

On Breathing

*I'm OK during the day, but at night I get scared,
Which makes it hard to breathe, which is a symptom
Of the pandemic, which is what scares me.
Well played, anxiety, my old friend. You've always
Warned me something like this might happen.
You're a gift from my ancestors who survived plagues,
And worse. They wove you into my DNA to warn me,
so that I too might survive. Now that it's happening,
Anxiety, I don't need you any more. I need
The ones who gave you to me. so hear me, ancestors
Who lived through danger times: I'm ready for you now.
All these years I've carried your worries In my bones.
Now I need your love, your thousand-year view.
Tell me it's going to be OK, remind me you made it
Through, and we will too. Teach me to breathe.*

Alicia Jo Rabins