

Nicole sat in the waiting room, nervously awaiting the doctor's return with her test results. She had hoped it would be good news, but lately, she'd turned herself off from the notion that good things were meant to happen to her. After all, if that were the case, then she wouldn't be in this godforsaken waiting room to see if some experimental treatment had cured her of this damned disease.

Ever since the 30-year-old had been diagnosed with breast cancer, Nicole's life had been turned upside down. Her boyfriend of four years had eventually left, citing some excuse about them growing apart and her not wanting kids, or some shit. Nicole didn't give a damn, not really. She knew it came down to the fact that he was scared of living with someone who was going through a life-altering disease. Worse, maybe he was so shallow that he didn't want to be with someone who no longer possessed the perky breasts that he'd loved so much. Nicole would never know, and as the months went on, she found herself caring less and less.

Her job, although initially accommodating, didn't have anything in the way of long-term health benefits. Though her surgery would be covered, the recovery time needed to get back to work was much more than she could take off. Without another source of income, Nicole would be entirely reliant on the generosity of strangers through fund-me requests to make it through the period. With no family and friends to turn to financially, in some ways it would be more convenient just to let the cursed cancer eat her away than deal with a health care system that wanted money more than it cared to save lives.

When she had been offered a more experimental treatment for her breast cancer, Nicole jumped at the chance. It was one that would not require long recovery times, cancer drugs, and chemotherapy. Best of all, she could maintain her hair and her breasts, her vanity becoming more important at the prospect of losing them. Though initially, Nicole was skeptical about any kind of treatment that wasn't guaranteed to be successful, the more she looked into it, the more appealing it seemed. It would literally give her life back to her, something that traditional medications and treatments had no chance of offering.

Nicole had spent a bit of time researching the technique on her own, just to ease the trepidation that her mind seemed to hold. It used a relatively new gene therapy, CRISPR, to modify the genome of her living tissues. The goal was to transfer a synthetic RNA strand into her cells, one with a genome from another organism. Once inserted into target cells in vivo, it would functionally modify them to contain the target DNA strand. In this case, the goal was to transfer the cancer-immune cells of a shark into her cells thereby inhibiting the cancer's spread and saving her life. From what she had been told, the doctors would genetically modify enough of her cells that she would be functionally immune to the cancer present. If done early enough, there would be no need to remove the already-affected tissues.

The technique was controversial, using the DNA from other animals to modify human cells. Besides, the number of reprogrammed cells needed to prevent cancer damage was staggering, and there was no telling if the inserted genes would take in replication. Though early tests on her own cells did look promising, it was still a risk over conventional treatments, requiring Nicole to sign away at countless documents just to undergo the process.

She did have the option to take on more standardized treatments later on, though there was a chance they wouldn't take once the cancer had been left for that long. It was a risk, one that medical professionals urged her not to take. But once the idea had been implanted in her mind, Nicole did everything in her power to push for that treatment. In the end, the doctors relented, allowing the more eager researchers to use her as a living example of their ingenuity, and, as such, a human guinea pig.

Nicole was one of a limited number of test subjects for this series of treatments but was fine with that. It was worth it, having the chance that she would be fully cured of the disease without losing her health benefits, her hair, her breasts, or her life. Best of all, since the procedure was experimental, it was offered freely for all of the subjects. For her, it seemed all too perfect, except for the risks that generally from undergoing a new test without long-term data to back it up. Yet, it would equate to much less recovery time if the procedure worked. If all went as planned, it would be like she never had cancer at all!

Though every day carried with it the real fear that she might receive bad news about the treatment, Nicole did her best to keep optimistic. She went through each day holding onto that hope that this would be the thing that would save her life. That she could go back to living as though she had never gotten that fucking diagnosis in the first place. It was all that kept her going after all the tests and visits and trials that she had to undergo.

It was time. The doctor came out, a smile on her face before Nicole even had time to react. She felt her heart race with the elation that she was indeed getting good news. The procedure must have worked! She was cured!

It was everything she could have ever wanted and more. The cancer was in remission, so to speak. Enough of her cells were reprogrammed to be unaffected by an infinitely replicating system. There was no chance of the mutated cells spreading beyond her breasts and causing any life-threatening damage. She was, in essence, cured.

However, she was not expecting the series of warnings that came with her good news. She was told, in no uncertain terms, to avoid any contact with sharks or related species unless they had been cooked or their DNA had been otherwise rendered inert. That meant no sashimi or visits to any aquariums, and swimming in the ocean was considered a high-risk activity. When

asked as to why those things were now considered risk factors, the doctor did not have an answer for her, other than they were strictly prohibited by the research team.

Nicole was torn after that. She didn't care for sushi anyway, and there were no aquariums near where she frequented for that to ever be an issue. However, there was no way in hell that she was going to cancel her trip to Hawaii. It was something she'd promised herself as a reward since the cancer diagnosis had been given, something that she'd dreamed about doing ever since she was a child. It was one of those 'life is too short' moments that she knew she needed to take advantage of come hell or high water. And, besides, she reasoned, her chances of encountering a shark while learning to surf were practically zero, right?

The first few days of the trip were everything Nicole could have hoped for and more. The surfing instructor was cute as hell, the drinks were free with the resort package she'd purchased, and best of all, the weather was dazzling each and every day. Life had so much more meaning now after having such a close brush with death on her doorstep. Everything seemed more alive and vibrant than at any point in her life before now. Why it had taken a scare with cancer for her to even attempt to come on a trip like this escaped her. She certainly wouldn't let life pass her by after all of this!

After several surfing lessons, Nicole finally found herself confident enough to try boarding on her own. It was silly, of course, to do something so potentially dangerous when she didn't have to. But she found sleep troublesome over these few days, not wanting to waste away in bed when she could be out experiencing all Hawaii had to offer her. There was no one to come save her in this early hour should something happen. But, as proven by undergoing the experimental CRISPR treatment, what was life without a little risk? She would have the chance to truly enjoy the waves without interruption from anyone else, a truly unique experience she could cherish for a lifetime.

Inexperienced as she was, Nicole naturally fell several times while out on the waves. But, they were mildly tame, and she was a strong swimmer. Able to get back on her board each and every time unscathed, Nicole was undeterred from heading inland until she had her fill.

Yet, one of her falls sent her further downward than before, pulling her under with an unexpectedly high wave that crashed her board. Momentarily helpless, Nicole could only try and hold her breath as she was tugged down towards the sandy bottom

As she did so, her bathing suit brushed against something coarse and jagged on the sandy bottom that startled her. It didn't feel like a rock or anything of the sort, though it did seem to

dig into the skin of her thigh. Panicked, she was able to push it away, rubbing it in a way that felt a little sandpapery against her skin before the thing suddenly disappeared.

Though the water was choppy, Nicole was just able to make out the shape of something rapidly swimming away from her and out to sea. It looked like a fish of some kind. The more Nicole stared, the more she was reminded of a shark, the one thing that she had been told to avoid. Her knowledge of sharks was rather limited, leaving her with no idea that she had stumbled across a gray reef shark.

Yet, the implication of the contact was entirely lost on her as she decided one close call was enough and headed back to shore. As she walked into the hotel, however, a strange feverish sensation came over her, prompting her to lie back down. She wasn't sure what would have made her sick, only that she needed rest from the sensations that were suddenly assaulting her.

Her dreams were vivid as she rested, flashes of ocean and waves and water. It shouldn't have been that concerning, all things considered. Yet, it wasn't the world about the waves that had her enraptured. It was the plain below that called to her. The brief flashes of the undertow and the ocean floor created images that haunted her thoughts. It was an entirely different world beneath the waves, and the more she dreamed, the more the waves called to her, allowing herself to be brought under once more.

Nicole awoke in the late afternoon, head somewhat swimming from the alien images. She found it bizarre to wake up on land, to be breathing air, and feel the air conditioner on her skin. It was as though she was wearing someone else's skin, even if such thoughts made little sense. Still, Nicole did her best to get up and dress and make her way down to start her day.

At the hotel's bar, a sudden, insistent hunger assaulted her, making her almost nauseous from the lack of food. Scouring the buffet, she eventually settled on some of the sushi. Deep down, a warning resounded through her mind, telling her that it was dangerous for her to eat that. Still, the cravings spurred on by the smell of raw fish were almost maddening, and Nicole filled her plate with sushi, taking out the fish and leaving the rice and seaweed wraps.

Control only returned once she had eaten three plates, surrounded in the mess of the discarded bits. Looking up into the stares of those around her, she found herself extremely embarrassed by the actions but could do nothing to explain them. Excusing herself, she made her way back to the room in shame, not wanting to look at the mess she had left or what she had done.

What had come over her, to eat like that? Never before had Nicole felt so hungry. It was a primal need to fill her stomach, one more insistent than any hunger she had felt in her life. Yet,

it was impossible to deny how satisfying it had been to let herself fall into the actions. It spoke to living in the world that was present in her dream, one that was starting to make more and more sense as time went on.

The air in the room was chilly, and Nicole started to rub her arms, trying to warm up before going to turn up the heat. As she did so, her fingers caught on the skin around her elbow, noting a rough texture that should not have been there. It was more than just dry skin. It was as though some of the substance she had rubbed against underwater the wrong way had been stuck to her. Looking in the mirror revealed what she had expected, a patch of grayish skin where she had been cut. Rubbing the skin, however, did not remove it from her person.

Looking at it more closely in the mirror, Nicole was a bit surprised to see that it was made of tiny raised bumps, covering the skin and ending with rather sharp points. If she went to rub them the wrong way, she was sure that they would cause the skin on her fingers to bleed. She had never had such skin as this, no matter how dry it had gotten.

Even applying all of the lotions and creams she had did not alleviate the bizarre deformity. In fact, it seemed to spread even further, covering more of her flesh and making it hard to see the pale skin in some places. By now, her entire elbow was coated, and the graying skin was running down towards her hand and up her shoulder. Any attempt to touch it only seemed to make it worse!

Yet, the more she struggled with panic, the more fatigued that she seemed to become. It was like it required more energy to be worried, making her feel tired. The air seemed a little thin, and the room was far too cold, prompting Nicole to turn up the temperature. She was freezing, making her sluggish and giving her a harder time to focus her thoughts. Though the heat in the room should have been stifling, the cold only made it worse.

In the end, she decided she needed to sleep, to hope that the creams did their work and that she would eventually feel better. Yet, the bed sheet felt strange against her skin, catching on her arm and making her feel powerfully uncomfortable. Eventually, she settled for the tub, the cool linoleum against her skin strangely relaxing. She even thought it fit to draw a bath, though wanted the water to be somewhat cooler temperature. Like the ocean, she thought, though it was far too late for her to reflect on further as she began to slowly pass out.

Nicole awoke sometime later with a start, gasping for air as she did so. The same vivid dreams had played over her mind all night, real enough that she thought herself awake. Images of being in the ocean, surrounded by water, and blissful peace ran through her mind like it was a

natural state of being. Waking up from that watery haven to this nightmare was not what should be!

Shooting out of the water of the tub, Nicole gasped a few more times, still finding it far too hard to breathe. It was as though the air in the room had become too thin, like she was atop a mountain. Worse, the air around her was far too dry, making her want to rub her skin to try and alleviate the irritation. Yet she was soon aware that the discoloration had spread over her arms, some of it on her back and chest by now. Rubbing it the wrong way with her hands would cause her some discomfort, she was sure.

Standing dizzily in the stifling room, Nicole was overcome with the urge to head back towards the ocean, the place that she had been so content in during her dreams. It was there she would find the relief that she was seeking, Nicole was sure. The dreams had been so vivid that nothing in the moment could convince her otherwise.

Still clad in the soaking clothes from last night, Nicole made her way out of the resort and towards the sandy beach. She encountered no humans as she did so. No one was present to rescue her if they could, not even lifeguards or other such employees. Yet, this was to her mind's benefit. There was no one to hinder her journey towards the water that beckoned to her. Her goal was so single-minded that she would not speak to them even if they tried. Nicole was destined for the water and no force on earth could stop her.

Even the more rational parts of her mind could not concoct a reason as to why she should not make her way towards the ocean that she craved. She was sluggish, tired, and felt strongly that the sensation of water over her would make everything right. There was no possible way for her to know this other than the dreams that she had been having. But in the moment, it was her truth.

The ocean air on her skin was of some reprieve as she stepped out onto the sand barefoot and started to make her way to the sea that she could now see. It called for her, like a siren on the rocks as she struggled her way across the surf. She seemed to feel weaker with each passing step, as though lacking the oxygen necessary to power her muscles and make her way towards her destination.

The moment that her feet touched the surf was the moment that her mind started to relax. The skin in that area instantly felt relief from the dryness in the air that had been plaguing her. She longed instinctively to feel the cool water wash over her entire being, to recall what it had felt like when she had fallen in the ocean just the day before. She didn't even feel she would need to resurface like she had. Why had she even come back to land in the first place when the water was so inviting?

A series of depressions along the sides of her neck started to pulsate with excitement as she entered the surf. It was as though they were waiting to be birthed with ocean water as Nicole moved out into the waves, the ocean up to her waist now as she dived in. The moment that her neck touched the water was the moment that they opened, like tears sliding down from the center in her neck and spreading to either end. There were four on each side of her neck, and they began rapidly pulsating as Nicole pulled herself out further into the water.

As she struggled to push herself into the waves, her clothes started to become more cumbersome, making it harder to swim. Finally, she could breathe better, oxygen being pulled into her lungs through her open mouth and the gills that flicked in tandem. Her energy started to replenish, giving her the motivation to finally pull off the shirt and pants that clung wetly to her form. Her arms were still a little weak, as though the muscles were dwindling in size. Still, she managed to tug away the shirt and pull down her pants, kicking them away with legs that were almost a bit stiffer than she recalled.

Naked now, the cool water did little to bother her skin as she swam outward, pulling herself down into the waves. It was difficult for her not to rise to the surface, buoyant as she was. Still, she knew instinctively that the world above was not a safe haven for her. Strength was returning to her body and it became more and more obvious to Nicole that she would never surface again of her own volition.

Yet, somehow, that realization did not scare her as it should have. Rather, she was content with the certainty that she would live an aquatic existence. The oceans held so much promise. There was food here, shelter from larger beings. Though she did not know why, exactly, her instincts dictated that she head out into deeper waters.

Though she struggled to see at first, the saltwater stinging her corneas, soon the changes allowed the area directly in front of her to be made known to her. Yet, still, she could not see more than several feet from her in the murky early morning water. Nicole felt herself functionally blind as she swam downward. Still, she trusted the instincts in her mind telling her that this was the right move to eventually lead her to safety.

Pulling herself forward with arms that seemed to be losing their strength, a tingling over her fingers denoted the formation of a thin membrane of skin between the digits. Tugging all the way up to her middle digits, it began pulling each of them stiffly together. She could still move them at the points of articulation, though the webbing made it impossible to pull them apart.

The same webbing seemed to be forming from her toes. They, like her fingers, forced each digit up towards the large toe. She could still move the mass of toes, though did not think

to do so in her single-minded goal to swim out into the ocean. The added webbing made her motions faster, catching on the water and propelling her forward towards her goal.

Where was she going? Nicole's fuzzy mind could not say. There was still rational fear of the ocean, one that weighed on the naked woman's mind the further into the murky depths that she entered. She had never been this far out, had never even imagined doing so. The thought, once long ago, would have terrified her to the core.

Yet, it was harder to remember why that was the case as she continued her swim, her webbed hands and feet making the motions easier. Deeper water was safer, wasn't it? It was scary now, not able to experience more than a few feet around her. But a growing part of Nicole's mind told her that she needn't worry about such things for long, that she would soon be made for this underwater world. It was getting more and more difficult not to trust that feeling that was coming over her mind as she continued to swim

Being cut off from the rest of the world did leave her more aware of what was slowly happening to her own body. Something started to press against the skin of her lower back, as though her spine was getting longer and poking its way free. A numb of skin started to swell around the irritation, forming a bump of sorts that allowed her spine to stretch within it. Nicole would have reached back to touch the growth if she could have, but both arms were currently being used to swim. Still, it was only mildly uncomfortable as her spine grew to fill the gap as though accommodating the space within.

The more her spine seemed to stretch, the longer the bump became, as though irritated by what was happening. Yet, rather than being filled with pus or detritus, this bump was swelling with muscles, extending from her back and filling the space of the protrusion. It was over one inch long now and still growing, the bones in her spine seemingly stretched to the limit to support the growth.

As the extension started to stretch past two inches, the connected muscles started to move of their own accord. It caused the bump to start to sway from side to side, matching Nicole's movements as she continued to swim. Though it was only a little bit helpful, the thing was still growing, three inches now and moving more and more through the water the longer it seemed to grow.

It was fortuitous that her new growth was taking on some of the slack of her swimming energy. Though she did not feel tired overall, her legs did seem to be a bit weaker, as though the muscle within was not getting enough oxygen. In truth, the fibers were starting to break down and dissolve, leaving the tissues full of holes. The bones within were also contracting slowly, changing shape into something that did not require as much muscle mass. The skin around them

continued to contract, too, as the gray shade spread from her belly to cover her thighs in a layer of denticles.

Her arms, too, were starting to feel weak as she propelled herself forward, the same structural changes afflicting them. Yet, even with their reduced muscle mass, Nicole was determined to keep swimming. There was an animal instinct inside of her that seemed certain that it would be detrimental for her to stop. It was essential that she kept moving, no matter what her dizzied human intellect thought of the endeavor.

The more she swam, the more Nicole struggled with keeping her body below the surface. The gills that she had grown needed water to constantly flow over them, lest they prevent proper oxygen intake into her form. Though it was difficult to remain under the waters, she struggled to stay at the same level she was, knowing that the air was dangerous to her and that she no longer belonged in that world.

Yet, her struggle would not last much longer as her internal organs moved to shift to allow her adaptation to the aquatic life she belonged to. She was not aware of it internally, but her liver started to swell relative to her other organs, pushing aside those that were not needed as it was filled with natural oils. The balance within allowed her to stabilize in the water, preventing her from moving to the surface yet not forcing her to the ocean floor. Still, Nicole remained largely uncaring about this, only relishing that she no longer had to struggle as hard as she swam towards what she assumed was safety.

A peculiar ache then assaulted her teeth, as though the individual dentures were loosening from her maw. She spat a little, seawater catching the curves of human teeth and causing them to loosen from their sockets. Her molars, her incisors, even her canines were all expelled in succession, spat into the ocean water. Thankfully, they were not accidentally swallowed, even with how her mouth was required to stay open to better intake the saltwater that she needed to breathe.

Nicole was not to remain toothless for long. She could feel new dentures pushing through the gums, bleeding into the water as the soft flesh was sheered to make room for their formation. It was somewhat painful to feel them pushing out of her flesh, a line of jagged teeth to replace her weak human ones. Yet, Nicole felt some pride in their development, how much deadlier they were than any human equivalent. She had admittedly felt naked with her human dentures in the deeper waters. Now, with her new, sharp teeth, she felt complete in a way that defied her current understanding.

Her widening gumline seemed to ache with the formation of more teeth behind her current set, jutting out at various angles rather than the straight teeth that had fallen out of her

human gums. There was some blood, the sheering edges painful against her gums and making her wince slightly. But, whatever process was changing her seemed to fix the tears in the gumline seconds after the teeth burst through. Her mind felt some stirring at the presence of blood, but Nicole could tell that it was her own, and it was quickly eroded from her mind.

An expanding jawline gave birth to a widening nose to try to accommodate the space her mouth required. It continued to expand, the bridge stretching out as the flesh grew more malleable. Her nostrils were left behind, pushed to the sides of her face as the massive bridge was soon visible in her field of view. The skin stretched as though made of putty, pushing forward ever further until her jaw was left a crescent-shaped length on the underside even as it continued to widen.

All over, Nicole could feel her human skin start to pattern with the formation of backward-facing, dermal denticles. Though they were already present on her chest and arms, they soon started to spread up her neck, past her gills, and covering her expansive nose. Though she was not aware of it, Nicole was being patterned with white skin on her underbelly, camouflage from below as anything looking up would have a hard time seeing white under the glare of the sun. Gray skin spread across her back, up her neck, and over the top of her head, giving the opposite effect for something looking down at her into the ocean depths. Yet, Nicole's only concern was following the instincts in her mind that told her to swim, to look for food, and safety as she sank further and further down along the ocean bottom, oily swim bladder allowing her to stabilize her placement.

Soon, much of the skin was replaced by the dermal denticles, so much so that the thousands of backward-facing protrusions reduced the drag of her body against the water and allowed her forward motion to continue while using less energy, taking some of the strain off her weakening arms and legs. Her stretching tail managed to take up some of the slack as well, propelling her down in the depths as her instincts dictated.

Nicole had a hard time reasoning why she felt so safe down here near the sandy bottom of the ocean. It should have terrified any human instincts that she had for self-preservation. Yet, those had been eroded the moment she'd set foot in the water, leaving only a brief human awareness and appreciation of what she was doing.

Though the world was dark and hostile to a human, Nicole's perception of the world was slowly shifting to match the aquatic lifestyle that her body seemed to now require. Her eyes, for one, soon darkened into what appeared to be black orbs, though were now much more complex. The developed tapetum lucidum allowed her to take in every bit of light from the surface, allowing her a level of vision that soon quieted the parts of her human mind that screamed at her in terror of being in the dark ocean. She could not determine distance as well as her mammalian

eyes had managed, lacking their ability to distort the lens. Yet, in her mind, her vision was sufficient with the other senses she would soon develop.

By this point, the external structures of her ears were entirely absent, dissolved into her altering anatomy. She could not hear, though that ability had already been functionally robbed from her upon her descent into the waves. The presence of the membranous labyrinth of her inner ear structures did provide a sense of balance and equilibrium, the only remnants of the structure that persisted in her form. Even the holes that denoted her ears' former presence were not used for hearing, now altered into spiracles to aid with her respiratory requirements.

Yet, it was her other senses that made the watery world light up as it could for the shark whose DNA was coursing through her veins. Her remaining nasal openings, separated by a set of flaps, channeled ocean water over a greatly increased surface area within folds of olfactory lamellae. These provided chemoreception the likes of which were unknown to her former human capabilities. A world of ocean life was soon opened up to her, things that her fading intellect had no name for but some which excited her developing instincts.

Brand new senses became known to her the more she descended into the ocean depths of her new home. Several dozen new pores opened along the underside of her snout, filling with a gelatinous substance. These ampullae of Lorenzini contained sensory nerves connected to the brain, particularly sensitive to electrical signals. Such abilities would not serve in the world she came from, but in a watery medium, they were perfect for detecting the locations of other life forms.

It was a faint energy surrounding her that triggered something in her mind, shutting down human perception and focusing her on the singled-minded desires of a hunter. She could smell the molecules of the target's excretions, though that was of little stimuli when compared to the weak electrical signal that spurred her forward. Only one thing played in her mind as she swam forward with more purpose than at any point thus far during her journey. Food.

As though in response to the driven desires of the shark she was becoming, her tail expanded even faster, its base half the circumference of her torso now as it swayed back and forth at a steady pace. The tip started to arch upward, another nub forming from the underside as her spine stretched even further out.

Though Nicole was unaware of more than a series of tingles, her internal anatomy was continuing to change. Calcium and other minerals were starting to leak out of her bones, their composition changing to match the cartilage that composed her nose. As the heavier materials from her former bones dissipated, Nicole could feel her body lighten, making it easier to swim more rapidly and reducing the energy it was taking her to do so. The sensations of the change

were lost on her, only their benefits as she honed in on the target of her smell and electrical sense.

She could see around her now the colorful contours of a reef, though distinguishing shapes was difficult for her changed mind. Though there were many channels for prey to hide within the reef, Nicole had her senses honed in on a goal, and the singled-minded drive to hunt would not allow her to relent.

Some excitement seeped into her human mind, the parts that were swept up in the moment as her brain focused on its singular goal. It was akin to waking up on Christmas morning, the fulfillment of desires stronger than anything Nicole had felt in all her life. It was at that moment that any human awareness was swept away in satisfying the shark's desires. She was less Nicole and more of a Nicole-Shark hybrid in mind as much as she was in body.

Her vision was much wider than before, making her able to see around her at almost a 360-degree angle. The only blind spots were in front of her nose and above her head, though Nicole-Shark felt she was moving fast enough that such would be of little deterrent to her hunting. Besides, her target was so firmly entrenched in her other senses that there was no chance of its escape.

Her thrashing tail, lighter skeleton, and more streamlined body and skin made it easy for her to overtake her prey as her jaws opened wide. The fish's scales grazed the serrated blades she held within her mouth as she bite down, more power in her jaws than Nicole-Shark was prepared for. The poor fish was almost severed in half! Nicole-Shark's flexibility allowed her to turn on a dime, however, biting into her prey and swallowing it in one more go.

The taste of her prey was far less integrate than Nicole-Shark was prepared for. There was no flavor, not really. She could tell it was fish, and receptors lining the inside of her jaw told her brain it was 'palatable' Other than that, there was no real concern with what it was she was eating or what it tasted like. It went down easily, her jaws sheering it into pieces small enough that she could swallow even with a neck only half the size of her body.

Her neck was starting to thicken at this point, having long since lost her gag reflex at the notion of eating raw, bloody fish. It seemed that her body was changing more rapidly to accommodate the needs of her shark existence. Her stomach, her intestines, and her digestive track were all altering to take in relatively large pieces of meat and allow it to sit in her stomach and nourish the changes that were overtaking her.

Yet, her shark instincts were hardly satisfied by one meal. It was taking a large amount of energy for her to change as she was. She needed to eat to support the energy requirements of

her DNA as it was rapidly rewritten to match that of the shark she had touched. She needed meat.

A series of pores were starting to run down her body, starting from the back of her head towards the base of her still-stretching tail. Displaced water could be picked up by cilia within each, allowing her further awareness of the location of a variety of potential prey items. The more intense the thrashing, her sharkish mind reasoned, the more likely that the object in question was sick, injured, or otherwise distressed. The perfect kinds of prey!

Nicole-Shark turned around again, her flexible tail allowed her rapid reorientation in response to stimuli. It was growing longer all the while, though Nicole-Shark was aware of the tingling that seemed to indicate its growth from her backside. It didn't hurt; none of the processes afflicting her caused any pain. The only real discomfort came from the persistent prickling that seemed to signal any alterations to her form. Yet, as it had thus far, the sensation remained largely unnoticed in her need to acclimate to an underwater existence.

By now, her tail was so thick that it forced her buttocks to recede and her anus to move down her taint towards her genitals. A strange clenching was all she felt as her exit was pulled towards her sex, tugged by the force of her rotating internal plumbing. The fusing flesh seemed to pull in her rectum until the walls broke apart and a vent was formed from the formerly two openings. Though Nicole-Shark was largely unaware of it, save the smell, a hormone within her urine was excreted from this new vent, one that hung rather pungently around her senses.

At this point, the spreading of denticles had eradicated any trace of human hair, save that which was atop her head. Even that hair seemed to fall away, carried like wisps on the ocean floor. Sharkskin soon ran the length of her extremities, eliminating fingers and toenails as the presence of webbing started to flatten her digits.

The tingling began to encroach over her back, culminating in a protrusion of her spine poking through. It rose from her back, slicing through the water with its thin structure. Fully developed with sharkskin already, her dorsal fin gradually extended to its proper length. Two more fins appeared near her vent, accenting the streamlined shape her body was steadily undergoing.

By now, the layers of muscle had swelled up her body into a more torpedo-like shaped, eliminating much of her human contours. A shock of humanity struck Nicole-shark's mind just then as the fat in her breasts started to deflate, causing them to sink into her torso until not even the areolas were left to denote their former presence. The irony was lost to her changing mind that the very thing the procedure hoped to preserve was eliminated by the change that she was undergoing.

Her webbed hands trailed over the skin of her chest, briefly lamenting the loss of her favorite human aspect. Yet, soon, the motion became impossible for her to maintain as her arms cracked and stiffened, the joints required to move them dissolving away for a simpler structure. Her arms were forced back outward perpendicular to her body as the fingers stiffened further, their own joints starting to meld away into the skin.

It was difficult to concern herself with such things as Nicole-Shark became completely engrossed by the hunger that was steadily taking over her mind. The scents and motions of prey were all around her, many hidden in the reef that she found herself residing in. It was little trouble to maneuver her body to hunt and eat. Several different fishes were rapidly devoured, her widening mouth making it easier to fill the energy needs that her changing body required.

The more she ate, the more her body swelled out with muscle needed to keep her body in motion. The fatigue that was starting to set in no longer bothered her as new red or white striated muscles formed under the flesh, able to keep her body moving with little effort so that she could continue to breathe with ease. Her overall size was smaller than her human form, but not by much as she continued to develop into the body she would likely wear the rest of her days.

Even as she ate, the smell emanating from her new vent grew stronger in her nose. She could hardly feel her body excreting it, though it was growing more and more pungent as she circled around the reef. The scent seemed to correlate with an ache in her loins that Nicole-Shark was only just now starting to realize was present. It was a need to be filled, to be grasped, and... What? Surely, it was not a sensation of arousal, though in her current state she hardly had the cognizance to distinguish a human sensation from the non-human orifice.

Something moving in the water attracted her attention just then as it seemed to circle her. It was roughly the same size as her, as best as her vision could detect. But it was her sense of smell that seemed to draw her in towards the other being, as she, too, started circling, as though sizing up this new interloper. Was it a rival? A threat?

No. The scent coming off it was one that made her loins tingle even more from its presence. More of the pungent hormone was released from her vent, leaving Nicole-Shark very confused. She was clearly aroused, though it was different than anything her fading human intellect could relate to. She needed something to stimulate her sex but it was nothing like her humanity had ever been drawn to. It was more akin to her being 'ready' to have a male find her. She desired the scent she was detecting in the water and was releasing more of her own in turn.

By this point, well over half of her form had been altered to match the creature that swam around her, the two of them seemingly caught in some sort of mating dance. Her body was

streamlined, head and tail almost the same circumference as her torso, though not quite there. No hair persisted on her body, only rough sharkskin where her pale human dermis once sat. Her neck had cracked so that her face sat forward, nose extended above her muzzle as her gill slits sat throbbing at either side. Her tail was nearly the length of her body and still growing, though she still had functional legs and arms that she was using to kick with and swim.

Nicole-Shark was compelled to swim past the male, releasing more of that hormone in her urine as she did so. The idea was that she would out speed him, to prove his futility to mate her. But, in her hybrid state, she had no chance to outpace a male that was fully a shark in species and had been for all of his life. He had to slow down to keep pace, ignoring the instincts in his body and turning himself upside down. It was difficult for him to maintain that position, the opposite of what a shark's physiology was meant to do. Yet, it was one more hurdle for the male to meet to prove he was a worthwhile mate.

A light nip on her underside had Nicole-Shark slow down to keep pace with the male that was rubbing against her loins, sending confusing feelings through her being. He had dug his fangs in, keeping the two of them at the same pace as they swam through the reef, their bellies nearly touching. Though it was not enough to draw blood, it was sufficient that Nicole-Shark had to fight the urge to panic. Was he going to kill her, eat her?

No. The bite was not strong enough to draw blood and was clearly not a feeding response. The male was tied to her, maneuvering his lower body into a position that satisfied some unknown instinct in her mind. It was not excitement that could be measured in human terms but rather a need that was about to be quelled.

Nicole-Shark felt her body reflexively stiffen to allow the male to line up his underside with hers. At once, there was a sensation of pricking as something in the male's anatomy pressed against her own. Two small protrusions, one on either side of his anal fins clasped her opening, sending a ripple of sensation through her body. The motion seemed to trigger some new pleasure center in her brain, making her tail swish from the intensity of it.

The actual mating act was brief, but the moments passed by like years as Nicole-Shark's mind was filled with something akin to bliss. It wasn't a human emotion and couldn't be classified as such. Rather, the sensations seemed akin to deep-seated contentment, like Nicole-Shark had achieved it all. It was like everything else, to both her human life and what she had previously experienced in her underwater existence meant nothing to this moment. The shivers running through her body were the needed reward as her mouth opened and closed in rapid succession.

Eventually, the male's claspers broke their connection, and his bite retracted as he pulled away to swim off, having provided his contribution to the future of their species. Nicole-Shark was left to swim forward, somewhat disorientated by the process. It was a combination of the developed shark instincts in conflict with the struggling human recollections that were plaguing her just below the surface.

The infusion of shark semen seemed to be the catalyst to complete the changes that Nicole-Shark was just now starting to understand in human terms. Her already-stiff arms stretched out to the sides of her body, the cartilage making it easier for the structures to flatten, muscled arms repurposing into simpler structures. The entire surface seemed to widen, shortening into stubs that sat almost motionless to the sides. Nothing remained of her hands or fingers at this juncture, just flattened points to denote their former position on her anatomy.

The trunk of her body was nearly that of the shark she was to become, though a few alterations were required to make sure that it was sufficient to fit her new species. Her neck swelled up with meat and fat, keeping her warm in the cooler ocean and leaving ample room for her gill slits to draw in water and life-giving oxygen. In a similar vein, her tapered body now matched the size of her torso as it swished lazily back and forth, propelling her forward. Nothing remained of her buttocks, her belly, her arms, and, perhaps most lamentable of all, her prized breasts.

Finally, the change hit the last of her humanity, the fattened, shorter legs that had stopped moving the moment that she had mated the male. Her pelvic girdle had snapped and broke away at this point, the bones between them dissolved and unnecessary. Lastly, her fingers and toes were absorbed into the webbing that made up their new tips. The cartilage and bone structures had simplified, much of it dissolving away as what remained stiffened. In the end, all that remained was a pair of pelvic fins, with no purpose other than to help her steer away from potential predators or unwanted males until she could determine their genes were suitable for insemination.

Now, Nicole-Shark was indistinguishable from the fish that had mated her, save for the lack of claspers and the internal anatomy that designated her as a female of the species. She continued swimming, almost aimlessly as her devolved mind tried to come to terms with her situation.

There was an awakening in Nicole-Shark's mind then, one that sparked the humanity that had been held below the surface of shark instincts. She was Nicole again, the woman who had willingly run to the sea to embrace the changes that were slowly overtaking her. What had happened? Why was she a fish? It made no logical sense!

Panic washed over the shark's form as Nicole tried to come to terms with what had transpired. She was no longer human, no longer had the body that she had been born with. All her hopes, her dreams, and her plans for post-cancer life were washed away with the tides as she was forced to adapt to the underwater life of a shark. Worse case, no one, not even her friends and family, would ever know what had happened to her. How could anyone have expected that she had somehow turned into a shark, perhaps forever?

Yet, it was becoming increasingly difficult to hold onto those thoughts when the hunger in her belly assaulted Nicole-Shark once more. The mating act, brief as it was, seemed to have taken a fair bit out of her, and the completion of the change required nourishment to sustain the form that was now hers. Her senses were alight with information, all about water currents and electrical signals and chemicals that made up her world now. They painted a picture that befitted an apex predator, or at least one higher on the food chain than many. There was always a bigger fish, after all, and sharks were not above eating their lessers!

It became difficult as the weeks went on for Nicole to hold onto her humanity as it was swept up in the daily activities of the shark she had become. Even the moniker of 'Nicole-Shark' was becoming less and less accurate as her human mind started to fade. Though there was a myriad of ocean elements to explore that would keep a human mind engaged for years, the needs and drives of the shark kept her away from most of those thoughts. The needs to eat and hide away were of most precedence. Those activities made it hard for Nicole's mind to want to rise to the surface and control her body. In most ways, it was easier to allow the shark its dominance. It knew what it needed to survive and thrive, a primitive mind for a species millions of years older than her own.

Periods of wakefulness were periodically interrupted by sleep, times when the human could rise to the surface and dream. Her mental reminiscence was of life on the surface, under the sun in another world. Yet, there were many memories that did not carry any appeal to the shark's fading human mind. Illness and heartbreak and struggles were not the most ideal recollections to experience. Even her pleasant memories carried with them several lamentations, experiences that she would never have again should she remain a shark. She would thank her shark mind when it came back to take dominance, to save her from those troublesome thoughts.

One day, how many from the change Nicole could not say, a peculiar need struck her loins, not unlike the ache from when having encountered the male. The pressure seemed to be building up, as though something was forming inside of her that eventually needed to be expelled. All of the usual shark needs, the desires to eat, and hide from bigger sharks all were

washed away by the insistent needs in her sex. The small human part that rose to the surface questioned whether or not it was a need to mate again. But, the shark knew better.

It did not take her long to find what her mind was looking for. A secluded space on the reef, one hidden away from the currents that wound around the area. A place where predators, including herself, would be not likely to venture. A place where her pups could grow in safety.

Nicole had never wanted to be a mother, but there was a part of her humanity, waning as it was, that found the notion satisfying. The physical sensation of expelling egg casings was almost orgasmic on its own, the likely prompt for female sharks to do it so specifically to propagate their species. Several dozen cases were ejected from her slit, falling to the seafloor to attach to the undersides of the coral. Yet, by the time she was done, she had forgotten they were even there, her mind returning to focus on feeding as it so often was.

That was the last time that the human Nicole came to the surface. There was no chance of her returning to humanity. Each time her mind had awakened she found she was still a shark, still locked behind instinct and unable to control her body. The spaces between each period of awareness grew further and further apart as her humanity eventually faded into a brain that could not support it. Still, there was some comfort knowing that she was well adapted to her home, a large enough predator that had successfully mated and given birth by laying eggs. And, in truth, what more was there to live for than that? The simple needs of a shark eventually won out completely and Nicole-Shark was no more, left to the mind of the animal she had become.

There was little left to determine what had happened to Nicole once she did not check out of the resort at the end of her reservation. An investigation was soon launched to try to determine her whereabouts. No one had heard of anything of her goings-on or potential plans outside of her Hawaii trip. Her work, her friends, her family, no one could fathom why she had left without a word.

There was no evidence of foul play, no ransom note, no blood, no struggle, no forced entry into her room. No body was ever recovered. Eventually, clothing akin to what she had been wearing the last time she was seen was found floating in the water, carrying all her cards and cash. It seemed to reduce the possibility that she was murdered for her belongings. With no body and no motive, the case soon went cold.

Eventually, word of Nicole's disappearance reached the center where her treatment had been prescribed. Though they had no confirmation of her encounter with a shark, the fact that she had been on vacation to Hawaii was not lost on them. There was every chance that she had

gone out to sea, perhaps affected by a brush up against a shark as she had been cautioned not to allow to happen. It was impossible to say for sure.

Yet, the real fear that her DNA had mutated further than anticipated played in the back of the scientist's minds the more they looked over her data. The cautionary tale for her to avoid sharks, it seemed, fell on deaf ears. For how could they have told her that the DNA that had been tested on, when exposed to DNA from the donor organism, rapidly converted the recipient until it matched the donor 100%? No one would have believed them.

Their only regret was that they had no one to witness the process taking place if such a thing were possible to happen on a larger, full-bodied scale. It was more likely that she had died as some horrid hybrid, the change killing her body before it could fully convert. Still, there was always the possibility...