

**COUNTDOWN TO
DANGER**
CHOOSE YOUR OWN ENDING!



For Leah, who really wanted Replica 2

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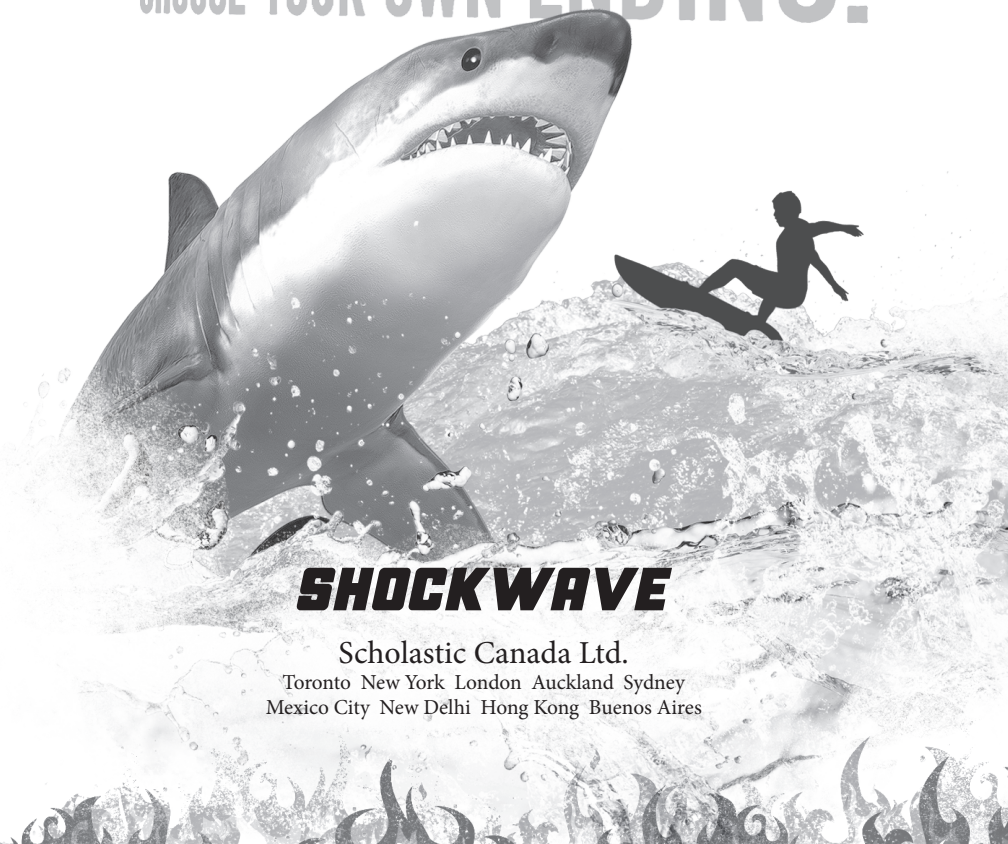
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JACK HEATH

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SHOCKWAVE

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30:00

A dark shape wobbles beneath the water, getting closer to the beach. You're ninety-nine percent sure it's just seaweed drifting on the currents — but what if it isn't? What if it's one of those big saltwater crocodiles Harrison warned you about?

You look up and down the beach. There are crushed shells, dead jellyfish and a shapeless mountain that might once have been an epic sandcastle — but no people. No one to ask for advice. Nobody who will call for help if something happens to you. You didn't even tell anyone you were going surfing, which now seems like a mistake.

Maybe you shouldn't go in the water. You could just take your surfboard back to the campsite. Harrison, the camp leader, will be serving dinner soon.

Then you see the speedboat.

It looks high-tech from a distance. But as it sputters closer to the shore, cutting a foamy white line through the grey ocean, gouges become visible in the carbon-fibre hull. Puffs of black smoke linger in the air behind it. A trail of leaked oil stretches all the way to the horizon.

The woman on board waves at you with a gloved hand. She's wearing a backpack and head-to-toe black

padding, like an ice-hockey player. The outfit is too big for her. Maybe she borrowed it from somebody.

“Hey!” she yells. “You!”

You look back along the beach. There’s still no one else around. She’s talking to you.

“I’m not going to hurt you,” the woman says. You take a step back. It hadn’t occurred to you that she might be dangerous until she said that.

Her boat has nearly reached the shore.

“What do you want?” you ask.

The woman throws a square anchor overboard and climbs out of the boat. Her trouser leg is ripped. The skin underneath is blistered and pink, like she’s been burned. She wades through the shallows towards you. Wet curly hair spills out over her shoulders.

“Do you have a phone?” she asks.

“No.” You gesture at your wetsuit, which has no pockets.

She huffs in annoyance. “Are you one of the kids from the Karina Bay Surf Camp?”

You nod.

“What’s your name, kid?”

If you say, “I’m Seth Ansari,” turn to page 68.

If you say, “I’m Leah — what do you want?” turn to page 96.



06:04

You sprint into the forest. At first it feels like running the wrong way on an escalator. You keep stumbling sideways. Soon your legs recover from the effects of the stun gun and you're going at full speed.

Harrison is a dangerous criminal. But he sent your friends to the lookout and was planning to follow them there, which probably means it's outside the blast radius. You have to hurry — at any moment the explosion could turn this part of the forest into a drifting cloud of ash.

As you flee deeper into the forest, you hear something. A faraway *whop-whop* sound. You stop, struggling to separate the noise from your desperate breaths and pounding heart.

It's a helicopter. Getting closer.

You look up. It could be the cops, here to save the day. Or it might be the people who planted the bomb making their escape. They won't want any witnesses. If they see you, Harrison might be the least of your worries.

Maybe they'll spot you through the canopy. Maybe they won't. Should you try to get their attention — or hide? ***If you climb the nearest tree and try to attract the helicopter's attention, turn to the next page.***

If you hide under the shrubbery, turn to page 79.



03:19

You scale the tree like a lizard. The adrenalin helps you find almost-invisible hand- and footholds. You barely notice your aching shoulders and thighs as you clamber from one branch to the next, twigs scraping your face, bark digging into your palms.

Soon your head breaks through the canopy. You can see the helicopter approaching through the darkening blue sky, silhouetted by the setting sun. You've never seen an aircraft like this up close — it's painted white, with massive landing skis and two rotors. One to keep it in the air, the other to steer, you guess. The markings on the sides are too far away to read.

“Hey!” you scream, waving. “Down here!”

There's no way they'll hear you over the whirling blades, and no sign that they've seen you. The helicopter comes closer. The wind from the rotors nearly knocks you over. You force yourself to keep your hands in the air as you balance on the branch.

“Hey!” you yell again. “Wait!”

A rope ladder unrolls out the side of the aircraft as it approaches. You've got their attention, whoever they are.

You stretch your arms up. The last rung of the ladder

swings by, almost out of reach. You just barely manage to snag it with one hand.

The ladder drags you out of the trees and into the air. You had assumed that the helicopter would slow down so you could climb up, but they seem to be in a hurry. All you can do is hang on.

Boom!

The earth erupts beneath you. Trees and clumps of dirt shoot up into the sky. You thought the helicopter was loud, but it's nothing compared to this. A hailstorm of tiny rocks pummels your back as a rush of hot air pushes you sideways. You swing under the helicopter, holding on to the ladder for dear life. It's a long way down. If you fall, you're dead.

The debris all rains back down into a smoking crater where the forest used to be. It looks like the mouth of a volcano. Your ears are ringing.

The rope ladder lurches upwards, and you almost fall. Someone is pulling you up to the helicopter.

Your grip tightens as the ladder takes you higher and higher. When you've almost reached the open door, a man reaches out for you. He's dressed like he expects to be attacked by a pack of wild dogs. His arms are so padded he can hardly bend his elbows. His face is covered by a Plexiglas shield.

"Take my hand," he bellows.

He isn't dressed like a cop. But what else can you do?



You grab his outstretched glove and he hauls you into the helicopter. You're relieved to see four other people in the cabin, some in police uniforms. Agent Stacey is with them.

"Looks like you don't have to defuse the bomb, Gary," Stacey observes.

The guy in the padded suit smiles grimly. "Guess not."

"You escaped," you say.

Stacey nods. "Those two thugs weren't all that bright." She buckles you into a bench seat. "Your friends will be glad to see you," she says. "They're waiting at the lookout."

You rest your head back against the rubber pillow and close your eyes.

The helicopter wheels around and thunders through the fading light towards the lookout.

00:00

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



08:10

You dip your foot in the water and splash it around. “Hey!” you yell. “Ugly! Over here!”

The croc ignores you and keeps swimming towards Harrison. It opens its tremendous mouth, exposing a muscular tongue. The spikes on its back make it look like a burned meringue.

You jump into the waist-deep water. One foot squelches into the mud of the riverbed. The other lands on a flat stone. The crocodile still ignores you—

Until you bend down, snatch up the rock and hurl it at the croc’s yellow eye.

The stone misses the eyeball and bounces off the croc’s tough hide. But now you have its attention. The croc whirls around to face you, hissing like a venomous snake.

You scramble back out of the water onto the stepping stones. Tail swooshing, the crocodile powers across the river like a runaway speedboat, heading right for you. You’ve saved Harrison’s life, but what about yours?

You hop from one stepping stone to another. The rocks are slippery. One false step could send you crashing back down into the water, but you don’t dare slow down.

At last you reach the shore. You’re on dry land, where you have the advantage.



Or so you think. As you run into the trees, you hear the crocodile emerge from the water. It doesn't crawl or slither towards you — it actually gallops. You can hear its feet thumping the forest floor.

This thing can move, fast. Much faster than you. There's no hope of outrunning it.

Maybe you can outmanoeuvre it instead. It might not be able to change direction quickly — you could dive out of the way as it charges. Or maybe you should scramble up a tree. Crocs can't climb trees — can they?

If you head for the nearest tree, turn to page 94.

If you turn to face the croc so you can dodge as it attacks, turn to page 91.



05:12

You skirt around the rock and keep going, farther away from the cave. Hopefully you're not making a huge mistake. Any second now that bomb will go off and turn this forest — and you — into compost.

The trail winds uphill to the lookout. You're getting closer — you can hear the ocean crashing on the shore. Maybe you'll make it beyond the blast radius in time.

Soon the trees thin out. The trail reaches the edge of a cliff and takes a sharp turn up a set of rotting wooden steps. Now you have the forest on your left, and a sheer drop down to the ocean on your right. Hopefully—

Boom!

The explosion lights up the sky like a giant firework display. A terrifying pillar of smoke and debris grows larger and larger in the distance, getting closer and closer . . .

You sprint even faster up the steps, desperate to outrun the growing shockwave. You can feel the heat and light and noise building up and up behind you. Any second now you'll be swallowed up by the blast.

Should you keep running? Or brace yourself against something?

If you grab a nearby tree and hold on tight, turn to page 112.

If you keep running, turn to page 16.



25:35

“It’s this way,” you say, and lead Stacey up the path. Even carrying your surfboard, it shouldn’t take more than five minutes to get where you’re going.

Stacey doesn’t seem out of breath, despite the fact that she’s jogging on a wounded leg. Is the burn even real?

“How many people are at the camp?” she asks.

“Uh . . .” You run through the list in your head. There’s Pigeon, Neil and Shelley — your friends — and three other kids whose names you haven’t yet learned. Plus Harrison. But you’re not sure you want Stacey knowing the exact number.

“Less than twenty,” you say. Not really a lie. “Why?”

“That’s two helicopter loads. Evacuation will be tricky.”

“Evacuation? What are you talking about?”

“Everything I’m about to tell you is classified,” she says. “If you share it with anyone you’ll end up in detention.”

You don’t think she means detention like at school. You duck under the branches of a massive oak tree and keep walking. “So why are you telling me?”

“Because you need to understand how important



this is. I've been undercover for two years, and if the next thirty minutes don't go perfectly, it will all have been wasted."

Ferns scrape at your legs. A gecko scampers across the path in front of you. You falter to avoid stepping on it.

"Keep moving," Stacey says.

You push on through the darkening forest. "Undercover where?" you ask.

"At an oil-drilling platform four hundred metres off the coast. We learned about the conspiracy years ago, but we couldn't prove anything, and I didn't know exactly where the bomb would be until today."

You can't have heard her right. "Did you say bomb?"

"Seven kilograms of T4 plastic explosive," she says. "Enough to make a crater as big as a football field when it explodes — and I now know that it's in the cave systems right next to your campsite."

You're starting to think that this must be a prank. "Why would anyone want to blow up a surf camp?"

"Something dangerous is in the water." Stacey sounds deadly serious. "I don't know what, but it means the company can't do any more offshore drilling. There's plenty of coal under this forest, so they're going to start mining here instead."

"But this is a national park."

"Not if it gets blown up. Then it's just dead land, and the government will be keen to sell it off."



“Won’t it be obvious who planted the bomb?” you ask.

“They’ve falsified evidence to make it look like a rival company did it.” Stacey checks her watch. “The bomb is scheduled to go off at sunset. I can disarm it, but—”

She suddenly tackles you to the ground. You drop your surfboard and cry out. She clamps a hand over your mouth.

“Shhhhh,” she whispers, scanning the forest.

If you chose to take Stacey to the campsite, go to page 99.

If you’ve been leading her to the lookout, go to page 110.

