Necessary Light

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WHEN I WAKE TO A BEDROOM FILLED
WITH BLUE LIGHTS

I open my eyes to a room sharp
with the dog’s bark and blue
with the flashing announcement
that once again in the world something’s not right.

What calls four cruisers to block off Beaver Street,
the small town side street so quiet, so late?
Someone’s been stopped. Some fugitive?
Drunk or drugged? Or merely skidded off-track
the way last winter I fell and broke my wrist
on the path to my own garage—the kind of trip-up
that takes one instant of not watching
to change your life. Exactly the way

out of a sound sleep, this strobe-light blue pulls me
into the middle of someone else’s predicament
so that I know again for sure
that even the deadbolt on the door and the weight
of two comforters can’t shut out the danger.
And because I have to find out what’s going on,
to make sure the cops have the lid on,
I get my uncle’s World War I binoculars

and go stand in the bathtub, ridiculous
in my Grandma Moses gown, hair sticking up,
because the window over it has the best view,
but I can’t make out why a small car

is slanted across the street, why three guys
in jeans are standing around while a couple of cops
run up and down, or why the houses across the way,
the whole neighborhood,

appears and disappears in the strobos.
And there are no guns drawn, no blood,
no shouts, no one trying to escape, so that finally
I decide it’s nothing after all
and go back to broken sleep, where the room continues to pulse with blue for hours, and I dream—a ten-gallon aquarium—and I am a peacock-tailed guppy, swimming back and forth through water’s blue maze.