

Sinéad Garrigan-Mattar

The Dead Letter Office closes down

*And my lament
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
To dearest him that lives alas! away.*

The dead letter office is closing down
because of a failure of management,
and all the not-quite-never-yet notes
will be burnt to the sound of a piped lament.

The manager wouldn't deal with the mail
and was an inveterate absentee,
he never could care for the sender or sent,
so we're locking the door and we're losing the key.

If you aimed a card, or a note, or a cry
too carelessly into the hopeful abyss
please come and claim it—take it back—
you wasted ink and were bound to miss.

From now on all unaccountable post
should be destroyed before it is sent:
forgetting the details won't be excused,
and we may read it out as a punishment.

The fire will be lit in the dark hours of night,
when dawn is stuck in its casual delay.
All letters not claimed will be chastened to ash
and the smell of their burning will herald the day.