

Wanted: Lost and Found

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Somebody lost a dog in Verkhnyaya Pyshma last month. The pedigree dog, a Deutsch-Drathaar, disappeared in the area of Baltym. His “owner misses him a lot.”

Hopefully someone else from Verkhnyaya Pyshma will check out [buro.nahodok.ru](#), one of a number of sites for the lost and found of Russia, although the dog is the only lost or found item from that area so far.

Other places are more active: There’s 174 in Yakutsk, but none in Birobidzhan.

In Ioshkar-Ola, somebody has found the passport of one Elbrus Akif Ogly Abidova, another a fluffy cat in a cellar “who is sitting in the dark and awaiting its fate.”

Such sites can be heart-warming, showing the kindness of strangers willing to go to the trouble of posting online to reunite the careless with their things. And then there are the mercantile finders like one Alyona Gromova who asks for a 30,000 ruble (\$975) reward for finding somebody’s passport.

I once had to pay \$100 to get back my passport. The finder then asked whether we could be friends.

Most of the lost and found are the usual driver's licenses, passports, telephones, cats and dogs. Alongside those, you also get people finding official number plates, flashcards with many photos of the same woman.

The people behind the site are quick to remind visitors to beware of con merchants who pretend they've found your document, small child, virginity, and then ask for money to return it.

One site kindly taped a conversation with a con artist who claims to have found the imaginary bag with clothes they posted on the site. The undercover repeats back all of the details in the ad when ringing up, and he and the fake finder agree to meet by the metro for the exchange.

There they proceed to re-enact a 21st-century version of Aladdin and the magic cave. The fake finder rings up and demands that first he place 1,000 rubles on his phone before he helps him out of the cave, or meets him to hand over the bag. Our Aladdin, who is recording the conversation, denies him the money and lives happily ever after.

Considering easy access to passport and driver's license records at your friendly local market, the web site warns seekers to verify unobtainable details before believing a finder who has discovered your passport or flashcard with all of your embassy's secret cables for the last century.

Sadly there is not yet a site for the metro's lost and found department, a rumored treasure trove of forgotten wooden legs, Soviet nomenklatura and some much-missed false teeth.

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