

"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

