



Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea · Episode 43 / 46 · B1–B2 · 00

The Sunken Avenger

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OVERVIEW

Summary

The Sunken Avenger — chapter 43 of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, told in clear English for language learners.

Transcript

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Chapter Forty-Three — The Sunken Avenger

After the storm, we were pushed east once more. Our hope of escaping near New York was gone. Poor Ned lost heart and kept to himself, just like Captain Nemo. But Conseil and I stayed together.

The Nautilus drifted north-east through thick fog. Fog is a sailor's enemy. In it, ships crash on hidden rocks or run into each other, even with their lights and bells. The sea floor here is a graveyard of lost ships.

By the 15th of May we reached the great bank of Newfoundland. Huge heaps of matter gather here, carried by the currents. Broken ice drops blocks of rock as it drifts past. Millions of tiny shellfish die here too.

Two days later I saw something amazing on the sea floor — a long cable, the one that carries messages between Europe and America. Conseil thought it was a giant sea snake! I told him its story. The first cable was laid in 1857, but it soon failed. More tries failed too. Once, someone even pushed nails into it to break it. The captain of the work ship warned that anyone caught would be thrown into the sea, and it stopped. At last, in 1866, a strong new cable worked.

The sea floor here forms a huge valley. It is so deep that Mont Blanc, the tallest mountain in Europe, could sink into it and its peak would still not show above the waves.

Nemo did not stop at Ireland. He turned south past Land's End. As we neared land, Ned came out of hiding again. He kept asking me where we were going, but I had no answer. Would Nemo show me the coast of France?

On the 31st of May the Nautilus began to circle, round and round, as if hunting for one exact spot. Nemo worked the ship himself, silent and dark in mood. Was he sad to be near Europe again? Did he remember the land he had left long ago? I felt sure some secret was close.

The next day, the 1st of June, he circled again. A large steamship showed far off to the east, flying no flag. At noon Nemo measured the sun with great care. Then he spoke one word: "It is here."

He went below. The Nautilus sank straight down and rested on the bottom. Our lamp lit the water all around. To one side lay a great mound. It looked like snow, but it was really an old wreck, covered in white shells. It was a warship, long dead, without its masts. It must have lain there many, many years.

What was this ship? Why had Nemo come to its grave? Then he spoke beside me, in a low, slow voice.

"This ship was launched in 1762. It fought bravely in many battles. In 1794 the French gave it a new name. Today, exactly seventy-four years ago, on this very spot, it fought its last fight. Its masts were gone. Water filled its hold. A third of its men could not stand. But it would not surrender. It nailed its flag high and sank with all 356 sailors, crying, 'Long live the Republic!'"

"The Avenger!" I cried.

"Yes," said Nemo, folding his arms. "The Avenger. A good name."

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