

## **Shark-Tooth Noir**

By: Dillon Deveney

“Goddamnit Squids.” I mutter to myself, “Goddamnit.”

The rain is heavy outside, depressing and gray... any other day I could have enjoyed it. Today isn't kind.

I stare into the pool of blood seeping from friend's chest as I scratch my dorsal fin, staring into my reflection. I have bags under my eyes and sores under my gills. Haven't slept in weeks. Maybe after I finish the 'Emerald Beetle Case' I can catch a few hours in my wave bed- damnit, look at him Gus. Your goddamned best chum is lying in a pool of his own blood with a sushi knife stabbed into his chest.

I'm not one to care for preaching, but damned if I didn't tell Squids a hundred times that his anti-human tendencies were going to get him fileted.

I sigh, rubbing the gloss from my eyes.

Time to do my goddamned job.

I remove the knife from Squids' chest, his tentacles twitch from the removal. The irony of the sushi knife is overwhelming, I decide whichever racist killed my friend is going to get a good look at my pearly whites. Its incredible, we Gillies have walked along side mankind for fifty years now and we're still treated like mindless animals that need to be put down. Equality seems nothing more than a wide-eyed guppy's dream these days.

I check my watch. It's been five minutes since I've sat down, need to get up and move again before my lungs shut down. Goddamned evolution gives me legs

and lungs, but still keeps me on the move like the sharks before me. I smash my head against the ceiling a few times trying to stand up as I remove my phone from my trench coat pocket. Walking out the door, I press two on my speed dial as I fix the position of my raggedy fedora.

“Hey Darla... Squids has been murdered.”

“Oh god, Mr. McGraw I’m so sorry,” replies Darla. Bless her human heart for caring for us fish-folk.

“Listen, I need an ID for the murder weapon...sent you a picture.”

“Okay, one second...oh.”

“Its him isn’t it?” I grind my teeth.

“Yeah. Big-Town Jack’s known for using a sushi knife to murder his victims.

Look Mr. McGraw, I know how you feel about Jack but-“

CRASH!

“Darla? Darla what the hell as that?”

No answer.

“DARLA!”

“Mr. McGraw.” New voice. Masculine. Not the voice I was looking for. “Big-Town Jack says to meet him at the wharf. Come alone.”

Click.

“God damnit Jack... GOD DAMNIT!” I crush my phone between my massive hands in hopefully the same way I’m going to crush Jack.

If I were a smaller man, I would have snuck into Big-Town Jack's place undetected. If I were a smarter man, I would have thought of a plan. Seeing as I am neither, I simply ripped open the front doors of Jack's seaside warehouse.

"WHERE'S JACK?" I screamed into the darkness.

The closest group of greasy humans dressed in ill-fitting suits halted their poker game quickly in search of their guns. I just have to get in close before they-

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Goddamned machine guns with their goddamned bullets. I sprint forward, filling the room with a roar as bullets tear through my favorite coat. The closest man to me pulls a rookie mistake and tries to fight me hand to hand. Yeah chum, like punching a Shark-Man with sandpaper skin is really a smart idea. I should just knock him out, but they never learn. I bash my skull into his, easily killing him. I take his lifeless body and hurl it at the man beside me, leaving only one left. By this time he realizes I am not entirely concerned with being shot.

I promised Darla I would never do this again, but I need to do this, for her sake... and for Squids too... right? I grab the man and stuff him halfway into my mouth before slamming my thousands of guillotine-like teeth closed like a steam press. Blood cascades down my throat, warming my gums and freezing my heart. My eyes dilate. My muscles bulge. I'm the animal now and its time to find Jack.

Sprinting up the stairs and tearing the door off its hinges was more than enough warning for Jack. I stand huffing and puffing like a death-machine ready to collect, with blood on my breath and vengeance on my mind. That's when I see Darla. All bloodied and tied to a chair with a knife to her throat.

“Good evening Mr. McGraw!” Spoke my dinner. “So glad you accepted my invitation. Such a shame your pal Squids couldn’t make it.”

“Darla. Now.”

“No Gus. I don’t think that’s going to happen.” He slides the knife between his hands precariously over Darla’s neck. “I find you sushi-scum to be just that: scum. Scum that needs to be cleansed from our world.” His blade slips closer to Darla’s neck. “Now the one thing I can’t stand more than you sushis... is the *person* who likes the sushis.”

I hear the muffled grunt of Darla before I even begin my charge. Her blood weeps from her neck so slowly I can’t help but stare.

I blink. When my eyes open again, I have Jack midway through his metal desk.

I blink again. This time I’m ripping his left arm of his socket with my teeth. The pop of his bones is almost as pleasurable as the taste of his blood.

I blink once more. I’m talking now. What am I saying? “You deserve this human. YOU ALL DESERVE THIS!”

I need to stop. I’m better than this. Darla wouldn’t want this... but she isn’t here anymore.

She can’t stop me this time.

I hear the muffled screams of Jack as I stuff him down my gaping maw.

CHEW. CRUNCH. CRACK.

I can hear the sirens in the distance.

I feel like I should run.

I feel like I should miss Darla.

I feel like... having seconds.