

## REVENGE OF THE EIGHT-LEGS

A short story by AmandaK

The screen fills with black and white snow swirling around crazily but for several long minutes I continue to stare at it. The last television station has just signed off for the night and I can no longer put it off.

Put off what? you ask. Well... going to bed. Such a simple act. We all do it every day. Yet here I am, trying to gather up my courage.

Am I an insomniac perhaps?

No, I'm not.

You see, when the alarm woke me bright and early this morning, the first thing to greet me when I opened my eyes was a *monster*. It sat right there, on the edge of my bed! Eight hairy legs, pitch black body. And it was big. I mean, really, really big! At least a full inch across. Well, you get the picture.

I don't think I've ever jumped out of bed so quickly, or went from 'asleep' to 'wide-awake' so fast. Never taking my eyes off of the monster, I fumbled around for a weapon -- all the while hoping it wouldn't have an ally hidden among my footwear, all the while hoping it would stay put and not run off. Don't get me wrong, I don't *really* dislike those bug-eyed horrors with their two-folded bodies and too many legs. As long as they stay OUT OF MY HOUSE!

This specimen, however, had been dumb enough to cross that line. And for it's trouble it got crushed. Squished beneath my shoe, beaten to a pulp. I couldn't suppress a shiver when I wiped up the mess with a big wad of toilet paper.

So why am I sitting here, afraid to search out my bedroom? Why? Well... who knows? That creep might have had buddies. They could be *in* my bedroom, you know. Waiting for me. Waiting to take their revenge for the murder of their friend.

With a sigh I push up off the couch and take my glass to the kitchen sink. Nothing like a stiff drink to gather up one's courage. I switch off the TV and without the piercing hiss of static, the room is suddenly eerily quiet. I shiver and rub my upper arms while dragging myself toward the bedroom. I switch on the light and, before crossing the threshold, I scan the room for dark blots that aren't supposed to be there.

I don't see anything out of the ordinary and scold myself for my foolishness. A few minutes later I am in bed and as soon as my head hits the pillow, I'm out.

Some time later, I don't know when exactly, I wake up. Still groggy with sleep, I try to figure out what it is that has woken me. Something taps my cheek, right next to my nose. It's a light touch, a delicate finger trying to wake me up. I open my eyes. Through a crack in the curtain moonlight is shining into the room. And in the moonlight, perched upon the tip of my nose so that I have to cross my eyes to bring it into focus, sits... I yell in terror. It's another of those multi-legged horrors!

I want to leap from the bed and wipe it off my face. My brain tells my hands to move. Nothing happens. I try to toss my head, only to find it is immobilized. So are my hands. And

my legs. I can only move my eyes. They frantically roll around in their sockets, trying to take in the room.

Again, I want to scream, but my vocal cords refuse to obey. My hands, my head, my whole body, has been lashed to the sheets with gossamer, sticky silk. And at least a dozen -no, make that two dozen- small black things scurry around, trussing me up even tighter, wrapping me in their webs.

All coherent thought leaves me. I can only stare at the big black thing on my nose. Eight round buggy eyes study me. I see malice in them, and hatred. I gulp. This is not just my worst nightmare come true. I realize I have to fear for my life. These creatures mean business!

To prove me right, there's a pinprick in my right hand. Immediately followed by one in my left foot. They are biting me! Or stinging, or whatever it is they do to kill! Before you can say 'eight-legged monsters', their teeth are all over my body. I finally regain my voice and I scream.

Bad idea.

Plop. With a quick hop the spider leaps from my nose upon my lower lip and crawls inside my mouth. Eeww! I gag and try to dislodge it with my tongue. But instead of letting itself be pushed out, it sinks its teeth into the sensitive flesh. Damn! That hurt!

With renewed strength, I struggle against my bonds. It's in vain. The silk threads, though thin, are many and I can't break them. I am helpless, in the eightfold claws of the arachnids. Tears begin to fall from my eyes and I'm trying to tell them I'm sorry, that I didn't mean to kill their friend. But with the creature sitting on my tongue I can't form the words. I doubt they would have believed me anyway.

More and more spiders are crawling in through the window. A steady stream of wriggly black things. Large and small, in all kinds. And they crawl upon my bed, across my body, beneath the covers, inside my pajamas. And they keep biting me.

And though a single bite from any of these animals may not be poisonous to me -I'm a gigantic human, after all, not a tiny fly- the continuous small inoculations from their poison glands are weakening me. Through the fear, I feel myself go weaker and weaker. I no longer struggle against my bonds; I don't have the energy anymore.

They crawl through my hair, the tiny pricks lining my skull. I can feel their small feet on my cheeks, pattering across my face. They crawl down my forehead, toward my eyes, and I squeeze them shut. Oh please, I pray silently, somebody help me!

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. The alarm jerks me awake. I don't dare move, don't dare open my eyes for at least five minutes, while I wait for my heart to stop racing. Cautiously I crack my eyes open a bit. I stare at the ceiling of my room, the paint off-white except for the yellow leakage stain in the corner. No monsters. No spiders. Nothing but me and the insistent beep of the alarm clock. I bark a relieved laugh: it was just a nightmare!

I sit up and realize my nightshirt is clinging to my back with sweat. I'm drenched.

I raise a hand to push the sweat-soaked hair of my forehead, and then I freeze in mid-movement, my hand hovering right before my eyes. My heart has stopped. On the back of my hand I count five, six, seven, even more miniscule droplets of dried blood. And what the hell are those silvery threads that are clinging to my fingers?

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