

## Ode to the Joyful Ones

*Shield your joyful ones.  
—from an Anglican prayer*

That they walk, even stumble, among us is reason  
to praise them, or protect them—even the sound  
of a lead slug dropped on a lead plate, even that, for them,  
is music. Because they bring laughter's  
brief amnesia. Because they stand,  
talking, taking pleasure in others,  
with their hands on the shoulders of strangers  
and the shoulders of each other.  
Because you don't have to tell them to walk toward the light.  
Because if there are two pork chops  
they will serve you the better one.  
Because they will give you the crutch off their backs.  
Because when there are two of them together  
their shining fills the room.  
Because you don't have to tell them to walk toward the light.

- Thomas Lux

## **Waking**

Get up from your bed,  
go out from your house,  
follow the path you know so well,  
so well that you now see nothing  
and hear nothing  
unless something can cry loudly to you,  
and for you it seems  
even then  
no cry is louder than yours  
and in your own darkness  
cries have gone unheard  
as long as you can remember.

These are hard paths we tread  
but they are green  
and lined with leaf mould  
and we must love their contours  
as we love the body branching  
with its veins and tunnels of dark earth.

I know that sometimes  
your body is hard like a stone  
on a path that storms break over,  
embedded deeply  
into that something that you think is you,  
and you will not move  
while the voice all around  
tears the air  
and fills the sky with jagged light.

But sometimes unawares  
those sounds seem to descend  
as if kneeling down into you and you listen strangely caught  
as the terrible voice moving closer  
halts,  
and in the silence  
now arriving  
whispers

Get up, I depend  
on you utterly.  
Everything you need  
you had  
the moment before  
you were born.

- David Whyte

## **A Center**

by Ha Jin

You must hold your quiet center,  
where you do what only you can do.  
If others call you a maniac or a fool,  
just let them wag their tongues.  
If some praise your perseverance,  
don't feel too happy about it—  
only solitude is a lasting friend.  
You must hold your distant center.  
Don't move even if earth and heaven quake.  
If others think you are insignificant,  
that's because you haven't held on long enough.  
As long as you stay put year after year,  
eventually you will find a world  
beginning to revolve around you.