

## The Ponds—Mary Oliver

Every year  
the lilies  
are so perfect  
I can hardly believe  
their lapped light crowding  
the black,  
mid-summer ponds.  
Nobody could count all of them—  
the muskrats swimming  
among the pads and the grasses  
can reach out their muscular arms and touch  
only so many, they are that  
rife and wild.  
But what in this world  
is perfect?  
I bend closer and see  
how this one is clearly lopsided—  
and that one wears an orange blight—  
and this one is a glossy cheek half nibbled away—  
and that one is a slumped purse  
full of its own  
unstoppable decay.  
Still, what I want in my life  
is to be willing  
to be dazzled—  
to cast aside the weight of facts  
and maybe even  
to float a little  
above this difficult world.  
I want to believe I am looking  
into the white fire of a great mystery.  
I want to believe that the imperfections are nothing—  
that the light is everything—that it is more than the sum  
of each flawed blossom rising and fading. And I do.

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