

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?"

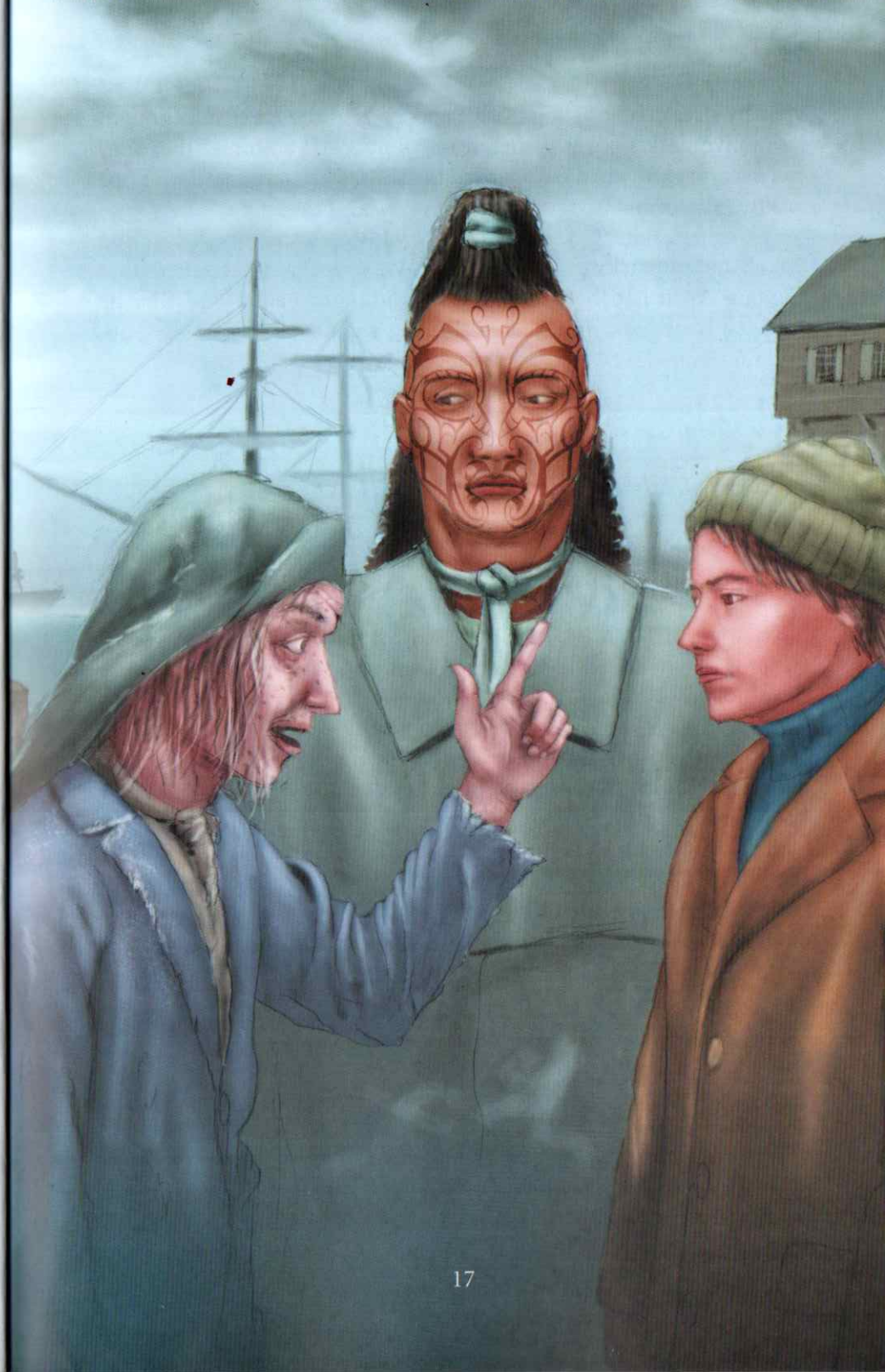
"The whale! The whale!" shouted the man.

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.

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|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Ishmael chose | a. was eaten by a whale. |
| 2. Peleg and Bilal | 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

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

Follow-up activities

5 Discuss.

- Do you think a person should trust his/her instincts in order to make decisions?
- 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?
- 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?
- Do you think that the strange man and his warnings can be seen as a sign for the *Pequod's* voyage?
- 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)