

DMV

by stephen hastings-king

My number has been called.

The DMV Lady sits behind a counter. I say what I want and hand her what I think are the necessary papers.

She types for a short time then looks up.

I'm sorry, sir. We cannot do this.

What do you mean?

The information hasn't arrived.

I had anticipated this. I brought a copy of the information. I hold up the paper.

I say: Here is the information.

Trying to be helpful, I point toward the area of text in the center of the page.

She says: I'm sorry. That is not the information.

I say: But it's the same information that you're waiting for.

You cannot bring the information, sir.

What do you mean I can't bring it?

When you bring information, it does not arrive.

But it's the same information.

That's not important. It must arrive. You cannot bring it.

Arrive where?

Here, she says. She points at a computer monitor.

I say: Where's that?

She looks at me like I am being obtuse.

She says: Go out in the hallway and call someone. Ask them to make the information arrive. They will tell you what to do.

So I go out into the shopping mall hallway. I sit on a rustic bench. I make a series of phone calls and find myself bouncing around seemingly interminable networks of extensions.

Finally, someone helps me. I tell him that the DMV lady said that when I bring information it does not arrive, that only he can cause information to arrive.

He says: I know. Do not worry. I will be right back.

And he puts me on hold.

When he comes back on the line, he says: Go do something and return in a half hour. The information will by then have arrived.

It is mid morning on a weekday. The mall is almost deserted.

Between the bench and the distant exit, there is an obstacle course of brightly painted plastic horses and spaceships. Some are rocking back and forth.

Behind me on the bench sits an elderly lady. Her head is wrapped in a floral kerchief. It bobs around like it is mounted on a spring.

I say: Hello.

She says: I am from Latvia.

I say: That's nice.

I look at my cell phone.

I think: If I am not a legitimate source of information and I send a text, it will never arrive.

Perhaps she can take dictation.

I tap her on the shoulder. I say: Do you take dictation?

She does not seem to understand.

I pantomime typing on my phone.

She nods. I hand her the phone.

I relay the entire story of my interaction with the DMV lady, interrupting it with gestures that I imagine would encourage the nice lady to continue typing and stopping at what seem reasonable intervals so I can push send.

I do not check the spelling. Any corrections will just make things worse.

I dictate: You can imagine the sorts of doubts raised by this questioning of my status as bearer of information.

The only reason you can see this text now is that I am dictating it to the nice Latvian lady next to me on the bench I was sent to sit on by the DMV lady.

Irina, she says.

Excuse me?

My name.

O.

After a suitable silence, I say: Can we continue please?

Of course.

I dictate: Her head seems to be mounted on a spring. I want to push it down and watch it bob around but she says no.

She stops typing.

Methodically, she puts the phone down on the bench, gathers her things, stands up and begins to walk away.

She turns back toward me.

Pointing toward the DMV, she says: They're right, you know.

I pick up the phone.

I push send.

