

"You'd bring me squid and a stillborn child
With your nets and sails to mend;
Serpent horizons of swallowed stars,
But my cage would never bend.

"Your frothy gifts have the stink of bait
Too long in the trough in the sun.
The hook is plain, I see the price,
Good Captain, I can wait.

"I'll wait for a man with bags of seed
For the sureness of the earth.
Where salt from sweat and not from spray
Weighs up a good man's worth."

And Maureen McCrae stayed long on the beach
With fringes of foam round her knees,
While staring for years at each square-rigged ship
Slipping in on the morning breeze.

All hope reached the depth of her scuttled pride.
But one day the Petrel returned.
The barque lowered sails, her captain waved,
The crew scrambled over her side.

None ever heard of an owner named Woods.
She was bought from a Captain Quayle.
Then one man remembered a rumor about
A master who vanished—a gale—