

RIDIN ON A LOW

Wi da labourin knock o da grumblin screw,
Da shudder an din
An daefnin grinnd –
Nae paece fur da wickeet
An as little fur da righteous
Tae repent der sins,
Staundin dumb ida steek o spöndrift
Wi just a glimmer o hop.
Twal fishermen trapped in a tin,
Crawlin each sheer smokkin swel in a vimmer
Wi herts risin laek fish-heids tae da trot,
Dodgin intae da rip o a hurrican
Whan da darkness sets in,
Black as da reekin waas o waater
Dat heave demsels tae da heevins
Afore dey brak in a faersome dunder,
Smorin da boat i da white boil o da brakker
As shö buries under
Wi a shud an a shakk, bringin up deid
Atween da toorin swels
Feetchin lumps ower da boo
Tae da funnel, brakkin green,
Dan heavin hersel frae da swamp an da rummel
Liftin her heid an froadin gunnels
Tae tak da nixt wan ageen.

Twa days an nauthin ta dö bit staund.
Nauthin ta aet in a craub o kettles an pans.
Nae whaur ta sit an nae wye ta sleep,
Wi da racket an crack o lockers an doors
Bein bel'd ta da back wi a bang.
An wha wid risk gyaun below tae a bö!?
Da brave man – or da blockeet fö!?
Birzed i da bunk bi da knees jammed tight
Doin his damndest no tae whumble oot
As shö taks a wupp
Or jimpin frae 'im in a panshite
Tinkin his number is up!
Wi da lang comfortless craeks an da crump
Da boom an da thud, da bulder
An runkles o sheckles an chain in a clatter

Slidderin under da shalter
See-sawin i da swash o watter –
An hingin in
Wi da hop at shö howlds
Under da punishin strain,

Duntin trow da shap
Intae da shalter o heim
Whaur da paece makks hit seem
Laek hit wis just a dream
O a nightmarish sea
Or something as herd tae expleen
At naebody saw
Idder as a dizzen raumished men
Hingin ower da rail
I da grey shug o a miserable moarnin
Cowld an raw,
Comin tae in a stupor,
Keepin der towts tae demsels.
Wi a desire tae hit da shore
Get rat-ersed drunk an keep up a commotion,
Or just tae mak fur da hoose
Wi nauthin said,
Fix a coffee an tak da bed
Tae sleep da sleep o a sinner
Or a lottery winner
An neeb af da guid fortune
O a day heim afore turnin til ageen
Wi a carton o fags an a shift o claes
Tae see you trow da comin days,
I da freshnin winds an blashy weet,
Whaur sic is da fortune afoardit men
O a ruif under der feet,
An no muckle cheenge frae a lousy ten.