



Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea · Episode 38 / 46 · B1–B2 · 00

Trapped in the Ice

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OVERVIEW

Summary

Trapped in the Ice — chapter 38 of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, told in clear English for language learners.

Transcript

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Chapter Thirty-Eight — Trapped in the Ice

On March 22nd, at six in the morning, we got ready to leave. The cold was terrible. Above us the Southern Cross shone bright in the dark sky. New ice was forming in black patches on the sea. In winter the whole southern sea freezes over, and no ship can pass. Seals break holes in the ice to breathe, but the birds fly north to escape the cold.

The Nautilus filled its tanks and sank slowly. At 1,000 feet deep it stopped, and its screw drove us north at fifteen miles an hour. By night we were moving under a huge iceberg.

At three in the morning a violent shock threw me out of bed. I got up, and then I was thrown across the room. The Nautilus had hit something and bounced back hard. Now it lay on its side. In the saloon the furniture was turned over, but the thick windows had held. Ned Land and Conseil hurried in.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"The Nautilus has struck," said Ned. "I do not think she will right herself this time."

I looked at the depth gauge. To my surprise, we were more than a thousand feet down. We went to look for Captain Nemo, but we could not find him. So we waited. Twenty minutes later Nemo came in. His calm face looked worried. He checked the compass, the gauge, and the map.

"An accident, Captain?" I asked.

"Yes. We have run aground. It was not a human mistake, but nature. A huge mountain of ice turned over. As it fell, it struck us, slid under the ship, and lifted us onto thinner ice. Now we lie on our side."

"Can we float up if we empty the tanks?"

"We are doing it now. You can hear the pump. But the block of ice is rising with us. Until something stops it, we cannot move."

We watched the gauge in silence. Slowly the ship began to straighten. The floor grew level under our feet. After ten minutes I cried, "At last we are upright!"

"Yes," said Nemo, and he went to the door.

We were floating in open water. But on each side, only ten yards away, rose a shining wall of ice. There was ice above us and ice below. The overturned block had trapped us in a tunnel of ice, more than twenty yards wide, full of still water. Bright light filled the saloon as the lamp shone on the walls. The ice sparkled like sapphires and emeralds, a whole mine of jewels.

"How beautiful!" cried Conseil.

"Yes," said Ned, "but I think we are seeing things that men were never meant to see."

Then Conseil covered his eyes. "I am blinded!" The Nautilus had put on full speed, and the icy walls flashed like

lightning. It hurt to look.

At five in the morning the ship struck ice at the bow. The tunnel was blocked with fallen blocks. Then, to my surprise, the Nautilus began to move backward.

"We are going back?" said Conseil.

"Yes," I said. "This end has no way out. We must go back and leave by the southern opening."

I tried to sound braver than I felt. Hours passed. I picked up a book and stared at it without reading. Conseil smiled and told me it was my own book about the deep sea. The gauge showed us three hundred yards down, moving fast — twenty miles an hour — in that narrow space.

At twenty-five minutes past eight, a second shock came from behind. I turned pale. Captain Nemo entered, and I went up to him.

"Is the way south blocked?" I asked.

"Yes, sir. The iceberg has shifted and closed every way out."

"Then we are shut in?"

"Yes."

Audio, timed transcript, and companions online:

<https://alexlearns.com/english/twenty-thousand-leagues/chapter-38/>

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