

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.