

Shark Holo Summer
By Angelus

Ocean spray glittered as it was tossed into the air by swimmers and surfers who had crowded onto the beach and spilled out to enjoy the cool water. The summer sun drew huge crowds to the beaches, but those crowds attracted the attention of a certain apex predator; an anthropomorphic shark was laying on the seabed far below the surface, deep enough that even his bright coloration would be difficult to spot from the above. Most of his body was a bright lobster red, but his front was a sunny yellow with a speckled fringe that ran down his sides and tail. Long black hair was tied into a loose ponytail that swayed like seaweed in the currents, and he was dressed in equally black swim trunks and a cropped tank top that were snug on his sleek body.

Holo stared up at the buffet that was blissfully swimming above him. They were all conveniently unaware of the danger that lurked below. He watched them for a while, studying the way they moved, the way they were pushed and pulled by the waves and the tide. All he needed was an opening, and he didn't miss his window of opportunity. He kicked off the seabed and shot to the surface at full speed with his mouth wide open. Water rushed past his fins and through his gills, invigorating him as he angled his ascent toward his target. The vibrant shark breached the surface and sent a pillar of glimmering seawater into the air as he scooped his prey into jaws.

The spectacle of his leap drew attention, but the water hid him from view and prevented anyone from seeing his prey's hands vanishing into the back of his throat. He swallowed and sent his snack into his gut as gravity pulled on him. As his stomach bulged out, he twisted in the air to point facedown for a nosedive into the water. Never one to pass up an easy meal, he opened his jaws for the descent and crashed back into the sea while cramming a second person into his mouth on the landing. The speed and force of his dive rammed his second meal past the point of no return in an instant, sealing them inside his distended stomach.

He made for the seafloor and tucked his prey-bloated self into a tangle of seaweed to hide from the eyes of the air-breathing food up above. His stomach contents were violent, a fact which always amused the anthro shark. Strong kicks and punches distended his yellow stomach, but he leisurely flipped himself over and squashed his stomach against the rocks and sand below to stifle them. "Even if you did escape, do you really think you'd have enough air to get to the surface after fighting like this?" He spoke to himself while stroking over the shapes his prey made in his stomach. Though his words turned to bubbles as they left his mouth, he could still hear his own voice.

A surprise coordinated attack from within bounced him off the ground and almost sent him sailing out of the seaweed patch. "Ow! Geeze, no more of that!" Holo let out an indignant snort and released a belch that sent bubbles jetting from his jaws and gills. His stomach shrank and tightened around his prey. The bulges became more pronounced and the thrashing from within intensified in desperation. "Sorry, were you breathing that? Don't worry, I'm sure you can breathe water too, right~? Here you go!" He knew very well that they couldn't, but he was still more than happy to replace what little thin air they had left with salty ocean water, swelling his stomach into a round, smooth sphere in the process.

“Hey, I’m one of those uh, what are they called? Aquariums, yeah! Urrp-” A sudden belch bubbled out of his mouth. The last of the air in his stomach was accompanied by a pair of goggles. He snatched them with his claws before they could float away and crammed them back into his mouth and down his throat. “Whoops, sorry! You can have those back.” His round stomach was settling, and the yellow sphere was swaying with the seaweed as he peeked his head out from his hiding spot. “Should be about time... Yup.”

Predictably, with two people suddenly missing, people were starting to freak out. Many were paddling to the shore for safety, making the sand even more crowded. Holo grinned and showed off his huge, white, meat-shredding teeth. “Easy. A little spook and the whole herd goes running for land, as if that’ll save them. Time for a meet and eat!” He made for the shore, sticking as close to the sandy bottom as he could with his gut hanging below him. It dragged in the water, slowing him down just a tad. That gut of his started to skid along the sand as it approached the shallows. Before his fins breached the surface, he angled his nose down and whipped his tail for a burst of speed. His entire body slipped into the sand as though it were an extension of the ocean. His body, tail, and even his churning stomach vanished from sight as he plunged through the wet sand and glided past the shoreline.

He couldn’t exactly see anything. The sand was as opaque as you might imagine, but he could more or less sense where things were. He could feel the ocean behind him, and feel where the sand gave way to impenetrable dirt and stone. More importantly, he could feel where people were located on the sand above, especially if they were moving. Holo slowed his pace and paddled to the surface, just barely poking his eyes above the sand to get a good view. The disappearance of two people in the water were keeping people’s gazes on the waves, so he went unnoticed as he surveyed the beach for a good spot to claim.

As soon as he saw an open patch of sand, he dived back down and made a beeline for it. He let himself float up through the sand and made sure to keep his stomach below him. He felt his back breach the top layer of sand, so he shook himself to make it look like he was surfacing from being covered in a pile of the stuff. He pulled his limbs and thick tail free and shook sand from his ponytail before laying belly-down on the warm sand. His stomach remained hidden just below the surface as it continued to work on his earlier meals.

People nearby were whispering about the disappearances, unaware of how close they were to the pair that had vanished. Holo tried not to smile too much, but he was pleased with the thin layer of tension he’d managed to spread over the summer fun. He hummed to himself to kill time while waiting for people to acclimate to his presence before making a move.

“Hey!” He called out and waved to a passing group that looked anxious the waters. “Sounds like something happened while I was napping, do you know what’s going on?”

“Well...” One of the group of three tried to fill him in about the missing persons, but Holo pretended he couldn’t quite hear them over the din of the busy beach.

“Sorry, I didn’t quite catch that! You wanna join me for a bit while you fill me in?” He smiled at them, making sure not to show his teeth.

The group discussed things for a moment before joining the shark, taking seats in the sand dangerously close to him. Holo yawned and stretched his limbs to keep up the “just had a nap” appearance. “So, nice to meet you all! I’m Holo!” He held out a hand for a handshake. One of them took his hand and gave it a shake, only to pull back suddenly with a yelp.

“Ouch!”

“Oop, sorry! Claws.” He gave them a sheepish look and briefly showed off his sharp digits. He was lying of course. His body concealed numerous venomous barbs on his limbs and fins that were filled with a mild sedative. It wasn’t enough to kill, not by far, but it was more than enough to put prey to sleep.

That left two.”So, you guys had said something about a disappearance?”

“Mmhmm. Apparently, two people that were out swimming vanished suddenly. People are saying they recall a big splash or wave washing over them, and then they were just gone! It’s a little worrying, I hope they’re okay...”

“Hopefully! I’m sure they’re fine, maybe the current pulled them down the beach a ways.” Holo felt his stomach gurgle under the sand, and his tail stiffened for a moment. He watched his new “friends” faces for a reaction, but none of them heard it over the din of the beach.

“I hope that’s all it is.”

“It’s pretty busy today too, so maybe they just got tangled up in the crowds!” Holo lifted an arm and gave them a firm pat on the back. “Just relax!” The pat came with a jab of venom.

“Ouch, hey, not so hard. We just met.”

“A-ah, sorry, I lose track of my own strength.” Two was good enough, and he was too hungry to keep waiting. He reached out and grabbed the third of their group, gripping their wrist with one hand. “After all, I’m WAY stronger than livestock like you!” He pushed himself to his feet, dragging his gut out from under the sand. Dusty grains of dry sand poured off of him and revealed his protruding, noisy stomach, and his gaze became wild as his muzzle parted and drool dripped from between flesh-ripping teeth. “See?” He lifted the one of them with one hand, and they tried to kick at him as their feet left the ground. “Weighs nothing!” He flicked his wrist and sent them a few feet into the air, and he opened his mouth and caught them on the way down. They plunged down his throat like it was a waterslide, vanishing without so much as a gulp. They splashed down into the acrid stew of bone-filled seawater inside the shark’s gut and started to thrash as their skin burned.

“Fuck!”

People started screaming. Shouts spread out from the scene, and soon the entire herd of land-dwellers was stampeding toward higher ground, trampling each other in the process. The dull thud of their frantic footsteps across the sand was music to the shark’s ears.

“Come on man, we gotta go!” His two remaining prey were still close by, and as one shook the other, it became clear that the other had passed out from the shark’s venom. As soon as he was shaken, his body slumped over and sprawled against the sand, completely unconscious. “Ghh!”

“What’s the matter? You can still save yourself, can’t you?” Holo grinned and took a step closer. His stomach bounced, and bulges still kicked out against the surface.

“Damnit! Sorry guys! I-” He turned to run but was hit with a wave of fatigue that brought him to his knees. His vision blurred and his eyes fluttered as his consciousness faded.

“W-wait... No... why...?” He fell face-first onto the sand.

“Psh. What a sad show. Oh well.” Holo grabbed the first of his sleeping meals under their arms, hoisted them up, and stuffed them into his mouth. His yellow throat bulged as he gulped them down, his chest widened, and finally, his stomach swelled out with a heavy gurgle. That ballooned ball of digesting meat and stewing bone hung down to his knees, so he placed a hand on the side of it to steady the wobble and sway as he approached his final meal.

People were giving him a wide berth as they fled from the water and the sand, rushing for their cars to flee home. The crowd parted around him like water around a stone, a fact which added more fuel to his superiority complex. "Alright, last snack for the afternoon!" He leaned down to lift his sleeping prey, flattening his stomach against the sand in the process. It bubbled with fierce digestion, and the struggles within had died out. The greedy beast opened wide and shoveled the limp body into his mouth.

It went down smooth and added to his stomach, dropping that groaning yellow ball to the sand where it supported some of its own weight once he was upright again. Holo let out a pleased sigh and smacked the side of his gut, sending a wobble across it and stirring its melting contents. "Not a record, but not bad. Ah well. There's plenty more chances." He turned to face the mainland and watched as the crowds dwindled. He raised a hand to wave goodbye and gave them the toothiest smile he could. "Thanks for coming! I'll see you tomorrow, dumbasses!" He knew as well as anyone that unless the beaches were officially closed (and even if they *were* closed) that people would swarm the beaches in equal numbers tomorrow, and the day after, and the day after that, all summer long, and he was going to eat, and eat, and eat, until there was nothing left to feast on.