

I'll tell it as I best know how  
And that's the way it was told to me  
I must have been a thief or a whore  
Then surely was thrown overboard,  
Where, they say  
I came this way from the deep blue sea

It picked me up and tossed me round  
I lost my shoes and tore my gown  
I forgot my name and drowned  
Then woke up with the surf a pounding  
It seemed I had been run aground

Well they took me in and shod my feet  
And taught me prayers for chastity  
And said my name would be Colleen  
And I was blessed among all women  
To have forgotten everything

And as the weeks and months ensued  
I tried to make myself of use  
I tilled and planted, but could not produce  
Not root, nor leaf, nor flower, nor bean  
Lord! It seemed I over-watered everything.

And I hate the sight of that empty air  
Like stepping for a missing stair  
And falling forth forever blindly:  
Cannot grab hold of anything!  
No, not I, most blessed among Colleens

I dream some nights of a funny sea  
As soft as a newly born baby  
It cries for me so pitifully!  
And I dive for my child with a wildness in me  
And am so sweetly there received.

But last night came a different dream  
A grey and sloping-shouldered thing  
Said "what's cinched 'round your waist, Colleen  
Is that my very own baleen  
No! Have you forgotten everything?"

This morning, 'round the cape at dawn  
Some travellers sailed into town  
With scraps for sale and the saddest songs  
And a book of pictures, leather-bound  
That showed a whale with a tusk a meter long

I asked the man who showed it me  
"What is the name of that strange beast?"  
He said its name translated roughly to  
He-Who-Easily-Can-Curve-Himself-Against-The-Sky.

And I am without words  
He said "My lady looks perturbed  
the light is in your eyes, Colleen."

I said, "Whatever can you mean?"  
He leaned in and said  
"you ain't forgotten everything."

"You dare to speak a lady's name?"  
He said, "My lady is mistaken.  
I would not speak your name in this place  
For if I were to try then the wind  
I swear, would rise, to tear you clean from me without a trace."

"Have you come, then, to rescue me?"  
He laughed and said, "from what, 'colleen'?"  
You dried and dressed most willingly.  
You corseted, and caught the dread disease  
By which one comes to know such peace."

Well it's true that I came to know such things  
As the laws which govern property  
And herbs to feed the babes that wean,  
And the welting weight for every season  
But still I don't know any goddamned "Colleen".

Then dive down there with the lights to lead  
That seem to shine from everything  
Down to the bottom of the deep blue sea  
Down where your heart beats so slow  
And you never in your life have felt so free  
Will you come down there with me  
Down were our bodies start to seem  
Like artefacts of some strange dream  
Which afterwards you can't decipher  
And so, soon, have forgotten everything.