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“Uh, miss, my friend could use your bathroom?”

Erika looked up from the wad of five dollar bills she was laying out on the counter. Three piles of ten. Seven in her right hand. Jessy was wiping down tables on the other side of the cafe. The man standing across from her was searching her face under a brow-full of frizzy white hair. He was wearing a grey linen caftan, dingy, with a brown stain at the shoulder. His white hair was fighting to escape a garishly teal newsboy cap, too tight for his large tennis ball-shaped head. He raised his eyebrows.

Right.

“Uh, miss, my friend could use your bathroom?”

She looked out the glass storefront, where a man in a chocolate brown tailored suit peered in at her, curious and expectant, his eyes and mouth bright lights strained to the same round ‘o’ shape.

Erika gestured to the sign behind her that read: ‘Bathroom for Customer Use Only. No Street Traffic Please!’ Then she pointed at the clock.

‘We’re closed.’

‘Uh, miss. We’re from out of town?’

She sighed to show that she had lost count of the bills in her right hand—six? seven?—put the wad on the counter, and said, ‘If he can be quick about it.’

The man quickly shuffled out to his friend, wildly waving his hands and stammering, ‘Yeah-yeah, yeah-yeah.’

By the time the well-dressed emerged from the

bathroom, Erika was stacking clean cups, steaming on the shelf over the giant de-caf urn. She sighed again, eyeing the clock.

He paused, reaching into his jacket pocket to pull out a business card case, embossed with a relief of an 8 point buck. He laid a card on the counter, bowed, and left the store, joining his friend who was peering inside, wearing his companion’s former triple ‘o’ expression. They jaunted off together.

When Erika finished putting away the dishes, she picked up the business card. Blank.

A few days later, she was cleaning out the back office in a desperate attempt to escape the slowest hour of boredom (7 to 8pm). There were surfaces in that office that hadn’t been touched since the cafe went free-trade. Stacks of envelopes piled up on an organizer in front of the six-paned window, blocking sunlight from the cluttered desk. She moved the envelopes, sprayed the window with magic blue liquid, and wiped three paper towels of dirt from the glass. Leaning over the desk, she picked spider webs from the sill, exposing the corpse of a large blue dragonfly. She pinched its tail, picking it up and closely inspecting it; it was perfectly in tact.

‘Hmmm,’ she remarked. ‘Blue dragonflies irritate the stomachs of house spiders. Avoid at all costs. Call a physician if accidentally ingested. Sorry, little spiders, I’m stealing your sofa.’

That was the summer of the blue dragonflies.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Ella Longpre.