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MEG: A Novel of Deep Terror

by *N. Y. Times* Best-selling author

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MEGALODON

**Late Cretaceous Period, 70 Million Years Ago
The Coast of the Asiamerica-Northern Landmass
(Pacific Ocean)**

From the moment the early morning fog had begun to lift, they sensed they were being watched. The herd of Shantungosaurus had been grazing along the misty shoreline all morning. Measuring more than forty feet from their duck-billed heads to the end of their tails, these reptiles, the largest of the hadrosaurs, gorged themselves on the abundant supply of kelp and seaweed that continued to wash up along the shoreline with the incoming tide. Every few moments, the hadrosaurs raised their heads like a herd of nervous deer, listening to the noises of the nearby

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forest. They watched the dark trees and thick vegetation for movement, ready to run at the first sign of approach.

Across the beach, hidden among the tall trees and thick undergrowth, a pair of red reptilian eyes followed the herd. The Tyrannosaurus rex, largest and most lethal of all terrestrial carnivores, stood twenty-two feet above the forest floor. Saliva oozed from the big male's mouth, its muscles quivering with adrenaline, as it focused on two duckbills venturing out into the shallows, isolating themselves from the herd.

With a blood-curdling roar, the killer crashed from the trees, its eight tons pounding the sand and shaking the earth with every step. The duckbills momentarily froze, then rose on their hind legs and scattered in both directions along the beach.

The two hadrosaurs grazing in the surf saw the carnivore closing in on them, its jaws wide, fangs bared, its bone-chilling trumpet drowning the crash of the surf. Trapped, the pair turned and plunged into deeper water to escape. They strained their long necks forward and began to swim, their legs churning to keep their heads above water.

Driven by hunger, T. rex crashed through the surf after them. Far from buoyant, the killer waded into deeper waters, snapping its jaws, straining to shorten the distance. But as it neared its prey, the T. rex's clawed feet sank deep into the muddy sea floor, its weight driving it into the mire.

The hadrosaurs paddled in thirty feet of water, safe for the moment. But having escaped one predator, they now faced another.

The six-foot gray dorsal fin rose slowly from the sea, its unseen girth gliding silently across their path. If the T. rex was the most terrifying creature ever to walk the earth, then *Carcharodon megalodon* was easily lord and master of the sea. Sixty feet from its conical snout to the tip of its half-moon-shaped caudal fin, the shark moved effortlessly through its liquid domain, circling its outmatched prey. It could feel the racing heartbeats of the hadrosaurs and the heavier thump-thump of the T. rex, its ampullae of Lorenzini tuned in to the electrical impulses generated by the pounding organs. A line of neurosenses along its flank registered each unique vibration in the water, while its directional nostrils tasted the scent of sweat and urine excreted from its floundering meal-to-be.

The pair of hadrosaurs were paralyzed in fear, their eyes following the unseen creature's sheer moving mass which circled closer, creating a current of water that lifted and dragged the

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two reptiles into deeper waters. The sudden change panicked the duckbills, who quickly reversed direction, heading back toward the beach. They would take their chances with the Tyrannosaurus.

Thrashing and paddling frantically, they moved back into the shallows, feeling the mud swirling beneath their feet. T. rex, waiting in water up to its burly chest, let out a thundering growl, but could not advance, the predator struggling to keep from sinking farther into the soft sea floor.

The duckbills neared the reptile's snapping jaws, then suddenly broke formation, swimming in different directions and passing within a few harrowing feet of the frustrated hunter. The T. rex lunged, snapping its terrible jaws, howling in rage at its fleeing prey. The duckbills never stopped, bounding through the smaller waves until they staggered onto the beach and collapsed on the warm sand, too exhausted to move.

Still sinking, the Tyrannosaurus had to struggle to keep its huge head only a few feet above water. Insane with rage, it lashed its tail wildly in an attempt to free one of its hind legs. Then, all at once, it stopped struggling and stared out to sea.

From the dark waters a great dorsal fin was approaching, slicing through the fog.

The T. rex cocked its head and stood perfectly still, instincts telling it that it had wandered into the domain of a superior hunter. For the first and last time in its life, the Tyrannosaurus registered the acidic taste of fear.

The Tyrannosaurus felt the tug of current caused by thirty tons of circling mass. Its red eyes followed the gray dorsal fin until it finally disappeared beneath the murky waters.

T.rex growled quietly, searching through the haze. Leaning forward, it managed to free one of its thickly-muscled hind legs, then quickly freed the other.

On the beach, the hadrosaurs took notice and backed away—

—as the towering dorsal fin rose again from the mist, this time racing directly for the T. rex!

The reptile roared, accepting the challenge, its jaws snapping in anger.

The wake kept coming, the dorsal fin rising higher . . . higher, while underwater, the unseen assailant's head rotated slightly, its jaws hyperextending seconds before it slammed into the T. rex's soft mid-section like a freight train striking a disabled SUV.

T.rex slammed backward through the ocean, its breath blasting out of its crushed lungs, an eruption of blood spewing from its open mouth seconds before its head disappeared beneath the waves. A moment later the dinosaur surfaced again, drowning in its own blood as its rib cage

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crumbled within the powerful jaws of its still-unseen hkiller, its gushing innards blocking its esophagus, strangling it to death.

Seconds later, the once-mighty land dweller vanished beneath a swirling pool of scarlet sea.

The hadrosaurs had watched the scene unfold, and were now whimpering and waiting, their bladders releasing in fear. Long moments passed, the sea remaining silent. The spell of the attack broken, the duckbills abandoned the beach, lumbering toward the trees to rejoin their herd.

An explosion of ocean sent their heads turning as the sixty-foot shark burst from the water, its enormous head and muscular upper torso quivering as it fought to remain suspended above the waves, the broken remains of its prey grasped within its terrible jaws. Then, in an incredible display of raw power, the Meg shook the reptile from side to side, allowing its massive rows of seven-inch serrated teeth to rip through gristle and bone, the action spraying pink froth and gouts of gore in every direction.

Finally *Carcharodon megalodon* crashed back into the sea, sending a great swell of water high into the morning air.

No other scavengers approached the Meg as it fed in the shallows. The predatory fish had no mate to share its kill with, no young to feed. A rogue hunter, territorial by nature, the Meg mated out of instinct and killed its young when it could, for the only challenge to its reign came from its own kind. An evolutionary marvel that had evolved over hundreds of millions of years, it would adapt and survive the natural catastrophes and climatic changes that caused the mass extinctions of the giant reptiles and countless prehistoric mammals. And while Megalodon's own numbers would eventually dwindle, some members of its species would manage to survive, isolated from the world of man in the perpetual darkness of the unexplored ocean depths . . .