

## Distilled

In the heart of midlife  
I began observing  
my elders.  
I wanted to learn  
how to inhabit  
the final stages of life.  
What I observed:  
Aging is a process  
of distilling down,  
of concentrating,  
of drying like fruit  
into essential flavors.  
In that, I found both hope  
and a warning.

The warning:  
Without intention  
and awareness,  
an elder ripens into  
into the essence  
of her flaws.  
If her fear or anger  
or denial dominate,  
she risks dying  
as she has lived.

The hope:  
By turning away  
from oneself and  
towards the world,  
the children, and those  
in her sphere of influence,  
an elder assumes  
the power to bless.

Soon – too soon –  
the time will come  
when my elders  
are all gone,  
should we all  
pass in order.  
I will no longer

be able to seek  
guidance, except  
from the otherworld.  
I will be one of those  
standing at the edge.  
Making our way  
to that border  
is not optional.  
How we traverse it is.

To be one who blesses,  
to be regarded  
as worthy, I must take  
my fundamental fears  
and hold them up  
to a forgiving heart  
and a generous universe.  
Only then can I  
set myself aside  
and become  
a gift of aging,  
distilled in that mystical  
alchemical process,  
strong, concentrated,  
and full of wonder.