

## In Blackwater Woods

Mary Oliver

Look, the trees  
are turning  
their own bodies  
into pillars

of light,  
are giving off the rich  
fragrance of cinnamon  
and fulfillment,

the long tapers  
of cattails  
are bursting and floating away over  
the blue shoulders

of the ponds,  
and every pond,  
no matter what its  
name is, is

nameless now.  
Every year  
everything  
I have ever learned

in my lifetime  
leads back to this: the fires  
and the black river of loss  
whose other side

is salvation,  
whose meaning  
none of us will ever know.  
To live in this world

you must be able  
to do three things:  
to love what is mortal;  
to hold it

against your bones knowing  
your own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes to let it go,  
to let it go.