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Bad News

by Sho Botham

Nothing travels faster than the speed of light with the possible exception of bad news, which obeys its own special laws. How do we determine what constitutes bad news? Is, it something that I decide is bad? Or do you decide it's bad? Do we have to agree together that it's bad news?

What about house spiders? When I get the vacuum cleaner out it's bad news for their webs. I often wonder what the spiders think when they come home to their web only to discover she's had the vacuum cleaner out and their web is no more. Do they stand there and think, oh shit, I've got to start again? Or do they stamp one of their eight feet in indignation and then just get on with it?

Is it bad news? Do spiders know about bad news?

Boing. Boing. Boing. The sound of prey in the web.

Spider thinks, yum. Prey thinks, OMG.

No bad news for the spider here.

Really bad news for its prey.

Small, scuttling, fast, frightening. That's spider season.

Do spiders know that they are bad news to so many?

Is it because they lack that cutesy look that would get them off the hook? We don't talk about the lovely spider season. We talk about spider season being bad news.

I remember, as a child, when a spider appeared on the glass of the window on the stairs. I was rooted to the spot. I couldn't move. I couldn't scream. I couldn't do anything but watch the spider in case it disappeared and I didn't know where it went to. I willed someone to come and find me. But no one did. At least not for an hour. Terrified, I stood there for an hour. That was bad news for me.

Today, I'm okay about spiders. I don't think of them as bad news. Maybe a bit irritating when they insist on building their webs in out of the way places so they are not so easy to reach with the vacuum cleaner. Bad news for me but not for the spider. Maybe the spider has learned its lesson and knows that it is bad news to build its web where it is easily reached by her with the vacuum cleaner.

None of this really answers my questions about what constitutes bad news. That in itself, is bad news.

Mr Turveydrop ran to the door. Mrs Pardiggle stood shaking on his doorstep.

"Come in. Come in," he said.

Mrs Pardiggle shook.

