

DAUGHTER
OF THE
DEEP

BY RICK RIORDAN

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FOREWORD

Don't Pick Up a Starfish by Its Arm

Did you know more than 80 percent of the ocean remains unexplored? EIGHTY, PEOPLE! It is very possible that at this moment a mermaid and a giant squid are munching on macroalgae macaroni and wondering when we're going to catch up and discover that Atlantis was just a theme park that went terribly wrong. Who knows?

No one can say for certain, because so much of the ocean is unknown. And I am terrified of the unknown, so it goes without saying that I am absolutely terrified of the ocean. Perhaps it started when, at the age of ten, I picked up a starfish by one of its arms . . . and soon found myself holding a single wiggling appendage. At the time, I didn't know that starfish arms could regenerate. I believed I was a murderer. I fell to my knees and bellowed with horror. (CURSE YE, FORMIDABLE MIGHT! SUCH INNOCENCE . . . DESTROYED! DOES THIS MEAN I CAN PERMANENTLY SKIP GYM?)

But the more that something terrifies me, the more I tend to obsess over it. And ever since that fateful starfish encounter, the ocean, with its strange inhabitants—that's right, I'm looking at you, various *echinoderms* and *ophiuroids*—has loomed large in my mind as a place of unknowable power, unimaginable beauty, and untapped potential.

Rick Riordan's *Daughter of the Deep* captures every single facet of that awe and terror.

If you have ever craved a story that will leave your heart racing, your lungs gasping from numerous twists and turns, your soul heaving from the effort of carrying around an ensemble

cast that includes smol, ingenious, and possibly bloodthirsty cinnamon rolls (oh, and a humongous creature of the deep who, truly, just wants love), you will find all that and more in the pages ahead. Our story begins with two warring schools and a cataclysmic event that sends the freshman class of the elite Harding-Pencroft Academy on a deadly mission to unearth a secret about the kind of technological power that can remake the world. I was on the edge of my seat the whole time as the crew navigated high-tech high jinks, deep-sea riddles, and the sort of military tactics that somehow make *me* feel smarter despite the fact that I have been ensconced in a soft blankie for the better part of the day.

I cannot think of a better captain to helm this watery adventure than the formidable Ana Dakkar. Ana is everything I wished I could be at fifteen. Fearless, brilliant, a linguistic whiz, friends with a dolphin named Socrates, and—most importantly to a daydreaming adolescent Rosh—burdened with an ancestral legacy that is the stuff of legends.

You see, Ana is one of the last descendants of Captain Nemo, and that's where things get complicated. As the last of the Dakkars, Ana not only finds herself grappling with an inheritance that could change the entire world's understanding of technology, but she's also struggling with larger questions, like what are we owed, and what do we owe others? It's easy to make the right decisions when all the world is watching, but when you're deep underwater, where the sun can't see you, you might just end up doing something you never expected. . . .

To me, this story is a lot like the ocean. Equal parts thrilling and terrifying, and, no matter which way you look at it, downright cool. Enjoy! And don't eat too many cinnamon rolls.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rohani Chokshi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'R' and 'C'.

INTRODUCTION

My journey under the sea started in landlocked Bologna, Italy, in 2008. I was there for a children’s book fair, right before *The Battle of the Labyrinth* and *The 39 Clues: The Maze of Bones* were scheduled for release. I was having dinner in the basement of a restaurant with about fourteen of the top brass from Disney Publishing when the president of the division turned to me and said, “Rick, is there any existing Disney intellectual property you’d love to write about?” I didn’t hesitate in saying, “*20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.” It took me another twelve years before I was ready to write it, but my version of that story is now in your hands.



Who is Captain Nemo? (No, not the cartoon fish.)

If you’re not familiar with the original Captain Nemo, he’s a character created by the French author Jules Verne in the nineteenth century. Verne wrote about him in two novels, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1870) and *The Mysterious Island* (1875), in which Nemo commands the world’s most advanced submarine, the *Nautilus*.

Captain Nemo was smart, well-educated, courteous, and massively wealthy. He was also angry, bitter, and dangerous. Imagine a combination of Bruce Wayne, Tony Stark, and Lex Luthor. Formerly known as Prince Dakkar, Nemo had fought the British colonial government in India. In retaliation, the British killed his wife and children. This was Dakkar’s supervillain/superhero origin story. He renamed himself Nemo, which is

Latin for *no one*. (Greek myth fans: This was an Easter egg about/shout-out to Odysseus, who told the Cyclops Polyphemus that his name was Nobody.) Nemo dedicated the rest of his life to terrorizing the colonial European powers on the high seas, sinking and plundering their ships and making them fear the unstoppable “sea monster” that was the *Nautilus*.

Who wouldn’t want to have that kind of power? As a kid, every time I jumped in a lake or even a swimming pool, I liked to pretend I was Captain Nemo. I could sink enemy ships with impunity, go all over the world undetected, explore depths no one had ever visited, and uncover fabulous ruins and priceless treasures. I could submerge into my own secret realm and never return to the surface world (which was kind of horrible anyway). When I eventually wrote about Percy Jackson, the son of Poseidon, you can bet that my old daydreams about Captain Nemo and the *Nautilus* were a big reason I chose to make Percy a demigod of the sea.

Now, I’ll be honest, I found Verne’s novels slow going when I was a kid. But I *did* enjoy my uncle’s old Classics Illustrated editions, and I loved watching the Disney film version of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*—even the cheesy bits like Kirk Douglas dancing and singing, and the giant rubber squid attacking the ship. Only when I was older did I realize how rich and complex the original stories were. Nemo was even more interesting than I had imagined. And I began to see little openings in the narrative where Verne had left room for a possible sequel. . . .



Why does Captain Nemo still matter?

Verne was one of the first writers of science fiction. Looking back from the twenty-first century, it can be difficult for us to appreciate just how revolutionary his ideas were, but Verne imagined technology that would not exist for hundreds of years

to come. A self-powered submarine that could circle the globe continuously and never have to dock for supplies? Impossible! In 1870, submarines were still newfangled inventions—dangerous tin cans that were more likely to blow up and kill everyone on board than to complete a trip around the world. Verne also wrote *Around the World in 80 Days* at a time when making the trip that quickly was unthinkable, and *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, a feat that is still far beyond human technology, though someday, who knows?

The best science fiction can shape how humans see their own future. Jules Verne did that better than anyone. Way back in the 1800s, he suggested what *could* be possible, and humans rose to the challenge. When people talk about how fast a plane or a ship can circle the world, they still use *Around the World in 80 Days* as a benchmark. At one time, eighty days was an incredibly short trip for circumnavigating the globe. Now we can do it in less than eighty hours by plane, and less than forty days by sea.

Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* inspired generations of spelunkers to explore the earth's cave systems and spurred geoengineers to figure out how the layers of the earth function.

Captain Nemo, on the other hand, raised awareness of the importance the oceans would have for the future of the planet. We know most of the Earth is covered with water, and 80 percent of the oceans are *still* unexplored. Figuring out how to tap the power of the sea, and to live *with* the power of the sea as our climate changes, may be key to human survival. Verne envisioned all of that in his books.

Nemo and his crew are able to live self-sufficiently without ever touching dry land. The sea provides all their needs. In *20,000 Leagues*, Nemo tells Aronnax that the *Nautilus* is entirely electric, and draws all its power from the ocean. In *The Mysterious Island*, Cyrus Harding speculates that when coal runs out, humans will learn to draw energy from the abundant

hydrogen of the ocean. That is *still* a goal people are trying to achieve today, and one of the reasons I decided that Nemo must have unlocked the secret of cold fusion.

In *20,000 Leagues*, Nemo's crew uses electrical Leyden guns that are more effective and elegant than standard arms. They have almost limitless wealth thanks to the many shipwrecks they've plundered. They've discovered the secrets of subaquatic agriculture, so food is never an issue. Most importantly, they have *freedom*. They are independent of any nation's laws and can come and go as they please. They answer to no one except Nemo. Whether that is good or bad . . . I guess that depends on what you think of Nemo!

The importance of the sea, the importance of imagining new technological advances—these are great reasons to still read Jules Verne. But there's one more critical thing to consider. Verne made Captain Nemo an Indian prince whose people suffered under European colonialism. His character explores themes that are just as critical now as they were in Victorian times. How do you find a voice and power when society denies you those privileges? How do you fight injustice? Who gets to write the history books and decide who were the “good guys” and the “bad guys”? Nemo is an outlaw, a rebel, a genius, a scientist, an explorer, a pirate, a gentleman, an “archangel of vengeance.” He's a complicated guy, which makes him a lot of fun to read about. I was fascinated by the idea of fast-forwarding his legacy into the twenty-first century and looking at what his descendants would be dealing with all these years later.

What would *you* do if you had the power of the *Nautilus* at your command? I hope *Daughter of the Deep* will inspire you to think about your own adventures, the way Jules Verne inspired me. Make ready to dive. We're going deep!





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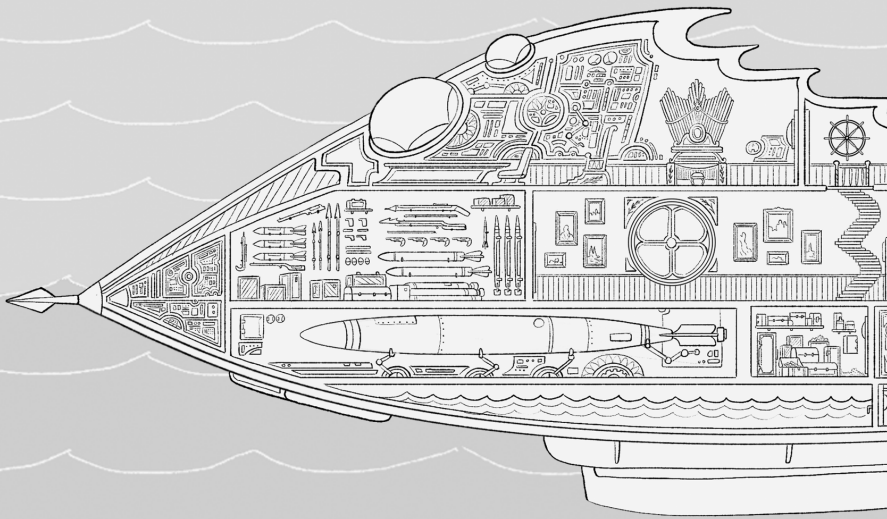
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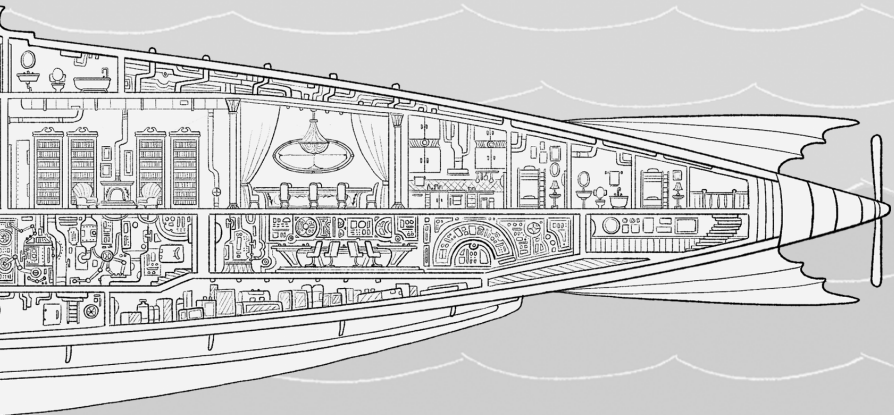
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