



Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea · Episode 24 / 46 · B1–B2 · 00

The Sea of Milk

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OVERVIEW

Summary

The Sea of Milk — chapter 24 of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, told in clear English for language learners.

Transcript

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Chapter Twenty-Four — The Sea of Milk

For days after the coral funeral, the Nautilus glided west through the warm, clear waters of the Indian Ocean, and I could not stop thinking about Captain Nemo.

Conseil believed the captain was simply a brilliant man who had grown tired of the world and its cruelties, and had come to live in the one place no one could reach him. Perhaps. But I was beginning to suspect there was more to it. The way he had locked us away that strange night, the wounded sailor, his burning hatred of the land and everyone on it — it all made me wonder. Was Captain Nemo only hiding from the world? Or was he planning some terrible revenge upon it? I could not say. I could only watch, and wait, and write down what I saw.

And there was so much to see. Each day I walked the deck and breathed the fresh sea air; each day the great windows opened onto wonders no one on land had ever glimpsed.

One afternoon the Nautilus rose and raced along the surface, its huge propeller flinging water high into the air. A steamer passed far off, and I had to smile — to those distant sailors, we must have looked exactly like the terrible sea monster the whole world had once feared.

One evening, Conseil and I saw the strangest little fleet. Hundreds of small creatures called argonauts were sailing along the surface of the water. Each one is a soft sea animal that lives inside a thin, curling shell shaped like a tiny boat. They spread two of their arms out flat, like sails, and drifted together across the waves — a whole navy of them. Then, at some sudden fright, every "sail" folded at once, every little shell tipped and filled, and in the blink of an eye the entire fleet sank out of sight. Not one was left. I have never seen real ships turn and vanish so smartly.

As we crossed into the northern half of the world, a pack of huge sharks came to swim beside us. Some had a strange dark mark on the throat, like a staring eye. Again and again they hurled themselves at the windows, so hard that even I felt uneasy. Ned Land could barely stand it — he wanted nothing more than to go up top and harpoon them. But the Nautilus simply put on speed and left the fastest of them far behind.

Then, one evening, came the greatest wonder of all.

Around seven o'clock the sea began to turn white. Not silver, not foamy — white, as though the whole ocean had been changed into milk. It stretched away in every direction, glowing softly, while the sky above looked black by comparison.

Conseil stared, amazed. "Sir — what is happening? Surely the water hasn't truly turned to milk?"

"No, my boy," I said. "They call it a milk sea. The whiteness comes from countless tiny living creatures — each one no thicker than a hair — glowing together in numbers far too vast to imagine. Ships have sailed through seas of milk like this for forty miles and more."

"Forty miles!" cried Conseil.

For hours the Nautilus drifted through that shining whiteness. Near midnight the sea slowly darkened to its

ordinary colour again. But far behind us, all the way to the horizon, the sky still glimmered — as though a pale, ghostly dawn were breaking in the middle of the night.

Audio, timed transcript, and companions online:

<https://alexlearns.com/english/twenty-thousand-leagues/chapter-24/>

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