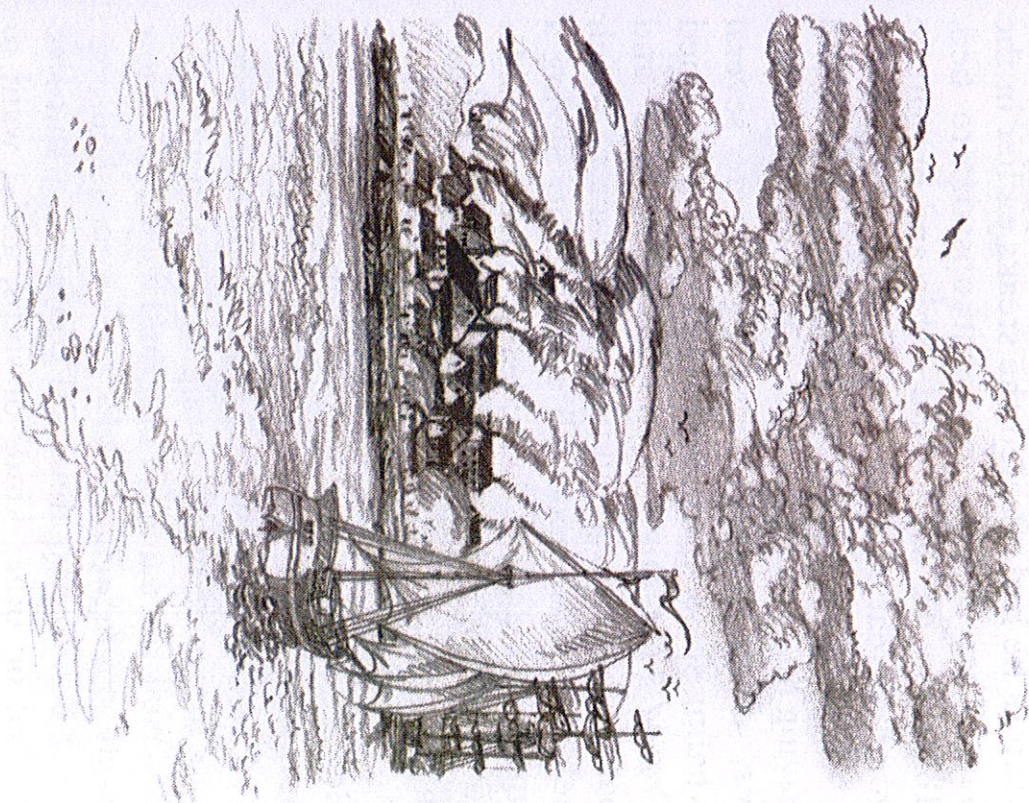




The Pequod

It was nearly dark when we reached Nantucket. What a place it was—a small wind-blown island with no trees and very few plants. The Indians discovered the island many years ago. Then came the white men who first sailed from its shore in search of fish. Now, men sailed to all corners of the world from this tiny seaport. Mr. Coffin had told us that his cousin, Hosea Hussey, owned an inn called *The Try Pots*. After wandering around and getting lost several times, we finally found the place. Mr. Hussey's wife served us some delicious soup of clams and codfish. I was glad to see that Queequeg didn't





try to harpoon the small pieces of fish in the soup as he had speared the streaks earlier in the day. After supper, we went upstairs to bed. Tomorrow we would find a ship and prepare to go on a great adventure.

I woke early, and, while Queequeg was still having his morning prayers with Yojo, I found my way down to the docks. There were several whaling ships. One caught my eye. It was named *Pequod*. Although its decks were old and battered, the three tall poles, called masts, which held the sails, stood tall and straight. Spying a small tent near the docked ship, I pecked inside.

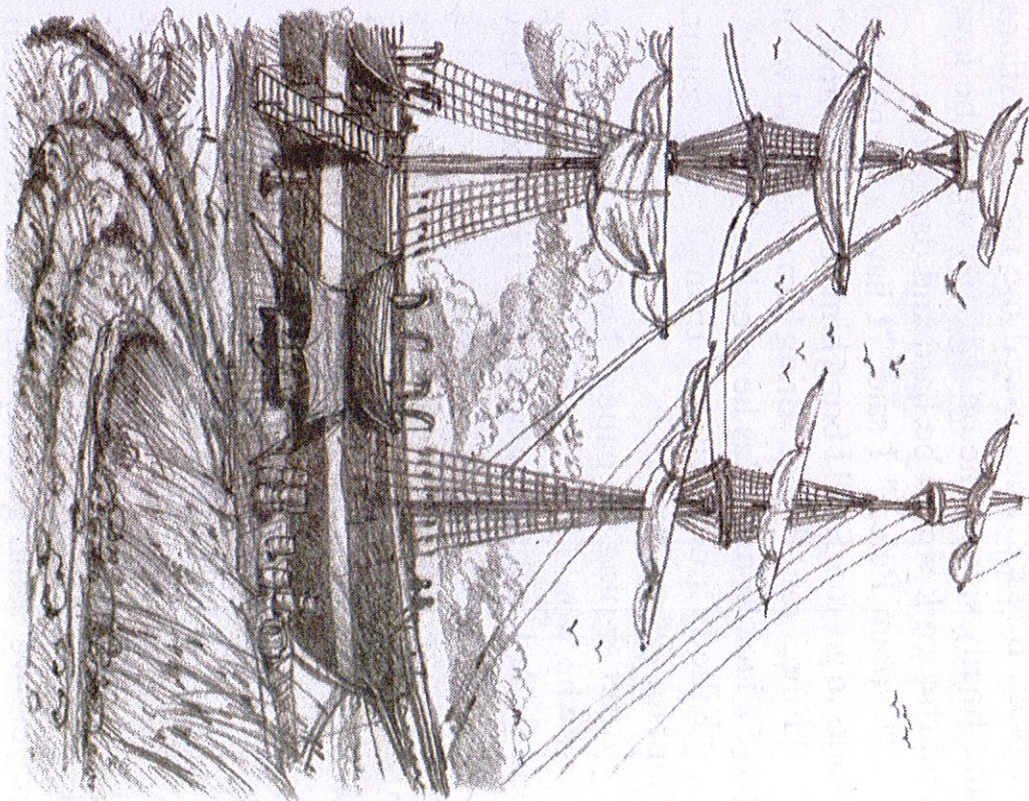
"Are you the captain of the *Pequod*?" I asked the man seated in the tent.

"I am an owner of the ship ye name," the old sailor answered in a rough voice. "Who wants to know?"

"My name is Ishmael. I and a friend of mine want to sign up to go hunting whales on your ship."

"Well, my name is Peleg, and what do ye know about whaling, young lad?" the owner asked.

"I don't know much," I confessed. "But I've worked on other kinds of ships, and I want to learn. Please give me a try."





Peleg took me to the other owner of the ship, Captain Bildad. They asked me more questions and finally signed me on. My pay would be low, and the work would be hard and dangerous.

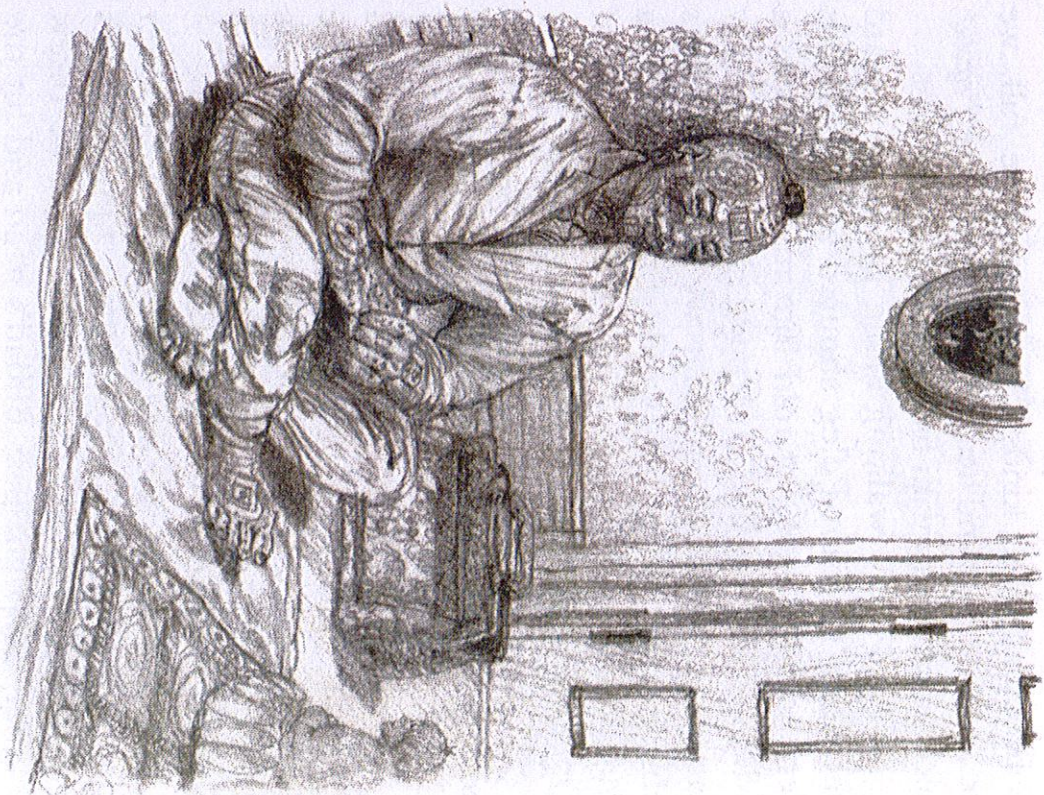
"Captain Peleg," I said, "I have a friend who wants to go, too. Shall I bring him down tomorrow?"

"Fine," said Peleg. "Bring him along, and we'll have a look at him. Has he ever hunted whales?"

"Killed more whales than I can count, Captain Peleg."

After signing the papers, I wanted to meet the man who would sail as captain of the ship. Peleg and Bildad told me I would meet him later. They told me that he could be a good man and a terrible one at the same time. His name was Ahab, and he had lost a leg fighting a whale. As I walked away, I thought about this strange Captain Ahab. A man with a good side and a bad side could be hard to work for.

When I arrived back at the inn that evening, Mrs. Hussey told me that Queequeg had spent the whole day in the room praying. I didn't disturb him. I was sure we would need all the prayers we could get. I quietly crawled into bed and was soon asleep.





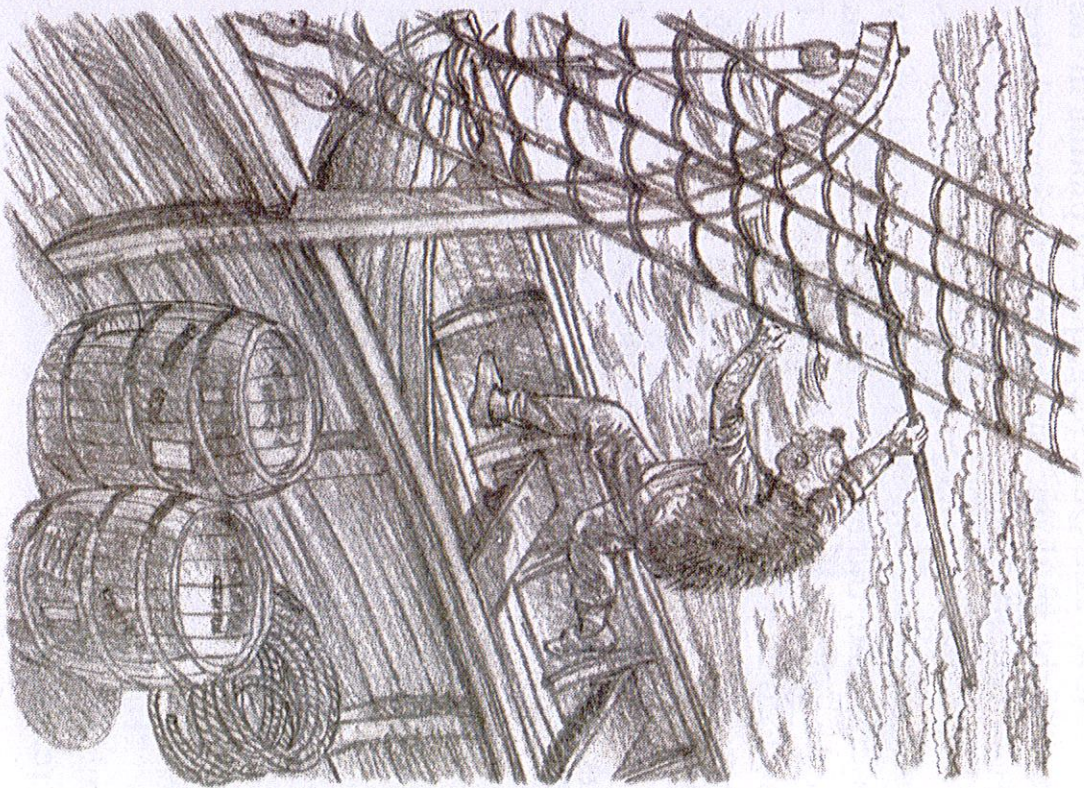
The next morning, we ate a huge breakfast of fish soups of all kinds. When we were full, we packed our bags and headed out to get on the *Pegwad*, picking our teeth with fish bones along the way.

As we were walking along the dock toward the ship, Captain Peleg shouted at us from his tent saying I had not told him my friend was a wild-looking savage. I argued strongly for my tattooed friend. I said that we were all God's children and that they would find Queequeg a man they could trust. They still made fun of Queequeg, even his name.

"Quohog, Hedgehog, or whatever your name is, did ye ever stand at the head of a whaleboat? Did ye ever spear a fish?" cried Peleg.

Without saying a word—but with a wild gleam in his eye—Queequeg jumped over the ship's rails and into one of the small whaleboats hanging on the side. Then, raising his harpoon, he cried out something like this:

"Cap'ain, you see him small drop oil on water far away over dere? Well, sposee him a whale's eye den!" And taking sharp aim at it, he threw the harpoon right past Bildad's head and hit the shining oil spot square in the center.





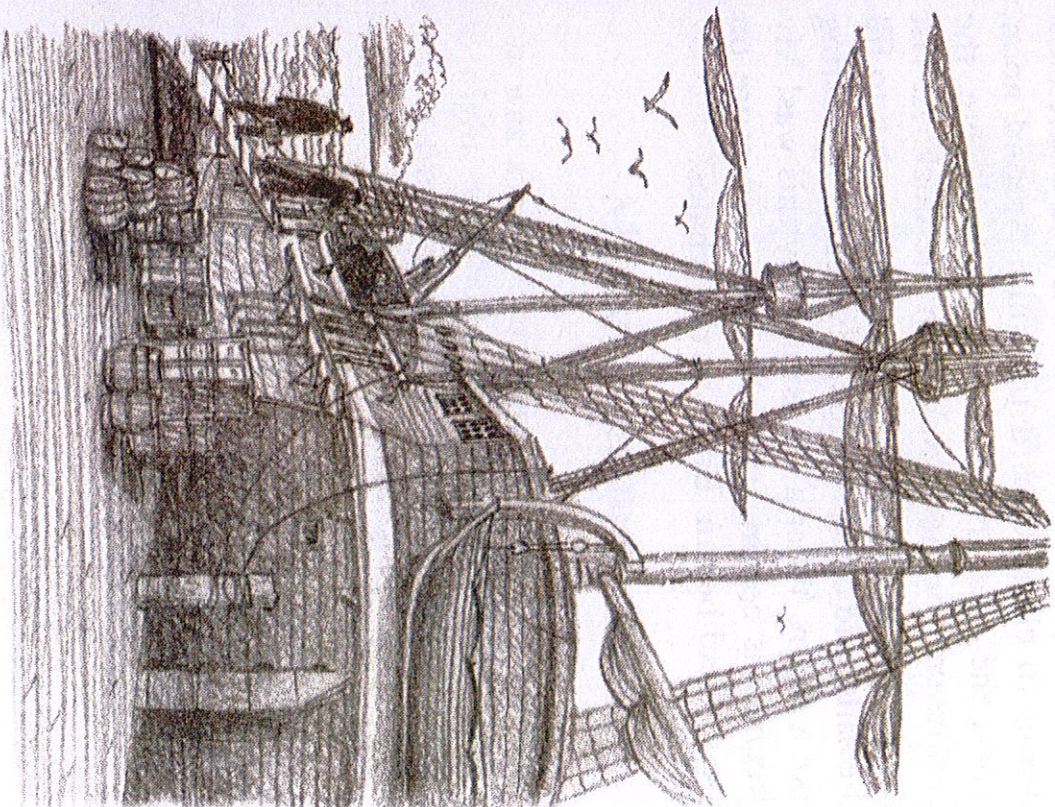
"Now," said Queequeg, quietly pulling in the line of the harpoon, "spossee him tar spot whalee eye. Well, dat whale dead!"

When they saw Queequeg's skill, the owners said he could join the crew. I was proud of my friend who, though he could not write, made his mark on the papers we were asked to sign. I noticed that it was the same mark as one of the tattoos on his arm. It had been a good morning. Things were looking bright.

A day or two passed, and there was a lot of activity onboard the *Pegoud* as it was loaded for the three-year trip. New sails were brought aboard, and old sails were being mended. Coils of rope, harpoons, food, water, empty barrels to store the whale oil, and every other thing you could imagine were stored below the ship's decks. But we had still not seen that strange Ahab.

With no captain to direct things, I was glad to hear one of the sailors say that our chief mate was busting around.

"Halloa! Starbuck's on the move," said the sailor. "He's a lively chief, he is. A good man and a religious one."





By now the sun was high in the sky. The crew began to climb aboard the ship. Around noon, when the final list of duties was complete, the *Pequod* was pushed away from the dock. At last the anchor was pulled up, the wind began to fill the sails, and off we glided. My heart was beating like a drum. What a Christmas day this was! My dream was coming true. My new adventure on the sea had begun. Bring on the whales!



Merry Christmas

It was a cold Christmas. As the day turned into night, we found ourselves upon a wintry ocean. A freezing spray wrapped us in ice. Like the white ivory tusks of some huge elephant, giant, curving icicles hung from the ship's rails.

Once we had reached a distance from shore, the two owners' work was done. A smaller boat, which had followed us out from Nantucket, pulled alongside to take Bildad and Peleg back to shore. The old sailors said their good-byes and wished us a safe journey.

"God bless ye, and keep ye, men," said Bildad. "I hope ye have fine weather. Don't