Anansi the Blind Fisherman

W. H. Barker and Cecilia Sinclair

Anansi, in his old age, became a fisherman. Very soon after that his sight began to fail. Finally, he grew quite blind. However, still being very strong, he continued his fishing—with the help of two men. The latter were exceedingly kind to him, and aided him in every possible way. They led him, each morning, to the beach and into the canoe. They told him where to spread his net and when to pull it in. When they returned to land they told him just where and when to step out, so that he did not even get wet.

Day after day this went on, but Anansi—instead of being in the least grateful to them—behaved very badly. When they told him where to spread his net, he would reply sharply, “I know. I was just about to put it there.” When they were directing him to get out of the boat, he would say, “Oh, I know perfectly well we are at the beach. I was just getting ready to step out.”

This went on for a long time, Anansi getting ruder and ruder to his helpers every day, until they could bear his treatment no longer. They determined when opportunity offered to punish him for his ingratitude.

The next day, as usual, he came with them to the beach. When they had got the canoe ready, they bade him step in. “Do you think I am a fool?” said he. “I know the canoe is there.” They made no answer, but got in and patiently pulled toward the fishing-place. When they told him where to spread his net, he replied with so much abuse that they determined, there and then, to punish him.

By this time the canoe was full of fish, so they turned to row home. When they had gone a little way they stopped and said to him, “Here we are at the beach.” He promptly told them that they were very foolish—to tell him a thing he knew so well. He added many rude and insulting remarks, which made them thoroughly angry. He then jumped proudly out, expecting to land on the beach. To his great astonishment he found himself sinking in deep water. The two men rowed quickly away, leaving him to struggle.

Like all the men of that country he was a good swimmer, but, of course, being blind, he was unable to see where the land lay. So he swam until he was completely tired out—and was drowned.

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