

## 1

The foot dangling in the lukewarm water of Piran harbour in Yugoslavia belonged to Joe Catlin. The harbour wasn't the cleanest or wisest of places to dangle anything. The comings and goings of the fishing boats, and the small tides, gave just enough current for the debris of the village to collect in the odd corners of the harbour, or to drift across in patches acting as parasols for the miriads of minute fish who scavenged beneath the slightly oiled surface. Sewage from the houses and hotels spilled out by gravity at the peninsular's point five hundred yards to the north of the fishing village; some of it drifted back. Occasionally the sewage gave a few unwary holidaymakers something more to think about than the ancient beauty of the old town.

A porbeagle shark, eight feet in length and weighing around three hundred pounds, was cruising a half-mile-long slick of blood, scales and fish guts, trailed by a fishing vessel just tying up alongside the quay. A small crowd of restaurant owners were already making loud and aggressive offers for the boat's catch. The porbeagle had rounded the head of the Adriatic, just beyond the shark nets lining the coast from west of Trieste in Italy, to the Yugoslavian border. Tourists were not informed of the shark nets by either the tourist boards, or the travel agencies who sold them the tickets. Shark incidents were rare, but just frequent enough to make the nets essential. There