

SNOWY NIGHT *by Mary Oliver*

Last night, an owl
in the blue dark
tossed an indeterminate number
of carefully shaped sounds into
the world, in which,
a quarter of a mile away, I happened
to be standing.
I couldn't tell
which one it was –
the barred or the great-horned
ship of the air –
it was that distant. But, anyway,
aren't there moments
that are better than knowing something,
and sweeter? Snow was falling,
so much like stars
filling the dark trees
that one could easily imagine
its reason for being was nothing more
than prettiness. I suppose
if this were someone else's story
they would have insisted on knowing
whatever is knowable – would have hurried
over the fields
to name it – the owl, I mean.
But it's mine, this poem of the night,
and I just stood there, listening and holding out
my hands to the soft glitter
falling through the air. I love this world,
but not for its answers.
And I wish good luck to the owl,
whatever its name –
and I wish great welcome to the snow,
whatever its severe and comfortless
and beautiful meaning.