



CHAPTER 1

CALL ME ISHMAEL. I AM A SAILOR, AND MY HAPPIEST DAYS HAVE been spent at sea. I have had many exciting adventures in the 'watery part of the world', as I like to call it, but none as thrilling and terrifying as the search for Moby Dick. Yes, I was part of the attempt to kill the cunning white whale and this is my story...

I left Manhattan and arrived in New Bedford, Massachusetts, on a Saturday evening in December, 1851. My plan was to catch a ferry from New Bedford to Nantucket so that I could join the crew of a Nantucket whaling ship. The Nantucket whaling business was a growing industry at that time, with hundreds of ships leaving American shores each year to hunt and kill sperm whales for their oil. The oil, which was extracted from the whale's fat, or blubber, was used for lighting oil lamps and making candles, and was considered particularly valuable. I had always been fascinated by the beauty and greatness of whales; they lived in wild and distant seas, and I knew that whale-hunting would provide me with the opportunity to explore exotic, far-away places.



Unfortunately, I missed the ferry to Nantucket and discovered, to my disappointment, that the next ferry was scheduled to leave on Monday. With only a few cents in my pocket, I was forced to search for some very cheap accommodation. I made my way through the dark, bitterly cold streets of New Bedford, gazing into the candlelit windows of various inns, until I found one that looked affordable. The swinging sign above the door read: *The Spouter-Inn*; the owner's name, Peter Coffin, was painted in white underneath.

I walked into the inn and found it full of sailors who were chatting merrily. After a brief search, I located the landlord and told him I wished to rent a room.

"No rooms left, I'm afraid," said Coffin. "But there is one bed left... would you mind sharing a room with a harpooner?"

I did mind, in fact, I minded very much. But the landlord insisted that the harpooner was a decent fellow, and managed to persuade me that sharing a room with a perfect stranger was a much better option than spending the night out in the cold.

"All right," I said. "I suppose I have no choice."

"Good," said Coffin. "Take a seat in the dining room and I'll bring you some dinner."

I made my way to the dining room and sat down at the table with four or five other sailors. Without delay, Coffin brought us a meal consisting of very generous portions of meat, potatoes and dumplings. The food was absolutely delicious and I quickly devoured every last bite.

"Say, Mr Coffin," I said as the landlord cleared away my plate, "is the harpooner here?"

Coffin chuckled. "No, he won't be back till much later. He's out selling his head."

"His head?" I exclaimed. "What on earth do you mean?"

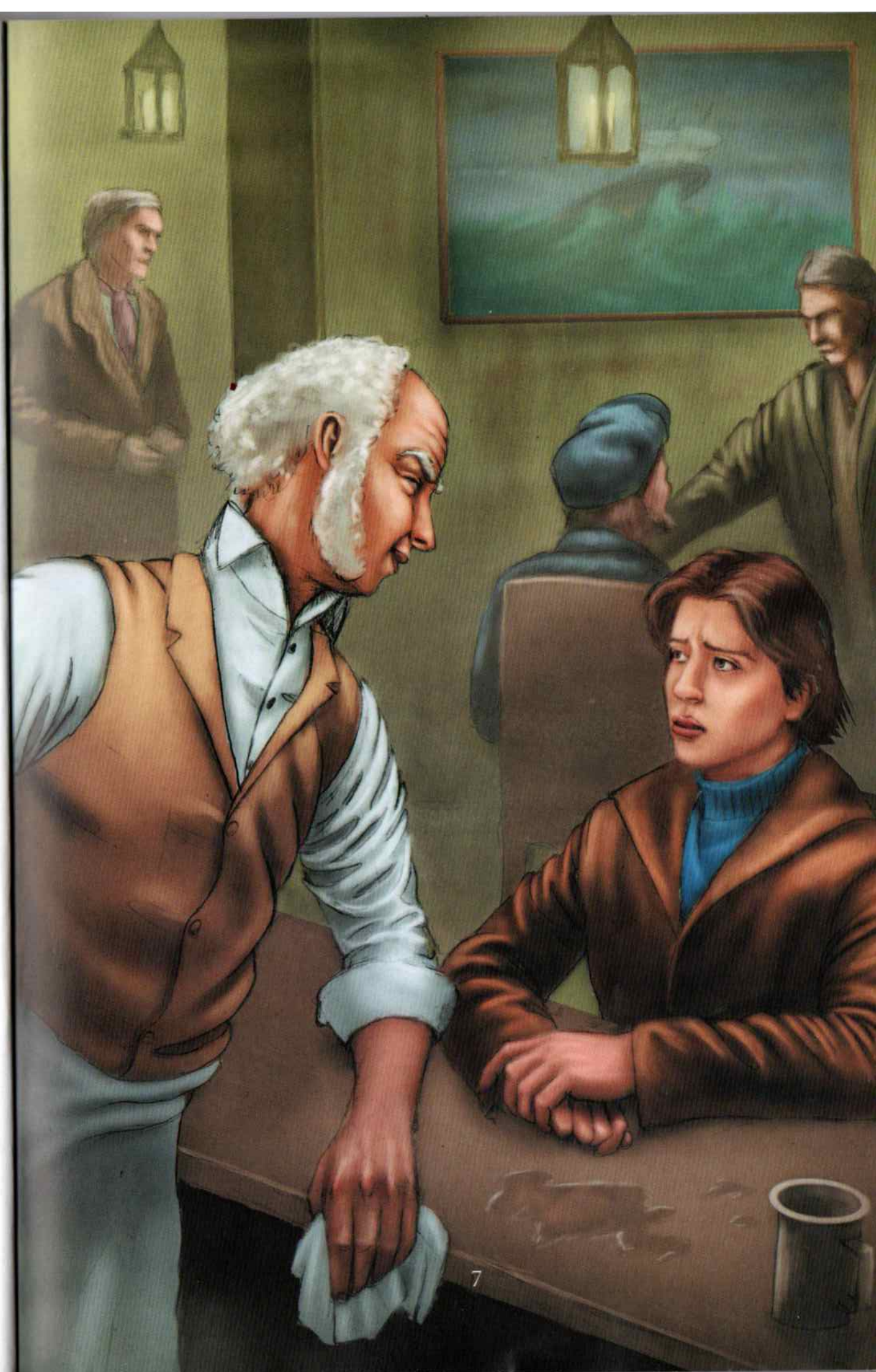
"The harpooner has just returned from New Zealand, where he collected some human heads," the landlord explained. "He's managed to sell all of them, except one. He has to sell it tonight; it wouldn't be right to try to sell a human head on Sunday morning when people are going to church..."

I could hardly believe my ears. "Mr Coffin, are you mad?" I shouted. "Are you really planning to put me in a room with some savage who's out selling human heads?"

Coffin grinned. "Calm down, young man. The heads are made of wax... I think. I assure you that the harpooner poses no threat to you. Anyway, it's almost midnight and I doubt he'll be returning to the inn tonight. Let me show you to your room; I'm sure you'd like to get some sleep."

Reluctantly, I followed the landlord up the staircase to a small room at the end of a narrow passageway. The room contained a table, chair and two beds. I noticed a bag of clothing on the floor, which I assumed belonged to my room-mate. The landlord wished me good night and I put on my nightwear and went to sleep.

I was awakened an hour or so later by the sound of the door opening. The harpooner had returned. I decided to remain perfectly still and not say a word until my room-mate noticed me. The harpooner was a huge man, holding a candle in one hand and a scarily lifelike head in the other. I watched him as he placed the candle on the floor and opened a large canvas bag from which he removed an axe and a wallet. Then, he put the head in the bag and closed it. The light from the candle was weak and I could only just see his face: his skin appeared to be yellowish-purple in colour and his cheeks were



covered in large black squares which I assumed were tattoos. He was bald except for a few strands of hair which were twisted up on his forehead.

I had never seen a more terrifying-looking man in my life and had he not been standing between me and the door, I would have run out of there as fast as my legs could carry me. The harpooner changed into his nightwear, blew out the candle and climbed into his bed.

My heart was beating so loudly, I could hear it beating in my ears. I decided I couldn't share a room with a madman after all, and I jumped out of bed and ran to the door. Of course, it was pitch black in the room, and I tripped over the harpooner's bag.

The harpooner sat up in surprise. "Who's there?" he shouted.

"Please don't hurt me!" I cried. "Landlord! Mr Coffin! Someone save me, please!"

The landlord heard my screams and burst through the door a moment later, dressed in a nightgown and carrying a lamp.

"Don't be afraid," said the landlord, as he helped me to my feet. "Queequeg won't harm a hair on your head."

"Are you sure about that?" I said.

The landlord laughed. "Queequeg, young Ishmael here will be sharing your room with you tonight, is that all right?"

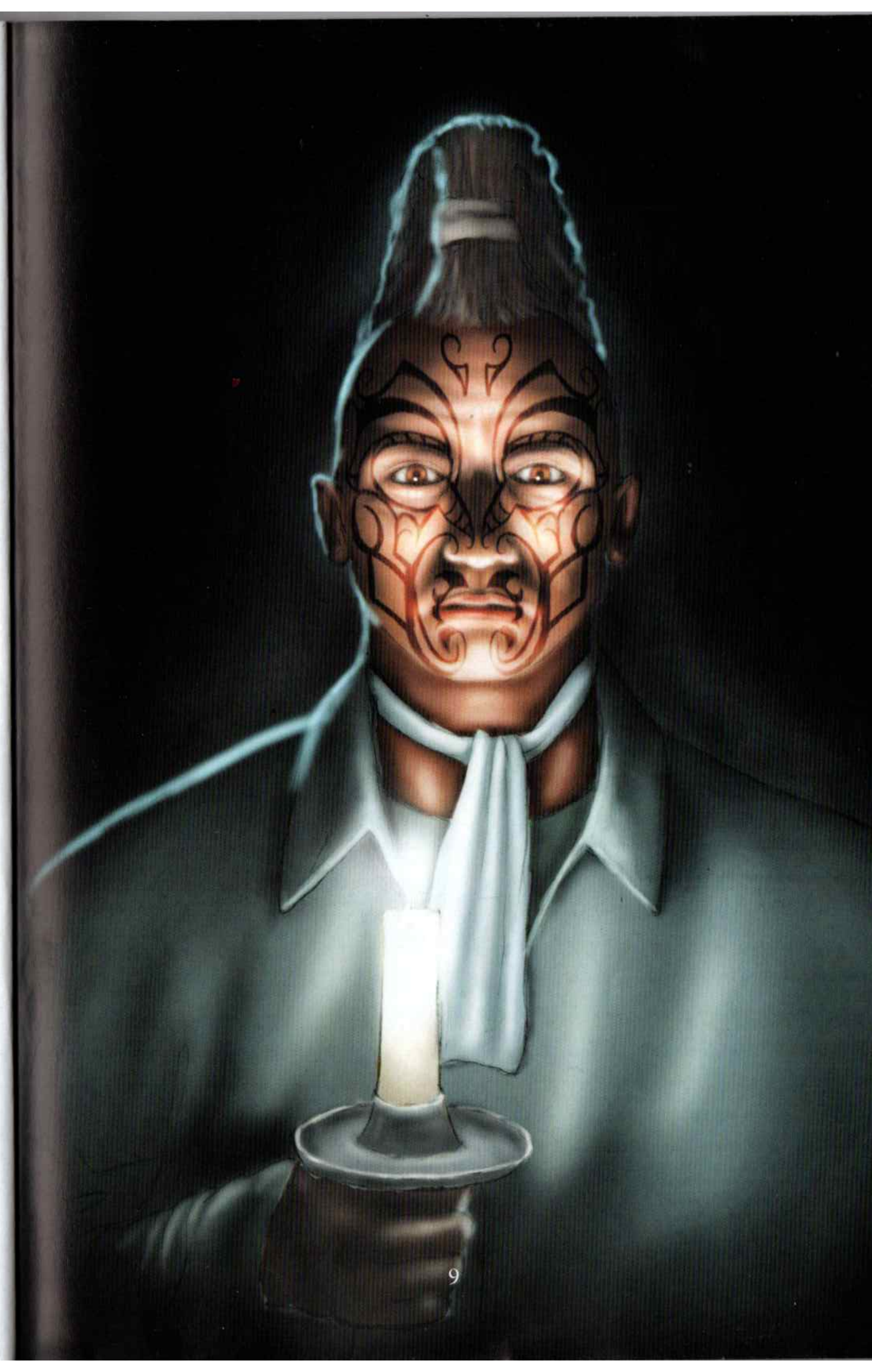
Queequeg was silent for a moment. "That's fine," he grunted.

"Good," said the landlord. "I'll see you both in the morning. Good night." With that, the landlord walked out of the room and closed the door.

"Don't worry, young man, I won't hurt you," said Queequeg.

I nodded and climbed back into my bed. Feeling strangely reassured, I fell asleep almost immediately.

The next morning, Queequeg and I woke up early and made our way to the dining room. I had the opportunity to meet some of the other guests at the inn; they were all whalers: carpenters, blacksmiths and harpooners. Some had only recently returned from a voyage; others were making plans to leave again. We enjoyed a breakfast of coffee and hot rolls, while Queequeg dined on large pieces of steak



which looked barely cooked.

Once we'd eaten, Queequeg lit his pipe and made his way to the lounge room, and I decided to go for a stroll. I returned to the inn after lunch and found the harpooner sitting in front of the fireplace, polishing a small wooden figure. Not wanting to spend the rest of the day by myself, I pulled up a chair and sat down beside him.

"Are we going to share a room again tonight?" asked Queequeg, without looking up.

"Yes," I said.

"In that case, we are brothers," he said, extending a hand to shake mine.

I smiled and shook his hand. We spent the rest of the day talking and getting to know one another better. Queequeg told me that he was a native of the South Pacific island of Rokovoko. His father had been the king of his tribe and Queequeg was next in line to take his place. But young Queequeg wanted adventure, so, one day, he hid on

board a whaling ship that had anchored briefly at his island. Queequeg managed to persuade the angry captain to keep him on board and teach him the business of whaling. In no time at all, Queequeg became an expert harpooner, known for his skill and accuracy.

"I want to see more of the world," he said. "That's why I'm here. I want to go on a whaling trip."

"Really?" I asked with delight. "I am also going to Nantucket to find a whaling ship."

"We'll go together," said Queequeg and smiled broadly. "After all, we are brothers now."

After supper, we returned to our room and Queequeg gave me thirty silver dollars, half his fortune. Of course, I told him I couldn't take it, but he wouldn't listen to me. In his culture, he said, it was customary to share one's belongings with one's family members.

I felt extremely touched by Queequeg's kindness and generosity; it felt good to make a new friend.



CHAPTER 1

Comprehension

1 Decide if the following sentences are True or False. Write T or F in the boxes.

1. Ishmael arrived in New Bedford in order to take part in the whaling business.
2. At first, Ishmael was afraid of Queequeg.
3. Queequeg was collecting real human heads.
4. When Ishmael jumped out of bed, the harpooner attacked him.
5. Ishmael and Queequeg decided to go on a whaling trip together.

2 Choose a, b or c to complete the following sentences.

1. Ishmael spent the night in New Bedford because
 - a. he changed his mind about the trip.
 - b. he had no money for the ferry.
 - c. the ferry left without him.
2. Ishmael had to share a room with Queequeg because
 - a. there were no rooms left in the inn.
 - b. he couldn't afford a whole room.
 - c. he wanted to meet the harpooner.
3. Queequeg had just returned from
 - a. New Zealand.
 - b. Rokovoko.
 - c. Manhattan.
4. Queequeg reassured Ishmael that he wouldn't
 - a. steal from him.
 - b. make fun of him.
 - c. hurt him.
5. Queequeg gave Ishmael
 - a. all his belongings.
 - b. a small wooden figure.
 - c. half of his money.

Vocabulary

3 Complete the following sentences with the correct form of the words in the box.

harpooners grunt blacksmith landlord pitch light

1. When I asked him about my wallet, he didn't answer, he just _____ behind his newspaper.
2. _____ use spears with long ropes in order to hunt whales.
3. It was _____ black in the cave and we didn't have a torch, so we couldn't see anything.
4. It is a comfortable, brightly _____ room with nice furniture and a big window.
5. The _____ made horseshoes out of iron.
6. Fortunately the _____ let them have the house at a low rent.

4 Find the words or phrases in Chapter 1 which mean the same as:

1. smiled widely _____ (page 6)
2. something you can pay for _____ (page 5)
3. the fat of sea animals _____ (page 4)
4. looking at something or someone for a long time _____ (page 5)
5. a group of people with the same race, beliefs and language _____ (page 10)
6. everything a man has in his possession _____ (page 11)
7. ate hungrily without properly chewing the food _____ (page 6)
8. without really wanting to _____ (page 6)

Follow-up activities

5 Discuss.

1. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of going on a whaling trip? Would you be able to spend time at sea?
2. What do you know about whaling? How popular is it today?
3. Would you ever share a room with a stranger if you had to?
4. Whales are large sea animals which are endangered. What other endangered species do you know of? Why is it important to protect them?
5. Do you think that the harpooner is a trustworthy person after all? What do you think will happen next?

6 Imagine that you are Peter Coffin, the owner of the inn. Write a page in your diary about Ishmael's first night at the inn and his meeting with Queequeg. (120-140 words)

CHAPTER 2

ON MONDAY MORNING, QUEEQUEG AND I CAUGHT THE FIRST ferry to Nantucket. We arrived in the early evening, and rented a room at an inn called *The Try Pots*. After a hearty fish stew supper, we discussed our plan for the next day.

"Yojo says you have to choose a ship for our voyage," Queequeg informed me. He said he had spoken with his idol, Yojo – the small wooden figure he'd been polishing the day before – and that the statue had insisted that I be the one to choose the whaling ship on which we were to travel.

Of course, I did not wish to make this important decision alone, and I tried to convince Queequeg that the idol was wrong, but my new-found friend wouldn't listen to anything.

"But, Queequeg, it's my first time on a whaling ship," I protested. "I know nothing about whaling boats."

"Yojo is always right," declared my friend. "You will choose the right ship."

So, the next morning, I walked to the harbour alone, while Queequeg and Yojo stayed at the inn. After a lot of searching, I discovered that there were three whaling ships that were about to leave for long voyages: the *Devil-dam*, the *Tit-bit*, and the *Pequod*. I inspected all three, and decided that the *Pequod* would be the most suitable.

The ship was about fifty years old and made from a dark brown wood which had faded considerably as a result of years spent under the harsh sun and fierce seas. The sides of the ship were lined with two rows of pointy whale teeth and the tiller had been made out of the jawbone of a whale. At first glance, the ship reminded me of an Ethiopian emperor wearing a necklace of polished ivory.

"Excuse me," I said, addressing myself to an elderly gentleman who was sitting under a covering on the deck. "Are you the captain?"

"Who wants to know?" said the old man.

"My name is Ishmael," I replied. "I want to sign up for the next voyage."

"Do you know anything about whaling?" asked the man.



"Uh, no, sir," I confessed. "But I'm eager to learn. You see, sir, I want to see the world."

The old man sighed. "The whaling business isn't a game, young man. It's to be taken very seriously. And if you don't believe me, ask Captain Ahab."

"Who's Captain Ahab?"

"The captain of this ship."

"Oh," I said. "But I thought you were the captain of this ship, sir."

"No," said the man. "My name is Peleg. I am the co-owner of the *Pequod*; the other owner's name is Bildad. It is our responsibility to hire the crew and make sure that the ship is stocked with all the necessary supplies... Anyway, as I was saying, I suggest you take a look at Captain Ahab before you commit yourself to this voyage; you might think twice about going whaling when you see that the captain has only one leg..."

"What do you mean, sir?" I exclaimed. "Did the captain lose his leg to a whale?"

"He didn't just lose his leg," said Peleg, "the leg was crunched up, chewed up and devoured by the biggest and most terrifying whale you've ever seen! That whale was a monster!" The old man threw his hands up in the air to emphasise the size of the whale, and I took a cautious step back. "Now, young man," Peleg continued, looking at me with his eyes narrowing, "are you sure you still want to go whaling?"

Though Peleg's story was a little alarming, I was more determined than ever to join the crew of the *Pequod*. "Yes, sir," I said. "I still want to go."

The old man raised a curious eyebrow. "Fine, then follow me," he said. Peleg led me to a cabin where I was introduced to his colleague, Bildad. It took just a few minutes to negotiate my salary and sign the necessary paperwork. I told the men that I would return the next day with a very skilled harpooner who would be a great asset to the crew.

As Peleg showed me out of the cabin, I asked him to tell me more about Captain Ahab. "He's a good man, about sixty years old; intelligent and well-educated," said Peleg. "He's very brave



and, some would say, quite mysterious. He's an excellent sailor and certainly the best harpooner I've ever seen. But he can be moody and bad-tempered; which is understandable, given the suffering he's endured. I doubt you'll meet him before the ship sets sail; he hasn't been feeling too well and is at home, resting."

I thanked the man for his time and made my way back to the inn. I was quite curious to meet this Captain Ahab; I found his story to be both sad and exciting. I could hardly wait to tell Queequeg my news.

The next day, Queequeg and I returned to the *Pequod*, where the harpooner's salary was determined and the relevant papers were signed. We left the ship in a jolly mood, talking excitedly about the journey that lay ahead, when we suddenly ran into a strange man. He was dressed in a faded jacket and torn trousers, and his face was marked with smallpox scars. "Are you travelling on that ship?" he asked, waving a thick finger at the *Pequod*.

"Yes," I answered. "Why?"

"Have you met the captain yet?"

"No," I replied.

"Ahab is a dangerous man, a dangerous man, I tell you. He's obsessed and his obsession has driven him mad! You shouldn't travel on his ship..."

"Obsessed?" I repeated. "With what?"

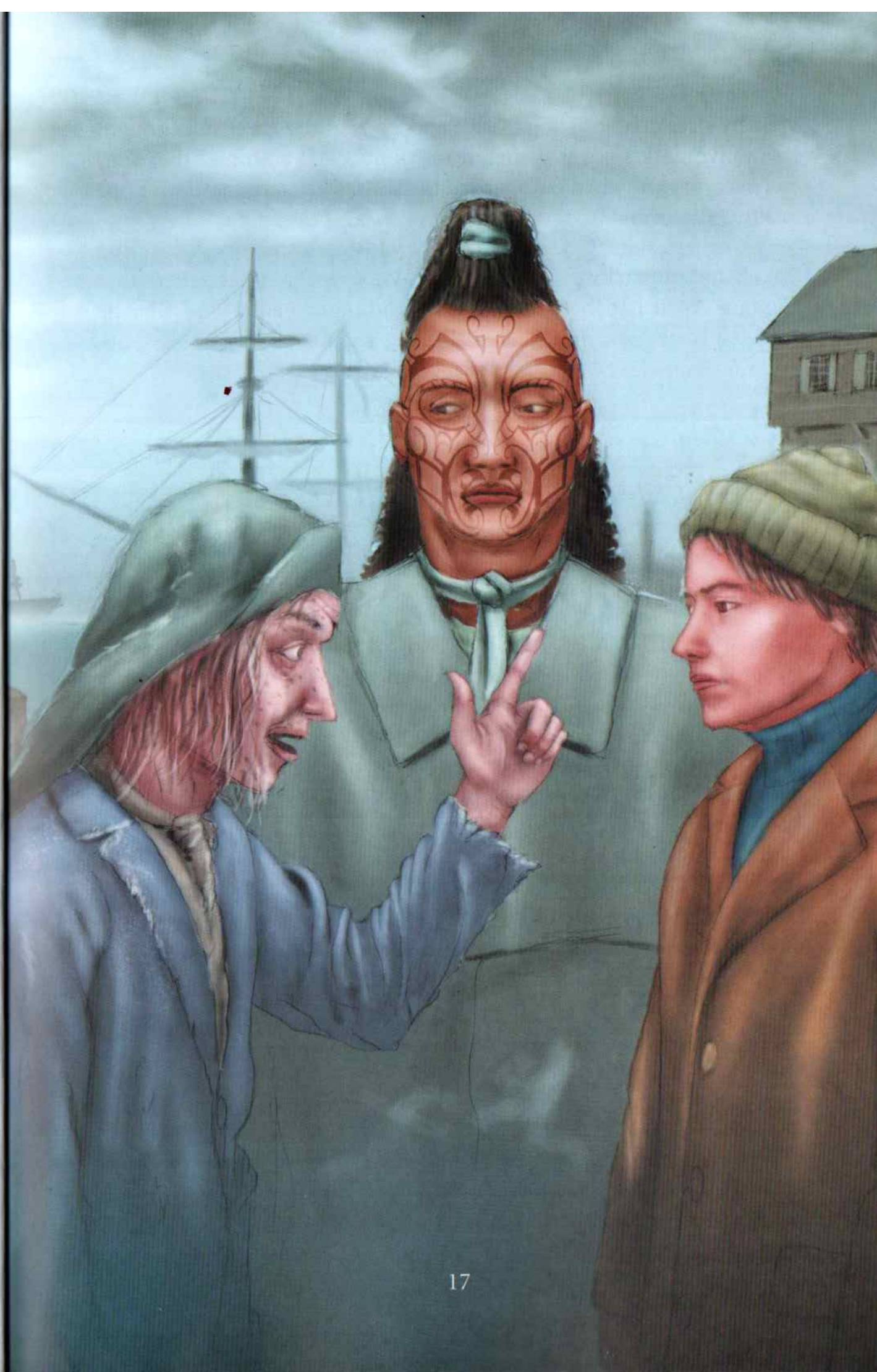
"The whale! The whale!" shouted the man.

Queequeg and I exchanged glances. "Look here, sir," I said, "I don't know what you're talking about and, frankly, I don't care either. Please step aside and let us be on our way."

The man shook his head. "Don't say I didn't warn you!" he shouted after us.

Queequeg and I walked on, and the strange man was quickly forgotten.

The *Pequod* was scheduled to set sail on Christmas Day. Queequeg and I woke up at 6 o'clock that morning and rapidly made our way to the harbour. It was still dark, and the ship was almost hidden from



view by streaks of grey fog. As we approached the *Pequod*, I thought I saw five dark figures gathered on the deck. I assumed that they were sailors, but when we boarded the ship, we saw there was no one around except for an old man who was sound asleep.

By sunrise, the *Pequod* was noisy with crew members carrying boxes and unpacking their things. We were later informed that Captain Ahab had boarded the ship the night before and that he planned to remain in his cabin. Finally, the anchor was pulled up, and the *Pequod* set off across the icy ocean.



CHAPTER 3

BY THE END OF THE FIRST WEEK AT SEA, I HAD MET MOST OF the members of my crew, including the mates. The mates are the men responsible for captaining the whaleboats, which are lowered into the sea once a whale has been sighted. Each whaleboat crew consists of a mate, a harpooner and four oarsmen.

The chief mate of the *Pequod* was a tall, thin, thirty-year-old man from Nantucket named Starbuck. He was courageous and practical, and was highly respected by the crew. Starbuck chose Queequeg to be his harpooner. The second mate was a friendly, easygoing man named Stubb. When he wasn't catching whales, Stubb spent most of his time puffing on his pipe. His harpooner was an Indian named Tashtego, who had long, dark hair, high cheekbones, and large eyes. The third mate was a short and stout man named Flask. His harpooner was Daggoo, an extremely tall African who wore gold hoop earrings.

Several days passed before Captain Ahab finally made his appearance on the quarterdeck, a section of the ship's upper deck. I was so surprised to see him that I had to pinch myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming. Ahab was a tall, impressive-looking man, and as he stood motionless on the quarterdeck, surveying his sailors below, he reminded me of a solid bronze statue. His hair was streaked with grey, and I noticed a lightning-shaped scar running down the side of his face and neck. Whether he'd been born with that scar, or it

CHAPTER 2

Comprehension

1 Read Chapter 2 and match the two halves of the sentences.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Ishmael chose | a. was eaten by a whale. |
| 2. Peleg and Bilald | b. the <i>Pequod</i> for the voyage. |
| 3. Captain Ahab's leg | c. boarded the ship on Christmas Day. |
| 4. A stranger warned the two friends | d. were the owners of the ship. |
| 5. Ishmael and Queequeg | e. that Captain Ahab was a dangerous man. |

2 Complete the summary of Chapter 2 using words or short phrases.

Queequeg suggested that Ishmael should choose (1) _____ for their trip. So, Ishmael went to the harbour and after some searching he decided that (2) _____ was suitable for them. He talked to one of the (3) _____ of the ship, Peleg, who warned him against the dangers of a whaling trip. Peleg also informed him that Captain Ahab had (4) _____ to a whale. However, Ishmael was still (5) _____ to join the crew. The next day Queequeg and Ishmael went to the ship and signed the relevant papers. As they were leaving, they (6) _____ a strange man. He told them that Captain Ahab was a (7) _____ and (8) _____ person. Despite the warnings, the two friends boarded the ship on Christmas Day.

Vocabulary

3 Find the words or phrases in Chapter 2 which mean the same as:

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. white bone that comes from an elephant's tusks | i _____ (page 12) |
| 2. angry and violent | f _____ (page 12) |
| 3. the people who work on a ship | c _____ (page 14) |
| 4. very willing to do sth | e _____ (page 14) |
| 5. make sth sound very important | e _____ (page 14) |
| 6. to begin a journey | s _____ (page 18) |

4 Complete the following sentences using the words in the box.

deck ran into polish negotiate fog supplies

1. Yesterday I _____ an old classmate of mine. He hadn't changed at all!
2. The _____ in our area makes driving conditions really dangerous.
3. Did you _____ your shoes?
4. Before we leave on our camping trip, we need to buy all the necessary _____.
5. They tried to _____ the price but the salesman insisted that the car cost €15,000.
6. He went up to the _____ to enjoy the view of the islands at sunset.

Follow-up activities

5 Discuss.

1. Do you think a person should trust his/her instincts in order to make decisions?
2. A man warned Ishmael and Queequeg that Captain Ahab was obsessed with the whale that took his leg. What do you think that means? Why does the man say that Ahab's obsession has driven him mad?
3. Ishmael was not discouraged by Peleg's warnings against whaling. If you were in his position would you give it a second thought? Do you believe it is worth taking risks in life?
4. Do you think that the strange man and his warnings can be seen as a sign for the *Pequod's* voyage?
5. Ishmael saw five dark figures on the deck. Who do you think these people were? Could they be dangerous?

6 Imagine that you are Peleg and you need to tell Bildad about Ishmael. How would you describe him? (120-140 words)