

## CHAPTER 1



“G’day. Yeah. G’day Rob.”

Josh was in the kitchen when his father took the call. They had been watching a movie together in the lounge when the phone rang. He took the opportunity to get another can of drink from the fridge when Steve paused the movie. Although he could hear only half the conversation, he gathered it was one of Steve’s mates.

“Yeah, been a while. Yeah, still at the mines. Money’s too good to give up.” Then a long pause. “Yeah, right, he’s not a bad kid.” Josh noticed Steve was looking at him as he walked back into the lounge. They were obviously talking about him. Josh wondered who it was on the other end of the conversation, mentally going through the short list of people Steve had introduced him to.

“Really?” Another pause. “Didn’t think there were dinosaurs in Antarctica. Be a bit cold.” He looked across at Josh and there was another long pause. A very long pause this time. Obviously the other person had a lot to say.

“Yeah, OK, I’ll think about it. It’ll depend on my roster. Sure.” Another pause. “OK mate, gimme a call on Saturday.”

Steve finished the call and looked across to Josh. “Rob, a mate I used to work with,” he explained. “Seems he met you in South Australia when you were on that dinosaur dig.”

Josh thought hard. Rob, Rob, who was Rob? The whole time on the dig at his cousin Kats’ place had been a bit of a blur. It wasn’t long after his mum died and he had moved in with Steve. He had been pretty miserable, and it was Steve’s idea he go. It was probably because Steve hadn’t known what to do with him during the school holidays, and it was better than putting him into the holiday care that he hated. He hadn’t even really known where South Australia was.

Josh glanced apprehensively at Steve, waiting for him to continue. Was he in trouble?

“He finished up going to uni after he left the mines.”

He nodded - that was it – now it came back to him. Rob had been one of the uni students working as an assistant to Karl, the chief palaeontologist on the dig. Josh vaguely remembered Rob saying he’d worked in the mines to get enough money to go to university.

“Oh yeah - what did he want?” Josh was curious and wanted to know more.

“He’s part of a team going to Antarctica to get some dinosaur bones out. They’re looking for a rigger to give ‘em a hand.” He reached for the TV remote. It seemed he was going to continue watching the movie.

“What! When?” Josh wanted to find out more. One of the things he remembered from the dig was Karl talking about Gondwana, explaining how Australia used to be part of a massive land mass that eventually became Africa, South America and Antarctica. Back then Antarctica had been directly connected to Australia, and Karl was sure there would be dinosaur bones there that could reveal a lot about how dinosaurs evolved after the land mass split up.

“So, they want you to go? Are you going to do it?” he asked. “That’d be so cool! I mean not cool as in cold, but cool as in a great thing to do. As well as cool as in cold,” he added.

Steve did not respond. There was silence in the room. *‘Typical,’* thought Josh. *‘Here’s a great opportunity, something I would jump at if I was him, and he’s just dismissing it.’* He stared at his hands, not wanting to look Steve in the face. *‘We really have nothing in common,’* his thoughts continued. *‘Don’t know why I live here; he’s not interested in me. He got rid of me over the holidays, sending me to South Australia. Didn’t even ask me if I wanted to go. Might as well move in with Mrs Stevens full time, at least she talks to me...’*

They sat in silence for a few moments longer.

Finally Steve responded. “I said I’d think about it. He’s going to call me back Saturday.” With that he turned the TV volume up and went back to watching the movie.

Later, in bed, Josh googled Gondwana and read about the supercontinent. Images of dinosaurs filled his head. He wondered what Steve would decide to do. Would he really pass up an opportunity of a lifetime to go to Antarctica?