

## FIVE A.M. IN THE PINEWOODS

Mary Oliver

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 needles 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 you pray.