

## SALLY-MAUD, ZACHARY DEE, AND THE DREAM SPINNER

By Shirley Climo

*Appears here with the kind permission of the copyright holders*

In the hills of the Ozarks, up the road a piece from Bean Hollow, and just a hop, skip, and a jump from Henson's Ford, there lived a girl named Sally-Maud.

Sally-Maud was a sight to see. She'd dimples in both cheeks, freckles on her turned-up nose, and hair the color of sugar maples gone red after the frost. She was scarcely bigger than a grasshopper, and every bit as lively on her feet. There wasn't man or boy in those parts who didn't hanker to claim her for his wife. 'Cept Zachary Dee.

But Sally-Maud didn't bat her blue eyes at any of them. She'd toss that fiery head and stick up that pert nose and declare, "I'll have him can treat me best." Then she'd add, "And brings along the best treats besides."

Well, that started off a scramble. Men galloped off to town to fetch sweetmeats in tin boxes and scents in glass bottles and calicos and curios and whatever came to mind. 'Cept for Zachary Dee. He just tipped back in his chair, whittled on a piece of wood, and watched while others came courting Miss Sally-Maud. Soon there were more goods piled up on that lady's porch than there were in the general store.

"My!" said Sally-Maud, pleased as punch. "Fancy that!" But she never would say who *she* fancied.

In most things, Zachary Dee was the match of any man. He was big and he was strong and so quick he could bag a weasel in the chicken house without even waking the hens. But he was poorer than a flea without a dog. His pockets were empty, save for the holes. He'd nothing but the roof over his head, which leaked when it rained, and the shirt on his back, and it was missing half its buttons. Zack knew he'd never stand a chance with Sally-Maud. That's why, when the rest of the lads slicked up to go sweethearting, Zachary stayed home in his tumbledown shack.

One night, as he was carving out a new wood whistle and listening to the tunes played on a fiddle over at Sally-Maud's, he chanced to look up, and there was a big brown and yellow spotted spider dangling from its thread, right above his head.

"Evening to you, Aunty Longlegs," said Zack.

The spider scuttled back up its silk.

"Glad you've come to visit," Zachary said then. "For I've heard that spiders bring good luck, and it's high time I had a turn of fortune."

Cautiously the spider dropped halfway down again.

"No harm in both of us spinning a few daydreams," said Zack.

The spider began to weave a web, and Zachary Dee began to do some wishful thinking about pretty Sally-Maud. And maybe he dozed a bit, for when he opened his eyes again he had a wonderful idea.

"Thank you kindly, Aunty," said Zack to the spider, for he was certain she'd put the notion in his head.

Straightaway he went to his cupboard and rummaged about until he'd found his dead-and-gone Granny's tortoiseshell hairpin. He'd never seen much use for it before—it was no good as a fish hook—but now Zack knew exactly what to do with it. By the sun's first light, he took that fancy hairpin and buried it beneath a spruce-pine, not far from Sally-Maud's house.

Then he made himself a batch of hoecakes, and when it was full morning, he started back, whistling, toward Miss Sally-Maud's. But he wasn't alone. He was toting Aunty Longlegs, dangling from his fingers like a charm on a string.

Sally-Maud was sitting on her porch in a caneback rocker, looking over all her treasures.

"Morning," called Zack, when he had come up close.

"Good morning to you, Zachary Dee," Sally-Maud answered. Then she pouted a bit, for she was miffed that Zack had never come courting. "Don't see you about here often."

"That's a fact," agreed Zack. "But today I'm out walking my dream spinner."

"Who's that?" asked Sally-Maud, for she couldn't make out what he held in his hand.

“My dream spinner,” said Zack again. “Aunty Longlegs here, who makes all my dreams come true.” And he swung the spider on its threads beneath Sally-Maud’s nose.

“Ugh!” screamed Sally-Maud, jumping back. “That’s just a plain old creepy-crawler.”

“No, ma’am,” insisted Zachary. “Why, only last night, as she spun her web, it came to me—clear as if she’d spoke out loud—where to find a genuine tortoiseshell hairpin.”

“Where’s that?”

“Why, buried beneath that spruce-pine yonder. You can go look for yourself, if you please.”

Sally-Maud did please, and quick as could be she was on her hands and knees, scratching about in the dirt beneath the spruce-pine. Soon enough she found the hairpin.

“If that don’t beat all!” she exclaimed.

“Keep it, if you want,” said Zack. “I don’t hold much for hairpins myself, and it goes right well with your red hair.”

Then he turned and started back home.

“Wait!” cried Sally-Maud. “Would you maybe be coming to call with the others tonight?”

Zachary Dee shook his head. “No. Aunty Longlegs here is too busy spinning nighttimes to go calling, and I’d not leave her alone.” He put the spider gently on his shoulder and walked back to his cabin. Sally-Maud just stood open mouthed, staring after the both of them.

Zack hung the spider back in its web. She set right to mending it, and he sat down to whittle on his whistle. After a bit he got up and rummaged in his cupboard again. At the back of it he found his granddaddy’s old pocket watch. It hadn’t ticked off a minute for fifty years, but the chain it hung from was good as new. So Zack snapped off the watch and took the chain and put it beneath a rock, halfway between his cabin and Miss Sally-Maud’s.

Next day, he plucked the spider from its web once more. "Time for an airing, Aunty Longlegs," said he, and the two started off, just as they had on the morning before.

"Howdy!" called Sally-Maud, soon as she saw him.

"Howdy yourself," said Zack.

"Are you walking your dream spinner?" she asked, patting the tortoiseshell pin in her hair.

"That I am," said Zachary, "for last night Aunty Longlegs told me where to find a shiny silver chain."

"Where?" Sally-Maud cried, all excited.

"Where?" asked Zachary Dee, swinging Aunty Longlegs around on her slender thread. The spider seemed to point a leg.

"Beneath that big old rock back yonder," said Zack.

He and Miss Sally-Maud walked hand in hand back to the rock. Sure enough, that's where she found the chain.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed.

"I never, either," agreed Zack. "It's all Aunty Longlegs' doing. But I don't need shiny chains, and Aunty here can spin her own. Keep it, if you like."

Then Zachary Dee fastened the silver chain about Miss Sally's pretty neck.

Sally-Maud smiled and showed her dimples and said, all sweet and soft, "Come up on the porch and set a spell, Zack."

"No, ma'am." He shook his head. "Aunty here is tuckered out." And he put the spider on his shoulder and started home again.

No music came from Sally-Maud's that night, so Zachary reckoned she had sent her suitors home early so's to get a good night's sleep. But Zack himself couldn't catch his forty winks. His brains were in a stew. He'd nary a thought how to woo Miss Sally next, since his cupboard was picked clean of trinkets. As he pondered, he looked up at the spider, and it was as if she spelled out the answer as she spun.

"Thank you kindly, Aunty," said Zack, for now he knew where to find exactly what he needed.

When he went by Sally-Maud's next day, she was standing on the step awaiting him. She looked fresh as a morning glory, and she was wearing both the hairpin and the chain.

"Where's your dream spinner?" asked Sally Maud, first thing.

"Home and resting. She worked quite a spell last night."

"Did she tell you what to look for?"

"She did indeed," Zack answered. "she bid me get some threepenny nails and fix my roof before it rained."

Sally-Maud looked downright disappointed. Nonetheless, "Whereabouts?" she asked, for she was always ready to go treasure hunting.

"Right here."

"Here?"

"Sure enough. Haven't you got some nails to spare?"

As a matter of fact, just the week before, Henry Biggs the hardware man had brought a whole bucket of brand-new nails to Sally-Maud.

"That old spider! She knows everything!" Sally-Maud giggled and pointed to the nails on the porch.

Zack helped himself to a handful. "this'll do to mend my roof," he said.

"That shirt needs mending, too," said Sally-Maud. "While you're atop your roof, I'll just sew some buttons on it."

So, while Zachary Dee fixed his roof, Miss Sally-Maud fixed his shirt, and washed it, too. He looked mighty smart when he ambled round next morning.

"Have you your dream spinner today?" Sally-Maud called out.

"She's home, tying her web. All that pounding on the roof shook it something terrible."

Sally-Maud sighed.

"Anyway, she told me to fetch some calico curtains for the windows, so's the sun won't get in her eyes while she's working."

"I got some calico," offered Sally-Maud.

"Aunty Longlegs thought you might."

"And I can sew it up into curtains."

"Can you, now? My, that sure will tickle Aunty Longlegs."

All that day Sally-Maud snipped and stitched. That evening Zachary Dee and Aunty Longlegs were snug as could be in their cabin, with the windows shut and the curtains drawn. And if there was any tune played on a fiddle over at Sally-Maud's that night, neither of them heard it.

So it went, each day like the one before, with Zack coming to see Miss Sally-Maud. Sometimes he carried Aunty Longlegs in one hand, sometimes he didn't, but he always went home with something in both hands. Once it was a mirror he said that Aunty'd dreamed about. Another time it was a spider frying pan, for of course she'd fancy that. Soon Sally-Maud's porch was bare of treasures, for most everything that her suitors brought of an evening ended up in Zachary's cabin the following morning. He had hung the looking glass over the chimneypiece, and there was a silk pillow on his chair and two or three tins of cookies in the cupboard.

By and by Sally-Maud said to Zack, "I surely would like to come over and see your place. It must be mighty grand."

"Oh no!" said Zack. "You can't do that, Sally-Maud."

"Why ever not?" she demanded.

"Because Aunty Longlegs has spun her web right over the doorjamb. None can come in but me—or maybe my bride, if I carry her over the threshold."

"That old dream spinner *told* you that?"

"In a manner of speaking," said Zack. "But I've not yet asked her where I'm to look for a wife."

"Well!" Sally-Maud shook her shiny red locks and stamped her foot so hard she shook the porch. "You might just look right here. And you might ask *me* instead!"

So Zack did, and they were wed, soon as the preacher came by. The three of them, Sally-Maud and Zachary Dee and Aunty Longlegs, lived happily together with everything at hand they'd ever dreamed of.