

SIDE 1: NYAME

NYAME: What is the meaning of this? Someone from the lowly earth visits me in the sky?

ANANSI: Oh great Nyame. Your people are poor and tired. We need to hear stories. Stories will make our lives bearable. Stories will give our lives meaning. (*NYAME opens the box a little and listens. SOUND EFFECT: CACOPHONY OF WHISPERING VOICES.*)

NYAME: (*Snaps the lid back down and VOICES STOP.*) No. The stories have great power. And I do not share.

ANANSI: (*To AUDIENCE.*) How to solve this? (*To NYAME.*) Nyame, they say you are a great gambler. Let us make a bet, and if I win, I get the Box of Stories.

NYAME: How can you win a bet? I am the strongest of all! Who is it that when he talks even the trees tremble? Me! Who is the King of All Things? Me! You have heard of my power. So what can you offer me when I win the bet?

ANANSI: If I lose, I will stay on the ground and will never bother you again.

NYAME: Not enough. Who is the weakest of animals?

ANANSI: Anansi!

NYAME: When Anansi talks, no one listens. When he shouts, everyone laughs. I command you all, laugh at Anansi. (*ALL LAUGH. ANANSI reacts to the ridicule.*) You think that I would give up all the stories to such a weak creature as you? If we bet and you lose, I will make you look foolish, so foolish that all the animals and people will laugh at you till the end of time. Do you still want to risk all that for the Box of Stories?

ANANSI: (*After a pause.*) Yes. My bet is that I can do anything you ask, no matter how difficult.

NYAME: This is too easy. You've heard of Python?

ANANSI: The big, dangerous snake who lives by the river?

NYAME: Bring me Python, and bring him to me alive. (*EXITS LEFT laughing.*)

SIDE 2: MOTHER/SHONTAY

MOTHER: Shontay, I saw you eat all your food this morning. But you're eating more now?

SHONTAY: Yes, Mother. Here, have some.

MOTHER: How did you get it?

SHONTAY: The girl beside me didn't eat all her food.

MOTHER: She's sick. So you stole her food?

SHONTAY: She wasn't eating it.

MOTHER: This is not how I raised you.

SHONTAY: But I was so hungry. I'm hungry right now.

MOTHER: That's no reason to take someone's food. *(To unseen girl.)* Hey girl, take your food and eat.

SHONTAY: But Mother—

MOTHER: As for you, Shontay, look there in the corner. A spider. Anansi is with us. *(ANANSI puts box of stories down with MOTHER and SHONTAY. [NOTE: If casting is doubled, the box of stories should be taken OFF now.]*) There is a story about Anansi stealing someone's food.

SHONTAY: I didn't steal—I just took it.

MOTHER: You were selfish. Anansi can be selfish sometimes. He wants everybody's food for himself.

SIDE 3: ELEPHANT

ELEPHANT: (*ENTERS LEFT with bananas.*) Bananas, bananas, when I see bananas, I go bananas. The sweetest word I ever heard is... bananas.

ANANSI: Hey, Elephant! I just saw a strange thing in the forest.

ELEPHANT: Was it a big banana?

ANANSI: Maybe. I'm not sure.

ELEPHANT: Hmm, I'd like to see a strange thing, but I don't want to leave my bananas.

ANANSI: Bring your bananas. It's right down this path. Look.

ELEPHANT: (*Approaches rock.*) Definitely not a banana. It looks like...

ANANSI: Like what?

ELEPHANT: It's a strange moss-covered rock. (*Faints and falls down.*)

ANANSI: Oh, Elephant, you have fallen on your big butt, but luckily, not on your bananas. Ha ha ha. (*Takes the bananas, goes to his "hut" and adds them to his yams.*)

ELEPHANT: (*Wakes.*) Uh, what happened? My bananas! Yes, I have no bananas! I'm going to cry so hard I'll have to blow my nose, and the whole jungle will hear it. (*Brays and EXITS LEFT crying. ANANSI eats.*)