

MELANIE JORDAN RACK

*Charlie Brown in the Dead of Night*

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.