In his debut collection, The Irresistible In-Between, David Sloan of Brunswick frankly discusses his imperfections, becoming more like us as he does so, and finding his vision in the one life he’s been given. Here, he introduces us to his flawed heart.

**Stunned**

*by David Sloan*

At ten, nothing beat holding my breath to bursting. In bed with eyes shut, ears plugged, I’d vanish, sink like a diver into bottomless inky waters,

and listen below the silence—
long pause of a sea god’s breathing—
for that surging thrum, shh-dum shh-dum shh-dum shh-dum

those fingers drumming on a hidden hull, steady as a string of bubbles. Later
I loped along mountain roads loose-limbed, aqua-lunged, Olympian.

At times, when breath and blood converged and beat in perfect two/four time, I floated out of my shoes, sh-dum, sh-dum, made the stretched skin of the sky my ocean.

Now I can’t hold a long note without gasping.
My tangled heart flops like a fish reeled out of the sea, stunned into stillness between thrashings, bewildered

by its sudden weight and a hard bottom.