

# I talk to my stethoscope

Serious work it was. Murmurs, rubs,  
beats, and clicks. You amplified them all  
with studied diligence, although my ear  
could only judge so much, and my brain's

tendency to second guess became a risk.  
Nonetheless, your time on a patient's skin  
was well-spent, like that of a scout  
reporting conditions behind the front.

You never had the thrill of being slung  
around the base of my neck but were trapped  
in my coat pocket, poised for work  
but not as a mantle, like the Lord Mayor

of Medicine's. Tubes rising from my pocket  
were enough. We must have been a bit  
backward. Was the murmur diamond-shaped  
or flat continuous? Were rhonchi

what we listened to, or rales? Those points  
are moot, old tool. There are better ways  
than you or me to make them clear today,  
but your reputation hasn't dropped.

You're younger than I am and, if you want,  
you could go back to work as an emblem  
of healing, rather than mucking around  
with the blood pressure cuff in my closet.

—Jack Coulehan, MD

