

THE LONELY SPIDER

Trevor was a large spider, who lived in a house high on a cliff top above the sea. The house stood on its own, with no other property for a neighbour.

And in the house, living alone, was its owner. A delightful old lady called Natasha. She knew that Trevor lived in her home and would often speak to him when she saw him in his favourite places. In fact it was Natasha who gave Trevor his name, when she found him sitting on the mudguard of her bicycle. "I'm afraid you'll have to move, Trevor, I'm off to the shops

And he slowly vacated the mudguard, in a manner that suggested he had left of his own free will, rather than be asked to leave. For he was very proud

Secretly, he was extremely fond of Natasha and he knew that the feeling was entirely mutual, but he could never become too friendly with her for the law of spiders dictates that they remain aloof, because a spider is indeed the noblest of creatures.

That is why, however hard we try, or however well intended we are, a spider will never allow us more than passing acknowledgement.

Natasha accepted Trevor's rather distant attitude, almost as if she knew of that great spider rule, but felt sad that such an order should ever be imposed, or in fact, observed

Trevor played lots of games but his favourite of all games was to sit at the top of the bath, then slide down its slippery enamel surface, glimpsing his reflection as he raced towards the huge taps at the end. Also he walked upside down on the ceiling, or ran through the thick pile carpet with his eyes closed. And sometimes he would spin the most perfect webs, that glistened with the crystal dew of autumn, at that special time of year.

But when Trevor was sad, he would retreat to the cool, dark recesses of the larder and sit beside the cold water pipe that ran all the way to the loft.

One day, when he had played all his favourite games, he rushed to the larder and started to cry, even before he reached his special place by the water pipe. He cried so much that tear drops ran on to his front legs and made him tip forward.

And then, as the tears subsided, he began to whisper to himself.

"Oh I am so lonely. I wish I had a friend".

"Someone to talk to. To play with.

Oh please, please. Let me have a friend".

And for a long while he just sat there and dreamed of a friend who he could be with, to do all the things, that are fun when shared. But he had hopelessly dreamed of this very thing, so many times, there in the cool larder, and now despair suggested that it was never to be

Eventually, as he wiped his eyes with one of those long magnificent legs, he spoke in a voice that was no longer a whisper, but loud determination. "Natasha is my friend, I live in her house, she calls to me, but I ignore her".

"Tch! The law of spiders is ridiculous! I am no better than her.

Yes, I am a fine and noble insect but, we are as equals. Everyone can be as good as each other".

And so saying, he resolved that tomorrow he would be Natasha's friend.

He was pleased with himself and this made him happy. So he started to walk from the larder as it was only his sad place when, he heard faint laughter.

He wondered who could be there, laughing, and went to investigate. Climbing over old tins, long forgotten, with faded labels, and boxes, the corners of which had been nibbled by inquisitive mice.

The laughter stopped but Trevor felt he had to keep looking.

When sure enough, there, on top of an old tea caddy, he saw the most beautiful spider he had ever seen.

At first Trevor was embarrassed and demanded, "Were you laughing because I was talking to myself?!"

And the spider began to run away, but Trevor pleaded, "Oh please don't go. Please stay".

And at once was cross with himself for having spoken so sharply to the delightful spider.

The spider stopped and turned to look at Trevor.

She smiled at him then shyly averted her gaze

"My name's Trevor. Will you be my friend?"

Still looking away, for she was very shy, she replied, slowly, "Yes, I would like to be your friend".

Trevor's heart leapt and he ran to the top of the caddy, ignored by its red and gold characters who decorated the tin.

"What is your name?" Trevor asked. She thought for a while then said, "I should like to be called Emma. I think it's a very pretty sound and I've heard the old lady of the house, every night address the photograph in her bedroom, 'Good-night Emma'".

Trevor remarked that he had seen the photograph of the young woman, who looked very much like Natasha but that she had never come to visit.

"Yes", said Trevor, "Emma is a pretty sound and it suits you perfectly". And from that day on, Trevor and Emma were together

They played all the games Trevor had invented and then Emma showed him how to tip-toe around the bath's polished chrome, without falling off, and how to climb the silver chain that hung below the shiny taps.

They played hide and seek but Trevor always found Emma because she could not contain her laughter whenever he came near.

And at night, from silver threads they spun at an upstairs window, they would watch the ships blinking at them out on the ocean, and speak of the great adventurer spiders on board, who travelled across continents, hidden in boxes of exotic fruit and all manner of strange merchandise. And all the while their happiness existed, Trevor completely forgot his promise to be Natasha's friend.

Such is the selfishness of love.

Spring had banished autumn and summer was just beginning.

It was a bright Saturday morning and Trevor and Emma were playing their favourite game, of hide and seek.

This day, Emma was determined that Trevor would not find her and had run to hide, while Trevor waited in the living room. She was trying to think of a new hiding place. Somewhere she had never hidden before, when, in the hall, she came across a box that sat by Natasha's bicycle.

It was a low, flat box, that once contained tomatoes but now held a few books, a pair of candlesticks, various other bric-a-brac and, tucked in a corner, the perfect hiding place.

A tin money bank in the shape of a pillar box.

Emma ran to the red post box, slipped slowly through the coin slot and waited at the bottom of its dark inside, knowing that this time Trevor would never find her

At the front of the cardboard box, on a label sellotaped to its edge, Natasha had written, in bold letters, 'VILLAGE JUMBLE'.

For a long while Trevor looked in all the familiar places, but could not find Emma, and as he went to the larder, thinking she had tricked him by going there, he said aloud, "Oh this isn't fair Emma, we never come here anymore. We are always happy".

But Emma did not answer, for she wasn't there, but safely hidden in the money box.

At last, when she decided it was time to emerge triumphant from her hiding place, and tease Trevor for not being able to find her, she heard a loud knock at the door, followed by Natasha's footsteps, then voices.

Emma thought she would wait until the commotion was over, before rushing off to Trevor.

But in the next few minutes everything happened so quickly.

She felt the box being lifted, and the loose ornaments rattling against her tin, as the box was carried away.

She heard voices, "Thank you very much. Bye bye Thank you", before the box was set down amongst several other boxes. There was a soft thud of a door closing, and soon, through the coin slot, Emma could just see the tops of trees rushing by against a cloudless sky.

At that moment Emma thought of Trevor. Thought that she may never see him again, and she was afraid. So afraid, she found it impossible to deny her tears.

From then on, every day was the same. Pining for Emma. Hoping she would return. But she never did.

Then one night, he remembered how he had determined to be Natasha's friend and how he had neglected to do so. And so he decided to go to the living room, where Natasha would often sit,

reading. Alone. And that, whatever happened, he would be her friend. And if, hope of hopes, Emma returned, they would all be friends.

As he crossed the thick pile carpet to the armchair where Natasha sat, Trevor saw her slowly shut her eyes.

But on this occasion it wasn't sleep that closed her tired lids, for they were never to re-open. And when Trevor discovered what had happened and thought that now he could never ever be Emma or Natasha's friend, again.

His heart broke.

But of course he didn't realise, that one day, they would at last, all be friends.