

20,000 Leagues

by

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TEASER

EXT. OPEN OCEAN - DAY

SUPER: The Pacific, 1899.

A large, steam-powered ship, *The Narwhal*, pulls up next to a small private yacht.

The *Narwhal* launches a series of ropes with hooks attached to them at the yacht, drawing it abreast of its large metal hull.

EXT. THE *NARWHAL*, DECK - DAY

THE CAPTAIN (40s, tall, stern) watches his CREW hoist stolen goods from the captured yacht and lay them on the deck.

He wields a giant multi-pronged FISH HOOK. He's a steam pirate.

PIRATE CAPTAIN

Where are the survivors?

PIRATE

Right 'ere, Cap'n.

A nearby pirate brings forth two hostages: a FATHER (late 30s, fat, well-dressed) clutching his beautiful DAUGHTER (8).

The father sobs.

FATHER

Please, just let her go. I'll give you anything you ask. Please...

The Captain dismisses the father, focusing on his daughter instead.

She looks up at the Captain with hate-filled, dry eyes.

PIRATE CAPTAIN

You're strong. Not like that squalling pig you call a father.

He turns to a pirate CREW MEMBER.

PIRATE CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

She'll come with us.

The pirate crew member wrenches the daughter from her father's grasp.

FATHER

NOOO!

DAUGHTER

DADDY!!!

The Captain grabs the father by the neck.

PIRATE CAPTAIN

As fer you...

The Captain raises his fish hook.

PIRATE CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Run this through yer neck and drag
you behind the ship like shark
bait.

The other pirates laugh as the Captain is about to puncture
the father's neck with the hook.

A huge, sudden swell rocks the ship.

SOMETHING (unseen) breaches next to the boat, drenching it in
seawater as it rises.

Up

And Up...

And Up...

Most disturbing of all, *it is completely silent.*

MYSTERIOUS POV: The pirates stare up at the enormous thing in
wide-eyed terror. A few cross themselves.

Only the daughter seems unafraid. She's in awe.

PIRATE CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Bloody Hell--

MYSTERIOUS POV: Whatever hovers above the deck rushes down at
the Captain until it's right in his SCREAMING FACE.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. CITY OF VERN - DAY

Flying through the sky, we pass a lumbering zeppelin as it hovers towards...

SUPER: The City of Vern.

It looks like a steam-punk San Francisco.

We settle on a massive shipping port full of steam-powered cranes and large container ships.

EXT. DOCKS, SHIPPING PORT - DAY

A ratty-looking DRUG SMUGGLER (teenager, tattoos, carrying a gun) deftly sprints between large wooden shipping containers.

He FIRES his gun at his pursuer: JULES (28, boyish, lean, a man of steely determination, wearing a trenchcoat).

Jules dodges the smuggler's shot and pulls a gun of his own.

JULES
Police! Stop!

The drug smuggler fumbles while reloading his gun. Accidentally drops it.

JULES (CONT'D)
(raising his gun)
Hands above your head. Now.

As the smuggler puts up his hands he drops a small grenade.

The grenade BURSTS into a massive cloud of steam, obscuring the smuggler as he continues running.

JULES (CONT'D)
Damn!

EXT. FISHING DOCKS - DAY

Elsewhere...

The drug smuggler reaches the end of a dock next to some moored shrimp boats. He looks back.

Jules has almost caught up.

The smuggler jumps into the water. Disappears beneath the waves.

Jules reaches the end of the dock. Hesitates.

FLASHCUT: A *YOUNG BOY* underwater. *Arms flailing. Struggling for the surface. Bubbles everywhere.*

Jules remains on the dock.

IN THE WATER

The drug smuggler laughs at Jules.

DRUG SMUGGLER
Can't swim can ya, Dick?

The smuggler swims off into the harbor, disappearing behind a shrimp boat.

ON THE DOCK

Jules jumps aboard a...

EXT. SHRIMP BOAT - DAY

He runs past the BOAT CAPTAIN, flashing his badge.

JULES
Outta my way.

EXT. SHRIMP BOAT, STERN - DAY

Jules pulls a lever, causing a massive net to drop into the water. Right on top of...

The drug smuggler.

MOMENTS LATER

Jules brings the net containing the sopping wet drug smuggler over the stern of the boat.

JULES
Where are they?

CUT TO:

EXT. PORT OF VERN, DOCKS - DAY

A pile of bricks containing white powder lays on the dock.

Vern City POLICE OFFICERS stack more blocks on top.

Jules stands nearby with a group of handcuffed DRUG SMUGGLERS, including the one he was chasing earlier.

Phosphorous CAMERA FLASHES light up the scene.

The chief of Vern City P.D., HAROLD MONTROSE (50s, bloated, walrus-mustache) stands at a podium full of press microphones.

MONTROSE

Today we struck a major blow to the opribrum market. These illicit narcotics were bound for our city's streets: its businesses, its customers, its families. This is how we will win our war on drugs. With swift and definitive justice. Are there any questions?

More camera flashes. Hands shoot up in the air. VOICES calling out questions.

MONTROSE (CONT'D)

(pointing)

Yes, you?

ANXIOUS REPORTER

Have you made any leads on the Leviathan?

WELL-DRESSED REPORTER

Do you know what kind of sea creature it is?

SLEAZY REPORTER

Is it actually a being from another world?

CONCERNED REPORTER

When will you close the beaches?
You need to close the beaches!

MONTROSE

Are there any questions regarding the recent drug crackdown?

The reporters grow quiet.

MONTROSE (CONT'D)

Then there will be no further questions at all, thank you.

Montrose leaves the podium as the reporters continue to fire off QUESTIONS regarding the "Leviathan" and its threat to the city.

EXT. VERN POLICE HQ - DAY

OFFICERS come and go from a stark building in the center of downtown.

INT. VERN POLICE HQ, CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY

Montrose sits behind his massive desk, spits chewing tobacco into an old coffee cup, looking at...

Jules, who sits before him.

MONTROSE

We have to do something.

JULES

Chief, with all due respect, this thing is a myth created to sell newspapers. We should continue focusing on the real problems affecting our citizens.

MONTROSE

This is a *real* problem, Detective. There have been reports of vessels sunk off our shores. Eyewitness accounts. Even photos.

Montrose shows Jules the latest *Daily Vern*.

The front page headline boasts "Leviathan Rises, Demon of the Deep" along with a grainy image showing something large and black just beneath the waves.

JULES

(taking the paper)

They turned a bed of Sargasso weed into a monster.

MONTROSE

I don't care if the monster's real. The fear *is what matters*. People are boycotting our beaches and tourist season is right around the corner. Major shipping companies have even threatened to stop coming to our ports.

JULES

Cause they're afraid of some mythical beast?

MONTROSE

Real or imagined, fear is a very powerful force, Detective.

JULES

What do you propose?

The chief points to a painting on the far wall. It depicts an old whaling ship on stormy seas.

MONTROSE

The newspapers are calling for a show. So we'll give them a show. The city recently purchased an old military frigate. I want to use it to go after this thing.

Jules laughs.

Montrose's seriousness tells him it's no joke.

MONTROSE (CONT'D)

You know the docks and surrounding sea better than anyone on the force. You can get the best harpooners, best navigators.

JULES

You want me to do this? But there is no Leviathan.

The chief slams his heavy fist on the desk

MONTROSE

I don't care if you have to cut up a sperm whale and call it the beast. Just deliver the city a body and put this thing to rest.

Jules looks up at the chief, uneasy.

EXT. HIGH SEAS - EVENING

A tall, ironclad frigate, *Moravian*, bounces along in rough seas beneath an overcast sky.

EXT. MORAVIAN, DECK - EVENING

Various CREW MEMBERS of the frigate vomit overboard as the ship climbs and falls with each swell.

Ned (40s, Nordic, muscular and imposing) strides along the deck. He carries a harpoon.

NED
 (re: seasick crew)
 Bunch of land lubbin' greenhorns.
 This isn't even a real squall.

Ned grabs a SEASICK SAILOR who's hanging over the side of the ship.

NED (CONT'D)
 Where's the detective?

SEASICK SAILOR
 Still in his cabin, sir.

NED
 'Course he is.

Ned throws the seasick sailor aside as he walks below decks.

INT. MORAVIAN, CREW QUARTERS - DAY

Ned can barely fit inside the cramped hallways. His long harpoon scrapes against the ceiling.

INT. JULES' QUARTERS - DAY

When Ned enters, he sees Jules vomiting into a wastebasket, next to his desk.

NED
 Sweet Neptune's Beard. You too. Ya haven't been on deck this whole trip.

JULES
 Guess I haven't earned my sea legs, yet.

NED
 It's better topside. At least you don't have to deal with the stench.

Jules washes his face in a small sink.

JULES

Have there... been any sightings?

Ned shakes his head no.

Jules sighs, writes "No sightings" in his logbook. There are at least twenty other entries with the exact same note.

JULES (CONT'D)

That's it. I'm calling it off.

DECKHAND (O.S.)

Detective!

Jules and Ned turn to see a DECKHAND (14, carrying a telescope) at the door. His face is ashen with fear.

INT. MORAVIAN, BRIDGE - EVENING

Jules, Ned and the deckhand stand at the bridge of the ship along with the ELDERLY CAPTAIN.

The deckhand gives his telescope to Jules as he points out to sea.

DECKHAND

Off the starboard bow.

Jules looks through the telescope.

THROUGH TELESCOPE: A large, dark shape has breached the stormy surface. Its features remain hidden by its violent wake. *The thing is as big and as fast as the frigate.*

ELDERLY CAPTAIN

Thank God it's moving away from the ship. I don't think we could take a direct attack.

JULES

We're gonna need the whole damn navy.

Ned takes the telescope from Jules.

NED

(looking through
telescope)

About time.

Ned gives the telescope back to the deckhand.

NED (CONT'D)
Bring her abreast of the beast. I
got something special.

JULES
What could possibly stop something
that size?

NED
(beaming)
The Trident!

CUT TO:

EXT. MORAVIAN, BOW - EVENING

Ned and a bunch of other CREW MEMBERS pull a massive tarp off of a giant harpoon gun mounted to the frigate's bow. It's loaded with three twenty-foot long spears.

The young deckhand looks up at the giant weapon in awe.

DECKHAND
Wow.

Ned climbs up into the gunner's chair. He looks through a sight atop the center barrel, lines it up with the beast.

The Trident billows steam as its powerful engine moves it into position.

INSIDE THE TRIDENT

Ned puts his finger on the trigger. Says a silent prayer.

Then FIRES.

EXT. HIGH SEAS - EVENING

An EXPLOSION of steam sends all three massive spears off the starboard bow.

The giant metal missiles strike the backside of the Leviathan only to BOUNCE OFF uselessly.

Moments later, the Leviathan turns towards the *Moravian*.

INT. MORAVIAN, BRIDGE - EVENING

Jules turns to the captain.

JULES
It's turning around.

CAPTAIN
Jesus.

The captain sees the oncoming creature. Its wake is even larger now, moving faster. Too fast.

The captain turns on the shipboard intercom.

EXT. MORAVIAN, BOW - EVENING

Ned climbs out of the Trident just as a nearby intercom announces:

CAPTAIN (O.S.)
(over intercom)
All hands brace for impact.

Ned picks up his harpoon.

NED
Like Hell.

He stands at the bow with his harpoon. Waiting.

The Leviathan approaches. It's so close, Ned can finally make out its dark backside. It appears to be made of...

Metal?

Ned pulls up his harpoon, confused.

The Leviathan disappears beneath the waves about a hundred yards from the bow.

EXT. MORAVIAN, DECK - EVENING

Moments later, two giant MECHANICAL TENTACLES shoot out of the water and latch onto the ship's iron hull.

CREW MEMBERS cry out in surprise and terror as they watch the tentacles bore into the sides of the ship with razor sharp titanium hooks.

Water floods into the ship.

An emergency KLAXON blares.

EXT. HIGH SEAS - EVENING

The tentacles begin pulling the *Moravian* underwater.

EXT. MORAVIAN, DECK - EVENING

Ned FIRES his harpoon at a nearby tentacle.

As the harpoon punctures the tentacle's scaly hide, it spews ELECTRICITY and steam onto the deck.

NED

What kind of devilry is this?

EXT. MORAVIAN, AFT DECK - EVENING

Dozens of FRIGHTENED SAILORS crowd onto a lifeboat as water spills over onto the deck.

The deckhand drags Jules out onto the deck. He's wearing a life vest.

DECKHAND

Come on. We have to abandon ship.

Jules hyperventilates as he feels the water rise over his ankles.

JULES

Wait. Wait. I need another life jacket.

DECKHAND

There's life jackets on the boat, Detective.

Just then, the deck of the ship is yanked...

UNDERWATER

Jules and the deckhand are pulled under with it.

Moments later, Jules loses his grip on the deckhand who vanishes into the inky black water.

Panicked, Jules desperately kicks for the surface...

FLASHES of when he was a CHILD, drowning in a small lake. YOUNG JULES makes the same flailing motion.

BACK TO PRESENT

The immense down force of the sinking ship drags Jules into the DEEP.

Certain to drown.

END ACT ONE