

Eddie's Sin

It didn't matter much what Eddie said.

We never knew for sure what sin he hid.
He'd drink with us and when the talk would turn
to tits and ass and sex and getting head
he'd look ashamed or hurt, so there's a clue.
Then once he had too many shots and said
"It's not illegal, but it's wrong," then burned
a hateful look through me that he thought hid
the hurt and shame and fear that shot him through.

It never mattered what his buddies said,
but it was never much. We all could see
the way his wife and sister turned away
or closed their eyes pretending not to hear
when someone ignorant or new would say
out loud what we were thinking: what could be
that bad? To seal him in his guilty head,
to lock him in with his remorse and fear?

We never knew for sure what Eddie did
or said to make things worse but worse they got.
A month, a spring, a year went by and none
of us believed he'd stick around another week
much less another season. What he'd done
or not done, how immoral, crime or not—
it hardly mattered, but he never hid
from it. He faced it down, alone and meek.

It never mattered much what Eddie did.