

**WITH LUCK**  
**(1990-1992)**

*In My Teens*  
*Diagnosed*  
*With Luck*

**DIAGNOSED**

Something in me wanted it, I thought.  
Something in me liked getting hit.  
*Masochism*, my doctors called it.  
I was eight. No one believed me then.  
No one would stop it from happening  
again. Not my mother or my father  
or the family priest who walked up  
the front hall steps as ominous  
as God himself. I was trapped.  
I knew that I could not get out.  
The rest is a blank as a bedsheet  
pinned to the living room wall.  
How I tottered and grinned,  
waving from some lost vacation  
as guilty as sin. Diagnosed.  
Bad. Wrong. Liar. Thief.  
Psychotic. How the labels stuck.  
Something in me learned to like  
what I was told I was. Victim.  
Something in me sought my punishment.

## IN MY TEENS

I could have been a poet then.  
I had all the credentials –  
Bournewood, McLean's, Met State.  
A romantic, I could have written  
about my suicide attempts  
before the electroshock.  
I would forget a lot, of course,  
except the back ward where  
they threatened to lock me up.  
Every day my father would come  
and take me out, and I would nod  
at what he said, and promise  
to be good. No more drugs.  
At night I would like awake  
and listen to the grunts  
that filled the open rooms.  
One floor below a woman named  
Bea screamed and screamed.  
I found that I did not need imagination.  
I had learned my lesson. I agreed.

## WITH LUCK

I come from a generation of unspoken rebellion.  
hidden in my father's mother's maiden name.  
Told how, hair-streaming, she chased her husband  
with a skillet down the streets of Plattsburgh,  
a new bride noted for her wild-eyed temper.  
Hidden Gaelic grammars. Rumor. Great-uncles  
heading back to fight the Black-and-Tans,  
never mentioned for fear of neighborhood spies.  
*No Irish need apply.*

Old and tamed,  
she prayed for the repose of almost all souls.  
Hers and mine entwined in secret plots  
passed on late nights at kitchen tables,  
simple food cooked with elaborate conspiracy.  
Hate the privileged, hate the rich.  
Never trust the lace-skirted priest.  
Drunk or sober, keep your wits.  
The knock that wakes may be the last.  
With luck I'll grow to be the scapegoat,  
the family's unacknowledged, troubled laugh.

Now a queer and truth-telling man, I claim  
her name as rightfully mine – *Glancy*,  
my iron escutcheon, my shield and weapon.  
Protected, I will name the hypocrites,  
the liars, the treasonous self-deceiving  
occupiers who seized my emerald youth,  
making me an immigrant in my own house.  
I will rise and throw them out.  
I will take my place among the garrulous.

David M. Eberly