

A Sad Child

Margaret Atwood

You're sad because you're sad.
It's psychic. It's the age. It's chemical.
Go see a shrink or take a pill,
or hug your sadness like an eyeless doll
you need to sleep.

Well, all children are sad
but some get over it.
Count your blessings. Better than that,
buy a hat. Buy a coat or pet.
Take up dancing to forget.

Forget what?
Your sadness, your shadow,
whatever it was that was done to you
the day of the lawn party
when you came inside flushed with the sun,
your mouth sulky with sugar,
in your new dress with the ribbon
and the ice-cream smear,
and said to yourself in the bathroom,
I am not the favorite child.

My darling, when it comes
right down to it
and the light fails and the fog rolls in
and you're trapped in your overturned body
under a blanket or burning car,

and the red flame is seeping out of you
and igniting the tarmac beside your head
or else the floor, or else the pillow,
none of us is;
or else we all are.

Questions

- Annotate the poem as usual
 - Complete the following questions. Point-form is fine.
1. Summarise each stanza of the poem.
 2. What parts of the poem sound like a parent talking to a child? What about the parts that sound like a child talking?
 3. Look for examples of figurative language. Specifically, look for metaphors, similes, and hyperbole.
 4. What do the last two lines of the poem refer to? None of us are what? All of us are what?
 5. What is this poem about? What evidence supports your idea?
 6. What is Atwood's message?
 7. What devices does Atwood use the most effectively? Explain why.