

BEHIND THE CORAL REEF

Written by

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Mystery--Toothbrush--Aquarium--Scout Master

FADE IN:

INT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Thousands of sea creatures; fish, sharks, turtles, swim in harmony through clear, blue water.

None seem bothered by the crowd of humans gawking at them from the other side of the thick, 20 foot high plexiglass.

A small sea turtle follows a large one. They pass some caves and a shipwreck, then disappear into a beautiful coral reef.

EXT. CORAL REEF CITY - DOWNTOWN - DAY

It's very different on this side of this massive, manmade habitat. The side not visible to humans. It's a fish city.

Small sea turtle, PHILLIP (8) swims to a group of young sea creatures who wait impatiently next to a large sea anemone.

A manta ray, SAMSON (8), flutters his wings excitedly.

SAMSON

Hurry up, Phillip! Hey! Scoutmaster
Scott! He's here! He's here!

From around the corner appears, SCOUTMASTER SCOTT, a large Kingfish, fins poking out of his tan, badge covered shirt.

SCOUTMASTER SCOTT

Gather 'round, troop twenty seven!

As the kids rush toward Scott, a huge grouper in police hat and badge, NATHAN WARD(40) dotes over DOTTIE WARD(8).

NATHAN

Now remember everything I taught
you about safety. Don't swim too
close to the bottom. No caves. No --

DOTTIE

Got it. Don't worry. I gotta go.

Dottie tries to swim away but Nathan won't let go. He hugs her, then with is big, downturned mouth, kisses her cheek.

NATHAN

Have fun, but like, safe fun.

She finally breaks away. Nathan and the other parents wave goodbye and watch as Troop 27 swims off.

EXT. CORAL REEF - CONTINUOUS

Scoutmaster Scott leads his troop through, around, over and under all kinds of reef structures.

SCOUTMASTER SCOTT

Today we're visiting a resident of our community who was actually born in the wild. A hammerhead shark!

The troop gasps! Except for the back row, Samson, Phillip and Dottie, who tune out Scoutmaster Scott. Samson does a flip.

SAMSON

Hey! I was born to be wild!

Amused, Phillip laughs. Mouth always downturned, Dottie's annoyance is shown when her brow furrows.

DOTTIE

That's not what he said. Born *in* the wild, not *to* be wild.

SAMSON

Jeesh. I was just making a joke. Maybe you don't think it's funny cus you can't smile.

Dottie's standing grump face gets even grumpier. Samson eggs her on more by swimming close to her and flapping his wings in her face. He dodges her as she tries to bump him away.

Phillip gets in the middle, uses his shell to block them from hitting each other. They exchange glares over his shell.

PHILLIP

Stop! You'll get us in trouble.

Up front, Scoutmaster Scott turns to see the commotion.

SCOUTMASTER SCOTT

You three knock it off! We're almost there.

In the back, Phillip is wedged between Dottie and Samson.

PHILLIP

See, we're almost there. Just stop--

Samson slides under Phillip and lifts so the turtle now rides on him. With no barrier, Samson taps Dottie repeatedly.

DOTTIE

You asked for it, flat face!

With all her might, Dottie slams into Samson who wraps his wings around her. They scrap, Phillip gets caught in it.

During this chaotic mash up of wings, fins and shell, Troop 27 continues on. The three don't notice as they tumble toward the bottom, bounce, then disappear under an ominous shadow.

EXT. CORAL REEF - SHARK HABITAT

Troop 27 slows as they approach their destination.
Scoutmaster Scott turns to address the anxious children.

SCOUTMASTER SCOTT

Now remember everything I told you
about Henry. He's a nice enough guy
but having been brought up in the
wild, his natural instincts are --

Scoutmaster Scott's eyes widen as he looks at the kids. His
lips quiver as he does a panicked, silent head count.

SCOUTMASTER SCOTT

Oh my cod.

EXT. CORAL REEF CITY - DOWNTOWN

Nathan waves at a seahorse family as he patrols the city. His
shell phone rings. He stops to answer.

NATHAN

This is State Grouper, Ward. --
What?! -- I'll be right there!

EXT. CORAL REEF - SHARK HABITAT - DAY

An ANGLEFISH policewoman waves to Nathan as she leaves with
the kids from Troop 27. Nathan stays with Scoutmaster Scott.

NATHAN

I have officers checking every cave
from here, to where you last saw them.
I think -- I should talk to Henry.

SCOUTMASTER SCOTT

But we never got to meet with him.

NATHAN

Yeah, but he knew you were coming.

Visibly shaken, Nathan looks over at the shark habitat.
Several types of sharks swish around a shipwreck surrounded
by an eerie assortment of dead trees.

NATHAN

Most fish won't venture down this
far -- for a reason. Go. Catch up
with your troop.

Scoutmaster Scott doesn't argue. He hauls tail outta there.

INT. CAVE

In the furthest corner of this dark space, Dottie, Phillip and Samson hover together. Only a sliver of light enters through the opening, which is blocked by a large object.

Wings over his eyes, Samson is freaking out.

SAMSON

I gotta get out of here.

DOTTIE

Shhhh. I have a plan.

INT. SHIPWRECK - DAY

Small sharks travel in and out of portal windows.

Nervously, Nathan looks up, watches as large sharks circle the jagged opening that was once the deck.

HENRY (O.S.)

(Australian accent)

It's unlike you to be nervous, Ward.

Nathan looks at HENRY, a giant hammerhead stretched across wooden barrels arranged as a chaise. Henry snickers as he picks his teeth with the pointed side of a **toothbrush**.

HENRY

I can assure you, none of us took those children. These aquarium natives rarely get those impulses. Plus -- it was just feeding time.

Henry flips the toothbrush and scrubs one tooth at a time.

NATHAN

How often do you get them, Henry?

Toothbrush drops to the ground. Henry stands, all 15 feet of him. Annoyed, he looks down at Nathan. His voice deepens.

HENRY

Been in here a decade now. I'm institutionalized, boss.

Above, the sharks stop circling and watch carefully. Their still bodies cast a dark shadow over Nathan.

NATHAN

Alright. Relax there, shark tank redemption. I'm just trying to find these kids. And my daughter.

Henry's demeanor softens. He nods at Nathan.

INT. DARK CAVE

No longer hovering, the kids are poised to take action.

On Dottie's nod, Samson flaps his wings under the tail of the object that blocks the opening.

Agitated, the tail starts to move. Samson continues, the tail gets wilder, kicking up sand, making it even harder to see.

Suddenly, light enters the sand clouded area as the object moves away from the opening and heads into the cave.

It's long green body turns and it's ugly head appears right in front of the kids.

The object, a MORAY EEL, opens its mouth exposing two rows of pointy teeth. The kids scream.

Samson's screams blow bubbles into the eel's face. It becomes disoriented. Phillip uses his wings to slap the eel. Dottie sees a way through.

DOTTIE

Look! Come on! Hurry!

Dottie leads them past the flailing eel, to the cave opening.

EXT. CORAL REEF

The three kids rush out of the cave only to be met by Henry the hammerhead. They scream.

NATHAN (O.S.)

Kids! Dottie! It's okay. He's here to help.

Nathan appears from behind Henry. Dottie runs over, squeezes him tight. Even though he can't smile, you can tell he is.

MURRAY, the Moray Eel pops his head out of the cave. Henry and Nathan glare at him.

MURRAY

What? I didn't even know they were in there. If they just told me I woulda let em out. Jeesh.

INT. AQUARIUM - UNDERWATER UNIVERSE EXHIBIT - DAY

In front of the 20 foot window a crowd watches thousands of sea creatures swim in harmony through clear, blue water.

FADE OUT