



Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea · Episode 28 / 46 · B1–B2 · 00

The Hunt for the Giant Dugong

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OVERVIEW

Summary

The Hunt for the Giant Dugong — chapter 28 of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, told in clear English for language learners.

Transcript

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Chapter Twenty-Eight — The Hunt for the Giant Dugong

That evening the Nautilus came up near the Arabian coast. I saw the town of Djeddah, its white houses bright in the low sun. Then night fell.

The next day, February 10th, we passed several ships, so the Nautilus dived. At noon the sea was empty, and it rose again. Ned, Conseil, and I sat on the platform. Ned suddenly pointed to the sea.

"Do you see something there, sir?"

"No, Ned. I do not have your eyes."

"Look well, near the height of the lantern. Do you not see a shape that moves?"

I looked hard. "Yes, a long black body on the water." Soon it was only a mile away. It looked like a great sandbank in the open sea. It was a huge dugong!

Ned's eyes shone. His hand seemed ready to throw a harpoon. Just then Captain Nemo came onto the platform.

"Would you like to be a fisherman again for a day, Master Land, and add this animal to the list you have killed?"

"I would, sir," said Ned, his eyes flaming.

"But be careful," said the Captain. "Do not miss it."

"Is the dugong dangerous?" I asked.

"Yes," said the Captain. "Sometimes it turns on the hunters and tips over their boat. But Master Land has a quick eye and a sure arm."

Seven silent sailors came up and lowered the boat into the sea. Six men took the oars, one took the tiller, and Ned, Conseil, and I sat at the back. Captain Nemo stayed behind and wished us good sport.

The boat rowed fast toward the dugong, two miles away. As we got close, the men rowed softly. Ned stood in the front, harpoon in hand. His line was tied at the end to a small barrel that would float and show which way the dugong went.

This dugong was enormous, more than seven yards long. It seemed to be asleep on the water, which made it easier to catch. The boat came within six yards of it. Ned leaned back and lifted his harpoon.

Suddenly there was a hiss, and the dugong vanished. The harpoon seemed to hit only water.

"Curse it!" cried Ned. "I have missed it!"

"No," I said. "Look at the blood. It is hurt, but your weapon did not stick in its body."

The sailors got the floating harpoon back, and we chased the animal.

The dugong came up now and then to breathe. Its wound had not slowed it. Several times we came close, and Ned

got ready to strike, but each time the dugong dived away. Ned shouted the angriest words he knew.

We chased it for an hour. Then the dugong, wanting revenge, turned and rushed at our boat.

"Look out!" cried Ned. The man at the tiller shouted a warning in his strange language.

The dugong came within twenty feet, then threw itself at us. The boat half tipped over and took in tons of water. Thanks to the steersman, we were struck on the side, not head on, so we did not fully turn over. Ned held onto the front and struck the animal again and again. The dugong buried its teeth in the side of the boat and lifted the whole thing out of the water, the way a lion lifts a deer. We fell over one another. I do not know how it would have ended, but Ned, still full of anger, struck the beast in the heart.

I heard its teeth grind on the iron. Then the dugong dived down, carrying the harpoon with it. But the barrel soon rose to the surface, and a little later the body of the animal floated up, turned on its back. The boat towed it to the Nautilus. It took very strong tackle to lift the dugong onto the platform, for it weighed 10,000 pounds.

The next day, February 11th, we caught a few Nile ducks for the kitchen.

In the evening we went into the Strait of Jubal, toward the Gulf of Suez. I saw a high mountain, Mount Horeb, the Sinai where Moses saw God. We passed near Tor, whose bay looked tinted with red, just as Captain Nemo had said. Then night fell, quiet except for the cries of night birds and the waves on the shore.

At a quarter past nine I climbed to the platform. I was too excited to sit still. In the dark I saw a pale light about a mile off.

"It is the floating light of Suez," said a voice. It was the Captain. "Soon we will reach the tunnel. The entrance is not easy, so I steer the ship myself. Come down, sir. We will not surface again until we have passed the Arabian Tunnel."

He led me to the pilot's small cabin at the front of the platform, where a strong pilot stood with his hands on the wheel.

"Now," said Captain Nemo, "let us try to make our passage." He pressed a metal knob, and the ship slowed. For an hour we ran close to a high, straight wall of sand.

At a quarter past ten the Captain took the wheel himself. A large dark gallery opened before us, and the Nautilus went boldly in. A strange roar filled the water. It was the Red Sea rushing down through the tunnel toward the Mediterranean. The Nautilus flew forward like an arrow, and on the walls I saw only bright lines of light flashing past. My heart beat fast.

At thirty-five minutes past ten, Captain Nemo let go of the wheel and turned to me. "The Mediterranean!" In less than twenty minutes the Nautilus had passed under the land of Suez.

Audio, timed transcript, and companions online:

<https://alexlearns.com/english/twenty-thousand-leagues/chapter-28/>

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