

## The Journey

Mary Oliver, "The Journey." ©1986 by Mary Oliver.

One day you finally knew  
what you had to do, and began,  
though the voices around you  
kept shouting  
5 their bad advice—  
though the whole house  
began to tremble  
and you felt the old tug  
at your ankles.  
10 "Mend my life!"  
each voice cried.  
But you didn't stop.  
You knew what you had to do,  
though the wind pried  
15 with its stiff fingers  
at the very foundations—  
though their melancholy  
was terrible.  
It was already late  
20 enough, and a wild night  
and the road full of fallen  
branches and stones.  
But little by little,  
as you left their voices behind,  
25 the stars began to burn  
through the sheets of clouds,  
and there was a new voice,  
which you slowly  
recognized as your own,  
30 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  
35 the only life you could save.