

Wind

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All of a sudden, nobody can explain wind. For better or worse, we've experienced wind for years. Centuries, really. Always. The whole time, we—i.e., the average populace—have just assumed someone knew where it came from, that scientists, the meteorologists, probably, maybe even DaVinci, had it written down somewhere. *Wind is a type of weather caused by _____*. Not so. Nothing, no encyclopedia entries, no conjecture, not even attempts to explain it that've been proven false. Other weather, we have the data, the answer to the question. How hot or cold it is depends on how close we are to the sun, while rain is a build up of moisture in the air. Snow, well, that's just cold rain. Wind, though, we've never known. Ever. Just one of those things that have slipped through the cracks, until one day, someone sets out to disprove the theory, maybe build on it, only to find no theory exists. Given its lack of attention, one could claim wind has been taken for granted, but since wind's not lost, just a bit exotic, wind can't be taken for anything. Like dreams, love, and the lemmings, wind falls into the category of the inexplicable or, at the very least, not yet explained. Life's mysteries, all of them, maybe forever. Maybe not.

I'm watching the wind report, the kind they break into television shows for, like for when a President dies, when I hear the thud: My infant son has rolled over and fallen off the couch. This is new—no rolling over before, just stationary baby slumber. The thud sounds like a bowling ball slamming against a wet lawn, and before I can even turn my head from the TV, my boy is screaming, an impossible scream from something so small and lying face flat down. I scramble and lift him to my chest, thinking at the same time that I shouldn't move him, that if he's broken, I'll only make it worse, spread the fracture, disperse the hemorrhage. But I can't just leave him on the ground to scream, helpless. He's alone, needing his daddy, plus: the neighbors could hear. In my arms, his skin is hot and red and he is oblivious to me, to my shushes, my hand wrapped around his head, pushing his face into my face,

his tears rolling into my mouth. I dance with my son, sway and pace, hoping he is more stunned than injured, the wind knocked out of him, the thud the worst part for us both. Babies are supposed to bounce, the story goes, because they're so fragile, so defenseless, they can withstand trauma that adults, even older kids, never could. I hope this is true, not some wives' tale, that I haven't killed my son, watching TV, eating cookies, the first time he and I are ever alone together, three months in.

When I was eleven, my own father shot himself in his office. He was mayor of our town, a five-termer, the son of the previous mayor, himself the son of the village founder and Postmaster. My father was sixty-eight when I was eleven, my mother his second wife, only thirty, the first wife dead from lupus and their children grown and long gone. Like most towns, we had debt, we had crime, and one town over always seemed like a better place to live. But my father was honest, did what he could to keep the roads paved, taxes low, bright lights on the downtown trees in December. No one had been murdered in our town in my lifetime, and, as far as anyone knew, no industry was pouring chemicals into the groundwater. He was going to run again the next year, a sixth term, like his father, and he would have won, though it's doubtful anyone would have challenged. The morning my father shot himself, he sat down to breakfast as he always had, one eye on the paper and the other on me, and asked what I planned to accomplish that day. I remember telling him I would ace my science test, resist trading my ham sandwich for a dessert, and, when I came home, do my homework before I even thought about turning on the TV. Now and then I'd daydream of being mayor one day, taking over when he stepped down. My father told me it was a good plan, one he'd sign off on, push before the city council with zest and zeal. An hour later he was dead. They pulled me out of school as soon as they heard, interrupted my science test, the principal breaking the news in the hall, then driving me home in her baby blue Chevette. A policewoman and a psychologist were waiting for me, and we sat in the kitchen making small talk for almost five hours until my mom came home. They didn't know where to find her, didn't have a daytime number. She didn't know about my dad until she found us all at the table, the window open, finishing off the strawberry pie from the ledge. To this day, I don't know where my mom was in that time, gone for five hours when I'd always assumed she was waiting for me, cooking, cleaning, talking to other city officials' wives on the phone. She's still alive—I could ask her if I wanted to, and she'd probably tell me. But it's something I've never really wanted to know, so I never asked, and never will.

I am not the mayor of my town. Neither are any of my stepbrothers, all of whom I've met exactly once, at father's funeral when I was eleven. I am not fit to be mayor, let alone the father of a three-month-old, a tiny cloister of skin and eyes and sharp, sharp fingernails, and, like his father, not very much hair, though he's moving in the opposite direction. Half an hour after my son slams into the carpet,

he stops screaming. He goes from frenzy to all-out laughing, just as quickly as he discovered rolling over. I search for signs of concussion, or at least what I think are signs of concussion—bloodshot eyes, vomiting, a loss of balance, which, I decide, would be impossible to determine. In all respects, my son appears fine, cheery and adoring, his only souvenir a heart-shaped abrasion on his forehead, a small patch of red, more of a carpet burn, I settle on, than a sign of internal bleeding. Later, when my wife comes home and sees the heart, she pulls him from my arms, grasping him as tightly as I had, demanding to know what I've done. Had I not let my son roll off the couch and hit his head on the floor, I would have demanded to know why she was gone for two hours instead of a half, what her plan was in case something went wrong, our only car gone with her, the family cell in her purse. But the heart is something I must explain, her absence, a secondary concern, secondary at best. I first try to pretend that it doesn't exist, that the heart's an impression of my chin on his forehead, or maybe a rash, a reaction to the new, off-brand detergent. My wife does not believe me. When she presses, demands to know what I did to our son, I tell her the only thing that makes any sense to me, the only thing that she will accept, sooner or later, though more than likely much, much later. I tell her *I don't know*, that it's something we may never, ever find out.