

Roses, Late Summer
by Mary Oliver

What happens
to the leaves after
they turn red and golden and fall
away? What happens

to the singing birds
when they can't sing
any longer? What happens
to their quick wings?

Do you think there is any
personal heaven
for any of us?
Do you think anyone,

the other side of that darkness,
will call to us, meaning us?
Beyond the trees
the foxes keep teaching their children

to live in the valley.
so they never seem to vanish, they are always there
in the blossom of the light
that stands up every morning

in the dark sky.
And over one more set of hills,
along the sea,
the last roses have opened their factories of sweetness

and are giving it back to the world.
if I had another life
I would want to spend it all on some
unstinting happiness.

I would be a fox, or a tree
full of waving branches.
I wouldn't mind being a rose

in a field full of roses.

Fear has not yet occurred to them, nor ambition.

Reason they have not yet thought of.

Neither do they ask how long they must be roses, and then what.

Or any other foolish question.