

P.O. Box 117

by [Nola Garrett](#) in the [December 19, 2018](#) issue

*When this letter reaches you, know  
I have sent you Naaman, my servant,  
that you may cure him of his leprosy.*

—II Kings 5:6

I praise all things postal:

the ritual  
of weighing, the taste of glue, the justice  
of one-cent stamps.

I praise each substitute  
mailman, uniform askew,  
wandering along Woodlawn Avenue,  
clutching our mail like a lost tourist.

I praise the collector's open albums aflutter  
with stamp hinges where a young miser  
sits hunched over a magnifying glass  
counting perforations.

Though Smollett wrote of *the horrors  
of prophetic dread that rack his bosom  
while the mail is read*, consider  
the correspondence of incense salesmen

and evenings at the main post office  
after the stamp buyers have left  
in silence

banks of brass boxes—  
the tinkles and sighs of their tumblers  
raining themselves down to sleep.