

## 20K LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA

By Alexandria Rayford-West, Carlos Washington, and Matt Foss

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## 20K LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA

*Adapted for our time from the novel by Jules Verne*

**By Alexandria Rayford-West, Carlos Washington,  
and Matt Foss**

**SYNOPSIS:** An adaptation of Verne's classic book that brings to light the themes of social justice and oppression for a contemporary audience. Works as a regular piece of theatre but created during the global health crisis allowing it to be a radio play or hybrid streaming production.

**DURATION:** 60 minutes.

**TIME:** 1866

**SETTING:** Various locations, one set.

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(4-20 any gender)*

ARONNAX.....Professor of science from a museum in Paris. *(103 lines)*

CAPTAIN NEMO .....Builder of the *Nautilus* and Champion of the Oppressed. *(59 lines)*

NED LAND .....A terrible scarecrow of a puppet. Think something that sounds and looks like the melted Matt Damon from Team America world police, maybe made out of old sports equipment and that can fall a lot. Puppet presents male. *(32 lines)*

### WORLD BUILDERS

ENSEMBLE .....(1-17+ people) Company who covers remaining roles, puppeteers, and sequence builders. For clarity, all World Builders are labeled with (WB) after the designated name.

FOLEY ARTIST.....Optional live sound design using old fashioned radio show techniques blended with contemporary technology... also, potentially a DJ.

### PRODUCTION NOTES

Stage directions of *MAGIC/SEQUENCE/MUSIC* etc. are placeholders for further collaboration. As a rule, there's a mix of technology at use—for example cameras capturing rough plastic or aquariums or crude puppets in order to make a cool effect. That collaborative space for the artists is preserved through the simple, but understandably vague label of *MAGIC*. Further, minimal descriptions have been included to encourage creativity and collaboration.

### SURGERY SEQUENCE

Shadow puppet sequence created using the single source light and differing focal lengths: Nemo's memory shadow sequence:



### AUTHORS'S NOTE

The following script, in its existing form, was edited, adapted and organized for safe and ethical performance during a global health crisis in order to amplify vital themes during a reckoning with America's long history and failure of equity and equality.

Verne's actual text is used not to give a long-dead, white European's credence to patterns of social injustice, but to provide an anchor to the novel, serving as a historical artifact of how far we have and have not come since the novel's

publishing—15 years after the Civil War. By tying these themes of social justice to Verne’s existing and actual text in a long familiar but rarely interrogated novel, it is our effort and tactic to subvert and confront privilege and inaction within the audience. In some ways, this effort is subversive. In others, it is more overt and matter-of-fact. The connections we have made with this novel are our own, but many of the text’s most powerful sections are predominately those of Verne—especially Nemo’s advocacy for the oppressed and actions against oppressors. We’ve relied on these to inoculate ourselves against the practice of detractors telling us to “Shut up and just act” or to not impose our feelings on this classic text. We are simply saying the words Verne wrote—albeit with a cool soundtrack.

Second, our hope is to build capacity with BIPOC artists who have not felt at or found a home within theatre and storytelling. Our intent is to create a work that builds capacity for collaborations with visual artists.

#### **PUBLISHER’S NOTE**

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## ONE – PROLOGUE

**AT RISE:** *ARONNAX enters and makes their way to the desk.*

*VERNE (WB) enters up stage right, with a t-shirt emblazoned with Jules Verne—a large portrait, with a few modifications sewn into the shirt that allow it to be puppeteered with a hand that opens the mouth, stick out a tongue, raises an eyebrow.*

*ARONNAX threads up a reel-to-reel recording machine. They press play. There's a whirring sound as the tape player starts up and plays VERNE speaking in French (pre-recorded.)*

*ARONNAX hits the tape recorder, turns a dial, does some science. Hits the machine. Maybe a record skip. ARONNAX flips the tape and presses play.*

**VERNE (WB):** *(Pre-recorded. As they puppeteer the t-shirt.)* I'm Jules Verne. I'm French.

I died in 1905 and wrote this book about five years after the American Civil War, in France.

I wrote this stuff almost 150 years ago.

*VERNE (WB) holds up watch for the Verne portrait to see.*

**VERNE (WB):** Exactly 150 years ago. Literally.

I'm dead. Literally. I was French!

Hit it.

*MUSIC: "History Repeating" by the Propellerheads hits. There's a credits/dance sequence with the WORLD BUILDERS. Music fades.*

**TWO – PRESS CONFERENCE**

**ARONNAX:** THE YEAR 1866 was marked by a bizarre development, an unexplained and downright inexplicable phenomenon that surely no one has forgotten. Without getting into those rumors that upset civilians in the seaports and deranged the public mind even far inland, in essence, over a period of time several individuals had encountered "an enormous thing".

*PROJECTION VIDEO: IMAGE OF MONSTER.*

*A beat. ARTIST (WB) draws as ARONNAX speaks.*

**ARONNAX:** A long spindle-shaped object, sometimes giving off a phosphorescent glow, infinitely bigger and faster than any whale.

If it was a cetacean, it exceeded in bulk any whale previously classified by science.

In every big city the monster was the latest rage; they sang about it in the coffee houses, they ridiculed it in the newspapers, they dramatized it in the theaters.

*A beat.*

**ARONNAX:** *(Continued.)* An endless debate then broke out between believers and skeptics in the scholarly societies and scientific journals and those self-proclaimed experts in the public whose learning comes from happenstance and anecdote, peddling conspiracy at the cost of cogency.

The "monster" had everybody fired up.

*NEWSCASTERS (WB) enter. Mics on long poles surround ARONNAX.*

**NEWSCASTER ONE (WB):** We go live to the Honorable Professor Aronnax of the Paris Museum and author of a two-volume work in quarto entitled *The Mysteries of the Great Ocean Depths...* Professor Aronnax?

**ARONNAX:** (*Like a COVID briefing. Clear's their throat.*) I am providing these heavily condensed details to help the public understand the importance of such affairs.

*Camera flash.*

*PROJECTION VIDEO: IMAGE OF MONSTER*

**ARONNAX:** ...on one side, those favoring a monster of colossal strength;

*PROJECTION VIDEO: IMAGE OF SUBMARINE*

**ARONNAX:** ...on the other, those favoring an “underwater boat” of tremendous motor power.

*Camera flash.*

**ARONNAX:** Now then, though the latter theory was perfectly reasonable—an underwater boat of tremendous power, this theory of a war machine collapses in the face of firm denials by these various governments, and the sincerity of these governments can't be doubted.

*A beat. Flashes of cameras, mics come in tight.*

**ARONNAX:** Hence, we're forced to accept the existence of an extremely powerful marine animal—basically a “cast-iron” organism.

All this to say, I would be inclined to accept the existence of a giant narwhal, or sea unicorn.

**NEWSCASTER ONE (WB):** A what, Professor Aronnax?

**ARONNAX:** (*Close to mic, quietly, but amplified.*) Uh... a sea unicorn?

*ARONNAX flips pages, looks into book.*

**WORLD BUILDERS:** *(Mumbling voices as the press conference concludes, exiting.)*

**NEWSCASTER THREE (WB):** Sea Unicorn?

**NEWSCASTER TWO (WB):** What the...?

**NEWSCASTER ONE (WB):** Narwhale? Nar-dumb.

### THREE – DEPARTURE

**ARONNAX:** *(Alone again.)* Alarmingly, public opinion firmed up as to the nature of the phenomenon, and people accepted without argument the existence of this prodigious creature.

**GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON (WB):** *(Enters)* We... uh... must rid the ocean of this alarming monster... in order to ensure the safety of transoceanic travel. *(Exits.)*

**BUSINESS SPOKESPERSON (WB):** *(Enters.)* The threat to the tools of international ocean trade and travel must be protected at all costs. *(Exits.)*

*SFX: TELEGRAM NOISE. TELEGRAM drops from the ceiling. ARONNAX catches. SECRETARY OF WAR (WB) enters before he speaks.*

**ARONNAX:** *(Reading telegram.)*

Doctor P. Aronnax  
Professor at the Paris Museum  
Fifth Avenue Hotel  
New York



**SECRETARY OF WAR (WB):** Aronnax, if you would like to join the expedition on the USS Abraham Lincoln, your expertise concerning the monster—the notorious narwhal or sea unicorn—will be of great importance—as we are going to rid the seas of it.

Commander Farragut is holding a cabin for you. The ship departs in the morning, without delay.

**ARONNAX:** Very cordially yours,

**SECRETARY OF WAR (WB):** (*Salutes.*)

J.B. Hobson

Secretary of the Navy (*Exits.*)

*SFX: STEAM WHISTLE and FOG HORN blows.*

*MUSIC: "In The Navy" by The Village People.*

*Full dance number with fabulous sailors and lots of guns.*

*Music fades and ARONNAX speaks.*

**ARONNAX:** The wharves in Brooklyn were covered with curiosity seekers, from which three cheers burst forth in succession.

*SAILORS (WB) give anemic cheers. Ship begins to travel.*

**ARONNAX:** All on board were committed to finding the sea unicorn, harpoon it and end our collective bondage to this beast.

We surveyed the sea with scrupulous care.

**CAPTAIN FARRAGUT (WB):** I'll give two thousand dollars to whoever sights the monster first!

*Cheers—all looking.*

*PROJECTION VIDEO: ABRAHAM LINCOLN SHIP*

**ARONNAX:** The *Abraham Lincoln* was carefully equipped to the task, with no vessel better armed for the endeavor.

But there was still more. There was Ned Land, the King of the Harpooners.

*Pulling out a puppet of NED LAND during text, puppet poses.*

**ARONNAX:** Gifted with a rare manual ability to lethally throw a sharp metal stick into a sentient marine mammal, Ned Land had no equal in his perilous trade.

**CAPTAIN FARRAGUT (WB):** He is like a telescope that can turn into a gun—what—bam! (*Makes gesture of telescope, then gun.*) Dead.

**ARONNAX:** With that, we began our search for the monster across the seven seas.

SFX: FOG HORN

#### FOUR – ALL AROUND THE WORLD

*Calendar sequence and traveling map—ship travels the globe. MUSIC plays during this sequence: “Grits and Groceries (All Around the World)” by Little Milton. MAGIC. After some time, ARONNAX speaks.*

**ARONNAX:** After three months, where every day seemed like a century, the warship *Abraham Lincoln* left not a single sector unexplored and found nothing.

**CAPTAIN FARRAGUT (WB):** If the monster hasn’t appeared in three day’s time, I’ll chart a course for home.

*Anemic cheers like before. CAPTAIN FARRAGUT (WB) shouts into water.*

**CAPTAIN FARRAGUT (WB):** Three days, whale. (*Mumbling.*) ...damn sea unicorn.

**ARONNAX:** The promise was given on November 2nd.

*ANIMATOR (WB) holds a calendar with November 4th circled in red.*

**ARONNAX:** The prospect of ending our fruitless journey had the immediate result of reviving the crew's failing spirits.

As the sun set on the last night, the ship came to a complete standstill, as if to bait the monster one last time, before charting a course towards home.

As the last bell struck twelve, in the midst of the overall silence, a voice rang out. It was Ned Land's voice.

**NED LAND:** Ahoy! There's the thing we're after!

*An effect, light beneath the water.*

**ARONNAX:** We all spotted the object; Ned was pointing to a dark shape beneath the water, where the sea was glowing.

This was no simple phosphorescent phenomenon.

The monster gave off a magnificent radiance that had to come from some force with great illuminating capacity.

**CAPTAIN FARRAGUT (WB):** Make ready, aim and fire at will! We'll bring it down TONIGHT!

**ARONNAX:** The *Abraham Lincoln* reeled into position and as the first gun lined up with the shadow glowing beneath the waves, it fired.

*SFX: A boom, a whistling of a cannonball puppeteered through the air and then thuds off the steel of the submerged Nautilus. A beat.*

**SAILOR (WB):** Oh drat! That whale's made of metal.

**CAPTAIN FARRAGUT (WB):** \$500 more to the man who can pierce that infernal beast.

*The cannon scene above is repeated. Same shot, same cannonball, same metallic thud.*

**SAILOR (WB):** Oh drat! That whale's made of metal.

**CAPTAIN FARRAGUT (WB):** Ned Land! Bring it down! Boom. Dead!

**NED LAND:** Aye aye.

*Similar sequence as above with a harpoon. Harpoon bounces off.*

**SAILOR (WB):** Oh drat! That whale's made of metal.

**ARONNAX:** All at once (*MUSIC starts.*) the light suddenly went out the sea unicorn began to approach us with a growing urgency.

*MUSIC. SOUND. Optional: "It's My Turn" by Stezo. The Nautilus is seen for the first time by the audience.*

**ARONNAX:** (*Continued.*) ...And before I could catch hold of anything, I was thrown into the sea.

*PROJECTION VIDEO: UNDERWATER SOUND/MUSIC muffled as if underwater. Bubbles and thrashing. Sound of ARONNAX fighting underwater, struggling to surface, then gasping for air. Quiet breaths.*

## FIVE – INTO THE SEA

**ARONNAX:** I shouted, swimming desperately for the *Abraham Lincoln*, but it was gone.

**NED LAND:** Professor Aronnax!

*We see NED LAND, standing on something solid.*

**NED LAND:** It's me, Ned Land.

**ARONNAX:** Ned! You were thrown overboard in the collision too? Is that...?

**NED LAND:** Your gigantic sea unicorn? (*Nods.*)

*Maybe the SAILOR (WB) from before drifts by, dead, clinging to a chair like a victim of the Titanic, or a life ring that says USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN.*

**NED LAND:** It's made of metal... six-inch armor plate.

**ARONNAX:** ...in the shape of an immense steel fish.

*MUSIC plays underneath, muffled from inside.*

*"A Change is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke*

**ARONNAX:** *(Stomping and Shouting.)* Hey. Hey! Up Here!

*MUSIC stops. Sound of creaking valves and iron doors.*

*Hatch opens—CREW MEMBER (WB) is seen.*

*NED LAND pulls out a big knife.*

*CREW MEMBER (WB) pulls out a gun.*

*NED LAND puts knife away.*

**ARONNAX:** And with that—we were ushered into the dark below of the underwater boat.

*Same sounds as before: sound of creaking valves and iron doors.*

## SIX – ON BOARD THE NAUTILUS

*Stage reset. Sound of unlocking, like before. Lights up.*

*NEMO stands behind ARONNAX and NED LAND. PROJECTION with large crest and motto over their head. NEMO gives a small cough.*

*ARONNAX and NED LAND turn.*

**ARONNAX:** Uh... um... Hello, my name is Professor Arronax and this is Ned Land. *(ARONNAX reaches out hand. Nothing. A look.)*

Bonjour, je suis le professeur Aronnax et c'est Ned Land... *(A beat.)*

Guten Morgen, ich bin Professor Aronnax und das ist Ned Land...

**NED LAND:** *(Loudly.)* I'M NED LAND AND THIS...

*NEMO holds up hand. NED LAND points to crest.*

**NED LAND:** What's that say?

**ARONNAX:** (*Reading.*) Mobilis in Mobili. Latin. For Moving within a Movement.

**NEMO:** (*In french.*) Excellente.

**ARONNAX:** You speak French?

*A beat. Underscoring.*

**NEMO:** My friends, I speak French, English, German and Latin equally well. I could have therefore answered you at your first question but wished to make your acquaintance first.

Professor Aronnax of the Natural History Museum of Paris and Ned Land—harpooner—both recently of the crew of the USS *Abraham Lincoln*.

### SEVEN – NEMO

*Art Sequence MAGIC.*

*MUSIC: “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised (Instrumental)” by Gil Scott-Heron.*

*NEMO dances with a large portrait frame—a living, kinetic and defiant portrait as ARONNAX speaks.*

**ARONNAX:** Nemo was as impressive as was powerful. Self-confident, courageous with tremendous stores of vitality, while possessing a calm and harmony of expression that gave a feeling of unimpeachable sincerity.

From their voice, I did not recognize a fellow countryman and admit the nationality of the stranger was hard to make out. Not European, or American—maybe a Turk, or from Arabia or Africa—perhaps the East Indies. Exotic, as it was the unfortunate habit in Europe to describe, in mixed company, that which you do not understand as such.

**ARONNAX:** (*Continued.*) This must be the Captain of this vessel, and the enterprise on the whole, and I felt instinctively reassured in their presence—a good omen for our situation.

*MAGIC over.*

**NEMO:** I wanted to weigh carefully what policy to adopt toward you. I had difficulty deciding. Your presence has disrupted the whole existence I have built.

**ARONNAX:** We didn't mean to.

**NEMO:** You didn't mean to? Did not the *Abraham Lincoln* mean to hunt me across the seven seas? Didn't you mean to travel aboard that ship of war? Didn't your shells mean to strike the hull of my creation? Didn't Mr. Land mean to hit me with his harpoon?

**ARONNAX:** (*Underscore.*) You undoubtedly have no idea of the discussions about you that have been going on in America, and Europe—you aren't aware of the public passions aroused on both of those continents surrounding the controversy and the *Abraham Lincoln* chased you over the high seas in the belief it was hunting some powerful marine monster, which had to be removed from the ocean at any cost.

**NEMO:** (*Half smile, calm tone according to book.*) Professor Aronnax, do you claim that your frigate wouldn't have hunted an underwater boat just the same as it did your monster?

*ARONNAX can't argue.*

**NEMO:** So you understand, sir, do I not have the right to treat you as my enemy?

**ARONNAX:** Maybe it would be the right of a savage, but not of a civilized person.

**NEMO:** I abjure the qualities of the latter and refute your prejudices against the former, Professor Aronnax.

*PROJECTION VIDEO: EVILS OF THE WORLD*

**NEMO:** I do not claim or seek or respect the tenets of what you term a civilized person and have severed all ties with the society with which such a term is associated—for reasons that I alone am qualified to appreciate.

Therefore I do not follow said society's rules and name them flawed, and I ask that you never refer to them as a basis or foundation of discussion.

*(Some time.)* That said, in my difficulty of deciding what to do with you and Mr. Land, I felt that my best interests could be reconciled with that natural compassion to which all human beings have a right.

Since fate has brought you here, you'll stay on my vessel, where you'll be free.

**ARONNAX:** Free... but solely aboard this vessel?

**NEMO:** Completely—free to roam its passages, enjoy its amenities and partake of its resources in its entirety. You'll be free on board, and in exchange for this comparative freedom, I'll lay just two conditions on you. Your word that you'll agree to them will be sufficient for me.

**ARONNAX:** I assume they're conditions any decent person can accept?

**NEMO:** Yes. They are. First, there's a possibility that certain unforeseen events may require me to confine you to your cabins for a time, for you and my safety alike. When I ask you to retire, I ask you do so peacefully. By acting in this way, I protect you from any responsibility or culpability of my actions.

Do you accept this condition?

*NED LAND nods. ARONNAX nods.*

**NEMO:** Second, you must give up seeing your homeland, friends and relatives ever again.

*NED LAND and ARONNAX guffaw with shock.*



**NEMO:** Once you have set foot on the *Nautilus*, you may never set foot on land again.

**ARONNAX:** That's merely the freedom any prisoner has, the freedom to walk around a cell.

**NEMO:** Is it unacceptable? Considering the alternative?

**ARONNAX:** This is sheer cruelty!

**NEMO:** It is an act of mercy. One rarely granted. You are prisoners of war, yet I have cared for you. A single word of mine could have plunged you back in the ocean depths and I would have had every right to do so!

You attacked me! You've just unearthed a secret kept from those who would destroy me and you think I'll send you back to a world that mustn't know anything more of me beyond rumor and speculation? By keeping you here, it isn't you I care for, it is for myself and those for whom I have created refuge.

**ARONNAX:** Then what you give us, quite simply, is a choice between life and death?

**NEMO:** Quite simply.

But to renounce a yoke you believe to be liberty in order to find authentic freedom is not perhaps so painful as you think.

**NED LAND:** Well, never will I give my word of honor not to try to escape.

**NEMO:** I did not ask for your word of honor, Master Land.

If you let me finish, you may not be inclined to complain about the stroke of fate that has brought us together. Let me assure you, you won't regret the time you spend aboard my vessel.

*MUSIC: "It's My Turn" by Stezo, MAGIC.*

*PROJECTION VIDEO: UNDERWATER MONTAGE*

**NEMO:** You're going to voyage through a land of wonders. Stunned amazement will likely be your habitual state of mind. Starting today you'll enter a new element, you'll see what no human being has ever seen before and thanks to this world tour, you're about to learn our planet's ultimate secrets.

Many people would jump at the chance to walk in the midst of these wonders that you will now have the chance to see.

**NED LAND:** See! There's nothing to see! Nothing we'll ever see from this sheet-iron prison. We're simply running around blindfolded—blind and in the dark.

**NEMO:** Then let me attempt to open your eyes.

*SFX: Sound of the windows opening on the Nautilus and there's a sequence—MAGIC and light. Music fades.*

**NEMO:** I see you have questions, Professor.

**ARONNAX:** Many.

**NEMO:** Then begin with the first.

**ARONNAX:** What name am I to call you?

**NEMO:** To you, I am simply Captain Nemo, and you are my guests on the *Nautilus*. What my name was before is for my knowing alone.

*MUSIC—like before, like a memory. Some time.*

**NEMO:** And the second?

**ARONNAX:** I... I... have forgotten.

**NEMO:** Then I am at your service when it reappears.

But now, my friends, I've set a course east-northwest at a depth of a hundred and sixty-five feet, and with your permission, we'll make way.

*MUSIC: "Backstreet Freestyle" by Kendrick Lamar*

**NEMO:** Welcome, to the *Nautilus*. (*Beat.*) Shall we?

## EIGHT – FIRST LEAGUE UNDER THE SEA

*ARONNAX nods.*

*PROJECTION VIDEO: SUBMARINES AND ART*

*MAGIC/SEQUENCE where miniature submarines and dancing plunges the ship into the depths. ARONNAX begins to speak.*

**ARONNAX:** The transparency of saltwater is well known and we could see vast distances as the horizon.

In the fluid setting as we descended into the depths, the electric glow was being generated in the very heart of the waves by the *Nautilus's* generators. It was no longer illuminated water, it was liquid light.

*MUSIC out. On the Nautilus.*

**NED LAND:** How do you generate this much power?

**NEMO:** I've chosen to make demands only on the sea itself for the resources of my electricity.

**ARONNAX:** The sea itself?

**NEMO:** From the sea's most abundant chemical.

**NED LAND:** Sand?

*NEMO laughs.*

**NED LAND:** Water?

**NEMO:** No, my good friend—but close—the salt within it. My fuel cells are powered by it. That of which, there is no shortage and it is the sodium that I extract from saltwater and use in making my electrical cells.

**ARONNAX:** You've obviously found what all mankind will surely want to find someday—a truly dynamic source of electricity.

**NEMO:** I'm not sure they've endeavored to earn it.

**NED LAND:** How did you build all this?

**NEMO:** (*Underscoring.*) In secret, on a deserted islet in mid-ocean, where once we finished, we burned every trace of our work and never set foot on land again.

Everything comes to me from the sea, just as someday everything will go back to it.

**ARONNAX:** You are in love with the sea, Captain.

**NEMO:** Deeply.

It's an immense wilderness where one is never alone because they feel life stirring around them.

*PROJECTION VIDEO: PEACEFUL SEA*

**NEMO:** The sea is simply the vehicle for a prodigious, uncanny mode of existence you are disqualified from on land—it's simply movement and love; it's living infinity, as one of your poets put it.

*PROJECTION VIDEO: WAR*

**NEMO:** The sea doesn't belong to tyrants. On its surface they can still stake their evil claims, battle each other, devour each other, haul every earthly horror. But thirty feet below sea level, their power ceases, their influence fades, their domination vanishes. Here alone do I find independence. Here I recognize no superiors. Here I am free.

**ARONNAX:** Then why do you trouble the ships of the world, if the water brings you such peace.

*Underscore out.*

**NEMO:** Because they have brought their trouble to these waters. This is the only language my oppressors understand, to destroy the very tools of their oppression. What choice have they left me?

*Some time. New underscore.*

**ARONNAX:** As we gazed out the windows, the *Nautilus* didn't seem to be moving, due to the lack of landmarks in the vast sea.

*PROJECTION VIDEO: EMPTY SEA (OR AQUARIUM SHOT THROUGH IT AT ARONNAX AND NED LAND)*

**ARONNAX:** But streaks of water, parted by the ship's spur sometimes shot past our eyes with extraordinary speed.

**NED LAND:** Where are the fish? I don't see any fish?

**ARONNAX:** As a great fisherman, you might be interested in how they are scientifically classified? I'd be happy to teach you.

**NED LAND:** Two kinds and two kinds only—them fish we eat, and them fish we don't. Done.

## NINE – SINKING OF THE FLORIDA

*There's a pinging on a magic radar, think maybe, a WORLD BUILDER holding a painted umbrella with a penlight behind it. NEMO is concerned, speaks into the communication device and then turns to ARONNAX and NED LAND.*

**NEMO:** I'm afraid an instance of the first condition has arisen sooner than I would have liked. My friends—if you'd be willing to retire ever so briefly to your quarters, I'll have food and drink delivered to you so you may take nourishment while I complete an urgent task at hand.

**ARONNAX:** But—?

**NEMO:** Professor—you gave me your word.

*ARONNAX nods, turns.*

**ARONNAX:** Ned Land and I retreated deeper into the ship, where goblets of fine wine and plates of rich food, all pulled from the sea, awaited us.

*NED LAND scarfs it down—food thrown at the puppet head grossly. NED LAND gives a little cough. A burp.*

**NED LAND:** Oh...

*NED LAND crashes to the floor—drugged and fast asleep.*

**ARONNAX:** As the apparent effects of what Nemo had placed in our repast to insulate their activity from our prying eyes and ears,

*MUSIC: “Freedom” by Beyonce starts—maybe slow, muffled and distant.*

**ARONNAX:** I heard the muffled sounds of cannon fire, with the last sound I heard before retreating into sleep the pounding of the great vessel’s electric engine.

*ARONNAX passes out. MUSIC full and loud.*

*PROJECTION VIDEO: SINKING OF FLORIDA*

*SEQUENCE: Maybe “Freedom” by Beyonce feat. Kendrick Lamar: There’s a dance. Maybe NEMO slices through paper ships in a battle dance.*

*PROJECTION VIDEO: FAMILY AND COUNTRY*

*It transforms into a flashback, as NEMO’S family and people are murdered and moments of all their battles since.*

*MUSIC: cross fades into “A Change is Gonna Come” by SAM COOKE. It ends.*

*PROJECTION VIDEO: FAMILY PORTRAIT*

*NEMO looks at portrait of family. We hear NEMO’s breathing. NEMO composes himself.*

**TEN – SHARK BREAKFAST**

*There's a knock at ARONNAX's door.*

**NEMO:** Good morning Professor.

**NED LAND:** (*Waking up, grossly and violently.*) Whah—ooh—  
chicken—what!?

**ARONNAX:** Was there an accident?

**NEMO:** No; an incident.

Yesterday's work delayed me longer than I anticipated, but if you would like to inspect the *Nautilus*, you have your leave as I must now take mine. The library, the lounge, the mess, the bridge all remains open to you—everything excepting my quarters which I reserve for myself alone.

We'll be making our course easterly. I'll leave you to your time.  
(*Exits.*)

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***20K LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA***

**By Alexandria Rayford-West, Carlos Washington, & Matt Foss**

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