

For Entertainment, My Ejecting-Spider Dance

Several times in the first few minutes of the movie we had rented, I laughed. For me, laughter is a rare reaction to movies classified as comedies, so I was optimistic about the entertainment potential for the movie. Then I got distracted from the movie.

I had seen many spiders in our house. I want to be generous and share our habitat, but as warmer weather of spring and summer opened here in Central Oregon, spiders emerged from winter dormancy and found their ways inside. I have at every opportunity moved our household spiders outside. Our warmer weather also brought abundant insects. Our windows are well screened. I'm sure spiders will make a better living outside, and I am more at ease when they live outside than when they live inside.

An effective way to move a spider is to wait until it is on a flat surface and imprison it under a glass. Then gently slip a piece of paper under the glass and allow the spider to walk onto the paper or up the inside of the glass. Raise the glass, and keep the opening closed with the paper. Take the temporary prison outside and allow the spider to escape. I did that with several spiders in the days before we watched the movie.

Despite the movie holding my attention, I knew immediately what to do with the spider who descended from the ceiling on a strand she strung behind her, two feet in front of me, though this time, I wouldn't use the glass prison.

I stood up and interrupted her web with the forefinger of my right hand and began walking toward the door. The single, sticky strand adhered to my finger. The spider reacted to my breaking the strand above her by spinning out more web and descending toward the floor more rapidly. I wasn't confident I could catch her once she made it to the floor and scurried off, so I bent down, interrupted her web with my left hand closer to her and raised that hand while I dipped down again with my right hand, trying to outpace her rapid descent toward the floor by repeatedly breaking her strand and raising it and her while I walked toward the door.

Laura, who was sitting about eight feet to my left watching the movie,

didn't see the spider. She had no idea why I reached down, rapidly raised my hand, reached down with the other hand and raised that one while walking toward the door, concentrating, as far as she could tell, on the air in front of me.

"What are you doing?" she asked. And then "Jon, are you all right? What is going on? What is the matter?"

The spider was small, and it took concentration to keep my eyes on her and to stay ahead of her effort to escape. I heard what Laura was saying, but I couldn't interrupt my concentration by responding. When I got to the door, I found it was locked, and it took considerable acrobatics to unlock it while I kept the spider from landing on the floor or on the door. I would answer Laura in a few seconds, as soon as I completed my mission.

I unlocked the door and opened it, and I reached outside just as the spider landed on the wide threshold. In her effort to escape the monster that was manhandling her strand, she set off immediately in the direction she faced when she landed, back toward the inside of the house. I didn't want to lose what progress I had made, so I fell to my knees and cupped both hands in front of her. She took the hint, turned, and ran outside, and I backed up, shut the door, and stood up.

Because I had gotten busier every second my strange dance progressed, I had not answered Laura. I had focused my attention on the spider, and I didn't realize Laura had gotten more and more upset as she watched her husband dance a strange, energetic, inexplicable dance across the front room. He bowed down and stood up straighter and bowed down again and again, rotated his arms in front of him, scrabbled terribly at the front door until he opened it, dropped to his knees in a prayerful but active attitude in the doorway, then crawled backward, slammed the door and stood up with a satisfied expression.

When I turned from the door I had just shut, I realized Laura's concern had escalated until she wondered if some exotic demon had taken possession of me. I quickly explained what had happened and explained that I had been too preoccupied with moving the spider to respond to her questions. Once she knew what my wild dance had been about, Laura relaxed and even saw some potential for humor. "That was very strange," she said.

Seeing my wild dance with the spider as it appeared from Laura's

perspective struck me as funny. I laughed more than I had at the beginning of the movie, which we eventually got back to, in a spider-free environment. The movie had been put together well, but it never attained quite the rapid pacing nor the eventual humor of my wild, unexplained, spider-escort dance across the living room toward the outdoor spring air.