



TIGER'S TALE, ANANSI'S STORIES

West Indies

Retold by Dianne de Las Casas

Excerpted from *Tangram Tales: Story Theater Using the Ancient Chinese Puzzle*

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Feel the story beat. (Clap. Clap.) Feel the story beat. (Clap. Clap.)

Before the world was as it is today, Tiger was the king of the forest. Because tiger ruled the forest, many things were named after him. The lily with red stripes was called a tiger lily. The moth with striped wings was called a tiger moth. And the stories of the forest were called Tiger's Tales.

Anansi the Spider was the weakest animal in the forest. He longed for greatness. One day, he decided to approach Tiger to ask for a favor. Tiger kept his stories in a basket and Anansi wanted the stories in the basket to be named after him.

Anansi bowed before Tiger and said, "Tiger, I have a favor to ask of you."

Tiger asked, "What is it, Anansi?"

Anansi answered, "Since you are king and have so many things named after you, I would like to have something named after me too. I would like the stories to be called 'Anansi Stories.'"

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Lying in a leisurely position, Tiger said, "Very well, Anansi. But first, you must complete two tasks. Bring me a gourd filled with bees. Then capture and bring me Snake. If you complete these tasks, I shall give you the story basket and name the stories 'Anansi Stories.'"

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The next day, Anansi found an empty gourd and carried it to where the bees lived. Queen Bee asked, "Anansi, what are you doing with that gourd?"

Anansi answered, "I have made a foolish bet with Tiger. I am supposed to tell him how many bees this gourd can hold."

Queen Bee said, “That is easy. I will help you. You will count as the bees fly in one by one. When the gourd is full, we will fly back out.”

Anansi said, “Excellent idea!” So the bees flew in one by one and when the gourd was full, Anansi corked the opening. He brought the buzzing gourd to Tiger. Tiger was not happy. He did not think Anansi could complete the task. Anansi said, “I have one more task to complete and you will have to name the stories ‘Anansi Stories.’”

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The next day, Anansi saw Snake and said, “Oh, no! What am I to do?” Snake asked, “What is wrong, Anansi?” Anansi answered, “I have made a foolish bet with Tiger. I am supposed to tell him if you are longer than this bamboo stick. But how will I measure you?”

Snake said, “That is easy. I will help you. I will stretch out straight, next to the stick. You will see that I am longer than the stick.”

Snake stretched and stretched but the stick was longer. As Snake stretched, Anansi quickly tied Snake to the bamboo. Snake was trapped! Anansi brought Snake to Tiger. Tiger was not happy but he had to honor his word. Tiger gave the story basket to Anansi and named the stories after him. Since that time, Tiger’s Tales have become known as Anansi’s Stories.

Feel the story beat. (Clap. Clap.) Feel the story beat. (Clap. Clap.)

You may not be able to catch a tiger by the tale, but you can always catch Anansi spinning a splendid story. One more time!

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