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DARED

— BETHANY HAMILTON —

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CHAPTER 1

FOURTEEN-FOOT TIGER SHARK

A red surfboard, acting as a street sign, stuck out of the ground. It was marked with the word *Tunnels*. As in Tunnels Beach. As in Bethany Hamilton's last attempt to find a surfing spot with decent waves that morning. Her mom maneuvered Blue Crush—their ancient 1988 Dodge Caravan—into the parking lot. Bethany put her empty cereal bowl aside and hopped out, for the third time that October morning. She jogged in the glow of their van's headlights toward the beach to survey the surf conditions.

Glassy. Flat. Not great for surfing. Just like the other surf spots they had checked over the last hour.

Bethany had gotten up at 5:00 a.m. on a holiday and ate breakfast on the go for this?

Okay, maybe that holiday was Halloween and not that big a deal. Christmas was her favorite holiday anyway. Her family would wake up early to surf, when everyone else was opening presents. A thirteen-year-old only wakes up early for something she loves. And today these less-than-spectacular waves were skunking her.

She was about to call it quits on her search for some huge waves, when a familiar pickup truck, the Blanchards', pulled up beside Blue Crush. Her friend and teammate Alana was also on the hunt for some angry growlers.

A few months back, Bethany got second place at the National Scholastic Surfing Association (NSSA) Championships—Nationals, for short. Now, time was ticking, with only eight months to

go until the next one. There, Bethany wanted to stand at the very top of the podium. First place was calling her name. She wanted gold.

Staring at the ocean, she bit her lip. These waves weren't going to help her get there. On an ideal surfing day in Kauai (pronounced Kah-oo-ah-ee), Hawaii, Bethany wouldn't have to wait long before, off in the distance, the sea would rise, higher and higher, until a bump formed. The bump would come flying toward her. That meant she'd have to move, and fast. Bethany couldn't be staring out to sea any longer; she needed to be facing the shore, ready to go. It was hard to paddle from a dead start, but Bethany would thrust both hands into the water, feeling the resistance, feeling her muscles work. Gently, the wave would catch her, lifting her up. But she wouldn't stop paddling, not yet. Soon, Bethany would feel the sudden pull of gravity. Belly still on her board, she'd tip over the wave. Then she'd push off the board with

her hands, swinging her feet onto the board, fighting to keep her balance, and she'd stand. Going from one skill to the next, she'd move up, down, and through the wave, water spraying with each turn.

That was surfing.

Today, she scrunched her freckled nose. She wasn't sure, with these small waves, if she'd fully experience that sensation.

But now that Alana was here, being out in the water with her friend, even without killer waves, was better than sitting at her kitchen table for homeschooling. So as the sun rose, Bethany shouted goodbye to her mom and slipped into the warm water with Alana.

Lying on her red-white-and-blue surfboard in her red-white-and-blue bikini, Bethany stared out into the sea, waiting and waiting for that angry growler. So long, in fact, that her sun-bleached blonde hair was almost dry.

I hope the surf picks up soon, Bethany thought after thirty minutes of relaxing on her board. Alana, Alana's brother Byron, and their dad, Holt, were also hanging out on their boards, only fifteen feet away.

Back on land, beachgoers began to set up blankets and beach chairs. A few other surfers were preparing to join them in the lackluster waves.

Bethany drummed her fingers against the nose of her board while her left hand dangled in the water, a shiny blue watch on her wrist. She didn't know that a fourteen-foot tiger shark was also nearby, perhaps attracted to the reflection of Bethany's watch, which looked like the scales or eyeball of a fish.

Bethany knew there might be sharks in the water—tiger sharks live in tropical waters—but sharing the surf with sharks wasn't something that generally crossed her mind. Besides, sharks aren't easy to see. They don't swim the way they're

shown in movies, with their black dorsal fin visible along the water's surface. Sharks swim beneath the surface, slow and quiet.

Had Bethany looked down and to her left, she might've seen the shark coming up through the crystal-clear water that day.

Instead, all Bethany saw was a gray blur as it broke the water's surface.

She felt her board lift and a few lightning-fast tugs, from jaws powerful enough to crack the shell of a 250-pound sea turtle.

But Bethany didn't scream.

She clung to her board and stayed on.

The shark let go and disappeared again beneath the surface.

Bethany noticed the red filling the water around her. It was startling. Was that blood? Was that . . . *her* blood?

Bethany stared at her own body in disbelief. She didn't feel any pain. And she realized her left arm, almost to her armpit, was gone.

A semicircle-shaped piece of her surfboard was gone too.

“I got attacked by a shark,” she called out to Alana and the others. Shock, but also training, made her voice sound calm. Just two weeks ago, Bethany had taken a lifeguard emergency-response training class.

Don’t panic. That was what Bethany had learned. And that was what she tried to do now.

In fact, Bethany was so composed that Alana thought she was joking about being bitten by a shark. No one had seen Bethany struggle; everything had happened so quickly, in less than three seconds. But then her friends saw the blood pooling in the water around her.

“Oh, my God!” Alana’s dad cried.

Oh, my God was right.

“I can’t believe this happened,” Bethany said to no one in particular. Did *she* really lose an arm? Not feeling any pain, it was possible to imagine it had happened to someone else. But

no. She blinked, and there was no denying she had only one arm.

Surfers used two. The front arm aimed where Bethany was going. The back arm balanced her. But now, *she only had one*, a thought that repeated in her head. Did a shark steal her dreams of becoming a professional surfer in a single bite?

How will I surf with one arm?

She couldn't. She didn't see how.

Bethany also had another thought, a funny one, considering the circumstances: *Will I lose my endorsements?*

One of Bethany's sponsors was Rip Curl. They'd sponsored her, giving her clothes, bikinis, and surfboards, since she was nine years old, after she won her first real surf competition.

But none of that mattered right now. All that mattered was saving her life.

To do that, Bethany first had to get out of the water. Unlike great white sharks, which

commonly swim away after biting a human, tiger sharks are scavengers that have earned the nickname “man-eaters,” along with “wastebaskets of the sea” because they’ll eat anything they can find. Bethany had to reach the beach a quarter of a mile away, across a patch of reef, as quickly as possible.

Lying there, rocking on her board, her head also started to sway. She took a deep breath and blew out slowly. She wanted to give in to the dizziness and fear. Her body was screaming at her to panic, but she didn’t see how that would help.

Already, with each second, Bethany was losing blood.

Thank God, she thought, trying to focus. *It’s high tide*. That meant the water was higher and they could swim over the reef. Shallower waters would’ve meant having to go around the sharp coral and rocks.

From her training, Bethany knew time wasn't something she could waste.

Already, it would take fifteen minutes to reach the beach.

She looked to Alana, Holt, and Byron for help.

"Go!" Alana's dad yelled to Alana's brother. "Get to the beach! Call 9-1-1!"

Byron moved as fast as he could, paddling like a madman to get to dry land and call for help.

Holt pushed the back end of Bethany's board, sending her toward the reef. There, he was able to stand. She watched as he ripped off his rash guard, the stretchy shirt he wore to protect his skin, and wrapped it around what was left of her arm. He pulled it tighter and tighter. While he got her to the shore—while he got her help—his surf shirt would create a makeshift tourniquet to slow the bleeding to a trickle.

Get to the beach. Get to the beach, Bethany repeated silently to herself. Dizziness began to

cloud her head. *Please, God, help me. God, let me get out of the water.*

With her right hand, Bethany seized the bottom of Holt's swim trunks, and he frantically pulled Bethany closer to the shores of Tunnels Beach.