

## ANANSI AND DEATH

One day, Anansi went hunting. He walked through the forest until he reached a large clearing. He walked on until he met a stranger. He greeted him:

- *Good morning, brother.* No answer.
- *Good morning, brother,* he repeated. No answer. Nothing.
- *Hem! Brother! Is that meat I can smell?* No answer.
- *Well, if you don't answer, it means I can help myself,* Anansi said.

Anansi went to the pot and he ate and ate until his belly was full. Then he said:

- *Though you won't answer, let me tell you something: from now on, I am your father-in-law and you're my son-in-law. Tomorrow, I'll bring one of my daughters with me.* No answer.
- *Well. If he doesn't answer, it means he agrees.* He walked and walked through the forest until he reached his house. He had made a basket of woven leaves to carry as much meat as he could.

The next morning, he said to Wenon, his wife:

- *I've found a place. A good hunting place. I've found our daughter a husband. Look: He gave me a lot of meat.* Wenon said:  
- *Fine.*

The next day, before dawn, he ordered his daughter:

- *Take your basket and come with me.* She packed her belongings and they left the house. They walked and walked, until they reached the clearing. Anansi said:  
- *Good morning, son-in-law!* No answer. He told his daughter:  
- *He won't answer but that's his way. He is your husband now.*

Anansi went to the pot and ate until his belly was full. He cut palm tree leaves and wove a basket to carry as much meat as he could. Then he said:

- *Son-in-law, I'm leaving. You stay here with your wife.*

He took his basket and went away. The young woman saw a neat trail leading to a creek. She picked up the dirty dishes her father had used and stepped on the path. « *Kwakpwala!* » The trap door opened - for Death (indeed, the stranger was Death himself) had set up a trap on the path. Death rose to his feet, took his club and made a rush at the girl. He hit her: « *gho!* ». He dragged her body into the house, skinned her, put her into the pot and cooked her. The next morning, before dawn, Anansi came back to the clearing.

- *Good morning, son-in-law!* No answer.
- *Is your wife all right?* No answer. *I suppose she is washing the dishes at the creek. Good.* Anansi took the pot and put it on the ground. He started to eat. He ate and ate, until his belly was full. While he was rummaging in the pot, in search of the best chunks of meat, suddenly « *fang!* » he saw his daughter's two rings.  
- *I can't believe it! This is the end of me! He has killed my daughter!*

He grabbed a solid club lying nearby and hit Death on the shin: « *Bom!* ». Death made a rush at him. Anansi fled. They ran and ran, until they arrived at the village. Then Anansi cried:

- *Climb! Wenon, Asingébélé, Akpwatitikwad, Bigimofu! Climb to the top of this tree.*
- *What did you say? Do you want us to bring the larger pot?* his wife asked.

- *Stupid woman! I was not the one who killed the chunks of meat we have eaten; the one who killed them is chasing me!* The family climbed in the tree. Anansi jumped and reached the top.

Death arrived. He sat down under the tree. For a moment, nobody moved, and then Asingébélé said:

- *Father, I cannot hold on anymore.* Anansi said:  
- *Look at your brother-in-law at the bottom of the tree. Go on, then!* The boy gave up and fell down. Death knocked him out « *gho!* » and threw his body aside. For another moment, nobody moved, and then Akpwatitikwati said:

- *Father, my arm is so tired.* Anansi said:  
- *I did not kill all the pieces of meat we have eaten; he killed them. Look at your brother-in-law at the bottom of the tree. Go on, then!*

The boy gave up and fell down. Death knocked him out and threw his body aside. Anansi's last child and then his wife Wenon gave up and fell down as well. Anansi was the only one left at the top of the tree. He held on and on, until he could stand it no more. So he said:

- *Son-in-law, do you know what you should do? I have eaten so much of your meat that I'm too fat now. Fetch banana tree leaves and a large heap of ashes, so that when I fall, my body will not burst and my fat will not be lost. For if I fall on the hard ground, my body will burst.* Death stood up, « *vou!* », he cut banana leaves and gathered ash as well as he could.

- *Look closely at the spot where I'm going to fall down,* Anansi warned. Death stared at the heap of ash! « *Plaou!* » Anansi dropped in the middle of the heap. Ash flew everywhere. While Death was wiping his eyes, Anansi fled.

Thus, Anansi brought Death among us. Before this story, Death stayed in the bush. He did not kill people, only animals. Since then, because of Anansi, Death has killed and pulled people apart.

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