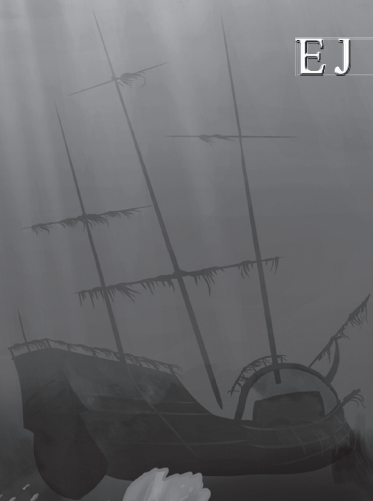




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PROLOGUE

FOR TIME BEYOND MEMORY THERE WAS THE ocean and it was empty. Then the first fish, a shark named Tyro, was borne from it. Tyro circled the Big Blue's vastness and found he was alone. So he swam once more through the seven seas and with each stroke of his mighty tail created everything that lives in and under the waters. He chose several sharks to hunt with him and called these the First Shiver, positioning them in a Line from first to fifth, with himself as leader.

First was mighty Finnbarr whose descendants became the great white sharks; second was powerful Longfluke whose children became the bull sharks; third was the cunning Machiakelpi whose sons and daughters became the mako; Ramtail the Battler was fourth and his young became the tiger sharks; and fifth, but never considered last in the Line by Tyro, was Leynar the Magnificent, whose descendants would be the threshers.

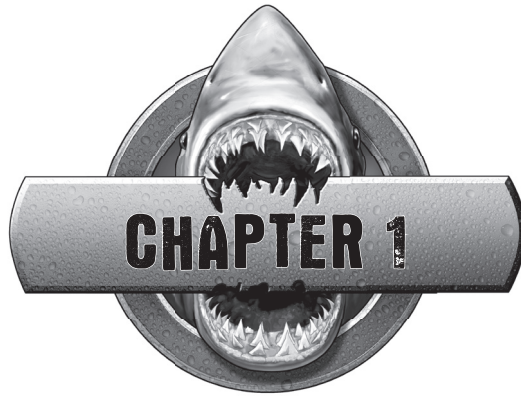
First Shiver governed with one goal in mind: to protect its members, which numbered all of sharkkind, and to ensure their survival from one generation to the next. For many years, every shark and dweller living in the Big Blue prospered under shiver law.

But after a long life Tyro grew weary. He summoned his Five in the Line and told them that one day a great evil would threaten all of sharkkind and every dweller in the seven seas. When this day came, only a united First Shiver would be strong enough to defeat the evil. After this warning, Tyro gave himself to the Sparkle Blue, where his spirit swims the eternal current to this day. But after their leader was gone, those in the Line bickered and fought about who would be best to lead against the coming danger. In the end, the five sharks of First Shiver could not—and would not—agree, and so swam off by themselves to create their own shivers...



THE REEF





SUNLIGHT DAPPLED THE WARM WATER AS GRAY flexed his powerful fins, gliding to a stop in a thick kelp bed. He used to hide in this patch of green-greenie unseen when he was smaller, but now his tail poked out. Gray made sure it waved back and forth with the warm tide so it wouldn't give him away. He would have been spotted going to the shiver's main hunting grounds, so he had snuck away in the opposite direction toward the lagoon. Gray was a growing fish, but the council, and his mom, Sandy, wouldn't let him hunt unsupervised. That was just unfair. He was twelve years old! He was practically adult for any sharkkind. Almost, anyway.

Even though his name was Gray, he was more bluish on his upper half and white on the bottom, with what he thought was a really cool stripe down each of his enormous flanks. "Everyone's jealous," he muttered. Apparently Gray was big for a reef shark. And ever since he

grew larger than Atlas, the old bull shark who was Coral Shiver's leader, every fin watched him with a mixture of curiosity and fear. Like I'm a freak or something, he thought.

Gray pushed that from his mind and concentrated on the task at hand. He'd get into trouble for sure if the council, or his mom, found out he was this far away from the homewaters. And so near the lagoon, Gray thought. But this is where the tasty, tasty lobsters hang out. He gnashed his rows of razor-sharp teeth, imagining the satisfying crunch of a nice, plump shellhead. The lobster that Gray was hunting wandered into the next kelp bed over, which was even thicker than where Gray was hiding now, but no problem. Many sharkkind didn't like swimming through greenie because they were afraid they would get tangled. But not Gray. He swam where he wanted, when he wanted. And today that happened to be in a kelp bed. Now where was that lobster? Being such a great hunter, Gray was positive the dumb shellhead didn't have a clue that certain doom was coming for it.

But suddenly his prey jetted forward, abandoning all stealth and gaining speed. The lobster somehow sensed his presence and made a break for the lagoon where Gray couldn't swim safely anymore, not since his growth spurt. This was a little annoying. Gray used the currents to mask his stalking to perfection! Or not . . . How did this little krillface know he was watching? The

lobster whizzed toward the mouth of the lagoon, where the landsharks had built some sort of floating home. Gray's mom would be really angry if she found out he was this close to the lagoon. But he wasn't about to be seen by anyone except the lobster. "And ol' Lobby will keep my secret once he's safely in my belly," Gray said out loud as he gained speed.

"Watcha doing, Gray?" asked Barkley the dogfish, disrupting Gray's concentration and even startling him a bit. Just a bit, though.

"Can't you see I'm busy?" Barkley could be very annoying. But still, he was Gray's friend and one of the few fish that made him laugh. He was also one of the few reef mates that would still spend time with Gray after his enormous growth spurt the previous year. Most of his old friends got very jumpy when he was around. Gray wondered why that was for a moment, but then set about leaving Barkley in his wake.

"Trying to catch that lobster, huh? Listen to your older and wiser friend—this isn't a good idea." Barkley was born a month before Gray and brought that fact up whenever he could.

"I'm not taking a survey about what you think!" Gray grouched.

"Hey, I just don't want to see you with your head stuck in a bucket again." The dogfish grinned, now swimming upside down and eye to eye with Gray. The memory still stung.

When Gray was a pup, he explored an ancient wreck of a landshark boat, a galleon, and got his head stuck in a *bucket* which was something humans used to carry stuff around in. It had been wedged on so tight Prime Minister Shocks needed to ask three of the octos from the octopus clan to pull the thing off. Gray was called “bucket head” that entire summer. He pretended not to hear Barkley’s teasing and increased his speed, but his friend was annoyingly fast for a dogfish and kept pace.

“Seriously, Gray, Miss Lamprey hunts around here before class. If she sees you, she’ll tell your mom for sure,” Barkley warned.

Everyone who grew up near the reef was taught by Miss Lamprey. They learned not only about the world in which they lived, but also about the dry world above the water where the two-legged landsharks ruled. Gray thought learning about the *human* world—that’s what they called themselves—was a big waste of time. But it did make things easier if you knew the words for things that didn’t come from the Big Blue. Especially if you got your head stuck in a bucket.

“Miss Lamprey can keep her pointy snout out of my business. And I thought we agreed to never bring up the *incident* again!”

“Oh, riiight. Totally forgot. Sorry. Let’s head back to the reef,” Barkley said as he tried to turn Gray by pressing against him. Ha! Fat chance. That used to work, but now Gray was four times the size of the

dogfish who nonetheless strained against his bulk. "Seriously, stop being such a flipper! We're going to be late for class!"

"I am *not* a flipper!" Gray told the dogfish. "I'm a total fin!" Being a fin was very cool. Being a flipper wasn't.

"Well, you're not acting very finny!" Barkley said. Gray butted his friend to the side and sped forward. "Hey! Come back!" shouted the dogfish.

"Eat wake, buddy!" The lobster had passed into the mouth of the lagoon. Talking with Barkley cost Gray valuable time. But it still wouldn't be enough time for his prey to make it home. Gray would show the shellhead who was the big fish in this patch of water.

He bore down on the lobster. Gray could feel the warm water whisking through his gills and closed his mouth so it wouldn't slow him down. He could smell the lobster as he closed the distance between them. So delicious! He ground his teeth in anticipation. Closer. The lobster disappeared momentarily into the fronds of kelp near the opening of the lagoon. There wasn't enough to hide in, though. Gray sped through the sparse greenie, opening his mouth for his strike when—whammo!

But it wasn't a good whammo. Not good at all. Gray had hit a hidden shelf in the lagoon bed. He could feel his dorsal fin in the exposed air *above* the waterline! The lobster turned and clacked its claws at Gray while shimmying and flipping its tail back and forth. Was the shellhead doing some sort of victory swim?! Impossible!

Crustaceans were just dumb snacks. It sure seemed to be enjoying itself, though.

Barkley cruised to a stop, hovering near Gray. “Wow, that looked painful. And dumb! Was it more painful than dumb, you think? Or the other way ’round?”

Gray struggled, thrashing his tail to free himself. But he was stuck. “If you’re finished, I could use some help!”

“Fine, fine.” Barkley quickly swam to the shallower side of the lagoon and pushed. This accomplished nothing. He swam a tight circle and tried butting Gray off the shelf. “You know, you might want to lay off the fatty tuna and go on a seaweed diet for a while. I’ve heard it’s very cleansing.”

“Shut your cod hole and push!” Gray yelled. They were far too close to the landshark colony. And humans had things called boats to move on top of the Big Blue. One time Gray came upon a human in a rubber covering floating by the bottom of the reef. He was chasing a group of mackerel and didn’t notice the human until they were snout to snout. It carried a spine shooter, and sometimes those were dangerous, even to a shark as big as Gray. But the landshark dropped it and blew bubbles instead, waving its arms wildly, looking very fierce indeed! It scared Gray so much he swam away as fast as he could! Close call. But this was more dangerous. Fish of all sizes—even whales!—were caught and killed by humans from boats.

Gray thrashed even harder. With one final ram from Barkley at full speed, he felt the ledge crumble, then disappear. He was free! Gray rejoiced as his dorsal fin submerged and he angled for deeper water.

“That was a close one, buddy!” Barkley chuckled nervously. After a moment, Gray did too. Pretty soon they were both cackling like crazy fish. “Can you imagine what your mom would do if she found out?” Barkley trailed off. Gray was laughing so hard he didn’t notice his mother floating off to the side, her eyes blazing. Uh-oh.

“I think I’m going to find out,” Gray said to his friend.

But Barkley wasn’t there, of course. The dogfish had wisely vanished. How does he do that? Gray wondered silently as his mother frowned, her tail swishing in short, angry strokes.