Hairy Legs

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I’m not sure why I originally couldn’t sleep that night when I was in the tent, but anyway, I was awake. My conscious mind was then able to notice the crickets’ concert, contrasted by my sister’s awful snores. I then did something illogical: I turned on my lantern. I was then completely and incurably awake. And being awake at night when you’re camping isn’t nearly as fun as it is when you’re at home or at a friend’s house: there’s nowhere to go unless you really have to pee, and you’re usually too scared to leave the tent anyway.

As my eyes adjusted to the flood of light, I remember sitting up, which rumpled my sleeping bag. Looking at my older sister, who was sleeping next to me on my right, I noticed that she was lying there neatly, as if she had just been tucked in. She doesn’t move in her sleep like I do. Mom says that it’s because she’s content. I think that it’s because she’s a perfectionist even in her sleep and doesn’t want to make her blankets messy.

As I watched her, I felt uncomfortable, and almost guilty. It doesn’t seem right to be able to stare at someone without their knowing. It’s like… I don’t know. Like kicking a dead person. They don’t know it, and they probably don’t care, so it shouldn’t matter. But it does, because I was feeling guilty. And yet, I continued to watch.

It reminded me of my sixth birthday. For my party, I had a piñata that looked like a horse. (That was the year that I wanted a pony. I never got one.) Even though I
protested, my mom tied the red bandanna over my eyes, turned me around too many times, then handed me the yellow plastic baseball bat.

I kept swinging that bat, even though I never hit the piñata. Then someone started giggling.

Frustrated, I tore off the bandanna. I looked around, but I couldn’t see the piñata. My sister pointed up, laughing. (I hated that laugh.)

I looked up. My dad had pulled the rope so that the piñata was completely out of my reach.

They were all in on the joke, but I was unaware of it. And that was what I was doing in the tent: secretly watching and mocking my older sister.

I don’t know how long I had been watching her before I noticed it, but there was a large and very hairy spider crawling up the left side of her neck. I just stared at it for a while. What could I do? If I killed it, my sister would know that I had been watching her, and if I woke her up she’d panic, and the spider would probably bite her. I wasn’t sure if spider bites were worse if they were on the neck, but I was feeling considerate enough not to risk it.

So I did nothing.

The spider persevered in its seemingly pointless journey up my sister’s face. It was on her cheek now, and my face started to tickle as I watched it. I sort of wanted the spider to stop, but it kept putting one long hairy leg in front of another, and it slowly made its way to her cheekbone. (It was kind of funny, now that I think of it.)
It then curved its path and stopped in that weird ditch under her nose. I wondered if a spider in the nose would stop her from snoring, but then I mentally scolded myself for thinking such a thing.

Since the spider was momentarily still, with its legs touching her nose and top lip, I decided to try to get it off of my sister’s face. Slowly, I reached out my thumb and forefinger, though I really didn’t want to touch the huge and nasty spider.

When I was about two inches away from it, however, the spider turned around.

It was facing her mouth.

“No,” I whispered. But there was nothing I could do.

Horrified, I watched the spider enter the open, unsuspecting mouth of my older sister.

I never told her this story, because what happened next would have probably made her ill. Maybe the spider was on her tongue and she was dreaming, I’m not sure, but for whatever reason, she closed her mouth, and swallowed.

I wonder if it tickled.