



The Whale

Sea drama in five acts after Herman Melville's novel

by Christian Lanciai (1999)

The characters :

Gardiner, captain of the "*Rachel*"

his mate

his lookout

Ishmael, sailor

Queequeg, harpoonist

Father Mapple

Captain Peleg

Captain Bildad

Captain Ahab

First mate Starbuck

Second mate Stubb

Third mate Flask

a brutal sailor
another sailor
a bored sailor
Bulkington
two Italians
Elijah, prophet of misfortune
Tashtego, harpoonist
Daggoo, harpoonist
Fedallah, captain Ahab's harpoonist
three sailors from Nantucket
a Dutchman
a Sicilian
an Icelander
a Chinese
a Maltese
a Frenchman
an Englishman
a Spaniard
Archy
Cabaco
captain Mayhew
Gabriel, a prophet of misfortune
captain Bloomer
doctor Bungler
Pip, cabin boy
the Pequod carpenter

and other sailors

The action is before the middle of the 19th century in Nantucket and on board the American whalers "*Pequod*" and (in the prologue and epilogue) "*Rachel*" apart from the sea itself.

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The Whale

Prologue.

On board a large ship.

Captain Gardiner (dejectedly) No hope? No catch? Nothing new? Nothing in sight?

mate Sorry, Sir. How long will we go on?

A lookout (above) Wait! I see something!

Gardiner (wakes up) What is it?

Lookout Straight leeward. It's too small to be a whaling boat. But there is something floating and a man moving. He is winking!

Mate A shipwrecked!

Gardiner Luff! (*grabs a binocularbar*) Where could he come from? There has been no storm here. Throw him a line! Soon we'll hear what he can tell us about.

Mate We have him!

Gardiner Haul him on board!

(a badly exhausted all wet sailor is hoisted across the rails.)

Speak, my friend, if you can! What ship?

Ishmael (with effort) Call me Ismael. The whaler Pequod. Who has saved me? (*Captain and the mate look surprised at each other.*)

Gardiner Pequod? What happened?

Ishmael It's a long story. I have been lying in the sea for more than a day, saved by my friend the harpoonist Queequeg's coffin. We were rammed by the whale. (*passes out*)

Gardiner Rammed by the whale? The entire ship lost, rammed by the damned whale! Take him down! Give him some rum! We must hear more about this at once!

(Ishmael is brought down to the cabin.)

Come on, mate! All tragic events in the world have to be documented, to make it easier to avoid them! Come now, and let's hear the whole story! (*goes down with the mate.*)

Act I scene 1. Nantucket.

The interior of a ruffled sailor church. Sailors of very different sorts occur sparsely.

Some are heavily under the influence and some are snoring.

Ishmael Is the parson late?

Stubb It doesn't look any better. (*sucks his pipe.*) He is always late. (*shows around*) But people keep waiting anyway.

a brutal sailor He will not come today. He has had too many funerals.

Stubb What do you mean by that, Johnson?

Sailor He always gets invited afterwards. He is popular, you know, and people know how he fancies grogs.

Ishmael (to the Maori on his side) Shall we leave, Queequeg?

Queequeg (with his harpoon on his knee) A good harpoonist always waits for his whale. (*takes a firm hold of his harpoon.*)

Stubb Your pal would be something for Pequod.

Ishmael I am actually looking for a whaler.

Stubb (indicates Queequeg with his pipe) A harpoonist like that is exactly what captain Ahab is looking for.

sailor Don't mention captain Ahab! Not here in church!

(a door opens, and father Mapple appears with a Bible under his arm, deeply pondering some problem.)

another Quiet! Father Mapple is coming!

sailor Now we'll see the devil as father Mapple preaches!

the other Quiet! *(Stubb quietly resets the pipe in his mouth, while father Mapple occupies the pulpit. He examines the outspread motley congregation.)*

Mapple You sitting starboard, move larboard! And you sitting larboard, move starboard! *(All wake up and start pulling together, some belching and swearing.)*

Mapple Quiet now, as I preach! This is no Sunday school! And today you will all see the devil, for the word of today *(raises his Bible like a threat)* is about no one less than the prophet Jonah! And he was a sailor who went under, just like you! And you will all now venture on diverse doomed ships, so you had better mark my words! You will perhaps never hear another sermon! And Jonah is the only sailor in the entire Bible who knew his business! So learn from him while you are still alive, for he is the only sailor in the entire Bible who survived! These are words and no shanties!

A bored voice Get to the point sometime, father Mapple.

Mapple (turns some pages in his Bible) Yes, hem, Jonah, you see, was the prophet who tried to escape from God, but he escaped in vain, for he had no one to escape to! *(lowers his voice dramatically)* But as you all well know, sailors are sensitive, and they know when they have a scoundrel on board who shouldn't be there! *(All listen.)* They felt, that Jonah's laundry was not quite clean! So when a storm broke loose they immediately understood it was because of Jonah! And what do you think happened as they heaved him over board? *(dramatic pause)* Dead calm at once! That proved to them the insanity of Jonah's venture.

a voice There is never dead calm at sea directly after a storm.

Mapple (at once) There was in Jonah's time! It says so in the Bible!

Sailor Refute that if you can, you bootlegger! You can't beat father Mapple on his own ground!

The voice (a ruffian, rising) Are you asking for trouble? *(The sailor rises at once, fit for fight.)*

Bulkington No fighting in church!

Mapple My friends, my brothers, my sons! What is there to fight about? The poor prophet Jonah was after all saved!

(All lose their bearings.)

The bored one Get on with it, father Mapple.

Mapple He was swallowed by a whale, and that whale later spit him up on land! God's grace is unfathomable!

An Italian sailor (to another) Wasn't it the same thing that happened to Geppetto in Pinocchio?

The other Yes, but who was first?

Italian I think father Mapple was first.

Mapple Quiet over there! Let me just finish my sermon! Jonah made it, because he understood the vanity of escaping from God, so instead he then escaped to God!

In the same way you can all manage if you don't escape from something when you go at sea but instead travel *to* something! That was the real meaning of my sermon. (closes his Bible, puts it at once under his arm and leaves the pulpit abruptly.)

Stubb (takes out his pipe from his mouth) Was that all, father Mapple? (Father Mapple doesn't seem to hear but walks towards the exit forgetful of everything else.)

Stubb (raises his voice) Have you no word of comfort to those who will sail with captain Ahab?

Mapple (stiffens and turns around. All are dead quiet. Mapple watches Stubb straight in his eyes.) I once had some words of comfort to those who sail with the devil himself but not to those who sail with captain Ahab. (walks out.)

Stubb (loud) Still captain Ahab is the most skilful whaling captain of all.

sailor Yes, he is more skilful than the devil (leaves.)

Queequeg Strong words, Ishmael. I like that. That captain is for me.

Ishmael It certainly sounds like a challenge.

Stubb (smoking) There are three whalers in Nantucket. I suggest you examine all three before you choose captain Ahab.

Ishmael What's wrong with captain Ahab?

Stubb You will see when you see him. (leaves, quietly smoking)

Ishmael What are we waiting for? Captain Ahab and destiny is waiting for us! And that captain needs a good harpoonist! (pats Queequeg's arm in confidence. They leave together.)

Scene 2. On the deck of Pequod. Harbour surroundings.

Peleg What fools do you think will sign up for this old barge?

Bildad We accept any fools if they just sell themselves cheap enough.

Peleg Do you think anyone would sell his life willingly to captain Ahab?

Bildad We don't need to show our good captain. And never forget, that the last fool isn't born yet.

Peleg Yes, I suppose that's what we are living on.

Ishmael (appears on the quay with Queequeg) Wait here, Queequeg. I'll get on board and check the situation.

Queequeg (with his harpoon) Is this the Pequod?

Ishmael That's what it looks like.

Queequeg She looks fine. I like her.

Ishmael Then we accept her. (pats his arm and walks on board)

(sees captain Peleg) Are you the captain?

Peleg J I am captain Peleg. (winks at Bildad who immediately plunges into his Bible) What can I do for you?

Ishmael I would be interested in signing on.

Peleg (examining him) Any experience?

Ishmael Only of traders.

Peleg (shakes his head) That's not enough. This is a whaler.

Ishmael I know. I want to learn about whaling.

Peleg That's the highest ambition you can have as a sailor. No harm in that. But you should know something about what you are getting into. Have you seen captain Ahab?

Ishmael I was hoping to find him here.

Peleg He is at home with his wife. Have you never seen him?

Ishmael No.

Peleg (blinks at Bildad, nudges him confidently, aside) A greenhorn. What would you give for him?

Bildad (raises his eyes to Ishmael, assesses him in a moment) One seven hundred and seventyseventh part.

Peleg One seven hundred and seventyseventh part? Are you mad?

Bildad Consider, captain Peleg, all our shareholders. Every widow and childless mother must have her part of the profit.

Peleg But be at least a bit human, Bildad! This sailor has muscles after all! You can't give him the salary of a galley slave!

Bildad One seven hundred and seventyseventh part. That's all he is worth.

Peleg (to Ishmael) I offer you a three hundredth part. Then my estimated partner may say what he likes.

Bildad Captain Peleg, will you then utterly ruin us?

Peleg Shut up, you old greedy bloodsucker! *(to Ishmael)* You'll have to excuse him. He is not just a quaker but has also read himself distracted on the Bible.

Bildad Even you are a quaker, if I remember correctly, my worthy brother!

Peleg Say nothing bad about quakers, if they would just refrain from quaking like you, brother. *(to Ishmael)* We accept you for a three hundredth part. Pity you are not a harpoonist. Then you would have had better terms.

Ishmael But I do have a harpoonist with me!

Peleg Get him here then! What are you waiting for?

Ishmael (calling) Queequeg! The coast is clear! *(Queequeg arrives on board, ready with his harpoon.)*

Bildad (examines him from his book) We can't have cannibals.

Ishmael Queequeg is no cannibal.

Bildad Don't you think I recognize a cannibal when I see him?

Queequeg Me harpoonist, no cannibal.

Peleg Convince us.

Queequeg Watch tar spot on railings over there! *(throws his harpoon immediately very close across Bildad's head)* If that tar spot be the eye of the whale, that whale now be dead. *(hauls his harpoon with pride)*

Peleg On the spot, on my honour! Did you see, Bildad?

Bildad (shaken) His precision saved my life.

Peleg (admiringly) What a momentous precision!

Bildad But he is no quaker.

Ishmael Neither am I.

Bildad He is no Christian.

Peleg What do you know about that?

Ishmael He belongs to the same community as you and I.

Bildad (incredulous) Which one, if I may ask?

Ishmael (simply) The first congregational church, of course!

Bildad I have never seen him in that community. Have you, captain Peleg?

Peleg What community is that?

Ishmael The same, that all men born by women belong to, encompassing the entire world engaged in adoring God. (*takes confidently Queequeg around his shoulders*) And this harpoonist of precision is no exception from that rule.

Peleg (strikes) We accept him for a ninetieth.

Bildad (still incredulous) Can he even sign his name? We can't accept him if he cannot sign his name.

Peleg You Bible maniac of a whining old maid, don't be so pathetic! He could sign a cross, couldn't he? We accept him!

Bildad It's on your responsibility, captain Peleg! Consider the widows!

Peleg You know very well that nothing is better for business than a sure hand at the harpoon! Here is the surest in the world! What more can you ask for?

Bildad You advance too quickly in your careless generosity, captain Peleg! There are rules!

Peleg Go to hell, you biblical bitch cunt, or I will throw you over board!

Ishmael No, don't do that for our sake, father Peleg.

Peleg You are far too kind and credulous, you greenhorn. Don't you think captain Bildad can take an ordinary scolding? He has been a captain of the Pequod just as I. But now captain Ahab is our man, and he drives on even harder than we.

Ishmael What is actually the matter with captain Ahab?

Bildad You'll see when you see him.

Peleg (serious) He has a wooden leg. A whale cut off his right leg, mauled it between his teeth. Captain Ahab can never forget that pain.

Ishmael I hope he doesn't let others suffer for it.

Bildad Only the whales, my friend, only the whales.

Ishmael So he avenges himself on the whales?

Queequeg We will help him!

Peleg That's the right spirit, my friend! Just draw a cross here, and captain Ahab's whales are all yours! (*Queequeg signs.*)

Bildad (examines) Clarify the name, please.

Ishmael I can write for him. (*writes*)

Peleg Then we are all set! Welcome on board an unforgettable voyage around the world on the Pequod with captan Ahab! (*offers his hand. Queequeg shakes it immediately, Ishmael afterwards but not without some hesitation.*)

Ishmael Why do I get the creeps?

Bildad (with mischievous joy) You'll find out, my friend. You have found your destiny. (*smiles cunningly.*)

Ishmael Come, Queequeg. We have to collect our things. (*leaves with Queequeg.*)

Bildad You have got two more stuck on the fly-paper.

Peleg We need more. Don't make it too good, worthy brother.

Bildad Even if all fools come here to sign on our death ship, there will be more fools born in the world. We never run out of them.

Peleg And that serves us and our business. (*gives Bildad a friendly nudge. They giggle with satisfaction.*)

Scene 3. On the quay.

Ishmael Do you still like Pequod?
Queequeg Good ship. Good captains. Good reputation.
Ishmael You sensed nothing suspect?
Queequeg My instinct perfect! No faults were missing!
Ishmael (*pats his arm with a smile*) Good, Queequeg! I trust your instinct. (*lower*) But have you seen that weirdo following us? (*A declined sailor whom they have passed is following them.*)
Queequeg Perhaps he wants something.
Ishmael (*turning around abruptly*) Is there anything you want from us, my good man?
Elijah Excuse me. I thought I understood you have signed on the Pequod.
Ishmael That is correct.
Elijah Will you then be sailing with captain Ahab?
Ishmael Who else?
Elijah Is he still alive?
Ishmael Shouldn't he be?
Elijah No, he shouldn't.
Ishmael Why?
Elijah So you know nothing about him?
Ishmael What should we know that we don't?
Elijah What is it you don't know?
Ishmael That's what we don't know.
Elijah So you know nothing.
Queequeg (*to Ishmael*) Is he balmy, or?
Ishmael It doesn't look any better.
Elijah Have you signed on?
Ishmael Yes.
Elijah Are you aware of what you signed?
Ishmael A contract. What else?
Elijah Did it say anything about your souls?
Ishmael We don't mix our souls with our business.
Elijah So you pledged your souls with the old Thunderbolt.
Queequeg Old Thunderbolt to you yourself!
Elijah No, wait! You don't know anything! You don't suspect anything! Old Thunderbolt is captain Ahab. You must obey him, for he is a consumer of souls. So you know nothing?
Ishmael No, old man, we know nothing.
Elijah Going round the Cape Horn once he lay like dead for three days, but he rose again from the dead. In Santa Cruz he once had a fight for life or death with a Spaniard in front of the altar in the cathedral. And the silver bowl in which he spat? Do you know anything about that?
Ishmael We only know that a whale took off his leg.
Elijah (*darkly*) It was not just any whale. It was Leviathan himself.
Ishmael Who is Leviathan?
Elijah He has many names. Another is the Devil.
Queequeg (*shakes his harpoon*) I kill him with my harpoon!

Elijah You can't kill the one without killing the other.
 Ishmael (*offended*) What the hell do you mean?
 Elijah (*pulls out his amputated arm, with a bayonet for a prothesis*) I mean that I know what I am talking of! Captain Ahab is sick, as sick as I, and he can never get well again, until this arm gets well again! I am sorry for your sake, but now I have warned you! (*totters away from them.*)
 Queequeg Who was he?
 Ishmael Who knows? (*calls after him*) Halt, old sailor! (*he halts.*) Who are you?
 Elijah My name is Elijah. Sorry I disturbed you. (*stumbles away*)
 Ishmael (*to Queequeg*) On board the Pequod we might learn more about him. Come now, let's go! (*They leave.*)

Act II scene 1. On board.

(Captain Peleg and captain Bildad receiving all the sailors.)

Peleg Welcome on board, Mr Starbuck!
 Starbuck Thank you, Sir. Is all well with captain Ahab?
 Peleg At least we got him on board.
 Starbuck Still ailing?
 Peleg Getting better.
 Starbuck Let's hope so.
 Bildad You sound doubtful Mr Starbuck.
 Starbuck I *am* doubtful I take no chances.
 Peleg And that's why you are first mate.
 Starbuck I am aware of my responsibility. Is captain Ahab?
 Bildad Or else he wouldn't be your captain.
 Starbuck I wish you could be more convincing, captain Bildad. (*leaves. Stubb coming up.*)
 Peleg Welcome on board, second mate!
 Stubb Thank you, Sir. Is captain Ahab on board?
 Bildad Or else we wouldn't be weighing anchor.
 Stubb Why doesn't he appear?
 Bildad Remove your pipe out of your mouth when you are speaking, mate Stubb.
 Stubb (*removes his pipe*) That doesn't make me speak any better, but perhaps you will hear better. I asked why we don't see captain Ahab.
 Starbuck (*interferes*) He is sick in his cabin, Stubb.
 Stubb Is he ill?
 Starbuck No, he is only seasick.
 Peleg That's good, Stubb. You can replace your pipe in your mouth and go to your place. Welcome on board, mate Flask.
 Flask Where is captain Ahab?
 Bildad In his cabin getting better. Everything is in order, third mate.
 Flask I sincerely hope so.
 Starbuck And where are our harpoonists?
 Peleg Here is your harpoonist, Starbuck. (*Ishmael and Queequeg come on board.*)
 Starbuck The most striking harpoonist in the world! I know a good professional when I see him. I would never wish for any other harpoonist in the world.

Ishmael I can assure you, Sir, that he never misses his point.

Stubb We shall need such experts when captain Ahab leave us behind!

Starbuck I know that Queequeg is the right man to follow even captain Ahab.

Flask (looks around) Where is my man?

Peleg Daggoo has arrived, Mr Flask.

Flask I sincerely hope so.

Daggoo (a large black and very tall negro suddenly appears, with a deep booming voice)
At your service, Mr Flask.

Flask There you are! Bravo! Let's get down to the cabin! *(leaves with Daggoo.)*

Bildad (confidently to Ishmael) Your friend will have much pagan company on board.

Ishmael I sincerely hope so.

Stubb And what about mine?

Peleg Tashtego is in the vicinity. I have seen him. Tashtego!
(A tall handsome Indian with very long hair appears.)
Here is Tashtego.

Stubb In fine shape, I see. Prepare for many whales this year, Tashtego.

Tashtego (bows) My friend Stubb knows he can always trust me like his pipe.

Stubb Always so courteous! Thanks goodness for every gentleman on board.

Ishmael But where is captain Ahab?

Peleg (suddenly angry) Who needs captain Ahab? You have captain Peleg and captain Bildad to pilot you out! Captain Ahab is busy in his cabin with private affairs! Move your legs instead and weigh the anchor! You are here on board only to work, young man!

Starbuck When we are well rid of these old scarecrows and all land is out of sight, I dare say captain Ahab will dare to come out of his den.

Peleg Get a move on now! Man the anchor gear, for all that's worth! The wind is in the bold man's favour! You cannot get any better weather for a start!
(All get busy, sails are hoisted, everyone gets to work.)

sailors (singing) For hey and ho, with a song and a beer!
Turn the rudder, and make for the skies, my dear!
Full ahead with all sails set for joining the rear
with the sea and the skies and a jolly good cheer,
there is nothing else we're waiting for in the rear,
so let the billows blow their foam to match our ringing cheer!

Peleg (calling) Get the anchors! Set the sails! Get going, you slowpokes! Get the show on the sea!

Tashtego (to Queequeg) He plays the captain.

Queequeg He is not captain?

Tashtego Melancholy captain. On pension.

Queequeg And the other?

Tashtego Even more melancholy.

Sailors (singing) Let it go fast with the wind for the sky!
Make speed and get moving as we have to get high
with the toil in the wind for the sky!
The captain gives orders but drinks the pee of his cabin,
while we have our grogs in the open for nothin',
so what are we waiting for? We're reaching the sky!

Peleg (kicking sailors in their bottoms) Make speed, you rogues! All sloth is forbidden at sea!

Bulkington The pilot boat is waiting, captain.

Peleg But we are not waiting for you! Get going!

Ishmael (to Starbuck) Has captain Bildad ever piloted other ships than his own?

Starbuck Bang on, brother. He never wants to pay pilots on ships he owns himself.

Ishmael You know the quakers.

Starbuck I am a quaker myself.

Bildad (resigned, as he must leave) That will do, captain Peleg, that will do.

Peleg Yes, we'll leave the rest to captain Ahab. We have done our bit.

- In three years, comrades, we will celebrate your return with a sumptuous smoking hot supper for you in old Nantucket!

Bulkington Don't forget our rum toddies, captain Peleg!

Peleg Never in my life! Trust us! And happy journey! Good luck, Starbuck! Good luck, Stubb! Take well care of our ship!

Stubb We will boil all the whales in the world in oil for you and come home loaded!

Peleg We are looking forward to it! In three years! Come on, Bildad!

(Bildad and Peleg go down from the second railing to the pilot boat and are gone.)

Ishmael (at the gunrail) Then it's only us and the sea.

Starbuck And captain Ahab.

Ishmael Is he really on board? I still have never seen him.

Starbuck I can sense him on board although I haven't seen him myself. His soul is more vibrant and alive than his body.

Ishmael An old sailor ashore said something about it. His name was Elijah, he had only one arm and a bayonet instead of the other.

Starbuck Yes, he has sailed with captain Ahab. I know him. Forget him.

Ishmael Why?

Starbuck He is a prophet of misfortune.

Ishmael Can we then get anywhere by repressing the unpleasant? No, mate Starbuck, we have to accept the unpleasant if we are to survive it.

Starbuck Then you are indeed prophetic yourself. I am just superstitious but have very long and sensitive antennae. Don't expect anything good from captain Ahab. He is born unblest.

Ishmael What does that mean?

Starbuck It's hard to define. He has a quarrel with eternity, perhaps something akin to the dilemma of the flying Dutchman.

Ishmael What kind of a journey is this? I thought we were going for whales.

Starbuck This matter of the whales is just secondary. Just you wait. Captain Ahab always brings surprises. For him whaling is just an excuse for challenging eternity.

Tashtego (approaching Ishmael, indicating) There he is now. *(Ahab has unnoticeably entered quarter deck, a grizzled, harrowed, small and limping man.)*

Ishmael He looks like coming directly from a bonfire.

Tashtego Close enough. Do you see the white streak going down his neck? It continues all the way down to his toes. He was hit by lightning once by Cape Horn but survived.

Stubb (joins them, quietly sucking his pipe) He got away by pure terror and became worse than ever.

Ishmael He doesn't look like a tyrant.

Starbuck What does he look like then?

Ishmael I can imagine him cross and choleric but not oppressive.

Stubb (to Starbuck) Our friend Ishmael is green. He was never in a whaler with captain Ahab.

Ishmael I hope that day will come.

Stubb Yes, you hope for that now. When it has arrived you will praise your lucky star that you survived.

Ishmael Is he that risky?

Stubb My poor friend, you don't know what you are talking about. Can't you divine anything in the unfathomable depths of that extinct volcano? (*indicates Ahab prudently with his pipe, who is tottering around on his wooden leg or watching the vast eternal horizon, as if he had some demand on it.*) That is the most unblest spirit in the world. Nothing good can come out of such a being. And we are all fools with captain Peleg and captain Bildad, the owners, who all share the belief that we could make money out of his unblestness.

Ishmael I can only sense an endless resource of energy. But it has some difficulty in finding outlet.

Stubb Do you think so? When it finally breaks out, nothing can stop it, not even all the storms of Cape Horn.

Ishmael Such a small insignificant man?

Stubb I warn you. He is all soul and very unblest as such. Don't knock on the shell. You could have your head bitten off by the crocodile of the egg.

Starbuck Do you dare to knock on the shell, Stubb?

Stubb The crocodile will come out sooner or later anyway, so you had better not try it. Look how worriedly he walks about, although his ivory leg must give him constant outrageous pains.

Starbuck That's the pain that keeps him and his hatred burning.

Ishmael Hatred?

Starbuck And more than hatred. You cannot guess.

Ishmael You all seem to have more fear than respect of him.

Stubb Our respect is total of his skill. Our fear is like of that scarecrow he is physically.

Ishmael And still you dare not knock on the shell.

Stubb (knocks his pipe) Just you wait. (*advances towards Ahab.*)

Starbuck When he knocks his pipe like that, it usually signifies harder combats with whales.

Ishmael Is captain Ahab then a whale?

Starbuck At least there is a whale within him, and that whale is the worst of all.

Stubb (accosts captain Ahab) Captain, with all respect, Sir, but you walk around at night so anxiously.

Ahab You shouldn't worry about that, Mr Stubb.

Stubb I don't.

Ahab So what's the matter with you?

Stubb Captain, it worries the sailors, who sleep under deck, since you walk so hard and bumpingly on your ivory leg.

Ahab Go to hell, you damned whining grumbler! My ivory leg is my own affair!

Stubb I just wished to suggest a constructive remedy of the problem. How about winding some rag of oakum around the ivory heel?

Ahab Enough! I should throw you to the sharks, so you could sense how it feels to have your bones crushed between their jaws! Do you then take me for a cannon ball, to be wadded in that fashion? Beware! You had better go down and hide in your grave at night, where such as you sleep in their wrappings to get used to the last one. Get lost, you dog, and keep quiet in your kennel!

Stubb With respect, Sir, but you don't speak to me like that.

Starbuck (tol Ishmael) He goes too far.

Ishmael I am waiting for the whale.

Ahab You miserable keelson rat! Are you asking for a regular outbreak on my side? I would by the devil throw you over board to the sharks if you didn't know how to kill whales. I regret that I unfortunately need you. Summon all men on quarterdeck!

Stubb All men on quarterdeck, Sir?

Ahab Dull of hearing and understanding he is as well, to top his incapacity and impertinence! Starbuck, all men aft!

Stubb Sir, with respect, but you do that only on emergency.

Ahab Shut up! It's not about punishing you but the sea!

Starbuck (obeys) All men aft!

(the call rolls on) All men aft! All men aft!

Ahab (to the rig) Ohoy, lookouts! Get down!

(The entire crew comes gathering from below and down from the rig. All gather under murmuring respect and in fearful expectation of captain Ahab's next move. He just walks to and fro on main deck, now and then casting an eye over the crew like as if to take aim at an enemy and goes on walking up and down. The suspense increases with the silence.)

Stubb (to Flask) He has summoned us to watch a walking performance.

Flask I thought you had learned not to joke with the captain.

Ahab (suddenly) Men, what do you do when you catch sight of a whale?

Some voices We sound the alarm! We give the warning! We spread the word!

Ahab (approvingly) That's right! *(after a pause)* And then?

A smart sailor We lower the boats and chase him!

Ahab And what do you sing as you lower the boats?

Many (together) A dead whale or a smashed boat!

Ahab (eagerly) Exactly! You know your trade! You know why you are here! But there is more to it than that!

Stubb Yes, then we have all the rough and dirty work.

Flask The chase is just the pleasant sport. All the rest is just routine.

Ahab (ignores them) Do you see this Spanish golden ounce of a coin? *(takes up a large golden coin for general display)* It is worth sixteen dollars! Can you all see it? *(the wonder and expectations of the crew increase.)*

You outlooks have many times heard me give the order to watch out for a white whale. Do you all see the golden coin? *(all mumble in the affirmative)* Mr

Starbuck, give me a hammer! (*Starbuck takes a hammer, gives it over to the captain, who makes way for the main mast, all the time holding up the coin, which he also rubs on his clothes. He receives the hammer and puts up the coin to the main mast.*) The first one who spots the white whale and gives me the signal shall have this invaluable coin! (*nails the coin to the mast.*)

many Hurray! Hurray! (*those with caps swing them and southwesters.*)

Tashtego A white whale?

Daggoo This is something for us!

Queequeg There is only one white whale. It's Moby Dick.

Stubb Moby Dick?

Flask Moby Dick?

Tashtego Captain, is the white whale you mean the same that they call Moby Dick?

Ahab Tashtego, do you know the white whale then?

Tashtego (thinking) Doesn't he wave his tail in a funny way as he goes down?

Daggoo Is he the one with such a strange blast? The largest and fastest of all cachalots?

Queequeg I know him. Many harpoons are nailed in him, and many of them are twisted like corkscrews.

Ahab (gets more and more enthusiastic and roused) Yes! Yes! You know him! You all know who he is! You know the devil I mean! Yes, Tashtego, he beats and stamps in the same way as a struggling destroyer in a gale! He is deformed like me! Yes, Daggoo, he is the largest whale in the world and blows up to the sky, and his blast is always thick! Yes, Queequeg, he is branded by dozens of harpoons, which he has all crumpled into corkscrews! You know him! You know what an enemy we are dealing with!

Starbuck (getting more and more worried) Captain, is it the same whale that took your leg?

Ahab (shrill) How do you know? (*calming down*) Yes, Starbuck, he is the one, the whale that reduced me to a cripple and turned me into a wreck. It was that devil who mutilated me for life! So I have every good reason to chase him around the Cape of Good Hope and Australia and Cape Horn and many times again until I get him and may see him blow out his black blood! He is ours, and we shall get him! Are you with me, brave mates?

many Yes! Yes!

Ahab Can you shake my hand on it?

many (throng to him to shake his hand) Yes! Yes!

several The sharpest harpoon for Moby Dick!

others Keep watch night and day for the white whale!

Ahab Thanks, my friends, thank you! (*shakes the hands of many*) Steward, fill up the great grog jug! We must all drink on this oath! No break or peace for Moby Dick until he is dead! (*Only Starbuck takes no part in the general excitement.*) But what's the matter with you, Starbuck? Are you not with me? Could it be that you are afraid of the white whale?

Starbuck (casual but worried) I am not afraid of any whale, captain. But we are not here to chase a singular whale around the world but to hunt as many whales as possible. We are not here to serve the desire of revenge of a captain on an irrational animal but to apply our profession to come home again with a work well done. The oil of your

white whale, captain, does not fill many barrels on the Nantucket market and could cost you your dismissal.

Ahab Damned materialist! Can't you see any further than your limited saucy snuff sense then, you poor pedant? Can't you see, that my revenge is greater than the whole world and never can be measured in money?

Starbuck Captain, an irrational animal cut off your leg without knowing what it did, without any intention and perhaps even by some instinct of self-defence. You have no right to insist on revenge on an animal and even less any right to risk the lives of an entire crew on such a venture.

Ahab Don't you get anything, you squirming worm? Are you still stuck on land? This whale is a monster and the incarnation of the greatest evil in the world! That whale has locked me up in a prison! Have I then no right to break out of it and get indemnity for the pains and tortures of endless years? No one should have to accept and swallow an injustice in this free and human world! He is the challenge of my life, and I have the right to accept it! Of course we will catch and cook many whales on the way, but no harpoon will be sharp enough for Moby Dick, and that whale shall be the final target of our journey! Not until we have laid down this the greatest and most evil of game will your captain be satisfied with his journey and feel at ease with his work, and you too! Not until then we have fully deserved our wages!

Starbuck May God keep us safe from your fanaticism, captain Ahab!

Ahab Have I then no right to be fanatical with my chronic sufferings? Remember, that it was the whale who turned me that way! That whale will never give me any peace until he is slaughtered by the harpoon! That whale is mine, and I have the right to take him!

Starbuck Take him then, captain, yourself, but I have the right to take some responsibility for the crew!

Ahab The crew! Look at it! They are all with me! They all want the golden coin! They all think, that one more whale will make no greater difference! No one is afraid of Moby Dick except you with your female heart! Look at Stubb! He is laughing! Look at the Chilean over there! He is frothing of lust for fight when he thinks of the challenge! You stand alone, Starbuck, against the whole hurricane of the fighting spirits of all these brave intrepid men! It's just a matter of killing a fish! What scruples could you as a professional whaler have against that?

Starbuck It's not against the whale. It's against you.

Ahab Then judge me afterwards and not in advance!

Starbuck (retires in some resignation) God help us all.

Ahab The jug! The jug! (*enter the steward with filled grog jugs.*) Double rations for everyone today! Let the jug go around! Drink deep and pass it on! We all have something to live for, since we face the greatest challenge of nature, and we have the right means of overcoming it! Fill it up, steward! Harpoonists, show me your harpoons! Come forth, and hand them over to me for inspection! This is an old tradition from ancient times! (*The three harpoonists present their lances.*) Cross them here in front of me, and I will lay my hands on them. (*They do so*) Hereby I swear with all of you to never rest or have a full sleep until we have Moby Dick's skeleton purged of all his mortal meat!

Stubb (to Flask) He never sleeps anyway.

Flask His life is like a fever.

Ahab Are you with me on my oath?

Almost all Yes!

Ahab Starbuck, Stubb and Flask, these are your harpoonists and their harpoons! Do you promise to stand me by?

Flask Yes.

Stubb But not without my pipe.

Starbuck And not without the welfare of the crew in the first place.

Ahab Good, Starbuck, when the white whale comes I will get into the whaleboat and you will remain on board! Is that agreed?

Starbuck (resigned and sceptical) As you wish, captain.

Ahab So swear then all of you! Swear death to Moby Dick! May God hunt us all into perdition, if we don't hunt Moby Dick to his death! Drink and swear!

Starbuck (by himself) A dreadful oath.

Stubb (detached) A laughable captain.

Flask But he is serious!

Ahab Drink and swear!

most We swear!

Ahab Then it's just the sun left waiting to descend on it all. Thank you, my friends! Now I know that I can trust you all! Drink and cajole and have a party tonight, for we have something to celebrate, since we have something to live for!
(retires. The jug goes around in many rounds, someone produces a harmonica and a tambourin, there is dancing and drinking, and the mood is very exhilarated.)

Ahab (aside) It was easier than I thought. I got everyone with me except Starbuck, who thinks I am insane, but I am only demonic, and if I am insane I know to control my madness. He doesn't see that I have every right in the world to tear asunder my mutilator. Eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth, life for life and blood for blood! That whale deserves to be hunted round the world by the long arm of justice! Nature must learn, that justice is above nature! Isn't that fair? Is it madness? Let someone convince me if it be possible, and if I am convinced I will gladly lay down my harpoon, but never before! Didn't God give man the right to master nature, and what is then nature to master man? If nature has the right to win against man, then there is no God, and then man has no value and no more right to exist than any irrational animal. Come again then, Starbuck, with your human common sense and try to convince me that I was not right!

Starbuck (by himself) They make merry and noise. They dance and party. They drink and laugh. What ignorance! A mad captain holds all our fates in his hand, and they just take it for granted in innocent acceptance and celebrate it with superficial joy. What horrendous, outrageous, shockingly gross naivety! How can man deal with nature except by humility alone? But they all happily follow their blind mad leader to perdition, since they are so happy to have a leader relieving them of having to think by themselves! What kind of an insidious death trap have I landed in together with hysterical hyenas who laugh at the carrion without realising that the way of the carrion is to turn them all into the same carrion? Yes, go on laughing, Stubb, at the folly of captain Ahab and stay away from it, but that's not the right method to remedy and cure it in time. It's not the right way to relieve him of the power to bring us all to destruction. (leaves)

crew (singing)

Farewell, Spanish girls and ladies,
farewell, my dearest beloved!
So brutally separated so soon
by our knave of a bloody captain!

Nantucket sailor Don't be squeamish now, boys, it's not good for your digestion!
Join instead with something rowdy! Come on and join me! (*starts singing. The others
join the chorus:*)

Our captain stood upon the deck,
a spy-glass in his hand,
a-viewing of those gallant whales
that blew at every strand.
Oh, your tubs in your boats, my boys,
and by your braces stand!
And we'll have one of those fine whales.
Just hold the line, make ready in the boats,
and keep alert by all the braces!
The biggest whale is what we want,
before the sun sets, for our supper!
Row with all your might, go for it, mate!
The whale will not be waiting late!

Flask Sound eight bells over there!

Nantucket sailor 2 Stop the singing! Eight bells!

dutchman They sleep heavily tonight. It must be that grog, but it's a good night, I say, and those who don't go drowsy off will get high instead. Some merriment will never do any harm, and our Starbuck is as solemn as if he was the one who walked on Ahab's leg. But Ahab turns a youth again if only he sees ways for his revenge. But he never will get back his leg, not even if he finally gets his revenge with interest.

Icelander So what are we striving for then? If he gets down his whale and drained and hanged he won't get any richer for that but will have nothing else left to do. He will just drive himself out of work.

Dutchman But the goal! That's everything. If you just have a goal to strive for, that's more than all the salary. But the point is not to reach the goal, for if it is attained, as you say, you then have nothing left to reach for.

Icelander As if the world was not wasted and exploited enough already of all exhausted enterprises.

Dutchman I guess it's all the failed targets that made so much go wrong.

Frenchman And for the sake of Moby Dick we'll now have to do without girls for three years.

Sicilian Be comforted. Moby Dick is probably just one of those mythic monsters.

Chinese With corkscrews for harpoons? With a twisted tail? With captain Ahab's leg in his belly?

Sicilian Yes, doesn't that sound exactly like tall tales and fables? We are perhaps all just ingredients to a fable.

Tashtego We are all captain Ahab's fable.

Sicilian I think we are in for bad weather. That's the sailor's reality.

Nantucket sailor 3 I heard captain Ahab tell the mate to meet a gale like you treat a tornado with a cannon shot. That's what I call a captain with a sense of reality.

Nantucket 1 No one has questioned captain Ahab's qualifications as a skipper. It's only Moby Dick that has twisted his mind.

maltese I would like to see those corkscrew harpoons. How do you wring a harpoon into a corkscrew?

Tashtego It's not the whale. It's the currents of the ocean. Our greatest enemy and Ahab's is not the whale but the sea. The whale exists only in Ahab's sick fantasies.

maltese I believe you are right.

Englishman But surely we could hunt down that whale for him? After all, it's only a whale.

Queequeg Of course.

(Lightning and thunder.)

maltese Here comes the storm. Here comes the darkness.

Daggoo What is darkness? Who is afraid of darkness is afraid of me, for I was made of it.

Spaniard So the lightning in the darkness was just Daggoo's teeth.

Daggoo (rushes up) Swallow your own, if you are a man enough to stand for your word!

Spaniard (accepts the challenge) I will cut you up, you black demon, great in strength, big in words but thoroughly stupid to the bone and soul!

many A fight! A fight!

Tashtego (aside) What's the rumbling noise of the heathens? They call it pleasure. Then I will rather save my sweat. Theirs is smelling far enough, and they are wasting it.

maltese It's because of the grog.

Englishman Take his knife! Fair play! Close the ring around them! Only knuckles!

(Lightning and thunder.)

Tashtego One battle down here and another up there - gods and men, just trouble-makers all of them.

Flask Take in the topsails! Make ready to reef the topsails!

maltese No white whale tonight. Just darkness and storm.

Stubb The gale is over us! Get to work, all of you! Here the real fun begins!

Nantucket 1 (to Ishmael) That's what he always says when it's getting serious.

Ishmael At least he put an end to the fight.

Tashtego No, you green one, it was him up there who released some wind.

Ishmael Captain Ahab?

maltese Maybe. To him we are all just farts.

Sicilian But he needs us for his white whale.

Tashtego Yes, he needs us as farts in his fable.

Archy How real is actually that whale?

Nantucket 2 I assure you, that the white whale is as real as the werewolves and vampires of Transylvania.

Archy You sound far too serious.

Cabaco He has had one grog too many. Every seasoned navy boot knows, that white whales don't exist. Captain Ahab pulls that story just to key up the crew and make the voyage more exciting. Thanks to the golden coin we will find and cook more whales than ever.

Nantucket 2 You don't know what you are talking about, Cabaco.

Cabaco For sure I do!

Nantucket 2 You don't at all!

Archy Shut up! One at a time!

Nantucket 2 (*rising*) The whale is not just white but even has a hump! It's large enough to swallow an entire whaleboat! And there are many such whales! Don't forget New Zealand Jack and Timor Tom, who could bring down entire ships!

Cabaco How?

Nantucket 2 By ramming them!

Cabaco Just head on – like that? (*drives his fist into his hand*)

Nantucket 2 Exactly.

Daggoo It's true, I heard many tell about it. Only a few got away by pure fright.

Ishmael It sounds perilous. And such a whale captain Ahab wants to catch?

Tashtego Only he can catch such a whale. He has tried before and has sworn to try again.

Daggoo He is not the one to give in.

Tashtego But there will be many whales on the way. Cabaco is right. Now everyone is on edge for alertness, and we might perhaps get a hundred whales harpooned before we see the smoke of Moby Dick.

Cabaco But how could a whale be white?

Tashtego How could a whale have a hump? How could a whale be larger than all others? How could a whale attack a ship in the calculated intention to bring her down? There is much you don't know about nature, Cabaco. Nature thinks different than we humans, but it thinks. If we pierce a hundred cachalots with our harpoons and boil them, is it then so strange that a more intelligent cachalot reacts and goes for a counter attack? If captain Ahab plants a harpoon in Moby Dick making him cringe in pain, is it then so strange that he mauls captain Ahab's leg? If we are hostile against cachalots and kill them, is it then so incomprehensible that that they grow hostile against their torturers?

Daggoo Tashtego is right. The animals have the right of self defense.

spaniard Just like the bull on the arena. There the odds are made even.

Tashtego No, they are a hundred to one. We strike and kill a hundred whales, but only Moby Dick goes for a counter attack. Man is the bully and tyrant of nature, and she uses her inhuman supremacy with most outrageous tyranny.

Archy I don't think captain Ahab thinks the animals have the right of self defense.

Tashtego He is mad and has to account for his madness.

Cabaco They say he was brought in a strait-jacket round the Cape Horn after he lost his leg.

Daggoo It is true. He had to be kept tied up and gagged for three days to prevent him from biting the whole crew to death.

Nantucket 2 But he has learned to control his madness. He allows us our hundred whales, and Starbuck will never let him run amuck with the ship.

Cabaco Good for us that we have Starbuck.

.Nantucket 2 He is our insurance against Moby Dick and against captain Ahab.

Tashtego I think the storm is over now.

Daggoo It was just a gale. (*Lights return.*)

Tashtego I'll have a look around from up the rig.

Cabaco Let us know if you see Moby Dick.

Tashtego (climbs the rig) I'd rather see other whales.

Archy What do you think, Ishmael? Does that whale exist?

Ishmael I am afraid we are all equally at a loss concerning the white whale.

Queequeg (demonstrating his harpoon) Until we see it! Then we'll get sharpened!

Ishmael Right'o, Queequeg! Keep your harpoon ready!

Tashtego (above) Ohoy! A whale in sight!

Archy Just don't tell me it's that Moby Dick.

Tashtego (like before) It's a whole crowd!

Stubb (enters suddenly) To the boats! To the boats! Now the real fun begins!

Ahab (appearing suddenly on main deck) Whale? Where?

Flask Straight ahead, captain! Watch that white appearance rising over there above the waves! It must even be Moby Dick!

Ahab Moby Dick! Yours and my destiny is approaching! Where do you see that damned whalefish?

Flask He disappeared in the waves. But lo! There he is again!

Tashtego (from above) White whale straight ahead! White whale straight ahead!

Ahab (suddenly furious) Mr Stubb! Get the boats up again at once!

Stubb (doesn't understand) Captain?

Ahab You poor bunglers! Can't you see it's just an infernal squid! It has arms and tentacles! Can't you see the difference between a whale and a squid, you impotent trash fish! And you call yourselves whalers! What kind of a lunatic herd have I got stuck with! False alarm! Start again from the beginning!

Tashtego (coming down) Sorry, captain. I only saw the white body rising above the waves.

Ahab You saw wrong! Get some spectacles! Or binoculars!

Starbuck (to Ishmael) A squid means bad luck.

Ishmael Why?

Starbuck It is evil. It has no backbone. It is quiet. It drinks its victims. You can fight a cachalot. No one can fight a squid, since if you cut off its tentacles, there will only be new ones growing out. And the ones you succeed in cutting off go on living and turn to invulnerable sea worms.

Ahab Don't talk nonsense, Starbuck! The squid is the main course for the sperm whale! Where there are giant squids like this one there are giant sperm whales like Moby Dick! It was almost right, only completely wrong.

Starbuck That's what I mean, captain.

Ahab I know what you mean. You want to demoralise the crew so that I don't get my whale.

Starbuck On the contrary. I want us to catch as many whales as possible.

Ahab For me there is only one whale.

Starbuck For me there are any whales but that whale.

Ahab Then we compliment each other. One does not exclude the other. Carry on like that, Starbuck, and we will both get satisfied.

Starbuck (to Ishmael) Sometimes I actually believe, that not even Moby Dick could stop that captain.

Ishmael That might then be Moby Dick's death.

Starbuck Yes, only the last whale's death could stop captain Ahab. But I want to live, Ishmael.

Ishmael We all do.

Starbuck Yes, all except captain Ahab. He alone wants to die for his cause.

Ishmael Let him die then, and we will go on from that.

Starbuck Yes, I suppose that's how it will pass.

Queequeg (suddenly) Where squids show up, there are sperm whales. There! (*points out in excitement*)

Starbuck You are right, Queequeg. The squid led us right.

Ahab Our first whale! Get the boats out! Stubb, he is yours! Haul him in at once!

Stubb Ay ay, Sir! Lower the boats! (*pus the pipe back in his mouth before he climbs into his boat, which is lowered with a full crew.*)

Ahab Now it begins, Starbuck! You shall have your hundred, and I will have my own. Is that agreed? (*offers his hand*)

Starbuck (hesitates) Captain, we don't rule our destinies. Neither you can warrant me a hundred nor I your one white whale.

Ahab The will, Starbuck! The good will is all that counts!

Starbuck Is your will good, captain? (*turns and leaves.*)

Ahab (by himself) Starbuck is the only one who defies me. Well, if I can spite destiny, I can also bypass him. He is after all my subordinate. Well thrown, Tashtego! Handsomely guided, Stubb! We have our first whale on a silver plate! And there will be many more practice games before we reach the finale, the greatest! Moby Dick, be as worried and disturbed in your sleep as I, for I am closing in on you getting closer every minute! All my sleepless nights of pains and torments will reach an end by our combat, in which you, the supreme evil of the universe, shall die! Thus I will finally be left in peace from your haunting terror, you only natural being to challenge man's supremacy over nature!

A lookout (from above) Ship ohoy!

Tashtego It's the Jerobeam from Nantucket.

Nantucket 1 A brother ship from home!

Nantucket 3 It must bring some news for us.

Ahab Heave to! Make ready for gam!

Starbuck They carry a plague flag. They have some infection on board.

Ahab That won't bother us. Let them come on board! I must know if they have seen my white whale.

Captain Mayhew (outside the rail) Ohoy, Pequod! Captain Mayhew from Jerobeam requests permission to come on board!

Ahab Come on board, captain Mayhew! What are you waiting for?
(*Captain Mayhew, Gabriel and some other sailors from Jerobeam come on.*)

Mayhew Thank you! Is that captain Ahab?

Ahab Welcome on board, captain Mayhew. (*They shake hands.*)

Stubb (to Flask) It's him!

Flask Who?

Stubb I have seen him before. He is a dangerous fanatic. He is called the Prophet but his name is Gabriel. He has a fatal capacity for gaining influence over crews and captains.

Mayhew We have a severe epidemic on board, but we who are here present are all perfectly well. Naturally no one of you must visit our ship.

Ahab Have you seen the white whale?

Mayhew The white whale?
Ahab Moby Dick! (*Mayhew stares in terror at Gabriel.*)
Gabriel The white whale! The devastating tail! I forbade captain Mayhew to have anything to do with the white whale! But he still went chasing it! Disaster, death and terror!
Ahab (eagerly to Mayhew) What happened?
Gabriel No one can assault the divine whale! Captain Mayhew has learned that with a vengeance!
Ahab Speak out of your beard, man. What happened?
Mayhew (hesitating) We had a mate, Macey...
Ahab And?
Gabriel (prophetically) I forbade anyone to attack the white whale! But first mate Macey refused to listen to me and had his just punishment! He planted his harpoon in the white whale, and that was the last thing he did.
Ahab (impatiently) To the point!
Mayhew The whale gave a flick with his tail, and Macey was flung high up in the air and down into the sea some thirty meters off. When we fished him up he was stone dead. No one can understand how he died.
Gabriel (triumphant) It was the revenge of the white whale!
Starbuck (aside) Could then a whale choose a special person and kill him only in the whaleboat and spare the others?
Stubb (snorting) A yarn.
Mayhew No, it's unfortunately the truth. That was exactly how it happened.
Gabriel There are witnesses!
Ahab We believe you, captain Mayhew. That whale is not to be trifled with. But I believe we have some mail for you. Get the mailbag, Mr Flask.
Mayhew I was just going to ask. We brought some letters addressed to Pequod... Mate Starbuck?
Starbuck It's from my wife. (*opens his letter*)
Mayhew Toby Bench? (*Flask brings the mailbag to Ahab.*)
A sailor That's me. It's from my mother. (*receives his letter*)
Mayhew Matthew Folger?
Stubb He is ill. I can take it for him. (*takes it.*)
Mayhew That's all.
Ahab We only have one letter for Jerobeam. That's what I tought. It's addressed to a certain mate Harry Macey. (*silence. All look at him. Ahab looks around without understanding.*) What's the matter?
Mayhew (serious) Captain Ahab, the letter is for the very man we lost by your white whale.
Ahab (to himself) I'll be damned!
Gabriel (raises an index to the sky) The white whale has chosen you for its victim, captain Ahab! This will be your last voyage!
Ahab (angry) Go to hell, you mad fool! No wonder you have an epidemic on board with such freaks around! Is your crew contaminated by this man's insanity?
Gabriel You are the one who is insane, captain Ahab! I can see it in you!
Ahab Leave my ship immediately! At once! (*Captain Mayhew leaves hurriedly with his mates. Gabriel is the last one to go.*)

Gabriel You have sworn your soul to the devil, captain Ahab! This ship is damned!

Ahab You make me damned by your infernal bullshit, you crazy idiot! Here! Take your dead mate's letter with you! (*sticks it on him*)

Gabriel No thank you! May his curse remain here on board! (*throws the letter down on the deck of Pequod and leaves.*)

Starbuck (after a moment of silence) A bad omen, captain Ahab.

Ahab (takes finally up the letter and throws it over board) Shut up! (*leaves*)
(*stops in front of the golden coin on the main mast*)

You shine, you devil, tempting like the whale of death himself.
Do you have power to evoke from hell the most supreme of evil?
Gold is always a seducer to extravagance, to crime and to perdition,
it could conjure any evil, and the human tribe of innocence and fools
walks always self-destructively into its trap and grave.
You are the road for Moby Dick and us to death,
and you will hang on there until we know
if you will be the grave of all or if I get my fair revenge.
(*totters on.*)

(*Starbuck reaches the coin.*)

Starbuck What did he sing for you, you lousy cat gold of mendacity?

You are the seal of his deceit
and his bribe for which he bought our souls.
We sold ourselves for gold to chase poor whales and torture them to death,
just innocent and harmless mammals, who exactly like ourselves
just want to live and love and suffer freely for our lust.
What is our whole whale industry if not just murder, slaughter
and outrageous torture of the noblest animals of innocence?
And out there is the white whale waiting for us,
and you are the shameless witness of that we've been turned into its slaves.
What is your message to us? I can hear it most distinctly.
"Fools you are! As long as you be chasing me
you will not even know if you be coming back to have some wages!
I am just a mirage, and for my sake you are chasing death,
most consciously and voluntarily!
Alas, what a most irrational unreasonable creature is not man!"
Hang on there as a seal on all our folly
with the maddest maniac of the seas for our inevitable leader.
(*drives his fist into the main mast in a kind of resigned despair and leaves.*)

(*Enter Stubb.*)

Stubb Weeks and months pass by to make full years.
We managed the Atlantic and have passed through all the Indian Ocean
and continue now towards Japan. We killed some whales and cooked them,
hoarding treasures of expensive oils and spermaceti,
and we are at ease, all satisfied and happy, but for the old one-legged captain,
who wants nothing less than the supreme reward and prize:

his justice and revenge. Forget it, old king Ahab.
Hang on there, you false compass of deceptive gold,
until your dying day, for your hanging there means that we are still alive.
That is all right with me. Just let us mind and do our work,
you white divinity and phantom of a whale,
and stay away from us, and we shall only be too pleased
to leave you also in consummate peace forever.

Tashtego (from above) Captain Ahab! A ship!

Ahab An Englishman. Bring her up alongside! Brace the main sail!
(*A ship comes up alongside on the other side of the rail.*)

Bloomer (from the other ship) Ohoy, captain!

Ahab Ohoy! Captain Ahab on the Pequod from Nantucket!

Bloomer Captain Bloomer on Samuel Enderby from London!

Ahab Come over here and let's have a handshake!

Bloomer Come over here instead! My hand is hard to shake!
(*shows an ivory arm with the end of a club.*)

Ahab We are in the same boat! (*lifts and demonstrates his ivory leg*)

Bloomer I'll be damned! A whale?

Ahab The biggest of tooth whales.

Bloomer Here also! Wait! I'll come over! Haul me across!

(*Captain Bloomer is brought over to Pequod with doctor Bungler.*)

Was it the white whale Moby Dick! Was he the one who pulled your leg?

Ahab He took it away with half my life!

Bloomer (admiring Ahab's leg) A well designed ivory bone. What do you say, doctor Bungler?

Bungler (examines it carefully) I couldn't have fashioned it better myself.

Ahab How did it happen? Tell me!

Bloomer Doctor Bungler here can recount it better than I, for I was unconscious all the time, wasn't I, doctor Bungler?

Bungler You made the rough work, captain. I only adjusted it.

Ahab To the point! What happened?

Bloomer It was a crowd of whales. Suddenly another whale turned up, that was bigger than all the rest, a white giant whale with deep furrows and scarred brow and and marble hump...

Ahab It's him! It was Moby Dick!

Bloomer And several harpoons were already stuck in him. He was so great and tempting, that I deserted the other whales for him. But that scoundrel was there to save the others! He tried to tear off the line of the harpoon in another! Then the line got stuck in his teeth, and as soon as we had sent our spear into him he dived, raised his tail high in the sky and let it down smashing our whaleboat. One harpoon got stuck in my arm and tore off all flesh down to the hand. That was the end of it. When I woke up I was on the operation table. Doctor Bungler did the rest.

Bungler There was nothing to do. It was the worst wound I have ever seen. I tried to save the arm, but it turned black. Then there was just to remove it and give him another.

Ahab (furious) That whale owes you an arm and me a leg!

Bloomer You are welcome to demand your leg of him, captain, but I allow him to keep my arm. I have no desire to meet him again.

Ahab In which direction did he go?

Bungler You are eager, captain. Let me just inform you, that whales never know what they are doing. They are just big, bulky and clumsy. It's not their fault. Of course you can demand both captain Bloomer's right arm and your right leg of him, but do you really think he would humour you in that request? No, he is just completely indifferent and will remain as large, bulky and clumsy as before and will perhaps take your second leg and your left arm for all your trouble. What will you do then without arms and legs? I think captain Bloomer is wise here in letting the whale remain big and bulky and clumsy in peace. He does not wish for any more harpoons in his back, and you would certainly not wish to lose more limbs. Neither would your crew. Isn't that reasonable?

Ahab Go to blazes, you miserable jellyfish! In which direction did the whale vanish, I asked?

Bungler Captain Bloomer, this man is a phenomenon. His blood is almost boiling. No thermometer could manage this. I feel his bolting pulse even down to the deck planks.

Ahab Get off my ship! We have work to do!

Bungler Good luck, captain! Don't let us interfere! You are most welcome to go on hunting on your own! Come on, captain Bloomer! A wild goose chase is nothing to this ambition to ride the whirlwind!

(Bloomer and Bungler start returning to their own ship, which then disappears aft.)

Ahab (while they are leaving, to himself) Bunglers! Amateurs! Imbeciles! Landlubbers! Bitch cunts! Greenhorns! Englishmen! Bah! *(goes down to the cabin)*

Stubb (to Bloomer and Bungler) We are sorry about our captain's bad temper.

Bungler Don't worry, mate! It will get worse.

Bloomer We understand him.

Bungler Captain Bloomer has many times rewarded my constant efforts to make his artificial arm perfect by using it as a sledge-hammer on me.

Bloomer Don't blame me! Blame Moby Dick!

Bungler I blame the fixation on him by you captains.

Bloomer Let that whale cut off one of your limbs, doctor, and you will say the same as so many: I'll never forget that whale!

Bungler That's exactly the mistake I will never commit. Keep that whale away from me! And my duty is to also keep it away from you, captain, and you from the whale.

Stubb Unfortunately we have no doctor on board, only a smith and carpenter.

Bungler That's what your rude captain misses: someone to react on.

Stubb Alas, our all too kind first mate fills up that job.

Bungler Stand by, second mate! You will be needed as a reserve!

Stubb Alas, I am afraid you are right.

Bloomer Good luck, Pequod, with or without your white whale! But your chances are better without! *(they depart)*

Stubb They know what they are talking about, and they are damned right. When the day comes, and if needed, I will take a stand for Starbuck against captain Ahab. What about you, Flask?

Flask Me and the crew as well.

Stubb We are a clear majority against one insane and lonely man. The problem is the formalities, since he is our captain.

Act III scene 1. The cabin.

Ahab (by the charts on the table) I have chased you across two oceans. Only the third remains, the greatest and deepest. But I know where you are, you demon. I keep tracing you like a bloodhound. (*enter Starbuck.*)

Yes, what is it? Get back up on deck! You are disturbing!

Starbuck I apologise for disturbing, captain, but some barrel is leaking in the store. We must try to find the leak.

Ahab And lose a lot of time on rehash? Are you mad, you idiot!

Starbuck I can't see that we have any choice.

Ahab Then you are blind! We have a white whale to hunt down! And the entire crew has once and for all sworn to hunt it down!

Starbuck Captain Ahab, don't speak to me like to an imbecile idiot, because I am not, and you as a sailor know that I am not. We must find and repair the damage. It's obligatory routine.

Ahab Get lost, you traitor! I have more important things to think of!

Starbuck Captain, the oil for which we toiled for a year is leaking. We have to set up tackles to take up the barrels.

Ahab Let them leak! We can't waste a week on fixing some barrel bands, not now, when we are so close!

Starbuck In one day we could lose more oil than we can gather in a year.

Ahab Nag! Nag! Nag! Get lost! I will not set up any tackles!

Starbuck What will the shipowners then have to say when we get home?

Ahab I don't care! They are not my conscience, and neither are you. My conscience is in the keel of Pequod, it keeps Pequod advancing forward and can't stop! Now you must leave!

Starbuck (advancing a step) Captain, a younger man than I would not as easily forbear your folly. I can do it only because I know you to be an unhappy man.

Ahab Are you impertinent as well? (*takes instantly up a rifle and aims straight at him*)
Out!

Starbuck (not budging an inch) Captain, I have showed much endurance. I know you and understand you. How about at least trying to understand someone else than yourself?

Ahab Enough nonsense! Get out on deck!

Starbuck You have threatened me with fire arms but not insulted me. For an answer I just tell you: May Ahab beware of Ahab. (*leaves.*)

Ahab (lowers his rifle) He understands me, that devil! May Ahab beware of Ahab! There is something in it. – Starbuck, come back! (*Starbuck returns.*)

You are far too good a man to have such an old marl nail of a captain over you. You are right, Starbuck. Let's save what we can of our cargo. Furl the t'gallant-sails and close-reef the topsails, fore and aft; back the mainyard; up Burtons and break out in the main-hold. You have your orders.

Starbuck Thanks, captain. (*leaves*)

Ahab Without seamen like him we would never survive to find the white whale. (*returns to his charts.*)

Scene 2. On deck. Full storm.

Stubb (*in full storm armour*) Save the boats! Get them higher! Tie them faster! Save them from the waves! Save our future!

Flask It's no use, Mr Stubb. The breakers could smash them anyway.

Stubb Not as long as we can do something about it! Not until you give up, Mr Flask, is everything lost.

Flask You sound half way up to captain Ahab.

Stubb I stand over him today, for he is below deck.

Flask Where is Mr Starbuck?

Stubb Getting the rig in order. I don't envy him.

Flask Can the rig be brought in order?

Stubb No.

Flask I thought so. An unrewarding task.

Stubb Especially when the sails are already torn to rags. Attention! (*They get down and hold on. A terrible breaker is heard and the crash of splintered wood.*)

Flask That's one whaleboat less, Mr Stubb.

Stubb Which one?

Flask Captain Ahab's own.

Stubb Thank goodness. I guess his boat got enough of his white whale hunt.

Flask Do you think that will stop him?

Stubb He will if he is reasonable and gets the message of the time. But unfortunately he is hopelessly mad. (*sings:*)

King Ahab as a mad king went to sea
but was too young to understand it
and found life at sea too heavy an ordeal
and so became just king of fools,
for heigh and ho! the sea got all the better of him
and he will never be the same again!

Flask What an irreverent chant!

Stubb Mad Ahab below deck
has gone to hiding in a sack
to never try again to spout more excrement
against the wind to spite the storm,
for heigh and ho! he will be spited by the sea!

Flask No, fie on you, Mr Stubb!

Starbuck (*enters*) Don't stand here singing, you loudmouths, when others are risking their lives in the rig for your sake!

Stubb We are just drifting with the sea.
Starbuck No, we are trying to sail! We never drift on board the Pequod!
Stubb Now you sound like Ahab.
Starbuck Better to cooperate with him than to become his victims.
Stubb Do you think that is possible without becoming his victims?
Starbuck It will work until you only have worse alternatives left.
Flask Have you seen, Mr Starbuck, that Ahab's own whaleboat has been smashed?
Starbuck Indeed, so it is!
Stubb He has no whale any more. He may not hunt for whales any more.
Flask Tell that to him.
Stubb Not I. You will have to do it, Starbuck.
Starbuck Most remarkable.
Stubb What? That he will have no whale this year?
Starbuck The gale comes from the east, the very direction which captain Ahab took today to chase the white whale. And his whaleboat has been smashed aft at the very place where he always takes a stand.
Stubb He took the wrong course but was unfortunately not himself in the right position in his whaleboat.
Starbuck This new wind would be perfect for us to return directly home to Nantucket the same way we came. The Japanese whale season is over, and the cargo we already have is quite enough.
(Sudden thunder, and a lightning reveals a figure of half deck precisely above them. It is Ahab in full storm outfit. All three are terrified since they first don't see who it is.)
Starbuck Who goes there?
Ahab Old Thunder! Who else?
Flask You should get down below, Sir. This is no night for you.
Ahab Shut up! Do you think the yarn weavers of Nantucket call me Thunder for nothing? Stormy weather like this electrifies me, and I enjoy it! Strike me, lightnings, as you did once before, and refill me with sacred energy to chase Moby Dick round the world!
(Thunder and lightning, roaring winds and crashes by breakers of the sea.)
Flask He is mad.
Stubb No, only lyrical.
Flask Still he is not affected.
Stubb He is worse than that. Like the devil he only gets high and elated by all the misfortunes of the world.
Flask God save our souls!
(Some spooky lights come from above. It's Saint Elmo's fire on the topmasts.)
Starbuck The corpusants! The corpusants!
Ahab Light us ahead through the night towards the storm into the depths of your darkness, Moby Dick!
Stubb A happy auspice, if Ahab didn't turn it to the opposite.
Ahab A happy auspice! Now I know my whale will not escape!
Starbuck Captain, behold your boat! Your own boat has been smashed to pieces just at your place in the aft!

(Ahab totters in fury up to the boat and grabs his harpoon, which also is set on fire like the masts.)

Ahab Do you honestly think that could stop me? *(olds out the harpoon like a frightening torch.)*

Starbuck Come to your senses, captain, while there is still time! This is an unhappy journey. Refrain from your destructively morbid and selfish intention! By this storm wind we could race home to Nantucket in record time! Our stocks are replenished, and our profit is considerable! So let's turn home and then start on a new and better journey! *(The crew gathers around them.)*

Stubb (to Flask) All sense on board is collected in Starbuck.

Flask (back) But madness stands above him.

Ahab Are you mad, boy? Every single sail has been torn asunder! Do you think you could fool me and my crew? They have no sails left to brace! We can't get out of our course, since our destiny forces us to follow it! *(brandishes his flaming harpoon)* And you have all sworn the oath! You have all promised me to follow Moby Dick! The coin is still there as a witness and a sacred vow! Starbuck, I have given you your hundred whales. You now have to allow me the single one I have asked for.

Starbuck How? Your whaleboat is in splinters, and your own horrifying harpoon is consumed by Satan's own fire of fear from hell!

Ahab Thus I blow out all human and inhuman fear. *(blows out the flame, which is extinguished at once.)* No one can be safer, Starbuck, fellow sailors and crew, than the ones who may serve under captain Ahab. *(goes calmly down below.)*

Flask There is something supernatural about him.

Tashtego The great spirit lives in him, but I don't know if it is good or evil.

Starbuck To your duties, mates! We have many sails to repair before this storm is over!

Scene 3. The cabin.

Captain Ahab lies in his cassock in troubled sleep.

A prudent knock on the door. Enter Starbuck.

Starbuck (cautiously) Captain? *(enters. Notices that he is asleep and hesitates. He catches sight of the rifle. He takes it up and finds it loaded. Slowly he turns it against Ahab.)*

Shoot you in your sleep, you mad seducer? I came here to give a report, but he is asleep in the foul unjust sleep of the unblessed. He has overcome the elements, and he knows it. We are heading straight for Moby Dick, and he will sail us all down all the way to final death if he gets what he wants. With this very musket he threatened my life. Shall I then assume power and turn executioner and save more than thirty lives by sacrificing this old man? The temptation is overwhelming. *(lowers the musket.)* But it would be indefensible. I only have my instinct for evidence, and although it convinces me enough it could never convince the others. Shoot him and answer for the murder? That would be an alternative. *(points it again.)* But no. *(puts it away.)* I was not born to take any human life. The fate of the good and the wise is only to become victims to the inhuman folly of arbitrariness. Who was it that said: "No irrationality among all the animals of the world is not large enough not to be infinitely transcended by man's insanity"? Take me, white whale, and let me die with

you as a victim to such a cruelty of human folly as captain Ahab's fanaticism represents. Sleep in peace, captain, until the whale drags you down into the abyss of the unbledness of every sailor's eternally open grave. We all belong there, and we are equal there, while only the myth will survive both you, your nonentity and Moby Dick. I don't have to be an executioner.

Ahab (in his sleep) Moby Dick! Now I've got you!

Starbuck (throws a despizing glance at him) Catch your whale in your sleep, captain Ahab. You will never catch any myth in reality. *(leaves)*

Act IV scene 1. On deck.

Stubb I don't think we'll get rid of that whale until we fix him, Flask.

Flask We ought to encounter him any day now unless we are unlucky.

Stubb You mean we will be lucky if we meet him?

Flask Of course, if I will be the one to see him first, for then the gold will be mine.

Stubb So you also fell into the trap of the seduction of that cat gold. Welcome to your funeral. I hope you will get some use of the money if you ever get ashore.

Pip No one will get that gold coin except captain Ahab, for captain Ahab doesn't sleep any more.

Stubb What are you suggesting, Pip?

Pip He just gazes for that whale, broods on the whale, lives for that whale and forgets the whole world for that whale.

Stubb That's no news, Pip.

Pip What about this then: he doesn't shave any more because of that whale.

Stubb What do the captain's toilet habits have to do with the whale? Does he think the whale will show up just because he doesn't shave?

Flask We all knew that the captain was a fool but not that he was a megalomaniac.

Stubb Didn't you get it until now, Flask? What is folly if not megalomania? And where is that human being who is not a megalomaniacal fool?

Flask You mean that we deserve the captain we've got?

Stubb To the highest degree, as long as we obey him.

Flask And what about Cabaco, who fell over board?

Stubb He got away. But cleverest on board is little Pip here, who twice tried to jump over board.

Pip Don't call me Pip. He doesn't exist any more. Pip jumped the whaleboat. Pip is missing. Pip was left alone to die in the middle of the sea.

Stubb He has been like that all since it happened. When he in terror jumped the whaleboat the first time I promised him, that if it ever happened again I would not fish him up again. It happened again, and he knew what he was doing. Fortunately enough, the Pequod fished him up. Since then he has been like that: deranged but wisest on board.

Flask Who does he think he is if not Pip?

Stubb No one. He just denies himself and refuses to be anyone at all.

Flask Another kind of madness than that of captain Ahab. Perhaps the direct contrary.

Stubb It is the contrary. Captain Ahab is mad, but Pip is wisest on board.

Ahab (totters by) Are you standing here idling again with your mouths full of bullshit as usual?

Stubb We are watching out for the whale, captain.

Ahab I can see that. But it doesn't show. And if anyone will be the first to see him, it will be me, for I am in telepathic contact with him and follow him like a bloodhound! What about Cabaco's lifebuoy?

Stubb Cabaco never got back to the surface. He must have slept or had a heart attack on his lookout. And the lifebuoy went down. It was too old and leaky. So it wouldn't even have helped Cabaco. It followed him down willingly all by itself.

Ahab So we have no lifebuoy.

Stubb Yes, Queequeg has given us his coffin.

Ahab His coffin? But he is alive?

Stubb He was dying and wanted a coffin. When the coffin was finished he decided to live after all. No one else has died, so the coffin is vacant. Cabaco brought the lifebuoy with him for his coffin. So Queequeg's coffin will be our lifebuoy.

Ahab A clever solution. Expose it aft, so that everyone can see that Pequod carries its own lifebuoy, even if it is a coffin.

Pip Who is alive? Not Pip. He was a coward. He could not bear the slaughter of the whale, so he deserted, and we don't pick up coward deserters here in the middle of the ocean.

Ahab (to Stubb) Who made him thus?

Stubb The sea. He was lying there alone for a day and night after not having been able to manage his second whale hunt. Pequod found him and picked him up, but since then he is balmy.

Ahab Where would you say that Pip is then, little boy? Is he still out there in the sea?

Pip He is long since left behind. Stubb promised never to pick him up again if he jumped off into the sea a second time, and Stubb is a man for his word. So was Pip, who took the consequences.

Ahab And who are you if you are not Pip?

Pip His empty soul without a body or his empty body without a soul. You must be able to notice that his eyes are completely void.

Ahab (roused in his compassion, embraces him) Come to me, Pip. From now on you shall stay with me in my cabin. The worst maniac on board could need another maniac for his only proper and sensible company. But beware of me, Pip, for I could sometimes be madder than what's acceptable.

Pip (pats his hand) Your hand is like a slide-rope, Sir, like something for weak souls to cling to.

Ahab Alas, I am but a straw in the river for such as you. But it will hold as long as it holds, even if its time gets constantly more limited. Come, let's go down and make yourself at home. *(goes down with Pip to the cabin.)*

Maltese There you are, two particular nutcases, one mad out of his strength and force, the other lost in feeble-mindedness. They go well together.

Ishmael (to Stubb) Ship ohoy, Sir.

Stubb (applying his binoculars) Yes, I can see. It's the Rachel from Nantucket. A large and handsome vessel, commanded by captain Gardiner. He and captain Ahab know each other. He is one of the most accomplished whalers of Nantucket. Notify captain Ahab, Flask.

Flask He is already on his way.

Ahab (coming in) A ship? A large ship? Is it Rachel?

Stubb It is the Rachel, Sir.

Ahab (using his binoculars) Heave to! Rachel if anyone must have seen Moby Dick. But why are there so many sailors aloft?

Stubb Captain Gardiner is coming on board.

(A large dark vessel is coming up alongside the Pequod. Captain Gardiner comes on board the Pequod alone, a serious and impressing man)

Ahab Greetings colleague! What news of Moby Dick?

Gardiner We happened to him yesterday. You haven't by any chance seen any whaleboat adrift?

Ahab No. What happened?

Gardiner We had a splendid day for hunting whales yesterday. Then the white whale turned up, and we launched a whaleboat and got a harpoon into him. But he then went off in a racing speed. That was the last thing we saw of him and of the whaleboat.

Ahab (elated) So Moby Dick is still alive! I may still have the honour and glory of hunting him down!

Gardiner Slow down, old man. I need your help. That is why I come on board.

Ahab What's on?

Gardiner We need your help in finding our missing whaleboat. We have been searching indefatigably since yesterday, the whole night and morning. But Rachel is slow of movement and reaction. Let me borrow your Pequod for some days.

Ahab Some days?

Gardiner She is faster. We would have better chances with Pequod. Help us in finding our lost whaleboat.

Stubb (to Flask) He is as mad as captain Ahab but of sentimentality. No captain would risk a ship to search for a whaleboat.

Ahab Captain Gardiner, that is entirely out of the question.

Gardiner You don't understand. My own son was on board.

(Some emotion among the men.)

Stubb His own son, Flask! Then we can't refuse helping him.

Gardiner I beg of you, captain Ahab, for only forty-eight hours. There is still a chance of finding him, but the hourglass of possibilities is running out by every minute. Pequod is fast and easy to manoeuvre. We need your help, captain Ahab. I will be glad to recompense you. You may decide the amount yourself. You must help me.

Ahab Captain Gardiner, I am sorry, but I have other things to do. We can't waste two days on a vain search for a lost whaleboat just because your son was in it, not now in our own moment of truth. We have a more demanding quest of our own to mind. Search for your son in your whaleboat, and if it is still afloat your son will be alive, and you will find him. But we lack your motivation. I must ask you to leave my ship.

Gardiner (bending in hopeless despair but keeping his face, shrinks and leaves the deck of Pequod without another word, sad and resigned, but turns around from the gangway:)

You have a child yourself, captain Ahab. Can't you understand me?

Ahab I wish I could understand myself, captain Gardiner. I will not ask you to forgive me, because I know you will not be able to. God help you, captain Gardiner, but I can't. *(Captain Gardiner leaves. The gangway is removed, and Rachel falls aft and vanishes.)*

Stubb (irritated, to Flask) What inhuman hardness!

Flask Just for the sake of a monster. The white whale has gone to his head.

Stubb Definitely. And only by killing it could we remove that tumour from Ahab's life, if even that would work. I fear that captain Ahab is a hopeless case.

Flask Only Starbuck could save him.

Stubb Yes, we must leave him to Starbuck.

(All leave the stage unnoticeably except Ahab on half deck by the rail. He looks down into the water. Starbuck comes up behind him.)

Ahab Oh, it's you, Starbuck.

Starbuck Captain.

Ahab It's a mild heaven and a mild day. On a day like this I killed my first whale. It was forty years ago. For forty years I have carried on hunting and killing whales for dear life, and what did I get for it? An ivory leg for a stamp of invalidity, a black and bitter soul and humanly a total burnt-out case. During these forty years I have been perhaps three years ashore in total, and fifty years old I committed the unpardonable crime against a woman to marry her. Thereby I made her a widow, since I left her after our wedding night. What kind of a life is that, Starbuck? What urges us so ruthlessly away from nature and all sense and everything that would be identified as a good and sensible life?

Starbuck But she is not a widow, captain. She is alive, and you have a small son. I am also happily married and have a small son. Isn't that kind of life worth returning to? We both have a life, and the entire crew has a future ahead. Why then risk everything on an impossible insane enterprise?

Ahab You heard the report from *Bachelor*, Starbuck. You saw her smashed whaleboat. You saw her heave her only corpse over board. Five men dead for Moby Dick, Starbuck, and only one of them could be buried!

Starbuck Leave that devildom alone! This is exactly the right kind of day to turn back, when all feel they have something to live for. Then they hearken the voice of sense, and they find the sense of peace. Turn around, captain, turn back to Nantucket, to your home, your wife and your duties to your tender son!

Ahab And allow Moby Dick to go on smashing boats, break hearts and limbs and bury seamen alive without a grave? I hold his heart in my hand, Starbuck, *(shows his fist,)* I know him! I have the life of the evil one in my hand, and I can do something about it! You must understand me, Starbuck. Come closer. I can't fail the only true mission I ever had in life. Do I look very old? I know I am, but that is nothing to how I feel. But you are still young and and still have your best years ahead of you, noble Starbuck. *(wipes a tear.)* This is how much I can do to satisfy you but no more. Don't go down any more into one of those boats, Starbuck. Stay on board and take care of the men and the ship while I hunt the white whale to his

death. I don't want to see you lose any arm or limb. Accept that insurance, Starbuck, but leave me to my destiny.

Starbuck Captain, you are unreasonable!

Ahab No, my friend, it's the destiny. It's the teacher of every man, and we must follow him, for we have no other choice, for destiny is all we have to guide us. Only he who is true to his destiny can be said to have received and accepted life in the right way.

Starbuck And if destiny is nought but death? Your way is self-destructive, captain!

Ahab We don't know that yet. But if it is so, it's only so for myself.

Starbuck We are all in the same boat, captain, and you are in command! Accept your responsibility!

Ahab I give you the responsibility, Starbuck, for Pequod and its cargo of a hundred boiled whales – a wealth without comparison. I only take responsibility for my destiny, which is the white whale.

Starbuck (has difficulty in controlling himself, in despair) Captain, you will wake up to life too late when it has passed you by. *(leaves in despair)*

Ahab What does he mean. Sometimes he makes me suspicious, as if he was ahead of me all the time and was leading me instead of the contrary. If his prophecy comes true we shall see what it means. But someone once prophesied to me, that only hemp could put my life to an end. Would I then be hanged in a gallows? For what? So not even Moby Dick could do me in. So I would be reasonably immortal. I always suspected that. There's your prophecy against mine, Starbuck. But he has left. Well, he will remain on board and out of danger. He is safe from me and from all possible curses of mine.

But what's that smell I feel in the air? *(sniffs in the air)* A whale! Spermaceti! We are in its waters. He can't be more than ten miles away. Get on your positions, lookouts! Sharpen your eyes! Concentrate! This unmistakable scent reveals more about the whale than any lookout can see. I am on his track! This is my life's eternal nightmare! Everyone on deck! *(stamps the deck)* At last we have reached the moment of truth! *(People come pouring up, gathering by the rails and climbing the rig.)* Can't you see anything, lookouts?

Tashtego (from above) Nothing yet.

Ahab Damned cyclopic eyes, sailing moles and sea elephants! They can't see anything! Then I will give them eyes to see with! Stubb! Flask! Hoist me up the rig at once! *(goes to the device for hoisting him up.)* His silver track in this smiling sea is as clear as any footmarks in the sand. He should be at some distance leeward... *(He is still being hoisted when he cries out in triumph.)* There he is! There he blows! There is his hump, as white as a mountain of snow! There is our monster! It's Moby Dick! Get me down! *(He is taken down.)* The coin is mine! Can you see him, lookouts?

Daggoo (from above) Yes, it's him all right, without a doubt. He looks like an iceberg but is moving with speed.

Ahab Launch the boats at once and put me in the first! Three boats is enough to start with. Starbuck! You stay on board! You are the captain of Pequod in my absence. Stand by the braces! Now launch all the boats at last! Shiver all sails! Get on with it! Hurry on! Hoist me into that boat there at once! Fedallah, you are coming with me. Is my new harpoon here at hand, the devil harpoon baptized in blood? Then we are all set! Make speed! *(Ahab's boat is launched.)*

Starbuck (down the rail) Good luck, captain!

Ahab'(s voice, down below) Death to Moby Dick!

Starbuck There he goes, the demented fool, drunk with his chronic megalomania, who once nevertheless had a heart and some humanity. Blasphemies is all he can produce now, all his life energy is just bitterness, revenge, morbidity and sick rumination, but there is still life in him. (*calling up*) What's happening, Tashtego?

Tashtego (coming down, making himself visible) They chase the white whale, but he swims away from them. Now Moby Dick went down. They seem at a loss. They look down into the water pointing in different directions. Stubb takes it easy, and Flask keeps rowing in this direction and that. Ahab's boat is lying still. But what's happening now? Suddenly they start rowing in a panic! The whale is coming up above them! He takes Ahab's boat in his jaws! They stand no chance! The whale cuts the boat in the middle!

Starbuck Set all sails! Straight ahead at the spot of disaster! There is no time to lose!

Tashtego Everything is chaos over there now, many are in the water, wreckage and half boats, they flounder, now Flask arrives there and also Stubb, and the whale calmly swims away from there.

Starbuck Can you see the captain?

Tashtego He is in the middle of the mess. He lives and appears mad of rage.

Starbuck That's the main thing. Get the lines out! Make ready to receive casualties! A stretcher for captain Ahab!

(*Crew members all wet through come back across the rails in bad conditions. Ahab is also hoisted on board. His ivory leg is broken off.*)

Ahab The harpoon! The harpoon! Could we save the harpoon?

Queequeg The harpoon is still there. It was never thrown.

Starbuck How are you, captain?

Ahab How many are missing?

Stubb (has come on board) Just Fedallah, Sir.

Ahab Fedallah? My own harpoonist? Where is he?

Ishmael He must have got entangled in the lines.

(*The sad remains of a whaleboat all chewed up are taken on board.*)

Stubb What about that, Starbuck? Moby Dick spat that thistle out of his mouth.

Ahab Who is so heartless as to laugh at a wreck?

Starbuck Yes, captain, this is a bad omen. Stop hunting the whale now. Fedallah is lost. One boat is lost, but all the others got away including yourself.

Ahab I can't turn back, Starbuck, with my mission unaccomplished! I will chase him around the world ten times if I have to! I weaken to your sentimentality with your scruples about women and children, but when it comes to the whale there can be no compromises! Do you see the golden coin, men?

many Yes.

Ahab It will stay there until the hunt is finished! It's mine, but only until further! And he who spots the whale on the day when he is killed, he shall have it! And if it happens to be me, I will give you ten pieces like that each! Are you with me?

all (enthusiastically) Yes!

Ahab Now take a break and rest before the chase is resumed. – Carpenter, I need a new leg.

carpenter Will it do with a wooden one? I could use a piece of the boat.

Ahab As a temporary solution then.

Carpenter Yes, captain. It will be finished tonight.

Ahab Well, Starbuck, any objections?

Starbuck You know my position.

Ahab And therefore you'll stay on board also as we go on. The hunt is mine! And it has only started! The whale is mine!

Starbuck I will say nothing more, captain, until the hunt is over.

Ahab Wise, diplomatic and detached as ever, Starbuck? (*pats him easily*) You will in time make a better captain than I.

Starbuck I only want everyone to live. Fedallah is dead. You only want to kill.

Ahab This will be my last death, Starbuck. Then I am finished. (*leaves*)

Starbuck (to himself) The last death will be the worst – but hardly for the white whale.

Stubb Don't gall the captain any more. We'll have a glass and forget everything when the whale is dead.

Starbuck How many victims do you think the whale will claim before captain Ahab succeeds in killing him?

Stubb I am a realist. One so far.

Starbuck I am also a realist, and I tell you there will be more. But it's not the whale who claims them. It's captain Ahab.

Stubb Shall we do something about it? Shall we sacrifice captain Ahab?

Starbuck He will sooner or later sacrifice himself for the maddest absurdity.

Stubb And I prefer to sacrifice the whale. I think that is the most realistic thing to do. (*leaves*)

Starbuck (sighs heavily staring down into the depths.)
(Someone strikes eight bells of the evening watch. The stage gets dark and disappears.)

Act V scene 1. The same.

Ahab in the whaleboat being lowered down.

Ahab Starbuck!

Starbuck Captain?

Ahab For the third time my soul breaks loose to catch up with the end of my journey.

Starbuck That's how you want it, captain.

Ahab Some ships leave their harbours never to return.

Starbuck That's an unavoidable fact, captain.

Ahab Some die when life has reached its lowest ebb, while others die when the tide is at the highest. I feel myself just like the foam of an exhausted wave of which nothing else remains but to be blown away by the wind in the last remaining fluff. Press my hand, noble Starbuck.

Starbuck Captain, remain on board. Further misfortunes can still be avoided.

Ahab You will remain on board to avoid them, Starbuck. I cannot avoid my own misfortune. I have taken on the white whale and its curse and misfortune alone.

Flask and Stubb follow me as seconds, but if things turn out for the worst I will send them back.

Starbuck Our eyes will follow you whatever happens.

Ahab I am glad that I didn't shoot you, Starbuck. I am glad that we became friends.

Starbuck I say the same to you, captain. *(They press each other's hands oine last time.)*

Ahab Launch!

Starbuck There he goes down into the farthest depth of the eternally open grave of the sea for every sailor. Queequeg is with him now instead of Fedallah. And where is Fedallah? Where are all the victims of the white whale and captain Ahab? Dead, anonymous, forgotten all and obliterated in the greatest of all mass graves. Lookout! Do you see the whale?

Tashtego Clearly. The three boats are quickly overtaking it. But it suddenly turns against them and heads straight against them with terrible speed! They cannot get away. Only captain Ahab's boat is left alone, but they have problems with sharks.

Starbuck Sharks?

Tashtego The sharks seem to cling to their oars by biting their oarblades and not letting them go.

Starbuck Head towards Stubb's and Flask's new foundering. Any disaster?

Tashtego No. They all seem alive, but the boats are turned to firewood by Moby Dick's enormous tail.

Starbuck We'll fish them up, and they may start again from the beginning. Get out the rescue lines!

(Stubb comes on board all wet.)

Any casualties?

Stubb (shaking it off) A few broken bones here and there. Some splintered wood in someone's flesh here and there. Some crooked and broken harpoon in the thighs of someone here and there. But no disasters. Moby Dick knows how to move the rudder.

Starbuck Ahab's boat is left completely in peace.

Daggoo But we have seen Fedallah.

Starbuck Where?

Daggoo All lashed up, dead and torn asunder by harpoon lines on the back of the white whale.

Starbuck Could Ahab see it?

Daggoo Yes. He lost his harpoon.

Stubb Moby Dick now has three harpoons in him from our boats, but he only gets more furious and energetic.

Flask (has come on board all wet) The whale or Ahab – that is the question.

Stubb Both are of some supernatural toughness.

Starbuck But what is the whale doing now?

Stubb He ignores Ahab's boat completely.

Tashtego He is coming towards us!

Stubb He actually does. And he intends to ram us.

Flask Can Pequod take it?

Stubb The hit of such a club with such force is more than any ship could stand.

Starbuck Now I see the fulfilment of Ahab's and our destiny coming up in a most horrible unpredictable fashion.

Flask We have no chance! Our bow cannot take a thrust like this!
Stubb And we don't even have time for a drink.
Starbuck Oh horrendous damnation that Ahab has sent us! If I had guessed something like this disaster, I would have averted it by any means! But now it is too late!
Stubb This is an encounter more advanced than the poor flying Dutchman! This vessel is not likely to go through us and is no phantom! Duck! Take cover!
(An enormous thrust with a crash like an avalanche is heard. All gets dark, general panic, hysterical cries and screams, gurgling noise of waters, and so on.)

Scene 2. The lifeboat.
Ahab with Queequeg, Ishmael and a few more.

Ahab Was that your scheme, outrageously incalculable whale? To trick me into a whaleboat in order to ram the ship? You have ignored me as if I didn't exist. But I have still got one harpoon left. *(raises it.)*
Ishmael Captain! Pequod will go down in a matter of minutes! We must get out of the whirlpools!
Ahab With the oarblades consumed by the sharks? Don't give me such nonsense! I have more important things now to concentrate my last powers on.
Queequeg How could the whale forget us? It didn't get its pains and harpoons from the brave ship. We were the ones who sent him his spears.
Ishmael But he didn't see us, because we were in front of him. The whale has a pretty bad sight, and he only saw the ship.
Maltese Unless it was calculation and pure evil.
Ahab Alas, you splendid rig, my stalwart hull, you firm deck and proud helm, do you have to go down without me? What's left for me then after this the loneliest possible life the loneliest possible death? Who could guess at such a bottomless and oceanic irony? But I still have got my last weapon. Unto death I am still bound to you, you matchless lifetime curse of a marble monster of beauty! I will evidently never get rid of you, my life's persecutor and cruellest taskmaster! Shall we find peace together in the grave, me with this the supreme evil of the world? Or shall I ride you in eternity like a nightmare, like Fedallah? Nothing matters any longer. You cold iceberg phantom, I shall never give up my weapon but to kill you! *(throws the harpoon)*
Queequeg The line! The line!
Ahab Wait, I'll sort it out
Ishmael He is diving!
Queequeg Cut the line!
Ahab No! It's our last chance against Moby Dick!
 (Suddenly Ahab is snatched out of the boat and vanishes.)
Queequeg There was a loop on the line! It got round his neck!
Ishmael So he follows Fedallah and Moby Dick down into the deep, strangled like a Turkish sultan.
Maltese And we follow Pequod down into the same deep. We are stuck in the whirlpool.

Queequeg The whirlpool! The whirlpool!
Maltese We are coming, Starbuck! We follow you!
Ishmael Captain Ahab! You'll not die alone! Stubb and Flask! Wait for us!
Maltese We are coming in full speed!

*(Their voices are drowned by the enormous noise of the whirlpool tempest.
Then everything goes dark and silent.)*

Epilogue.
In the cabin of Rachel.

Gardiner But how on earth did you survive?
Ishmael I fell out of the boat. Thereby I was the last one to be sucked down by the whirlpool. And exactly as it started to drag me down I saw my friend the harpoonist Queequeg's coffin come up floating. That was our only lifebuoy. My friend's coffin thus became the salvation of my life.
Mate And the white whale?
Ishmael I don't think captain Ahab succeeded in killing him in spite of all his exorbitant efforts.
Gardiner So his entire journey was in vain, the profit went all down the drain, all the efforts and dire labours to gather oil and spermaceti from butchered and cooked whales...
Ishmael Yes, captain. Starbuck was right. He should have murdered captain Ahab while he could. But no one could guess at what means the whale would find to defend himself.
Gardiner And Starbuck was really the only defendant and lawyer of the whale.
Ishmael The most tragic victim of the supreme injustice, which not even the irrational whale was guilty of.
Mate A strange tale of destiny.
Ishmael You didn't find any other survivors?
Mate Not a single one.
Gardiner Not even my son.
Ishmael Captain, we have something in common.
Gardiner Yes, we have.
Ishmael May I sleep now?
Gardiner No more grog? Nothing else you wish for?
Ishmael No. Just to sleep.

Gardiner (puts tenderly his hand on him) Sleep then, my son. *(rising)* Come, mate. *(takes him aside)* Disrupt the search for our lost whaleboat. I will never find my son. It has been four days now. Let's learn from captain Ahab and give up in good time and not allow stubbornness to press us into dangerous presumption.

styrman Instead of your son we found the last surviving sailor from Pequod.

Gardiner Yes. I searched for a lost son but only found another shipwrecked orphan. Let that be enough. Too many lives are lost, but let's rejoice about the only one we managed to rescue. *(takes his mate round the arm. They go out.)*

The End.

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