

At the Bottom of the Ocean

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Adapted by LHU Language Center

Characters:

Narrator, Jacques Piccard, Don Walsh

Narrator:

Most of the ocean floor had been mapped. The Marianas trench in the Pacific ocean held the deepest spot in the entire ocean. It was called Challenger Deep and it was almost seven miles down. Jacques Piccard and Lieutenant Don Walsh began their descent in the *Trieste* on January 23, 1960.

Jacques:

No fish has ever been hauled up from so far down. Do you think there's life at the bottom, Don?

Don:

I'm going to be looking so hard, I'll probably see something even if it isn't there! Are you ready?

Jacques:

Ready. Close the hatch.

Don:

Going down.

Narrator:

The *Trieste* passed through layers of water at different temperatures. It stalled at some cold layers.

Jacques:

We're stalled, Don. We'll have to release some of the gasoline in the float to start moving down again.

Don:

Releasing. And we're moving again.

Jacques:

We're at 600 feet. The light is fading to twilight. Turn out the lights, Don.

Don:

Done. Look at that! Luminous animals.

Jacques:

And there's plankton streaming past.

Don:

We're at 1,000 feet. It's starting to get colder.

Jacques:

2,000 feet. I'm putting on warmer clothes.

Don:

Here, Jacques. Have a candy bar.

Jacques:

10,000 feet. There's a small leak through one of the connectors where wires from the outside lights come into the cabin. It's an old friend, a tiny drip, drip, drip.

Don:

15,000 feet. The leak has disappeared. We've lost phone contact with the surface.

Jacques:

24,000 thousand feet. We've surpassed all previous records for depth.

Narrator:

At 30,000 feet, they were startled by a powerful, muffled crack.

Don:

What was that?

Jacques:

I don't know. Let's wait.

(Slight pause.)

Don:

Nothing. Nothing's happening.

Jacques:

Okay, let's check around.

Don:

Here it is. It's a crack in the outer view window.

Jacques:

Is the inner one holding?

Don:

I think so. It seems to be watertight.

Jacques:

I guess we're okay. We won't need to send the emergency signal.

Don:

33,000 feet. I'm probing for the bottom with the echo sounder. (Pause.) No echo.

Jacques:

35,000 feet.

Don:

No echo. There's no bottom yet.

Jacques:

Maybe we missed it!

Don:

I've got it. There's an echo. The floor is 252 feet more.

Jacques:

I can see it! I can see the bottom.

Don:

1:06 p.m. January 23, 1960. We've reached the bottom.

Narrator:

This spot in the Marianas Trench, Challenger Deep, is the deepest spot in the ocean. It measures 35,814 feet deep. Mt. Everest is the highest point above the earth's surface at 29,029 feet. The men in the *Trieste* were one mile deeper in the ocean than height of Mt. Everest.

Jacques:

Do you see anything alive?

Don:

Not yet.

Jacques:

What's that? Look! Do you see it? It's an ivory-colored flat fish.

Don:

Yes! It looks like a sole or a flounder. It's flat with eyes on the side of its head.

Jacques:

Our light doesn't seem to bother him. It's the first light ever to shine on this creature.

Don:

It's a bottom-feeder looking for food. That means it has spent all its life at these tremendous depths, under this great pressure.

Jacques:

What a wonderful sight. Here is the answer to the question biologists have asked for decades. Can life exist at the bottom of the sea? It can! It does!

Don:

Congratulations, Jacques. Shake my hand. We've made history.

Narrator:

They had made a valuable scientific discovery and set a world record for depth. It's a record that may never be broken, unless someone digs a hole in the bottom of the sea.