Word says. Psalm fifty-six. ‘Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?’ God sees your tears, Martha. And He hears your cries.”

Martha leaned back into the window seat and frowned. “I don’t cry that much.”

Phoebe chuckled. “That is true. But anytime you do cry, you can go to Jesus. Tell Him what hurts your heart. Share your fears. Ask Him to help you in your life. He is listening, and He wants you to know Him.”

“Sometimes He feels as far away as my parents,” she whispered, her chin trembling again. Her governess wrapped loving arms around her and squeezed her tight.

“My sweet girl, even when the Lord feels the farthest away, He is as close as the breath in your lungs. Remember what we read last week? In the book of John?”

Martha nodded, the soft fabric of Phoebe’s dress soothing her cheek. “God loved the world so much He sent Jesus to die for us.”

“And?”

“And if I seek Him and believe in Him, He will give me eternal life.”

“That’s right. Never forget, no matter what comes your way in life, Jesus loves you so very much.” Phoebe pressed a kiss to Martha’s head. “And I do too.”

Martha soaked in the warmth of the words. The last of her tears slipped down her cheeks but she swiped them away. When Phoebe talked about God, it always made sense, like He was in the room with them. But . . .

Did God hear her like He heard Phoebe? She just wasn’t sure.

“It’s time for bed.” Phoebe squeezed her once more then let go and stood. “Wash your face and get in bed. I’ll set the window seat to rights.”

Martha nodded and made her way to the washstand in the opposite corner of her room. She poured a bit of water in the basin and cupped her hands in the tiny pool. The water was lukewarm and soothed her puffy eyes. She plucked the towel from the hook on her wall and patted her face dry. Her limbs felt heavy as she climbed in bed and pulled the coverlet up to her chin. Snuggling into her pillow, she watched Phoebe move from lamp to lamp, dousing the flames until the lamps by the bedroom door and Martha’s bed were the only lights flickering.

Her governess smoothed the damp tendrils of hair away from Martha’s brow and smiled. “Will you be able to sleep tonight?”

She nodded, her eyelids already heavy. “Thank you for listening.”

“Anytime.” Phoebe turned the lamp down low and settled in the chair next to Martha’s bed. She always stayed until Martha was deep in sleep. Sometimes Phoebe was in the same chair when Martha awoke the following morning.

No longer able to keep her eyes open, she listened to the soft rustle of pages.

Phoebe began to read. “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?”

The words wrapped around her with a peace she didn’t know was possible, and she succumbed to sleep.



| 1878 • DENVER

Martha rubbed the small coin in between her fingers as she paced her room. Where was Phoebe? She should be here by

now. Martha needed to prepare for breakfast and appear at the table promptly, or there would be words from Mother.

Martha sighed. Mother's words had grown much harsher of late. Because she was supposed to understand how to be a lady by now.

She glanced at the clock again. It was not like Phoebe to be even a minute late. How could she be fifteen whole minutes delayed?

With a huff, Martha yanked her bedroom door open. She scurried down the long hallway, past the grand staircase that led down to the main hall. Turning left, she headed toward the attic stairs and pulled the door open. Martha took them two at a time. "Phoebe? Are you up here? Mother is going to be furious that I'm late this morning. What excuse should we gi—"

The word stuck in her throat as she entered Phoebe's small room.

Empty drawers hung open. All of Phoebe's little touches, the doily on the nightstand and the miniature of her and her mother, were gone. Martha's gaze darted around and focused in on Phoebe. The older woman stood at her bedside, folding a dress into her small suitcase. Tears slid down her face.

Martha ran to her, almost knocking the two of them to the floor with the force of her hug. "What is this, Phoebe? Where are you going? Why are you packing? Why is everything empty?"

Her governess pulled her arms out from Martha's stranglehold and gave her a short hug. "I have to leave, dear one."

Blood rushed from Martha's cheeks. Panic prickled the back of her neck. This couldn't be happening. "What? *No*. You can't leave." A sob choked her throat. "Why are you leaving me?"

"My mother is sick." Phoebe's voice cracked. "She needs me to care for her. I received the letter just this morning. She wrote to hasten my return home." Gently, she pried Martha's arms from her waist with a soft squeeze. "I am sorry you found

out this way. I planned to come see you once my packing was finished.”

Everything inside her went numb. It was like the woman’s voice was wrapped in cotton, so distant and fuzzy. “Your mother is sick? Is she dying?”

Phoebe winced at the boldness of the question.

Martha covered her mouth for a moment. “I’m so sorry. That was not polite for me to ask.”

A deep sigh eased out of Phoebe, her face ashen. She turned and placed her hands on Martha’s shoulders. “It was not polite, that is true. But I know it was from your heart. Your care for me and my family is evident. That means a great deal to me.” She paused and clamped her lips together. They trembled. “I do not know if my mother is dying. Just that she is very ill. And I am quite worried about her.” A noise from the stairs made Phoebe jump.

Fear undulated off Phoebe like the ripples after a stone was plunked in water. What was going on?

“Please, I don’t have time to chat right now.” Phoebe’s gaze shot to the door, her voice firm and louder than before. “Let me pack, and I will come see you in a minute.” She turned back to her bag and started pressing folded dresses into it.

Martha took a step back. Was Phoebe . . . dismissing her?

She trudged her way back downstairs to her room, tears clouding her vision. She threw herself on the bed and sobbed into the pillow. What was she to do? How could the one person Martha trusted and needed leave her? It wasn’t fair. Couldn’t Phoebe see that she was needed here? With her?

Even as the thoughts swirled, her face grew hot.

She was being selfish. She was not caring for Phoebe as Phoebe had cared for her. What had she called that rule? The Golden Rule? Martha sniffed and pressed her hands to her eyes. “Whatever ye would that men do to you, do ye even so to them.” She sat up and hugged the soggy pillow to her

chest. It wasn't fair, but Martha could see that her attitude was wrong. Despite her broken heart, she needed to support her only friend.

Her bedroom door creaked open. Martha glanced up then stood quick as she could. She placed the pillow in its proper place and tried to wipe all the tears from her eyes and face. "Hello, Mother."

Victoria Jankowski glided into the room with silent footsteps, her skirts barely making a sound as they brushed the plush carpet. Even after years of practice Martha hadn't mastered the same feat. It was as if even walking was to showcase her mother's elegance and wealth.

Mother frowned, studying Martha's ensemble. "You are still in your nightgown." It was a statement, not a question.

"I am, Mother. Phoebe was late and then I found her packing. She's leaving to see her sick mother and—"

"Yes, yes. I know. Are you unable to dress yourself?" Mother arched an eyebrow. "Perhaps it is good that woman is leaving, since your dependence upon her keeps you from even the simplest of tasks."

Martha's cheeks heated. She lowered her gaze to the carpet. "I am sorry. The news of Phoebe's departure upset my morning. I will dress and meet you for breakfast."

Two fingers slid under Martha's chin and tipped it upward. Martha knew better than to meet Mother's eyes, so she kept her gaze down.

"I had hoped that after breakfast, you would be suitable for morning calls. It is time to teach you the running of the household. But I cannot have you greeting guests with puffy eyes and a sad countenance." Mother dropped her hand and sighed. "You will not make a scene this morning. You will say your good-byes. After your governess leaves, you will report to me in the front drawing room. Instead of morning calls, we will review the setting for a proper tea service."

Martha kept her eyes focused on the cabbage roses swirling in her carpet as Mother moved toward the door.

“Do try not to disappoint me further this morning.” Mother’s words were smooth and soft, but the warning was clear.

With a click, the door closed.

Martha’s knees buckled, and she plopped down on the bed. Tears stung the corners of her eyes, but she balled her fists and pressed them against her face until the temptation to weep passed. Bearing the brunt of Mother’s constant disapproval was awful. Surely it would be easier if Mother would just strike her. Of course, Mother would never hurt her that way.

Besides, maybe Mother didn’t know how deep her words cut at times. She was always so focused on two things: ensuring with Father that the Jankowski family business kept running and making Martha the perfect socialite. Because above all else, the family name *must* be upheld.

Martha stood and went over to her wardrobe, selecting a pretty, pale blue dress suitable for tea service. She slipped the dress on, its soft waves swirling around her legs. Soon she would be wearing full-length gowns. Maybe Phoebe could—Martha shook her head. It was so natural for her thoughts and heart to turn to her governess.

Her friend.

What would she do now without Phoebe? Her friend always followed Mother’s orders to teach and raise Martha with all the society accomplishments, but she did so with warmth and care. And she encouraged Martha as she tried to learn everything from the proper dinner setting to playing the pianoforte and harp. Indeed, Martha’s talent at the pianoforte had blossomed under her governess’s tutelage. It was the one area where Mother complimented her.

Now Phoebe was leaving.

Martha would be all alone.

Her bedroom door opened. She tensed, anticipating Mother

again. Instead, Phoebe bustled through the door, looking smart in a dark gray traveling dress and matching hat. Tears brimmed in her eyes as she approached Martha.

“I am so sorry for the sudden nature of my departure,” Phoebe whispered, and Martha threw her arms around the woman’s waist.

“I need to apologize.” Martha sniffed. “I was so rude to you earlier. Please accept my heartfelt wishes for your mother’s speedy recovery.” Martha forced herself to give a slight smile to the woman who had meant so much to her. Even Mother would not fault that bit of social grace.

“Thank you, but I would much rather have your prayers.” Phoebe squeezed her again then stepped back. She cupped Martha’s tear-stained cheek in her gloved hand. “Do not forget all our chats, Martha. I know the situation with your parents is difficult, but the Lord is with you. You can call on Him. He loves you.”

Her words were like salt in the wounds of Martha’s heart. How she wished she had the same peace that encompassed her friend! “I will try not to forget. And I will pray for your mother. When do you think you will be back?” The question escaped on a whisper.

Phoebe dropped her hand, her frown deepening. “I will not be returning.”

“What?”

“My mother is much too ill, and if she is dying, I have to be with her. Only the Lord knows how long she has.”

The room tilted for a moment as Martha digested this news. Then it righted again, leaving her lightheaded. “I see.”

She really was alone now.

“I will write to you every chance I get. Please know how hard this is for me, Martha. You know how much I care for you. You are like a little sister to me, and I will miss seeing you every day. Your inquisitive nature and thirst for learning are a

delight. As is the tender heart you possess but hide away. As your mother teaches you the ways of society, don't lose those things. They are gifts and will serve you well in life, dear one." Phoebe hugged Martha one last time. "I will miss you."

She could scarcely return the affection. Her heart constricted, making it difficult to breathe. Phoebe patted her cheek then made her way out the door. In a daze, Martha followed her, remembering that Mother wanted her to properly see Phoebe on her way. She walked downstairs in time to see a footman pass Phoebe's bags to a hansom cab driver. Mother was by the door, looking every inch the perfect hostess.

Martha took her place by Mother's side. Phoebe looked at the two of them with a sad smile. She held her hand out to Mother, a bold move.

"Thank you for the years of employment in your house, Mrs. Jankowski. It was a pleasure to serve your family."

Mother's smile was thin. "We appreciate your service. I trust the letter of reference I gave you will be enough if you must find employment?"

Phoebe dropped her hand, her cheeks sporting two red splotches. "Yes, ma'am. Thank you."

Mother nodded. "You will not want to be late for your train. Say your good-byes, Martha."

Martha fought to exhibit the same cool, calm demeanor as her mother, but her best friend in the whole world was leaving. The *only* friend she had. Her confidante. Her guide. She swallowed the lump in her throat and hugged Phoebe tight one last time. "I pray your journey is safe."

Phoebe smiled. "Thank you, dear one. I pray we meet again someday."

Martha released her and nodded, a lone tear trailing down her cheek. "Me too."

"Martha!" Mother's voice cut through the marbled hallway. Her insides cringed as she straightened her shoulders and

stepped back into the foyer. There would be no other good-byes.

The large oak door shut with a final click. Martha inhaled a sharp breath through her nose to stem her emotions. She would mourn later.

When she was alone.

She turned, steeling herself to meet her mother's expectations.



**1884 • AT THE FOOT OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS,
WEST OF DENVER, COLORADO**

Martha stood at the trailhead, sweat slicking her palms. The spring sun was hot on her face, and her feet itched inside her work boots. But she'd have to ignore it. Nothing could stand in her way today.

A breeze teased tendrils of hair across her forehead. She promptly shoved them back under her bonnet and took a deep breath. She would not waste this opportunity. A large shadow blocked the sun, and Martha looked up. Mr. Johnson gave her a smile. He'd been the foreman for her father's dig years ago, and now he was the key to her getting the chance to follow in Father's footsteps.

Today, Martha would join her first dig. She *would*.

Wiping her hands on her work dress, she smiled back at the foreman. "Mother said you would be here today and let me work on your dig."

"Indeed, Miss Jankowski. It's an honor to meet you. I remember many stories about you from your father." His smile slid into a frown. "It's a shame he can't join us."

Martha nodded, without an adequate response to this giant of a man. It *was* a shame her father was no longer digging, but what were the proper manners in this situation? Especially after she'd connived her way here with her mother to allow

it. Best to just continue on with confidence, right? “This is my companion, Miss Ducasse.”

The older woman tipped her head, her face shadowed by the large parasol keeping the sun from her pale skin.

“It’s a privilege to meet you, Miss Ducasse. And a pleasure to have Antoni Jankowski’s daughter with us. Follow me, please. I will show you where we are working.”

The trio made their way to a small quarry where only a handful of men were working. Martha surveyed the scene. Her stomach seemed filled with butterflies. But along with her excitement, doubts niggled at the back of her mind. Even though this dig was smaller than the one she remembered. Less activity, fewer men working. Even the quarry itself was tiny compared to the dig she’d attended with Father. Of course, everything was enormous at the age of six.

Now her eighteen-year-old eyes took in the reality of the dig site.

“We just found this spot a couple of weeks ago.” Mr. Johnson led her to the large wagon bed in the center of the work area. “Several small animal skeletons have been pulled out in the northwest outcropping there. It’s an excellent place to start digging and learning about the science of bones.”

While it wasn’t her first dig, it was the first one in a long time. She longed to soak in every second, every shovelful of dirt, every teeny-tiny fossil she could find no matter its significance. “I appreciate you allowing me on your dig, Mr. Johnson. My mother is most thankful for your kindness and prepared a luncheon for you and your men to be taken at your convenience.” Martha laced her fingers together and swallowed hard against her dry throat. Mother wouldn’t have found fault with that speech.

“That is very generous. Thank you. Now, I will show you where you can dig today and if you have any questions, please seek me out.”

He led her to a flat space where small boulders protruded from the ground. A mound of red and brown dirt was piled on one side of a hole about three feet wide and six inches deep. Mr. Johnson crouched down and gestured for Martha to follow suit. She knelt, rocks pressing into her knees through the fabric of her dress.

“You see this long, curved line here?” He gestured to a small lip at the top of the hole. Martha’s breath caught. The faint imprint of bones was still in the rock! “We found a snake skeleton here. And the vertebrae and hind leg of some sort of rabbit here. We think there might be more in this area. Would you be up to seeing what else can be found?”

She nodded and gestured for Lily Rose, her companion, to hand over her bag. Martha untied the thick string cinching it together and pulled out the roll of tools she’d purchased the minute her mother agreed to let her go back out on a dig site. “I will do my best to find something for you today.”

Her words tumbled out in a rush, and Mr. Johnson laughed and sat back on his heels. “The chances of finding something are always slim, Miss Jankowski. But I can see you’ve got the fever for the job. Your father had that same look in his eyes when he started working. Always determined to find the next big skeleton. I know he always wanted to dig up a dinosaur.” A sad smile tugged at the older man’s lips. “Too bad that dream was never fulfilled.”

Martha peered into the small hole then back at the foreman. Though she was young, and being on a dig with her companion and a long-lost family friend was not society’s way, her fingers itched to get started. The heat of the sun, the tangy smell of dirt and pine dancing on the breeze, and the thrill of the search had her blood pounding in her ears. The chance to make a discovery here put those boring society dinner parties to shame.

Being here in the mountains, where the rocks had secrets

waiting to be unearthed, was the fulfillment of her dreams. She wouldn't take that for granted. She would make her parents proud.

And it made her feel close to Father in a way she hadn't felt in a long, long time. Especially since he'd become more and more of a recluse the past few years. For Mr. Johnson to compare her to him—at least who he'd once been—was an honor.

She plucked her small chisel, brush, and hammer out of her tool roll and sent him a smile. "Someday, Mr. Johnson, I will find a dinosaur. I know there's one in these foothills." She gazed at the mountain peaks in the distance. "And when I find it, it will go in a beautiful museum. My name will be on the plaque right next to it. 'Martha Jankowski, Paleontologist.'"

Lily Rose stepped closer and touched Martha's arm—a sure sign she was displeased with Martha's boldness. But Martha lifted her chin and ignored her companion.

"Those are some mighty big dreams, young lady." The foreman scratched his head, but he didn't laugh or give her a condescending expression, bless him.

"They are." Martha shifted so she could start tapping into some loose rock. "But what good is it having dreams if they aren't big?"

Mr. Johnson chuckled and stood. "That's a truth, Miss Martha. I'll leave you to it for now. And we will eat that luncheon in an hour."

Martha nodded and turned to her work, but not before she caught Lily Rose's raised eyebrows. What did it matter? Yes, her mother hired her companion to guide her in the ways of society as an adult, but that didn't mean Lily Rose could tell Martha what to do.

Without a word, she knelt in the hole. The fine, pointed chisel slotted into a small crack between two flat rocks. She tapped the top with four sharp raps. The rocks split and she dug them out. With rapid strokes, she brushed dirt and pebbles

out of the way then sighed. Nothing. It wasn't surprising. Paleontology wasn't for the faint of heart. She'd have to be patient and able to press on despite coming up empty on a dig.

Luncheon came and went and still she dug. The holes in her small plot multiplied. So far the only interesting thing she'd uncovered was a small mound of marcasite and a caterpillar. Martha used her fingers to dig out a few stuck pebbles then grabbed her brush. Once the debris was out of the new hole she'd made, she began tapping again. A large chunk of rock broke away from the outermost edge of the red dirt. She tapped again. . . .

Wait a minute.

That didn't sound like chisel hitting rock. Her heart thumped against her ribs.

She dug and swept away more rock and dirt. "My canteen," she muttered, her gaze darting around her worksite. "Where is my canteen?" She spotted it by her tool roll and stretched to grab it. Unscrewing the cap, she dribbled a little water in the hole and wiped the mud away carefully with a rag. There, poking out of the Colorado clay, was some sort of bone!

"Mr. Johnson!" Martha jumped to her feet. "I think I found something!"

The foreman approached and crouched down next to her, peering at the protrusion. He ran a bare finger along the ridge. "Certainly feels like a bone. Well done." He smiled at her. "One of my men can come and finish the job."

His statement doused the joy bubbling through Martha. If she pushed too hard, he might kick her off his dig, but she couldn't pass up the opportunity. "Could I dig just a little more? Make sure it's worth the attention of one of your workers?"

Mr. Johnson hesitated then nodded. "But if you get deeper and it looks like it is too big for you to remove, you call me."

"I will, I promise." Martha placed her hand over her heart.

She bent back over the protrusion and thought for a minute while Lily Rose sat on a boulder with her parasol and watched. The silent scrutiny spoke volumes.

No matter. Martha wasn't about to stop now. Her flat-edged chisel might help loosen some of the harder rock around whatever this thing was. For the next hour, she found a rhythm of working. Her fine chisel broke up the surface rock and dirt closest to the bone. She used the sharp-edged trowel to scoop out dirt and pry clumps of rocks out of the stubborn clay. The flat-edged chisel gave her enough leverage to loosen the object and break it free from its Rocky Mountain prison.

"Martha—"

She glanced at Lily Rose.

"How long would your mother want you to be out in the sun?"

Martha shifted her weight back onto her heels and glanced at her companion. Now was the time to be bold . . . authoritative. She was a Jankowski after all. "I promised Mr. Johnson a full day of work, and I intend to stand up to my agreement. Perhaps if you would prefer, I could find another companion."

The woman flinched but didn't break eye contact. "That won't be required. If you are up to the challenge and the heat, then so am I." She lifted her chin a bit.

Lily Rose Ducasse had been hired by Martha's mother as her companion when she was thirteen years of age. At first, it had been a nuisance—the whole companion thing—that Martha bucked against. But over time, she'd come to appreciate her mother's wisdom. Lily Rose's private instruction in etiquette had saved Martha more times than she could count.

Rarely did the two of them come to odds, but every once in a while, Martha felt it necessary to insist that her companion understand her place. Mother had taught Martha well in that area and while she was not as harsh as her parent, she didn't mind hanging the carrot over her companion's head. Losing

employment at the Jankowski mansion would tarnish Miss Ducasse's reputation forever.

Ever since Phoebe left, Martha had hardened herself toward allowing anyone into her private thoughts and dreams.

Mother trained her. Martha hated it, but she did it and did it well. Appeasing her mother in all things high society helped Martha gain what she wanted in the long run.

Patience had become her best friend. Strategy, her greatest tool.

It had won her the chance to dig once again.

Soon, a small bone began to take shape. It was slender at one end with a sharp point jutting out of the middle and had a small bulb at the other end.

A tingling zipped through Martha, making her hands tremble. She took several deep breaths to calm her nerves. It looked like a few more well-placed taps would get the bone free. Just a few moments later, she tugged on the bone, and it came free.

Martha grabbed her rag and wiped it down, unable to contain a little cry of joy and inspecting it again. Sure enough, it was a leg bone. She scrambled to her feet and in a very unladylike manner ran across the small quarry. "Mr. Johnson! I've got it!"

"Well, let's see what we have here." He took the bone and ran his hands along it, then held it up, studying the ends. "Miss Martha, if I am not mistaken, you have found the leg bone of a crocodile. Quite remarkable that you were able to remove it in one day. Sometimes it takes much, much longer. You were taught well."

His praise lifted her spirits even higher. She stared at the bone in the man's hands and chewed her lip. "A crocodile? Aren't they saltwater inhabitants?"

"That's right. But we found a few like this when we dug in Morrison, Colorado, a few years back. Most people think

bones like this would be found on the east or west coast of our country. I can't explain it, but at one point, this land must have flowed with several rivers with all kinds of critters living in their waters. I bet if we keep digging in that area, we'd find turtles, starfish, maybe even shark teeth." He placed the bone back in Martha's hands. "It's an important find today, Miss Martha. And you should be proud that you persevered and dug it out. I'll have my men expand their dig to your area tomorrow morning."

She studied the bone, its angles and planes. Well, it wasn't a dinosaur. But it was her first find. Hopefully, Mother would let her talk to Father about it tonight. Would he be pleased? Even proud?

"May . . . may I take this with me tonight? I'd like my father to see it."

"Of course. Bring it back tomorrow, and we will start again." Mr. Johnson glanced at the sky. The afternoon was fading into the deeper blue of evening. "You've done a fine job today, Miss Jankowski. And I look forward to having you return."

The grin on Martha's face was so wide it hurt her cheeks. "Thank you, sir. I will see you tomorrow." She went back to her site and gathered her tools in her bag. Lily Rose took the bag, but Martha wrapped the bone in her handkerchief and tucked it in her pocket. She couldn't wait to show Mother and Father. Sure, not everyone found a fossil their first day. But it had to be a good sign to not only find a bone, but to release it from its rocky clutches.

After a long hike back to the carriage, Martha climbed in and then leaned against the padded squabs. If only Phoebe was still with her. She would have loved examining every inch of Martha's discovery, talking about how amazing it was that God could have created such a creature. The thought made her eyes sting with tears. God had seemed so far away since her governess left. But maybe . . .

Could He have helped her today?

She pushed the thoughts away and pulled the bone out again and something plunked on the seat. Her fingers brushed the leather until she found the object. Father's lucky coin. Martha picked it up and rubbed it between her forefinger and thumb. Maybe this was why she'd been so fortunate her first day. Father had said it brought him loads of fortune on different digs.

"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps."

The words flashed like lightning in Martha's mind. It was a Bible verse Phoebe read to her many times in their discussions about how to live one's life dependent on God, not on luck. How could she know if she found this bone because the Lord directed her steps? Did that mean her father's coin had no meaning?

God had been out of her reach ever since Phoebe left . . . her father even longer. It would be nice to cling to one or the other right now. But instead, she felt alone.

Martha sighed and slipped the coin back in her pocket. Those thoughts were too heavy for such a happy day. For now, she would be content with her find. It was one small step in her plans. She meant what she said to Mr. Johnson today. She was determined to find a dinosaur. Mother didn't know it yet, but Martha had much bigger plans and dreams. Over time, she'd win her parents over.

Her name would appear on a museum plaque, honoring her contributions to science. And she wouldn't be a disappointment to the Jankowski name.

Martha unwrapped the crocodile bone and traced its lines with her fingertips, a small smile on her lips.

She was going to show everyone what she was capable of. Even if she had to do it all by herself.

The smile grew and she lifted her chin as the carriage