



Image from PickPik

James B. Nicola

## Packing

Last time I said good-bye, you said *Don't go*.  
That's why I've packed in silence through the night  
and let you sleep. It's for the best, you know.

I laid my shirts and trousers in a row  
as I saw you do, packing for your flight,  
first time we said good-bye, ages ago,

then stacked them in the suitcase thus and so,  
and saw, as far as packing goes, how right  
you've always been, my love. And now I know:

inverted stock-stuffed shoes on top. Below,  
rolled briefs and such to stuff the corners tight.  
The way to pack for people on the go.

Will call tonight. If not, then tomorrow.  
Next week. Or write. Next month. It's getting light.  
Close curtains tight. Sleep. Sleep. My love, you know,

is absolute and would not hurt, although  
I fear there lurks a lout within that might,  
were I to linger longer. And we know  
that if I say good-bye, you'll scream *Don't go*.

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James B. Nicola is the author of eight collections of poetry, the latest three being *Fires of Heaven: Poems of Faith and Sense*, *Turns & Twists*, and *Natural Tendencies*. His book *Playing the Audience: The Practical Actor's Guide to Live Performance* won a *Choice* magazine award.