POETRY

FIVE A.M. IN THE PINEWOODS

I'd seen
their hoofprints in the deep
needles and knew
they ended the long night

under the pines, walking
like two mute
and beautiful women toward
the deeper woods, so I

Got up in the dark and
went there. They came
slowly down the hill
and looked at me sitting under

the blue trees, shyly
they stepped
closer and stared
from under their thick lashes and
even

nibbled some damp
tassels of weeds. This
is not a poem about a dream,
though it could be.

This is a poem about the world that is
ours, or could be.
Finally
One of them—I swear it—

Would have come to my arms.
But the other
stamped sharp hoof in the
pine needs like

The tap of sanity,
and they went off together through
the trees. When I woke
I was alone,

I was thinking:
so this is how you swim inward,
So this is how you flow outward,
so this is how

MOCCASIN FLOWERS

All my life
so far,
I have loved
more than one thing,

including the mossy hooves
of dreams
the spongy litter
under the tall trees.

In spring
the moccasin flowers
reach for the crackling
lick of the sun

and burn down. Sometimes,
In the shadows,
I see the hazy eyes,
The lamb-lips

of oblivion,
it's deep drowse,
and I can imagine a new nothing
in the universe,

the matted leaves splitting
open, revealing
the black planks
of the stairs.

But all my life — so far —
I have loved best
how the flowers rise
and open, how

the pink lungs of their bodies
enter the fire of the world
and stand there shining
and willing—the one

thing they can do before
they shuffle forward
into the floor of darkness, they
become the trees.

- from "House of Light" by Mary Oliver

DHARMA

Buddha’s Final Teaching

"Make of yourself a light. Rely upon yourself. Do not depend upon anyone
else. Make my teachings your light. Rely upon them. Do not depend on
others’ teachings."

-Buddha

Practicing Patience

In Tibetan Buddhism there’s a set of teachings for cultivating compassion
called mind training, or lojong. One of the lojong teachings is, “Whichever
of the two occurs, be patient.” This means if a painful situation occurs, be
patient, and if a pleasant situation occurs, be patient. We stay in the middle.

-Pema Chodron

Metta Meditation

Metta Meditation, also known as Loving-Kindness Meditation is a practice of de vel op ing
good will towards yourself and others. With each recitation of the phrases,
we are expressing an intention, planting the seeds of loving wishes over and over
in our heart.

You can begin the practice of loving-kindness by meditating for fifteen or twenty
minutes in a quiet place. Let yourself sit in a comfortable fashion. Let your body rest
and be relaxed. Let your heart be soft. Let go of any plans or preoccupations.

Begin with yourself. Breathe gently, and recite inwardly the following traditional
phrases directed toward our own well-being. You begin with yourself because out-
without loving yourself it is almost impossible to love others.

May I be filled with lovingkindness.
May I be safe from inner and outer dangers.
May I be well in body and mind.
May I be peaceful and truly happy.

Repeat these phrases over and over again, letting the feelings permeate your body
and mind. When you feel you have established some stronger sense of lovingkind-
ness for yourself, you can then expand your meditation to include others. After fo cusing
on yourself, choose a benefactor, someone in your life who has loved and
truly cared for you. Picture this person, invite them into your attention and carefully
recite the same phrases.

Continue practicing by creating the exact phrases that best express your kindness
and follow the way that most easily opens your heart. You can then send good will
toward a friend, a neutral person and someone that is difficult for you in your life.

-Jack Kornfield