**How to Have a Midlife Crisis**

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that won’t kill you, or bankrupt you,

or end your marriage,

or your reputation.

First, you must accept

the inevitability of descent—

resist the advice of friends and family,

your spouse, your ego,

for the Botox, the surgery, the Lexapro.

You are not an aging artifact, not a historical building,

not a deflated dirigible needing helium.

Let yourself taste the regret, lean into the sharp bite

of shame, dig deep into the bruised cavern, uproot

the knot of narratives, moth-eaten scripts,

peel back the rotting masks—

who you thought you had to be

to belong, to be loved.

Let them decompose, softly,

dig deeper still, until you reach

the rich loam of childhood.

Find yourself there—tender,

wild bird or playful mouse,

with star-lit eyes and flaming heart,

magic spilling from your fingers, creating

worlds from dust.

Remember

who you were and what you loved.

Cradle close your child self—small,

winged & wild, gentle, fierce -

commit to not forget

again, grow up immense, sublime,

on fire. Spend the rest of your days

stretching wings, sprouting roots, hunting

for awe and delight.