

Anansi and the Chameleon

Anansi the Spider had become very arrogant and far too full of himself. God was not happy with him, not happy at all! God decided to teach him a lesson.

Now, in the same village as Anansi lived Chameleon, and both owned fields of crops. When the crops were sown God sent rain as he always did, but this year it rained only on Chameleon's field. Not a drop fell on Anansi's land. Chameleon's crops grew strong and tall while Anansi's field was bare earth with not a single shoot of green.

Anansi was angry but he had an idea. At night he crept to Chameleon's field and began to harvest the crops, leaving his footprints everywhere. This might seem like a strange thing to do, to leave footprints behind, but Anansi was clever. He knew that a chameleon leaves no footprints on the ground. In the morning Anansi went to the chief of the village. He claimed that he, Anansi, was the owner of the field of crops. Not Chameleon, and he could prove it! He showed the chief the footprints and can you believe it, the chief awarded Anansi the field.

God was annoyed. He could not let Anansi get away with that so now he made a plan to help Chameleon. He told Chameleon to dig a hole, a hole that was tiny on the surface but which led underground to great tunnels and a huge cavern.

Chameleon worked hard and soon the hole was ready. But God had not finished. He told Chameleon to make a cloak, a fantastic cloak made from vines and flies which, when the sun shone on it, glittered brilliantly like the most precious jewels.

The first time Anansi saw Chameleon wear the cloak he wanted it, of course! He asked to buy it. Chameleon pretended to think about it. Such a fine cloak was very valuable. The more reluctant to sell Chameleon seemed, the more Anansi wanted that cloak. Finally they agreed on a price. Chameleon would sell the cloak for as much grain as Anansi could put into the hole he had made. Anansi looked at the tiny hole in the ground and thought he had got himself a bargain. He started to fill the hole, but as the days passed and still the hole remained empty Anansi began to realise that this time it was he who had been tricked.

As for the cloak, well, he gave that to the chief as thanks for awarding him the field. The chief was at first delighted to own such a fine cloak and wore it constantly, but after a while the vines broke and the flies flew away. The chief was angry! He thought Anansi had dared to trick him. As punishment he ordered Anansi not only to give Chameleon the field back but also to give him the best of his fields.

And that is how Anansi the trickster was tricked.