

## Chapter 1

### The Mongolian Death Worm

Intense thirst and a growling stomach were the likely reasons for Sheriff Marty Monson's epiphany, that his decision to help Allyson with her version of time travel was idiotic, if not delusional. Allie's professional journeys through time were boring as hell since digging for artifacts always moved backwards, never into the future, plus it was damn hard labor. He was drenched with sweat in the unforgiving Utah wilderness, twelve miles southwest of Moab as the eagle flies. If he'd had any sense when he and Allie had planned the day trip, he would have pushed her into doing something leisurely and fun they could both enjoy. Instead here he was, working his ass off in the desert on what should have been a quiet Sunday in late April.

To make his own plan work, he had to pretend to go along with hers. For over two hours, he'd dug up lumps in the dry streambed and of course found nothing exciting, only bland rocks covered in rusty dirt. No fun at all. Trying to dupe an author and Ph.D. of paleoarchaeology was a lot to hope for, but if he did succeed, maybe this inane episode in their lives could finally be over. He glanced at the sun, then his watch. Allie should have already found the whiskey bottle he planted. If it took much longer, they would need to pack up, and the solo trip he'd made here last week would be a waste.

Marty lifted his million-pound cowboy boot for the zillionth time and stepped on the shovel blade. It sunk down four inches and chunked against something solid and metallic, sounding a lot different than when he'd hit rocks. He frowned, backed the blade out and reinserted it into the ground behind the first stab. He scooped up the load of dirt and scattered it. A man-made object lay in the sandy pile. He picked it up and brushed off the grit, and realized he'd uncovered an ammunition magazine for an automatic weapon. The black metal box was long and rectangular