

## To Be of Use

by Marge Piercy

The people I love the best jump into work head first without dallying in the shallows and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight. They seem to become natives of that element, the black sleek heads of seals bounding like half-submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart, who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience, who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward, who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge in the task, who go into the fields to harvest and work in a row and pass the bags along, who are not parlor generals and field deserters but move in a common rhythm when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud. Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust. But the thing worth doing well done has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident. Greek amphoras for wine or oil, hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums. But you know they were made to be used. The pitcher cries for water to carry and a person for work that is real.