

STORM

The snow visits us,
taking little bits of us with it,
to become part of the earth,
an early death and an early return—

like the filing of tax forms.
And all you can say after adding up
column after column: “I’m not myself.”

And all you can say after the long night
of searching for one certain scrap of paper:
“It never existed.”

And when all the lamps are lit
and the smell of the stew
has followed you upstairs
and slipped under the door of your study:
“The lute is telling the story
of the life I might have lived,
had I not—”

In my study, which is without heat,
in mid-January, in the hills
of a northern province—only
the thin white-haired volumes
of poetry speak, quietly, like
unfed birds on a night visit

to a cat farm. And an airplane is lost
in a storm of fitting pins.
The snow falls, far into the interior.

The breath of fresh air that accompanies all of Jim Tate's poems is fittingly colder in "Storm," the outrageous gusts of language and subject quietly outrageous—and utterly convincing, like the snow that

*visits us,
taking little bits of us with it*

- Charles North