

Echo

I don't know what his name is
And I don't know his profession
But he'll perform my echo
A test I'm having
For formality.

He doesn't know whether
I'm an inpatient here
In a hospital wheelchair
With this hospital porter
But I'm not.

He doesn't know that
It's not safe for me at all
To be sitting up this long
While he rattles off instructions
To lie down.

He doesn't know how

I can jump up off the bed though
To step onto the scales
When my estimated weight, he says,
Won't do.

He doesn't know why
I then lie there doing nothing
Pausing to undress
Doing what I need to now instead
Which is rest.

He doesn't know that
I see this building every day.
Living just across the street there
300 metres maximum
From this room.

And he doesn't know that
Less than one minute drive
Is the furthest I've gone out
By far the furthest that travelled

For two years.

He doesn't know how many
Phonecalls were made here
By my husband in the last week
Wanting this trip, this process
Not to harm me.

He doesn't know what
medications I have taken
To make my heartbeat look so normal
Slow and steady
On the screen.

He doesn't know what
It'll have to start and do
If I sit or stand too long,
Keeping up this sinking ship with graft
And hormones.

He doesn't know that

If I overdo it now
It could be racing all the day
And if I'm dead unlucky this time
All the night.

He doesn't know that
I'd feel better for an hour
But that such a surge of power
Causes symptoms that can be delayed
By days.

He doesn't know how
I left these clothes out for a week
A nice clean outfit for this treat;
Yesterday I soaped my armpits
In the sink.

He doesn't know how
Terrified I am of Covid,
And the damage it could do to me-
Of losing what I've still got left,

Still yet worse.

He doesn't know how
Scared I am of being in here
Fighting for the most basic care
For illness I know more about
Than they do.

He doesn't know how
Scared I am of feeling well
Outside the house today
Thinking that I'm fine again
Mistaken.

He doesn't know that this trip
Is an echo of before.
Just two years back in I strode
Through those same doors to ENT
Just down the hall.

My hair was done,
My clothes were formal,
And this illness,
Still not named yet, in
Remission.

The consultant didn't
Examine me even, no swelling there
That day to see
Just sent me off again with his
Best wishes.

I caught the later train then
Ate my breakfast, played a podcast,
Put on makeup in the loo, then walked
The mile through town to teach all day
As normal.