

Jules Verne
THE MYSTERIOUS
ISLAND

CHAPTER I

- Are we going up again?
- Not at all; we are going down!
- **Mr. Smith**¹, we are falling!
- Throw over all the ballast!
- The last sack is empty!
- Does the balloon rise again?
- No!
- I hear the waves, they are splashing!
- The sea is under us!
- Five hundred feet!
- **God help us!**²

These words rang through the air above **the Pacific**³, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon of the 23d of March, 1865.

The hurricane was lasting without intermission from the 18th to the 26th of March. It covered a

¹ **Mr. Smith** — мистер Смит

² **God help us!** — Да поможет нам Бог!

³ **the Pacific** — Тихий океан

space of 1,800 miles, it occasioned immense destruction in America and Europe and Asia. Cities were in ruins, forests were uprooted. Hundreds of shipwrecks, thousands of persons in the sea!

While these catastrophes were upon the land and the sea, something was in the heavens, too.

A balloon was spinning around as in some aerial whirlpool. It rushed through space with a velocity of ninety miles an hour. Below the balloon, there was a basket with five persons.

The storm was terrible. The balloon came from a great distance, the passengers were unable to determine the course. They could not calculate their position. They could not see anything, the thick fog was under the balloon. Around them everything was obscure. The clouds were very dense. No light, no sound, no roaring of the ocean penetrated that profound obscurity.

Meanwhile the balloon rose to a height of 4,500 feet, and the passengers discovered that the sea was beneath them. They realized that the dangers above were less formidable than below.

The night passed. At dawn, the clouds rose high into the heavens; and, in a few hours more, the whirlwind disappeared. Now, however, it became evident that the balloon was again sinking slowly. The voyagers threw overboard different articles, few provisions, and everything they had in their pockets. But the gas was escaping, and the voyagers were going down!

There was no land, not even an island, beneath them. It was a vast sea on which the waves were

surging. It was the limitless ocean. Not even a ship was in sight.

In order to save themselves it was necessary to stop the downward movement. But the balloon continued to descend!

It was a terrible situation. These men were unfortunate. The gas continued to escape. They fell faster and faster. At 1 o'clock they were not more than 600 feet above the sea. The gas poured out. If no land appears before nightfall, voyagers, balloon, and basket will disappear beneath the waves.

It was evident that these men were strong. Not a murmur escaped their lips. They were ready to struggle to the last second. The basket was constructed of willow osiers, it could not float, and they could not support it on the surface of the water. It was 2 o'clock, and the balloon was only 400 feet above the waves.

Then they heard a voice. It was the voice of a man whose heart knew no fear.

— **Is everything thrown out?**¹

— No, we yet have 10,000 francs in gold.

A heavy bag fell into the sea.

— Does the balloon rise?

— A little, but it will soon fall again.

— Is there anything else to throw out?

— Nothing.

— Yes there is; there is the basket! Let it go.

This was, indeed, the last means. They wanted to lighten the apparatus. The five passengers clam-

¹ **Is everything thrown out?** — Всё ли выброшено?

bered into the net around the hoop, and looked into the abyss below.

The balloon went up. But soon it began to descend. It was impossible to repair the rent, through which the gas was rushing.

At 4 o'clock, when the balloon was only 500 feet above the sea, they heard the loud barking.

— **Топ**¹ saw something! Land! Land!

They saw a land. But it is far, it takes an hour to reach it. An hour! They did not know whether it was an island or a continent. They do not know what part of the world the tempest brought them. How to reach that land?

At 4 o'clock they saw that the balloon could not sustain itself much longer. It grazed the surface of the sea.

A half hour later, and the land was a mile distant. The balloon jumped into the air. It rose 1,500 feet, and soon, however, it fell upon the sand. The passengers, assisting each other, hastened to the ground.

The basket contained five passengers and a dog. Four men were upon the shore. The fifth one, then, was in the water. His friends cried:

— Perhaps he is trying to swim ashore. Save him! Let us save him!

¹ **Топ** — Топ (*кликка собаки*)

CHAPTER II

They were neither professional aeronauts nor amateurs. They were prisoners of war who succeeded to escape. Their aerial voyage lasted five days. How did it happen?

This same year, in the month of February, 1865, many officers were captured by the enemy. One of the most famous of them was **Cyrus Smith**¹. Cyrus Smith was an engineer by profession, and a scientist, to whom the Government gave the direction of the railways.

He was thin, bony, lean, about forty-five years old, with **heavy moustache**². His muscles showed remarkable firmness. He was highly educated, practical, and clear-headed, his temperament was superb. Cyrus Smith was also the personification of courage.

¹ **Cyrus Smith** — Сайрес Смит

² **heavy moustache** — густые усы

At the same time with Cyrus Smith another man fell into the hands of **the Southerners**¹. This was **Gideon Spilett**², reporter to **the New York Herald**³. Gideon Spilett obtained exact information and transmitted it to the journal. He was a well-known reporter.

A man of great merit; energetic, prompt, and ready; full of ideas; soldier and artist; resolute in action.

He also was in all the battles, revolver in one hand and notebook in the other. Gideon Spilett was tall. He was forty years old or more. Sandy-colored whiskers encircled his face. His eye was clear and lively.

Cyrus Smith had a devoted servant. This man was black, he was born of slave parents. Smith freed them, but the servant had no desire to leave his master. He was a man of thirty years, vigorous, agile, adroit, intelligent, quick, always smiling and honest. His name was **Nebuchadnezzar**⁴, but everybody called him Neb.

All these people were in **Richmond**⁵, and it was very difficult to get out. They were prisoners. The reporter wanted to get out of Richmond at any risk.

Meanwhile, the siege continued. Among the people in the town there was **Jonathan Forster**⁶,

¹ **the Southerners** — южане

² **Gideon Spilett** — Гидеон Спилет

³ **New York Herald** — «Нью-Йорк Геральд»
(название газеты)

⁴ **Nebuchadnezzar** — Навуходоносор

⁵ **Richmond** — Ричмонд

⁶ **Jonathan Forster** — Джонатан Форстер

who was a violent Southerner. This Jonathan Forster conceived the idea of passing over the lines of the besiegers in a balloon.

So a balloon was made and placed at the disposal of Forster and five of his companions. They found arms and food. The departure of the balloon was on the 18th of March. On the morning of the 18th there were symptoms of a storm, and soon the tempest began.

The balloon was ready, but the weather was terrible. The night of the 19th and 20th passed, but in the morning the storm was hard, and departure was impossible.

On this day Cyrus Smith in one of the streets of Richmond met a man whom he did not know. It was a sailor named **Pencroff**¹, aged from thirty-five to forty years, strongly built, his eyes were bright and glittering. Pencroff came to Richmond on business, he had with him **Herbert Brown**², of **New Jersey**³, a lad fifteen years old, the son of Pencroff's captain, and an orphan. Pencroff loved the boy as his own child. He also wanted to get out. He did not hesitate to address Mr. Smith without ceremony.

— Mr. Smith?

The engineer looked at the man who added in a low voice:

— Mr. Smith, do you want to escape?

¹ **Pencroff** — Пенкроф

² **Herbert Brown** — Герберт Браун

³ **New Jersey** — Нью-Джерси

— How? — answered the engineer, quickly. — Who are you? — he demanded, in a cold voice.

Pencroff told him about himself.

— Well, — replied Smith. — And how do you propose to escape?

— By this idle balloon which is doing nothing, and is ready to take us!

The engineer seized Pencroff by the arm and hurried him to his house. There the sailor explained his project, which was simple enough. The storm was terrible, it is true; but a skilful engineer like Smith knew well how to manage a balloon. He saw many storms in his life.

Cyrus Smith listened to the sailor and he was silent. This was the opportunity! The project was very dangerous, but it was real. During the night, in spite of the guards, they might reach the balloon, creep into the basket, and then cut the lines!

— I am not alone, — said Smith.

— How many people more? — demanded the sailor.

— Two; my friend Spilett, and my man Neb.

— Three, — replied Pencroff; — and, with Herbert and myself, five. Can the balloon carry six?

— Very well. We will go! — said the engineer.

— Tonight, then, — said Pencroff.

— Tonight, at ten o'clock, — replied Smith.

Pencroff returned to his lodging, where he found young Herbert Brown. This brave boy knew the plans of the sailor, and he was ready to go with him.

The storm did not abate. The engineer feared but one thing; that the balloon could be torn into a thousand pieces.

Evening arrived. Thick masses of fog passed over the earth. Rain mingled with snow fell. The weather was cold. The streets of the city were deserted. In such weather, no one guarded the square in which swung the balloon.

— Bad weather, — said Pencroff, holding his hat, which the wind was trying to take off, firmly to his head.

At half past 9, Cyrus Smith and his companions came together at the basket. Without saying a word, four of them took their places in the basket, while Pencroff, under the direction of the engineer, unfastened the bundles of ballast. Then the sailor joined his companions. At that moment, a dog leaped into the basket. It was Top, the dog of the engineer, who had followed his master.

Then the storm burst upon them. The engineer did not dare to descend during the night. It was not until five days later that they saw the sea below them.

So of these five men, who started on the 20th of March, four were thrown, four days later, on a desert coast, more than 6,000 miles from this country. And the one who was **missing**¹ was their leader, Cyrus Smith.

¹ was missing — отсутствовал

CHAPTER III.

A wave swept away the engineer. His dog had disappeared at the same time. The faithful animal tried to rescue its master.

— Forward! — cried the reporter, and all four began their search. Poor Neb wept with grief and despair. But Smith's companions hoped to find him.

— Look for him! — cried Neb.

— Yes, Neb, and we will find him, — replied Spilett.

— Alive?

— Alive!

— Can he swim? — demanded Pencroff.

— Oh, yes, — responded Neb. — And, besides, Top is with him.

The sailor looked at the roaring sea, and shook his head.

It was nearly 6 o'clock. The fog made the night very dark. The men went northward along the shore. Where are they? They could not guess their geographical situation. They walked upon a

sandy soil, mixed with stones. The little party was searching all the corners.

After a walk of twenty minutes the four men were suddenly stopped by a rock. They **found themselves**¹ upon the extremity of a sharp point upon which the sea broke with fury.

— This is a promontory, — said the sailor, — we must turn back.

— But if he is there! — cried Neb.

— Well, let us call again.

And all together uttered a vigorous cry, but without response. They waited, and tried once more. And again there was no answer.

Then they turned back. They were following the opposite side of the promontory over ground equally sandy and rocky. However, Pencroff observed that the shore was bold there, and the birds were less numerous on this shore.

They were walking towards the south. Soon they found themselves again upon a high promontory of slippery rocks.

— We are on an island, — exclaimed Pencroff.

The words of the sailor were true. The castaways were not upon a continent, but upon an island not more than two miles long.

This desert isle, covered with stones, without vegetation, did it belong to a more important archipelago? They could not tell. It was necessary to wait until the next day to search for the engineer; who made no cry to signal his presence.

¹ **found themselves** — оказались