

# The Vacuum

By Howard Nemerov

The house is so quiet now  
The vacuum cleaner sulks in the corner closet,  
Its bag limp as a stopped lung, its mouth  
Grinning into the floor, maybe at my  
Slovenly life, my dog-dead youth.

I've lived this way long enough,  
But when my old woman died her soul  
Went into that vacuum cleaner, and I can't bear  
To see the bag swell like a belly, eating the dust  
And the woolen mice, and begin to howl

Because there is old filth everywhere  
She used to crawl, in the corner and under the stair.  
I know now how life is cheap as dirt,  
And still the hungry, angry heart  
Hangs on and howls, biting at air.

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