



THE SINNER AND THE SPIDER

By John Bunyan

Sinner.

What black, what ugly crawling thing art thou?

Spider.

I am a spider-----

Sinner.

A spider, ay, also a filthy creature.

Spider.

Not filthy as thyself in name or feature.
My name entailed is to my creation,
My features from the God of thy salvation.

Sinner.

I am a man, and in God's image made,
I have a soul shall neither die nor fade,
God has possessed me with human reason,
Speak not against me lest thou speakest treason.
For if I am the image of my Maker,
Of slanders laid on me He is partaker.

Spider.

I know thou art a creature far above me,
Therefore I shun, I fear, and also love thee.
But though thy God hath made thee such a creature,
Thou hast against him often played the traitor.
Thy sin has fetched thee down: leave off to boast;
Nature thou hast defiled, God's image lost.
Yea, thou thyself a very beast hast made,
And art become like grass, which soon doth fade.
Thy soul, thy reason, yea, thy spotless state,
Sin has subjected to th' most dreadful fate.
But I retain my primitive condition,

I've all but what I lost by thy ambition.

Sinner.

Thou venom'd thing, I know not what to call thee,
The dregs of nature surely did befall thee,
Thou wast made of the dross and scum of all,
Man hates thee; doth, in scorn, thee spider call.

Spider.

My venom's good for something, 'cause God made it,
Thy sin hath spoiled thy nature, doth degrade it.
Of human virtues, therefore, though I fear thee,
I will not, though I might, despise and jeer thee.
Thou say'st I am the very dregs of nature,
Thy sin's the spawn of devils, 'tis no creature.
Thou say'st man hates me 'cause I am a spider,
Poor man, thou at thy God art a derider;
My venom tendeth to my preservation,
Thy pleasing follies work out thy damnation.
Poor man, I keep the rules of my creation,
Thy sin has cast thee headlong from thy station.
I hurt nobody willingly, but thou
Art a self-murderer; thou know'st not how
To do what good is; no, thou lovest evil;
Thou fliest God's law, adherest to the devil.

Sinner.

Ill-shaped creature, there's antipathy
'Twixt man and spiders, 'tis in vain to lie;
I hate thee, stand off, if thou dost come nigh me,
I'll crush thee with my foot; I do defy thee.

Spider.

They are ill-shaped, who warped are by sin,
Antipathy in thee hath long time been
To God; no marvel, then, if me, his creature,
Thou dost defy, pretending name and feature.
But why stand off? My presence shall not throng thee,
'Tis not my venom, but thy sin doth wrong thee.
Come, I will teach thee wisdom, do but hear me,
I was made for thy profit, do not fear me.
But if thy God thou wilt not hearken to,
What can the swallow, ant, or spider do?
Yet I will speak, I can but be rejected,
Sometimes great things by small means are effected.
Hark, then, though man is noble by creation,
He's lapsed now to such degeneration,
Is so besotted and so careless grown,
As not to grieve though he has overthrown
Himself, and brought to bondage everything
Created, from the spider to the king.
This we poor sensitives do feel and see;
For subject to the curse you made us be.
Tread not upon me, neither from me go;
'Tis man which has brought all the world to woe,
The law of my creation bids me teach thee;
I will not for thy pride to God impeach thee.
I spin, I weave, and all to let thee see,
Thy best performances but cobwebs be.
Thy glory now is brought to such an ebb,
It doth not much excel the spider's web;
My webs becoming snares and traps for flies,
Do set the wiles of hell before thine eyes;
Their tangling nature is to let thee see,
Thy sins too of a tangling nature be.
My den, or hole, for that 'tis bottomless,
Doth of damnation show the lastingness.
My lying quiet until the fly is catch'd,
Shows secretly hell hath thy ruin hatch'd.

In that I on her seize, when she is taken,
I show who gathers whom God hath forsaken.
The fly lies buzzing in my web to tell
Thee how the sinners roar and howl in hell.
Now, since I show thee all these mysteries,
How canst thou hate me, or me scandalize?

Sinner.

Well, well; I no more will be a derider,
I did not look for such things from a spider.

Spider.

Come, hold thy peace; what I have yet to say,
If heeded, help thee may another day.
Since I an ugly ven'mous creature be,
There is some semblance 'twixt vile man and me.
My wild and heedless runnings are like those
Whose ways to ruin do their souls expose.
Daylight is not my time, I work in th' night,
To show they are like me who hate the light.
The maid sweeps one web down, I make another,
To show how heedless ones convictions smother;
My web is no defence at all to me,
Nor will false hopes at judgment be to thee.

Sinner.

O spider, I have heard thee, and do wonder
A spider should thus lighten and thus thunder.

Spider.

Do but hold still, and I will let thee see
Yet in my ways more mysteries there be.
Shall not I do thee good, if I thee tell,
I show to thee a four-fold way to hell;
For, since I set my web in sundry places,
I show men go to hell in divers traces.
One I set in the window, that I might
Show some go down to hell with gospel light.
One I set in a corner, as you see,
To show how some in secret snared be.
Gross webs great store I set in darksome places,
To show how many sin with brazen faces;
Another web I set aloft on high,
To show there's some professing men must die.
Thus in my ways God wisdom doth conceal,
And by my ways that wisdom doth reveal.
I hide myself when I for flies do wait,
So doth the devil when he lays his bait;
If I do fear the losing of my prey,
I stir me, and more snares upon her lay:
This way and that her wings and legs I tie,
That, sure as she is catch'd, so she must die.
But if I see she's like to get away,
Then with my venom I her journey stay.
All which my ways the devil imitates
To catch men, 'cause he their salvation hates.

Sinner.

O spider, thou delight'st me with thy skill!
I pry'thee spit this venom at me still.

Spider.

I am a spider, yet I can possess
The palace of a king, where happiness
So much abounds. Nor when I do go thither,
Do they ask what, or whence I come, or whither
I make my hasty travels; no, not they;

They let me pass, and I go on my way.
I seize the palace, do with hands take hold
Of doors, of locks, or bolts; yea, I am bold,
When in, to clamber up unto the throne,
And to possess it, as if 'twere mine own.
Nor is there any law forbidding me
Here to abide, or in this palace be.
Yea, if I please, I do the highest stories
Ascend, there sit, and so behold the glories
Myself is compassed with, as if I were
One of the chiefest courtiers that be there.
Here lords and ladies do come round about me,
With grave demeanour, nor do any flout me
For this, my brave adventure, no, not they;
They come, they go, but leave me there to stay.
Now, my reproacher, I do by all this
Show how thou may'st possess thyself of bliss:
Thou art worse than a spider, but take hold
On Christ the door, thou shalt not be controll'd.
By him do thou the heavenly palace enter;
None chide thee will for this thy brave adventure;
Approach thou then unto the very throne,
There speak thy mind, fear not, the day's thine own;
Nor saint, nor angel, will thee stop or stay,
But rather tumble blocks out of the way.
My venom stops not me; let not thy vice
Stop thee; possess thyself of paradise.
Go on, I say, although thou be a sinner,
Learn to be bold in faith, of me a spinner.
This is the way the glories to possess,
And to enjoy what no man can express.
Sometimes I find the palace door uplock'd,
And so my entrance thither has upblock'd.
But am I daunted? No, I here and there
Do feel and search; so if I anywhere,
At any chink or crevice, find my way,
I crowd, I press for passage, make no stay.
And so through difficulty I attain
The palace; yea, the throne where princes reign.
I crowd sometimes, as if I'd burst in sunder;
And art thou crushed with striving, do not wonder.
Some scarce get in, and yet indeed they enter;
Knock, for they nothing have, that nothing venture.
Nor will the King himself throw dirt on thee,
As thou hast cast reproaches upon me.
He will not hate thee, O thou foul backslider!
As thou didst me, because I am a spider.
Now, to conclude since I such doctrine bring,
Slight me no more, call me not ugly thing.
God wisdom hath unto the piss-ant given,
And spiders may teach men the way to heaven.

Sinner.

Well, my good spider, I my errors see,
I was a fool for railing upon thee.
Thy nature, venom, and thy fearful hue,
Both show that sinners are, and what they do.
Thy way and works do also darkly tell,
How some men go to heaven, and some to hell.
Thou art my monitor, I am a fool;
They learn may, that to spiders go to school.