

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,
Maine Poet Laureate*

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.

Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. Poem copyright © 2013 David Sloan. Reprinted from *The Irresistible In-Between*, Deerbrook Editions, 2013, by permission of David Sloan. Consultant to the Maine Poet Laureate, at mainepoetlaureate@gmail.com or 207-228-8263. *Take Heart: Poems from Maine*, an anthology collecting the first two years of this column, is now available from Down East Books.