



Kingdom OF THE Deep





Shark Wars #4: Kingdom of the Deep

RAZORBILL

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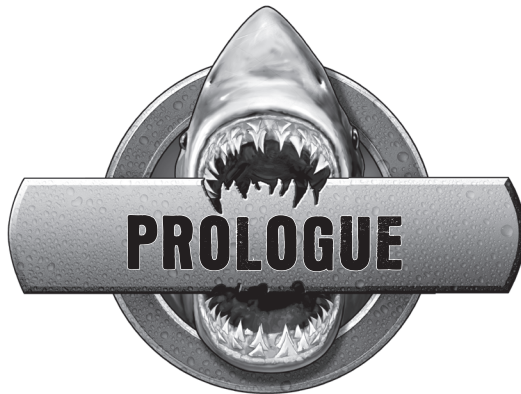
PEARSON





THIRTEEN YEARS AGO





“QUICKLY, MY SON!” GRAYNOLDUS SHOUTED AT his terrified pup. “You must swim like you have never swum before!” The little megalodon wasn’t old enough to speak but understood and churned his tail as fast as he could. Would it be enough?

Graynoldus could not believe how the situation had spun out of control so quickly and completely. It was madness!

Did Kaleth know of the coup by Drinnok? Drinnok was a bully and a loudmouth, but Graynoldus never would have thought that the giant mako shark would send King Bollagan and his Line to the Sparkle Blue! And were Hokuu and the mako *fin’jaa* that agreed with Drinnok part of this conspiracy? If so, Kaleth was in terrible danger! Graynoldus had to get to the other side and warn the rest. Everything depended on it!

“Stop him! By the order of Drinnok, stop him now!”





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yelled one of the giant frilled shark guards in hot pursuit. Graynoldus risked a glance back as he made a sharp turn, guiding his young son into the narrow canyon leading upward toward the new world above. Frilled sharks were better suited for swimming in tight spaces and flowed over the jagged ridges and switchbacks while he scraped himself on the sharp rocks. The frills were part eel, and that made them very tough in a fight, especially in cramped places. They could turn quicker than any sharkkind, and though their tri-tipped teeth were small compared to those of a megalodon, they could tear chunks off a shark with alarming efficiency. Frills also had a razor-sharp spike on the end of their tails that could pierce even the toughest shark hide. And they were swimming in a swarm of at least twenty.

If he and his pup were caught . . .

Graynoldus kept his attention on moving upward through the twisting passage. There was no time for playing “what if” right now. He would deal with that situation if the time came. Graynoldus ground his teeth and bore down, pushing his son forward.

Fifth Shiver had been sealed off for eons. It had been so long that only in legend was it whispered that there were a sun and moon above what was called the *chop-chop*, a term that had lost all meaning. Their watery world was hemmed in by a limestone and lumocrusted boundary. You could swim five thousand aqualeagues in any direction and no farther. Such had





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it been since long after the time of Tyro, the First Fish, who created all sharkkind and then set them in a Line to protect those who lived in the ocean. There were ancient stories that the Big Blue was bigger than their own waters, but there was no way to prove it.

Not until the seaquake.

The titantic quake had cracked the stone barrier imprisoning them all and opened a path upward into the wider ocean world. A scout had swum through the falling rocks, hissing steams, and glowing lava and made it to the other side! What he discovered was hailed as a miracle, a sign that their time was not over in the Big Blue. Graynoldus, too, was overjoyed when he swam out from the warm darkness of their pocket ocean. It had taken some time for his eyes to adjust, but he had seen the waters of the Big Blue along with the sun and moon above! Miraculous!

It was called the chop-chop because it was *choppy* from the waves! Who knew?

But this was a different world. It was much colder, the water tasted different, and most importantly, it was teeming with brand-new sharkkind and dwellers. They were younger races but doing wonderfully.

Their wise king, Bollagan, had decided that other than Kaleth, who was fifth in his Line, and a small group to guide the younger race of sharkkind, no one would swim into the new world until he had time to think over the consequences. Rightly, Bollagan thought that the





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younger races should swim their own current, with just a little help from their older, wiser cousins as in the ancient times. He did not want to start a war by rushing out and surprising them. If Fifth Shiver was to join the new world, they should live in peace with the younger races.

Although Bollagan was supported by Graynoldus and most others of his Line, Drinnok disagreed. He thought that they, the *prehistores*, as the younger race called them, had the right to reclaim the Big Blue as their own.

"If they have a problem with that, then they will die!" he had shouted at the council meeting last night. Sure, it was a disagreement, but Drinnok was a disagreeable fin and argued at most of the council meetings. Then Graynoldus had awoken to the sounds of battle this morning and word that the king and the rest of the Line were dead. Now Graynoldus was the only one left to tell Kaleth of Drinnok's treachery! With Kaleth at his side, perhaps they would be able to deal with Drinnok before he could invade the Big Blue.

If she was still alive.

Graynoldus used his massive tail to dislodge the loose rocks he hurtled past, but it wasn't enough. The frilled sharks, willing allies in Drinnok's plan, were too agile. A pocket of steam blasted out, scalding his side. The path was swelling and contracting, as if it hadn't yet decided if it wanted to stay open.

"Swim, my boy! Swim!" Graynoldus urged his son





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as he felt a tug on his tail. One of the frilled sharks had taken a bite from it. Their teeth were so sharp you almost didn't know you were being bitten.

Almost.

Graynoldus pushed little Gray forward and then flipped over, blasting the attacker away with his massive tail. The rest of the frills came forward in a rush. Each time one of the swarm struck, a scoop of flesh was taken from his flank or tail. Graynoldus was streaming so much blood that little Gray had stopped in shock, his mouth trembling. His son watched as Graynoldus was being eaten alive.

They weren't going to make it. . . .

"Swim, Gray! Swim or you will be punished! Do what I say!"

Little Gray, frightened beyond belief, began moving upward once more.

Graynoldus turned and brought his own massive dagger teeth to bear, snapping two frills clean in half. They went writhing and twisting into the blackness. He ground several others to jelly against the rough passageway before turning to his enemies. The way was thin enough that the frills had to attack him face-to-face. Though Graynoldus dwarfed any one of them, the combined strength of the swarm would tear him apart.

"You will not pass!" he yelled with all his strength. "By Bollagan's mighty heart, YOU WILL NOT PASS!"

Then the mountainous walls around him cracked





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and heaved. An orange glow brightened the waters before deepening to an angry red.

Steam hissed, louder and louder.

Graynoldus turned and looked at his son for what he knew would be the last time. "Swim, Gray! Swim! I love you!"

Little Gray disappeared around the last corner.

Good boy, Graynoldus thought.

The frilled sharks rushed forward to finish him.

And then the world exploded.

