

## CHAPTER 6

### The Phantom Five

I began to pick up all sorts of information about whales in general and about Moby Dick, in particular. The most prized of all whales is the sperm whale, because of its valuable spermaceti—a white, waxlike substance taken from the oil in the sperm whale's head. Spermaceti lights the lamps of the world and is an important ingredient in making perfume.

As for Moby Dick, I learned he could be spotted from a great distance because he differed from most other sperm whales. Not only did he have a peculiar snow-white wrinkled forehead and a high white hump, but the rest

of his huge body was so streaked and spotted with the same white color, that he gained the nickname of "The White Whale."

Moby Dick was known to swim frantically away from a boat lowered by a whaling ship to chase him. But he only pretended to be frightened. Suddenly he would turn around and bear down on his pursuers, either breaking their boat to splinters or driving them back in terror to their ship.

Once, a captain went at Moby Dick with three boats. All three were shattered by the whale. Seeing his men spinning about in little whirlpools of the sea, the captain grabbed a small knife with a six-inch blade and dashed at Moby Dick's heart like some wild man in a duel. That captain was Ahab. It was at that moment that the whale swept its curved lower jaw beneath Ahab and cut off his leg!

From that moment on, Ahab wanted revenge against the whale, for to Ahab all the

evil of the world was rolled into this one creature. I marveled that he had managed to make the crew share his hatred and even take on *his* enemy as their own.

One still moonlit night, we were standing in line passing buckets to fill the scuttle butt—a barrel which holds the fresh water for the day's use. Suddenly, one of the seamen whispered to another, "Hsst! Did you hear that noise?"

"What noise?"

"There it is again, under the hatches. It sounded like a cough."

"Be still, shipmate, will ye? It's the three soaked biscuits ye ate for supper turning over inside ye—nothing else. Now hand over the bucket."

"Ye can grin all you like," said the seaman. "We'll see what turns up. There's somebody below that has not been seen on deck. I suspect old Ahab knows something about it

too. I heard Stubb tell Flask one morning that there was something of the sort in the wind."

Nothing came of this mystery for a while. Then Tashtego, who was keeping a watch on the mainmast, sang out, "There she blows! "

I looked up to see where the Indian had sighted a whale. Tashtego stood perched high in the air, his arm stretched out like a wand.

"There she blows! There! There! There!"

"Where? Where?" came excited shouts.

"On the lee-beam, about two miles off! A school of them!"

That meant they were on the side of the ship away from the wind. Instantly, all was commotion.

"Quick, steward!" cried Ahab. "Get me the time, the time! "

Dough-Boy, the steward, hurried below, glanced at the watch, and reported the exact minute to Ahab.

We knew Ahab kept careful notes of where

and when whales had been sighted or captured. Every night he would take from his locker a large wrinkled roll of sea-charts and study the various lines-and shadings, tracing routes with his slow but steady pencil. He studied the currents of all four oceans and the habits of all whales in order to reach one burning goal—to *find and kill Moby Dick!*

Although we were now going after other whales which, after all, was the main business of the *Pequod*, I knew that Ahab's real prey was ever on his mind.

The ship was now kept away from the wind. Three boats were swung over the side and down to the sea. At this exciting instant, we heard a sudden cry. It took every eye away from the whales and directed them with a glare at Ahab. The captain stood on deck surrounded by five dark phantoms who seemed to have appeared out of the air.

These strangers busied themselves,

noiselessly lowering one of the spare boats.

"All ready there, Fedallah?" called Ahab.

"Ready," came the half-hissed reply from a tall, dark figure with one tooth evilly protruding from steel-like lips. The man wore a rumpled black cotton jacket and pants, and his long white hair was braided and coiled around his head like a turban. The other men had the tiger-yellow color of the Manillas, a tribe of natives from the Phillipine Islands near Australia. Some superstitious sailors believed these natives to be secret spies of the Devil.

"Lower away, then!" shouted Captain Ahab.

Like goats, our men leaped down the rolling ship's side into the three tossed boats below. In the fourth boat, rowed by the five strangers, stood Ahab. He was yelling across the water at Starbuck, Stubb, and Flask to spread out so as to cover a larger area.

When, for a minute or so, their two boats came close, Stubb called to Starbuck, "What think you of those five yellow men, sir?"

"Smuggled on board, somehow, before the ship sailed," called Starbuck. "Pull strong, strong, boys!—A sad business, Mr. Stubb. But never mind, it's all for the best!"

"I thought so too. *That's* why he kept going down into the hold so much. The men were hidden there. The White Whale's at the bottom of it. . . . Well, well, can't be helped now—Give way, men! It ain't the White Whale today!"

I silently recalled the mysterious shadows I had seen creeping on board the *Pequod* during the dim Nantucket dawn. I remembered, too, the puzzling hints of that strange man, Elijah. I would have a lot to think about at a time when there would be less excitement. But for now, all everybody wanted to do was close in on those whales.

## CHAPTER 7

### Men Overboard

Ahab's tiger-yellow men seemed all steel and whalebone. Like five strong trip hammers they rose and fell with hard, regular strokes of their oars. Fedallah, at one end of the boat, pulled the harpooner's oar, while at the other end Ahab steadily managed the steering oar.

"Flask!" called Ahab across to the other boat. "Pull out more to leeward, man."

"Aye, aye, sir." Flask swept his great oar round. "Lay back, men!" he shouted. "There she blows right ahead, boys! Roar and pull, my thunderbolts!"

Meanwhile, in one of the other boats, Stubb



was getting his crew to row too, but in a far different and rather funny way. He'd say the most outrageous things to them, but in a tone that was half-angry and half-joking.

"Pull, pull, my little ones!" shouted Stubb. "Why don't you break your backbones, boys? Pay no mind to the five in yonder boat. The more the merrier! Even if they are devils, they are good fellows. Hurrah for the gold cup of sperm oil. The devil fetch ye ragamuffins, ye're all asleep. Wake up and pull! Every mother's son of ye, draw his knife and pull with the blade between his teeth. That's more like it now!"

In another boat, Starbuck's way was different. He'd command with a low, intense whisper, "Pull, pull, my good boys." He'd never say much to his crew, nor they anything at all to him.

It was a sight full of wonder and awe—the roaring waves of the sea, the boats rolling to

the top of a watery hill then sliding sled-like down its other side, the windstorm tossing them about. All these amid the cries of the harpooners and the shuddering gasps of the oarsmen. The *Pequod* bore down on her boats with outstretched sails, like a wild mother hen chasing after her screaming brood. It was thrilling!

Starbuck now gave chase to three whales as our boat rushed along in the rising wind and mist. Suddenly he hurled a lightning-bolt whisper to Queequeg. "Stand up!"

Our harpooner sprang to his feet and waited till he heard, "That's his hump. There, there! Give it to him!"

Queequeg's darting iron made a rushing sound... and then there was confusion. An invisible push came at us from the stern, or rear, of our little boat. The sails collapsed, and something rolled and tumbled like an earthquake beneath us, tossing all of us

helter-skelter into the white curdling foam of the sea. The windstorm, the whale, and the harpoon all blended together, and the whale, merely grazed by the iron, escaped.

Swimming about, we managed to pick up our floating oars, climb back into the lonely boat, and tumble to our places. It was no use calling to the other boats. We could not be heard in the storm. We were up to our knees in water, and in the deepening mist the *Pequod* was nowhere to be seen. As the dawn came on, we sat there drenched through and through, shivering cold, and without hope.

It was Queequeg who first jumped to his feet, cupping his hand to his ear. As we listened, we heard a faint creaking. Then, before we knew what was happening, the *Pequod* loomed into view, bearing right down on us!

We jumped into the sea just moments before our boat was crushed beneath the

*Pequod's* hull. Again we swam for our lives with the seas dashing us against the ship, until at last we were safely taken up on board. We learned that the three other boats had gotten back in time.

“Queequeg,” I said, still shaking myself to fling off the water, “my fine friend, does this sort of thing happen often?”

He calmly gave me to understand that yes it did. Stubb and Flask, who were with us, agreed.

Considering that the three men thought nothing of being overturned; considering that they saw nothing unusual in cautious Mr. Starbuck's driving us onto his whale in the teeth of a squall; and considering, too, our captain's mad quest for the White Whale, there was only one sensible thing for me to do.

“Queequeg,” I said, “I am going below and make a rough draft of my will. Come along. You shall be my lawyer and advisor.”

## CHAPTER 8

### A Victim of Moby Dick

Southeastward from the Cape of Good Hope, a name which seemed all wrong for that place of tormented seas, howling winds, and leaping waves, we met another ship. It was the *Albatross*, a ship that had been long absent from home, judging from her rusty sides and the long beards of her tatter-dressed sailors.

“Ship ahoy!” Ahab called to the other captain. “Have ye seen the White Whale?”

But as the captain of the *Albatross* put the trumpet to his mouth to answer, it fell out of his hand into the sea, and he couldn't make

himself heard. So we passed on.

Not long after, we met another homeward-bound whaler, the *Town-Ho*. This time, Ahab allowed a gam, or exchange of visits. Some *Town-Ho* crewmen who came on board the *Pequod* whispered the secret of their ship to Tashtego. When he later told it to us, it sparked our interest in Moby Dick.

An officer and a sailor on the *Town-Ho* had gotten into a fight over an unfair order to sweep the deck. In self-defense, the sailor knocked the mate out. Others got involved, and it became a mutiny.

Steerkilt, the seaman, was about to kill Radney, the Chief Mate, when a call came. Moby Dick had been sighted. Radney's boat was the first one lowered away, and as he stood spear in hand, he was washed overboard. Moby Dick clamped him between his jaws, reared up high, and then plunged down into the water.

When the whale rose again, he had some tatters of Radney's red wool shirt caught in his teeth. All four boats gave chase, but Moby Dick had disappeared.

After hearing the *Town-Ho's* story, we all had Moby Dick on our minds. Daggoo, who had the look-out, saw a great white mass that kept rising and sinking. "There she breaches, right ahead!" he called. "The White Whale, the White Whale!"

Ahab gave instant commands for lowering. His boat was down ahead of the other three. I watched with interest as a vast, pulpy, cream-colored mass hundreds of yards long and wide came floating on the water. Countless numbers of long arms radiated from its center, curling and twisting like a nest of snakes. It had no visible face or front; it was just a ghostly, shapeless living thing.

As it disappeared again, making a low sucking sound, Starbuck said, "I would

almost rather have seen and fought Moby Dick than that white ghost."

"What was it, sir?" said Flask.

"The great live squid. There's a superstition that few whaleships that see the squid ever return to their ports to tell of it."

Ahab said nothing. He turned his boat and sailed back to the ship, with the rest of us silently following.

But Queequeg had a different opinion about what seeing the squid meant. "When you see 'quid close by, then you see quick 'perm whale."

The next day was hot, and all of us were drowsy. But sure enough, just as Queequeg had said, all at once we spotted a huge sperm whale lazily swimming along and spouting his jet, like some fat citizen leisurely smoking his pipe on a warm afternoon.

But that pipe was the poor whale's last. As if struck by a magician, all the drowsy men



on the sleepy ship awoke and got busy lowering the boats. Our noise must have alarmed the whale, for he threw his tail forty feet into the air and sank out of sight, like a swallowed-up tower.

Stubb, being nearer than any of the others to where the whale again appeared, counted on having the honor of capturing it.

“Start her, start her like thunderclaps, my men,” he ordered. “But keep cool—cucumber’s the word. Start her, Tash, my boy.”

“Woo-hoo! Wa-hee!” screamed the Indian in reply, raising some old war whoop to the skies.

His wild screams were answered by others just as wild from the other boats.

“Kee-hee! Kee-hee!” yelled Daggoo, straining back and forth in his seat like a tiger pacing in his cage.

“Ka-la! Koo-loo!” howled Queequeg.

The men in Stubb’s boat tugged and strained until the welcome cry was heard.

“Stand up, Tashtego! Give it to him!”

The harpoon was hurled. The boat now flew through the boiling water like a shark that is all fins. She seemed to pass whole Atlantics and Pacifics as she shot on her way, till at last the whale somewhat slowed his flight and the boat's as well.

“Haul in, haul in!” cried Stubb.

All the men faced round towards the whale and began pulling the boat up to him, while he still towed the boat. Stubb sent dart after dart into the whale's body. Soon a red tide poured from all sides of the monster. The sun, playing upon the bloody water, sent back its reflection into every man's face, so that they all glowed to each other like red men.

“Pull up!” Stubb now cried, and the boat moved along the whale's side. Reaching far over the bow, Stubb slowly churned his long sharp lance into the heart of the whale and kept it there, carefully churning and churning.

The whale made a last desperate flurry, sending the boat backing out of his mad, boiling spray. Then the spray stopped, and the whale once more rolled out into view, opening and closing his spout hole with sharp, crackling breaths. Streams of red blood shot into the air, then ran down the whale's sides into the sea. His heart had burst.

Stubb took his pipe from his mouth, scattered the dead ashes over the water, and stood thoughtfully eyeing the vast corpse he had just made.