

DARCY'S DRAGONFLIES

She loved the out-of-doors and nature. Not your typical 13-year-old girl. Darcy especially liked bugs and dirt. In the summer, Darcy would spend hours and hours exploring the three-acre lot just down the street adjacent to the village cemetery. It was fondly referred to as the "prairie" because it was a wide-open space with no trees.

There were grasshoppers and crickets. All kinds of butterflies rested on the blooming milkweed and purple coneflowers. And there were dragonflies! They seemed to especially like the warm summer afternoons zooming up and down while flashing their beautiful blue iridescent wings. The dragonflies were the good gals of the prairie because they ate mosquitoes, LOTS and LOTS of mosquitoes!

One warm summer afternoon on her way down to the prairie, Darcy shared a special experience with Mrs. Cataldo. It confirmed, forever, her love affair with dragonflies. Mrs. Cataldo was an older neighbor who lived down the street right next to the prairie. Everyone called her Mrs. C. She was probably in her mid-70's. Mrs. C had lived in the village all her life. She knew everyone and everything that was happening. She'd be sitting on her porch swing each day as Darcy headed to the prairie for another adventure. She'd often greet Darcy with a comment on the weather or share her thoughts on recent happenings in the village.

That afternoon, Darcy decided to join Mrs. C on her swing for a few minutes, just to chat and pass the time. Mrs. C started their conversation by asking, "Darcy, what draws you to the prairie? What do you especially enjoy?" Darcy quickly replied, "The dragonflies, for sure!" "Why?" Mrs. C asked. Darcy commented on their beauty and their energy in moving all around.

Mrs. C replied, "They're a favorite of mine too, for your reasons and a few of my own." She looked at Darcy, as if she were looking into her soul, and said, "Darcy, do you know that dragonflies symbolize transformation and change? They remind us of our inner spirit, our ability to overcome hardship. They inspire us... to connect with our strength, our courage and our potential for happiness." Darcy smiled.

Then Mrs. C continued to say, "I sit here on my porch. Each week I see people arriving at our village cemetery to say their last good byes to someone they love. I notice and it's no accident, that our prairie dragonflies don't stay in our prairie, especially on those days. I see dozens of them fly over to where the families and friends are gathered. They zip about and hover over the gathering, making their presence known for all those who look up to see."

"Darcy," she said, "Those dragonflies carry a bittersweet message, that life has changed. But even more, they invite each of us to reach deep down into ourselves to find that place where our strength and potential for happiness resides. The dragonflies are a sign to them, and to all of us, that we can and we will change. In time, their pain and our pain can transform. We can grow into happiness again." Darcy took a deep breath as she turned toward Mrs. C and thanked her for the wisdom she had just shared. She softly said, "I'll remember."

As Darcy stepped off the porch and continued to the prairie, blue iridescent dragonflies flew over to greet her. She smiled, a big smile. And in that moment Darcy knew that her understanding of life, especially the hard things in life, had changed.