

MY FRIEND, THE SPIDER

By: T.N. Searcy

I have never dreamed that someday I would refer to an ugly creepy-crawly spider as my friend, but I knew one on a personal level, starting in late summer/early fall of 2020. Having never seen him/her face-to-face, I guess it is alright to call the critter my friend. Since we were not formally introduced, and I do not know its proper name, I will just call it THE SPIDER.

This little insect (did not like to be called one) had taken up residence behind the outside mirror on my car. At least, I am assuming that is where the tiny creature lived. As everyone knows, the outside mirror on a car is encased in a metal frame and can be adjusted electronically from inside the car by using a button just beyond the armrest on the door. There is a small open space surrounding the mirror, separating it from the metal encasement. I assumed the SPIDER lived behind the mirror in the open space where the electric wires connect. The web was destroyed daily, but a new one was created by the following morning, with one end always anchored to the metal frame around the mirror.

A small spurt of insect spray and I would have been rid of my little friend, but I was amused every day by the antics that kept me in suspense. Each day when I went out to use my car, there would be a new web extending from that mirror to the handle on the door or off in some other direction. No doubt my SPIDER called me dirty names for destroying that web, but I was alright with it so long as it was done from behind the mirror. I never once saw my SPIDER at work in daylight hours, so the artwork must have been created at night. It was amazing to observe that this

spider knew to work at night when predators, such as birds, would be inactive, and the creative work of spinning a web could be accomplished under cover of darkness. How big is a spider's brain, anyway?

Webs are woven to snare insects for the spider's food, but not once did I see an insect in that web. No starvation took place, so something must have been caught and eaten at night. Someone told me that spiders eat their web as a source of protein. When I went to the car in the daytime, my SPIDER friend, with a full stomach of mosquitos, must have been sleeping in the space between the mirror and the metal encasement where it could not be disturbed. Our daily temperatures in late summer reached near 100 degrees, and it could have been 120 degrees behind the metal encasement, so why wasn't my SPIDER roasted? I'm just asking, but SPIDER never ventured out to tell me. Do spiders sweat? Where do they get water? We had no rain in ten days or more, and there were no dew drops on the web. Perhaps moisture came from juicy stuff in insects—yummy, yummy.

The design and location of the web were a mystery to me. It stretched from the mirror's edge to the car door's handle – never touching the door surface – just out there in space, and often there were several strands. One day a strand had been extended from the mirror of my car to the door handle of a car parked adjacent to mine, with a space of three to four feet between the two cars. Now, how was that feat accomplished? Spiders have no wings, the wind was not blowing, and the two cars were on the same level. If my SPIDER dropped to the ground and walked over to the other car, how did it rise upward to the handle and keep the strand intact? Can a spider jump to that height?

Over a two-week span, the arachnid (SPIDER) continued to create webs on my car door, but then I noticed there were no new webs. What happened? I had declined to have my car washed so as not to disturb this mysterious little web-maker. He, or she, was a hard worker, always doing its job of spinning webs, and kept me guessing what would be there the next day. Now, the web creations had ceased. I was saddened not to see any new webs.

I assumed all along the creature must be a bachelor as there were no signs of a mate being present. How to spider handle.....well, you know? Maybe, the same way fish procreate. I read somewhere the spiders lay eggs. That chapter was missing from my high school biology book, back in the 1940s. We were not even told how human babies were made, let alone spiders.

As new webs were missing from my car door for several days, I assumed SPIDER had gone away to prepare for winter hibernation. But then, the mystery may have been solved. I went to a vision clinic to return a pair of new glasses for some adjustments. The receptionist seated me at a small table, with an aide seated opposite me. She reached across and brushed my shoulder. I asked, "What was that?" The lady said a small spider was on my shoulder. Uh-Oh. I told her that the spider was one of my pets. She strongly suggested that I look for it on the floor when I was ready to leave. Where is PETA when you need them?

The spider on my shoulder brought up a new mystery. If that was my SPIDER, how did it get inside the car? All windows were raised, the doors were locked, and I'm not aware of any openings. My SPIDER had to be waiting for me on the car roof over the door or on the top edge of the door. As I opened the door, SPIDER made a

courageous leap for my shoulder. The outside temperature that day was in mid-sixties degrees, and that smart spider knew he could enjoy a ride from the inside warmth of my car. This leads me to think that spiders may have the ability to reason and outsmart humans at times.

My daily amusement maker is gone. What should I do now? I don't think baby spiders are sold in pet stores. They are not popular pets like kittens and puppies. Perhaps I should have gone back to that vision clinic and looked for new webs under all the chairs.

Why should I be concerned about the mystery of my SPIDER and its web? There are other mysteries to be solved. A young congresswoman from New York tells us that we have global warming, and it will kill us all within ten or twelve years if we don't get rid of our oil, our airplanes, and our cars. Sadly, there goes my SPIDER'S home. Maybe the congresswoman should have talked to my SPIDER.

Yes, my sanity is intact, and I can cope with the loss. Sending sympathy cards will not be necessary.

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