

Eight-Legged Freaks

by David Backer

I've just moved to New York City and, somehow, Scarlett Johansson is at the same party I'm at. I'm standing next to her. I say the line I've been practising since I left Ypsilanti, the line I've come up with just in case I find myself standing next to Scarlett Johansson at a party in New York City.

'I'm sorry, I have to ask you, were you in that movie *Eight-Legged Freaks*, with the huge alien spiders that take over the mall? I only ask because I saw that movie with my grandfather right before he died — he loved it. He was a quiet man, but after we saw 'Eight-Legged Freaks' together we talked non-stop about his time in World War II and how he always wanted to be a radio technician but he had such bad allergies that he'd always be sneezing around the sensitive equipment and how he met my grandmother in Brooklyn and how she rejected him fourteen times before she went on a date with him.'

'That's such a good story,' Scarlet Johansson says with wonder. 'Yeah, I was in that movie when I was like, sixteen.'

'Oh,' I say, surprised, 'so you've been in other movies too?'

We go outside onto the fire escape and sit, drinking mixed drinks from cups that say our names on them, and we sit close to each other because it's cold and we talk about our lives and our feelings and she asks for my email address. She emails me the next day asking if I want to get a cup of coffee.

