

**Tom Sleigh**  
from *Ahab's Wife*

**Prologue**

**VOICE OVER of PREACHER**

*(Sound of organ music for a touch of church atmosphere.)*

Brother and Sister Sailors, you who are hitched and you who aren't, take a look—a close look—at the whale. We're all of us Jonahs in the belly of Love. Cuttle fish looking for a cuddle. Harpooners harpooned by desire. Our text this evening concerns the hearts of two of our shipmates, their hearts' depths and shallows, their ventricles and madrigals, their ebb tide and flood tide that compassed them about, swallowed them down...

*(Enter Ahab's Wife upstage and Young Ahab far downstage, on opposite ends of the stage, each isolated in pool of light. Throughout the scene, Ahab's Wife plays to audience, and never turns to face Young Ahab, the implication being that they are lost to one another. She is trying to remember nautical language, as if working to recover a dim memory. He is coaching her in the proper tone and inflections so that she will sound authentically "sailor-like." When he gives her instruction, however, she doesn't acknowledge him: For her, he is only a voice, or a ghost, inside her head. She begins demurely, then becomes more and more swaggering and rough.)*

*(AW waves to audience, as if calling out to a dimly remembered person from the past.)*

Yoohooo...yooohooo!

**YOUNG AHAB**

*(Mocking her.)* Yoohooo?

*(In a loud whisper and swinging his arm back and forth as if holding a glass of rum.)*

"Yo ho!" A real sailor says, "YO HO!"