

CHAPTER 38. Dusk.

By the Mainmast; Starbuck leaning against it.

My soul is more than matched; she's overmanned; and by a madman!
Insufferable sting, that sanity should ground arms on such a field! But he
drilled deep down, and blasted all my reason out of me! I think I see his
impious end; but feel that I must help him to it. Will I, nill I, the
ineffable thing has tied me to him; tows me with a cable I have no knife
to cut. Horrible old man! Who's over him, he cries; 'aye, he would be
a democrat to all above; look, how he lords it over all below! Oh! I
plainly see my miserable office, 'to obey, rebelling; and worse yet,
to hate with touch of pity! For in his eyes I read some lurid woe would
shrivel me up, had I it. Yet is there hope. Time and tide flow wide. The
hated whale has the round watery world to swim in, as the small gold-fish
has its glassy globe. His heaven-insulting purpose, God may wedge aside. I
would up heart, were it not like lead. But my whole clock's run down; my
heart the all-controlling weight, I have no key to lift again.

[A burst of revelry from the fore-castle.]

Oh, God! to sail with such a heathen crew that have small touch of human
mothers in them! Whelped somewhere by the sharkish sea. The white whale is
their demigorgon. Hark! the infernal orgies! that revelry is forward! mark
the unfaltering silence aft! Methinks it pictures life. Foremost through
the sparkling sea shoots on the gay, embattled, bantering bow, but only to

drag dark Ahab after it, where he broods within his sternward cabin,
builded over the dead water of the wake, and further on, hunted by its
wolfish gurglings. The long howl thrills me through! Peace! ye revellers,
and set the watch! Oh, life! 'tis in an hour like this, with soul beat
down and held to knowledge, 'as wild, untutored things are forced to
feed? Oh, life! 'tis now that I do feel the latent horror in thee!
but 'tis not me! that horror's out of me! and with the soft feeling of the
human in me, yet will I try to fight ye, ye grim, phantom futures! Stand
by me, hold me, bind me, O ye blessed influences!