

Mike James

The Night After You Left, I Dreamed The Whole World Was Burning

woke to the sound
of rain
on the roof

all night the dream
of fire

house
fields around house
woods to town's edge
town and townspeople

also birds
strange flightless birds
(red, black and black)

all the birds
calling, calling

Poem

when learning a language
learn the trickiest words first

words like “love” and “soul”

think about the way a child learns to speak
by wants

by what he can hold

love, then, is what
can slip
from our hands

a juggler’s grace
is needed

 --as some can keep
half a dozen oranges
in mid-air--

an act of not always, but now

Postcard Invitation From New Lodgings

for Michael Wurster

our house is far enough outside of town
to almost be a destination

a star map or a compass
can, just about, lead you here

i tell every friend
if you are near, stop by

if you can't make it
(from health, money or distance)

still send me a greeting so i can,
once again, wish you well

Poem

all day a crow sits on the
wooden bones of an old fence

crows are good at waiting
much better than we are
with our alphabet of wants

the crow waits for darkness
and the music it brings

darkness plays an orchestra
of self-made instruments
that crack and buzz

the one legged cricket
masters his own jazz

Still Life, With Smudges

after tasting
one long
finger
fresh from
the yellow sun
batter of
a cake
or ladling
up the
winter taste
of venison
in stew
my grandmother
might pause
to say

*close enough
is enough*

then add
two seconds
later

*perfection's
like that
little boy
who won't
get dirty
who won't
play rough*

Mike James' poems have appeared in a wide variety of magazines. Recent work has appeared in *Comstock Review*, *Misfit* and *Iodine*. New work is forthcoming in *Chiron Review* and *Poem*. His most recent books are *Past Due Notices* (Main Street Rag) and *Elegy In Reverse* (Aldrich Press). He lives in Georgia with his wife and five kids. Mike.James@nissan-usa.com