

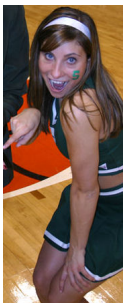
Shark Attack!

Written by Giles Weaver



She wore a Michigan State Spartans flag as a skirt. I was definitely in enemy territory -- the Bay-- and knew that no matter what happened in the game, a tall blond woman wrapped in a flag -- let's call her JANET -- was more likely to get the crowd behind her than your not so humble narrator. Yes, this was our hostess,

I thought, seemingly harmless, but after weeks of the-best-tournament-ever she had become a wicked harpie who would gouge out my eyes the moment Sean May hit his first hook shot. And this was Janet's bar, a center of evil called Sharkees, where she had reserved table space for twenty in exchange for pMichigan State Cheerleadershirt wondering when they would turn on me and suck my blood through straws.



Speaking of blood and straws, yes, I must admit, there was plenty of warning. Several days, in fact, and perhaps we should have paid closer attention, but we did not. We laughed and said, "Ha, Ha, Ha. That is a funny name for a drink. We will have one, oh yes we will." So, you see, the Final Four started innocent enough, how were we to know? Perhaps we should have thought about it when my friend -- let's call him SANTA -- bellied up to the bar and ordered in an excited kid-in-a-candy-store kind of way: "One Shark Attack, please." The bartender looked at him like he was stupid, and even though the paragraph promoting the Shark Attack took up half the drink menu and clearly states "Serves Two or More," he asked "How many people do you have with you?" "Two," Santa responded. "You gotta have three people," he barked. "Fine. Three." "You just told me two." Santa didn't lie. In fact, he was with four other people, all thirsty. Santa was thirsty too, and ran a simple equation though his head -- if you charge \$23.00 for a drink you better actually serve it without a bunch of attitude or you are liable to get beaten to death and your body dumped off the coast of Malibu. But I digress. "You know what. Just give me the Shark Attack." Ms. Claus -- let's call her SARA -- defused the situation with a kind word and the bartender got to the important work of creating the bar's signature cocktail. At the time we didn't realize the bartender's attitude was a dark omen. It was a black raven. It

Shark Attack!

Written by Giles Weaver

was a pillar of salt.

Santa and Sara returned to our table with the Shark Attack. It was a thing of beauty iUNCCHEERLEADERn a bar full of beauties and my favorite team in all of sports would be on this wonderful thing we call television soon. The sun was beating down on this coastal town on a perfectly temperate Southern California afternoon, and I had my best gal -- let's call her SUZY -- by my side. If there was ever a day to drink a bucket of liquor it was today, and that is exactly what it was, a bucket of liquor, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, it was. A cauldron of fruity red poison with seven long red straws fanning out of it, and dunked right in the middle was a plastic spotted Whale Shark (Made in China).

We plugged ourselves into the Shark Attack and somewhat cautiously began to drink, slowly at first, just a tiny sip here and there, to let it know the sweet and sour and fruit wasn't fooling us, that we were professionals and knew demon fluids when we tasted them. Take, for example, the tequila, or the 151 proof Rum. The grenadine made for great fake blood, and another member of our party -- let's call him JUDD -- quickly discovered that the spotted shark could double as a shot glass and enthusiastically passed around shots of "chum" to anybody who would take them.



Illinois and Louisville played and I didn't really care who Carolina's last victim would be. The Shark Attack was flowing, and finally we were near to the end. Several of us went outside to smoke cigarettes and it's funny how when you're sitting down you don't realize that you can't stand up. We returned to the table to discover that the rest of the Shark Attack was polished off by "the women," which, we are told, is fair according to coven rules and regulations. We announce that standing should no longer be taken for granted. "What. I'm not feeling anything," she said. "Me either," the other she added. "I wonder if the bartender didn't put anything in it because Santa fought with him." "That's it, because I don't think there's anything alcoholic in this." Yeah, all I taste is fruit."

Clearly, they had gone mad.

Michigan State We ordered food and pitchers of beer to placate their unquenchable thirst to spend money. Quesadillas, fried buffalo shrimp, burgers, chips and salsa. Bar food at its finest. We were home. "Pace yourself, pace yourself..." I kept muttering to myself. "Remember what happened last time... remember what happened last time..." The last time Carolina was in the Final Four they lost. I handled it with the dignity and grace that only the very highest echelons of aristocracy can pull off. I beat my television with a wet towel. Why I had a wet towel in my possession at the time is still unsolved. Then I tried to kill the messenger, but the television was

Shark Attack!

Written by Giles Weaver

too heavy to pick up. Things were broken. Threats were made. Lives were destroyed. "Pace yourself... pace yourself..."

A funny physiological phenomena occurs when I watch Carolina basketball. I can drink triple my body weight. This is not some juvenile boast. It is a fact that modern medicine cannot readily explain. I leave it to the more spiritual seekers in this world to unravel this mysterious connection. For our purposes here, however, it merely explains why pitchers of beer were consumed at an alarming rate by all present. One after the other, and this one a little faster than that one, and the next faster than that.

Carolina and Michigan State were on the main stage and Janet's sea of green were on their feet. She smiled as she screamed obscenities at me from across the bar, and cast aspersions on me and my immediate family to anyone who would listen, which is almost everyone if you are wearing a flag.



She worked the bar like some scene out of GOODFELLAS, and made friends with guys who work as brick walls. Yes, slowly, silently, she raised her secret Spartan army, brick wall drones ready to do her violent bidding at the bat of her eyelashes. They laughed, and hollered, and screamed, and plotted, and schemed, and drowned in the giddy prospect of my head on a stick. Michigan State was up by five at half time and they smelled an upset. I, on the other hand, smelled a Shark Attack.

And this is the turning point of our modern Greek tragedy, the part where the protagonist and his merry band of revelers make a crucial mistake which leads to their imminent downfall. Because, you see, as I'm sure someone of your intelligence can understand, that one bucket of liquor is simply not enough for such an auspicious occasion as the Final Four of the best-tournament-ever. I ordered it this time. A California dream goddess whipped it up and I will never forget those beautiful but fleeting moments we had together, the intimacy, the artistry, the vulnerability, the wild abandon, yes, I will always love her.

The Shark Attack went down easy, and even easier if you used three straws at one time. Juicy toxic ecstasy filled what we now realized were our empty souls and set Sharkees aglow. Carolina pulled away and that was the last anyone can say with certainty that they remember. The rest is one long blurry spotted haze of spilled drinks, missing persons, Italian accents, a series of requests for live sex shows, a mini "Shark Attack," drinks that were Carolina blue (these were apparently my brainchild and I have the credit card receipt that proves it), an "incident" with a poser South Bay bouncer, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Things were broken. Lurid implications were made. Liberties were taken. Lives were destroyed. It was, quite simply, like college, which was poetic in a way as we were watching a college basketball tournament. Janet and her minions of would be assassins weren't even

Shark Attack!

Written by Giles Weaver

needed to wreak their obviously premeditated havoc on me. I did their dirty work for them. What went wrong? Hadn't I paced myself?



I wish I could furnish you with more sicko details or woeful pleas for our legal defense fund, but a fully accurate reconstruction of the evening is quite simply not possible, and as luck would have it we all lived to see another day. Was it our proudest moment? No. Was it our worst moment? I can only speak for myself when I say verily unto you, No. But that story is for another time, another day, a perfect day, a day like Sharkees that time when Carolina beat Michigan State, a day with women in flag skirts, a sweet succulent dream of a day that will once again call for a bucket of liquor, perhaps, maybe, yes, even a Shark Attack, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, one more.