

## Tacky

And your red hat with plain white letters  
tacked on in some factory in China where few people  
and some machines sweated over one long assembly line,  
to make sure that the right combination of thread and red and glue and letters  
found its way to a living room in  
Nebraska, where you place it over the brick fireplace in the heart of your home.  
And your daughter, who you scoop up and kiss  
as she wobbles her small body in the perfect position  
to tip over on the bricks  
wails and wails.  
And your daughter, who will grow up to be gay  
will sit under the same fireplace you saved her from and hide  
parts of herself from you.  
And your daughter, who will grow up and  
open the wrong door at a teenage party where  
some ghoul of a man will corner her cause he  
wants to find out if she's "really not into dudes"  
the smell of his breath will stick with her beyond the  
lifespan of all other details of that memory.  
And your daughter, who will grow up and  
tell you that she's going on a band trip  
when really she's taking a shoebox of cash  
over state lines and into a clinic, where  
she won't cry but she will cling to a nurse who  
whispers: "it's going to be okay."  
And your daughter,  
who will have grown up  
watching all of the ways you've collapsed backwards  
and swelled into the hat on the mantle  
will sit some years later  
at Thanksgiving dinner, and find the  
list of all the things she's had to forgive you for  
at the bottom of her wine glass.

-Audrey Schreiber



Poetry  
By  
Mary Oliver

*The Journey*

One day you finally knew  
what you had to do, and began,  
though the voices around you  
kept shouting  
their bad advice--  
though the whole house  
began to tremble  
and you felt the old tug  
at your ankles.  
"Mend my life!"  
each voice cried.  
But you didn't stop.  
You knew what you had to do,  
though the wind pried  
with its stiff fingers  
at the very foundations,  
though their melancholy  
was terrible.  
It was already late  
enough, and a wild night,  
and the road full of fallen  
branches and stones.  
But little by little,  
as you left their voices behind,  
the stars began to burn  
through the sheets of clouds,  
and there was a new voice  
which you slowly  
recognized as your own,  
that kept you company  
as you strode deeper and deeper  
into the world,  
determined to do  
the only thing you could do--  
determined to save  
the only life you could save.

### ***Wild Geese***

You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.  
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.  
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers.  
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
are heading home again.  
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.

from *Dream Work* by Mary Oliver

### ***Sleeping in the Forest***

I thought the earth remembered me,  
she took me back so tenderly,  
arranging her dark skirts, her pockets  
full of lichens and seeds.  
I slept as never before, a stone on the river bed,  
nothing between me and the white fire of the stars  
but my thoughts, and they floated light as moths  
among the branches of the perfect trees.  
All night I heard the small kingdoms  
breathing around me, the insects,  
and the birds who do their work in the darkness.  
All night I rose and fell, as if in water,  
grappling with a luminous doom. By morning  
I had vanished at least a dozen times  
into something better.

### ***When death comes***

When death comes  
like the hungry bear in autumn;  
when death comes and takes all the bright coins  
from his purse

to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;  
when death comes  
like the measles-pox

when death comes  
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosity,  
wondering:  
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything  
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,  
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,  
and I consider eternity as another possibility,

and I think of each life as a flower, as common  
as a field daisy, and as singular,

and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,  
tending, as all music does, toward silence,

and each body a lion of courage, and something  
precious to the earth.

When it's over, I want to say all my life  
I was a bride married to amazement.  
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my  
arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder  
if I have made of my life something particular, and  
real.

I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,  
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this  
world

Mary Oliver