

PROVINCETOWN, AUGUST

She listened seven ways at once, walked to the end
of Pier Two, then back again along Pier One.

Humming, this Protea, dallying. Stuffing gone
outta her then, innit, doll? Now she picks up her favorite

pen and puts it to the paper she likes best. Jetsam
bobbing there along the shore. No caterwauling

Creature hubbubbing about the wharf no more; a bit
o'sea cucumber wrack but a sheen to'er, all the same.

Once, a broken sandal, the dusty road past
a thick-walled church and when you opened a door...

All her life she's lived frugally, on surprise.

She loved the click of tiles across

a gameboard, chances smooth in her hand.
Her arm always listed

slightly to the left, and delicate, like the cat
balanced on the pilings outside Harpooners'

last night, or the distant music of tiny spoons
on porcelain cups stirring tea.

Even so, she'll give it one more mumbledy-peg.
Before whales begin to feed, they cast bubble nets,

spreading haloes through the water in luminous
turquoise rings.