

MOBY DICK

Melville's novel in Two-Acts

Adapted  
by  
Kirk Smith

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

ISHMAEL  
AHAB  
MOBY DICK  
STARBUCK  
STUBB  
FLASK  
CONSTANTINE  
TASHTEEGO  
DAGOO  
QUEEQUEG  
STEWARD  
FEDALLAH  
OLD CARPENTER  
PIP  
BULKINGTON  
ARCHY THE NEW BEDFORD SAILOR  
CABACO AN EGYPTIAN SAILOR  
NANTUCKET SAILOR  
LONG ISLAND SAILOR  
FRENCH SAILOR  
DUTCH SAILOR

Notes on the Cast:

AHAB: Looks like a man cut away from the stake after the fire has overwhelmingly wasted all his limbs without consuming them. His whole high, broad form seems made of solid bronze and shaped in an unaltered mold. Threading its way out from among his odd, gray hairs, and continuing down one side of his tawny, scorched face and neck till it disappears into his clothing, is a slender rod-like mark, vividly whitish. His ivory leg is fashioned from the polished bone of a sperm whale's jaw. He wears a bent head and a half slouched hat.

MOBY DICK: A whale made up of dead sailors.

STARBUCK: Chief mate. Quaker by descent. He is a long, earnest man, with flesh as hard as twice baked biscuit. Around thirty summers have dried up all his physical superfluosity.

STUBB: The Second mate. Happy go lucky, neither craven nor valiant, taking perils as they come with an indifferent air.

FLASK: The Third mate. A stout, ruddy, young fellow who is very pugnacious concerning whales.

CONSTANTINE: Captain of The Rachel.

TASHTEEGO: Harpooner for Stubb, and main mast-head-stander. Long and lean with sable hair, high cheekbones and round, black eyes. To look at the tawny brown skin of his lithe snaky limbs one would almost have credited the superstitions of the earlier puritans and half believed this wild native to be the son of the prince of the powers of the air.

DAGOO: Harpooner for Flask. A gigantic coal black African. Savage, with a lion like tread. Suspended from his ears are two large golden hoops.

QUEQUEEG: Harpooner for Ahab and friend of Ishmael. Through all his unearthly tattooing one sees the traces of a simple, honest heart. In his large, deep eyes, fiery black and bold, there is evidence of a spirit that would dare a thousand devils. He looks like one who had never cringed and never had a creditor.

STEWARD: A very nervous and shuddering sort, the progeny of a bankrupt baker and a hospital nurse. And what with the standing spectacle of Ahab and the periodic visitations of the three savages, the Steward's whole life was one continual lip quiver.

FEDALLAH: Also called The Parsee. Ahab's subordinate phantom, such as civilized people only see in their dreams.

### Notes on Style:

The story unfolds through flashbacks, dialogue, narration and movement. There are wildly physical sections set against contemplative, philosophical ones. Some passages are dark and others, I hope, will be funny. Occasionally, scenes are simple and naturalistic, though most are very theatrical. The overall design concept must be somewhat flexible; no specific historical style should be represented.

### Notes on the Set:

The play takes place on and around The Pequod, a whaling ship at sea. The ship ought to be represented onstage, but not realistically. Still, it must be sailed, climbed, danced upon and ultimately, destroyed, night after night.

### Notes on the Whale:

The whale is made up of dead sailors, actually and metaphorically. When sailors die at sea in this play, they join the whale - literally become a part of it - making it's onstage presence more obvious to the audience, it's proximity more clear to the remaining crew, and it's existence more threatening to Ahab. Which is to say, the more lives lost in the hunt for Moby Dick, the more powerful and unconquerable he becomes. I suggest that the actors mask their heads and adopt a whitish costume as their death/transition takes place.

## ACT I

(House lights down. In black we hear a steady click, click, click. It's the sound of AHAB pacing the deck, his ivory peg leg striking the wood. Lights up on ISHMAEL, alone. The clicking continues throughout the opening speech.)

### ISHMAEL

Some years ago - never mind how long precisely - having little or no money in my purse, and nothing in particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off depression and regulating my circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I catch myself pausing involuntarily before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially when my nerves get an upper hand and it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off - then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can.

(The sound of AHAB pacing stops.)

Call me Ishmael.

(There comes a huge crash! A curtain drops to reveal a ship, the Pequod, and her crew working furiously. SAILORS climb and swing from ropes, hoist the sails and ready the whale-boats, everyone yelling and rushing in a strange, chaotic explosion. ISHMAEL stands still, staring straight ahead for a moment, as if remembering this exact event, and then, suddenly animated, he takes his place working among the crash and rattle. AHAB and FLASK stand together on the quarter deck.)

### AHAB

Man the mast-heads! Call all hands.

### FLASK

Man the mast-heads! Call all hands!

### AHAB

What do you see?

### TASHTEEGO (from the mast head)

Nothing! Nothing yet sir!

### AHAB

The gallant sails! Stunsails! Alow and aloft, and on both sides! Up! Up! Up! Aloft!

FLASK

Aloft the main-top-sail! The main-gallant-sail!

(Several SAILORS grab their lines and begin to hoist AHAB up to his perch near the mast-head. The work below continues.)

AHAB

There she blows! There she blows! A hump like a snow hill! Moby Dick!

TASHTEEGO

There she blows! There she blows!

(The crew rushes to the rigging to see the whale, which is still barely visible to them, and not seen at all by the audience.)

AHAB

A mile or so ahead! Every roll of the sea reveals him! There she blows! Again and again! He's going to sound! In stunsails!

FLASK

In stunsails!

AHAB

Down top-sails!

FLASK

Top-gallants down!

AHAB

Stand by the boats. Starbuck, remember, stay on board, and keep the ship. Helm there! Luff, luff a point! Steady, man, steady! Ready the boats.

FLASK

Ready boats!

AHAB

Stand by! Stand by! Lower me. Lower! Lower! Quicker. Quicker!  
(AHAB is lowered back to the deck near STUBB at the braces.)

STUBB

He's heading straight to leeward, Sir. Right away from us! He can't have seen the ship yet!

AHAB

Quiet, man! Stand the braces! Hard down the helm! Brace up! And stand by!

(Suddenly all is still and quiet.)

ISHMAEL

The boats were dropped, their sails set, and all their paddles plying. With rippling swiftness off we went, shooting to leeward, Ahab at the onset.

STARBUCK

(still on the ship, a journal in his hand.)

Like noiseless shells, their light prows sped through the sea; but only slowly neared their foe. Yet as they neared him, the ocean grew still and smooth; seemed drawing a carpet over its waves; seemed a noon meadow, so serenely it spread. And their prey, not yet distinctly visible, went sliding along as if an isolated thing. Before it, not far out on the rugged water, went the glistening white shadow from his broad milky forehead. And behind, the blue interchangeably flowed over into the moving valley of his steady wake.

(to PIP)

Prepare the decks, they'll be back before nightfall.

PIP

Yes sir.

(PIP scurries off to work. The crew arrange themselves for the upcoming moment in which they are returned to the ship.)

ISHMAEL

And we were, with one boat less than we'd started with. And Ahab, dragged aboard with bloodshot, blinded eyes and white brine caking in his wrinkles, found that the long tension of his bodily strength did almost crack. Helplessly, he yielded, crushed for a time like a body trodden under foot. Far inland, nameless cries escaped him, as desolate sounds from out of ravines.

AHAB

The harpoon, is it safe?

STUBB

Aye, Sir; it was not darted.

AHAB

Lay it before me.

(STUBB retrieves the harpoon and lays it before AHAB.)

Good. Any missing men?

STARBUCK

Aye, Sir. One missing. Name of . . . Bulkington.

AHAB

Fine. Help me now; I wish to stand.

STARBUCK

(Moving to help AHAB)

He was a good sailor this Bulk--

AHAB

Where is my boat?

(Silence)

Where is my boat!

STUBB

(Gesturing to a wrecked pile of broken wood.)

Here, Sir.

(AHAB crosses to what's left of his boat.)

STUBB

The splinter the ass refused, aye Sir? It pricked too keenly.

(STUBB and several SAILORS laugh.)

AHAB

What soul-less thing is this that laughs before a wreck? Man did I not know thee brave as fearless fire I'd a thought you were a landsman! Neither groan nor laugh should ere be heard before a wreck.

STARBUCK

Aye, Sir. Tis a solemn sight; an omen, and an ill one.

AHAB

An omen? If the gods think to speak to men, they'll speak outright, not shake their heads. Begone! You two are the opposite poles of one thing. Starbuck is Stubb reversed! The two of you are all mankind. Ahab stands alone among the millions, nor gods, nor men his neighbors! How now? Aloft there!

(TASHTEEGO scampers up to the mast-head.)

Do you see him?

(TASHTEEGO signals "no".)

Sing out for every spout, though he spout ten times a second! Down royals and top-gallant stun sails.

FLASK

Down royals, down stuns!

AHAB

Slow the course. We must not run over him 'til morning.

ISHMAEL

And with that he was gone.

(Several exit. Remaining crew silently resume their work.

ISHMAEL crosses downstage, speaking to the audience.)

Now when I say that I am in the habit of going to sea I do not mean that I ever go a passenger. For to go as a passenger you have to have a purse. And a purse is but a rag unless there's something in it. Besides, passengers get sea-sick, grow quarrelsome and do not enjoy themselves much, as a general thing. No I never go a passenger; nor, though I am something of a salt, do I ever go to sea a Captain or a Commodore. No, when I go to sea, I go a sailor. True, they rather order me about some and at first this sort of thing is rather unpleasant; I mean it touches one's sense of honor. But it wears off in time. What of it if some old hunk of a sea captain orders me to get a broom and sweep down the decks?

FLASK

Get a broom, you, and sweep down the decks!

ISHMAEL

What does that indignity amount to?

FLASK

You crippled thin backed baby goat!

(SAILORS laugh. FLASK raises his hand against ISHMAEL, but then exits. OLD CARPENTER tosses a broom to ISHMAEL)

OLD CARPENTER

The angel Gabriel thinks nothing less of you for promptly and respectfully obeying, however they may order you about, and however they may thump and punch you.

ISHMAEL

As if I were a slave?

OLD CARPENTER

Who ain't a slave? Tell me that.

ISHMAEL

So I have the pleasure, at least, of knowing that everyone is served the same way - either from a physical or metaphysical point of view?

OLD CARPENTER

Indeed! The universal thump is passed round so completely that all hands should rub each other's shoulders and be content.

(OLD CARPENTER exits)

ISHMAEL (to audience)

Again, I always go to sea a sailor - because they make a point of paying me for my trouble.

DAGOO (working nearby)

Whereas they never pay passengers. Not a single penny that I ever heard of.

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

On the contrary, the passengers themselves do the paying.

FRENCH SAILOR

And there is all the difference in the world between paying and being paid!

STUBB (to ISHMAEL)

Tell me boy, why do you think the fates put you down for this shabby part on a whaling voyage when others were cast in magnificent roles in high tragedies--

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

Or given short and easy parts in comedies--

FRENCH SAILOR

Or funny parts in farces?

ISHMAEL

I can't really say. But they tricked me into the delusion that it was my own choice and that I set about performing this part as a result of my own unbiased freewill empowered by my very discriminating judgment!

STUBB

So it was the whale?

ISHMAEL

It was the whale.

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

I'd say not the whale himself, but the idea of the whale that roused your curiosity.

ISHMAEL

Aye.

STUBB

The wild and distant seas where he rolled his island bulk?

ISHMAEL

It's true.

DAGOO

The nameless perils, the marvels of a thousand Patagonian sights and sounds?

ISHMAEL

Yes, those.

STUBB

The wholesome exercise and the pure air!

ISHMAEL

Yes, yes, all of it!

(All fall silent at the sound of AHAB's false leg slamming down against the deck.)

AHAB (cryptically)

The great flood-gates of the water-world swung open and revealed the wild conceits that now sway you to your purpose. Two by two, in your innermost soul, float endless processions of the whale, and chief among them is one grand hooded phantom, like a snow hill, hung there in the air.

ISHMAEL

(silence)

AHAB

Aye, Sailor?

ISHMAEL

Aye, Sir.

(AHAB stares at him for a moment and then looks away.)

AHAB

There is death in this business of whaling, boy - a speechlessly quick, chaotic bundling of man into Eternity.

ISHMAEL

Aye, Sir.

(AHAB exits. The crew return to work, though not doing much.)

NANTUCKET SAILOR

Ever go to the Try Pots?

ISHMAEL

The Try Pots?

NANTUCKET SAILOR

In Nantucket. The fishiest of all the fishy places.

EGYPTIAN SAILOR

The Try Pots! Chowder for breakfast, chowder for dinner, and chowder for supper.

ISHMAEL

(nodding)

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

Chowder after bowl of chowder until you began to look for fishbones coming through your clothes!

ISHMAEL

There was a fishy flavor to the milk too, which I never understood.

NANTUCKET SAILOR

I thought the same until one morning I happened to take a stroll along the beach and I saw the old man's bridled cow feeding on fish guts, and marching along the sand with each foot in a cod's decapitated head!

LONG ISLAND SAILOR (authoritatively)

Looking very slipshod I assure you!

ISHMAEL

I remember the Try Pots. The Try Pots was Queequeg's favorite.

(QUEEQUEG shakes his head.)

FRENCH SAILOR (imitating an inn-keeper)

But the chowder; cod or clam tomorrow for breakfast, men?

ISHMAEL

Both!

LONG ISLAND SAILOR (sarcastically)

Both, indeed, and let's have a couple of smoked herring by way of variety.

(ALL laugh)

NANTUCKET SAILOR (to ISHMAEL)

So you know Nantucket then?

ISHMAEL

Less well than I know New Bedford.

EGYPTIAN SAILOR

The same is true for all of us.

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

Did you ever go to worship there? At a chapel I mean.

ISHMAEL

Queequeg and I did.

NANTUCKET SAILOR

Really?

ISHMAEL

Sure.

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

Not at the Whaleman's Chapel.

ISHMAEL

(looks to QUEEQUEG, who nods)

Aye, the Whaleman's Chapel it was.

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

And the Chaplain?

ISHMAEL

I couldn't say.

QUEEQUEG

Father Mapple.

(LONG ISLAND SAILOR leaps down and taking on the appearance of Father Mapple directs the crew to sit as a congregation.)

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

The one and only Father Mapple! Starboard gangway! Side away to larboard - larboard gangway, to starboard! Sing now men and raise the dead!

(LONG ISLAND SAILOR, as Father Mapple, begins the song, but not as a hymn, rather a strange and lurching chantey, accompanied perhaps by drums and accordion.)

The ribs and terrors in the whale,  
Arched over me a dismal gloom,

While all God's sun-light waves rolled by,  
And lift me deepening down to doom.

I saw the opening maw of hell,  
With endless pains and sorrows there;  
Which none but they that feel can tell-  
Oh I was plunging to Despair.

In black distress I called my God  
When I could scarce believe him mine,  
He bowed his ear to my complaints-  
No more the whale did me confine.

(SAILORS applaud.)

Shipmates let's turn now to Jonah - last verse, first chapter - where God had prepared the great fish to swallow up the man. Feel now the saltish floods surging over us; sound with him to the kelpy bottom of the waters with seaweed and slime all about! Aye, what a pregnant lesson is this prophet, so billow-like and boisterously grand!

QUEEQUEG

But what is the lesson?

(AHAB enters unnoticed.)

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

The lesson here is sin! And as with all sinners, the sin of Jonah was disobedience. Never mind now what the command was, or how conveyed, only that it was a hard command. Yet all the things that God would have us do are hard. Remember that. To obey God we must disobey ourselves; in this the hardness of obeying consists.

ISHMAEL

Then it was for disobedience that Jonah was cast into the belly of the whale?

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

Not only disobedience, Jonah further taunts God by fleeing from Him. He thinks that a ship made by men can carry him to countries where God does not reign.

(STARBUCK enters, unnoticed.)

FRENCH SAILOR

And then?

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

The sea rebels; he will not bear the wicked burden. A dreadful storm approaches, the ship is like to break. But when the Boatswain calls all hands to lighten her; when boxes,

bales and jars are clattering overboard; when the wind is shrieking and the men are yelling, and every plank thunders with trampling feet right over Jonah's head; in all this raging tumult, Jonah sleeps his hideous sleep. He sees no black sky, nor any raging sea, feels not the reeling timbers, and little hears he the far rush of the mighty whale, which even now with an open mouth is cleaving toward him through the sea!

STARBUCK

(Noticing AHAB growing more irritated.)

Enough.

STUBB

All hands back to work! Spring!

(All return to their tasks.)

ISHMAEL

I recalled, as we returned to our duties - the same now as they were then - one shivering winter's night as the Pequod thrust her vindictive bows into the cold malicious waves. Who should I see standing at her helm but Bulkington! I looked with sympathetic awe upon the man who, in mid-winter, just landed from a four years dangerous voyage, could so unrestingly push off again for still another tempestuous turn. Wonderfulest things are ever the unmentionable; deep memories yield no epitaphs.

(Gesturing toward the ocean.)

This is the stoneless grave of Bulkington.

(to BULKINGTON who steers the ship.)

Dark enough for you, is it?

BULKINGTON

Aye, it's very dark.

ISHMAEL

But you don't seem to mind so much.

BULKINGTON

No. I don't.

(Beat.)

ISHMAEL

Soon again at sea after such a long journey?

BULKINGTON

Is it any concern of yours?

ISHMAEL

No, not really.

BULKINGTON

All right then.

ISHMAEL (to the audience)

The land seemed scorching to his feet.

BULKINGTON

I'll say that it fares with me as with a storm-tossed ship that drives along a leeward coast.

(BULKINGTON looks at ISHMAEL)

The port would gladly give relief, grant comfort and assistance. In the port, you say, is safety, supper, and warm blankets.

ISHMAEL

And friends.

BULKINGTON

Aye. But in a gale the port is that ship's enemy. She must fly all hospitality, for one touch of land, though it but graze her keel, would make her shudder through and through. With all her might she crowds her sail offshore, fights the very winds that blow her homeward; seeks landlessness again; for refuge's sake, forlornly rushing into peril; her only friend her bitterest foe.

ISHMAEL

It's true. Likewise it seems that all deep and earnest thinking is the constant effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her against the treacherous, slavish shore.

BULKINGTON

Tis so I suspect.

ISHMAEL (to the audience)

In landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, infinite as God. Better is it to perish in that howling infinite than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee!

(Looking over the side)

ISHMAEL (CONT.)

Take heart Bulkington. Bear thee grimly demigod! Up from the spray of your ocean perishing - straight up leaps your transformation.

(BULKINGTON steps into the sea and assumes the guise of MOBY DICK. ISHMAEL steps to the helm.)

STARBUCK

(With his diary, on another part of the boat.)

Some days elapsed with ice and icebergs all astern, but the Pequod now went rolling through the bright and briskish Quito spring. The clear and ringing days were as crystal goblets of Persian sherbet, heaped up with flakes of rose water snow. The starred and stately nights seemed haughty dames in jeweled velvets bound at home in lonely pride.

ISHMAEL

For a sleeping man it was hard to choose between such winsome days and such seducing nights. But all the witcheries of that unwaning weather did not only lend new spells to the outward world, inward they turned upon the soul, especially when the still mild hours of evening came on.

OLD CARPENTER

(To ISHMAEL who stands at the helm.)

Old age is always wakeful; as if the longer linked with life, the less a man wants to do with that that looks like death. Among sea-commanders, the old graybeards will oftenest leave their berths to visit the night-cloaked deck.

(STARBUCK heading down to bed, encounters AHAB)

STARBUCK

Good evening, Sir.

AHAB

Mr. Starbuck.

STARBUCK

I can't help but notice, Sir, that of late you seem so much to live in the open air and that your visits are more to the cabin than from it.

AHAB

That's true, Mr. Starbuck. Descending this narrow scuttle feels to me like entering a tomb and it's hard, sometimes, to sleep in that grave dug berth. When this sort of steady quietude prevails the silent steersman there is bound to catch, from the corner of his eye, an old man emerging from below, his grip at the iron banister to help his crippled way.

STARBUCK (smiles)

Good night then, Sir.

AHAB

Yes, Mr. Starbuck.

(Several moments pass as AHAB paces steadily.)

ISHMAEL

Pardon me, Sir.

(AHAB turns)

I have seen you walking here these last several nights and I couldn't help but notice that you have so far abstained from patrolling the quarter deck.

AHAB

Yes, that's true.

ISHMAEL

I wonder what the reason is.

AHAB

At times like these I abstain from patrolling the quarter deck because, to my worried mates below, seeking repose but six inches beneath this ivory heel, the reverberating crack and din of my bony step would fill their dreams with the crunching teeth of sharks!

(AHAB gives a long look to ISHMAEL, and then ascends the quarter deck and begins to pace deliberately.)

STUBB

(coming up to the deck from underneath)

Excuse me, Sir?

AHAB

Stubb?

STUBB

Aye, Sir. I wonder, Sir, if... I mean, that if you are pleased to walk the planks at this hour...at night, Sir. Then, well, no one could say nay, or for you not to. But I wonder Sir, if perhaps you might, well could you perhaps, is there not some way of muffling the noise a bit? Perhaps a bit of cloth on the end--

AHAB

Am I a cannonball Stubb? Would thou wad me in that fashion?

STUBB

Sir, I--

AHAB

Go thy ways boy, I had already forgot about you! Go below to your nightly grave! Go down there where such as thee sleep between shrouds. Go down dog! To your kennel!

(They stare at one another for a moment.)

STUBB

I am not used to being spoken to that way, Sir. I do but less than half like it.

AHAB

Avast!

STUBB

No, Sir. Not yet. I will not tamely be called a dog, Sir.

AHAB

Then be called ten times a donkey, and a mule, and an ass, and begone! Or I'll clear the world of thee!

(AHAB rushes STUBB who hastily retreats.)

ISHMAEL

That task now accomplished, he stepped heavily back into his bony business like a man cut away from the stake. And I, for one, stepped back into the shadow of that standing spectacle, the black, terrific Ahab.

STUBB

(Somewhere else on the ship.)

I was never served so before without giving a hard blow for it. I don't know whether to go back there and strike him or get down on my knees and pray for him. Yes that's the thought coming up in me, and indeed it would be the first time I ever did pray! It's strange how he flashed at me - his eyes like powder pans! There's something on his mind as sure as there's something on a deck when it cracks.

STEWARD

You say you're sure that's how it went?

STUBB

Aye, and that's just exactly how it happened.

STEWARD

It's no surprise; he ain't in his bed more than three hours out of twenty four. And he don't sleep then.

STUBB

What do you mean?

STEWARD

I mean that in the morning, when I come to straighten up the cabin, I find the old man's hammock clothes all rumpled and tumbled, and his sheets down at the foot.

STUBB

And the coverlid?

STEWARD

Tied in knots.

STUBB

How about the pillow?

STEWARD

The pillow, worst of all, is frightful hot as though a baked brick had been on it!

STUBB

A hot old man.

STEWARD

Indeed. Ahab and anguish lay stretched together in one hammock.

STUBB

I guess he's got what the shore folk call a conscience; I hear it's worse than a toothache.

STEWARD

Well I don't know what it is, but the lord keep me from catching it.

STUBB

I wonder what he goes into the afterhold for every night.

STEWARD

For a snooze I'll bet.

STUBB

No, it's like he's got an appointment.

STEWARD

In the afterhold?

STUBB

I know, damn me, it's strange.

STEWARD

Don't think so much. That's my eleventh commandment.

STUBB

Oh really?

STEWARD

Really. And sleep when you can; that's the twelfth.

STUBB

Aye; it's good advice but here I go again: Didn't he call me a dog?

STEWARD

He called you ten times a donkey and piled a lot of jackasses on top of that!

STUBB

He might as well have kicked me and been done with it.

STEWARD

Maybe he did kick you.

STUBB

What?

STEWARD

Maybe he did kick you.

STUBB

What do you mean by that?

STEWARD

I mean that, perhaps, he kicked you.

STUBB

He didn't kick me.

STEWARD

Well, if he did--

STUBB

He didn't.

STEWARD

If he did, would you say that he used the real leg or the false one?

STUBB

What difference does--

STEWARD

The ivory leg or the other?

STUBB

Well, certainly if he kicked me it would've been... the ivory peg I suppose.

STEWARD

Well be glad of that.

STUBB

And why should I be glad to be kicked?

STEWARD

Not to be kicked, but if kicked, that kicked by a false leg rather than a real one. What's the row? There's a mighty difference between a living thump and a dead thump; that's what makes a blow from the hand fifty times more savage than a blow from the cane. The living member, that's what makes the living insult.

STUBB

Right. What's his leg now but a cane - a whalebone cane. Aye, twas only a whaleboning that he gave me, not even a kick. Besides, look at it once. The end of it - the foot part - what a small sort of end it is, whereas if a big footed farmer kicked me, there's a devilish insult.

STEWARD

So he kicked you?

STUBB

No! I don't know. He might have kicked me. He might have kicked me and I didn't notice; I was so taken all aback with his brow somehow; it flashed like a bleached bone.

STEWARD

A bleached bone? What the devil's the matter with you? You don't stand on your right legs.

STUBB

I know. Coming afoul of that old man has turned me wrong side out.

STEWARD

I say don't give it another thought, at least not tonight.

STUBB

You'd say that, would you?

STEWARD

I would.

STUBB

Well to hammock then. Tomorrow we'll see how it looks by daylight.

(STUBB and STEWARD exit. TASHTEEGO calls from the mast-head while ringing a bell.)

TASHTEEGO

Ship ahead! Directly ahead!

(Several crew gather and look seaward.)

ISHMAEL

A large ship, the Rachel, was bearing down directly upon the Pequod, all her spars quickly clustering with men. At the time, we were making good speed but as the broad-winged windward stranger shot nigh our boastful sails fell all together and the life fled from our smitten hull.

OLD CARPENTER

Bad news; she brings bad news.

PIP

How can you tell?

OLD CARPENTER

I can tell.

AHAB

(Near the rigging, with a trumpet to his mouth)

The White Whale! Have ye seen he White Whale?

CONSTANTINE

(from offstage)

Aye, yesterday. Have ye seen a whale-boat adrift?

AHAB

No whale-boat adrift, no.

(CONSTANTINE boards the Pequod)

Where was he? The whale. Not killed? Not killed - was he?

CONSTANTINE

Not killed.

AHAB

Tell me, how was it?

CONSTANTINE

Dreadful is how it was. Late in the afternoon not two days ago, three of my boats engaged a shoal of whales. The task led them four or five miles from the ship and while they were swift and in full chase the white hump and head of Moby Dick loomed suddenly up and out of the water. After a keen sail before the wind our best harpooner fastened and began to battle, at least by what the mast-head could tell. In the distance, he says, he saw the boat and then a swift gleam of bubbling white water, and after that no more.

STARBUCK

What then?

CONSTANTINE

The recall signals were hung in the rigging; and darkness came on. The rest of my crew now back safe aboard, we crowded all sail in search of the missing boat, a fire in our try-pots for a beacon, and every other one aloft at the lookout. Thus we sailed until daylight.

AHAB

But found nothing.

CONSTANTINE

Nothing.

AHAB

We have no spare boat to offer.

CONSTANTINE

Captain!

AHAB

What else would you have me do?

CONSTANTINE

(descending upon AHAB)

Unite your own ship here with mine! Let us sail over the sea here together, searching, four or five miles apart, on parallel lines.

FLASK (to STUBB)

Who ever heard of two whale-ships cruising after one missing boat in the height of the whaling season?

STUBB

I'll wager something now. You see how pale he looks?

FLASK

He's pale enough.

STUBB

Well I'll wager that someone in that missing boat sailed off with his best coat or maybe his watch even and if not that it---

CONSTANTINE

Captain, my own boy is among them! For God's sake let me - for eight and forty hours - let me charter your ship. I will gladly pay you for it, if there be no other way. For eight and forty hours, only that. You must! You must, and you shall do this thing. A little boy but twelve years old.

STUBB

His son! Oh he's lost his son! I take back the coat and watch. What says Ahab? We should save the boy.

OLD CARPENTER

He's gone; drown last night with the rest of them; I heard their spirits wailing on the water.

FLASK

And old Ahab there like an anvil, receiving every shock without quivering.

CONSTANTINE

I will not go till you say "Aye" to me. You too have a boy, Captain; I've seen him myself in Nantucket. He's but a child nestling safely now at home, a child of your old age, like mine. Yes. Yes! You relent; I see it. Run men, run and stand by to square in the yards!

AHAB

Avast! Touch not a rope! Captain, I will not do it. Even now I lose time. Goodbye and God bless you, may I forgive myself. Mr. Starbuck look at the binnacle watch, and in three minutes from this present instant warn off all strangers; then brace forward again, and let the ship sail as before.

(AHAB turns and exits. Helpless, CONSTANTINE looks from one face to another, and then exits the same way he entered.)

ISHMAEL

Soon the two ships diverged their wakes; and as long as the strange vessel was in view, she was seen to yaw, hither and yon, searching every dark spot, however small, on the sea. This way and that, her yards swung round; starboard and larboard, she continued to tack; her masts and yards thickly clustered with men. But by her still halting course, and winding woeful way, you plainly saw that this ship that so wept with spray still remained without comfort. She was Rachel, weeping for her children because they were not.

AHAB

(Entering from his cabin.)

Mast-head there! Look sharp! There are whales about! If ye see a white one, split your lungs for him!

DAGOO

Aye, aye.

STARBUCK

He paused a little then, and proceeded to the rigging; heavily, he leaned over the side. It was difficult not to feel the impossible watery longing in Ahab's stare. Then he all but kneeled and offered a kind of prayer, so deeply devout that he seemed kneeling and praying at the bottom of the ocean. It ended in prolonged and solemn tones, like the continual toiling of a bell in a ship that is foundering at sea in a fog.

ISHMAEL

It was an almost unbearably difficult thing to hear.

(ISHMAEL returns to work. Music plays, a simple, low sound. A minute passes while the crew perform their natural tasks. AHAB turns, surveys the group for a moment, and then exits.)

Ahab, my Captain, still moves before me in all his Nantucket grimness. And in this episode, touching emperors and kings, I must not conceal that I have only to do with a poor, old whale-hunter like him. Oh Ahab, what shall be grand in thee?

STUBB(entering, to ISHMAEL)

You there, have you been up top.

ISHMAEL

Up top?

STUBB

To the mast-head. Have you had a watch on the mast-head?

ISHMAEL

Not yet, Sir.

STUBB

It's you then. Two more hours here and then aloft.

ISHMAEL

Aye, Sir.

(STUBB exits)

DUTCH SAILOR

Never yet aloft?

ISHMAEL

Why do you ask?

DUTCH SAILOR

Well the business of standing mast-heads, ashore or afloat, is an interesting one. I think a philosopher such as yourself should know a little something of it?

ISHMAEL (Smiling)

Tell me what you think I should know.

DUTCH SAILOR

First, you should know of the old Egyptians who were the earliest standers of mast-heads.

ISHMAEL

What of the builders of Babel? They must, doubtless by their tower, have intended to rear a most lofty mast-head.

DUTCH SAILOR

Aye, but that great stone mast of theirs may be said to have gone by the board in that dread gale of God's wrath.

ISHMAEL

True.

DUTCH SAILOR

So the Babel builders get no priority over the Egyptians, ancients who sang out for new stars like the lookouts today sing out for a sail, or a whale, or the land coming into view.

OLD CARPENTER

Might I add a bit of my own?

DUTCH SAILOR

Be my guest.

OLD CARPENTER

In Saint Stylites, the Christian hermit of old times who built himself a lofty stone pillar in the desert and spent the whole latter portion of his life on its summit, hoisting his food from the ground with a tackle; in him we have a remarkable instance of a dauntless stander of mast-heads who was not to be driven from his perch by fogs or frosts, rain or hail or even sleet. He, valiantly facing everything out to the last, literally died at his post.

ISHMAEL

Impressive.

DUTCH SAILOR

Very.

OLD CARPENTER

Astounding.

DUTCH SAILOR

Quite.

ISHMAEL

But what of the modern era? Am I to believe that there are no great standers of mast-heads still living?

DUTCH SAILOR

(looks to the OLD CARPENTER who shrugs)

I'm afraid we have mostly but a lifeless set. And though they're capable of facing a stiff gale - indeed their stone natures are a great advantage there - they are entirely incompetent in the business of singing out.

TASHTEEGO

(Descending the mast-head)

Two hours gone! Up with the next of you.

ISHMAEL

(Ascending. To the audience)

The three mast heads are kept manned from sunrise to sunset; the sailors taking their regular turns every two hours.

DUTCH SAILOR

(Shouting up to ISHMAEL)

In the serene weather of the tropics it is exceedingly pleasant, the mast-head. To a dreamy, meditative man it is delightful.

ISHMAEL (at the top)

There you stand a hundred feet above the silent decks, striding along the deep, as if the masts were gigantic stilts, while beneath you and between your legs, as it were, swim the hugest monsters of the sea.

OLD CARPENTER

There you stand lost in the infinite series of the sea, with nothing ruffled but the waves.

DUTCH SAILOR

But alas! We're not in the tropics yet.

ISHMAEL

And here, tossed about by the sea, the beginner feels about as cozy as he would standing on a bull's horns!

(yelling down)

It is much to be deplored that the place to which you devote so considerable a portion of your natural life should be so sadly destitute of anything approaching a cozy inhabitiveness, or adapted to breed a comfortable localness of feeling, such as pertains to a bed, hammock, sentry box, or pulpit, a coach, a hearse, or any other of those small and snug contrivances in which men temporarily isolate themselves!

OLD CARPENTER

(up to ISHMAEL)

Would you like a coat!

ISHMAEL

To be sure!

(OLD CARPENTER exits. STUBB, TASHTEEGO, STARBUCK and QUEEQUEG enter.)

DUTCH SAILOR

(to STARBUCK, referring to ISHMAEL)

Beware I say to the ship owners of Nantucket, beware of enlisting a lad with a lean brow, a hollow eye and given to unseasonable meditateness.

STARBUCK

(Raising his journal)

Your concern is noted.

TASHTEEGO

Your whales must be seen before they can be killed!

STUBB

Aye, your sunken-eyed philosopher will tow you ten times around the world and never make you pint of sperm richer.

(Suddenly there comes a scream from above. A huge commotion lands in the rigging and all rush toward it. ISHMAEL has fallen. He is dragged out of the rigging and onto the deck by QUEEQUEG. ISHMAEL, unhurt but badly shaken, sits shivering and wet. QUEEQUEG and several others are huddled around him)

ISHMAEL (to the audience)

Let me make a clean breast of it here and frankly admit that I kept but a sorry guard.

(OLD CARPENTER enters and hands ISHMAEL his coat.)

With the problem of the universe revolving around me, how could I - being left completely to myself at such a thought engendering altitude - how could I but lightly hold my obligations to observe all whale-ships' standing orders to "keep your weather eye open and sing out every time"?

STUBB

You've not raised a whale yet! Whales are scarce as hen's teeth whenever you're up there.

(FEDALLAH enters, unseen by the others. He looks strange and seems eerie, gliding serpent-like around the deck in a weird sort of dance. ISHMAEL watches and speaks as if alone.)

ISHMAEL

Perhaps they are. Or perhaps there might have been shoals of them in the far horizon; but lulled into such an opium-like listlessness of vacant unconscious reverie is this absent minded youth by the blending cadence of waves with thoughts, that at last he loses his identity; takes the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep, blue bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature, and every strange half-seen, gliding, beautiful thing that eludes him; every dimly discovered, uprising fin of some indiscernible form seems to him the embodiment of those elusive thoughts that only people the soul by continually flitting through it. In this enchanted mood, thy spirit ebbs away to whence it came; becomes diffused through time and space; like sprinkled Pantheistic ashes, forming at last a part of every shore the world over. There is no life in thee now, except that rocking life imparted by a gently rolling ship; by her, borrowed from the sea; by the sea, from the inscrutable tides of God. Yet while this sleep, this dream, is on you move your foot or hand an inch; slip your hold at all; and your identity comes back in horror. And perhaps at mid-day, in the fairest weather, with one half-throttled shriek, you drop through that transparent air into the summer sea, no more to rise forever.

(FEDALLAH exits.)

STUBB

Twas but a slip boy; we've all been landed in the rigging a time or two.

NANTUCKET SAILOR

At least those here to tell about it landed in the rigging.

STUBB

Aye, that's the truth!

(All laugh but QUEEQUEG.)

OLD CARPENTER

Up with ye then. Can you stand?

ISHMAEL

I can stand.

STUBB

(Reaching to help ISHMAEL)

Then on your feet.

ISHMAEL

I can stand.

STUBB

You climb again in two bells.

(STUBB exits. The others return to their tasks.)

STARBUCK

Soon that steady ivory stride was heard again as to and fro he paced, upon planks so familiar now to his tread that they were all over dented, like geological stones, with the peculiar mark of his walk. Had you gazed as I had upon that ribbed and dented brow, there also you would see still stranger footprints - the footprints of his one unsleeping, ever pacing thought.

AHAB

Starbuck! Everybody aft. All hands!

STARBUCK (astonished)

Sir?

AHAB

I repeat, everybody aft! Mast-heads there! Come down!

FLASK

Mast-heads down! All aft! You there, spring and spit fire!

(All hurriedly assemble before AHAB.)

AHAB

What do you do when you see a whale, men?

ALL

Sing out for him!

AHAB

Good. And what do you next?

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

Lower away and after him!

AHAB

And what tune is it you pull to?

NANTUCKET SAILOR

A dead whale or a stove boat!

AHAB

Yes! That's right! That's absolutely right! Look here now! Do you see this Spanish ounce of gold? Do you see it now? Mr. Starbuck, hand me your top maul. Whosoever of you raises me a white-headed whale with a wrinkled brow and a crooked jaw; whosoever of you raises me that white-headed whale with three holes punctured in his starboard fluke - look you, whosoever of you raises me that whale, he shall have this ounce of gold!

(Group erupts into shouts of approval. AHAB begins to nail the gold coin to the top-mast.)

It's a white whale, I say. A white whale! Skin your eyes for him, men; look sharp for white water, if you see but a bubble, sing out.

TASHTEEGO

Captain, that white whale must be the same that some call Moby Dick.

AHAB

Moby Dick? Do you know the white whale then, Tash?

TASHTEEGO

Does he fan-tail a little curious before he goes down?

AHAB

Yes.

DAGOO

He has a curious spout too. And mighty quick?

AHAB

He's quick.

QUEQUEG

And he have one, two, three, a good many irons in him, and all betwixt and twisted.

AHAB

Aye, like a corkscrew, Queequeg, the harpoons lie all twisted and wrenched in him. Aye, Dagoo, his spout is a big one, like a whole shock of wheat and white as a pile of our Nantucket wool. And aye, Tashteego, he fantails like a split jib in a squall! Death and Devils men, it is Moby Dick you've seen! Moby Dick!

STARBUCK

Captain Ahab, I have heard of Moby Dick. Was it not Moby Dick that took off thy leg?

AHAB

Aye, Starbuck; aye, my hearties all around; I confess, it was Moby Dick that dismasted me; Moby Dick that brought me to this dead stump I stand on now. Aye! It was that accursed white whale that razed me; made a poor pegging lubber of me forever and a day! And I'll chase him round Good Hope, and round the Horn, and round Norway, and round perdition's flames before I give him up! And this is what you've shipped for men, to chase that whale on both sides of land, and over all sides of earth, till he spouts black blood and rolls fin out. What say you? Will you splice hands on it now? I think you look brave!

ALL

Aye, Aye!

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

A sharp eye for the white whale!

NANTUCKET SAILOR

A sharp lance for Moby Dick!

AHAB

Steward! Draw a great measure of grog! But what's this long face about Mr. Starbuck? Wilt thou not chase the white whale? Art thou not game for Moby Dick?

STARBUCK

I am game for his crooked jaw, and for the jaws of Death too, Captain, if it fairly comes in the way of the business we follow; but I came here to hunt whales, not my commander's vengeance. How many barrels will thy vengeance yield even if thou gets it? It will not bring much on the Nantucket market.

AHAB

To Hell with the Nantucket market! The white whale is a wall shoved near me; sometimes I think there's naught beyond. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him.

STARBUCK

Vengeance on a dumb brute that smote thee from blindest instinct? Madness. To be enraged with a dumb thing, Captain, it seems blasphemous!

AHAB

Talk not of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me! For could the sun do that, then I could do the other. Who's over me? Truth has no confines. Take off thine eye! More intolerable than fiends' glarings is a doltish stare!

(STARBUCK stiffens, deeply insulted and very angry.)

So, first thou pales but now thou reddens; my heat has melted thee to anger-glow. Look here Starbuck, what is said in heat, that thing unsays itself. I meant not to incense you. Let it go! Look, see yonder turkish cheeks of spotted tawn - living breathing pictures painted by the sun. There, the Pagan leopards, the unreckoning and unworshipping things, they live and seek and give no reasons for the torrid life they feel! The crew, man; the crew! Are they not one and all with Ahab? Stand up amid a hurricane, thy one tossed sapling cannot! Starbuck, what is it? Reckon it. Tis but to help strike a fin, no wondrous feat for Starbuck, the best lance out of all Nantucket, surely he will not hang back when every foremast hand has clutched a whetstone. Speak, but speak! I see. The silence voices for thee.

(STARBUCK turns away from AHAB. FEDALLAH'S ghostly laugh is heard, rising from the after-hold.)

STARBUCK

God help us.

ISHMAEL

In his joy at the mate's acquiescence, Ahab heard not his foreboding invocation; nor yet the low laugh from the after-hold; nor yet the vibration of the winds in the cordage; nor yet the hollow flap of the sails on the mast, as for a moment their hearts sank in.

(ISHMAEL crosses to the ship's side.)

But Starbuck's downcast eyes lightened with the stubbornness of life; the subterranean laugh died away; the winds blew on; the sails filled out; and the ship heaved and rolled as before.

AHAB

Steward! The measure! The measure!

(AHAB receives the grog, drinks and passes it to the harpooners)

Here now, drink and pass!

(Harpooners pass the mug)

Round with it. Round! Short draughts and long swallows men; tis hot as Satan's hoof but it goes down excellently. It spiralizes in ye; forks out as the serpent-snapping eye. Well done. Hand it to me! Steward! Refill! Now my braves, ring me in. Boy! Come back!

(STEWARD returns with a full mug)

Hand it to me! Advance now mates! Cross your lances full before me.

(The mates advance and cross their lances. AHAB grasps the lances at their crossed center; and glares intently from STARBUCK to STUBB, from STUBB to FLASK.)

Mates ye cower before my strong, sustained and mystical aspect. Stubb, Flask, sideways ye look from me; the honest eye of Starbuck falls downright. Ye've nothing to fear, men; I have ye now and I'll keep ye well! I would give ye three but once the full-forced shock of my own electric thing were I not afraid that it would drop ye dead! As it is I give ye this: I have yielded all my thoughts, all my fancies to this one supreme purpose. And now you join me. Aye?

(AHAB looks at STUBB.)

STUBB

Aye.

AHAB

Aye.

(AHAB turns to FLASK.)

FLASK

Aye.

AHAB

Aye.

(to STARBUCK)

Aye?

AHAB (CONT.)

(STARBUCK is silent.)

Aye! Aye! Aye! Aye!

STARBUCK (submitting)

Aye.

AHAB

Ha! The deed is done! Yon ratifying sun now waits to sit upon it. Drink harpooners!  
Drink and swear ye those that man the deathful whaleboats - God hunt us all if we do not  
bring death to Moby Dick!

(The cup is lifted to cries and maledictions against the whale.  
STARBUCK, pale and worried, exits. Silently, AHAB dismisses  
the crew, who exit but for ISHMAEL, who remains, listening.)

I leave a white and turbid wake, pale waters and paler cheeks, wherever I sail. The  
envious billows sidelong swell to whelm my track; let them; but first I pass.

(looking out over the ocean)

Time was when as the sunrise nobly spurred me, so the sunset soothed. No more. This  
lovely night, it lights not me; all loveliness is anguish since I can ne'er enjoy it. Gifted  
with the high perception, I lack the low; damned most subtly and most malignantly!  
Damned in the midst of Paradise! Goodnight! Goodnight.

ISHMAEL (softly)

Goodnight, Captain.

AHAB (shocked)

What! What is this?!

ISHMAEL

I'm sorry, Sir. It is only Ishmael.

AHAB (confused)

Ishmael?

ISHMAEL

Aye, Sir. The crewman Ishmael.

AHAB

Come out here you, where I can see you.

(ISHMAEL comes into view.)

You think me mad? You must!

ISHMAEL

No, Sir.

AHAB

Ha! Starbuck does.

ISHMAEL

I have my own----

AHAB

But I am. I'm a demoniac. I am madness maddened. I am that wild madness that's only calm to comprehend itself! The prophecy claimed that I would be dismembered; and aye! I lost my leg. I now prophesy that I will dismember my dismemberer. Now be the prophet and fullfiller one; that's more than ye great gods ever were. I laugh and hoot at ye, pugilists, ye deaf burkes and blinded bendigoes! I will not say as schoolboys do to bullies - take someone of your own size - no, ye've knocked me down, but I am up again, and it's ye who've run and hidden. Come out! Come out I say! Come and hear old Ahab's compliments; come and see if ye can swerve me. Swerve me? Ye cannot swerve me, else ye swerve yourselves! Man has ye there. Swerve me? The path to my fixed purpose is plaid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. Over unsounded gorges, through the rifled hearts of mountains, under torrents' beds, unerringly, I rush! Not an obstacle nor an angle to the iron way!

(AHAB silently releases ISHMAEL and begins to pace.)

STARBUCK

(From another part of the ship)

My soul is more than matched; she's overmanned and by a madman! Insufferable sting, he drilled deep down and blasted all my reason out of me. Some ineffable thing has tied me to him; and tows me with a cable that I have no knife to cut. Horrible old man. Who's over him, he cried; he would be a democrat to all above while lording over all below! I plainly see my miserable office - to obey, rebelling; and worse yet, to hate with a touch of pity. For in his eyes I see some lurid woe.

(beat)

Yet there is hope. Time and tide flow wide. The hated whale has the round watery world to swim in, as the goldfish has its glassy globe. His heaven-insulting purpose God may yet wedge aside. I would up heart, were it not like lead.

(A burst of revelry comes from the deck. Crew sings "We'll drink tonight with hearts as light to love as gay and fleeting...")

To sail with such a heathen crew, they have no touch of human mothers in them! Whelped somewhere by the sharkish sea, the white whale is their demigod. The revelry is forward! Mark the unfaltering silence behind.

(on deck)

STUBB

(mending a brace)

I've been thinking it over.

FLASK

Thinking what over?

STUBB

Our situation. I've been thinking it over . . . and ha ha's the final answer.

FLASK

Why's that?

STUBB

Because a laugh's the wisest answer to all that's queer. And come what will the one unfailing comfort's that it's all predestined.

FLASK

Did you hear his talk with Starbuck?

STUBB

I heard not all his talk with Starbuck, but to my poor eye Mr. Starbuck looked something like I the other evening felt.

FLASK

The kicking evening?

STUBB

Aye, that's the very one. And you can be sure the old Mogul has fixed him; I know it!

FLASK

What of it?

STUBB

Nothing. Nothing of it.

FLASK

I thought as much. You're no prophet after all.

STUBB

No? I'll tell you this, I know not all that may be coming, but be it what it will, I'll go to it laughing!

FLASK

Aye, then that's the policy.

STUBB

Captain, my Captain, such a waggish leering lurks in all your horrors that I feel funny!  
Fa la lirra skirra!

(STUBB exits. FLASK sings and a couple of others join in.)

FLASK

We'll drink tonight with hearts as light,  
To love as gay and fleeting  
As bubbles that swim, on the beaker's brim,  
And break on the lips while meeting!

NANTUCKET SAILOR (entering)

No, no! Don't be sentimental. Take a tonic and follow me!  
(He sings and the others echo his phrases)

Our Captain stood upon the deck  
(Our Captain stood upon the deck)  
a spy glass in his hand  
(a spy glass in his hand)  
A viewing of those gallant whales  
(A viewing of those gallant whales)  
That blew at every strand.  
(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  
Hand boys over hand!  
(hand boys over hand.)  
hand boys over hand!

STUBB

(Just his voice, from the quarter deck.)  
Eight bells there, forward!

NANTUCKET SAILOR

Eight bells forward indeed! D'ye hear bell-boy? Bell boy!  
(PIP pokes his head out from below and is immediately dragged  
onto the deck by the NANTUCKET SAILOR.)  
Strike the bell for eight now Pip! Strike and let me call the watch, for I've the sort of  
mouth for that!  
(thrusts his head down the scuttle)  
Star-bo-l-e-e-n-s, a-h-o-y! Eight bells there below!

DUTCH SAILOR (entering)

Grand snoozing tonight maty; a fat night for that!

FRENCH SAILOR

(Coming up onto the deck.)

Aye, let's have a jig or two before we rise to anchor in blanket bay. What say you? Here comes the new watch! Pip! Little Pip! Hurry with your tambourine!

PIP (sleepily)

I don't know where it is.

FRENCH SAILOR

Beat thy belly then and wag your ears. Jig it men! I say merry's the word! Damn me, won't you dance?

EGYPTIAN SAILOR

I don't like your floor maty; it's too springy for my taste. I'm used to desert floors don't you know. If you'll excuse me...

(He yawns and lays down somewhere.)

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

Me too. Besides, where's your girls? Who but a fool would take his left hand by his right and say to himself, how do you do?

FLASK

Aye, girls and a green, then I'd hop with you. I'd turn grasshopper with girls and a green!

NANTUCKET SAILOR

Well well ye sulkies, that's plenty more of us.

(FLASK exits. NANTUCKET SAILOR gestures toward the two or three remaining.)

Hoe corn when you may I say! All legs go to harvest soon. And here comes the music now!

LONG ISLAND SAILOR (with the tambourine)

Here you are Pip, and there's the jangling-bits. Up you mount now, go to it!

(PIP wearily takes the tambourine and begins to play. The remaining sailors dance and carry on while the others sleep among the coils of rope and rigging)

NANTUCKET SAILOR

Bang it, bell-boy! Rig it! Dig it! Stig it! Quig it! Make fire flies now and break the jinglers!

OLD CARPENTER

(from below)

I wonder if those jolly lads bethink what they are dancing over. I'll dance over your grave I will - such is the bitterest threat of the night women that beat head-winds round corners.

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

Split jibs and tear yourselves! Rattle your teeth and pound away!

(Suddenly there comes a deafening crash of thunder.  
Everything stops. The thunder rumbles on.)

FLASK

(appearing on deck)

Give us a whiff, Tash.

(Instantly TASHTEEGO scales the mast-head.)

Man the helm. Slip the rigging.

(The sleeping sailors leap into action. EGYPTIAN SAILOR takes the helm.)

It's the waves' turn to jig it now, matys. They'll shake their tassels soon enough.

FRENCH SAILOR

Oh would all the waves were women. When arboring arms hide ripe bursting grapes, I'd as soon drown as live, and chase them evermore!

FLASK

(kicking the FRENCH SAILOR)

You may yet, monkey!

NANTUCKET SAILOR

How the sea rolls, swashing against the side! Stand by for reefing, hearties!

FLASK

Aye, the winds are just now crossing their swords; they'll be lunging presently.

OLD CARPENTER

(Coming up from below)

Crack, crack old ship! So long as thou crackest, thou holdest! Well done, there well done. The mate he holds ye to it stiffly!

DUTCH SAILOR

He has his orders, mind ye that. I heard old Ahab tell him he must always kill a squall!

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

That old man's a grand one! And we're the lads to hunt him up a whale!

OLD CARPENTER

Oh how the three pines shake!

FLASK

Steady helmsman. Steady!

OLD CARPENTER

This is the sort of weather when brave hearts snap ashore, and keeled hulls split at sea. Our Captain has his birthmark; look yonder boys, there's another in the sky - lurid like, ye see, all else pitch black

DAGOO

What of it? Who's afraid of black is afraid of me!

NANTUCKET SAILOR

Aye harpooner. Thy race is the dark side of mankind, and devilish dark at that.

(DAGOO stares silently at the NANTUCKET SAILOR)

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

What's that I saw - lightning?

NANTUCKET SAILOR

No. Dagoo showing his teeth!

DAGOO

Swallow thine, manikin. White skin, white liver!

NANTUCKET SAILOR

Big frame, small spirit!

(They rush each other and begin to grapple.)

ALL

A row! A row!

(ALL gather round the two, who battle wildly.)

TASHTEEGO

(coming down from the mast-head)

A row below and a row aloft - Gods and men - both brawlers!

STUBB

(from the Quarter deck)

Hand by the halyards! In top sails!

FLASK

(Kicking indiscriminately)

Jump my jollies! Jump!

NANTUCKET SAILOR

(Receiving a kick, and abandoning the fight.)

Jollies?

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

(Grabbing NANTUCKET SAILOR and hauling him off to work)

Lord help such jollies as us.

PIP

(shrinking under the windlass)

Yikes! Crish, crash, there goes the jib-stay! Blang-whanng! God!

DUTCH SAILOR

Duck lower Pip, here comes the royal yard!

FLASK

Hold on hard!

PIP

Jimmini what a squall!

DUTCH SAILOR

A white squall!

STUBB

White squall for a white whale!

PIP

It makes me jingle all over like my tambourine!

STUBB

Reef top-sails!

FLASK

Reef top-sails! Spring sheep-heads! Spring and spit fire!

STARBUCK

Even now when the boatswain calls all hands to spring, when the wind is shrieking and the men are yelling, and every plank thunders with trampling feet, in all this raging still he sleeps his hideous sleep. He sees no black sky, feels not the timbers' reeling and hears he not the rush of that mighty whale, which even now cleaves toward him through the sea.

ISHMAEL

Wave after wave leaps onto the ship and finding no speedy vent runs roaring fore and aft till the mariners come right to drowning while yet afloat.

STARBUCK

O sleeper arise!

ISHMAEL

One man, startled by the direful cry, staggers to his feet and stumbles to the deck to look out upon the ocean. At that same moment another is sprung upon by a panther-like billow leaping over the bulwarks!

(NANTUCKET SAILOR goes overboard, and everything stops. The crew looks to help him, but it's too late; he's lost in the water. NANTUCKET SAILOR becomes part of the whale. AHAB speaks calmly just above the silence.)

AHAB

Terrors upon terrors run shouting through his soul. The God-fugitive is now too plainly known. The sailors mark him; more and more certain grow their suspicions. The lot is Jonah's; and furiously they mob him. Their blows are nothing next to the hard hand of God that is upon him.

(beat)

What I've dared I've willed - and what I've willed I'll do.

(Action resumes on deck as AHAB appears there.)

STUBB

She's down some now, Sir.

AHAB

Yes.

STUBB

Man overboard, Sir.

AHAB

Yes.

(beat)

STUBB

Nothing to be done then, Sir?

AHAB

Better to perish in that howling infinite than be dashed ingloriously upon the land.

STUBB

Aye, Sir.

(STUBB looks at FLASK and shakes his head. FLASK looks apologetically at LONG ISLAND SAILOR, who looks away, distraught. After a moment, OLD CARPENTER enters and begins to play a slow, melancholy tune on an instrument he carries with him. AHAB exits. The crew works in silence except for the music. Eventually, ISHMAEL finishes his work and turns to

speak.)

ISHMAEL

I, Ishmael was one of that crew; my shouts went up with all the rest, my pledge was welded alongside theirs. And stronger I shouted and more I did hammer and clinch my teeth because of the dread in my soul. A wild feeling was in me; Ahab's quenchless feud had suddenly seemed mine. So with greedy ears I learned the history of that murderous monster against whom I, and all the others, had taken our oaths of violence and revenge.

(ISHMAEL sits beside the LONG ISLAND SAILOR)

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

For some time past, the White Whale haunted the uncivilized seas. Not all knew of his existence, only a few. Even fewer had actually seen him

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

And the number who had battled him was small indeed.

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

But in several stories a whale of uncommon magnitude and malignity was said to have done great mischief to his assailants, and then completely escaped them.

FRENCH SAILOR

None other than Moby Dick.

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

Huge calamities ensued. Not just sprained wrists and ankles, broken limbs, and devouring amputations, but accidents fatal to the last degree of fatality! The repeated disasters accumulated; and piled new terrors upon the name of Moby Dick.

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

Nor did the wild rumors fail to exaggerate and still more horrify the deadly encounters.

DUTCH SAILOR

And whalemens are the worst.

ISHMAEL

The worst at what?

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

Not only are they, in general, unexempt from the ignorance and superstitiousness hereditary to all sailors, but of all sailors, they are by odds brought most directly into contact with whatever is appallingly astonishing in the sea.

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

(getting a little worked up)

He's not only the enemy of every living creature he's so incredibly ferocious as to continually thirst for human blood!

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

Judge then for yourself to what enflamed pitches and distracted fury the minds of his more desperate hunters were impelled, when amid the chips of chewed boats, and the sinking limbs of torn comrades, they swam out of the white curds of the whale's wrath and into the serene, exasperating sunlight that smiled on as if at a birth or a bridal.

FLASK

I'll wager that's a scene that played very like our Captain's.

ACT II

(Lights up)

ISHMAEL

Though in many respects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres by contrast, were formed in fright.

(On the quarter deck. The SAILORS pass buckets, hand to hand, to fill the scuttle-butt.)

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

Psst! Did you hear that noise?

EGYPTIAN SAILOR

Take the bucket will you, Archy? What noise do you mean?

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

There it is again, under the hatches. Don't you hear it? A cough, it sounded like a cough.

EGYPTIAN SAILOR

Cough be damned! Pass the bucket.

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

There again - there it is! It sounds now like two or three sleepers turning over!

EGYPTIAN SAILOR

Forget it, will you? It's two or three soaked biscuits you ate for supper turning over in your belly. Mind the bucket!

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

Say what you will Cabaco but I've sharp ears.

EGYPTIAN SAILOR

Aye, you're the one that heard a Nantucket Quakeress' knitting needles fifty miles at sea.

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

Grin away; we'll see what turns up. There's something in the after-hold that's not yet been seen on deck; and I suspect our old mogul knows something of it. I heard Stubb tell the Steward, one evening watch, that there was something of that sort in the wind.

EGYPTIAN SAILOR

And it's no concern of ours.

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

You know these floating outlaw whalers; they're likely to pick up such queer castaway creatures found tossing about the open sea on broken planks and bits of wreck, oars, whaleboats, canoes, and whatnot, that Beelzebub himself might climb up the side and step down into the cabin to chat with the Captain - and who would even notice?!

EGYPTIAN SAILOR

Shhh! The bucket!

(AHAB bursts onto the deck howling.)

AHAB

Back! Back! Down with ye forked flames--

STARBUCK

Sir!

AHAB

Starbuck! Oh Starbuck.

(STARBUCK leads AHAB away from any others.)

Pardon me.

(noticing the evening)

It is a mild wind tonight, and a mild looking sky. On a night very like tonight I struck my first whale, a boy harpooner of only eighteen! Now forty years ago! Forty years of continual whaling! Forty years of storm-time on the pitiless sea. For forty years Ahab has forsaken the peaceful land for forty years making war on the horrors of the deep! Oh Starbuck, here am I, whole oceans away from that young girl I wed past fifty. Here is he who sailed for Cape Horn the very next day leaving her but one dent in the marriage pillow. Wife? No, a widow with her husband alive! And how the richer or better is Ahab now? Is it not hard that with this weary load I bear, that one poor leg should have been snatched from under me? Do I look old, so very very old, Starbuck? I feel deadly faint, bowed and humped as though I were Adam staggering beneath the piled centuries since Paradise. Stand close to me Starbuck, let me look into a human eye; it is better than to gaze into the sea of sky, better than to gaze upon God. This is the magic glass man! I see my wife and child in thine eye! Stay on board, Starbuck. Lower not when I do. When branded Ahab gives chase to Moby Dick that hazard shall not be thine. No, not with the faraway home I see in thine eye.

STARBUCK

Oh Captain! my Captain! noble soul! grand old heart after all! Why should anyone give chase to that hated fish? Away with me! Let us fly these deadly waters! Let us home! Wife and child too are Starbuck's! This instant let me alter the course. How cheerily we would sail on our way to see old Nantucket again! I think, Sir, they have mild blue days, even as this, in old Nantucket.

AHAB

They have; I have seen them. About this time, yes, it is his noon nap now, my little boy wakes, sits up in bed, and his mother tells him of me, of cannibal old me; how I am abroad upon the deep, but will yet come back to dance with him again.

STARBUCK

Tis Mary, tis my Mary herself. She promised that every morning my boy would be carried to the hill to catch the first glimpse of his fathers sail! Yes! It is done. We head for Nantucket! Come my Captain set the course and let's away.

AHAB

What is it?

STARBUCK

What, Sir?

AHAB

What is it? What nameless thing, inscrutable, and unearthly; what hidden lord and master, what cruel, remorseless emperor commands me; that against all natural lovings and longings I so keep pushing, and crowding and jamming myself on all the time, recklessly making me ready to do what I know in my natural heart I dare not do? Is Ahab, Ahab?

(beat)

Yes. These eyes are windows, and this body of mine the house. What a pity they didn't stop up the chinks and the crannies though; and thrust a little lint in here and there; but it's too late now to make improvements; the universe is finished, the capstone is on, and the chips were carted off a million years ago. Starbuck!

STEWARD (to ISHMAEL)

But blanched to a corpse's hue with despair, the mate had stolen away.

ISHMAEL (to audience)

And the ship torn on.

STUBB

By salt and hemp the motion of this deck creeps up the legs and tingles the heart. This ship and I are two brave fellows. Someone take me up and launch me spine-wise on the deep!

TASHTEEGO

There she blows! She blows! Right ahead!

(Crew rush to the edge of the ship, some clinging to a spar with one hand, some reaching forth and waving with the other. Some shade their eyes from the vivid sunlight, and sit far out on the rocking yards, struggling to get a glimpse of the whale.)

STUBB

I knew it! You can't escape! Blow on and split your spout. O whale the mad fiend himself is after you! Blow your trump and blister your lungs! Ahab will damn off your blood as a miller shuts his water-gate upon the stream!

ISHMAEL

We were one man then, not thirty. All directed, like the ship that held us, by our one lord and keel. The rigging lived, the mast-heads like the tops of tall palms, were tufted with arms and legs, and the spars hung in full bearing of mortals ready and ripe to meet their fate.

STARBUCK

And how they strove through that blueness to find the thing that might destroy them!  
(All look out across the ocean.)

AHAB (to TASHTEEGO)

Why not sing out for him if you see him? Sing out!

TASHTEEGO

I don't see him!

AHAB

Sway me up men; you've been deceived. Moby Dick does not cast one jet and disappear.  
(Crew rush to AHAB and begin raising him toward the mast-head.)

TASHTEEGO

There she--

FLASK

(jumping up and down)

There she breaches! There she breaches!

AHAB

Defy me will you? Look at that whale tossing himself salmon-like to heaven! Aye, breach your last Moby Dick! Thy hour and thy harpoon are at hand! Down, down all of ye!

FLASK

Down now!

AHAB

But one man at the fore!

FLASK

The boats! Stand by!

ISHMAEL

Rising with his utmost velocity from the furthest depths, the whale thus boomed his entire bulk into the pure element of air. Piling up a mountain of dazzling foam, he showed his place to the distance of seven miles or more. The torn, enraged waves he shook off seemed his mane, and the tail fin slashing wildly in the wind, his clattering hooves. He alone was a whole stampede.

(The crew, like shooting stars, slide back onto the deck, and then into their boats. AHAB, less dartingly is lowered from his perch.)

STARBUCK (at the helm)

As if to strike a quick terror by this time being the first assailant, Moby Dick turned and now bore down upon the three crews. Ahab was central, and cheering his men told them he would take the whale head to head.

ISHMAEL

(appearing below, alone)

But Moby Dick rushed among the boats with open jaws and a lashing tail, offering appalling battle on every side. Heedless of the irons darted in him, he seemed intent on annihilating each and every separate plank of which those boats were made. Skillfully maneuvered and incessantly wheeling, the boats for a while, eluded him, as Ahab's unearthly slogan tore every other cry to shreds.

AHAB

Down Moby Dick! Down! Down! Down! Down. Down . . .

(As AHAB's voice trails off we see that the boats are a shambles and MOBY DICK has vanished.)

STARBUCK

As before, the attentive ship, having seen the battle rage and end, again came bearing down to bring the rescue.

(The crew collect themselves and climb back onto the ship.)

FLASK

Aye, my boys, line here then and report what you've got.

(Each passes, individually, in front of STEWARD and OLD CARPENTER who variously shake their heads and make notes.)

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

Sprained shoulder.

EGYPTIAN SAILOR

Sprained wrist.

TASHTEEGO

(holds up a terribly twisted and bent piece of metal)

STEWARD

Wrenched harpoon.

FRENCH SAILOR

(hobbling sadly)

Broken ankle.

(FLASK kicks FRENCH SAILOR who lands easily on both feet.)

Sprained ankle.

DUTCH SAILOR (to the carpenter)

Shattered oar.

NEW BEDFORD SAILOR

Concussion

QUEQUEG

(Holds up a huge knotted mess.)

STEWARD

Inextricable intricacies of rope.

(STEWARD passes the rope to OLD CARPENTER)

OLD CARPENTER

(To FLASK, who now holds a lance bent into the shape of a J.)

Was that your lance, Maty?

FLASK

Aye, it was.

OLD CARPENTER

Pass her here then and I'll remove the whalish curve.

(AHAB appears, assisted by STARBUCK. AHAB's ivory leg is snapped off leaving but one long, sharp splinter.)

AHAB

Mr. Starbuck, tis sweet to lean sometimes, be the leaner who he will; and would old Ahab had leaned a little oftener than he has.

OLD CARPENTER (approaching)

The ferrule was not wood, Sir. I put good work into that leg.

STUBB

But no bones broken, Sir; I hope.

AHAB

Aye, and all splintered to pieces, Stubb. D'ye not see it? But even with a broken bone, old Ahab is untouched; and I account no living bone of mine one bit more me than this dead one that's lost. No White Whale, nor man, nor fiend can so much as graze old Ahab's proper inaccessible being.

(gesturing overboard)

Can any lead touch yonder floor?

(toward the sky)

Or any mast touch yonder roof? Aloft there! - Which way?

TASHTEEGO

Dead to leeward, Sir.

AHAB

Up helm then, and pile on the sail! Down the rest of the boats and rig them. Starbuck away and muster the crew!

STARBUCK

First let me help you to the bulwarks, Sir.

AHAB

Oh, how this splinter gores me now! Accursed fate, that the unconquerable Captain should have by his soul such a craven mate!

STARBUCK

Sir?!

AHAB

My body, man, not thee! Get me a cane, that shivered lance will do.

(Looking around for FEDALLAH)

I have not seen him yet, but . . . Quick call them all!

STARBUCK

All hands on deck.

FLASK

All hands on deck! Blood and thunder men! Blood and thunder!

AHAB

Fedallah?

(silence)

Fedallah!

(AHAB looks to STUBB)

STUBB

The Parsee! He must have been caught in--

AHAB

The black vomit wrench ye! It cannot be! Run, all of ye, above, aloft, cabin, fore-castle - find him! Find him!

(Several of the crew rush off in search of FEDALLAH.)

STUBB

Aye, Sir, caught among the tangles of your line. I thought I saw him dragging under.

AHAB

My line?! No!

(AHAB begins to pace.)

Gone! The Parsee gone and he was to go before me - but still be seen again ere I could perish. How's that? There's the riddle now. Gone. What means that little word? What death-knell rings in it that old Ahab shakes as if he were the belfry? The harpoon too! The forged iron, do you see it? Look there, do you? No. The blistered fool! This hand here did dart it; tis in the fish! Aloft there! Keep him nailed! Quick, all hands to the rigging of the boats!

(Crew return and follow AHAB's commands)

Collect the oars! Harpooners to the irons!

FLASK

To the oars and irons!

AHAB

A pull on all the sheets! I'll ten times girdle the unmeasured globe; I'll dive straight through it, but I'll slay him yet!

STARBUCK

Great God! but for one single instant show thyself! Never, never wilt thou capture him, old man. In Heaven's name, no more of this! Two days chased, twice stove to splinters; thy very leg once more snatched from under thee. Thy evil shadow called Fedallah gone, all good angels mobbing thee with warnings, what more wouldst thou have? Shall we keep chasing this murderous fish till he swamps the last man? Shall we be dragged by him to the very bottom of the sea?

AHAB

Starbuck, of late I'm strangely moved to thee, ever since that hour we both saw - thou knowest what - in one another's eyes. But in the matter of the whale, be the front of thy face no more than the back of this hand. Ahab is forever Ahab, man. This whole act is immutably decreed. 'Twas rehearsed by thee a billion years before this ocean rolled. I am the fates' lieutenant; I act under orders. Look thou underling, that thou obey mine.

ISHMAEL

Once more the sail was shortened, and everything passed like the previous night, only the sound of hammers and the hum of the grindstone were heard til nearly daylight. The men, who toiled by lanterns, were sharpening their weapons for the morrow.

(ISHMAEL crosses)

Meantime, out of the broken keel of Ahab's wrecked craft, the carpenter made another leg. And slouched Ahab, still, as on the night before, stood fixed within his scuttle. His hid heliotrope glance, anticipatngly gone backward on its dial, now sat due eastward, for the earliest sun.

(ISHMAEL finds a seat near the edge and looks out across the water. He writes a few lines in his journal and FLASK enters.)

FLASK

No sleep?

ISHMAEL

Not much lately, no.

FLASK

The whale?

ISHMAEL

Maybe.

FLASK

You're not afraid, are you?

ISHMAEL

(no doubt about it)

Yes. Aren't you?

FLASK

Not of the whale.

ISHMAEL

Of the Captain?

FLASK

No. I'm not afraid him; I can take a kick or two. I'm afraid of sharks.

ISHMAEL

Of sharks?

FLASK

It's terrible; I tremble just to think of them.

(beat)

Have you ever seen 'em - on a whale carcass I mean?

ISHMAEL

I suppose. I don't--

FLASK

It's ghastly. I remember once, round midnight, on my first voyage a whalin'. The top mate had cut himself a steak of our slain friend, and nor was he the only banqueter on whale's flesh that night. Mingling their mumblings with his own mastications, thousands and thousands of sharks, swimming round the dead leviathan, smackingly feasted on his fatness. The few of us sleepers below were startled awake by the sharp slapping of their tails against the hull, just a few inches from our hearts.

ISHMAEL

A key few inches though.

FLASK

Aye, but over the side you could see them wallowing in the sullen black waters and turning over on their backs as they scooped out huge globular pieces of the whale the size of a human head.

ISHMAEL

That's awful.

FLASK

As I said. Amid all the smoking horror and diabolism of a seafight, only sharks'll longingly gaze up to the decks like hungry dogs round a table where red meat is carved, ready to bolt down every killed man that might be tossed to them.

(waiting for a response)

They're butchers.

(ISHMAEL nods.)

It's shocking! their sharkish business.

ISHMAEL

Aye.

(A moment passes as they each stare into the night.)

FLASK

The whale keeps you from sleeping?

ISHMAEL

No, I think it's more the heat. It's dreadfully uncozy.

FLASK

That's one way to put it. Myself, I like to be warm when I'm sleeping.

ISHMAEL

But to truly enjoy the warmth some small part of you must be cold, for there is no quality in this world that is not what it is merely by contrast. Nothing exists in itself.

FLASK

Oh.

ISHMAEL

If you flatter yourself that you are all over comfortable, and have been for some time, then you're no longer comfortable. But if, like Queequeg and me in a bed, the tip of your nose or the crown of your head be slightly chilled, well then in the general consciousness you feel most delightfully and unmistakably warm. And the height of this sort of deliciousness is to have nothing but the blanket between you and your snugness and the cold of the outer air. Then there you lie like the one warm spark in the heart of an arctic crystal.

FLASK

I wouldn't close my eyes for even a second in bed with one of those harpooning savages.

ISHMAEL

I felt nervous too at first, and for a moment I thought I should open them, but I kept them shut in order the more to concentrate the snugness of being in bed. And because no man can ever know himself unless his eyes be closed; as if that darkness were indeed the proper element of our essences, though light be more congenial to our clayey part.

FLASK

You lost me a little at the end there.

ISHMAEL (smiling)

Sorry.

FLASK

What's in your book?

ISHMAEL

A good night's sleep, and dreams.

FLASK

Let's hear a little then.

ISHMAEL

(Reading from his journal.)

At last the anchor was up, the sails were set, and off we glided. It was a sharp cold Christmas; and as the short northern day merged into night we found ourselves almost broad upon the wintry ocean as blindly we plunged, like fate, into the lone Atlantic.

FLASK

You're right; now I'm dead sleepy.

(They laugh. FLASK exits. ISHMAEL goes back to his journal and a gentle hammering sound comes from another part of the ship. ISHMAEL crosses to the OLD CARPENTER who is working diligently. ISHMAEL watches for a moment.)

ISHMAEL

What is it?

OLD CARPENTER

A coffin.

ISHMAEL

A coffin?

OLD CARPENTER

It's not the usual fashion.

ISHMAEL

Who's dead - I mean that's still onboard?

OLD CARPENTER

Not dead, afraid of dying.

ISHMAEL

And who's not afraid of dying?

OLD CARPENTER

Not just afraid of dying. Certain of dying.

ISHMAEL

All.

OLD CARPENTER

Soon.

ISHMAEL

(understanding that he means to commit suicide)

Oh.

OLD CARPENTER

An act like this is prepared within the silence of the heart, as is a great work of art.

ISHMAEL

This is a serious problem.

OLD CARPENTER

For me it is the only problem.

ISHMAEL

Is life not worth living?

OLD CARPENTER

I've seen people die because they judge that life is not worth living. I see others, paradoxically, killed for the ideas or illusions that give them a reason for living.

ISHMAEL

So what is called a reason for living is also an excellent reason for dying.

OLD CARPENTER

Exactly. I can't elude it anymore.

ISHMAEL

What do you mean?

OLD CARPENTER

I am caught; stuck. Panting as though these frantic whiffs were my last. Toiling, not pleasuring. What business have I here? Already we are boldly launched upon the deep and soon we shall be lost in its unshored, harborless immensities. The Pequod's weedy hull now rolls side by side with Leviathan. Death is certain. Have I hope for another life, a reward that I deserve? A thought that this one will improve? No. Some new trick, to live not for life itself but for some great idea that will transcend it, or refine it, or give it meaning? I have none!

ISHMAEL

Then why do you need a coffin?

(OLD CARPENTER lays down his tools and looks at the coffin)

What difference does it make?

OLD CARPENTER

It doesn't make any difference. But I made it. I've done it well and it's beautiful.

ISHMAEL

It looks like a buoy.

OLD CARPENTER

I admit it's not my usual pattern.

(OLD CARPENTER steps back to look at the thing)

A buoy?

ISHMAEL

Yes.

OLD CARPENTER

Maybe so.

(beat)

Maybe we've hugely mistaken this whole matter of life and death. Maybe what they call my shadow here on earth is my true substance.

(ISHMAEL nods)

Maybe in looking at things spiritual we are too much like oysters observing the sun through the water and thinking it the thinnest of air. Maybe my body is but the less of my better being. Maybe it doesn't matter.

ISHMAEL

Maybe.

OLD CARPENTER

And maybe my coffin be a buoy after all.

ISHMAEL

I hope so.

(Crew enters while ISHMAEL speaks.)

The morning of the third day dawned fair and fresh, and once more the solitary nightman was relieved by daylight lookers dotting every mast and almost every spar.

AHAB

D'ye see him?

TASHTEEGO

(from the mast-head)

Not yet in sight.

AHAB

Follow the wake, that's all. Helm there, steady. Steady as thou goest, and has been going. What a lovely day again! Were it a new made world, and made for a summer house to the angels, a fairer day could not have dawned upon it.

STUBB

(hearing him speak, and thinking it strange)

Sir? Pardon me--

AHAB

Nothing. Go away.

(Continuing to himself, he gradually grows louder and more intense until the crew can't help but notice.)

Tis food for thought, had Ahab time to think; but Ahab never thinks, he only feels. Thinking is, or ought to be, cool and calm; but our broken hearts throb and our poor brains beat too much for that. O how these wild winds blow; they whip about me as the torn shreds of split sails lash the tossed ship they cling to. Out upon it! It's tainted.

STARBUCK

Sir!

AHAB (to STARBUCK)

Were I the wind, I'd blow no more on such a wicked, miserable world! I'd crawl somewhere to a cave and sink there. And yet tis a noble heroic thing, the wind. Whoever conquered it? In every fight it has the last and bitterest blow. Run tilting at it and you but run right through it. Ha! A coward wind that strikes stark naked men but will not stand a single blow himself! Even Ahab is a braver thing, a nobler thing than that. Would now the wind but had a body; but all the things that most exasperate and outrage mortal man, all these things are bodiless!

(Turns from STARBUCK)

Aloft there! What d'ye see?

TASHTEEGO

Nothing, Sir.

AHAB

Nothing! And noon at hand!

STUBB

He's not there, Sir.

AHAB

Aye, it must be so. I've oversailed him.

STUBB

Sir?

AHAB

Aye, he's chasing me now!

STUBB

I don't follow, Sir.

AHAB

Fool! It's the lines - the harpoons he's towing. I've run him by last night. About! About! Come down all but the regular lookouts!

STUBB

About! Man the braces!

STARBUCK

Against the wind he now steers for the open jaw.

ISHMAEL

God keep us.

STARBUCK

Yes, God keep us; for already my bones feel damp within me, and from the inside wet my flesh.

ISHMAEL

The angels think no less of us for obeying his commands.

STARBUCK (stops)

Don't speak to me of angels, Sir. You know nothing of them.

ISHMAEL

Pardon me, Sir.

STARBUCK

I fear that in obeying him I disobey my God.

ISHMAEL

I'm sorry for that.

AHAB (arrives)

Stand by to sway me up! We should meet him soon.

STARBUCK

Aye, aye Sir.

ISHMAEL

A whole hour passed; gold beaten out to ages until, at last, the spout was spied again. And instantly from the three mast-heads, three shrieks went up as if the tongues of fire had voiced them.

ALL

There she blows!

AHAB

Forehead to forehead I meet thee, Moby Dick this third and final time! He's too far off to lower yet, Mr. Starbuck.

STARBUCK

Aye, Sir.

AHAB

The sails shake!

STARBUCK

Aye, Sir.

AHAB

On deck there! Crowd her into the wind's eye. The whale travels fast.

STARBUCK

Aye, he travels fast.

AHAB

And I must down, but let me have one more look aloft here at the sea. An old, old sight, and yet somehow so young, and not changed a wink since I first saw it. 'Tis the same. The same to Noah as to me! What's that he said? That he would go before me, Fedallah, my pilot, yet to be seen again? But where? Will I have eyes at the bottom of the sea? Supposing I descend those endless stairs. Thou told'st a direful truth O Parsee, as touching as thyself. But with Ahab, there thy shot fell short. Down!

(AHAB is lowered. Crossing to his boat he stops.)

Starbuck!

STARBUCK

Sir.

AHAB

For the third time my soul's ship starts upon this voyage.

STARBUCK

Aye, Sir, thou wilt have it so.

AHAB

Some ships sail from their ports, and ever afterwards are missing.

STARBUCK

Truth, Sir; saddest truth.

AHAB

Some men die at ebb tide, some at low water, and some at the full of the flood.

STARBUCK

At the full of the flood, Sir.

AHAB

Starbuck, I am old; shake hands with me, man.

(They shake hands)

STARBUCK

Captain, noble heart, go not! See here, look at me, a brave man that weeps . . .

AHAB

(releasing STARBUCK's hand, crossing, and entering his boat.)

Lower away.

STUBB

Lower away!

FLASK

Lower away!

ISHMAEL

Scarcely had we pushed from the ship when numbers of sharks, rising suddenly from out of the dark waters, maliciously snapped at the oars as they dipped in the sea; and in this way accompanied the boats with their bites.

AHAB

Pull now men! Pull! Like fifty thousand battleship loads of red-haired devils!

(During the length of STARBUCK'S speech the boats are fiercely and silently battling the whale. Sailors are dying one by one.)

STARBUCK (gazing over the side)

My God! The future swims before me - empty outlines and skeletons only - while all my history is now, somehow grown dim. But no! Stir thyself Starbuck! Stave it off. Mast-head there! Mast-head! Mark well the whale!

AHAB

(Fighting the whale)

Come, why don't some of ye burst a blood vessel? Will ye spit fire or not?!

STARBUCK

O Ahab shudder! Shudder!

AHAB

Drive in your nails - oh ye waves! To their uttermost heads drive them in! Ye but strike a thing without a lid! For no coffin and no hearse can be mine, and only hemp can kill me!

ISHMAEL

Suddenly the waters swelled and heaved as if sideways sliding from a berg of ice. And bedraggled with trailing ropes a vast form shot lengthwise but obliquely from the sea. Shrouded in a drooping veil of mist, it hovered for a moment in the rainbowed air, and fell swamping back into the deep.

STARBUCK

Crushed thirty feet upwards, the waters flashed for an instant like heaps of fountains, then brokenly sank in a shower of flakes, leaving the circling surface creamed like new milk round the marble trunk of Moby Dick.

AHAB

Give way! Give way!

STUBB

The creature's maddened!

FLASK

Yesterday's fresh irons are corroding in his sides!

STARBUCK

Moby Dick seemed possessed by all the angels that fell from heaven.

MOBY DICK

And all the men that followed.

(The action stops. One dead sailor speaks, deliberately.)

MOBY DICK (Cont.)

All the angels that fell from Heaven and all the dead that followed.

(The other dead among the whale steadily and quietly repeat the line, "all the dead that followed" and begin to attack the boats.)

Churning my tail among the boats I once more flailed them, spilling irons and lances and dashing bows!

(The sailors raise FEDALLAH from their midst.)

And there, lashed round my heaving back, pinioned by the reeling was the half torn body of their Parsee; his sable clothing frayed to shreds, his distended eyes turned full upon the Captain.

AHAB

Befooled! Aye Parsee, I see thee again! Thou goest before and this, this is the hearse that thou did promise. Still I hold thee to the last letter of thy word; where is the second hearse?

(to the other two whale-boats, led by FLASK and STUBB)

Away mates, to the ship! Those boats are useless now; repair them if you can and return, if not, Ahab is enough to die.

(The repeated line fades out.)

FLASK

(to his crew, nearly in the water)

Don't be afraid my butter-boxes, we'll be picked up soon enough. I saw some sharks astern, circling like St. Bernard's dogs with our relief.

AHAB

(to his own boatmen)

Down men! The first thing that but offers to jump from this boat I stand in, that thing I harpoon. Ye are not other men, but my arms and my legs; so obey me!

(dispersed, the sailors composing Moby Dick are unrecognizable)

Where's the whale? Where is he? Gone down?

STARBUCK (from the ship)

Ahab, it's not too late, even now on the third day, to desist. See! Moby Dick seeks thee not. It is thou, thou, that madly seeks him!

ISHMAEL

Still Ahab glided over the waves and the unpitying sharks accompanied him. So pertinaciously they stuck to the boat; and so continually bit at the plying oars, that the blades became jagged and crunched, and left small splinters in the sea at every pull.

AHAB

Heed them not! Those teeth but give new rowlocks to your oars. Pull on! 'Tis the better rest, the shark's jaw, than the yielding water!

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

But at every bite, Sir, the thin blades grow smaller and smaller!

AHAB

They will last long enough! Pull on!

STUBB

But who can tell whether those sharks swim to feast on Ahab or the Whale?

AHAB

Pull on! We near him.

MOBY DICK (reconvening)

At length the craft ran raging on my flank. And he, his body arched and both arms lifted lengthwise to the sky, darted his fierce iron, and his far fiercer curse into us.

ISHMAEL

Then hearing the rush of the sea-crashing ship and seeing it as the source of all his persecutions Moby Dick bore down upon the prow, his jaws in fiery showers of foam.

DUTCH SAILOR

Look at the whale!

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

Look! The ship!

AHAB

Oars! Slope downwards to thy depths! Dash on, my men! Dash on!

DUTCH SAILOR

We're not foe enough for him!

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

He'd take the world head to head!

AHAB

Dash on I say! Will ye not dash on?!

STARBUCK (on the ship)

Up helm!

STUBB

Up helm!

STARBUCK

Oh sweet powers of air now hug me close! Up helm I say! Oh Ahab lo thy work. Steady helmsman, steady. He turns to meet us.

STUBB

I grin at thee thou grinning whale! Who ever helped Stubb but his own unblinking eye?

FLASK

That's true. That's true! And there's no help now matys - the voyage is up.

MOBY DICK

(One sailor speaks while the others destroy the Pequod)

From the ship's bows, nearly all those living hung inactive, their enchanted eyes intent upon me. Retribution, swift vengeance, and malice were my whole aspect. In spite of all that he could do I smote the ship's starboard bow while men and timbers reeled.

AHAB

The ship! The hearse! The second hearse! O death-glorious ship, must ye perish without me? Oh lonely death on lonely life! I feel my top-most greatness in my top-most grief. Towards thee I roll, thou all destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from Hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearses to one cursed common pool! And since neither can be mine, let me be towed to pieces while still chasing thee, thou damned, unconquering whale! Thus I give up my spear.

ISHMAEL

The harpoon was darted and the whale flew forward. With igniting velocity the line ran through the groove - and ran afoul. Ahab stooped to clear it, but the flying turn caught him round the neck, and voicelessly he shot out of the boat ere the crew knew that he was gone. For an instant all stood still; then turned.

LONG ISLAND SAILOR

Great God, where is the ship? Where is the ship?

ISHMAEL

Through dim bewildering mediums, they saw her sidelong fading phantom, only the uppermost masts out of the water. Soon concentric circles seized the boat; and all its crew and each floating oar and every lance pole went round and round and then collapsed, and the sullen white surf carried the smallest chip of the Pequod out of sight.

MOBY DICK

And the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago.  
(exit)

ISHMAEL

I alone am escaped to tell the story. For when the half-spent suction of the sunk ship reached me, a coffin-like buoy shot from the deep. For one whole day and night I floated on a soft and dirge-like main. On the second day a sail drew near. The unharmed sharks glided by, as if with padlocks on their mouths and the savage seahawks sailed with sheathed beaks. Nearer and nearer, it was the ever-cruising Rachel, in search of her missing children, that found only another orphan.

END OF PLAY