

into a deep sleep. Ananse, however, tossed and turned until his crafty mind discovered a way out.

Deep in the night, Ananse called Abena's name three times. When she did not respond, he carefully fetched a small pail of water and poured it on her sleeping mat. Then he went back to sleep on his own side.

At dawn he woke up and, with a cry of outrage, he woke up Abena.

"Ho, Abena! What is this I see? The woman I worked so hard to marry wet our mat at night. Shame, for I have married a bed wetter. I must tell the counsel of elders, for I have been cheated."

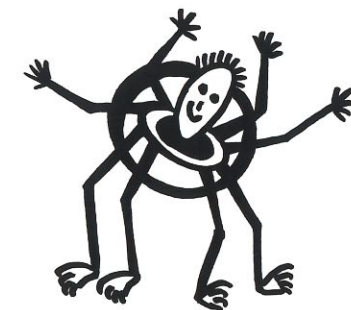
It was Abena Nkoroma's turn to plead and beg, but Ananse would hear none of it.

Eventually Abena said, "My husband, let us consider this incident a mat confidence."

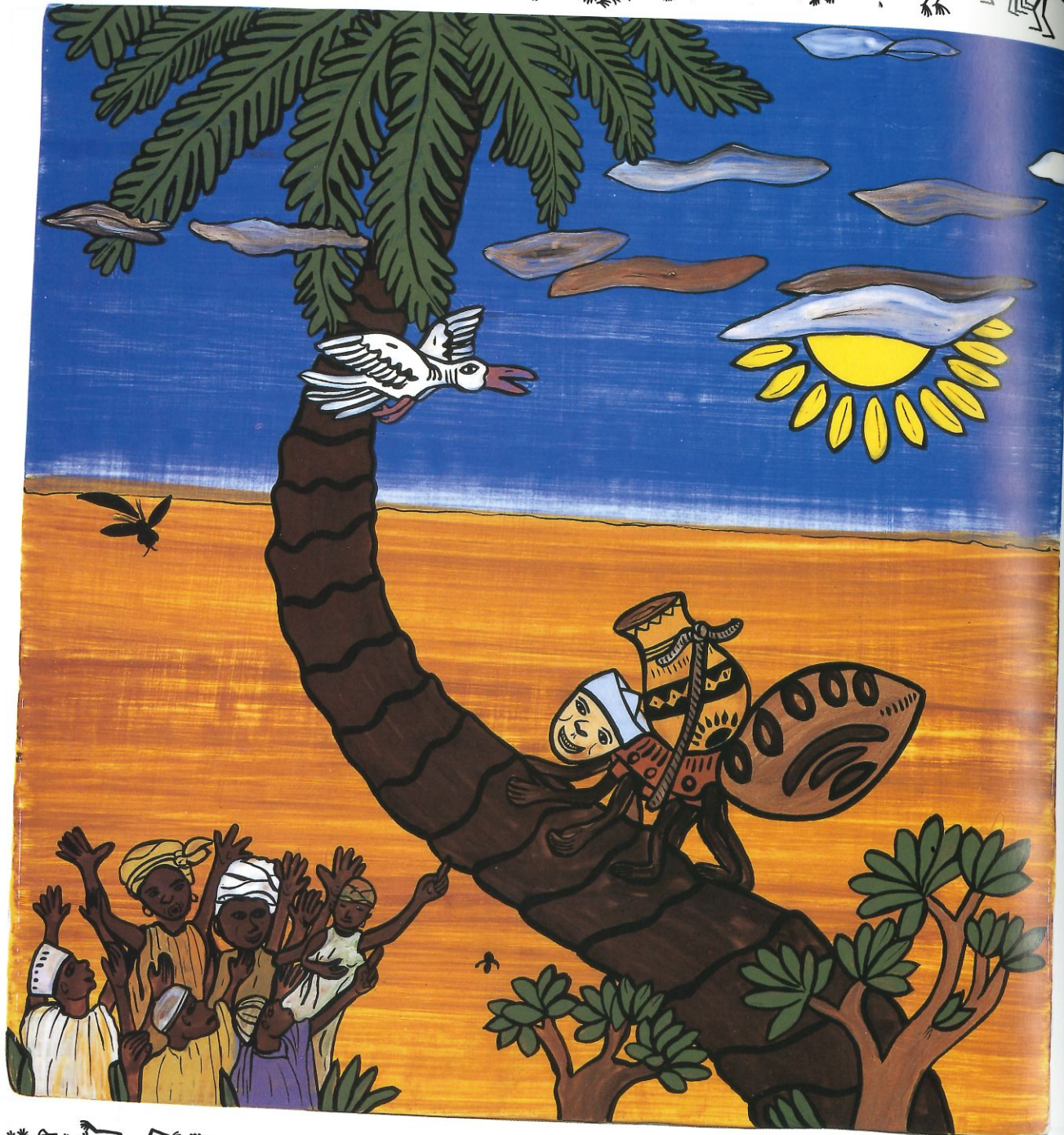
"Well," said Ananse triumphantly, "if you agree to keep the other matter a mat confidence!"

And so Ananse preserved his life and his marriage, as people preserve their marriages to this day by keeping mat confidences private.

## *Ananse and the Pot of Wisdom*







**A**NANSE IS a very special spider, well known for his wit and wisdom. He lives like other spiders, in corners and on ceilings. The tricky thing about him is that he looks no different from other spiders. In fact, he may be the very next spider who comes your way.

Everybody knew that Ananse was wise, for he boasted loud and clear. In his high-pitched voice he laughed at fools and spoke louder than everyone else.

One very sunny day, Sky God called Ananse up to the skies to have a chat.

"Without a doubt," Ananse said, "of all the animals you created, there is none as wise as I."

Sky God said in a quiet voice, "Could you do some work for me? Go about the earth and collect all wisdom for me. When you have brought it up to me, I will name you the Sage of All Time."

Ananse hid a smile. "That's easy, sir," he said. "I will be back in three days with the wisdom of the world."



Now, Ananse, as selfish as he was, had already traveled the length and breadth of the earth and collected every shred of wisdom. He kept it all in a giant pot in his secret hiding place.

He slid down to his home on a fine woven thread. He took a rest in the shade and had a lazy day.

The next day he started out to take the pot full of wisdom to Sky God way up in the skies.

It was a huge pot and very heavy. As Ananse tugged it behind him, he was more than filled with pride. When others asked to help, he would say in a stand-offish way, "This work is top secret for a very high official."

To get up to the skies where Sky God lived, you had to climb a tall coconut tree that grew beyond the clouds right up into the heavens. Ananse stopped to consider the best way to carry his load. He could not carry it on his head because he needed all his eight arms to creep up the tree. In the end he strapped the pot tightly to his back and made his way slowly up the tree.

From afar everyone saw his clumsy figure scaling up so slowly. They knew he was going to meet with Sky God himself. The people gathered under the tree to watch him make his way. And all the while they wondered what he had in the giant pot.

Inch by inch Ananse climbed. He was looking forward to the fame his great feat deserved. Meanwhile the sun moved slowly across the wide sky.

Just before the sun set, he paused and carefully wove a web to keep himself secure.

He could hardly sleep at all that night. He was so excited!

At daybreak Ananse woke up and continued his climb. A greater crowd was gathered below, waving and cheering him on. He pressed on, never mind his aching muscles. He had an appointment in heaven, and he was going to make it there.



Higher and higher Ananse kept up the pace, until the light of the moon reminded him to take a rest.

That night he dreamt he wore a crown given to him by Sky God himself. On it was written "The Sage of All Time."

Another day passed and a very tired Ananse was near the end of his journey. Below, the crowd let out a cheer.

It was a great moment for Ananse and, as pride filled his chest, he raised all his arms in a victory wave.

It was a shocking moment when he plummeted down to earth. He hit the ground with a bang and the pot broke in a million pieces. Wisdom scattered left and right, to the very ends of the earth.

Ananse lay there in a heap, sobbing his heart out. What he had worked so hard to collect was now out of his grasp. Now everyone and every fool had a little bit of wisdom. He could not claim that all wisdom was his alone.

Then Sky God whispered in his ear, "I gave you eight arms, Ananse. If you really had all wisdom, you would not have waved them all."

