

A shark's home is in the ocean.

Shoal smiled as he laid back on his surfboard, gazing into the blue sky above. He loved the beach; there was no place he would rather be. He loved the cries of the gulls as they circled overhead, as if the birds themselves were too cheerful to keep quiet. He loved the warm sun shining down on his tan skin, to contrast with the cool ocean water. He loved said ocean beneath him, the gentle tides making him rise and fall on his surfboard. He loved-

Guuurgle

He chuckled. "I was just getting to that." Shoal smirked as he rubbed a hand along his rounded gut. Yes, he loved the beachside food as well, maybe a little too much.

Hunger pangs aside, the shark was incredibly cozy in his spot. He actually had to fight off the rising urge to take a quick nap atop his surfboard. This wouldn't be the first time he had dozed off on the ocean, but Shoal wasn't exactly laying his surfboard so he could snooze.

The shark's grin widened as he felt the tide start to pull him deeper into the ocean; he didn't need to sit up to know that a huge wave was on the way! Lethargically, he rolled himself onto his belly and began to paddle towards the coast, the cool ocean water feeling great against his strong arms.

Soon, he found himself rising up. And up. And up. Shoal's heart pounded in his chest as he felt that familiar anxious energy coursing through his body, quickly rousing him from his sleepy stupor. Oh, this was turning into a beautiful wave! A perfect way to end the day!

The sound of the wave crashing nearby caused the shark to arch back, positioning himself onto his feet in one fluid motion. Just like that, his ascent had ended, the surfer quickly gliding down the massive wave. Pivoting his feet with the dexterity one learned after years of practice, Shoal quickly turned his board sharply to the left, riding perpendicular to the wave.

And just like that, he was gliding along the tide. Shoal's toothy grin opened up as he dashed through the wave; the beach to his right, a wall of water to his left. The roar of the wave crashing down behind him was deafening, yet Shoal was as calm as could be. The shark never felt more alive than trying to outrun, or outsurf, a gigantic wave. With the slightest of movements, he was able to lower and raise his elevation on the wave itself.

And with a twist of his waist, he shot himself upwards until he flew out of the wave, grabbing onto his surfboard like a skater performing a trick, before cannonballing into the water.

“That was freaking epic, dude!”

Shoal grinned as he waded out of the water, watching the wolf running up to him. The red-furred lupine was smiling ear to ear. “Seriously, bro, watching you go has gotten me all amped up! That last aerial was legit!”

The large shark chuckled, scratching shyly at the dorsal fin on top of his head. “Naaaaaw, it was nothing, JT. Nothing I haven’t done already.”

“Yeah, dude, that’s the point!” The red wolf grinned, slapping the shark’s broad shoulders. “You’re so good at surfing, you could probably do it in your sleep now. They may as well just hand you the tournament trophy.”

Shoal felt his cheeks flush slightly. “You really think so?” he asked, wagging his tail happily. It was true, he felt himself performing a lot better on the waves lately; his movements were more fluid, and he didn’t find himself losing balance or bailing. Heck, he wasn’t even dragging his tail in the water anymore; a common mistake that had caused him to wipe out numerous times. Yeah, he did great!

His stomach decided it wanted a word in as well, grumbling loud enough for the two surfers to hear it. The shark laughed, patting his chubby middle. “Heh, can we, uh, grab a bite at the Bayside Bistro real quick? I’m freaking starving after surfing all day, man,” he muttered, walking along the sand.

“Always with the food.” JT stuck his tongue out. “Sure, bro. Let’s-”

“Excuse us, gentleman. Could I have a word with you, real quick?”

Shoal paused, blinking. His first thought was that they were in trouble, seeing three furs walking towards them on the beach wearing formal suits. Seriously, this was a beach, not a courtroom! Only psychopaths and people who meant serious business wore suits like that to a place covered in sand. Clearly, these guys did not come here to soak up some rays.

The shark’s grin slowly faded away as he planted his surfboard into the sand, looking down at the dressed up strangers. “Uh, can I help you guys?”

The smaller of the well-dressed furs, a rather slender stoat, looked up at Shoal with a soft smile. “Pardon the intrusion. We just so happened to overhear you gentlemen mentioning a tournament earlier. You wouldn’t, by any chance, be referring to the Australian Open of Surfing Tournament, would you?”

“Oh!” Shoal perked up at the mention of the tournament, a grin returning to his face. “Yeah, for sure, dude! You gonna enter it too?”

“Oh, goodness no!” The stoat laughed, waving his paw at the mere idea of it. “I’m what you’d call a fish out of water. I’m barely coordinated enough to ride a bike, let alone surf along the mighty sea. You, however, have quite the talent there! I wouldn’t be surprised if you did manage to come out victorious!”

Shoal felt himself blushing a bit, the shark shyly scratching at his dorsal fin again. It was one thing to be complimented by his close friends, but by a complete stranger too? What did he do to deserve this kind of treatment? “O-oh, uh, thanks, man. I’ll see what I can do, y’know?”

The shark grunted as he felt JT slap him on the back, looking over to see the red wolf smirking at the suits. “It won’t be a challenge for him. He’s been training for weeks on end, and he’s still got another few months to improve before the tournament even starts! He’s got this in the bag.”

Shoal wished he was thin enough to hide behind his surfboard. Why was JT talking him up in front of these guys? What if they were part of the competition and were looking to size him up, or something? Even if they weren’t competing, maybe they were friends with someone who was!

However, the stoat’s grin actually widened at those words, the mustelid clapping his paws together. “Perfect! That’s what I like to hear. I’m glad I made the right decision to approach you, then.” He held out his paw for a handshake. “My name is Archibald Borking III, Archie for short, and I am a...representative of the Luca-Cola Company and its subsidiaries.”

“That’s a long name!” Shoal laughed. The idea of such a short stoat having a long, fancy name like that was hilarious to the shark. There was no way he would remember a name like that, though. A shame more people could have names like JT. He happily clasped the smaller paw within his own, giving it a firm shake. “Just call me Shoal, dude.”

“I-I shall!” Archie grunted from the shake. He pried his arm free from the shark’s grasp, shaking his wrist before continuing. “Well, Shoal, I have a proposition for you. You see, while the Luca-Cola Company is primarily a soda manufacturer, we have been dipping our toes into an energy drink product. Have you heard of something called X-tamina?”

“Uhhhh...” Shoal tapped the side of his muzzle, before shaking his head. “Nah, dude. Can’t say I have.”

“Perfect. That’s because we’ve been keeping it a secret, for now.” Archie chuckled, reaching into the suit’s pocket. The stoat soon pulled out a large aluminum can, the word ‘X-tamina’ written across it in a bright neon pink, as if someone spray painted it on.

“We were going to market this new energy drink to adrenaline junkies such as yourself. ‘High Octane Fuel for the High Octane Crowd,’ or something similar. The slogan is still a work in

progress, of course, as is the can's final design, but I suppose that's irrelevant. Would you care to try?" Archie held out the can.

"Uhhh, sure, dude." Shoal took the can, blinking. He wasn't much for energy drinks, considering he never really found the need for them when his favorite hobby already filled him with more than enough energy. In any case, he opened the container and took a large sip, his brow furrowing as the liquid hit his tongue. *This* was an energy drink? It felt like he was drinking battery acid! It was way too sweet to be considered refreshing, and the drink itself felt weird on his teeth. And what was that flavor?! It was weird, tangy, spicy...

It was pretty good!

"What do you think?" Archie raised a brow.

Shoal smacked his lips, looking over the aluminum can once again, before taking yet another long drought. It still felt like battery acid in his mouth, but he had to admit the after taste was actually not too bad! He grinned. "I kinda like it!" He held the can out for JT to try, but the red wolf shook his head no. Oh well, more for him!

"Wonderful, splendid!" The stoat beamed, his tail flicking in excitement. "I really have chosen the perfect candidate then! As I've said earlier, we were planning on marketing X-tamina to the extreme crowd, and what better way to introduce it than with the winner of the Australian Open of Surfing sponsoring our new product!"

Shoal let out a muffled burp after downing the last of the can, chuckling. "That sounds like a great idea, dudes! Hope it goes well."

Archie's smile faded, and Shoal wondered if he had said something to offend him before JT elbowed his broad sides. "Bro, I think they're asking you to sponsor their drink."

"Oh dang, seriously?" The shark gasped.

Archie laughed. "Yes, seriously! I have the contract on hand and everything. We'll offer financial support as well, with a starting salary of a hundred thousand a year. As well as a lifetime supply of X-tamina, of course."

Shoal dropped the can onto the sand, the shark staring blankly ahead. A hundred thousand a year?! That's, like, a lot, right? Yeah, that was a crap ton! Even JT looked taken aback, the lupine staggering back. "You can't be serious!"

"But I am!" Archie's grin widened. "However, I'd prefer it if we could allocate ourselves somewhere else? I'm afraid the sun is starting to get to me; I'm starting to feel faint already. Perhaps we could go over the finer details later, over dinner or—"

“Oh! Bayside Bistro! Let’s go there!” Shoal chirped up, wagging his forked tail. “We were just about to go there ourselves!”

The stoat laughed again. “Alright, then. Dinner will be my treat!”

“Nice!” Shoal beamed. He still couldn’t believe his luck! He was getting paid to surf and drink energy drinks, and all he had to do was win that little tournament! It was hard to believe this was actually happening. With a sharky grin, he held up his fist. “Pound it!”

Archie blinked. “Erh, pound what, exactly?”

“My first, brah!”

“Your fist?” The stoat furrowed his brows, looking at it. “With what?”

“With your other first!” Shoal snickered. Man, this guy was dumb!

It was the greatest dinner of Shoal’s life. He was wrong to assume Archie was just another formal suit. The stoat was actually super nice, even if he never caught onto his and JT’s surfing lingo. Either way, he laughed and smiled and chatted with them kindly; despite not understanding surfing very much, he was still great to talk to.

Not to mention his sheer generosity! Shoal was a bit of a glutton; his soft belly was testament of that. So when Archie reminded the shark he could order whatever he wanted, as much as he wanted, well, he certainly took advantage of it. An entire sampler platter for an appetizer *and* two whole entrees made up Shoal’s meal for that night, not to mention several glasses of soda. Even JT mentioned he should slow down a bit, but Archie was completely fine with it, even offering the shark dessert afterwards. By that point, his stomach resembled an overstuffed tan beachball, hanging heavily over his swimsuit’s waistband!

That wasn’t to say he did nothing but stuff his face at the restaurant. Archie explained the contract to him while they ate, although the shark couldn’t quite keep up at times. Formal, professional stuff was just a bit too difficult a concept to grasp for the happy-go-lucky surfer. Fortunately, JT was there to explain things in a bit simpler terms, and soon even Shoal realized the contract’s terms were simple: make a big showing at the tournament, and he’d get a sponsorship. Not only that, but he was given a card with money already loaded onto it for him to use to help prepare him for that tournament.

Shoal put that card to good use when he ordered two whole platters of fish sticks for breakfast the next day!

Sure, that may have been a bit irresponsible of him, but then again, he had been training for weeks at this point. Surely he deserved a little break by now, right? Besides, he needed something to help wash down all those cans of X-tamina. Archie had given him *waaaaaay* too many of those right away; he had no idea what to do with them all! The shark still wasn't too fond of the feeling of them either; fortunately, he discovered they went down much easier when he ate something to go along with it.

And that was how he spent his break day: Lounging at the beach and ordering food whenever he wanted to drink from his cooler full of X-tamina. He didn't need to be surfing the waves to enjoy what the beach had to offer. Just sitting back and soaking in the rays was enough; the very atmosphere of the beach itself made the shark feel content and happy. In fact, he even dozed off a few times while lounging, despite the amount of energy drink he consumed, yet he always found himself waking up to his next snack being delivered. Beachside service was great! He had always been a bit too broke to afford something like that, but not with that card. With it, he could order as much as he wanted!

As the sky started to turn orange, the shark decided to finally get up and stretch his feet, taking a short stroll along the coastline. That stroll ended up at the Bayside Bistro, where he recreated the previous night's meal. He had such a great time the night before, after all, and there was no reason not to have one again! Granted, he was still a bit bloated from all of his snacking and drinking earlier, but those were just snacks and empty calories! He needed real, healthy food to give his body all the nutrients it needed, like fried shrimp! That was the perfect way to end his day of relaxing: prepping himself with as much food as possible so he'd be ready the next day to train.

Only, that day ended up exactly like the last.

It wasn't his fault! Shoal really, really wanted to get back to surfing that day. But the shark woke up just feeling completely drained of all energy; it was a hassle just to drag himself out of bed. Did he sleep funny? Was it all the food and energy drinks? Were all those weeks of surfing suddenly catching up to him?

Yeah, that last one sounded the most likely.

In any case, Shoal found it perfectly acceptable to spend that day as well lounging on the beach, enjoying the snacks and drinks before sauntering over for a large meal at the restaurant. Why not? He didn't need to go back to training right away if he was already a shoe in to win the tournament, right? And sitting on the beach watching other surfers was training in its own way, as it let him watch and learn their movements. So yeah, it was completely justifiable for him to sit on his rump, eat snacks, and drink X-tamina all day that day.

As well as all day the next day. And the day after that. And the rest of the week.

And the week after that.

Shoal let out a muffled grunt as he woke up from an impromptu nap at the beach, the shark groaning as he shifted in his seat. The darn things were starting to squeeze into his sides a bit; the surfer figured they were starting to warp beneath the intense heat or something. Yeah, Australia did tend to get pretty hot during Christmas time.

He smacked his lips, the taste of X-tamina still lingering on his tongue. He was starting to get used to drinking it without needing food to wash it down, although that obviously didn't stop him from ordering food whenever he pleased. The taste really was growing on him; a shame it didn't actually give him much energy. It made for a delicious soft drink, at least! Still smacking his lips, Shoal reached around the armrest to grab at another X-tamina can from his cooler, his sides squeezing against the chair.

Only to find JT standing right beside him, arms crossed.

"Oh! Shoal perked up, smiling. "Hey, man! It's been a while, dude. How ya been?"

"I've been good." JT responded curtly. The red wolf didn't look Shoal in the eyes, instead looking over the surfer's midsection for a moment, before glancing up at the shark's face. "You're looking...healthy."

"Thanks, bro! Been giving myself a little R&R, ya know?" Shoal smirked, grabbing that can of X-tamina and bringing it to his muzzle. He drained nearly half the can in seconds, letting out a muffled burp before holding it out. "Want some?"

"I'm good." JT shook his head. Shoal shrugged, chugging the rest of the can for himself. JT definitely looked like someone who could use an energy drink right now. The red wolf was looking much more...sedated, than usual. He didn't have that wild, excited look in his eyes. Instead, his lips were pursed and his brow was furrowed; if anything, JT looked worried! How weird.

Shoal was about to mention that when the red wolf spoke up. "You, uh, been doing any training while I've been away?"

"A little," Shoal shrugged, setting the can into the sand where it piled up with the other empty containers.

JT's ears flattened. "You're gonna train today, right?" Yeah, he definitely sounded concerned.

The shark chuckled, his belly wobbling. "First thing tomorrow, bro! Just gotta relax a bit first. Let my body unwind a lil more. A surfer's gotta be as fluid as the ocean, ya know?"

"I think you're plenty fluid, dude." JT remarked, eyes still on that wobbling belly, before glancing to the cooler full of X-taminas. "I, erh, also think you should start cutting back a bit on the fluids, too. You're getting kinda..." The lupine's tail curled around his thigh shyly. "You're getting kinda fat."

Shoal blinked, staring blankly ahead at the red wolf. Was JT being serious? Was his friend implying that he was...that he was getting...seriously?

Gradually, his gaze drifted towards his body, inspecting it curiously. It didn't take long for him to realize what JT was talking about: His stomach was *big*. It rested on his thick thighs, molding around his legs slightly, almost wide enough to rub against both sides of the chair's armrests (although his hips were currently accomplishing that job quite well). Gingerly, he hefted the lowest roll of his belly in his hand, feeling the chub squish between his fingers, before dropping it back onto his lap, sending it rippling.

Then, he laughed.

"Aha! You scared me for a sec! I thought it was something serious." Shoal snickered, reaching for another can of X-tamina. "You made it sound like I was glowing green or something!"

JT's brows furrowed even further. "You're...not worried about your weight?"

Shoal shook his head. "I've always had a bit of a belly, bro! It's no big deal."

"This isn't a 'bit of belly,' Shoal. You're actually getting really fat!" JT cried out in exasperation, walking forward to squeeze a pawful of the shark's overhang. "Your gut wasn't this big three weeks ago, dude. It's bigger than a beach ball!"

Shoal raised his arm to belch into it, not wanting to accidentally burp in the wolf's face. "It's just bloated, is all. Been keeping myself plenty hydrated, ya know." He drank from the next can of X-tamina.

But JT wouldn't let up. "You're growing a second chin."

"It just looks like I am. It's just the light, bro."

"Your cheeks have dimples in them."

"Only when I smile. I thought I've always had those anyways."

"Your swim trunks look ready to rip right off!"

That was a very valid point. Shoal didn't have a proper response for that comment, specifically because he could feel them squeezing his plush waist. It's been a real pain as of late pulling them on; today in particular it was a real nightmare.

The shark eventually shrugged it off. "They must have shrunk in the dryer or something."

JT's eyes narrowed. "I've seen you wear those swim trunks for 5 years, and they're only *now* starting to shrink?"

"It happens, man. Clothes aren't meant to be worn forever."

JT looked frustrated as hell, which was strange, given that Shoal was the one being berated about his weight. The shark was fine! At most, he put on a couple of pounds, but that wasn't anything a couple hours of surfing could fix! "I'll go surfing in a bit, alright?" The shark compromised, hoping it would get JT out of his nonexistent hair.

The wolf sighed out of his nose. "Alright, man... I'm just looking out for you, alright? You got this, dude." With a half smile, JT patted the shark's broad shoulders before walking away.

Shoal slumped back into his seat. He really wasn't in the mood to surf today. He just woke up from a nap, after all. But, it couldn't hurt to get a bit of practice in to make sure his skills were still sharp before the tournament. Grabbing the ends of the beach chair, he leaned forward and slowly squeezed his way out, his belly folds bunching over themselves.

"Your shrimp cocktail, sir?"

The shark blinked, quickly plopping himself back down. His server, a female fox, had arrived with a large bowl of sauce, with over a dozen delicious-looking shrimp placed along the edges. He had forgotten he'd ordered that before passing out!

Shoal grinned a sharky grin. "Thanks, ma'am." He leaned back into his seat, setting the delicious-looking snack on his broad belly. Surfing can wait, right?

"Hurf...hurf...hurf..."

It wasn't even his fourth attempt at surfing today, and Shoal was exhausted. The wheezing shark struggled to catch his breath as he swam deeper into the ocean, his thick arm wrapped around his surfboard. He remembered a time when he could do this all day while hardly breaking a sweat. How the hell did he do it?! The shark felt like he was dying already!

With a twinge of embarrassment, he thought back to his talk with JT, and how the wolf suggested he go back to training.

He really wished he had taken that advice, instead of loafing around for another three weeks.

At last, he was finally deep enough to wait for the waves. Shoal coasted to a stop as he clung to his surfboard, slowly regaining his breath. Swimming felt far more challenging than usual, but for some reason he was able to float much easier than he used to. A shame there wasn't a floating competition instead of a surfing competition. He'd win that for sure!

Or an eating or drinking contest. Man, he was craving an X-tamina something fierce.

A wave was approaching. Shoal groaned as he slowly hauled himself onto his surfboard, struggling to lift his chunky legs high enough to wrap around the deck. It didn't help matters much that his swim trunks were digging tightly into not just his waist, but his thighs as well - he had even purchased these new swim trunks several sizes larger than usual, just to avoid that issue!

There was a bit of rocking, the shark nearly falling off of his own surfboard, but at last he managed to haul himself up. He swam forward, trying to ignore the feeling of his belly flattening out to either side of the surfboard, as well as his side rolls bunch up everytime he swung his arms forward to paddle. There was no way he should be *this* rusty after a month and a half of relaxing. Just swimming was proving to be too much of a hassle for the maybe-more-than-pudgy shark. Where did the energy go?

Man, he *really* could use an X-tamina.

His eyes widened as he felt the wave start to lift him up. Alright, this was it. His last few times, the shark had completely biffed it and collapsed into the water just from attempting to stand on his own surfboard. He didn't remember being so...front heavy. This time, he would do it, though. He'd stand up, and glide across the water like nothing was wrong!

With a grunt, Shoal gripped the sides of his board and pushed himself up, feeling himself wobble.

Steady...steady...

His knees dug into his hanging gut as he pulled them in.

Steady...steady...

His love handles bunched up once his feet were planted on the board.

Steady...stea-

Craaaaack! The board snapped in two!

Shoal didn't even have time to let out a swear before flopping into the ocean, at the height of the wave! Wide-eyed, the shark found himself tossing and turning beneath the water, like a single sock in a washing machine! He curled up into a ball, quickly feeling himself get disoriented as the sound of rushing water filled his ears. Which way was up anymore?!

Just when he thought he was gonna vomit, his back collided with the squishy ground hard. Shoal let out a startled gasp, shocked to find air rushing into his lungs. He grunted and slowly opened his eyes, finding himself laying on the coastline, staring up at the sun.

And his belly. His big, heavy, spherical dome of a belly.

He had gotten fat. Really, really fat.

Shoal didn't move. He didn't want to move. He was stuck staring transfixed at himself, wondering how he managed to miss all *this*. No wonder the surfer felt so heavy and sluggish; anyone else would if they had a body like that! The shark reached forward to grab at his hefty belly, his grapefruit-sized moobs squeezing against each other. That belly flab squished so easily into his fingers, far more than when JT grabbed it last, jiggling and wobbling like a big bowl of jell-o. With a blush, the shark realized he was actually a couple inches short of being able to reach the farthest end of his belly!

He couldn't see past that rising dome of blubber, but he could tell his gut wasn't the only part of him that puffed up. Obviously his thighs had grown quite doughy as well, if they were squeezing that heavily into those extra large swim trunks. No wonder he had been forced into a waddle as of late. Likewise, he could feel new folds bunch up when he curled his tail even the slightest bit. With a wince, he reached up to rub along his dorsal fin, groaning when he realized even that was a little wider than before! How did he get so huge?!

Shoal thought back through those weeks and weeks on non stop eating, drinking, and napping. He then wondered how he wasn't even bigger than he was now.

The shark heard footsteps in the sand; it was a moment before he saw JT appear over the curve of his belly, the red wolf looking at him the same way he did those three weeks prior. "You alright, man?"

Shoal sighed. "I'm fat, bro." He reached down to heft up all that sharky blubber for emphasis, feeling that cauldron of lard slosh and burble about. Crud, laying on his back, he was actually nearly half as tall as JT was, thanks to his gut!

He expected JT to scold or criticize him, like the red wolf had every right to. However, his friend chose to reach a paw out for the shark. "Need a hand."

Despite the situation, Shoal smiled slightly as he took that slender paw in his own chunky one, feeling the red wolf try hefting him up. Damn, he really was heavy! JT's heels dug into the sand as he pulled as hard as he could, the two working together to help haul Shoal into a sitting position.

At last, the task was done, and the shark felt his belly spill forward to completely flood his lap, his navel as far away from him as his knees. Shoal shoved his hands deep into that all-encompassing lard, feeling them sink in up to their wrists. "I'm boned, aren't I, dude?" He may as well kiss that endorsement deal, and all the money that came with it, goodbye.

"Not necessarily." JT sat across from his friend in the sand, the slender wolf looking hilariously thin compared to the fat shark. "You still got another couple weeks till the tournament, right? You think you could drop enough weight to, uh, not break surfboards beneath you?"

Shoal groaned in response. "If only it was that easy," he muttered, drumming on the top of his gut. It took him a month and a half of bad habits to gain all that weight, no amount of dieting would get him to slim down a noticeable amount by the tournament. Even now, that doughy gut let out a quiet rumble, sending ripples across his pudgy body. It took all of his willpower to not start looking for his cooler of X-tamina.

JT's tail thumped against the sand. "We gotta do something for ya, man. I mean, you gotta at least try to lose a few pounds before then, unless you wanna go down as the fattest surfer in history!"

"I dunno, man!" The shark rubbed his fists into his chubby cheeks. "I can't even fit on a surfboard without breaking it! The only thing big enough to fit me would be...would be..."

Shoal must have been glowing, because he just came up with a bright idea! The shark gave a wide, toothy grin, dimples forming in those pudgy cheeks. "Bro...I got it!"

"You do?!" JT's ears perked up, the wolf's tail wagging. Before he could ask further, however, the fat shark had already hauled himself onto his feet, waddling off the beach. "Where ya going, dude?"

"To get more X-tamina!"

The shark laughed at the expression on JT's face. "Bro, are you crazy?! That crap turned you into a freaking whale, and now you're gonna drink more? It's what got you into this situation in the first place!"

Shoal's grin didn't fade. "Well, now it's gonna get me out. You wanted me to train more, right? Well I got a neat idea for a trick that might get me through this tourney yet!"

A shark's home is in the ocean.

Shoal smiled as he laid back on the ocean, gazing into the blue sky above. He loved the beach; there was no place he would rather be. He loved the cries of the gulls as they circled overhead, as if the birds themselves were too cheerful to keep quiet. He loved the warm sun shining down on his tan skin, to contrast with the cool ocean water. He loved said ocean beneath him, the gentle tides making him rise and fall on his back. He loved-

GRUUUUURGLE!!

He chuckled, staring up at the cream-colored hill of shark belly before him. "I was getting to that," he teased, patting the side of the rippling expanse. Yes, he loved the beachside food. Damn, did he love the food. The obese shark had barely been drifting for an hour, and yet he was already fantasizing about the feast he would treat himself to once the tournament was over. That, and all those X-tamina's waiting for him. He made sure to ask JT to bring two coolers for him when this was done.

"And up next, we have Shoal!"

Finally! About time he had his turn to surf. With a sly grin, the shark lazily kicked his feet against the water, paddling himself across the sea. He had to turn to his side slightly to see the wave approaching; there was no way he could see anything past his gut anymore!

The shark's heart pounded excitedly when he felt himself lifting in the waves, as he had done so hundreds of times in the past. Granted, this was a slightly different situation, but he was no less excited to show off his newest move to the crowd. Higher and higher he rose, his toes wiggling in excitement.

This was going to be a good wave.

His head dipped down, and soon, Shoal was sent plummeting down. Down, down, down on his back. His grin widened when he heard the crowd gasping. No doubt they were alarmed to find this enormous, flabby, sphere of a shark falling out of control, ready to get crushed by the wave! Surely, the fat sack of lard must have lost his surfboard earlier, more likely had broken it beneath his sheer tonnage!

Wrong, he was the surfboard!

Shoal twisted sharply to his right, and found himself rocketing off to the side, gliding across the wave while on his back! Even with the sound of the wave crashing against his ears,

the tubby shark easily heard the hysterical screaming of the crowd on the shore watching him seemingly defy gravity, or the laws of physics! In fact, by positioning his tail and dorsal fin in the water, Shoal was able to swiftly turn up and down on the wave, all with seemingly little effort! This was a trick only a shark as fat as himself could pull off. His insulated skin and boundless blubber kept him afloat, while his dorsal fin mimicked that of a surfboard.

However, he was certainly much rounder and wider than any surfboard to date; Shoal knew that firsthand, as he saw the tube of the wave quickly catch up to him. He wasn't as speedy as a surfboard, unfortunately. This meant he had to perform the second phase of his trick as soon as possible.

Shoal pulled out a can of X-tamina, brought it to his lips, and began chugging. He drank like his life depended on it, his fat neck wobbling with every heavy gulp. Fortunately, he had literal months of practice for this specific part of the trick; he downed the can in seconds flat. With a toothy grin, Shoal raised the can high into the air, making sure the audience, and the cameras, could see it.

He could still hear their cheering after falling into the ocean.

Shoal didn't win the tournament. In fact, he was immediately disqualified when it was discovered he hadn't even brought a surfboard with him. However, his little stunt had garnered far more attention than even the first place winner! Crowds of furs swarmed the massive shark, all dying of curiosity as to how he managed to perform such a feat, as well as what strange beverage he was drinking while surfing. Shoal was too busy gulping down cans of X-tamina to respond to everyone, but the sight of so many furs made his grin grow wide. That endorsement was totally his!

As if his day couldn't get any better, Shoal was actually invited onto the stage for a public interview after the winning ceremonies!

"And now," the dragon-wolf announcer beamed as he spoke into his microphone. "Put your paws together for the shark who knows how to have a *whale* of a time: Shoaaaaa!"

The audience roared as the shark lumbered onto the stage, the wooden floorboards bending noticeable beneath his feet. The sight of so many smiling faces was almost enough to bring a tear to his eye. It would have been one thing to have won the tournament like he had initially planned.

But it was all the more satisfying to, despite being disqualified, shatter the competition completely. Just like he shattered his bathroom scale earlier this week!

While walking towards the center stage, Shoal uncapped an entire gallon filled with X-tamina, chugging down on the sugary sludge right in front of the whole crowd. He hardly seemed to come up for breath, even as the dragon-wolf announcer spoke to him. "We are just *dying* to know more about your incredible stunt. You had no surfboard, yet you glided across the water just fine without one! Not only that, but you had time to chug down a can of...whatever it is you're drinking right now! Won't you tell us what prompted you to enact this rather...unorthodox style of bodysurfing?" He asked as he held the mic to Shoal's muzzle, having to press himself against that broad gut to do so.

The shark finally lowered the empty container, letting out a muffled belch. Licking his lips, he grabbed the microphone and turned towards the audience. Hopefully, the cameras were all focused on him, although he had a feeling they were being pointed at his stomach, considering it was practically eclipsing the podium. "I just wanna *hurp* say...I wouldn't be here today, standing before you dudes like this, without Luca-Cola's newest drink: X-tamina!"

He set the gallon jug down and held his arm out; JT quickly ran across the stage, bringing him another one. The shark grinned as he uncapped that one, chugging it with the same fervor as the last one. He was going to need a lot more if he wanted his next trick to be even more impressive!