



Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea · Episode 33 / 46 · B1–B2 · 00

A Harbour Inside a Volcano

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OVERVIEW

Summary

A Harbour Inside a Volcano — chapter 33 of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, told in clear English for language learners.

Transcript

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Chapter Thirty-Three — A Harbour Inside a Volcano

The next day, February 20th, I woke very late, for the night walk had tired me out. I dressed and checked our course. The Nautilus was still going south, twenty miles an hour, fifty fathoms deep. The fish were much like those we had seen before, though there were giant rays and sharks so clear they were almost invisible in the water.

By four o'clock the sea floor grew rocky, scattered with lava. Then a high wall rose ahead and blocked our way south. Its top rose above the sea. I thought it must be an island — perhaps one of the Canaries or the Cape Verde Islands. Soon the panels closed, and the Nautilus stopped by the wall. I went to my room and slept.

When I woke, it was eight o'clock the next day. The Nautilus was floating on the surface, yet all around was deep darkness. I heard steps on the platform and went up. "Is that you, Professor?" said a voice. "Captain, where are we?" "Underground, sir," he answered. I could not understand it.

Soon the ship's lantern was lit. We were floating on a lake, closed in by a great circle of rock walls, two miles across. High above, a small round hole let in a faint gleam of daylight. "We are inside an old volcano," said Captain Nemo. "The sea broke into it long ago. While you slept, the Nautilus came in through a natural passage below the surface. This is my safe harbour, hidden from every storm."

"But why do you need it?" I asked. "The Nautilus needs no port." "No," he said, "but it needs power to move. I make electricity from sodium, and sodium from coal. And here, under the sea, lie whole forests turned to coal over the ages. For me it is a mine that never runs out. My men come here in diving suits and dig the coal themselves. When I burn it, the smoke rises from the crater, and the mountain looks like a living volcano again."

He told me the loading would take just one day. So I went to find my companions and invited them to explore. "Land again!" said Conseil. "I do not call this land," said Ned. "We are under it, not on it." Ned thought only of finding a way out.

We walked along a narrow sandy shore between the walls and the lake. The rocks shone in the lantern light, and fine dust flew up like sparks under our feet. We climbed the slopes, slipping on the smooth crystal. I told my friends how this crater had once been full of boiling lava. "Then why is it quiet now?" asked Conseil. "Because the sea broke in and won the fight," I said. "Long ago, water rushed into the mountain. Now the volcano is only a calm cave."

We climbed higher, crawling on our knees over hard rock. Plants began to grow from the cracks — small trees, drooping flowers, and even a few violets, which I smelled with delight. Near some strong dragon-trees, Ned suddenly cried, "A hive! A hive!" And so it was — thousands of bees humming in a hollow tree. Ned smoked them out and filled his bag with sweet honey. "Mixed with bread-fruit, this will make a fine cake," he said.

Higher up we saw birds of prey and fat bustards running on their long legs. Ned had no gun, but he threw stones and, after many tries, brought one bird down for supper. Then we turned back toward the shore. Above us the crater opened to the sky like the mouth of a well, and we could see clouds passing over the top.

By the time we came back on board, the crew had finished loading the sodium. The Nautilus was ready to leave.

But Captain Nemo gave no order. Perhaps he wished to slip out secretly at night. Whatever the reason, the next day the Nautilus left its hidden port and sailed once more beneath the waves of the Atlantic.

Audio, timed transcript, and companions online:

<https://alexlearns.com/english/twenty-thousand-leagues/chapter-33/>

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