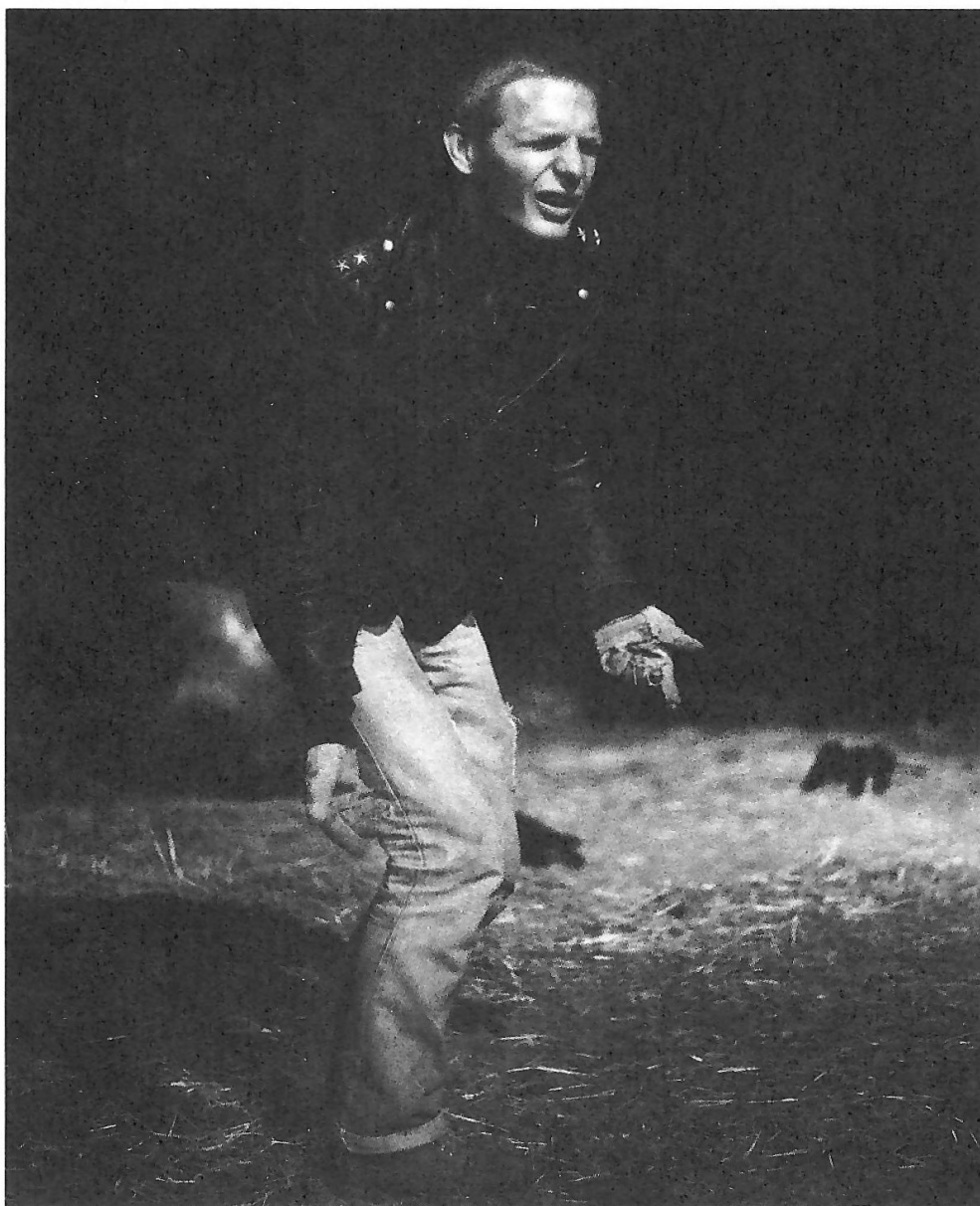


III: PLANET OF THE SPIDER PEOPLE



Margaret Von Biesen

"I can't see!" COYOTE (Darrell Larson) on the *Planet of the Spider People*.

THE SCENE: An enclosed, densely wooded space. Large, hairy SPIDERS are everywhere—in webs, on the ground, hanging from the trees, etc.—and they are ambient, able to move on cue. There are also two large “rocks,” one with Buffalo horns sticking out of it. CLOWN, masquerading as a “spider person,” hides behind the rock without horns. When the spiders move, she hops about in terror and hides. She is not supposed to be in this place. When the Audience is settled, COYOTE, distraught, eyes tightly closed, crawls down a tree.

COYOTE: Trickster! Trickster! Where are you? I’m lost, Trickster! I don’t know where I am! *(He inadvertently brushes against something and gets a shock.)* Ahhhh! Everything is electrified in this place! Oh, no! Trickster, come up! Come up, Trickster! *(Silence)* Oh, I’m lost and sad! Ahhhh! I’m tired of being sad! I’m tired of being lonely! I can’t see! And everything is electrified here!

(TRICKSTER talks from inside the big rock with two buffalo horns sticking out.)

TRICKSTER: Hey, Coyote! Stop complaining so loud! You’ll wake up all the people!

COYOTE: Who’s talking here?

TRICKSTER: Me! You’re not the first person who ever had a hard time of it, so stop feeling sorry for yourself and be quiet!

COYOTE: I’ll yell if I want to! I’ll talk if I want to! I am Coyote! I have come up here to fix the stars!

TRICKSTER: Why?

COYOTE: Because there is too much suffering down there!

TRICKSTER: I wouldn’t take it personally. From up here it doesn’t look like shit or shinola.

COYOTE: I don’t like your attitude! I think I’ll kill you! *(He flounders around making threatening noises.)*

TRICKSTER: Hey Coyote! If you promise to stop making so much noise, I’ll tell you where you are.

COYOTE: Coyote knows where he is! Coyote is among the stars! I was on my way to straighten things out up here when some evil, tricky person threw dust in my eyes! I think it was that Old Spider Woman! Otherwise, Coyote would have taken care of things already! He'd have done his task and gone back to his own tribe!

TRICKSTER: Calm yourself, Coyote. If you sit where I tell you, you won't get a shock and you'll find out where you are.

COYOTE: Very well, then. Coyote will sit down.

TRICKSTER: (*Directing him*) Not there! Over there! Now... dig!

(*COYOTE digs, discovers a "Milky Way" candy bar.*)

COYOTE: Ah! Food! (*He eats.*) You grow good food around here!

TRICKSTER: I never touch the stuff. It's bad for the teeth.

COYOTE: I like 'em better frozen. But thanks a lot, anyway. Thanks a lot.

TRICKSTER: You're welcome.

COYOTE: I still can't see anything. Tell me what my home country looks like, the planet Earth.

TRICKSTER: We don't call it "Earth" up here. We call it Sakasakasaka.

COYOTE: What does that mean?

TRICKSTER: Little Blue Mother Turning in Space.

COYOTE: Is my mother's color blue?

TRICKSTER: Most of the time. That's the main impression of her. Blue. And she has a little yellow guy turning with her. He's called Babababababa.

COYOTE: And what does that mean?

TRICKSTER: Little Blue Mother's Yellow Little Kid.

COYOTE: Can you see any of my brothers and sisters?

TRICKSTER: No.

COYOTE: Any human beings?

TRICKSTER: No. (*A sort of telescope protrudes from the rock's "head."*)
I see thousands of immense clouds of gas and dust! These are the most massive objects in this galaxy! And these great clouds are held together by their own self-gravity! Each one of these things is worth about a hundred thousand suns!

COYOTE: Where?

TRICKSTER: You can't see them. They don't radiate any light. And nobody knows what's holding 'em up there in the first place. (*The telescope retracts.*) If I were you, I wouldn't strain myself in that direction. I'd use my energy to watch out for the Spider People.

COYOTE: (*Leaping to his feet*) The Spider People! You got Spider People here?

TRICKSTER: I heard of some Spider People around here talking about killing you.

COYOTE: Oh, no!

TRICKSTER: I'll go and find out what they are going to do.

COYOTE: Okay! But come back soon! (*The rock moves a few inches to the right and all the spiders move also.*) Creature? Creature?

TRICKSTER: That was another one, a cousin of mine. But I'll tell you something good. Why do you think the Spider Lady hangs around in a tree? What do you think about that?

COYOTE: I don't know what to think.

TRICKSTER: She holds on to the tree and shuts her eyes and she can see everything over the whole Milky Way. This tree here is the Chief of the whole Milky Way. That is why spiders always go on trees.

COYOTE: This is news to me.

TRICKSTER: Do you wish to see everything, or not?

COYOTE: Certainly, I do!

TRICKSTER: Well, keep your eyes shut, hold onto this tree and you will see everything!

COYOTE: I'll try it. *(He touches the tree and gets a shock.)* Ahhhh! You tricked me, Creature! You tricked me! I'll kill you!

TRICKSTER: I forgot a part. I'm sorry. Rub your feet on the ground three times and you won't get a shock. You'll like it very much.

(COYOTE rubs his feet, touches the tree, then leaps into the tree and throws his arms around it.)

COYOTE: Oh, I love this tree! I love this tree! This tree is a true Chief! *(The Spider People move around. TRICKSTER stands, shedding his rock outfit. He wears a Buffalo Robe and a Buffalo headpiece.)* I can see! I can see over the whole Milky Way! I can see the four elements! I can see the four directions! I can see above and below! I can see the beginning and the end! I can see in the middle! And it is...! It is...!

TRICKSTER: Don't open your eyes, Coyote! *(COYOTE opens his eyes. The SPIDER PEOPLE bustle about. COYOTE howls)*

COYOTE: Did I see that? Did I see that?

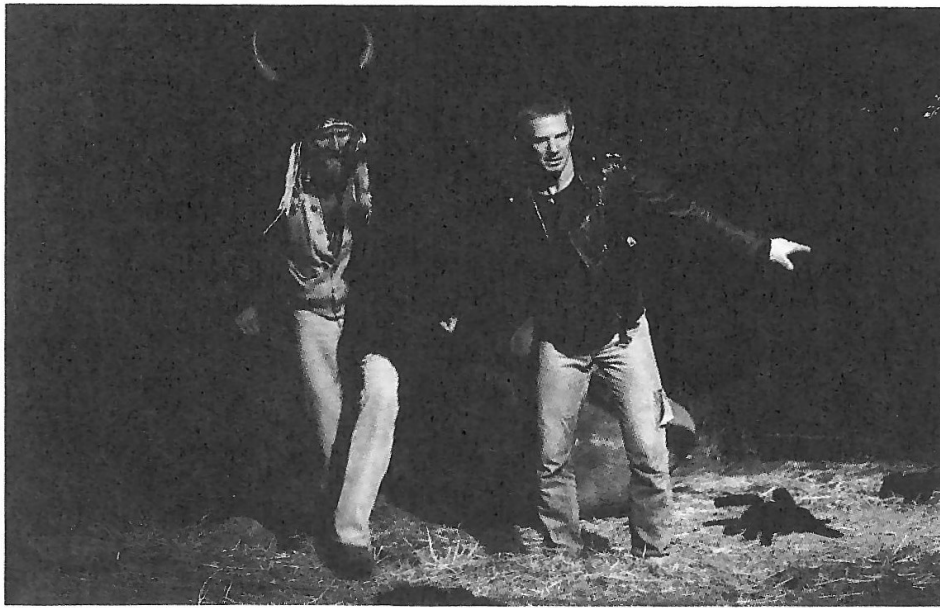
TRICKSTER: What?

COYOTE: *(Jumping out of the tree)* My brother the Buffalo, are you really there?

TRICKSTER: Where?

COYOTE: Don't be an idiot! This is Coyote talking! Are you in front of my eyes or behind my eyes?

TRICKSTER: That question is too thick for me. I can't understand it.



TRICKSTER (Norbert Weisser), wearing his Buffalo robe and headdress, and COYOTE (Darrell Larson) evade Spider People.

COYOTE: My brother the Buffalo, are there Spider People here, too?

TRICKSTER: I think there are Spider People here, too.

COYOTE: My brother, the Buffalo, is there a creature here with a bad attitude?

TRICKSTER: Coyote, I don't see a creature here with a bad attitude.

COYOTE: My brother the Buffalo, if you are really here too, then let's go back to our own tribe.

TRICKSTER: How will we get there?

COYOTE: I will ride there in the hump of your back.

TRICKSTER: There is no hump on my back here, Coyote.

COYOTE: Then I will ride inside you, Buffalo. I will ride in your entrails.

TRICKSTER: There is no room for you in there, Coyote, because I loaned my large intestine to a two-hearted person.

COYOTE: That was a stupid thing to do! Coyote can't get back to his own tribe now!

(The voice of SPIDER WOMAN is heard from within the other large rock.)

SPIDER WOMAN: Oh, the shame of the eyeballs! The horror of the feet!

TRICKSTER: There is a creature here with a bad attitude.

(The SPIDER PEOPLE make a ruckus. COYOTE and TRICKSTER head for the trees.)

SPIDER WOMAN: You see that? You can't make a move around here without stepping on something.

COYOTE: *(Clinging to the tree)* My brother the Buffalo — who is this guy?

TRICKSTER: Hey, Creature — are you a bona fide Indian or a two-hearted white-eyes?

SPIDER WOMAN: What difference does it make? I'm a person!

TRICKSTER: What tribe?

SPIDER WOMAN: Shmohawk.

TRICKSTER: Maybe we know that tribe. Where do they make camp? We could be relatives of yours!

COYOTE: I never heard of that tribe!

SPIDER WOMAN: When I was a Shmohawk down there I never knew what was happening. Sit down, Buffalo Head. You're making me nervous.

TRICKSTER: I'm afraid of the Spider People.

SPIDER WOMAN: They won't bother you as long as I'm talking.

TRICKSTER: Keep on talking, Creature.

COYOTE: Keep on talking!

SPIDER WOMAN: Well, we didn't know shit from shinola. Thirty-five miles up and nothing exists down there. There's no surface on the surface. No cities, no mountains, no lights, no freeways. And from up here? Just a little blue marble spinning in the light of the sun. *(She stops. Movement from the SPIDER PEOPLE.)*

COYOTE AND TRICKSTER: Talk, Creature!

SPIDER WOMAN: I acted like I knew what I was doing. All us Shmohawks did. We thought we knew about the stars and planets and atoms and molecules and galaxies and what everything meant. It's frustrating. You don't know when to watch it, when to leave it alone. You don't know if it's ever all right. It's not your fault, but you're responsible. It is your fault, but you're too hard on yourself. You're damned if you do, and damned if you don't. I got sent up here with all these Spiders because I'm the type which is afraid of stepping on things. But you can watch it just so long, and then — whoops, you've done it again. *(She pauses. Movement from the SPIDER PEOPLE.)* You try and stop one thing and another one starts, worse than before. You pay your taxes, and they audit you. You stop smoking and you bloat up. You give up drinking and you find yourself with a taste for kinky sex. You give up sex and you get manic depressive, laughing or crying all the time. You're too loud or too quiet and your own presence is a torture to yourself and a burden to others. To sum up, I think the worst thing about being a Shmohawk is: you have no idea what you're doing, but you have to pay the consequences anyway, and then you resent it.

COYOTE AND TRICKSTER: Those poor Shmohawks!

SPIDER WOMAN: And then — Bang! You end up here on the Planet of the Spider People!

COYOTE AND TRICKSTER: Oh, no!

SPIDER WOMAN: Look into my eyes, Coyote/Trickster, and tell what you see.

(They peer at the Rock Creature.)

COYOTE: Your eyes are full of pain, Creature!

TRICKSTER: Your eyes are showing a lot of fear, Creature!

SPIDER WOMAN: It's because I have to stay in here and not move. If I come out of here, I might say something, I might do something, I might step on something. But the real horror of it all is—everything is ordinary. Everything just has to be done. I get up. I groan. I brush my teeth. I throw water on my face. Of course, it's not water like on Earth, but same difference. Then I get dressed. In clothes. Then I cook and eat. Spider People breakfast. Not like on Earth, but same difference. I read the paper. Spider People News. Then I go to the bathroom. (*Sound of toilet flushing inside the rock.*) Not like on Earth, but same difference. And so on.

TRICKSTER: I know exactly how you feel, Creature! A long time ago Coyote and I made a vow to Earthmaker to never, ever touch a woman again — especially if she was young and beautiful. One day, after prospecting in the mountain canyons for gold, we decided to go into town for a drink. It had been raining for weeks and the roads were all mud. When we got into town, the stagecoach had just arrived — and there in that coach was the most beautiful damsel I had ever laid my eyes on! Long blonde hair, blue eyes, the prettiest smile you ever seen, a blue cotton dress, parasol over her arm, and as she was trying to step out of that coach she lifted her dress up a little, like this... ah... But, of course she couldn't move, because the street was overflowing with mud.

SPIDER WOMAN: Is this conversation nearly over?

TRICKSTER: Well, before I could say "bip," Coyote was over there, picked her up and carried her across the muddy road into the saloon, put her down on the bar and bought her a drink! The cowboys were whoopin' and laughin'. I was stunned! I didn't know what to think! I couldn't say a word! I couldn't even drink that night! While Coyote was downing one brandy after another! Days later back at the camp I finally asked him, "Coyote!" I says, "Coyote! How could you do such a thing, after making that vow to Earthmaker?" Do you know what he said?

COYOTE: Are you still carrying her? I put her down days ago!

SPIDER WOMAN: That story is too thick for me. I can't understand it.

COYOTE: Try to follow this. One day the Coyote and the Trickster needed a judgement made. So they went to Earthmaker. And Earthmaker made his judgement, but the Trickster did not agree with the judgement. So do you know what he did? He put his shoes on top of his head and he walked out of the room!

SPIDER WOMAN: Hey, Coyote, I think I hear your mother calling!

COYOTE: My brother the Buffalo, I feel sorry for this guy.

TRICKSTER: Watch out, Coyote. This is an old trick. This creature has a bad attitude.

COYOTE: My brother the Buffalo, maybe if we help this creature with a bad attitude, we'll be able to go back to our own tribe. Hey, Creature.

SPIDER WOMAN: What?

COYOTE: You got a sun up here?

SPIDER WOMAN: No, I don't have a wife here. It's better that way. If I had a son, he'd grow up to be just like me.

COYOTE: I didn't mean that! I meant the sun in the sky! When the sun rises, you start all over again! That's Coyote's way!

SPIDER WOMAN: The sun won't rise here for another million years, Coyote. One million years here is one sunrise. *(Pause)*

COYOTE: I know what I'll do!

SPIDER WOMAN: What's that?

COYOTE: I'll turn myself into a woman and become your wife! That way you can start something new!

TRICKSTER: Wait, Coyote! *(COYOTE turns himself into a woman. To Audience)* Coyote turned himself into a woman. He was always doing crazy things like that. That's because Coyote had no limits. When the sun rose on Earth, he started over. He forgot all about it. It was all brand new for him...

SPIDER WOMAN: Hey, Miss Coyote — you are a beautiful woman. You really turn me on. My heart is pounding and my member is pulsing. I can think of nothing but you. I can't live without you. In short, I feel romantic.

COYOTE: That's what they said back in my own tribe. All the young men wanted to marry me. I had to go away from there, because I wasn't attracted to any of those young men.

TRICKSTER: Hey, Coyote — why don't you come into MY lodge? We'll spend the night fooling around. You'll find it very agreeable.

COYOTE: No! I'm not attracted to you! Besides, my heart belongs to another person. He is different than the rest of you. He is an extraordinary person! He's quite a guy!

TRICKSTER: He can't hunt! He can't fish! And he's afraid of stepping on things. He'll have a lot of trouble making a living.

COYOTE: I don't care. He is very sensitive. And Coyote can go kill a hundred rabbits anytime she wants to. She will do anything for her man!

SPIDER WOMAN: Don't listen to him, Miss Coyote, and come into MY lodge.

COYOTE: I want to, Mr. Creature, but only if your intentions are honorable. You shouldn't take advantage of an innocent girl.

SPIDER WOMAN: I hadn't intended marriage. But I'm in love, so if that's the way it is, then that's the way it is. I want to have you for my wife, Miss Coyote, because I think you're terrific. I'm pretty shy, though. I don't have much experience in these matters.

COYOTE: Let's get married and have kids, Mr. Creature. I find you extremely attractive, so don't worry about that other stuff. Coyote will show you how it's done.

TRICKSTER: (*To Audience*) Coyote and the Creature tied the knot... and retired to their lodge... Coyote was a good wife... (*COYOTE mimes.*) She prepared his food... she sewed his moccasins... she fed his horses... she hunted rabbits... she washed his clothes... she

decorated the lodge... she arranged a dinner party for a week from Thursday... she made his bed... and lay down in it to await her husband... the Creature was very pleased... (*SPIDER WOMAN belches.*)

SPIDER WOMAN: Now I'll go in to my wife...

TRICKSTER: At first Coyote couldn't find the Creature's member, because it was in a funny place, but then she got a shock.

COYOTE: Oh! You're electrified!

SPIDER WOMAN: I'm sorry. I forgot to tell you. Rub your feet three times. You won't get a shock. You'll like it very much.

(*COYOTE rubs his feet three times, then has "intercourse" with the rock.*)

TRICKSTER: Coyote liked it very much. She got pregnant right away.

SPIDER WOMAN: Thank you, Miss Coyote. You're the first woman that ever cared for me as a person. I feel much better about myself. I don't feel so insecure now. In fact, I feel strong enough to go back down there and try again.

COYOTE: But Mr. Creature, you can't leave now — I am pregnant!

(*SPIDER WOMAN stands, shedding her rock costume. She is dressed like a man in suit and tie.*)

SPIDER WOMAN: I'm sorry, Coyote, but you knew it wasn't serious. You knew it couldn't last. These things happen. I can't let it ruin my life. I have to get myself together now. I'm gonna clean up my act, avoid entanglements, keep my mouth shut, and try not to step on anything. (*Seeing CLOWN*) What are you doing here, you little twirp! Are you trying to destroy my trick? Go over there and make yourself useful. (*Grabs CLOWN by the ear and propels her toward COYOTE, who is about to give birth on the side of a knoll.*) The Earth isn't such a bad place to live. Same difference, but what the hell. I can make it. Mainly because I don't give a rat's ass. I'm not one of you guys and I never will be, heh, heh. (*She straightens her tie and exits through the Audience, trying not to step on anything.*)

TRICKSTER: *(To Audience)* The Creature went back to being a Shmohawk again.

COYOTE: Oh! Oh!

TRICKSTER: Coyote was in labor. But the kids wouldn't come out. Hey, Coyote — it's time to give birth now! You got plenty kids in there!

COYOTE: Oh! That's what you get for trying to help a guy out! Coyote was very foolish to fall for that guy! Oh! One night of temptation! One night of pleasure! And look what happens to a person! Look what happens! And who is gonna take care of the kids now? Oh! Coyote is sorry he became a woman!

TRICKSTER: Hey, Coyote — you're in a fine pickle! Maybe I'll give you a hand getting those kids out!

COYOTE: Oh! My brother the Buffalo, if you give Coyote a hand pushing these kids out of me, we will go to all the tribes and tell them what a great guy you are, and then they won't kill you for your meat!

TRICKSTER: *(To Audience)* I knew that Coyote would forget all about it, but I decided to help him anyway. Otherwise he would keep on yelling. *(Goes to COYOTE)* Hey, Coyote — the kids can't come out of there because there's no door there. I'll have to make a door, and then the kids will come out.

COYOTE: Oh! My brother the Buffalo — make a door! *(TRICKSTER makes a door.)*

TRICKSTER: Okay you kids — come on out of there! *(Pause. He puts his ear to the door.)* First-born, they won't come out!

COYOTE: My brother the Buffalo, why won't they come out?

TRICKSTER: They don't have any names. They're afraid to come out without a name. If you give them a name, they'll come out.

COYOTE: How can I give them a name if I don't know who they are? I never heard of anything so stupid! When I see how they are, I'll give them a name!

TRICKSTER: They say that you are the true Chief and Father of their tribe, so you should give them each a name. Then they'll come out.

COYOTE: How many of 'em are there?

(TRICKSTER motions CLOWN to take a look. CLOWN crawls half-way inside, returns and shows "twelve" with her fingers.)

TRICKSTER: Twelve.

COYOTE: Let's go then! *(CLOWN helps "midwife" the following births.)*

COYOTE AND TRICKSTER: Oh! "Takes It All Back because He Didn't Mean It." *(A Spider Baby runs out of COYOTE.)* Oh! "Pretends He Is Thinking Of Something Else." *(Another Spider)* Oh! "Looks At His Hand With Profound Interest." *(Another Spider)* Oh! "Turns Away to See What's Happening There." *(Another Spider)* Oh! "Coolly Denies He Is Angry." *(Another Spider)* Oh! "Would Rather Be In New York City." *(Another Spider)* Oh! "Says It's Not His Ego, But Something Real." *(Another Spider)* Oh! "Does You a Favor." "Never Joins The Circle." "Acts Like He Knows What You Mean." "Certain Things He Can't Agree With." *(Four more Spider Babies run out. COYOTE falls back exhausted.)*

COYOTE: Oh! *(Pause)* They got all that stuff from their father. *(He sits up. The SPIDERS all crawl and bounce around. COYOTE and TRICKSTER scream, rush to the trees and throw their arms around them.)*

COYOTE AND TRICKSTER: *(As lost little boys)* Spider Grandmother! Please! Help us get back to our own tribe!

(A huge straw model of one of the figurines from Coyote I: Pointing rises up some distance off, its eyes flashing. COYOTE and TRICKSTER get a shock from the trees and fall to the ground, cowering in fear. SPIDER WOMAN's voice is heard as if coming from everywhere.)

SPIDER WOMAN: Coyote/Trickster, you thought you could climb up here and fix things. That was your shadow talking. I had to throw star dust in your eyes. In this way you got lost and you don't know what's real anymore. You even thought you could become a woman. And so your Earthly Mother is ashamed, First-born, and the stars above are turned cold against you. Earthmaker hopes you have learned a lesson from all this.

COYOTE AND TRICKSTER: (*As little boys*) But Spider Grandmother, when can I go back to my own tribe? And how will I get there?

SPIDER WOMAN: When the sun rises, Coyote/Trickster. When the sun rises...

(*COYOTE crawls into TRICKSTER's arms. Darkness.*)

END