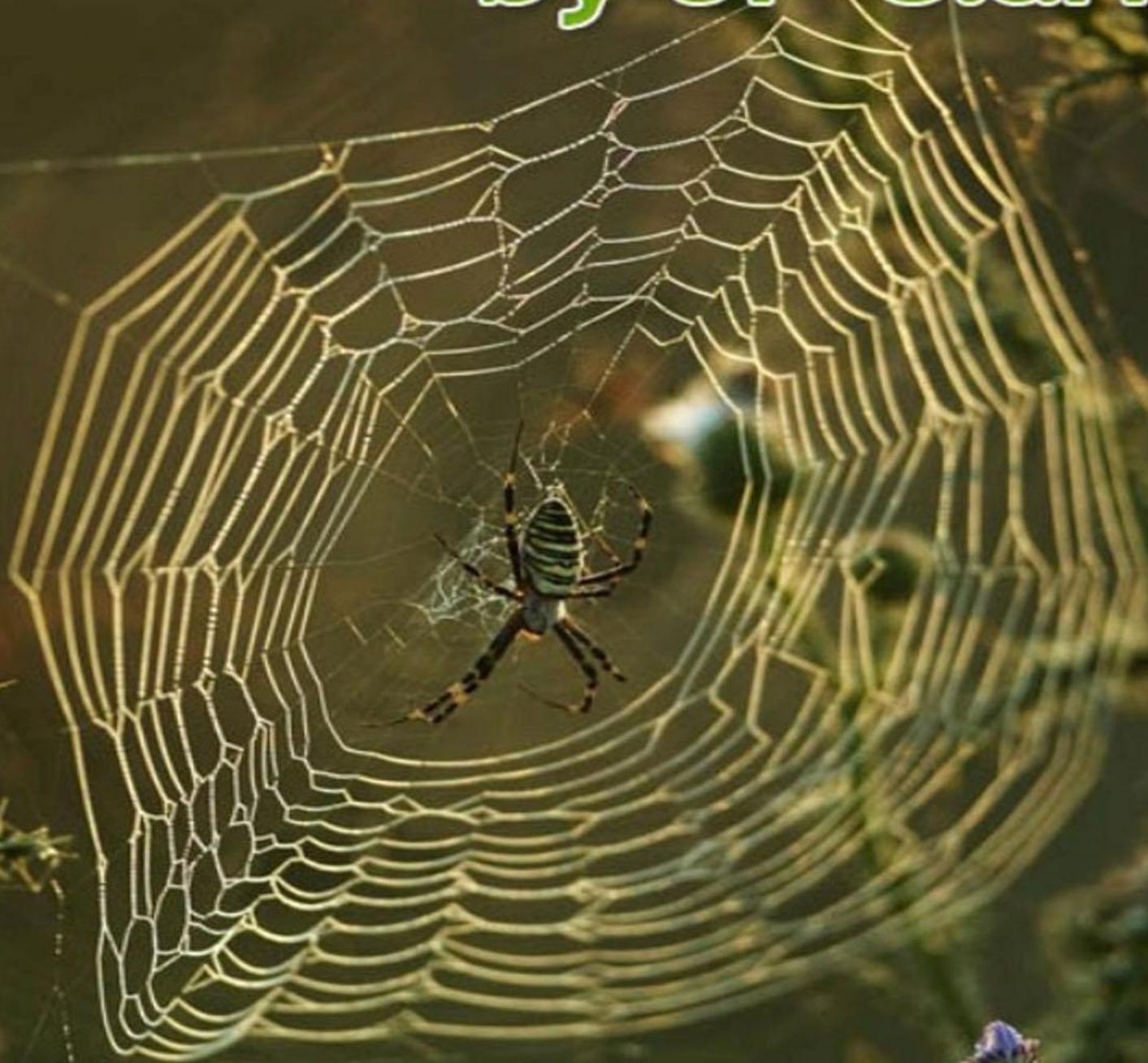


A WEB STORY

by JF Clark



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Chapter 1

It was just a wonderful day, and Jake was out having a great time. He was thinking how good it was to be out and about. It was so wonderful to be alive and to experience each and every minute of every day. Whenever he was out, it was a great day. He was so full of energy, and his senses were completely alert. It felt as though he had a song in his head because he was so happy; there seemed to be so little to be concerned about.

There was more light around him than he was familiar with, but that did not bother him—actually he kind of liked it that way. Jake was raised in shadows and he was only exposed to weak light. It would be a new experience. *After all, I am really quite adventurous*, he thought. With the extra light maybe he would be able to see more things. Many more things would be happening; there would be more to see and experience. He thought, *I know they say that I should not be out in too much light and that it could be too bright for me, but I don't know if I really believe that it is as dangerous as they keep telling me*. They tell him many things. He has learned many lessons that give him an excellent background. But is everything they tell him true? He feels that he must find out on his own. Curiosity can be dangerous, he knows. But he is sure that he will be very careful. The thought of going out to new areas and to have new adventures was such a thrill to him. He was lost in his thoughts when all of a sudden he thought he saw something. What was that? He stopped and looked, but he wasn't sure if anything was really there at all. He went closer to see what more he could see. Again he stopped and looked around and thought some more. A few moments passed and nothing more happened; he did not see or sense anything more. At long last he decided that it probably was nothing after all and decided to continue on his long crawl.

Being on a long crawl all by himself was not unusual for a young spider. A companion would be nice, but right now he was having a great time by himself. He went a little farther. The terrain changed now; the walls were wide open. All spaces now seemed wide open. He was getting a little concerned because he did not want to cross over out into the wide open areas. It was always better to stay at the edge or near a crack or, even better, on the ceiling. The ceiling was always a great place. Jake remembered his lessons: he was told that he would be very safe there and he could see many things. But best of all, most of his enemies couldn't get to him there.

There were new colors now, and he even thought that he felt a difference in temperature. All of these things excited him, but he kept reminding himself that he was now in a strange new territory. There could be many dangers here, as he was pretty sure that he was entering the main territory of the giants. The giants had already been down in his web community before. But the spiders could not really figure out what the giants looked like or what they were doing. No spider really knew much about the giants except that the giants simply were giants. The giants were always nearby, but they almost always left the web community alone. The web community feared the giants, as indeed they feared many things—but rather than fear them, it would be much better to be careful and aware of them.

The giants do not attack our community, Jake thought. They may take down our webs and cause us some trouble, but they don't chase after us because they are too big. No, the giants are not our enemies, but we still must be careful with them. Our real enemy is Mr. Centipede. Mr. Centipede is not very nice or friendly. We have to call him Mr. Centipede because we never met one that would tell us its name. Sometimes he waits by a crack or a web so that he can attack and grab us. He is very tricky and very fast, especially with all of those extra legs. I don't understand why they can't be satisfied with just eight legs like we have. It just doesn't seem fair that Mr. Centipede has so many more legs. The extra legs make him faster than we are, and he can catch

us so easily and make us disappear. I think that maybe he is so hungry that he completely eats us when he catches us and that is how he makes us disappear. He probably eats our legs, and that helps him to have even more legs. Eating us is probably what makes Mr. Centipede grow so big. The adults say that is not true, but I think it is. They just don't want to scare us. That is nice of them, but they may be overprotective of us. We won't get so scared, and we need to know the truth.

Sooner or later, we will find out the truth. We need to know what is really going on, and we need to grow up. Jake stood there as he thought how the spiders ate. Spiders are nice and friendly because we just taste the insects and suck the juices from them. We are actually very civilized and respectful of others. That way there is still an insect body that you can be remembered by. It may be a lot smaller, but we usually leave something. If we were very hungry it may just be some legs or antennae. Mr. Centipede never left anything and then it would not be known what happened to you.

Now he did not mind that he was called little. Everyone he knew called him Little Jake. Sometimes when they really wanted to annoy him, they would call him Little Jakey. That really annoyed him. Yes, he knew that he was not as big as most of his other relatives and friends. But one day he would grow up and be just as big as all the adults. That thought always gave him great comfort—then no one would call him little anymore. Maybe they would call him big. *Maybe I will even be great*, he thought. *But I just want to be Jake and be happy and live my life in harmony with nature and family and friends.* Most of his friends had nicknames also—but a nickname such as Little Jakey was really annoying. He felt sorry for Tiny Tom, and hearing the name “Fat Bob” almost made him cry. Jake hardly knew Fat Bob, but the name did not sound so nice. Many of the nicknames did not sound very nice. Spiders, especially the young ones, could be so cruel sometimes. Jake felt really sad for his cousin, Small Sam. Yes, he was small, but he was still his cousin. Jake liked to just call him Sam. The two of them were distant cousins and also great friends. They would hang out as much as they could, but Sam usually had a lot of chores to do at his web home; they could never hang out as much as they would like. Sam was small, and Jake was bigger than he was. Well, at least Sam was not as small as Tom. Tiny Tom was really tiny—no one knew why, but sometimes some friends were really tiny. He seemed like a nice friend. Tom never did anything bad, but he usually stayed at home or at least close to his mother. Jake did not know why and he thought that maybe he could find out why. It didn't really matter to Jake what the reason was; he was just curious, Jake felt that they could be good friends whatever the reason was. He thought, *I want to know him, and I want him to be my friend.* Tom was a good jumper even if only for short distances. It was hard to describe Tom except that he was really tiny and had a light grey complexion. Yes, a very tiny fellow indeed.

Fat Bob was indeed big. Actually Big Bob would have been a much nicer name, but those young spiders could be mean in giving nicknames sometimes. Bob ate a lot. He was always eating. Oh how he loved to suck those insect juices! He did not crawl around the web very much, and he hardly ever left it. But he would probably make a really good friend if a spider got to know him. Bob was a nice spider, and he liked to have fun. It was a shame that he did not crawl out to see his friends more often.

What was really sad in the spiderhood was Little Billy's situation. Many spiders wanted him gone. He was crippled and only had seven good legs. It was so sad to see him struggle, but he kept trying to be a good spider and a useful web resident. If he just kept eating and crawling around, maybe he would become cured of his disability as he got bigger. It seemed that he had so much potential. Each new molt would bring new hope for a better future. There were some spiders that looked at him and saw the ability that he had rather than his disability. Many of them knew that he had very good potential. Billy had all the hopes of many placed upon him. Most spiders have a positive attitude so they hope that when he grows he will no longer be disabled. The poor disabled spider; many felt sorry for him, but Jake tried to look at his potential.

Then there was Silly Sally. That was a nice, cute nickname, he thought. Sally even liked it. It was the perfect name for her. She was so funny, and she really liked being funny. Sometimes she just slid down as though her legs could not carry her anymore. Then she just got up and crawled away. She really loved to play with her food. She was cute, and she had an interesting way of looking at you with those big bright eyes. Oh could she dance. He did not pay much attention to dancing; he just really liked her nickname and the funny things that she would do. It was so much fun to be with her.

Jake has many other friends, but he hardly ever gets to see them. That is how it is when you are growing up. You meet many other young spiders and become friends with many of them, but you don't see some of them very often. You would like to see each other, but you are just too busy growing up and going to school, and your schedules just don't seem to match. Spinning class can keep you very busy. It can be fun, but it is very important to learn how to spin a good web. In class, the teachers also teach you special ways to shoot your web fluid. Jumping class can be a lot of fun also. It is amazing to see that some spiders are natural high jumpers. Some of the other students are not nice, however. They may be rude, or they may make fun of you for no reason. Most of the students are good spiders, and some are very funny. When you are at your web home, however, your mom won't always let you out to see your friends. You need to do all of your chores, practice your lessons, and be a nice spider before your mom lets you out. It can be annoying at times. Your mom may even make you miss crawling time with your friends. Growing up can be rough on a young spider.

As he thought about growing up, some faces appeared in his memory. He remembered the faces but not always the names. Some friends he had not seen in a very long time. He remembered the name of one face immediately, though. This one was easy to remember because he was unusual. The eyes were quite different from the eyes of most spiders. They were almost closed. Jake wondered if the spider could see much. When he spoke to him, he found out that the spider could see a little—but not very clearly. He remembered his name: Squinto. Some of the other young spiders made fun of him. They would call him Squinty. Sometimes they would even play games with him just to check if he could see how many spiders were crawling near him. That was not very nice, but that was how young spiders could be. Jake thought he was a nice spider, but he didn't crawl around very much, so he had not seen him in quite awhile. It was not easy for Squinto to get around when he was always struggling to see. Then Jake remembered other spiders also. It was great to have such pleasant memories.

Jake thought how lucky he was growing up. He knew he was not quite a full grown adult yet but he felt as though he was almost there. Of course he realized that the adults would treat him as though he was still a juvenile. Jake was no longer a juvenile but neither was he a full adult spider yet. Soon he would be a full adult but for now he had to wait. The adults would even treat him as though he was younger than he actually was. *It is not easy to be treated fairly*, he thought. Then he started to think of good thoughts. He always had enough food and a nice web home to keep him comfortable. He had many brothers and sisters—most of whom he never knew. Jake was closest to his older brother, Raknar, and he would usually spend time with him at home. Even though Raknar was a bit older, the two were very close in age. Raknar very often treated Jake as though he was a juvenile spider, and Jake did not like that. He had so many other relatives and distant cousins also. There were so many spiders that he would probably never get to meet. This made him sad, but it was okay. That was how it was in the spider community. He really liked happy thoughts and wanted to be happy all the time. He could just hope that all of his siblings were okay and happy also. But his mom and some older siblings always told him that he must be careful. They showed him many dangers. They taught him many lessons, and he paid attention. He was a very quick learner. But more important than being a quick learner was that he understood how important it was to keep learning, paying attention, and trying to understand it all. Yes, one day really soon he would be out on his own, so he must prepare himself as much as

possible now by learning all that he could. He knew that he would grow up quickly. These were really great times, but they wouldn't last forever. He was a young spider now—not quite an adult yet, but he would be one before he knew it. These good times would be missed, but at least he would be able to look back on them and have no regrets, because he did his best to be a good little spider and learn all that he could. Jake really loved life and was having a lot of fun. All of these thoughts kept flooding through his brain. He loved to think when he was out on crawls. Jake saw a nice safe spot, and he crawled over to it to pause and think. It was such a great day for a daydream. He stood there for awhile thinking and daydreaming. So many thoughts kept running through his brain. He had so many thoughts that at times he almost forgot where he was.

I hear all the adults talking about this nice community that we live in and how lucky we are to be here, he thought. Sometimes they whispered among themselves the way adults do as they try to pretend that they are saying nothing, that it is just grownup talk. He wondered what they were saying. One day he would find out. *I will find some way to hear what they are really saying. It must be interesting—maybe a secret. I just love secrets.* But then a bright ray of light came by, and he forgot all about adults and secrets and all things that were not fun. He was distracted by the fun that was right in front of him. He thought he saw something dance in the bright, warm glow of the light, but it was too bright to look at. He was always told to not spend too much time in the light because his skin might get old and dry up or because he might not be able to see very well. He knew the light could be dangerous, but his greater concern was that the light sometimes made it hard for him to see. It was just so bright. Well it just danced away, and then it was gone—just like magic. That did not matter because he would just continue crawling. If he felt like it, he would crawl really fast. He was having a great day touching and looking at things. His brain was being overloaded with entirely new sensations, but he felt so great. He actually began to feel lightheaded, almost like he was in a dream. Jake loved being out, but he really wanted a friend. A friend that could be with him sometimes, maybe even on an adventure, or even just on short crawls on a beautiful day like today. Tiny Tom was a friend, but he was so small, and maybe he would be afraid to really go anywhere. *But I will talk to him, and maybe soon he will come out and play,* Jake thought. Fat Bob seemed like he would be a nice friend, but he was always eating. He also moved so slowly. Maybe he would keep asking him to come out and play. It was a shame that Sam always had so many chores. *I must have a friend that I can be with. We could have a lot of fun.*

As he was slowly crawling along many different thoughts came to him. His mom had always told him to spin his shelter whenever he wanted so that he would always have all that he needed. She had told him to never be afraid of darkness and to be careful of the bright, warm light. It might dry his skin, she said. It could even blind him. And he must always watch out for strangers.

Yes, most of his life so far he had spent in near darkness and low light. Mom assured him that he needed the darkness to grow and be safe. She had let him out before away from the safety of the web, but each time he went farther. Still, he would never forget where he came from, because he knew that was where his real home was. This time it was really different though. He was already traveling much farther than before, but he was determined to not get lost. Jake thought back over all that he had learned. He saw how easy it was to grow by molting. His little brother, Koe, did not pay attention and stayed small—it was sad. Sometimes Jake did not really want to grow and molt. It would seem so wonderful to stay small and remain near the web. Hide and seek was his favorite game, and if he stayed small, it would always be easy to hide. His family had given him many lessons. They really gave him a great start in life. Family meant a lot to him; they always had, and even more so now when he was not near them. Spinning class was so much fun also. He remembered the other students and even his teacher. She had a really funny name. He was trying to remember it, but he just kept thinking of the jokes about her name. Then it came to him: Kuatzela, yes that was her name. That was a really old spider name that she even

slightly changed. She tried to change her name so it wouldn't sound so funny to her students. Sometimes the students would make so much fun of her name that he would laugh and it would be hard to concentrate on his lessons. It was great growing up, but now things were different.

Now he was out and about. He was alone and had to rely on himself. There were always some new places to see and visit. Yes, he had seen bright light before. He was not afraid of the light, but he was more familiar with darkness. With all eight eyes, he could see very well in the darkness. It was true that darkness was his friend, and he could sense everything that was happening near him. *I will just stay at the edge of the light*, he thought. But light was interesting to him, and he wondered where it could take him and how it would really feel. So he decided to leave the edge and actually go into the light to see how it would be. It was a bold move on his part, even a little risky. The light was warm and bright just as he had been told and had experienced before. But curiosity was getting the better of him. It was time to spend more time in the light and explore new places. Maybe there would also be different food with a new taste. Some things were confusing, and at times he did not understand what he was seeing and experiencing, but now was the time to learn. He felt safe. He remembered all of his lessons, and he was determined to not get lost—and to return home soon. The light was very warm and bright. It seemed to be getting even warmer. A strange new sensation overcame him. It was almost a weak feeling. It was much different from what he had experienced before; he did not understand it and wasn't sure what to do. Now he was feeling much more lightheaded than he had felt a moment ago. His body told him to take a rest, but the lessons he had learned made him very concerned. Finally he decided that he did want to take a rest. Tiredness overcame him, so he decided to put up a little web shelter and rest a bit. He was in deep thought trying to understand all that he was seeing and sensing, and eventually he became really slow. He was starting to barely have any sensations at all, and he began to fall asleep.

Sleep came fast, and then very soon so did the dreams. At first they were fast and short, just a motion or a quick flash of sensation, but soon they started to make sense. Mom was giving all the usual warnings. The teacher from spinning class kept reminding the whole class how to spin correctly. A friend of his even appeared in his dream. Then all of a sudden, he became scared. There was a shake, and it felt so real. Was it a dream or still a part of one? He was in that state between sleeping and being awake so he was not sure what was real.

Suddenly he woke up, still a little sleepy. He realized that his web was actually shaking. This was not a dream. Now he was wide awake, and all of his senses started to race. It was always time to be careful whenever the web would shake. What was it? What could it be? Could it be a trick (a breeze) or an enemy? He hoped it would be food. All of the adults always warned him to be very careful because it could be Mr. Centipede. Now Mr. Centipede was always considered a mean old fellow. He never seemed to have any friends or family, but not much was really known about him—only that he was very dangerous. He would make everyone disappear, and he was bigger than the spiders. They would call him Mr. Pede just for fun; it was a nice short nickname for him. He was also very fast. Maybe the shaking was simply one of the giants. The giants were not very scary; spiders could easily crawl away from them. The giants were so big that they didn't even always see the spiders. Mr. Centipede was the one they needed to be afraid of.

His mind continued to race; all of these thoughts flooded in within a matter of seconds. What would it be? The suspense continued. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, he had sufficiently gathered his wits about him. It was now time to see what was really going on. He carefully looked and sensed all that he could, ticking off the list of possibilities. There was no giant nearby. This did not seem to be a trick- it did not feel the way the trick usually feels. Best of all, there was no Mr. Centipede around. Jake was now happy and relieved. Safety and food were always good to have, but of course the situation could change so fast. Jake knew he had to be careful once he left the protection of his temporary webbing. It turned out that the shaking was something different. A flying insect was caught in his web, and it kept flapping its wings to

break free; it also made a strange noise—a sort of vibrating noise. It was fat in the middle and looked like it might attack him with its long pointy nose. It was a new kind of insect that he had never seen before. Spinning class now came in very handy, as he had learned all the techniques and now made good use of them. It was all with many thanks to his teacher.

Now Jake was not considered a webster—one of the true masters of spinning. Only the absolute best spinners were called websters, but he was still very skilled, and he knew how to apply what he had learned. He was a highly qualified, journeying spider. His web was sticky enough to hold this new meal in place. He was not afraid; he knew exactly what to do. At first he studied the insect for awhile, trying to understand it and to figure out what it was. At least he would understand and remember all that he could. He did not want it to stop moving. At length he felt that he had learned all that he could, and his appetite was getting the better of him. When it was time to eat, he was quite famished. Now it was time to have something that he had never had before. This tasted quite different—and good. There was quite a lot of red liquid inside of this little fellow; he was quite juicy. Jake wanted to find out much more about this strange new flying insect. After sucking up all that he could, he felt much better, and he now had some newfound energy. He now realized that the heat and especially bright light could be dangerous to him if he experienced it too suddenly. The lesson of the danger of the light really hit home now. He began to think that maybe the light had made him sleepy. Many times he was told how dangerous the bright light could be and he kept remembering more of the details of what he was told. As he thought about it and got his energy back he began to wonder if the light really was a danger as he had been told. Gradually he started to realize that the light was not really a problem yet. It was not so bright or strong. *Maybe the light needs to be very bright*, he thought. Even if it were, he could gradually condition himself to be able to handle the light and the heat. The bigger issue at this time he thought was that he was tired from all of his crawling and simply needed food. He was so happy that he had listened to what his mom had told him about making a web shelter and that it had caught an insect. It was so much fun crawling around that he had forgotten that he needed food. He still was curious and would try to be more careful next time. This experience interested him so much that he was now really determined to explore and travel as much as he could. Yes, there would be many dangers. He had been warned and was aware of them—but he just could not stop thinking about going out on an exploration. He would be more prepared and would get his system familiar with the world outside his community so it would be able to handle the strain next time. He would try to improve his senses and find out if there were more lessons that he could learn. *I will go back home now and tell everyone all that I have sensed, and I hope they can tell me what it all means*, he thought.

Now it was time to go back to the old spiderhood and see everyone. *But I am especially happy to go back home to see my web family*, he thought. It was time to go away from the light and to go back to the darkness. On and on he kept crawling. He wondered why it always seemed to take longer to go back than it did to go out. Soon he was going down into the dark basement. He liked to travel along the wall; it gave him a whole different perspective. He kept going, and soon he was in the shadows of the dark basement. *But I still must be careful; danger can be anywhere*, he thought.

He wondered if he might still be surprised, but the shadows did make him feel more comfortable because he knew that with the shadows, he could fool his enemies. Soon he knew that his web home was near. He kept going closer. Suddenly he stopped; he thought he sensed something. It was time to stop moving and be careful. Time passed, and he did not sense anything more. It must have been a trick, he thought. After a few minutes passed, he continued on his way. Soon he was at the web, and everyone was really happy to see him. His mom was concerned, however, and she started asking lots of questions.

That was okay, though, because mothers always ask many questions simply because they care. It was just so good to be back at home. At home it was safe and he could relax. It always

made you feel good to see familiar spiders. He was not the oldest. There were still two older brothers living at home. It was really good to see them and his many younger brothers and sisters. At home it was the same routine; it was comfortable, but a little boring. When it got too boring, the travel bug got into him, and he knew it was time to go out and explore. Dinnertime came, but he was not very hungry; his mom was concerned, but when she heard about the meal he just had, she was happy. She always told the family to be careful about eating before meals because it could spoil their appetite. They all knew she was right, but sometimes they just got hungry and couldn't wait. This time it was different; she was not angry. Now things were changing. Jake was growing up, and he could make decisions for himself. Of course he would have to live with the consequences of his decisions, but that was part of life. The rest of the family ate their meal. They then rested for a short while and went about the usual web business for the rest of the night. When daylight started to approach, it was time to go deep inside the webs to rest and conserve energy. During the daylight, it was usually quiet with little activity. A little bright light might appear inside the webs, but mostly it was a low light with many shadows. Food was usually not as easy to obtain at that time. Daylight hours were the time to rest, stay hidden, and conserve energy.

Time would pass. But mostly it was too slow. It seemed to take forever. Sometimes he would be so bored just waiting at the web home for time to pass that he felt like he was going out of his mind. He could barely control himself; he desperately wanted to be out there to do and see so many things. It was always like that, and he wondered how much more could he take of it. He tried to remember that all of the adults had always told him to be patient and careful and to take his time.

At long last, after what seemed like an eternity, the light would get weaker. Now it was time for action again. This always made him happy. He would get a burst of energy and feel so wide awake and lively that he thought he could go on forever. But it was just the excitement and energy of youth that kept him going. He had such a strong desire to experience new activities. It was now decision time. Exploring was good; actually it was great. It was always fun, even by himself—but it would be even more fun to share with a friend. They could help and protect one another. Now was the time! He thought of his cousin Sam, but he said no because his mom might find out and get angry. Bob seemed like he would be a great friend, and he was not an immediate relative, so mom would not find out about any plans. Jake thought that Bob just seemed to move too slowly though. Could Bob race crawl? Jake didn't know.

After much thinking, Jake decided on making Tiny Tom his good friend. At least he was so tiny that he could easily hide. Jake then told his mom that he was going out for a crawl and would probably go over to see Tiny Tom. His mom then stopped and asked him why he called Tom "tiny." She had never heard Tom called that before. Jake said that it was just a nickname—and that he actually was tiny. He also knew that nicknames were not something that the adults paid attention to. Mom said it was okay for him to go, but she also warned him that if he wanted friends, he had better be a nice spider and treat others with respect. Jake said that he understood all of that and that Tom did not mind the name; he just wished that he were bigger.

So Jake crawled over to Tom's web for a visit. He was happy to see that Tom was practicing jumping, and he was doing it very well. He was still tiny, but he was now bigger after having recently molted. Now he was almost small. Jake joined him in some jumping fun, and they crawled and jumped together. Then Tom said that he also wanted to get away and explore and have some fun. He was practicing his lessons; he was now a pretty good jumper, and he was a good web spinner also. His webs were much smaller than most were, but he did not need a big web because of his size. They became best friends. Then they made a vow to make a secret plan together very soon.

They got excited about a secret plan and started talking about it. Jake started to hint at traveling, and Tom started talking about other ideas. Each of them had different ideas about what

the secret plan would be. Jake was thinking in terms of traveling on a big trip; Tom was thinking that it would be something secret that only they would do here in the web community. Their conversation paused for a moment, and Jake tried to focus it back on a trip. Then he remembered that he had better get back to his web home. He had not been very watchful of the time, and he had also been away a lot. As much as possible, he wanted to stay at home and keep his family happy so that when he really wanted to go somewhere, he could go without the family being very concerned. Then Jake left Tom and said that he would be back soon to continue their planning. He told Tom to keep thinking about a plan. He arrived back home, and his family was quite pleased to see him again so soon. Mom was the happiest of them all. Jake was bored at home, but he thought it was a good chance to get some rest.

Jake fell asleep and woke up completely refreshed. After a quick meal, he would go out to see Tom again. When he arrived at Tom's web home, he was surprised. He had thought that he would find Tom jumping as usual, but that was not the case. Tom was curled up and quiet; he was not happy. Jake asked him what was wrong. Tom said that his mom had overheard their secret plan, and she did not like it. His mom said that she did not want him to make any secret plans. She said that he had better not do anything bad and that she would watch him closely. He was upset just thinking about being watched closely, as though he were still a baby spider. It made him feel tinier than he already was. He wanted to feel more independent, even though he really wasn't as independent as Jake was. It really saddened him. Tom continued to tell Jake that his mom was so serious about him having no secret plans that she even warned him with punishment. Spider parents would hardly ever punish their young unless they felt it was for a very good reason. All of the juveniles usually learned their lessons and did as they were taught to do. If they did not pay attention and practice their lessons, they would probably not fit in to the community. For most of them, that would be punishment enough because it was very important for all of them to have their friends. Even though Jake was different from most of the spiders, he still wanted his friends. Now as he was getting older, his friends would mean even more to him. Jake tried to make sure that he was always nice and respectful of others and that he never caused any trouble. As long as he was a decent spider and didn't cause any trouble, the others wouldn't mind so much even if he was different. They still may poke some fun at him, though. Jake had more freedom even though his mom was concerned for his safety. Tom's situation was different than Jake's. Tom's mom was also concerned for his safety, and Tom didn't really understand and appreciate that. His mom was also stricter than most, but she felt that she had to be strict because he was so small. Tom had not done anything bad, and as far as Jake knew, he was a decent spider—but he usually just stayed around his web home and did seem a bit odd. She would rather punish him at home so that he would learn and practice his lessons better and become a decent spider. His mom did not want him to learn the hard way. He would at least be safe if he stayed at home. She did not want him to be punished by life because that could be very dangerous. Tom's mom had heard many stories of young spiders being punished by life when they encountered dangerous situations that they were not prepared for, and she did not want that to happen to Tom. Many of those spiders simply never returned home, and their families were always deeply saddened. Much of that sadness could have been prevented. Tom's mom did not want that to happen in her family. She wanted to make sure that he practiced what he had learned and that he avoided danger. Then if he did find danger, he would be prepared on how to deal with it. She did not want to punish him; she really just wanted to help him. If punishing him was the best way to help him, then she would do that. Jake understood all of that and said, "We are not doing anything. We were just talking about something that we might plan to do. Feel better. We can still talk and hang out."

At first Tom was quiet and kept his head low and stayed curled up. Jake remained quiet; then he started to smile a little as he kept looking at Tom. Next he started picking up one leg as though he were about to start jumping. Again he told Tom that they could still talk and hang out.

Tom didn't say anything about that, so Jake began to wonder if that also might be a problem. He asked Tom if his mom had said that having Jake as a friend was still allowed and if they could still hang out together. Tom said that they could. He assured Jake that it was not a problem. Jake then suggested that they relax and start doing some jumping. Tom thought about all that Jake had said, and he did feel better. He uncurled himself and said that he wanted to do some jumping also. Jake joined in, and soon they were having fun again. They started talking about all sorts of things just as all the young spiders do. Jake asked Tom if he wanted to go for a crawl, and Tom said that he did. So they started out on a slow, local crawl and kept talking. Tom said that he was very happy to have Jake as a friend. He said that he was different from the other spiders. Some of them didn't like him and made fun of him because they knew he was different. Jake said that he also had problems fitting in to society. They all wanted him to do things like everyone else. Tom told Jake that he was concerned that the community would not accept him because he was so small, liked to jump so much, and did things differently than others did. But he had to be different because he was so tiny. Tom continued, saying that he had a lot of problems in spinning class because of the other students. A few of them made fun of Tom because he was so small and different. Jake did not know that, and it made him feel sad. Then Tom asked Jake why the others treated him that way, and Jake said he did not know. Tom really wished to be bigger, and he wanted to be accepted for who he was, but he was having a hard time because it seemed as though hardly anyone wanted to be his friend. Most everyone he met just wanted to point out how different he was. It seemed as though Jake was the only one who wanted to be his friend. Jake said there were others who liked Tom as well. He mentioned that Sam was also a friend but that he did not hang out often—and there was Bob too. Tom felt a little better. He said that he wanted to have some more friends, especially now that he was getting older. They both wanted more friends; even though Jake was more independent than Tom, he also wanted more friends. Both of them realized that they were different from many others in the community and that both of them were having problems being accepted. This realization brought them even closer as friends. Now they were more relaxed and open with one another, and they continued talking.

Their conversation slowly went back to their "secret plan." Again, they each tossed out different ideas, but it kept coming back to traveling. They decided that the plan would be a trip—a big trip, maybe even an exploration. Maybe other friends could go with them if they wanted. They hoped that at least one or two others would join them. Then Jake said, "Wait a minute. We have to be careful because if many spiders find out about it, it would not be a secret." They agreed and said that maybe it should be planned for the future, but they needed to learn and plan much first. So they knew that they would have to wait for the appropriate time. For now, they would stay near their webs and try to contact some friends any way they could. At that moment, their immediate interest was in having fun and finding out who might want to go on an exploration. For right now the best idea was just to have a party. That would be their secret plan for now. *Let's make it a special party*, they said. It was time to have a molting party. They would now be nice, social spiders so that they could fit in better with their peers at the party. Both of them were very pleased with the idea of a party because they felt that they could make some new friends and have a lot of fun at the same time. Everyone should be happy and in a good mood.

Now the arrangements had to be made. Jake and Tiny Tom were having a lot of fun discussing their plans. It was now time to get down to serious details. They carefully thought through what needed to be done: We have to be careful so the adults don't find out about our plans. Let us go and contact our friends. We will web up a new space just for the party. Maybe we will even catch some fresh insects for the party. You know that we all prefer fresh food. Preparation is the key to making the party a success. There must be plenty of webs to protect us and to help us catch insects. The party will be arranged for tomorrow just after it gets dark. Just as it gets dark we will meet at the big crack in the wall that is hidden by the huge shadow. Then we will crawl over to the party location. We will leave a tiny amount of web pointing in the

direction of the party in case there are any latecomers. A few of us can then take turns as guards and then we can watch out for any late arrivals. Then when the party is in full swing, we will not need any guards and we can all stay inside, protected by our webs.

Tom said that he hoped the party would not be too wild, but at the same time he wanted to have a lot of fun. The exact location of the party would be a secret for now. Only he and Tom would know the exact location. They were both so excited that they almost molted on the spot—but they had to control themselves and remain calm. No one else must find out about it except their friends. Now they needed to hurry and go home. If they met any of their friends along the way, they would tell them about the party and tell them to pass the word. Jake then reminded Tom that when he told spiders about the party, he should mention that he would be giving the party also—it was not just Jake's party. Tom was very happy to hear that. They were able to crawl together for a short distance before they had to go in different directions. Tom was having such a good time just being out with Jake that he really did not want to be in a hurry to go home, and he said so to Jake. Jake then said that he didn't want Tom to pick up his bad habit of being careless about the time. Tom said that was good advice, so he had better head back home so that he didn't risk any punishment. As they were about to separate and go in different directions, they saw another spider. They both stopped to see who it was, and it turned out to be Fat Bob. They were so thrilled and were about to tell him about the party when all of a sudden another spider came toward them. Jake stopped talking. He did not want someone whom they did not know to find out about the party, so he wanted to recognize the spider first. The spider came closer to them. Neither Bob, Tom, or Jake knew who he was, but he did seem friendly. He crawled right up to them. Then he got really close to the three of them, and it seemed as though he might actually crawl on top of them. He actually crawled so close to them that Jake thought his behavior was rude. Now Jake thought that he looked familiar, but he just wasn't sure. He looked at Jake and said, "hello", and asked him how he was doing. Jake was puzzled, so he gave no response. The spider looked at Tom and Bob and then turned back toward Jake. Again he looked at Jake and said, "Hello Jake; what are you doing here?" This time it was a personal greeting, so Jake realized that the spider definitely knew him. Jake was still puzzled, but he felt that he should respond, so he just gave a short, quick "hello" back. Then that spider said, "Don't you remember me? My name is Ruwenzori." Jake then asked Ruwenzori where he knew him from. Ruwenzori said that he was a friend of Raknar, one of Jake's older brothers. At that point Jake started to remember things about him and remembered that he was a fun-loving spider, very social, and at times could get a bit loud. As far as Jake knew, he was a decent spider. Jake then asked Ruwenzori what he was doing there, as Jake wondered if he was simply out on a crawl. Ruwenzori laughed and said that he usually didn't go out on a simple crawl. He liked to have a purpose to his crawling even if that was just a quick visit with another spider. Ruwenzori continued talking, as he usually did, because he was also a big talker. Then he said that he was there to meet Raknar. That surprised Jake because he didn't think Raknar would go out at this time of the night. Jake decided to be quiet and show no sign of surprise because he wanted to hear what more Ruwenzori would say. Ruwenzori did keep talking; he said that he was there to meet Raknar and that they would hang out together. Jake thought this was all becoming rather interesting. He was wondering where Raknar went and what he did. Now he might actually find out. Maybe Raknar had a secret that he could find out about, he thought. Jake was not interested in spying on his brother or getting him in trouble, but he was curious, very curious, about what went on. Jake's main concern was for his brother's safety, because after all, he was family. Other than that, Jake's interest was in what he might learn from Raknar. Jake simply had an incredible thirst for learning.

Jake thought this whole situation was quite interesting and amusing. Here his brother was meeting a friend for something private right where he and his friends were talking. At the same time, Jake was here trying to talk to his friends about some private plans. It seemed as though

neither he nor his brother wanted to let the other know about his plans. He began to wonder if Ruwenzori or Raknar would even have any suspicions about the party. As he thought about it more, he felt that they would not have any idea about it. Their thoughts were probably filled with their own plans. Jake felt that he and his friends should continue to act like juveniles so that his brother and Ruwenzori would have absolutely no idea about their plans for a party. So Jake continued to act as though he were a juvenile spider. He told Ruwenzori that he was glad that he was getting Raknar out to have some fun and that this looked like a nice place to hang out. Ruwenzori laughed and said that they wouldn't hang out there. He said he was meeting Raknar for some fun because he had found an interesting place for them to go so they could have some insect juices together. He said he had found a little web place that had been forgotten by everyone. Even though it had been forgotten by the spider community, different insects still got caught in the webs there, and some of them would be stuck there in the web for days before anyone came out to suck the juices. Some of the insects were forgotten for so long that they dried up and were wasted. Ruwenzori said that when the insects were stuck in a web for too many days, the juices started getting old. Then when spiders sucked the old juices, they seemed strangely affected by them. He said that the effect could be a lot of fun. This was something completely new to Jake and his friends, because they had always thought that when insects became old in the web, they simply became dry or did not taste very good any more. Jake and his friends always preferred fresh food. Jake remained quiet because he did not know what to say to Ruwenzori. Ruwenzori kept on talking loudly. "Raknar and I will have a lot of fun, but you are all too young to understand about having fun."

Then his attitude changed, and Ruwenzori acted like an adult, still loud. He said, "What are you juveniles doing out here? You should be at home. This is not a party." Jake and Tom were startled by those remarks. Tom even jumped a little, which Ruwenzori noticed and said, "What is the matter. Why are you so jumpy?" Tom tried to relax and not give any more reactions. Jake wondered if Ruwenzori knew about the party but then thought that would not be possible. He told Ruwenzori that they were not so young; in fact, they were almost adults. Ruwenzori just looked at the three of them and loudly said, "Okay, if you say so." Then he laughed some more. It was getting annoying; Jake thought it was no wonder that he was friends with Raknar, as both of them were annoying. During this whole time, Fat Bob was just quietly standing there because he was amused by the whole situation. Then Bob pointed out that there was another spider approaching them. They all focused their attention on that. The spider came toward them slowly; it turned out to be Raknar. Raknar tried to act as though nothing unusual was going on, and as he approached the group, he said hello to all of them. When Raknar came up to the group, he asked what was going on. Ruwenzori said that he had seen these juveniles out crawling around and that it was probably time for them to go home. Raknar looked at Jake but did not say anything. There was a brief moment of silence among the group.

Jake figured that he would continue to play along, so at that point he spoke for his group, agreeing and saying that they were all going home. "We were already heading home when we crawled into Ruwenzori." Raknar told him to go home and that he had better be careful of the time. Jake said that he would be careful and that they were all about to go their separate directions. Then Jake, Bob, and Tom crawled off together. Soon they stopped so that they could say good-bye. As they were not yet far away, Raknar could still see them. Jake and Tom told Bob that they had to talk fast and that he should try to not give any reaction. Then they quickly told Bob about the party. He was really happy to hear about it, and he said that he would tell a few spiders. Then they split up and crawled in different directions. They did it all very quickly and were very careful because they did not want Raknar or anyone to suspect anything.

Raknar had watched them go, and as soon as they were out of sight, he told Ruwenzori that it was okay for them to go to their forgotten web place. They wanted to be sure that they were not followed. Ruwenzori told Raknar that he had mentioned the web place to Jake, but Raknar was

not concerned about that—he simply wanted to be sure that they were not followed. Neither of them suspected anything about Jake and his friends because Raknar was more interested in his own plans.

On his way home, Jake crawled into a friend whom he had not seen in some time. It was Tumorow. They were happy to see each other. Tumorow was a nice spider, but he was strange looking because he had some strange bumps on him. No one knew what the bumps were from; all they knew was that he'd had them since he was little. Sometimes he was able to use the bumps to hide by blending into his surroundings. He usually did not get out much because with the bumps, he looked different from other spiders. This would be an excellent chance for him to get out and be a social spider, so Jake told him about the party that was scheduled for the next day. Jake also told him to pass the word around to other friends and then hurried home. Tiny Tom met up with a couple of spiders on his way home too, and he tried to tell them about the party. At first they acted as though they did not even see him, but Tom persisted. Then they said that it couldn't be much of a party with spiders as small as he was. Tom explained that the other spiders would not be small. He told them that he and Jake were giving the party. They had heard of Jake, and they asked who else would be there. Tom said that Fat Bob would be there and that there would also be some female spiders. They should have plenty of fresh food, he assured them. Tom knew how spiders just love fresh food. They decided that they would go to the party. Fat Bob was having a good time meeting up with spiders and inviting them to the party. He even saw Silly Sally and invited her. They all went home and acted completely normal, and then tomorrow came.

Chapter 2

It was boring for Jake and Tom at home, but they did not care because their thoughts were all about the party. Everyone arrived on time. They all came to the meeting place and had a little spider parade on their way to the party. It had become fun even before the party began. Everyone stayed in line and crawled as quickly as they could to avoid being seen. They all headed over to the new party hideout. It was simply beautiful. Webs were hung everywhere, and there were all kinds of webs. Some even had bright colors in their silken threads. All of their friends were there, and they were so happy that they were able to secretly get together like this. They were lucky; they even had quite a few insects for food. Silly Sally was there, and she said that the food was so weblicious, and she was so happy that it was all fresh. They knew that no one would eat much if it was dry food. Sally looked really nice, and she was having such a great time. Jake thought that she looked cute—but then it was time to greet someone else. That was how parties could be.

The party was just so wild; it was really lively. They did webrobics and even had an insect hunt. The saying was that if you look on the web, you can find anything. Sometimes there are really tiny insects that are caught in the web, and since they are so small, you may barely notice them or even care about them. The best ones who can find the most insects are considered web savvy. Now sometimes the webs are not all that sticky, so some insects may break free. That is why you always want to be quick but careful, because the quick spider catches the insect.

There were some great vibrations at the party, and all of their senses were excited. They started discussing having another party really soon. There could even be a contest to see who could spin the most beautiful patterns. Some could spin a really flat web. Others could make a nice cobweb trap. Later Sally led the group in a tarantella. She was a great dancer.

All of the spiders were tasting the insects and sucking all the juices that they could handle. One spider started making noises as he was sucking the juices. At first the other spiders tried to ignore it because they were having so much fun and because the noises were rude. That spider kept making noises, and he was now making them louder. A few spiders stopped what they were doing and joined in. Soon they were all making noises, and they all started laughing. It is just so contagious when spiders start laughing at a party. Some spiders were almost on their backs rolling around because they were laughing so hard. Some of the spiders looked odd, but they were happy to be there. They were all well behaved. There were no fights, just great fun. Jake was so thrilled as he thought about the party. Some of us had too much insect juice, and that would usually make us tired and bring us closer to molting, but we were so happy and excited to be with our friends. Then we started to play a game in which a few of us got on one web strand, waiting to see who would fall off first. We were wondering how many spiders that one lone thread could hold, but we knew that our threads were really strong—so we had to see who would lose his balance or get pushed off first. Fat Bob fell off first, and when he landed, one of his legs got bent behind his head—it was so funny. In a few seconds he had picked himself up; he was not hurt. Bob then said that he was eating too much and that he would try to eat less from now on because being at the party made him see how much he missed having fun with his friends. It was a little sad, but we were all happy to hear that. Then we went back to partying. It was all so much fun. At long last, it was time to molt. The winner would be the one who completed the process first. Of course everyone who molted would be a winner; there would be no special prize. Just being at this really fun party with your friends made you feel like you have won. It would all be in good fun. Some of us started to molt; it was so nice to molt together. Tiny was the quickest.

We all started to remark how much he had grown. Some were not ready to molt yet, but that was okay. The party was still going strong.

Suddenly we were surprised—the adult spiders were at the entrance to our web party. Somehow they found out about it and managed to track us down. Unfortunately, the party was now over! None of us minded very much though. We had already had our fun, and we knew that they were concerned about us. If we were to be punished, we would accept it. Jake's mom spoke for all of the adults. She said, "You bad little juvenile spiders. This was a foolish thing to do, and it is also very dangerous for all of you to have fun like this. You are not being careful. Always remember that there are many dangers for spiders. We don't want anything to happen to any of you. Listen to us; someone saw the recluse hiding, and Mr. Centipede is always watching, hoping to grab one of you. You must understand these dangers and that the recluse is real, with his brown coloring and all. He does not bother with webs. Rather he hides and lurks in the shadows. If you are asleep, he will probably grab you. If you are dead or injured, he will grab you. We would not even be able to give you a good web burial. It would be sad. Remember that he is not a nice fellow. Some of you may know how quick that Mr. Centipede is. He also is very tricky; he may even wait by the edge of your web and pretend to be dead or asleep. You must always be careful, and there are always new dangers to learn about. Now let us escort you safely home, and if any of you are still molting, your parents will stay and watch over you. Your molting should always be done in the safety of your web. Now let us go home before it gets any earlier.'

Eventually we found out that nobody received any actual punishment because we really had not done anything that was considered bad. Also, all of the parents were happy that we were socializing nicely and growing. Even though there was no punishment, we had to listen to many warnings and learn a few new lessons. That was fine with us because we knew that we had to learn more anyway. Since it was Jake's idea to have the party, he would be grounded for a short while. But he did not sit at home and sulk. No; rather, he stayed near his web home and relaxed, thinking and learning what he could.

Soon he was allowed to go where he wanted again, but he was told to be extra careful and to not come up with any more crazy ideas. He was constantly being reminded to be careful. It was a little annoying—but not so bad, because it was nice to know that someone cared about him.

His mom said, "You look bored; why don't you visit your cousin Sam? I'm sure that he will be happy to see you." Now, as we all know, moms don't know about nicknames. They simply don't pay attention to such things. Even if she heard them, she would not give them a second thought. She would just think the children were playing around. All adults are like that because their heads are full of grownup thoughts. Most adults have even forgotten how to have fun. Even when they see us, they just keep talking, thinking that we are playing and not paying attention. Jake thought it was a secret that his mom did not know that Sam's nickname was Small Sam.

Jake liked Small Sam so much as a friend that sometimes he had to remind himself that he also was a relative. He felt a little sad that he was so small, though. At least he was not as little as Tiny Tom. To Jake as long as you were a decent spider size did not matter, and they would all grow to be bigger anyway. One day Jake and Sam were crawling around and having fun, playing their spider games. All young spiders had their favorite games. He asked Sam how he felt about being called "small" and about actually being small. Sam said that he did not mind at all. Sam said that he actually liked being small in some ways, because he could go and hide places where others couldn't. It was great having him as a cousin. He was so happy, and he had a great outlook on life. That gave Jake an idea and he thought Sam's small size could be useful. Jake decided to find out about the elders secrets, and he thought that Sam could help.

Sam was also interested in learning more and in finding out what was going on. The more they spoke, the more Jake realized that Sam was as curious as he was. Jake felt that it was time to mention the adult's secret conversations to Sam. It would be interesting to see what sort of

reaction he would get. Sam was immediately interested because he also had wondered about some adult secrets. Together they discussed this for awhile. They decided that they must find out if it really was something that might interest them or was something that they should learn about.

We need a plan, they thought. Maybe we can simply be near them when they are talking. We can just pretend that we are playing and not paying any attention to them. We decided that a better idea would be to have Sam get really close so that he could definitely hear what they were saying. Since Sam is so small, he could probably get close without them even noticing him.

If they do happen to notice him, he will just say that he is playing. Sam could say that he is playing hide and seek; the adults would believe it. We may have to do this many times, however. How shall we put this plan into action? First we should observe them so that we are aware of when they are talking about their secrets and we can be around to listen. We don't want them to have any idea that we are trying to find out information.

Since curiosity was now getting the better of both of them, they decided to put their plan into action as soon as possible. Both of them were now starting to observe the adults. They wanted to get an idea about when the most likely time would be to overhear the secrets of the adults. Then they observed and waited. Then they observed and waited some more. It was very difficult being so patient, but they really wanted their plan to work. Yes, it was sort of a game, but they were serious about it. It made them feel so special and important to work on such a plan together. At long last, they felt that it was time to put the second step of their plan into action. Now it was time for Sam to be the special agent—literally, to be the spy. He was so excited. Both of them were so excited. For so long they had kept it quiet; they did not tell any other spider of their plan. That made it even more special, because it was like a special private pact between them.

Now the time had come. Sam would simply crawl into position near the opening of two webs. He would hide very well in a small space, and then he would wait. Together, after much observation and thought, they had figured what would be the best, most strategic spot. Then, also from their observations, they figured out a good time for Sam to hide there. Now they would see if they had planned correctly. If not, they would try again. They were extremely determined to make their plan succeed and to find out whatever they could. According to their observations, the adults should soon be taking out the remainders of some meals. Often two would come out at the same time, probably for safety. Hopefully, two adults would then meet and feel comfortable talking. They would be away from their families, so they would feel that there was no one to overhear them. They should not notice Sam, and hopefully, they would speak freely of things. Maybe they would even speak of their secrets.

Jake and Sam thought about it some more and went over their plans one final time. They agreed upon a time and went through the specific steps they would take. Shortly after darkness, they would meet and then take up their positions. Jake would be nearby but not too close. Now it was Sam's turn to see if he was as good at hiding as he claimed to be. They were excited all day long as they waited, but they tried their best to be completely patient in order to not give a single hint that some plans were underway. Darkness came, and they left their webs and both arrived at their meeting place. Then they crawled toward their positions as had been planned. Jake kept alert but pretended to be playing just in case he was seen. Sam went to his position and hid. It was such an excellent spot for hiding. It was a very small niche that was so well hidden that it literally blended into the surroundings. He could probably hide there forever and never be found.

It was a dream hiding spot. Sam quietly stayed there; he kept alert and waited. Much time passed, and he still waited. He was very patient, not like most of the young spiders. Then an adult appeared. This might be his long-awaited opportunity. The adult paused for a few moments, crawled around a little, and then left. That did not work as planned.

Meanwhile, Jake was trying to keep busy as he continued to wait. Boredom was starting to get to him, but he was eager to find out what Sam was experiencing. Also, he did not want to leave in case Sam needed any help. So he, too, continued to wait.

Sam was disappointed, but he was still very patient. He waited some more. He was now getting tired, and he was almost ready to give up for now but thought he would wait just a little longer. Suddenly another adult appeared; she was taking something out of her web that she did not want. Then as if by magic, another adult spider appeared. Sam was ecstatic. The plan was coming together. This could be that long-awaited moment. The excitement completely perked him up. He was now wide awake and listening intently. The adults saw and acknowledged each other. They started a conversation. Talk started to turn to more interesting topics. The adults were getting more serious, and Sam felt that this could be what he had been waiting for.

Even if they didn't hear anything interesting, it was still so exciting to play this new game. Here they were, spying on the adults who, until now, had been watching them. The adults' conversation seemed to get more serious, and Sam started to listen much more closely. He could make out their words, but he thought that maybe they were using a code language because even though he understood the words, he didn't know what they meant. He became more curious but also frustrated by this situation. It continued like that for just a few minutes more, but to Sam it seemed like an eternity of confusion and frustration. He simply did not know what to make of it. Soon the thrill of his little spy game began to wear off, and he lost his concentration. He became bored and careless. The adults were still speaking and he still heard them, but it just did not mean very much to him anymore. He became restless and thought about crawling away, but he did his best to maintain self-control and to continue to stay right where he was. Before long, the adults stopped talking and simply went back inside their webs. Sam was not as happy about how it turned out as he had hoped. He decided it was time to carefully crawl away.

During all this time, Jake was pretending that he was playing with Sam so that none of the adults would even be looking for him. It was an interesting activity, and Jake did not mind it at all. After all, it was part of their plan. Doing this would also help to develop skills that he could use later in life. Yes, he was serious about playing his part, but it was also a lot of fun. He was not sure how long he would continue to do this, but he thought he would keep his part of the plan going for as long as he could, or at least until Sam found him.

All of a sudden, he thought he noticed a spider crawling toward him. At first it was too far away to be sure, but soon the spider got closer, and he realized that it was not only a friendly spider but one of his brothers. As he came closer, he said to Jake, "Mom wants you home now. It is mealtime, and she says you must be hungry." Jake was a little annoyed because he wanted to be more independent, and actually he already was. But the bigger issue was that he suddenly realized that he had totally lost track of time. The plan had completely taken over his thoughts. He was just so completely involved and having fun in the process. Now his mind started to race. Where was Sam; would somebody find out about their plan? No. Everything would be fine. Now it was time to calm down and act as he always had before. He decided that he had better slowly go back home with his brother so that no one would be suspicious. Sam could take care of himself, Jake thought. So Jake slowly followed his brother back to their web home.

Back at the web, all was fine. Mom didn't really question him. She was happy that he was safe and back home. She did remind him to be more careful about the time. Mom had a nice, big, fresh insect all ready for the family, and the whole family took turns sucking the juices. Mostly they were quiet when they ate, but sometimes they got a little noisy. If anyone made any noises, everyone would just start laughing. Sometimes they laughed so much that they had to take a break in the middle of eating until they could stop laughing. It could be so much fun to be at home sometimes.

Sam had started to carefully crawl away when he thought all was clear. He made his move and kept going. It was almost time to breathe a sigh of relief that he had gotten out of the area when he thought he heard a slight sound. He stopped and decided to listen closely. He had just stopped when he heard a greeting: "Hello." Then he heard it a little louder: "Hello, what are you

doing here?” It was louder because it was closer. It was much closer. Then he noticed that it was an adult spider. It was one of the adult spiders on whose conversation he had been eavesdropping. He was concerned that he might have been seen, and he did not want to arouse suspicion, so he decided to simply respond back with a basic “hello” and to act like he did not have a care in the world. That would be a very simple and easy thing to do; he would simply be natural and act his age. What could possibly be easier than that?

Apparently it worked. Just as he thought, she did not give any reaction, and he slowly crawled away. Almost immediately he noticed another spider looking at him. That spider was darker so it was not as easy to notice. Sam and that spider just looked at each other without a word and Sam slowly crawled away. When he was quite a distance away, he was finally able to relax and breathe a sigh of relief. At that moment, he was extremely thankful that he had not gotten caught. But more importantly, he really felt that no one was even suspicious of him or of his plan. After all, he really hadn’t done or planned anything bad. His plan wasn’t obvious or something that he needed to hide. This made him feel more confident and even a little bold. But since he loved his community so much, he never lost perspective. He always felt that he would try to be a nice little spider and treat everyone with respect.

At long last, Sam came to the place where he was to meet Jake. He stopped and looked around to be sure. It was definitely the place. Once he was sure that it was the spot, he looked for Jake but did not see him. He started to search for Jake, but after a short time he realized that something must have happened. Maybe Jake simply could not wait any longer—but Sam was positive that all was well. Such was the nature of Sam. He was a really positive fellow, just like Jake. Their personalities were similar. Both of them were curious and interested in many things, but above all, they had really great, positive attitudes.

Sam then realized that time had really slipped away. He was a little concerned, so he figured that he had better head right home as fast as he could. On his way home, he was thinking of getting some food. He was just now beginning to realize how hungry he was, so he decided to crawl faster. Now spiders don’t really like to keep moving for a long distance, and certainly not out in the open. They prefer to crawl in short bursts, stop and relax, and quickly see what is around. They also prefer to stay by the edge of something for protection—also because that is where insects can be found easily. Going across a wide open area for a great distance almost breaks a spider’s safety rules. Sam was well aware of this, and he knew that these safety rules were good principles to follow, so he did stay mostly along the edges. He continued to crawl as fast as he could along the edges. Soon he realized that something was wrong because even though he was still crawling, he wasn’t really going in the direction that he’d wanted to go. Then he realized that there was a gap in the path that he wanted to travel; he would have to go back some of the way and then crawl around to continue back along the path to go home. Due to his haste to go home, he had lost concentration of where he was actually crawling. He would now have to backtrack. That did not make him happy, but he knew that it was the only thing to do. Very soon he was back on the right path to go home, and he made up his mind that he would concentrate better. For a moment he stopped and gathered his thoughts. He decided that he would try to think about just one big thing at a time. He needed to clear his head of the many thoughts that were cluttering his mind: Jake, their spy game, his hunger, and the time. All of this was much more than his little spider brain could handle. Now, after clearing his mind, he felt that he was ready to continue the crawl all the way home.

Before long he was at the entrance to his web, and that was a big relief. He quickly went inside. At first, all seemed fine. Then the questions came. His mom asked him where he was for all that time. He decided to try to just act like a youngster, like he had before. The impression that he was trying to give was that he was simply a careless youth out having fun and that he was totally unaware of the time. At first his mom did not like his response and she asked him whom was he with. He knew then that he had to be careful what he said to mom because she would

know when he told the truth. So he simply decided to tell her the truth—that he had been out playing with his cousin Jake. Sam was a little concerned that she might find out about their spy game, but he and Jake had agreed that they would say that they were playing with each other. So he figured that all would be well. His mom looked at him quietly for a moment and then said that she would probably be seeing Jake's mom, Lorta, in another day or two. Sam gave no reaction. His mom looked at him for a moment; she seemed satisfied, and she started to turn away. Her concern then shifted to food, and she told Sam that since he had stayed out so late, there were only leftovers to eat. He didn't mind because he was so hungry that he could eat anything.

Sam ate his fill of leftovers, and then he went to get some sleep. He curled himself up and was comfortable. It was time to sleep because he was tired from all of his activities, and tomorrow would be here very soon. Sleep did not come to him. His mind was racing from all of the activities and their secret plan. He still kept wondering if anyone was suspicious of their plan. Mom did seem to believe his story, but she was going to visit Lorta soon. He felt that it would be like a test, because he was sure that she would discuss with Lorta what he had told her about him and Jake playing. Sam didn't really think his mom was suspicious. Mostly his thoughts turned to Jake. He could not wait to see him so that he could find out what happened, and he also wanted to tell Jake what he had experienced. They just had to compare notes so that they could see how their secret plan was going. Sam felt that Jake was fine, but he wanted to know for sure. This was their secret together, and it united them as though it were a special bond. Sam was wondering if he and Jake would continue their plan, but he was sure that they would. He just didn't know how or when. His mind was full of these thoughts, and he was having a hard time sleeping—he was simply unable to sleep at all. He was tired, but he did not care because his mind was so active. It was a struggle to remain relaxed and curled up while still being unable to sleep, but he was so tired and had to stay there. Besides, if he started to be active so soon, it would raise suspicion. So he stayed in that position, struggling to get some sleep, for what seemed like an eternity. Then suddenly it was time to uncurl and be active again.

He was happy to be active again, but he felt so tired that he wanted to get more sleep. Sam really felt as though he had gotten no sleep at all. Now it was time to be active, even though he did not feel like it, so he had to begin his usual activities. Gradually as he was up and about, he started to feel better. Soon his mom had some food for him; it was fresh, so that made him really happy and gave him energy. He started thinking about Jake and their plans again. Mom started to say something, but he did not pay attention. He started to think that he could see Jake today. Suddenly he heard his name being called. Then he heard his mom ask, "Sam, are you listening to me?" That immediately brought him out of his thoughts and back to the present reality. She asked again, "Sam do you hear me?" He responded back, "Yes." Then she told him to listen to her. She said that she had many things planned for the day, so she wanted him to stay around their web home; if he went out, it should not be for long or far away. Today he couldn't play with any of his friends. He was not happy, but he understood because it happened sometimes. Anyway he would have a chance to rest some more. So the more he thought about it, the happier he was about staying home.

Before he knew it, time had passed and his mom was back from her activities. Sam had rested plenty while she was away, but now he was hungry. It seemed like that problem was about to be solved, because his mom had brought home some freshly webbed food, as usual. She reminded Sam that it wasn't all for him. Mom often said that to him; it was almost like a joke. This time she really meant it, because now he seemed unusually hungry. Before he started to eat, she said that tomorrow she was going to visit Lorta. She said that tomorrow Sam should again stay near his web home at least until she returned from her visit with Lorta.

For a moment Sam lost interest in the food in front of him. He knew that she was going to visit Jake's mom soon, but he had not realized that it would be tomorrow. Sam had hoped that maybe it would be another couple of days. The more days that passed before they visited, the

better for Sam and Jake, because then maybe the moms would forget to say some things to each other. Sam was also very frustrated about being stuck inside again for the whole day tomorrow. He almost completely lost his appetite as he thought about it some more. His mom noticed that he was not eating and was surprised, since she had thought that he was really hungry. A moment ago he had been very hungry. Now, however, he was concerned about the two moms talking tomorrow. Since he was not eating, his mom asked him if something was wrong. He knew that he had to respond immediately, so he simply answered “no” and tried to begin his meal again. Mom asked again if the food was okay. He looked at her and tried to manage a small smile. Then he dove right in and started sucking those insect juices. He acted as though all were well. It appeared that he was enjoying himself. Actually, he was enjoying himself because he really did like to eat and he really was hungry. Mom was now happier. It was always nice to see small Sam eat very heartily. She looked at Sam and told him to slow down. Again she reminded him that not all of that food was for him. He stopped and looked like he’d had enough for now. As Sam thought more about the situation, he felt that there was no reason to worry, so he just went back to his usual activities and didn’t bother to give it any more thought. Then he decided to ask his mom when she would be home from visiting with Jake’s mom. She said she did not know and asked Sam why he wanted to know. He just said that he wanted to go out and play for awhile, and if she was back early enough, he would have time to go outside and play before mealtime. She said that she would try to go out early so that she could come back early. That way there should be enough time for him to go out and play. He was happy to hear that. Then his mom surprised him. She said that he could go out right then if he wanted to, but not for very long. He was really happy to hear that. Sam was so happy that he got himself together and went outside almost immediately. His mom was surprised at how quickly he went outside, but she had figured that he probably would want to go outside and decided to give him the chance. She was glad to see how happy it made him.

Sam was really happy to be out and about now because it was totally unexpected. But he knew that he did not have a lot of time, so he crawled as quickly as he could, hoping that maybe he would see Jake. He was trying to cover as much area as he could in the little time that he had. On and on he kept crawling. He did not realize how far he had crawled. Then he noticed a spider and hoped that it was Jake. He stopped and noticed that the spider was coming near him, but it seemed as though it had not yet seen him. At that point he also realized that he had crawled so far so fast that he was not really sure where he was. That did concern him somewhat, because he also was not sure of the quickest way back to his web home.

Anyway, he thought that the spider seemed friendly, so he would just remain there for a few minutes. It was good to be so small sometimes, he thought. Sam was very fond of observing spiders as well as other things just like all the spiders. So he just stood there and watched as that spider crawled nearer to him. As the spider crawled closer, Sam thought that he looked like Jake—but not exactly. He still did not seem to notice Sam, and Sam was happy to stay there and observe. This was definitely a friendly spider. Sam began to think that maybe he was one of Jake’s siblings because he really resembled Jake and was about Jake’s size. The spider was still acting as though he had not noticed Sam, which surprised Sam. Sam was small but not incredibly small, and it did not seem possible that the other spider really hadn’t yet seen him. He crawled closer to Sam but not directly toward him. Sam was confused, thinking that the spider would surely have noticed him by now.

It would be almost impossible for that spider not to have noticed him unless he was not able to see very well. There seemed to be no indication that he had any vision problems, but Sam felt that something must be wrong. He had never seen a spider act that way before. Sam began to feel sorry for the spider, and he no longer observed him as closely as before. He felt sad that the spider seemed to have some problem.

Sam thought that he would remain there for another moment and then continue on and hopefully find Jake. He was no longer paying much attention to that spider; now he was deciding which direction he would go to look for Jake. All of a sudden, that spider was right next to him. Actually he was almost on top of Sam, and Sam noticed that he was actually a lot bigger than Sam was. Now that he was up close, Sam could see that he definitely had a resemblance to Jake and was even about the same size, maybe a little bigger than Jake. Now he could see that the spider was looking directly at him, and it appeared that he definitely did not have any vision problems. He began to wonder if maybe that spider had been trying to fool him. It seemed like maybe that was a new method to try to fool insects while approaching them. The spider kept standing over Sam and looking at him right in the eyes. Sam did not like it when big spiders looked down on him like that; it made him feel so small and uncomfortable. That spider just stood there for a moment, quietly looking down on him, knowing that he couldn't move. Sam just quietly stood there and waited, because that was all that he could do. The spider kept looking at him and finally said hello. Sam knew immediately that this was a female spider. Sam responded back with a simple "hello." Then he noticed that the spider seemed to smile, and she spoke again. She said that her name was Arsenica.

Sam said hello again because he did not know what else to do or say. Arsenica was friendly, and she kept looking at Sam with a smile on her face. She acted as though she wanted to be a friend. Sam was still too young to be interested in female spiders, so he just asked her how she was doing. Her smile seemed to grow even bigger then, and Sam thought that it even looked as though her eyes were smiling. She answered that she was doing very well. Then she asked him what his name was, and he said that it was Sam. She then asked him what he was doing. Sam was becoming uncomfortable, because Arsenica was positioned around him in such a way that it was not easy for him to move. In addition, he did not like all these questions from a stranger. Sam then said that he was just out for a quick crawl before he went back to his web home. Then she asked him if he lived nearby, and he said yes and that he needed to go now. Then he started to try to crawl. At that point, Arsenica realized that she was in his way, so she moved. Sam felt relieved and kept on crawling. Arsenica started to crawl beside him because she wanted to chat some more.

Sam was annoyed, but he did not show it because she was a friendly spider. He just kept crawling and said that he did not want to be late. She continued with her questions. All of her talking and questions were starting to annoy Sam, and he started to wonder how much more of her questions he could handle—maybe she would crawl away from him if he did not pay her much attention. He was hoping that she would crawl away from him. Then Sam thought of a question to ask her. He said that she looked like a friend of his and wondered if she was related. She just laughed and said she didn't think so. Then she continued with her questions. By now even her voice was becoming annoying to Sam. He didn't want to be rude, but he figured that he would probably have to interrupt her because she was talking almost constantly. Now he did not care about how it might come out, so he just asked, loud and clear, "Are you related to Jake?" She completely stopped and looked at him. Finally, silence from her. Sam was a little surprised but pleased that he had stopped her from talking so much. After a moment, she said that Jake was her brother. Sam was pleased with himself because he had guessed correctly. Arsenica then said that he must be the one who Jake talked about. She said that she knew he was a distant cousin, and Sam agreed that it was all true. Arsenica was even happier now because she knew more about him. She said that it was amazing that they had never crawled into each other before. Sam did not respond. Now she was back to talking some more, but at least her chatter was not nonstop as before. She asked him where he lived, and he just replied that he was going there now. Sam said that he had to get home as soon as possible so that he would not get in trouble. Arsenica said that she would crawl with him if he did not mind. He said that was fine but that they had to move

fast because he didn't want to come home late. It would be easy for her to move fast, as she was almost twice his size.

As they crawled along, she asked if he wanted to be her friend. He said it was okay but that he did not have a lot of time to play. She then asked him where he hung out and what he liked to do. He politely repeated that he did not have a lot of time to play or to hang out. Arsenica then asked him why he did not have much time to play, and Sam said that his mom did not let him out a lot because she needed him at home. There were always a lot of activities and chores for him to do. Sam said that he did not have many brothers and sisters. It was a small family, so his mom relied on him a lot. Arsenica understood that. As they got closer to Sam's web home, she asked if she could see him again tomorrow or the next day. Sam said maybe, if he was not busy. He said that he would try to get out because he wanted to go out and play also.

Finally they arrived at Sam's home. Sam's mom was at the entrance waiting for him because Sam was late. Both Sam and Arsenica could tell that his mom was not happy. She saw the two of them, and then she looked at Sam and told him to go inside and get ready to eat. Sam looked at Arsenica and went inside. Arsenica was concerned that Sam would get in trouble because of her. If he got in trouble, she might not be able to see him. She really wanted to see Sam again soon, so she decided that she would say it was her fault that Sam was late. After all, that really was the truth. She started to speak, but Sam's mom just picked up one leg and tried to wave her away. She was showing that she was not interested in anything that Arsenica had to say. Arsenica tried to speak again, and again Sam's mom picked up a leg to dismiss anything that she would say. Sam's mom did not want to have anything to do with Arsenica, and she was trying to make it obvious. This time she quickly put down her leg and turned to go back into her web. Arsenica just stood there and watched as she crawled back into her web. After a few moments, Arsenica turned and left the area. She knew that Sam's mom was not happy about seeing her with Sam. She also knew that there was nothing that she could do or say about it now. As she was heading home, she was hoping that she would get to see Sam again very soon. Once Sam's mom was inside her web she crawled over to Sam. She looked at Sam and said, "I want you to stay away from her." Sam asked her why. His mom said, "Because that spider is pure poison." He realized that his mom was trying to give good advice, but since he was getting older, he did not like the idea that she was still telling him who he could have for a friend. Since he did not want to start trouble and knew that he was already late, he just kept quiet. Also, he wasn't even sure if he wanted Arsenica as a friend—but he wanted to be the one to make that choice. Sam said that he had just been crawling along and that Arsenica had stopped him and said that she wanted to be his friend. His mom told him to be careful with her because she could get him into trouble. She continued that he should not have her as a friend and that he would find many other friends. Sam said that he would be careful, and he also said that he had told Arsenica that he did not have much time to play. He also told his mom that he was not sure if he wanted to have her as a friend. His mother was happy to hear those things. He added that he was being friendly to her, however, because Jake was her brother. His mom was surprised when she heard that; she said that she could talk to Jake's mother, Lorta, about that when she saw her the next day. She told Sam that she had not known that Arsenica was Jake's sister and that he had done the right thing, because it was always good to be friendly whether or not the spider was related to Jake. Mom reminded Sam that he had come home late, and she was not happy about that. But since he had been friendly, and since coming home late had not been his fault, she would not punish him. Then she reminded him that he must stay at home tomorrow while she visited Lorta, and he must be more careful. Sam agreed and said that he would be more careful. Mom was happy, and she said that it was now time to eat. Sam was always happy to have some food because it would help him to molt so that he could grow. He couldn't wait for the day when he would be called just "Sam" It was not fun being called "small." So he ate as much as he was able to eat, and then it was time for him to go to sleep. He wasn't very tired and couldn't fall asleep right away. Sam

remained curled up and tried to relax. As he stayed there, he started thinking about all sorts of things. He started thinking about Arsenica and that it would be good to have many friends. Then he remembered his mom's warning and decided that he had better be careful. He completely understood what his mom meant when she said that Arsenica was pure poison. Sam knew that his mom had a feeling about Arsenica that she could get him into trouble, maybe big trouble. His mom always had good advice, so he would make sure that he paid attention to what she said. On the one hand, he wanted to start making his own decisions, but he also wanted to avoid any family arguments. Next Sam started thinking about his mom visiting Jake's mom the next day. He wasn't very concerned about it, but it was becoming uncomfortable for him to just stay there and to try to sleep. When you try to sleep, it never seems to work. So Sam just tried to relax and to be thankful that he had a chance to relax in his nice web home.

His thoughts started to turn to Jake and when he would see him again. Then he thought about being stuck inside tomorrow and ... then he was outside crawling around, and he was happy. Next thing he knew, a big spider was chasing him, and he was scared. It was chasing him and getting closer. He was crawling as fast as he could, but he could not seem to get away from that spider. It kept gaining on him, crawling faster and faster, and it did not seem to be friendly. Sam kept crawling as fast as he could. It seemed as though there would absolutely be no escape for Sam from that spider. The spider was just about to pounce on him and web him up. Suddenly Sam jumped when he heard a sound; it was his mom calling him to wake up. He remained curled up and tried to think what was happening. Sam realized that he had fallen asleep and had been dreaming. He had fallen asleep and slept so deeply that he did not even wake up once. Now he was trying to gather his thoughts. He heard mom call his name again, and he knew that it was now time to uncurl and to be active. Yes this was real, and he was awake. Slowly he uncurled himself. After that deep sleep and those dreams, he did not want to make any sudden moves. He was slowly moving, still trying to figure out what had happened. To him it seemed that it was barely a few moments ago that he had curled himself up and settled down for sleep. He remembered that he had been having different thoughts as he was trying to sleep; he even remembered what he had been thinking about. Next thing he knew, it was time to wake up—now how did that happen, he thought to himself. It had happened so fast that it was almost like magic. The time went so fast that it seemed scary. He had not even known that he had fallen asleep, and it was now time to wake up; his mom was calling him.

Then he remembered that he needed to wake up and eat something, because his mom would probably go over to visit with Jake's mom soon. As usual, his mom had something ready for him to eat, and he was always happy about that. As he was eating, she said that she would be leaving soon for a visit but was planning to be back at home early so that he would have time to go out for a bit when she got back. He was happy to hear that and continued eating. His mom then gave him a few chores to do while she was gone, and then she left. Sam finished eating and began to do his chores.

Sam's mom headed over to visit Lorta. She knew a very quick crawlway, so she got there really fast, and she did not meet up with any other spiders along the way. Moms are too busy and have too much to do to waste time with distractions. She was always happy to get where she wanted to go as quickly as possible. At the entrance to Lorta's web, Sam's mom shook the web to let her know that she had arrived. Almost immediately, Lorta came to the entrance to greet her. They were really happy to see each other. Lorta invited her in, telling Sam's mom to make herself comfortable and that she would be with her soon. She was just preparing some small snacks. Sam's mom, Murata, did just that. She looked around the web as she made herself comfortable. She liked what Lorta did with her web. When Lorta finished preparing the snacks, she was able to concentrate on chatting with Murata. They were very close and had known each other for a long time. Actually, they had known each other since they were very young. Murata

and Lorta were distant cousins. Sometimes you can have a good, close relationship with distant relatives, and this was one of those situations. It seemed very nice that their sons were not just relatives but also close friends. Murata said that she thought the web looked very nice. She wondered where Lorta got her ideas. Lorta said that when she went out, she didn't always hurry to complete her errands. Rather, she liked to slow down, even if just a little, so that she could observe things more closely. That helped to give her some ideas. Murata said that she had so many errands and tasks to do that she had to crawl quickly to get everything done and then get back to her web home. Lorta said that she also got help from her big family, which included a few sons. Murata agreed that family would be a big help, but she only had a small family; she did not have as many spiders as Lorta. Mostly she relied on Sam for help. He was very helpful, and he did stay at the web whenever she requested, but he still was only one spider. Also, he was very young and small. Lorta commented that Murata's web was probably still nice and cozy. Murata said it was, but it would be nice to have it look even better. Lorta was concerned that Murata might feel badly, so she tried to think of some way to help her, suggesting that maybe she could get some help. Murata thought that was an interesting idea, but she asked where she would get help. Lorta thought that she had an answer. She said that maybe she could get one of her sons to help. Lorta continued, saying that since her son, Jake, and Sam were such good friends, Jake would probably be glad to help. Murata thought about it for a minute and agreed that it was a good idea. Lorta then said that they should have some snacks that she had prepared. They crawled to another part of the web where the snacks were all webbed up. Murata said they looked so nice that she would like to have those snacks in her web and asked how they were prepared. Lorta said that she would show her. They crawled over to another part of the web where there was a freshly caught insect. Lorta told her that she had made some spots on the web extra sticky. Then she crawled over to the insect and told Murata to watch. That insect was still moving around, so they knew that it was very fresh. Lorta went right up to that insect even though it was still moving. She was so close that she could touch it. Lorta was not afraid; she knew that she had made her web very sticky so that the insect could not get free.

Once their prey is caught, spiders never like to lose an insect. If an insect escapes from their web, it shows that they did not do a good job when the web was made. If another spider sees that happen to you, she may laugh and tell other spiders that you don't know how to make a decent web. It can be very embarrassing, and if enough insects get away, you may miss out on some meals. Lorta would not let that happen to her. In spinning class, she learned her lessons well. She had been feeding her large family and had plenty of practice.

Next Lorta picked up a leg to get Murata's attention and pointed to what she was going to do. Then she proceeded to web up that insect. She did it slowly so that Murata could see exactly how it was done. Lorta added a nice artistic touch to it. The way she did it made it seem so easy. When it was done, she picked up a leg and pointed at the completed insect snack. Lorta told her that it was easy, but she just needed to practice it a few times. Murata said that she now knew how it was done and would practice it. She said that it looked so nice prepared that way, and it really was so easy. Murata said that she would try this for her family as soon as she got the proper insects, and Lorta assured her that her whole family would enjoy it.

Then Lorta said that it was time for the fun part. She said that now they should start snacking on the webbed-up insects. Since Murata was the guest, she was supposed to start snacking first. But Murata did not. She just stood there looking at the webbed-up insect. Lorta asked if there was anything wrong, and Murata replied that the insect looked too nice to snack on. Lorta just laughed and said that they must remember that it was just food. It was not a decoration; it was food, and they didn't want to waste any food. They couldn't just let these snacks stay here and dry up—it would be a shame. These days food was not always so plentiful. Then Lorta waited to see what Murata would do. It was the polite way to treat her guest. Murata looked at Lorta and then at her snack, and then she went right up to it and started to suck the juices. Lorta then started

couldn't have two strong females in the same home, but there was no immediate rush for Arsenica to move out. Lorta said that Arsenica did a lot of wild crawling. She said that she wondered if it was more dangerous for Arsenica or for the spider who she may encounter. Arsenica could take care of herself, she said. Then she asked Murata if Arsenica had caused any trouble. Murata said that she wasn't aware of any trouble. Lorta told her to continue talking. Murata said that they both realized that Arsenica had bad moods and could be dangerous. Lorta nodded. Murata said that the other day, Arsenica had seen Sam when he was out crawling, and she had said that she wanted to be his friend. Sam was still so small and young to be involved with a spider like Arsenica. Again Lorta nodded. Murata said that she wanted to give Sam freedom and let him make his own choices, but she felt at this time that Arsenica should stay away from him. She said that she had become puzzled by Sam even before he met Arsenica and that they must try to keep those two apart at least until they were older. She added that she also wanted to keep Sam at home now, because she still needed his help. Lorta agreed, but she said that Arsenica could be difficult. Murata said that she would try to keep Sam busy so that he wouldn't be able to see her much, if at all. Lorta said that she would see what she could do. Then they said good-bye.

Murata now crawled back by a different route. It was much slower than what she was familiar with. She crawled fast to make up for the greater distance. Soon she was in the area where she thought their sons had been playing the other day. Then she slowed down so that she could look around. At first she did not notice anything. She kept looking and then she noticed a web. Murata headed toward that web and carefully approached the entrance to the web. Then she shouted out a big "hello." Almost immediately an adult spider came to the entrance. She looked out and saw Murata. They were friendly toward each other. Murata was thinking of what to say when the spider said that she looked familiar. Neither one could remember ever meeting. Then the spider remembered why she looked familiar. She said that the other day there had been a young male spider playing near her web. "That spider looked a lot like you," she said to Murata. Murata asked if he was small, and the spider said that he was. The spider said that he was polite, but he did act like a real juvenile. He was quiet and then he slowly crawled away. Murata was interested; this seemed to be just what she wanted to hear. Then Murata asked the spider what her name was. She said that it was Tarytula. Murata noticed that she had more dark hair than most in the community had, and it was also thicker. She also told Tarytula that her name was very pretty. They exchanged greetings and now were becoming fast friends. Murata asked her about Sam, and Tarytula said that she didn't know his name, but he sure did look like Murata. From what Murata was hearing, it was around the same time that Sam and Jake had supposedly been playing together, so she figured it must be Sam that Tarytula was talking about. Tarytula said that he had acted like a juvenile, but she did not know why he was so close to her web entrance. Unless a spider was visiting, it was considered rude—or that someone might be trying to cause trouble—to get too close to a web entrance. Tarytula had thought it was odd, but since he was so young, she was not offended. She repeated that it just seemed as though he was so busy playing by himself that he did not realize where he was. Murata heard what Tarytula had just said, but she wanted to confirm it. She then asked if he was alone, and Tarytula said that he was. Tarytula said there had been no other spider around, so he just seemed like a lonely juvenile playing by himself. "Maybe there was another spider that I did not see, and they were playing a hiding game. If he hadn't been so involved in playing, I would have felt sorry for him," she said. Murata was puzzled, wondering why Sam would have been here by himself. She thought more about what Tarytula was saying about Sam acting like a juvenile this far away from home in front of strangers. It all seemed so unlike Sam that she was wondering if it was actually Sam. Maybe Jake was with him and they were playing hide and seek, she thought. Murata did not know what to think. She said good-bye to Tarytula and said that she might see her again soon. Tarytula told her to crawl by anytime. Then Murata started to slowly crawl out of the area, but

she was puzzled as she was leaving. She continued crawling toward her web and thought that she would probably not question Sam; she would simply watch him more closely and try to do so without him being aware of it. She also felt that she would need to talk to Lorta about this again soon. Murata did not think that Sam might do anything bad, but she was very puzzled. She realized that it was possible that Tarytula could be mistaken. Since she was concentrating on going home, Murata did not want to concern herself with Sam's activities anymore for now, but she was glad to be aware of it. She liked the idea of Jake coming over to help her.

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