



Deep Past

Eugene Linden

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Science writer Eugene Linden's fiction debut *Deep Past* is an intriguing, science-minded thriller.

When anthropologist Claire Knowland receives a new assignment in Kazakhstan to study domesticated horses, she's less than thrilled. Not only is she headed to a harsh steppe climate, but going there means pausing her study and training of elephants, a project that she loves.

The seemingly dull assignment takes an exhilarating turn, though, when large bones are unearthed by the strong winds. When Claire examines them, she believes they are elephant bones. Her geologist colleague estimates them to be more than five million years old, from a time when neither elephants nor any other large mammals inhabited the area. What's more, the bones seem to have been arranged by an intelligent life-form.

Claire's efforts to investigate are blocked by the powerful Delamain Foundation. They're the ones funding her research, and she is forced to outsmart them at every turn to discover the truth. With the assistance of an unlikely ally—mysterious Russian geologist Sergei Anchev—Claire works toward a potentially life-changing discovery.

Linden's knowledge of geology, anthropology, and speculative science shines through on every page. In addition to fascinating scientific features, the book also deftly handles political machinations and international academics, resulting in a wholly unique blend of fact and fiction.

Colorful, well-developed characters make the book even more enjoyable. Claire is a complex and believably motivated heroine, and supporting characters, especially Sergei, are realistic and lively. Each adds impressive depth to the subject matter. The setting also plays an important part, enhancing the peril at every turn.

Entertaining, educational, and absolutely original, *Deep Past* is a fascinating debut novel.

ANGELA MCQUAY (May/June 2019)

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