



by Nick Perilli

Old Jo has always delivered the mail around here. Today, she presented Perry Koolich a letter addressed to him in a bloodied envelope sealed with wax. He was already out on his porch, waiting for a package that was out for delivery. Old Jo would not move until Perry read his letter. A wind rushed across the street as the man peeled open the flap and read it aloud. A din of leaves rustled under his shaky voice.

*Dear Perry Koolich.*

*Sunday, April 30th, 2023. Cardiac arrest.*

*Your Friend,*

*Old Jo*

Perry jolted back in fear, dropping the mail. It fell with the weight of a large stone. Perry demanded to know what the letter was—what it meant—even though he could guess. He grabbed hold of Old Jo and shook her.

“You take this back, Old Jo,” Perry said. “You take this back!” Old Jo stepped away—slipped out of his grasp as if his weak hands had no structure to them at all.

And on went Old Jo down the street, giving a viscous red letter to the people on her route. Some gasped when they read their letter. Some refused it. Some of them just stood there and solemnly thanked Old Jo for bringing it to them, a welling of joy in their heavy throats.

When Old Jo reached the edge of her route, the evening sun coloring their withering skin orange, she paused for a spell. She stood on the vast corner between this street and another. Reaching into her bag for the next letter, she found only one. It was addressed to her and felt particularly heavy.

She locked it in a rusted relay box and walked on.

