

The Spider and the Fly

by
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Contains excerpts from Mary Howitt's The Spider and the Fly

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EXT. CAFE - DAY

GRANDMOTHER (V.O.)

"Will you walk into my parlour?" said the Spider to the Fly.

ARA, 29, dark eyes with long hair, glances out from the cafe window. She twirls her pencil.

GRANDMOTHER

"Tis the prettiest little parlour that you ever did spy."

John, 32, business casual with both hands in his pockets, approaches the cafe. He winks at a delighted child.

GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

"The way into my parlour is up a winding stair, and I have many curious things to show when you are there."

A woman takes selfies on the bench in front of the cafe. John forces a smile and enters.

GRANDMOTHER (CONT'D)

"Oh, no, no," said the little Fly, "to ask me is in vain, for who goes up your winding stair can ne'er come down again."

INT. CAFE - DAY

John orders a coffee. He notices Ara at the cafe bar.

Ara, smiles and reaches for her tea.

JOHN

This is definitely your first time here.

John places a tip in the jar.

ARA

How can you be sure?

JOHN

If someone as beautiful as you came here even once, everyone would know.

ARA

You really shouldn't.

Ara shakes her head and retreats to her table. She picks up her pencil and considers her unseen sketch.

JOHN
And you really shouldn't have your
address displayed on your luggage.

Ara glances down and laughs.

ARA
I see.

John smiles at Ara and reaches for his coffee. His sleeve
is pulled back revealing scratches on his forearm.

ARA (CONT'D)
Do you have a cat?

JOHN
Um?

John glances at his arm and laughs, fixing his sleeve.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I do, Detective...?

ARA
Ara. You?

JOHN
John. May I join you at your table?

Ara gestures to the empty chair. John sits. Sunlight
spills through the window across Ara's face.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Listen, I don't want to give you the
wrong idea. I'm definitely hitting on
you, and I'm not just saying this, but I
couldn't help but notice that you have
copper in your eyes.

ARA
Yes.

JOHN
It's just that, I'm a doctor, and if you
haven't been screened for Wilson's
disease you should.

Ara stares at John.

ARA
Hepatolenticular degeneration.

JOHN
Yes, exactly.

ARA

A doctor? Barely out of residency then.

John laughs.

JOHN

Right. Four years ago.

ARA

Diagnosed at seven, meaning my knowledge predates your MD, doctor.

JOHN

Quite.

John stands up.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Excuse me, I forgot to grab sugar.

ARA

Here, I have some organic sugar. It's better than the packets. Only sharing since you're a health-conscious doctor.

Ara dangles the small glass bottle of sugar between them.

JOHN

Oh, thank you. So I haven't messed up that badly then?

John sits again, taking the glass bottle of sugar.

ARA

Maybe not.

JOHN

So, I am a pediatrician with my foot in my mouth, Dr. John Weiland. What do you do?

ARA

I draw.

JOHN

May I see?

Ara hands him her leather sketchbook to reveal a sketch of the woman on the bench.

JOHN (CONT'D)

This is incredible. You are an incredible artist.

ARA

Nay, a god. And this is an act of immortalization.

John's smile contorts.

JOHN

You know, I am a huge admirer of hyperrealism. Especially portraits.

John closes it, revealing her full name: Dr. Ara Christeson.

John sighs.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Of course. What's your specialty?

John hands the sketchbook back to Ara.

ARA

I'm not a medical doctor. I studied astrophysics in school, amongst other things. Biology, chemistry...

JOHN

You're having fun with me, aren't you?

ARA

Loads. Of course, I could have even more if your bedside manner is any better than your tact.

John still smiling, scrunches his nose.

JOHN

I like you.

ARA

I like you, too.

JOHN

Visiting a friend?

ARA

My grandmother. It's a surprise.

JOHN

So, she doesn't even know you're here?

ARA

Not yet.

JOHN

When will you go see her?

Ara looks at the time on her mobile.

ARA

About an hour. She sleeps in, so I didn't want to show up too early.

JOHN

So, you are free for the next hour?

ARA

Maybe.

JOHN

Would you believe I saw a genuine Banksy on the side of this cafe?

John gestures behind him.

ARA

No, I wouldn't.

JOHN

It hasn't been confirmed to really be a Banksy yet. It will hit the news regardless if it is or isn't.

ARA

What do you think?

JOHN

100% Banksy, guaranteed.

ARA

You're very sure.

JOHN

Positively sure.

Ara smiles.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Let's make a bet.

ARA

On?

JOHN

If it is genuine, you buy me dinner. If it isn't I'll buy you dinner.

John smiles.

ARA

Tepid. Let's go dutch on a bastard.

John laughs.

JOHN

Come on, I need some fresh air. I'll show it to you.

John stands, tossing his now empty cup in the recycling.

Ara looks at the time on her mobile.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

ARA

Nothing. You said it's on the side of the cafe?

Ara stands.

JOHN

Yea, right outside.

John turns to exit the cafe. Ara follows.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

John exits the cafe and turns down the alley. He looks at the wall and walks toward the back. Ara follows.

John stops. Ara watches him.

JOHN

Look, it's right there.

Ara lours at John. He stares at her. He shrugs.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well, maybe it isn't.

John thrusts his hands around her neck and slams her head into the wall.

GRANDMOTHER (V.O.)

He dragged her up his winding stair, into his dismal den.

He forces her to the ground and strangles her.

GRANDMOTHER (V.O.)

Within his little parlour-- but she ne'er
came out again!

Ara resists. She digs her nails into his wrists.

GRANDMOTHER (V.O.)

And now dear little children, who may
this story read.

JOHN

I really like you, Ara.

Petechiae form on Ara's face and eyes. She struggles. Her
eyes close.

GRANDMOTHER (V.O.)

To idle, silly, flattering words, I pray
you ne'er give heed:

Ara's hands fall limp.

GRANDMOTHER (V.O.)

Unto an evil counsellor, close heart and
ear and eye.

Sweat drips down John's pale face. He loses his grip on
Ara's neck.

GRANDMOTHER (V.O.)

And take a lesson from this tale, of the
Spider and the Fly.

Ara opens her eyes and gasps for air.

John remains on his knees. He retches.

Ara pulls herself up. She uses the wall to steady
herself. John falls forward onto his hands. He collapses.

Ara bends down to whisper as he writhes on the ground.

ARA

I really like you too, John.

Ara glances at the time. She walks out of the alley and
pauses. She touches her neck as a group of young women
pass her. Her gaze falls upon the woman from the bench
among them.

ARA (V.O.)

So I lured him up my winding stair, into
my lavish den.

Ara turns and walks back into the alley where John lies supine. He glares at her.

ARA (V.O.)
Within my little parlour...

Ara pulls out the glass bottle of sugar. She weaves it between her fingers and stalks toward John.

ARA (V.O.)
...but he never came out again.

John's eyes fall to the bottle in Ara's hands.

Ara digs her fingernails into John's face as she forces his mouth open.

ARA (V.O.)
And now dear little children, who may my
story read, To idle, becoming prey, I beg
you take the lead:

She pours the contents of the bottle into his mouth. She covers his mouth with her hand and forces him to swallow.

ARA (V.O.)
Unto a timid counsellor, close heart and
ear and eye...

Ara places the now empty bottle in his hands. She walks out of the alley.

ARA (V.O.)
And take a lesson from my tale, become
the Spider, not the Fly.