

# Stories in the Street





With very many thanks to everybody who supported and took part in the project

Enfield Library Service: Lucy Love, Kris Rhodes, Clare Dalkin, Eminne ....., Geraldine Patterson, Andy .....

Nasreen Majiid from Raynham primary school

Judith Tomioka from St. John and St. James primary school

Kate Turnpenny from Wilbury primary school

Storytellers –

Hong Ying, Eunice Boadu, Patrice Reid, Helen Buller, Mrs. Topiwala, Elif Sariatun, Gulcan Sikirci, Halil Celik, Riittamaria Kukkonen, Muazzez Sahin, Sandra Bretherton

Children at Raynham primary school

Brooke Gibson, Eren Oz, Yaren Dirik, Andre Davies, Reece Ant, Kamile Budryte, Jose Georgeena, Althea Akano, Ashviny Ramanathan, Mahir Abdalla

Children at St. John and St. James primary school

Hope Osejindu, Fatimat Latey, Georgia Dixon, Paul Avoki, Kayvan Rowe, Donnel

Goshing-King, Michael Irvine-Asare, Kyle Chambers, Dylan Week, Rihanna Chinelo-Kirby, Elymma Mensah, Jade Branch-Thomas

Children at Wilberry primary school

Naseem Ahmed, Noble Nwokocha, Eliúde Cardoso, Muhammed Oztirak, Poyraz Sumbul, Ali Ali, Amari Gyamfi, Murat Keklik, Erdi Tas, Abadi Ebbe, Diogo Barros-Angelico, Marie Stelmakh

# Stories in the Street

## Contents

Introduction

Boatman and the Professor

Heaven and Hell

The Tortoise and the  
Hat Shaking Dance

Cigaal and his Horse

The Tortoise  
and the Guitar

Anansi and the Banana Tree

The Hodja and the  
Missing Legs

Hodja and the Donkey

The Fox and the Cockerel

Topiwallah

The Woman and  
her Daughters

Monkey and the Tumult  
in Heaven

Anansi and Dog and  
the Pot of Porridge

# Introduction

This is a book of stories. I heard all of them in Edmonton between August 2010 and March 2011. The stories didn't come from a book or from the internet, they came from the mouths of people living here in Enfield. Many of the people who told these stories have come from far away. But they have brought with them something infinitely precious – the stories they heard when they were children.

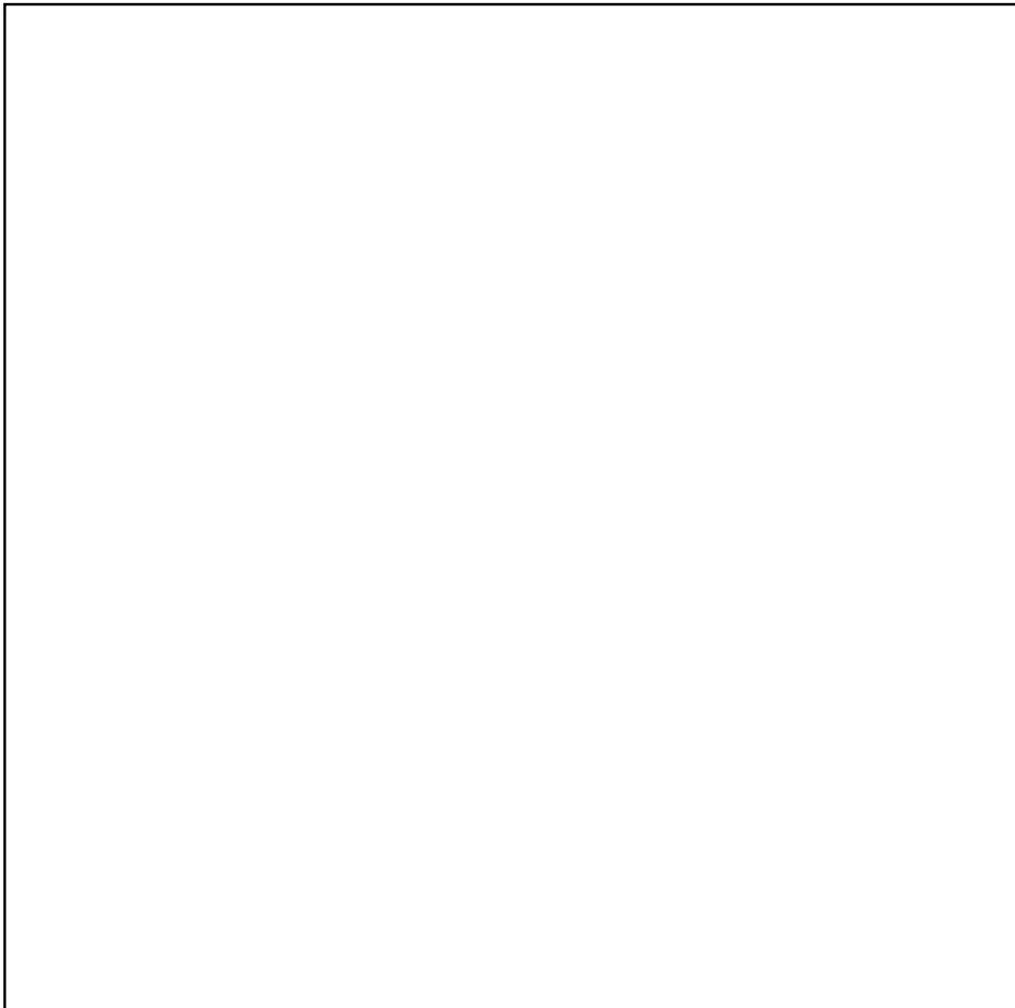
I organised storytelling sessions in local libraries and schools, and invited parents to meet me and swap stories with me. I heard many stories, and afterwards I always asked about how the storyteller had first heard that story. This is why stories are so important, because they are told face to face, and the person who listens can ask questions and join with the storyteller in learning about the past, about the place where the story came from and about the world that the story talks about.

Many of the storytellers explained that they had heard their stories when they were children, but that they were afraid that today's generation of children would not be interested in them. Storytelling has to compete with a lot of rivals for childrens' attention. TV, computer games and films can seem more exciting and interesting than a story. But a story captures the imagination of the listener far more completely than a film or a computer game. A story when it is told well begins in the mind of the storyteller, but it comes to life in the mind and the imagination of the listener. A story connects a speaker with a listener and provides a profound sense of being part of a shared world. Nothing else can do this so well.

I took these stories to local schools and told them again to children. The children responded with stories of their own, and with illustrations. We used the illustrations they made in this book, and we used their voices in the DVD we made.

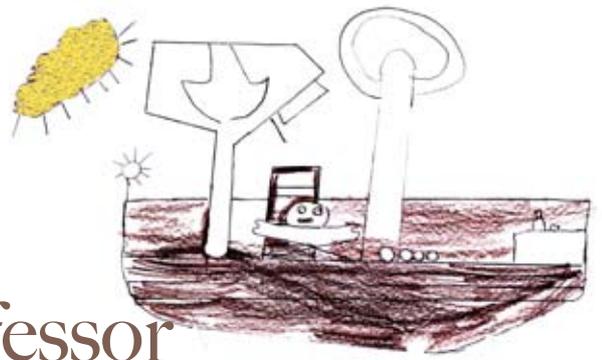
I hope you enjoy reading all these stories and looking at the beautiful illustrations that accompany them. And if you want to know more about the people who told them, and what value they place on storytelling, then please watch the film on our DVD below.

These stories were told in the hope that they would continue to be told, and continue to be meaningful to the next generation. I hope that this wish comes true.



“I heard this story when I was at school in Bangladesh. We used to hear this story from the teacher. I don’t know a lot of stories, I think it is because I grew up when there was a war in my country. There wasn’t time to talk, and people were afraid. I remember that my family was in Pakistan when the war broke out and we had to be careful, to hide and not go out of the house. Finally we managed to get home to Bangladesh...”





# Boatman and the Professor

from **Bangladesh**

Once there was a man who made his living by rowing a boat across a river. He had been rowing the same boat across the same river for the whole of his life. One day a very well dressed man came to the river bank and said “Will you take me across? I have an important meeting to attend.”

The boatman steadied the boat, and the man got in. As he rowed his passenger across the river, the boatman said to him “Who are you sir, if you don’t mind me asking?” “Well”, replied the man, “I am a professor.” “You must have a lot of knowledge”, said the boatman. “Yes, I do”, replied the professor, smugly. “But what about you? What do you know?” he asked the boatman. “I don’t know anything, sir”, said the boatman, “I have never been to school”. “You’ve never been to school?” The professor started to laugh. “So, do you know how to read?” “No”, said the boatman. “Well, you must be one hundred percent ignorant...” said the professor. “Do you know how to write?” “No”, said the boatman. “Good gracious, you must be two hundred percent ignorant”, said the professor. “Do you know about anthropology, or astronomy, or trigonometry, or sociology or the macroeconomy...” “Stop, stop, stop”, said the boatman, “I don’t know anything...”

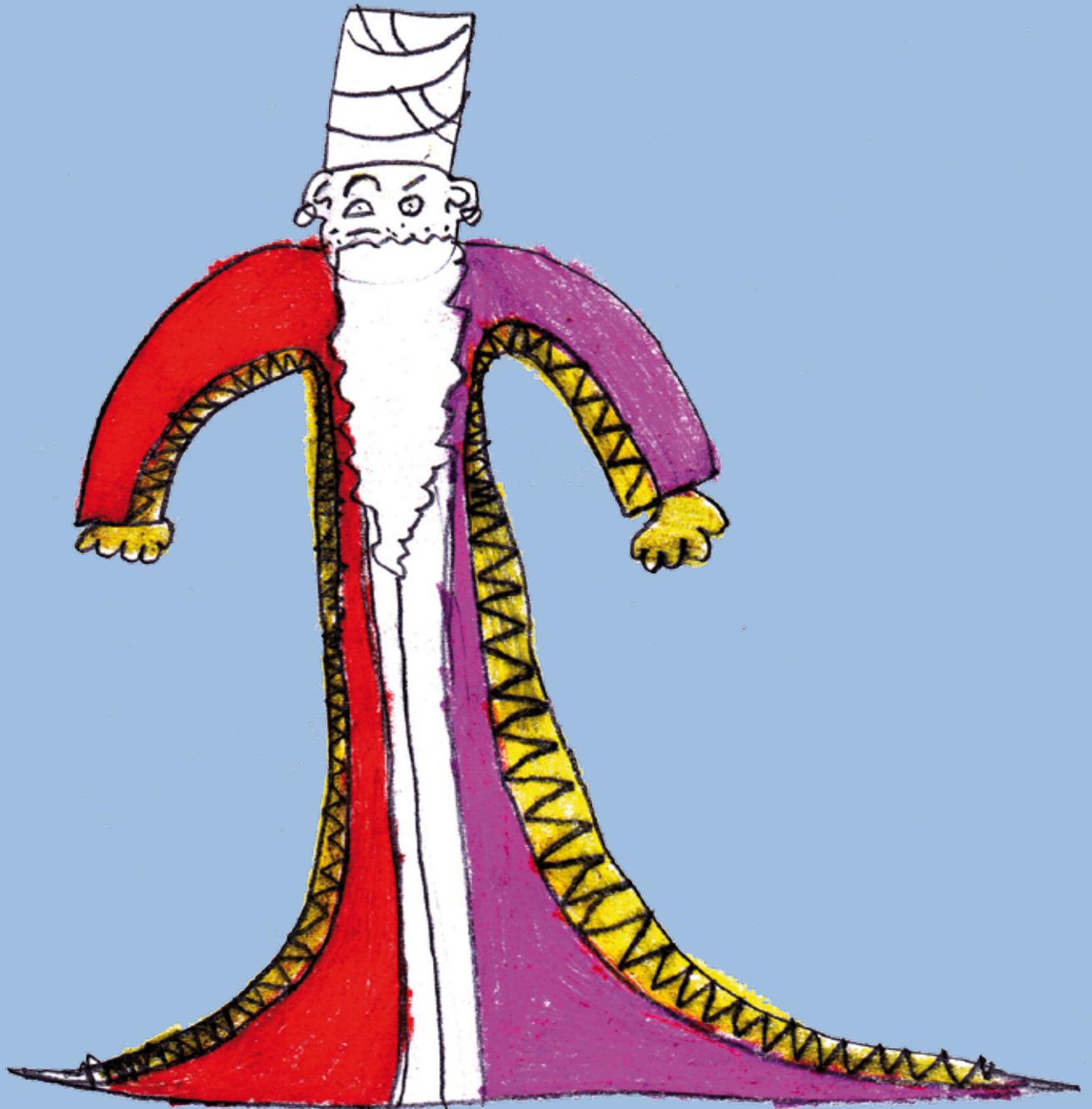
The professor started to laugh, but at that moment, a wave rocked the boat, and the boat started to tip over, then another wave swooshed over the top of the boat and it tipped upside down. The boatman and the professor fell into the water.

The boatman immediately started to swim strongly, pushing with his arms and legs through the water with ease. After a few strokes he turned round. He saw the professor was still clinging onto the boat. Only his head was above the water, and he was shivering.

Suddenly the boatman started to laugh. “Hey, professor, do you know how to swim?” The professor could hardly talk he was shivering so much, but finally he said “No, I don’t know how to swim...” “Well”, said the boatman, “you must be three hundred percent ignorant...” He went back to help the professor get to the river bank. Then the boatman went on his way, and as he went he said to himself “I thought I was ignorant, but I’m not, I know something that not even a professor knows.”

“I heard stories when I was a young girl, about thirteen years old. That is a long long time ago now. I heard them from my aunts. And I used to hear stories from my gran, she told us lots and lots of stories. I used to tell them to my grandchildren when I came to this country, but now I haven’t told them for a few years.

In Africa there is always a song that goes with a story, I wish I could remember the songs that go with this story, but I haven’t thought about the story for a long time.....”



# Heaven and Hell

from Cyprus



There was a wise man who used to answer peoples' questions. One day a man came to him and said "Tell, me, what is the difference between heaven and hell?" The wise man said "come with me, I will show you. "

He took the other man by the hand, and suddenly it seemed as though they were transported to a different place. "Where are we?" asked the man. "We are in hell", said the wise man. The other man was very scared, but when he looked at the scene around him, he stopped being frightened. He saw that the place was filled with people and that they were bending over a big pot that was buried in the ground. When he looked inside the pot, he saw that it was filled with food. It smelled delicious. "How can this be hell?" asked the man. "Just watch", replied the wise man. The man saw that each person had a long spoon, with the handle of the spoon tied along their arms. The spoons were very long, and each person could reach down into the pot of food and dip into it with their spoon. But when they pulled their spoons out and tried to feed themselves, they couldn't reach the end of the spoon with their mouths. They shouted with frustration, some people were crying some people were cursing, everybody was starving with hunger. "Now, that is hell", said the wise man.

Then he took the other man by the hand, and suddenly they were somewhere else. "Where are we now?" "Now, you are in heaven", said the wise man. The other man looked around, and to his surprise, he saw that there was another pot, and some more people gathered around it. And they had the same long spoons tied onto their arms. And they were dipping the spoons into the pot and pulling them out. But this time, when each person lifted out their spoon, they didn't try to feed themselves, no, instead they offered their spoon to someone opposite them. The person opposite could reach the end of the spoon and eat from it. And then they offered their spoon in return. Everybody was eating, everybody was happy.

The wise man turned to the man who had asked him the question. "Now this is the difference between heaven and hell", he said....

“My mum used to tell me stories when I was in my village. She must have told us hundreds of stories, they are all stories that teach something. I will try to remember some more...”



# The Tortoise and the Hat Shaking Dance

from Ghana



Tortoise was always getting into trouble and playing tricks. One day he was invited to a party at somebody's house. He was very happy "I am sure there will be food there, and I will be able to dance as well..." He put on his best clothes, and then he put on his best hat, and then he went out.

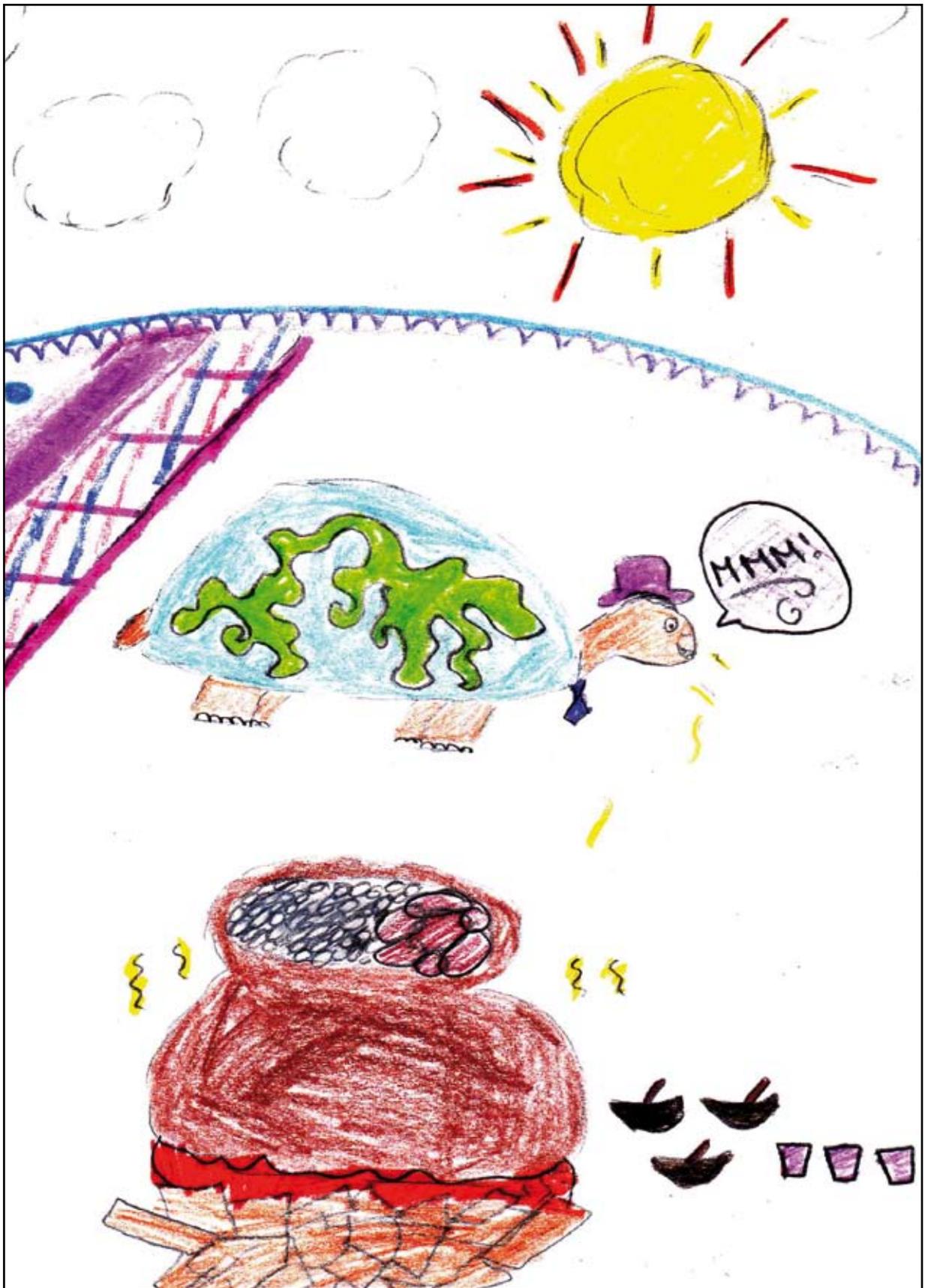
When he got to the house, he was shown inside and he sat in a room with other people. His host said to him "We are still cooking the food, and when it is ready, then the party can begin..." Tortoise sat there for a while, but he was getting hungrier and hungrier, and what is worse, he could smell the cooking smells coming down the corridor. Finally, he couldn't stand it any longer. "Er...um... I need to go to the toilet..." The other people told him that he should go if he had to go, and tortoise started to walk down the corridor to the yard at the back of the house, to find the toilet. But he didn't really want to go to the toilet, he just wanted an excuse to go to the kitchen. As he went passed the kitchen door he looked inside. There was nobody there...and the pot of food was bubbling and boiling and smelled delicious.

Tortoise reached up and dipped his hand into the pot. Then he snatched it out again. He had a big handful of meat. It was hot, hot, hot!!! He wanted to eat it, but it was so hot, he didn't dare put it in his mouth. Then he heard footsteps coming down the corridor. What could he do? He had to hide the food, he didn't want his host to see how greedy he was. He didn't know where to put it. The footsteps were getting nearer...he had to do something. His hand was burning... Suddenly tortoise pulled off his hat and pushed the food into his hat. But what was he going to do with his hat? Now the footsteps were really close...So tortoise just pushed his hat back onto his head. Then he saw his host. "Tortoise, what are you doing?" Tortoise felt something burning his head. The pain was terrible. He started to move his head from side to side. Tears started to roll down his face. "Tortoise, what's the matter, why are you crying, why are you twitching your head like that?" "Oh..." said the tortoise... "Oh.....it's because....ouch...ouch..." And now tortoise started to jump up and down. And he ran down the corridor, and he ran into the front room and he

started to jump up and down and shout. But he didn't dare take off his hat, because then everybody would find out what he had done....So he said "I'm crying because I'm so happy to be here...and I'm moving like this...because I've just invented a new dance...yes...it's called the Hat Shaking Dance...." And tortoise started to jump and shake his head and shout. And the people at the party started to laugh. "Let's all do the dance, let's all do the hat shaking dance...." And they all started to move like tortoise. And finally tortoise couldn't stand it any longer. He ran out of the house, and he ran all the way home. And only then did he pull off his hat. His head was burned, and the pain was terrible. All his hair had been burned off his head..

And whenever people saw tortoise again, they used to say "hey, tortoise, will you do the hat shaking dance...." And now you know why it is that from that day to this tortoises have been completely bald.



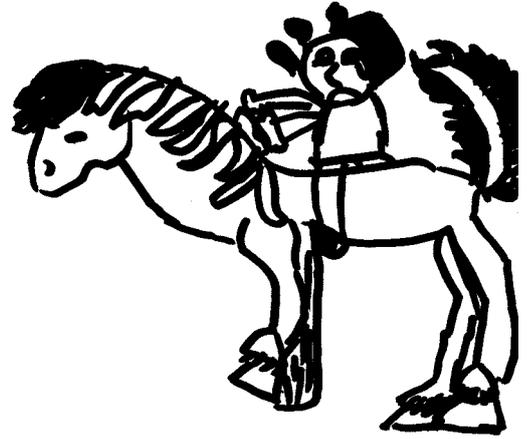


“I was in Somali and the Civil War started. I thought it was going to be over quickly, but it never stopped. I remember that I wanted to visit one of my friends, this was in Mogadishu, and I started to walk across the town to see her. But I met some one who said to me “don’t go that way, the war is happening there...” So I went by a different route. But then I saw burned out buildings and I heard sounds. So I went back and I never managed to see her. And then I heard that she had gone up to the North of the country. And then that she had left. Many years went by, and I came to England. And I found my friend there too. I couldn’t find her in Mogadishu, but I found her in Ealing! And when we were in Somalia we used to work on a newspaper. Now here in England we have started an organisation. And we have given it the same name as the newspaper....”



# Cigaal and his Horse

from Somalia



Cigaal is a man who is always boasting and pretending that he can do things that he really can't. One day he had a horse, and he heard that there was going to be a great battle somewhere. He said to everybody "I am going to fight in that battle. I am going to be a great hero. I will be given a lot of medals, everybody will be singing my name...."

Nobody believed him, but Cigaal got on his horse and went riding towards the battle. As he got nearer and nearer, he started to feel more and more frightened. He heard shouts and screams and the sound of bullets and eventually he threw himself off his horse, and started to run away. He ran and he ran so fast that before he knew it, he was back where he started. The people all saw him. "Eh, Cigaal, what happened to you? Did you become a hero? What did you do?" "Oh, yes", said Cigaal. "I fought and I fought on my horse, I was in the middle of the battle, I was fighting, everybody was shouting my name, there were bullets flying everywhere, but I wasn't afraid, I was fighting and fighting". "Then why are you here?" "Well", said Cigaal, my horse was shot from underneath me. It was killed. I had nothing else to take me into the battle. So I came home again."

At that moment, somebody saw something coming towards them in the distance. It was Cigaal's horse. The horse knew how to get home just like Cigaal. The people started to laugh. "Eh, Cigaal, you know that horse that was shot from underneath you? The one that was killed? Well, here it is...." Cigaal looked at the horse, and looked at the people. He didn't know what to say. And the people just laughed and laughed and said "Cigaal, you've been making things up again haven't you...."

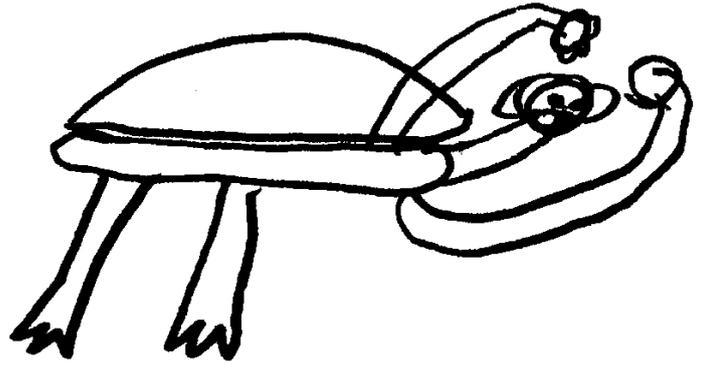


“I heard stories from my aunt in her village. We didn’t live in a village, but we went to visit her during the school holidays. She didn’t have electricity, and we had a kerosene lamp during the evenings. My gran used to gather us together, all the children and tell us she was going to tell a story. And we always used to say “does it have a song in?” And when she said “Yes”, we were very excited, because we loved to hear the song as well as the story...”



# The Tortoise and the Guitar

from Zambia



Once there was a beautiful pool of water. All the animals used to go there to drink. There was a crocodile that lived in the middle of the pool and when the animals gathered around the edges to drink, they were careful to keep well clear of the crocodile. One day, a tortoise came to the pool. He was holding a guitar. He started to play it. He played Congolese Rumba, then he played Nigerian Hi-Life, then he played Soukous, then he played Afrobeat... The animals loved his music and they laughed and started to dance by the pool. They started to shout out “Hey, tortoise, you are the best....”

But the crocodile was watching and the crocodile was listening. And he said to himself “How dare this tortoise be so popular. I am the best, not the tortoise. I will get hold of that guitar. Then the animals will realise that I am the best.” The crocodile rose out of the water, and the animals ran away. But the tortoise was still playing and he didn’t notice. The crocodile opened his huge mouth and lunged at the tortoise. Just in time, the tortoise saw the crocodile and threw down the guitar and ran.... The crocodile laughed to himself. “Now I have the guitar. Now I will play it...” But when the crocodile touched the guitar, nothing happened. When he tried to pluck the strings, they just made a terrible sound. Because the crocodile didn’t know how to play the guitar. And the tortoise was so furious with the crocodile. “How dare the crocodile take my guitar? He can’t even play it. That makes me so angry....” The tortoise crept back to the pool of water. He was so angry that he started to drink the water in the pool and he didn’t stop. He drank and he drank and he kept drinking until his belly was filled with water. And the pool was empty.

Suddenly the crocodile found that he was standing in mud. And the other animals came to the pool to drink, but there was no water there.

“What’s happened to the water?” they all said. “I’ve drunk all the water. It’s in my belly. And I won’t give it back until the crocodile gives me back the guitar...” The animals looked at the crocodile. “Please, please, please, give the guitar back to the tortoise....”

The crocodile didn’t want to listen to them. “Why should I do something just because a stupid tortoise says I have to?” so the crocodile said... “NO!”

“Please, please, please give the guitar back to the tortoise. Or we won’t have anything to drink....”

“NO!!!”

“Please, please, please give the guitar back to the tortoise, or we’re all going to die of thirst....”

“NO!!!!!!!!”

“Please, please, please, give the guitar back to the tortoise, or our dead bodies are going to rot next to the pool....”

“NO!!!!!!!!!!!!”

“Please, please, please, give the guitar back to the tortoise, or our dead bodies are going to rot and stink and make a horrible smell....”

And the crocodile was feeling thirsty. And the animals were begging and pleading and asking him. And finally he said.

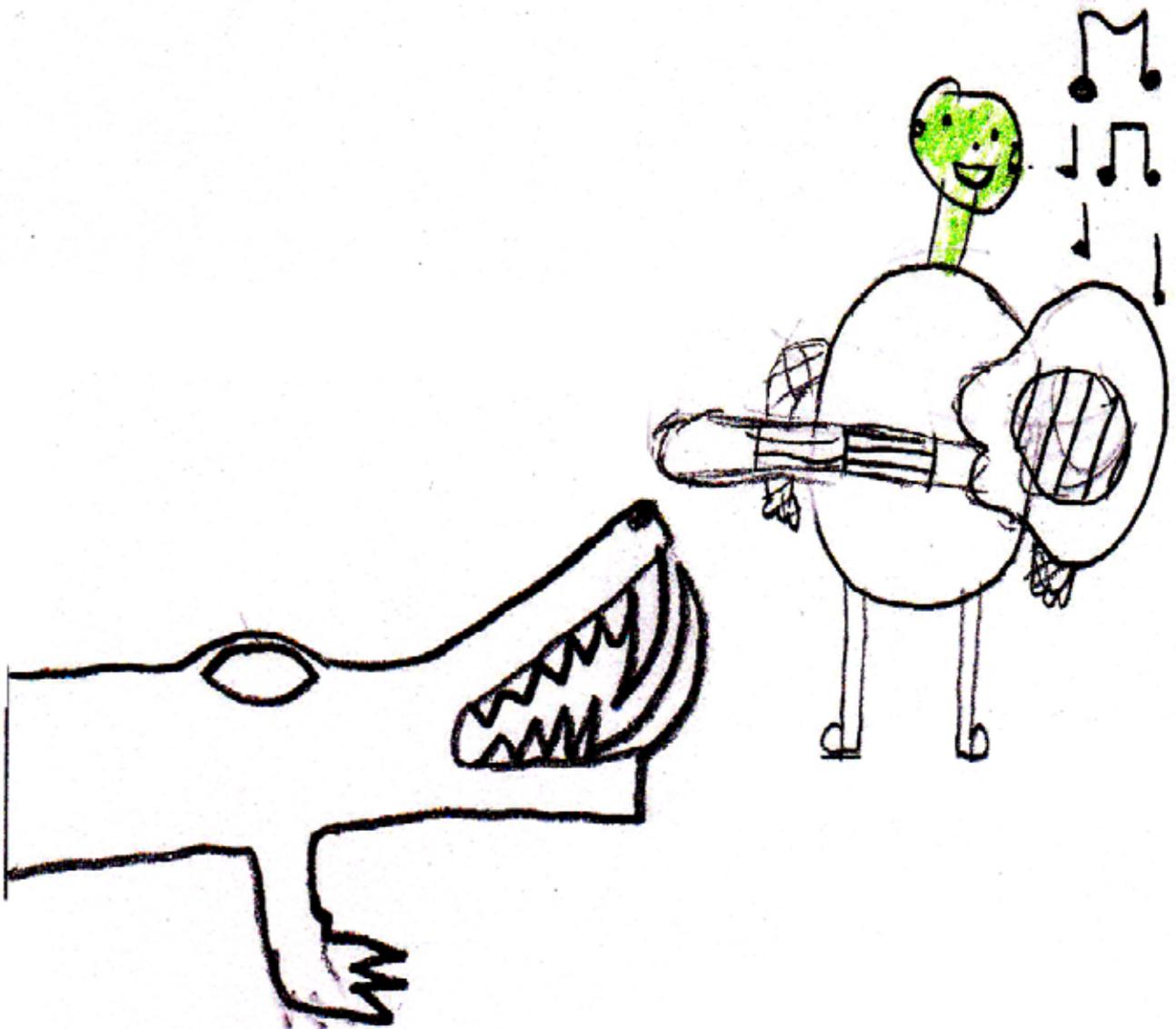
“WELL. ALRIGHT THEN.....”

And the crocodile put the guitar back on the side of the pool. And the tortoise picked it up. And he tuned the strings and he started to play. But the animals didn’t dance, because they were so thirsty. They all said

“Please, please, please give us back the water....”

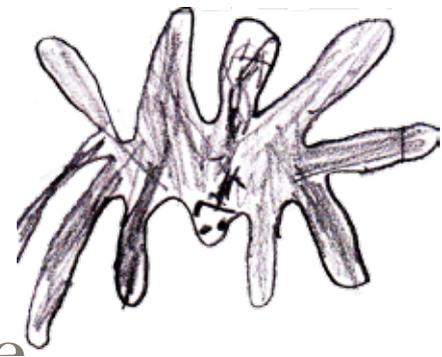
And the tortoise opened his mouth, and started to sing, and as he sang, the water started to come out of his belly again, and it started to fill the pool, and the animals started to splash around and drink the water, and the crocodile started to splash around with them, and the tortoise started to play his guitar. And he played Congolese Rumba, then he

played Nigerian Hi-Life, then he played Soukous, then he played Afrobeat. And the animals were all dancing and the crocodile was dancing with them, and from that moment onwards, when the tortoise came to the side of the pool with his guitar, even the crocodile called out. “Hey, tortoise, come and play for us. Because you are the best.....”



“I heard this story from my great grandmother. She told me stories all the time. This was the very last story that she told me before she passed away...”





# Anansi and the Banana Tree

From Ghana

Anansi lived with his wife and his three children. He always said to them “Don’t worry, I will look after you. I am your dad, you are my children...”

One day a terrible famine came to the land and there was nothing to eat. Anansi looked at his children, and they were all crying. “Please dad, find us something to eat...” Anansi said to his wife “don’t worry, I will find food for the children.” Then Anansi said, “come with me...”

Anansi and his three children started to walk through the land. Wherever they went they saw dead animals and dead trees. There was nothing to eat. Then in the distance, Anansi saw a tree. When he got nearer, he saw something growing in the tree. Bananas. At last, they had found some food. As he walked towards the tree, he started to think to himself “I am a grownup, I should eat more food than children. They might be hungry, but I am even more hungry. I must have some food too...”

When they got to the tree, anansi looked up. There were three bananas hanging from the tree. He looked at his three children, and they were all so happy. “Look, dad, it’s bananas, we can each have one can’t we?” “Well”, said anansi, “Yes, I suppose so....” He climbed the tree and got all the way to the top, and he picked the three bananas. When he got down to the ground. He said to his children “now, line up and I will give you something to eat one by one...” The first child stepped forward and anansi said to him “Now, I have been up the tree and got the bananas, so why don’t we have an agreement. I will take half and you will take half. That’s fair isn’t it?” The child nodded, and anansi divided the banana in half and kept half for himself and gave half to his first child. Then the second child stepped forward and anansi said “Look, here is a banana. But I did all the work to get it, so why don’t we split it between us?” The child nodded, and anansi took half the banana and gave half to his second child. Finally the third child stepped forward. “Look, here is a banana. But I’m hungry too, so we should go shares in it, shouldn’t we? The third child nodded, and Anansi gave half the banana to himself and gave half to his third child.

So anansi ended up with three halves of three bananas. And each of his children ended up with half a banana each. Was that right? Surely anansi should have fed his children first, but he kept the biggest share for himself.

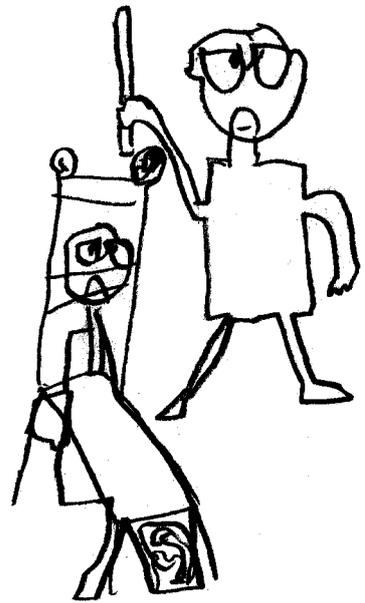
This story shows you that you should not be greedy, but you should think first of the people who are depending on you....

“Nasrudden Hoca is very famous in Turkey. He lived in Turkey in the 17C and there is a statue of him in the village where he was born. Everybody in Turkey knows these stories...”



# The Hodja and the Missing Legs

from Turkey



Hodja is a wise man. And a foolish man. And he is a clever man. And a stupid man. He is very mixed up. But whatever he does, you have to laugh.

One day there were some children sitting by the side of the road, and they saw Hodja coming towards them. “Let’s play a trick on Hodja, and see what he does”. They all started to laugh, but they hid their laughter and they sat down by the side of the road and pushed their legs forward. Then they put their legs out in different directions and twisted their legs round, and pushed their legs underneath and over the top of their neighbours legs. By the time Hodja reached them, the children were sitting on the ground with their legs all mixed up. Then the children pretended to cry. “What’s the matter?” asked Hodja, “why are you crying?” “We’re crying because we’ve mixed up our legs”, said the children, trying not to laugh. “We don’t know which leg is which. We don’t know whose leg is whose. We don’t know how we are ever going to find out. Please help us....”

Hodja guessed that the children were making fun of him. So he said to himself “I think I will teach them a lesson too...” He said to the children “I think I can help you find your legs. It is very difficult, but I think I can do it...” The children could only just hold in their laughter. “Please, Hodja, help us...” So hodja reached into the long pocket in his coat, and he pulled out..... A stick. And he lifted the stick and suddenly, he hit the children across the back with it. THWACK. And then again. THWACK. And by the third time, the children all jumped up and Hodja was aiming the stick at them again, but now they were running away from him. “Hodja’s gone crazy”, they were shouting, “he’s trying to hit us. Ouch....Ouch...”

But the Hodja was laughing. “Now, look, you all know where your legs are now don’t you.... You should be grateful to me. If it wasn’t for me, you would still be sitting there, unable to find your legs. Look how much I have helped you....”

“Nasrudden Hoca is very famous in Turkey. He lived in Turkey in the 17C and there is a statue of him in the village where he was born. Everybody in Turkey knows these stories...”



# Hodja and the Donkey

from Turkey



One day the hodja had some things he wanted to sell in the market. He put them in a big basket and loaded the basket onto his donkey. He walked along the road, with his donkey next to him and soon they arrived at the market.

The basket was heavy and when he took it off the donkey's back, the animal was very relieved. Then hodja started to sell his wares to people passing by. He wanted to attract their attention, so he called out. "Who will buy from me? Very good prices!!! Everything cheap!!!!" And every time hodja called out, the donkey called out as well. The donkey said "HEEEHAAAAAW. HEEEEEEHAAAAW". Hodja looked at the donkey and said "SSSHHH". And then he called out again "Who will buy from me? Very good prices!!! Everything cheap!!!!" But again, the donkey called out too. "HEEEHAAAAAW. HEEEEEEHAAAAW".

Eventually the hodja turned to his donkey in exasperation. "Look", he said "are you selling these goods or am I ?".....



“This story is one I remember from school. In Iran we used to use stories to study language and to learn about grammar. It is from a famous collection of stories in Iran.”





# The Fox and the Cockerel

from Iran

Once there was a cockerel who lived in a tree in the farmyard. He always woke up early in the morning, before the sun had risen. Then he would open his mouth. Then he would sing “COCKERDOODLEDOO....” There was a fox who used to come into the farmyard looking for something to eat. He saw the cockerel in the tree, and wanted to eat him. “How can I eat him, if he always stays up there in the tree?” thought the fox. “I can’t climb up there, so I must persuade him to come down here...” When he heard the cockerel singing, he had a good idea.

The fox waited at the bottom of the tree until the cockerel had stopped. Then the fox called out to him. “Hello up there. Can you hear me?” “Who’s that?” said the cockerel. “I can’t see you there. Who are you and what do you want?” “I am your biggest fan”, said the fox. “I always sit at the bottom of the tree so that I can hear you when you sing in the morning. You have the most beautiful voice in the world. It is so strong and pure and sweet...” “Do you really think so?” said the cockerel. He was so pleased to receive such complements. “Yes, you know, you are right. I do have a beautiful voice.” “It’s only a shame that nobody gets to hear it”, said the fox. “I mean, you should have a recording contract, you should be on TV, you should be making records and then everybody would hear you.” “Yes, yes, you are right”, said the cockerel, feeling very happy. “But how can I ever do that?” “Well, if you come down here, and meet me, I can help you”, said the fox. “You see, I know people in the recording business, I am sure I could introduce you....” The cockerel was so excited. He started to hop from branch to branch. When he got down to the lowest branch, he jumped off it and fluttered down to the bottom of the tree. There was the fox. “I am so happy to meet you”, said the fox. “Will you sing again for me, so I can listen once more to your voice. And this time, might I suggest that you close your eyes when you sing. That’s what all the best singers do...” “Yes, is it? Yes, you are right. Yes, I’ll close my eyes”, said the cockerel. And he closed his eyes, and stretched out his neck and opened his mouth. And at that moment....the fox....POUNCED....

The fox opened his mouth and gripped the cockerel’s neck. The fox started to run off with the cockerel held firmly in his jaws. The fox started to growl. “Let me go”, shouted the cockerel, but he could hardly breathe because the fox was gripping his

throat. "I thought you wanted to help me..." The fox was growling, his mouth full of the cockerel. "No.No. I am a fox. Why should I help you. No. No. I just tricked you. No. I am going to eat you..." And the fox kept running, heading for the forest. And now the cockerel realised what had happened. "Why was I so stupid? Why did I believe what the fox said to me? I was so vain. I let myself be tricked. Why was I so pleased with myself?"

Then the cockerel had an idea. He said "Mr. Fox. You have tricked me so well. You must be the cleverest animal in the world. You must be so happy to be so clever..." And the fox thought to himself "Yes, it was a good trick. Yes I am very clever..." And the cockerel said "if I was as clever as that, do you know what I would do? I would shout out to the whole world. I would let them know what I had done. Because if you don't tell them, nobody will know how clever you are..." And the fox thought "yes, I should do that. I should tell everybody what I have done. Then they will know just how clever I am..."

And the fox stopped. And the fox opened his mouth. And the cockerel...FELL OUT. And the fox started to shout "I am so clever. I tricked the cockerel. I could trick anybody. I'm cleverer than everybody in the world." And then he realised that he had let the cockerel fall from his jaws. He looked around, but





the cockerel had disappeared. Then he heard a sound from a tall tree nearby.  
“COCKERDOODLEDOO....”

The fox looked up into the tree. Right at the top he could see the cockerel. “Cockerel, come down. Don’t stay up there. I want to help you”, said the fox. “No you don’t”, said the cockerel. “You just played a trick on me. I was so vain I believed you. But now I know that I shouldn’t believe what people say to me....”

And from that moment onwards, the cockerel always stayed safe in the tree. And whenever the fox came into the farmyard, the cockerel thought to himself “I mustn’t be boastful any more. I must be helpful...” And then he would warn all the other animals that the fox was there. Then he would cry out “COCKERDOODLEDOO....”

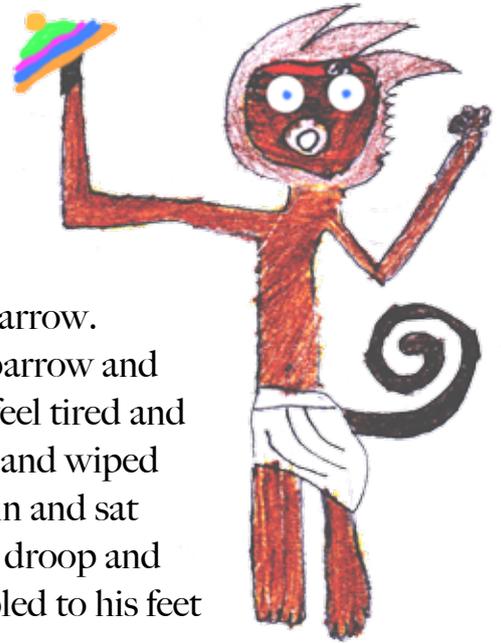
“This story is a story that used to be in a book that we read when we were in school in Gujerat. It is one I tell now, because my name is Topiwallah, and the story is about a Topiwallah, which is someone who makes hats.”



# Topiwallah

from India

There was a man in India who used to make hats. He made them in all shapes and sizes, beautiful colourful hats and bowler hats, and top hats and cloth hats, and ladies hats and gentlemen's hats. He was called Topiwallah, which is another way of saying “the hat maker.”



One day he decided to go to the market to sell his hats. He took a great pile of them and put them in his wheel barrow. Then he put a hat on his own head, lifted up the wheel barrow and started to walk to the market. On the way, he started to feel tired and he stopped under the shade of a tree. He took off his hat and wiped the sweat from his forehead. Then he put his hat on again and sat down in the shade of the tree. Soon his eyelids started to droop and he fell asleep. A little while later, he woke up. He scrambled to his feet and he went back to his wheel barrow. But the wheel barrow was empty. The hats had vanished. He looked around, thinking some one had stolen them. Then he realised what had happened.

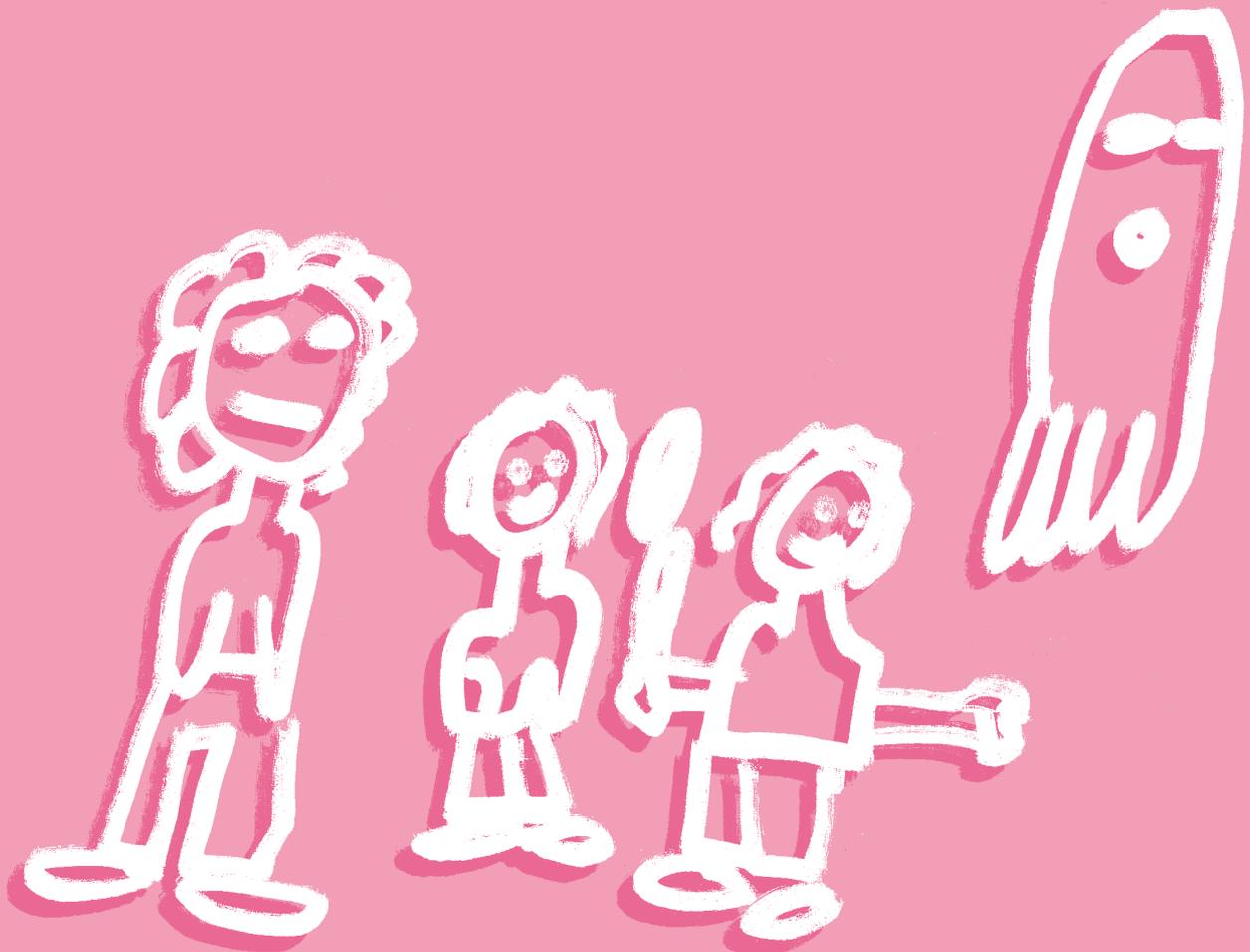
The tree where he had stopped was full of monkeys. And each one of those monkeys was wearing one of Topiwallah's hats. The small monkeys were wearing big hats, and the big monkeys were wearing small hats, and some monkeys were wearing hats with feathers and flowers on and other monkeys were wearing top hats and bowler hats. Topiwallah started to laugh. But he thought to himself "How am I going to get my hats back now? Those monkeys are too quick for me. They won't let me catch them. What can I do?"

He put his two hands to the sides of his head as he thought. He didn't know what to do. But to his surprise, when he put his hands to the sides of his head, all the monkeys did the same. And when he took his hands away again, all the monkeys did the same. And when he started to scratch his chin in thought, all the monkeys started to scratch their chins. And when he tapped the side of his head, all the monkeys tapped the sides of their heads. And now Topiwallah was happy "Whatever a monkey sees, a monkey will imitate. Now I know what I should do", he said.

With a great sweep of his arm Topiwallah took his own hat off his own head. Each of the monkeys swept their hats off in the same way. And now with another dramatic movement, Topiwallah threw his hat down to the ground. And each of the monkeys threw down their hats with exactly the same gesture. And the hats all came tumbling down to the ground. There were flowery hats and feathery hats and big hats and small hats and bowler hats and top hats and ladies' hats and gentlemen's hats. And Topiwallah ran to gather them up. He made a great pile of them and put them in his wheel barrow. Then he lifted his wheelbarrow up, and hurriedly, before the monkeys changed their minds, he ran away.

“I heard stories when I was a young girl, about thirteen years old. That is a long long time ago now. I heard them from my aunts. And I used to hear stories from my gran, she told us lots and lots of stories. I used to tell them to my grandchildren when I came to this country, but now I haven’t told them for a few years.

In Africa there is always a song that goes with a story, I wish I could remember the songs that go with this story, but I haven’t thought about the story for a long time.....”



# The Woman and her Daughters

from Nigeria



There was a woman who lived near the bush. She lived on her own with her two daughters. She used to go out in the morning to look for food and when she left, she said to her daughters. “Now be careful, don’t leave the house on your own. There are many animals who might eat you, there are many dangers outside. Wait until I return. And if you ever get lost, I am going to teach you a song. You must sing the song loudly, and then I can find you easily, just by listening for the song.”

One day the mum went out and she spent a long time looking for food. She came home much later than usual and when she opened the door there was only one of her daughters there. “Where is the youngest, what has happened?” “Oh mum, she went out of the house. She wouldn’t listen to me. She said she was going to look for you. I don’t know where she is....”

The mum turned round and ran off into the bush looking for her daughter. She hoped her daughter would remember the song she had taught her. She started to sing the song herself, in case her daughter could hear her. She went on and on looking and listening and singing.

The mum walked on and on until it became dark. Then she stopped. She didn’t know what to do. Should she go home? Which direction should she search in now? Then she heard a voice. The voice said “ I am the spirit of the bush. I have been listening to your song. I know where your daughter is. If you want to find her again you have to make me a promise.” “I will promise you anything”, said the mum. “You must promise me that when you find your daughter..... you will give her to me....” said the spirit. Now the mum knew that she had a terrible decision to make. If she made the promise she would see her daughter, only to give her away again. But if she didn’t promise, perhaps she would never find her daughter on her own. What should she do? She said “very well, I will promise to give her to you.

But you must show me where she is, and you must keep her safe always.”  
“I will do that. Now close your eyes. Sing your song. And walk straight forward....”

The mum closed her eyes and started to sing and as she walked forward she felt that her feet were sinking into soft sand. She kept her eyes closed and she kept singing. And finally the spirit said “reach out with your arms and open you eyes.” And when she opened her eyes, the morning had come and she found someone else with her. It was her daughter.

They were standing together on a sand bank and all around them was a huge river. The water seemed to stretch as far as they could see. But the mum hugged her daughter tightly to her. And the spirit said “If you want to stay with your daughter, then you can. But you will never be able to leave this place. But if you give your daughter to me, then I will show you the way home.” “If I give her to you, you must promise to look after her always.” “I will do that”, said the spirit, “and I will let your daughter come to visit you every week. Now close your eyes and walk straight ahead.” The mum closed her eyes and started to walk once again. And with each step, her feet landed on solid ground. And she kept walking and walking. And she kept singing her song. And after a while she knew that she was home.

She opened her eyes. There was her house, she pushed open the door and there was her eldest daughter. She hugged her and she told her what had happened. She said “your sister is safe. She is living in the bush and she will come to visit us every week. I have made a promise, and that is how it will always be.” And at the end of each week, there was a knock on the door. The mum and her oldest daughter ran to the door and opened it, and there was the youngest daughter. She stayed with them for a day and a night, but by the next morning she had disappeared. And the mum lived with her oldest daughter, and the spirit of the bush kept its promise to her always.



My father was a storyteller in China. It was his job. He was in the army and he used to entertain the troops by telling stories. In China, storytellers tell stories with songs and music and gestures. My father used to play a musical instrument from Uzbekistan, it's made out of two pieces of metal that click together to give a rhythm.

My father used to travel around a lot and we travelled with him. We lived in North China for a while, then we came all the way down to Shanghai and lived in the South.

I heard stories all the time when I was a child. I used to listen to my father rehearsing, and I used to hear the stories on the radio. There are some stories that everybody in China knows very well.

Where is my father now? He's in China. But he had a stroke and now he can't speak. So he doesn't tell stories any more. But I can remember them.



# Monkey and the Tumult in Heaven

from China



Once there was a huge stone sitting in the sunshine. The sun had been shining and shining on it for thousands of years. One day, something came out of the stone. It was an arm. Then something else came out. Another arm. Then a foot came out, then a leg, then another foot and another leg, then a body and then a head. And last of all there was a tail waving out of the stone. And there wasn't a stone there anymore, there was a Monkey.

Monkey laughed happily, stretching his arms and legs. "I am Monkey", he shouted out. I used to be inside this stone and now I am outside. I am alive. I am Mighty Monkey, I am Great Monkey, I am King Monkey. And in no time at all, Monkey had learned to read and write and recite poetry and learn about the world. And soon Monkey was learning to do tricks and learning to do magic. Monkey learned how to fly up into the air. Monkey learned how to walk from cloud to cloud, one foot on one cloud and the next step on another cloud until he could walk across the sky. Monkey learned how to change his shape, so he could become an ant or a snake or a bird or a fish....or a person....or a tree....or a house....or anything that he wanted. And Monkey had found a magic stick. It weighed a million tonnes, but it was so small that Monkey could stick it behind his ear like a pencil. And when he wanted to use it, he pulled it out from his ear, and waved it three times in the air, and it became as big as a pillar, or as big as a house or as big as a mountain, and Monkey could swing it round his head and fight anybody and anything.

And Monkey started to boast about himself. He said "I am King Monkey. I should be the ruler of the whole of the earth. No, I should be the ruler of the whole of the earth and the sky. No, I should be the ruler of the whole of the earth and the whole of heaven as well. And Monkey went flying up into the air, walking from one cloud to the next and going higher and higher into the sky until he got to heaven. And when he got there, there was a big gate, and someone guarding the gate. It was a Star, holding a sword and shouting at

Monkey. "You hideous Monkey, what are you doing here. We don't want your sort here, go away!!!" But Monkey wasn't frightened. He took his stick from behind his ear. And he waved it around three times, and it started to grow and he shouted at the guard. "Let me in. Let me in or I will destroy everything...."

The guard ran away from the gate, and ran through heaven, feeling very worried. When he got to the middle of heaven, he came to the Palace of the Emperor of Heaven. It is made entirely of a beautiful stone, Jade, which gleams in the sunlight. The guard ran into the palace, and bowed down low before the Emperor of Heaven. "Your majesty, your majesty, something terrible has come to the gate. A hideous ape, a gigantic monkey, made of stone, with a stick that he waves around, and he threatens that he will destroy the whole of heaven if we don't let him in...." The Emperor nodded. "Yes, I was worried that Monkey would come here. I have been watching him from up here, and he is vain, arrogant and bad tempered. There is only one thing we can do. We must give him a job here. Go back to the gate, and tell the Monkey that he can come and live here and look after the Horses. Tell him that he will be called Monkey the Great Groom of Heaven..."

The guard ran all the way back to the gate where Monkey was waiting patiently. He told him that the Emperor had given him a job. Monkey was delighted. "I am Monkey, the Great Groom of Heaven. This is the highlight of my career...." He came through the gate, and the guard showed him to the place where all the heavenly horses were kept. And from then on Monkey stayed in heaven and looked after the heavenly horses. Monkey used to clean them, and ride around on them, and feed them, and live with them.

But one day, he overheard two Heavenly Soldiers laughing about him. "That Monkey", said one soldier, "he thinks he's got an important job. But he hasn't. All he does is look after horses, he's no better than a servant. What an idiot. He let himself be tricked by the emperor. He doesn't realise how much everybody laughs at him behind his back...." Monkey was furious. Suddenly he realised that he didn't have an important job at all. "I am the Great Monkey. I am the Greatest Monkey That Has Ever Lived. Nobody will laugh at me. I will make them regret it...." Now Monkey was angry. He took the stick from behind his ear, and he waved it in the air and it turned into a huge cudgel. Then Monkey went to the Beautiful Heavenly Garden of the Peaches of Eternal Life. He cut down all the trees, and he ate as many peaches as he could and he stamped on all the rest. Then Monkey

went to the Heavenly Crucible of the Pills of Eternal Life. He grabbed as many of the pills as he could and stuffed them in his mouth. Then he went running through heaven waving his cudgel and shouting. "You have tricked me, but I have tricked you. Look, I am going to beat everything down. Look out....You will regret ever having tricked Old Monkey...." The Emperor of Heaven and all his soldiers ran out of the palace. "He has gone crazy! Look, he's going to destroy us all. Fight him..." The Heavenly Soldiers ran towards Monkey, but he flew up into the air and started to rain down blows on them with his cudgel. The soldiers all ran away.

The Emperor assumed a solemn expression. "Send for Ehrlang-shin!!!!" He said. Ehrlang-shin had peacock feathers growing from his shoes, so he could fly into the air. He had snakes twisted round his neck, and he had six arms, and each arm held a sword. Ehrlang-shin had three eyes in his head, and Ehrlang-shin had a magic mirror in which he could see everything as it really was... Ehrlang-shin came running at the Emperor's call, buckling on his sword belt. "Ehrlang-shin", said the Emperor. I want you to fight that hideous, ugly and monstrous ape, who calls himself King Monkey. I want you to arrest him and put him in prison. He's up there in the sky now, waiting for a fight. Go and get him...."

Ehrlang-shin did not need a second invitation. He shot up into the air, flying on his peacock feather boots, and he saw Monkey in the distance. Ehrlang-shin pulled a sword from his belt, with each of his six hands. Then he shouted at Monkey and the battle began. Monkey swung his cudgel and Ehrlang-shin swung his swords, and they struck at each other until the sparks were flying. Monkey was dodging the blows of the six swords and Ehrlang-shin was dodging the blows of the great cudgel and the heavenly soldiers were throwing spears at monkey and the Guardians of the Gates were throwing balls of fire at Monkey. And Ehrlang-shin called to his dogs, the ones he went hunting with, great fierce dogs with huge eyes and huge mouths. And the dogs came and bit and snarled at Monkey. And Monkey was surrounded, and he said to himself "Things are getting a bit too hot for Old Monkey here. I better change myself."

And Monkey changed himself into a fish and suddenly dropped from heaven and fell into the sea. "Where's he gone? What's happened to him?" everybody shouted. Ehrlang-shin took out his magic mirror and looked into it. And he saw Monkey as he really was, swimming in the sea. "I know where he is now. I will follow him." And Ehrlang-shin changed himself into a huge fish and dived into the sea and

started to chase after Monkey. So Monkey changed himself into a bird, and flew up into the sky and started to escape. Again, Ehrlang-shin looked in his magic mirror, and knew where he was, and turned himself into a great eagle and started to chase after Monkey through the sky. Now Monkey was getting tired, and he flew down to the earth and changed himself into.... A house.

And Ehrlang-shin looked in his mirror and knew what he had done. Then Ehrlang-shin called to his dogs, and called to the soldiers of heaven, and brought a giant net. And they all flew into the air and Ehrlang-shin led them to a house. He whispered to them "This looks like a house, but really it is Monkey in disguise. When I tell you to, drop the net on him and attack him." Everybody waited, and then Ehrlang-shin shouted "NOW!!!" And they dropped the net and the dogs started to bark and the soldiers started to shout and Monkey was so surprised, that he stopped pretending to be a house and went back to being a Monkey. But now he was trapped in the net. And the fight was over.

And the Emperor of Heaven said "Ehrlang-shin, find a place where this troublesome and fearsome and bothersome Monkey can be put, so that he never troubles or frightens or bothers us again..." And Ehrlang-shin looked around, and he saw a great mountain. And he put his fingers underneath the mountain and he HEAVED. And he lifted the mountain up, just enough to make a hole underneath it. Then he took Monkey, wrapped up in the net, and with one flick of his wrist, he rolled Monkey out of the net straight into the hole under the mountain, and then he dropped the mountain on top of him. Monkey used all his strength, but he couldn't escape. All he could do was to burrow with his head through the mountain until his face appeared in a hole in the side of the mountain.

"You aren't going to leave me here are you?" said Monkey. "What am I going to do here? What is going to happen to me." The Emperor of Heaven shook his head. "You are going to stay there for a long time, Monkey. You are going to stay there for five thousand years until someone comes to release you. And the person who releases you will teach you many things. Because with all your knowledge, you still don't know how to control yourself or how to use your great talents wisely. But when you do, then you will be truly King Monkey." And they left Monkey there. And after five thousand years, someone really did come to release monkey. And what happened after that is a very long story indeed.....



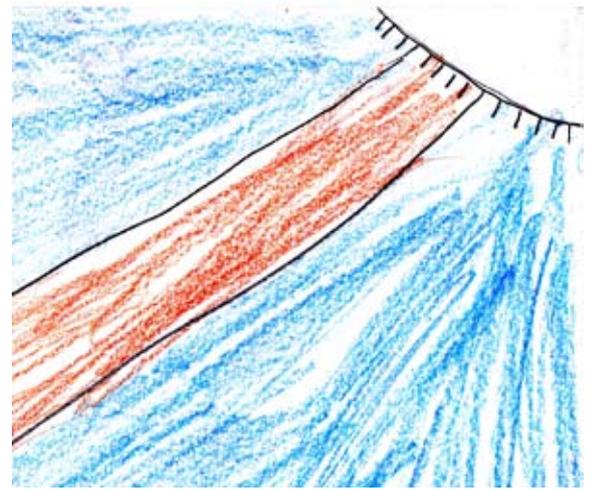
I grew up in the countryside in Jamaica. We used to go fishing in the pond, swimming in the sea, climbing coconut trees, going into the sugar cane fields. It was very exciting and I really miss those moments.

I heard a lot of stories when I was a child, from my great aunt and my great uncle. The majority of the time it was on the verandah in the evening and we would be sitting in the dark slapping away at mosquitoes and just listening to the stories, and having a laugh because the majority of them are Anansi stories. Anansi stories are very very funny because he's a person who tries to outsmart everyone and sometimes he'll come across people who will actually outsmart him and then he'll try to find ways of getting back at the person. So it was always fun listening to the stories...

There are so many stories. I can remember one when Anansi told Dog that he could drink the hottest porridge. And both of them boiled their porridge at the same time on a wooden stove with a big black pot. But what Anansi did, he tried to outsmart Dog. Dog was genuine in what he was doing, he boiled his porridge and he wanted to eat his when it was still hot. But Anansi told Dog that he would make his porridge even hotter. And he actually put his out in the sun. And everybody thinks that the sun would make it much hotter, but it actually made it much cooler. And Anansi won the competition. But eventually Dog found out and he was chasing him and Anansi has to be running....

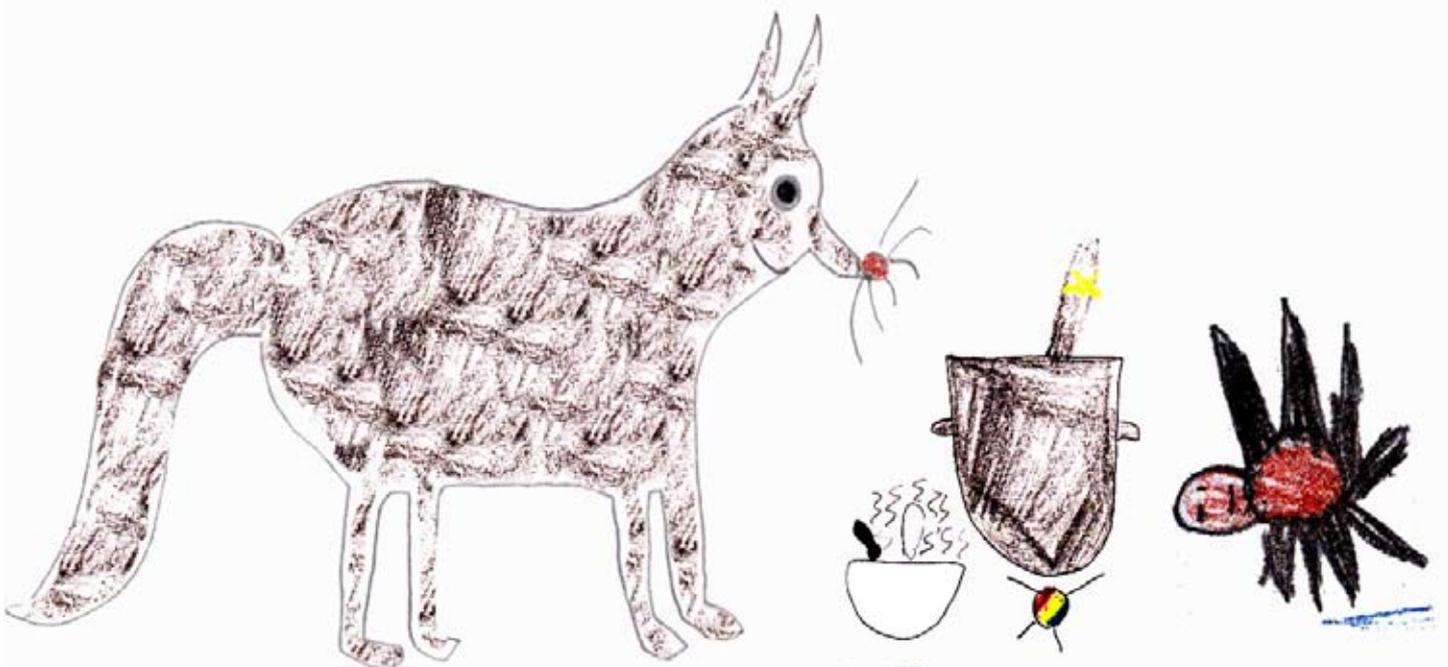
# Anansi and Dog and the Pot of Porridge

from Jamaica



Shall I say the story the way I first heard it? It goes like this –

One day Anansi and Dog decided to do an competition about who can drink the hottest porridge. Both of them boil the porridge at the same time on the same fire, a big pot on the same fire. But Anansi as usual tries he outsmart everybody. So Dog has his porridge and ready for eat it hot. But then Anansi takes his porridge and put it outside under the sun. But Dog tink that the porridge would have still be hot. But Dog never know say the sun would have cooled the porridge. Then Anansi win the competition. But then, when dog find out say Anansi try to smart him out, Dog get mad at Anansi and try to chase him and try to get back at him....



For further information about this project,  
please contact  
Richard Neville  
[info@storiesinthestreet.co.uk](mailto:info@storiesinthestreet.co.uk)

