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The Too-Ambitious Spider

Abbie Phillips Walker

The crack in the storeroom door was not very large, but when a spider running along the floor saw it, he said, "I wonder what is in there?" And looking through the crack, he saw that it was the storeroom, and as he was looking for a home for himself, he crawled through the crack and in a minute was in the room all by himself.

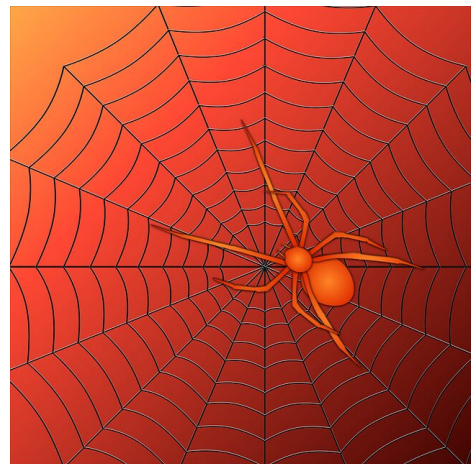
"A nice large room," he said, "and well fitted to be my home."

As he looked around, he saw in one corner a mirror from which a piece of the corner had been broken; by the window, a chair from which the seat was gone, and in the middle of the room, a table from which a leg was missing, and which stood somewhat unsteadily on the three that were left.

At the windows, there were no curtains, but the closed blinds shut out the bright light, and in the half-darkness, the spider went around the room and looked over the furnishings.

"First," he said, "I will mend the mirror, for then I may be able to see myself, and since no one is to live with me, that will keep me from being lonesome."

And beginning at the edge of the break in the glass, he spun his finest thread from there to the frame. Then back and forth, he traveled, carrying the thread with him and spinning such a fine web as he had never spun before, "for," said he, "I must make the web look as much like the mirror as I can, and then the break will not be noticed." And when he was finished, the break was nicely mended and, except that it did not shine as the glass did and reflected no image when he looked in it, it was nevertheless handsomely mended.



Then he went over to the chair. "They certainly did get a lot of wear out of that chair," he remarked, "for there isn't enough of the seat left to tell what it is made of. However, when I have finished, it will be as good as new and even better for my use."

So, beginning at one corner of the seat frame, he spun a thread which reached to the other corner and then a thread which, crossing the first thread, reached between the two other corners, and then with these as a foundation, he wove a beautiful web which covered the whole of the seat. Since the bottom of the chair was larger than the break in the mirror, he used a larger and stronger thread, and when he had finished and sat down in the middle of the web, he said to himself: "No one could ask for a handsomer chair or one with a stronger seat, and I shall spend much of my time sitting in this chair and rocking back and forth."

And then when he went to the table and, crawling to the top, he walked along to the corner where the leg was missing and, fastening a thread to the edge of the table-top, he dropped over the side and lowered himself to the floor. Having fastened his thread there, he crawled up the thread already spun and was soon at the top again, and going back and forth and up and down many times, he had at length a cord of considerable size. "There," he said, "so strong a support as that ought never to break. And now, having mended all the things which needed mending, I will settle down for a winter's rest."

But he had only been there a few days when he heard footsteps on the stairs, and quite before he knew it, the door opened and in stepped a maid with broom and duster, dustpan and brush.

"What a dirty room!" she said. "Mistress would surely be angry if she should see all this dust and these cobwebs," and so saying, with half a dozen motions of the duster, she destroyed every web that the spider had made. Then she swept the room and dusted it, and in half an hour or so, she had finished and gone.

"Well, what would you think of that?" said the spider. "All my work destroyed by a careless servant. I shall have to do it all over, but next time I will protect myself against another such accident." And so after he respun the webs on the mirror and on the chair and on the table, he went over to the door and spun his strongest web across the keyhole and around the knob of the door.

"We will see now," he said, "if I will be intruded on by servants that have nothing better to do than to tear down things faster than I can build them up. When she tries that door, she will find it securely fastened, and on the inside, too, and it will teach her to keep out."

But it was only a few days after when, to his surprise, the same maid came to the door and without any more effort than usual opened it and came in with the same broom and the same duster and the same dustpan and the same brush and in the same manner as before destroyed all the results of the spider's work.

When she had gone out, the spider was discouraged. "What is the use," he said, "of a spider trying to have things like people who are greater than he? I build for

days and they destroy in a minute. I think I will build me a web in the corner and live as other spiders do." So he built him a web in the corner, and when a few days later, the maid came again to clean the room, she did not see the web, and the spider rested in peace. "After all," he said, "I am comfortable here, and mirrors and chairs were really not made for spiders."

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