

## The Woman Downstairs

## The Handsome Family

Chicago is where the woman downstairs  
Starved herself to death last summer  
Her boyfriend Ted ate hot dogs and wept  
With the gray rats out on the fire escape

In a thrift store chair I drank cases of beer  
And dreamed of laying down on the L tracks  
The trains roared by under smoke-gray skies  
Lake Michigan rose and fell like a bird

And when the wind screamed up Ashland Avenue  
The corner bars were full by noon  
And the old stew bums sliding down their stools  
Ate boiled eggs and fed beer to the dogs

The woman downstairs lost all her hair  
And wore a beret in the laundry room  
I borrowed her soap and bought her a Coke  
But she left it on a dryer

She died in June weighing eighty two  
Her boyfriend went back to New York  
The cops wandered through her dusty rooms  
One of them stole her TV

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