

Anansi Feels Sick



It is a bad day for
Anansi the spider. He is
walking in the tall grass,
thinking of yams. He does
not look where he steps.
The grass **rustles**. Then a
big spotted paw drops on
his back and presses him
flat in the red dirt. Four
legs wiggle out. The big
cat Leopard has him.





'I know you,' says the big cat in a slow voice. 'You took fish from my stream. You ate mangoes from my tree. You told all the forest that my roar sounds like an old man.' He leans down close. 'Today I eat you. But I am busy now, so I will eat you when the sun goes down.' The big cat carries him to his rocky den and drops him in. The spider feels sick in his **stomach.**

The spider gets up and looks around. The den walls are hard rock. The way out is a thin gap. The big cat has to squeeze through it, so the spider could too. But the cat sits right in the gap like a big spotted door. The spider calls out in a glad voice, and his call **echoes** off the rock. The cat does not budge.



The spider checks each corner of the den. In a crack in the rock, he finds a small bag of dried selim pepper. These sharp seeds give the best soups their taste. He sniffs the bag. Very good pepper. The smell is so sharp his eyes water. He holds it close and turns an idea in his mind, the way a **chef** turns a yam in the fire.





The spider calls out again.
This time his voice is not
glad. It is the voice of a **chef**
at work. 'Great Cat,' he says,
'I have been thinking about
supper. You caught a spider,
but you have no spice. Plain
spider is barely worth eating.
Even kings must season their
meat.' The big cat turns one
ear. Then he turns the other
ear. His tail flicks.

The big cat turns his head. 'I eat my prey just as I catch it,' he says. 'I am Leopard.' 'Yes,' says the spider. 'That is why all say you are a great hunter but a poor host. Even the table of the Sky-God has selim pepper.' The cat lashes his tail, but he **listens** hard. The one thing he loves as much as hunting is his good name. The spider lets the sharp pepper smell drift to the gap.



The big cat stands up. 'There is a grey selim tree,' he says slow. 'Three hills north. I know it.' He looks at the spider with thin eyes. 'This is a trick to make me leave.' 'You see all,' says the spider. 'Fine. Forget the pepper. Plain spider it is. I just thought, as this is the first spider in two seasons, it could be one to remember.' He gives a deep, **scheming** sigh. The cat stands in the gap, thinking.





'I will go north for one moment,' says the cat. 'But I will web the gap first, so do not think of running.' The cat drags a tangle of old spider-silk from the corner. Not silk that the spider spun, just loose bits. He presses it over the gap. Then he pads away north. The spider waits till the spots are gone in the tall grass. The old silk is a mess, and he is **aghast** at it. He gets to work. He has spun far better webs than that before breakfast.

The spider slips through the gap in three seconds flat. But he does not run, not yet. He takes the bag of pepper and tucks it deep in the den, far back in the rock crack, where the cat will not find it for a long time. Then he spins a new web over the gap, much stronger, much finer, so thin and clear that the sun will not show it. He **whistles** as he works.



Then the spider runs. He **hastens** south through the forest, up in the high branches, swinging on his silk from tree to tree. He is near the village when he hears the thunder of paws behind him. There is no selim tree three hills north. There is no selim tree near at all. The big cat knows it now, and he is mad.





The big cat hits the web at full sprint and sticks fast. The silk is fine, and it is the best work the spider has spun. It wraps his nose and ears and paws in a big tangle. The cat gnashes his teeth. He roars. He thrashes. He rolls. But the web holds while the spider drops from the last tree and reaches the village edge, where the big cat will not go. 'Even kings must season their meat,' the spider calls back. 'Wait a while. It makes the taste better!'

Anansi sits in the village square and eats three bowls of nut soup with selim pepper. The cook gives it to him, for the birds up in the trees told her all the tale. He eats slow, glad down to his **stomach**, every **ache** from the den now gone. From that day on, the big cat checks each den well before he naps in it. And cooks across the forest **often** say it when they reach for the spice jar: even kings must season their meat. But in the village, they always wink when they say it.





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Anansi the spider is having a very bad Tuesday. Leopard has caught him, dropped him in a rocky den, and plans to eat him the moment the sun goes down, leaving Anansi's stomach in knots. Trapped behind a giant spotted paw with no way out, can the clever spider talk, trick, and web his way to freedom before evening falls? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 118: ch /sh/, /k/; gn /n/; gh /g/; silent t), this book practises words like 'chef', 'stomach', 'ache', 'echoes', 'aghost'.

Phonics Focus: ch /sh/, /k/; gn /n/; gh /g/; silent t

ache, aghast, chef, echoes, gnash, hastens, listens, often, rustles, scheming, stomach, whistles

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