

A Story

by stephen hastings-king

Like many little towns, ours has an archive. It is a catalog of everything that happens. It is a vast network of associations. Everything within it is complete.

Like many little archives, budget cut-backs have had an impact. In ours, information is classified and cross-referenced. But no-one can access it.

Still, if it's there, it's real.

I brought the story I was going to write with me. I handed it to the archivist.

I say: This story happened here in town. I would like it included in the archive please.

What is it? she asks while looking it over.

It's a story.

As she reads it, small lines appear on her forehead.

As she reads, she asks if I have an abstract and keywords.

I hand her another sheet of paper.

Abstract: This is a story about itself.

Subject: Sequences---Sentences---Other

She looks up. But what's it about?

I say: It's about itself.

So this is meta-fiction?

No because there aren't sentences about fiction in general. It's just a story that is about itself.

She looks at me suspiciously. She writes something on a notepad.

While she is writing, she asks: Why do you want this to be placed here?

Because the way in which the story is about itself involves a network of allusions.

She looks at me. Wouldn't it be better if people read it?

I say: They can read it here.

She says: You realize that we do not have the funds to allow access to the archive.

I nod.

She takes the piece from the notepad and disappears with it and my story into the archive.

I say: When you put it in its place in the networks of information, it will open up.

But she is not listening.

I like to think that she cataloged the story I was going to write and that it is now a little center amongst many in a vast network of ramifications. I imagine it elsewhere and complete. I like to think it is happy there.

