

NANCE VAN WINCKEL

Slavic Stamps

Ms. Postmistress opens a metal box
and shakes out faces like flower petals: kings
with eyes ablaze, men over-indulged
by duty and God. Outside is the charming
village, a black sedan moving slowly
through: Mr. Priest on a bullhorn.
New batteries power old prayers
and people in doorways fold their hands
as the voice blares. Each Friday the car
brings the voice. It prays from a script.

After I'm gone, I'll mail a letter back
here. *Without water, I'll say, there are no
potatoes, and without potatoes
there is no vodka.* It'll be shorter
in Czech. It'll strike home in black ink.

The priest voice peaks then fades out
by the main well, rumored to be
poisoned. Two men there take samples —
four hands in rubber gloves. Seen
from my window, their flask is amber
when it dips down for answers,
which no one will believe anyway.

From here I'm sending word
to a distant there. Compatriots, expect
a complete analysis soon. I lift
a king and lick the back of him.