

She was about to doze off hearing the monotonous hum of the tires on the pavement and the gentle rocking of the bus when it started to slow down; she sat on a wheel seat near the back. She brushed her hair and long, brown ear lop out of her face when she stirred as the bus slowly swerve onto the shoulder of the highway, tires crunching on the gravel as it slowed to a complete stop. It was close to midnight, hardly any cars passed them. Her and the rest of the passengers on the bus were stuck on I-57 in the middle of winter. The only sight to be had was barren, snow-covered farmland for miles. Rebecca's exodus up North was put on pause.

The bus driver spoke over the PA: "Aaaattention passengers, we regret to inform you that our trip to Chicago will be delayed due to a technical emergency. I ask that you please sit tight as we figure out the problem. We'll be back on the road shortly. Thank you."

The few passengers that were sleeping stirred awake from the sudden commotion. Their tired, expressionless faces now showed concern, and some quietly chattered amongst themselves.

A middle-aged crow several seats in front of Rebecca complained audibly, "That's it! I'm never taking Southern Transit again! Time after time there's been a breakdown or a half-hour delay. I'll never -"

"Shut yer pecker! Just wait it out like the rest of us," retorted a young bull shark with a slight, Hispanic accent; not once did he glance at her as he spoke. He only wore jeans and an old, white t-shirt that bulged slightly from his large body, and his jet-black hair was slicked back. He sat across the row from the crow, leaned back and arms crossed.

The crow stuck her beak in the air in disgust. "Well...at least I'm traveling legally."

"Ay Dios mío," he said to himself as he rolled his eyes and absently looked out the bus window.

"Hey! We're in America! Speak English fer fuck's sake!" yelled a scruffy coyote with a thick, Southern accent who sat behind Teódulo. "I could smell your salty, beaner scent from here, shark boy!"

Teódulo turned around to him in annoyance. "Fuck you," he told the coyote calmly as he gave him the finger.

The coyote was taken aback by his gesture, but immediately smirked. "Just you wait 'til the Klan finds ya'll and reams yer ass for sayin' that ter me."

"Tch. That'll be the day."

The crow chimed in with her pompous tone. "You Mexicans are always stealing jobs from us hard-working Americans, and just waltzing over the border like nobody's business," she said as she waved her wing about, "I bet you're smuggling in cocaine too."

Teódulo shifted his eyes in confusion. "Uh, no I'm not; and I'm actually from -"

"We don't give a shit where yer from! You beaners are ruinin' this country for us proud Americans!"

The two kept trying to tear down Teódulo, and he kept brushing them off in hopes that they'd stop. Meanwhile, Rebecca and the other passengers were trying to tune them out as they waited for the bus to start up again. She tried pulling her long ear lops over her ear holes to try and block out the arguments. This was one of many reasons why she wants to leave the South: too much racism and pointless hate.

The bus driver spoke over the PA again, slightly irritated at the commotion going on behind him: "Attention passengers, the bus will indefinitely be stuck here due to a fuel leak. Please remain calm and sit tight. I have contacted the nearest station and we will have to transfer you to a different bus to Chicago. The next bus will be here in about 45 minutes. Thank you."

Rebecca checked her phone: 12:30 am.

Dammit! I wish I was out of the South by now; I'm sick of this bull shit! I bet that shark guy's thinking the same thing. I feel awful for what he's probably gone through every day since he got here.

Just then, Teódulo got up out of his seat. "That's it! I've heard enough from your fucking mouth!" He stomped back towards the coyote, shuffling in the aisle as best as he could; he was much bigger and bulkier compared to the coyote.

"Oh what? Now yer gonna try an' make a -"

Teódulo threw a fist at his face. **Crunch** The coyote was knocked out cold in his seat, blood covered his muzzle and his tongue lazily dangled out his mouth. The other passengers stared in awe at the sight. A light grey tiger with green stripes pulled out his phone to dial 911, but decided against it after noticing Teódulo glaring at him to the side.

He turned to the crow. "Normally, I wouldn't threaten a señorita. If you weren't, you'd end up like him," he said, pointing at the knocked out coyote. "Now I suggest you sit quietly and keep that self-entitled pecker of yours shut or I might make an exception." He tapped her beak with a claw.

The crow's eyes went wide; she kept quiet and never said a word after that.

About 15 minutes passed; it was dead quiet, save for the passengers who shuffled in their seats from time to time. Many of the passengers, even the driver, fell back asleep; the coyote was still unconscious in his seat, the blood now dried on the fur of his muzzle. The only ones wide awake were Teódulo and Rebecca.

Teódulo shook his leg nervously as he absently looked out the window, resting his webbed hand on his cheek as he did so. *Shit! I hope he was lying about the KKK. Who knows if there are other racist hicks on this bus,* he thought in Spanish. Thinking to himself in his native tongue eased his stress since arriving in the States.

Nervously massaging a long ear lop, Rebecca got out of her seat and shuffled in the aisle over to Teódulo.

"H-hey, um, do you mind if I sit next to you for a while?" she asked, rubbing her ear lop much quicker.

Teódulo turned his large head to face her, cocking his eyebrow slightly. "You gonna give me shit about my heritage too?"

"Oh no no no, I just thought...I just thought that you'd want some company after...well, you know. If you want to be left alone, that's fine too." She shuffled her feet paws as if she was going to go straight back to her seat.

He looked back out the window for a moment, then back to her. "Que demonios, why not." He waved a webbed hand for her to sit down. She complied and took the empty seat next to him, still nervously massaging her ear.

"So...um...where are you from?" she asked.

"Honduras; completely different from México, but just as bad: poverty, horrible government, your usual third-world country."

"Is that why you came up to the States?"

"Sí. I've sometimes heard this place be called 'El Norte' and have heard about how great it is, bit over-exaggerated if you ask me."

"Yeah...not...not the greatest place to be from my experience." She stopped rubbing her ear lop and stared blankly at the floor. "I fucking hate this place," she said quietly to herself.

Teódulo gave a slight chuckle. "Tch, no kiddin.' I've only been here a month and I can think of several reasons why."

Rebecca started to tear up, but tried to keep it to herself. Teódulo looked over at her, concerned. "Ay, señorita, what's wrong?"

She wiped her eyes, still absently looking downcast. "Nothing...just...just had a flood of some horrible memories...that's all," she said with a shudder. She gave a heavy sigh. "The further I am from them, the happier I'll be...if this damn bus gets moving anytime soon."

"I'm with ya on that."

Composing herself back again, she asked, "If you don't mind me asking: why did you leave Honduras, other than it being a shit-hole?"

"Well...that was really it, to be honest. I had no real family, no real friends...no love life, nothing; I didn't know why I left earlier, could've gone anytime I wanted really."

"Oh...I'm sorry."

He absently waved his hand. "Ah, don't be, it's not like I was leaving anyone or anything behind." He turned himself to face her better. "So what about you? Why are you leaving this shit-hole?"

She was silent for a moment, then turned to him. "Like I said before, I hate it here...and I'm not leaving anyone behind either." *I'm sorry dad...you made me do this.*

"Hehe, I guess we're both fugitivos then."

She gave a small smile, but then immediately said, "Oh, I'm Rebecca by the way. I-I don't think I caught your name."

"Teódulo, but my friends used to just call me Teó...when they were around."

"Oh...uh, ok. Teó. Got it." She absently looked forward as she rubbed one paw on the opposite sleeve of her coat.

They both sat in silence afterwards. Teódulo looked back out the bus window absently while Rebecca attempted to sleep sideways in her seat.

The coyote finally came to, dried blood all over his muzzle. He glanced forward at Teódulo but quickly hid himself to avoid eye contact. Afraid to make contact with him again, the coyote tried wiping any blood he could off him.

The crow still didn't say a word, even if she did wince at the thought of anyone sitting next to Teódulo anytime she happened a glance at them.

Sleep failing to come to her, Rebecca checked the time again on her phone: 1:10 am.

Ugh, I can't wait 'til we get to Chicago.

Teódulo was sleeping peacefully next to her, head bowed and his large arms crossed, like he fell asleep during a sermon.

I swear, ALL guys look cute when they're asleep.

Just then, the thought of her snuggling up to him right now occurred to her. Her mind fashioned images of them cuddling, her somewhat large body in his muscular arms, protecting her; them having dinner at a Mexican restaurant, because that would be the closest thing reminding him of his heritage; them swimming together at a beach, him not judging her for not being a good swimmer or her chubby appearance in a one-piece. Her curiosity wanted to know if the rumors were true with male sharks: were they packing two down there? She could feel her face burn beat red as random fantasies played in her mind.

Oh my God! You just met the guy!

She turned the other way to try and keep her passionate thoughts at bay, but it only made them stronger.

Thankfully, the bus driver interrupted when he spoke over the PA: "Attention passengers. Our emergency transfer bus to Chicago is here. Please be sure to take any and all belongings with you on the other bus. We apologize for the inconvenience. Thank you."

She was about to grab her bag and dash off to the other bus when she noticed Teódulo still sleeping. She nudged him.

"Hey Teó, the other bus is here."

He shook his head to wake himself up. "Oi. ¡Finalmente!"

Taken aback by his response, she asked him, "Did you bring anything with you? I didn't notice a bag or anything."

He got up from his seat. "Just me, myself, and what I'm wearing right now, señorita. Like I said earlier, I wasn't leaving anything behind when I left Honduras."

They both made their way to the front of the bus, along with the coyote, who still had some blood on his face, the crow, and the other passengers. When they got on the other bus, they both headed for the farthest seats available and sat next to each other, Teódulo in the window seat again, Rebecca in the aisle seat.

When everyone was on board, the other bus pulled onto the highway, starting up the monotonous hum of its tires on the pavement and its gentle rocking as it traveled.

Rebecca checked her phone; it was 1:30 am.

Around the first hours of the morning, when the sun's glow barely shined through the dark clouds, the bus was about to pull in to the O'Hare bus station. The bus driver informed the passengers and, again, apologized for the breakdown earlier. Any passengers sleeping woke, whether from the driver's announcement or noticing the bus has stopped. The all got off.

"So...where you headed off to now?" Rebecca asked Teódulo sleepily.

He was just as tired. "Well...to be honest, I'm not sure. I never thought I'd make it this far."

She smirked. "Hehe, I'm in the same situation."

They both headed inside the station building and sat down. Teódulo had a hard time getting comfortable due to his bulky tail and dorsal fin. *At least I had some place to put this damn thing on the bus*, he thought to himself in Spanish.

Rebecca turned to Teódulo. "Hey, um, I forgot I had to call a friend of mine as soon as I got here," she informed him, "she was willing to let me stay until I put my life back together..." She glanced downward a moment, then turned back to him. "I could ask her if you could stay too if...well, if you don't have any place to stay."

He pondered a moment. "That depends. She around your age?"

She hesitated at his query, rubbing her ear flop out of habit, but replied, "Yes...Why do you ask?"

"Well, señorita, you look a bit too young to be traveling this far on your own. Believe me when I say you wouldn't want to have a run-in with a male rabbit when he's drunk. I've been to New Orleans and saw what they do to...any female *Humanalia* really..." He paused a moment.

Rebecca took the chance to retort. "Hey, don't worry about me. I can take care of myself." She unintentionally raised her voice some. "Why should you or anyone say when I can be on my own? Or dictate if I'm capable of doing so?" She was nearly yelling at this point.

"Señorita, please!" he commanded in a hushed tone while leaning towards her. "Not here where -"

"What?! I can't do what I want because you said so DAD!!"

Teódulo quickly backed away with a shocked look when she shouted at him. He waited a moment for her anger to pass. Thankfully no one was around save the owl bus station operator, who rotated his head at the commotion.

Rebecca started crying now, though softly. "S-s-s-sorry...I -"

"Come on, let's go outside Becca." He stood her up and they both walked out the entrance opposite the bus parking area. He rubbed her shoulder with a webbed hand to try and comfort her as they walked outside. "Why don't you let your amiga know we're here and...try not to think about what just happened too much...ok?"

She nodded.

After regaining her composure, she looked up her friend, Amber, on her phone and gave her a call. She explained the situation with Teódulo and informed her that she had one of her episodes again.

When she was finished squaring everything away, and partaking in idle chit-chat, she hung up and told Teódulo, "Ok, so, she doesn't feel comfortable having strangers stay at her place, let alone ones much older than us, no offence."

"None taken."

"So...it sounds like you'll have to stay someplace else...sorry."

"It's ok."

"There are a couple motels near her place though...I'm sure you'd be fine with that..."

"No, no, no, es bueno. I-I'd be ok with that for a while." He paused to let out a yawn, exposing his two rows of sharp teeth for a moment. Rebecca winced at the sight. "Yo muy cansado."

"Yeah...me too," she yawned.

About a half-hour passed when the bus to Axeford arrived at the station. Immediately after getting on and finding a couple seats, both of them fell asleep. After some time, Rebecca unknowingly rested her head on Teódulo's muscular shoulder, not once flinching at the touch of his rough skin; Teódulo opened his eyes a moment and noticed her behavior, but quickly went back to sleep, half-smiling at the site.

Two hours past as if it were a few minutes when they woke, feeling the bus's crawl into the Axeford station. Rebecca was calling Amber as they were heading towards and out the front entrance; the bull shark started to shiver as soon as they went outside. They were only waiting a few moments as Teódulo borrowed her phone to call a cab when a young, female brown rat pulled up to the curb in a beat-up Honda.

He moved an eye muscle upward, as if he were cocking an eyebrow. *So this must be Señorita Amber.*

She got out of her still-running car and embraced Rebecca. "I'm so glad you were able to make it safely up here!" she exclaimed.

"It's so glad to see you for real for the first time," replied Rebecca. "I can't thank you enough for letting me stay over for a while...I don't know how to repay you."

"Don't worry about it. When you were talking about what's been going on with your dad, I just knew I had to help you out somehow." She noticed Teódulo. "So this is your, erm, 'friend' you met on the way up? Teó, was it?" She eyed him up and down, drinking in his foreign, muscular form, blushing at the sight of him.

He tried keeping his 'tough guy' appearance, despite the cold biting at his thin scales. "S-Sí ...I came up all the way from Honduras...had quite an interesting run-in with some locals down South on the way up here too...Please to meet you, Amber." He held out his right, webbed hand. *I hope her amiga doesn't think we're dating or something. Aye, that'd be weird and just...wrong; they're both so young.*

Amber gingerly shook it then quickly let go at the touch of his odd skin and webbing. She reddened some upon hearing his deep, Hispanic accent. "He's...quite a site, isn't he?"

Teódulo frowned at her comment. "Yeah...I get that a lot," he replied.

"No, no, no, I didn't mean anything like that," she quickly recovered, "It's just...there aren't a lot of marine *Humanalia* around here, so..." She paused a moment to shake off the awkward of meeting him. "Anyway, you must have had a long trip. I-I'm sure I can figure out someday so you can stay over as well. I don't have a lot of space though, it's just a one-bedroom apartment; b-but I think we can work something out."

He half-smiled at her comment. "I'm sure it'll be much better than a cheap motel."

She giggled. "Yep. I wouldn't want a guy like you to have to stay at one of those sketchy places." She paused, realizing what she said for a moment. "B-Because they're usually full of drug dealers a-and hookers and stuff. I-I mean, you don't want to stay at a place like that, right? You know what? Why don't you both come stay at my place, ok?"

"Then let's get going, it's freezing out here. I'm not a mammal ya know?"

"Y-Yeah, let's-s-s get out-t-ta here," Rebecca chimed in though chattering teeth while pressing both ear flops as close as possible to her head.

"Yeah, sure," Amber obliged. "You mind sitting in the back, though, 'Becca? I don't think Teó here's gonna fit."

"Wherever it's warm," she spat as she nearly jumped in the car after Amber opened the back door.

Teódulo could barely squeeze himself in the passenger seat, nearly taking over the driver's seat as well. Even after he adjusted the seat, he still couldn't get quite comfortable in the small car.

Amber looked over at him. "It's small, I know. I'm not used to driving anyone else around...sorry about that."

"Nah, it's ok," he reassured her as he still shuffled around a bit to get comfortable, "I think I can manage." As he started to lean back, a force pushed at him from the center of his back. "Ugh, this damned fin," he said to himself.

Amber turned forward again, putting the car in drive. "Well, it's only a half-hour to my place from here, if that's any help," she reassured him.

"Aye. Gracias."

All three of them headed up a narrow, cramped stairway leading the floor of Amber's apartment. The door to her apartment was only right around the corner; the white paint was faded and scratched from age, and the brass numbers on the door fared no better. They entered into a spacious main area that only contained a couch, coffee table, and a TV stand that held a large box TV. A cable outlet hung out of the wall, dangling by its exposed internal wires. The carpet and walls had various stains, and the air inside was stale. Neither Rebecca nor Teódulo showed any concern about the conditions of the apartment, but Teódulo still couldn't grasp why a 19-year-old girl would get a place of her own, let alone be willing to house a man his age.

Amber turned to them after locking the door behind them. "Ok. Becca, you can sleep on the couch if you want."

"Yeah, that's fine," she replied.

"Teó, do you mind sleeping on the floor in here?" Amber asked.

"Es no problema; I can sleep anywhere," he replied.

She chuckled at his Spanish. "That makes things easy." She then went into the kitchen and looked around in the fridge and cupboards. "Hey! Do you guys mind going someplace for breakfast?" she shouted from the kitchen. "I forgot to go shopping because I didn't know when Becca was gonna get here!"

"Yeah! That's fine!" Rebecca shouted back.

Amber came back into the main room. "Oh, thanks. I hope you guys have enough cash; I don't have much on myself right now. Pay Day's not 'til next week."

"I should be good," Rebecca stated.

"Me too," replied Teódulo.

"I know of a couple good places nearby, cheap too, and they aren't fast food."

Amber explained to them what's in the area. Once they decided where to go, they all exited the apartment, walked down the cramped stairs, to Teódulo's discomfort, and got back into Amber's car; Teódulo sat in the back seat this time.

* * *

"I'm gonna need some fishies in my gut, or else I'm gonna go loco." Teódulo was swishing his large tale back and forth as he paced around the main area of the apartment; partially for warmth, mostly out of frustration. "The one thing I enjoyed about Honduras: an unlimited supply of fishies." He wiped a claw on his mouth where a trickle of saliva once was.

"I know a decent place," Amber said behind the closed door to her bedroom, "It's called Frozen Tide and it's really good if you like fish. It can get pricy though, but I got enough for the three of us."

"Oh, you don't need to cover for me, Amber," said Rebecca from the couch that's currently her bed; her voice barely audible to contrast the shark's lead feet claws.

"You worry a lot hun," replied Amber, "don't worry, I can cover for you guys." She exited her room, now clothed in only a yellow hoodie and grey sweatpants. She sat down next to Rebecca. "Been saving up anyway, at least for you, Becca."

She observed her frustrated, unintended guest. "You, señor, owe me some decent sleep and a new bathroom mirror. Honest to God, I thought there was an earthquake for a change."

Teódulo stopped his pacing and directed his attention to the young rat, his large tail still moving. "Lo siento; I forgot I tend to snore."

"You didn't on the bus," Rebecca said.

He looked aside to her. "I wasn't in strange water in a strange place. Besides, I was just 'resting my eyes' as you Americans call it."

"Make all the excuses you want dude." Amber pointed her thin, furless claw at him. "Be lucky I let you stay here too; this place gets expensive when it's just me."

A heavy silence filled the main room for a moment until Rebecca broke the awkward silence. "Hey guys, um...I'm getting kinda hungry."

"Yeah me too. Like I said: I'll buy."

"¡Finalmente!"

The trio slowly made their way to the Frozen Tide due to the sudden snowfall. Amber fishtailed the car several times on the way there, letting out a small squeak each time she did so. Teódulo protested several times about the cramped car and her driving, along with the cold; but he didn't direct this at anyone in particular.

They all exited the car into the windy winter to enter the restaurant; it was one of those small, hole-in-the wall places you would find in any downtown region. Rebecca and Amber were quite content in only their hoodies and pants, though Amber kept her naked tail tuck in near her protected body. Teódulo kept his macho appearance as best he could, despite his scaly body shivering against the cold. They all went in.

The overall theme of the restaurant was expected: arctic fishing; the whole place was decorated with various fishing tools, paintings, and other memorabilia akin to the penguin culture of the North and South poles. In front of them stood a podium where a seemingly bored badger with a lip piercing leaned against. He wore black dress pants and a blue t-shirt that had the restaurant's name in small print on the front corner. Behind him was a large open space, separated from the entry way by a decorative fishing net and wooden posts; simple, wooden tables and chairs placed evenly throughout. There was also a small bar in the left, rear corner and one door leading back into the kitchen behind the bar; the other kitchen door was in the opposite corner, also in the rear. Bathrooms were near this kitchen door. Many of the tables were filled, though business seemed steady for this time of day.

The badger grudgingly greeted them as they entered. Masking his boredom, he lead them to their table; Amber and Rebecca sat next to each other while Teódulo sat across from them. The badger waiter offered them menus and drinks. After deciding and placing their order, they waited. Teódulo spoke up first after trying his beer.

"¡Que es rico! I never knew I'd find good drinks up here! Everything back in Honduras tasted, ugh, dirty."

"So I take it you're here to stay?" Amber asked with a twinge of sarcasm.

"Oh, sí señorita." He pointed at Rebecca with the same hand that held his beer. "Like I said to your friend here, I'm *never* going back to that place; there's nothing for me there. There never has been." He took a sip of his beer.

Amber gave a small frown. "Aw, I'm sorry about that. You must've had a hard journey then."

"Not exactly," he said, "When you're like me, getting through the Gulf is a breeze when you have these guys," he said as he showed them his finger webbings and pointed to his dorsal fin on his back. "The hard part was getting up here from Louisiana with whatever money I could scrape up, and getting legal. Meeting Rebecca here made the trip a little easier; it seems like no one inland thinks you're a real person when

you're a Latino, or a shark for that matter." He grinned on one side, his sharp teeth showing some. "At least folks seem friendly up here, but damn is it cold."

"You should get used to it, maybe," Amber assured him as she took a sip of her soda. "I don't know much about sharks since, well...yeah. But you seem nice."

He chuckled. "Thanks."

"So what's Honduras like? I've never been there and I was just —"

"Amber, don't," interjected Rebecca. "I've already tried asking him on my way here; he doesn't want to talk about it."

"But why —"

"Don't...p-please," she started massaging her ear flop out of habit, but quickly put both hands in her lap.

Amber leaned in closer to Rebecca. "You look cute when you do that, you know?" she teased.

Rebecca felt her cheeks burning and was about to commit her nervous habit several times, but fought against it for each temptation. In a pouty mood, she quickly took a sip of her soda and quickly set the glass back on the table, almost spilling its contents. Finally she said, "No I don't."

"Yes you do."

"No I don't."

"Yes you doooo."

"No I DON'T."

Teóculo interrupted their banter, "Uh, señoritas. Food's comin'."

The same waiter badger came back to their table, holding a tray with their food with one hand. He eased it on the edge of the table, slightly wincing hoping it wouldn't fall over, and maneuvered around the table giving them their orders. Rebecca got her extra stuffed salad wrap, Amber got her semi-raw salmon with a sides of corn and assorted fruits, and Teóculo got his 'Fishnet and Chips' dish, containing a variety of fully and semi-cooked fish with a side of wedge-cut fries. They each thanked their waiter and he left as quickly as he came.

Teóculo took a large chomp of a fish before speaking. "So...Amber..." he swallowed some, "How come you have your own place at your age? You're fresh out of high school I assume?"

Amber paused before taking another bite of her salmon. "It's...nothing I want to talk about..." She was about to take a bite, but decided against it. "But...I think it'd be wrong of me to not talk about myself, yet you were willing to do so yourself, at least a little."

"Simply put...my mom's a hard alcoholic. Ever since her and Dad got divorced...she's never been the same since...I haven't been treated by her the same since she stopped giving a shit about anything. That's the last I saw of her." Her snout scrunched some, as if she was apathetic about her situation. "That's all I'm comfortable sharing, at least with you," she said waving her fork towards Teóculo. "No offence."

"I understand; you just met me." He took a chomp out of one of the fish. Still chewing, he turned to Rebecca. "You've been mostly quiet this whole time."

She looked up; a piece of lettuce poked out from the side of her mouth. "Huh...Oh." She wiped the lettuce off with a finger. "I-I don't have much to tell...I left the same reason Amber did, more or less. I, uh, d-don't feel comfortable talking about it." She instantly went back to her food, seeming to try and shut her two friends out.

Teódulo grimaced, but regained his neutral composure. "I hated the South too, kid, and I hated mi padres as much as you two chicas." There was a brief pause; the musty tension between the trio eventually cleared when Teódulo spoke up again. "So what's this, uh, 'football' I keep hearing everyone talk about? It sure as hell doesn't sound like fútbol hispanico. I mean, how is tackling *not* illegal in your 'football?'"

They kept up this idle chit-chat throughout the rest of dinner, the girls explaining anything Teódulo asked about American culture as best as they can. After finishing dinner and dividing up the bill and calculating the tip, to which Teódulo saw no reason for the latter, they exited the restaurant. By the time they did so, only the city lights illuminated their way to Amber's car amongst the heavy, nighttime blizzard that pierced their skin. Filing back in the car, they returned to Amber's apartment and all three went straight to bed.

Within the following few weeks, Teódulo eventually left the girls and rented out his own place, one that was more adaptive to a variety of species, where his tenant included a 1,000 gallon saltwater tank for his needs. He found some simple work at *Takenaka Technologies*, who owned a distribution and manufacturing center in Axeford; it paid well enough. Rebecca stayed with Amber and worked at the same pub she did. They never saw the large bull shark again.