

Sounds

Category: Poems

written by William Toms | March 13, 2020



A doctor places a
stethoscope on the
chest, and listens...

Sound comes crawling through, leaping
from its suitcase of slightly sweaty skin
across to the diaphragm, a divide keeping
him from me, now breached, the world now open
crawling up a well-used black rubber tunnel
to my ears, calling to me, waiting to begin
knowing, albeit briefly, the mysteries within.
Slow, deep whoosh, slow, deep rumble,
in, out, in, out, in, out, the rhythm of breath,
repetition, ancient, magnificent, humble,
sucking in precious oxygen, grabbing it softly,
a deal in exchange for recently used air
now full up with carbon dioxide mostly,
a winning deal though the oxygen doesn't care.

No rales, the clarion of fluid sleeping
where it's not welcome, between sponge cells
that need their space clear, reaping
life that comes as each breath repels
invaders, micro-malcontents, seeping
in, unwanted, but their infection doesn't sell,
the bellows blow them out, reeling.
No rhonchi, coarse rattles
of challenged lungs preparing for battle.
No wheeze, the cry of a bronchus
straining to stretch, just a little more air,

just a little more, please give us.
No, no asthma, a disease so unfair,
these healthy lungs strong wind thrust.
Move around to the front. No need
for deep breaths here.
It's the rhythm of the beat, the creed
of the pump, so easy to hear.
Thump, thump, lub-dub, lub-dub,
a toe-tapping time to a good rap beat
it keeps a rhythm that holds no fear.
It shows no skip, no compensatory pause,
no anxious wait after a ventricular ectopic,
no needed compensation for a failing flaw.
Not too rapid, not too slow, no evidence the muscle is sick,
just the sound of beating at a nice, normal pace.
This unpaired organ, so strong, so electric,
moves blood into the body's embrace.
These are the sounds that are caught running
up the black rubber tubes used for listening
to the movements, the mechanics, the motions
of the inside of us, when we are breathing, beating,
free of the medicines, free of the potions
of the person listening with such intent focus,
listening unsuccessfully for what makes us us.