

Moby Dick

By Herman Melville

Call me Ishmael. When I was young, I set out to find adventure on the sailing ships that roam the great seas of the world in search of the giant whales. It seemed to me that hunting and killing these great monsters must be the greatest adventure a man could experience. What I discovered was something much different – and much more terrible – than I had imagined.

But I was young then – and nothing can change a young man’s mind. So off I went to **New Bedford**, where the whaling ships take off on their world-wide hunts for the greatest of god’s wonders – the **leviathan** of the deep.

It was snowing when I arrived. Lights shone from inn windows into icy streets. I came to a small light under a sign - The Spouter Inn - on a black corner where the wind howled. Inside it was like the bulwarks of an old condemned ship. Arching over the bar was a whale’s jawbone. The walls were hung with spears and harpoons. Some seamen were looking at pieces of carved whale ivory. All this was new to me. I’d never been in Nantucket before, but I’d decided to go whaling. I was curious about the idea of a great whale.

The landlord said he didn’t have a separate room. “You ain’t no objections to sharing a harpooner’s blanket, have ye? If you’re going a-whaling you’d better get used to that sort of thing.”

“That depends on the harpooner,” I said.

“He’ll be here afore long. He’s from the South Seas. He’s brought over a load of embalmed New Zealand heads. Great curios! He’s sold all of ‘em but one. Tomorrow’s Sunday, and it wouldn’t do to be out sellin’ humans heads when folks is going to churches. You want supper?”

Supper over, the bar began to fill with sailors, I didn't want to drink, and if I had to sleep two to a bed I might as well get the best place for myself. I was shown into a small room, cold as a clam, with a huge bed. I looked round. Someone had left a rolled hammock, a great many bone fishhooks, and a seaman's bag. A tall harpoon stood at the bedhead. I got into bed and blew out the candle.

I was woken by a heavy footfall. I pretended to be asleep.

Holding a light in one hand and a shrunken New Zealand head in the other, a stranger entered the room. He didn't look at me, but stooped to take something from his bag. Then he turned. Such a face! It was of a dark, purplish yellow color, stuck over with blackish squares. I thought *he's been in a fight!* Then he turned to the light, and I realized his face was covered in tattoos.

And what is it, thought I, after all? It's only his outside. A man can be honest in any sort of skin.

He stuffed the New Zealand head into his bag, pulled out a tomahawk and took off his top hat. He had no hair, just a small scalp-knot twisted up on his head. If he hadn't been between me and the door, I'd have bolted out of it quicker than ever I bolted a dinner.

As he undressed, I saw he was tattooed all over. From his coat pocket he took a little image, which he set above the fireplace. He kindled some shavings to make a fire, and put a bit of ship's biscuit on top. When the biscuit was cooked, he held it to the lips of the **idol**. But the little devil didn't seem to fancy such fare; he never moved his lips.

I wasn't going to show that I was awake. But when he leaped into bed beside me, tomahawk and all, I screamed and rolled away.

"Who-e debel you? You no speak-e, dam-me, I kill-e." The tomahawk swished in the dark.

"Landlord!" I cried. "Angels! Save me!"

"Speak-e! Tell-ee-me who-ee be!"

The landlord rushed in with a light. I leapt out of bed and ran to him.

"Don't be afraid," said he, grinning. "Queequeg here wouldn't harm a hair of your head."

"Stop your grinning," I shouted. "Why didn't you tell me your harpooner was a cannibal?"

"I thought ye know'd. Didn't I tell ye he was a-peddling heads about the town? Go to sleep!"

"Queequeg, look here - this man sleep-ee. You sabb-ee?"

'Me sabbee plenty,' grunted Queequeg. 'You gettee in.' He motioned to me kindly with his tomahawk.

Why have I been making such a fuss? I thought to myself. This man's a human being like me. He has just as much reason to fear me as I have to fear him.

I turned in, and never slept better in my life.

On Monday morning I walked along the quay looking for whaling ships going on three-year voyages. Two I rejected on sight. Finally, I went on board *The Pequod* and decided that this was the very ship for Queequeg and me. She was rather small, her hull dark from the typhoons and calms of four oceans. She'd been fifty years a whaler; her rigging had been mended with whalebone and whale ivory. Whale teeth adorned her **bulwarks**.

I found no one on the quarter-deck but an old Quaker seaman. 'Are you the captain of the Pequod?' I asked.

'Why, what dost thou want?'

'I was thinking of shipping.'

'Dost know anything about whaling?'

'I shall soon learn. I've been in the merchant service, and ...'

'Merchant service indeed! So what takes thee a-whaling?'

'I want to see the world.'

'Want to see what whaling is, eh? Have ye clapped eyes on Captain Ahab?'

'Who is Captain Ahab, sir?'

‘Captain Ahab is the captain of this ship. I’m the part-owner, Captain Peleg. I’m not going on the voyage. Captain Ahab will be your captain. Clap eye on Captain Ahab, young man, and thou wilt find he has only one leg.’

‘Was the other lost by a whale?’

“Lost by a whale? Young man, come nearer to me. It was devoured, chewed up, crunched. Now, you can pitch a harpoon down a live whale’s throat, and then jump after it? Answer quick!”

Nothing he said could deter me. I signed the papers, saying as I did so, “I have a friend who wants to ship too - shall I bring him down?”

“Fetch him along,’ said Captain Peleg, ‘and I’ll have a look at him.”

The landlord was amused by my sudden friendship with Queequeg. Queequeg treated me with such loving kindness that my heart was won. On Sunday he’d come to the First Congregational Church with me - and a grim, cold service it was. Queequeg left before the blessing, but afterwards I could not condemn the loving way he worshipped his idol. I respect other people’s religions. The next morning, he ate a prodigious breakfast of chowders, and then we sallied out of board the *Pequod*, sauntering along and picking our teeth with halibut bones.

Captain Peleg took one look at Queequeg and said he’d have no cannibals aboard his ship. “Son of darkness,’ he said to Queequeg. ‘Are you a member of any Christian Church?’”

“Why’, I said quickly, ‘He’s a member of the First Congregational Church.”

“What, the one that worships here in Nantucket?”

“I mean the church to which you and I, and every mother’s son and soul of us belong, which is the great congregation of this whole worshipping world.”

“Young man,’ said Captain Peleg, “You’d better ship for a missionary instead of a foremast hand. I say, Quohog, or whatever your name is, did you ever stand in the head of a whale-boat? Did you ever strike a fish?”

Queequeg leaped into the bows of one of the whaleboats hanging to the side. He braced his left knee and poised his harpoon. “Cap’n, you see

him small drop tar on water dere? You see him? Well. Spose him one whale eye, well den!”

He took sharp aim, and darted the harpoon clean across the ship’s decks, and struck the glistening spot of tar out of sight. Captain Peleg had Queequeg signed up in no time. Queequeg couldn’t write, so he signed with the same queer round figure that was tattooed on his forearm. Captain Peleg continued his obstinate mistake over Queequeg’s name, so it stood something like this: Quohog, his mark.

“Shipmates, have ye shipped in that ship?” I was still looking back at the Pequod. I thought I saw some shadowy figures running aboard the ship, but the morning was too misty to be sure. I turned to see who was speaking, It was a sailor in a shabby jacket and patched trousers, his face pitted with smallpox.

“Yes.’ I said. ‘We’ve just signed the articles.’”

“Anything down there about your souls? Or perhaps you haven’t got any?”

“What are you jabbering about?”

‘Ye haven’t seen Old Thunder yet, have ye?’

‘You mean Captain Ahab? He’s sick, they say, but will be all right before long.’

The stranger laughed derisively. ‘All right before long! Well, he’s a good whale hunter, and a good captain to his crew. But you must jump when he gives an order. But that thing that happened to him off Cape Horn, long ago... he lay like dead for three days and nights. And what about how he lost his leg last voyage, the one the whale took off? Ye didn’t hear a word about them matters, did ye?’

“I know all about the loss of his leg.”

“All about it, eh?’ Sure ye do? All?”

‘Pretty sure.’

“Well, well, ye’ve shipped, have ye? Names down on the papers? What will be, will be. I’m sorry I stopped ye.”

Over the next three days there was great activity aboard the Pequod, getting all the stores in for the voyage: beef, bread, water, fuel and iron hoops and **staves**. Old sails were mended and new sails brought aboard, and coils of **rigging**. We had spare boats, spare lines and harpoons, spare everythings almost, save for a spare captain and a duplicate ship.

At last the anchor was hauled up, the sails set, and off we glided. It was a cold Christmas day, and as the short northern day merged into night, we found ourselves upon the wintry ocean. The freezing spray encased us in ice. The long rows of whales' teeth glistened in the moonlight. We still hadn't seen Captain Ahab.

Our chief mate was Starbuck, a Quaker from Nantucket. Stubb from Cape Cod was the second mate, a cheerful, happy-go-lucky man who took perils as they came. Flask from Martha's Vineyard was third mate, a stout young fellow who made it a point of honor to destroy any whale he encountered. The harpooners were Queequeg, Tashtego (who was an Indian warrior from **Gay Head**), and Daggoo from **Nantucket**, a gigantic Black man with golden earrings. The rest of the crew came from the **Azores**, where the outbound Nantucket whalers take on their crews.. (Islanders make the best whalemens.)

For several days nothing above hatches was seen of captain Ahab. We sailed south in biting polar weather, but we were cheerful and confident. Three better men than our three mates could not readily be found. But every time I looked towards the **taffrail**, foreboding shivers ran over me.

One day I looked up, and captain Ahab stood upon his **quarterdeck**. He looked like a man who been cut away from being burnt at the stake. A white scar ran down his face and neck till it disappeared in his clothing. I heard later he been struck by lightning in a storm off Cape Horn. Instead of the missing leg, he had a barbaric white leg carved from a sperm whale's jawbone. The bone leg fitted into a hole bored into the deck so Ahab could stand upright on the ever pitching deck, holding on by a rope. He gazed fixedly forward, not saying a word to anyone, as if stricken by some mighty **woe**.

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II

Each day the sky grew less gloomy, and each day we saw a little more of captain Ahab before he retreated to his cabin again. At last, the good weather seemed to charm his grim mood. More than once he gave a look which, in any other man, would soon have flowered out in a smile.

Captain Ahab and the three mates ate in the captain's cabin. The officers were like little children as they waited for Ahab to serve their food. No one spoke. When the officers had finished eating, the harpooners were allowed into the captain's cabin to eat what was left. Queequeg, Tashtego and Daggoo ate with relish and rough humor, in total contrast to the restraint shown by the officers.

The **masthead** was manned while we cruised to our hunting grounds. Southern whale ships have no crow's nests like the Greenland whalers. For your masthead-watch, you perch at the head of the topgallant mast, standing on two thin sticks, which are the topgallant cross trees. Here, tossed about by the sea, the beginner feels about as cozy as he would standing on a bull's horns. I frankly admit that, clinging to the mast over a tossing sea, I kept a poor ground.

One morning Ahab came up the cabin gangway to the deck. Soon his steady, ivory-leg tread was heard going to and fro. The hours wore on.

"Mark him, Flask," whispered Stubb; the chick that's in him pecks the shell. It will soon be out."

It drew near the close of day. Suddenly Ahab halted by the **bulwarks**, and inserted his bone leg into the hole there. With one hand grasping the rope, he ordered Starbuck to send everybody **aft**.

“Sir!” Said the mate, astonished at the order, which is never given on ship-board unless something extraordinary has happened.

“Send everybody aft! repeated Ahab. **Mast heads**, there! Come down!”

Soon the entire ships company were eyeing him apprehensively. He looked like the weather horizon when a storm is coming up.

Ahab’s eyes darted among the crew. Then he cried: “What do you do when ye see a whale, men?”

“Sing out for him!” Came a score of voices.

“Good! And what do ye do nest, men?”

“Lower away, and after him!”

“And what tune is it ye pull to, men?”

“A dead whale, or a **stove boat!**”

The old man seemed strangely excited.

“Look ye! D’ye see this Spanish ounce of gold?” – he held up a bright new coin to the sun – “It’s a sixteen-dollar piece, men. D’ye see it? Mr Starbuck, hand me yon **top-maul!**”

Starbuck handed him a hammer. Captain Ahab stood at the **mainmast** with the hammer uplifted in one hand, showing us the gold he held in the other. “Whoever raises me a white whale with crinkled brow and a crooked jaw – whoever raises me that white headed whale with three harpoon holes in his starboard fluke – Look ye – whoever raises me that same white whale, he shall have this gold ounce, my boys!”

“Huzza! Huzza!” cried the seamen, as captain Ahab nailed the gold piece to the mast.

“It’s a white whale, I say,’ said Ahab, throwing down the hammer. “Skin your eyes for him. If ye see a bubble sing out!”

All this while Tashtego Daggoo and Queequeg looked on with even more surprised than the rest, as if Ahab’s words reminded them of something.

“Captain Ahab,’ said Tashtego, ‘that white whale must be the same that some men call Moby Dick.’”

“Moby Dick?” shouted Ahab. ‘Do ye know the white whale then, Tash?’

“Does he fantail a little curious, sir before he goes down?’ asked Tashtego deliberately.

“And has he a curious spout too?” asked Daggoo.

“And he have one, two, three - oh! A good many irons in his hide too, captain,” cried Queequeg.

“Ay, Queequeg!’ cried Ahab. “The harpoons lie all twisted and wrenched in him. Aye, Daggoo, his spout is a big one, white as a pile of Nantucket wool. Aye, Tashtego, he fantails like a split jib in a squall. Men, it *is* Moby Dick ye have seen! Moby Dick!”

“Captain Ahab,” said Starbuck, “I have heard of Moby Dick. was it not Moby Dick that took off thy leg?”

“Who told thee that?” Ahab paused. “Aye, Starbuck. Aye, my hearties all round. It *was* Moby Dick that dismasted me. Moby Dick brought me to this dead stump I stand on now.” Suddenly he gave a great animal sob like a heart-stricken moose. “Aye, it was that accursed white whale that made a poor pegging lubber of me forever and a day! And that’s what ye’ve shipped for, men! To chase that white whale over all the earth till he spouts black blood and rolls fin out. What say ye men? Will ye splice hands on it now? I think ye do look brave!”

“Aye, aye,” they shouted, running closer to the exited old man. “A sharp eye for the white whale! A sharp lance for Moby Dick!”

“God bless ye,” sobbed Ahab. “Steward, draw the men a measure of grog! But what’s this long face about Mr Starbuck? Art thou not game for Moby Dick?”

“I came here to hunt whales, Captain Ahab,’ said Starbuck, because that’s our business I didn’t come to take vengeance on a dumb animal. The whale **smote** thee from blind instinct. Madness! To be angry with a dumb

animal. The whale smote thee from blind instinct. Madness! To be angry with a dumb animal, Captain Ahab, seems **blasphemous**.”

But Ahab would not listen to Starbuck. Again he shouted for grog for the men, and called upon them to keep watch for the white whale with their weapons ready. “Death to Moby Dick!” He cried. “God hunt us all, if we don't hunt Moby Dick to his death!”

I, Ishmael, was one of that crew. My shouts had gone up with the rest, but there was dread in my soul. What the white whale was to Ahab has been hinted. What he was to me as yet remains unsaid.

Ahab knew that Starbuck was against this mad search for Moby Dick. The others had been won over by the promise of gold. Often, as the Pequod roamed the seas in search of Moby Dick, Ahab's Voice was heard hailing the mastheads, telling them to keep a bright lookout. This **vigilance** was not long without reward.

It was a cloudy, sultry afternoon. The seamen were lazily lounging about the decks. Queequeg and I were weaving extra lashing to the boat. A strange dreaminess hung over the ship and all over the sea.

“There she blows! There! She blows! She blows!” The unearthly cry came from Tashtego at the masthead.

“Where-away?”

“On the **lee-beam**. Two miles off! A school of them!”

Instantly all was commotion. The cranes were thrust out. The three crew's boats swung over the sea like baskets over high cliffs. The crews clung to the rail, one foot on the **gunwale** ready to leap into the boats. But suddenly every eye was taken from the whales. With a start, all glared at dark Ahab. He was surrounded by five **dusky** phantoms that seemed fresh formed out of the air.

The phantoms flitted on the deck, casting loose the captain's boat. The figure at its bows was tall and dark, wearing a black Chinese jacket and wide black trousers. But crowning this blackness was the glistening white of his living hair, coiled like a turban round and round his head.

The ship's company gazed wonderingly upon these strangers. Ahab cried out to the white-turbanned old man. "All ready there, Fedallah?"

"Ready!" was the half-hissed reply.

"Lower away then!"

In spite of our amazement we sprang over the rail. The **sheaves** whirled in the blocks. The three boats dropped into the sea. The sailors leapt down the rolling ship's side into the tossed boats below.

Hardly had they pulled out from under the she ship's **lee** than the five strangers, coming from

Ahab was at the steering oar.

Pull, pull, my fine Hearts, said Stubb to his crew, as he loungingly manned his steering oar. "What is it you stare at? Those chaps in yon boat? Ha! They're only five more hands to help us! Never mind from where! Devils are good fellows enough. Pull, will ye? Pull!"

But as Stubb's boat passed Starbuck's, Stubb called across the water, "What think ye of those yellow boys, sir?"

"They were smuggled aboard before the ship sailed . . . a sad business, Mr. Stubb. The white whale is at the bottom of it. Can't be helped. Give way, men. It ain't the white whale today! Give way!"

(I recalled the mysterious shadows I'd seen creeping aboard the Pequod on that dim morning in Nantucket, and the hints dropped by the sailor who had spoken to us on the quay.)

The whales had gone down into the blue. There was no sign of them.

Queequeg stood in the bows of Stabuck's boat, his harpoon poised. In Ahab's boat, Fedallah stood with his harpoon. Tashtego, the harpooner in Stubb's boat, cried out suddenly, "There they are!"

A landsman would only have seen a troubled bit of greenish-white water and a few puffs of vapor. The boats tore towards it. Our boat ran into a mist. Neither ship nor boat could be seen.

Queequeg, harpoon in hand, sprang to his feet.

“That’s his hump! There! Give it to him!”

A short rushing sound leaped from the boat – the darted **iron** of Queequeg. The boat seemed to strike a ledge. The sail collapsed and exploded. A gush of scalding vapor shot up nearby. Something rolled and tumbled like an earthquake beneath us. We were tossed helter-skelter into the white curdling cream of the **squall**. Squall, whale and harpoon all blended together. The whale, merely gazed by the iron, escaped.

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III

The wonder of the stowaway phantoms soon **waned** away, although hair-turban Fedallah remained a muffled mystery to the last. He was linked with Ahab’s peculiar fortunes in some way, but what this was, none knew.

Days, weeks passed, under easy sail. We swept across the cruising grounds of the Atlantic and were south of St Helena.

One serene and moonlight night, when all the waves rolled by like scrolls of silver, a silver jet was seen far ahead of the white bubbles at the bow. Lit by the moon, it looked like a glittering god arising from the sea. On these moonlight nights, Fedallah stood lookout at the mainmast head. Not one whaleman in a hundred would think of lowering the boats by night, so you can imagine what the men felt when they saw Fedallah perched aloft at such unusual hours, his turban and the moon companions in one sky.

So when he cried out, ‘There she blows!’ the mortal crew below quivered with excitement.

Ahab commanded the top-gallant sails and royals to be set, and every stunsail spread. The ship rolled down before the wind. Yet the silvery jet was no more seen that night.

Some days after, at the same silent hour, the silver jet was seen again. Once again, upon making sail to overtake it, it disappeared as if it had never been. And so it served us night after night, till no one heeded it but to wonder at it. But this solitary jet seemed to be forever alluring us on, as we rounded cape horn amidst howling winds and set our course for **Java**.

One transparent blue morning, Daggoo at the masthead saw a great white mass lazily arise in the distance. It glistened like snow for a moment, then sank. Was this Moby Dick? When it re-appeared he was sure. He yelled out, 'There! There again! There she **breaches!** The white whale! The white whale! The white whale!'

The seamen rushed to the **yard arms**. Soon four boats were on the water. All swiftly pulled towards their prey. The white mass rose again - no whale, but a vast pulpy cream-colored mass floating in the water. With a low sucking sound, it slowly disappeared again.

Starr said wildly, 'I'd rather have fought Moby Dick than have seen that white ghost!'

'What was it, sir?' asked Flask.

'The great squid. Few have seen it and lived to tell the tale.'

Ahab said nothing. Turning his boat, he sailed back to the ship. The rest followed silently.

For long days we cruised the Pacific Ocean. Starbuck harpooned a sperm whale, which towed his boat so it flew through the water, every man clinging to his seat. At last the wounded whale slackened his flight. Stubb darted dart after dart into its flesh until a red tide poured from the monster like brooks down a hill.

Jet after jet of white smoke agonizingly shot from the blowhole of the whale. The monster wallowed in his blood., lashing up mad boiling spray, in which the boat was almost engulfed. At last gush after gush of clotted blood shot into the frightened air. The whale rolled into view, motionless. His heart had burst!

"He's dead, Mr Stubb," said Daggoo.

Stubb relished whale meat for his supper.

The next day, using the enormous cutting tackles to bring up the blubber strip by strip. Then the remains of the white carcass were cast off, and the huge head, full of valuable **spermaceti** was hung from the ship's side.

We sailed on, occasionally meeting other ships. When he had the chance, Ahab asked other captains if they'd sighted the white whale. No one had until we met an English captain with only one arm. In place of the other was a long sperm whale bone.

"Hast seen the white whale?" asked Ahab, as soon as he'd boarded the English ship.

"See you this?" The English captain showed his bone arm. "The white whale was the cause, last season. We had him harpooned, but this old grandfather whale, with the white tail and hump, came snapping at the boat in two with flukes. I clung to the line, but the harpoon caught me and the barb ripped my arm off."

"Didst thou cross the white whale's wake again?"

"Twice."

"But could not fasten?"

"Didn't want to try. Ain't one limb enough? He's best let alone. Don't you think so?"

"How long since thou saw him last? Which way heading?"

"Why ... east, I think."

But as Ahab struggled back to the ship's boat, hampered by his whalebone leg, the English captain whispered to Fedallah, "Is your captain mad?"

The rolling waves and days went by. One night, in the mid-watch, the old man suddenly thrust out his face, fiercely snuffing up the sea air. He declared a whale must be near. Soon all the watch could smell the peculiar odor of a sperm whale. At daybreak, the mastheads were manned, and all hands called on deck.

Ahab had us haul up the rigging. "There she blows! There she blows! A hump like a snowhill! It's Moby Dick!"

Fired by the cry, we rushed to the rigging to see the famous whale they'd been pursuing for so long. The whale was about a mile ahead. Every roll of the sea revealed his high sparkling hump, his silent spout jetted into the air.

“And did none of ye see it before?” cried Ahab, hailing the perched men round him.

“I saw him just when you did, and I cried out,” said Tashtego.

“Not the same instant! No!” said Ahab. “Fate reserved the doubloon for *me*. I only. None of ye could have raised the white whale first. There she blows! There she blows! Stand by three boats. Mr. Starbuck, stay on board and keep the ship. **Helm** there! Luff a point! All ready the boats there? Lower me, Mr Starbuck!” He slid through the air to the deck.

Soon the three boats were dropped. The paddles plied with rippling swiftness, Ahab heading the onset. A pale death-glimmer lit up Fedallah's sunken eyes. A hideous motion gnawed his mouth.

Slowly we neared the foe. The ocean was like a noon-meadow, so serenely it spread. The breathless hunters came so near their prey they could see his dazzling hump in a ring of greenish foam. Bright bubbles rose and danced by his side. A gentle joyousness, a mildness even in swiftness, invested the gliding whale. Then the **forepart** of him slowly rose from the water. His whole body arched through the air. The grand god revealed himself and went out of sight. White sea fowls lingered over the ripples that he left.

With the paddles down, the sheets of their sails adrift, the three boats floated, awaiting Moby Dick's reappearance.

“An hour,” said Ahab, standing rooted in the boat's **stern**. He gazed towards the dim blue spaces to **leeward**. Then his eyes swept the watery circle left by the whale. The breeze freshened; the sea began to swell.

“The birds! The birds!” cried Tashtego.

The white birds were now all flying to Ahab's boat, wheeling round and round it with joyous expectant cries.

Ahab peered into the depths. He saw a white spot no bigger than a weasel. It came up fast, growing larger as it rose. Ahab saw two long crooked rows of white glistening teeth. It was Moby Dick's open mouth and jaw. His vast, shadowed bulk blended with the blue of the sea. The glittering mouth yawned beneath the boat like an open tomb. Ahab swept the steering oar sideways, whirling the boat aside. He called Fedallah to change places with him, seizing the harpoon himself. He was ready in the **bows**.

Moby Dick instantly moved sideways, and shot his head upwards beneath the boat.

He had the bows in his mouth. A tooth caught in a rowlock. The pearl-white inside of his jaw was within six inches of Ahab's head. The whale shook the wooden boat like a mildly cruel cat her mouse. Fedallah gazed, and crossed his arms. The crew tumbled back into the stern.

Ahab seized the whale's jaw in his naked hands. He wildly strove to wrench it from its grip. The jaw slipped from him. The gunwales bent in and snapped.

Moby Dick bit the craft completely in two. The crew at the stern-end clung to the gunwales as the craft drooped. The boat spilled Ahab out, and he fell the flat-faced upon the sea.

Moby Dick lay at a little distance from his prey, thrusting his white head up and down in the waves. Then he swam round and round the wrecked crew. The splintered boat seemed to madden him. Ahab's head looked like a tossed bubble which the least shock might burst. Fedallah eyed him mildly from the broken stern. The other boats dared not pull in to strike, for fear it would make the whale attack the castaways or Ahab.

The Pequod sailed into the circle, parting the whale from its victim. Ahab was dragged into Stubb's boat. The castaway crew were picked up.

Ahab lay prostrate for a moment. Then he halfway rose. "The harpoon. Help me, man. I wish to stand. So, so. I see him! What a leaping spout! Hands off from me! Out oars!"

But the whale was swimming away too fast for the boats to follow. As soon as the boats were swung aboard, the Pequod gave chase. Sometimes

Ahab himself was up at the masthead, watching for Moby Dick's glittering spout. Sometimes he paced the deck below, unrelenting.

It grew dark. "Can't see the spout now - too dark," cried a voice from the air.

"How heading when last seen?"

"As before sir - straight to leeward."

"Good, he will travel slower now that it's night."

Ahab went over to the doubloon nailed to the mainmast. "Men, this gold is mine. I earned it. But I'll leave it here until the white whale is dead. Whoever raised him on the day he shall be killed, this gold is that man's." And so saying, he slouched his hat, and stood on deck until dawn.

"D'ye see him?" cried Ahab to the mastheads at daybreak when he'd allowed a little space for the light to spread.

"See nothing, sir."

The ship tore on, leaving a wake like a ploughshare turning up a level field.

"There she blows! - she blows! - she blows! Right ahead!"

"Aye, aye," cried Stubb. "I knew it - ye can't escape. Oh whale! The mad fiend himself is after ye!"

Stubb spoke for almost all the crew. The hand of fate had snatched their souls. They were one man, not thirty. They were all directed to that final goal which Ahab, their one lord, did point to. They clung to **spars**, shading their eyes from the vivid sunlight, seeking through the infinite blueness for the thing that might destroy them.

Suddenly, less than a mile ahead, Moby Dick burst into view. The great whale breached, booming his entire bulk into the pure air amidst a mountain of dazzling foam.

"There she breaches! There she breaches!"

"Breach your last to the sun, Moby Dick!" cried Ahab. "Thy hour and thy harpoon are at hand! The boats! Stand by!"

The men slid to the deck like shooting stars.

“Lower away!” Mr. Starbuck, the ship is thine!”

As if to strike terror into the boats crews, Moby Dick turned and came for them. Ahab was ready to take the whale head-and-head - that is, pull his boat straight into the whale’s forehead.

Moby Dick churned himself into furious speed, rushing among the boats with open jaws and lashing tail, heedless of the **irons** darted at him from every boat.

For a while the boats eluded him, sometimes only by a plank’s breadth. Now a line from every boat was made fast to Moby Dick, warping the boats towards him. Bristling with barbs and points, the whale flashed up to the bows of Ahab's boat, dragging the boats of Stubb and Flask toward his **flukes**. The two boats dashed together like rolling husks on a surf-beaten beach.

The whale dived.

Ahab's boat suddenly shot from the sea as if drawn up to heaven by invisible wires. The white whale dashed his broad head against its bottom, and sent it, turning over and over, into the air. It fell gunwale downwards. Ahab and his men struggled from under, like seals from a sea-side cave. The whale swam away, trailing after him and tangled lines.

When the crew, bruised and shaken, were back on the Pequod, Ahab stood leaning on Starbuck. His bone leg had been snapped in two.

“Give me a cane to lean on! Up helm! Pile on the sail again! Where is Fedallah? By heaven, it cannot be! Where is he? Missing?”

“He was caught in the tangles of your line,” said Stubb, “I saw him dragged under.”

“My line? Gone? My death-knell rings in it! Quick! All hands on the ringing!”

“Great God! Show thyself for an instant!” cried Starbuck. “Never, never wilt thou capture him, old man. In Jesus’ name no more of this devil's madness! Shall we be towed by Moby Dick to hell? Blasphemy to hunt him more!”

“Fool! Ahab is forever Ahab, man. This whole act is decreed by Fate. I act under orders.”

When dusk descended, the whale was still in sight. On the third day we gave chase again, while the carpenter made Ahab a wooden leg. Ahab brooded on the loss of Fedallah as the ship rushed after Moby Dick.

At noon the Pequod caught up with the whale.

“Starbuck!”

“Sir?”

“For the third time my soul’s ship starts upon this voyage, Starbuck.”

“Oh, my captain, go not! Go not!”

“Lower away,” cried Ahab, tossing the mate’s arm from him. “Stand by the crew!”

As soon as the remaining boats pushed from the ship, sharks rose and snapped at the oar blades. The white whale sounded. The boats waited until he rose again. Suddenly the waters swelled in broad circles, then heaved up. A low rumbling sound was heard. Trailing ropes and harpoons, a vast form shot lengthwise from the sea. Shrouded in a veil of mist, it hovered in the rainbowed air, then fell back into the deep.

The boats darted forward to attack. Once more Moby Dick flailed the mates’ boats apart. The whale’s flanks showed as he shot past. There, lashed by harpoon lines, was the half-torn body of Fedallah, his distended eyes turned full upon Ahab.

The harpoon dropped from Ahab’s hand.

The whale swam away, intent on pursuing his own straight path across the sea.

“Ahab!” cried Starbuck from the ship. “It’s not too late to stop! See! Moby Dick seeks thee not! It is thou, thou, that madly seekest him!”

Only Ahab's boat was left. The wrecked boats were being hoisted aboard the Pequod. Tashtego, Queequeg and Daggoo watched from the rigging. The solitary boat glided over the waves, attended by snapping sharks. Ahab steered through the mist from Moby Dick’s spout right up to

his **flank**. The whale seemed strangely oblivious. Ahab darted his fierce iron, and his fiercer curse, into the hated whale. The harpoon sank to the socket,

Moby Dick writhed, and **canted** the boat over. Ahab clung to the gunwale. “Oars! Oars! Burst in upon him!”

The whale wheeled round, and saw the black hull of the Pequod. Seemingly, he saw in it the cause of all his persecutions. He bore down on the ship.

Ahab staggered. “Dash on, my men. Will ye not save my ship?”

Moby Dick’s solid white forehead **smote** the Pequod’s starboard bow. Men and timbers reeled. Waters poured through the breach.

From the boat, Ahab darted his harpoon. The stricken whale flew forward. The harpoon line caught in its groove. Ahab stooped to clear it. The line caught him round the neck. He was shot out of the boat. Before the crew knew, he was gone.

The tranced crew stood still. Then they turned. The ship? Great God, where was the ship? Through the mists they saw her phantom, only the uppermost masts out of water. There, fixed by faith or fate, the pagan harpooners still maintained their sinking lookouts on the sea. Soon the water circled over the head of the Indian at the mainmast. An arm and a hammer hovered, attempting to nail the ship's flag to a sinking spar, until, his whole captive from folded in the flag of Ahab, Tashtego went down with Ahab's ship. The ship, like Satan, would not sink to hell until she had dragged a living part of heaven with her.

The great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago.

AND I ALONE SURVIVED TO TELL THE TALE

The End