

Customs

You are at the border coming back into Canada. When he asks what you do in Canada, you tell him, with only a brief hesitation, that you are a poet. Oh, he says, and looks at you skeptically. Do you have your poet's license? No, you say, caught off guard but nimble, you fancy, in your recovery: you tell him that you're still at least several courses short of your degree in Creative Writing. He scoffs. No, he explains, you're obviously not a poet if you don't have your poet's license; neither does it have anything to do with Creative Writing and if you were a poet you'd know that. You are entirely surprised to hear this, despising Creative Writing yourself and having no courses toward a degree but you are at least pleasantly surprised that the license bears no relation to coursework. Though you are still completely clueless about the existence of licenses.

I'm sorry, officer, you say, but I've never heard of poet's licenses. I've only been in the States a week. Is this something new? The officer knows you are a fraud and is slightly disgusted at having to deal with so pathetic a creature as one who says he is as ineffectual a thing as a poet and is, on top of it, lying.

Canada has had licenses for poets for years, he says. He says it matter of fact. You smile a rather shitty smile and look at your feet. You had thought so too, but didn't know it was official, a fait accompli. *You're kidding.*

How... do you get a license? you ask. I don't know the procedure, sir, you'll have to inquire with the appropriate authorities. Obviously he is not telling all; he said that the license had nothing to do with University certification. But he is somewhat stony by now and you don't think you'll pry anything out. You look at him and wonder what he reads? What do you read, officer, do you read any poetry? No, I don't read poetry, he says. You look into his eyes and you say It's crazy to give out poet's licenses, don't you think? He looks at you silently, sizing you up. It is possible he agrees with you. But it is at least as possible that the question is of little concern to him. And there is a long lineup of people behind. Please take your baggage with you to the little room off to the side, he says. Next!

You shuffle off to the waiting room realizing that there will be some delay here and begin to plot the next scene hoping that you can live up to your questionable but ambitious claim.

