

JOANNE EPP

WITHOUT KNOWING

Look, I tell my son. *This is you.*

In the picture I fling a handful
of leaves in the air. He's a year old,
trying his legs in the park
among acorns and squirrels.

The camera caught us like this: eyes upward,
open-mouthed, waiting for leaves
to flutter and fall again.

He shapes the word without knowing it.

A big word in those old school readers:

Oh, look. Oh, see. Oh, oh.

An intake of breath, sometimes
no more than a gasp. A tiny word,
vessel for a child's huge wonder.

Look, I say again. We leaf through
a thrift-store copy of Dick and Jane,
its cover frayed, spine held on with tape.

My son disdains it now. Too many *ohs*.

But what else is there to say when something
turns your head—a leaf, acorn, squirrel?

In a moment of surprise words flee the mind,
but sound comes unwilling, a quick-stopped
breath, brief parting of the lips,
to take the whole world in.