

Python Can Eat Anansi



Anansi has an old deal with Python. When the river was high, his yam crop was deep in the mud. **Catastrophic!** But grand Python had food for him. Free, no fee. Now here is Python, on Anansi's step, come to claim his meal. And the meal Python asks for is Anansi, hot in a pot!





'An old deal is an old deal,' says Python, and he licks his lips. 'I am here for my meal, Anansi. And the meal is Anansi!' His body is as thick as a tree. When he grins, his mouth is so wide that Anansi can see down his **esophagus**. Anansi gasps. He needs a plan, and fast.

'Wait!' yells Anansi, and he lifts one leg high.

'Python, do not eat me like this!' Python's eyes go thin. 'I am the longest beast in this wood. I do as I like.' 'True,' says Anansi, smooth and sly. 'But to eat me the plain way, like any old snake? No. A king needs a **phenomenal** feast, not a plain snack.'



Anansi keeps up the chat, and each **phrase** is as smooth as silk. 'I am off with this red vine rope, a gift for Nyame, the Sky King. It is the strongest rope in the wood. So strong,' says Anansi with a wink, 'that it can hold the grand knot, the knot just a true king can tie.' He lifts up a coil of bright red vine rope.





Python is proud. He is the longest snake in the wood. But no beast calls him the king who ties the grand knot. A knot like that is a **trophy**.

'What is this grand knot? Tell me,' he says.

Anansi smiles a sly smile.

'A king ties the grand knot,' he says, soft and low.

Python asks to see this knot. So Anansi tells him all: it is a looping, twisting king's knot, so hard that just a long, grand body can tie it. 'Weak snakes fail at loop three,' says Anansi with grand **emphasis**. 'Ha!' grunts Python. 'Show me loop one.' Anansi loops the rope over a branch and shows him loop one. Just loop one. And it looks grand.



So Python has a go. His grand body coils. 'Loop one, so good!' He twists back with **oomph**. 'The next loop! Grand!' He bends under. 'Loop three! Weak snakes quit here, but not Python!' With each loop, Python grins wide. And with each loop, his twist gets tighter. He is so keen on looking grand that he does not see his own tail coil tight round his body.





'Now the last loop,' says Anansi. 'The king's loop. In, round, and under, just so.' Python strains and twists his grand neck and makes the last loop. He is proud. So proud! 'A king ties the grand knot!' Python yells. Then he tries to slither over to Anansi. But he can not shift at all! **'Phew,'** says Anansi.

Python thrashes. He grunts. He hisses. He tugs left and the tie gets tight. He yanks right and it gets tighter. The red rope, laced in his loops, holds it all in place. 'Anansi!' Python yells. 'Untie me now!' But Anansi dashes off down the path, past the ferns and **phlox**, and calls back, 'Just a king can undo such a tie!'



But Python has one trick left. He lifts that grand chin and yells as if he has a **megaphone**.

'Anansi is a cheat!

Anansi did not pay! Tell

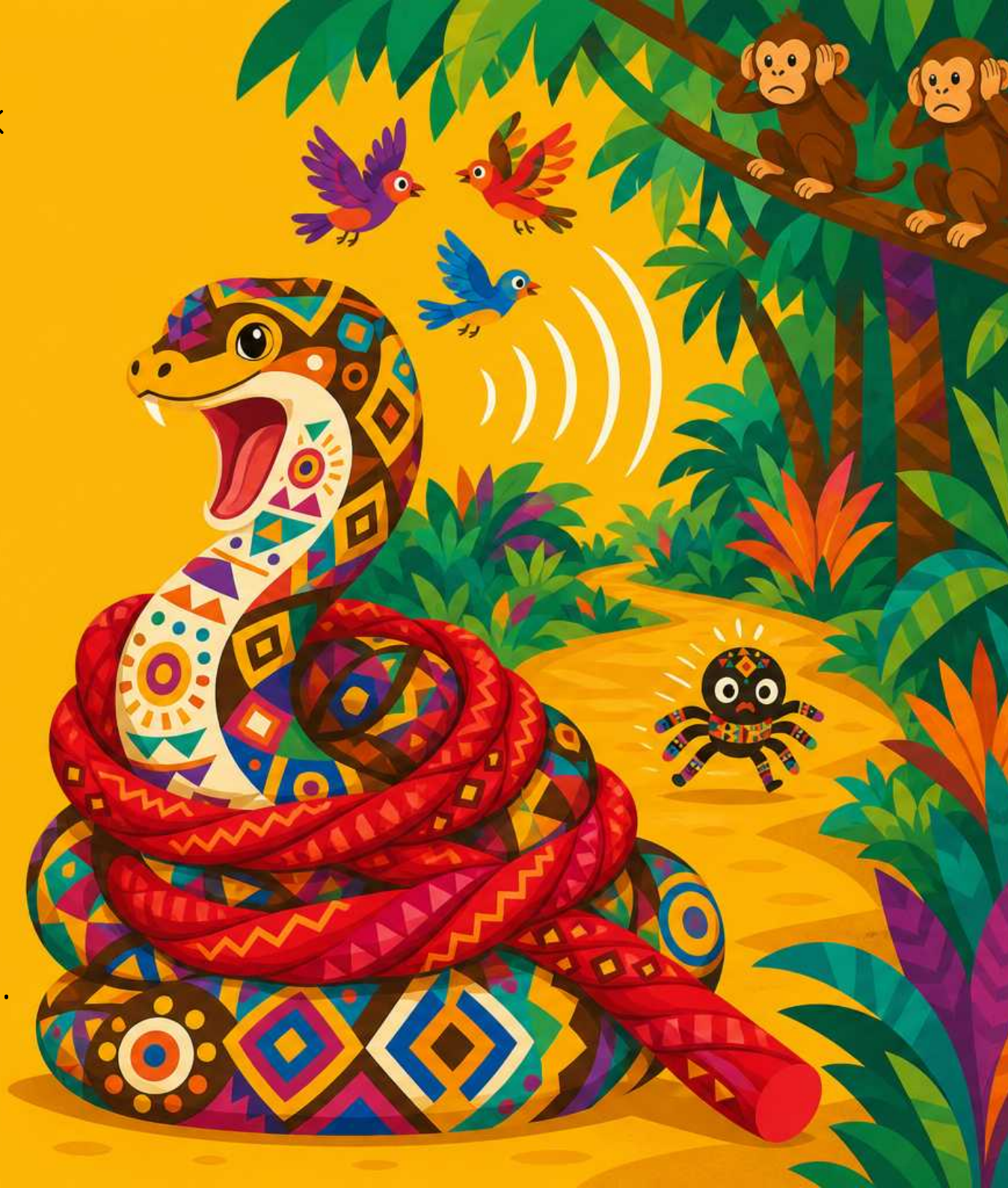
Nyame, the Sky King!

Tell all the beasts!' The

yell booms in the trees.

Far down the path,

Anansi stops. This is bad.





Anansi thinks hard. If Nyame takes that yell as true, Anansi can not tell his stories from that day on. So he goes back and unties the knot, loop by loop. 'I do not cheat, Python,' he says. 'I give a fine gift: a knot just a king can tie. All the wood can tell that story. It ends the old deal.' Python is as still as an old **philosopher**. Then he nods. 'Yes,' says Python. And he means it.

So the old deal ends. Not with Anansi in a hot pot, but with a chant that goes from glen to glen: 'Python ties the grand knot!' The beasts still chat and chat: did Anansi win, or did Python? Anansi says he tricked Python. Python says no knot can trap a king. And both, in a way, are right. Python glides off, proud as a king. The chant is his **trophy**. And Anansi keeps the red rope. Good rope is good rope.





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Anansi owes Python a debt, and Python wants Anansi himself for dinner! Thinking fast, Anansi spins a tale about a grand knot that only a truly phenomenal king could tie, one worthy of a trophy. Proud Python can't resist showing off, looping and coiling to prove himself. Will his own pride tie him in knots? Written for Jolly Phonics classrooms (Step 3, Unit 1: ph as in phone), this book practices words like 'phenomenal', 'trophy', 'pew', 'emphasis', 'oomph'.

Phonics Focus: <ph>

catastrophic, emphasis, esophagus, megaphone, oomph, phenomenal, pew, philosopher, phlox, phrase, trophy

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