

A Simple Test

Electrodes snake over my chest.

Executing the final keystrokes, the doctor
takes up the wand from its pedestal.

Her coat glows gently, swinging
slightly like curtains drawn
shut before a show.

Laid out on the table, paper crinkles
against the gooseflesh of my back—

I'm here because something
inside me is abnormal. She prods

through the muscle of my chest,
searching for a vision of the heart—

the thickness of its walls, the size
of its ventricles and chambers,
the amount of blood it pumps
per minute.

I crane to see what she sees
on the monitor. From where I lay,
the picture is a washed-out sketch,
shuddering and contracting.

There was so much I couldn't see.

And this feels like living,
how average it is, how often
the virtuoso heart
is lost to us.

Unaware of the tumult in our chests,
we turn outward to affirm life.

All we must do is listen.

Each breath, a chance.
Each beat, a test.