


Elegy for a Gust of Wind



I knew you as a heavy breather.
Each inhalation commanding the flare
of nostrils, fearful and strong,
two expansive spheres limited
only by the elasticity of your skin,
and the struggle to reclaim
all that had escaped the moment prior.

I watched you as you slept,
even then filling your chest with pride,
a gowned, blue-breasted creature
exhaling slowly by mouth, the mist
hovering above your lips like a secret
meant for the singular ear
of your late wife.

Suddenly, you
wheeze...struggle...pant...
in a manner that does not fit
the wise furrow of your eyebrows,
the eyes of a once stoic man
now painfully narrowed, as though straining
to see through the dark, ultimately exhausted
by the last breath
that was your own.

Now you breathe
through a hole
in your neck.
The sound like dishes
breaking in an earthquake,
unyielding and sharp,
and hardly like air at all.

Jana Lichtenfeld, MD