

MOBY-DICK

A new play by Steve Burch

. . . after Melville

“Shadows present, foreshadowing deeper shadows to come.”

“Benito Cereno” Herman Melville

“Compass, quadrant and sextant contrive

No farther tides...High in the azure steeps

Monody shall not wake the mariner.

This fabulous shadow only the sea keeps.”

from “At Melville’s Tomb” Hart Crane

Cast of Characters (in order of appearance)

Ishmael

*Coffin, innkeeper, Spouter's Inn

Queequeg, harpooneer, (Starbuck's boat)

*Father Mapple

*Capt. Peleg, Pequod co-owner

*Capt. Bildad, Pequod co-owner

*Elijah

Starbuck, 1st Mate

Flask, 2nd Mate

Stubb, 3rd Mate

Ahab, Pequod captain

Tashtego, harpooneer (Stubb's boat)

Daggoo, harpooneer (Flask's boat)

*Pip, cabin boy

*Fedallah, harpooneer (Ahab's boat)

*Ship's Carpenter

*Perth, ship's blacksmith

*Captain Gardiner, captain of the *Rachel*

*Sailors: Russian Sailor, Alabama Sailor, Old Manx Sailor, Spanish Sailor, Belfast Sailor, Capt. Gardiner's helmsman

*Also: Manhattan promenaders; guests at Spouter's Inn; church-goers

Cast of Actors (suggested doubling and trebling)

ACTOR ONE: Ishmael

ACTOR TWO: Coffin, Ship's Carpenter*

ACTOR THREE: Queequeg

ACTOR FOUR: Father Mapple, Spanish Sailor, Perth*

ACTOR FIVE: Capt. Peleg, Daggoo, Capt. Gardiner's helmsman*

ACTOR SIX: Capt. Bildad, Russian Sailor, Fedallah*

ACTOR SEVEN: Elijah, Old Manx Sailor*

ACTOR EIGHT: Starbuck

ACTOR NINE: Flask

ACTOR TEN: Stubb

ACTOR ELEVEN: Ahab

ACTOR TWELVE: Tashtego, Alabama Sailor*

ACTOR THIRTEEN: Pip*

ACTOR FOURTEEN: Captain Gardiner, Belfast Sailor*

*Also: Manhattan promenaders; guests at Spouter's Inn; church-goers, WOMAN'S VOICE

ACT ONE

At rise

In the dark of the stage, we can dimly make out the shadow of a ship upstage. Throughout the first four scenes it will loom in the background and become fully identified as the Pequod when Ishmael and Queequeg board it in Scene Five.

Scene One

ISHMAEL enters from the dark, dressed in a long coat, wearing a wide-brimmed hat covering much of his face, and carrying a walking stick. We first hear him through the stick rhythmically hitting the ground as he walks. He addresses the audience.

ISHMAEL

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago – never mind how long precisely – having little or no money in my purse, and nothing 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 the spleen, and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth, whenever it is a damp drizzly November in my soul, whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet, and whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street and methodically knocking peoples' hats off – then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword: I take quietly to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very much the same feelings towards the ocean with me.

People dressed in top hats and Sunday bonnets and carrying parasols begin to wander along the stage, staring silently out at the sea. ISHMAEL walks among them and the audience.

Circumambulate the city of a dreamy Sabbath afternoon. What do you see? Thousands upon thousands of landsmen posted like silent sentinels all pacing straight for the water. Here they all unite. There is magic in it. As everyone knows, meditation and water are wedded forever.

Slowly the crowd evaporates.

I am tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote. I love to sail forbidden seas and land on barbarous coasts. Not ignoring what is good I am quick to perceive a horror and could still be social with it. But the whaling voyage was welcome, the great flood-gates of the wonder-world swung open, and there floated into my inmost soul, endless processions of the whale. And for no reason I can fathom, and perhaps, for no reason at all, mid most of them all, one grand hooded phantom, like a snow hill in the air.

Scene Two

The stage darkens suddenly, there is a clap of thunder close-by and the sound of a torrent of rain. ISHMAEL grabs his kit and races to an inn. The noise abates as ISHMAEL brushes off the water from his clothes. He removes his hat and we see that he is now a young man. Several figures are seated at tables silently watching him, some smoking pipes, others playing backgammon. A lone musician plays a lament on a fiddle. PETER COFFIN regards ISHMAEL from behind a bar. ISHMAEL crosses to him.

ISHMAEL

Are you the landlord? I don't know anyone here in New Bedford and I desire to be accommodated with a room.

COFFIN

Coffin's my name. *Shakes his head.* The Spouter Inn is full, not a bed unoccupied. But, you haint no objections to sharing a harpooner's blanket have ye? I s'pose you are goin' a whalin,' so you'd better get used to that sort of thing.

ISHMAEL

Rather than wander further about a strange town on so bitter a night, I would put up with the half of any decent man's blanket.

COFFIN

I thought so. All right, take a seat. Supper'll be ready directly.

ISHMAEL

pointing to one of the men Landlord, that ain't the harpooner, is it?

COFFIN

smiling Oh, no, the harpooner is a dark complexioned chap.

ISHMAEL

Where is that harpooner? Is he here?

COFFIN

He'll be here afore long.

A shout of several voices is heard.

COFFIN

That's the Grampus's crew. A three-year's voyage and a full ship. Hurrah, boys!

A tramping of sea boots is heard and a wild set of mariners erupts on the stage. The Fiddler breaks off and begins a jaunty version of "A-Roving." COFFIN passes tankards around and the seamen drink and sing along. Two begin to kick up their heels and dance to the tune. Suddenly one grabs ISHMAEL and pulls him into the dance, whirling him around before ISHMAEL begs off and returns to the bar. When the song ends, the sailors grab their keys and duffle bags and race off to their beds. The room is silent. The others finish their game and smoking and exit.

ISHMAEL

Landlord! What sort of chap is he? Your harpooner? Does he always keep such late hours?

COFFIN

straightens up the room No, generally he's an early bird. But tonight he went out a peddling, you see, and I don't see what in airth keeps him late, unless, may be, he can't sell his head.

ISHMAEL

Can't sell his head? What sort of a bamboozingly story is this you're telling me? Do you pretend to say, landlord, that this harpooner is actually peddling his head around this town?

COFFIN

That's precisely it, and I told him he couldn't sell it here, the New Bedford market's overstocked.

ISHMAEL

With what?

COFFIN

With heads to be sure. Ain't there too many heads in the world?

ISHMAEL

I tell you what it is, landlord, you'd better stop spinning that yarn to me. I'm not green.

COFFIN

Be easy, be easy. Skrimshander, this here harpooner has just arrived from the south seas where he bought up a lot of 'balmed New Zealand heads – great curios you know – and he's sold all of 'em but one. And that one he's trying to sell tonight, 'cause tomorrow's Sunday, and it would not do to be sellin' human heads about the streets when folks is goin' to churches.

ISHMAEL

Depend on it, landlord, that harpooner is a dangerous man.

COFFIN

He pays reg'lar. Have you ever shipped aboard a whaler, lad? I thought not.

ISHMAEL

Have you, landlord? What's it like?

The sound of a footstep and a scraping from a pegleg is heard as a shadow crosses the stage during this. [Or we might see a darkened figure upstage behind a scrim.]

COFFIN

There's a man out there tonight, walking in this gale, walking and hobbling on a peg leg. He could tell you. One look at him would tell you. But come, it's getting dreadful late, you had better be turning flukes. It's a nice bed. Sal and me slept in that ere bed the night we were spliced. There's plenty room for two to kick about in that bed; it's an almighty big bed that.

They cross and enter the room with a large bed.

There, make yourself comfortable now, and good night to ye.

COFFIN leaves a lit candle by the bed and exits. ISHMAEL sits on the bed, then decides, and strips down to his underwear, and climbs under the sheets. He blows out the light. Soon QUEEQUEG enters, carrying a sack with his head, and a tomahawk. He places both on a table and proceeds to strip. His face, torso, chest, and arms are covered with tattoos (as are the Maori from New Zealand). He removes a small bundle from his pocket and unwraps it. It is a small carved statue. He reverently places it on the table. ISHMAEL, terrified at the sight, sits up. As QUEEQUEG gets into bed, he's startled by ISHMAEL's presence and roars. He grabs his tomahawk with one hand and with the other grabs ISHMAEL by his hair.

ISHMAEL

screams Landlord! Landlord! Help me!

QUEEQUEG

Who-e debbil you? You no speak-e, //dam-me, I kill-e!

ISHMAEL

overlapping at 'dam- me' Landlord! For God's sake, Coffin! Landlord! Watch! Coffin! Angels! Save me!

QUEEQUEG

flourishes the tomahawk Speak-e! Tell-ee me who-ee be, or dam-me, I kill-e!

COFFIN rushes into the room in his night shirt and ISHMAEL leaps from the bed and rushes to COFFIN's side.

COFFIN

Hold on! Hold on there!.. I'm coming! *grinning* Don't be afraid now. Queequeg here wouldn't harm a hair of your head.

ISHMAEL

Stop your grinning, and why didn't you tell me that that he was a cannibal?

QUEEQUEG sits up and lights his pipe.

COFFIN

I thought ye know'd it. Didn't I tell ye he was peddlin' heads around town? Queequeg, look here, you sabbee me, I sabbee you: this man sleep-ee you. You sabbee?

QUEEQUEG

Me sabbee plenty. You gettee in. *He motions with his tomahawk.*

ISHMAEL

Landlord, tell him to stash his tomahawk there, or pipe, or whatever you call it. I don't fancy having a man smoking in bed with me. It's dangerous. Besides, I ain't insured.

ISHMAEL nods to COFFIN. Smiling, COFFIN exits. ISHMAEL stands and QUEEQUEG sits and smokes as each regards the other.

For all your tattooings, you are on the whole a clean, comely looking cannibal. What's all this fuss I've been making? You're a human being just as I am. You have as much reason to fear me as I have to be afraid of you.

QUEEQUEG politely motions to ISHMAEL and he rolls over as ISHMAEL climbs back into the bed.

Good night.

QUEEQUEG

Good night.

QUEEQUEG begins to snore as ISHMAEL looks at him.

ISHMAEL

Better to sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian.

Scene Three

In the dark we hear a scraping of foot and pegleg. A WOMAN's VOICE is heard, crying out: "Jeddediah!" The sounds ceases. Then it starts again and we hear the WOMAN as she cries softly.

Next morning QUEEQUEG's arm is thrown over ISHMAEL in a sleeping embrace. ISHMAEL awakes and finds that he is nestling into the arm. He tries to move the arm but QUEEQUEG continues to hug ISHMAEL tightly in his sleep.

ISHMAEL

Queequeg! QUEEQUEG snores. Queequeg! In the name of goodness, Queequeg, wake! This is most unbecoming, your hugging a fellow male in the matrimonial sort of style!

QUEEQUEG grunts, draws back his arm, shakes himself all over and sits up in bed. He looks at ISHMAEL and rubs his eyes, as ISHMAEL quietly lays watching him. QUEEQUEG jumps out of bed and commences dressing by donning a very tall stovepipe hat and, minus his trousers, hunting for his boots.

ISHMAEL

Queequeg! Seeing, now, that there are no curtains to the window, and that the street being very narrow, the house opposite commands a plain view into the room, I beg you to accelerate your toilet somewhat.

QUEEQUEG dons his waistcoat and taking up a piece of hard soap and wetting it, he lathers his face. QUEEQUEG then takes a harpoon from the corner, unsheathes the head, strops it a little on his boot, and begins a vigorous scraping of his cheeks as ISHMAEL struggles to get into his clothes while watching this fascinating ritual.

QUEEQUEG

finishing You shave?

ISHMAEL nods, a little fearfully. QUEEQUEG strides over to him and begins to lather ISHMAEL's face. He then commences to scrape at ISHMAEL's face as ISHMAEL attempts to retreat back to the bed.

ISHMAEL

Careful, please? That's, that's a sharp blade. *QUEEQUEG grunts.* Where do you come from, friend? I'm from New York City. Born and bred there. Have you ever shipped out from there? *QUEEQUEG makes a shushing sound.* I grew up along the Hudson River, a water rat. Been shipping out since I was, oh, since I was fourteen. Merchant ships, mostly. *QUEEQUEG impatiently shushes him.* I'm . . . I'm no good a landsman. Only at sea do I ever feel at home. I don't have any family. My parents, well, my parents . . . I don't, well this may come as a shock, but I never knew my parents . . .

QUEEQUEG regards ISHMAEL. Then QUEEQUEG puckers his lips at ISHMAEL and signals through hand gestures and grunts for ISHMAEL to pucker his lips. ISHMAEL shakes his head, alarmed. QUEEQUEG, amused, continues to urge ISHMAEL to pucker his lips. At last ISHMAEL puckers his lips and closes his eyes, offers them to QUEEQUEG. QUEEQUEG pinches ISHMAEL's lips with his free hand – to shut him up – and lifts ISHMAEL's head and shaves his throat. When he finishes, he gently pats ISHMAEL on the cheek.

QUEEQUEG

Now-ee, go to church? Good. I bring my Yojo.

ISHMAEL

Church, my friend. Yes. Bring your . . . Yojo.

QUEEQUEG nods and proudly marches out of the room in a great pilot jacket, retrieving his small statue and wrapping it up in his bandana. ISHMAEL suddenly scrambles after him as church music is heard from a small pump organ.

Scene Four

In the Whalemens' Chapel (Seamen's Bethel). ISHMAEL and QUEEQUEG wander as a small choir sings a Quaker hymn. Several families enter and sit as ISHMAEL and QUEEQUEG stop and look at several marble tablets hanging on the walls.

ISHMAEL

We talk of the Turks, and abhor the cannibals; but may not some of *them* go to heaven before some of *us*? We may have civilized bodies and yet barbarous souls. *reading aloud* Sacred to the memory of John Talbot/Who, at the age of eighteen, was lost overboard/Near the Isle of Desolation, off Patagonia/November 1st, 1836./This tablet is erected to his Memory by his Sister.

The small Choir begins to sing, or intone, the following inscriptions on the tablets. As they sing, FATHER MAPPLE is wheeled in on his pulpit carved as a ship's prow. The singing grows into a

fugue, with the last words, "Surviving Shipmates" and "His Widow" echoing contrapuntally among the Choir.

CHOIR

sings Sacred to the Memory of ROBERT LONG, WILLIS ELLERY, NATHAN COLEMAN, WALTER CANNY, SETH MACY, and SAMUEL GLEIG,/ Forming one of the boat's crews of the Ship Eliza/Who were towed out of sight by a Whale/On the off-shore Ground in the Pacific/December 31st 1839./This marble is here placed by their surviving/Shipmates . . .Surviving Shipmates . . .Surviving Shipmates.

Sacred to the Memory of the late CAPTAIN EZEKIAL HARDY/Who in the bows of his boat was killed by a/Sperm Whale on the coast of Japan/August 3rd 1833/This tablet is erected to his Memory by/His Widow . . .His Widow . . .His Widow . . .

FR. MAPPLE

Starboard gangway, there! Side away to larboard – larboard gangway to starboard! Midships! Midships!

The Congregants sit, including ISHMAEL and QUEEQUEG. All is quiet.

FR. MAPPLE

"And God prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." Shipmates, this book, containing only four chapters – four yarns – is one of the smallest strands in the mighty cable of the Scriptures. Yet what depths of the soul does Jonah's deep sealine sound! What a pregnant lesson to us is this prophet! But what is this lesson that the book of Jonah teaches? As with all sinners among men, the sin was in his willful disobedience of the command of God – never mind now what that command was, or how conveyed. If we obey God, we must disobey ourselves; and it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists.

Silence. FATHER MAPPLE slowly waves a benediction, covers his face with his hands, kneels and remains kneeling till all the people have departed and he is left alone in the church. The CHOIR repeats the final sung phrase, "His Widow" as they leave the church.

Scene Five

ISHMAEL and QUEEQUEG, carrying his harpoon, board the Pequod. PELEG sits in a chair whittling on a stick of wood. PIP is aboard and is swabbing the deck.

ISHMAEL

Is this the Captain of the Pequod?

PELEG

Supposing it be the Captain of the Pequod, what dost thou want of him?

ISHMAEL

I was thinking of shipping.

PELEG

Thou wast, wast thou? Ever been in a stove boat?

ISHMAEL

No Sir, I never have.

PELEG

Does know nothing at all about whaling, I dare say – eh?

ISHMAEL

Nothing, Sir. But I have no doubt I shall soon learn. I've been several voyages in the merchant service, and I think that . . .

PELEG

Hast not been a pirate, hast thou? Didst not rob thy last Captain, didst thou? Dost not think of murdering the officers when thou gettest to sea?

ISHMAEL

I protest, sir, that I am innocent of these things!

PELEG

But what takes thee a-whaling?

ISHMAEL

Well, I want to see what whaling is. I want to see the world.

PELEG

What to see what whaling is, eh? Have ye clapped eye on Captain Ahab?

ISHMAEL

Who is Captain Ahab?

PELEG

Aye, aye, I thought so. Captain Ahab is the Captain of this ship.

ISHMAEL

I am mistaken then. I thought I was speaking to the Captain.

PELEG

Thou art speaking to Captain Peleg, that's who ye are speaking to, young man. It belongs to me and Captain Bildad to see the Pequod fitted out for the voyage and supplied with all her needs, including crew. But as I was going to say, if thou wantest to know what whaling is, clap eye on Captain Ahab, young man, and thou wilt find that he has only one leg.

ISHMAEL

What do you mean, sir?

PELEG

Young man, it was devoured, chewed up, crunched by the monstrousest leviathan that ever chipped a boat! Look ye now, young man, I have given thee a hint about what whaling is. Do ye feel inclined for it?

ISHMAEL

I do.

PELEG

It takes blood and a hunger for blood. It takes a man who loves to kill and to swim in the blood of his kill. Now, art thou the man to pitch a harpoon down a live whale's throat, and then jump after it? Answer quick!

ISHMAEL

I am, – if it should be positively indispensable to do so.

PELEG

Good, again. Now then, ye also want to go in order to see the world? Can't ye see the world where ye stand?

ISHMAEL

Go a-whaling I must, and I would. And the Pequod is as good a ship as any - I think the best.

PELEG

calling down below Bildad!

BILDAD enters, carrying his Bible, spots ISHMAEL and glances at PELEG.

He says he's our man, Bildad; he wants to ship.

BILDAD

Dost thee?

ISHMAEL

I dost. I mean, I do.

PELEG

What do ye think of him, Bildad?

BILDAD

eyeing ISHMAEL He'll do.

PELEG eyes BILDAD.

PELEG

Thank ye, Bildad. Now then, my young man, down ye go here, for the three hundredth share.

ISHMAEL

As he signs his name, indicating QUEEQUEG, standing at a distance Captain Peleg, I have a friend with me who wants to ship too.

ISHMAEL signals to QUEEQUEG who slowly strides to the men.

BILDAD

groaning as he looks up at QUEEQUEG What share does he want?

PELEG

to ISHMAEL Has he ever whaled it any?

ISHMAEL

Killed more whales than I can count, Captain Peleg.

PELEG

looking over QUEEQUEG I cannot and will not allow cannibals on board unless they can produce papers.

BILDAD

Yes, he must show that he's converted. *turning to QUEEQUEG* Son of darkness, art thou at present in communion// with any Christian church?

PELEG

overlap after 'communion' I say, tell Quohog there – what's that you call him? I say, Quohog, or whatever your name is, did you ever stand in the head of a whale-boat? Did you ever strike a fish?

Without saying a word, QUEEQUEG jumps upon the bulwarks, bracing his left knee and positioning his harpoon cries out.

QUEEQUEG

Cap'n, you-ee see him small drop tar on water dere? You-ee see him? S'pose him one whale eye? Well, den!

Taking sharp aim at it, QUEEQUEG darts the harpoon right over BILDAD's hat and across the deck strikes the tar spot out of sight.

PELEG

Quick, Bildad! Quick, I say! You, Bildad! Get the ship's papers! We must have Hedgehog there, I mean Quohog, in one our boats! Look ye, Quohog, we'll give you the ninetieth share, and that's more than ever was given a harpooner yet out of Nantucket! The ninetieth share!

BILDAD quickly opens the ship's book and hands the pen to ISHMAEL and QUEEQUEG. Both sign. BILDAD takes out a bundle of tracts and thrusts one into QUEEQUEG's hands after he signs.

BILDAD

grasping QUEEQUEG's hands Son of darkness, I must do my duty by thee. I am part owner of this ship, and feel concerned for the souls of all its crew.

PELEG

Overlapping Avast there, avast there, Bildad, avast now spoiling our harpooner. Pious harpooners never make good voyagers: it takes the shark out of 'em.

BILDAD silently buttons up his coat, stalks away on deck and stands very quietly looking out over the harbor.

ISHMAEL

turning back to PELEG Where might Captain Ahab be found?

PELEG

And what dost thou want of Captain Ahab? It's all right enough, thou art shipped.

ISHMAEL

Yes, but I should like to see him.

PELEG

I don't think thou wilt be able to at present. He keeps close inside his house. Doesn't speak much, but when he does speak, then you may well listen. Ahab of old, thou knowest, was a crowned king!

ISHMAEL

And a very vile one. When that wicked king was slain, the dogs, did they not lick his blood?

PELEG

gently Look ye, lad, never say that on board the Pequod. Never say it anywhere. Captain Ahab did not name himself. So good-bye to thee, and wrong not Captain Ahab because he happens to have a wicked name. Besides, my boy, he has a wife – not three voyages wedded – a sweet resigned girl. Think of that. By that sweet girl that old man has a child. No, no, my lad, stricken, blasted if he be, Ahab has his humanities!

ISHMAEL and QUEEQUEG watch as PELEG disappears into the ship. They look over at BILDAD, then leave the ship and begin to laugh in joyous anticipation.

Scene Six

A figure emerges from the shadows leveling a massive finger at the Pequod, dressed shabbily.

ELIJAH

Shipmates, have ye shipped in that ship? Have ye shipped in her?

ISHMAEL

You mean the Pequod, I suppose.

ELIJAH

Aye, the Pequod – that ship there.

ISHMAEL

Yes, we have just signed the articles.

ELIJAH

Anything down there about your souls?

ISHMAEL

About what?

ELIJAH

Oh, perhaps you haven't got any. I know many chaps that haven't got any, and they are all the better off for it. A soul's a sort of a fifth wheel to a wagon.

ISHMAEL

What are you jabbering about, shipmate?

ELIJAH

He's got enough, though, to make up for all deficiencies of that sort in other chaps.

ISHMAEL

Queequeg, let's go. This fellow has broken loose from somewhere, he's talking about something and somebody we don't know.

ISHMAEL and QUEEQUEG begin to exit.

ELIJAH

Ye haven't seen Old Thunder yet, have ye?

ISHMAEL

stops Who's Old Thunder?

ELIJAH

Aye, among some of us old sailors chaps, he goes by that name. Ye haven't seen him// yet, have ye?

ISHMAEL

If you mean Captain Ahab, no, we haven't. He's sick they say, but is getting better, and will be all right again before long.

ELIJAH

laughs All right again before long! Look ye, when Captain Ahab is all right, then this left arm of mine will be all right, not before.

ISHMAEL

What do you know about him?

ELIJAH

What did they tell you about him?

ISHMAEL

My friend, what all this gibberish of yours is about I don't know, and I don't much care. But I know all about the loss //of his leg.

ELIJAH

All about it, eh? Sure you do? // All?

ISHMAEL

Pretty sure.

ELIJAH

Ye've shipped, have ye? Names down on the papers? Well, well, what's signed is signed; and what's to be will be. And then again, perhaps it won't be, after all, I suppose, God pity 'em! Morning to ye, shipmates, morning. The ineffable heavens bless ye. //I'm sorry I stopped ye.

ISHMAEL

Look here, friend, if you have anything important to tell us, out with it. But if you are only trying to bamboozle us, you are mistaken in your game. That's all I have to say.

ELIJAH

And it's said very well, and I like to hear a chap talk up that way! You are just the man for him, the likes of ye. Morning to ye, shipmates, morning!

ISHMAEL

Morning it is. Come along, Queequeg, let's leave this crazy man. But stop! Tell me your name, will you?

ELIJAH

Elijah. Morning to ye, shipmates, morning.

ISHMAEL and QUEEQUEG look at each other and begin to exit.

ISHMAEL

losing patience Never mind him, Queequeg, come on.

ELIJAH steals up to them again and suddenly claps his hand on ISHMAEL's shoulder.

ELIJAH

Morning to ye! Morning to ye! Oh! I was going to warn ye against – but never mind, never mind – it's all one, all in the family, too – sharp frost this morning, ain't it? Good bye to ye. Shan't see ye again very soon, I guess; unless it's before the Grand Jury.

ELIJAH then passes them by and continues until he disappears.

Scene Seven

This scene is a combination of activities. Men come aboard the ship carrying their kits, while other sailors are involved with getting the ship under way. PELEG and BILDAD supervise the activity. During this, a mast should be raised with rigging by sailors hauling on winches together and singing one or two work-hauling songs (e.g., "Pat Doyle's Boots" and "Haul Away, Joe"). There should be a crow's nest atop the mast that various sailors throughout the play will climb up to as various watches change. Among the sailors shouting orders are the three mates (STARBUCK, 1st Mate; STUBB, 2nd Mate; FLASK, 3rd Mate). ISHMAEL and QUEEQUEG come aboard and are quickly pulled into heaving on the capstan. BILDAD walks around and when individual sailors are free, hands them a Bible or a tract. PELEG crosses to STARBUCK.

PELEG

Now, Mr. Starbuck, call all hands. Muster 'em aft here – blast 'em!

BILDAD

No need of profane words, however great the hurry, Peleg. But away with thee, friend Starbuck, //and do our bidding.

PELEG

jumping among the men at the mast Aft here, ye sons of bachelors. Mr. Starbuck, drive 'em aft. Man the capstan! Blood and thunder! Jump! Is that the way the nancy boys heave in the marchent service? Spring, thou sheep-head, spring and break thy backbone! Why don't ye spring? I say, all of ye, spring! Quohog! Spring! //Thou chap with the red whiskers, spring here! Scotchcap, spring! Thou Greenpants, spring, I say! All of ye! And spring your eyes out!

SAILORS

overlapping PELEG's exhortations, singing and hauling on the 'hey' and' ah' of the refrain, as well as the underlined words.

refrain To me, way, hey, hey, hey . . . Ah!

We'll pay Paddy Doyle for his boots.

refrain

We'll all drink whisky and gin.

refrain

We'll all shaver under our chin.

refrain

We'll all throw mud at the cook./

refrain

We'll pay Paddy Doyle for his boots.

The sailors finish the rigging and one climbs up to the crow's nest as BILDAD watches in serene approval.

BILDAD

overlapping as the men work, recites Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood/stand dressed in living green./So to the Jews old Canaan stood,/While Jordan rolled between.

PELEG approaches BILDAD and touches his arm.

PELEG

Captain Bildad – come, old shipmate, we must go. Careful! Careful! Come, Bildad, boy, say your last.

BILDAD

addresses the crew and mates God bless ye, and have ye in His holy keeping. Be careful in the hunt, ye mates. *starts to exit, stops* Don't stave the boats needlessly, ye harpooners; good white cedar plank is becoming more expensive by the day. Don't forget your prayers, either. *starts to exit, stops* Don't whale it too much a' Lord's days, men. But don't miss a fair chance either, that's rejecting Heaven's good gifts. *starts to exit, stops* If ye touch at the islands, Mr. Flask, beware of fornication . . . //

PELEG

hurrying his partner off the ship Come, come, Captain Bildad, stop palavering – away!

The crew cheers as the ship gets under way and leaves the port. They begin singing ‘Haul Away, Joe’ as they continue their work as STUBB hollers out “Jib sail! Fore sail! Main sail! Spanker!”

Scene Eight

Night. The ship is quiet. Moonlight. The helmsman quietly steers the course. In the dark, we hear the scrape and thump of a foot and a pegleg. ISHMAEL enters and leans against the taffrail, looking out at the night sky. The thumping and scraping is heard again. AHAB enters to the sounds as he stroll the deck. ISHMAEL stands transfixed by the sight of the captain. AHAB is tall, seemingly statuesque. He crosses to ISHMAEL.

AHAB

Your mouth is wide open, sailor. You wish to say something to me? . . .Does the sight of my leg bother you? . . .Does the sound of its weight interfere with your sleep?

ISHMAEL

shaking his head No. I mean, no sir, Cap’n, if you are pleased to walk the planks, then no one could say, nay.

AHAB

staring at him That’s right, sailor. Now, stop staring at me. Go thy ways. Below to thy mighty grave. *ISHMAEL does not move.* Down, dog, and kennel!

ISHMAEL

speechless I am not used to be spoken to that way, sir. I do but less than half like it, sir.

AHAB

gritting his teeth Avast!

ISHMAEL

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!

As AHAB moves toward him, ISHMAEL retreats below decks. AHAB stands for a while where ISHMAEL stood, looking up at the sky. He lights his pipe and smokes in silence. In the dark, we hear the WOMAN's VOICE cry out: "Jeddidiah! Please! You need not do this!" He tosses the still-lighted pipe into the sea. AHAB begins his pacing again, his pegleg tapping the course of his walk.

Scene Nine

Daytime. The crew and mates are all at their stations, involved in their chores. AHAB enters and commences his pacing.

STUBB

whispers D'ye mark him, Flask? The chick that's in him pecks the shell. T'will soon be out.

AHAB comes to a stop. Distant drumming is heard, as a heart beat.

AHAB

Starbuck, send everybody aft.

STARBUCK

Sir?

AHAB

Send everybody aft. Mast-heads! Come down!

STARBUCK

All hands aft!// On the double!

STUBB

Overlapping on "aft" All hands means you!// Now!

FLASK

Overlapping on "you" All hands now, lads. On the double! Quick time!

The entire ship's company assembles and faces AHAB, with excitement and apprehension.

AHAB

vehemently What do ye do when ye see a whale, men?

MARINERS

Sing out for him!

AHAB

Good! And what do ye do next, men?

MARINERS

Lower away, and after him!

AHAB

And what tune is it ye pull to, men?

MARINERS

excitedly A dead whale or a stove boat!

AHAB

Look ye! D'ye see this Spanish ounce of gold? *holds up a bright coin in the sun.* D'ye see it, men? Starbuck, hand me yon top-maul.

AHAB slowly rubs the gold piece against his jacket, then takes the maul from STARBUCK and nails the coin to the main mast.

AHAB

Whosoever of ye raises me a white-headed whale with a wrinkled brow and a crooked jaw; whosoever of ye raises me that white-headed whale with three holes punctured in his starboard fluke; look ye, whosoever of ye raises me that same white whale, he shall have this gold ounce, my boys!

MARINERS

cheer Huzzah! Huzzah!

AHAB

It's a white whale, a white whale! Skin your eyes for him, men. Look sharp for white water! If ye see but a bubble, sing out!

TASHTEGO

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

AHAB

Moby Dick!? Do ye know the white whale then?

TASHTEGO

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

DAGGOO

Has he a curious spout, too, very bushy, even for a parmacetty, and mighty quick?

QUEEQUEG

And he hab one, two, tree – oh good many iron in him hide, too, all twiskie-tee betwisk like him – him – like him – him – him . . .

AHAB

Corskscrew! Aye, the harpoons all lie twisted and wrenched in him, aye! It is Moby Dick ye have seen!

MARINERS

whispering Moby Dick!

STARBUCK

Captain Ahab, was it not Moby Dick that took off thy leg?

AHAB

Who told ye that? Aye, Starbuck, aye. Aye! It was that accursed white whale that razed me! Aye, aye! And I'll chase him round Good Hope, and round the Horn, and around the Norway maelstrom, and round perdition's flames, and over all sides of earth, till he spouts black blood and rolls fin out. What say ye, men? Will ye splice hands on it, now?

MARINERS

excited Aye! Aye! A sharp eye for the White Whale! A sharp lance for Moby Dick!

AHAB

God bless thee. *half sob and half shout* God bless thee, men. Steward! Go draw the great measure of grog.

STEWARD leaves. MARINERS cheer. AHAB notices STARBUCK's silence.

AHAB

Starbuck? Wilt thou not chase the white whale? Art not game for Moby Dick?

STARBUCK

I am game for his crooked jaw, and for the jaws of Death, too, Captain Ahab, 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 thee in our Nantucket market?

AHAB

Let me tell thee that my vengeance will fetch a great premium here!

STARBUCK

Vengeance on a dumb brute! That simply smote thee from blindest instinct! To be enraged with a dumb thing, Captain Ahab, seems blasphemous.

AHAB

Talk not to me of blasphemy, I'd strike the sun if it insulted me.

pause

STARBUCK

nods, murmurs God keep me - keep us all.

AHAB

The measure! The measure! *STEWARD returns.* He tasks me, he heaps me. That inscrutable thing behind the mask is chiefly what I hate, the malignant thing that has plagued mankind since the time began; the thing that maws and mutilates our race, not killing us outright but letting us live on, with half a heart and half a lung; and I will wreak that hate upon him. *To the harpooners* Produce your weapons!

QUEEQUEG, TASHTEGO, and DAGGOO produce their harpoons. They range before AHAB near the capstan and the rest of the CREW form a ring around them. AHAB searches the faces of the group as STEWARD fills a flagon with wine and hands it to AHAB. AHAB hands it to the nearest seaman.

AHAB

Drink and pass! *each man drinks and passes the flagon to the next.* Round and round! Short draughts – long swallows, men; 'tis hot as Satan's hoof. Well done, almost drained. Hand it me – here's a swallow. Steward, refill! *STEWARD refills the flagon.* Attend now, my braves. Advance ye mates! Cross your lances full before me.

STARBUCK, STUBB, and FLASK comply. Their crossed lances form a three-pointed star. AHAB extends his hand and grasps the axis, staring intently at each man. Each man cannot bear the glance and looks away.

AHAB

And now ye mates, I do appoint ye three cup-bearers to my three pagan kinsmen there – yon three most honorable gentlemen and noblemen, my valiant harpooners. Now, ye cup-bearers, advance.

AHAB, slowly going from one harpooner to another, brims the unattached and upturned harpoon sockets with the liquor from the flagon.

AHAB

Now, three to three, ye stand. Commend the murderous chalice! Drink, ye harpooners! Drink and swear! Death to Moby Dick!

MARINERS

shout Death to Moby-Dick!

AHAB

God hunt us all if we do not hunt Moby Dick to his death!

The drum beats become quite loud. The goblets are lifted, and to cries and maledictions by the entire crew against the white whale, all drink in unison. STARBUCK turns and shivers. To cheering and singing, the replenished flagon makes the final rounds among the now frantic crew, and AHAB retires to his cabin. The drumming ceases as the lights fade.

Scene Ten

Midnight on the forecastle. MARINERS, HARPOONEERS, and PIP are alternatively resting or carrying on small tasks, lounging, leaning, lying in various attitudes. All are in the dark and are singing in chorus.

ALL

sing Farewell and adieu to you, Spanish ladies!

Farewell and adieu to you, Ladies of Spain!//

Our captain's commanded . . .

OLD MANX SAILOR

overlapping on "Spain" Oh, boys, don't be sentimental, it's bad for the digestion!

ISHMAEL'S VOICE

Eight bells there, forward!

RUSSIAN SAILOR

Hsst, boys! Let's have a jig or two, what say ye? Stand by all legs! Pip! Little Pip, hurrah with your tambourine!

PIP

sulky and sleepy Don't know where it is.

RUSSIAN SAILOR

Beat thy belly then, and wag thy ears. Jig it, men, I say! Damn me, won't you dance? Throw yourselves! Legs! Legs!

BELFAST SAILOR

I don't like your floor, matey, it's too springy to my taste. I'm used to ice-floors . . .

SPANISH SAILOR

Me, too, where's your girls? Who but a fool would take his left hand by his right, and say to himself, how d'ye do? Partners! I must have partners!

All laugh. FRENCH SAILOR picks up a tambourine and tosses it to PIP.

RUSSIAN SAILOR

Here you are, Pip, now up you mount on the windlass-bits. Now, boys!

PIP begins to play his tambourine. Half of the crew dance to it, some go below or lie asleep among the coils of rigging, all grumbling,

SPANISH SAILOR

dancing Go it, Pip! Bang it, bell-boy! Rig it, dig it, stig it, quig it, bell-boy! Make fire-flies! Break the jinglers!

PIP

Jinglers, you say? I pound it so!

ALABAMA SAILOR

Rattle your teeth and pound away!

RUSSIAN SAILOR

Merry-mad! Hold up thy hoop, Pip, till I jump through it! Split jibs! Tear yourselves!

DAGGOO

quietly smoking That's a white man; he calls that fun. I save my sweat.

OLD MANX SAILOR

I'll dance over your grave, I will! O Christ! Dance on, lads, you're young; I was once.

RUSSIAN SAILOR

Spell, oh! Whew! This is worse than pulling after whales in a calm. Give us a whiff, Tash.

The men cease dancing and gather in clusters. Some of them smoke pipes. The sky darkens and the wind rises.

SPANISH SAILOR

reclining It's the waves' turn to jig it now. They'll shake their tassels soon. Now would all waves were women, then I'd go drown, and chasee with them evermore! There's nothing so sweet on earth as swift glances of warm, wild bosoms in the dance and such ripe, bursting grapes!

BELFAST SAILOR

reclining Tell me not of it! Hark ye, lad – fleet interlacings of the limbs – lithe swayings – coyings – flutterings! Lip! Heart! Hip! All graze; unceasing touch and go, eh Pagan? *nudges ALABAMA SAILOR.*

ALABAMA SAILOR

reclining Hail, holy nakedness of our dancing girls! The Heeva-Heeva!

BELFAST SAILOR

I heard old Ahab tell Stubb he must always kill a squall – fire your ship right into it!

ALABAMA SAILOR

Blood, but that old man's a grand old cove! We are the lads to hunt him up his whale!

ALL

Aye! Aye!

OLD MANX SAILOR

Steady, helmsman, steady! This is the sort of weather when brave hearts snap ashore. Our captain has his birth-mark. Look yonder, boys, there's another in the sky – lurid-like, ye see, all else pitch black.

DAGGOO

stares at the SPANISH SAILOR What of that? Who's afraid of black's afraid of me!

SPANISH SAILOR

advancing Aye, harpooner, thy race is the undeniable dark side of mankind – devilish dark, at that. No offence.

DAGGOO

grimly None.

BELFAST SAILOR

That Spaniard's mad or drunk. But that can't be.

A flash of light from the sky.

RUSSIAN SAILOR

What's that? Lightning? Yes!

SPANISH SAILOR

No, Daggoo showing his teeth.

DAGGOO

springing Swallow yours! White skin, white liver!

SPANISH SAILOR

meeting him Knife thee heartily!// Big frame, small spirit!

DAGGOO and SPANISH SAILOR circle each other. SPANISH SAILOR has a knife.

ALL

A row! A row!// A row!

RUSSIAN SAILOR

overlapping A row! Goats and monkeys!

DAGGOO and SPANISH SAILOR grasp each other and wrestle for the knife.

BELFAST SAILOR

overlapping A row! A row! The Virgin be blessed!// Plunge in with ye!

ALABAMA SAILOR

Fair play! Snatch the Spaniard's knife!// A`ring! A ring!

A circle is formed tightly and the knife is taken away from the SPANISH SAILOR.

OLD MANX SAILOR

There! Look at the horizon! A squall! A squall!

ISHMAEL's VOICE

Hands by the halyards! In top-gallant sails!// Stand by to reef topsails!

ALL

overlapping The squall! The squall! Jump, my jollies!

The fight breaks up as all the men scatter to their stations and to safety.

PIP

shrinking under the windlass Jollies? *thunder* Crish crash! Blang-whang! Jimini, what a squall! Oh thou big white God somewhere in yon darkness, have mercy on this small black boy down here! Preserve him from all men that have no bowels to feel fear!

Lightning tears across the sky and thunder follows. More lightning as the thunder rolls away in the distance.

Scene Eleven

A cloudy, sultry afternoon. SAILORS are lazing about the decks or gazing vacantly into the waters. FLASK has the watch; ISHMAEL is in the crow's nest.

ISHMAEL

sings out There she blows! There! There! There! She blows! She blows!

FLASK

Where-away?

ISHMAEL

On the lee-beam, about two miles off! A school of them!

STARBUCK

To the boats!

Instantly all is commotion as sailors jump and STARBUCK's and STUBB's boats are struck with their respective crews assembling.

ISHMAEL

There go flukes!

AHAB swiftly rushes on deck and pulls out his telescope and looks in the direction of ISHMAEL's alarm.

ISHMAEL

The whales gone down heading to leeward.

AHAB

Swing out! Now! No waiting!

ISHMAEL quickly descends from the crow's nest to join his boat. AHAB's boat is swung out and standing by its bow is FEDALLAH, with a glistening, white-plaited turban on his head.

AHAB

All ready, there, Fedallah?

FEDALLAH

half-hissing Ready.

AHAB

shouting across the deck Lower away, then, d'ye hear? Lower away there, I say!

Two boats from one side and the third – AHAB's – from the opposite are rowed around. Piloting each boat are AHAB, STARBUCK, and STUBB. Each boat contains two oarsmen and a harpooner. STUBB's also contains PIP, as an oarsman.

AHAB

Starbuck! Stubb! Spread yourselves widely, // cover the area!

STARBUCK

Captain Ahab . . . ?

AHAB

Spread yourselves, give way, all boats! Thou Starbuck, pull out// more to leeward!

STUBB

soothingly Pull, pull, my fine hearts-alive; pull, my children; pull my little ones. Easy, easy, don't be in a hurry – don't be in a hurry – softly, softly – that's it, that's it. Long and strong. Give way, there. Stop snoring, ye sleepers and pull. Pull, will ye? Pull, can't ye? Pull, won't ye?

STARBUCK pulls across STUBB's bow and closes in to him.

STUBB

Mr. Starbuck, larboard boat there, ahoy! A word with ye, if ye please!

STARBUCK

focused on the whales in the distance Halloa!

STUBB

pointing to FEDALLAH What think ye of that new boy?

STARBUCK

(to his crew) and to STUBB Smuggles on board, somehow, before the ship sailed. (Strong, strong boys!) There's hogsheads of sperm ahead, Mr. Stubb, and that's what ye came for. (Pull, my boys!) This at least is duty, duty and profit hand in hand!

STUBB

Aye, the White Whale's at the bottom of his being here. Well, well, so be it! Can't be helped! All right, give way, men! It ain't the White Whale today! Give way!

The boats diverge. AHAB's boat remains out of hearing of the others. FEDALLAH readies his harpoon as AHAB steers.

STARBUCK

Every man look out along his oars! Thou, Queequeg, stand up!

QUEEQUEG readies his harpoon. TASHTEGO, STUBB's harpooner, drops to his feet.

TASHTEGO

crying out Down, down all, and give way!// There they are!

STARBUCK

softly Pull, pull, my good boys. Roar and pull, my thunderbolts!// See that white water!

STUBB

coolly Pull, babes – pull, sucklings – pull all. Softly, softly, and steadily, my men. Only pull and keep pulling, that's all. Take it easy.

There is a sudden rap of a whale's fin against STUBB's boat which shakes the entire boat. PIP panics.

PIP

No! We die! No!

PIP leaps from the boat, entangling himself in the lines.

PIP

Help! Help me! I'll drown! No! Help me!

STUBB

He's caught in the lines!

TASHTEGO roars, throws down his harpoon, and pulls at the rope, pulls out his knife, and looks to STUBB.

TASHTEGO

astonished Cut the lines? *angrily* Cut them?

STUBB

Damn him, cut!

TASHTEGO cuts the rope, and STUBB pulls PIP aboard. TASHTEGO sheathes his knife, picks up his lance and sits angrily.

PIP

whispers as he's pulled aboard Help! Help me! I drown! No!// Help me! I drown!

TASHTEGO

overlapping on "No" Losing whale for this! *He spits.*

All the boatmen are pulling their oars as their Mates and Captain gaze intently in the direction of their prey. Each boat pulls further from the others. All the boats, except STARBUCK's, disappear in the darkness.

STUBB

kindly as he calms PIP Never jump from a boat, Pip. Stick to the boat, is your true motto in whaling. Sometimes there will be cases where Leap from the boat is better. But, stick to the boat, Pip. We can't afford to lose whales by the likes of you.

TASHTEGO

spitting A whale would sell for thirty times what you would, in Alabama.

STUBB

gently Bear that in mind, and don't jump any more.

STARBUCK

whispers Give way, men, there is time to kill a fish yet before the squall comes. *pause* There's white water again! Close to! Spring!

QUEEQUEG, harpoon in hand, springs to his feet.

That's his hump! There! There, give it to him!

QUEEQUEG throws his harpoon. Then everything explodes as the boat capsizes when the whale swamps it. All hands are in the water, swimming and picking up gear and tumble back to the righted boat as STARBUCK shouts orders.

STARBUCK

Sing out! Queequeg? Gomez? Hold on to the boat!

ISHMAEL splashes around and begins to panic as he cannot see the boat. QUEEQUEG swims to him, envelops him in his arms and swims him back to the boat, passing his to the others now in the boat. The wind increases to a howl and the men begin a frantic rowing back to the ship.

Scene Twelve

[Dumb show] It is night. Fires on the deck for boiling down the blubber in a vat with a large chimney create smoke and steam and great shadows. The men, armed with long knives and axes, strip the flesh off the whale to wild cries and grunts of excitement as they rip and tear the flesh off the whale. When they are finished they gather up their strips and carry them to the boiling vat and dump the flesh in.

STUBB and FLASK share a pipe on deck. ISHMAEL watches all this from the crow's nest.

STUBB

Who would have thought it, Flask! If I had but one leg you would not catch me in a boat, unless maybe to stop the plug-hole with my timber toe. Oh, he's a wonderful old man!

FLASK

I don't think it so strange. If his leg were off at the hip, now, it would be a different thing. That would disable him; but he has one knee, and a good part of the other left, you know.

STUBB

I don't know that, my little man; I never yet saw him kneel!

The two mates retire below to join their men. It is quiet. We hear the WOMAN's VOICE cry out, "Jeddidah!" AHAB emerges from the smoke and begins his rounds on the deck. He approaches the smoky, steaming vat. He stops and stands gazing at it, as if he were hypnotized.

AHAB

I am locked in a chamber of horrors, and my only escape from this room lies in hunting and killing this beast. How can this prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? Speak, thou vast and venerable enemy; speak, and tell us the secret thing that is in thee. Thou hast been where bell or diver never went. Thou hast seen enough to split the universe and make an infidel of Abraham, and not one syllable is thine! Not one! Not one. Not from you below. Not from heaven above, though he means to destroy us all.

AHAB slowly walks away, watched by ISHMAEL. From the smoke is heard the command, "Haul in the chains!"

Scene Thirteen

AHAB's cabin. Morning. AHAB is engrossed in reading charts of the seas and islands, and tracing new courses. There is a knocking sound.

AHAB

Who's there? On deck! Begone!

STARBUCK enters.

STARBUCK

It is Starbuck. The oil in the hold is leaking, sir. We must pull into a cove, a harbor somewhere and soon and repair the damaged barrels.

AHAB

Pull into a cove you say? Now that we are nearing Japan? Heave-to here for a week to tinker a parcel of old hoops?

STARBUCK

Either do that, sir, or waste in one day more oil than we may make good in a year. *no response* What we come twenty thousand miles to get is worth saving, sir.

AHAB

So it is, so it is; if we get it.

STARBUCK

I was speaking of the oil in the hold, sir.

AHAB

And I was not speaking or thinking of that at all. Begone! Let it leak! I'll not have our course changed at will.

STARBUCK

What will the owners say, sir?

AHAB

What cares, Ahab? Owners? Owners? Look ye, the only real owner of anything is its commander, and hark ye, my conscience is in this ship's keel. On deck!

STARBUCK

reddening Captain Ahab, a better mate than I might well pass over in thee what he would quickly enough resent in a younger man, aye, and in a happier, Captain.

AHAB

Dost thou then so much as dare to critically think of me? On deck!

STARBUCK

Nay, sir, not yet; I do entreat. And I do dare, sir, to be forbearing! Shall we not understand each other better than hitherto, Captain?

AHAB seizes a loaded musket from the rack.

AHAB

There is one God that is Lord over earth, and one Captain that is lord over the Pequod. *points it towards STARBUCK.* On deck!

The two men glare at each other. STARBUCK begins to leave the cabin, then stops and turns to AHAB, still pointing the musket at him.

STARBUCK

levelly Thou hast outraged, not insulted me, sir; but for that I ask thee not to beware of Starbuck. Thou wouldst but laugh. But let Ahab beware of Ahab. Beware of thyself, old man.

STARBUCK turns and leaves the cabin. AHAB continues to aim the musket and stare at the now-closed door.

AHAB

Waxes brave, but nevertheless obeys; most careful bravery that!

Lowers the musket and returns it to the rack. He opens the door. Attend! FLASK enters.

Furl the t'gallant-sails and close-reef the top-sails; find us a cove to pull into!

FLASK

Aye, sir.

As FLASK exits, AHAB returns to his charts; he smiles.

Scene Fourteen

QUEEQUEG is seized with a fever in the sailors' quarters. The area is empty as all others are on deck working. He tries to rise from his hammock and cannot. He is weak, sweating, and shivering yet silent. Only his quickened and raspy breathing can be heard. RUSSIAN SAILOR enters and stretches himself.

QUEEQUEG

Bring-ee carpenter. Ship's carpenter. *RUSSIAN SAILOR* hesitates. Now!

RUSSIAN SAILOR quickly runs from the area and seconds later he returns with the *CARPENTER*. *CARPENTER* walks over to *QUEEQUEG* and squats by him, feeling his forehead and looking back at *RUSSIAN SAILOR* who shrugs.

QUEEQUEG

In Nantucket I see little canoes, like war-wood from my island; when ask-ee, told all whalemens who die in Nantucket were laid in same canoes; much-ee pleases me; custom-ee of my people, after warrior dies, they stretch-ee him in his canoe, leave him to float away to starry islands. I not want buried in hammock, tossed to sharks. No. I want canoe-ee, I am whaleman.

CARPENTER

I can make your coffin from those dark planks. That do you?

QUEEQUEG nods. *CARPENTER* takes his tape rule and measures *QUEEQUEG*.

RUSSIAN SAILOR

Ah, poor fellow, he'll have to die now.

CARPENTER

Why'nt you be useful and go get his friend, and his boat's Mate. Go on with you.

RUSSIAN SAILOR hurries out as *CARPENTER* now measures on a bench the exact length of the coffin, and then retrieves planks and his tools and sets to work.

QUEEQUEG

When you finish-ee, bring to me.

STARBUCK and *ISHMAEL* enter.

ISHMAEL

Queequeg!

ISHMAEL crosses to the hammock and feels his friend's forehead. *STARBUCK* watches intently. *ISHMAEL* shakes his head, removes his bandana and wipes down *QUEEQUEG*'s face. *PIP* enters surreptitiously and watches from a corner. The only sounds are the *CARPENTER*'s work and *QUEEQUEG*'s raspy breathing.

QUEEQUEG

My harpoon, place it in coffin-ee.

ISHMAEL does all this.

Now, lift me into final bed-ee. I make-ee trial.

Crying, ISHMAEL lifts up QUEEQUEG and carries him to the open and unfinished coffin. He lowers QUEEQUEG into it where he lays without moving for several moments.

QUEEQUEG

Go to my bag, bring-ee out my god, Yojo

ISHMAEL does this and unwraps the statue, handing it to QUEEQUEG who crosses his arms on his breast with Yojo between them.

Place hatch over me.

The coffin lid is put in place over him, but the face is uncovered. PIP hovering nearby draws near to QUEEQUEG, holding his tambourine.

PIP

sobbing Poor rover! Where go ye now? Will ye do one little errand for me? Seek out one Pip, who's been missing long. If ye find him, then comfort him, for he must be very sad. For, look, he's left his tambourine behind. I found it. Rig-it, dig-it, dig, dig! Now, Queequeg, die, and I'll beat your dying march. Rig-a-dig! Queequeg dies game! Mind ye that – Queequeg dies game! But base little Pip, he died a coward! Tell them he jumped from a whale-boat! No! No! Shame on all cowards! Shame on them! Let 'em go drown like Pip, that jumped from a whale-boat. Shame, shame!

STARBUCK quietly leads PIP back up on deck. QUEEQUEG murmurs and ISHMAEL removes the lid. Suddenly, QUEEQUEG sits up and looks at ISHMAEL and the CARPENTER.

QUEEQUEG

surprised I a duty ashore, which I am leaving undone; I change my mind-ee about dying. I not die yet.

ISHMAEL

But, my friend, is living or dying a matter of your own sovereign will and pleasure?

QUEEQUEG

stands up If man make-ee up mind to live, sickness cannot kill him.

Stunned, ISHMAEL looks at both QUEEQUEG, now breathing deeply without the raspy sounds, and at the CARPENTER who begins to chuckle. ISHMAEL wipes his eyes from crying, then he begins to chuckle, then to laugh heartily. The CARPENTER pats him on the back and both men begin to roar with laughter. QUEEQUEG steps out of his coffin, then pulls it over to his hammock.

QUEEQUEG

Make-ee good sea chest.

Scene Fifteen

Midday. TASHTEGO, QUEEQUEG, and DAGGOO sit with each other, eyes closed, in the sun. PERTH is standing between his forge and anvil in his apron, when AHAB comes along carrying a small leather pouch. He watches PERTH working at his forge. Sparks fly out.

AHAB

These sparks are always flying in thy wake, Perth. They burn, but thou liv'st among them untouched and unburnt.

PERTH

rests for a moment Because I am scorched all over, Captain, I am past scorching. It's not easy to scorch a scar.

AHAB

How canst thou endure without being mad? Do the heavens hate thee that thou cans't not go mad? What wert thou making there?

PERTH

Welding an old pike-head, sir; there were seams and dents in it.

AHAB

I suppose thou canst smooth almost any seams and dents, never mind how hard the metal?

PERTH

Aye, sir, I think I can.

AHAB pulls PERTH close to him and looks at him intently.

AHAB

Look ye here, then. Can ye smooth out a seam like this, blacksmith? *AHAB runs his hand across his brow.* If thou couldst, blacksmith, glad enough would I lay my head upon thy anvil, and feel thy heaviest hammer between my eyes. Answer! Canst thou smooth this seam?

PERTH

All seams and dents but one, sir.

AHAB

Aye, blacksmith, it is the one, it is unsmoothable; it has worked down to the bone of my skull! *smiles* Child's play. Look ye here. I want a harpoon made, one that a thousand yoke of fiends could not part; something that will stick in a whale like his own fin-bone. There's the stuff. Filled with blades. Razors. *flings the pouch upon the anvil* Quick! I'll blow the fire.

AHAB works the bellows as PERTH begins the process. A drumbeat begins, slowly, like a heart-beat and continues to the end of the Act.

PERTH

after several moments I fear something, my Captain. Is not this harpoon for the White Whale?

AHAB

For the white fiend!

PERTH

Place the water-cask near.

AHAB

No! No, no. No water for that. I want it to have the true death-temper. Ahoy, there! Tashtego, Queequeg, Daggoo! What say ye, pagans! Will ye give me as much blood as will cover this barb?

AHAB holds up the barbs. The three harpooners rise as one and approach AHAB.

AHAB

Yes. Three punctures from the heathen flesh, and then we temper the White Whale's barbs.

He crosses to the three and punctures each with a razor, wiping their blood on each barb.

Yes. Yes. Yes.

The drumming increases in volume and tempo. AHAB brings the barbs to the forge and howls as they are placed within.

AHAB

Ergo non baptize te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli! I do not baptize thee in the name of the father! I baptize thee in the name of the Devil!

From the forecastle, watching all of this, PIP laughs lightly. The drumming stops.

Blackout. End of ACT ONE.

ACT TWO**Scene Sixteen**

Midnight. Ahab's boat. The lantern hanging from the boat on a calm sea. All are asleep except FEDALLAH who sits watching. Whales can be heard in the far distance. AHAB starts from his sleep and looks at FEDALLAH.

AHAB

I've dreamed it again.

FEDALLAH

Of the hearses? Have I not said, old man, that neither hearse nor coffin can be thine?

AHAB

And who are hearsed that die at sea?

FEDALLAH

But I said, old man, that before thou couldst die on this voyage, two hearses must be seen by thee on the sea.

AHAB

Aye. Aye. A strange sight, that, Parsee. A hearse and its plumes floating over the ocean with the waves as pall-bearers. Such a sight we shall not soon see.

FEDALLAH

Believe it or not, thou canst not die till it be seen, old man.

AHAB

And what was the saying about thyself?

FEDALLAH

Though it come to the last, I shall still go before thee, my pilot.

AHAB

I have here two pledges that I shall yet slay Moby Dick and survive it.

FEDALLAH

Take another pledge, old man. Hemp only can kill thee.

AHAB

nods and rubs his chin The gallows, ye mean – I am immortal then, on land and on sea. Immortal on land and on sea! *laughs derisively*

Both become silent. The grey dawn comes on and the crew begins to wake up.

Scene Seventeen

A typhoon. The ship is torn from its canvas. Sky and sea roar with thunder and blaze with lightning. STARBUCK stands on the quarterdeck while STUBB and FLASK direct the men in lashing the boats.

FLASK

shouts Bad work, bad work, Mister Starbuck! But the sea will have its way!

STUBB

sings “Oh, jolly is the gale/And a joker is the whale/A-flourishin’ his tale!/Such a funny, sporty, gamy, jesty, jokey, hokey-pokey lad is the Ocean, oh!//Such a funny, sporty, gamy, jesty, jokey, hokey-pokey lad is the Ocean, oh!”

STARBUCK

overlapping Avast, Stubb, let the typhoon sing; but if thou art a brave man thou wilt hold thy peace.

STUBB

But I am not a brave man; never said I was a brave man; I am a coward, and I sing to keep my spirits! And I tell you what it is, Starbuck, there’s no way to stop my singing in this world but to cut my throat.

STARBUCK

Here! *seizes STUBB by the shoulder and points toward the weather* Markest thou not that the gale comes from the eastward, the very course Ahab is to run for Moby Dick? The very course he swung to this day noon?

STUBB

I don’t half understand ye. What’s in the wind?

STUBB points behind him on the deck. FLASK follows the gaze.

FLASK

Who's there?

AHAB

revealed by lightning Old Thunder!

STARBUCK

pointing upward Look aloft! The St. Elmo's Lights!

The yard-arms are tipped with a pallid fire while the tall mast appears as a silently burning taper on an altar. All are silent, struck fearful and the sound of the rain dims.

FLASK

Blast the boat! Let it go! Have mercy on us all!

STARBUCK

overlapping as he points upward See! See!

AHAB

Aye, men, look up at it, mark it. The white flame but lights the way to the White Whale!

Sudden, repeated flashes of lightning. All shade their eyes. STARBUCK grabs AHAB by the arm.

STARBUCK

God! God is against thee, old man! Forbear! T'is an ill voyage! Ill begun, ill continued! Let me square the yards, old man, and make a fair wind of it homeward, to go on a better voyage than this.

Overhearing STARBUCK the panic-stricken crew instantly rushes to the boats. Snatching a burning harpoon, AHAB waves it like a torch among them.

AHAB

All your oaths to hunt the White Whale are as binding as mine! Old Ahab is bound!

The crew slinks back to their places. AHAB stares down STARBUCK, then retreats below. STUBB and FLASK once more direct the crew in the lashing of the boats.

STUBB

Come on, lads, lash these boats, // Lash these boats!

FLASK

overlapping Look alive there! Look alive! Every man jack of you! Or you'll taste the cat!

Scene Eighteen

The following day. Fair and calm. FRENCH SAILOR is in the crow's nest. STARBUCK is at the helm. STUBB enters and crosses to STARBUCK. The SEAMEN are singing, subdued but in good humor.

BELFAST SAILOR

sings "In Amsterdam, I met a maid, mark well what I do say/In Amsterdam I met a maid and she was mistress of her trade/I'll go no more A-roving from you fair maid."

SAILORS

joining in on the chorus 'A-roving, a-roving, a-roving's been my ruin/I'll go no more a-roving with you fair maid."

STUBB

A good sign, the wind seems to be coming round astern.

STARBUCK

I've got the ship as near her course as possible. Take the helm, I'll report to the Captain.

STARBUCK goes below to AHAB's cabin. ISHMAEL and QUEEQUEG stand at the side as QUEEQUEG lights his pipe.

ISHMAEL

Queequeg, you have your Yojo? With you, I mean?

Queequeg brings out his little statuette, considers it, and shows it to ISHMAEL.

QUEEQUEG

You have Yojo?

ISHMAEL

No. Only a young man on a cross crying out for his father, and hearing nothing but silence as his body sags against the nails.

QUEEQUEG

He not hear-ee his father?

ISHMAEL

No.

QUEEQUEG

Father not there?

ISHMAEL

shrugs Or indifferent. Does Yojo hear?

QUEEQUEG

Yojo let-ee me talk to him.

ISHMAEL

Does he hear you?

QUEEQUEG

I hear me.

Silence. Both men look out to sea.

ISHMAEL

Queequeg, we're friends, right?

QUEEQUEG looks at ISHMAEL, then offers him the pipe. They share the pipe for a silent moment, looking out on the sea. A lone musician brings out his instrument and begins to play the BELFAST SAILOR's tune. QUEEQUEG turns ISHMAEL to face him, then presses their foreheads together.

QUEEQUEG

We now married. Best friend-ee, I glad to die for you.

QUEEQUEG resumes his smoking and turns back to the sea. ISHMAEL is taken aback. He rests his hand on QUEEQUEG's arm.

ISHMAEL

I am your best friend. And I would die for you, if it need be. *pause* Do you miss your home? I sometimes miss my home. I miss Manhattan when I'm at sea, and when I'm there, I can't wait to get back to sea.

QUEEQUEG

Kokovoko my home. My father is king. I am prince. I no go back-ee. Go back and wait-ee to be king? Wait-ee for him to die? Here I have work. Good work. *pause* Why you come on boat?

ISHMAEL

The truth? I was seeking oblivion. My taking to sea was a temporary passage out of existence. I know, my friend, I know. I had made up my mind. A wild, mystical, sympathetic feeling was in me. For a brief second Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine. And then I thought I'd lose you. *QUEEQUEG regards ISHMAEL.* Queequeg, I want to live.

QUEEQUEG

smokes and nods Shipmates look-ee at us. Why?

ISHMAEL

They marvel that two fellow beings should be so companionable, as though a white man were anything more dignified than a white-washed negro. It's a mutual, joint-stock world. We cannibals must help these Christians.

Both men smile at each and continue smoking together. STARBUCK pauses before entering AHAB's cabin. AHAB is asleep sitting up in his chair at the table with the charts spread over it. The cabin lamp swings with the motion of the ship. The loaded muskets are exposed in their rack. STARBUCK stares at them, then he picks up a musket. Long pause. STARBUCK points the musket at the sleeping AHAB. AHAB starts and wakes. He stares ahead, thick with sleep.

AHAB

How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the White Whale is that wall, shoved near to me.

AHAB nods back to sleep. STARBUCK's hands shake. He turns from the door, replaces the musket in its rack, leaves and returns to the helm.

STARBUCK

He's too sound asleep, Mr. Stubb. Go thou down and wake him, tell him. I must see to the deck here. thou knowst what to say.

STUBB nods and hands the helm over to STARBUCK, and exits. STARBUCK stares out to the water and begins to sob.

Scene Nineteen

AHAB crosses the deck and examines some sail.

AHAB

Forward, there! Mend this canvas!

Two seamen come, the BELFAST SAILOR and the OLD MANX SAILOR.

AHAB

Take a section, each of ye. I'll help.

All three cross towards the extreme stern. OLD MANX SAILOR takes one end of the canvas sail while BELFAST SAILOR and AHAB stretch it across. AHAB then brings stitching tools and the three men examine their sections (and eye AHAB).

OLD MANX SAILOR

Sir, I mistrust it. This canvas looks far gone; long heat and wet have spoiled it.

AHAB

'Twill hold, old sailor. Long heat and wet, have they spoiled thee? Thou seem'st to hold.

OLD MANX SAILOR

I do my best, sir. But as my Captain says, with these grey hairs of mine 'tis not worth while disputing, 'specially with a superior who'll ne'er confess.

All three begin their work with the sail stretched across their laps. After several moments the OLD MANX SAILOR begins to quietly hum a tune.

AHAB

What's that? Where wert thou born?

OLD MANX SAILOR

In the little rocky Isle of Man, sir.

AHAB

Excellent! Thou'st hit the world by that.

OLD MANX SAILOR

I know not, sir, but I was born there.

AHAB

In the Isle of Man, hey? Well, here's a man from Man, a man born in once independent Man, and now unmanned of Man, which is sucked in – by what? Watch it! Hold hard! *the canvas tears.* *AHAB holds on to his mood* And now the mad sea will part yet another sail. But Ahab can mend all. Haul in here. And look ye, mend thou this sail. See to it.

AHAB crosses the deck and looks out over the sea. The BELFAST SAILOR and the OLD MANX SAILOR resume their work. PIP enters and watches them at their task.

OLD MANX SAILOR

There he goes now. To him, nothing's happened; but to me, the skewer seems loosening out of the middle of the world. Haul in, haul in! Ha, Pip? Come to help, eh, Pip?

PIP

Pip? Whom call ye Pip? Pip jumped from the whale-boat. Pip's missing. There's his arm breaking water. A hatchet, a hatchet! Cut it off! We haul in no cowards here! Captain Ahab! Sir, Sir! Here's Pip, trying to get back on board again.

OLD MANX SAILOR

seizes PIP by the arm Peace, thou crazy loon! Away from the quarter-deck!

AHAB

advancing on them Hands off from that holiness! The greater idiot ever scolds the lesser.

OLD MANX SAILOR releases PIP. AHAB turns to PIP and speaks gently to him.

AHAB

Where sayest thou Pip was?

PIP

Astern there, sir, astern! Lo!

AHAB

And who art thou? I see not my reflection in the vacant pupils of thy eyes. Who art thou?

PIP

Bell-boy, sir, ship's crier – ding,dong,ding! Pip! Pip! Pip! One hundred pounds of clay reward for Pip! Five feet high, looks cowardly. Ding, dong, ding! Who's seen Pip the coward!

AHAB

holds PIP and looks into his face Oh, ye frozen heavens! Look down here. Ye did beget this luckless child, and have abandoned him. Here, Ahab's cabin shall be Pip's home henceforth, while Ahab lives. Thou touchest my inmost center. Come, let's down.

AHAB offers PIP his hand.

PIP

What's this? Here's velvet shark-skin. *gazes intently at AHAB's hand and feels it* Ah, now, had poor Pip but felt so kind a thing as this, perhaps he had ne'er been lost. Oh, sir, let old Perth now come and rivet these two hands together, the black one with the white, for I will not let this go.

AHAB

smiles Nor will I thee, unless I should thereby drag thee to worse horrors than are here. Come then, to my cabin. See the omniscient gods oblivious of suffering man; and man, though idiotic and knowing not what he does, yet full of the sweet things of love and gratitude. Come! I feel prouder leading thee by the black hand, than though I grasped an Emperor's!

Taking PIP by the hand AHAB escorts him below to his cabin. OLD MANX SAILOR watches all of this and shakes his head.

OLD MANX SAILOR

There go two daft ones now. One daft with strength, the other daft with weakness. Mend it, eh? I think we had best have a new canvas altogether. I'll see Mr. Stubb about it.

The OLD MANX SAILOR leaves to find STUBB while the BELFAST SAILOR hauls in the canvas sail where AHAB originally found it.

Scene Twenty

QUEEQUEG's coffin . The CARPENTER caulks its seams. AHAB comes slowly. PIP follows him.

AHAB

Back, lad, I will be with ye presently. What's here?

CARPENTER

Life buoy, sir, Starbuck's orders.

AHAB

Art thou not my leg-maker? Art thou not our undertaker?

CARPENTER

Aye, sir, I patched up this thing here as a coffin for Queequeg; but they've set me now to turning it into something else.

AHAB

Then tell me: art thou as unprincipled as the gods, and as much of a jack-of-all-trades?

CARPENTER

But I do not mean anything, sir, I do as I do.

AHAB

Dost thou not ever sing working about a coffin? Dost thou never?

CARPENTER

Sing, sir? Do I sing? Oh, I'm indifferent enough, sir, for that, but the reason why the grave-digger made music must have been because there was none in his spade, sir. But the caulking mallet is full of it. Hark to it.

AHAB

Carpenter, hast thou ever helped carry a coffin, and heard that coffin knock against the churchyard gate, going in?

CARPENTER

Faith, sir . . .

AHAB

overlapping Faith? What is that?

CARPENTER

Why, faith, sir, it's only a sort of exclamation-like. That's all, sir.

AHAB

A life-buoy of a coffin! I go below; let me not see that thing here when I return again. Now, then, Pip, we'll talk this over. I do suck most wondrous philosophies from thee! Some unknown conduits from the unknown worlds must empty into thee!

AHAB and PIP walk away as the CARPENTER stares after them.

Scene Twenty-One

From the crow's nest, ISHMAEL shouts out.

ISHMAEL

A ship! A ship! To portside! It's the Rachel, out of Nantucket, bearing down on us!

Several sailors quickly convene to look at the approaching ship, along with the three Mates.

OLD MANX SAILOR

Bad news; she brings bad news.

A boat carrying CAPT. GARDINER and his helmsman approaches. ISHMAEL climbs down from the crow's nest and is replaced by DAGGOO. As CAPT. GARDINER stands in the boat, bringing the trumpet to his mouth, AHAB enters, followed by PIP. Both shout through their trumpets.

AHAB

Captain Gardiner! Hast see the White Whale?

CAPT. GARDINER

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

AHAB

joyous and fearful No! Have . . .Where was he? . . .Not killed? Not killed!// How was it?

CAPT. GARDINER

overlapping Three of my boats were engaged with a shoal of whales, and then the white hump and head of Moby Dick loomed out of the water! Three and then a fourth boat went after him! We lost sight of them all! We picked up the three boats, but the fourth is missing! I need your help, Ahab! Would the Pequod unite with the Rachel in our search? We could sail the sea some five miles apart, on parallel lines, sweeping a double horizon!

STUBB

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

CAPT. GARDINER

My boy! My own boy is among them! For God's sake – I beg of you! For eight and forty hours, let me charter your ship! I will gladly pay for it! Eight and forty hours only! Only you must, you must!// You shall do this thing!

STUBB

His son!

OLD MANX SAILOR

He's drowned with the rest of 'em, last night. I heard. All of ye heard their spirits.

CAPT. GARDINER

A little lad! But twelve years old! I beseech you! I will not go till you say aye to me! For you, too, have a boy, Captain Ahab – though but a child and nestling safely at home now! A child of your old age, too! Yes! Yes, you must relent! You will relent! I see it! Run, men!// Run now and stand to square in the yards!

Crew reacts. Some cross themselves, e.g. BELFAST and RUSSIAN SAILORS.

AHAB

Avast! Touch not a rope! Captain Gardiner, I will not do it! Even now I lose time! Good bye! Good bye! God bless ye, man, and may I forgive myself, but I must go! Mr. Starbuck, let the ship sail as before!

Hurriedly turning with averted face, AHAB descends into his cabin, leaving CAPT. GARDINER silently to return to his ship. SAILORS silently return to their chores and activities. PIP follows AHAB. ISHMAEL turns to STUBB, watching CAPT. GARDINER's boat disappear.

ISHMAEL

Who, who was she, Mr. Stubb?

STUBB

She was Rachel, weeping for her children, because we were not.

STUBB retreats to his quarters as ISHMAEL continues watching the boat return to the Rachel.

Scene Twenty-Two

AHAB's quarters. He moves to go up on deck; PIP catches his hand to follow.

AHAB

Lad, lad, I tell thee thou must not follow Ahab now. The hour is coming. Do thou abide below here, where they shall serve thee, as if thou wert the captain. Aye, lad, thou shalt sit here in my own chair.

PIP

No, no, no! Ye have not a whole body, sir. Do ye but use poor me for your one lost leg. I will never desert ye, sir. Sir, I must go with ye.

AHAB takes PIP's face in his hands and looks at him deeply, then shakes his head with a profound sadness.

AHAB

gently If thou speakest thus to me much more, Ahab's purpose keels up in him. I tell thee no, it cannot be.

PIP

Oh, good master, master, master!

PIP grabs AHAB and begins to sob. AHAB violently shakes PIP and looks him in the eye.

AHAB

Weep so and I will murder thee! Have a care, for Ahab too is mad! Listen, and thou wilt often hear my ivory foot upon the deck, and still know that I am there. And now I quit thee. Thy hand! God for ever bless thee, and if it come to that, God for ever save thee, let what will befall!

AHAB exits. PIP remains.

PIP

Pip! Pip! Ding, dong, ding! Who's seen Pip? He must be up here; he told me to stay here. Aye, and told me this screwed chair was mine. Here, then, here our old sailors say great admirals sometimes sit at table, and lord it over rows of captains and lieutenants. Ha, what's this? Pass round the decanters; fill up, monsieurs! A black boy's host to white men with gold lace upon their coats! Monsieurs, have ye seen one Pip? Jumped from a whale-boat once, seen him? No! Well, then, fill up again, captains, and let's drink shame upon all cowards! I name no names. Shame upon them! Shame upon all cowards.

Scene Twenty-Three

That night. AHAB steps on deck and scans the horizon, sniffing the sea air. DAGGOO and TASHTEGO are both perched as lookouts. STARBUCK is on deck, looking out at the dark. FEDALLAH stands to one side and watches as AHAB crosses the deck to STARBUCK.

AHAB

He's near. Can you not smell him? He's near.

Pause.

STARBUCK

Sir

AHAB

Oh, Starbuck . . . on such a night as this, I struck my first whale – a boy harpooner of eighteen! Forty – forty – forty years of continued whaling. Forty years of privation, and peril, and storm-time. Forty years on the pitiless sea. When I think of the life I have led, the desolation of solitude it has been. Whole oceans away from that young girl-wife I wedded past fifty . . . and sailed for Cape Horn the next day . . . I widowed that poor girl when I married her, Starbuck. What a forty years' fool old Ahab has been! . . . Come close to me, Starbuck, let me look into a human eye. It is better than to gaze into sea or sky, better than to gaze upon God. I see my wife and my child in thine eye. . . . Starbuck, I want you, I order thee, to stay aboard the ship. Keep her and bring my Pequod home for me.

STARBUCK

Oh, my Captain! My Captain! Why should any one give chase to that hated fish! Let us fly these deadly waters. This instant, let me alter the course.

AHAB

Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who that lifts this arm? But if the great sun move not of himself, but is an errand-boy in heaven, how then can this one small heart beat, this one brain think thoughts, unless God does that beating, does that thinking, does that living, and not I? By heaven, we are turned round and round in this world. Where do murderers go? Who's to doom when the judge himself is dragged to the bar? But it is a mild, mild wind and a mild looking sky, and the air smells now as if it blew from a far-away meadow.

DAGGOO

Man the mastheads! Call all hands!

Thundering with the butts of three clubbed handspikes on the forecastle deck, SAILORS are roused and instantaneously they all appear with their clothes in their hands. They begin dressing as soon as they arrive on deck.

AHAB

What d'ye see?

TASHTEGO

Nothing, sir! Nothing!

A gull cries in the distance.

AHAB

There, she blows! There she blows! A hump like a snow-hill! It is Moby Dick!

Drum beats begin.

TASHTEGO

A mile or so, ahead!

AHAB

There she blows! There she blows! There she blows! Again! There again! Stand by three boats. Starbuck, remember, stay on board and keep the ship. Helm, there! All ready the boats there? Stand by, stand by! Lower me, Starbuck. Quick, quicker!

All SAILORS ready themselves and their boats, each boat guided by its Mate.

STUBB

He is heading straight to leeward, sir, right away from us. He cannot have seen the ship yet.

AHAB

Be dumb, man. Stand by the braces! Hard down the helm! Boats, boats!

Soon all three boats are lowered. The drumming ceases.

Scene Twenty-Four

The three boats are now stilly floated, awaiting the whale's reappearance. STUBB, and FLASK at their helms, AHAB is standing in his stern. It is dawn.

TASHTEGO

cries The birds! The birds! White birds!

The sounds of many birds; the drumming starts up.

AHAB

Fedallah, change places with me.

He seizes FEDALLAH's harpoon; FEDALLAH takes the helm.

Crew, grasp your oars and stand by to stern.

The whale shoots beneath the boat, bumps against it and snaps the boat in two. All are thrown from it and all cling to the wreckage.

AHAB

shouting orders at those coming to the rescue Sail on the whale! Drive him off!

The drumming stops. STUBB's boat comes by and picks up the crew and AHAB, pulling each into the boat.

AHAB

My harpoon, is it safe?

STUBB picks it up and shows AHAB.

STUBB

Aye, sir, for it was not darted; this is it.

AHAB

Lay it before me. Any missing men?

STUBB

I think all are aboard, sir.

AHAB

That's good. Help me, man, I wish to stand. So, so, I see him! There! There! Going to leeward still. What a leaping spout! Hands off from me! The eternal sap runs up in Ahab's bones again! Set the sail; out oars; take the helm!

The boats return to the Pequod.

Scene Twenty-Five

AHAB is helped to the deck, all eyes fastened upon him. He hangs on the shoulder of STARBUCK; his ivory leg has been snapped off. STUBB and the CARPENTER come up to assist. The CARPENTER examines the leg. ISHMAEL is in the crow's nest.

CARPENTER

The ferrule has not stood. Sir, I put good work into that leg.

STUBB

But no bones broken, sir, I hope.

AHAB

Aye! Oh, how this splinter gores me now, Stubb! But even with a broken bone, old Ahab is untouched. Aloft there, which way?

ISHMAEL

Dead to leeward, sir.

AHAB

Starbuck away, and muster the boats' crews.

STARBUCK

Let me first help thee towards the bulwarks, sir.

AHAB

Accursed fate! That the unconquerable captain in the soul should have such a craven mate!

STARBUCK

Sir?

AHAB

My body, not thee. Give me something for a cane.

STARBUCK hands it to him.

Muster the men. Surely I have not seen him yet. *panics* By heaven it cannot be!// – HE CANNOT BE MISSING? Quick, call them all!

STUBB

overlapping The Parsee!// He must have been caught in –

AHAB

overlapping The black vomit wrench thee! Run! All of ye above! Below! Cabin! Forecastle! Find him!// Not gone – not gone! FEDALLAH!!

STUBB

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

AHAB

stricken My line! My line . . . Gone? . . .Gone? Collect the oars. Harpooners! The irons, the irons! I'll ten times girdle the unmeasured globe, yea and dive straight through it, but I'll slay him yet!

STARBUCK throws his arms around AHAB to wrestle him into control of his mind.

STARBUCK

Never, never wilt thou capture him, old man – In Jesus' name no more of this! That's worse than devil's madness. Shall we keep chasing this murderous fish till he swamps the last man?

AHAB

calmly staring at STARBUCK Starbuck, in the matter of the whale, Ahab is forever Ahab, man. This whole act's immutably decreed. 'Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this ocean rolled. Fool! I am the Fates' lieutenant; I act under orders.

Pause. STARBUCK releases his hold as AHAB stares him down, and then looks away.

Stand round me, men.

The crew cautiously gathers.

AHAB

So once more with Moby Dick –Aye, men, he'll rise once more, but only to spout his last. D'ye feel brave, men, brave?

STUBB

As fearless as fire.

MARINERS

shout fiercely in unison Aye, sir!

The drums begin. The crew begins to repair the boats.

Scene Twenty-Six

The next morning. AHAB on deck with a hastily refitted stump. BELFAST SAILOR is the watch.

AHAB

D'ye see him?

DAGGOO

Not yet.

AHAB looks at the expectant crew. All are fearful. There is total silence except for the sea.

AHAB

Aloft, there, what do you see?

BELFAST SAILOR

Nothing, sir.

AHAB

Nothing! Aye, aye, it must be so. I've oversailed him. He's chasing me, now, not I – him. That's bad.

BELFAST SAILOR

He breaches! He breaches!

STUBB

Man the boats! // Move it!

FLASK

overlapping Man the boats! Oarsmen!

AHAB

Forehead to forehead I meet thee this final time, Moby Dick!

The boats are lowered. ISHMAEL is AHAB's oarsman and QUEEQUEG his harpooner.

Starbuck!

STARBUCK

Sir?

AHAB

Some men die at ebb tide, some at low water, some at the full of the flood. Starbuck, I am old – shake hands with me.

They shake hands and regard each other.

STARBUCK

He is swimming away from us, straight away from the Pequod. See! Moby Dick seeks thee not! It is thou, thou, that madly seekest him! Sir, please!

AHAB quickly smiles at him with something akin to affection.

AHAB

Good bye. Lower away! Stand by the crew!

AHAB climbs into his boat and it pulls away. A voice from his cabin cries out.

PIP

The sharks! The sharks! O Master, my master, come back!

Drum beating intensifies in volume and tempo. The three boats once more move away from each other. FLASK's boat first meets with Moby Dick. The boat is illuminated by an extreme brightness of white light.

FLASK

O my sweet Jesus . . . !

The men scream. The boat is smashed and all are drowned as a black light blots out their presence. The drumming stops abruptly. Only the ocean is heard. AHAB watches this destruction.

AHAB

Drive, drive in your nails! O ye waves! Ye but strike a thing without a lid; and no coffin and no hearse can be mine. *to his crew* And hemp only can kill me!

The drum beating re-commences. This time it is STUBB's boat and crew which are destroyed, first by an intense white light, followed by the screams and sounds of men dying and the boat shattering. Then silence and a black light blotting their presence.

AHAB

Give way!

The drumming starts up again. Moby Dick's white light begins to brighten AHAB's boat. The harpoon drops from his hand. He picks it up.

Ye are not other men, but my arms and legs, and so, obey me. Where's the whale? Gone down again?

The drum beating gains in tempo and intensity. The Pequod is bathed in the white light.

STARBUCK

Stand fast, men! It is only a whale; aye, a monstrous whale, but a whale still, and we hunt whales and we kill them!

The sounds of the ship breaking up in pieces and the rigging being torn down. All aboard, PIP, CARPENTER, PERTH, and the others scream.

Jesus, God! We've become the hunted!

SAILORS

screaming in utter terror No!//Help me!//Our father who art in heaven//Save me!

The screaming sailors are finally joined by STARBUCK. and all dying and sinking in the intensity of the white light; then the drumming ceases and complete blackness as the black light obscures the ship's presence. AHAB staggers.

AHAB

Great God, where is the ship? The hearse! The second hearse! //I grow blind.

SAILORS

crying in terror, overlapping The whale! The ship!

AHAB

overlapping I can't see my ship! My men! Will ye not save my ship?

The drumming starts up again as the white light grows in near blinding intensity. AHAB grasps his harpoon and looks up at the approaching 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 to thee, though tied to thee thou damned whale!

The drumming increases to a frenetic tempo. AHAB throws his harpoon. Men cry and the boat is shattered and birds cry as well. The drumming stops as blackness takes over the entire stage and the screams cease. Only the birds and the ocean are heard.

Scene Twenty-Seven

A small grey light comes up downstage and reveals ISHMAEL clinging like a lover to QUEEQUEG's coffin.

ISHMAEL

The drama's done. The hunters became the hunted. Why then here does any one step forth? Because one did survive the wreck. I was he whom the Fates ordained. *One by one, each crew member slowly enters upstage in a darkened light, floating in a void. All are dead: QUEEQUEG, STARBUCK, PERTH, STUBB, FLASK, PIP, CARPENTER, OLD MANX SAILOR, TASHTEGO, DAGGOO, FEDALLAH. Their faces are twisted in fear, rage, anguish, and pain. They slowly float and bob. AHAB floats in with his harpoon hanging by its rope around his broken neck. But . . . why not Starbuck? Or Queequeg . . . quietly Why me? Why have I been condemned to remember and to chase these shadows? Shadows of shadows? Where was God? . . . So, drifting on the margin of the ensuing scene, buoyed up by this coffin, Queequeg's coffin, for almost one whole day and night, I floated on a soft and dirge-like main, unharmed by sharks, who glided by as if with padlocks on their mouths. On the second day, a sail drew near, nearer, and picked me up at last.*

ISHMAEL raises his body and waves to the ship.

AHOY!!! AHOY!!! It was the Rachel and its Captain Gardner, the devious-cruising Rachel that, in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan.

He then stands up and reaching behind him (and the coffin), he pulls out the long coat he wore at the beginning and puts it on. Then he reaches and pulls out the hat he wore and his walking stick. ISHMAEL again raises his arm to the approaching ship.

Another orphan.

ISHMAEL begins to walk away, through and past the floating, drowned ghosts. ISHMAEL slightly pauses by QUEEQUEG. He then quickly and determinedly disappears beyond them, his walking stick heard tapping along with his feet. The lights begin to fade out and we hear, in addition to the waves and the birds, whales singing in the distance. The sounds of the gulls and the surf fade away. In the dark we continue to hear the distant calls of whales singing for several seconds.

FINIS

NOTES on Staging *MOBY DICK* . . . *after Melville*

Boats, whales, harpoons (Scenery and Props)

The Pequod can be a simple skeleton with areas to be used for Ahab's cabin, below decks quarters for the sailors, the quarterdeck and forecastle, and a central mast with rigging and a crow's nest (there should be a perpetual change of the watch during the play).

OR there can simply be a bare space (my own preference). Perhaps upstage there is a mast with a sail attached that can be unfurled and hoisted. I think a usable mast can be done with a 12-15 ft stepladder, anchored to the stage. This will be the mast with the crow's nest (seat/step atop the ladder) which will be scrambled up and down.

The boats can be simply 2 planks per boat, roughly 10-12 ft long. 2 actors, one at each end, "row" the planks. 2 sailors – harpooner and helmsman – stand "inside" and move with the boat. The planks' up/down motion will create the illusion of being at sea.

Many activities, including throwing the harpoons, need to be mimed (along with the turnstile hoisting the anchor, etc.).

We don't see the whales, certainly not Moby Dick. He is presented by a blindingly bright white light. Each boat smashed, and its crew killed, are blotted out with use of a black light. The whale hanging from the ship that Ahab approaches and speaks to philosophically, can be an actor, "hanging" from inside the step ladder, back to the audience. The ensemble sailors may mime the stripping of the flesh from the whale, hacking with axes and knives with eager gusto (it is very violent and even sexual, especially as the slaughtering means money for them). This can be a shocking moment. Probably the actor should be stripped of clothes, possibly his backside made-up to look completely flayed. It could be "played" by either a man or a woman, though I think a naked woman being so brutalized will take the audience out of the moment in a way that on paper may effectively parallel the reality of the slaughter, but I think would be a mistake on the stage.

The St. Elmo's sequence should provide an imaginative display of the lighting designer's art.

Music and sounds

It would be better if music could be diegetic (i.e, live and performed in view of the audience as part of the narrative). The instruments should be concertina, fiddle, and/or tin whistle and a pump organ (for Fr. Mapple's entrance). I also feel that drums, especially tympani, kettle drums, and bass drums, ought to be used for the whale hunt sequences, starting with a heartbeat rhythm and then increasing as the situations become tenser. As to whether it would be more effective for the drumming to be done live or recorded and amplified, I don't know. Let's hear how it sounds? The other sounds: storms, sea, whales, birds, rain, etc., will need to be from pre-recorded sources. Lastly, I've indicated in the script that a plain hymn to be composed for the Father Mapple sequence in the Seamen's Chapel, the words based on a reading of the marble tablets put on the walls of the chapel, with a fugal repetition of "his wife".

Performed live by the ensemble or pre-recorded?

Dialogue and Directions

The dialogue is roughly 80% pure Melville, taken directly from the book, though slimmed down and madeactable. There are places where the dialogue should overlap with the previous dialogue. I have placed these two // to indicate where the overlapping sentence should begin.

Casting

Non-traditional, please. We're in a theatre. This isn't real, it isn't a documentary. Let's celebrate the actor's art and the audience's collective imagination and willing suspension of disbelief. Women should ideally be half the crew, even important characters, if the actor can play the role. I can even see a female playing Ahab (Fiona Shaw anyone?) if that is the right actor for that production. Likewise, racial casting. I fully believe that we're a long way from audiences not entering the world of the play because they cannot conceive an African American Ahab or Ishmael. This said, I would like to state a preference for Ishmael and Queequeg to be played by men and for Pip to be played by an African American (either male or female).

Ahab's Leg

My suggestion here is to strap Ahab in a leg brace (painted white to emphasize its ivory-ness) attached above the knee.

Finally

Obviously all these notes are from my own imagination about how I'd like to see the play done. It is an idealized, unrealistic image. Every play's production is conditional and is predicated on three realities: 1) the casting pool available to the director at the time of production; 2) the actual space for the performance (e.g., proscenium, ¾, arena, environmental, etc) and equipment available; and 3) the budget. There is a 4th reality also and that is the vision each director, designer, performer brings with them. This script is intended to be an offering to these people from me, to say "let's play."

[Further Notes following a Production

Moby-Dick's first production occurred at the University of Alabama on February 21-27, 2011. The cast size grew from 14 actors to 16 and 13 dancers were added by the director, Seth Panitch. These dancers became known as the Elements and provided stunningly theatrical abstractions of ocean, whales, wind, and Queequeg's harpoon. Seth also brought in a soloist on the electric violin who provided wonderful music accompaniment to most of the scenes and their transitions. These additions, while wonderful, happened because of the circumstances and conditions of that performance. *Moby-Dick* can work without dancers and electronic violin, but I leave it all to the vision of each director and production.]