



Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea · Episode 31 / 46 · B1–B2 · 00

The Treasure of Vigo Bay

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OVERVIEW

Summary

The Treasure of Vigo Bay — chapter 31 of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, told in clear English for language learners.

Transcript

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Chapter Thirty-One — The Treasure of Vigo Bay

The Nautilus had travelled a huge distance, and now it rose near the coast of Spain. Ned Land, Conseil and I climbed onto the platform, but a strong wind was blowing. The sea was rough and tossed the ship hard, so we soon went back inside.

Ned followed me to my room, looking troubled. Our fast trip across the Mediterranean had ruined his escape plan, and he was disappointed. "Friend Ned," I said, "you should not blame yourself. Trying to leave then would have been foolish. We are going up the coast now, near France and England. In a few days you may act safely."

Ned looked at me hard. Then his lips parted. "It is for tonight," he said. I was not ready for this. "Tonight, at nine," he went on. "I have told Conseil. We will be close to the Spanish coast. It is cloudy, and the wind is good. Captain Nemo will be shut in his room. The crew will not see us. You will wait in the library for my signal. The boat is ready — oars, sail, and even some food."

"The sea is rough," I said. "That is true," Ned agreed, "but we must take the risk. Freedom is worth it. By morning we could be far away, safe on land."

Then he left, and I sat full of doubt. In my heart I did not want to go. Leaving meant giving up the Nautilus and my unfinished studies. Yet I had given Ned my word. Could I really break it now, at this very important moment?

The day felt endless. Part of me longed for freedom. Part of me hoped that something would stop the plan. I checked the compass twice; the Nautilus stayed in Portuguese waters. I packed my few notes and dressed warmly. Every minute felt like an hour. I feared most that our plan would be found out, and that I would face Captain Nemo, sad and hurt by my leaving.

At last I went down to the library and waited. The ship grew quiet. The screw slowed, then stopped, and I felt a small shock. The Nautilus had settled on the ocean floor. Still no signal from Ned. I felt that something was wrong.

Suddenly Captain Nemo appeared. "Ah, sir!" he said kindly. "Do you know the history of Spain?" His friendly words left me confused. He sat me down and told a strange story. In 1702, Spanish ships full of gold and silver from America came to Vigo Bay. Enemy fleets from England and Holland were near. When the Spanish admiral saw the treasure would be lost, he burned and sank his own ships on purpose. They went to the bottom with all their riches.

"We are in that same Vigo Bay," said the Captain. "Come and see." Through the glass I saw the sea lit with electric light. Nemo's crew, in diving suits, were gathering gold and silver from the old wrecks. The sand was heaped with coins and jewels. Now I understood the secret of his great wealth.

"You have beaten a Spanish company to this treasure," I said. "They value these wrecks at five hundred millions. I pity the poor people who could have been helped by such riches."

My words seemed to hurt him. "Barren!" he cried with strong feeling. "Do you think these riches are lost because I gather them? Do you think I keep them for myself? There are suffering beings and oppressed races on this Earth — victims to help and avenge. Do you not understand?"

He stopped, as if sorry he had said so much. But now I understood. Whatever had driven this man beneath the sea, his heart still beat for people in pain. His treasure was not for himself. It was for the poor and the oppressed of the world.

Audio, timed transcript, and companions online:

<https://alexlearns.com/english/twenty-thousand-leagues/chapter-31/>

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