# Chapter XL

## *Midnight, Forecastle*

*page 169*

HARPOONERS *and* SAILORS

Foresail: the principal sail on the mast nearest the front of a ship

*(Foresail rises and discovers the watch standing, lounging, leaning, and lying in various attitudes, all singing in chorus)*

*Farewell and adieu to you, Spanish ladies!  
Farewell and adieu to you, ladies of Spain!  
Our captain's commanded—*

1ST NANTUCKET SAILOR

Oh, boys, don't be sentimental; it's bad for the digestion! Take a tonic, follow me!

*(Sings, and all follow)*

Strand: beach, shoreline

Tubs: wooden tubs in which the ropes of harpoons are coiled for quick release

Hand over hand: rapidly

*Our captain stood upon the deck,  
A spy-glass in his hand,  
A viewing of those gallant whales  
That blew at every strand.  
Oh, your tubs in your boats, my boys,  
And by your braces stand,  
And we'll have one of those fine whales,  
Hand, boys, over hand!  
So, be cheery, my lads! may your hearts never fail!  
While the bold harpooneer is striking the whale!*

MATE'S VOICE FROM THE QUARTER-DECK

Eight bells: midnight

Eight bells there, forward!

2ND NANTUCKET SAILOR

Blackling: young African-American person

Hogshead: a cask that holds 63 gallons

Star—bo-l-e-e-n-s: starbowlins, the crew assigned to the starboard watch (that is, the next watch on duty)

Avast the chorus! Eight bells there! d'ye hear, bell-boy? Strike the bell eight, thou Pip! thou blackling! and let me call the watch. I've the sort of mouth for that—the hogshead mouth. So, so, (thrusts his head down the scuttle), Star—bo-l-e-e-n-s, a-h-o-y! Eight bells there below! Tumble up!

DUTCH SAILOR

Fat: good

Grand snoozing to-night, maty; fat night for that. I mark this in our old Mogul's wine; it's quite as deadening to some as

*page 170*

Filliping: stimulating, arousing

Ground-tier: the lowest level of casks in a ship's cargo hold

Butts: large casks, especially ones that hold two hogsheads, or 126 gallons, of liquid

Resurrection: the time foretold in the Bible, when all the dead of the Earth will rise again to stand judgment in front of Christ

filliping to others. We sing; they sleep—aye, lie down there, like ground-tier butts. At 'em again! There, take this copper-pump, and hail 'em through it. Tell 'em to avast dreaming of their lasses. Tell 'em it's the resurrection; they must kiss their last, and come to judgment. That's the way—that's it; thy throat ain't spoiled with eating Amsterdam butter.

FRENCH SAILOR

Hist: hush, be quiet

Hist, boys! let's have a jig or two before we ride to anchor in Blanket Bay. What say ye? There comes the other watch. Stand by all legs! Pip! little Pip! hurrah with your tambourine!

PIP

*(Sulky and sleepy)*

Don't know where it is.

FRENCH SAILOR

Double-shuffle: a low, noisy dance

Beat thy belly, then, and wag thy ears. Jig it, men, I say; merry's the word; hurrah! Damn me, won't you dance? Form, now, Indian-file, and gallop into the double-shuffle? Throw yourselves! Legs! Legs!

ICELAND SAILOR

I don't like your floor, maty; it's too springy to my taste. I'm used to ice-floors. I'm sorry to throw cold water on the subject; but excuse me.

MALTESE 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!

SICILIAN SAILOR

A green: a lawn

Aye; girls and a green!—then I'll hop with ye; yea, turn grasshopper!

LONG-ISLAND SAILOR

Well, well, ye sulkies, there's plenty more of us. Hoe corn when you may, I say. All legs go to harvest soon. Ah! here comes the music; now for it!

AZORE SAILOR

*(Ascending, and pitching the tambourine up the scuttle)*

*page 171*

Windlass-bitts: a frame of timbers that holds the [windlass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windlass)

Here you are, Pip; and there's the windlass-bitts; up you mount! Now, boys!

*(The half of them dance to the tambourine; some go below; some sleep or lie among the coils of rigging. Oaths a-plenty)*

AZORE SAILOR

*(Dancing)*

Stig: stick or brand

Jinglers: the small cymbals on a tambourine

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?—there goes another, dropped off; I pound it so.

CHINA SAILOR

[Pagoda:](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pagoda) a Buddhist religious temple, typically fitted with wind chimes

Rattle thy teeth, then, and pound away; make a pagoda of thyself.

FRENCH SAILOR

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

TASHTEGO

*(Quietly smoking)*

That's a white man; he calls that fun: humph! I save my sweat.

OLD MANX SAILOR

Night-women: witches

Beat head-winds round corners: make impossibly sharp turns around corners while riding through the air

Green navies: sunken ships on the ocean's floor

Green-skulled crews: the skeletons of sailors who went down with their ships

I wonder whether those jolly lads bethink them of what they are dancing over. I'll dance over your grave, I will—that's the bitterest threat of your night-women, that beat head-winds round corners. O Christ! to think of the green navies and the green-skulled crews! Well, well; belike the whole world's a ball, as you scholars have it; and so 'tis right to make one ballroom of it. Dance on, lads, you're young; I was once.

3D NANTUCKET SAILOR

Spell: take turns; in this case, let's rest

Spell oh!—whew! this is worse than pulling after whales in a calm—give us a whiff, Tash.

*(They cease dancing, and gather in clusters. Meantime the sky darkens—the wind rises)*

*page 172*

Lascar: from the Indian subcontinent

LASCAR SAILOR

[Brahma:](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brahma) the Hindu creator god

Douse: lower quickly

Sky-born, high-tide [Ganges:](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganges) the Milky Way, called "the Ganges in the sky" after a river in northern India that is sacred to Hindus

Seeva: [Shiva](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shiva) the destroyer, one of three major Hindu gods. According to tradition, Brahma sent the goddess Ganga down to earth from heaven. In order to keep Ganga from destroying the earth in anger, Shiva caught her with his head, and she flowed out of his hair as [the river Ganges](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganga_in_Hinduism)

By Brahma! boys, it'll be douse sail soon. The sky-born, high-tide Ganges turned to wind! Thou showest thy black brow, Seeva!

MALTESE SAILOR

*(Reclining and shaking his cap)*

Snow's caps: whitecap waves

Chassee: chassé, a gliding ballet step

It's the waves—the snow's caps turn to jig it now. They'll shake their tassels soon. Now would all the waves were women, then I'd go drown, and chassee with them evermore! There's naught so sweet on earth—heaven may not match it!—as those swift glances of warm, wild bosoms in the dance, when the over-arboring arms hide such ripe, bursting grapes.

SICILIAN 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! not taste, observe ye, else come satiety. Eh, Pagan?*(Nudging.)*

TAHITAN SAILOR

*(Reclining on a mat)*

Heeva-Heeva: a [Tahitian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tahiti) dance involving rhythmic hand clapping and foot stomping, and speaking

Pirohitee's peak: one of the main mountains on the island of Tahiti

Hail, holy nakedness of our dancing girls!—the Heeva-Heeva! Ah! low veiled, high palmed Tahiti! I still rest me on thy mat, but the soft soil has slid! I saw thee woven in the wood, my mat! green the first day I brought ye thence; now worn and wilted quite. Ah me!—not thou nor I can bear the change! How then, if so be transplanted to yon sky? Hear I the roaring streams from Pirohitee's peak of spears, when they leap down the crags and drown the villages?—The blast! the blast! Up, spine, and meet it! (Leaps to his feet.)

PORTUGUESE SAILOR

Swashing: splashing

Reefing: rolling up the sails to reduce the amount of wind they can catch

How the sea rolls swashing 'gainst the side! Stand by for reefing, hearties! the winds are just crossing swords, pell-mell they'll go lunging presently.

DANISH SAILOR

Crack, crack: go swiftly

Crack, crack, old ship! so long as thou crackest, thou holdest! Well done! The mate there holds ye to it stiffly. He's no more

*page 173*

afraid than the isle fort at Cattegat, put there to fight the Baltic with storm-lashed guns, on which the sea-salt cakes!

4TH NANTUCKET SAILOR

Waterspout: a tornado or whirlwind that occurs over water, creating a funnel cloud of air and spray

With a pistol: it was commonly believed that a waterspout could be interrupted or broken by shooting into it

He has his orders, mind ye that. I heard old Ahab tell him he must always kill a squall, something as they burst a waterspout with a pistol—fire your ship right into it!

ENGLISH 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

Keeled: capsized

How the three pines shake! Pines are the hardest sort of tree to live when shifted to any other soil, and here there's none but the crew's cursed clay. Steady, helmsman! steady. This is the sort of weather when brave hearts snap ashore, and keeled hulls split at sea. Our captain has his birth-mark; look yonder, boys, there's another in the sky—lurid-like, ye see, all else pitch black.

DAGGOO

What of that? Who's afraid of black's afraid of me! I'm quarried out of it!

SPANISH SAILOR

*(Aside.)* He wants to bully, ah!—the old grudge makes me touchy. *(Advancing.)* Aye, harpooneer, thy race is the undeniable dark side of mankind—devilish dark at that. No offence.

DAGGOO

*(Grimly)*

None.

St. Jago's: from [Santiago,](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santiago%2C_Cape_Verde) in the Cape Verde archipelago off the western coast of Africa

ST. JAGO'S SAILOR

That Spaniard's mad or drunk. But that can't be, or else in his one case our old Mogul's fire-waters are somewhat long in working.

5TH NANTUCKET SAILOR

What's that I saw—lightning? Yes.

*page 174*

SPANISH SAILOR

No; Daggoo showing his teeth.

DAGGOO

*(Springing)*

Mannikin: little man

White liver: cowardice

Swallow thine, mannikin! White skin, white liver!

SPANISH SAILOR

*Meeting him*

Knife thee heartily! big frame, small spirit!

ALL

A row! a row! a row!

TASHTEGO

*(With a whiff)*

A'low: below decks

A row a'low, and a row aloft—Gods and men—both brawlers! Humph!

BELFAST SAILOR

A row! arrah a row! The Virgin be blessed, a row! Plunge in with ye!

ENGLISH SAILOR

Fair play! Snatch the Spaniard's knife! A ring, a ring!

OLD MANX SAILOR

Ready formed. There! the ringed horizon. In that ring Cain struck Abel. Sweet work, right work! No? Why then, God, mad'st thou the ring?

MATE'S VOICE FROM THE QUARTER DECK

Top-gallant: the mast above the topmast

Topsail: a square sail set above the lowest sail on the mast

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

ALL

The squall! the squall! jump, my jollies! *(They scatter.)*

PIP

*(Shrinking under the windlass)*

Jib-stay: a heavy rope or wire cable used to steady the jib boom

Royal yard: a spar used to spread the top of the sail on the royalmast

White squalls: sudden and violent windstorms that come without dark clouds or other warning

Jollies? Lord help such jollies! Crish, crash! there goes the jib-stay! Blang-whang! God! Duck lower, Pip, here comes the royal yard! It's worse than being in the whirled woods, the last day of the year; Who'd go climbing after chestnuts now? But there they go, all cursing, and here I don't. Fine prospects to 'em; they're on the road to heaven. Hold on hard! Jimmini, what a squall! But those chaps there are worse yet—they are your white squalls, they. White squalls? white whale, shirr!

*page 175*

shirr! Here have I heard all their chat just now, and the white whale—shirr! shirr!—but spoken of once! and only this evening—it makes me jingle all over like my tambourine—that anaconda of an old man swore 'em in to hunt him! Oh, thou big white God aloft there 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!