

# Blue

—*Tabitha Clark*

SANGEY BAKOUPDA WAS going to die tonight. He didn't realize it when he walked into the Crimson Crustacean. Had he known this, he would have chosen somewhere else to have his dinner. Alas, he was hungry and he saw the glowing light of the "Crust" (as the workers called it) from the empty highway, so he stopped in for a bite. It was fifteen minutes until closing and an hour until lights out for Sangey Bakoupda.

Sangey wasn't the type you would consider an enemy to anyone. He was a 58 year old mathematician. Overall, he was a quiet man, though he could be a bit condescending. He knew what time the restaurant closed, but he also knew it was the waiter or waitress's job to stay until he was finished, despite the hour. He had been through one hell of a day at work, and it was his turn to make someone miserable. So, he strutted boldly through the deserted, foggy parking lot, grabbed the door handle, and entered the restaurant.

Sangey received an eyebrow raise from the hostess as he came through the door. The hostess looked 17 years of age and the name on her badge had an odd spelling. "Hello sir, welcome to the Crimson Crustacean. Only one for dinner this

evening? Would you like a booth or a table?"

"A booth please," Sangey stuttered, still amazed by the ramble of words that had attacked him. The hostess hadn't even given him a chance to answer the first question before moving on to the next. Her speech reminded him of an auctioneer. He assumed she was trying to get things started so he would be out of the restaurant as soon as possible. Had he known her thoughts, he would have proven himself right. "So, how do you pronounce that name?" he asked as he patted her elbow.

She looked at with a mix of confusion and disgust. "It is pronounced 'Tasha'. My parents decided to spell it in a unique way," Toisha explained as she looked over at another woman, "Dolly will be your waitress this evening, and she is coming this way right now."

Dolly rolled her eyes as she saw the man enter the restaurant. She knew she had to pick up her daughter in an hour from the rink, and this asshole was going to make her late. Dolly walked to the back and let Justin, the cook, know there was one more customer before closing.

"Are you kidding? Please tell me

you are kidding Dolly! Well, he better not order anything grilled because I already cleaned the damn thing!" Justin seemed a little less than pleased about the situation.

Dolly left the prep alley to greet her customer in the dining room. "Hello sir, my name is Dolly, and I will be taking care of you this evening.

Sangey lightly patted Dolly's elbow as he gave her his order. "I will have tea, a plate of lemons, a glass of ice, a lime, and a shot of grenadine. I am ready to order my dinner as well. I would like a steak, well done, with fries, coleslaw, and I will have dessert later on."

Dolly could feel the color creeping into her face. This man had ordered the one meal on the menu that took the longest to make. A well done steak took 20 minutes to cook! She stalked back to the kitchen to give Justin the news. "Please drop that steak on the floor a few times before

giving it to me to take out," she said.

"No problemo! Oops!" Justin exclaimed, dropping the steak on the floor again and again. Little did Justin know, the floor had been cleaned with an industrial strength cleaner, and it retained a residue that was now seeping into the meat. Justin let the steak slip from the tongs one final time before placing it on the plate. If he would have lifted the piece of meat, he would have seen blue goo underneath, staining the piece of tableware.

Dolly took the meal out to the waiting man, smirking all the way.

Sangey smiled when he saw his food being walked out from the kitchen. He was hungry. Dolly sat the plate down in front of him, asked if he needed anything else, and then walked off to finish the rest of her work. Sangey cut the steak and put the first bite into his mouth. There was a tang of something different,

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but Sangey figured it was just a new sauce or flavoring the restaurant was using. He ate every bit of the steak within fifteen minutes, never even noticing the residue on his plate.

All of a sudden, the restaurant began to spin. Sangey's throat and stomach were on fire and his heart felt like it might break out of his chest. He didn't understand what was going on. He tried to make his way out of the restaurant and to his car, but he collapsed just outside the booth. As the lights of the restaurant faded into the distance, he heard nothing the steady hum of the restaurant's dining music. The rest was silence.

"Dolly! We have another one!"  
Toisha called as she walked over to Sangey's body.

Dolly sauntered over to the dead man and gazed at his glassy expression. "You need to learn not to come into restaurants right before closing," she said, "Where do you think we get our steaks?" Dolly told Toisha to grab Justin from the back to help move the body. Dolly knew what would happen. Who do you think cleaned the floor that night? 