

# AFRICAN TALES

## Dung Beetle's Burden (A Story From Ghana)

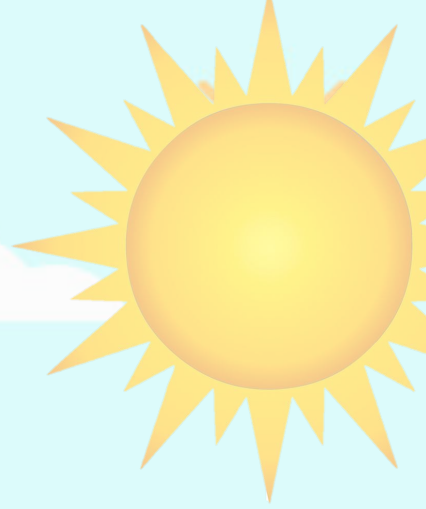


Long ago, Anansi, a cunning spider,  
and his son, Kweku Tsin, were very  
successful farmers. They grew fine  
harvest that were the envy of all  
their neighbors.



One year, however, the rains failed and it looked as though their seeds would not sprout. Kweku Tsin was walking through his fields when he met Chameleon.

Chameleon asked why the young spider was so sad. Kweku Tsin told him that the crops would fail without rain.



Chameleon told Kweku Tsin to find two small sticks. He then told him to tap the sticks lightly on Chameleon's back in time to a magical song:

**O water go up, O water go up  
And let rain fall, and let rain fall.**



To Kweku Tsin's joy it immediately began to rain. Kweku Tsin thanked Chameleon profusely and happily tended his fields.



Within a couple of days, his fields  
promised to yield another fine crop.



Anansi soon heard how well Kweku Tsin's crops were growing. His own fields were bare and baked hard by the sun.



Anansi demanded to know the secret of his son's good fortune. Kweku Tsin told his father about Chameleon's magic.



Anansi decided he would get his fields watered too.

“My son made Chameleon water his fields with little sticks. I will make him give me twice the water with two big sticks!”



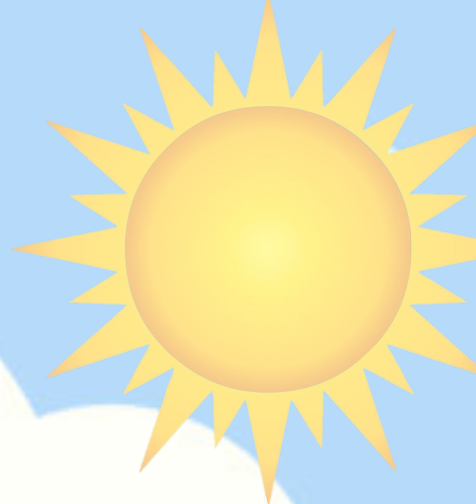
Anansi met Chameleon and told him of his problems.

Again, Chameleon asked for two small sticks to be tapped on his back in time to his song.



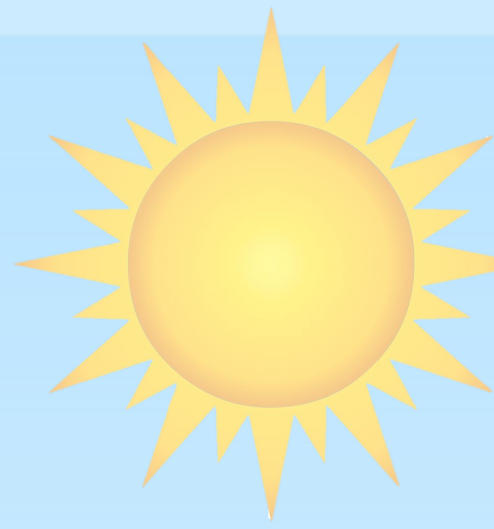
The cunning spider got the two large sticks he had concealed nearby and beat Chameleon so hard that he fell down dead.

The greedy spider was frightened, for he knew Chameleon was the Creator's favorite. He had to pass the blame for Chameleon's death onto someone else.

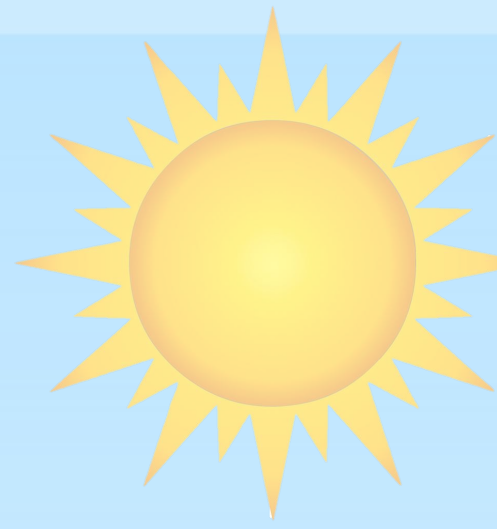


Not long after, Kweku Tsin came along to see if his father had any luck in getting rain for him to come down.”

“I will go up an fetch him,” said Kweku Tsin, and he began to climb.



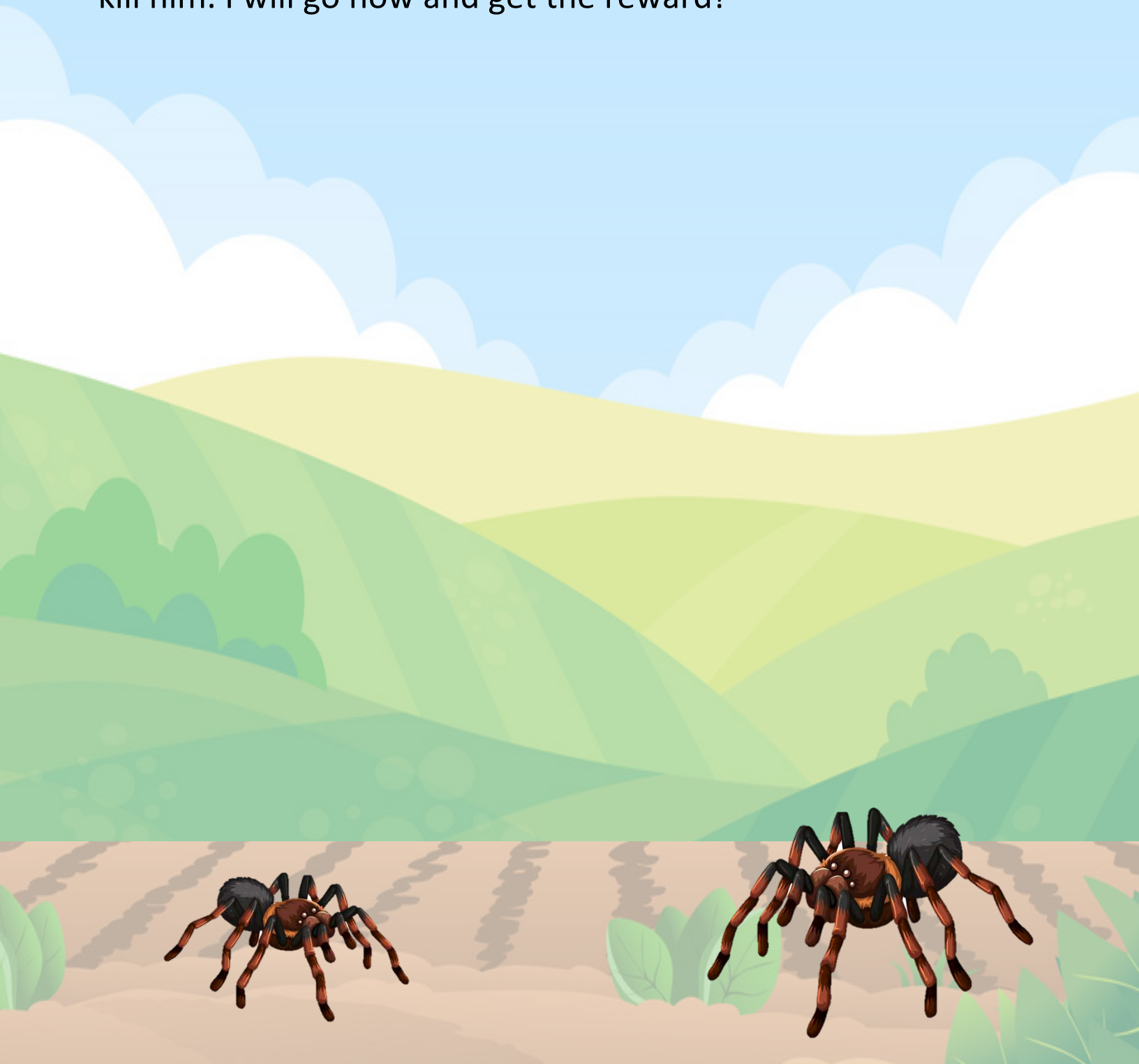
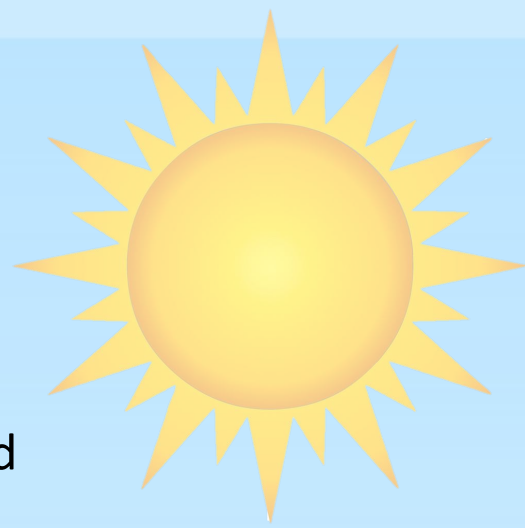
He soon found Chameleon high in the branches but when he touched his limp body, Chameleon fell to the ground.



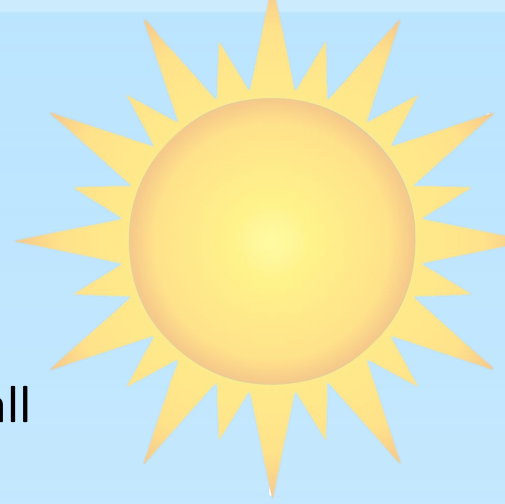
“Oh! What have you done, you wicked child?” cried Anansi.

“It doesn’t matter,” replied Kweku Tsin, who saw through Anansi’s trick.

“The Creator is very angry with Chameleon and promised a bag of gold to anyone who would kill him. I will go now and get the reward!”



The Creator was very angry with Anansi  
for killing Chameleon.



He sealed Chameleon's body in a great round  
container and Anansi was made to push the ball  
around with him forever as a punishment.

The only way Anansi could ever be rid of his  
burden was for another animal to offer to take it  
from him. Of course, no one was willing to do this.

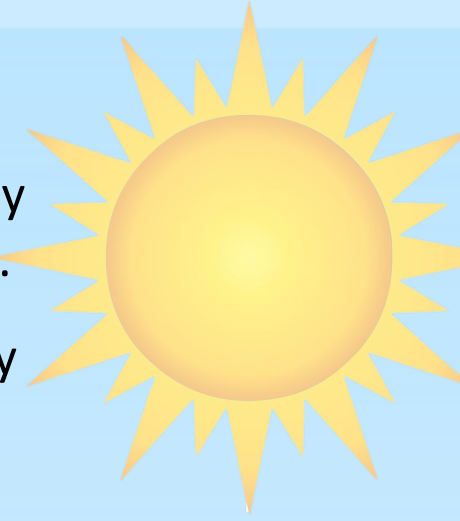


After many years, Anansi was almost worn out by his heavy burden. One day, he met Dung Beetle.

“Will you hold this burden for me while I visit my son?” asked Anansi.

“I know your tricks, Anansi!” replied the Dung Beetle. “You just want to be rid of your burden!”

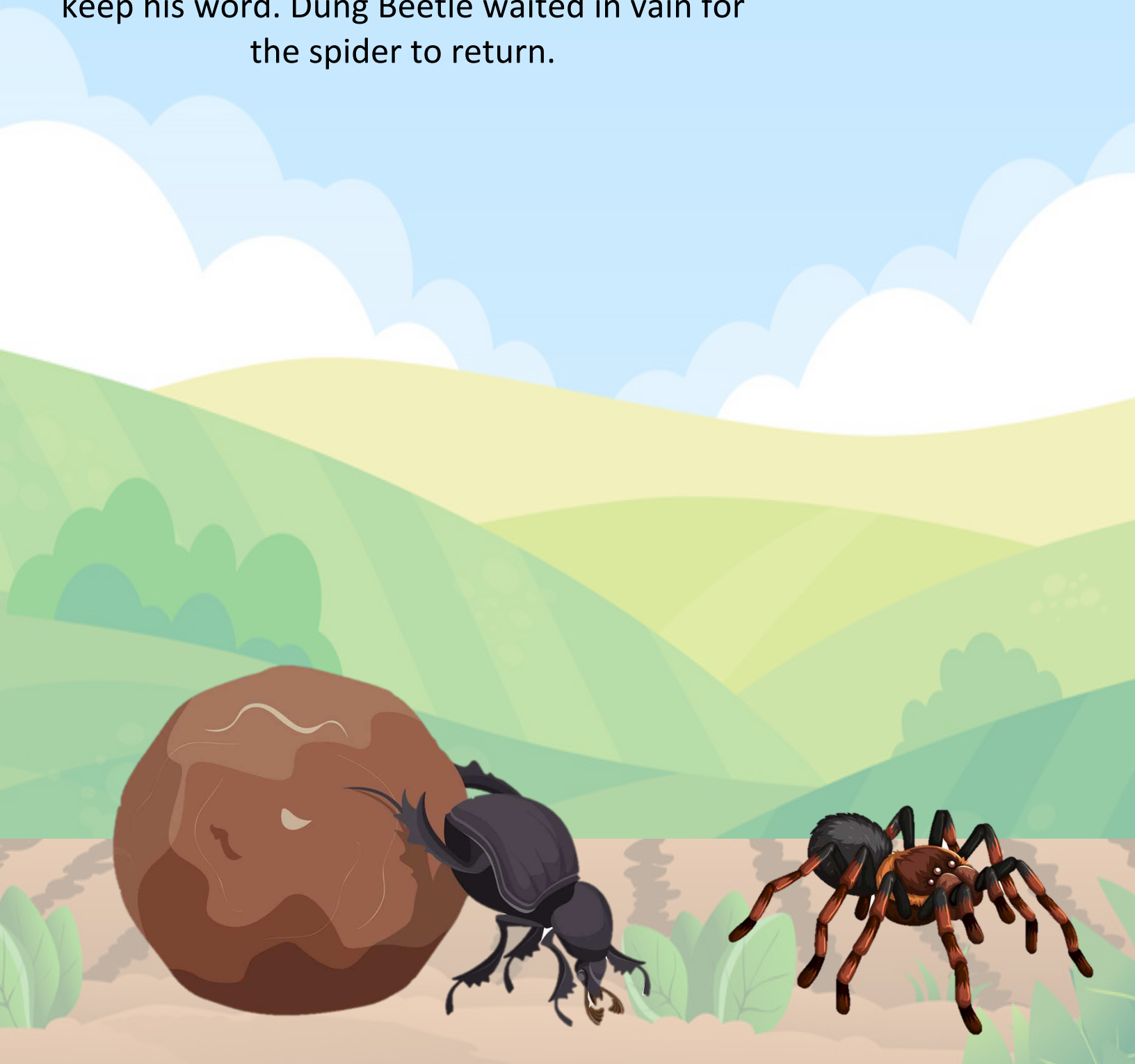
“Oh no, Dung Beetle,” protested Anansi. “I will be back for it, I promise!”



Dung Beetle was very honest. He always kept his promise and so he believed Anansi.

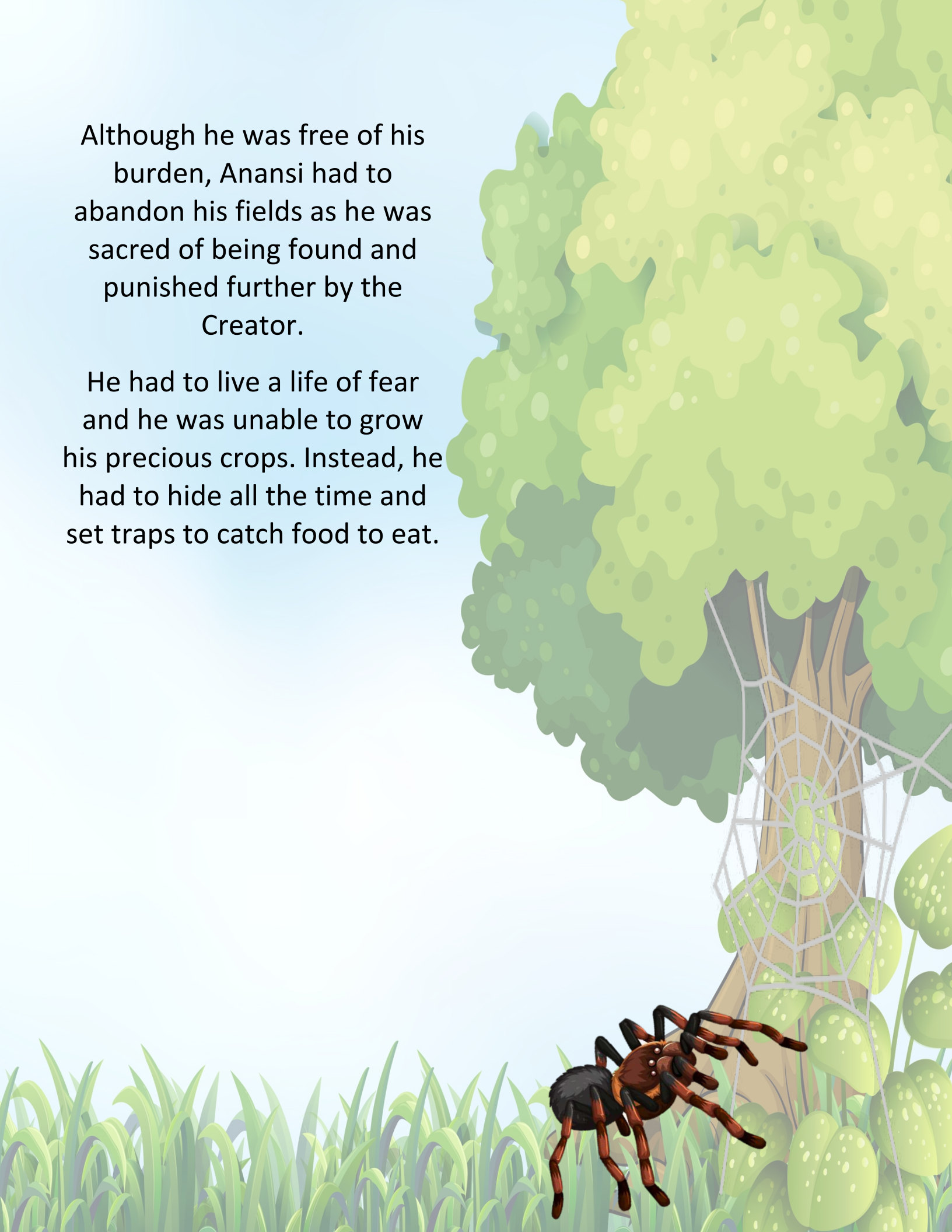
Dung Beetle braced himself against the huge ball and Anansi ran off.

Needless to say, Anansi did not intend to keep his word. Dung Beetle waited in vain for the spider to return.



Although he was free of his burden, Anansi had to abandon his fields as he was sacred of being found and punished further by the Creator.

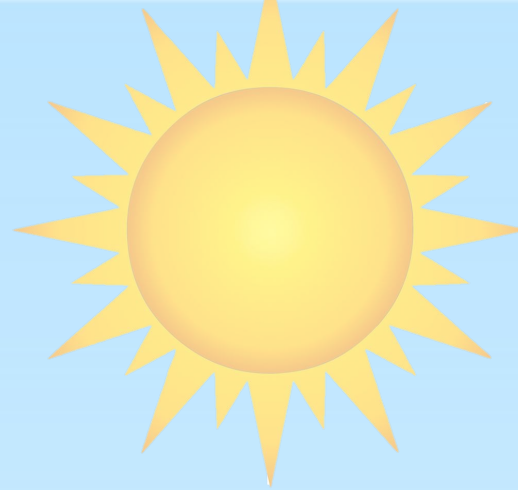
He had to live a life of fear and he was unable to grow his precious crops. Instead, he had to hide all the time and set traps to catch food to eat.



Dung Beetle had to take over Anansi's burden. For the rest of his life he had to roll and push the large ball before him.

This is why we so often see dung beetles pushing great balls as they move along.

**Extracted from: "When Lion Could Fly and Other Tales From Africa."**



# FUN FACTS

## About Dung Beetles

- Dung beetles are found on all continents except for Antarctica.
- It is estimated that there are about 7000 species of dung beetles in the world.
- Dung beetles can roll up to 50 times their weight making them the strongest insect in the world.
- The dung beetle is not only the world's strongest insect – it's the world's strongest animal!
- They like to eat dung or animal poop, as you might call it.



# DID YOU KNOW

## This About Chameleons?

- Chameleons actually change their colour due to a number of different factors, including their mood, changes in light or temperature, or the humidity of their environment.
- Chameleons have eyes in the backs of their heads.
- 59 unique species of chameleon live on the island of Madagascar and are found nowhere else.
- Excluding their tail, some chameleons' tongues can be twice the length of their body. Their tongues consist of both muscles and bones, and can bend round to grab their pray.
- Generally, chameleons don't live very long – some for up to 10 years in captivity.





# THINK

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