

THE ANSWER IS

Ever get asked a question by a stranger that requires a sarcastic answer?

I was at my favorite kind of job—a very temporary one—answering phones and delivering documents, not learning people’s names or faces and enjoying being a mostly responsibility-free professional.

The receptionist I was filling in for admitted she was already in vacation mode when she briefly showed me the ropes. Though it was not entirely appropriate, I had agreed to handle the daily bank deposit and report because it didn’t look terribly difficult. She’d shown me a modified method for the three days she would be gone that we both thought I could handle.

The first day went off without a hitch. The paperwork added up, all the checks were there, smooth sailing. On the second day, people started to notice they hadn’t gotten any mail in a while. Their spacey receptionist had neglected to collect it before she left or even tell her replacement (me) where the postal box was. So in came three days’ worth of mail to be stamped, opened and distributed. This put me behind on the banking. Then, according to the report, I was missing three checks. I inquired of one of the brunettes—all of the blondes seemed to be supervisors—what I should do. She was aghast that I had even *touched* the checks.

“You’re doing the banking? Did anyone even show you how?”

Hmm.

So many responses, so few I could come back with and still come back to work the next day.

I knew the answer the question deserved. It was practically seeping through my skin like garlic the morning after a really good bowl of shrimp scampi.

Did anyone even show me how? I half-expected a Rodney Dangerfield-type Alien to emerge from my stomach to quip, “No, but I’ll be gone after tomorrow!” if I didn’t concentrate very hard.

But not wanting my first job for this agency to be my last, I stifled every reasonable urge and took a beat.

“Did anyone even show you how?”

“Yes. Yes, someone did,” I said, sweating slightly. Could have been the scampi or the comic-conquering.

The next day I came back and finished the job, except for the banking. They had someone else handle that.