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Robert J. DeMott
Short Prose Contest

Hunger

Finalist

Leonora Desar

When I was a kid I wanted mail. This is all I wanted. I'd get home, I'd say, is the mail here yet. Mom used to put it for me on the fridge. She put a magnet to it, and there it would be, all my parents' bills, electric and cable and that other daughter they tried to buy who's still somewhere in China. My mom said, what are you going to do with it. I didn't know. I just wanted to look at it. I liked the idea that someone was thinking of me. And if not me, my family. They were sitting in a little cube in Omaha, Nebraska, they were saying, you owe 82 dollars and 11 cents, but really they were saying, I love you. No one in my family said this. We said it but we didn't mean it, not the way the mail did. It took a second to say, I love you. Maybe two, if you drew it out. But with mail it took time. It took care. It took an envelope and stamps. It took licking the stamp and risking disease. My parents never risked this. They kissed each other but with a rubber. They put it in between their faces. It was all very delicate. Then they pulled away, like it was all too much. This love thing. We sat around and watched the ball drop on New Year's and my father said, all those people. And we knew exactly what he meant. All those people, pushed against each other. It was like the mail. Envelopes rubbing envelopes, and paper. I wanted to be that paper, pushed against something. I wanted to be a stamp rubbed against a tongue.