

# Siberia

Category: Waiting

written by Pam Kress-Dunn | October 6, 2020

The appointment with Dr. M. was over in record time, and I texted my husband, "On my way!" as I headed downstairs. Getting out was easier than in, what with the hand sanitizer, temperature check and exhaustive list of questions just inside the narrow entrance. The university hospital was a ninety-minute drive, but we didn't mind. The leaves were turning, and Iowa City has Indian food and a world-class bookstore.

I walked across the courtyard to the parking ramp, peering down the rows of cars. No blue Subaru. My left foot hasn't worked right since a fracture five years ago, and that was as far as I could go. I texted again. "I'm ready! Where are you?" Nothing.

What had started as a brisk, sunny day was turning chilly and blustery. Normally, I would have walked back inside to wait in a chair by the window. But the chairs were gone, and the young woman at the door was adamant. "Do you have an appointment?" "Well sure," I said, "but it's over and my ride's not here." Those were not the magic words. I stood there, confused and shivering in my thin cardigan. I'd had two negative Covid tests in the past month, but I felt like Typhoid Mary standing so close to the line of new patients – the blessed ones, the soon-to-be warm. So I went back outside to the bench she pointed out.

It felt like Siberia. Poor, freezing woman huddled on a metal bench, watching all the lucky people being retrieved by attentive spouses, grown children, taxi drivers. "Why aren't you answering my texts?" I wrote fruitlessly. I imagined my husband sitting in some cozy coffeehouse, sipping a London Fog while my fingers turned blue. I was as furious with myself as with him, embarrassed when I began sobbing beneath my mask. I don't do that. I am not a crier, for heaven's sake.

My last text read, "Going to Prairie Lights via Lyft." Finally, a response. "Okay." Okay? What? And then, there he was, striding out of the ramp, asking why in the world I hadn't let him know I was ready. Then all the texts popped onto his phone, evidently held back by the ramp's architecture.

I canceled the Lyft, got up and hobbled to the car. Turned the heat on high. Eventually started talking calmly, and forgave him.

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