



Bard Beetle



by Robert Prins

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"Help! Stop! Police!" Flurry McWebb screamed as her web caught fire, instantly burning it to ashes. "It was him," she cried, pointing four of her eight legs at a beetle who was lumbering away, humming a smug tune to himself.

An official looking centipede rushed to the scene on 98 legs. In the other two legs he carried a notebook and a pencil. The helmet on his head shifted a little to one side and he adjusted it with legs three and four before addressing Flurry McWebb.

"Tell me what happened, Ma'am" he said. The smell of burnt spiderweb lingered in the air as Constable Pederson began his investigation.

Flurry McWebb pointed with as many legs as she could without losing balance. "It was the beetle! He burnt my web, he fried my dinner and left me homeless!"

"Calm down and explain it to me slowly," Constable Pederson soothed.

Between sobs, Flurry McWebb told Constable Pederson how she had been peacefully eating dinner when she noticed a beetle about to walk into her web. She tensed for the thrill of the catch. A beetle would keep her in fresh meat for a week or more. But just as the beetle reached her web, he stopped. He had seen her trap. After a few moments of watching him, she saw him turn around as if he was going to walk off. Realising the beetle would not be caught, Flurry settled back to her dinner. Suddenly she heard some loud pops, and all at once her web caught fire and turned to ashes. As she leapt to safety, she saw the beetle wandering off and heard him singing smug songs. "It had to be him," she concluded.

Constable C Pederson scribbled in his notebook, then raced around on his hundred legs looking for evidence. Finding nothing other than ashes, he raced after the beetle, overtaking him under a pile of dry leaves.

"Stop!" he commanded.

"Yeeesss?" the beetle asked.

"Name and address?"

"Bard Beetle, no fixed abode."

"Bard Beetle, I am arresting you on suspicion of arson."

"Whatever," the beetle replied. "Search me. No matches, fire lighters or flint. You can't pin nothin' on me."

After a long interrogation and search, it certainly looked as if it was Flurry's word against Bard's. Bard Beetle was about to walk free when they were interrupted by a wheezy breath.

"Wait!" a puffed-out snail panted. "I have been trying to catch up, but your multiple legs are all too fast."

"We can't prove Bard Beetle caused the fire," Constable Pederson announced. "He had no way of starting it. It was probably spontaneous combustion."

Flurry McWebb gasped.

"You are wrong, Constable. Bard Beetle's real name is Bombardier Beetle," wheezed the snail. "He's a serial arsonist."

"No!" cried Bombardier Beetle. With a series of quick popping sounds, fire exploded from his rear. The dry leaves behind him burst into flame.

"Aha!" shouted Constable Pederson. "Bombardier Beetle, we will be feeding you to the blackbirds."



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When Flurry Mc Webb's home burst into flames, she knew it had something to do with a beetle. But where was the evidence? Would Flurry and Constable Pederson be able to catch the arsonist before it was too late?

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