



Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea · Episode 44 / 46 · B1–B2 · 00

Nemo's Black Flag

Nemo's Black Flag

OVERVIEW

Summary

Nemo's Black Flag — chapter 44 of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, told in clear English for language learners.

Transcript

Nemo's Black Flag

Chapter Forty-Four — Nemo's Black Flag

The name of the Avenger, and the deep feeling in Nemo's voice, stayed in my mind. This was no ordinary man who simply disliked people. Something terrible had happened to him — a hatred so strong that time could never soften it. Did he still want revenge? Soon I would know.

The Nautilus rose to the surface. Then a dull boom rolled across the water. I looked at the captain. He did not move.

I climbed to the platform. Ned and Conseil were already there. "That was a gunshot," said Ned. The steamship we had seen was coming closer, pouring out black smoke, only a few miles off. Ned studied it. "That is a warship," he said. It flew no flag, so we could not tell its country.

Then a puff of white smoke burst from its front. Water splashed the back of the Nautilus, and a loud crash filled the air.

"They are firing at us!" I cried.

"They have found the monster," said Ned, "and now they are firing at it." Suddenly I understood. The world no longer believed in a sea beast. They knew the truth — that this was a submarine, a machine of danger. And they were hunting it. Instead of friends, that ship carried enemies.

Ned wanted to signal them. He raised his handkerchief. But Nemo's iron hand struck him down. "Fool!" the captain shouted. "Do you want to die on the point of the Nautilus before I drive it into that ship?"

Nemo was terrible to see. His face was white, his eyes tight with anger. He turned to the warship and shouted, "Ship of a cursed nation! You know who I am. I do not need your flag. Look — I will show you mine!"

He raised a black flag at the front of the platform. Another shot struck the Nautilus but did not break through. Nemo turned to me. "Go below, you and your friends. Go!"

"Are you going to attack that ship?" I cried.

"I am going to sink it," he said coldly. "Do not judge me. Go down."

We had to obey. The Nautilus sped away, out of range, but it did not flee far. All night it circled the warship like a hunter, drawing it on, never striking.

At dawn I climbed up once more. Nemo was still there. I tried to speak, but he cut me off.

"I am the law and the judge!" he said. "I am the wronged man, and there is the one who wronged me! Through him I lost everything I loved — my country, my wife, my children, my father, my mother. I saw them all die! All that I hate is on that ship. Say no more!"

Now I understood him at last. I went back to my friends. "We will escape tonight," I said. Better to die than to help in this revenge.

But we never got the chance. The Nautilus dived below the waves. It would not strike the ship's strong sides. It would strike below the waterline, where the metal could not save it.

Trapped in my room, I waited in dread. The ship trembled and rushed forward. I felt the shock — soft, almost gentle — as the steel point passed through the warship like a needle through cloth.

I ran to the great window. Nemo stood there, silent and grim, watching. The wrecked ship was sinking, and the Nautilus sank with it to see every moment of its end. Water poured through the broken hull like thunder. Men clung to the masts, then vanished under the sea. Soon all was gone.

I turned to Nemo. When it was over, he walked to his room. On the wall hung a painting of a young woman and two small children — his family, all lost. He reached out his arms to them, fell to his knees, and wept.

Audio, timed transcript, and companions online:

<https://alexlearns.com/english/twenty-thousand-leagues/chapter-44/>

© 2026 AlexLearns.com — free language podcasts for curious people.