

# FRIGHT TIME

## 3 Spine-tingling Tales for Young Readers

- EYE OF THE SPIDER
- STRIKE UP THE FEAR
- CAVE OF NO RETURN



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# EYE OF THE SPIDER

by Jack Kelly

## 1

**T**he spider's web is one of the most wonderful structures in the natural world," Mr. Carlson said.

As he turned to draw on the blackboard, I began Phase One of our plan. I dropped my pencil and made sure it rolled over toward the window. I saw Eric and Craig smile. I hoped they wouldn't break out laughing.

"A large web can have as many as thirteen thousand strands," Mr. Carlson was saying. He began to sketch a spider's web with the chalk. "Each of them is coated with a special glue for capturing prey."

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I left my desk, bent down to get my pencil. Then I picked up three dead flies from the window ledge. There was one of those big shiny-green ones. It wasn't even dead—it was still kicking its little legs.

Next, I folded a piece of paper into a kind of envelope and put the flies inside. When I was sure Mr. Carlson wasn't looking, I passed the paper forward. It reached Eric, who sat in the front row. That was Phase Two.

"You can see that the web is not only strong and useful, it is also very beautiful. To come across one on a summer morning, when it's covered with dew, simply takes your breath away." That's the way Mr. Carlson talked.

Eric waited until Mr. Carlson turned back to the blackboard. The teacher began to make a diagram of the little nozzles, "spinnerets" he called them, that spiders use to make silk. Eric snuck out of his seat. He tiptoed to Mr. Carlson's desk. He dropped the three flies into the mug that Mr. Carlson drank his tea from.

That was Phase Three. Now we just waited.

"Before we finish today," Mr. Carlson said, "I want you to take a quiz on Chapter 8 in your book. You all read Chapter 8, didn't you?"

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We groaned as he handed out the quiz. Mr. Carlson gave us one of these dumb quizzes almost every day. That was one of the reasons we were always looking for tricks we could play on him.

Mr. Carlson wasn't our real teacher. Mr. Simmons, who usually teaches seventh-grade science, was out because his wife had had a baby. He wanted to stay home and help her for a couple of months. Mr. Carlson was the substitute.

We're always pretty hard on substitute teachers. We figure it's a chance to get away with whatever you can get away with. Usually the substitutes didn't give too much homework, either. But Mr. Carlson did. He wanted us to do all this extra reading about different kinds of spiders and insects, which was what we were studying then.

Mr. Carlson sat down at his desk while we took the quiz—another quiz on spiders. He was tall, but very thin. He had a small head and a short neck and a pair of big, thick glasses. His hair stuck out in bristles at the sides of his head.

We waited. This was the time when he usually filled his mug with tea from his thermos.

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Not today, though. Instead, he began to read a thick book, probably something about spiders.

I went back to trying to think of the answers to the questions on the quiz. For most of them, I had to take a wild guess. I'm not always that good about doing my homework.

A few minutes later, something hit me on the head.

"Ow!" I said. It was just a paper wad, but it startled me.

"Lee, did you say something?" Mr. Carlson asked.

"Who, me?" I said.

Eric was looking back at me and grinning. Mr. Carlson had just poured his tea. Eric had thrown the paper wad to alert me. Now the teacher would find the flies in his mug. Boy, would he be grossed out!

Mr. Carlson turned the page of the book he was reading. He lifted his mug. I held my breath. He put the mug to his mouth. Craig almost laughed. Mr. Carlson sipped some tea. He put the mug down and went on reading.

We thought he'd see the flies right away. This was even better. Maybe he'd even get one in his mouth. We waited.