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Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (Simplified Edition by ChatGPT)

Part 1

The year was 1866. During that year, something strange and troubling began to disturb the seas of the world. The event was not a small one. It was spoken of in ports, in cities far from the sea, and even in quiet inland towns. Sailors talked of it in low voices. Merchants grew uneasy. Governments listened with concern. Something unusual had been seen upon the ocean, and no one could explain it.

Ships from different countries reported meeting an enormous object at sea. It was long and shaped like a spindle. At times it gave off a strange light, almost like fire shining through water. It moved faster than any whale known to science. It appeared, then vanished, only to be seen again far away in another ocean. The reports were written carefully in ship logbooks, and though the details differed, the main facts were similar. The object was large—larger than any known sea animal. It moved with great speed. It seemed alive.

Some men believed at once that it must be a giant animal. Others thought it could not be. If it were a whale, it was larger than any whale ever studied. Some said it was two hundred feet long. Others said it was much longer. When the most careful reports were compared, many agreed that it must be at least three hundred and fifty feet long. No whale of such size had ever been recorded.

On July 20, 1866, the steamer Governor Higginson met the strange object five miles from the east coast of Australia. Captain Baker first believed he saw a

sandbank rising from the sea. He prepared to note its position on his charts. But suddenly two great columns of water rose high into the air from the object, with a loud hissing sound. These columns reached about one hundred and fifty feet above the surface. A sandbank could not do such a thing. The captain understood then that he was not looking at land, but at a living creature, unknown and powerful.

Three days later, another ship, the Columbus, saw the same object in the Pacific Ocean. Yet the two ships were separated by more than seven hundred nautical leagues. The creature had moved that distance in only three days. Such speed was difficult to believe.

Fifteen days later, two ships crossing the Atlantic—the Helvetia and the Shannon—signaled each other that they had both seen the monster. They estimated its length to be greater than three hundred feet. It was longer than their own ships. The largest whales in those waters had never exceeded sixty yards. This creature was far larger.

As more reports came in, public interest grew stronger. Newspapers wrote about the mystery. Some made jokes. Others treated it seriously. Artists drew pictures of sea serpents and giant creatures from old legends. Writers compared it to Moby Dick, the great white whale from stories of the northern seas. The ancient tales of the kraken were repeated. Old writings from Aristotle and Pliny were mentioned again.

Scientists argued in learned journals. Some believed the creature was real. Others laughed at the idea. The debate lasted for months. People took sides. Ink flowed freely as articles were written and answered. Some writers attacked each other personally. The question of the monster divided opinion everywhere.

Then, in early 1867, the matter changed from a question of science to one of danger. Ships began to suffer damage. On March 5, 1867, the Moravian struck something in the night. It was not on any chart. The shock was strong. Only the strength of the ship's hull saved it from sinking. Later, when the ship was examined, part of its keel was found broken.

Three weeks later, on April 13, the Scotia of the Cunard Line felt a shock while

crossing the Atlantic. The sea was calm. Passengers were at lunch when the ship was struck. The carpenter rushed on deck crying that they were sinking. Water poured into one of the compartments. When the ship reached port and was examined in dry dock, a large hole was found in the iron hull. It was shaped like a triangle and cut cleanly through thick metal plates. The object that had made it must have been sharp and extremely strong.

After this event, fear spread quickly. Many ships that disappeared without clear cause were blamed on the monster. People demanded action. Trade between continents seemed at risk. Insurance companies worried about their losses. The public called for the seas to be made safe again.

At this time, I had just returned from a scientific expedition in Nebraska. I was an assistant professor at the Museum of Natural History in Paris. The French government had sent me to America for research. After six months, I arrived in New York at the end of March, carrying many valuable specimens.

While I was organizing my collections, the news of the Scotia reached the city. The discussion of the monster was everywhere. I had read all the reports from Europe and America. I could not ignore the matter. As a scientist, I was asked for my opinion.

At first I doubted. But the evidence could not be dismissed. I wrote an article for the New York Herald. In it, I explained that either we knew all the species of the ocean, or we did not. If we did not, then it was possible that a new and powerful animal lived in the great depths of the sea. Perhaps an accident had driven it to the surface.

If, however, all known species were already recorded, then I suggested it might be a gigantic narwhal. The common narwhal has a long ivory tusk. Some of these tusks have been found embedded in ships. If such an animal were ten times larger than usual, and if its weapon were proportionally stronger, it could have pierced the hull of the Scotia.

My article was widely discussed. Many supported my view. Others mocked it. Yet the idea of a giant sea creature excited the imagination of the public. Soon the United States government decided to act.

A fast frigate, the Abraham Lincoln, was prepared for an expedition. Commander Farragut was placed in charge. The ship was armed with powerful weapons. The purpose of the voyage was clear: to hunt down and destroy the monster.

Just before the ship was to leave Brooklyn, I received a letter from the Secretary of the Navy. He invited me to join the expedition. France would be represented, he said. A cabin was ready for me.

Three seconds before reading that letter, I had no thought of chasing the creature. Three seconds after, I felt certain that I must go. My curiosity overcame my desire for rest. I accepted immediately.

I called for my servant, Conseil. He was a faithful Flemish man who had traveled with me for many years. Calm, orderly, and devoted, he never complained, no matter how long or difficult the journey.

“Conseil,” I said, “we leave in two hours.”

“As you wish, sir,” he replied quietly.

I explained that we were going to pursue the famous sea monster. He showed no excitement, but began packing at once.

Soon we were aboard the Abraham Lincoln. Commander Farragut welcomed me warmly. The ship was powerful and well equipped. Its engines could drive it at nearly eighteen knots per hour.

Crowds lined the shore as we departed. Cheers followed us down the river and out into the Atlantic. The pilot left us, the fires were stoked, and the screw turned faster. The frigate moved into the open sea.

Thus began our voyage in search of the mysterious creature that had troubled the world.

Part 2

Captain Farragut was a true sailor. His ship and his will seemed to be one. He believed firmly in the existence of the monster. No one on board was allowed to speak lightly of it. To him, it was real, and it must be destroyed. Either he would

defeat it, or it would defeat him. There was no other outcome in his mind.

The officers shared his belief. They spoke of little else. They calculated distances, discussed reports, and studied maps. Sailors climbed into the rigging and scanned the horizon for hours. Even under the hot sun, they would not leave their posts. The promise of a reward—two thousand dollars to the first man who sighted the creature—gave sharpness to every eye on board.

Only one man seemed unmoved by the excitement: my servant Conseil. He watched as he always did, calm and silent, but he showed no strong feeling about the matter. He obeyed my instructions and observed the sea with polite interest, yet I could see that the idea of a giant sea creature did not trouble him.

The ship had been prepared with great care. Every kind of weapon used in whale hunting was present. There were hand-thrown harpoons, heavy guns that could fire explosive bullets, and a powerful cannon placed on the forecastle. The captain had spared no expense. He meant to give battle if battle came.

Among all the crew, one man stood out: Ned Land. He was a Canadian, about forty years old, tall and strongly built. His face was serious, and he spoke little. But when he did speak, his voice was firm. He was known as one of the finest harpooners in the world.

Ned had hunted whales in the northern seas for many years. He knew their habits and their strength. His hand was steady, his aim true. When he held a harpoon, few animals could escape him. The crew trusted him deeply.

I grew to know Ned well during the voyage. He liked that I was French, and sometimes we spoke together in our shared language. He told me stories of icy seas, long hunts, and fierce struggles with great whales. His words were simple, but full of life.

Yet, for all his skill, Ned did not believe in the monster. He said openly that he doubted its existence. One evening, as we stood together on the deck, I asked him directly.

“Ned,” I said, “do you truly not believe in this creature we pursue?”

He looked at me carefully before answering.

“Perhaps I do not, Professor,” he said slowly.

“But you, who know the sea so well—why doubt it?”

“Because I have hunted many whales,” he replied. “I have seen large ones. Strong ones. But none could pierce the iron hull of a ship. Until I see such a creature with my own eyes, I will not believe in it.”

I tried to explain my reasoning. I spoke of the great pressure in the deep sea, and how a creature living there must have a powerful body to survive. I calculated the force pressing upon a body many miles below the surface. Ned listened, though I could see he was not fully convinced.

“If such animals exist,” he said at last, “they must be strong indeed.”

“Exactly,” I replied.

But he only shook his head slightly.

Days passed, and then weeks. The Abraham Lincoln sailed south along the coast of America. We passed Cape Horn and entered the Pacific Ocean. The sea stretched wide and empty before us.

Every day we searched. Every shadow on the water caused excitement. Often a whale would appear, and the crew would rush to their posts. But each time, it was only an ordinary whale, not the creature we sought.

Once, on June 30, we met an American whaling ship. Its captain asked for Ned Land’s help in hunting a whale they had seen. Commander Farragut agreed. Ned boarded the other ship and, with remarkable skill, harpooned not one but two whales in quick succession. His reputation grew even greater.

Still, there was no sign of the monster.

We crossed the tropics. The heat was strong, and the sea calm. The crew began to grow restless. For three months we searched the Pacific without result. The ship changed direction many times, chasing false signs and rumors. We covered hundreds of miles each day.

Slowly, doubt spread among the sailors. The excitement that had filled the decks began to fade. Some said the monster had never existed. Others thought it had fled to unknown waters.

At last, on November 2, Captain Farragut made a promise. If within three days the creature did not appear, he would turn the ship toward Europe and abandon

the hunt.

The crew accepted this decision with relief. For the next two days, every man watched the sea with renewed effort. If the monster existed, now was the time for it to show itself.

On the evening of November 4, the sky was cloudy, and the moon partly hidden. The sea was calm. I stood on deck beside Conseil. We spoke quietly.

“This may be our last night in these waters,” I said.

“Perhaps so, sir,” he replied calmly.

Suddenly, a voice rang out across the deck.

“There it is! Off the starboard side!”

It was Ned Land.

Instantly, every man rushed toward the sound. I looked where Ned pointed. About two miles away, the sea seemed lit from below. A bright, white light shone beneath the surface, moving slowly.

It was not the faint glow of sea creatures. It was strong, clear, and intense. The water around it shimmered. The light moved forward, then back, then toward us.

The captain gave orders at once. The engines were reversed, and the ship turned to face the light.

The creature circled the frigate at high speed. Its movement was playful yet powerful. Then it darted away into the darkness, leaving a shining path behind it.

My heart pounded. The monster was real.

For hours, we remained alert. Near midnight, a loud sound was heard—a powerful breath, like steam escaping from a giant machine.

At two in the morning, the light appeared again. This time it was closer.

Dawn approached. The fog lifted slowly. At last, in the growing light, we saw it clearly.

About a mile and a half away, a long dark body rose above the waves. It was immense—perhaps two hundred and fifty feet long. From its head, two tall jets of water shot into the air.

It was alive.

The captain ordered full steam. The engines roared. The frigate surged forward.

The creature allowed us to approach, then moved away with astonishing speed. The chase began.

For nearly an hour, we pursued it. We could not gain on it. Ned Land took his place at the bow, harpoon ready. The crew shouted encouragement.

At noon, the captain ordered the cannon to fire. A heavy shot struck the creature but seemed to slide off its surface.

The pursuit continued through the day. As night fell, the light returned once more.

This time, the captain decided to approach quietly. The ship slowed. We drew nearer.

Ned stood poised, his harpoon raised. We were less than one hundred feet away. With a swift motion, he hurled his weapon.

I heard the sharp sound of metal striking something hard.

At once, the light vanished. Two immense jets of water rose and crashed over the deck. The ship shook violently.

I was thrown over the railing.

I fell into the sea.

Part 3

The shock of the cold water stole my breath. For a moment I sank deep beneath the surface, carried down by the weight of my clothes. The sea closed over my head, and a dark silence surrounded me. But instinct and long habit saved me. I struck out strongly with my arms and rose again toward the light above.

I broke the surface, gasping. The night was dark, and the waves rolled heavily around me. My first thought was for the frigate. Had anyone seen me fall? Would they lower a boat? I turned in the direction where I believed the Abraham Lincoln must be.

I saw, far off, a dark mass moving away. Its lights were fading. The frigate was already at a distance. The wind and the sea carried her farther from me each second.

“Help! Help!” I cried with all my strength.

My voice was lost in the vastness of the ocean. The waves filled my mouth with salt water. My heavy coat dragged me down again. I struggled to keep afloat. Each movement became harder. I felt my limbs grow tired.

Just as I believed I could fight no longer, I felt a strong hand seize the collar of my coat. I was drawn upward with sudden force. A familiar voice spoke close to my ear.

“If master will kindly lean on me,” said Conseil calmly, “master will float more easily.”

“You!” I cried, half choking.

“Yes, sir. I followed master when he fell.”

The faithful boy had leaped into the sea without hesitation. He now supported me with one arm, while swimming with the other. His calmness gave me courage.

“The frigate?” I asked.

“Gone, sir,” he replied simply.

I looked once more. The darkness had swallowed it. We were alone.

“Very well,” I said at last. “Let us try to keep afloat as long as possible.”

We began to swim side by side. The sea was not rough, but the long waves lifted and lowered us steadily. Our clothes grew heavier with each minute. I felt the cold enter my body.

“Sir,” said Conseil quietly, “master had better remove his coat.”

He was right. With some effort I freed myself from the heavy garment. Conseil did the same. The loss of weight helped us greatly.

“We must not despair,” he continued. “Perhaps we shall be picked up.”

His voice was steady, as if we were walking in a garden and not floating in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

We swam slowly, choosing no direction, for we could see nothing clearly. The sky was cloudy. The moon gave little light. The sea stretched endlessly in every direction.

Time passed. I do not know how long. My strength began to fail. I felt my arms grow weak. My breath came with difficulty.

“Conseil,” I said, “I cannot go on much longer.”

“Sir will hold on to me,” he answered. “I will carry sir as long as I can.”

Such devotion moved me deeply. I tried to resist weakness, but the cold and fatigue overcame me. My head sank once more toward the water.

At that moment, a voice called out in the darkness.

“Ahoy! Is that you, Professor?”

It was a rough but familiar voice. Hope sprang back into my heart.

“Ned!” I cried.

“Yes. Climb up, both of you!”

I felt my hands touch something solid. It was smooth and hard beneath my fingers. Not wood. Not rope. Something else.

“Hold fast!” said Ned Land. “You are safe for the moment.”

With his help, Conseil and I managed to raise ourselves partly out of the water. We lay upon a broad surface that rocked gently with the waves.

“What is this?” I asked, still confused.

“The very beast itself,” replied Ned. “Or at least its back.”

I tried to understand. We were not upon a floating wreck. We were not in a boat. We were lying upon the body of the creature we had pursued.

The surface beneath us was firm and unyielding. It did not feel like flesh. It felt like metal.

“It is not a whale,” said Ned in a low voice. “My harpoon struck something hard—like iron.”

I passed my hand over the surface. It was smooth and cold. There was no movement beneath us, no sign of living muscle.

“You believe it is not an animal?” I asked.

“I know it,” said Ned. “This thing is made by men.”

I remained silent. The idea seemed impossible. And yet the facts lay beneath my hands.

The object on which we rested moved slowly forward through the water. We could feel its steady motion.

“We must hold on,” said Conseil.

We crawled cautiously toward what seemed to be the center of the curved surface. There we found greater security from the waves.

The night wore on. We spoke little. Each of us was lost in thought.

If this was not a creature of nature, what was it? A machine? A vessel? Who could have built such a thing? And for what purpose?

At last, toward dawn, a faint gray light spread across the sky. The sea became visible around us. We were indeed upon the back of a long, dark object rising just above the surface.

It was shaped like a huge cylinder. No fins, no tail, no sign of a living being could be seen.

Suddenly, I heard a metallic sound close by. A circular opening appeared in the surface. A man's head rose from it.

He looked at us with surprise. His features were pale and serious. Without speaking, he disappeared again inside.

A few moments later, several men emerged. They moved quickly and silently. Before we could resist, strong hands seized us.

"Do not struggle," said a voice in a language I did not recognize.

We were lifted and drawn through the opening.

The hatch closed above us.

We were no longer upon the sea. We were prisoners inside the mysterious object.

Part 4

We found ourselves in a dark chamber. The hatch above had been shut with a heavy sound, and the faint light of dawn no longer reached us. For a few seconds we stood in complete darkness, listening to the beating of our own hearts and to the distant sound of water moving along the hull of the strange vessel.

"This is not the stomach of a whale," said Ned Land in a low voice.

"No," I replied, trying to control my thoughts. "We are inside a machine."

We heard the sound of footsteps. A door opened, and a soft light entered the room. Two men appeared, carrying a lamp. They examined us carefully but said

nothing. Their faces were calm, but their expressions were firm and serious. They did not seem surprised, only cautious.

“Who are these men?” whispered Conseil.

“I do not know,” I answered.

The men spoke together in a language I did not understand. It was not French, not English, not German, nor Spanish. The sounds were strange to my ear.

After a short conversation, they made signs for us to follow. We had no choice. We obeyed.

We were led through a narrow passage. The walls were smooth and metallic. The floor was firm and steady beneath our feet. We felt a gentle vibration, as if a powerful engine were at work somewhere within the vessel.

At last we entered a larger room. It was well lit by a bright white light that seemed to come from the ceiling itself. I looked up and saw no flame, no lamp, no candle.

“Electric light,” I murmured.

The room was simple but comfortable. There were chairs, a table, and food laid out for us. The air was fresh. The temperature was pleasant.

The two men motioned toward the table. It was clear that they wished us to eat.

“We are not badly treated,” said Conseil quietly.

“Not yet,” replied Ned.

Hunger soon overcame caution. We had been many hours in the sea and were exhausted. We ate what was placed before us. The food was good, though unfamiliar in taste.

When we had finished, the men left us alone. The door closed.

“Professor,” said Ned, pacing the room, “this is no sea monster. It is a vessel—a submarine vessel.”

“Yes,” I said slowly. “You are right.”

“And it can move beneath the sea as easily as a whale,” he continued. “It must have great power.”

I walked to the wall and touched it. The metal was thick and solid.

“This machine,” I said, “must be the true cause of all the accidents at sea. It

must have struck the ships.”

“Then we are prisoners of men,” said Conseil calmly, “not of a beast.”

We sat in silence for some time, thinking of what this meant. If this vessel was built by human hands, who commanded it? Why had it attacked ships? Why had it remained hidden?

After some time, the door opened again. A tall man entered.

He was dressed in dark clothing, simple but of fine material. His face was pale, his features strong and proud. His eyes were deep and penetrating. He stood before us without speaking, studying us carefully.

There was an air of authority about him. It was clear that he was the master of this vessel.

I stepped forward.

“Sir,” I said in French, “we are shipwrecked men. We ask only to be returned to the nearest land.”

He did not reply. His eyes remained fixed upon us.

I tried English.

“We are passengers from the frigate Abraham Lincoln. We mean you no harm.”

Still he remained silent.

I attempted German and Spanish. In each language I explained our situation. He listened without interruption, but his face did not change.

At last he spoke.

His voice was calm, clear, and firm.

“Gentlemen,” he said—in perfect French—“I understand you. You are French. You are Professor Pierre Aronnax. This is your servant, Conseil. And this is Mr. Ned Land, the Canadian harpooner.”

We stared at him in astonishment.

“You know us?” I asked.

“I know much about you,” he replied.

He paused, then continued.

“You have been cast into the sea. I have saved your lives. You are now aboard my vessel.”

“What vessel?” demanded Ned.

The man looked at him steadily.

“You are aboard the Nautilus.”

The name was new to me.

“And you, sir?” I asked.

He drew himself up slightly.

“I am Captain Nemo.”

There was something in the way he spoke his name that suggested it was not his true name. But I did not question him.

“Captain Nemo,” I said, “we are grateful for your rescue. We ask only to be set ashore.”

His expression grew more severe.

“You are free,” he said slowly, “but you must understand one thing. You have seen my vessel. You know of its existence. I cannot allow that knowledge to leave this ship.”

“You mean—” I began.

“I mean that you must remain here.”

Ned Land stepped forward angrily.

“Remain? You cannot hold us prisoners!”

The captain’s eyes flashed.

“Mr. Land,” he said coldly, “I can do whatever I choose.”

A heavy silence filled the room.

I felt a strange mixture of fear and curiosity. The Nautilus—this powerful submarine vessel—was the greatest scientific creation I had ever imagined. And its master was a man who had chosen to live apart from all nations, beneath the sea.

Captain Nemo turned toward me.

“Professor Aronnax,” he said, “you are a man of science. I offer you an opportunity no other man has known. You may explore the depths of the ocean as never before. You may study the mysteries of the sea. But you must accept one condition.”

“What condition?” I asked.

“You must give up all hope of returning to the world above.”

His words fell heavily upon me.

To live forever beneath the sea? To abandon land, friends, country?

Yet the thought of exploring the hidden world of the ocean stirred my scientific soul.

“And my companions?” I asked.

“They remain with you,” said Nemo.

I looked at Ned and at Conseil.

Ned’s face showed anger and resistance.

Conseil’s face showed quiet acceptance.

I turned back to the captain.

“We ask time to consider,” I said.

“You shall have it,” he replied.

He bowed slightly and left the room.

The door closed once more.

We were alone again, but no longer in darkness. We were inside a marvel of human skill, commanded by a man who had cut himself off from all nations.

Our fate was now tied to the Nautilus.

Part 5

For several minutes after Captain Nemo left us, none of us spoke. The sound of the sea sliding along the hull reached us faintly through the metal walls. The steady vibration of the engines told us that the Nautilus was already in motion.

Ned Land broke the silence first.

“Professor,” he said sharply, “you are not thinking of accepting this?”

I did not answer at once. My mind was in confusion. Fear, wonder, and scientific curiosity struggled within me.

“We are prisoners,” Ned continued. “He made that clear enough. If we refuse, what then?”

“Sir,” said Conseil calmly, “master will decide wisely.”

I paced the room slowly. Captain Nemo had spoken firmly, but not with cruelty. He had saved our lives. He had treated us with respect. Yet his condition was severe.

“We must understand our position clearly,” I said at last. “We are alone in the middle of the ocean. Even if he were willing to release us, how could he do so safely? We would be cast into the sea again.”

“He could put us ashore,” said Ned.

“Perhaps. But where? We do not know our location. And we do not know this man.”

Ned crossed his arms.

“I know enough,” he muttered. “He is no friend of ships.”

That much was certain. The damage done to vessels could only have been caused by this submarine. The thought troubled me.

A short time later, the door opened again. One of the crew signaled that we were to follow. We obeyed.

We passed through several corridors, each lit by the same bright white light. I could see now that the light came from long glass tubes fixed along the ceiling. There was no smoke, no smell of oil. The air was pure and fresh.

At last we entered a large and magnificent room. I stopped in astonishment.

It was a salon, richly furnished. The walls were covered with fine works of art. Paintings hung in golden frames. Between them stood statues of marble and bronze. Along one wall I saw shelves filled with books. Thousands of volumes were arranged with perfect order.

At the center of the room stood a large organ.

“Remarkable,” I whispered.

Captain Nemo was standing near the organ. He turned toward us.

“Welcome, Professor,” he said quietly. “This is my salon.”

“It is extraordinary,” I replied honestly.

“You see,” he continued, “I am not a savage.”

There was a faint bitterness in his voice.

“You are a man of culture,” I said.

He inclined his head slightly.

“I was once part of the world you know. Now I have left it forever.”

He motioned for us to sit. Ned remained standing.

“You have seen part of my vessel,” said Nemo. “You will see more. The Nautilus is powered entirely by electricity. It draws its energy from the sea itself.”

“From the sea?” I repeated.

“Yes. The ocean provides everything I need. It gives me power, heat, light, and food. I am independent of the land.”

His eyes shone with pride.

“How deep can your vessel descend?” I asked.

“To great depths,” he replied calmly. “Far beyond the reach of ordinary divers. The Nautilus fears no pressure.”

I felt my excitement return. The possibilities were endless.

“And you explore the ocean?” I said.

“I live in it,” he answered.

Ned stepped forward.

“And you attack ships?” he demanded.

The captain’s face grew cold.

“I defend myself,” he said firmly.

There was a silence. I sensed that this subject touched something painful in him.

“Captain,” I said carefully, “you have offered us a choice. We understand that we cannot leave without risking our lives. We will remain aboard your vessel.”

Ned made a sharp movement, but I raised my hand slightly.

“For the present,” I added.

Nemo studied me closely.

“You accept my condition?” he asked.

“We accept that we must remain here,” I replied.

He nodded.

“Very well. You shall have freedom within the Nautilus. You will see what no man has seen before. But remember—there is no return.”

His words echoed in my mind.

He then offered to show us the vessel. We followed him.

We were taken first to the library. It contained books in many languages—science, history, literature. I saw works from every nation.

“All these are mine,” said Nemo.

Next we entered a room filled with instruments—barometers, thermometers, compasses, and devices whose purpose I did not yet understand.

“This is my laboratory,” he explained. “Here I study the sea.”

Finally, he led us to a great window set into the wall.

“Look,” he said.

A metal cover was raised. Before us appeared a clear view of the ocean.

We were beneath the surface.

The water outside was filled with soft light from powerful lamps fixed outside the hull. Fish of many shapes and colors swam past slowly. Plants waved gently in the current.

I could not speak.

It was as if we stood inside an aquarium of vast size, moving silently through an underwater forest.

Conseil leaned forward in wonder.

“Sir,” he whispered, “it is beautiful.”

Even Ned Land was silent.

Captain Nemo watched us with quiet satisfaction.

“This,” he said softly, “is my world.”

The Nautilus moved steadily forward. Schools of fish parted before its path. Strange creatures glided by.

I forgot, for a moment, that we were prisoners. I felt only the thrill of discovery.

Yet deep within me remained the memory of the world above—the sky, the wind, the land.

Our new life beneath the sea had begun.

Part 6

Captain Nemo allowed us to remain before the great window for a long time. The Nautilus moved smoothly through the water, and the strong lamps outside lit the sea as if it were day. I saw fish of bright red, blue, and silver. Some were small and moved in groups. Others were large and swam alone with slow and steady motion. Plants rose from the sandy bottom like trees in a quiet forest.

“We are about fifty feet below the surface,” said Captain Nemo. “The Nautilus can go much deeper, but for now I wish you to grow used to the sight.”

“It is beyond anything I imagined,” I replied.

“You will see more,” he said calmly.

He lowered the metal cover over the window. The bright view of the sea disappeared, and the room returned to its steady electric light.

“Now,” he said, “I will show you your quarters.”

We followed him once more through narrow passages. The interior of the vessel was clean and orderly. Every part seemed built with great care. I felt again the gentle vibration of the engines.

At last we reached a small but comfortable cabin.

“This will be yours, Professor,” said Nemo.

The room contained a bed, a table, and shelves for books and instruments. There was also a small window, but it was closed by a thick metal cover.

“Your companions will have cabins nearby,” he added.

“Captain,” I said, “may I ask where we are now?”

“In the Pacific Ocean,” he answered simply. “We are moving west.”

“And your destination?”

He gave a slight smile.

“The sea has many paths. I follow my own.”

With that he left us.

When we were alone, Ned Land spoke at once.

“Professor, I do not trust this man.”

“He is mysterious,” I agreed. “But he is also a genius.”

“Genius or not, he keeps us here against our will.”

“For now,” said Conseil quietly, “we must observe and learn.”

I could not deny the truth of that. If escape were ever possible, we would need knowledge.

We rested for some hours. The events of the past day had exhausted us. The steady motion of the Nautilus and the quiet hum of its engines soon brought sleep.

When I awoke, I felt the vessel descending. My ears sensed a change in pressure. A bell rang softly in the passage outside. Shortly after, one of the crew appeared and signaled that breakfast was ready.

We followed him to the dining room. Captain Nemo was already there.

“Good morning, Professor,” he said.

“Good morning, Captain.”

The meal was simple but satisfying. The food tasted fresh, though I could not identify all of it.

“All comes from the sea,” said Nemo, noticing my curiosity. “The ocean supplies me with everything.”

“Even clothing?” asked Conseil politely.

“Even clothing,” replied the captain. “Fibers from sea plants, oils from marine animals. The sea is generous.”

After breakfast, he invited us once more to the great window.

“We are descending to one hundred meters,” he said.

The cover was lifted.

This time the view was darker. The light from the lamps shone strongly against the deep blue water. The sea floor was visible below us. Strange shapes lay scattered upon it—shells, rocks, and plants.

“Observe carefully,” said Nemo. “Few men have seen this.”

I pressed close to the glass. Fish moved in slow and graceful motion. Some had long, thin bodies. Others were round and flat. I saw large crabs walking across the sand.

“The diversity is astonishing,” I murmured.

“You will have time to study it,” he replied.

Ned Land, however, looked not at the fish but at the thickness of the glass and

the metal frame.

“Strong enough,” he muttered to himself.

Captain Nemo noticed but said nothing.

For several hours we remained in the salon. Nemo spoke little, but when I asked scientific questions, he answered clearly and precisely. His knowledge of marine life was vast. He seemed to know every species we saw.

“You have studied this world for many years,” I said.

“Yes,” he replied. “The sea is my country now.”

“You have no ties above?” I asked carefully.

His expression changed.

“None,” he said firmly.

There was a pain in his voice that told me not to ask further.

Later in the day, he showed us the engine room. Powerful machines filled the space. Large metal cylinders moved with steady rhythm. Wires and coils were arranged with exact order.

“Electricity is my servant,” he said.

I could not hide my admiration.

“Your vessel is far beyond any other,” I said.

“Yes,” he answered. “The world above does not yet know what I have achieved.”

There was pride in his tone, but also distance.

As evening approached, the Nautilus rose slowly toward the surface. I felt the change once more.

At supper, Captain Nemo was thoughtful and quiet. After the meal, he went to the organ in the salon and began to play.

The music filled the vessel. It was deep and powerful, yet full of sorrow. The notes echoed through the metal walls and seemed to carry the sadness of a man who had chosen exile.

I watched him as he played. His face was calm, but his eyes were distant.

When he finished, he closed the instrument gently.

“Good night, gentlemen,” he said.

He left us alone.

“He is not a common man,” I said softly.

“No,” said Conseil.

“He is dangerous,” added Ned.

That night, as I lay in my cabin, I thought of the choice we had made. We were prisoners, yet also explorers of a hidden world.

Above us lay the sky and the nations of men.

Around us stretched the endless ocean.

And guiding us through its depths was Captain Nemo, master of the Nautilus.

Part 7

The next morning I was awakened by a slight change in motion. The Nautilus no longer glided smoothly as before. Instead, there was a faint trembling, as if the vessel were adjusting its depth.

I rose and dressed quickly. When I stepped into the passage, I found Conseil already waiting.

“Master slept well?” he asked.

“Yes,” I replied. “And you?”

“Very well, sir. The bed does not move much, even under the sea.”

We went together to the salon. Captain Nemo was there, studying a chart laid upon a large table.

“Good morning, Professor,” he said. “We are now several hundred meters below the surface.”

“May we look?” I asked.

He nodded, and the great window was uncovered.

At first I saw only deep blue water. The light from the lamps reached outward in strong beams, but the darkness beyond was heavy and thick. Then, slowly, shapes began to appear.

The sea floor rose before us in wide hills and valleys. It was not flat sand as I had seen the day before. It was a rocky region, full of strange formations. Long lines of sea plants waved gently in the water. Between the rocks moved creatures

I had never seen in life.

“We are passing over a submarine forest,” said Captain Nemo.

“A forest?” I repeated.

“Yes. These plants grow like trees. Some reach great height. They do not have trunks as land trees do, but their forms are similar.”

I watched in wonder as we moved above the forest. Large fish drifted between the plants. Some had long fins that spread like wings. Others were heavy and slow.

“The silence is remarkable,” I said softly.

“Sound travels differently here,” Nemo replied. “The Nautilus moves quietly.” Ned Land entered the salon and looked through the glass.

“There is food enough here,” he said with interest. “If only I had my harpoon.” Captain Nemo turned slightly.

“You will have the opportunity to hunt, Mr. Land,” he said.

Ned looked surprised.

“Hunt? Under the sea?”

“Yes. We can walk upon the ocean floor.”

I stared at him.

“Walk?” I asked.

“With special suits,” he explained calmly. “You shall see.”

My heart quickened at the thought. To walk beneath the sea—what scientist would refuse such an experience?

For several hours we remained before the window. The submarine forest slowly gave way to open ground again. Strange shells lay scattered across the bottom. I saw long lines of coral rising like walls.

“These are coral formations,” said Nemo. “They grow slowly over many years.”

I made mental notes of every detail. The variety of life was greater than I had ever imagined.

At last the metal cover was lowered.

“We will prepare for an excursion tomorrow,” said Captain Nemo. “You may rest for now.”

“An excursion?” repeated Conseil.

“Yes. A walk upon the bottom of the sea.”

He left us with that promise.

In our cabin, Ned Land spoke in a low voice.

“Professor, this may be our chance.”

“Our chance?”

“If we leave the vessel, perhaps we can escape.”

I considered the idea. But we did not know our location. The sea could be many miles deep. Even if we reached the surface, where would we go?

“We must first see how this is done,” I said. “Then we can decide.”

Conseil nodded.

“Master is wise,” he said.

That evening, Captain Nemo dined with us again. He spoke of the sea with quiet passion.

“The ocean is vast,” he said. “It covers most of the earth. It is free from the quarrels of nations. No king rules it. No law binds it. Here I am independent.”

“You have chosen exile,” I said carefully.

He looked at me steadily.

“I have chosen justice,” he replied.

I sensed once more the deep wound in his past, but he gave no further explanation.

After supper he played the organ again. This time the music was softer, almost gentle. It seemed to speak of distant memories.

When the last note faded, he rose and wished us good night.

I lay awake long after. The thought of walking on the ocean floor filled me with both excitement and fear. What dangers might we meet there? What wonders would appear before our eyes?

Yet beyond all this was the larger question.

Who was Captain Nemo truly? Why had he turned his back on the world above? And what would become of us in his strange and silent kingdom beneath the sea?

The Nautilus moved steadily through the dark waters, carrying us deeper into mystery.

Part 8

The next day began with great anticipation. When I entered the salon, I saw several strange objects laid out upon a table. They were suits made of thick material, with heavy boots and large helmets of metal and glass.

Captain Nemo stood beside them.

“Professor,” he said, “today you will walk upon the floor of the sea.”

I examined one of the suits closely. The helmet was round, with thick glass windows in front. At the back was a container connected by tubes.

“How shall we breathe?” I asked.

“Each suit carries its own supply of air,” he replied. “You will not depend upon the Nautilus while outside.”

“And the pressure?” I continued.

“The suit protects you. The depth today will not be great.”

Ned Land approached with interest.

“And weapons?” he asked.

Captain Nemo signaled to a crew member, who brought forward several rifles.

“These are not ordinary guns,” said Nemo. “They fire electric bullets. They are silent and powerful.”

Ned lifted one and tested its weight.

“It will do,” he said briefly.

Soon we were dressed in the heavy suits. It was not easy to move at first. The boots were weighted to keep us steady on the sea floor. The helmet was placed over my head and fastened securely. I heard my own breathing clearly inside.

A crew member connected the air supply. The sound of air flowing filled my ears.

Captain Nemo himself wore a similar suit. He made a sign, and we followed him through a chamber at the side of the vessel.

A door closed behind us. Water began to fill the chamber slowly. I felt the coolness rise around my legs, then my body. My heart beat faster, but the air inside

the helmet remained steady.

When the chamber was full, another door opened.

We stepped out into the sea.

At first I was amazed by the silence. The world outside was quiet and filled with blue light from the Nautilus lamps. The vessel stood behind us like a long dark shape resting upon the bottom.

We began to walk.

The movement was slow but not difficult. The weighted boots kept us firm on the sandy floor. Around us grew tall sea plants that swayed gently.

Fish moved without fear among the branches. Some passed very near, curious but calm.

Captain Nemo led us forward into the submarine forest I had seen from the window. Up close, it was even more wonderful. The plants rose high above our heads. Their leaves were long and soft, moving with the current.

I bent to examine shells scattered across the sand. Conseil also studied them carefully, though he could not speak through his helmet.

Ned Land, however, moved with a hunter's eye. He watched the larger fish that swam nearby.

At one moment, Captain Nemo raised his rifle and fired. There was no sound. A flash of light appeared at the end of the weapon. A large fish trembled and fell lifeless to the ground.

Nemo gestured to two crew members, who collected it.

We continued walking for nearly an hour. The forest gave way to open ground once more. In the distance I saw coral rising like towers.

Suddenly, Captain Nemo stopped and pointed.

Ahead of us lay a large creature resting upon the sand. It was long and heavy, with thick skin and powerful fins.

A sea cow.

Ned Land lifted his rifle at once. Nemo nodded.

Ned fired. The electric bullet struck true. The animal moved slightly, then lay still.

Ned turned toward me, and though I could not see his expression clearly, I knew he was satisfied.

After some time, Nemo signaled that it was time to return.

We walked back toward the Nautilus. I looked once more at the strange and silent forest behind us. The experience felt like a dream.

We entered the air chamber once more. The outer door closed, and the water slowly drained away. When the inner door opened, we removed our helmets.

“Well, Professor?” asked Captain Nemo.

“It is beyond words,” I replied honestly.

“You see now what the sea holds,” he said.

“Yes. And I thank you for allowing us to witness it.”

Ned Land removed his suit and stretched his arms.

“It is a fine hunting ground,” he said. “But I would rather hunt under the open sky.”

Nemo looked at him calmly.

“The sky has its limits, Mr. Land,” he said. “The sea does not.”

That evening, fresh meat from the sea cow was served at supper. It was tender and flavorful.

As we ate, I reflected upon the day. I had walked where no man had walked before. I had seen a forest beneath the sea. I had felt the weight of water above me and yet moved freely.

And still, we remained prisoners.

Captain Nemo rose from the table.

“Tomorrow,” he said, “we travel farther into the Pacific.”

The Nautilus would continue its silent path beneath the waves.

Our journey into the unknown was only beginning.

Part 9

During the following days the Nautilus continued its course beneath the Pacific Ocean. Captain Nemo allowed me to observe the instruments in the salon and the

laboratory. I spent long hours studying the charts that showed our position and depth. We were traveling steadily westward, often several hundred meters below the surface.

Life aboard the vessel settled into a strange routine. We rose at regular hours. Meals were served with order and precision. The crew moved quietly through the corridors, speaking little. There was no disorder, no loud voices, no wasted movement.

Yet despite this calm, I could not forget that we were confined. The metal walls surrounded us always. The world of air and sunlight seemed distant, almost unreal.

One morning Captain Nemo invited me to examine the engine room more closely. Ned and Conseil accompanied us.

The engines were driven by electricity, as he had explained. Large batteries lined one wall. Coils of wire ran along the ceiling. The motion of the machinery was smooth and powerful.

“The sea gives me the elements I require,” said Nemo. “From the water I extract the necessary substances. With them I produce the energy that moves this vessel.”

“You are entirely independent,” I said.

“Yes,” he replied. “I depend on no nation, no government, no trade.”

His words carried quiet pride.

As we returned to the salon, I noticed a slight change in the motion of the Nautilus.

“We are rising,” I said.

“Yes,” answered Nemo. “I wish to show you something at the surface.”

A short time later we felt the vessel steady itself. The vibration of the engines slowed.

“We are floating,” he said.

We followed him to the platform at the top of the vessel. The hatch opened, and fresh air rushed down the passage. I breathed deeply as we climbed out.

The sea stretched around us in wide blue waves. The sky was clear. After so many days beneath the surface, the sight of open air was almost overwhelming.

“We surface when necessary,” said Nemo. “To renew our air and to observe.”

Ned Land looked toward the horizon.

“No land,” he muttered.

Captain Nemo watched him quietly.

“We are far from any shore,” he said.

After a short time, we returned below. The hatch closed, and once again we were separated from the sky.

Later that afternoon, as I stood by the great window, I saw a new sight. A group of sharks passed slowly before us. Their dark shapes moved with silent power.

“They are dangerous,” I said.

“Yes,” replied Nemo calmly. “But they respect the Nautilus.”

I watched as one shark came closer. It circled the vessel, then turned away.

The ocean was not empty. It was full of life, of struggle, of hidden strength.

That evening, Captain Nemo spoke little during supper. His face was serious, his eyes distant.

After the meal, he invited us once more to the salon.

“Professor,” he said, “tomorrow we shall visit a place few men have seen.”

“Where is that?” I asked.

“A region of great interest,” he answered simply.

He would say no more.

The next day the Nautilus descended once again. The water grew darker as we moved deeper. The lamps shone brightly ahead of us.

After some time, I saw through the window what appeared to be the remains of a structure.

“What is that?” I asked.

“Look carefully,” said Nemo.

As we drew nearer, I saw that it was not a natural formation. It was the wreck of a ship.

Broken masts lay upon the sand. The hull was partly buried. Fish swam through the empty windows.

“How long has it been here?” I asked quietly.

“Many years,” said Nemo.

I felt a strange sadness. That ship had once sailed proudly upon the surface. Now it lay silent in the deep.

“There are many such wrecks,” he continued. “The sea keeps them all.”

We remained before the window as the Nautilus passed slowly over the remains. I saw scattered objects—tools, ropes, fragments of wood.

Ned Land stood beside me.

“Perhaps there are treasures in such wrecks,” he said.

Nemo heard him.

“Yes,” he replied. “The sea holds great wealth. But wealth does not tempt me.”

His voice was firm.

As we moved on, the wreck faded into darkness.

That night I could not sleep easily. The image of the sunken ship remained in my mind. How many lives had been lost there? How many stories ended beneath the waves?

The Nautilus continued its silent journey, indifferent to the tragedies hidden in the deep.

And we, its unwilling guests, traveled with it into regions where the sun never reached.

Part 10

The following days were filled with scenes both beautiful and strange. The Nautilus glided over wide plains of sand, through fields of coral, and along deep valleys where light barely reached. I spent most of my time in the salon before the great window, taking careful notes of all that I saw.

Captain Nemo often joined me. When I asked questions, he answered with precision. His knowledge of marine life seemed without limit. He could name every species that passed before us, and he described their habits calmly, as if he had lived among them all his life.

One afternoon, as we traveled at a moderate depth, I noticed a change in the water. The sea appeared darker and more cloudy.

“We are approaching a current,” said Nemo.

“Which one?” I asked.

“A great submarine current that flows across this part of the Pacific.”

The Nautilus entered the moving water without difficulty. I could see particles drifting quickly past the window.

“The ocean has rivers within it,” Nemo continued. “Some are warm, some cold. They cross the sea as rivers cross the land.”

I listened with great interest. Even in this hidden world, there were laws and movements, currents and changes.

Later that evening, Ned Land came to my cabin.

“Professor,” he said quietly, “I cannot grow used to this.”

“To what?” I asked.

“To living under metal. To breathing air that is not free. To knowing that the land is above us and we cannot reach it.”

I understood him well. My own heart felt divided. The scientist in me rejoiced at each discovery. The man in me longed for open sky.

“We must be patient,” I said. “Perhaps an opportunity will come.”

Ned nodded but said nothing more.

The next day Captain Nemo invited us to witness a sight of special importance.

“We are nearing a region of volcanic activity beneath the sea,” he said.

“Volcanoes?” I repeated.

“Yes. The earth is not quiet below the ocean.”

The Nautilus descended slowly. Through the window I saw dark rocks rising sharply from the sea floor. In the distance, a faint red glow shimmered.

As we approached, I saw columns of warm water rising from cracks in the rocks. The red light came from molten stone far below.

“A submarine volcano,” I whispered.

“Yes,” said Nemo. “Even here the earth moves and burns.”

We watched as bubbles rose from the heated ground. The water shimmered with warmth.

“Does it not endanger the Nautilus?” I asked.

“No,” he replied calmly. “I keep my distance.”

The sight was powerful and solemn. Beneath the calm surface of the ocean, fire still lived.

After some time, we moved away from the volcanic region. The water grew cooler and clearer again.

That night, Captain Nemo spoke little. His eyes were thoughtful, as if he were remembering something long past.

The days continued to pass. I began to lose count of time. Without sunrise and sunset to mark the hours clearly, the rhythm of life changed. Only the clocks and the captain’s commands reminded us of days and nights.

One morning, as we sat at breakfast, the vessel suddenly tilted slightly.

“What is it?” asked Conseil.

Captain Nemo stood at once.

“We are approaching a region of ice,” he said.

“Ice?” Ned repeated with surprise.

“Yes. We are moving south.”

I looked at him with interest.

“Toward the southern seas?”

He nodded.

“The Nautilus fears neither cold nor storm.”

A thrill passed through me. To explore the southern oceans beneath the ice—such a journey had never been achieved.

Yet with that thrill came unease. The farther we traveled from known lands, the more distant our hope of escape seemed.

Still, I could not deny the power of curiosity that drove me forward.

The Nautilus continued its path, silent and strong, beneath the endless waters of the Pacific.

Above us, unseen, lay the world of nations and men.

Below and around us stretched the vast and mysterious kingdom of the sea.

And at its center stood Captain Nemo, master of his hidden domain.

Part 11

During the days that followed, the temperature inside the Nautilus grew cooler. The captain was true to his word: we were moving toward the southern seas. The water outside the great window changed in color. It became darker and heavier, and the light from our lamps seemed to fade more quickly into the deep.

One morning, when we entered the salon, Captain Nemo was already there, studying the instruments.

“We are approaching high southern latitudes,” he said. “Soon you will see a new world.”

Ned Land folded his arms.

“A world of ice, I suppose,” he said.

“Yes,” replied Nemo calmly. “But even beneath ice, the sea lives.”

A few hours later, the Nautilus rose slowly toward the surface. We felt the upward motion clearly.

“We must take air,” said Nemo.

The hatch was opened, and we climbed to the platform.

The sight before us was striking. The sea was gray and restless. In the distance floated great white masses—icebergs. Some were small. Others rose like silent mountains from the water.

The air was sharp and cold. I breathed deeply and felt the sting in my lungs.

“Magnificent,” I said softly.

“And dangerous,” added Ned.

The Nautilus soon submerged again. Through the window we could now see large pieces of ice drifting beneath the surface. Their shapes were strange and smooth, like carved stone.

“The greater part of an iceberg lies below the water,” said Nemo. “Only a small part is visible above.”

The Nautilus moved carefully between the floating masses. The captain guided the vessel with precision.

For two days we traveled among the ice. The sea life had changed. I saw seals

swimming with slow grace. Large white birds passed overhead when we surfaced briefly.

“Penguins,” said Nemo when I pointed at them.

On the third day, the Nautilus descended once more.

“We will pass beneath the ice,” the captain said.

Beneath the ice, the light was dim and green. The ceiling above us was a frozen roof, thick and solid. The sight filled me with awe.

“If the passage closes,” whispered Conseil, “we would be trapped.”

I felt the same thought, but Nemo showed no concern.

“The Nautilus is strong,” he said. “We shall find our way.”

The vessel moved slowly forward. The ice above formed strange shapes, like arches and caverns.

Hours passed. I began to feel a faint unease. The ceiling seemed to lower.

At last the Nautilus stopped.

“We are blocked,” said Nemo calmly.

“Blocked?” repeated Ned sharply.

“The ice has closed behind us and before us.”

My heart beat faster.

“Then we are imprisoned beneath it,” I said.

“For the moment,” Nemo replied.

He gave orders at once. The engines reversed. The vessel attempted to retreat, but there was no passage.

The crew moved quickly but without panic. I admired their discipline.

“We must wait for a change in the ice,” Nemo said. “Or find another route.”

“And our air?” I asked.

“We have reserves,” he answered. “But not without limit.”

The seriousness of our situation became clear.

The Nautilus remained motionless for several hours. The air inside grew heavier.

“Professor,” said Ned in a low voice, “if we die here, it will not be by a sea monster.”

I could not answer him.

Captain Nemo continued to study his instruments.

“We will descend,” he said suddenly.

“Descend?” I asked.

“Yes. Beneath the ice.”

The Nautilus sank deeper. The pressure must have been enormous, but the vessel held firm.

Below us lay dark water. Above, the frozen barrier.

After some time, the captain ordered full power.

The Nautilus rose sharply upward.

A terrible shock shook the vessel. I was thrown against the wall. The sound of cracking ice filled the air.

Again the vessel struck upward.

At last there was a loud crashing sound.

Light appeared above us.

The Nautilus had broken through.

Fresh air rushed into the vessel as we surfaced. The crew gave a quiet cheer.

Ned let out a long breath.

“That was close,” he said.

Captain Nemo stood calm and silent.

“The sea yields to those who know it,” he said quietly.

We had escaped.

But I understood then that life aboard the Nautilus would never be without danger.

The ocean was vast and beautiful—but it was also powerful and unforgiving.

And we were entirely at its mercy.

Part 12

After our escape from beneath the ice, the Nautilus remained for some time at the surface. The fresh air renewed the atmosphere within the vessel, and the crew

moved with quiet satisfaction. Captain Nemo, however, showed no sign of excitement. His face was calm, as if the danger had been no more than a small difficulty.

The southern seas lay wide and silent around us. Great blocks of ice floated at a distance, shining under the pale light. The air was cold and pure. I remained on the platform longer than usual, looking across the frozen waters.

“Professor,” said Nemo, joining me, “few men have reached this region. Fewer still have passed beneath it.”

“You have achieved what others only dreamed,” I replied.

He looked toward the horizon.

“The earth still holds many secrets,” he said quietly.

Soon the Nautilus submerged again. The temperature inside rose slightly as we moved away from the thickest ice.

Over the next days we continued our journey northward. The sea gradually changed. The ice disappeared. The water grew clearer and warmer.

I returned to my studies before the great window. I saw new species of fish and plants. Some were bright and delicate. Others were dark and strong.

One afternoon, as we traveled at moderate depth, a sudden sound shook the vessel. It was sharp and violent.

Ned Land rushed into the salon.

“What was that?” he demanded.

Captain Nemo stood at the instruments.

“We have struck a large sea creature,” he said calmly.

Through the window I saw a group of large shapes moving around us.

“Cachalots,” I said.

Sperm whales.

They circled the Nautilus with slow but powerful motion. Their massive bodies passed close to the glass.

“They are dangerous,” said Conseil softly.

One of the whales struck the vessel with its head. The blow was heavy but did no harm.

Captain Nemo's eyes grew cold.

"They will not attack again," he said.

He gave a signal.

The Nautilus moved forward with sudden speed. The powerful hull cut through the water directly toward the nearest whale.

The impact was violent. The whale turned and struggled.

"Captain!" I cried.

But Nemo remained firm.

The Nautilus struck again. The whale's movement slowed.

Around us the water became clouded and dark.

Ned Land watched in silence.

Within minutes the whales scattered. The Nautilus remained untouched.

"You use your vessel as a weapon," I said quietly.

"I defend myself," Nemo replied.

His voice carried no emotion.

That night I felt uneasy. The sea was beautiful, but it was also a place of struggle and death.

Days passed, and our journey continued. The Nautilus entered new regions of the ocean. Coral reefs appeared once more. Schools of fish moved in silver clouds.

Then one morning Captain Nemo approached me with unusual seriousness.

"Professor," he said, "today you will witness something rare."

"What is it?" I asked.

"A pearl of great size."

He explained that we were near waters known for pearl oysters.

"We will make another excursion," he said.

Once again we prepared the diving suits. The ritual had become familiar, yet the excitement remained.

We descended to the sea floor near a bed of oysters. They lay scattered across the sand, some open slightly, others closed tight.

Captain Nemo led us toward a larger rock formation. There, within a giant oyster, he pointed.

I leaned closer and saw within it a pearl of remarkable size and beauty.

It shone softly in the filtered light.

Nemo did not take it.

“It will grow larger,” he said through gesture.

As we turned to leave, a sudden movement caught my eye.

A shark.

It moved swiftly toward a diver not far from us.

Captain Nemo reacted at once. He raised his electric rifle and fired. The shark twisted and fell away.

The diver was saved.

Back aboard the Nautilus, Nemo spoke little of the event.

“The sea is not without danger,” he said simply.

I could not help but admire his courage.

Yet I also sensed that beneath his calm exterior lay deep emotions.

Our journey carried us onward, from region to region, from wonder to danger.

And always, the question remained in my mind:

Would we ever see the world above again?

Part 13

Our voyage continued through warm seas after we left the region of pearls. The Nautilus moved with steady power, sometimes near the surface, sometimes far below it. I had begun to understand the rhythm of life on board. Each day brought new sights, new species, and new questions.

Yet for Ned Land, curiosity was not enough. He longed for land, for open sky, and for freedom. He spoke to me often in low voice when we were alone.

“Professor,” he said one evening, “this cannot last forever.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“We must escape.”

“And how?” I replied quietly. “We are in the middle of the ocean. We do not know where we are. The Nautilus dives whenever it chooses.”

“Then we must wait,” he said firmly. “Wait for the right moment.”

I could not deny that his words troubled me. I admired Captain Nemo’s genius. I admired the wonders he showed us. But I did not forget that we were held against our will.

A few days later, the Nautilus entered the waters of the Indian Ocean. The temperature rose. The water outside the great window was bright and clear.

One afternoon Captain Nemo invited us to the salon.

“Professor,” he said, “we are approaching a passage known only to a few. It will allow us to travel from this ocean to another without returning to the surface.”

“A passage?” I asked.

“Yes. A natural tunnel beneath the sea.”

I was filled with excitement. Such a formation would be of great scientific interest.

Soon the Nautilus descended toward a rocky region. Through the window I saw a vast wall of stone rising from the sea floor. At its base was a dark opening.

“There,” said Nemo.

The vessel moved toward the opening. The light from our lamps shone against the rock walls.

We entered the tunnel.

The passage was wide enough for the Nautilus but narrow compared to the open sea. The walls rose on both sides, rough and uneven. The ceiling curved above us.

The water was calm, but the space felt confined.

“This tunnel was formed long ago,” said Nemo. “It connects two seas.”

I examined the rock closely. It bore signs of ancient movement and pressure.

“It is remarkable,” I said.

For several hours we traveled through the dark passage. At times the ceiling lowered, and the Nautilus moved carefully. The crew remained silent and attentive.

At last a faint light appeared ahead.

“We are nearing the exit,” said Nemo.

The Nautilus emerged into open water once more.

“We have entered the Red Sea,” he announced.

Ned Land raised his eyebrows.

“Then we are nearer to land than before,” he said softly.

I knew what he was thinking.

Over the next days we traveled beneath the Red Sea. The water was rich with life. Coral reefs stretched in long lines. Fish of bright color moved in groups.

Captain Nemo spoke more freely during this time. He seemed at ease in these waters.

“This sea has a long history,” he said. “Many ships have passed above it.”

One evening he invited us to watch a hunt.

The Nautilus rose near the surface. Through the window I saw several large sea turtles swimming slowly.

Nemo ordered the vessel forward. The turtles attempted to escape, but the speed of the Nautilus was greater.

Soon one was secured.

“Food for many days,” said Nemo.

Ned Land could not hide his approval.

“At least the sea feeds us well,” he said.

Yet even as we enjoyed the abundance of the ocean, I sensed a growing tension within myself.

The world above was not forgotten. I thought often of France, of the museum, of the simple freedom of walking upon land.

That night, as I stood alone in the salon, I looked out into the dark water.

The Nautilus moved forward with silent strength.

Captain Nemo’s kingdom stretched endlessly around us.

And we continued our journey deeper into the mysteries of the sea.

Part 14

After we crossed the Red Sea through the hidden tunnel, the Nautilus entered the Mediterranean. Captain Nemo told me that few men would ever believe such a journey possible. Yet we had passed beneath continents and seas without rising

to the surface.

“The land divides nations,” he said one evening. “The sea unites them.”

His words stayed with me.

In the Mediterranean waters we saw many signs of human history beneath the sea. Ancient ruins lay scattered on the ocean floor. Broken columns rested among coral and sea plants. The remains of old ships were half buried in sand.

“These are traces of old civilizations,” I said quietly.

“Yes,” Nemo replied. “Empires rise and fall. The sea remains.”

His tone carried neither joy nor sadness—only certainty.

One afternoon, as we passed through deeper water, I noticed several dark shapes moving in the distance.

“What are those?” I asked.

“Poulps,” answered Nemo.

I had read about such creatures, but had never seen them alive. They were large, with long arms that moved slowly like twisting ropes.

The Nautilus slowed.

“They are curious,” said Nemo. “But they can also be dangerous.”

As we watched, one of the creatures approached the vessel. Its long arms stretched toward the glass.

Suddenly, with frightening speed, it attached itself to the hull.

The crew reacted at once. Captain Nemo gave sharp orders.

Through the window I saw the arms gripping the metal. Their suction held firmly.

“We must remove it,” Nemo said.

The Nautilus surfaced. The hatch opened, and several crew members climbed out with axes.

Ned Land turned to me.

“Now we shall see a fight,” he said grimly.

I could not follow them outside in that moment, but I watched through a side window as much as I could.

One of the poulps rose partly above the water, its arms moving wildly. The crew

struck at them with axes and knives.

The struggle was fierce and terrible. One crew member was caught and pulled toward the creature. Captain Nemo himself rushed forward and cut the arm that held the man.

The sea churned with movement. At last the creature fell back into the water, its arms floating lifeless.

When the men returned below, their faces were grave.

Captain Nemo's expression was dark. He spoke no word of triumph.

Later I learned that one of his crew had been lost in the struggle.

That night the Nautilus moved slowly and in silence.

Captain Nemo remained alone in the salon for many hours. I heard the sound of the organ once more, but this time the music was heavy and sorrowful.

I understood then that, despite his strength, he felt deeply for his men.

The days that followed were quieter. The Nautilus left the Mediterranean and returned once more to the open ocean.

Our journey had carried us through many seas—Pacific, Indian, Red, Mediterranean—and still it continued.

Yet within me, the desire for freedom grew stronger.

Ned Land spoke often of escape. He watched closely whenever the Nautilus rose near land. He studied the movements of the crew and the timing of the watches.

"We must be ready," he whispered to me one night.

"Ready for what?" asked Conseil.

"For the moment when the captain brings us close enough to shore."

I did not answer. My thoughts were divided.

I had seen wonders beyond imagination. I had walked beneath the sea, passed under ice, explored volcanic depths, and traveled through hidden tunnels.

And yet I longed for the sound of wind in trees, for the warmth of the sun upon my face without glass or metal between us.

Captain Nemo continued to guide the Nautilus with steady purpose.

His world was the ocean.

But ours, though we lived beneath the sea, still belonged to the land above.

Part 15

Our voyage did not slow after the struggle with the poulps. The Nautilus resumed its steady pace across the ocean. Yet the mood on board had changed. The loss of one of the crew weighed heavily upon Captain Nemo. He spoke little, and when he did, his voice carried a quiet gravity.

For several days he remained in his cabin more than usual. The organ was silent. The salon felt larger and emptier without his presence.

I spent my time studying and observing, but my thoughts often returned to the scene of the attack. The sea, so beautiful in its calm, could become violent without warning.

One evening, as we were finishing our meal, Captain Nemo entered unexpectedly.

“Professor,” he said, “we are approaching a region of strong currents. The Nautilus must pass carefully.”

“Which region?” I asked.

“The Gulf Stream,” he replied.

I knew the name well. It was a powerful current in the Atlantic, carrying warm water across great distance.

The next morning we gathered at the great window.

The water outside moved swiftly. Particles rushed past in long streams. The Nautilus adjusted its position and speed.

“The sea has its own rivers,” said Nemo. “Some are gentle. Some are fierce.”

The vessel tilted slightly as it met the current. But it held steady.

Ned Land stood close beside me.

“If we were in a small boat,” he murmured, “we would be swept away.”

“Yes,” I said.

The power of the sea was clear before us.

Later that day, Captain Nemo invited me alone to the salon.

“Professor,” he began, “you have seen much of the sea. You have studied it with care. Tell me—do you regret coming aboard the Nautilus?”

The question surprised me.

“Captain,” I replied honestly, “I have seen wonders beyond my greatest hopes. As a man of science, I cannot regret that.”

He looked at me closely.

“And as a man?” he asked quietly.

I hesitated.

“As a man,” I said slowly, “I miss the freedom of land.”

He turned away for a moment.

“Freedom,” he repeated softly. “Yes.”

There was a long silence.

“You believe I deny you freedom,” he said at last.

“You hold us here,” I answered carefully.

“I protect my secret,” he replied. “The world above would destroy what it does not understand.”

I sensed deep bitterness in his words.

“Captain,” I said, “you have great power. But you also carry great sorrow.”

He did not answer. Instead, he walked to the organ and placed his hands upon the keys.

The music that followed was unlike any I had heard before. It was full of strength and pain, rising and falling like waves in a storm.

When he finished, he stood motionless for several seconds.

“The sea is wide,” he said quietly. “It is the only place where a man may live free from the cruelty of men.”

He left me alone in the salon.

That night I spoke with Ned Land and Conseil.

“The captain is not merely an explorer,” I said. “He has chosen exile for a reason.”

“Perhaps he has enemies,” said Conseil.

“Or he has done wrong,” said Ned.

I could not decide which was true.

The Nautilus continued its path. The days blended together, marked only by the changing scenes beyond the window.

Yet I felt that our journey was moving toward something final. Captain Nemo seemed driven by an inner force, guiding the vessel with greater urgency.

And within my own heart, the desire for escape and the thirst for knowledge remained locked in silent struggle.

The ocean stretched endlessly around us.

We traveled within it, carried by the will of one man.

And none of us knew where the voyage would end.

Part 16

The days after my conversation with Captain Nemo passed in uneasy calm. The Nautilus continued across the Atlantic, sometimes near the surface, sometimes far below. I could sense a change in the captain. He spent long hours alone in the salon, studying charts and instruments. His movements were firm and precise, yet there was a tension in his face that I had not seen before.

Ned Land noticed it as well.

“He is driving the vessel harder,” Ned said one morning. “We are moving faster than before.”

I checked the instruments when I could. Ned was right. The Nautilus cut through the water at great speed.

“Perhaps he has a destination in mind,” said Conseil.

That thought troubled me. Captain Nemo had never spoken clearly of any final goal. He had wandered through oceans, explored ruins, crossed ice and fire. But now his course seemed direct.

One afternoon, as we stood before the great window, I noticed fewer fish than usual. The water appeared darker and heavier.

“We are entering northern waters,” said Nemo behind us.

I turned.

“Toward which region?” I asked.

“Toward cold seas,” he answered.

His eyes shone with an intensity that made me uneasy.

That evening the sea grew rough. Even beneath the surface, we felt the force of strong waves above. The Nautilus rose and fell more than before.

At supper, Captain Nemo ate little. He spoke not a word.

After the meal he went to the organ. The music he played was wild and powerful. It echoed through the vessel like a storm.

Ned leaned toward me.

“Professor,” he whispered, “we must be ready.”

“For what?” I asked.

“For whatever comes.”

The next morning the Nautilus remained near the surface. Through the window I saw dark water moving in great circles.

“What is this?” I asked.

Captain Nemo stood at the instruments.

“A powerful whirlpool,” he said calmly.

“A whirlpool?” repeated Conseil.

I looked more closely. The water ahead formed a vast circular motion. Waves rushed toward a central point, then vanished downward.

“It is dangerous,” I said.

“Yes,” Nemo replied. “But the Nautilus will pass.”

His voice was firm, almost eager.

The vessel moved forward.

“Captain,” I said urgently, “we should avoid this.”

He did not answer.

The whirlpool grew larger in the window. The motion of the water was violent. The Nautilus began to shake.

“Full power!” Nemo commanded.

The engines roared. The vessel strained against the current.

Ned grabbed my arm.

“This is madness,” he said.

The Nautilus was pulled closer to the center. The force of the water increased.
We were drawn into the great circle.

The floor tilted sharply. I struggled to keep my balance.

“Hold fast!” cried Conseil.

The noise was terrible. Metal groaned. The lights flickered.

Captain Nemo stood firm at his post.

“The sea is my domain!” he shouted above the roar.

The whirlpool seized us completely.

The Nautilus spun violently. I was thrown against the wall. Water crashed
against the hull with crushing force.

I heard Ned shout my name, but the sound was lost in the storm.

The vessel tilted again. I felt myself lifted, then hurled sideways.

The world turned in darkness and chaos.

I lost consciousness.

When I opened my eyes, I felt the movement of waves beneath me—not the
steady motion of the Nautilus, but the rolling of open sea.

The sky was above.

Fresh air filled my lungs.

I lay in a small boat. Ned Land and Conseil were beside me.

“You are alive!” cried Conseil.

“Where is the Nautilus?” I asked weakly.

Ned shook his head.

“Gone,” he said. “The whirlpool took it.”

I tried to rise, but my strength was small.

Around us stretched the gray sea. In the distance I saw a rocky shore.

We had escaped.

How we had been thrown clear of the vessel, I could not say. Whether the
Nautilus had survived, I did not know.

Captain Nemo—master of the sea—had vanished into its depths.

The boat drifted toward land.

My mind was filled with memories of our long voyage: the forest beneath the waves, the volcano, the ice, the ruins, the pearls, the terrible whirlpool.

I had traveled twenty thousand leagues beneath the sea.

I had seen wonders beyond imagination.

And though I stood once more beneath the open sky, a part of me remained forever with the silent and mysterious world below.