

THE SUMMER OF BLACK WIDOWS



sherman alexie

The spiders appeared suddenly
after that summer rainstorm.

Some people still insist the spiders fell with the rain
while others believe the spiders grew from the damp soil like weeds
with eight thin roots.

The elders knew the spiders
carried stories in their stomachs.

We tucked our pants into our boots when we walked through fields
of fallow stories.

An Indian girl opened the closet door and a story fell into her hair.
We lived in the shadow of a story trapped in the ceiling lamp.

The husk of a story museumed on the windowsill.

Before sleep, we shook our blankets and stories fell to the floor.

A story floated in a glass of water left on the kitchen table.

We opened doors slowly and listened for stories.

The stories rose on hind legs and offered their red bellies to the most
beautiful Indians.

Stories in our cereal boxes.

Stories in our firewood.

Stories in the pocket of our coats.

We captured stories and offered them to the ants, who carried the
stories back to their queen.

A dozen stories per acre.

We poisoned the stories and gathered their remains with broom
and pan.

The spiders disappeared suddenly
after that summer lightning storm.

Some people insist the spiders were burned to ash
while others believe the spiders climbed the lightning bolts and
became a new constellation.

The elders knew the spiders
Had left behind bundles of stories.

Up in the corners of our old houses
we still find those small, white bundles
and nothing, neither fire
nor water, neither rock nor wind,
can bring them down.