

Anansi and the Dark Rock



Deep in the woods,
trees grow so thick
that noon looks like
night. Anansi finds an
odd green rock, wide
and soft with moss,
unseen until now. He
leans close and says
seven words. Then
all goes dark.





Anansi wakes up flat on his back in the ferns. He feels fine, just mixed up. He did not trip. He did not get hit. He is too clever not to test it, so he says the words again to **retry** the trick. All goes dark, and he wakes on his back one more time. Anansi sits up and grins a grin that should worry someone.

The plan comes in a rush, like a ripe mango dropping from a tree. Anansi can find where all the best food hides. Elephant keeps honey in a hollow tree, and others keep fish, mangoes, and nuts. He just needs to bring each one past the rock and say the words. Anansi **expects** an easy win. He rubs four legs and goes to find Elephant.



'Elephant!' Anansi calls, running up. 'There is an odd thing on the south path. Elephant must see it.' Elephant is big and does not worry about tricks, so she follows. At the rock, Anansi says the magic words. Elephant sits with a boom that cracks a branch, and starts to snore. Anansi picks up her honey and eats it. Elephant wakes and returns to the woods, sure she just felt sleepy.





The trick works so well that Anansi gets greedy. Fish, mangoes, a basket of nuts, a string of yams. One by one, each one who follows Anansi wakes up with no food and no clue where it went. The rock says nothing. It does not react, green and still and useful. Anansi has never been this well-fed.

But one small friend does not follow. Little Bush Deer hides by a wild fig tree. She sees Elephant go down the path and come back wrong. Bush Deer is small and careful, and she does not trust Anansi. So she follows behind, near as she dares to see all of it. She hears each word Anansi says, hoping to **decode** the trick, and she counts each stolen meal.



Bush Deer goes to explain it to the others. They stand along the path, mixed up about sitting down. It is hard to make them believe a spider stole their food. But the missing food is hard to argue with. 'He used the rock,' Bush Deer says. 'Seven words. I heard them.'

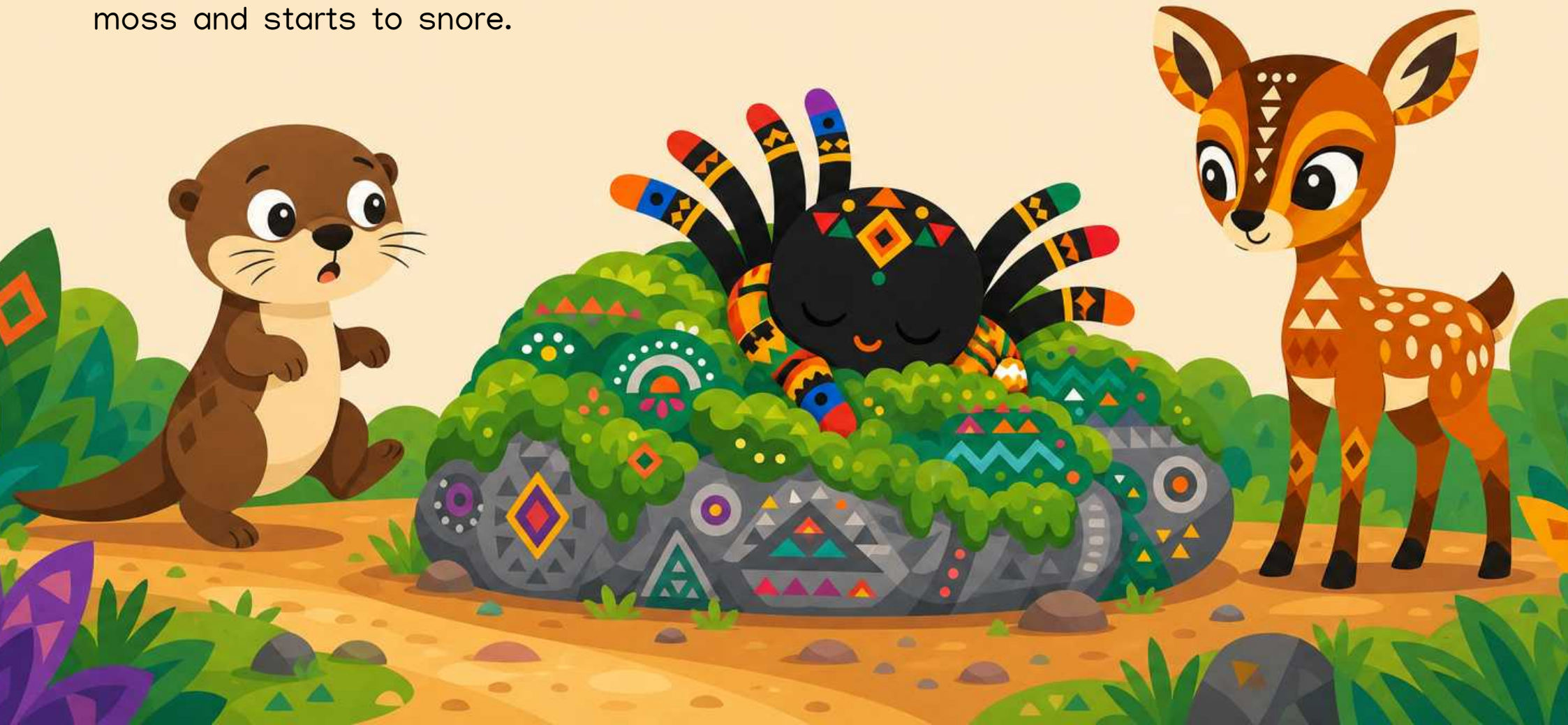
Elephant sits down again, this time on purpose, and thinks hard.





The plan comes from Bush Deer, and it is simple. It uses the rock on Anansi himself. They know Anansi will return, because greedy ones always come back. Bush Deer will hide by the rock with the others out of sight. When Anansi comes with the next one, she will step up and say the words first. They go over the plan, then wait.

Anansi comes down the path, leading a new friend who has not heard the warning. He stops when he sees Bush Deer by the rock, sure he can **decode** her game. 'Anansi,' she says, 'I have looked all over for you. Isn't this an odd moss rock?' All of Anansi's legs fold at the same time. He lands chin-first in the moss and starts to snore.



The others come out from the trees. They gather every bit of food Anansi hid: the honey, the fish, the mangoes, the nuts, the yams. They give each thing back to its owner. The new friend gets a mango and goes home happy. Then the others sit around the rock and share a good meal while Anansi snores in the moss beside them.





Anansi wakes, lifts his chin from the moss, and finds himself ringed by full, calm friends. Elephant holds out a bit of his own stolen honey. 'Anansi did not ask,' Bush Deer says, 'if others might learn the words.' Anansi looks at his empty food store. He opens his mouth and shuts it, but he cannot undo it. Then he eats the honey, because it is still good honey, and a spider who just lost needs something sweet.

After that day, they all **decline** to go to the south path alone. They go in groups, talking loud, watching each other. They always bring more food than they need, because sharing feels better than keeping. The moss rock sits where it always has, green and still, useful to those who are most careful. And when a new friend comes and someone leads them toward the path, one small voice will pipe up: 'Isn't this an odd moss rock?' Just to keep everyone awake.





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Deep in the Ashanti forest, Kwaku Anansi finds a strange moss-covered rock that hums with magic and can knock any creature fast asleep with just seven words. Soon every animal wakes up dazed, with their dinner mysteriously gone. Who is behind the thefts, and can clever little Bush Deer figure out the secret before the whole forest goes hungry? This Bookbot level practices two-syllable words with prefixes, including 'return', 'explain', 'decline', 'unseen' and 'undo'.

Reading Skills: Prefix

decline, decode, expect, expects, explain, react, retry, return, returns, undo, unseen

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