



The Price of Success

Now and then I come across something interesting, or something happens to me, and I put a note about it into my 'A Story A Week' idea file, but when I later sit down to write the story I realize, "I've written about this before," and end up tossing it out. Sometimes though, it's not *exactly* the same story ...

If you are a very long-time reader of this series - and you would have had to be here right from story #10, more than six years back - you will remember an episode telling about a spider who had taken up residence in my 'genkan' (the entranceway of the house). The story was straightforward - I myself had not noticed the spider web, but visitors certainly did, presumably coming to the conclusion that I was a poor housekeeper.

Well, any visitors coming here this month will almost certainly have the same impression, because a similar situation has arisen; another spider has decided to live in the same spot, and this one has really gone to town. Nobody can miss the gigantic web/nest she has constructed for herself. But why is this worth repeating? Is there a different twist to the story this time?

There most certainly is! She has woven herself into a real jam, and I'm watching with great interest to see just what happens next ...

This particular spider showed up a few weeks back, in mid spring. She isn't the type that makes the classical spiral type of web, but one of those that makes a kind of 'tent' shape up in the corner of the room. The intent is the same of course, to catch insects that wander too close. When I first noticed her web, I mentally congratulated her on her excellent choice of location. Her small web was in one corner of the transom window over my front door (on the inside). I usually leave the front door open until quite late in the evening, trying to let breezes flow through the building, and this means that quite a number of insects also make their way in too. Many of these end up knocking themselves against that same window in their attempt to leave again, and she was able to snare many of these every evening.

As time went by, and this continued day after day, she grew quite a bit larger in size, and also began to expand the area covered by her web. Every morning as I watered the plants just outside the front door, I also had to sweep up the discarded insect husks that littered the floor in the area directly below her web, and as I did so I silently congratulated her on her successful setup.

But my admiration has become tempered somewhat in recent days. It seems she has fallen into a bit of a trap, and as I mentioned, it is going to be very interesting to see what happens next.

The problem? She has overbuilt. She kept expanding and increasing the area covered by her construction activities, and the web has not only grown larger in area, it has grown much denser ... and more visible. It has now pretty much entirely blocked access to the window. I watched for a while last night, and during the time that I stood there, not a single insect was able to approach the 'danger zone' - they were all diverted by the large white 'screen' as soon as they came close, flying off to another part of the house (or directly out the open door).

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Her previous setup - a smallish net in one corner of the wide window space - had been wonderfully effective. As insects gradually grew tired from banging against the glass, trying to leave, they would drop lower and lower, until they either bumbled directly into her web, or grew weak enough that she could leap and grab them. But none of that is happening now. She waits and waits in the center of the magnificent 'castle' she built with her riches, but nothing can get near.

It can get lonely at the top!

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