

Asthma · *Lynne McMahon*

Tremors, and yet my daughter
Demands to play, to climb
Onto my knees, her Everest.
The air begins thinning out

In white sockets around her eyes
Which closes my throat too. *Rest now,*
I want to tell her, which only makes her angry
And scared. I have gasped that way

In nightmares, muffled in feathers and wool,
But my bones never took on
Such prominence. Her shoulders work
Their wingbones and her ribs

Open and close like palm fronds
In some terrible fan and still she rises
Putting her hand against my face
And finding my lap two logs

On which to roll, not falling.
Her small heart and my larger one
Jerk out their mismatched rhythms
But now it is my breath

Which begins the hard ascent.
I am the mountain after all
Locked by the snow's embrace, and the blue veins,
And remote clouds which are not moving.