



Meg: Hell's Aquarium

By Steve Alten

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The Philippine Sea Plate: The most unexplored realm on the planet. Hidden beneath its primordial crust lies the remains of the *Panthalassa*, an ocean that dates back 220 million years. Vast and isolated, the *Panthalassa* is inhabited by nightmarish sea creatures long believed extinct.

Tanaka Institute, Monterey, CA: Four years have passed since Angel, the 76-foot, 100,000 pound Megalodon, birthed a litter of pups far too numerous and aggressive to keep in one pen. Fortunately, a Dubai royal prince who is building the largest aquarium in the world seeks to purchase two of the "runts"?if Jonas Taylor's twenty-one year-old son, David, will be their handler. Jonas reluctantly agrees, and David is off to Dubai for the summer of his life, not realizing that he is being set up to lead an expedition that will hunt down and capture the most dangerous creatures ever to inhabit the Earth!

This edition of the book is the deluxe, tall rack mass market paperback.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Steve Alten is the best-selling author of the *Meg* series. A native of Philadelphia, he earned a Bachelor's degree from Penn State, a Masters from the University of Delaware, and a Doctorate from Temple University. He is the founder and director of Adopt-An-Author, a free nationwide teen reading program used in thousands of secondary school classrooms across the country to excite reluctant readers.

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1.

Monterey Peninsula Airport
Monterey, California

Saturday

The black Lexus JX sedan is double-parked outside Gate B, the vehicle's driver, Jonas Taylor, eyeballing the airport cop who has sent him circling the airport four times already. The sixty-six-year-old paleobiologist glances at his twenty-four-year-old daughter, Danielle, curled up in the passenger seat next to him. The model-pretty blonde, who works part-time for a local NBC-TV affiliate as a news reporter and weekends emceeing shows at the Tanaka Institute, is staring at the digital clock on the dashboard, growing impatient. "Almost four thirty. If his plane doesn't get here soon, I'll miss the evening show."

"His plane just landed. Relax." Jonas taps the steering wheel to an old Neil Diamond tune on the radio. "Anyway, Olivia can always emcee the show in a pinch."

"Olivia?" Dani looks at her father as if she just swallowed turpentine. "Dad, the Saturday night show is my gig. Period. Now would you please turn off that annoying song?"

"I like Neil Diamond."

"Who?"

"Come on, I'm not that old."

"Yeah, you are. Seriously, Dad, I will pay you to let me change the station."

"Fine, only no gangster rap."

"It's gangsta, and get with the times. Ghetto is in. It's what we relate to."

"My mistake. I forgot your mother and I raised you as a poor black child in a gang-infested neighborhood."

The airport cop approaches the Lexus. Before he can signal Jonas to move the car, twenty-year-old David Taylor steps out of the baggage claim exit, an orange and blue University of Florida duffle bag slung over

one broad shoulder. Jonasâ€™s son is wearing a gray Gatorâ€™s Football tee-shirt, faded jeans, and sneakers. He is fit and tan, his brown hair long, speckled with golden highlights from being in the sun, his almond-brown eyes hidden behind dark sunglasses.

David tosses his duffle in the back seat of the Lexus and climbs in. â€œSorry. Plane was an hour late.â€?

â€œNo worries. We just got here. Right, Dani?â€?

â€œWrong. You know dad, he had to leave an hour early.â€? She allows David to kiss her cheek. â€œYou look good... Jesus, Dad, drive!â€?

Jonas pulls into traffic, following the signs leading to Highway 68 West.

â€œYou look like you gained a few pounds. Lifting weights again?â€?

â€œYes... and no, for the last time, I am not trying out for football.â€?

â€œSure, I know. I just saw the shirt and thoughtâ€”â€?

â€œItâ€™s just a shirt.â€?

â€œâ€”because the coach called our house twice last week. He lost two wide-outs to injuries in spring training. With your speedâ€”â€?

â€œDad, enough! My playing days ended in high school.â€?

â€œOkay, okay. I just remember my playing days at Penn State... those were the best of times.â€?

â€œPlease, that was half a century ago.â€? Dani ruffles her fatherâ€™s thick mane of snowy-white hair. â€œDavid, what do you think of Dadâ€™s new look?â€?

David smiles. â€œItâ€™s as white as Angelâ€™s ass. It was still gray last time I saw you.â€?

â€œComes from working too closely with monsters.â€?

â€œI thought you enjoyed working with Angelâ€™s pups?â€?

Jonas smiles at his daughter. â€œI was talking about you.â€?

Dani smacks him playfully across his head. â€œI told him he should use that hair stuff that gets rid of the gray.â€?

â€œDonâ€™t listen to her, Dad. It makes you look more intelligent. Sort of like Anderson Cooper, only a lot older.â€?

â€œGood. I can use all the help I can get. David... about this internshipâ€”â€?

â€œDad, we talked about this.â€?

â€œThere are other specialties in marine biology. We just completed the Manta Ray sale with the Naval Warfare Center, thanks, in part, to your piloting demo. The Navy knows youâ€™re the best pilot we have, and the Vice Admiral mentioned they could use a good trainer.â€?

â€œYou know I love piloting the subs. I just like working with the Megs more. Thereâ€™s something about big predatorsâ€”â€?

â€œYou want big predators? San Diego needs a new trainer for their female orca. I could make a callâ€”â€?

â€œPass.â€?

â€œWhatâ€™s wrong with orcas?â€?

â€œNothing, if you enjoy teaching dog tricks to a whale. Angelâ€™s pups have special needs.â€?

â€œPups? Christ, you make them sound like a litter of cocker spaniels. The three runts are already larger than an adult great white, and the two sisters... you tell him, Dani.â€?

Dani nods, text messaging on her cell phone. â€œThe sisters are evil. Theyâ€™ll be as big and nasty as their mother.â€?

â€œWhy do you call them â€˜the sistersâ€™? Technically, all five are sisters.â€?

â€œWhen you see them every day like Dani and I do, youâ€™ll understand. They may have shared the same womb, but the three runts look and act nothing like Bela and Lizzy.â€? Jonas exits Highway 68, heading south on Highway 1. â€œHowâ€™s Corrine?â€?

â€œWe broke up.â€?

Dani looks up. â€œSeriously? I never liked her.â€?

â€œWait,â€? Jonas jumps in, â€œwhat was wrong with Corrine?â€?

â€œShe was getting too serious.â€?

â€œWhatâ€™s wrong with serious? Is serious so bad?â€?

â€œHowâ€™s mom?â€?

â€œSheâ€™s good. And donâ€™t change the subject.â€?

â€œMomâ€™s stressed out,â€? Dani says.

â€œNot PETA again?â€?

â€œWorse. A thug off-shoot. They call themselves R.A.W. Stands for Return Animals to the Wild. Dad had to hire a security outfit; they were puncturing the staffâ€™s tires. Iâ€™m trying to convince my producer to let me do an exposÃ©. These assholes donâ€™t give a damn about the Megs. Theyâ€™re just after the free publicity.â€?

David says nothing, preferring to gaze out his passenger window at the Pacific Ocean peeking through the rolling hillsides.

Jonas weighs the sudden silence. â€œGo ahead and say it, David. â€˜The penâ€™s too small. The pups are getting too big.â€™â€?

David looks at his father. â€œWhat did the State Assembly say?â€?

â€œSame as theyâ€™ve always said. No more expansion, at least not along the coast. They offered us six hundred acres in Bakersfield.â€?

â€œBakersfield? Why not Death Valley?â€?

â€œThere may be another option. Mac and I have a meeting on Monday with Emaar Properties out of the United Arab Emirates. Rumor has it theyâ€™re constructing some kind of new state-of-the-art aquarium and hotel in Dubai.â€?

â€œI heard about that. The place is supposed to be incredible, ten times the size of the Georgia Aquarium. You think they want one of the pups?â€?

Jonas nods. â€œIâ€™d bet the house on it.â€?

The Lexus heads south on Cabrillo Highway, exiting onto Sand Dunes Drive. David stares at the ocean, mesmerized by its crashing surf, marveling at the differences between Montereyâ€™s rough Pacific and Floridaâ€™s calmer Atlantic. He has spent the last three summers interning at the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution in Fort Pierce, completing field work in order to earn his bachelorâ€™s degree in marine biology. Up ahead he sees the familiar concrete and steel bowl, the arenaâ€™s ocean-access canal running out to meet the deeper ocean waters like a submerged pier.

The Tanaka Institute and Lagoon: home to the most dangerous creatures in the planetâ€™s history.

Built by Davidâ€™s maternal grandfather, Masao Tanaka, more than thirty-five years ago, the lagoon had originally been designed to function as a field laboratory to study cetacean behavior. Each year, tens of thousands of whales migrated south from the Bering Sea along Californiaâ€™s coast, searching for shallow, protected harbors in which to birth their calves. The Tanaka Lagoon, essentially a man-made lake with an ocean-access canal, was thought to be the perfect birthing place for pregnant females who were struggling to make it down to Baja.

Masao had mortgaged his familyâ€™s future to build the facility, but when rising costs had depleted those funds, he had been forced to seek help from the Japanese Marine Science Technology Center. JAMSTEC was more interested in creating an early-warning, earthquake detection system off the Japanese coast, and Masao held the patents on UNISâ€”a new Unmanned Nautical Information Submersible. In exchange for funding his whale lagoon, Masao accepted a high-risk contract with JAMSTEC to deploy twenty-five UNIS robots seven miles below the Western Pacific along the seismically active sea floor of the Mariana Trench.

To complete the mission, Masaoâ€™s son, D.J., had to escort each UNIS to the bottom using an Abyss Glider, a one-man, deep-sea submersible resembling an acrylic torpedo with wings. It would take months to deploy the robots, but once the system was up and running the network worked like a charm. And then, one after another, the drones stopped transmitting data. JAMSTEC froze funding on the whale lagoon, insisting Masao fix the problem. To do that required retrieving one of the damaged UNIS robotsâ€”a two-submersible jobâ€”but Masao refused to allow his other pilotâ€”his daughter, Terryâ€”to make the dive with her younger brother. Instead, he turned to an old friend for help.

Before he became a paleobiologist, Jonas Taylor had been the best deep-sea submersible pilot ever to wear the N...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Galen Dent:

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Richard Williams:

This book untitled Meg: Hell's Aquarium to be one of several books that best seller in this year, honestly, that is because when you read this book you can get a lot of benefit in it. You will easily to buy this kind of book in the book shop or you can order it via online. The publisher of the book sells the e-book too. It makes you quicker to read this book, because you can read this book in your Mobile phone. So there is no reason for your requirements to past this guide from your list.

Eugene Meunier:

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Violet Murray:

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