

M O B Y – D I C K

Ahab's Story

A warm sea breeze descends upon me. It bows at my feet and kisses my brow, displaying its gratitude towards my return to this mysterious and foreboding blue. I reflect upon the power of our very ship, cutting through the ocean's endless mass with great and impregnable strength. The ocean proves to be conscious of this power and parts below us, its lowly status quite known to both crew and captain.

My life has been dedicated to the reign of this vast kingdom for many years. A great many seas I have sailed upon and a great many whale I have defeated, and aboard the *Saul* I remain steadfastly determined to uphold this position. An able crew travels with me, able yet somber, as these men have left behind lovers and children to pursue the fortune of the sperm whale. A noble feat, as the common sailor may easily return home without satisfying this pursuit, and many others never return home. This crew is of some fortune, however, as I have been widely recognized in my skill in the business of whaling and feel certain of my ability to triumph over this another ocean and its watery inhabitants who swim unknowingly below the surface, almost luring me to dive in amongst them.

When I head to sea, I leave nothing in my wake but the water churned from beneath my ship. I have been deeply tethered to the sea from the moment I first voyaged upon it, and there is nothing to keep me upon the sturdy earth which the majority of fellows find to be their home. I find their life to be dull; there is an absence of excitement that can only be found in the hunt of an animal whose homeland we have found ourselves to be hunting in.

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(The deck. Several men on the crew are standing around, taking a break from the lookout. Ahab enters.)

AHAB.

Lads!—Have ye yet witnessed evidence of thy holy and evasive creature whom we unceasingly hunt for amongst these fateful waters? Thou art charged with thy righteous duty to bring death to this monster and wealth from its sperm.

(The men look amongst themselves with a nervous tension. A young sailor, the youngest on the crew, begins to speak.)

YOUNG SAILOR.

There is only one great whale we speak of, sir—'tis Moby Dick! This sodden world's unattainable Pearl, the treasure of its depths. A creature held in the eye of God, blessed with mighty fortitude, to rule over these waters as such a vast beast only does.

AHAB.

Methinks ye speak out against thy lordly Captain and true King of these waters. Moby Dick is but one white beast of a whale, a massive brute with the purpose of providing prosperity to God's more admirable creation. What is it that places this whale in a position of status above my own?

(The young sailor gleams with passion and speaks boldly yet again.)

YOUNG SAILOR.

Ahab has struck down his thousands, and Moby Dick his ten thousands. Thou shalt not sin against this being as it has not sinned against you!* God has placed favor in this whitest whale over any and all who travel these waters. Be warned of his sovereignty, for those who choose not to abide it face the grim and deathly fate of the Mary Rose.

AHAB.

Thy blasphemous accounts shall prove disastrous in time, but my mind is now set on this Moby Dick. On this voyage and in these waters below, I will find the

*This quote is found in the first book of Samuel 18-19. In this section, Saul is being told that God has placed favor in David as King. There is a parade going through the cities of Israel and the women are singing "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands." This is when Saul begins to become jealous of David and is warned not to sin against him because he has not yet sinned against him.

devilish creature and drive my harpoon through its ample blubber, and the whale at once will be defeated, as all to come before it have, and even still it shall be a great steak for Ahab's supper!

(Ahab exits with an angry flourish. The young sailor's words cut through our captain as a hot branding rod, striking not fear but burning hatred within his chest, giving root to a great desire to prove his dominance over the White Whale, which now flows through his veins as the most potent poison. The young sailor turns to the sea and looks out as if expecting the White Whale to lurch from the waves and smite him there.)

AHAB *(to himself)*.

This eldritch boy will one day face his own fate, but mine, as King of this country, has now taken shape in reclaiming the throne that I have earned through shedding the blood of this species which men rightfully dominate. This journey shall continue as one to gain profit from these leviathans roaming the sea, but the whale that I hold with my most hearty scorn is this Moby Dick who dares to challenge my dominion!

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Long and loathsome, a year passed. Restlessly, the Saul continues through the waves, swells forming behind the stern of the ship with white and wondrous foam. The sky is also white, and a steady fog has fallen over the horizon. At the break of this fateful dawn, the crew had already assumed their lookout position with an anchored but still groggy determination, as it had been several weeks since a whale had been spotted, and this fact also allowed the fog to enter the minds of the crew.

The sailor stationed at the ship's foremast-head had been battling with the beckoning tug of sleep from behind his eyes for some time and for a moment gave rest to his senses, allowing his idleness to give way to exhaustion. Softly, he fell into a dream. A great storm took upon the Saul; dark and impetuous clouds swirled above the sailor, crackling with white lightning that threatened to strike the boat down the middle and split the boards in two. Burning through the turbulent sky, the sailor was able to hazily make out an immense figure, whose glaring brightness made the sailor inclined to shield his eyes. The figure continued to ascend and with it the sailor's anxiety. Soon enough, fear enveloped the man's being, yet the fear remained not of something coming from the heavens—but of the infernal sea! Moments later, a myriad of shouts coming from the deck awoke the sailor from this doomful stupor.

A member of the crew, pale and full of dread, had spotted the white fiend and had sent the crew into a flurry, rushing to the boats as I had ordered, scarcely ready to tackle the leviathan. The boats and their men pitched into the

churning water, all the while the fog persisting in saturating the air surrounding these boats and the terror-stricken men upon them. Through this haze, I directed them toward the usurper with the fury of a mocked monarch, clutching my harpoon, determined to strike it down in one throw.

In a flash of blazing white, the great beast erupted from the depths, and a cold and forceful spray crashed from the sky onto myself and the crew, chilling every man to his core. I remained steady in my determination to bring death to this creature and gripped my weapon with white knuckles. Without any of the crew expecting it, the whale changed its course from fleeing from our boats to barreling straight toward us with its great battering-ram of a head. The young sailor who had spoken to me with such audacity in the time before we had actually met this monster caught my eye. Awe and horror mingled together in this man's composure as he watched Moby Dick hurl his body into the ship nearby. The men were sent from their boat into the dark water and the whale began to flee yet again. The young sailor shouted at me from his boat, "You were in the hand of the enemy and he has spared you with your very life! Heed my caution and command these men back to safety on our ship before the whale returns!"

I turned back to the sea with ferocity, willing the whale to return and take its chance yet again. The small stroke of fear I had gathered in this terrific scene left my being at the statement of the boy and a murderous conviction took its place. Moby Dick's enormous body shone from below my boat and I snarled at

the notion that he was targeting his power toward my boat specifically. In his rising from the water, the monster had caused a great shake to my boat and I lost grip on my harpoon. The whale was again in the air and was descending upon me and in quick desperation, I reached for and grabbed the six-inch knife at my side and swiped at the blubber of the beast! The whiteness of the creature consumed my soul, a color of anger and revenge and death. The whale had spared my life yet again—but had taken my leg!

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

In beginning this short story, I figured I wanted to do some kind of creative fiction piece on *Moby Dick*. A goal of mine was to attempt to emulate the style of the book and Melville's own style of writing with a few allusions to *The Scarlet Letter* and *Moby Dick* with longer sentences and more elevated vocabulary. Before starting on this project, I was intent on finding a name with heavy meaning for the ship that housed Ahab when he lost his leg. Because Melville commonly uses biblical references in his writings, I decided to seek the counsel of one of my roommates who is a devout Christian. In terms of stories about revenge, she recommended that of Saul and David, which can be found in 1 Samuel. Saul was a king who had become entitled and God deemed him unfit for his position of royalty, placing his favor in David, a close friend of Saul's son. Saul grows very jealous of David, a monomaniac some might say,

and chases him down in an attempt to kill him, while his son advises against it. Ultimately, Saul does not kill David, but there are two occasions when David has the chance to murder Saul, but instead spares him. To me, this tale seemed to have many connections to the relationship between Ahab and Moby Dick, and I ended up writing this short story in reflection of the story of David and Saul. The story of Saul ends in 1 Samuel 31, when he decides to fall upon his own sword and die with his sons and countrymen at war. Ahab also dies at the mercy of his own weapon when he is caught in the rope of his harpoon while at war amongst his crew and against the White Whale. Both men, in their monomaniacal attempt to maintain power, ultimately face their doom as a consequence of this narrow-minded desire, for “out of the wicked comes wickedness” (1 Samuel 24: 13).

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