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The First Star of Fall

Ryan G. Van Cleave

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The First Star of Fall

by Ryan G. Van Cleave

The black-soaked sky is huge with the voice
of cormorants and yellow-breasted swallows.

Leaves drained of all color
litter the ground like so many unwrapped cigars.

The resinous scent of oak and spruce is here tonight,
nearly lost in the heavy purple breath of lilacs.

And high above the bulky shadows of chestnuts—
there, above the tallest tier of pine—

a guttering white dwarf, it is self-control,
the light of a heart exhausting itself.

On the brink of extinction,
its splintering shine casts a spell,
asking us to please, please last.



Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall

