

Hang in There!

In the half bath, after therapy,
where I splash water on my face
there is a framed quotation
reminding me
that, though I am the same

age as Fitzgerald
when he drank himself to death,
nevertheless, Fitzgerald said:
For what it's worth, begin again.
Be who you want to be.

It's like that cat, I think, the one
on every guidance counselor's door,
the dangling one beneath the caption:
Hang in there!
The cat

would have to fall.
Fitzgerald too.
It's in the fling
the thing that brings us low.
But more than gravity and gin,

the biggest drag is the false
hope, the quote Fitzgerald never said,
the caption for a silent cat
who, letting go—be brave, I know—
would live to leap again.

—Benjamin Shalva