

A JACK CHRISTIE ADVENTURE



DAY OF THE
ASSASSINS

JOHNNY O'BRIEN

an extract from:

day of the assassins

by Johnny O'Brien

978 | 84877 091 | £5.99 PB

from templar publishing

We've been so delighted with feedback for *Day of the Assassins*, Johnny's debut novel with Templar.

'Time travel mixed with warfare, what more could a boy want!'

Nat, aged 12

'A really action-packed story where there are things happening all the time and you never get bored.'

Jacob, aged 10

Readers have loved travelling back in time with Jack and his more-brawn-than-brains best friend Angus, to the momentous events leading up to World War One. Landing aboard one of Britain's great warships on 20th June 1914, Jack and friends crawl their way across enemy frontlines, become airborne in the Alps and end up in Sarajevo on the day of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. There, Jack must make his biggest decision yet: should he intervene or let history run its course? *Day of the Assassins* is only the first title in a very big adventure for Jack Christie at Templar.

Rebecca Elliott

Publishing and Licensing Manager

A JACK CHRISTIE ADVENTURE



The shock wave from the air burst caught Jack full on, lifted him up and threw him backwards a full six metres, his body twisting in mid air as he flew. Gravity pulled him back to earth, but where there should have been churned-up mud to cushion his landing, there was nothing. Instead, he was propelled into a huge empty space on the ground. With a crunching thud, his face, and then the rest of his body, hit the sloping inner wall of a large hole. As he slid down, mud filled his ears, nostrils and mouth. He came to rest in a large puddle in the bottom of the hole.

Pendelshape's plan to give Jack and Angus an impromptu lesson in the horror of war was looking like a very bad idea indeed. With his encyclopedic knowledge of the First World War, it had sounded like he was aiming for some field hospital way behind the allied lines. But with the intrusion of the Austrian officer things had not gone according to plan. The time travel technology had placed them slam in the middle of no-man's-land during a major British offensive.

Just as they had landed, there had been an ear-splitting explosion and Jack had suddenly become airborne. He didn't even know if Angus and Pendelshape had survived the blast. And now, here he was at the bottom of some putrid hole in the ground.

Suddenly, on the other side of the puddle, Jack saw two eyes staring back at him from a mud-freckled face. The figure opposite was lying against the side of the crater, caked in dirt. From his uniform and helmet, Jack recognised immediately that he was German. But judging by his pink skin and the fear on his face it was clear that he was more a boy than a man. Above the boy's knee, Jack could make out a large dark patch. The boy-soldier was wounded. At that point Jack realised with dismay that within his white, fragile, boy-fingers, the soldier held a large black pistol. It was pointing at Jack.

He felt panic start to build from the pit of his stomach. The boy was as terrified as Jack was, but nevertheless, Jack could see his index finger slowly squeezing the trigger of the pistol. There was a yellow flash and a loud crack as the

gun fired. Jack braced himself – but the impact from the bullet didn't come. Instead, it had buried itself in the wall of earth to his left. The boy held the pistol up again, this time both index fingers wrapped round the trigger and squeezed a second time... there was a click. The gun was empty.

At that moment, a second German soldier loomed from behind the lip of the crater. Even at that distance, Jack could see that he was stockier than the boy opposite. The soldier surveyed the scene and quickly descended into the crater moving with speed and confidence. Reaching the bottom of the hole, he bypassed his young comrade and marched directly through the puddle to where Jack lay. The soldier reached down to the bayonet hanging on his belt and fastened it to the end of his rifle, which he now lifted up and pinned under Jack's chin. Jack was helpless. This was it.

Suddenly, out of the corner of his eye, Jack detected a large, fast-moving blur descend from his side of the crater. The German soldier half-turned, momentarily distracted. The blur moved with uncanny speed. Jack recognised the figure. Angus! The soldier had no time to react. Angus launched at him with a crunching rugby tackle. Jack was first to his feet and grabbed the soldier's rifle. The tables were turned.

The soldier stared back defiantly from his prostrate position on the crater floor. Then he reached to grab something from his back.

“Don't even think about it,” warned Jack, raising the

rifle and inching the glistening bayonet towards the soldier's face. He thrust the bayonet forward – instinctively copying the soldier's action against himself a few seconds earlier. But Jack misjudged, and the serrated steel edge of the seven-inch blade made contact with the lobe of the soldier's right ear, slicing right through it. The soldier whimpered in fear. Jack recoiled – alarmed at the ease with which the injury had been inflicted. Angus was now up on his feet. The soldier stared, pleadingly, first at Jack and then Angus standing next to him. A moment before, he had seemed like an automaton – a killing machine. But now he was helpless and terrified. Contrary to what Jack had first thought, he could not have been that much older than either Jack or the boy soldier who still sat quivering on the opposite side of the crater. And there was something else about the soldier lying at their feet, something about the face... and now with the injured ear... Something odd. Jack waved the rifle and shouted a second time.

“Go! Go on, get out of here!”

For a moment, the soldier looked confused and stared back at them questioningly.

Jack raised his voice, “Go! Now! The British will be here soon.”

Euphoria spread across the soldier's face – it was as if he had been re-born and his humanity restored. He scrambled to his feet and staggered through the water to the other side of the crater. He stopped briefly to haul his young comrade to his feet. Then, supporting his friend, he clambered up the opposite side of the crater and away.

Jack was shaking, “Er, thanks Angus.”

Angus was silent and stared at the opposite side of the crater.

“You OK? Look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

“I think I might have.”

“What?”

“That soldier... I’m sure...” Angus stopped mid-sentence and rubbed his eyes. “Doesn’t matter... Come on, we can’t hang around. It’s dangerous here.”



a jack christie adventure:
day of the assassins

by Johnny O'Brien

978 | 84877 091 | £5.99 PB

February 2010 Ages 9+

e-book available June 2010

The inspiration for his debut novel, *Day of the Assassins*, first hit Johnny O'Brien when he came across his grandfather's medals from the First World War. Born in Edinburgh, Johnny studied History at Cambridge University. He now lives in Surrey and has four sheep and a springer spaniel with floppy ears. He is married with three children – all of whom have normal ears!

Turn to page 37 to read an extract from the second Jack Christie adventure, *Day of Deliverance*.

