

October Friday

by [Charles Hughes](#) in the [October 10, 2018](#) issue

A boy is walking home from seventh grade,  
Happy because it's Friday and because  
Pure sun is setting leaves on fire, although  
He doesn't really see the reds and golds  
Flaming along the way he always goes.  
The radiance pulls him, and he feels its pull.  
In minutes, he'll be home and changed and out,  
Throwing around a football with a friend.  
In Vietnam, the war is ramping up.  
The boy hasn't yet heard of Vietnam,  
Nor does he know that war is prophecy  
And adamant, perpetual self-fulfillment.  
He's been baptized and taught that God is love,  
That Christ died for our sins and rose again  
For our salvation—none of which he doubts  
Or thinks about. He'll lean and stretch for a catch,  
Running as if possessed, the cooling air  
Washing against his face and reaching arms.  
God doesn't stop the wars and maybe can't,  
The world being powerful and God being love  
(A thought a later self will come to think).  
The boy, this afternoon, is bathed in firelight.  
He'll grab the pass, crash an imagined goal line,  
And go inside for supper and the night.  
Outside, the leaves will lose their fire and dim.  
A little breeze will blow up and begin  
To take a few of them, then more and more,  
And drift them down in whispers, which a witness,  
Alert in the dark, could well hear as a calling—  
To burn, as God-like leaves do in the fall.