

CLASSICS RETOLD

A JOURNEY To The CENTRE Of The EARTH



By Jules Verne

Learn English Through Story

Journey to the Centre of the Earth

By Jules Verne

Level 1

Retold by Elizabeth Gray

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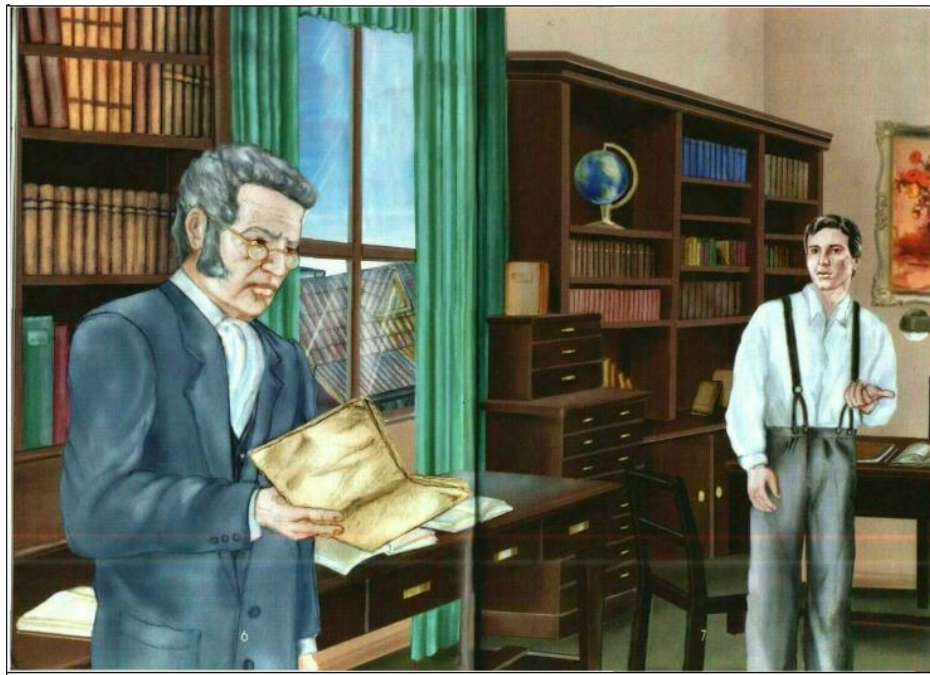
Chapter One

A Strange Message

Otto Lidenbrock is the famous professor of geology at the University of Hamburg, in Germany. He is also my uncle. He is sixty-five years old, not very tall, with grey hair. He wears small round gold glasses that make him look very serious.

I'm Axel. I'm only nineteen and the professor's personal assistant. I watch my uncle very carefully when he works. That's why I know so much about our planet - Earth.

My uncle, the professor, is a hard worker. He spends most of his day in his laboratory at the University, so he never comes home before two o'clock for lunch. But yesterday, he came home very early. This surprised Martha, our cook. The poor old girl did not have the lunch ready and she was a little upset.



"Professor, you're early!"

"Never mind, Martha. I don't want lunch today."

"But, professor, you must eat!"

The professor looked excited.

"Martha, food is not important."

Then he turned to me. "Axel, come with me."

He took me into his library. It was a big room with lots of book cases against the walls and heavy velvet curtains in front of the windows. In the middle of the room, there was a desk where my uncle spent most of his evenings.

He took an old book out of his coat pocket. He looked at me.

"Axel, look at this! Look at this!"

I took it from his hand. Its cover was hard and it looked very old.

"Why, what is it professor?"

"I found it today in an old bookshop. It's seven hundred years old."

"What's it about?"

"It's about the old princes from Norway who came to live in Iceland."

"Why is that so special?"

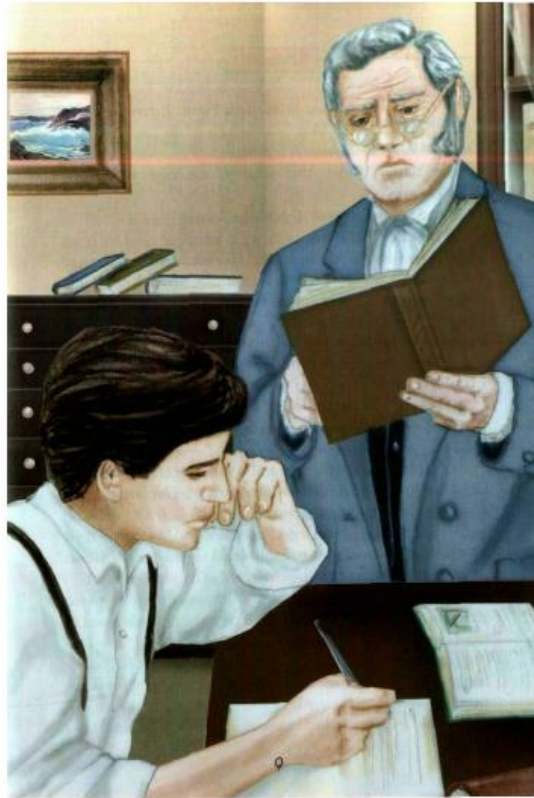
He smiled and said, "Because it is written in a language that no one uses anymore."

I opened the book and saw strange letters from a strange alphabet. I did not understand any of it. I turned its yellow pages and a piece of paper fell out of the book onto the floor. The professor jumped on it.

"What's this?"

It was an old yellow piece of paper with the same strange letters on it. The professor knew many languages, but he could not read this old language from Iceland. He took a thick book from one of the shelves. It was a dictionary for all the old languages in the world which people do not speak today. Then, he gave me a piece of paper and a pencil.

"Axel, write down these letters as I read them to you."



The professor read each letter to me and I wrote them down.

When we finished, this is what they said:

Go into the volcano at Sneffells Yokul. Before the first of July, the sun will show you the way to the centre of the earth. Make this journey. It is fantastic.

The name under this strange message was 'Arne Saknussemm'.

"Arne Saknussemm! I don't believe it!"

"Who's she?"

"He was a famous scientist. He wrote many strange things about the earth, but no one believed him. They said he was crazy. This must be the answer to the things he said. He left this piece of paper in the old book for someone to find. Do you understand, Axel, how lucky we are?" Then, he turned to the library door. "Martha!"

I couldn't understand any of the things my uncle said.

"What do you mean, we?"

Martha opened the door to the library.

"Did you want me, sir?"

"Yes, Martha. I want you to buy us two train tickets to Denmark. Master Axel and I are going to Iceland."

This was the biggest surprise of my life!

"What?! Uncle, I can't go."

The professor looked at me calmly.

"You can and you will."

Chapter Two

Grauben

There is a seventeen-year-old girl living in our town. I think she is the most beautiful girl in Germany. She's got long blonde hair and bright blue eyes. Her name is Grauben, and we are in love. We want to get married. That's why I didn't want to go with my uncle on his mysterious trip. But he couldn't understand that.

"Are you in love with Grauben?"

"Yes."

"And you want to marry her?"

"Yes."

The professor was silent. He was a good man, but he could not understand love because his only interest was science. He forgot what I said and began to talk about our journey.

"Today is the 26th of May. We have one month to get to Sneffells. We're going to take the train to Denmark, and then we'll take a boat to Iceland. The whole trip is going to take twelve days, then we have to walk to the volcano."

I could not listen to him anymore. My heart felt heavy. The professor needed an assistant and he did not want anyone else to know about this secret. But how could I leave my Grauben?

I went for a walk through the beautiful city of Hamburg. I walked along the Elbe river thinking of Grauben. I stopped for a moment to look at a fishing boat sailing on the calm water. Then I turned and, like magic, she was there. Grauben, my Grauben, stood twenty feet away, looking at the river.



"Grauben!"

She looked like an angel.

We ran into each other's arms and kissed.

"Oh, Axel! I'm so excited!"

She sounded very happy, but I couldn't understand why. "Excited? Why are you excited, my love?"

"I was at your house. I heard about your journey. Isn't it wonderful?"

For a moment, I felt sad. So, Grauben wanted me to go away from her!

"But, Grauben, we want to get married. I don't know when I'm coming back."

She looked at me lovingly and held my hand.

"It doesn't matter. I'll still wait for you. Don't you understand? This is the kind of journey all great men must make. When you come back, you're going to be famous like your uncle. Then, our life will be perfect together."

"Do you really mean that?"

She touched my face and smiled.

"Of course I do."

"Oh, Grauben, you are the most wonderful girl in the world!" Back at my uncle's house, I felt excited. Then, I thought of something. Maybe this adventure was too dangerous. Maybe we wouldn't come back. I ran into the library where my uncle was. "Uncle, is it possible that we won't come back from this journey?" His answer didn't make me feel any better.

"There's only one way to find out, Axel ..."

Chapter Three

Iceland

It was very early in the morning when the boat got to Iceland. We could see the round body of the Sneffells Yokul volcano going up into the sky through the clouds. It had snow near the top, and it looked like an angry monster waiting for someone to try and climb it.

The boat stopped at Reykjavik. It was a small town with small brick houses. Mr Fridriksson, a professor from the university there, met us at the boat. He looked very friendly and smiled when he saw us.

"You must be professor Lidenbrock."

"And you must be professor Fridriksson. This is my assistant, Axel."

We shook hands.

"You got my letter, then."

"Oh, yes, professor, and everything is ready for you. Please, come with me."

My uncle did not tell anyone the real reason for our journey. He wanted the two of us to be the only ones to travel to the centre of the earth. But we needed someone to go along with us as we didn't know the area, and the ice and snow around the volcano was too dangerous. So, Mr Fridriksson found us a guide. His name was Hans and he looked perfect for the job. He was tall and very strong. He had small blue eyes and long red hair. He almost never smiled or spoke.



Mr Fridriksson introduced us.

"Professor Lidenbrock, this is Hans. Hans, professor Lidenbrock and his assistant, Axel."

Hans moved his head just a little to say hello.

"Hans is a very quiet man, like most Icelanders, but he is the strongest and best climber in Reykjavik."

My uncle smiled at Mr Fridriksson's words.

"He's just perfect, Mr Fridriksson."

Mr Fridriksson let us stay at his house until we were ready to leave. We needed many things for our adventure. We took four horses to travel to the mountain. The professor and I each rode one, but Hans walked. The other two horses carried our bags.

We took a lot of things with us: rope for climbing, tools, lights, guns, medicine and enough food for six months. The only problem was we could only carry enough water for one week. The professor believed there was water under the volcano, but what if there wasn't?

We left Reykjavik on the 15th of June, early in the morning. We travelled along the sea and it was a wonderful journey. The land had a dark colour from the explosions of the volcano, and the beautiful blue sea next to it made it look fantastic. The journey to Sneffels took us six days, and each day we stopped in a different village for the night. The villages were small and very pretty, built at the foot of the volcano, next to the sea. The villagers were very nice, but, like Hans, they did not talk much.

When we got closer to the top of Sneffels, I thought of something.

"Uncle, what happens if the volcano explodes again?"

"No, that's impossible. This volcano had its last explosion in 1229. I checked the ground. It's impossible."

"But..."

"Axel, I am a scientist. This is a fact. There is nothing more to say."

It was now eleven o'clock at night and we were at the top. We stopped and found a small place inside the opening of the volcano where we could sleep. That

night, I had a dream. I saw that I was alone inside the volcano. I was lost and very scared. Suddenly, the volcano exploded and I was shot out of its top like a rock!



Chapter Four

Inside the Volcano

The mouth of the volcano was one mile wide. We tied a rope around each other and began to climb down. Hans went first. The inside of the volcano looked like the inside of an ice-cream cone. Its opening became smaller as we went down because of the rocks left there after explosions.

The bottom of the volcano was 2,000 feet down. When we got there, I looked up and saw the opening at the top. It was a perfect circle of clear blue sky.

There were three holes in the floor of the volcano. Each of them was about a hundred feet wide. The explosion of rocks and hot lava once came through these holes and then out through the top. Now, they looked like dark caves. I looked at the holes and then turned to my uncle.

"Which one do we take?"

"I don't know. Ame Saknussem said the sun touches one of them at the end of June. Today is June 25th. It is too late to see the sun today. We must wait until tomorrow."

"What if it's cloudy tomorrow?"

"Then, we will wait again. But we only have five more days. In July, the sun is too low. It cannot reach the bottom of the volcano."

"Then, we can go home?"

"Axel, don't say such things! Tomorrow will be sunny, and we are going to the centre of the earth."

The next day it was cloudy. The professor could not believe it.

"Four days. We only have four days. Please, please, sun, come out, come out!"

The professor looked up at the sky with his arms open. The only thing he wanted now was to see the sun shine. I thought of Grauben and the danger waiting for my uncle and myself inside those holes. I hoped for rain.

Hans built a small house from the large rocks he found on the floor of the volcano. He never said much, but he always thought of something useful to do. I checked the rock of the volcano walls to see how old they were. Drops of water from

the ice and the snow outside ran down the wall, and the sound they made inside was like music. Suddenly, the professor called out my name.

"Axel! Axel, come here."

I ran to him curious to see what was there.

"What is it?"

"Look at this!"

There were two words on the wall of the volcano in the old Icelandic language.

"What does it say?"

"Arne Saknussemm. He was here. We're in the right place."

The next day, the sun came out, and at 1:13 in the afternoon, it touched the hole in the centre of the floor.

"That's it. That's the hole to the centre of the earth. Let's go."

Hans brought our bags, but there was one problem. We could not carry all of them and climb down the hole at the same time.



"What must we do now?"

The professor took off his glasses and cleaned them while he tried to think of a solution.

"Well, we'll throw everything we don't need down the hole and we'll find it when we get to the bottom."

Hans threw the bags down the hole in front of us. We listened, but we never heard them hit the bottom.

Chapter Five

Lost in the Tunnels

We put our rope through holes in the rocks on the sides of the walls, then climbed down. Hans went first, then my uncle, then me. Every two hundred feet, we found a flat rock to stop on. We pulled the rope down from above us, tied it to a new rock, then started again. We did this for almost ten hours. We travelled 2,000 feet down.

Finally, Hans said something.

"Stop!"

It was only one word, but it was nice to finally hear his voice.

"What happened?"

"We're at the bottom."

The professor and I looked at him.

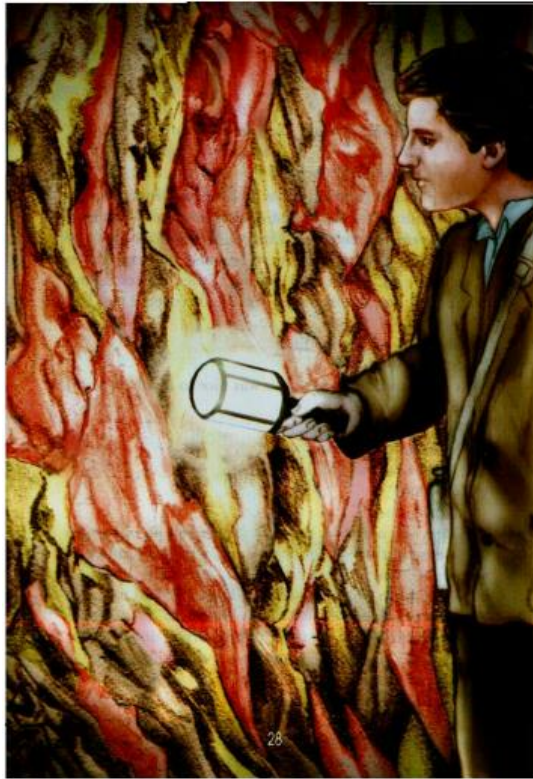
"Of what?"

"I don't know."

There was a turn in the hole. There was an open area like a cave at the bottom of the hole, which continued to the right. Our bags were there. After ten hours of climbing down, we were very tired. We decided to spend the night there.

In the morning, we continued our journey down.

The hole now opened and looked more like a tunnel. We did not need to climb because we could walk down this tunnel. We used our torches, so we could see the rock on the walls clearly. It looked like glass of different colours. Some of it was red, some was brown, and some was yellow. My uncle saw me looking at it.



"That's from the lava."

"It's beautiful."

"So, you're starting to enjoy our journey. There's more to see. Come along."

We walked for two more days and we found other tunnels. There were tunnels everywhere, but we did not know which was the right one. Unluckily, our water finished.

"Now, what are we going to do?"

"We're going to find a spring. There are many, but we have to go down further."

I could not move. I was very tired and thirsty and thinking of Grauben.

"Uncle, I can't go on."

"Axel, please. We are going to find water."

"Water!"

It was Hans' voice.

"What did you say?"

"Water!"

There was a loud sound behind the wall next to us. It sounded like the water of a river. Hans took a pickaxe and made a hole in the wall. Water came out onto the floor around us.

"I told you, Axel. Water! Ow! It's hot. Don't touch it. It needs air. We're too far underground."



The water was cold enough to drink after a few minutes and we all felt strong again. We continued our journey but I made a serious mistake. I was very excited about finding the water and I went first. I walked too far in front of the others and I got lost. I tried to go back, but I could not find them.

I shouted their names.

"Uncle! Hans!"

I could only hear my own voice in the tunnel. I was afraid. I ran. Then I fell. I fell through the air down a long tunnel. Then I hit my head and everything went black around me.

Chapter Six

An Underground Water-World

When I opened my eyes, I heard the sound of the sea. The sun was high in the sky. But this was not possible! We were under the ground! My uncle stood over me.

"He's OK, Hans."

I saw Hans smile. My head hurt. I touched it and I felt a bandage on it. I tried to speak, but it was difficult.

"Where are we?"

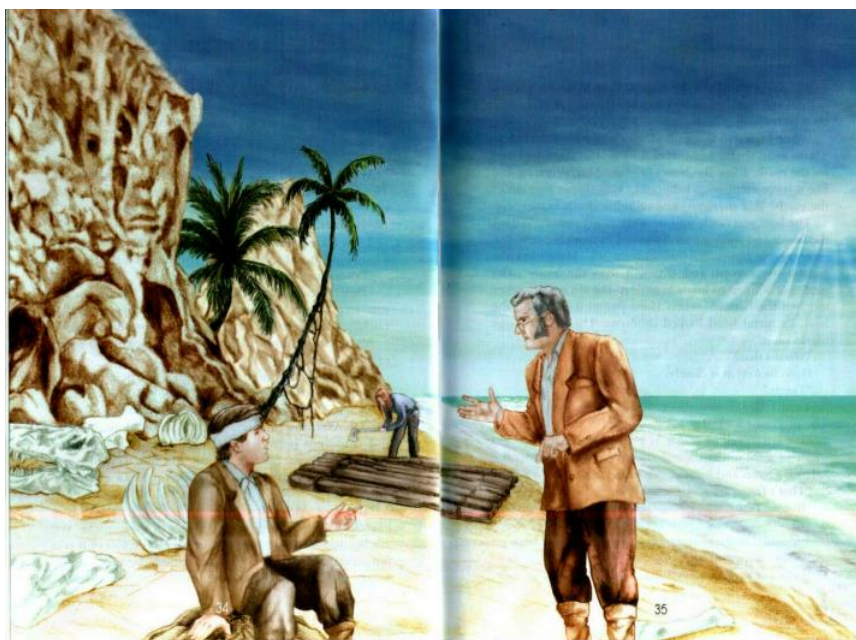
"Don't speak, Axel. You had a terrible fall. We heard you screaming. We were in a tunnel next to yours. Luckily, the two channels came out here, on this beach."

My uncle sat down next to me and spoke with more excitement in his voice.

"Axel, we found an underground sea. There are trees here and the bones of animals that lived thousands of years ago. When you get better, we are sailing across this sea. Oh Axel, you can't imagine how happy I am!"

I could not move much for two days. I heard Hans building a boat for us to sail in, but I could not understand how there was light. The professor explained this to me.

"It is a mystery, like so many things, but it is something like electricity coming from the heat of these rocks. We are inside something like a giant cave. The top of it is a few miles high. There are even clouds because of the water."



I looked up and saw the clouds. I could not see the top of this cave, but it was difficult to believe that all of this was under the earth.

When I felt strong again, I took a walk along the beach. There were shells there from a time before man walked on the earth. I saw the bones of something which looked like a huge elephant. I thought, 'Can things live under the earth? Are there any animals alive down here?'

The boat was ready and we were ready to sail. We left the beach and a strong wind pushed us quickly out to sea. After a few hours on this strange sea, Hans tied the pickaxe to a rope and threw it into the water. The professor wanted to know how deep the sea was. It never touched the bottom. When Hans pulled it back into the boat, its metal head looked different. There were large marks on it.

"What's that?"

Hans looked at it closely.

"Teeth."

Teeth? Could something so big live in these waters? The professor looked at his compass.

"We are travelling south. If I am right, we left Iceland when we went under the volcano. We travelled under the Atlantic Ocean and now we are under Scotland."

"That's fantastic!"

"But we're still not going down. I want to go further down!"

Suddenly, there were huge waves rocking the boat.

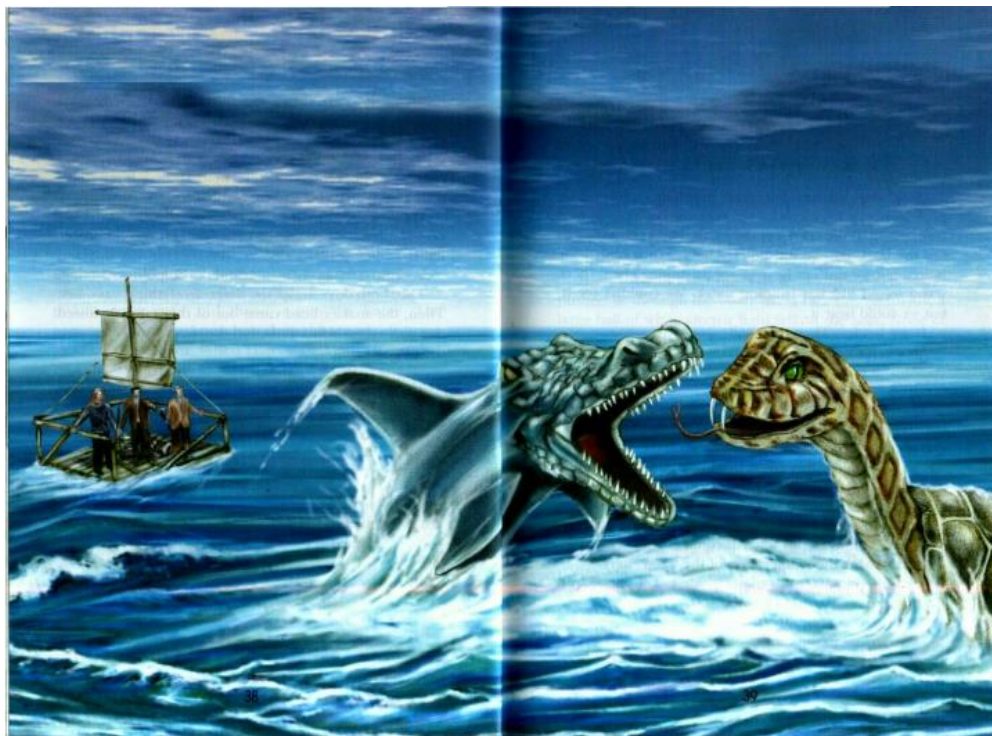
"What's happening?"

Hans pointed to something dark about a mile away from us. It came closer and I thought I saw a giant dolphin. I was wrong. It was an alligator. It came closer and I saw that I was wrong again. It was something with the body of a dolphin and the head of an alligator. It was over one hundred feet long. Then, I saw a huge snake with a shell on its back like a turtle's.

We took the guns in our hands, but the animals did not care about us. They fought each other. It was a horrible fight.

We heard the snake hissing and the dolphin screaming.

They both dove under the water. Everything was quiet. Then, the snake's head came out of the water. It hissed one more time before it died in the water. But where was the monster dolphin?



Chapter Seven

A Terrible Storm

Now, our journey felt even more dangerous. The professor was frightened, but nothing could stop him from going to the centre of the earth. Hans continued to sail the boat, but we did not see land. We travelled for hours, but we did not hear or see anything. Then, there was a sound like fast running water. We couldn't see it, but we could hear it.

It got louder. Then we saw it.

"Look, it's water shooting up into the air!"

"And it's coming from the body of a huge sea creature."

We tried to turn the boat, but the waves pulled us near the creature. For a moment, I thought that this was the end of our journey. The water went up 500 feet high into the air. An animal that could do this, could kill us easily. Then, we saw that the long black body we thought was an animal, was an island. It was like a small volcano, shooting up water, instead of lava.

"That's where all this water is coming from."

"Axel, check the temperature of the water here."

I took a thermometer out of my inside jacket pocket and I put it in the water for a few seconds.

"163 degrees Fahrenheit."

"We're close to the centre."

"We can't go on, uncle. It's too hot."

"We must."

The electric light coming from the rocks over our heads began to make explosions. The clouds were now near the water. Small lines of light that looked like snakes exploded all around us. The waves were bigger now and pushed us away. I was very scared.

"What's happening?"

The explosions were too loud for us to hear each other.

"It's an electrical storm, Hans!"

Hans tried to keep the boat from sinking. The wind pushed us through the water like a race car. Suddenly, a large ball of white electric light fell on the boat. None of us could move. It held our feet with its electric power. We shouted to each other, but none of us could hear anything. The boat moved by itself, and there was nothing we could do. Suddenly, the ball of electricity exploded.

We all fell down and a huge wave threw us into the water.

Hans had the professor in one arm and me in the other. I don't know how he did it, but he got us to land safely. I began to think that all the energy he saved by not talking, made him the strongest man on earth.

The storm stopped and we saw the boat, still on the water, a hundred feet away.

Hans swam out to save our food and equipment. The professor and I tried to understand where we were.

"I think that sea is 800 miles wide."

"That means we went under Europe. The Mediterranean sea is now over our heads!"



"Let's wait for Hans to bring back the compass."

When Hans brought back the compass, the professor and I could not believe what we saw. It said we were north and not south. That meant the wind took us back to the place where we started.



Chapter Eight

A Lost World

We were on the north side of the sea again, but not on the same beach as before. For this reason, we began to look around to see what we could find. The professor didn't want us to stay there for long. He wanted to sail on the sea again.

"Professor, it's too dangerous! You saw what happened."

"I don't care, Axel. I did not come all this way to turn back now. We've got to see what's on the other side of that sea."

This beach was longer than the other one. Its rocks had more holes in them, and I thought this was because of earthquakes. There were many more bones and old shells on this beach.

"Look at all of this, Axel! We can read the whole history of the world from these bones."

There were skeletons of animals that are not living today. It was very exciting to see them out in the open and not in a museum.

"Axel, look! A human head!"

There, with all the other bones, was the head of a man. How did it get here? Did it fall down one of those holes like we did? Was that going to happen to us? The professor was excited.

"If other scientists could see me now! This could be the oldest skeleton ever found!"

We walked further down and the beach changed. Now, there were large trees and small plants around us. The further we went, the more life we found. Suddenly, I saw something move behind the trees. My uncle and I hid. It was a family of mammoths from thousands of years ago.



"Axel, can you believe it? There is another world under our earth!"

"But are there also people here?"

"Yes, look!"

I couldn't believe it. Walking behind the mammoths was a giant man. He was over twelve feet tall with long hair and a beard. He had a piece of animal skin around his waist.

"Should we try to talk to him?"

"No, he looks dangerous. Hans is not with us, and we don't have our guns. Let's go back to the boat."

We ran away quietly, so the prehistoric man did not see us. When we stopped running, we were back at the beach. I saw an old knife on a rock.

"Let's clean this and keep it. It could be useful."

"Axel, don't you understand what this is?"

"Yes, it's a knife."

"But it's made of metal. It is only two or three hundred years old."

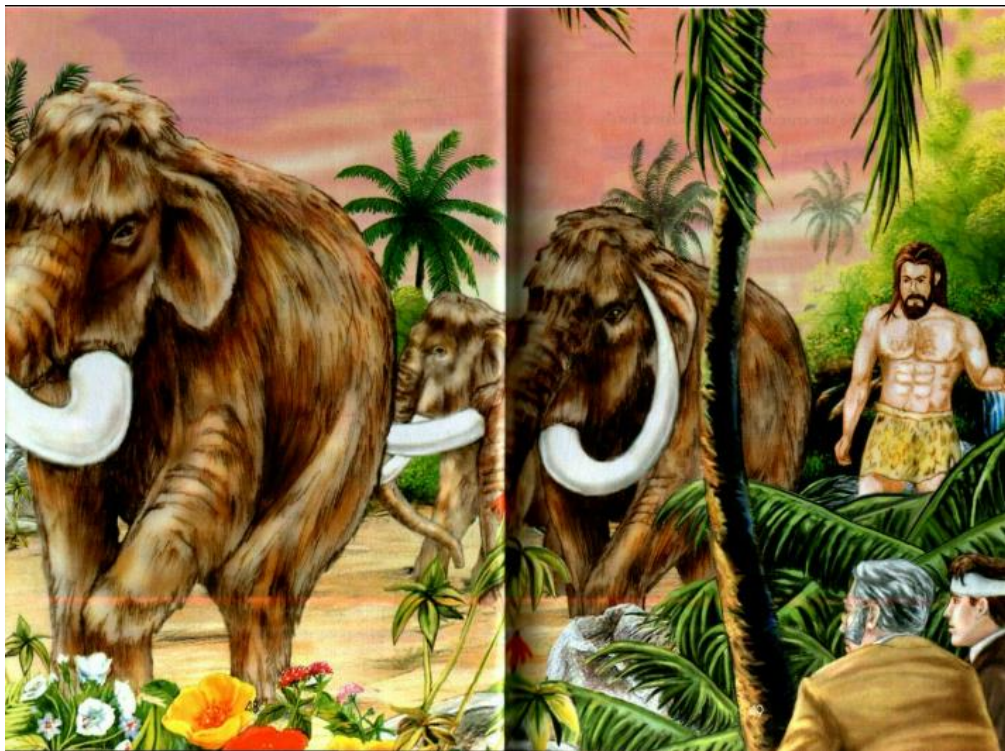
"Do you mean..."

"Yes, Arne Saknussemm!"

The professor saw a cave nearby. He ran to it.

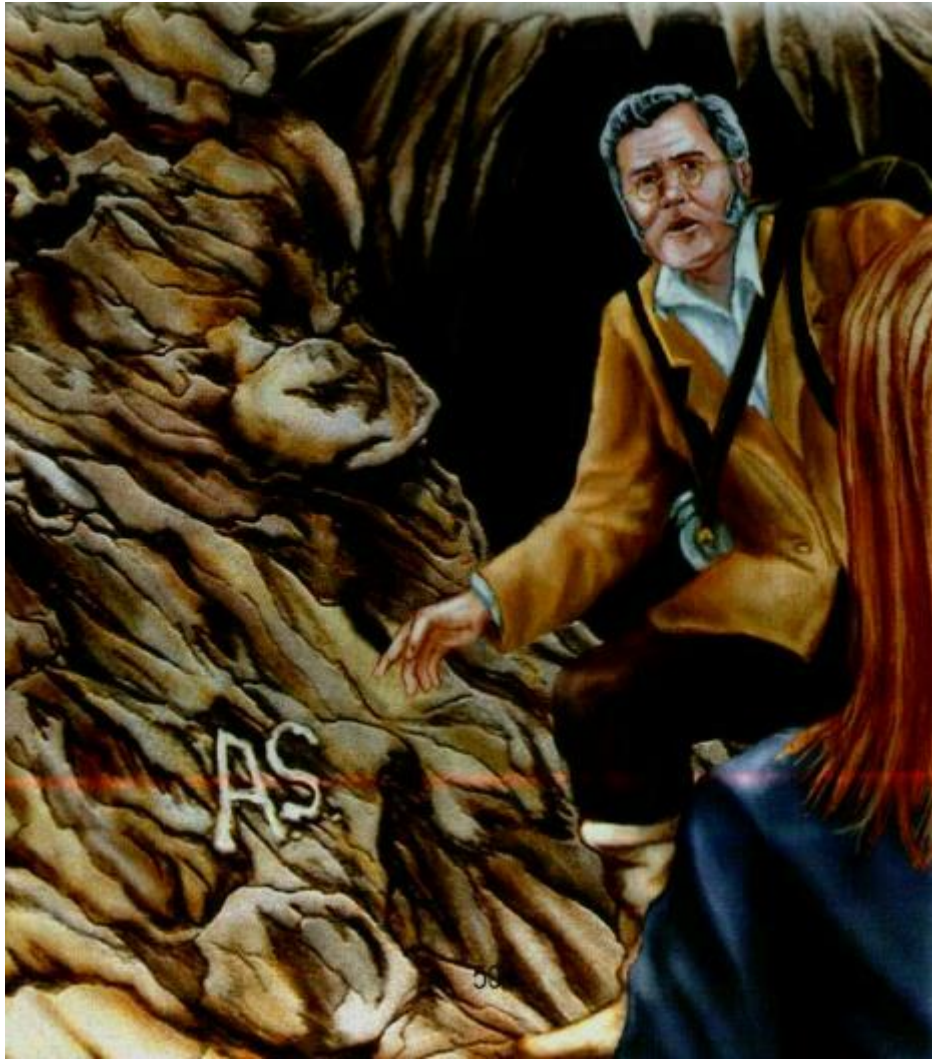
"Axel, it's him!"

On the rock, next to the entrance of this cave, there were two letters in old Icelandic: A.S.



The professor looked very excited.

"This must be the entrance we are looking for."



Chapter Nine

The Last Tunnel

Hans brought the boat to the end of the beach where the cave was. We tied it to a rock in the water and took our bags to the cave.

"Are we going to use the boat again?"

"I don't know. Maybe, if we come back this way. But, who knows where this new tunnel will take us."

We needed the boat sooner than we thought. We walked about twelve feet inside the cave, then we saw a huge rock blocking the tunnel. We couldn't understand it.

"How could Arne Saknussemm get around this rock?" The professor thought for a moment, and then he looked at the rock.

"Maybe it fell after his journey, in the last two hundred years, probably after an earthquake or a terrible storm."

"I wish there was another earthquake to move that rock from the entrance of the cave."

"Axel, that's it! We can use the gun powder to move this rock again."

"Do you think it will work?"

"There's only one way to find out."

We still had some extra gun powder with us for the guns. Hans made a hole in the rock with his pickaxe, then we put the gun powder inside. We used the rope to light it, but we made it very long to give us time to move back and hide.

The three of us got into the boat and moved fifty feet out to sea. We had no idea how big the explosion was going to be. Waiting for it made us very nervous.

"Maybe it won't work."

"Axel! Don't say those things."

We waited. Suddenly, the rocks on the beach opened like two curtains. The earth shook and everything fell into a huge hole. We fell back in the boat, and the final explosion made the sea rise in a huge wave which pushed us back to the beach.

We were in the air, on top of the water, and the hole was below us. It looked big enough to take in all the world!

"We're going down into the hole!"

"That's what we want!"

"Not this way!"

We shouted because the noise of falling rocks was all around us and we couldn't hear each other. The boat moved like a train through the tunnel, then we crashed into a new river of fresh water. The boat went under and came back up so fast that there was very little water in it. I don't know how we stayed in it. We held onto the sides of the boat with all of our strength.

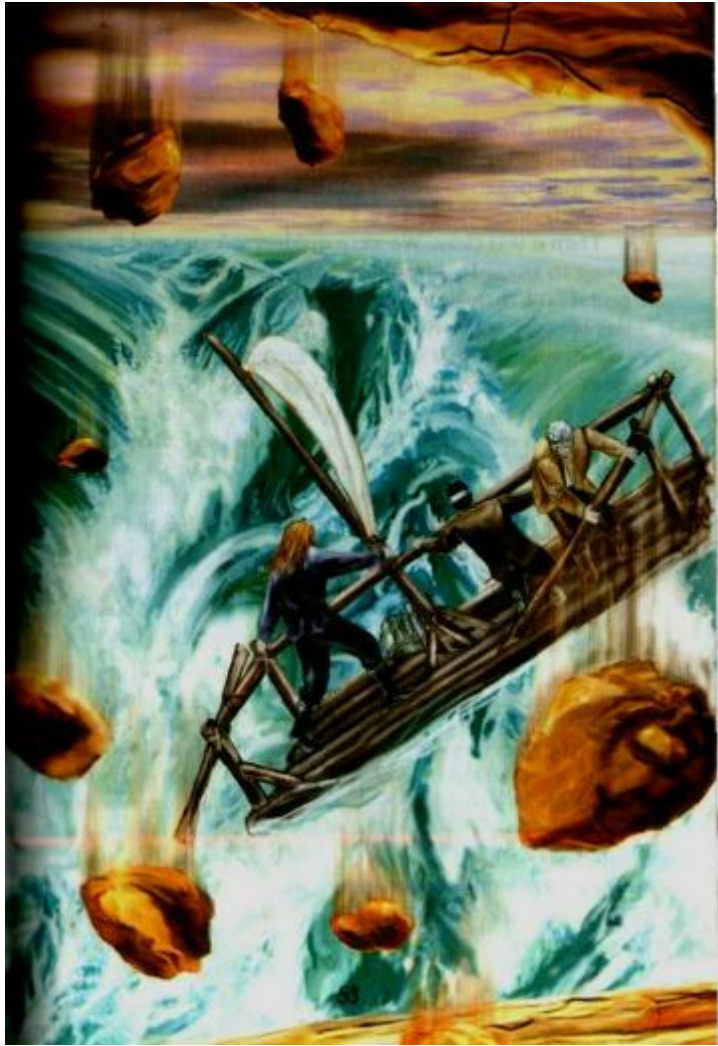
"Professor, where are we?"

"I don't know, but the water is taking us somewhere. We have no choice but to follow it."

"It's getting hot!"

The temperature was high. The walls had the red colour of lava.

"Are we under another volcano?"



When I finished my sentence, we heard a loud roar from behind us. Water and air pushed us forward faster. The walls began to shake and rocks began to fall.

"Professor!"

Then it was clear. We were inside a volcano and it was going to explode. I could see the blue sky through the round hole at the top of the volcano. There was one more terrible roar and we were flying up into the air!

Chapter Ten

Back Home

The volcano threw us into the sea. Hans saved us again with his amazing strength. But where were we? It looked like the surface of the earth. There were small boats in the water and olive and fruit trees on the land. Behind us was the huge volcano. We saw a little boy. We tried to go near him, but he was afraid of us. After all our underground adventures, we looked horrible. The professor spoke to him in German, French and English, but he did not understand. Finally, the boy spoke in Italian.

"What did he say?"

"He said we're in Stromboli, Italy."

"You mean we went in one volcano in Iceland and came out of another in Italy?"

"Yes, and that one there is Mount Etna."

And that was how our journey ended. The professor was not happy that he didn't get to the centre of the earth, but when we got back to Germany, he felt better. Martha told everyone in Hamburg about our journey, and when we arrived, there was a big celebration for us. Everyone in Hamburg was at the train station when we arrived, but the only person I looked for was my Grauben. And I saw her, like a white light, moving past the others, until I could hold her.

"Oh, Axel, I'm so glad you're back. I thought of you every day and sometimes I was afraid, but somehow I knew you were all right."

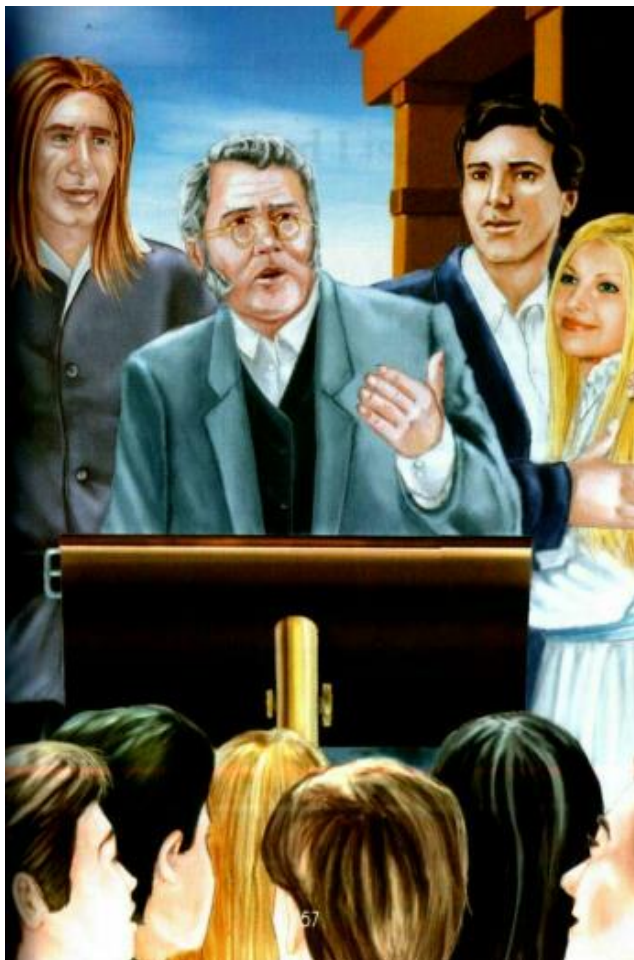
"Well, I never felt that I was safe, but I did want to come back to you, every minute of every day."

There was a stage set up in the station, and the journalists who were there asked the professor to talk about our journey. Uncle Otto was tired, but he agreed.

"My nephew, Axel, and I are now back from an incredible journey."

We saw things that scientists still do not know about. There is life in the heart of this planet. There is water and beaches and trees. Arne Saknussemm, a famous scientist from the sixteenth century, was the first to travel under the earth. We are the second. I do not know if others will try this dangerous adventure in the future. If they do, they need someone like our guide Hans with them, or I'm afraid they will not survive.

For a moment, I thought I saw a smile on Hans' face as the people clapped and cheered. But, as usual, the quiet Icelandic didn't say a word.



— THE END —

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