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October

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October

Michelle DeRose

This is the month of the dead
when all things gentle like leaves
are gashed with color and they fall or fly
through violent wind like sinners
to concrete, grass, or gutter.

In the crunch of brown leaves caught in the curb
one newly fallen maple, glistening and damp,
the color of my hand clamped over the open mouth
of a flashlight,
I think of Kevin,
who didn't attend Parents' Day in 1989,

of Gang Lu two years later, blasting the last day of October
to frighten Iowa from dressing like phantoms,

and on the day the air grew damp, of Dan,
who fell gently, I hope, to rest in soft grass.

October reminds me that the beautiful ones are dying.