

## Caramba!

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I am still in New York, still in the apartment that NYU has made available to me in a high rise building in Greenwich Village. My apartment is on the 13th floor.

This morning when I turned on my computer and went to the internet, I saw a news headline that made me blink. p"Man Glued to Toilet Seat Sues Home Depot."

Goodness, I thought; a man glued to a toilet seat must feel pretty stupid.

Then I decided to see if there was a place in this building to do laundry. I have been in New York now for seven days. I need to do laundry.

So, carrying a bag of dirty laundry, I took the elevator down to the basement and walked down a long corridor and found a large well-lit room with laundry machines, and indeed three women in there industriously folding clothes.

Aha. pl put my dirty laundry into a washing machine and then looked around to find a machine to give me change. There isn't one, because this is modern-day laundry...you use a special card that you buy from a machine. Okay. I can do that. I stand looking at the card-buying machine, and realize that it takes 5, 10, or 20 dollar bills. I open my wallet. pAll I have are \$20 bills.

Okay. Is it worth \$20 to me to do laundry? pl decide yes. pl insert a \$20. The machine rejects it, spits it back out.

One of the clothes-folding women comes over to see what my problem is. Ah: female bonding! pShe speaks no English. But it is clear, as I take out another \$20, that she thinks I am nuts for using twenty dollar bills. pShe points to the place on the machine that says clearly \$5.

I shrug. Got no \$5. pA different \$20 works, and now I have a laundry card. pShe rolls her eyes and walks away and talks in another language - Portuguese, maybe - to the two other woman. Clearly they all think I am stupider than...well, than a man glued to a toilet seat.

But now I have a card. pl try to read the instructions on top of the washing machine but they have been obliterated and marred by age and overuse. I do see, however, that there is a little door to open and put in detergent. pl have no detergent. pThere is no detergent-dispensing machine in the room.

The women are watching me. With contempt, I think. pThe creepy words of the old Holly Near song come to my mind... "And the junta...the junta" pThese women have formed a junta, I think. pThey hate me. I am a blond woman who has just casually put a \$20 bill in a machine. They will overthrow me first chance they get.

But one of them offers me detergent form her large bottle. pl thank her...overly profusely....and pour a glug of detergent into my machine, fool with the card slot and the dials, inserting my card several times, probably each time paying another \$1.50, but finally the machine starts and tells me that it is going to run for 38 minutes.

I flee back to my apartment. I wait 35 minutes, return to the basement, and my machine...it is #41, (a number I remembered because it was my sister's high school boyfriend's football jersey

number)...tells me it has 2 minutes to run still.

I wander around around, reading the instructions on the driers, so I'll be ready; then I sit on a bench and wait. The clothes-folding ladies are gone. I am alone.

The machine now says 0 minutes, and I go over and open it up.

It is empty.

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I find my clothes: dry, unwashed, pin Machine #40.

I am now back in my apartment, waiting out the 38 minutes for Machine #40, in which my laundry is now being washed without detergent. pWhat the heck. pMaybe water is enough.

Tags: Untagged