Editor’s Note: The author writes, "I am an asthmatic, and my disorder was particularly severe in childhood when I was hospitalized several times. My poem reflects my memories of that time, including, what seemed to be near-death events." Clara B. Jones is a retired university professor who specialized in Animal Behavior, conducting fieldwork in Latin America. Her guiding principles are intentional living and restraint without craving.

A Fish Out Of Water

I am no stranger to the fear of death
   thrust onto fossil reefs off San Andrés
   lost in a forest on Osa
   sucked into waters off Puntarenas
   pierced by a black palm in Belize
   broadsided on Bloomfield Avenue
or to little girls immortalized in grief
   Wordsworth humanized
   Darwin pathologized
   my grandfather spurning God.

I was no stranger to my mother's manic breath
   smearing my chest with VapoRub®
   beckoning my allergist to a home visit
   Tedral® calming asthmatic symptoms
   a six-year-old’s body limp as waning daffodils
   helpless as hares pursued by house cats
   hopeless as fishermen waiting for sturgeon's return
   stethoscope echoing heaves too shallow for life-support
   a non-believer praying for a miracle
   in her child’s room
   where chameleons changed color
   where canaries preened
   where curtains were closed to sounds of cars and cardinals.

Clara B. Jones, PhD
Asheville, NC