

# Mystery of the White Spider

a mystery in two acts  
by Kevin T. Baldwin

A natural sciences professor specializing in arachnology at Millborough University suddenly dies. Although the cause of death is a bite from a highly toxic spider, one student is held as a possible murder suspect. Fellow classmates meet a reporter who informs the students the professor was working on a genetically enhanced new breed of Australia's white-tailed spider; about the bite of this spider, and how the breed has been evolving. The white-tailed spiders prey on daddy long legs, a highly toxic arachnid whose bite cannot penetrate the human skin; however, the white-tailed spider's bite can. Several reports have shown the white-tailed spider bites becoming more toxic. The professor was rumored to be working on cultivating a new amalgam of the two. By merging the two spider types, the resulting combination could produce one of the most toxic spider bites in the world. The new breed of spider is said to be all white, and any venom and anti-venom would be worth millions. So, the reporter doubts the professor died of any apparent accident in his laboratory. He believes the professor was murdered for his work... but by whom?

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## Synopsis

A natural sciences professor specializing in arachnology at Millborough University suddenly dies. Although the cause of death is a bite from a highly toxic spider, one student is held as a possible murder suspect. His fellow classmates meet a reporter who informs the students of how the good professor was working on a genetically enhanced new breed of the white-tailed spider, which hails from Australia. The reporter informs them how the bite of a white-tailed spider can cause serious abrasions on the human skin, but up until now there have been no reported fatalities from their bites. However, the breed has been evolving. The white-tailed spiders prey on daddy long legs, a highly toxic arachnid whose bite cannot penetrate the human skin; however, the white-tailed spider's bite can. Several reports have shown the white-tailed spider bites becoming more toxic. The professor was rumored to be working on cultivating a new amalgam of the two. By merging the two spider types, the resulting combination could produce one of the most toxic spider bites in the world. The new breed of spider is said to be all white, and any venom and anti-venom would be worth millions. So, the reporter doubts the professor died of any apparent accident in his laboratory. He believes the professor was murdered for his work... but by whom?



## The Cast

**NINA SWENSON:** A sophomore student; goes out with Michael.

**CASSANDRA BONHAM:** A junior student

**MICHAEL HANCOCK:** A junior student; Nina's boyfriend

**VERONICA BARNES:** A junior student

**MABEL ABRAMSON:** A freshman student

**SAGE PEMBLETON:** A transfer student; went to high school with Cassandra

**JAZIDUA "JAZZ" LETHOU:** A freshman student; brainy; a bit of a nerd.

**TODD BERKOWITZ:** An Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) for the University

**BRITTANY EVERS:** Sage's rich, socialite girlfriend, always at the height of fashion—as are her friends

**NELS VAN DE MEER:** A university professor

**VANESSA VAN DE MEER:** The Professor's wife

**DETECTIVE HAWTHORNE:** A plainclothes detective

**DETECTIVE BARTHOLOMEW:** Hawthorne's partner

**MILLIE:** A medical examiner

**MEIER FIEVEL:** A local newspaper reporter

**IILYANA MORAVEK:** a.k.a. "The Black Widow", an older woman working for the Russian mob. She is a tall thin woman of Eastern European descent, and speaks with a mild European accent.

**"DETECTIVE" OLBRYN**

**"DETECTIVE" QUINNEY**

**BRITTANY'S GIRLS:** Friends of Brittany that think, act and do everything just as Brittany does



## The Setting

Millborough University.



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## **ACT I— Scene 1**

*<Lights rise on Millborough University Student Union, a gathering place for the students to eat, read and socialize. It is 11:30am during fall registration day. Nina, Cassandra, Michael, Veronica and Mabel enter and cross to a large table. Nina, Michael and Veronica carry books. Cassandra and Nina food and drinks. All have heavy backpacks except for Mabel, who has a handbag. They start placing items down onto the table and begin to sit around the table one by one.>*

**NINA:** My backpack is going to bust with all these new text books.

**CASSANDRA:** I know. Mine, too. Mabel, where are all your books for classes?

**MABEL:** *<Taking out an iPod and headphones.>* Oh, I downloaded them all from the Internet. *<Puts on headphones and starts up her music player.>*

**CASSANDRA:** From the Internet? Where?

**MABEL:** *<Speaking loudly over her music.>* [www.anytextbookyouwant.com](http://www.anytextbookyouwant.com).  
*<Tunes out of the conversation, enjoying her music.>*

**CASSANDRA:** *<Sighs.>* She's gone.

**NINA:** I can't believe how many courses you signed up for, Cassandra.

**CASSANDRA:** I've got 22 classes a week.

**MICHAEL:** 22? How can you possibly handle 22 courses? I can barely get by with the six I registered for.

**CASSANDRA:** Not courses, Michael. Classes. *<Takes several more books out of her backpack and begins stacking them on top of the books on the table.>* I registered for five of my required courses, but since I'm going into medicine I need to take a lot of science courses, as well, which means labs. So, it's really eight with a whole bunch of labs. 22.

**VERONICA:** 22 classes? Wow. And some of those labs are like 90 minutes. You're putting in almost a 40-hour work week and you're not even getting paid!

*<Michael and Nina start getting food and drinks out of Nina's bag.>*

**CASSANDRA:** Well, my Dad's a doctor and he says to get used to the long hours because the days will be much longer once I get into pre-med. But I will be getting some extra money from Professor Van De Meer. He let's me do some part time work in the animal biology lab.

**MICHAEL** *<Opening a soda.>* That's cool for you, I guess. I couldn't be a doctor. Too many germs. I get sick real easy.



**NINA:** It's true. *<Begins eating.>* He wouldn't even kiss me until our tenth date because I had a cold.

**MICHAEL:** She was really sick.

**NINA:** Do you know what it's like to go out with a boy who shakes your hand on the ninth date?

**CASSANDRA:** I've never made it past nine dates with ANY boy.

**NINA:** *<With her mouth now full of food.>* Well, let me tell you this. *<Takes a big swig out of the soda as Michael stares at her.>* It can really give a girl a complex. *<Burps, then looks at Michael.>* Oh, did you want some of this?

**MICHAEL:** *<Sarcastically.>* Not anymore.

**VERONICA:** You mean you've never been in a serious relationship, Cassandra?

**CASSANDRA:** Only with my biology books.

**VERONICA:** How come?

**CASSANDRA:** It's just that I grew up in a real rural town. The boys spent most of their time on their family's farms or on the football gridiron. I spent most of my time in the library. *<Thoughtful.>* There was this one boy, though.

**NINA:** *<Interested.>* Ooh. What was his name?

**CASSANDRA:** *<Wistful.>* Sage.

**VERONICA:** Sage? Sage? That's not a name. That's an ingredient.

**CASSANDRA:** Sage Pembleton. He was gorgeous. He was voted the "boy most likely to own his own combine by graduation" in our yearbook. And he did.

**MICHAEL:** What's a combine?

**NINA:** It's like a tractor; cuts wheat and corn fields. Did he know you liked him?

**CASSANDRA:** No. Never. I never had the courage to tell him. There was this one time during P.E. but, *<Changes her mind.>* No. It's too embarrassing.

**VERONICA:** Don't stop now.

**NINA:** No. Tell us.

**CASSANDRA:** Well, we were all doing outdoor fitness exams in gym class. Boys and girls classes combined.

**MICHAEL:** Combine? More tractors? This was pretty rural.

**NINA:** <Smacking him.> Not "COMbine," stupid. "comBINED." Pay attention.

**CASSANDRA:** Sage was there. We were all paired off in teams for rope climbing. Sage and I were a team. He'd climb the rope while I held onto it, and then I'd climb the rope while he held onto it, y'know, to keep the rope from swinging.

**MICHAEL:** Right. So what happened?

**CASSANDRA:** I climbed the rope. Took me forever and as I was climbing  
<Starts to scratch herself.> I started getting all itchy.

**NINA:** From the rope?

**CASSANDRA:** Yes. The higher I got the worse the itchiness got. There must have been something in whatever the rope was made of that I was allergic to. I literally began to break out all over the higher I climbed.

**NINA:** Oh, no.

**CASSANDRA:** Oh yes! But I didn't want to embarrass myself in front of Sage. I'd be mortified. So, I just kept going. <Stands up and acts out the following:> I pulled myself up further and further; my two hands held tightly to the rope. My whole body itched more and more. Before I got half-way up the rope, I looked at my arms and saw that I was beginning to break out in all these ugly red blotches. Then, as I made it to the top of the rope, that's when *it* happened.

**VERONICA:** What? What happened?

**CASSANDRA:** I scratched myself.

**VERONICA, MICHAEL & NINA:** Oh, no!

**CASSANDRA:** <Nodding.> Oh, yes! <Scratching.> Both arms. Both hands. Fifteen feet high. I turned upside down on the rope and then fell all the way down...right into Sage's arms.

<Together.>

**NINA:** Wow. He caught you?

**VERONICA:** You landed in his arms?

**NINA:** Y'know, that almost sounds romantic.

**VERONICA:** Yeah, really. You could have told him how you felt right at that moment and it would have been beautiful.

**NINA:** Sure. Something to tell your grandchildren about.



**CASSANDRA:** *<Shaking her head.>* Not even close. You see, there were these hooks, like fish hooks, up near the top where the rope tied off at the beam, and somehow my gym shorts must have gotten caught on these hooks, because as I sat in Sage's arms, dazed, I looked up at the top and there were my shorts, hanging there, just waving in the breeze like a flag.

**VERONICA:** Ewww!

**CASSANDRA:** That's how I felt. Ewww! So I ran out of gym class, mortified. I never showed my face in there again. It's amazing they let me graduate but I think the gym teacher took pity on me.

**NINA:** But you must have seen him after that?

**CASSANDRA:** The gym teacher?

**NINA:** No, silly. Sage. Did he ever say anything to you?

**CASSANDRA:** Never. We'd pass in the school halls on occasion, but I could never look at him. I was just way too embarrassed. He never said a word. I appreciated him all the more for that.

**MICHAEL:** Maybe he was just as embarrassed as you. *<Looks at Nina, who has a stunned expression on her face.>* What? I can be sensitive once in awhile.

**VERONICA:** Or it could be that Sage was just too much of a gentleman to say anything.

**CASSANDRA:** Perhaps, but needless to say any other boys I went out with after that incident were just disastrous because they knew what had happened and they all made fun of me for it. They even gave me a nickname.

**NINA:** Boys can be such jerks. *<Punches Michael.>*

**MICHAEL:** Ow! Hey! What did I do?

**NINA:** You're a boy, aren't you?

*<Sage enters carrying a backpack and lunch, looking around for a place to sit.>*

**MICHAEL:** *<In a fake whiny, meek voice.>* But I'm sensitive.

*<All laugh.>*

**CASSANDRA:** *<Nudging Mabel, who has not been listening to the conversation.>* What are you listening to, Mabel? Mabel? *<Nudges her again.>* Mabel? *<Mabel takes the headphones off.>* What are you listening to?

**MABEL:** <Smiling.> It's my own personally designed music player. You see, I was able to rewire my player to the same frequency as my mom's satellite radio service and now I've got over 350 stations. This is channel 322. Country music.

**NINA:** Ugh. I hate country music. I'd rather listen to a bunch of chimpanzees playing the bagpipes.

**MABEL:** <Smiling.> Oh, that's channel 347.

**MICHAEL:** You're pretty smart for a freshman, Mabel.

**MABEL:** I know. I'm a high-tech nerd, what can I say? I can pretty much hack into anything.

**MICHAEL:** But is that legal?

**MABEL:** <Shrugs.> I dunno. It's my Mom's account. We're still paying for the service. It's just coming out of here instead of her car. Anyone can do it.

**NINA:** Anyone?

**MABEL:** Sure. All you need is the proper password decryption software, play around with it a little, and you can pretty much hack into anything.

**MICHAEL:** I don't believe it.

**MABEL:** "Find the right key and you can unlock any door." My dad used to tell me that. Of course, he actually made keys for a living, so I don't know how philosophical that makes his statement.

**CASSANDRA:** Just the same, Mabel, I— <Sees Sage.> Oh, my God! Oh, my God!... <Repeats several times as the others try to calm her down.>

**MICHAEL , NINA, et al:** What? What is it, Cassandra?

**CASSANDRA:** It's him. How can he be here? It's impossible?

**VERONICA:** Who? Who's here?

**CASSANDRA:** Sage! He's right back there.

<They all stand to look back at Sage as Cassandra yells:>

**CASSANDRA (Continued):** Don't look!

<They all sit back down into their seats crouched around Cassandra.>

**MICHAEL:** Are you sure?



**NINA:** Maybe it just looks like him.

**CASSANDRA:** Don't you think after the story I just told you that I'd remember what he looks like? *<Peeks over at Sage again.>* Ugh! What's he doing here? He was supposed to be going to UCLA.

**VERONICA:** Maybe he's planning to go into pre-med like you?

**MICHAEL:** Millborough does have a great pre-med program.

**NINA:** Pre-med? *<Attempting to sound like an urban hick.>* I thought he was combine-bound after school?

**CASSANDRA:** So did everyone in town. But then he moved. No one has seen him in three years. *<Sage heads towards the group.>* Oh, no! He's headed this way. He's going to ask to sit here.

**MICHAEL:** Should we tell him to buzz off?

**CASSANDRA:** *<Anxious.>* Yes. No, no, no. You can't do that. It's my problem. Not yours. But I can't stay here. *<Points to next table stage left where Jazz is seated, eating and reading quietly.>* I'm going to move over there.

**NINA:** But Cassandra, we're your friends. Why should you...

**SAGE:** Hi! Can I join you guys?

*<Cassandra crawls under the table.>*

**NINA:** *<Attracted to Sage.>* Sure. Have a seat, handsome.

**VERONICA:** *<Nervously.>* Um, excuse me a minute. *<Crawls under the table with Cassandra as Sage sits.>*

**CASSANDRA:** *<To Veronica.>* Now what do I do?

**VERONICA:** I don't know. *<Epiphany.>* I know! Take off your glasses?

**CASSANDRA:** What?

**VERONICA:** You said it's been three years. Maybe he won't recognize you.

**CASSANDRA:** By taking off my glasses?

**VERONICA:** Hey. It worked for Superman and Wonder Woman.

*<Cassandra shrugs her shoulders, then takes off her glasses. The two slowly emerge from under the table. Sage stares at them.>*

*<Together, to Sage.>*

**VERONICA:** Hi.

**CASSANDRA:** Hey.

**SAGE:** Uh... hi. Did you lose something?

**CASSANDRA:** *<Slightly taken aback at the sight of Sage.>* Um...

**VERONICA:** Yes! She did. A contact. My friend lost one of her contact lenses.

**SAGE:** Whoa. That's a bummer. Did you find it?

**CASSANDRA:** *<In a daze.>* Find what?

**SAGE:** Your contact. Did you find your contact?

**CASSANDRA:** *<Snapping out of it.>* Oh! Uh, no. Uh, maybe it fell over here.  
*<Crosses to Jazz's table.>*

**SAGE:** *<Confused.>* If you lost it over here why would you look over there?

**CASSANDRA:** Uh. *<Looks left, then right.>* Oh, well...it...

**VERONICA:** It rolled.

**CASSANDRA:** Good! That's good! I mean— yeah, that's it. It rolled. My contact rolled away. *<Pointing.>* Over there. Be right back. *<Bumps Jazz's table because she has trouble seeing without her glasses. To Jazz:>* Hi. *<Pretends to look under the table, then looks up at Jazz.>* Sir, can I sit here for a minute?

**JAZZ:** I'm a girl.

**CASSANDRA:** Sorry. Can I sit here for a minute?

**JAZZ:** Sure. What's up?

**CASSANDRA:** Just pretend like we're talking.

**JAZZ:** We *are* talking.

**CASSANDRA:** That's good. Keep it up.

**JAZZ:** Who are you?

**CASSANDRA:** I'm Cassandra and I'm trying to hide from that gorgeous guy..

**JAZZ:** *<Looks over at Sage then back at Cassandra.>* Are you serious?  
*<Beat.>* Is this some kind of hazing? I know I'm only a freshman, but still...



**CASSANDRA:** No. No. Please. Can I sit here just for a minute?

**JAZZ:** I guess so.

*<Cassandra sits.>*

**SAGE:** *<To the others.>* Boy, it sure feels good to get out of that registration. I thought it'd never end. I'm beat and it's not even noon yet.

**CASSANDRA:** *<To Jazz.>* What's your name?

**JAZZ:** Jazidua Lethou.

**CASSANDRA:** Jazi...huh? What? Is that French?

**JAZZ:** Oui. Yes. My father is from France.

**CASSANDRA:** Funny. You hardly have an accent. Where's your mother from?

**JAZZ:** Westchester, New York. They're government physicists, so we travel all over the world. I speak four... *<Thinks about it.>* no... five different languages.

**CASSANDRA:** Wow. That's cool. I love science. I'm going into pre-med.

**JAZZ:** Cool.

**CASSANDRA:** *<Leaning towards the next table.>* Wait... shhhh.

**MABEL:** So, did you sign up for everything you wanted, Sage?

**MICHAEL , VERONICA & NINA:** *<To Mabel.>* Shhhhhh!!!

**MABEL:** Oops.

**SAGE:** Well, yeah, I... Hey. How did you know my name?

**MABEL:** Uh... you introduced yourself, silly.

**SAGE:** I did? I don't remember doing that. Huh. I must be more tired than I thought. What are your names?

**NINA:** *<Smiling.>* I'm Nina and this is my boyfriend, um, um...

**MICHAEL:** Michael. I'm Michael. Remember?

**NINA:** *<Almost sad.>* Michael. Right.

**VERONICA:** I'm Veronica. We're all upperclassmen *<Pointing to Mabel.>* Except for her. This is Mabel. She's a frosh but wicked smart.

**SAGE:** Cool. And who was the girl with the missing contacts?

**MABEL:** Oh that's Cassa...

**CASSANDRA, MICHAEL, VERONICA & NINA:** *<To Mabel.>* Shhhhhh!!!

**MABEL:** I mean that's, uh... *<Confused.>* ...classified?

**SAGE:** *<Laughing.>* Classified? Hey, you're pretty funny, Mabel.

**VERONICA:** You're new here, aren't you? You seem old to be a freshman.

**SAGE:** Yeah. I'm a transfer student. Came here from UCLA.

**MICHAEL:** If you were in beautiful L.A., why come back to Millborough?

**SAGE:** *<Eating his meal.>* Purely an economic decision. My family couldn't afford another year. So, I transferred my credits and decided to come here cause it's closer to home. Hey, did you guys get into all the courses you wanted?

**NINA:** Sure did, but I sure wish I didn't have to take natural sciences, though. I hate science, and Professor Van De Meer is supposed to be real tough. Thank goodness I'll be in there *<Referring to Cassandra.>* with Cass... *<Cassandra waves at her to shut up.>* ...uh, with Classified. She's really smart.

**SAGE:** No kidding? Most of my courses transferred, but I have to make up my science credit, so I'll be in that natural science class, as well.

**CASSANDRA:** *<Stands and shouts.>* What?

*<Sage looks at her. Cassandra tries to regain her composure and pretends to find her contact on Jazz's table.>*

**CASSANDRA (Continued):** I mean, *what* a stroke of luck. Here is my contact. *<Pretends to pick up contact>* Right here on the table.

**SAGE:** *<Pointing.>* You lost it from this table to that table?

**CASSANDRA:** It's that new flexible kind of contact. Bounces like crazy.

**SAGE:** I thought it rolled.

**CASSANDRA:** It... *<Long pause, stumped.>* ...does both.

**MABEL:** Then why don't you wear your glasses?



**SAGE:** You wear glasses? "Classified"?

**CASSANDRA:** Uh, sometimes. Not always. Just when I drive, read,  
<Mumbling to herself.> or look at things.

**SAGE:** Say. You look familiar.

**MABEL:** <Pulls Cassandra's glasses out of her pocket.> Here are your glasses.  
They're right here, silly. Put them on.<Puts them on Cassandra's nose.>

**SAGE:** <Instantly recognizes her.> Oh, my God! It's Captain Underpants!

**VERONICA , MICHAEL, MABEL, NINA & JAZZ:** "Captain Underpants"?

<Mortified, Cassandra turns to leave, stumbling over Jazz's foot . The table gets  
knocked over. Everyone gets up in surprise.>

**MICHAEL:** Cassandra!

**NINA:** <Helping Cassandra up off the floor.> Are you all right?

**TODD:** <Enters in response to the crash and crosses to the group.> What hap-  
pened? Who knocked the table over?

**CASSANDRA:** <Holding her right arm.> It was me, Mr... <Looks at the  
nametag on his uniform.> ...Berkowitz.

**TODD:** Are you okay? How did this happen? You know the food may not be  
great here, but you don't have to start wrecking the joint. Help me stand the table  
back up, guys.  
<Michael and Sage assist Todd setting the table back in place.>

**JAZZ:** <Hoping to take some of the heat off of Cassandra.> It was my fault,  
Mr. Berkowitz. I accidentally tripped her.

**TODD:** A frosh, huh? <Jazz nods. Todd chuckles.> I should have known. <To  
Cassandra, who is still holding her right arm.> You okay, miss?

**JAZZ:** <To Veronica.> Humph. What a jerk.

**CASSANDRA:** I'm all right. And it wasn't her fault. I was the clumsy one.

**TODD:** What's your name?

**CASSANDRA:** Cass... <Embarrassed, looking toward Sage.> ...Cassandra.

**SAGE:** <To Cassandra.> Cassandra! That's it! The girl from gym class.

**CASSANDRA:** *<To Sage.>* Leave me alone, would you? *<Begins to cry.>*

**TODD:** All right. Calm down. Relax. Let's have a look. *<Rolls up Cassandra's sleeve to reveal that she is bleeding.>*

**MABEL:** *<Reacting poorly to the sight of blood.>* B-b-b-blood!!

*<Mabel faints back into Nina and Michael, nearly knocking them over. They stand her back up and Nina fans her with a text book from the table.>*

**MABEL:** That's good. That's good. Wait. That's geometry. Find a different book. A paperback.

*<Nina puts down the hardcover book and picks a paperback to fan again.>*

**MABEL (Continued):** Ah... Nora Roberts. That's better. *<Smiles.>*

**TODD:** *<Pulling out a chair for Cassandra.>* Have a seat, kid. I want to treat that cut. I'll be right back. Got my first aid kit in the truck.

*<Todd exits as Brittany enters with two of her girlfriends. She sees Sage standing near Cassandra and, in a great display:>*

**BRITTANY:** *<Waving.>* Sage! Sage! Over here, dear!

**SAGE:** *<Seeing Brittany, a bit caught off guard.>* Huh? Oh, uh...Hi, Brittany!

**BRITTANY:** Hurry up, Sweetheart. My limo driver is waiting to take us all to that new French restaurant, "L'odeur du Buffle".

**SAGE:** Yeah, Okay Brit. Be right there. *<Starts to collect his things.>* Hey. Are you gonna be okay, Cassie?

**CASSANDRA:** Don't call me Cassie! Don't even speak to me. *<Embarrassed, begins to cry.>* Just leave me alone.

**SAGE:** But I was just...

**MICHAEL:** Sorry, dude, but I think you better split.

**SAGE:** Yeah. *<Grabs the last of his stuff.>* Sorry, Cassandra. I really am.

*<Sage exits with Brittany and her friends as Todd returns with his first aid kit.>*

**TODD:** Here we go. *<Opens up the kit to reveal all sorts of medical products.>* Looks like you must have cut yourself on something along the bottom of the table. It could get infected, so I'm going to give you a shot to prevent that.



**CASSANDRA:** *<Slightly nervous.>* A shot?

**MABEL:** *<More nervous.>* A sh-sh-shot?

**MICHAEL:** Take it easy, Mabel. The EMTs on campus are fully qualified in the giving of shots in case of accidents like this. *<Pause.>* Uh, aren't you?

**TODD:** *<Preparing Cassandra's arm for the shot.>* Actually, it's my first day on the job. *<Cassandra pulls away.>* Chill. I'm trained. I'm trained.

**NINA:** You ever see this Brittany chick before?

**MICHAEL:** Not me. Believe me, I'd remember a sweet-looking chick like that. *<Nina smacks Michael.>* Ow!

**NINA:** Mr. Sensitive.

**JAZZ:** I wonder if they know?

**VERONICA:** Know what?

**JAZZ:** That the name of the restaurant they're going to, "L'odeur du Buffle", translates into English as "The Odor of Buffalo".

**MICHAEL:** I didn't even know they had buffalo in France.

**MABEL:** *<Watching Todd prepare the needle.>* Oooh. I'm gonna be sick. I can't even watch medical dramas on TV. They make me...

**TODD:** Don't worry, miss. I really do know what I'm doing. Now this shouldn't hurt a bit. *<Gives Cassandra the shot.>*

**MABEL:** ...F-F-Faint. *<Falls back again, this time knocking over Michael and Nina.>*

*<Blackout.>*

## Act I—Scene 2

*<At rise, three weeks later in a natural sciences lab. Students are seated at tables, partnered up for the class. Prof. Nels Van de Meer is writing on the chalkboard, which displays diagrams of how to dissect a frog. There is a door next to the desk which leads into Van De Meer's office. A woman dressed in a maintenance uniform exits from the office, unnoticed by everyone except Brittany, who reacts slightly. Cassandra, Mabel, Michael and Nina enter, passing the woman. They sit. Sage then enters, sees Cassandra and takes steps towards her, but she turns her back on him. He shrugs and goes to sit with Brittany.>*

**NINA:** *<To Michael.>* Whew. You know, Michael, it's been three weeks. Is Cassandra going to lighten up on Sage or what?

**MICHAEL:** What happened over at the student union was somewhat embarrassing, you could say almost harassing.

**NINA:** But I've spoken with this guy Sage a couple of times since then and I don't think he was trying to make fun of her.

**MICHAEL:** He called her "Captain Underpants". How is that not making fun? If were he and she were me, I'd say this guy's all done.

**NINA:** Oh, I think he just remembered the nickname others had given to her. He barely knew who she was back in high school, remember? So, maybe that was all he could think of to say.

**CASSANDRA:** *<Annoyed.>* You know, I'm only four feet away from you guys. I can hear every word you're saying.

**NINA:** *<Quickly gets up, crosses over to Cassandra's table and sits.>* Good. I'm just saying the guy seems pretty upset with himself every time he sees you. He may want to apologize but is afraid you won't accept.

**CASSANDRA:** I won't. I can't.

**MICHAEL:** *<From his table, a la Dr. Seuss.>* Would you? Could you? In this lab? Would you? Could you? He seems so sad.

**CASSANDRA:** *<Perplexed.>* What's going with you, Michael?

**NINA:** Oh, he hooked himself up to this new Facebook group that's celebrating today as "Talk Like Dr. Seuss Day".

**MICHAEL:** *<Defensive.>* It's fun. I enjoy it. And it's nothing to be coy with.

**CASSANDRA:** *<Confused.>* What does that even mean? *<Michael shrugs.>* Well, it's better than when he joined that other group on "talk like a pirate" day.



**MICHAEL:** Arrgghh.

**NINA:** My lab partner. I have such an idiot for a boyfriend.

**MABEL:** Have any of you guys been following what Professor Van de Meer has been teaching in this biology class?

**CASSANDRA:** It's natural sciences, Mabel, not biology. It's been interesting.

*<Nina returns to sit with Michael.>*

**MABEL:** Interesting? I can't believe we have to dissect a frog. Yuck. I couldn't do that in high school. I got so grossed out that I threw up all over the frog.  
*<Beat.>* Teacher made me dissect it anyway.

**CASSANDRA:** Eww. Gross. *<Starts to pull out a piece of paper.>* I'm sorry, Mabel, but it did state right in the syllabus handed out at the beginning of the semester. *<Opens it up.>* Here it is, that "dissecting and studying animal biology is a big part of understanding how nature works". Didn't you read the syllabus?

**MABEL:** *<Meekly.>* No. I scanned it onto my flash drive to look at it later.

**CASSANDRA:** And? Did you?

**MABEL:** *<Admitting.>* No, I uh, was short on space so I deleted it so I could download the latest (name of popular band or hot new music artist) song.

*<Van De Meer enters picks up a tray with small, black oval- or rectangular-shaped dishes supposedly containing frogs for dissection by the class.>*

**CASSANDRA:** Sigh. *<To Nina.>* You wanna trade lab partners?

**NINA:** Only if you wanna sit with the Cat in the Hat. *<To Mabel.>* Mabel, dude, downloading stuff onto your flash drive for class will only help you if you open it up and look at it.

**MABEL:** *<Takes out flash drive and stares at it for a long time.>* Really?

**NINA:** Tell me again why they let you, a frosh, in this class, anyway?

**MABEL:** *<Not boasting, but matter of fact.>* Because I'm brilliant.

*<Van De Meer starts passing out the dishes.>*

**NINA:** *<Scoffing.>* Yeah, right.

**CASSANDRA:** No. It's true. Mabel told me she had all "A's" in high school.

**MICHAEL:** How? How? *<Thinking of a rhyme.>* I want to know...uh, now.

**MABEL:** I'm good at technical stuff. I want to work for NASA some day.

*<Van De Meer puts a dish in front of Cassandra and Mabel.>*

**MABEL (Continued):** Ewww. *<Whispers to Cassandra.>* Now I'm hoping we won't be studying intelligent life on other planets.

**CASSANDRA:** *<Whispering back.>* No?

**MABEL:** *<Whispering.>* Not if I'm gonna have to dissect it!

**VAN DE MEER:** Are you ready for today's exercise, Ms. Bonham?

*<Mabel touches the frog in the dish with a curved instrument from the table. The instrument hooks under the frog and sticks up in the air. Mabel puffs out her cheeks as if she's about to throw up. Cassandra smacks Mabel causing her to swallow with a gulp. Then, in a normal voice, Cassandra smiles and answers:>*

**CASSANDRA:** Absolutely, Professor Van De Meer.

*<Mabel tries to pull the instrument "out" of the frog, but can't.>*

**VAN DE MEER:** Excellent. *<Gives final frog dish to Nina and Michael.>* These frogs came in this morning. So, they're nice and fresh.

**NINA:** *<To Michael.>* They're not Florida oranges. They're dead frogs.

**MICHAEL:** *<Looking and poking at his frog with a similar instrument, tries to think of a rhyme.>* The frogs came in this morning. Not of their own free will. So, with some remorse, to pass this course...*<Stumped.>*

**MABEL:** *<Gasps.>* I think I'm gonna be ill.

**MICHAEL:** *<To Mabel.>* Hey. That's pretty good.

**NINA:** Would you two stop it?

**VAN DE MEER:** These frogs should all be in excellent condition for dissection.

**MABEL:** *<Looking up at Van De Meer, smiling a faint smile.>* Peachy.

**VAN DE MEER:** Oh, Miss Bonham— are you still available to babysit Charlotte this evening?

**CASSANDRA:** Certainly, professor. I'd love to!



**VAN DE MEER:** Very good. About seven-ish, then?

**MABEL:** Charlotte? I didn't know you babysat for him, Cassandra. I thought you worked in his lab.

**CASSANDRA:** I do. How is Charlotte, sir?

**VAN DE MEER:** I have her with me. *<Goes to remove a box from his pocket.>*

**NINA:** Ooh, you have a picture? *<All lean in to catch a glimpse.>*

**VAN DE MEER:** No I have Charlotte. Right here.

**NINA:** In your pocket?

**VAN DE MEER:** Yes, in my pocket. *<Produces a box carrying a long, black, hairy spider.>* Meet Charlotte.

*<Students shriek and huddle in fear. Mabel screams, whacks the instrument which triggers the frog to flip onto the floor. She then hides under her desk.>*

**VAN DE MEER (Continued):** Relax. She's harmless. As a matter of fact, Charlotte recently laid her eggs and is lying dormant until they hatch.

**MICHAEL:** She's huge. Like a luge! *<Nina smacks Michael.>* Ow!

**VAN DE MEER:** Charlotte is an MFS.

**NINA:** What's that?

**VAN DE MEER:** A Mediterranean Flu Spider. Very rare.

**MABEL:** *<Coming out from under her desk.>* Are they poisonous?

**VAN DE MEER:** Not at all. Their bite will hurt a bit, but those who have been bitten by these spiders have merely had reactions similar to having flu-like symptoms such as headaches, itching, watery eyes and constant sneezing.

**CASSANDRA:** *<Looking at the spider.>* Aww. She's fast asleep.

**NINA:** How can you tell?

**VAN DE MEER:** How can you not tell? We live in a cold climate, so these Mediterranean spiders have a tendency to "overwinter".

**NINA:** What's that?

**CASSANDRA:** It means they go through a kind of hibernation period.

**VAN DE MEER:** *<Impressed.>* Yes. You remembered from last semester. Exactly. Very good. You see, there's a drop in their metabolic rate, and as one can tell see this spider has brought its legs into its body. Charlotte could remain huddled up like this, virtually incapacitated, during the coldest months of the year.

**MABEL:** I had an Aunt Louise who used to do that, too.

**VAN DE MEER:** Her ability to... *<Looks at Mabel for a moment.>* Her ability to shut down for a long period of time indicates that Charlotte can remain inactive for shorter periods of time during her reproductive cycle, which is her way of getting rest. Last night, she spun the cocoon in which her babies will be born.

**NINA:** How many babies will she have?

**VAN DE MEER:** About twelve hundred will hatch from the cocoon.

**NINA:** *<Stunned.>* Twelve...hundred?

**VAN DE MEER:** Yes.

**MABEL:** Ouch. Must be one heck of a big web.

**NINA:** Yeah. Charlotte better get her rest now, cause when those kids are born she's gonna need to find herself a good daycare. Can you imagine what would happen if those things ever got loose in here?

**MABEL:** *<Scratching.>* Makes me itch and sneeze just thinking about it.

**VAN DE MEER:** *<Proudly displaying Charlotte's box.>* Yes. Simply fascinating creatures. *<Hands the box to Cassandra.>* Here. Take Charlotte overnight and monitor her vital signs closely. If her babies hatch, notify me immediately. *<Walks back to his desk.>*

**NINA:** *<To Michael.>* Man, he really needs to get out more.

**MABEL:** That was creepy. I hate spiders! *<Michael laughs.>* What's so funny?

**MICHAEL:** *<Chuckling.>* I assumed you'd think that a spider was sublime, since you visit the world wide web all the time. *<Laughs as the class groans.>*

**SAGE:** *<Goes to pick up Mabel's frog to return to her.>* I think this is yours.

**MABEL:** *<Turns, smiling.>* Really, what? *<Sees frog.>* Swell. *<Takes it by a leg.>* Thanks.

**SAGE:** Cassandra, I. Look, I just wanted to say I'm so...

**BRITTANY:** *<Annoyed.>* Sage! The professor's about to begin.



**SAGE:** *<To Brittany.>* Right. *<To Cassandra.>* Look, can we talk later?

**CASSANDRA:** Well, I *<Looks to Nina and Michael who shake their heads as if to say "Say yes, dummy".>* Sure. I'm between classes from four to four fifteen. Meet me at the student union?

**SAGE:** *<Smiles.>* Great. I'll see you then.

**VAN DE MEER:** All right, class.

*<Students prepare to begin the examination of their frogs as the woman is seen near the door with a remote control device in her hands.>*

**VAN DE MEER:** We'll begin our study by dissecting your frogs so that we may fully examine their skin, skeleton, heart, stomach, small and large intestine, brain, eyes, kidneys, lungs, liver and nervous system. By that time we should be able to break for lunch.

*<The woman presses the button and a fire alarm is heard. The woman exits.>*

**VAN DE MEER (Continued):** All right. That's the fire alarm.

**MABEL:** *<Relieved.>* Thank God!!

**VAN DE MEER:** Everyone file out single file. Hopefully this won't be long.

*<Everyone picks up their things and head out. Brittany makes sure Sage doesn't approach Cassandra's group. Cassandra leaves Charlotte's box on her desk. Mabel puts on her headphones and turns on her iPod again.>*

**NINA:** No. We wouldn't want the frogs to go bad before we tear them apart.

**VAN DE MEER:** That's right. *<Sees Charlotte's box.>* Oh, we better put Charlotte in the back. You can pick her up later, Cassandra. *<Exits to his office.>*

**CASSANDRA:** *<Getting pushed out the door by her classmates.>* Professor, wait. You can't stay. Not during a fire alarm.

*<Black out; alarm stops.>*

### **Act I— Scene 3**

*<Lights up on same classroom, about a half hour later. The alarm is heard again briefly, but then ends. Cassandra, Nina, Michael and Mabel, still listening to her music player, all re-enter the classroom slowly.>*

**CASSANDRA:** *<Looking around.>* Professor Van De Meer? Are you here, Sir?  
*<To her friends.>* I'm worried. Professor Van De Meer never came out.

**NINA:** Are you sure?

**CASSANDRA:** We stood outside that door for a half hour and he never came out of the classroom.

**MICHAEL:** *<Still rhyming.>* He could have left, the one we seek. Perhaps he had to take a...

**NINA:** *<Cutting him off.>* MICHAEL!!!

**MICHAEL:** Sorry.

*<Suddenly Vanessa Van De Meer enters the room. She appears to be a wealthy woman judging from her attire. She is obviously angry about something.>*

**VANESSA:** Who are you? What are you doing here?

**NINA:** *<Sarcastically.>* Hel-lo. We go to college here. Who are you?

**VANESSA:** I am Vanessa Van De Meer. Where is my husband?

**CASSANDRA:** We were just looking for him, as well. You see there was this fire drill and...

*<Todd rushes in carrying his medical kit, immediately followed by Jazz.>*

**TODD:** *<Out of breath.>* Where's the professor?

**NINA:** Man, he is one popular teacher, isn't he?

**CASSANDRA:** Mr. Berkowitz. Jazz. What are you two doing here?

**JAZZ:** I was having lunch with Todd when he got a call to come over here.

**NINA:** "Todd"? *<A bit teasing.>* Oooh. Were you two on a date?

**JAZZ:** Kinda. Sorta. I guess.

**NINA:** I thought you said he was a jerk?



**JAZZ:** I did, but he became less of a jerk.

**NINA:** When?

**JAZZ:** When he apologized and asked me out.

**TODD:** No time for talk. I got a call...

*<The door to Van De Meer's office opens and the Professor stumbles out, holding his neck with one hand, moaning in pain. Mabel takes her headphones off.>*

**MABEL:** Oh, no!

**VANESSA:** *<Startled.>* Nels!

**MICHAEL:** Nels?

**CASSANDRA:** Professor?

*<Van De Meer collapses to the floor in front of the group.>*

**CASSANDRA (Continued):** Professor!

*<Todd runs to Van De Meer's side. Van De Meer tries pointing to his office but Vanessa grabs onto that hand and holds onto it, feigning concern.>*

**TODD:** *<Moving Vanessa aside.>* Better stand over here, Ma'am. *<Returns to Van De Meer.>* Take it easy, Professor. Let me take a look. *<Moves the Professor's hands away from his neck.>* Looks like he's been bitten by something.

**MABEL:** *<In a panic.>* B-b-b-bitten? Not like by a spuhspuh-spider? Right?

**TODD:** Could be. Looks like.

**NINA:** Maybe one of his arachnids got loose?

**TODD:** I can't tell. I've seen bites before but I've never seen anything like this. It's huge. If it was a spider it would have to be enormous.

*<Nina, Michael, Jazz and Mabel slowly move away and stand on chairs.>*

**VAN DE MEER:** *<Very weak.>* Come closer. Please.

**VANESSA:** *<Calling to him.>* Yes. I am right here, my darling.

**TODD:** *<Noticing.>* Uh, actually, I don't think he was calling to you, Mrs. Van De Meer. *<Looking at Cassandra.>* I think he wants you, Cass.

**CASSANDRA:** Me? *<Approaches Van De Meer.>* What is it, Professor?

**VAN DE MEER:** *<Still reaching out towards his office.>* White...

**CASSANDRA:** *<Trying to stop him.>* Take it easy, Professor. We'll get you to a hospital and then...

**VAN DE MEER:** White...white... *<Dying breath.>* spider. *<He dies.>*

**CASSANDRA:** *<Sad.>* Oh, no.

**NINA:** *<After a beat.>* What was that about a spider?

**VANESSA:** *<Again feigning concern.>* Poor dear. He was delirious.

**CASSANDRA:** No, he said "white spider". What does that mean?

**NINA:** Is that what killed him?

**CASSANDRA:** I don't think so. He pointed to his office. I've got to go in there and see.

**MABEL:** *<Realizes, gasps.>* A white spider? Is it still around this room? *<Todd and Jazz join the others on the chairs.>* Wah! Somebody kill it!

**NINA:** Cassandra, don't go!

*<As Cassandra tries to enter the office, a dazed and disheveled Sage enters, holding onto the back of his head with one hand.>*

**CASSANDRA:** Sage! What are you...

*<Before she can finish the question, Sage collapses into her arms.>*

**VANESSA:** *<In shock.>* Who is he and what was HE doing in there?

**MABEL:** Oh, no! Is he bit, too?

*<Todd steps down and with his medical kit begins to examine Sage.>*

**MICHAEL:** Wow. Along came a spider *<Looks at Cassandra.>* and death right beside her.

*<Cassandra looks towards the dead body of Van De Meer as lights dim. Blackout>*



## Act I— Scene 4

*<Lights rise on the police station interrogation room. There is a desk and only one door. Detectives Bartholomew and Hawthorne are talking with Millie, the medical examiner. Mabel, Cassandra, Michael, Nina, Todd, Jazz and Vanessa are all on stage, sitting in two rows of chairs, arguing over the day's events.>*

**HAWTHORNE:** *<To the group.>* All right! Settle down, everybody! Settle down. *<To Millie.>* Listen, Millie, I know lab results can normally take awhile, but see what you can do to speed it up? I wanna try and pin this down as quickly as possible. I've got reservations at "L'odeur du Buffle" tonight.

**MILLIE:** It takes as long as it takes, Detective. I can't rush the lab work. But, my preliminary autopsy shows death was caused by a venomous spider bite. But more tests are needed before I can confirm that.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** Well, do what you can, Millie. Thanks.

*<Millie exits as reporter Meier Fievel tries to barge his way into the room.>*

**BARTHOLOMEW (Continued):** Look, Meier. I already told you we'll issue a statement to the press shortly.

**MEIER:** Please! I'm on a deadline. My readers deserve to get all the facts and...

**BARTHOLOMEW:** ...And your readers can wait a little bit longer. Now, out. *<Pushes Meier out the door.>*

**VANESSA:** *<Stands, sobbing.>* Officers, must I remain in this awful place? I need to collect my husband's... *<Pauses to wipes her eyes, or blows her nose in her handkerchief.>* ...remains. Our faith requires an immediate burial.

**HAWTHORNE:** I can respect that, Mrs. Van De Kamp, but...

**VANESSA:** Van De Meer.

**HAWTHORNE:** Huh?

**VANESSA:** Van De Meer. Not Van De Kamp. I don't make frozen foods.

**HAWTHORNE:** Oh, sorry, Mrs. Van De Meer, but your husband's death is still under investigation, so until we get some answers, I'm afraid his body has to remain at the morgue... *<Gets a nudge from Bartholomew.>* ...uh, medical examiner's office. *<To Bartholomew.>* Like that's any better?

**BARTHOLOMEW** – Please have a seat, Mrs. Van De Meer. *<She does.>* We've read all your statements, and everything appears to check out.

**BARTHOLOMEW (Continued):** So, for right now... *<To Mabel, Nina, Jazz and Michael.>* ...you, you, you and you can all leave. The rest of you, please stay. We just have a couple of other questions for you.

*<The four slowly get up to exit, taking a quick look back at Cassandra.>*

**HAWTHORNE:** *<To Todd.>* You say you got called to the Professor's lab?

**TODD:** Right.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** The caller told you that somebody was hurt?

**TODD:** Right.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** Who was the caller?

**TODD:** My dispatcher.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** *<Shaking head.>* Dispatch has no record of the call.

**TODD:** *<Surprised.>* What?

**HAWTHORNE:** You're new to the school, right?

**TODD:** I started at the end of last semester, in the spring.

**HAWTHORNE:** How many dispatchers are there?

**TODD:** There's only three, one for each eight-hour shift.

**HAWTHORNE:** Do they take breaks?

**TODD:** I guess so. Why?

**HAWTHORNE:** If there's only one dispatcher on per shift I was just wondering who covers for them when they go on their breaks.

**TODD:** The shift supervisor.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** When you got the call who was the supervisor on duty?

**TODD:** Steve Mahoney. Look, I put all that in my statement, so can I go now?

**BARTHOLOMEW:** *<Long pause, looks at Todd's file.>* Sure. Go ahead. We've got your number, so we'll be in touch.

**TODD:** Thanks. *<Rises and heads to door, but then turns back to Vanessa.>* I'm sorry for your loss, ma'am. Bye, Cass. *<Exits.>*



**HAWTHORNE:** <Opening Vanessa's file.> Mrs. Van De Meer, tell me again why you were going to see your husband?

**VANESSA:** We were supposed to have lunch and he was late. I went to find him in his office. And then he...he... <Begins to sob.>

**HAWTHORNE:** <Unmoved.> Were there any problems in your marriage?

**VANESSA:** <Shocked.> Problems? Why would there be? He was a wonderful man. A pillar of the community. The contributions made to medicine as a result of his scientific research are all well documented.

**HAWTHORNE:** That may be, ma'am, but that wasn't my question. Were there any problems in your marriage?

**VANESSA:** Other than an occasionally absent-minded spouse, no. But name me a single woman whose significant other doesn't have a flaw and I'll show you... <Beat, then, with emphasis.> a single woman. <Rises.> May I go, officer?

**BARTHOLOMEW:** <Grabbing Cassandra's file.> Just one more thing, Mrs. Van De Meer. <To Cassandra.> Miss Bonham, you wrote in your statement that the professor mentioned something about a "white spider". Is that correct?

**CASSANDRA:** Yes.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** Know anything about a white spider, Mrs. Van De Meer?

**VANESSA:** <A pause.> No, I don't.

**HAWTHORNE:** <To Cassandra.> You?

**CASSANDRA:** No. Nothing.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** <To Vanessa.> You're husband never mentioned it?

**VANESSA:** My husband was not the type to bring his work home with him. <After a moment.> He spent so much time in the lab I was lucky if he ever brought himself home. <Pause, upset.> May I please go now, detectives?

**HAWTHORNE:** You can go, ma'am. Our sincerest condolences for your loss. <Vanessa heads to the door, also looks back at Cassandra, then exits.>

**HAWTHORNE (Continued):** So that brings us to you, little lady.

**CASSANDRA:** I don't know what else I can tell you.

**HAWTHORNE:** Well, we've got your statement, but I'm more concerned as to why your old high school chum was found at the scene?

**CASSANDRA:** <*Dumbfounded.*> Sage? But, we're in the same class. He must have gone in to see the professor.

**HAWTHORNE:** The class went out when the fire alarm rang.

**CASSANDRA:** Right.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** Nobody left the area during that whole half hour?

**CASSANDRA:** No.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** But somebody must have left since Pembleton was found in the professor's office, wasn't he?

**CASSANDRA:** <*Confused.*> I know, but I didn't see him leave the waiting area, though.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** During fire drills on campus, people are to supposed go to designated areas outside the building, right?

**CASSANDRA:** Right. That's what we did.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** Somebody is selected to do a head-count to make sure everybody got out?

**CASSANDRA:** Yes.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** Was one done this time?

**CASSANDRA:** I think so. Yes. Yes, there was.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** Good. Now I want you to think hard about that number.

**CASSANDRA:** <*Thinking.*> I can't remember. <*Recalls.*> Wait. Now I remember. It was fourteen. There were fourteen of us there.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** Fourteen. <*Looking at notes.*> There were only two classes in progress in the building at the time the fire alarm went off. Eight people were in your class and nine people in the other.

**HAWTHORNE:** We got reports from campus day security that there weren't any visitors in the building at the time the alarm went off, so with the Professor still in the building there should have been a total of sixteen people in your area.

**CASSANDRA:** But...

**BARTHOLOMEW:** You just said there were fourteen. Who was missing?



**CASSANDRA:** *<Thinks.>* It could only have been Sage and...

**BARTHOLOMEW:** And who?

**CASSANDRA:** He has a girlfriend. Brittany Evers. I don't know her well. They must have left together, but I didn't see them leave.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** Okay. You and the professor. Were you close?

**CASSANDRA:** I took two other bio courses with him.

**HAWTHORNE:** Ever meet his wife before?

**CASSANDRA:** No.

**HAWTHORNE:** Ever know him to be involved with anyone suspicious?

**CASSANDRA:** No. Why would I?

**HAWTHORNE:** No reason. We haven't been able to locate Miss Evers. Any idea where she lives?

**CASSANDRA:** No. Off campus, I think.

**HAWTHORNE:** Okay. *<Closing file.>* I think we're done here. You can go, Miss Bonham. You've been very helpful.

**CASSANDRA:** *<Rising slowly.>* Where is Sage now?

**BARTHOLOMEW:** They've got him at the hospital under police protection till we can bring him here for interrogation. We need to determine his involvement in all this, but for now he's going to be booked under suspicion of murder.

**CASSANDRA:** Murder? But he...

**HAWTHORNE:** Thank you again for your help, Miss Bonham. You can go now. We'll be in touch if we have any other questions.

*<Cassandra slowly gets up and exits as lights fade.>*

**HAWTHORNE (Continued):** Great. You know what that means?

**BARTHOLOMEW:** Yeah. One of 'em's lyin'.

*<Blackout.>*

## Act I—Scene 5

*<At rise, moments later, just outside the interrogation room at police headquarters. Cassandra has just exited the room and is now standing next to the door. Michael, Mabel and Nina are waiting for her. She begins to cross to them, but Meier enters and approaches.>*

**CASSANDRA:** *<To her friends.>* They're charging Sage with murder.

**NINA:** I know. We heard.

**MEIER:** Excuse me, Miss Bonham. My name is Meier Fievel and I was hoping you could answer a few questions.

**CASSANDRA:** I'm sorry, Mr. Fievel, but now is really not the best time.  
*<Continues towards to her friends.>*

**MEIER:** I don't think you realize the danger you and your friends might be in.

**MABEL:** *<Nervous.>* Danger? What kind of danger?

**MEIER:** You kids really don't know what Van De Meer was up to, huh?

**MICHAEL:** *<Still rhyming.>* We know he loved his spiders. Yes, this much is true. But we haven't got the slightest idea of what made his face turn blue.

**CASSANDRA:** Michael. Stifle. *<To Meier.>* Go on, Mr. Fievel.

*<Cassandra catches herself in rhyme, looks back at Michael with a stern look. Michael shrugs his shoulders.>*

**MEIER:** It's "Talk Like Dr. Seuss Day" again already, huh? How time flies.

**VERONICA:** *<Entering.>* I got here as soon as I could. Is everyone all right?

*<Meier sees Veronica and is immediately taken with her.>*

**NINA:** Veronica, hi. We're okay. But they're holding Sage as a murder suspect.

**VERONICA:** *<Shocked.>* Oh, no. *<Sees Meier and is mutually attracted.>*

**CASSANDRA:** *<To Fievel.>* What was it you were saying about the professor?  
*<No response.>* Mr. Fievel?

**MEIER:** *<Snapping out of it.>* Uh, yeah. Well, I heard you told the police that the professor's last words were "white spider". Is that right?

**CASSANDRA:** Yes.



**MEIER:** Well, your professor was working on a new breed of spider. *<Pulls out his reporter's notepad and scans through his notes.>*

**NINA:** What kind of spider?

**MEIER:** The deadliest kind. Any of you ever hear of *<Looking at his notes.>* the 'white-tailed' spider?  
*<All the kids shake their heads 'no.'>*

**CASSANDRA:** No. *<Beat.>* Yes. *<Recalling.>* Wait a minute. I have heard of them. They're from Australia, aren't they? *<To her friends.>* The professor spoke about them in one of my classes last year. I think he said he kept some.

**NINA:** Mediterranean spiders. Australian spiders. Why couldn't he collect foreign currency like other people?

**MEIER:** He kept them all right. For research. The white-tail of the spider is where their venom is stored. A single bite can cause massive abrasions on the human skin.

**VERONICA:** I heard the professor was killed by a spider. How horrible.

**MEIER:** That's the rumor.

**CASSANDRA:** But wait a minute. If I remember correctly, nobody has ever died from a bite from the white-tailed spider.

**MEIER:** True, but these spiders have been evolving.

**VERONICA:** Evolving? How?

**MEIER:** There are several thousand species of spiders that exist in Australia alone, but the white-tailed spider is the only one which preys on daddy long legs.

**NINA:** So? Aren't daddy long leg spiders harmless?

**CASSANDRA:** Actually, no. They're really one of the most poisonous arachnids in the world. It's just that their bite can't penetrate the human skin.

**MEIER:** However, the white-tailed spider's bite can.

**CASSANDRA:** Are you saying...

**MEIER:** *<Nodding.>* Reports coming out of Australia have shown that the bites of a white-tailed spider bites are becoming more and more toxic. Your professor was said to be working on developing a new amalgam of the two spiders.

**NINA:** I don't know about that.

**MEIER:** About what?

**NINA:** "Amalgam". What's an amalgam?

**MEIER:** Merging the two spiders would produce one of the most toxic poisons in the world.

**CASSANDRA:** But, wouldn't the FDA require approval for something like this?

**MEIER:** Ha! By the time anyone finally got approval from the Food and Drug Administration, we'd all be about ten years older. Some people, some really *im-patient* people, may not want to wait that long.

**NINA:** You mean like the Mafia?

**MEIER:** Oh, there's more than one kind of mob out there, kiddo. There are a few countries who'd be VERY interested in it. *<Checking his notes again.>* But here's the kicker. This new breed of spider the professor was cultivating was supposedly so toxic it was rumored to be all white.

**CASSANDRA:** *<Realizing.>* Oh, my gosh! The white spider.

**MEIER:** Just imagine, gang. Any venom and anti-venom would be worth millions. So, that's why I doubt the professor's death was an accident.

**VERONICA:** You think the professor was murdered for his work?

**MEIER:** Yeah. *<Gazes at Veronica and smiles.>* Yeah.

*<Veronica. smiles back.>*

**CASSANDRA:** But by whom?

**MEIER:** *<Snapping out of it.>* Uh, that's what I'm hoping you kids can help me find out. I think somebody did kill your professor. I don't think it was a spider and I'll bet it wasn't your friend. But whoever did kill him, I suspect they didn't find what they were looking for. So, they'll be coming back.

**NINA:** *<Sarcastic.>* Peachy.

**CASSANDRA:** Do you have an idea who might have done this? Any suspects?

**MEIER:** Only one. A very resourceful woman named Ilyana Moravek. The cops call the "Black Widow".

**MABEL:** The Black Widow?



**MEIER:** *<Nodding.>* Works for the Russian mob. She sells the formulas for toxic poisons on the international black market to the highest bidder. This is an extremely dangerous woman.

**MICHAEL:** Great. So, you want us to solve a mystery. But it's one that could make us *<Runs his finger across his throat indicating a throat cut.>* history.

**NINA:** *<To Michael.>* I'll be so glad when this day is over.

**MEIER:** No, I don't want to put you in any danger. Just help me get some information.

**VERONICA:** *<To Meier.>* Where do we start?

**MEIER:** I'm going back to the campus. I need to check with the dispatch office to see if I can nail down who called Berkowitz. If I strike out there, I'll hit the professor's office and see...

**CASSANDRA:** But the professor's office has been sealed off by the detectives until their investigation is complete.

**MABEL:** Why don't we just leave this to them?

**MEIER:** They need proof, and so far they haven't been too receptive to my theories. They certainly aren't going to listen to me and I doubt they'll listen to a bunch of college kids. I have a hunch if we don't act fast the Black Widow will be long gone before the cops can catch her. *<Looking at Veronica.>* Can one of you come with me to help me look around the campus?

**MICHAEL:** *<Starts to speak.>* Sure, I'll...

**VERONICA:** *<Cutting Michael off.>* I'd be happy to help you, Mr. Fievel.

**NINA:** *<Rolling her eyes.>* Why am I NOT surprised? Okay, what can the rest of us do?

**MEIER:** Well... *<Indicating Cassandra.>* you knew Van De Meer best. Can you see if you can get me any more information about that spider bite on the professor's neck? The medical examiner's been instructed by these guys to keep the body under wraps until their investigation is concluded. I think they're stalling, but I'll be damned if I know why.

**CASSANDRA:** Sure. I think I know how I can find out. I'll take Mabel with me.

**MABEL:** *<Meekly>* Me?

**NINA:** Don't worry, Mabel. *<Pulling on Michael's arm.>* Dr. Seuss and I will go with you, too.



**MABEL:** Great. Where are we going?

**CASSANDRA:** Where else?

**NINA, MICHAEL & CASSANDRA:** To the morgue.

**MABEL:** <*Wincing, high pitched cry.*> Oh.

<*Blackout.*>

## Act II— Scene 1

*<Lights rise on the Millborough Morgue, a typical autopsy area. There is a table with a draped corpse lying on it. There are other tables and cabinets, etc. in the room. Millie is putting on surgical gloves preparing for an autopsy. She pulls back the drape to reveal Professor Van De Meer. She picks up a scalpel, and goes to make an incision when Nina and Michael rush in through the door.>*

**NINA:** *<Screams.>* Quick! There's been an accident!

**MICHAEL:** Hurry, hurry, hurry! Doctor needs to scurry!

**MILLIE:** How did you two kids get in here?

**NINA:** *<Out of breath.>* Never mind that. A woman just outside was crossing the street when she was hit by a bicyclist.

**MILLIE:** A bicyclist? *<Beat.>* So?

**NINA:** *<Realizes it's not working.>* Well, it ran over her feet, chopped off several toes. *<Over-acting.>* Oh, it's awful! Blood and guts everywhere. Gushing, spewing, pouring...

**MILLIE:** *<Grossed out.>* Eww. *<Covers up the Professor.>* Look, call an ambulance. I'm very busy here, kids.

**NINA:** *<Insulting.>* And you call yourself a doctor!

**MILLIE:** I call myself a coroner. If she dies, call me.

**MICHAEL:** Coroner or not, you took the oath. You need to obey the Hippocratic Oath.

**MILLIE:** "Talk Like Dr. Seuss Day"? All right. Take me to the body, I mean, injured.

*<They exit. Moments later, Cassandra enters leading in a very nervous Mabel, who has her hands over her eyes. Cassandra is pulling her along by an elbow.>*

**CASSANDRA:** *<Quietly.>* Mabel, we're in. You can open your eyes now...

**MABEL:** *<Shakes her head, she opens her eyes, sees the dead body, and covers her eyes again.>* Ewwwww. *<Heads for the door.>*

**CASSANDRA:** Come back here! It may be gross, but we've got to take a look at the bite. Remember, this is for the professor. *<Uncovers the body.>* Ewwwww!

**MABEL:** That's what I said!

**CASSANDRA:** *<Examines Van De Meer's neck.>* There's the bite. Find a ruler.

**MABEL:** Where?

**CASSANDRA:** It's an autopsy room. Things here are measured all the time.

**MABEL:** How do you know?

**CASSANDRA:** I used to watch "Quincy" and "Crossing Jordan" re-runs a lot growing up. Just find a ruler. One that measures in centimeters.

*<Mabel looks while Cassandra reads the examiner's report on the table.>*

**CASSANDRA (Continued):** According to this, the toxicity level in the Professor's body was enough to kill an elephant.

**MABEL:** *<Finds a ruler nearby and hands it to Cassandra.>* Here you go.

**CASSANDRA:** Thanks. *<Measures along Van De Meer's neck.>* A-ha!

**MABEL:** What?

**CASSANDRA:** An average size spider's bite is usually between .05 centimeters in length between each fang, each evenly distributing the spider's venom.

**MABEL:** *<Sarcastic.>* Of course it is. So?

**CASSANDRA:** These marks on the professor's neck are almost a full three centimeters apart. There's no spider in the world that could have made these marks.

**MABEL:** Could he have been bitten more than once?

**CASSANDRA:** I don't think so. *<Pointing.>* There's a spider on your neck!

**MABEL:** *<Squeals, then madly tries brushing the spider off.>* Get it off me!!

**CASSANDRA:** Calm down! Shhh! *<Whispering.>* There really isn't one there. I just wanted to prove that if the Professor got bit, he'd do exactly what you just did. It's a reflex. The spider wouldn't have had time to bite him a second time.

**MABEL:** So that means the professor...

**CASSANDRA:** Was murdered. And, whoever did murder him either wanted everyone to think it was done by one of his spiders or that Sage killed him and tried to make it look that way.

**MABEL:** But who? Never mind. I don't want to know. *<Puts on headphones.>*



**CASSANDRA:** This is all so bizarre. *<Long pause.>* White spider. White spider. *<A revelation.>* That's it!

**MABEL:** *<Startled, takes off headphones.>* What? What's it?

**CASSANDRA:** *<Takes out her cell phone and dials.>* Hello, Jazz? It's Cassandra. Is Todd with you? Good. What's his number? *<Writes the number in the air.>* Got it. I'm going to call him back on his phone in two seconds. *<Pause.>* Never mind why. Tell him! Thanks. *<Hangs up; redials.>* Hello, Todd? I need you and Jazz to meet me at the Professor's office in two hours. I think I figured this out. *<Pause.>* Just meet me there. *<Pause.>* Thanks. *<Hangs up.>*

**MABEL:** What was that all about?

**CASSANDRA:** Mabel, I'll bet you know a lot about frequencies, right?

**MABEL:** Sure. I told you, I'm a nerd.

**CASSANDRA:** No, Mabel. You are beautiful.

**MABEL:** I am? *<beat.>* Cool. *<Considers for a moment.>* Why?

**CASSANDRA:** You said it yourself. Anyone can hack into anything if they have the right key. Wouldn't that work for frequencies, as well?

**MABEL:** *<Realizes.>* I get it! You mean somebody hacked into the dispatch system on campus! But, how come?

**CASSANDRA:** Mabel, we have to get back into the classroom.

**MABEL:** Cassandra, I know you like the class, but give it a few days, at least. I mean, the professor just died.

**CASSANDRA:** I mean we have to go there today so I can look in the office.

**MABEL:** Why?

**CASSANDRA:** Because I think I know how somebody called Todd and why the dispatcher's office didn't know anything about it.

**MABEL:** Yeah, but we still need to find out whom.

**CASSANDRA:** If we can get into the office, can you tap into the professor's computer and pull out any notes he may have saved on his hard drive?

**MABEL:** Is "Dancing with the Stars" for old people? Sure.

**CASSANDRA:** Good. Come on. *<Starts to go, then stops.>* Wait. First I want to

see if Sage has been released. Let's go.

*<Cassandra and Mabel exit as lights fade. Blackout.>*

## **Act II— Scene 2**

*<Lights rise on a jail cell at police headquarters. Sage sits alone on a bench. Detectives Olbrys and Quinney enter. Olbrys sits next to Sage as Quinney leans on a nearby wall.>*

**SAGE:** Where are Hawthorne and the other guy?

**QUINNEY:** Detectives Hawthorne and Bartholomew are out. They are busy looking for your girlfriend. Seems she cannot be found.

**OLBRYNS:** She lives off campus. You know where?

**SAGE:** No. I've never been to her place. Has Brittany called at all?

**OLBRYNS:** No, but she did leave a message for you on your answering machine back at your room on campus.

**SAGE:** A message? What did she say?

**OLBRYNS:** <Waving.> Sayonara.

**SAGE:** Huh?

**QUINNEY:** Yeah. Bye-bye. Seems her family didn't want her associating with a murderer.

**SAGE:** But I didn't kill anybody. I was attacked myself.

**OLBRYNS:** Funny you should mention that. See, Van De Meer's dead, but the killer let you live. Now why do you suppose that is?

**SAGE:** I don't know. Why not ask the killer?

**QUINNEY:** Maybe we are.

**SAGE:** What? You think I cracked myself on the back of the head? That's nuts!

**OLBRYNS:** Actually it'd be brilliant if your intention was to throw us off the trail.

**SAGE:** I'm telling you I didn't kill anyone!

**QUINNEY:** Then why were you there? Why weren't you with the rest of your group outside during the fire alarm?

**SAGE:** I... I can't remember.

**OLBRYNS:** Try.

**QUINNEY:** Was your girlfriend with you?

**SAGE:** No. Why?

**OLBRYNS:** Because she wasn't outside with the group, either.

**SAGE:** <Remembering.> Wait. That's it! I remember. We got separated. I went back into the building looking for her. I thought maybe she went back inside.



**OLBRYNS:** That gets you inside. How did you wind up in the Professor's office?

**QUINNEY:** ...And how did he wind up dead and you with just a bump on the noggin?

**SAGE:** That I don't remember. *<Hesitates.>* I think I need a lawyer.

**QUINNEY:** Your call. *<Stands to leave.>* By the way, you have a visitor.

**SAGE:** A visitor? *<Beat.>* Is it Cassandra?

**OLBRYNS:** No.

*<Quinney and Olbrys head out as Ilyana Moravek enters and sits with Sage.>*

**OLBRYNS (Continued):** *<To Ilyana.>* Five minutes, ma'am.

**SAGE:** Who are you?

**ILYANA:** My name is Ilyana Moravek. Does that name mean anything to you, Mr. Pembleton?

**SAGE:** No. Should it?

**ILYANA:** They told me your memory is a bit sketchy.

**SAGE:** Sketchy is right. You do look familiar. Like someone I know, but I can't quite place the face.

**ILYANA:** I am a businesswoman, Mr. Pembleton. Professor Van De Meer was working on some very important research for my *<Beat.>* company. Tell me, do you remember the professor saying anything to you?

**SAGE:** No. I walked into the room, saw the professor on the floor, and the next thing I recall is waking up with this bump on my head.

**ILYANA:** Do you remember seeing anything about a white spider?

**SAGE:** A white what? Spider? *<Shakes his head.>* No, I'm sorry.  
*<Quinney and Olbrys re-enter. Cassandra pushes past them into the room.>*

**OLBRYNS:** Another visitor, Pembleton.

**SAGE:** *<Rises.>* Cassandra.

**CASSANDRA:** *<Runs to Sage.>* Sage. *<They hug.>* Are you okay?

**SAGE:** I'm fine. No, I'm not fine. Can you call my folks?

**CASSANDRA:** I already did. They'll be coming up in the morning.

**QUINNEY:** That's fine, lady, but he'll be arraigned in the morning.

**SAGE:** No!

**CASSANDRA:** What? Sage... *<To others.>* Could we have a moment alone?

**OLBRY:** One minute. *<Detectives exit.>*

**ILYANA:** I must be going, but you should know I am a wealthy woman, Mr. Pembleton, and my financial resources are at your disposal.

**SAGE:** Thanks, but why?

**ILYANA:** Because I believe you. I don't think you murdered anyone, but I do believe you have some information which is critical for my work.

**CASSANDRA:** What do you do?

**SAGE:** Oh, sorry. Cassandra, this is Ms. Moravek.

**CASSANDRA:** *<Recognizes the 'Black Widow' but plays dumb.>* Pleased to meet you, Ms. Moravek.

**ILYANA:** Likewise, I'm sure. *<Exits.>*

**CASSANDRA:** Where did the other detectives go?

**SAGE:** *<Shrugs.>* Out looking for Brittany.

**CASSANDRA:** Where is she?

**SAGE:** I don't know. She... *<Beat.>* She dumped me.

**CASSANDRA:** That figures. *<Consoling.>* I'm so sorry.

**SAGE:** Yeah. Not been a good day, has it?

**CASSANDRA:** Sage, you're in danger. That woman. She's...

*<The Detectives return.>*

**OLBRY:** Minute's up.

**QUINNEY:** Visiting hours are over.

**CASSANDRA:** Okay. I just want to say good-bye. *<Hugs Sage, whispering.>*  
I'm sorry. I have to go, but don't trust that woman or those men. I think I know  
what happened but I have to go back to the professor's office.

**SAGE:** *<Whispering.>* Be careful, Cass.

**CASSANDRA:** I will. *<Kisses Sage on the cheek.>* Stay safe.

**OLBRY:** Let's go, lady.

*<Cassandra exits with the Detectives. Sage slowly sits as lights fade to black.>*



### **Act II— Scene 3**

*<At rise, we are back in Van De Meer's office. The room is dark, but adorned with all sorts of insect and prominently displayed arachnid paraphernalia. There is a display case with are all sorts of large and small spiders, in the very center of which is a massive white spider. Veronica and Meier enter with flashlights.>*

**VERONICA:** You really think the killer is going to come back here, Mr. Fievel?

**MEIER:** Yeah. Look, Veronica, we've known each other for a few hours now, so please call me Meier.

**VERONICA:** Okay, Meier. Uh, is there a, uh, Mrs. Meier?

**MEIER:** Me? Married? A reporter's life isn't usually one that attracts women.

**VERONICA:** I think it must be terribly interesting. Every day covering a new and exciting story. Murders. Bank robberies. Crooked politicians. Espionage.

**MEIER:** Actually I cover flower shows.

**VERONICA:** Flower shows?

**MEIER:** Flower shows. Theatre shows. Restaurant openings. Ice dancing. I'm an entertainment reporter.

**VERONICA:** But I thought...

**MEIER:** It's how I got my foot in the door. Hey, you gotta start somewhere.

**VERONICA:** You ever eat at "L'odeur du Buffle"?

**MEIER:** Let me think. *<Recalling.>* Yeah. Great food... high prices... place smelled like wet buffalo. Four out of five stars.

**VERONICA:** Uh-huh.

**MEIER:** But I'm telling you, Veronica, this is the one story that'll make my editor sit up and take notice. *<Beat.>* I hope. *<Finds a device near a fire alarm.>*

**VERONICA:** *<Encouraging.>* I'll be he does.

**MEIER:** She.

**VERONICA:** Oh. I'll be she does. What's that?

**MEIER:** It's a triggering device of some kind. It was hooked up to the fire alarm. Someone rigged it in so the alarm would go off during class.

**VERONICA:** Wow. You're...so...smart.

*<They look at each other with obvious affection. They lean in to kiss as Cassandra, Nina, Michael and Mabel enter also carrying flashlights.>*

**MABEL:** I don't think this is such a good idea.

**NINA:** Quiet, Mabel.

**MABEL:** Why? There's nobody else in the building, remember?

**CASSANDRA:** Not yet, but I expect there will be shortly.

**MABEL:** Fine, but if there's a poisonous spider here, I don't want to be near it.

**NINA:** My mom used to say there's nothing in the dark that isn't in the daylight.

**MABEL:** Well, considering we're talking about poisonous spiders, I find very little comfort in that.

*<Meier finds the light switch and turns on the lights. When the lights rise, Mabel realizes the group is standing right beside the display case with all the spiders in it. Mabel freaks at the sight of the big white spider centered in the display.>*

**MABEL (Continued):** Ahhhh! The white spider! Ahhhh!

**VERONICA:** Shhh! Quiet, Mabel!

**MEIER:** What are all of you doing here?

**CASSANDRA:** Hoping to catch the person responsible for this.

**VERONICA:** Us, too.

**MABEL:** That display case is hideous.

**VERONICA:** But look. There's the white spider.

**CASSANDRA:** I see. Look inside. *<Opens the case and takes out a large box.>*

**MEIER:** What is that?

**MABEL:** You found them. It's a whole bunch of white spiders!

**CASSANDRA:** *<Smiling.>* But not *really*. These are baby spiders.

**NINA:** Babies?

**CASSANDRA:** A lot of spiders are white when they're born. I don't think this is what the professor was referring to. These must be Charlotte's babies. The eggs must have hatched, which must have been why the professor didn't leave his office. He had to protect them for Charlotte.

**MABEL:** Then where's Charlotte?

**CASSANDRA:** I guess she died. As soon as the female lays her eggs, her job is done and she passes away.

**NINA:** That's so sad. *<Looking in the box.>* There must be hundreds of them.

**MABEL:** *<Itching and scratching.>* Don't let them out, whatever you do. I just got over my hay fever. I don't need anything like the Mediterranean Flu.

**CASSANDRA:** *<Returns box to the case.>* Here you go, little guys. *<Closes display case.>* Mabel, see what you can pull up on the Professor's computer.

*<Mabel nods, then goes to a computer on the desk and begins her work.>*

**MEIER:** The rest of you look around. See if you can find something like a letter the professor may have left. Maybe he mentions something that could be a clue.

*<Veronica, Nina and Michael look in several file cabinets along the wall.>*

**CASSANDRA:** Meier, Ilyana came to see Sage. I think she was trying to get information about something that may be in here.

**MEIER:** Probably the white spider itself or the professor's research notes on the white spider poison. But if Ilyana didn't find the white spider...

**CASSANDRA:** That means...

**MEIER:** *<Finishing sentence.>* She'll be coming back. Good work, Cassandra.

**MABEL:** There's nothing here.

**NINA:** What do you mean?

**MABEL:** What do you mean what do I mean? The hard drive is wiped clean.

**NINA:** But look at this letter I found in this file.

*<They all look. Vanessa, Todd and Jazz enter quietly.>*

**MICHAEL:** But who would do that? *<All look at him, waiting for a rhyme.>* Ah, I'm done with "Dr. Seuss Day". Just tell me what happened.



**CASSANDRA:** The Professor.

**VANESSA:** *<Pulls out a gun.>* That's right. *<All react.>* No one move!

**NINA:** Jazz! Todd!

**VANESSA:** Stay back or I will shoot.

**MABEL:** *<Softly.>* Yipe! I think we're about to join Charlotte.

**VERONICA:** What's going on?

**VANESSA:** *<To Jazz and Todd.>* The two of you, over there. *<They join the others.>* You were right about his work being valuable, but it wasn't my husband who was interested in selling his secrets to the highest bidder.

**CASSANDRA:** It was you.

**VANESSA:** How astute. For 20 years I waited for that egghead to come up with some fantastic discovery, one which would make us rich. *<Sarcastic.>* But no. All he cared about was his research and how his experiments could benefit mankind. He theorized if the white-tailed spiders continued to evolve an anti-venom would be critical to saving hundreds of lives. Lousy altruistic philanthropist.

**MICHAEL:** *<Sarcastic.>* Yeah. The nerve of some guys, huh?

**MEIER:** Time was running out, eh Mrs. Van De Meer?

**VANESSA:** Well, I wasn't getting any younger. I couldn't wait anymore. This was my ticket to wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.

**MEIER:** But you couldn't have carried this off by yourself. You needed help.

*<Ilyana enters with Olbrys, Quinney, Sage and Brittany behind her. Olbrys and Quinney have guns drawn.>*

**VANESSA:** I was desperate.

**MEIER:** *<Seeing Ilyana.>* Let me guess. You made a deal with the Black Widow and her henchmen?

**ILYANA:** Correct. Nobody move! *<To Vanessa.>* You! Put the gun down.

*<Vanessa drops the gun. Quinney goes over to pick it up.>*

**ILYANA (Continued):** Everybody, hands where we can see them. *<To Meier.>* As you may have guessed, it was my daughter that was in the room for the professor's unfortunate accident.

**JAZZ:** Your daughter? Who? *<Brittany steps forward.>* No.

**BRITTANY:** Da.

**CASSANDRA:** Well that explains a lot.

**SAGE:** So it WAS a set up.

**CASSANDRA:** What happened to the real detectives?

**ILYANA:** They are still trying to find Brittany. Imbeciles.

**OLBRYNS:** *<With European accent.>* Da. We sent them on a wild duck chase.

**QUINNEY:** *<Also with accent.>* Nincompoop. It is goose. A wild goose chase.

*<Overlapping.>*

**OLBRYNS:** Duck.

**QUINNEY:** Goose.

**OLBRYNS:** Duck.

**QUINNEY:** Goose.

**OLBRYNS:** Duck. Duck Duck.

**QUINNEY:** Goose.

*<Quinney hits Olbrys upside the head. The two continue to argue.>*

**ILYANA:** Enough already!

*<Quinney returns to holding his gun on the Group.>*

**ILYANA (Continued):** What Olbrys lacks in social skills is more than made up for by his technical expertise.

**MABEL:** So you hacked into the dispatch communication system?

**OLBRYNS:** *<Impressed with himself.>* Da. It was easy.

**MABEL:** *<Interested.>* Really? What sort of encryption software did you use?

**OLBRYNS:** *<Crosses to Mabel.>* It was easy. You see there's this new 64-bit DNA-based software which can decrypt even the most securely protected files.

**MABEL:** Really? *<All others are visibly annoyed by this conversation.>* That's fascinating. How did you get past the firewalls? Did you use a password restoration tool to reveal password decode asterisks?

**OLBRYNS:** Yes. That's it exactly. You see, in the past, data recoveries have been limited to slow processing power.

**MABEL:** I know, I know. That's so true. Remember those older Unix-based systems? *<Laughing.>*



**OLBRYIS:** <Laughing.> Da. Da. So I always felt that the key to decryption...

**ILYANA:** <Screaming.> Would you two stop already??

**OLBRYIS:** <To Mabel.> I'm sorry. I have to go back to work, now.

**MABEL:** Okay. Say! Maybe we can go out sometime and you can explain to me how the DNA encryption software works?

**OLBRYIS:** I'd like that, but we're going to have to kill you in a minute.

**MABEL:** So my guess is that this wouldn't have worked out anyway, then.

**OLBRYIS:** Probably not. <Crosses back to Quinney.>

<Together to Olbrys.>

**QUINNEY:** Nincompoop.

**ILYANA:** Idiot. I may have you shot along with them.

**MEIER:** So now it's starting to come together. Let me guess: Ilyana, you had the resources, so you had Olbrys hack into the dispatcher system to call Todd. Vanessa, probably having been on campus enough times, she knew the layout of the campus and the professor's office and she must have tapped the alarm.

**TODD:** What about Brittany?

**MEIER:** Easy. She made it look like Sage killed the professor.

**ILYANA:** <Annoyed.> What is this? "Murder She Wrote"?

**MEIER:** When the alarm sounded and you all left, Brittany came back here knowing Sage would follow.

**BRITTANY:** <Now with an accent.> Some boys are so predictable.

**SAGE:** <Approaching Brittany.> But why me? Why not hit on the professor?

**VANESSA:** Are you kidding me? That nature geek? She'd have to have eight legs, fangs and a hairy butt in order for him to be interested.

**JAZZ:** <Sarcastic.> Fangs and a hairy butt? Is that why he married you?

**VANESSA:** Why you little... <Vanessa lunges at Jazz, but Olbys and Quinney pull her back.>

**ILYANA:** Enough! <To Vanessa.> Get back there.

**MEIER:** <To Ilyana.> May I?



**ILYANA:** *<Sits down.>* Sure, why not? You've come this far.

**MEIER:** For their plan to work, Brittany needed to latch on to somebody new, someone no one on campus would be likely to fight for if suspected of murder.

**BRITTANY:** *<Indicating Cassandra.>* Of course we did not count on little Miss Buttinski here to have known him.

**MEIER:** Brittany entered the office, knocked off the Professor and hid.

**SAGE:** When I came in, she was all ready to conk me on the head, giving her enough time to leave.

**MEIER:** Right.

**CASSANDRA:** By the time Todd shows up, Brittany is gone, the Professor is dead, and Sage, being the only one in the room, is the most likely suspect.

**BRITTANY:** True, but nyet—I did not kill him. The Professor was dead when I got there. I found nothing on the white spider. No venom. No notes. Nothing.

**CASSANDRA:** But then who? *<Looks at Vanessa, realizes.>* Of course. You know what, Ms. Moravek? I think you've got competition for your nickname.

**ILYANA:** What do you mean?

**CASSANDRA:** It is Mrs. Van De Meer who is the real “black widow” here, and I can prove it. *<Pointing to the display case.>* May I?

**ILYANA:** *<Nodding.>* No tricks!

**CASSANDRA:** No. No tricks, but I do have a bargain. If I give you all the professor's secrets, you let us go unharmed.

**ILYANA:** *<Nodding in agreement.>* Da. Very well. *<To Sage.>* You. Back over to the desk with your friends.

*<Sage moves to the desk. Cassandra goes to the display case, reaches inside, and takes out a file and the box of babies, closing the safe behind her. She crosses past Sage, sneaking the box to him, and brings the file to Ilyana.>*

**MEIER:** Cassandra, what are you doing?

**ILYANA:** *<Looks at the file.>* Very good. Let's go. Vanessa, you will come? *<Vanessa is hesitant.>*

**CASSANDRA:** My guess is she doesn't want to. Take a close look at that file, Ms. Moravek. I think you'll find the professor's notes quite revealing.

**ILYANA:** <Reading notes.> "Total...declension"?

**NINA:** <Annoyed.> Oh, great. Another word I don't know.

**MEIER:** Declension means atrophy or deterioration.

**NINA:** <Sarcastic.> Not helping.

**ILYANA:** <Continues reading.> "Utter failure"? Is this some sort of trick?

**CASSANDRA:** No. The professor's work was a bust, and Vanessa knew it. <To Vanessa.> Didn't you? He must have told you how the white spiders all died because their own immune systems couldn't handle the high levels of toxicity. <To Ilyana.> Ms. Moravek, did Mrs. Van De Meer ask for an advance from you if she could hand over all her husband's work to you?

**ILYANA:** Da. Yes. Months ago. I considered it a good investment.

**CASSANDRA:** So did she. My guess is she spent most of that advance before her husband dropped this bombshell on her about his work. Given they couldn't survive, it made his work futile. Since she knew you'd find out, she'd have to pay all that money back. She became desperate.

**NINA:** Ah-ha! Okay. Desperate. Now THAT word I understand.

**MICHAEL:** Well clue the rest of us in.

**NINA:** <Holding up the letter.> I found this from the Professor's insurance company. Mrs. V. upped his life insurance policy in case of accidental death.

**MEIER:** So she upped his insurance and staged this whole thing to collect the insurance money.

**CASSANDRA:** That way she pays you back before you find out she spent all the money you advanced her.

**ILYANA:** <Sarcastic.> Pay us back? More likely she would float the coop.

**MEIER:** Fly the coop.

**ILYANA:** What?

**MEIER:** Fly the coop. Not float the coop.

**ILYANA:** Whatever. You know, it's not nice to correct somebody when they're holding a gun to your head. <To Olbrys and Quinney.> Bring her. <Olbrys and Quinney grab Vanessa.> She will come with us. Time to say good-bye.



**BRITTANY:** *<Crosses to Sage.>* Sorry, boychik. It was fun while it lasted, but parting is such sweet sorrow. *<Kisses Sage on the nose.>*

**ILYANA:** *<Holding gun.>* Miss Bonham, I applaud your resolve in this matter.

*<Ilyana claps her hands. Olbrys and Quinney raise their guns to shoot.>*

**NINA:** Wait! You said you wouldn't hurt us.

**ILYANA:** Unfortunately witnesses are something I cannot afford. *<To Olbrys and Quinney.>* Kill them all. Now!

**CASSANDRA:** *<To Sage.>* Now, Sage!

*<Sage runs over and pours the spiders on Brittany, Ilyana, Olbrys and Quinney, who instantly drop their guns, and start screaming, trying to get the spiders off.>*

*<Overlapping.>*

**BRITTANY:** Ah! Spiders!

**OLBRYNS:** There's thousands of them! Ow!!

**QUINNEY:** Get 'em off a me!! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch!

**ILYANA:** They're biting! Ow!

**MEIER:** Quick! Get their guns!

*<Sage runs to get the guns.>*

**ILYANA:** Get them, you fools! *<Begins to sneeze.>* Ah-chooo!!

*<Together.>*

**OLBRYNS:** I can't see!! Ow! My eyes are... ah-choo watering!!

**QUINNEY:** They're in my pants! Ow! Ow! Ow!

**BRITTANY:** Mother, Ah-choo!! Help me, Mother!! *<Sneezing her head off.>*

**ILYANA:** Fend.. ah-choo!! Fend for yourself, you spoiled brat!! Ah-choo!!

*<The Villains keep sneezing uncontrollably during the following exchange.>*

**MABEL:** What's happening?

**CASSANDRA:** They're sneezing spiders, remember? Mabel, did you remember to hook the Professor's computer up to the state police web site?

**MABEL:** Sure. *<Gets bitten.>* Ow! They've been listening in the whole time. They should be here any...any...any...moment now...Ah-choo!!

**CASSANDRA:** *<Smiles.>* Cool. *<Gets bitten.>* Ow!



*<Detectives Hawthorne and Bartholomew burst in with guns drawn on Ilyana, Brittany, Olbrys, Vanessa and Quinney.>*

**VERONICA:** Oh, no! They're all over the room! *<Gets bitten.>* Ow!

**BARTHOLOMEW:** Hands up! *<Gets bitten.>* Ow!

**HAWTHORNE:** Alright. *<To Sage.>* Hand those guns over to me. *<He does.>* Everybody downstairs. Move out to the... *<Gets bitten.>* Ow! Everybody move out to the...the...the...Ah-choo!! Ah! Just get downstairs. There's a police car waiting. *<Calling out.>* Someone call an exterminator. Now!

**ILYANA:** Well played, Ms. Bonham. Ah-choo!! Well played.

*<The Detectives move the Villains out the door, all itching, sneezing and scratching upon exit as the spiders move onto the rest of the cast on stage. The rest continue on, each getting bitten intermittently.>*

**JAZZ:** Well she'll be going away for a long time. Ow! Cassandra, How did you know? Ah-choo!

**CASSANDRA:** I didn't. But my guess was that if Mrs. Van De Meer was listening in on the campus security channel... Ah-choo!! And if Todd called in, she'd know he was coming here and would follow. Ah-choo!

**MEIER:** Now this is a story. *<Realizing.>* Ow! I've got to call my editor. *<Grabs the phone.>* Hi. This is Meier, get me ah-ah-ah-choo! Get me an anti-histamine. *<Beat.>* No, I'm NOT at the flower show. *<Hangs up.>*

**TODD:** *<Scratching.>* Out in my ambulance. Ah-choo! C'mon! Let's go.

*<Todd exits with Jazz, Meier, Veronica, Nina, Michael and Mabel— all itching, sneezing and scratching upon exit.>*

**SAGE:** *<Comes up and puts his hand around Cassandra's shoulders.>* That was very brave, Cassandra. Ah-choo!! Thank you for everything.

**CASSANDRA:** Just do me a favor... ah-choo! Forget the... ah-choo! "Captain Underpants" thing?

**SAGE:** I... ah-choo... I promise.

*<They lean in to kiss but sneeze instead.>*

**BOTH:** Raincheck.

*<They exit as lights fade to black.>*

**END OF PLAY**