Squalor

Squalor
(Peter Berryman)

In the squalor of her awful little shack she sat
With her grungy cat and her parakeet
With rats a-runnin' 'round the size of caribou
Playin' peekaboo with her filthy feet

Eatin' donuts with a spoon and drinkin' Ovaltine
Through a scum of green floating leisurely
In a coffee cup of plastic from the Sally Ann
Shakin' in her hand out of misery

cho: And it's all because she didn't eat her vegetables
It's all because she didn't eat her vegetables as a kid
Or maybe she didn't chew them properly if she did.

Her brother slept behind the shack without a bed
With his battered head resting on his knee,
As the roaches and the traffic sang a lullaby
The water pipes would sigh a little harmony.

With the stogies he had found wrapped up in cellophane
To keep out the rain when the night was through
He would stumble down the alley pickin' junk sometimes
Or try to beg for dimes on the avenue.

Her mother as a seamstress never brought in much
'Cause she'd lost her touch in a codeine haze
Now she staggers in a stupor through the city streets
Wrapped in ratty sheets from her sewing days

Her crazy little face is hidden in the shade
Of a hat she made from a cardboard box,
The hair beneath her hat is so in need of care
It doesn't look like hair, it looks like dirty socks.

Her uncle'd come to see her in his tattered clothes
With a runny nose and a pint of wine
And a bucket full of bullheads he had caught that day
On Monona Bay with a hand held line

She would spread a little blanket on the apple crate

Where they always ate when they had the food
They would eat and they would drink and when the grub was gone
They would carry on if they were in the mood

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