



Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea · Episode 03 / 46 · B1–B2 · 00

I Make Up My Mind

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OVERVIEW

Summary

I Make Up My Mind — chapter 3 of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, told in clear English for language learners.

Transcript

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Chapter Three — I Make Up My Mind

Three seconds before that letter arrived, chasing a sea monster was the last thing on my mind. Three seconds after I finished reading it, I knew there was nothing in the whole world I would rather do.

By rights I should have been exhausted. I had just come home from months of hard travel, and all I truly wanted was to go back to Paris — to my friends, my little rooms beside the botanical gardens, and my precious collections. But none of that could hold me back now. I forgot the tiredness, forgot everything, and said yes to the American government on the spot.

Besides, I told myself, the sea leads everywhere in the end. Perhaps this narwhal would be kind enough to swim toward France and let me catch it closer to home. And I promised myself I would bring back at least a good piece of its ivory tusk for the museum. But first I would have to hunt it in the North Pacific — which is about as far from France as a person can get.

"Conseil!" I called.

Conseil was my servant, a loyal young man from Belgium who had travelled with me everywhere for ten years. I was very fond of him, and he of me. He was calm, tidy, hard-working, and quick with his hands, and never once had he grumbled about a long journey, no matter how far — whether to China or the Congo. He had only one funny habit: he was so terribly polite that he never spoke to me directly. Instead of saying "you," he always talked about me as "sir," in the third person, as though I weren't standing right in front of him. It could be a little maddening.

Oh — and here is the joke of it: his name, Conseil, means "advice" in French. Yet he never once offered any, not even when I begged him for it.

I called him a second time, and then a third, my hands already shaking with excitement as I flung things into my trunk.

At last he appeared. "Did you call, sir?"

"Yes, my boy. Pack your things and mine. We leave in two hours."

"As you wish, sir," he said quietly, as if I had merely asked him to fetch the newspaper.

"Not a moment to lose! Coats, shirts, socks — throw in as many as you can and hurry."

"And your collections, sir?" he asked.

"The hotel will keep them safe."

"So we are not going back to Paris?" said Conseil.

"Oh, we are," I said quickly. "Just... by a slightly longer road."

"Whatever road pleases you, sir."

"You see, my friend, it is the monster — the famous narwhal. We are going to rid the seas of it. A glorious mission, but a dangerous one! There is no telling where we will end up. But we have a wide-awake captain, and we are going."

Within the hour our luggage was aboard the ship. I hurried up onto the deck and asked for Commander Farragut. A sailor led me to a fine-looking officer, who shook my hand warmly.

"Professor Pierre Aronnax?"

"That's me. Commander Farragut?"

"Welcome aboard, Professor. Your cabin is ready."

The Abraham Lincoln was a splendid ship — fast, powerful, and built for the chase, able to race along at nearly eighteen knots. Quick enough for any ordinary voyage... though whether it was quick enough to catch our monster was another question entirely.

My cabin was snug and comfortable. "We shall be very cosy here," I said to Conseil.

"As cosy, if you will forgive me, sir, as a hermit crab inside a snail's shell," he answered.

I left him to unpack and climbed back up on deck to watch us get under way — and not a moment too soon. Commander Farragut was already giving the order to cast off the last ropes that tied us to the Brooklyn pier. Fifteen minutes more and the ship would have sailed without me, and I would have missed the strangest, most incredible adventure of my life.

The commander was not about to waste a single hour. He sent for the engineer.

"Is the steam up?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then go ahead!" cried Commander Farragut.

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<https://alexlearns.com/english/twenty-thousand-leagues/chapter-03/>

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