

Reflections of a Midcareer Inflection Point

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2015, a seemingly long time ago,
yet not so long in many ways,
I caught myself off guard.

An involuntary reaction to
an emotional spark.
A harsh voice raised...
Wait, that's mine!

Pulse quickens,
Jaw clenches,
What's going on?
Something is amiss.
I investigate.

Taking inventory:

Exhaustion, check;
Overwhelm, abundant;
Contentment, eh, enough;
Pleasure, almost empty, noted;
Fulfillment, huh, I've misplaced the jar;
I'll look for it later.

It's stifling.

What is it?

Found it!

This ware is scorched.

Toweling it off,
the label becomes clear:

Rage, copious and steaming.

The tureen had been cool and empty
just before my post-call nap,

I'm almost certain of it.

Yet, with the nap interrupted,

one mundane phone call

with a meager task asked,

"I need a ride,"

A guttural roar ensued

as Rage billowed.

Driving to fetch my daughter,

My head throbbing,

I ponder in dismay.

Who lit the match,

Who overfilled the vessel abruptly?

I rack my brain to no avail.

It would be years before the culprit was revealed,

Its name unknown to me at the time.

In that distant season,

Or was it yesterday,

Awareness arrived.
With labeled enemy faced,
Recovery made possible
Restoration achieved.
The perpetrator
now exposed—
It's name:
Burnout.