

INVASION OF THE TARANTULADIES

by Michael Bigelow Dixon and Jon Jory

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INVASION OF THE TARANTULADIES*A One-Act Sci-Fi Horror Comedy***by Michael Bigelow Dixon and Jon Jory**

SYNOPSIS: Get tangled in terror! Science students check into a themed Air B&B, excited for the annual Tarantula Festival. When their TAs mysteriously vanish, they realize something's seriously amiss. Suddenly, it's a battle against enormous, dancing Tarantuladies (yes, that's a thing!) Can a ragtag group of students survive the night? Don't miss this hilariously creepy, campy, and outrageous sci-fi horror comedy!

DURATION: 30 minutes.

SETTING: The living room of Tarantula House Air B & B.

TIME: Present Day.

CAST OF CHARACTERS*(7 females, 3 males, 7 gender neutral)*

CRISTA (f)..... Property Manager. *(14 lines)*
 JEAN (f)..... Teaching Assistant. *(32 lines)*
 JOSEPH (m)..... Teaching Assistant. *(18 lines)*
 BETH (f)..... Student. *(43 lines)*
 JOAN (f)..... Student. *(49 lines)*
 TONI (f)..... Student. *(51 lines)*
 RING (m)..... Student. *(62 lines)*
 JACK (m)..... Student. *(42 lines)*
 SELENA (f)..... Student. *(37 lines)*
 BECCA (f)..... Student. *(41 lines)*

TARANTULADIES:

TABITHA (m/f)..... *(8 lines)*
 TALLULAH (m/f)..... *(3 lines)*
 TAMARA (m/f)..... *(4 lines)*
 TATIANA (m/f)..... *(4 lines)*
 THEODORA (m/f)..... *(4 lines)*
 TANISHA (m/f)..... *(3 lines)*
 TIARA (m/f)..... *(3 lines)*

SET: The living room of Tarantula House, a themed Air B&B with 8 doors—5 are working doors and 3 are painted on walls but have real handles.

FURNITURE: A sofa, a table, 4 chairs.

COSTUMES: Contemporary casual for the T.A.s and Students. Professional casual for the Property Manager. Tarantuladies can be costumed complexly or simply—a simple version could include painted stockings pulled over faces for masks, colorful leotards, tights, and a belt with 4 legs attached (Tarantulas have 8 limbs, so human arms and legs plus 4).

DO NOT COPY

AT START: *A wall with eight doors (five open/close and three are painted on the wall with real handles.) We see a sofa, a table, and four chairs. This is Tarantula House, a themed Air B&B near the annual Tarantula Festival in La Junta, Colorado. At lights we see CRISTA MISSIVE, the property manager. She sits on the sofa and checks a list.*

CRISTA: *(Pleasantly.)* I hate people, all people except possibly my husband Bob, and I'm not sure about him. How, how did I end up in La Junta, Colorado when I wanted to be in Paris, France? Why wasn't I told that sometimes, well, life sucks. Maybe there's a law your parents can't tell you that. *(Looks at her watch.)* Where are these people? Why are people always late? Why do I drive a Chevrolet Vega? Why do I have ingrown toenails? But most importantly, why are two college teaching assistants bringing students to the annual Tarantula Festival late for their rental. Also, why does my husband Bob think he's funny? You are not funny, Bob!

A strange knock at the door.

CRISTA: I truly despise people who do strange knocks.

CRISTA stands, crosses to a door stage left, and opens it, and ushers in JEAN and JOSEPH.

CRISTA: Well, come on in!

JEAN: Hi, I'm Jean, the teaching assistant you talked to on the phone.

JOSEPH: Hi, I'm Joseph, the teaching assistant you didn't talk to on the phone.

CRISTA: Well, that's just utterly hilarious. *(Closes door and turns to JEAN and JOSEPH.)* Now then...

Another strange knock. She re-opens door.

CRISTA: Well, look at that! A cluster of youth. Get on in here.

Seven STUDENTS enter.

BETH: Hi, I'm Beth, student liaison for our tarantula trip.

JOAN: I'm Joan, business manager for the student newspaper.

TONI: Toni Boiko, I've been studying spiders since second grade. I've been bitten eighteen times and loved every moment of it.

RING: Hi, I'm Ring, generally considered to be a bad person.

JACK: Hi... *(To JOSEPH.)* Do I have to say my name?

CRISTA: Only if you have one.

JACK: Jack. Smart, good-looking, and nervous.

SELENA: Hi, I'm Selena.

CRISTA: Hi Selena.

BECCA: I'm Becca.

CRISTA: Good on ya. Well, welcome to Tarantula House. Can you guess what it's named after?

BECCA: Maybe tarantulas?

CRISTA: Bingo. You see eight doors which symbolize the eight legs of the tarantula. The doors you'll be using are... *(Pointing.)* Kitchen, attic, west residential and front door.

TONI: Where do the other doors lead?

CRISTA: That would be none of your beeswax. Now...*(Pointing at closet door.)* Closet door. Do not under any circumstances, and I mean **any** circumstance, open the closet door.

RING: That's weird.

CRISTA: Not as weird as what will happen if you do.

JOAN: Cool.

CRISTA: Pay attention to warning signals from monitors for radon, carbon monoxide, seismic activity, fire and smoke alarms, air filters, dehumidifiers, humidifiers, thermostats, movement sensors, and solar energy battery storage—all of which are in the basement, along with the electrical breaker box and back-up generator.

SELENA: I love basements. I was born in a basement.

CRISTA: *(Coldly.)* Fascinating. Now, your cellphones are now officially dead. The house has aluminum siding which blocks cellphone service.

BECCA: I can't live without my cellphone.

CRISTA: Adios compadre. So that's the available info. If perchance big, hairy, ugly spiders aren't your cup of tea, you will have no tea. If you need to contact me, you can't. That's it. I'm not taking any questions. Oh, one last thing. Two light switches. (*Pointing to a pair of light switches on wall.*) Don't touch that one. (*Waving.*) Have a perfectly terrible time. (*Exits.*)

JOAN: Lacks charm.

JEAN: And any other human qualities.

RING: Which switch aren't we supposed to touch?

BECCA: Don't touch either one, just to be safe.

JEAN: So, here we go. You know that Joseph and I are tagging along as teaching assistants to make sure you learn stuff.

JACK: What stuff?

JOSEPH: We're not picky.

JEAN: If you love creepy-crawly things, you are in for a fabulous treat.

BETH: What if you're not crazy about creepy-crawlies?

JEAN: You on the wrong choo-choo train, honey.

JOSEPH: So, here are the three tarantula species you are likely to run into here ...

JEAN: The Goliath Bird-eating Tarantula ...

JOSEPH: The Blue Fang Skeleton Tarantula ...

JEAN: The Gooty Sapphire Tarantula.

JOAN: How do you spell Gooty?

JOSEPH: But don't get your underwear in a twist if you don't see those, as there are 900 different species.

TONI: 932, including the *Aphonopelma johnnycashi* named for Johnny Cash.

JOSEPH: Thanks for the update.

JEAN: This is an overnight assignment.

SELENA: Oh goody.

JOSEPH: We'll be back tomorrow to take you to Tarantula Fest.

JEAN: Warnings ...

RING: I love warnings.

JOSEPH: Do not ever ...

JEAN: Ever, ever ...

JOSEPH: Get between a tarantula mother and her babies or egg sacs.

JACK: Why?

JEAN: You see *Aliens*?

BETH: You mean the movie with the Big Mother alien?

SELENA: Who lays eggs all over the place?

RING: And wipes out the crew on a bloody rampage?

BECCA: That one?

JEAN: Yeah. Just sayin'.

JOSEPH: But the important thing is have fun. Stay up late and tarantula your hearts out.

JEAN: We'll be back in the morning so we can hit the festival and drink the specially created Tarantula Milkshake.

JOAN: Not really using tarantulas in it, right?

JEAN: I'm not telling.

SELENA: I have a teeny-tiny bad feeling about this.

JEAN: Don't get your underwear in a twist. So that's the menu. Joseph and I will be back at eight a.m. sharp.

BETH: But ...

JOAN: I actually don't like bugs.

JOSEPH: A tarantula is not a bug.

BECCA: I'm not actually touching them.

JACK: Second that.

TONI: You guys are going to love tarantulas! They can regenerate lost legs.

RING: Why would that make me love them?

JEAN: (*Claps her hands.*) Everybody.

SELENA: Why are you clapping at us?

JEAN: Oops. It's what my mother did when she wanted attention.

BECCA: Well, fortunately you're not our mother.

JEAN: Right. Now I'm passing out flashlights and worksheets so you can record tarantula behavior in their natural habitat.

JACK: As if I cared.

JEAN: Zap! You care.

JOSEPH: You will note size, behavior and species.

JOAN: My favorite is definitely the Gooty Sapphire.

TONI: There's also the Queensland Hissing Tarantula, nicknamed the "barking spider."

She barks at JACK.

JACK: Cut it out.

JOSEPH: All right, let's everybody play nice. Remember this is a final project which counts as 50% of your grade in Biology.

JEAN: One final warning: If you do get bitten, do the Tarantella.

RING: Whaaaaat?

JEAN: In the 19th century, they believed if you danced the Tarantella...

RING: Which is...?

JEAN: A frenzied, frenetic dance that moves the venom through your system.

TONI: It's based on movements of real tarantulas. *(Pause.)* They really do dance to music.

JACK: And you want us to dance like tarantulas?

JEAN: You want to die?

BETH: What?

JEAN: Just kidding.

BECCA: Seriously. What should we do?

JOSEPH: Just wash the area with soap and water, wrap it with a clean cloth full of ice for ten minutes.

JACK: What if I'm outside and I don't happen to be carrying ice cubes in my pocket?

JEAN: Go to the nearest ice cube.

JEAN: Seriously, tarantula venom seldom kills.

SELENA: I'm not liking the word "seldom."

RING: *(Taking Bluetooth speaker out of backpack.)* I got a speaker if we want music.

JOSEPH: Not now.

RING puts the speaker back in the pack.

JEAN: *(Moving on.)* Complete your observations by dawn because tarantulas are nocturnal and return underground when the sun comes up.

JOAN: I love schedules.

RING: And where will our noble teaching assistants be?

JEAN: Back at the motel, eating chocolates and sleeping in our jammies. Bye.

JEAN and JOSEPH leave.

RING: They just walked out on us and left us to die in agonizing pain.

TONI: This is going to be super-duper fun!

JACK: This isn't a class, it's a death sentence.

TONI: Oh, come on! Just think of it as a treasure hunt for poisonous eggs.

JOAN: Okay, take a look out the window and see if they're gone.

RING moves downstage and looks out.

RING: Don't see 'em.

TONI: Okay, here's the deal.

BETH: Listen up.

TONI: As we planned, we capture as many tarantulas as we can before dawn and then sell them on eBay before Joseph and Jean wake up. Hopefully we corral a bunch of different types. Believe it or not some tarantulas sell for hundreds of dollars on eBay.

JOAN: *(Rubbing hands together.)* Money, money, money and more money.

TONI: Look, if each of us catches at least a dozen, we could split as much as \$25,000!

SELENA: Praise the lord.

TONI: That's like \$3,500 apiece!

JACK: Do we actually have to touch them with our hands?

JOAN: For that much I will kiss every one of them on their spidery little lips.

TONI: Then, we tell Jean and Joseph we only caught three. We hide the others in boxes outdoors and come back from them later.

SELENA: Finally, I'm a criminal.

BETH: It seems like a little sketchy, right? I mean, not letting Jean and Joseph share?

JOAN: Beth, we all love mankind and wish to serve them, but baby, darling, sweetie, when dealing in tarantulas you just gotta look out for number one.

BETH: But is it like... ethical?

JOAN: Let's say you could walk away with thousands of dollars or you could be ethical, which would you do, seeing as how you told me you only have seventeen dollars in the bank?

BETH: I'd be ethical next week.

The others sing to BETH.

THE GROUP: *(Singing.)*

For she's a jolly good fellow,
For she's a jolly good fellow,
Yes, she's a jolly good fellow,
And so say all of us!

BETH: That was so nice.

JOAN: Brilliant! Everybody in?

JACK: Sort of, maybe, more or less, uh-huh.

SELENA: Love you forever. Ring, bring in some boxes to get started.
They're outside.

RING: Yes, my master. *(Exits.)*

TONI: Okey-dokey-doke. A few facts from my tarantula research.

BECCA: Oh boy.

TONI: Tarantulas are never bigger than a dinner plate.

SELENA: Now there's something I didn't want to know.

TONI: Tarantulas are large, hairy, quick-witted, fierce predators.

JACK: Or that.

TONI: In South America some people roast and eat them.

JOAN: Ewwwww.

TONI: And some researchers say they can detect human fear.

BECCA: Found me right out.

RING returns with a stack of small boxes and passes them around.

RING: Tarantula boxes. Here.

JACK: I would like to confess I am not picking up a big hairy biting thing and putting it in a box. Not my style, possibly with forceps.

BETH: I'll do it. I try to do one thing I hate every day. Preferably before lunch. Broadens my horizons.

RING: Ummm, guys, I must report strangeness.

BECCA: Good strangeness or bad strangeness?

RING: Indeterminate strangeness.

JOAN: Tell.

RING: Okay. Jean and Joseph went back to the motel, right?

BECCA: Yeah?

RING: But if you look out the window, their rent-a-car is still there.

BETH: They went for a walk?

TONI: They're tarantula hunting.

RING: In high heels? Jean is always in high heels and high heels don't go tarantula hunting.

SELENA: They went behind a tree to pee?

TONI: They could have used the bathroom here.

RING: Also, their gradebook and Jean's glasses were lying on the ground. See?

RING holds out glasses and gradebook.

TONI: Uh-oh.

RING: Definitely uh-oh.

JACK: Let me check out my grade. (*JACK looks through gradebook.*)
Ooooo. Not good.

SELENA: Okay, this is freaking me out big-time.

BECCA: I'm calling the police.

RING: Whoa, whoa!

BECCA: Why whoa?

RING: It's not exactly a crime scene, Becca. Maybe it's a, you know, love story and they're out there, you know, loving.

BETH: That's so sweet.

SELENA: Jean's married and Joseph's in love with himself.

TONI: Stop with the theories. There is obviously a simple answer.

RING: Ah-hah! Occam's razor.

SELENA: What?

RING: Guy's name was Ockham, and his theory posits the simplest solution or explanation is most likely the correct one.

JOAN: I'm impressed.

BECCA: So what is the simple answer to Jean and Joseph gone missing?

TONI: Stop making it a murder mystery. This is science.

BECCA: I didn't say it was a murder mystery.

TONI: You implied it was a murder mystery.

BECCA: (*Pissed.*) Did not!

JOAN: Imagine the headlines.

BECCA: They've been carried off by tarantulas!

JOAN: The school will go bananas.

JACK: We have now gone completely round-the-bend.

BECCA: But...

TONI: Just stop! We're science students, not off-the-charts hysterics.

BECCA: I'm definitely a hysteric. It's my major talent.

TONI: (*Loudly.*) Listen up! (*Everyone turns and looks at her.*) They probably came in through the back door to get something.

JACK: Why?

TONI: That's not the point.

BETH: So the point is?

SELENA: What are they doing?

BETH: Exactly. Now in times of confusion and distress what is needed is leadership, and I have a fabulous leadership resumé. By the time I was three I was head of household and since that time I have been head of everything that needed somebody to be head of it. Seven different adults have called me "charismatic". No more yakety-yak, I am now in charge.

JOAN: Why?

BETH: Because I say so. I have had nine years of judo and if you disagree, I will hurt you.

RING: Sounds good to me.

SELENA: So lead.

BETH: No one goes outside. Outside, if necessary, is for later. We'll search the house in pairs. Those pairs are: myself and Toni...

TONI: Love it.

BETH: Joan and Becca...

JOAN: Cool beans.

BETH: And Selena and Jack

SELENA: I don't like Jack. He lacks sex appeal.

JACK: I don't care for myself much either, so it's perfect.

BETH: C'mon everyone. We can do this.

EVERYONE: (*Chanting.*) Tarantulas! Tarantulas! Tarantulas!

Much shouting and several fists in the air. If a member of the cast can do a back flip or cartwheel, so much the better. RING waves hands in a "stop" gesture, and everyone shuts up at the same moment.

BETH: What?

RING: Who's my buddy?

BETH: You and your shadow, Ring. Hold down the fort. Any last words, Toni?

TONI: Tarantulas are not picky eaters. They'll eat anything that moves.

RING: Fun fact.

BETH: *(To the group.)* Let's do this thing!

ALL grab boxes and exit, each pair using a different door: kitchen, attic, west residential, but not the closet or front door. One pair tries doorknobs on the painted doors, before finding a real door and exiting. RING is left alone.

RING: Okey-dokey. *(Picks up a box and looks around the room.)* Here tarantulas, it's your friend, Ring.

There is scratching and scratching from the door that has not been used.

RING: Uh-oh. *(Scratch-scratching continues and RING backs away.)* Something behind that door. Ring doesn't like something making noise behind a door. Ring should open the door and see what it is. *(Continues talking to himself.)* Open the door, Ring. Or not. Maybe Ring shouldn't open the door. Maybe the last thing Ring should do would be to open the door.

He backs up. Scratch-scratching gets louder—whatever is making the noise is trying to get out.

RING: Whataya think, Ring? Shall we open the door? The answer to that is "no". Ring doesn't want to open the door. On the other hand, Ring doesn't want to be a wuss. Ring is a healthy young male with a reputation as sexy, so he should open the door and not lose that reputation. On the other hand, is it really a valuable move to open the door and be eaten by spiders? I know, Ring should call for help, but in a manly way. *(He does.)* Help! *(No one answers or comes.)* Little help here!! *(Nothing. No one.)* Ring is alone. *(After a moment, he again talks to himself.)* Come on Ring, it's just a big spider. A big, big spider. *(Pause.)* A big, big, big, ginormous spider. A big,

big, big, big, big, big, big spider! But Ring isn't afraid. Ring is an old-fashioned dominant male who fears nothing. Except possibly a ginormous spider. No. Ring will do this! Do this, Ring! Hop to it, Ring. Know no fear!

The scritch-scratching has stopped.

RING: No sound. Just my imagination. *(He opens the door a crack. Nothing.)* Ha! See? Nothing. A closet. Ridiculous to worry. Ring is glad no one saw Ring ridiculous worry. Ring is a man of action.

He opens the door a little wider and is suddenly pulled inside.

RING: Help!

We see RING'S hand reach out again, then disappear. From offstage...

RING: No. No, no, no. *(Odd laughter, like being tickled.)* Wait. Whoa. Ha-ha. Ha-ha-ha-ha. *(Blood-curdling yell.)* Nooooo!

Door slams shut. Silence for a count of three. Lights out. Another count of three, then lights up. The three pairs re-enter through kitchen, west residential, and attic doors. JOAN, BECCA, BETH and TONI carry boxes. SELENA holds something the size of a volleyball.

BETH: Wow! That was fun!

JOAN: We didn't find Jean and Joseph, but we caught three tarantulas.

TONI: We got a King Baboon.

SELENA: No Jean and Joseph either, but we found this!

BECCA: Uh... is that a tarantula egg sac?

JACK: Yeah! There could be 500, maybe a thousand eggs!

SELENA: We could be rich.

TONI: Money is nice but ...

JACK: Money is very, very nice! We are going to blow money out our nose when we sneeze.

JOAN: Where's Ring?

BETH: Oh. *(Calling.)* Ring?

JACK: *(Shouting.)* Ring!

SELENA: Where are you, Ring?

ALL: Ring!

JOAN: Outside? Bet he went outside. *(Trying the front door.)* It's locked.

BETH: Unlock it.

JOAN: From the outside.

BETH: It can't be.

JOAN: *(Furious.)* It is. It's locked from the outside.

BECCA: We're locked in?

ALL: Someone's locked us in the house. *(Two-beat pause, then simultaneously.)* Uh-oh. *(Another two-beat pause.)*

SELENA: I'm not a fan of being locked in the house.

JACK: This has definite horror movie implications.

TONI, JOAN and BETH: Knock it off, Jack!

JACK: When I'm scared, I can't move and I pee.

BECCA: Are you scared?

JACK: I'd call it mildly terrified.

EVERYBODY: *(Except TONI.)* Don't pee!

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