

Long Legs the Spider and How he saved the World

Chapter 31 from The Lost Lagoon

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A long time ago there lived a spider. He had a round body, almost like a button, and eight long, spindly legs. He also had eight skinny knees, eight slim ankles, eight bony feet and no toes at all. His name was Long Legs—which was a very common name amongst spiders of his sort. So common, in fact, that if you wave to a crowd of his kind, and shout: ‘Yoo-hoo! Long Legs!’ all of them will turn around and look at you.

One day, as Long Legs was spinning his web, two birds landed in a bush close by. One bird said to the other: ‘Cousin Sparrow, we are in trouble. The mighty eagle, King Prez, King of Birds, has lost a feather—and we are the ones to find it. If we don’t, King Prez said the sky will fall and squash us into pancakes.’

‘That sounds like Chicken Little,’ replied Cousin Sparrow. ‘He thought the sky was falling too, but he was just being a silly goose.’

‘That’s true, Cousin Sparrow, but this time it’s for real—King Prez said so—and if we don’t find that feather, it’s pancakes for all of us!’

Long Legs ran, linkety-lank, to his brothers and sisters. ‘King Prez has lost a feather!’ he cried. ‘If we don’t find it the sky will squish us into pancakes!’

‘Which feather did he lose?’ asked his littlest sister.

‘The feather from his cap, for sure,’ said his second eldest brother. ‘It’s always the biggest feather; it holds the universe up!’

‘Oh, no!’ moaned all the spiders. ‘Not the feather from King Prez’s cap!’ and they began wailing as if the world was going to end.

‘Stop wailing and collect your wits,’ shouted Long Legs. ‘Run to the four corners of the earth! Search under every stone! Spin webs and catch flies ... I mean, spin webs and catch spies, maybe they know something!’

So all the long-legged spiders ran, linkety-lank, around the world, spinning webs and catching spies and looking under stones. But the feather was not to be found.

Just then a tortoise came lumbering by.

‘What’s all the fuss about?’ he asked. ‘You’d think the world was ending!’

‘It is! It is!’ Long Legs cried. ‘The feather from King Prez’s cap is not to be found! We’ll be squished into pancakes!’

'Nonsense!' said the tortoise. 'I'm the one that holds the sky up with my strong shell. Just tell King Prez that you found the feather and put it back in his cap. He'll never notice that it's not true.'

So all the spiders ran linkety-lank to King Prez, and said: 'O, King Prez, we found the feather from your cap and put it back—you look so high and mighty!'

'Thank goodness,' sighed King Prez, much relieved. 'Now the sky will not fall and no one will be flattened into pancakes.'

'Hurrah!' cried all the spiders.

'Hurray!' cried all the birds.

'I'm hungry,' declared King Prez. 'Where are my cooks?'

All the cooks came crawling out of the royal kitchen on their humble hands and knees.

'What's for breakfast?' demanded the King.

'Pancakes, your majesty,' they replied, bowing up and down and scraping the floor.

'Pancakes!' exclaimed the spiders in dismay. And in a flash they all ran away as linkety-lank fast as their skinny legs could carry them!"

"That's a good spider's tale," said Greenleaf. "My mother used to tell me about Long Legs when I was little too."

"Us too," chimed in the gnomes.

Just then Tiptoes came flying through the air and landed in the boat.

"I met a slug and he told me the strangest tale," she said breathlessly. "I flew back as fast as I could—I can't wait to tell it to you."

"We've had a story as well," said Jeremy Mouse, pointing to Spin-a-lot the spider. "Let's swap tales."

And so they did.