

COUNTDOWN TO DANGER

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ENDING!



*For Danielle, Ruby and Léo . . .
always my first choice in the adventure of life!*

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JEFF SZPIRGLAS

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CHOOSE YOUR OWN ENDING!



CANADIAN SABOTAGE

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04:17

You're so close. You just need to give the lid one hard tug. In your mind's eye, you imagine all the colours inside that box: gold, silver, red, green . . . But maybe that's just the oxygen deprivation talking. You're sure you're almost out of air. Just get that box open, get more air, and start collecting your well-earned booty!

With one last muster of strength, you fling the lid of the chest open. It swings easily, and you take a look inside to see—

“GAAARRGLE!” you scream, as the last of your air escapes your lungs. Octopus! Big octopus!

It must have been living in the box this whole time. No wonder all that gold had spilled out. You turn and race to the surface, but you feel a thick tentacle coil around one of your legs, then the other. A third tentacle grabs hold of your waist, pulling you down.

You try to scream, but with nothing left in your lungs, you just swallow gulps of salty, cold sea water.

Down you go, and as the octopus tightens its grip, everything grows dark.

THE END.

To try again, go back to page 22.



03:58

Blecch! You've been through enough today without having to lug a hundreds-year-old hand around with you. In fact, who's to say you even need to go back to that lighthouse at all? Once you have the treasure, you can go to the mainland and find your parents. You're holding all the cards now.

You finish filling your pockets. It's a shame they're not bigger because there's still a bit of treasure left, and you're not going to be able to drag that chest back through Death's Swamp by yourself. But that's fine—you know the secret path and can come back with your mom and dad.

You start to make your way to the boat. That means splashing back into the swamp and keeping your eyes peeled for those snakes. *Urgh. Why did it have to be snakes?*

Doesn't matter. You just stay focused on your new-found riches, and that's enough to push you forward. Except . . .

You keep hearing *something* splashing through the muck with you. At first you pass it off as the snakes, until . . .

You hear it again and whip around, spilling some



of the coins into the murky waters. “Dang!”

You double your speed. A few more coins fall into the water as you push ahead. You watch them disappear under the surface. *Careful*, you tell yourself. *Walk quickly but carefully.*

You look ahead and see the other edge of the swamp. It’s just a few metres away. Just a few more steps—
SPLASH!

Something grabs your leg.

“GAH!” you scream, and a whole bunch of the treasure flings out of your pockets, scattering into the swamp.

You whirl around, only to see—

THE HAND!

There it is, clutching your ankle in a viselike grip. It pulls you back, deeper and deeper into the swamp.

You try to scream and just end up gagging on the swamp water. You try feverishly to pull the hand off you, but it only pulls you in deeper.

The last thing you see as you’re dragged under completely is that disgusting hand giving you a final thumbs-up.

THE END.

To try again, go back to page 136.



03:58

Blecch! That hand is super gross, but a promise is a promise, even if it's to a ghost. You fill your pockets with as many jewels and coins as you're able. You know where the treasure is located; you can always come back here later. For now, it's time to make good on your promise, then find your parents.

You're not sure where to put the hand, so you place it on your shoulder. Rather creepily, the finger bones clench your shirt, keeping the hand in place. "Urgh." You shudder, but keep your mind focused on getting through the swamp and back to the mainland.

You've nearly reached the other side of the swamp when Feared Beard suddenly materializes before you.

You scream and jump, falling into the water.

"Arrr." Feared Beard smiles. "You found the secret path! And I see you made good on yer promise!" He eyes the hand.

"I keep my word," you tell the ghost. "What are you even doing here?"

"I don't know how ye'll be driving that thar boat home without *this*." Feared Beard dangles the key to the men's boat from his ghostly hook.

"Right! The key! Thanks!"



You think about this. “How did you even pick that up?”

“Ghost power!” Feared Beard says.

“And, come to think of it, how did you get all the way here?”

“*Ultra* ghost power!” Feared Beard smiles.

“So why didn’t you just transport yourself here and get your hand yourself?”

Feared Beard waves you off. “You ask too many questions.”

Then he floats past you, towards the boat still anchored nearby. “Come. The treasure and your parents await! Along with much stirring conversation. Oh, we’re going to be good friends, you and I.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, now that me treasure’s been found, I’ll be needing a new place to haunt. Looks like we’ll be friends for some time yet!”

You roll your eyes. Having a tagalong ghost pirate isn’t your idea of a good time, but that’s just what you’ve got with your new not-quite-best friend. Lots and lots of time.

00:00

You survived! There are eleven other ways to escape the danger—try to find them all!

