

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.

