



## Road Test Stress

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*By Lisa Miller*



It was the day of the dreaded Road Test, and my daughter was a full-on teenage terror: the stressing, pacing, attitude-through-the-roof kind.

We left the house with ample time for the test. We decided to follow the DMV directions precisely, but we overshot our destination in an effort to reach the Bronx River Parkway, only to end up circling back to I-287; the almighty DMV had us driving in circles before the test had even begun.

The scene of the road test looked way more like one for a shady drug deal. It was under an I-287 overpass in White Plains but nothing about it said DMV. There were no signs and nothing official, just black-outfitted figures surreptitiously approaching newly parked cars with purpose. But we were not in a position to complain. We were there as supplicants.

Well, except that we had arrived in a shiny white Range Rover outfitted like a reindeer, so except for that small detail, we were flying under the radar.

“We look ridiculous in this car,” my daughter muttered. Her normally elevated level of teenage self-consciousness was now in hyper-drive. Up until that moment I was pretty proud of my antlers and red nose and bright clean car. But sitting here in road test hell, I realized – a little too late – how cute and fun might not exactly go over so well with the DMV.

It was a cold day and the drizzle was acting like an IV drip, shooting the cold directly into our bloodstream. We waited. And waited. Nerves got worse. Then, at last, the woman with the power descended upon us. Her power was evident because she was the one with the portable computer on a cord around her neck.

The woman cut right to the chase: “Where’s your MV-262? It’s not here,” she said, aiming her neck computer toward the small paper pile on the hood of the car. Then she punched in the license plate number and Emily’s permit number with audible exasperation at the hold up.

The DMV operative offered up, “I don’t have one on me. I can check. Maybe my colleague has one, but I don’t. And, if he doesn’t have it…” and she walked away in mid-sentence.

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I started praying, (while climbing into the backseat of the car) and retrieved the “Driver’s License” file I’d brought from home. It was under the passenger seat. Tucked in between all sorts of useless DMV papers was that darn MV-262. I held the little miracle up high into an imaginary shaft of light.

I then raced over to show it to the DMV woman to verify its authenticity. Once given the go ahead, I filled it out fast. We then waited for what seemed like hours for the examiner to finish up with the driver-to-be that had gotten to jump the line because of our delay.

At last, came the opportunity for Emily to get behind the wheel and show she deserved a license. I was immediately demoted to stage crew and allowed the privilege of standing on the cold damp dirty sidewalk under the booming I-287 overpass, where I prayed for Emily to pass, hoping my prayers hadn’t been used up with that MV-262 hunt.

I was anxious and my feet were numb. But only minutes later the flying white reindeer approached, then pulled over to the curb and put the hazards on. I then carefully crossed the DMV zone, almost afraid to get a ticket for jaywalking. DMV paranoia had kicked into high gear by now. When I got to the car, the stocky examiner unceremoniously slid down out of the SUV and sauntered off to her next candidate without even a nod of acknowledgement in my direction.

Somehow Emily was now back in the passenger seat, so I climbed into the driver’s seat. I looked over to Emily, prepared for the tears and the sorrow and the anger and stress to erupt. I felt myself leaning toward the driver’s side door, wanting to slide down and out of that seat, back in time to the comfort of that cold wet dirty sidewalk.

Instead, a tiny smile appeared at the corners of Emily’s lips. She clutched the tiny white computer slip of paper, like it was a pot of gold. “I passed,” she whispered. And every ounce of tension and stress in both of us was replaced with giddy smiles, one big goofy hug and two little tears in the corners of my eyes.

Antlers engaged, we set a course for home.

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