



A COLLECTION OF
STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
David A. Naff



SPIDER'S TINY WAIST



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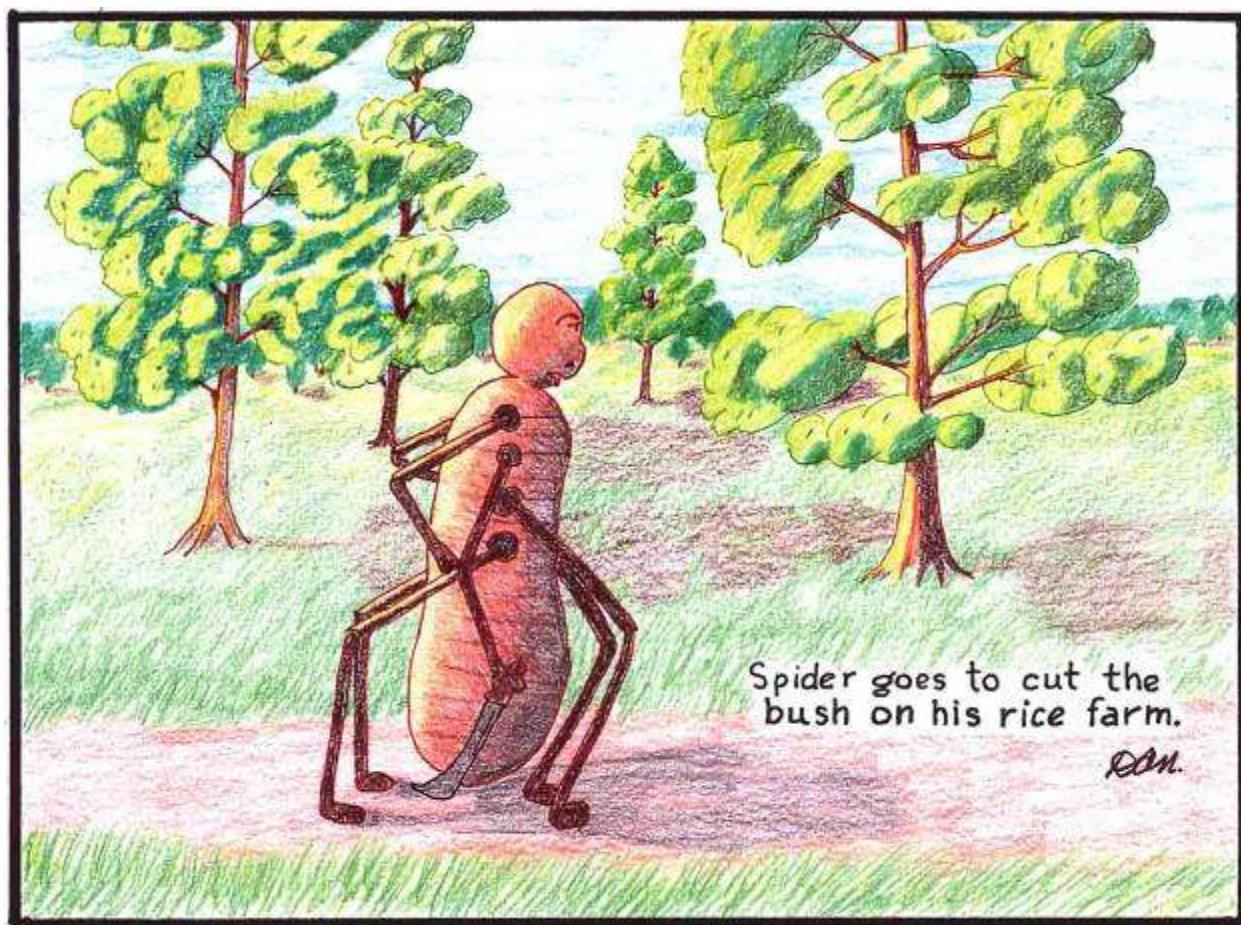
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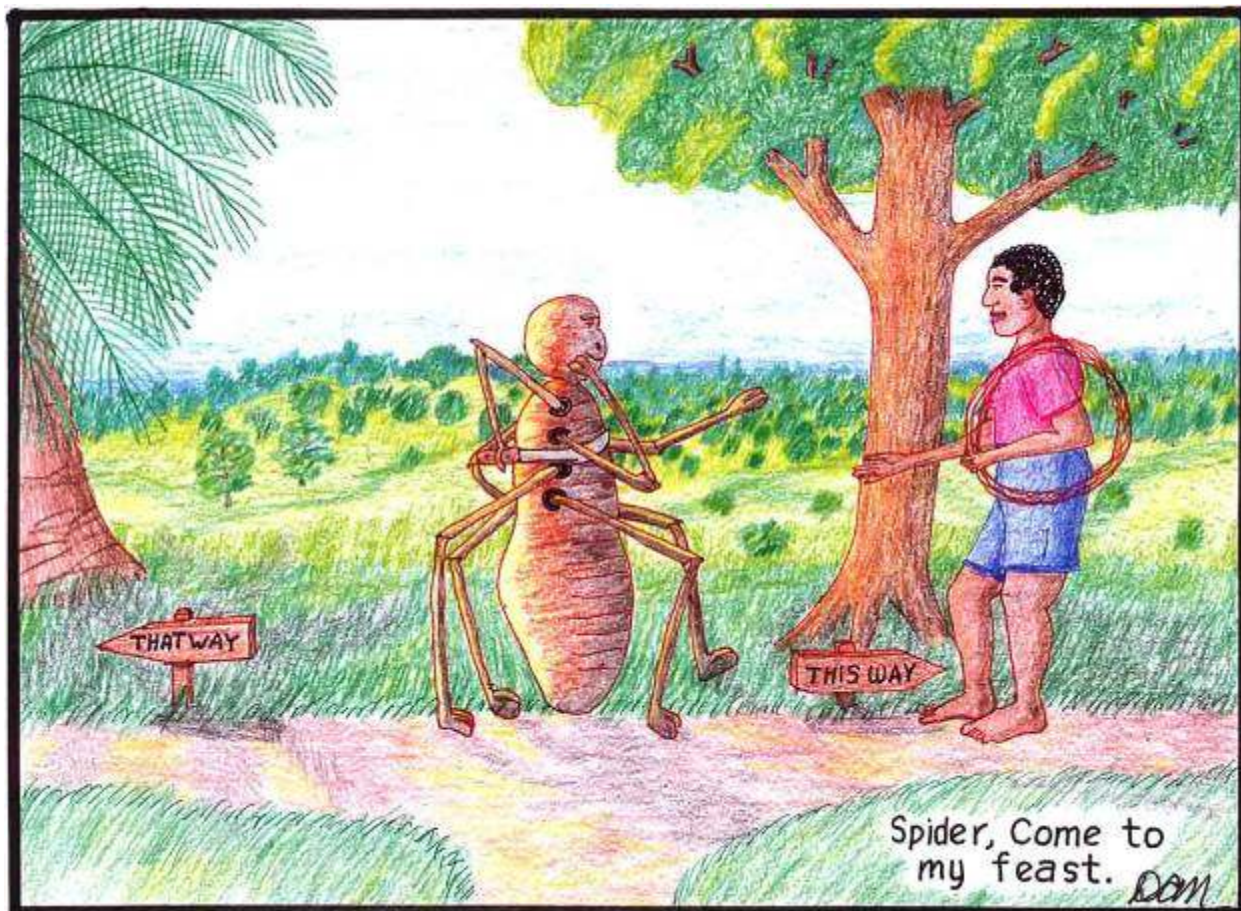


SPIDER'S TINY WAIST

Note to the reader: Words and phrases typical of West Africa are retained, and indicated by italics.

Spider hated work! Spider really liked to sit in the shade and sleep, ...or eat, ...or tell funny stories, ...or play. But to work - ugh! He did not know that the Bible said, “The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who answer discreetly” (Proverbs 26:16).

Spider walked along slowly with his cutlass under his arm. He was going to cut bush on his farm to plant rice. It was late; the sun was already getting hot and Spider was not even at his farm yet. Most of the other farmers had already cut the bush on their farms



and were just waiting for it to get dry enough to burn. Yes, Spider was late, for Spider hated work.

He came to the place where the path divided. One path led to the village of This Way, the other to the village of That Way. There he met a friend from the village of This Way.

"Hello, Spider, how are you today?"

"I am fine, my friend. How are you?"

"All right. And how is your family?"

"My family is well, and how is your farm?"

"All cut and ready to burn as soon as it gets a little drier. How are you coming with your farm?"

"Oh, mine is almost all cut. I am about to finish it today."

Spider lied because he had not even begun to cut the bush on his farm.

Of course the Bible says, "The Lord detests lying lips" (Proverbs 12:22a); but Spider either didn't know this or he chose to ignore it.

"Well, Spider, I came to ask you to my feast this evening. They are getting ready to cook just now."

Spider was delighted. "Oh, I am *too happy* to come to your feast."

"Come along with me. We can talk and have good company while they cook."

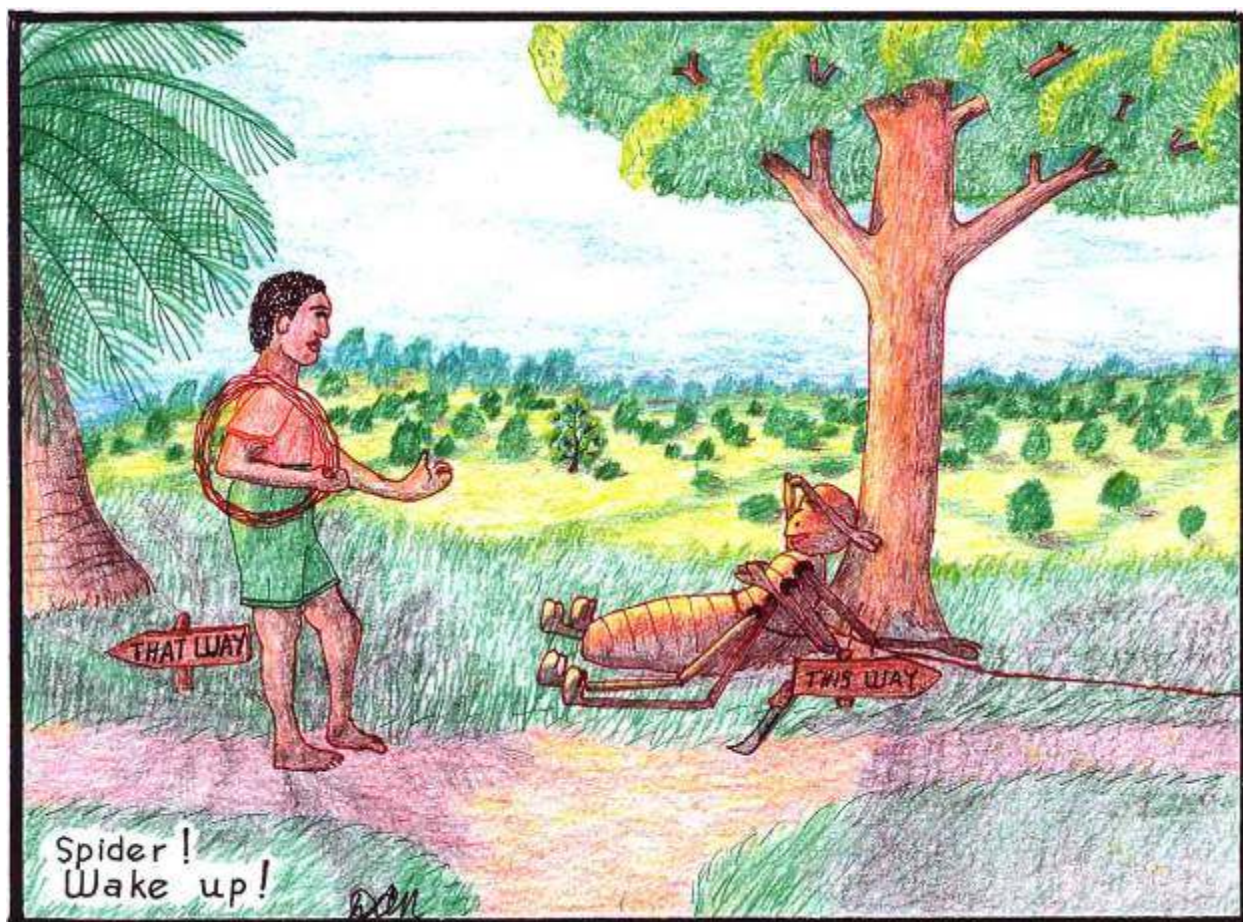
Spider thought to himself, "If I go now there will be plenty of work! The women will expect me to get water, to cut the wood, to pound the rice in the mortar, to - -, to - -, to do all sorts of work."

"My friend," Spider said, "I cannot come just now. I must finish cutting the bush on my farm. But I see that you have a long rope there. Tie one end of it around my waist and take the other end back to town. When the feast is ready, just pull the rope and I will come."

"Oh, you can *clever so!*" Spider's friend answered. He tied the rope around Spider's waist and went on to the town of This Way trailing the rope behind him.

Spider dropped his cutlass beside the path and sat down in the shade under a big tree. He had forgotten all about cutting bush. He thought only of the feast. He thought about a big dish full of rice with palm butter soup poured down over it. It had many big chunks of meat in it. Oh, yes, wasn't he the clever one. With that rope tied about his waist, he did not even have to go early and *catch hard time* with all that work. Work - ugh! Much nicer to sit here in the shade and dream about food. Ah yes--yes-s-s-----. Uh, uh, uh. Spider yawned and was soon fast asleep.

Time passed and the sun moved slowly across the sky. Suddenly Spider woke up. Someone was calling him.



"Spider! It is me, your friend from the village of That Way. Wake up! I want you to come to my feast."

"Oh yes, Whew, I'm sleepy. Feast? That Way? Sure, glad to come. When?"

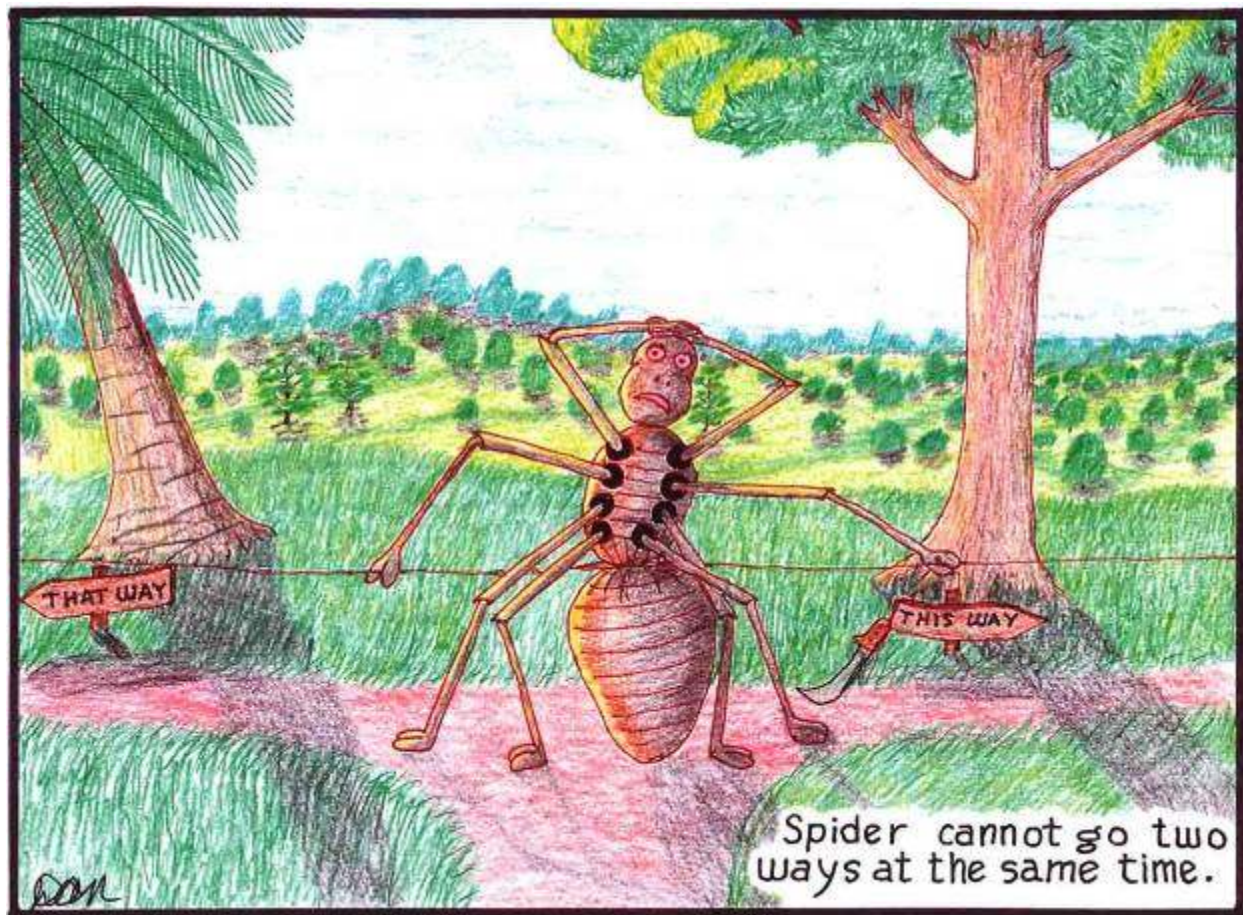
"Today! This evening. Why not just go back with me."

Spider looked up at the sun still high in the sky. It would be several hours before the feast was ready.

"Well, errr, not just now. Busy. . . Very busy. . . must cut the bush on my farm."

Spider was thinking fast now. He thought, "It is still early. I don't want *hard time* with all that work!"

Aloud he said, "*I say*, my friend, I want to finish brushing my farm. I see that you have a long rope there. Just tie it around my waist and when the feast is ready just pull on the rope and I will come."



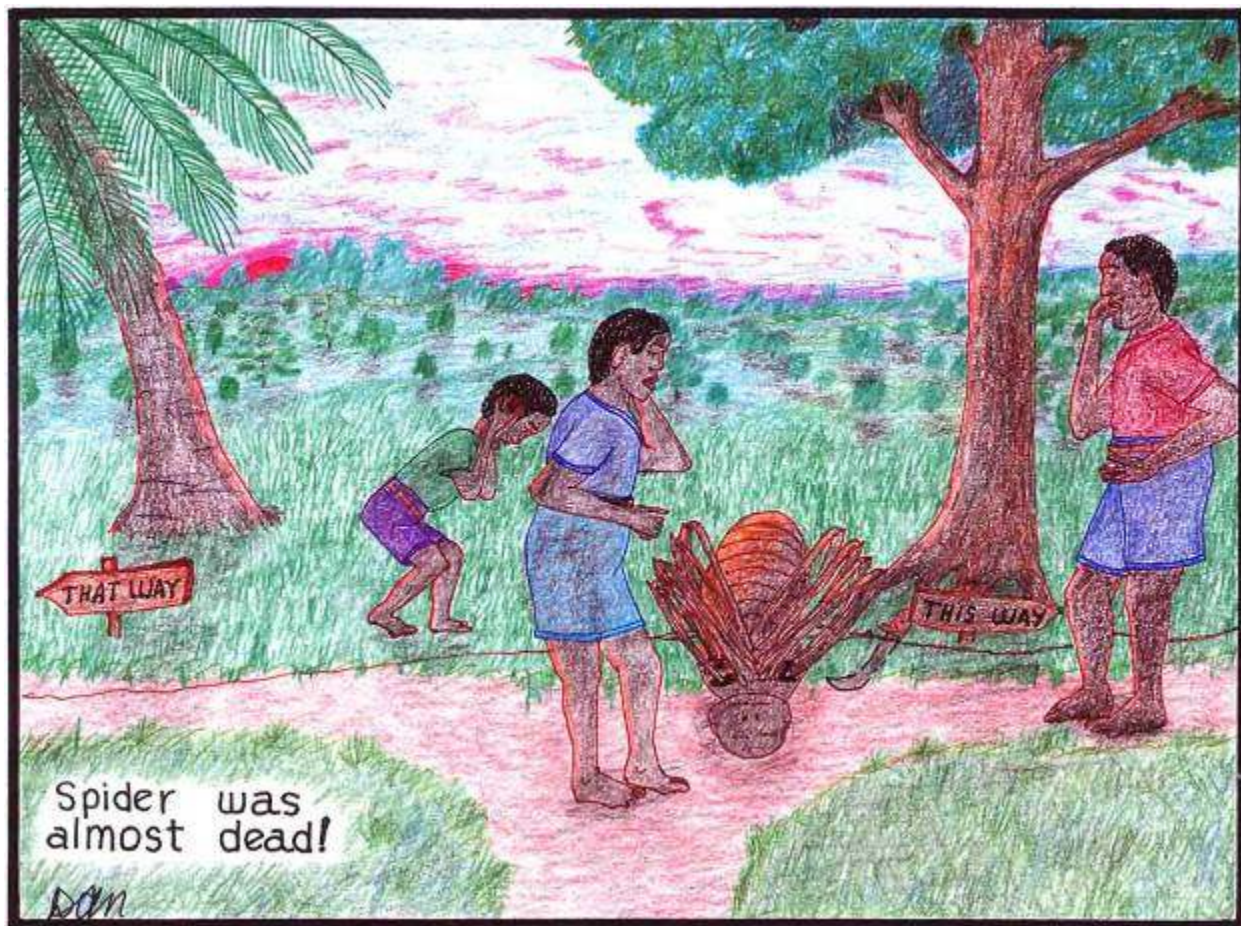
So, the man tied the rope around Spider's waist and went back to town.

Spider sat under the tree very content with himself. "Ha, ha, ha. Two feasts in one day and I don't have to help kill the cow or chop wood or carry water or pound rice. Myself, *I can clever so!*"

Spider sat there thinking of food, of fun, of funny stories. The sun sank lower and lower in the west.

Suddenly! a tug on the rope leading to the town of This Way! Spider got up. "Ehe, This Way is ready first." Spider started for This Way.

Oh! a pull comes from the town of That Way. "Oh no!" groaned Spider. "That Way is ready also. *I am in big trouble!*"



Spider was swayed back and forth with the tugging of the rope moaning, "This Way - That Way? This Way - That Way? "Which way shall I go?"

This Way rope was pulled again - harder!

That Way rope was also pulled harder!

"Which way? Which way?" Spider could not decide.

The people at This Way wondered why Spider did not come. They pulled much harder. That Way pulled much harder also.

"Which way? Which way?"

Spider was yanked first one way and then the other way.

The people at This Way said, "Why doesn't Spider come? Pull harder!"

The people at That Way said, "Make Spider come. Pull as hard as you can."

This Way and That Way jerked poor Spider back and forth. Spider did not come though they both pulled as hard as they could. Finally the people in both towns left the ropes, sat down and ate all the food.

When all the food was gone they decided to go see why Spider did not come. They found Spider lying on the ground almost dead. His waist was squeezed in until it was very tiny. Their ropes had almost cut him in two. To this day all spiders have very tiny waists. If you do not believe me go look at a spider and see for yourself.

Now, what does God's Word say? "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money" (Matthew 6:24).

We must cut the rope the devil has about us and go God's way.

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