



The Oldest We've Ever Been: Seven True Stories of Midlife Transitions

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I had this idea of where I should be in middle age, an image that had been born in the 1950s when I'd been a child watching Lassie on TV. As outdated as it was, that blurred snapshot somewhere at the back of my mind actually did have a green lawn, a house, a picket fence, and two kids: a boy and a girl. In the corner, there was my husband in a suit coming home from work. And was that me at the front door in an apron? Did every woman my age have a similar snapshot in their mental scrapbook? In the decades since Lassie, maybe I'd managed to update the picture some. I'd erased the apron and added a home office instead. Still, there it was. And here I was, nowhere near it. In this engaging collection, editor Maud Lavin has enlisted seven talented writers to share their stories of midlife transitions, reflecting the unpredictable challenges and unexpected graces that characterize this multilayered stage of life. The writers—Kim Larsen, Calvin Forbes, Ellen McMahon, Allan deSouza, Peggy Shinner, William Davies King, and Maud Lavin together with Locke Bowman—offer a wide range of stories and experiences that are both universal and deeply personal in their details. From tales of divorce and dating through the lens of an eccentric collecting habit to the challenges of dealing with a close friend's grave illness, these memorable essays evoke a complex, honest, and often surprising picture of what it means to be middle-aged. The authors aim to share stories appreciating midlife, not as the problem child of self-help books (those many manuals that claim to have the answer to menopausal mood swings or abdominal fat or bone thinning), but as a wealth of events and perceptions and feelings never experienced before. This richly layered montage offers readers a chance to reflect on the gifts of this age and, finally, to savor the idea of being “the oldest we've ever been.”

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