

TREASURES *1* OF THE EARTH

The

SECRETS
BENEATH



KIMBERLEY
WOODHOUSE

Books by Kimberley Woodhouse

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A Deep Divide

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TREASURES OF THE EARTH

The Secrets Beneath

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All Things Hidden

Beyond the Silence

THE HEART OF ALASKA

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Under the Midnight Sun

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Forever Hidden

Endless Mercy

Ever Constant

JEWELS OF KALISPELL

The Heart's Choice

TREASURES  OF THE EARTH

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BENEATH

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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
Judy Hogan

My mom, avid reader, and cheerleader.

She chauffeured me around to piano and voice lessons, musical theater rehearsals, and hundreds of musical competitions. Always cheering me on.

Our home was filled with laughter and music thanks to this wonderful lady.

Now she's a grandma and a great-grandma, and her positive, cheerful enthusiasm for life oozes out at every corner.

Love you, Mom!!!!



And it's also dedicated in loving memory of
Donna Bell

She fought the good fight. She ran the race.

She finished well.

My beautiful aunt went home to be with her Savior while I was writing this book, and even though it was incredibly difficult (and I shed a lot of tears), we are rejoicing that she is no longer suffering in this world.

To God be the glory!

DEAR READER

To set the stage for this series, allow me to give you a little context. 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) that 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 all of 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 (*Speak to the Earth and It Will Teach You: The Life and Times of Earl Douglass 1862–1931*. Book Surge Publishing, 2009) 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. So I chose the southwest corner of Wyoming off of the Green River in what is now Flaming Gorge Reservoir. The area in this first story would now be flooded because of the Flaming Gorge dam. What is now Marsh Creek is the offshoot of the area where I imagine Walker Creek once thrived.

My research buddies, Renette Steele and Jeni Koch, were invaluable to me as I drove them all over God's creation to find the exact place to set *The Secrets Beneath*.

I intentionally placed this story there so I would not detract from the discoveries of the real paleontologists in history. Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado all have a wealth of dinosaur quarries filled with fossils, and many of the best discoveries in North America were found there.

This is a work of fiction, and while I did an enormous amount of research, any mistakes are my own and not a reflection of all the wonderful experts who helped me along the way.

I invite you to traipse along with me through history as we meet the people of Walker Creek and dig for dinosaurs.

Enjoy the journey,

Kimberley Woodhouse

“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

PROLOGUE

“Our lives are books. Each day is a page written good or evil.”

~Earl Douglass

**1869 • WALKER RANCH, ALONG AN OFFSHOOT OF
THE GREEN RIVER • WYOMING TERRITORY**

The garden—*his* garden—was alive with color today, while the inside of him was black as death. Especially when he thought of his father.

The contrast of the lush vegetation, fragrant flowers, and colorful buds with the darkness that crept through his veins made him shiver.

Julian Walker tucked his chin tight to get rid of the thoughts. Damian was the one who embraced the darkness. Not him. His brother could handle it better than he could. Deep down, Julian’s true yearning was for the light, to grow beautiful things, and to stay out of their father’s fiery wrath.

He dug his fingers into the dirt. A rich, dark concoction of mud he’d dragged up from the river bottom mixed with lots of cattle manure. Wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow, he’d dragged the dark soil up to this place. It had taken him weeks. Mother

said it was work that would be worth it—her ploy to keep him away from his father.

Randall Walker's violent temper was well-known throughout their little town and beyond. But he was a wealthy man with the largest cattle ranch in the whole territory. So mean ol' Walker—as everyone in town called him—did whatever he pleased, and people left him alone.

Julian hadn't missed the pitying glances cast at them. Especially his mother. But a kinder soul on the planet couldn't be found. She was an angel. *His* angel. Sent to protect him. To love him. To . . . fix him.

The more he grew, the more the blackness inside him grew. He hated it. Feared it would turn him into a man like his father. The past two years had been worse than ever.

"Julian . . ."

Mother's whisper washed over him in the garden. She tipped his face up to see her.

A single tear slipped down his cheek as the sun created a halo around her. "Yes, Mother?"

"Don't allow his ugliness to taint you, dear boy. I will fight for you. Fight for the good in you. I see it every day."

Plunging his fists back into the dirt, he fought the desire to hate his own father. "I don't want to be like him. Not ever."

"Oh, Julian." She knelt next to him. "You won't be. I'm here to help you be different. I promise. Now, you keep working out here while I go fix some supper."

Her soft footfalls faded as he studied the ground. It gave him the opportunity to swipe at his cheeks with his sleeve.

Julian shut his eyes and inhaled the sweet aromas of the garden around him. In those seconds, he took long breaths and time almost stood still. Everything else melted away. And a bright light in his mind made him smile. Just like Mother said . . . there was light to overcome the darkness. There was hope.

Time in the garden made the afternoon disappear. But

shouts and crashing from the house shattered the calm in his mind and the black fury inside him spread to every inch of his limbs once again.

“I hate him. I wish I was older. Then I’d show him.” Damian stood there with his hands fisted at his sides, his face pinched and creased in a deep frown. He stomped off toward the trees.

Julian agreed. What he wouldn’t give to be bigger than his father. To be able to show him the same pain he inflicted on a daily basis. Last time Julian stood up to the man, he hadn’t been able to get out of bed for a week. At thirteen, he was puny compared to the hulk of his tough, rancher father.

So he dug in the dirt with a vengeance. One day. One day he’d be stronger than the old man.

The sounds from the house threatened to shatter the thin barrier that kept him from plunging headlong into the dark.

Mother’s lilting voice echoed in his head. “Shut it out, Julian. Grab onto the light.”

He was trying.

Clamping his jaw as tight as he could, he lifted his chin. He focused on the sun above him and allowed the warmth to cover him. The sun gave nourishment to the ground.

He was like the ground. Dark. Lifeless. But the light could change that.

Blocking out everything around him, he went back to work. Churning the soil as if it were his own soul. This morning, he’d killed three prairie dogs and five birds. All to bury in his garden. Funny how death made beautiful things grow.

Mother had taught him that.

Although she’d cried the first time he came home with an animal he’d killed. When he’d asked about her tears, she’d stated that she meant when things died *naturally* they fed the earth and the ground and helped things to grow. She didn’t want him killing animals and birds.

But he'd continued. He couldn't help it. Not when his garden flourished like it did. He simply kept it from her. She had enough on her mind.

The voices inside the house grew in volume and shattered his barricade. Mother was screaming as his father yelled horrible words at her. Thuds and crashes followed. Mother's voice was full force now. Her anger evident.

But Father's was louder.

It drowned out any other sound.



| FOUR MONTHS LATER

"This is why your mother left."

Julian's father poked a large finger in his face.

"You. If you weren't such a horrible, sorry excuse for a son, she would still be here. You made her life miserable."

The words sparked fire in him. How dare his father blame him? Usually Julian kept his mouth shut. Took the beatings. Took the yelling. Because there wasn't any way out. Damian was always there to comfort him, but it couldn't fix things. Couldn't fix him.

His father had been in a lousy mood for days. First it was because some of his cattle had gone missing. Then two horses carrying two of his hands had tumbled down a ravine. None survived. Not that his father cared much about the lives of the men who worked for him, but it did make him shorthanded. And he hated losing horses.

Mother's voice echoed in Julian's mind. *"Deep down, don't be afraid. You're a good person. You are. Don't let his words get to you. They're not true."*

Julian missed his mother. What he wouldn't give for her to come back.

"It's all your fault."

Father slapped him.

“She left because of you and you know it. Couldn’t take it anymore. And now look what I have to put up with!”

Julian closed his eyes against the sharp sting in his face. Fought to grab onto something to keep him from plummeting into the depths. But he lost. Something inside him cracked. Like an earthquake splitting the earth in two, his battle between the dark and light tore at his soul.

Bolting forward, Julian roared and shoved his father. “It’s not my fault your cattle have been stolen. And it’s not my fault she left. *You’re* the horrible one. Not me. She loved me.” Tears sprang to his eyes. Hot and stinging. A sign of weakness to the man standing before him.

Damian never succumbed to them—Julian could hear his brother’s disappointment in him now. The last thing his brother said to him before he left . . . “Don’t cry.”

Those large fists—like two hammers—pummeled him. Over and over. When he fell to the ground, his instincts kicked in. He curled into a ball and tried to protect his head from the assault. Closed his eyes and squeezed them as tight as he could.

In his mind, he pictured Mother’s smiling face. He couldn’t blame her for leaving. But why didn’t she take him with her?



Julian eased his eyes open. How long had he been unconscious? He groaned as he uncurled. Everything hurt as he worked his way to his feet. His blood had dried on his arm and on the floor, so he’d been out longer than most times. Which meant his father could return at any moment. At least Damian would be gone for a while.

With soft steps, Julian made his way out the door to the well and lowered the bucket. He winced as pain shot through him, but he had to clean up the floor or there would be consequences.

And he’d had enough for one day.

It took half an hour to clean the floor and himself, but when it was complete, he headed out to the garden. The one place his father would never come. Mother said it was because he made her a promise. But then she also taught Julian everything to plant that made Father cough and sneeze. Well, she didn't say to plant it *intentionally*, but he understood it nonetheless.

The garden had been their safe haven. Their sanctuary. His mother could make anything grow. Now that she was gone, it was up to him.

In the months up to her departure, he'd been expanding the garden. Digging in the hard, dusty, rocky ground down a couple feet so that he could replace the inhospitable soil with thick river-bottom mud and manure. Every haul with the wheelbarrow made him a bit prouder. He'd almost doubled the area of the entire garden in size, which would be perfect to plant the precious bulbs his mother had ordered and kept hidden. If he could finish preparing the ground in the next few weeks, then he would be able to start planting the bulbs in fall which was when Mother said was the best time.

Maybe by the point he went back to school, he could tell Mary Ziegler about his plans and show her all his hard work.

She loved flowers too. Loved talking to him about his garden and the variety of plants. Just a couple years his junior, she was the only friend he'd ever had.

That is, with Mother gone, if Father allowed him to return to school. Even though mean ol' Walker prided himself on not having ignorant offspring, he often went on a rampage on a regular basis about how all the books were softening Julian's mind.

Julian kept quiet at school. Did his work. Learned what he could. But most of the other kids called him odd for wanting to talk about flowers and gardening or whispered behind their hands about how he was the son of mean ol' Walker and he must be as vile and hateful as his old man. Damian encouraged

Julian to stand up for himself, but he never did. He pretended not to hear and then read every book the teacher would allow.

Mary was the one who invited him to play games with the others at recess. Or helped him when he struggled with the math work. She was the one who greeted him with a smile every day.

Oh, her friend Anna Lakeman said hello each morning to him too, but she wasn't as nice as Mary. He'd caught her staring at him and frowning on several occasions.

He couldn't blame her.

The sky darkened and Julian forced his focus away from his safe haven. He'd avoided the house as long as possible. After several hours digging in his garden, he was exhausted. Every inch of his body ached from his father's cruel lashing. If he could stay out of his father's way for the rest of the evening, it would be a miracle. But he'd have to do his best. Keep quiet. Hidden. He needed a bath. And a month of rest.

His stomach rumbled in a loud roar reminding him that he hadn't eaten. Another reason to sneak back into the house. With a groan, he got to his feet, cleaned up his tools, and took slow, agonizing steps toward the back door.

But the fierce hulk of his father stood there waiting for him, his arms crossed over his muscled midsection.

Julian's heart threatened to pound out of his chest. The instinct to run battled with his common sense to stay put and not risk another beating.

"I'm headed out in the morning. Gotta drive some cattle to Colorado. You'll have to fend for yourself. Scottie will be here taking care of the ranch."

At least the foreman treated Julian with kindness. Well, it *seemed* kind compared to the vicious blows from his father. Julian swallowed and blinked but held the older man's stare. A required response. Any words might rile the man again.

His father turned and walked away.

After he counted to ten, Julian released a huge breath. At least he wouldn't have to deal with his father's temper for a while.

It put a bit of a spring into his sore and exhausted step. Perhaps he would even go into town and tell Mary.

Her smile would make everything better.

Now if he could keep Damian away and avoid another altercation with their father before daybreak, the light might have a chance to chase the darkness away.

one

“I cannot tell what the years may bring, life is a scene of change.”

~Earl Douglass

SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 1878 • SETTLEMENT OF
WALKER CREEK, WYOMING TERRITORY

Home.

A seemingly innocuous word. A place she loved.

And yet, every time Anna Lakeman returned there, her insides begged to differ.

She could see it in the distance, just a few minutes away . . . the house where she grew up, where she learned to sketch and paint.

The wheels of the wagon bumped and rolled their way along the grass- and weed-covered lane. A testament to her absence.

What was it about coming home that made her want to run away?

With each return from a dig with her father, she pondered

the same questions. Never getting any answers. Or perhaps she'd been avoiding the answer for too long.

Memories of her mother were beautiful and made her feel warm and loved, so it wasn't the loss of the woman who gave her life that brought these feelings.

Then there was the loss of her best friend, Mary. It had been a decade since her friend went missing, but Anna felt the absence in her heart and soul every day. Some people said that grief lessened over time. And if she was honest, she could say that yes, the grief was less. But the loss . . . she knew that as keenly today as she had the day Mary didn't return.

Home was where she had the best memories of Mary and of Mama.

So why was it an uncomfortable place? This time she didn't silence the answer.

She knew why. Because *he* wasn't there.

It was best to face facts. Her struggle came down to the loss of her first and only love, Joshua Ziegler.

She drove her wagon up to the door and set the brake, her shoulders sagging with a long exhale. It exhausted her to deny that struggle over and over. The effort it took to shove it down so she wouldn't voice the words weighed heavier each day.

But that was the path of great loss.

And even though the loss wasn't in death, she felt it as such.

Three years had passed since he'd gone back east for medical school. Three years since their spat. Three years since they'd talked. Shared their hearts. Talked of dreams of the future. Until he left, she would've never dreamed of life without him. The community expected them to marry. Their families expected them to marry.

She'd expected them to marry.

The rumble of her father's wagon brought her thoughts around. This was no time for her pondering. She had work to do.

Every inch of Anna's body ached as she stepped from the

hub of the wheel into the tall, dry grass in front of her home. She stretched but it didn't help the soreness that seemed to scream from every muscle. With a glance around, she took mental notes of the scene. One she'd sketched a thousand times and would probably do a thousand times more. Other than the growth being too tall around the house, not much had changed in the months she'd been gone with her father.

"I don't know if it's me and my old age, but the road seems to get rougher every time we travel it." Dad's soft chuckle brought her gaze around.

"It's not you, I can promise you that." Turning on her heel, she stretched one more time and then stepped toward the supplies that needed to be unloaded.

A bone-jarring wagon ride over the rough Wyoming terrain for the past five hours had given her inside the impression she was eighty years old rather than a young twenty-one. But such was the life of a traveling paleontologist and his daughter. He went wherever the bones called. She tagged along to sketch and paint everything.

As they unloaded crates, bags, and fresh supplies they'd purchased from the large mercantile up in Green River, she longed to get back to all her sketches from the trip. The bones of the horse-like creature they'd found fossilized in the rock layer weren't the greatest find her father had ever had, but they *were* interesting. Quite exciting to draw too, since she'd never seen a bone structure quite like it.

As a child, she'd wanted to be a paleontologist just like her father. She'd hung on his every word, watched his every move, and read every tome written on the subject.

But over the years, she'd learned the harsh truth.

Women didn't pursue science like that. And they most certainly didn't dig in the dirt. That was unacceptable. And vulgar—according to the women of society who knew about such things.

Although, she had to admit that she'd always admired the work of Mary Anning from Lyme Regis, England. The woman had been a fossil collector pretty much her whole life, and even though she wasn't given the credit she deserved, her name was still well-known in paleontological discussions. Why couldn't Anna do the same?

If only she could have known the woman. But Mary Anning had been gone for thirty years and had lived half a world away. Besides, her fossil collecting had been her means of support after her father's death when she was eleven. Probably why it had been somewhat acceptable. The pity of the public gave allowances now and then.

Anna released her breath as she set down another satchel. Even though she longed to be the one to find the next great discovery in paleontology, her gifting truly was in the sketching. Oh, how she loved every little detail.

Now that they were home, Dad would sequester himself with all his notes and specimens, and she would need to put the house to order once again. After that, she could spend all the time she wanted going through the sketches and reliving their last dig.

They worked together hauling and sorting, enjoying the quiet camaraderie that had become habitual. It didn't take long to set things in their proper place since they'd left everything clean and in order. The one addition was the layer of dust, which Anna eliminated with the removal of the sheets covering the furniture and quick use of the broom.

"I'll be in my study, Anna." Dad's nose was in a book as he walked down the hall.

She'd figured as much, but unlike her usual desire to get back to her sketches, her insides swirled. The unsettled feeling called for something different from her usual routine. "I think I'll go see the Zieglers then, if that's all right with you?"

she called after him. “Louise will return tomorrow to help around the house.”

“That’s fine.” His voice vanished as the door clicked behind him. Whether or not he’d heard what she said was the question of the hour, but he’d likely stay buried in his study for the rest of the afternoon anyway.

Anna hauled the tub into her bedroom and filled it with warm water. Washing away all the dirt from the travels made her feel a bit more like herself. She dunked her head to rinse the soap from her hair. She couldn’t wait to see Mary’s family. When her best friend disappeared ten years ago, Anna had spent days and weeks helping the community search for her.

When no trace of her friend had been found, she’d mourned with the family, begging her father to allow her to stay at their home for a few days. Each night, she’d cried herself to sleep in Mary’s bed while Mrs. Ziegler sat in her rocking chair staring out the window at the dark.

It had taken the community months to recover from the loss. Mary’s parents did their best to find joy in their faith and family, but the sorrow never left.

Over the years, Anna spent a lot of time at the Ziegler home. Martha and Joshua were older but had never seemed to mind when their little sister and her best friend tagged along. After Mary disappeared, Anna continued to spend a lot of time with the family. If she wasn’t at school or out on a dig with her father, she could be found at the Ziegler home.

Then Martha got married, which left Joshua and Anna. They’d been comfortable with one another the entirety of their childhoods, but things changed. In the evenings they would read with his parents, she would show them her sketches, and he soon insisted on seeing her home each night.

It didn’t take much for her to develop a deep crush on Joshua. For a long time, she thought it was mutual.

Anna shook those thoughts away along with the droplets

of water from her bath. There was no sense in pining for the man who hadn't even bothered to write.

After dressing and pinning up her hair, she grabbed her bonnet, went out to her horse, and saddled Misty for the short ride out to the Ziegler ranch. With the wind at her back, she hunched over the mare and gave her free rein to race along the trail they both knew so well.

The pounding of her horse's hooves shook the rest of her ill thoughts away. A chat with Mrs. Ziegler—who'd been like a mother to her—would certainly settle her down again and help Anna to get over this melancholy.

But the ranch yard was empty. No smoke rose from the chimney. The barn doors were shut. Animals corralled close to the house.

It was clear no one was home.

"Bother." Anna allowed her shoulders to slump. They must be in town.

The choice before her stretched. Go to town in search of her friends? Of course, she'd have to see other people as well. That made the option a bit less desirable. Or . . . head home?

Her shadow disappeared on the ground as she contemplated. A cloud must have covered the sun for the moment. As her gaze shifted upward, the sky darkened, and gray clouds staged themselves in the distance to roll in and cover the sun for the rest of the afternoon.

It might blow over and it might not. What to do?

A crack of thunder made the decision for her.

She'd have to head home. What had been a beautiful day now seemed downright gloomy. Sad how it matched her mood.

Turning her mount back to the trail they'd just ridden, she pulled her hat down and tightened the string. Fat drops of rain dotted the dusty road. "Time to go, Misty. Let's hope those clouds don't have much to spill."

She shouldn't have voiced the words. Because within minutes, the sky opened up, and a storm like she'd never seen before gushed from the heavens. The trail almost disappeared before her eyes and Misty's unease vibrated through Anna's knees and thighs as she held on. Slowing her horse to a trot so she could gain her bearings, she couldn't see anything but the downpour of water. Misty's head bobbed up and down with her discomfort with the thunder and lightning.

There was no shelter and no other choice than pray that her faithful mare could find her way home. Anna's dress, her underclothes, and every inch of her were now soaked.

Lightning struck a nearby tree and Misty reared. Anna held on with all her might and clung to her horse's neck. "Whoa. Easy, girl. We need to get home in one piece, all right?" She soothed the mare and rubbed her neck, keeping her words calm. Which grew increasingly difficult as the storm built.

Tension grew in her neck and shoulders as she gripped the reins. If she couldn't see where they were going, how would Misty? Her beautiful mare was getting up in years.

God, please help us to make it home. The prayer left her mind as the sky seemed to open its floodgates and dump oceans of water on top of them.

Misty's head was visible but not by much. Anna's bonnet was completely flattened from the deluge, and rivers of water raced down her face and body. Bending over her horse, she held the reins and hugged Misty's neck. "Get us home, girl. You can do it."

Misty whinnied and shook her head as thunder rumbled overhead in a constant rhythm. Then the mare trotted forward.

Anna counted each second in the minutes as they passed, hoping and praying they would reach shelter soon.

She had tallied eleven minutes when the roar sounded behind her. What was that? She sat up and looked around, but

she couldn't see anything through the sheets and sheets of rain that continued to pour down from above.

The roaring grew. Accompanied by massive explosions—snapping and cracking. What was happening?

A wall of water barreled toward her.

“Giddyap, girl!” she yelled in Misty’s ear.

Her mare didn’t hesitate and raced into a furious pace.

But they were no match for the water.

Just as they crested a hill, Anna felt the horse underneath her lift with the wave.

God . . . help!

READ MORE

