

Spider House

"Hurry up," I say.

Brendan slams the door and mutters, "I'm com'n." He is my best friend and my comrade for this evening's adventure. He moved across the street when I was in kindergarten and we have been best friends ever since. Brendan collects comic books like other kids collect baseball cards. His favorite Marvel character is Wolverine.

I asked him once, "Why do you like Wolverine so much?"

He said, "Knives are awesome and Wolverine can heal himself. How cool is that!"

Everyone calls me Spidey. It is not because I like Spiderman. I love spiders. It is not like I am going to marry a tarantula. But they are the most mysterious creatures on Earth.

Posters line my wall with creepy and scary spiders. I have every spider book known to man. I even talked my grandmother into buying a Spider Encyclopedia set.

Last Christmas, my Dad bought me an aquarium for when Mom finally lets me have a real spider in the house. My brother has a hamster so why can't I have an arachnid? Did I say it? I love spiders. They are my thang.

We get on our bikes and head towards the fair. This is the most exciting thing that has ever happened in our small town. We have one of everything. One school, one road that leads in and out of town, one grocery store (Walmart), and now we have one fair. I do not care that it is going to be here for only the weekend. Halloween is tomorrow. How cool is that!

"I'll beat you to the fair," Brendan says.

"In your dreams." After about two blocks, we are out of breath. It is a good thing the fair is not too far. We will never make it. Jocks, we are not. Spider nerd and Wolverine superfan are our thang.

The setting sun shimmers in our eyes as the faint music of the Merry-Go-Round echoes along the street. I look over at Brendan and say, "We are almost there." He grins while we pedal harder.

The cool breeze whistles and combs my hair. A stranger appears out of nowhere. I slam on the brakes. Brendan swerves and hops on the grass and then skids. I stop inches from plowing over an old woman.

My heart skips a beat and I say, "Sorry." Wow, I almost hit a Gypsy and the only thing that comes out of my mouth is "Sorry." I am a jerk. She peers at me and smiles, showing her black teeth.

Creepy. A chill runs along my spine. "Do not go to the Spider House," she mutters. I pedal around her and catch up to Brendan.

"Weird, old, coot, we need to get out of here," I say. Brendan nods. I glance back and the Gypsy is gone. She vanished as quickly as she appeared. Poof.

Ten minutes later, we park our bikes at the school and walk over to the fair. The Ferris Wheel's lights blink on and off. The Merry-Go-Round music echoes in the background.

"Where do you want to go first?" I say.

"You can't go to the fair without riding the Ferris Wheel," he says with a grin.

"The Ferris Wheel is for kids."

"I'll bet all the cool kids are riding the Ferris Wheel."

I shove him and say, "You are an idiot." We weave through the crowd at a steady pace.

Brendan yells, "There she blows," as we approach the Ferris Wheel. He points to Scott Hazelton. "I told ya. All the cool kids ride the Ferris Wheel." I glance at the top of the Ferris Wheel. Scott and a girl sitting next to him are laughing.

"I did not know Scott had a sister?"

"Hey stupid, that's Sharon Moran." He punches me in the arm. Scott Hazelton is the shortest kid in our fifth grade class. All the girls get gooey-eyed around him except for Sharon. She calls him names or trips him in class. Now, it makes sense.

Waiting is the worst. We hope the line will move faster. But of course, it does not.

Finally, we are next. After waiting in line forever, we get on the Ferris Wheel.

The ride moves at a snail's pace. And then it moves faster and faster. It stops. I look at Brendan and raise my eyebrows as if to say, "Is that it?" He shrugs. The Ferris Wheel moves in reverse. We hold our hands above our heads and hoot and holler.

"We need to find the Haunted House," I say.

"Not, yet. Let's go on a few more rides," Brendan says. Did he blow me off? That has never happened before.

We get on the Bumper Boats. It is like Bumper Cars but on the water. We exit the boats laughing. I squeeze the water from my shirt like a washrag.

“Are you ready to find the Haunted House?”

Again, he says, “Not Yet.” I am tired of him brushing me off. Halloween is tomorrow. I have to visit a Haunted House!

“Let’s play some games,” Brendan says. I agree, but I am not happy about it. We walk through the crowd and pause in front of a dunking booth.

“Do ya wanna play this game?” Brendan asks.”

“Nah, I am trying to save my tickets for the Haunted House.”

“You’re being a jerk,” Brendan mutters.

“You are being a butt. I have been trying to go to the Haunted House all night. Every time I ask, you brush me off. Why is that?”

Brendan shrugs. “I dunno.”

I walk away in a huff. When I glance over my shoulder, Brendan is still standing in line as if nothing happened. I continue stomping my feet in the opposite direction.

A neon sign flashes behind the Ferris Wheel. I quicken my pace. It seems like everyone is in my way. “Watch it kid,” says a man waiting in line.

“Sorry,” I say. I rush around him and walk for a few more minutes.

“How many tickets?” I say to the man behind the ticket counter. He slowly holds up his index finger.

“Are you sure?” he nods in slow motion. I hand him the ticket. The door creaks as I rush inside.

A flashing neon sign says, “Spider House.” Spider-shaped desserts cover the kitchen table. I grab a cookie and bite off one of its legs.

Several dozen spiders crawl across the table. I jump back and screech like a girl. Those can not be real. This house is supposed to scare me. Right? I bend down to get a closer look. A black spider crawls up my arm faster than I can blink.

I shake and dance to get it off. I dash out of the kitchen.

The hallway has black lights that shimmer through the spiderwebs hanging from the ceiling. Spiders crawl back and forth along the wall. I pause in front of a coffin resting in the middle of the corridor.

I lift the lid. A spider crawls out of a vampire’s mouth. He sits up and says, “Good evening.” My heart skips a beat. I walk a little faster.

A mummy with spiders crawling out of his eye sockets hobbles towards me. I crawl in between his legs and sprint down the hall.

I crash through a wall of spider webs as I breathe in the cool night air. It is pitch black. No lights. No music. Where is the fair?

I jog across the open field. The thump thump echoes in the moonlight. After a few minutes, the outline of the Ferris Wheel creates a shadow against the night sky.

I stop. No lights. No crowds. Where did all the people go? How long was I in the Spider House? It felt like ten minutes. I cross the fairgrounds to the school, grab my bike, and hurry home.

The porch light is on when I arrive home. This can not be a good sign. I open the back door and peer inside. CNN rings across the house. My parents look up as I enter the living room.

"Do you know what time it is?" my Mom says. I giggle. "This isn't funny," she says a little louder.

"I know, I know. But how am I supposed to know the time? Do you see me wearing a watch?" I show them my wrists and twist them back and forth.

"Don't be smart with me, young man. Where were you this evening? Jake has been home for hours." Jake is my older brother. He is the star running back at our school. He is everything I am not.

Dad sits on the couch and stares at me with a disapproving look. He does not say a word. I can almost hear him say, "I am very disappointed with your behavior tonight. I thought we could trust you."

"Where have you been all night?" Mom says again. She is almost screaming.

I take a step back and stare at her for a moment. "I was at the fair. When I came out of the Spider House, everyone was gone."

"Spider House?" She glares at me. And then storms out of the room. "Jake, wake up. Did you see a Spider House at the fair?"

A moment later, she slams my brother's door and stomps into the living room.

"Jake said he didn't notice a Spider House. Why do you insist on lying to us?" Mom demands.

"I am not lying. Why will you not believe me?" I say a little louder as I clench my fists.

Jennifer said, "You disappeared at the fair."

"That is not true."

“Now, Brendan is lying?” I stomp out of the living room and slam my bedroom door shut.

Whispers of Mom and Dad talking echo through the walls. It stops as sudden as it began. Knock, knock.

The door opens. Dad pauses in the doorway and then enters.

“Your mother and I are worried about you. We’re glad you got home safe.” Here comes the “but.” There is always a “but” in these talks.

“But we are disappointed in your behavior. It was very irresponsible. Do not do it again. You are going to cause your mother to have a heart attack.”

My mouth begins to smile. Dad scowls at me. I slowly say, “I am sorry about tonight. I will not do it again.”

Dad bends over and kisses me on the forehead. “I love you, he says.” Dad hesitates in the doorway before leaving.

What a way to begin my Halloween weekend. It was not my fault. What did the Spider House do to me?

Reader,

I hope you are enjoying the Spider House. You can continue reading this story on Amazon.

Author: Reuben Shupp

Book: Creepy and Scary Tales: A Collection of Short Stories