

**STEVE  
MCDONALD**

## Dear Marlyle

After nearly eight hours of hard driving, I was not happy to carry my luggage from the car into the Airbnb only to find a spider with eight very long legs hanging

as if in midair between the wooden magazine stand filled with guidebooks to Carmel and Monterey and the corner of the fake mahogany kitchen cabinet,

so I sat down for a moment to consider my options as I know you would want me to do, and I thought I could swat it with one of the *InStyle* magazines

on the end table or I could trap it with one of the coffee cups from the kitchen and then take it outside to shake it into the juniper next to the red brick walkway,

but in trapping it I might break one of its long legs, especially if it was a quick spider, and I knew you wouldn't want that, so I thought I should just ignore it, although I was not sure

I *could* ignore a spider, not even a harmless daddy longlegs type, which, according to Wikipedia, which I checked as soon as I sat down, this one was, and which, as I was happy to discover,

would rarely if ever bite humans, so I decided to decide what I would do about the spider later because, as I said, I was really tired, so I went into the bathroom

and looked into the mirror and there, in the corner by the ceiling, another daddy longlegs—or maybe a mommy longlegs?—also hanging as if in midair, and now I thought,

Well, how many more are there? so I started searching the two rooms, looking into closets and corners and along baseboards and under end tables and along

the side of the red couch but there were no others as far as I could see and somewhere along the line I'd found myself asking, What are you really looking for? What is it you want?

and I know you'll understand when I tell you that I had no answer to that question, just a vague sense of something missing, so I lay down on the bed and tried to take a nap,

but I couldn't sleep because I kept thinking about spiders, and then—I almost don't want to tell you this—when I opened my eyes and saw the black dot directly above my head on the ceiling

I freaked out a little bit and clambered out of bed, grabbed a shoe, then climbed back onto the bed to get a closer look at the dot, which, it turned out, was just a black dot, nothing more,

so I was happy about that, although I had no idea what a dot was doing on the ceiling, and all of this is just to say that I have lived here now for two full days and nights

with spider A and spider B, and we are all well and doing fine, although I've noticed that spider B sometimes moves from one corner in the bathroom to another, but spider A

seems much more content with where it is, there with all the magazines to keep it company, I guess, and that somehow reminds me of our daughters—I'm sure you understand—

so I guess you could say this place has come to feel a little bit like home.

P.S. This morning spider B is missing. I have looked for it everywhere. Will you know what I mean when I say I am both relieved and somehow unhappy, even a little lonely?

**Steve McDonald** is the author of two full-length books of poetry, *Credo* (finalist in 2016 Brick Road Poetry Press competition) and *House of Mirrors* (Tebot Bach, 2013). He has also published two chapbooks, *Golden Fish / Dark Pond* (winner of the 2014 Comstock Review Chapbook contest) and *Where There Was No Pattern* (Finishing Line Press, 2007). A two-time Pushcart Prize nominee, he lives with his wife, Marlyle, in Murrieta, California.