



Felicity

Mary

Oliver

Poems

SELECT TITLES ALSO BY MARY OLIVER

POETRY

American Primitive

Dream Work

New and Selected Poems, Volume One

White Pine

The Leaf and the Cloud

What Do We Know

Why I Wake Early

New and Selected Poems, Volume Two

Swan

A Thousand Mornings

Dog Songs

Blue Horses

PROSE

Blue Pastures

Winter Hours

A Poetry Handbook

Felicity

Mary Oliver

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For Anne Taylor

The Journey

“You broke the cage and flew.”

RUMI

Don't Worry

Things take the time they take. Don't
worry.

How many roads did St. Augustine follow
before he became St. Augustine?

Walking to Indian River

I'm ready for spring, but it hasn't arrived.

Not yet.

Still I take my walk, looking for any
early enhancements.

It's mostly attitude. I'm certain

I'll see something.

I start down the path, peering in
all directions.

The mangroves, as always, are standing in their
beloved water,

their new leaves very small and tender
and pale.

And, look! the way the rising sun

strikes them,

they could be flowers
opening!

Roses

Everyone now and again wonders about those questions that have no ready answers: first cause, God's existence, what happens when the curtain goes down and nothing stops it, not kissing, not going to the mall, not the Super Bowl.

"Wild roses," I said to them one morning. "Do you have the answers? And if you do, would you tell me?"

The roses laughed softly. "Forgive us," they said. "But as you can see, we are just now entirely busy being roses."

Moments

There are moments that cry out to be fulfilled.
Like, telling someone you love them.
Or giving your money away, all of it.

Your heart is beating, isn't it?
You're not in chains, are you?

There is nothing more pathetic than caution
when headlong might save a life,
even, possibly, your own.

The World I Live In

I have refused to live
locked in the orderly house of
reasons and proofs.

The world I live in and believe in
is wider than that. And anyway,
what's wrong with *Maybe*?

You wouldn't believe what once or
twice I have seen. I'll just
tell you this:
only if there are angels in your head will you
ever, possibly, see one.

Do the Trees Speak?

Do the trees speak back to the wind
when the wind offers some invitational comment?
As some of us do, do they also talk to the sun?
I believe so, and if such belief need rest on
evidence, let me just say, Sometimes it's
an earful.

But there's more.

If you can hear the trees in their easy hours
of course you can also hear them later,
crying out at the sawmill.

I Am Pleased to Tell You

Mr. Death, I am pleased to tell you, there are rifts in your long black coat. Today Rumi (obit. 1273) came visiting, and not for the first time. True he didn't speak with his tongue but from memory, and whether he was short or tall I still don't know. But he was as real as the tree I was under. Just because something's physical doesn't mean it's the greatest. He offered a poem or two, then sauntered on. I sat awhile feeling content and feeling contentment in the tree also. Isn't everything in the world shared? And one of the poems contained a tree, so of course the tree felt included. That's Rumi, who has no trouble slipping out of your long black coat, oh Mr. Death.

Leaves and Blossoms Along the Way

If you're John Muir you want trees to live among. If you're Emily, a garden will do.

Try to find the right place for yourself. If you can't find it, at least dream of it.

When one is alone and lonely, the body gladly lingers in the wind or the rain, or splashes into the cold river, or pushes through the ice-crusting snow.

Anything that touches.

God, or the gods, are invisible, quite understandable. But holiness is visible, entirely.

Some words will never leave God's mouth, no matter how hard you listen.

In all the works of Beethoven, you will not find a single lie.

All important ideas must include the trees, the mountains, and the rivers.

To understand many things you must reach out of your own condition.

For how many years did I wander slowly through the forest. What wonder and glory I would have missed had I ever been in a hurry!

Beauty can both shout and whisper, and still it explains nothing.

The point is, you're you, and that's for keeps.

I Wake Close to Morning

Why do people keep asking to see
 God's identity papers
when the darkness opening into morning
 is more than enough?
Certainly any god might turn away in disgust.
Think of Sheba approaching
 the kingdom of Solomon.
Do you think she had to ask,
 "Is this the place?"

Meadowlark

Has anyone seen meadowlark?
I've been looking for probably
forty years now

unsuccessfully.

He used to live in the field
I crossed many a morning
heading to the woods,
truant again from school.

There were no meadowlarks in the school.
Which was a good enough reason for me
not to want to be there.

But now it's more serious.
There is no field, neither have the woods survived.

So, where is meadowlark?
If anyone has seen him, please would you let me know
posthaste?

The Wildest Storm

Yesterday the wildest storm
I ever witnessed flew past
west to east, a shaggy
howling sky-beast

flinging hail even as lightning
printed out its sizzling
unreadable language
followed by truly terrible laughter.

But, no. Maybe it wasn't laughter
but a reminder we need—
seemingly something to do with power.

What could it be? What could it be?
What do you think it could be?

Cobb Creek

It's morning at the creek-edge
and the question is:
Shall I jump as usual and enjoy,
as I have hundreds of times,
the casual down-thrust of my legs
on the other side?

Certain facts are unavoidable, still
something in me
refuses to abdicate.

I don't spend much time on it.
I jump
and for the first time in my seventy-seven years
I fall in.

What a beautiful splash!

Nothing Is Too Small Not to Be Wondered About

The cricket doesn't wonder
if there's a heaven
or, if there is, if there's room for him.

It's fall. Romance is over. Still, he sings.
If he can, he enters a house
through the tiniest crack under the door.
Then the house grows colder.

He sings slower and slower.
Then, nothing.

This must mean something, I don't know what.
But certainly it doesn't mean
he hasn't been an excellent cricket
all his life.

Whistling Swans

Do you bow your head when you pray or do you look
up into that blue space?

Take your choice, prayers fly from all directions.

And don't worry about what language you use,

God no doubt understands them all.

Even when the swans are flying north and making
such a ruckus of noise, God is surely listening
and understanding.

Rumi said, There is no proof of the soul.

But isn't the return of spring and how it
springs up in our hearts a pretty good hint?

Yes, I know, God's silence never breaks, but is
that really a problem?

There are thousands of voices, after all.

And furthermore, don't you imagine (I just suggest it)
that the swans know about as much as we do about
the whole business?

So listen to them and watch them, singing as they fly.

Take from it what you can.

Storage

When I moved from one house to another there were many things I had no room for. What does one do? I rented a storage space. And filled it. Years passed. Occasionally I went there and looked in, but nothing happened, not a single twinge of the heart.

As I grew older the things I cared about grew fewer, but were more important. So one day I undid the lock and called the trash man. He took everything.

I felt like the little donkey when his burden is finally lifted. Things! Burn them, burn them! Make a beautiful fire! More room in your heart for love, for the trees! For the birds who own nothing—the reason they can fly.

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