



Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea · Episode 41 / 46 · B1–B2 · 00

The Battle with the Giant Squid

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OVERVIEW

Summary

The Battle with the Giant Squid — chapter 41 of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, told in clear English for language learners.

Transcript

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Chapter Forty-One — The Battle with the Giant Squid

For several days the Nautilus kept away from the American coast. On April 16th we saw Martinique and Guadeloupe far off. Ned Land had hoped to escape near these islands, and he was very disappointed. We had now been prisoners for six months and had traveled 17,000 leagues, with no end in sight. Captain Nemo had grown quiet and distant. He no longer came to the saloon to show me the wonders of the sea. I did not know why.

Near the Bahamas, tall cliffs rose under the water, covered with great weeds. Looking at them, I said, "These are perfect caves for poulps. I would not be surprised to see one of these monsters."

"I will never believe such animals exist," said Ned.

"Well," said Conseil in a very serious voice, "I once saw a great ship pulled under the waves by the arm of an octopus."

"You saw that?" said Ned. "With your own eyes? Where?"

"At St. Malo," answered Conseil. "In a church — in a picture of that very creature."

Ned burst out laughing. I told them the picture came from an old legend, and legends about sea monsters cannot be trusted. Still, I said, big squid are real. Fishermen often see some more than four feet long. And in 1861, near Tenerife, the crew of the ship Alector met a monstrous squid. They tried to pull it aboard with a rope, but it was so heavy that its tail broke off, and it sank away.

As we talked, Conseil watched at the window and calmly described a creature: eight arms, huge eyes, a mouth like a parrot's beak. "If this is not that same squid," he said, "it is at least its brother."

I rushed to the glass and could not hold back a cry of disgust. Before me was a terrible monster, a squid eight yards long. It swam toward us fast, staring with great green eyes. Its eight arms were twice as long as its body, and its horny beak opened and shut like a parrot's. Soon seven more came, and I heard their beaks scraping on the iron hull.

Suddenly the Nautilus stopped with a shock. Captain Nemo came in, looking grim. "The screw has stopped," he said. "The hard jaws of one of these creatures are caught in the blades. We must fight them, man against beast. Our bullets are useless against their soft flesh, so we will use axes."

"And my harpoon, sir," said Ned, "if you will accept my help."

"I accept it, Master Land."

We climbed the stairs, where ten men waited with axes. Conseil and I each took an axe; Ned held his harpoon. The Nautilus rose to the surface. The moment a sailor opened the hatch, an arm slid down like a snake, and twenty more waved above. With one blow Nemo cut it off. But as we pushed up onto the platform, two arms seized the sailor in front of the captain and lifted him into the air.

What a sight! The poor man was swung about, held fast by the suckers. He choked and cried, "Help! Help!" The

words were French. My heart froze — there was a countryman of mine on board! That cry I shall hear all my life.

Nemo threw himself at the squid and cut off an arm. We all fought, driving our weapons into the soft flesh. Seven of the eight arms were cut away. But just as the captain reached the last one, the monster shot out a cloud of black ink. We were blinded. When it cleared, the squid was gone — and my poor countryman with it.

Ten or twelve more squid now covered the platform. Ned's harpoon struck their staring eyes again and again. Then a tentacle he had not seen threw him down. The great beak opened above him. I rushed to help, but Nemo was there first. His axe struck between the huge jaws, and Ned, saved, drove his harpoon deep into the creature's three hearts.

"I owed myself that revenge," said the captain to Ned.

Ned bowed and said nothing. The battle had lasted a quarter of an hour. The beaten monsters sank at last beneath the waves. Captain Nemo, covered with blood and worn out, stood gazing at the sea that had swallowed one of his men, and great tears ran down his face.

Audio, timed transcript, and companions online:

<https://alexlearns.com/english/twenty-thousand-leagues/chapter-41/>

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