



PROLOGUE

In the dim light of the rare books room of the Boston Public Library, a brown walnut spider, a type of orb weaver, waited in a shimmering silken web stretched between two ancient volumes of Greek poetry. The young spider had been secretly observing the new spider family since their arrival almost two weeks before. The mother and three spiderlings were everything he had ever dreamed of being. Charming and smart, they spun stories as easily as silk. Behind their three pairs of eyes, they had little fiddle markings. Buster himself—for that was the brown walnut spider's name—had no such interesting marks. In addition to all this, the three spiderlings were curious, lively, and often

squabbling. In short, they were a family. Buster was an orphan.

And the newcomers were not just a family, they were a venomous one. How he envied them for that. He almost swooned at the very thought. And he needed their venom desperately. For something very bad was happening in the Boston Public Library, and it had to be stopped. The little spider family was clueless as to what was going on practically in front of their very eyes — all twenty-four of them! But with this family on his side, the horrid crime spree would end!