Great White

What does a great white shark think about all day?

A reading for two people

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Sometimes I wonder.

Really, I do.

Sometimes I wonder what all this is about.

I mean, here I am, 30 years old, and all I ever seem to do is swim about.

It’s all I ever seem to do.

Well, I do quite a bit of swimming.

Swim all the time.

All Great Whites do.

I mean, over a year maybe I swim 10,000 miles.

Over a year.

That’s quite a bit of swimming.

10,000 miles…

I’m a Pacific White, myself.

I like the Pacific.

Nice and big.

Mainly, I hang out around California.

That’s where they say it all goes on.

In California.

That’s what people up there say, anyway.

I’m not sure what they mean by “it all goes on” really.

But that’s what they say.

In California.

Not a lot goes on down here, really.

But it’s peaceful, and there’s a lot of good food.

And me.

Like a huge, grey torpedo.

Always swimming.

Way down deep.

Down where the light is dim and secrets are kept.

That’s where I live.

Down there.

That’s where I live.

Seals.

That’s what I like to eat best of all.

Seals.

Especially the big ones.

Elephant seals.

That’s what people call them.

They’ve got these enormous noses.

The males do anyway.

Who cares?

They taste good.

That’s why I like seals.

Nice and juicy.

If you can catch them.

People up there get upset when I catch a seal.

They do.

They call me cruel.

But I’ve got to live, haven’t I?

And these are my waters, when you think about it.

My sea.

I’ve been down here 400 million years.

Give or take.

Even Great White sharks have to live.

Don’t we?

Sometimes I try to catch fish.

Tuna fish are really nice.

Big and meaty.

They swim so fast, though.

You’ve got to be quick.

Seals are different.

Not so fast.

Not so slippery through the water.

Easier to see as well.

Especially from below.

They look like a shadow over my head.

A nice, fat shadow in the sky.

The surface above me is bright.

In the morning, especially.

That’s when I like to hunt.

In the morning.

They’re black against the bright surface.

All those seals.

Easy to spot.

From below, anyway.

Not like fish.

They’re hard to spot.

I prefer seals.

A big shark like me takes some feeding.

I seem to get hungry every few days.

So I catch a seal when I’m hungry.

As soon as it gets light up above.

Seals hunt as well, of course.

They’re hungry too, in the morning.

In they come, into the water.

First thing in the morning.

One after the other.

You can see the splash when they dive in.

You can hear it.

I guess they’re hungry too.

They come in looking for fish.

They swim around up there, looking for fish.

I swim around deep below, slow and quiet.

Looking at the seals.

I look for big ones, mostly.

When I’m hungry.

Big ones are the best.

I think so, anyway.

The way I hunt is to come up really fast from below.

About 25 miles an hour.

They don’t know what’s hit them.

When I get it right.

They don’t stand a chance.

I’m big!

I’m really big!

I weigh around 2,250 Kg.

That’s a bit over two tonnes!

That’s as much as a big car.

And I’m almost twice as long as a car.

Six and a bit metres.

Six and a bit metres, and 2,250 Kilos.

That’s a real shark.

I like to think about stuff like that.

Makes me proud, somehow.

Of course, I’m a big shark.

Bigger than most.

One of the biggest there is.

Maybe I am the biggest there is.

I’m an old one now.

I’ve been around for years.

Around 30 years.

Seen it all before.

A lot of it, anyway.

Most seasons I go to the White Shark Café.

Spend a few weeks hanging out there.

The White Shark Café.

That’s what people up there call it, anyway.

Not us Great Whites.

It’s a ridiculous name.

I think so, anyway.

Great Whites don’t drink coffee!

But that’s what they call it, up there.

It’s just where we go to hang out together.

Half way to Hawaii it is.

The White Shark Café.

Loads of Whites go there to hang out.

We do a lot of diving.

We dive and dive.

300 metres down.

Why?

Catch Tuna, perhaps.

Find a mate, maybe.

We hang out for a while.

Then swim back to California.

It’s something to do, I suppose.

Something to do.

People seem to think a lot about Great Whites.

They seem to think a lot about us.

“How deep do Whites dive?”

“What do they eat?”

“How old do they get?”

Why do people want to know all this stuff?

Who cares?

I can dive 1,000 metres deep.

That’s a kilometre.

I think that’s impressive.

A kilometre down!

Dark, down there.

Dark and cold.

I don’t stay there long.

Not if I can help it.

No seals down there.

No tuna either.

But it’s safe down there.

No people down there.

People are strange.

They hunt Great Whites.

I’ve seen them do it.

I think they do it for fun.

Strange.

I don’t get it.

Why would they do that?

For fun?

Sometimes I hang out with my clan.

What people up there call my clan, anyway.

There are six of us.

Six Great Whites.

We hang out together.

In our clan.

We travel about together as well.

Mostly we hunt alone, though.

Don’t want to disturb the seals, do we?

I’m hard to see.

I’m dark on top, white below.

Makes me hard to see.

Really cool, I am.

I’m hard to see from above.

That’s my dark back.

My grey back.

It doesn’t show up against the dark sea bottom.

I think that’s cool.

Really cool.

If you were below me, it would be different.

Of course it would.

Then I’d be against the bright background of the surface.

And I’m all white below.

I don’t show up against the bright surface.

How cool is that!

A hunter has to hide, doesn’t she?

Or he, I suppose.

A hunter has to stay hidden.

I’m a female Great White.

We’re bigger than the males.

I like being the biggest.

It’s cool.

Really cool.

Sometimes I hear about Great Whites in other places.

There are Great Whites on the other side of America.

Japan, too.

Apparently.

Even the Mediterranean.

Seems odd, but there are.

In Australia there are lots of us.

And in South Africa.

Lots of us there.

Well, I say lots, but it’s not that many.

Not any more.

Not as many as there used to be.

People say we might be dying out.

Some people say that’s a good thing.

Some people say we should all be killed.

All of us.

No more Whites.

So they say.

Some of them.

The end of the Great White.

Seems a shame.

To me.

We’ve been swimming around down here for 400 million years.

Some people study us.

Especially round South Africa.

People go looking at Great Whites in cages.

The people are in cages, not the sharks.

Must be a funny thing to see.

They’re afraid of us, apparently.

Well, maybe they’re right.

Sometimes we do bite people.

Sometimes.

Not that often, though.

Not that often.

Great Whites bite fewer than 10 people a year.

Fewer than 10 people!

And maybe only one of those will die.

That’s not many!

More people are killed by lightning every year.

Lots more.

24,000 a year.

So they say, anyway.

I suppose it’s quite interesting down here.

Lots to smell.

I’ve got a real nose on me.

I can smell stuff from miles away.

Blood, for instance.

And I can hear everything for miles around.

Sound travels really well in water.

Really well.

I can pick up electrical signals, as well.

From muscle movements!

A bit like having extra hearing, I suppose.

If anything moves, I can pick it up.

I can detect the electric signal from its muscles.

I think that’s really cool.

Really cool.

Not much goes on down here that I don’t know about.

Not after 400 million years!

That’s much longer than people have been up there.

Much longer. Much, much longer.

400 million years I’ve been down here.

Always moving.

Have to keep moving.

Have to keep moving to breathe.

Like a huge torpedo.

That’s how I think of myself.

Like a huge torpedo.

A huge, grey, ancient torpedo.

Slowly moving over the sea bottom.

An ancient Great White.

Thinking.

And hungry.

Sometimes, anyway.

What’s it all about, though?

What’s it all about?

Who knows?

I don’t.

That’s for sure.

I don’t.