Charlie Brown in the Dead of Night

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This howling makes me shiver, but it ought to be beautiful. I wish he would stop it. And you’re out there, too, little girl, smiling over sticker albums and apple slices. Who is it takes care of us? Who mends trees when their limbs crack, who thinks of a question like that? I know worry is a way of filing, but the folders are too long or too narrow and none of my frets ever fit. The space around my head at night is easier to work with, blankets piled on top of me so I can barely see the rise of my chest. They don’t mend them, that’s who. I don’t know which is worse, the barking or the silence.

Tomorrow, maybe, I can win your eye with animal crackers or a pencil with sparkling foil clefs. And what good is that, the blessing eye that might not see me surrounded by autumn’s energy and nearly bursting with rhapsodic blood? It’s a lot to look for. There’s a lot to see in people, the way they hover at the edge of knowing and oblivion, the way they keep on clipping hair and making appointments, clocks with hearts. It’s definitely a tick when I see you, your dress smoothed over invisible knees, tick the way I feel you know me. I’ve danced with girls before, swaying lightly back and forth, just on the edge of what it means to fill my body, of being poured in like wet cement. Then worry filled up my shoes, but it was almost pretty, a haze like sundown or chiffon before I had to sit down.

If life is a series of escapes to the punchbowl, I want to ask out loud, is this it? But what kind of question is that? I’ll be fixed tomorrow when the day is mine, opened up like the white cream of a cookie. Keep trading lunches and mittens with me—what is love but one
big cloakroom—because mine is the longing
of a Hercules let loose, mine is the fear of a burst
oil candle, bright with flame and dim with the rupture.
He’ll keep it up. Until I’m out there barefoot
with flashlight and dogdish, or until sunlight sticks up
unruly, ready as a willing head waiting to be combed.