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W · E · S · T
AFRICAN
FOLKTALES



COLLECTED AND TRANSLATED

B Y J A C K B E R R Y

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION

B Y R I C H A R D S P E A R S

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I The Scarecrow

Once upon a time the Spider, Anaanu, made a huge yam farm, together with his wife Kornorley and his son Kwakute. When the time for harvesting was drawing near, Anaanu called his family together, and when they had all assembled, he told them that he believed he was about to die. He told them that his wish was to be laid in a coffin, after his death, and for the coffin to be left in the middle of their beloved farm. The lid of the coffin was not to be nailed down. And inside the coffin, to accompany him to the land of the dead, his family were to put a grinding-bowl and ladle and all the other cooking utensils.

Three days later, Anaanu died. His family had already found a coffin and all the cooking utensils. His instructions were followed faithfully, as is proper when an elderly person, and particularly the head of a family, departs from this world. The coffin was taken to the farm unsealed and left in the middle of the place, right there among the yams.

In the middle of the night, Anaanu got up, came out of the coffin, uprooted some yams, and cooked and ate them. Then he retired to a well-fed rest inside his coffin.

In the morning, when his family came to the farm, they noticed that some of the yams had been uprooted, but they said nothing.

That night, Anaanu did just the same, and the following morning his family again noticed that more yams had disappeared. But again they went away in silence.

This went on day after day and night after night, with Anaanu stuffing himself, and his family getting more and more worried about the way the yams were disappearing.

When the yams were almost all gone, Kwakute said he couldn't let things go on this way any longer. He had thought up a plan by which they might be able to do something about the thefts. The family made a scarecrow, a man's figure, of sticky, gluey rubber and left the figure on the farm.

At night, when Anaanu came out of his coffin as usual to eat the yams, he saw this human figure standing among the yams. He was annoyed and shouted, "Who are you?" The figure didn't answer. Anaanu wasn't going to leave it at that. "If you do not answer me," he said, "I'll slap you with my right hand."

The figure didn't say a word, so Anaanu slapped it with his right hand, and the hand got stuck in the glue. Now he said, "If you don't let go of my right hand, I'll slap you with my left." The figure didn't move. So Anaanu slapped it with his left hand, and that got stuck, too. And now, more furious than ever, "Unless you let go of my hands immediately, I'll kick you with my right foot." The figure didn't move. So Anaanu kicked it with his right foot, and that became stuck even harder than his right hand. With furious exclamations, Anaanu kicked with his left foot, and that got stuck, too.

Finally he threatened loudly, "Unless you release me at once, I shall push you down with my stomach."

The figure didn't move. So Anaanu drew his belly back and swung it forward with great force. But now he was completely stuck to the glue, spread-eagled on the scarecrow.

In the morning, when Kwakute, Kornorley, and the rest of the family came to the farm to uproot some yams, there was the thief stuck to the scarecrow. "We have got him, at last!" they shouted and rushed forward to take down the thief and start beating him. But when they got near, who could it be but their own father and husband, the dead Anaanu!

They slowly pulled him loose from the scarecrow. But Anaanu was so ashamed of himself that he could not stand around. As soon as his feet

touched the ground he ran away home, and even there he didn't stop until he had hidden his face in the caves of the roof, where the darkness is.

That is why the spider always stays in the caves of the roof.



2 The Wise Fool

A poor peasant woman bore many sons. All except one lived normal, useful lives and did well. Naturally their mother loved them. One of them was born a fool, and he was neglected and left to shift for himself as best he could. All day long he worked on a large patch of sandy soil, not far from the village. Everybody laughed at him all the time.

One day the mother went to her garden and there found a baby with very long hair lying on its back under a big tree. It was crying and kicking. It looked hungry and neglected. The woman fed and nursed it, and soon it fell asleep. She worked all day on the farm and no one came for the baby. When night began to fall, the woman took the child home with her. Again the next day nobody came for the baby, so she cut its long hair.

Soon afterward, a troupe of fairy people came to the village to claim the baby. When they found that its hair had been cut, they demanded that it be put back. This, of course, was impossible. They demanded that if the woman could not make the baby's hair grow again, she was to be taken away and killed. The chief and the elders did everything in their power to appease the fairies. They offered gifts—gold ornaments, land, slaves—everything to no avail. The fairies were adamant. The woman must die!

Further discussion seemed useless, and the meeting was just about to break up when the fool walked up and demanded to be heard. "Listen to me," he said. "The fairies say my mother should die. It is a fair punishment for her crime. But the fairies walked across my land as they came to the village. I demand that they rub out their footprints before they are allowed to take mother away." It seemed a foolish, meaningless demand, and everyone said, "How simple!" The fairies agreed.

At sundown the fairies were still working on the sandy plot. Two days

went by. And a week. And another. Because just as one set of footprints were got rid of, another set appeared. By the end of the second week, in fact, the fairies had covered the entire plot with footprints. At last they gave up and let the woman live.

That is why even today, children who do not do well are not cast out, but treated fairly. Wisdom hides in many places.



3 Why We Tell Stories About Spider

In the olden days stories were told about God, not about Anaanu, the Spider. One day, Anaanu felt a very strong desire to have stories told about him. So he went to God and said, "Dear God, I want to have your stories told about me."

And God said, "My dear Anaanu, to have stories told about you is a very heavy responsibility. If you want it, I will let you have it, but first you must prove to me that you are fit to have it. I want you to bring me three things: first, a swarm of bees; second, a live python; third, a live leopard, the King of the Forest himself. If you can bring me these three things, I will allow the stories that are told about me to be told about you instead."

Anaanu went away and sat down and thought. For three whole days he sat and thought. Then he got up, smiling, and took a huge calabash with a lid. He put some honey in this calabash, set it on his head, and he walked into the forest. He came to a place where a swarm of bees was hovering around some branches. Then he took the calabash off his head, opened the lid, and started saying loudly to himself while looking into the calabash, "They can fill it; they can't fill it; they can fill it; they can't fill it."

The bees heard him and asked, "Anaanu, what are you talking about?"

And Anaanu said, "Oh, it would be nothing if it were not for that foolish friend of mine. We had an argument. I said that, despite the honey in the calabash, there is still enough space for the makers of the honey to go into the calabash. But he said you are too many, that you cannot go inside the space that is left. I say you can fill it; he says you can't."

Then the leader of the bees said, "Ho! That is easily proved. We can go

inside.” So he flew into the calabash. And all the bees flew in after him. As soon as they were all inside, Anaanu clapped the lid onto the calabash, very tightly, and took the calabash to God. He said, “I have brought you the first thing, the swarm of bees.” And God looked inside the calabash and said, “Well done, Anaanu, but where are the python and the leopard?”

Anaanu went away into the forest and cut a long stick from a branch of a tree. He scraped all the bark off this stick so that it became a long white pole. Then he went deeper into the forest, carrying the pole and shouting to himself, “It is longer than he; it is not longer than he; it is longer than he; it is not longer than he.”

Now the python, who was very proud of his length, for which he was feared throughout the forest, was lying down curled up and resting. When he saw Anaanu, he said, “What are you talking about, Anaanu?”

And Anaanu said, “Oh, it is nothing but an argument that I had with a very ignorant and foolish friend of mine. Do you know that when I told him that you are longer than this stick, from the black mark to the other end, he refused to believe me, and said the stick is longer than you? I say you are longer; he says you are not.”

The python growled and said, “What! There is nobody in this world longer than I. As for that stick, bah! I shall soon show you who is longer.”

So saying, Python stretched himself beside the stick, putting his head on the black mark. Anaanu said, “To be sure I get the correct length by which you exceed the stick, let me tie you closely to the stick so you won’t wiggle and seem shorter.” So Anaanu tied Python firmly to the stick. But as soon as Anaanu had finished doing so, he lifted the stick onto his shoulder and said, “Now, my friend, we will go on a little journey.” Then he took the python to God and said, “I have brought you the second thing, the python.”

And God looked at the long pole with its burden and said, “Well done, Anaanu, but you still have to bring me Leopard, the King of the Forest himself.”

Anaanu went away and dug a deep pit in the forest, on Leopard’s path, and covered the pit with sticks and leaves. Leopard, who was going hunting for his food, soon came along the trail and fell into the pit. He was trapped and couldn’t get out. Anaanu soon appeared, as if by chance, and said, “Eh, is this King Leopard himself? Well, well, well! But if I am kind enough to bring my family to help me get you out of this pit, you will reward us by eating us all.”

But Leopard replied, "How can you talk like that, Anaanu? How could I do such a thing after you have saved my life? I promise that, if you get me out of this pit, no leopard will ever eat a spider again."

And Anaanu said, "All right, I believe you. I will call my family to help get you out of this pit." So Anaanu brought his family and also a heavy stick and a lot of rope. He threw the stick into the pit and jumped in after it. And he told Leopard, "Since you are so heavy, we will have to hoist you out with this stick and some ropes." So Leopard took hold of the stick between his four paws. Anaanu tied first his two front paws to the stick and then his two hind paws, all very firmly. Then his family hoisted them both out of the pit. But as soon as they came out, Anaanu jumped off and grabbed the tail end of the pole. He told Leopard, "Now we will go and visit someone you know." So saying, he dragged the stick with its load to God and said, "I have brought you Leopard, the King of the Forest himself." And God looked at Anaanu and said, "You have done very well, Anaanu. You have achieved the impossible. You deserve to have stories told about you. So from today I decree that the stories that were once told about me shall be told about you."

And that is why stories are told about Anaanu, the spider.



4 How Tortoise Won by Losing

Tortoise and his wife had no food to eat. Tortoise therefore decided that he would approach his father-in-law and beg for food. He did so, and his father-in-law was very happy to offer Tortoise yams, corn, and vegetables. He took Tortoise to his farm and showed him all around it and let Tortoise take what he wanted.

Within a few days, Tortoise and his wife had finished the food given to them, and they became very hungry again. They wanted more food, but Tortoise was ashamed to go back to his father-in-law to ask for more. He decided to help himself. Tortoise left his house at midnight and went straight to his father-in-law's farm. There he took yams, corn, vegetables, and other things, packed them in a big basket, and tried to lift the load

onto his head, but the load was too heavy, and he could not lift it. He kept on trying and trying until morning, when his father-in-law saw him and seized him.

The father-in-law then tied Tortoise to a tree by the side of the road where everybody would see him. When people saw Tortoise disgraced thus, they asked his father-in-law what he had done. He told them that Tortoise had stolen his crops. Then they praised him for being able to catch such a sly thief as Tortoise. But the same people who had praised him in the morning were returning from their farms in the evening and found Tortoise still tied to the same tree, and they went to the father-in-law and asked, "Is Tortoise not your son-in-law? Why should you tie a man with ropes to a tree from morning till evening, even if that man is a thief? Do you want to kill him? Surely you have shown yourself to be more evil than the thief."

So in this way Tortoise's wrongdoing was shifted to his father-in-law.

This is an example of how someone can make himself unpopular by placing his rights before his human feelings.



5 The Power of the Temper

Once upon a time there lived a woman who had no child. This woman was very rich, but she was barren, and she had always wanted to have a child.

One day the woman went to the seashore. She saw something lying on the sands as if it had been washed up from the sea. She took this thing home with her.

When she got to her room, the thing started talking. It asked her what she wanted most in life. The woman said she most wanted to have a child. Then the thing told her that her wish would be granted.

Soon afterward the woman had a child. She named the baby Dede, which means "satisfaction" or "salvation."

The woman loved her baby very much. She was so fond of the child that, as it grew up, she could never bring herself to correct it no matter what it did wrong.

Then he got a long pole and released the man and all the animals from the hole.

When the creatures came out of the hole, they were very happy and very grateful to the hunter. Each of them brought him some presents. He received much gold and silver, and many precious jewels. He became a rich man. Snake, who was one of those released, brought him some medicine that could cure any snakebite. Snake said it was the best he could give, and it should be very useful for a hunter.

Now the chief of the village also had some jewels. And one day he found that all his jewels had been stolen. He sent out messages about his jewels. A friend of the hunter's heard this message, and he went straight to the chief and told him that he knew where the jewels were. He said they were with the hunter. The chief sent people at once to ask the hunter whether he had any jewels in his possession. When the hunter said yes, they immediately took him to the palace and condemned him to death.

Just as the hunter was about to be executed, some people came in and said that the chief's daughter had been bitten by a snake. Now the palace was thrown into confusion, for no one could do anything to save the chief's daughter from dying. The chief was mad with grief. Then the hunter remembered the medicine that Snake had given him. He gave it to the chief's daughter and cured her. The chief was very pleased with him and set him free.

The friend who went to tell the chief that the hunter had stolen his jewels was arrested and taken to the palace and beheaded.



11 What Spider Learned from Frog

A long time ago, Frog and Spider were the best of friends. They went everywhere together and they did everything together. All the same, Spider used to treat Frog badly, even though he was his friend. For example, he would always eat most of the fish or meat in their food before serving the meal to Frog. Frog wasn't like that at all. When he shared a meal with

Spider, he always gave him a fair share of the meat or any other especially good part.

One day, Frog decided he had had enough of this sort of treatment, and he thought of a way to teach Spider a lesson. He told his wife to get a meal ready for Spider and himself, and he especially asked her not to put too much salt or pepper in the stew. By evening, Frog's wife had finished everything and had set out the food on the table. As they were waiting for Spider, Frog pretended to think of something. He told his wife, "Look, I've forgotten my hunting knife. I left it at the farm, and I think I had better go back and get it. If Spider comes, welcome him and don't wait for me—serve the food immediately." When his wife went back to the kitchen, Frog jumped in the stew and hid there.

Along came Spider shortly after, and he was given the message and was served the food. The first thing Spider did was to fish out all the meat from the stew and gobble it down greedily. Doing this, he ate Frog, too, without even noticing.

When he had finished Spider got up to go, and he was just about to take leave of Frog's wife when he heard, "Greedeeep! Greedeeep!" in his stomach. He was frightened and began to run, but the faster he ran, the more the noise came from his stomach. "Greedeeep! Greedeeep!" This went on for forty days. It kept him awake at night, and he had no sleep and could eat no food. Spider could stand it no longer. He lay down and got ready for death. Then, suddenly, Frog jumped out of his mouth and said to Spider, "I have known for a long time about your greedy ways, and this should be a lesson you will never forget."

From this you should remember that when you are invited to share food, let the one who provides serve it and divide it among the guests.



12 The Magic Contest

A long time ago there were two very powerful magicians living in the same town. Each of them could perform wonderful feats of magic.

One day there was a big celebration in the town, and the chief, as part of

eggs, all the vegetables, and all the nice things she left behind, leaving only the skins and rinds for me.”

As she was singing she started to sink into the ground, and her voice grew faint and more and more sorrowful. But she went on singing.

Soon she was waist-deep in the ground. In a few days she was neck-deep in the ground. It was then that her mother appeared on the scene. She too was weeping and shouting. She begged her daughter not to go away from her. She promised her she would give her many nice things to eat if only she would come back to her. The gods took pity on the poor mother. All of a sudden the ground cracked, and her dear little daughter came back to her.



18 Spider Finds a Fool

This is about Mr. Spider and his nephew, Obleku, the coucal. One day Spider went around the town saying that he was looking for a fool to be his partner in setting a trap. He shouted and called out in the town for a fool to help him in setting the trap, but he couldn't find one.

Then Coucal said, "Why is it that my uncle is so anxious to find a fool for a trap? I will go with him." And so Coucal went with Spider, and they went and cut the sticks used for setting the trap. When they had set the trap they left it and went home. The following morning they went to look at the trap, and it had caught an animal. The animal was a squirrel. Spider called out and said, "My son, come and look at the animal we have caught."

Coucal went and looked at the squirrel and said, "This is called a squirrel." Spider said, "So, what animal shall we catch tomorrow?" And Coucal said, "Tomorrow we shall snare the grasscutter." Spider said, "But isn't a grasscutter bigger than a squirrel?" And Coucal said, "Yes, it is bigger." And Spider said, "All right, in that case, you take the squirrel today, and tomorrow when we catch the grasscutter, I will take that." So Coucal took the squirrel home and ate it.

The following morning when they returned, indeed there was a grasscutter in the trap. So Spider called to Coucal and said, "Come and see, indeed we have got a grasscutter." Then Coucal said, "Yes, and tomorrow we are going to trap a duiker." Spider said to Coucal, "But a duiker is bigger than the grasscutter, isn't it?" And Coucal said, "Yes, it is bigger." And Spider said, "All right, in that case you take the grasscutter, and tomorrow when we trap the duiker I will take it." And so Coucal took the grasscutter.

When they got home, Spider's wife, Konole, asked him, "After all the traps you have been setting, hasn't your trap caught any animal at all?" Spider said, "Have heart, be patient. The day I trap an animal and bring it to this house you will be very happy." Konole said, "Go and look at the coucal; his wife is curing meat, unheard-of meat. You know, the other day they caught a grasscutter. Today they caught a duiker." Spider said, "You just be patient."

So Spider went and asked Coucal again, "What animal will we catch tomorrow?" And Coucal said, "Tomorrow we will catch an antelope." The following morning they went and looked at the trap, and indeed they had caught an antelope. Spider said, "What animal are we going to catch tomorrow?" And Coucal said, "Tomorrow we will catch the biggest antelope." Spider said, "All right, in that case, take this antelope, and tomorrow when we get a real antelope, the biggest antelope, I will take that." So Coucal took the antelope home.

The following morning when they went to the trap, there was a real antelope in it, the biggest antelope. Spider said, "Aha! After this antelope, what can we catch again?" Coucal said, "Oh, tomorrow we can catch a bush pig." And Spider said, "But the bush pig is bigger than this antelope." And Coucal said, "Yes, it is bigger." Spider said, "All right, take the antelope. Tomorrow when we catch the bush pig I will take that." So Coucal took the antelope away and ate it.

Now, Spider's wife, Konole, was feeling very distressed and irritated at the way Coucal was bringing home meat every day when she wasn't getting any meat at all. In fact, she lost her temper and had a little quarrel with Spider about it.

In the morning when they went, there was a bush pig in the trap. Spider said, "What animal are we going to catch tomorrow?" Coucal said, "We shall catch a wild cow." Spider said, "But a wild cow is greater than a

bush pig.” Coucal said, “Yes.” And Spider said, “Then take the bush pig.”

This game went on for some time between Coucal and Spider, Spider who said he was looking for a fool to be his partner in setting a trap. They went on with this game, animal after animal, until at last they trapped an elephant, and then Spider asked Coucal, “What animal are we going to catch tomorrow, after this elephant?” And Coucal said, “Tomorrow, the animal we shall catch is called I-overwhelm-anything-even-an-elephant.” Spider said, “If its name is I-overwhelm-anything-even-an-elephant, then it must be greater than an elephant,” and Coucal said, “Yes, it can overwhelm an elephant.” And Spider said, “In that case, Coucal, you take the elephant, and tomorrow when we catch I-overwhelm-anything-even-an-elephant, I will take it.” And Coucal said, “All right.”

So Coucal took the elephant away. The next morning when they went to look at the trap they had caught a mouse, a small mouse with a very long nose and a very bad smell. This kind of mouse stinks so bad that when it crosses the path in front of you, you almost fall down and die. That was the animal they caught. So Spider shouted to Coucal and said, “Coucal, Coucal, Coucal! Come and see what animal we have caught!” So Coucal went over there, looked at the animal, and said, “Oh yes, this is the animal that is called I-overwhelm-anything-even-an-elephant.” So Spider said, “After this animal what animal can we catch again?” And Coucal said, “Oh, we trapped all the animals, and there is none left that we can trap again that is of a magnitude greater than this mouse.” So Spider said, “In that case I will take this animal.” Coucal said, “All right, you can have it.”

So, it was only with that mouse that Spider was able to take any meat home so his wife could see that he too had brought some meat home from the trapping. So when Konole saw the mouse that smells she said, “Take it away! Take it away! We don’t want this animal here in this house.” So in shame and grief Spider took this mouse and ran away with it and scurried up the wall and went and hid in the caves of the roof.

Because of this, if you are ever going to do any work with a partner, you yourself ought not to go around saying that you are looking for a fool to be your partner in the work. You should just do the work with your partner without cheating so you both can succeed.

22 Spider's Bargain with God

Kwaku Ananse, the spider, went to Sky God Nana Nyamee and asked whether he could buy the stories told about Him so they would be told about Ananse instead. Nana Nyamee said, "Yes, provided you bring me the following things in payment."

Ananse said, "I am willing. Just name them."

Nana Nyamee said, "Bring me a live leopard, a pot full of live bees, and a live python." Ananse was afraid, but nevertheless he agreed to provide them. He went home and sat down and thought and thought.

At last he took a needle and thread, and set out toward the forest where the leopard lived. When he got to the stream where Leopard got his water, he sat down, took out the needle and thread, and sewed his eyelids together. He waited. When he heard the footsteps of Leopard coming to fetch water, he began to sing to himself: "Hmm. Nana Nyamee is wonderful. He sewed my eyes and took me to his palace. Then I began to see wonderful things, and I have been singing of them ever since. Beautiful women, palaces, rich and delicious food, and a wonderful life."

Leopard came up to him and asked Ananse, "What were you singing about?"

He replied, "Hmm. Nana Nyamee is wonderful. He sewed my eyes and took me to his palace. Then I began to see wonderful things, and I have been singing of them ever since. Beautiful women, palaces, rich and delicious food, and a wonderful life."

Leopard said, "Eh, Ananse, what is it, are you dreaming?" "No," said Ananse, "there is a beautiful woman here."

Leopard said, "Please Ananse, sew my eyes shut, too, and lead me to Nana Nyamee so that I, too, may see all the wonderful things."

"No, I know you, Leopard, when you see her and all those other beautiful creatures you will kill them and eat them up."

"No, No, No," Leopard growled. "I shall not. Rather, I shall thank you."

Ananse took his needle and thread and sewed Leopard's eyes and led him to Nana Nyamee's palace. He said, "Nana Nyamee, here is the first installment. Keep it."

Next day Ananse took an earthenware pot and went to a place where he

knew there were honey bees. As he came near the place he sang, "Oh bees! Oh bees!"

The bees said, "Ananse, what is all this murmuring about?"

Ananse replied, "I have had an argument with Nana Nyamee. He says all of you together won't fill this pot, but I say you will, and so I came to find out."

They said, "Oho, that is easy," and they flew into the pot, buzz, buzz, buzz, until the pot was full, and every bee had flown into it. Then Ananse quickly sealed the pot and carried it off to Nana Nyamee as his second installment.

For two days he could not think how to get the third—a live python. But at last he hit on a plan. He went to the forest and cut a long stick, a stick as long as a tree. He carried this off to the forest, singing to himself, "I am right, he is wrong! He is wrong, I am right."

When Python saw him he said, "Ananse, what are you grumbling about?"

He answered, "How lucky I am to meet you here. I have had a long and bitter argument with Nana Nyamee. I have known you for a long time, and I know your measurements both when you are coiled, and when you are fully stretched out. Nana Nyamee thinks very little of you. He thinks you are only a little longer than the green mamba, and no longer than the cobra. I strongly disagree with him, and to prove my point I brought this pole to measure you."

Python was very angry, and he began stretching himself out to his greatest length along the stick.

And Ananse said, "You are moving! You are moving! Let me tie you to the stick so I can get the measurement exactly right."

And Python agreed. As Ananse tied Python up he sang a little song, and when he had Python securely fastened to the stick, Ananse carried him off to Nana Nyamee.

Nana Nyamee was very pleased with Ananse and forthwith beat the gong throughout the world that all stories should be told about Ananse.

That is how Ananse became the leading figure in all Ananse stories.

NOTES



The numbering of the notes corresponds to that of the tales. The language in which the present version of the tale was originally told is listed after the title, followed by the country where the tale was told. The initials that follow refer to the collector or transcriber of the tale; the full name of this person appears in the Acknowledgments section. This information was not always available. Many of the tales begin and end with traditional opening and closing formulae; these are listed in the Notes at their first use. (See nos. 1, 2, 4, 13, and 29.)

1. **The Scarecrow** – Ga (Ghana). N.A.K. This scarecrow is analogous to the “tar baby” in the famous Uncle Remus tale. Spider’s wife, Kornorley, is the same as Konole in nos. 18 and 98. The standard Ga opening formula is: **STORYTELLER:** Shall I tell you or shall I not? **AUDIENCE:** Yes, tell us! The typical closing formula is: **STORYTELLER:** If I get another [story] I’ll stick it behind your ears.

2. **The Wise Fool** – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. These particular fairies or elves are identified as little men with backward-pointing feet. The standard Sefwi opening formula is: **STORYTELLER:** Now this story—I didn’t make it up! **AUDIENCE:** Who did then? The typical closing formula is: **STORYTELLER:** This is my story which I have now told you, whether it is

sweet or whether it is not sweet, take a bit of it and keep the rest under your pillow.

3. Why We Tell Stories About Spider – Ga (Ghana). N.A.K. See no. 22 for another version. This is a widespread tale, usually involving three seemingly impossible tasks. Opening and closing formulæ at no. 1.

4. How Tortoise Won by Losing – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. Tortoise frequently receives punishment or personal injury. The standard Yoruba opening formula is: STORYTELLER: Once upon a time; a time passes; a time is coming; a time will never finish upon the face of the earth.

5. The Power of the Temper – Ga (Ghana). N.A.K. See the tale of the fish child in no. 67. Also similar to the pineapple child motif. See Index: Pineapple child. Opening and closing formulæ at no. 1.

6. The Contest Between Fire and Rain – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. See fire personified in nos. 89 and 95. Opening formula at no. 4.

7. The Constant Parrot – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. Opening formula at no. 4.

8. Aja and the Enchanted Beast – Krobo (Ghana).

9. The Elephant, the Tortoise, and the Hare – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. Similar to the Western fable of the race between the tortoise and the hare. See nos. 41 and 44. Opening formula at no. 4.

10. The Snakebite Medicine – Ga (Ghana). N.A.K. See similar story in no. 121. Opening and closing formulæ at no. 1.

11. What Spider Learned from Frog – Adengme (Ghana). The frog actually said, "Woya."

12. The Magic Contest – Language not known.

13. The Greedy Dog – Vane Avatime (Ghana). The Avatime opening formula is: STORYTELLER: Hear my tale! AUDIENCE: Let the tale come! A

typical closing formula is: **STORYTELLER:** At the bottom of my story, at the top of my story, here, there: all is ended.

14. Adene and the Pineapple Child – Ga (Ghana). See no. 32 for a version about Adle. See the fish child version at no. 67. Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.

15. Sasabonsam's Match – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. See Index: Sasabonsam. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

16. The Jealous Wife – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. The original tale contains a song that is repeated a number of times. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

17. A Mother's Love – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. See no. 26. Note the motif of inequitable treatment of children, as in no. 70. Opening formula at no. 4.

18. Spider Finds a Fool – Ga (Ghana). L.L. Spider's wife, Konole, is similar to Kornorley in nos. 1 and 98. Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.

19. The Locust-Bean Seller – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. See the "river judge" in nos. 35, 47, and 97. Opening formula at no. 4.

20. Magotu and the Devil – Mende (Sierra Leone). A.S. See also no. 24. Note the wisdom of the twin.

21. Leopard and the Son of the Hunter – Larteh (Ghana). B.J. See no. 111 for a similar tale concerning a hunter's daughter.

22. Spider's Bargain with God – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. See no. 3 for a similar tale. Nana Nyamee is Grandfather Sky God. The tale is told with much singing. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

23. Python Meets His Match – Krio (Sierra Leone). S.M. This may also serve to explain the great length of the python.

- 24. Big Man and the Chimpanzee** – Krio (Sierra Leone). S.M. See another tale of chimpanzee strength at no. 23.
- 25. The Sacrifice** – Larteh (Ghana). B.J. The food she took him is called *oto*. Concealed people and secret words are common motifs. See Index: Hidden people, Open Sesame for other similar tales.
- 26. The Cruel Mother** – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. The sinking child is similar to the departing pineapple child. See nos. 14, 17, and 32. Opening formula at no. 4.
- 27. The Orphan's Revenge** – Vane Avatime (Ghana). Underlings are singled out for extra hand-washing before eating. See no. 41. Opening and closing formulae at no. 13.
- 28. The Sacred Bowl** – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. The voice may be the voice of the river. Opening formula at no. 4.
- 29. The Wise Child** – Twi (Ghana). G.O.B. There may be an element of wordplay in the business about hair-cutting and the eating of the ear of corn. This child is identified as Kwaku Babone, the wonder child, in other versions. See the hair-cutting motif again in tale no. 57. A similar tree-chopping episode in no. 83. The typical Twi opening formula is: STORYTELLER: Hear my tale! AUDIENCE: Tell us! Typical closing formulae are: STORYTELLER: This story I have told you, whether it is sweet or not, take some and bring some. STORYTELLER: My story that I've told is this: let some go and let some come! STORYTELLER: So if this, my tale, is good or not, we leave it up to you to bring your own.
- 30. The Headstrong Bride** – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. The headstrong bride discovers that her husband is really something other than what he appears to be. See no. 58. The serpent in human form is a very old motif. See Old Testament, Genesis. Opening formula at no. 4.
- 31. The Pact** – Cameroon Pidgin. C.G.
- 32. Adele and the Pineapple Child** – Ga (Ghana). N.A.K. See the version with Adene at tale no. 14. Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.

- 33. The Voice of the Child** – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. Kwasi again, as in no. 3. A cow- or horsetail switch is the equivalent of a magic wand. See Index: Switch for other tales mentioning the switch or whisk. Akokoaa Kwasi Gynamoa is another name for Kwaku Babone. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.
- 34. The Yam Farm and the Problem Tongue** – Ga (Ghana). L.L. The use of a trick to learn a secret is a common motif. See Index: Name-guessing test, Open Sesame for similar tales. The lethal word appears again in no. 54. Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.
- 35. The River's Judgment** – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. The original tale begins with a song. See the “river judge” motif in nos. 19, 47, and 97. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.
- 36. Who Has the Greatest Love?** – Ga (Ghana). A cow- or horsetail switch is the equivalent of a magic wand. See Index: Switch for other tales that mention the switch or whisk. Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.
- 37. Tortoise Buys a House** – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. Tortoise is slow but clever. He is often associated with magical music, either hypnotic or diverting. Opening formula at no. 4.
- 38. Why Bush Pig Has a Red Face** – Ga (Ghana). N.A.K. The grasscutter is a cane-rat or the bush-rat. Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.
- 39. Spider and the Nightjar** – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. A fetish priest is a sorcerer whose power derives from a fetish or charm. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.
- 40. Spider Learns to Listen** – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. Neither “Food Pounder” nor “Pounder” are exact translations, but they allow the necessary sense of the wordplay to be retained. This whip is similar to the cutlass in tale no. 75. The whip is also reminiscent of the brooms in the Walt Disney version of “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice.” Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

41. Tortoise and the Singing Crab – Vanc Avatime (Ghana). Tortoise is weak but clever and triumphs. See also nos. 9 and 44. Tortoise is typically associated with the use of music to accomplish his ends. See no. 27. Opening and closing formulae at no. 13.

42. Spider Meets His Match – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. The reference to killing two birds with one stone is T.Y.E.'s rendering of an expression in the text meaning, "while one is off urinating, it is a good opportunity to break wind." It can be taken to mean: "How convenient; why not?" Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

43. The Enchanted Loom – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. In his greed for more cloth, spider forgets the magic word for stopping the loom. The same word, "Adwebreww" is used in no. 40 to stop the beating whip. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

44. How Tortoise Got Water – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. See also nos. 9 and 41. Tortoise uses music to divert the animals into dancing. Opening formula at no. 4.

45. The Cloud Mother – Krio (Sierra Leone). See Index: Hidden people, Open Sesame for tales with similar motifs.

46. Spider the Artist – Ga (Ghana). N.A.K. This is a tale of Spider's greed made into a how and why tale. Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.

47. Ata and the Messenger Bird – Krobo (Ghana). See other cases of the "river judge" in nos. 19, 35, and 97. Ate and Lawe are found in tale no. 86. See also the tales of the pineapple child at nos. 14 and 32.

48. Who Is the Greatest Thief? – Mende (Sierra Leone). A.S. A contest to settle competing boasts.

49. The Song of the River – Twi (Ghana). B.J. Also called "The Gift of Densu." Opening and closing formulae at no. 29.

50. The Most Suitable Name – Fula (Nigeria). D.A. The cake of pounded grain is millet flour, which is formed into balls and then stirred into milk.

51. Who Is the Most Helpful Lover? – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. A cow- or a horsetail switch is the equivalent of a magic wand. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

52. What Spider Knows – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. The magic word is mostly nasal: [hūã]. A similar “hunting nose” is found in no. 68. In general, fairies or elves have big noses. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

53. The Tale of the Enchanted Yam – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. The name Dagraa is in the original tale, but the others are substitutes. See Index: Name-guessing test for tales with similar events. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

54. The Most Powerful Name – Avatime (Ghana). W.G. This Mawu is also God in Krobo stories. The tale uses the element of a lethal word that backfires. Opening and closing formulae at no. 13.

55. The Return of Ananse – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. Spider's greed leads him to a feigned death so he can eat all the beans. See no. 1 for the same motif. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

56. Spider Gets Cured – Vane Avatime (Ghana). The overly particular bride gets seduced. Opening and closing formulae at no. 13.

57. The Wise Man Takes a Wise Wife – Language origin not known. The tale has three parts. The third part is a typical Kwaku Babone tale. See no. 29.

58. The Spoiled Bride and the Python – Language origin unknown. Important motifs are the disguised groom and the bride who strikes her parents when she decides to marry. See the latter motif in no. 65.

- 59. The Dishonest Wife** – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. Opening formula at no. 4.
- 60. Ananse Is Put in His Place** – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. The name of the slippery herb is *efiandoro*. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.
- 61. Wonder Child and the Talkative Woman** – Ga (Ghana). The name Sosorisu is a “funny name,” and stands for Kwaku Babone. “Throne” here is a translation of “stool,” the symbol of power for a chief. “Dethroning” is a translation of “destooling.” Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.
- 62. Greed Makes a New Friend** – Krio (Sierra Leone). S.M.
- 63. How Crab Got His Shell** – Language unknown (Northern Ghana). Name-guessing is often used to incite a dispute.
- 64. Tortoise and All the Wisdom in the World** – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. The collecting of wisdom in a gourd or calabash appears in many tales. See no. 99. Opening formula at no. 4.
- 65. Dede and the Leopard** – Ga (Ghana). L.L. See Dede again in no. 5. Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.
- 66. The Master Trickster** – Hausa (Nigeria). D.A. The Hausa Spider has a cleft palate, which affects his speech with heavy palatalization. It appears here as a lisp.
- 67. Asiedo and the Fish Child** – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. and J.Y.E. (J.Y.E. is the six-year-old son of T.Y.E.) Compare to the pineapple child stories at nos. 14 and 32. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.
- 68. The Incredible Nose** – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. The word is mostly nasal: [hūā]. A similar “hunting nose” is found in no. 52. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.
- 69. Rat's Vanity** – Ga (Ghana). N.A.K. An all-female-animal cast is not common. Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.

70. Why Fowls Scratch – Twi (Ghana). H.M.. Note the motif of the inequitable treatment of children, as in no. 17. This also points out the immortality of Kofi (or Kwaku) Babone. Opening and closing formulae at no. 29.

71. The Hog's Magic – Yilo Krobo (Ghana). The Red River Hog is the *patafò*.

72. The Bag of Salt – Ga (Ghana). N.A.K. Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.

73. The Beaten Path – Twi (Ghana). H.M. Opening and closing formulae at no. 29.

74. The Stone with Whiskers – Krio (Sierra Leone). E.J. Tale revolves around greed and a lethal word.

75. The Charmed Cutlass – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. See a self-planting whip in no. 40. The cutlass is reminiscent of the brooms in Walt Disney's "The Sorcerer's Apprentice." Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

76. Why Tortoise Is Bald – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. Hot food in hat motif again in nos. 79 and 98. Opening formula at no. 4.

77. Why Lizard Bobs His Head – Ga (Ghana). N.A.K. Name-guessing motif is common. See Index: Name-guessing test for similar tales. Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.

78. Spider the Swindler – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. The punishment is of the Briar Patch type in Uncle Remus tales. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

79. Tortoise Sheds a Tear – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. Hot food in hat motif in nos. 76 and 98. Opening formula at no. 4.

80. The Cunning of Galonchi – Mandinka (Gambia). G.I. The exchange of bodies to be put in the drowning sack is a common motif.

81. **Tortoise Disobeys** – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. The plastron of the males of many species of tortoises is slightly concave. Opening formula at no. 4.
82. **Dog Is Betrayed** – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. Opening formula at no. 4.
83. **The Wise Child and the Chief** – Adengme (Ghana). The child's name is actually Olenopematse. A similar tree-chopping episode in no. 29.
84. **The Drunkard's Wisdom** – Ashanti (Ghana). An herbalist is essentially a medicine man.
85. **The Wisdom of Aja** – Krobo (Ghana). A cow- or horsetail switch is a magic wand.
86. **The Lion's Advice** – Ashanti (Ghana).
87. **Choosing the Right Friends** – Avatime [?] (Ghana).
88. **The Clever Boatman** – Krobo (Ghana). See Index: End in question for tales that ask a question.
89. **Why the Mason Wasp Has a Narrow Waist** – Krobo (Ghana). See fire personified in nos. 6 and 95.
90. **The Fairies and the Flute** – Adengme (Ghana).
91. **Sophia and the Devil** – Krio (Sierra Leone). L.T.
92. **Wonder Child and the Beast** – Krobo (Ghana). Kwaku Babone can also be called Kofi Babone in this tale.
93. **Crying for Yaka** – Krobo (Ghana).
94. **The Child's Vengeance** – Krobo (Ghana). The name Gbeseku is a funny-sounding one similar to Kwaku Babone, one of the wonder-child names.

- 95. Why Hippo Wears No Coat** – Krobo (Ghana). See fire personified in nos. 6 and 89.
- 96. Foriwa's Beads** – Akan (Ghana). See Index: Bird messenger, Open Sesame for other tales using these motifs.
- 97. The Tail of the Elephant Queen** – Ashanti (Ghana). See the “river judge” again in nos. 19, 35, and 47.
- 98. Why Spider Is Bald** – Ga (Ghana). N.A.K. Kornorley is the same as Konole in nos. 1 and 18. Hot food in a hat motif in nos. 76 and 79. Opening and closing formulac at no. 1.
- 99. Spider and the Calabash of Knowledge** – Twi (Ghana). B.J. See no. 64. Opening and closing formulac at no. 29.
- 100. The Noble Adowa** – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. Adowa, the Royal Antelope, is different from other antelopes. Opening and closing formulac at no. 2.
- 101. Spider's Funeral** – Krio (Sierra Leone). S.M. This “Bra” is “Brother,” the same as “Br'er” in Uncle Remus tales.
- 102. Who Is the Greatest Magician?** – Ga (Ghana). These magicians are herbalists, or medicine men. Opening and closing formulac at no. 1.
- 103. Tortoise and the Stew Bowl** – Ga (Ghana). G.A.
- 104. Crab and Guinea Fowl Part Ways** – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. See Index: Food dispute for other tales with this common motif. Opening formula at no. 4.
- 105. The Gift of the Wicked Old Woman** – Twi (Ghana). G.O.B. The old woman is addressed as Nana, a term of respect. Opening and closing formulac at no. 29.
- 106. The Honest Finger** – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. Opening formula at no. 4.

107. Cat and Rat Have It Out – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. Food disputes are a source of animosity in many tales. See Index: Food dispute. Opening formula at no. 4.

108. The Hunter's Best Friend – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. Opening formula at no. 4.

109. The Vultures and the Liver Cave – Krio (Sierra Leone). S.M. There is another tale of how the vulture became bald at no. 116. See Index: Open Sesame for the other tales using secret words to gain entry to something.

110. The Nefarious Fly – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. See Index: Food dispute for other tales using this theme. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

111. The Hunter's Daughter – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. See no. 21, which is a similar tale told about the hunter's son. The bang of gunfire is rendered as "Tomm!" Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

112. The Gluttonous Monkey – Avatime (Ghana). Opening and closing formulae at no. 13.

113. Why Singing Tortoises Are Solitary – Ga (Ghana). N.A.K. Tortoise is often associated with hypnotic music. Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.

114. The Price of Eggs – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. The yellow-backed duiker's name is Ekwaduo. The original tale is filled with words for the various sounds made by the animals leaping and falling. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

115. The Coffin of God's Daughter – Twi (Ghana). G.O.B. The old lady is a witch, of course—an opponent of God. Opening and closing formulae at no. 29.

116. The Quarrel Between Heaven and Earth – Yoruba (Nigeria). W.A. The separation of heaven from earth is also in tale no. 120. Opening formula at no. 4.

117. The Cry of Sasabonsam – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

118. Adowa and the Leopard – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. Most of this tale is to be sung. I have deviated from the translation in order to provide more symmetry for this tale. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

119. Ananse and God's Business – Larteh and Twi (Ghana). B.J. Opening and closing formulae at no. 29.

120. Why the Sky Is High – Ga (Ghana). N.A.K. Includes a moral about obedience in women. See also no. 116. Opening and closing formulae at no. 1.

121. The Gifts – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. The man in the pit is probably Kwaku Babone. See also no. 10. Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.

122. The Necklace – Mendé (Sierra Leone). G.I. The term “elder” is used here for the literal “big man.” The underlying moral is that co-wives should not be jealous.

123. The Tale of Aso Yaa – Sefwi (Ghana). T.Y.E. The original song was: “Aso Yaa, eee! Sodene. Aso Yaa, eee! Sodene!” Opening and closing formulae at no. 2.