

Sharkskin

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Art by [Nakase](#), [click here for the full sequence](#)



Thank you for your purchase of our Sharkskin diving suit, and for choosing DRUID for your magitechology needs!

This revolutionary product uses mana to both protect its wearer and enhance their swimming ability. In addition, its optional gills attachment allows you to swim underwater for hours without worrying about running out of oxygen. Don't swim like a human, let magic allow you to swim like a shark!

Warning: Please read the following instructions carefully. Improper use can lead to wild magic events for which DRUID is not liable.

Only power your Sharkskin with approved, properly charged, magicite crystals. Avoid unstable magic...

It took a lot of mental effort for Jane to keep her eyes from glazing over as she reviewed the complicated warnings and instructions for her new magitek diving suit. The instructions were detailed, but incredibly boring. The only thing that kept her going was just how aware she was that her life might depend on it.

Most people probably would have said her diving suit was ridiculous looking, considering it had fins on its back, shoulders, and legs to mimic the appearance of a great white shark. It did have normal diving suit colors, with black being the primary color and a blue underbelly however, so at least no one would think that the name 'Sharkskin' was literal.

Supposedly, the reasoning behind modeling the suit after a shark was that its makers thought it would enhance the suit's aquatic enchantments. According to Jane's own research, there was a lot of disagreement among magitek engineers about whether or not such thematic designs actually made any difference, but she honestly didn't care. She was a huge fan of sharks, so having a shark themed design was a plus all by itself as long as it at least worked as well as a normal diving suit.

Several aspects of the suit's design had surprised her. The instructions said that she would not need underwater goggles, because the suit's enchantments were supposed to protect her eyes. The Sharkskin suit's gills were even stranger, since they were almost like a giant collar that went on top of her shoulders. She would still need to wear a breathing mask that was connected to the gills, since they certainly could not pump oxygen directly into her body, but she was willing to at least try them out since they complemented the suit's theme so well.

The gear design was so different from what she was used to that her instincts kept telling her that she was forgetting something. She hoped that one more read of the instruction manual would calm her nerves, and thankfully it seemed to be working. As far as she could tell, she had everything ready. All that was left was for her to power the suit up.

Like any other magitek device, that meant she needed to activate the suit's magicite to power it. The green crystal was already in its socket over her chest, so she carefully placed her hand on it and pushed until she heard a satisfying click. The crystal flared to life, and emitted a green glow as it began powering the suit. Previously invisible lines along the suit's surface suddenly began glowing green, somehow making it look both high tech and mystical.

As the suit powered up, Jane felt warmth fill her body. Unless she was mistaken, that meant that the enchantments which were supposed to enhance her swimming ability were activating. In addition, the suit began adjusting itself so that it became comfortably snug. The wrinkles that it had sported before disappeared, and she was pleased to see that it seemed perfectly smooth now.

“This is so cool!” She murmured to herself as she stretched to test her range of motion. The suit had become incredibly flexible. It felt as if it was adjusting its tightness on the fly to make motion as easy as possible. A part of her was disappointed that she couldn’t feel the suit’s fins, but she still couldn’t help but feel like a powerful shark woman.

For the final touch, Jane strapped on the suit’s breathing mask and took a few deep breaths to make sure that the amphibious gills seemed to be working properly. A real shark wouldn’t be able to breath out of the water, but she was not going to complain that one detail was overlooked.

Satisfied that everything was ready, Jane dove into the clear blue seawater. The benefits of the Sharkskin suit were immediately apparent. Her body seemed to cut through the water with little resistance, and even though the suit didn’t have any obvious pressure seals only her exposed hands and head got wet.

The most surprising sensation was the way she felt the sea water over her eyes, but didn’t feel irritated by it at all. Somehow, that one magical effect made the biggest difference. Now that she could see through the water without any physical protection she felt like she was swimming in a place that she belonged, rather than as a trespasser.

Overjoyed by how well the suit worked, Jane let herself loose like a child who was trying out a new playground. She explored the seafloor, darted through rock formations, swam with schools of fish. There was no reason for her to even keep track of time, since the power crystal she was using would keep the suit and its artificial gills powered for hours.

Much later, far away from her boat, Jane noticed a strange purple color at the edge of her vision. It looked as if something on the seafloor was glowing in the distance. Intrigued, she decided to investigate and launched herself towards the source of the light with a kick of her flippers.

It didn’t take long before a huge mass of purple crystals became clearly visible. Several of the crystals looked at least two feet tall, and were emitting an eerie purple light.

In all her years of diving, she had never seen anything like this before. The way the crystals were glowing almost reminded her of Magicite crystals, but she had never seen purple crystals before.

After staring in the crystals in wonder for several moments, she decided that she needed to bring a sample back with her. She didn’t remember the details, but she had heard something about irresponsible use of magic having effects on the environment. If this was caused by magic, then she needed to make sure that someone knew about this.

Using both hands, she carefully grabbed onto one of the protruding crystal formations and tried to pull it loose. To her surprise, it shattered within moments and dozens of tiny fragments went floating in all directions.

“Huh, I’ve never seen such fragile magicite before,” Jane said to herself as she caught the largest shard and began swimming away with it.

At least, she tried to swim away. After only a few strokes her limbs started feeling strangely heavy, as if the water was becoming thicker. It took her a moment to realize that her suit must have started malfunctioning.

As she glanced over her shoulder to try and figure out what was wrong, she saw that several of the shattered crystal fragments were following behind her as if they were being attracted to her. Her eyes widened with alarm as she began to realize just what was causing the malfunctions, and she loosened her grasp on the shard she was carrying.

The mana circuits near the hand she had been carrying the shard with had begun glowing purple instead of their usual green, and the anomaly was. Far too late, Jane recalled the warnings she had read about the dangers of charging her suit with an improper mana source, though she would never have imagined simply being near such a source would count as charging.

To her surprise and horror, she realized that the suit’s flippers had inexplicably started fusing together, and that the purple light had totally overtaken her suit from the knees down as well. Two of the smaller shards had somehow attached themselves to her legs, and were pulsing as they flooded the device she was wearing with foreign mana.

Strange sensations began spreading through her legs as her flippers fused together into a shape that resembled a shark’s fin, and Jane began to realize what was happening. The suit was transforming, and it might transform her along with it. She had heard stories about people being disfigured or transformed by ‘Wild Magic Events’, and she did not want to be one of them!

In a panic, she began trying to pull the suit off. She couldn’t reach the zipper pull because it was hidden under the gills, so she tried pulling those off despite the additional danger that would put her in. However, the gill attachment seemed stuck to the suit’s shoulders. After wasting precious moments trying to pry the thing off, Jane realized that she couldn’t feel where the device ended and her suit began. It was as if it had merged with the suit’s rubbery material. As she continued trying to get a hold of a seam, she noticed the sensation of the suit spreading up her neck.

Her efforts to separate her feet with frantic kicks had not been successful either. The suit’s legs had fused together to the point that she looked like some kind of shark mermaid. For the moment her feet and legs were clearly visible under the tight material, but it seemed to be

thickening somehow. She wasn't sure that she wanted to imagine what would happen to her if it kept growing.

Jane was startled out of her thoughts as several more of the crystal shards impaled the Sharkskin suit and began injecting it full of more wild mana. By this point, the magitek circuits had begun to grow and spread like veins, giving it a terrifyingly organic look. The only remaining glow of its suit's green mana came from its original magicite crystal on her chest, and that too was being overwhelmed by the corruption.

As the last bit of purified mana was snuffed out, a burning sensation began spreading through her body. It reminded her of a time she had accidentally absorbed mana into her body when she mishandled a magicite crystal, but this time it was far worse. Any hope that she might escape from this situation unscathed faded away as burning got more intense, as if her entire body was on fire.

Even though she had little hope at this point, Jane kept trying to escape from the rapidly morphing suit. However, everything was working against her. She felt faint and dizzy, making it hard for her to even start to come up with a real plan. Even pulling at the suit's increasingly organic feeling material hurt her now, as if it had become stuck to her skin.

In a moment of dazed panic, she even tried to remove her breathing mask, but found that it clung to her just like everything else. Somehow, it had become a part of the corrupted diving suit. She was still getting oxygen, but it was being forced into her lungs instead of being timed with her breath.

The rational side of her mind was glad she had been prevented from accidentally drowning herself. However, the idea that the thing had even taken over her breathing made the situation even more terrifying. To make matters even worse, she felt her arms start getting pulled towards the rest of the suit. Membranes had formed under her armpits, and they were inexorably growing spreading down her arms and pinning them against her sides. Within moments, the sleeves melded seamlessly with the rest of the suit, and her previously bare hands were quickly engulfed as well.

Now that her arms and legs were both trapped, there was nothing Jane could do except wiggle futilely now, but she knew that the struggle was useless at this point. The suit felt like it had literally become sharkskin now. In addition, the strange sensations which were pulsing through her body made it hard to be sure she still had arms and legs under the thickening material.

Feeling trapped and defeated, Jane tried hoping that something good would somehow come from this. The suit was obviously becoming more shark shaped, so maybe she was being turned into a real shark. Maybe living as her favorite creature wouldn't be that bad. That was, assuming of course she didn't lose her mind like so many other victims of wild magic had.

As if to remind her that wild magic wasn't something to be trifled with, teeth suddenly began to sprout from her face mask. Shark teeth to be specific. Behind her head, she felt something sliding over her hair. It didn't take much imagination for her to realize what was happening. The shark's jaws had formed, and they were going to close over her.

It was then that Jane began to fear that maybe she wasn't going to be transformed at all. Maybe she was just going to be consumed and replaced with a monster.

The jaws mercilessly closed over her face, and everything went black.

Afterwards, she was not able to remember how long she had been trapped in that crushing darkness. All she knew was that everything had changed by the time she opened her new eyes. Her arms and legs were gone, and she could feel her fins. Glorious shark fins. However, something didn't seem right.

When she finally managed to twist enough to get a good look at herself, she realized that she hadn't become a shark. Not really. She had become a monster with the shape of a shark. Even though she was shaped like a great white, her colors were black and blue instead of grey and white. On top of that, her body was covered in glowing purple crystals, whose glow seemed to pulse with her heartbeat.

Strangely, she didn't feel upset or afraid of the changes. The fear she had felt before had been replaced with the icy calm and the unrelenting instincts of a predator. Unfamiliar thoughts pushed at her, urging her to hunt and feed. She barely managed to realize that these thoughts weren't her own, and that something was affecting her mind. It took an incredible effort to keep herself from being overwhelmed.

From that day on, keeping hold of her humanity was a constant struggle that she wasn't sure she was winning. The only thing that kept her fighting was her fear that she might forget she had been human, and end up hurting someone. The days as a shark went on endlessly, and she had lost track of how long she had been stuck like this. Other sea creatures, even sharks, were terrified of her. The combination of the loneliness and her mental struggle threatened to drive her mad.

Eventually, she found a way to calm herself. Every once in a while, one of the crystals on her back would flake off and begin floating through the water. Each time this happened, some alien instinct led her to immediately grab it in her teeth and carefully plant it on the seafloor. The first few times this had happened she fought the instinct off and swam away, but eventually she gave in. Giving in felt so calming. It gave her purpose.

Maybe if she grew enough crystals, and made a large enough garden, then someone else might get transformed by them. Then, she wouldn't be alone anymore...

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