

**Spider Tartare; The Attackers: Black Sheep: Demetrius: Characteristics of Mob Mentality: Emotionalism & an Inability to Think; Shouting a Rallying Cry Does not Make it True; Useful Idiots Promote a Hidden Agenda: Silence or Kill Paul; a Mob Is Emotional, confused, & indoctrinated; an Assembly is rational, Organized, and Informed, Acts 19:32**

Jim Lawrence will be our guest speaker next Sunday. I thought today I'd give you a little history of the kind of mischief the two of us caused during our youth. This is a story I wrote in 2006 that recounts an episode that happened while we were in high school. It remains a source of local legend for a diminishing number of members of the class of 1959.

**Spider Tartare: Spider-Man v. The Assassin**

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Never did cotton to spiders. When it comes to ugly they head the list. Those demonic eyes, eight of them in all, glaring out over their pedipalps: little arm-like appendages that curve around in front of their nasty looking little faces. There are four sets of walking legs covered with bristle-like hairs and with claws on the ends. Even if they somehow lose a leg it eventually grows back. All have venom glands but most are nontoxic to humans. The black widow and the brown recluse are the most venomous but not fatal. Finally, they construct intricate webs to trap their prey. They usually ensnare their victim in silk and turn it as if on a spit before carrying it to the hub of the web for consumption. The insect world's Jeffrey Dahmer!

I ask you: "Why, after hearing this would anyone not be an arachnophobic?" I don't know either, but Jim Lawrence is a candidate. In the days of yore when our lives were filled with stupid ideas I offered this man a challenge that has become one of Troy's urban legends, at least for the class of '59—well, for a few members of it.

Jim lived at the Pine and Murphree Street intersection's northwest corner and the slope of Pine Hill created a natural basement for the house. We were in and out of the area pretty often and it was well known by all that I don't do spiders. One day several members of the Murphree Street Gang (MSG) were down in the basement and one of my cohorts (I cannot remember which) picked up a dead spider and threatened to throw it on me. I picked up a wooden stick that was lying nearby and announced that if he did I'd smite him thoroughly about the head and shoulders with reckless abandon. He called my bluff and I demonstrated my resolve.

Now guess which one of us was judged to have violated some moral code? I was. The group turned on me for whacking the guy who threw the spider carcass on me after I'd clearly announced my intentions. I thought I'd made a good decision since surely this would put an end to anyone else's ideas about ever trying this with an actual living spider. But instead all my friends transformed into early-day Hezbollah with a charge that I used a "disproportionate response."

So the next day at good ole Troy High, Jim ragged me about my fear of spiders: how silly it was, how he wasn't afraid of them *at all*, blah, blah, blah, ad nauseam. So finally I said, "I'll bet you a dollar you wouldn't eat one!"

"Yes I would," said the would-be Peter Parker.

"No you won't," said the Hardened Criminal.

"Will, too!"

"Fine, then let's find one and let's see."

After school we went down in the school's basement to the Band Room. Mr. Herman Moll was still the director that year and I'm sure the reason he died only a short time later was because of the trauma he suffered from the trombone section alone: Jim, Larry Ray, and me. Jim could play, Larry played, I held the horn—desperately—but without making any audible sounds.

Mr. Moll had been director of the Trojan Marching Band for I guess around 83 years by this time and for some reason he had accumulated about a thousand musical instruments of various descriptions that were jumbled in the corner of the Band Room.

In amongst the brass, woodwinds, and percussion was a big bass horn in whose bell we discovered a spider's web. In the middle were those eight nefarious little eyes glaring away over its protruding little fangs as if to say, "Do you feel lucky? Well, do ya, punk?"

Not feeling lucky at all I yielded the floor. "There's your snack, Jimmy. A dollar says you won't eat it."

I don't know what actually went through Jim's mind at that time. He didn't grin and jump for joy over the idea but, honor challenged, he was to be damned if he didn't prove to me he had no fear of spiders. No, none whatsoever. At all.

Cautiously he meandered through about a hundred instruments in his advance toward that bass horn's bell and the waiting target. Finally, eye-to-eyes, he slowly reached in and with his forefinger and thumb seized the critter by his legs and brought him out, alive and kicking.

He paused, looked at me for a frozen moment, then suddenly with a quickness that denied him time to change his mind, put the thing in his mouth, chewed it up, and swallowed it down.

"Where's my dollar?" he gasped.

Aghast, I paid up and we both went home.

Jim had no ill effects from his spider tartare and subsequent events revealed how proud he was of his culinary victory that proved him courageous and me a pusillanimous, milquetoast, weak, sissified coward. He gave wide testimony to all who would listen about his flight of derring-do. He had a reputation of regaling little children with embellished tales of ghosts, goblins, and Uncle Remus so this talent was surely put to good use on this fine afternoon as the size of the beast expanded from the width of a dime to that of a dinner plate.

Vanquished, Hardened Criminal was cowering at home, phobia intact, accompanied by the specter of his "disproportionate response" to a fellow member of the MSG the day before.

The next morning started just like all the others: another day in Paradise. First with Miss Lamb. She knew English, I didn't. Then, with Miss McCullough. She understood math without numbers, I didn't. To make matters worse there was the Triumvirate. Bobby Davis, Evelyn Stephen, and Faye Oliver always, without fail, made hundreds on all tests. They turned the Bell Curve into a myth since my 63s could never spike upward with them around. But on this day, "normal" worse turned to "god-awful."

Turns out that Jim "Steve Irwin" Lawrence doesn't show up for school. Spider-Man is now Absent-Man. I didn't think too much of it since we all were absent from time to time. For me illness was like a vacation so I would not think ill of others having occasional respites from the tortures of academia.

Questions arose in Home Room about why Jim hadn't come to school. Someone, I have no recall of whom but one who had no knowledge of Jim's present health, piped up and reported how yesterday I had bet Jim a dollar he wouldn't eat a spider. The story gained legs, probably eight or more, and before long I had held him down and force-fed him a tarantula.

Without chance for rebuttal I'm suddenly in Dr. Smart's office suffering an inquisition from a gaggle of faculty. "Why would you propose such a disgusting thing?" "Do you not know that spiders are venomous?" "Do you realize that he could be deathly ill?" "How dare you gamble on school property!"

"Hey!" says Accused Assassin, "*He* ate the spider. If he was crazy enough to *eat* it he *deserves* to be sick!"

Wrong thing to say. I was scorned for my insensitivity. Faculty members then huddled to determine what to do. It was decided to call Mrs. Lawrence to learn how close Poor Jim was to death. You'd have thought Robert A. McGehee was gassing the hearse.

So what was Miss Sarah's explanation for Spider-Man's absence? Turns out he had cut his chinny-chin-chin on Camille Head's diving board the afternoon before and had stayed home to *recover*. Yes! It's true. I get hassled because I *watched*, nauseously, as Jim ate a spider, but Camille is never questioned because she *watched* him head-butt her diving board. So, the truth about Jim's absence had nothing to do with his strange diet, but because he couldn't successfully jump into a pool of water. And he does this just minutes after consuming the Gigantic Arachnid, knowing full well that going swimming that quickly after eating could well have caused him to catch a case of polio. And had this occurred I'm sure I'd have been blamed for that, too.

26. The scene now shifts back to the theater where we find the mob is disarray:

**Acts 19:32** - So then, some were shouting [ κράζω (*krázō*): kept on shouting ] one thing and some another, for the assembly [ ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*) ] was in confusion [ συγχέω (*sunchéō*) ] and the majority did not know [ οὐκ ὁράω (*ouk horáō*): to perceive with the mind or senses ] for what reason they had come together. (NASB)

27. Several characteristics of mob mentality are discerned from verse 32:

- (1) The verb *krázō* is an imperfect active indicative. There were two factions of the mob that were engaged in shouting. This is the progressive imperfect which describes an action that is in progress in past time from the viewpoint of the speaker, i.e., Luke. It also indicates that it occurred simultaneously with another action.

The shouting was continuous, the union shouting while at the same time another faction of the mob was shouting something else.

- (2) We know what the union members are shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" What the other bunch was screaming is not mentioned, but we will be able to surmise that their tirade was directed toward the Jewish population of Ephesus.
- (3) The reason for this is that those among the assembly were confused. The word "assembly" is the noun *ekklēsia* which generally refers to the assembly of a church.
- (4) However, the word has many applications and context guides the correct translation. Here is clear that this assembly is not only tumultuous it is also illegal.
- (5) Those in the mob are described by the perfect passive participle of the verb *sunchéō*. The perfect tense indicates they were confused at the beginning of the riot and remain confused.
- (6) PRINCIPLE: Mob mentality may be described as the inability to think while riled up emotionally. The emotion was expressed in the shouting of a lie which verse 34 indicates continued unabated for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"
- (7) Because a large group of people shout a lie for two hours does not transform the rallying cry into truth. The benighted are functioning on emotion and emotion is not capable of rational and lucid thought.
- (8) Their ignorance is certified by the negative conjunction *ouk* and the verb *horáō*, a pluperfect tense places emphasis on the results that existed in past time: "they had no mental perception."
- (9) A contributing cause of all this chaos was that the majority of those in the theatre did not know why they were there.
- (10) A mob is the assembling of useful idiots to carry out a hidden agenda by means of a rhetorical veil.
- (11) The rhetorical veil is that Artemis is being disrespected.

- (12) The hidden agenda was to force Paul out of town so that the union's bric-a-bras business could recover its losses and continue as things were before the apostle came to town.
- (13) Mobs that are organized today function in the same general way, although I am of the opinion that those who make up most of today's mobs are not necessarily useful idiots but in some cases are either hired or gladly volunteer to carry out the ruse for political purposes.
- (12) Our Constitution provides in its First Amendment, "the right of the people peaceably to assemble."
- (13) There is a stark difference between the participants of a mob and an assembly. A mob is defined as "a large or disorderly crowd, especially: one bent on riotous or destructive action."<sup>1</sup>
- (14) An assembly is "a company of persons gathered for deliberation and legislation, worship, or entertainment."<sup>2</sup>
- (15) The mob is populated by emotional, confused, and indoctrinated people. An assembly is a gathering of rational, organized, and informed people.
- (16) Indoctrinated people are imbued with partisan opinions and points of view. Informed people possess much information, knowledge, or education about the issues they wish to deliberate.

28. The expanded translation of verse 32 reads this way:

**Acts 19:32** - So then, some were continuing to shout one thing and simultaneously some did another, for the tumultuous mob was in a constant state of confusion and the majority had no mental perception of the reason they had come together. (EXT)

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<sup>1</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v.: "mob."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v.: "assembly."