

ANANSI AND THE BANANA BIRD

A tale from the Caribbean

Anansi the spider enjoyed eating the many different kinds of fruits found in the jungle. But, bananas were one of his favorites. Bananas were also a favorite of the Banana Birds. These birds were named after the fruit because they look a bit like bananas. Their yellow and black feathers enable them to blend in with the banana plants.

Once, just as the monsoon season was ending, the bananas began to ripen. This was when Anansi met up with a Banana Bird. Anansi commented on the bird's looks, saying that if it hadn't moved, the spider would have taken it for a banana. He laughed at how he might have tried to take a bite out of it.

The bird was not amused. In fact, it was a bit offended. So, he challenged Anansi to a race. Whichever got to Mr. Brown's banana plantation first would win. The winner could take away and eat as many bananas as he could carry. Both the spider and bird agreed to these terms.

Banana Bird was so sure he would win that he took his time getting to Mr. Brown's plantation. First he rested in the branches of a mango tree. Next he pecked at some cocoa plums. He rested on a branch by the ocean and let the sea breeze blow through his feathers. Last, but not least, the bird spent time jumping around on the beach.

Ever so slowly, Banana Bird flew toward Mr. Brown's plantation. He was that sure in his ability to win the race. How surprised he was when he arrived at the finish line, for there was Anansi, eating from the ripest fruits. When he got over his surprise, Banana Bird became angry. He wanted to know just how Anansi, the spider, managed to arrive at the plantation before he did.

Anansi laughed at the bird's question. He informed Banana Bird that he spun webs and climbed all the way to the plantation, not stopping for a single break. Unlike the bird that wasted much of his time, the spider slowly and steadily continued on his way, until he reached Mr. Brown's plantation.

Anansi was so happy about winning the race that he turned the events into a song. Banana Bird did not like hearing a song in which he was a loser so he flew off to other banana fields.

Because of his small size, Anansi was only able to carry four ripe bananas home to his family. These he gave to his wife and three children. When they realized that Anansi didn't keep any bananas for himself each of them offered him half of theirs.

So, Anansi's family each had a half a banana from Mr. Brown's plantation. How many did Anansi end up with?

Adapted by Kathleen Simonetta.

Inspired by the following tale:

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