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# Murmur

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JOHN CASTEEN

*Murmur*

I've always had this hole inside my heart,  
it's literal, and every two years needs  
machines with cords taped onto me and plugged  
by nurses with their gelid hands. In truth

it's never caused me trouble, or not much.  
I need my prophylaxis certain times,  
like anybody; don't much mind gray eyes  
of residents who promenade to see

(or, rather, hear) my fault when I'm laid out  
for show. I'm clinical; I'm teachable.  
They have to use their stethoscopes like men  
on subs use pings to find the enemy.

Have always been ventricular, septal, and defective  
to them. Which suits me fine. I like to know  
they squirm when asked to pin it down, and watch  
my small systolic/diastolic cycles misfire

on television. Every time there's that suck  
and whistle, leading to the next, referring  
to the first, which speaks to the last. My own  
inefficiency. The exegesis white-coats try

and try to learn: my fast, off pulse. Heartstutter.  
Like murmured things old women said at cards  
when I was small: *Good night*, they said. *Great day*  
*in the morning*. And, *Lord, Lord. Lord have mercy*.