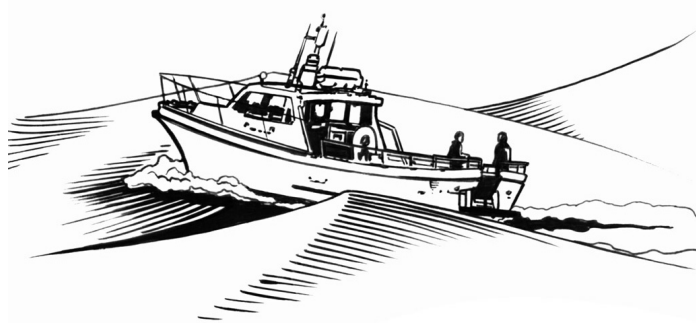


**JACK
STALWART**

The Search for
the Sunken
Treasure:
AUSTRALIA

Read the first
chapter here





Chapter 1: The Reef

Eighteen-year-old Alfie Doyle stood at the back of the boat in his favourite blue wetsuit and looked out over the rough Australian sea. He fastened his oxygen tank, put his mouthpiece in and took a deep breath before jumping off.

SPLASH!

He crashed into the churning waves. Almost instantly, he began to sink. He checked his oxygen levels and glanced at his watch. There was only twenty minutes to swim to the bottom, do a bit of



research and get back to the boat before he ran out of air.

Ready, he tipped his head forward and plunged into the depths. As he descended, he swam past some of the Great Barrier Reef's amazing sea life. There were orange clown fish, purple and yellow surgeonfish, schools of blue-green puller fish and even brownish moray eels. This was the bit Alfie loved most – swimming with some of the most unusual sea creatures in the world.

Alfie continued downwards. As he approached the seabed, he flicked on his underwater torch. When his feet touched the bottom, he lifted his hand to his mouthpiece and switched on his Underwater Communications Piece.

'Touchdown,' said Alfie into the UCP. 'Will report everything as I go.' In his earpiece he could hear Harry, his boss,

who was still on the boat.

‘Good,’ said Harry. ‘Let’s hope the sands haven’t shifted that much.’

Alfie swam to the back of the wreck, or the stern. Last time they were there, he and Harry had discovered some pieces from the officers’ quarters. From what Alfie could tell everything was as they left it forty-eight hours ago.

He carried on, swimming the length of the rotted wooden boat towards the bow at the front. The bow was where the crew members would have lived, and



Harry in particular was keen to see what was there. Today their job was to remove the sand covering the bow, bring up any relics and hand them over to the State Maritime Museum.

As Alfie raised his torch to survey the scene, he gasped. The sand that had covered the front of the wreck two days ago was no longer there. He swam a bit closer and noticed a hole going down into the area where the crew members' quarters would have been.

Alfie frantically spoke into his UCP.

'Harry, something's wrong!'

'What do you mean?' asked Harry.

'Something's not right,' said Alfie.

'There's no sand!'

As Alfie was talking, a dark figure in diving gear snuck up behind him. The stranger lifted a gun and pointed their spear directly at him.



‘I think someone’s taken something from HMS *Pandora*!’ said Alfie, his eyes bulging with panic.

Just then, the figure pulled the trigger, releasing the deadly spear into Alfie’s leg.

‘Owww!’ howled Alfie, blinded by the pain.

