



Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea · Episode 26 / 46 · B1–B2 · 00

A Pearl Worth Ten Millions

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OVERVIEW

Summary

A Pearl Worth Ten Millions — chapter 26 of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, told in clear English for language learners.

Transcript

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Chapter Twenty-Six — A Pearl Worth Ten Millions

At four in the morning the steward woke me. I dressed fast and went to the saloon, where Captain Nemo was waiting.

"M. Aronnax, are you ready to start?" he asked.

"I am ready," I said.

The Nautilus was still far from the coast and the Manaar Bank, he told me. A boat would take us to the right spot. "It carries our diving suits. We will put them on when we begin our walk under the sea."

Ned and Conseil were already on the platform, happy about the trip. Five sailors waited in the boat with their oars. The night was dark, and clouds hid most of the stars. I could just see a dark line of land far away.

We took our places, and the sailors rowed south, slowly, in silence. I wondered what Captain Nemo was thinking.

By six o'clock the sun rose fast, the way it does in hot lands. I saw the land clearly now, with a few trees. The boat neared Manaar Island, and the anchor dropped in very shallow water. We were on one of the highest points of the pearl bank.

"Here we are," said Captain Nemo. "In a month, many fishing boats will come. This bay is calm and good for diving. Now let us put on our suits."

The sailors helped me into the heavy suit, with an air tank on my back. We did not need the electric lamp, Nemo said: the sun was enough, and a bright light might bring dangerous animals.

"And our guns?" I asked.

"Guns? What for? A hunter fights a bear with a knife. Here is a good blade." Ned also carried a huge harpoon.

Then they closed the copper helmet over my head. A moment later we walked down into the water, over smooth sand, following the Captain. Bright fish rose around our feet, and the sun lit the sea floor, showing rocks, shells, and coral like beautiful fans.

At about seven we reached huge piles of pearl oysters. Ned quickly filled his net with the best ones, but we had to follow the Captain.

Then a large cave opened in the rocks. It was dark, but my eyes soon got used to it, and I saw arches and natural stone pillars. Why had our guide brought us here? Soon I knew. At the bottom sat one giant oyster, wider than two yards. It was bigger than the great basin in the saloon of the Nautilus. I guessed it weighed 600 pounds.

The Captain slid his knife between the shells so they could not close. Inside lay a pearl as big as a coconut, round and shining. It was worth a fortune. I reached out to touch it, but the Captain stopped me. He wanted the pearl to keep growing, year by year.

Ten minutes later he signalled us to crouch in a gap in the rock. About five yards away, a shadow sank to the

ground. It was a man, a poor Indian pearl diver. His small boat floated above him, and a stone tied to his feet helped him sink fast. He filled his bag with oysters, went up, emptied it, and dived again. He could not see us in the shadow.

For half an hour he worked safely. Then suddenly he made a sign of terror and sprang up. A huge shape appeared above him — an enormous shark, its eyes on fire, its mouth open. The shark rushed in, and its tail struck the diver to the ground.

The shark turned to cut the man in two. Just then Captain Nemo stood up, knife in hand, and walked straight at the monster. When the shark rushed him, Nemo jumped aside and drove his knife deep into its side. Blood turned the water red. Then I saw him hanging onto a fin, striking again and again, but he could not win.

The Captain fell, the huge shark on top of him, its jaws opening wide. But quick as thought, Ned rushed in with his harpoon and struck the shark's heart. The monster shook and died.

Ned pulled the Captain free. Nemo went straight to the Indian, cut the rope from his stone, took him in his arms, and rose to the surface. We all followed, saved by a miracle, and reached the diver's boat.

Nemo and Conseil rubbed the man until, slowly, he woke. Then Nemo took a bag of pearls from his pocket and placed it in his hand. The poor man took it with a shaking hand, hardly knowing what to think.

Back on the Nautilus, the Captain turned to Ned.

"Thank you, Master Land," he said.

"I was only paying you back, Captain," Ned replied. "You saved my life once. I owed you that."

A sad smile crossed the Captain's lips. On the way home we passed the dead shark, over twenty-five feet long, while other sharks fought over its body.

That evening I thought about all that had happened. Two things were clear: Captain Nemo's great courage, and his kindness to a man from the world he had left behind. This strange man had not closed his heart completely.

When I told him this, he answered with feeling: "That Indian, sir, lives in an oppressed country. And I am still, and will be until my last breath, one of them!"

Audio, timed transcript, and companions online:

<https://alexlearns.com/english/twenty-thousand-leagues/chapter-26/>

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