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STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
David A. Naff



HOW SPIDER CAME TO LIVE IN THE HOUSE OF MAN



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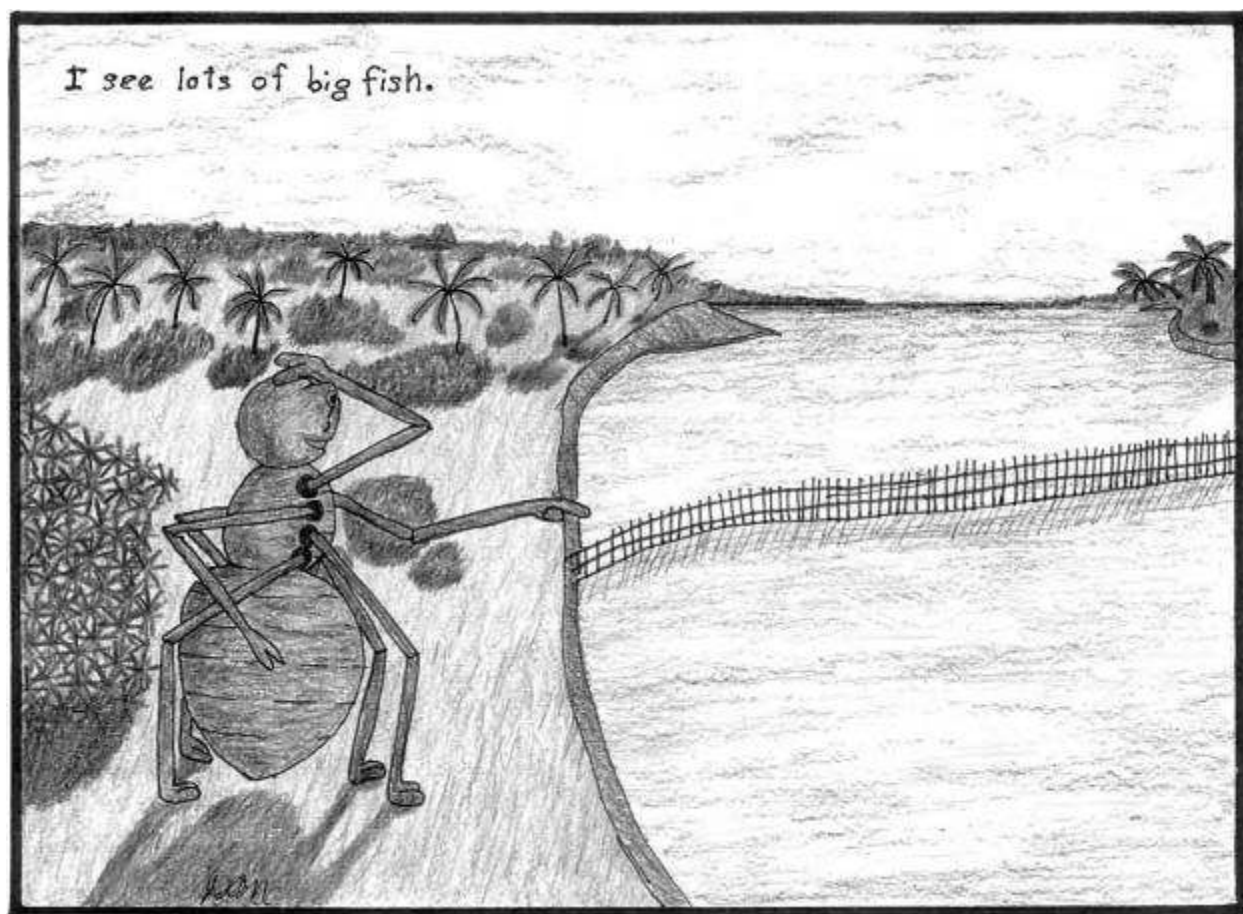
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By Spark Team





HOW SPIDER CAME TO LIVE IN THE HOUSE OF MAN

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

Now Spider always has very important business to attend to; especially if it can keep him from having to work, and very especially if it involves food, or a good time.

Today Spider's special business had to do with a place down by the river and a certain water fence that someone had put across the river to catch fish.

"Eh-heh," Spider was saying to himself, "Just as I thought. Here is a very good water fence across the river and there are plenty of fish in it. It has been a long time since I've had a lot of fish to eat. Hm-m-m, but I see a lot of Leopard tracks around here. This water fence must have been made by Leopard. Hm-m-m, it would be very dangerous to

take fish from Leopard; yes-s-s, very dangerous indeed. If Leopard caught me taking fish from his fence - hah! I would be *finio*! But, hm-m-m, if I came at night while Leopard is in the bush hunting, he would not know. Yes-s-s, but I will need someone to help me. Someone with a strong light. Eh-heh I know just the one to help me get some fish. Heh-he-he."

So Spider went off to see his good friend Lightning Bug.

"Hello, Lightning Bug. How are you today?"

"Oh, hello, Spider. I am well even though I am *hungry too much*, just like everyone these days. And how are you, Spider?"

"I am hungry just like you, but I know where there are plenty of fish - big ones."

"Well then, Spider, why should you be hungry?"

"Because I am a very busy man. During the day I have too much to do to get them."

"Ah yes, Spider. Heh-he-he, but I notice that you are never too busy to eat. Heh-he-he."

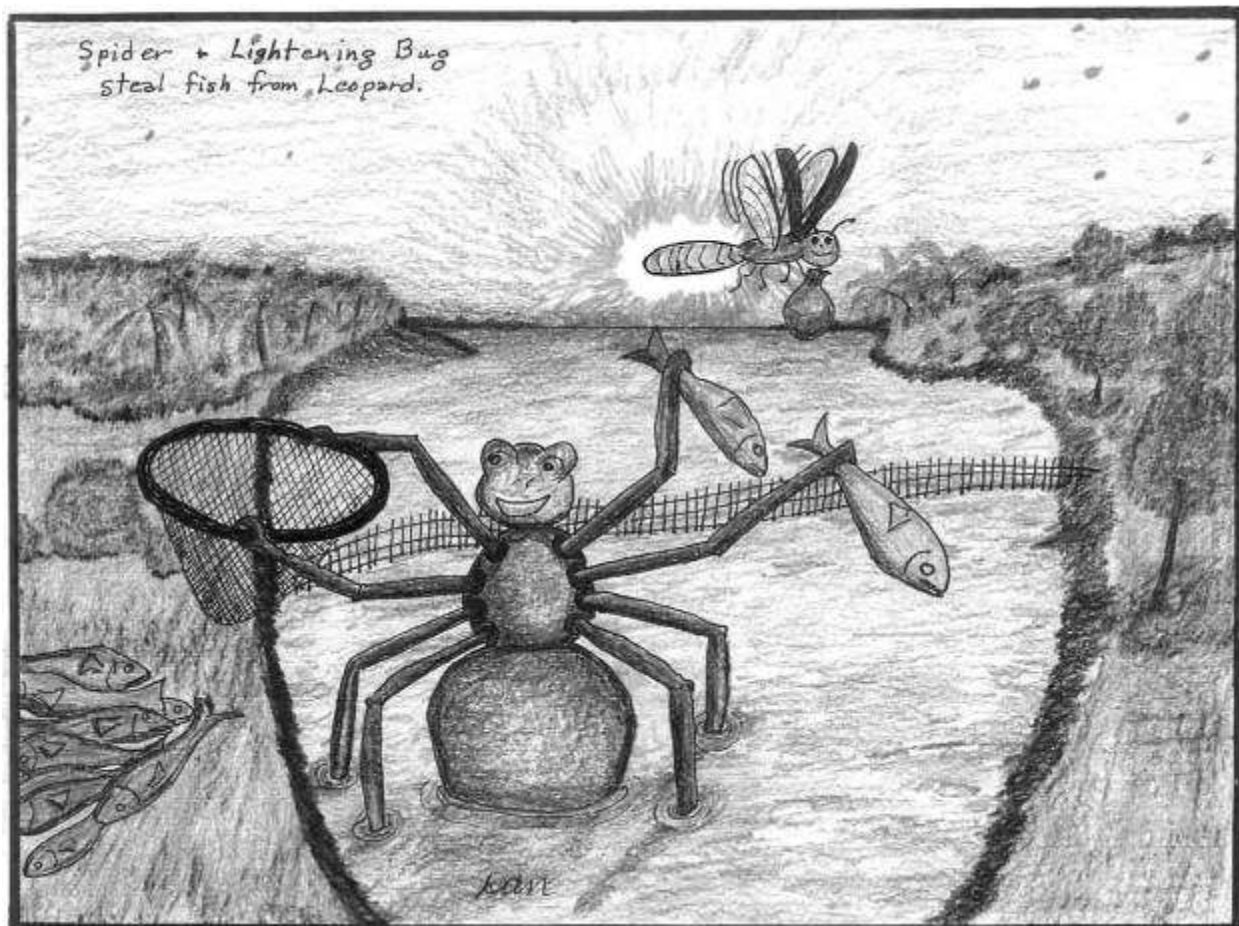
"Yes, yes, of course, but I need your help, good friend Lightning Bug, and I'll share the fish with you."

Now at the words fish and share, Lightning Bug became very interested.

"You see," Spider explained. "I have made a big water fence down in the river and it is filled with big fish. They are good ones too."

Here Spider's mouth filled with water as he thought of a big dish of white rice with *soup* pouring down over it and many big chunks of fish. Lightning Bug's stomach began to growl.

"Now, Lightning Bug," continued Spider. "I have so much important business to tend to in the day time that I have no time to go and get the fish. I will have to go at night. I want you to come along to help me. You can shine your light so I can see the path and also to get the fish out of the water. I'll divide with you; half for you and half for me."



"Heh-he-he," Chuckled Lightning Bug, thinking also of white rice and *fish soup*. "Oh, yes, Spider," Lightning Bug exclaimed. "I'll be glad to help you. Did you say half for me?"

"Yes. That's right. Half for you. All big ones."

"All right, Spider, I'll see you tonight."

What was Spider doing?

What does God say? "Do not steal" (Exodus 20:15).

What else was Spider doing?

And what does God say about that? "Do not tell a lie about your neighbor" (Exodus 20:16).

Well, late that night, if you had been awake, you might have seen Spider and Lightning Bug making their way down through the bush to the river. Spider had made sure that Leopard had gone hunting in the opposite direction.

Lightning Bug was flying overhead shining his light all around. He was carrying a big bag. Spider was walking along below directing Lightning Bug just where to go. He too carried a big bag, and a fish net.

"A little to the left Lightning Bug. Now in front small. Hold it steady now. Ah yes, here we are."

Now Lightning Bug held his light up high while Spider waded out into the river with the big net. Soon the net was full. Spider came out of the water and carefully emptied the net onto the ground. They were all good big fish. Lightning Bug's mouth filled with water,

Spider went into the water several times, and each time he came out the pile of fish grew larger. At last Spider laid the fish net aside.

"Now we will divide the fish, Lightning Bug. Do you have your bag ready?"

"Oh, yes, Spider."

So Spider began to divide the fish. It went something like this....

"One for Lightning Bug. One for Spider."

"One for Lightning Bug. Two for Spider."

"One for Lightning Bug. Five for Spider."

"One for Lightning bug. Ten for Spider."

"Spider!!" exclaimed Lightning Bug. "You said you would divide the fish half for me and half for you."

"Oh, hush now Lightning Bug. You are so small that you do not really need half."

Well that was true and so Lightning Bug did not say any thing more, but he was *vex*. He had hoped to sell some of the fish in the market.

A few nights later the same thing happened. Lightning Bug shone his light while Spider piled the fish on the ground. The pile grew larger and larger. At last Spider came up out of the river. Spider began to fill his own bag with the fish. He was not dividing. He was putting all the fish into his own bag.

"Spider! you are not dividing with me! You have not even given me one small fish. You are not being fair."



"Oh!" said Spider, "well, here, have one." Spider threw Lightning Bug one small fish.

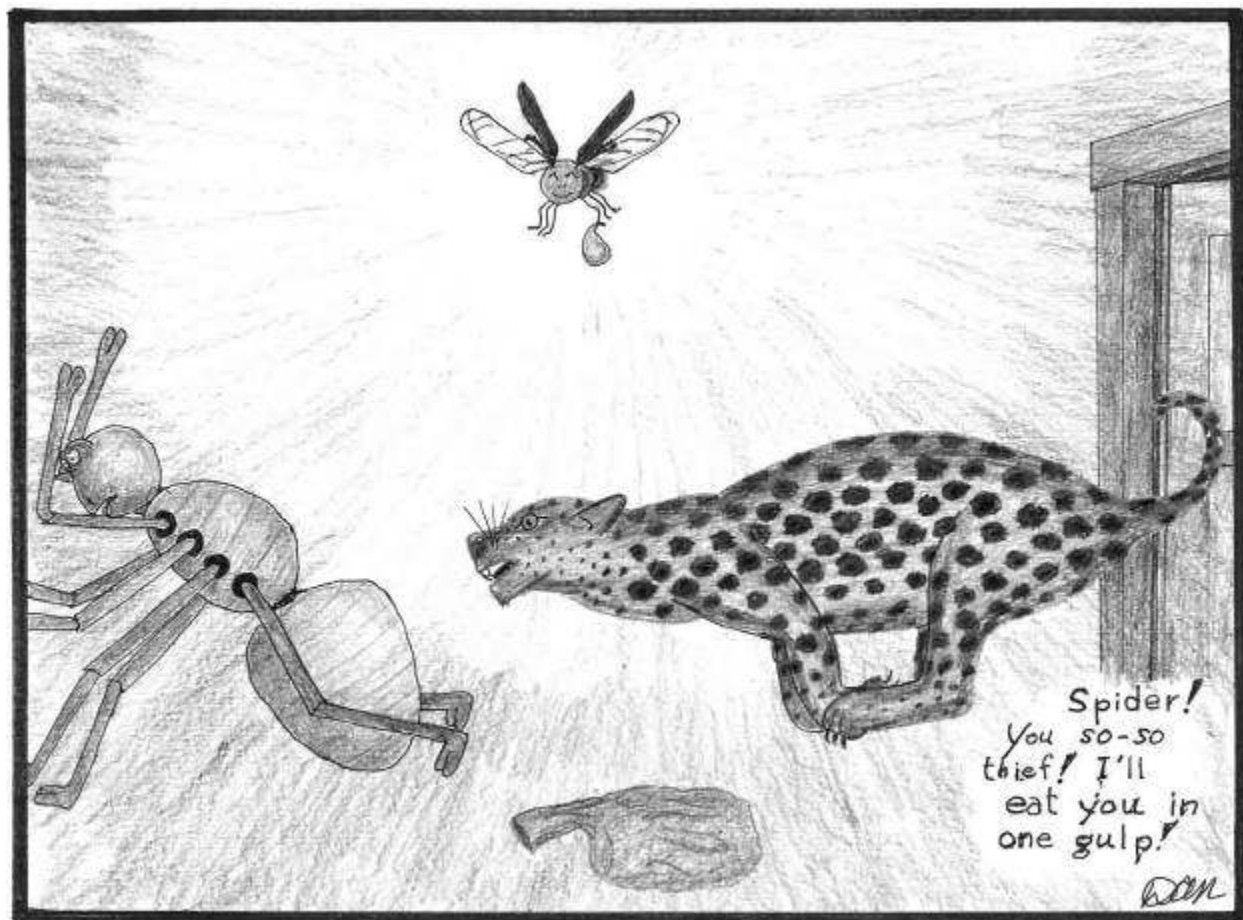
"Spider!! I want my share!"

"Be quiet, *small boy*. Leopard may hear you. I gave you one. Now keep quiet."

Lightning Bug did not answer, but he was *vex too much*. He had been looking around and had also seen some Leopard tracks. He was sure that the water fence belonged to Leopard and not to Spider.

So, they started home. Lightning Bug shining his light in front and Spider coming along with his huge bag of fish. Spider was thinking only of how many fish he could eat, and was not watching where he was going. Lightning Bug was *vex plenty-o*. "I'll fix you, Spider," he thought to himself. "Call me a small boy, will you? You'll be sorry."

Lightning Bug led Spider straight to Leopard's house. "Spider, here is your house. Good night." he lied.



Spider kicked the door open with his foot. "Wake up, wife. Get the fire going. I have plenty of fish. We'll...."

Spider saw two big eyes looking straight at him. "Wha- wha- what big eyes!"

"Yes, Spider," roared Leopard, "and now I see who has been stealing my fish."

Spider dropped the big bag of fish and shot out the door. Away through the town Spider ran dodging this way and that way between the houses. Leopard was close behind, swatting with his big feet to try to smash Spider.

"I'll smash you Spider! I'll swallow you up you no good piece of nothing!" Leopard roared.

The chase went on until they got out into the bush. Spider went under some leaves moving from one leaf to another until Leopard did not know under which leaf Spider was hiding. Leopard went on

smashing leaves hoping to get Spider. Soon Leopard was far away and Spider was safe for now.

"Whew," panted Spider. "That was too close. Whew!"

What almost happened to Spider?

What does God say? "You get what is coming to you when you sin. It is death" (Romans 6:23a).

Spider almost died under Leopard's feet. But spiritual death is much more serious, and sin brings spiritual death; that is, complete separation from God and from anything that is good.

Spider was thinking hard, "I cannot go back to my house for Leopard will certainly go there to look for me."

So Spider went far far away into the bush where he hoped that Leopard would not come. There he took some banana leaves and made a little house to stay in until Leopard's anger would go away. Then he could return home.

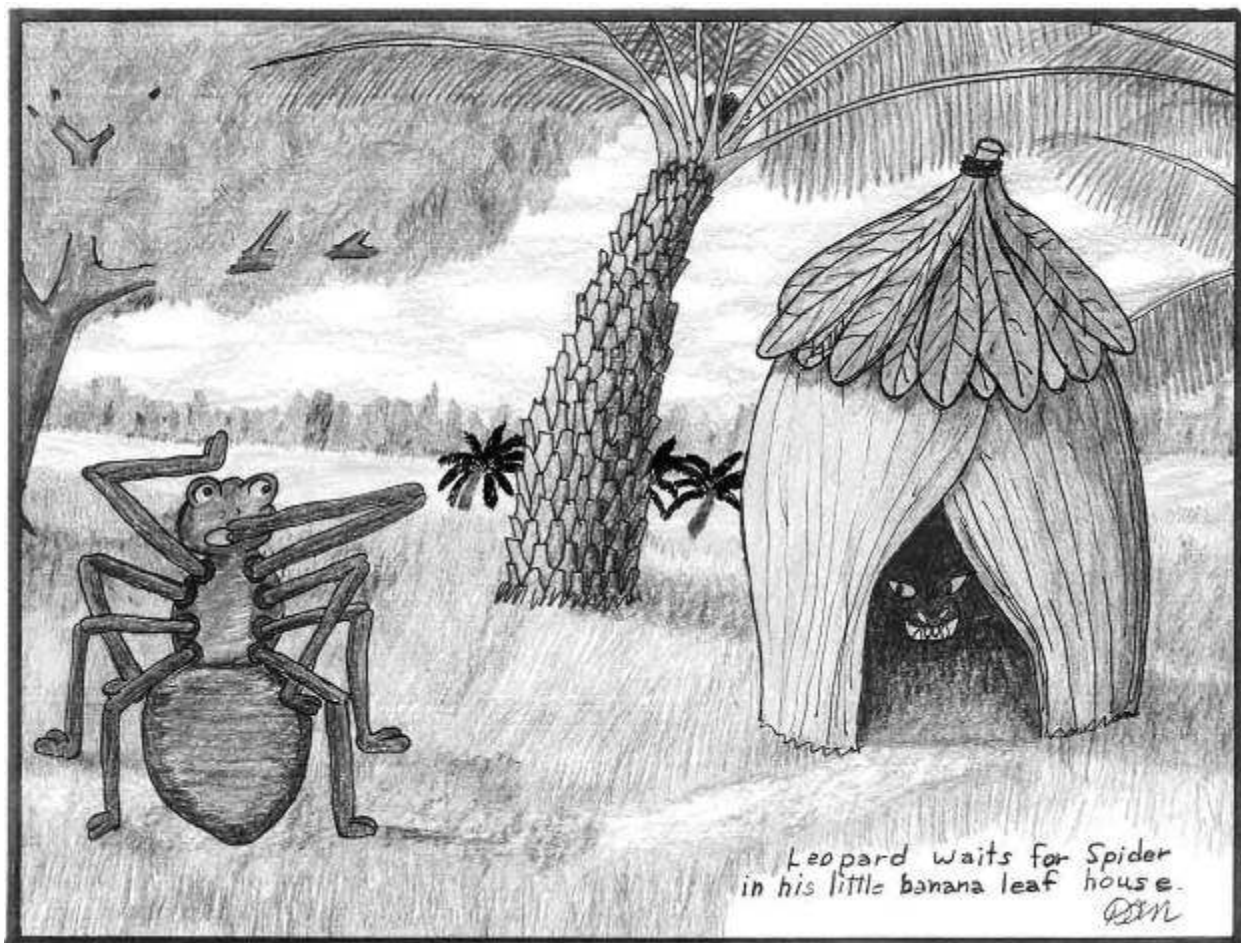
Then one day Leopard was out hunting for meat. He went a long way looking, looking for meat. He was not finding any meat so he kept going farther and farther into the bush. There in the deep bush he saw a little house made of banana leaves.

"Ah-hah," said Leopard, "This looks like a little house that Spider would make. Uh-huh, I am sure that this is Spider's house. Now I'll just give Spider a nice little surprise. Heh! Heh! Heh!"

So Leopard crawled into the little house. It was so small and he was so big that it almost came apart. It did not quite fall down as he crawled through the little door.

Leopard curled up tight inside with his big paws right by the door with his claws out, and his mouth wide open. Now he was all ready to grab Spider as soon as he came through the door.

"Just wait until that Spider steps inside that door. I'll smash that Spider flat and swallow him with one gulp. Heh-heh-heh. Yes-s-s."

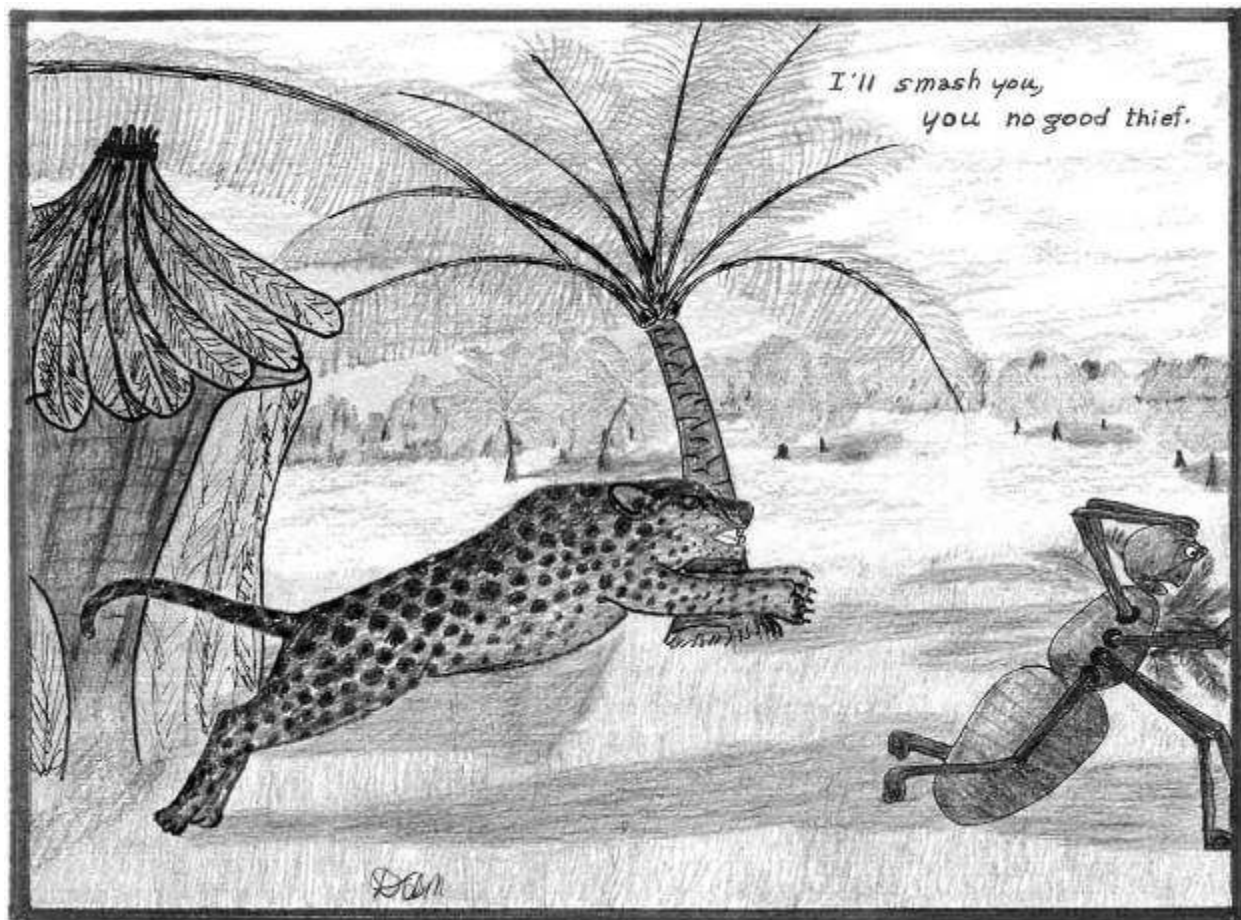


What does God say? "Keep awake! Watch at all times. The devil is working against you. He is walking around like a hungry lion (leopard) with his mouth open. He is looking for someone to eat" (I Peter 5:8).

Soon Spider came skipping along the path back to his little banana leaf house. Sometimes he would sing; then he would stamp his feet in a little dance along with his song. Rata-tat-tat-tat. Spider was happy and well pleased with himself. He had caught a fat squirrel and planned to roast it for his supper.

Spider was getting close to his little banana leaf house. Suddenly he stopped; looked at the ground and up the little path leading to his house. Leopard tracks!!

"Hmm-m-m," Spider said to himself, "I see Leopard tracks going into my little banana leaf house, but I do not see Leopard tracks coming out of my little banana leaf house. Hm-m-m, I wonder. Let me look



closer. Yes, I am sure that Leopard is inside my little banana leaf house. Now what shall I do?"

Spider thought for a while. "I know. I'll talk to my little banana leaf house."

"Hello little banana leaf house." No answer.

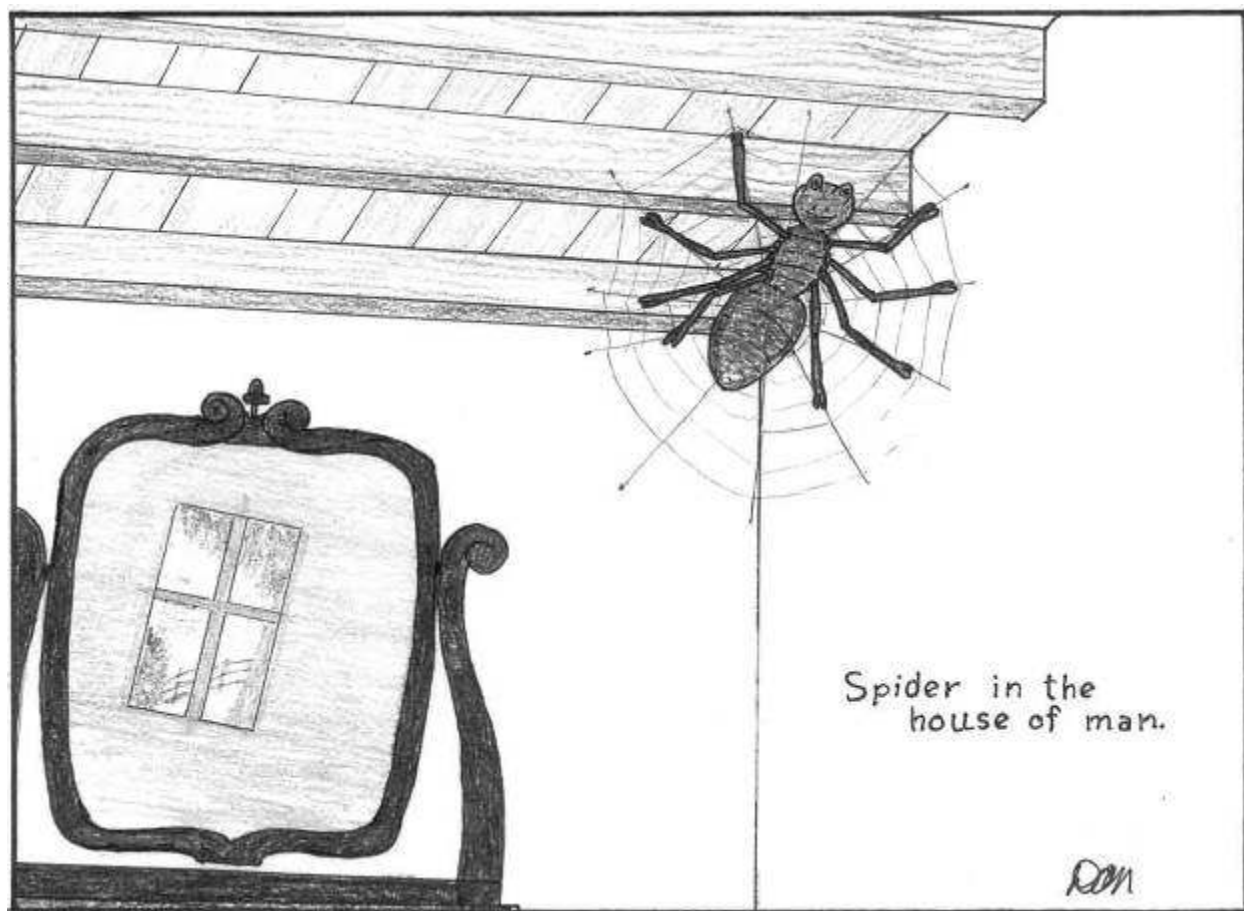
"Hello little banana leaf house." Still no answer.

"Now that is strange," Spider said out loud so Leopard could hear him, "There must be something wrong for my little banana leaf house always answers me if everything is all right. Hello little banana leaf house!"

Leopard thought to himself, "If I do not answer like a little banana leaf house, Spider will never come in. How does a little banana leaf house sound?"

"Hello little banana leaf house," Spider called.

"Hello, Spider, everything is all right. Come on in," croaked Leopard, hoping that he was talking like a little banana leaf house.



"Ha-hah," says Spider, "I know your voice, Leopard. You cannot fool me." And Spider ran off into the bush as fast as he could go.

Leopard tore out of the little banana leaf house so fast that he knocked it all to pieces. Again Leopard ran after Spider trying to smash him with his big paws. Spider dodged this way and that way. Finally Spider came to some big cotton-wood trees. He hid under the big roots so Leopard could not find him.

"Whew," gasped Spider, "That was even closer than the last time. *For true I lack small to die.* I will never be safe from Leopard again. Where can I go so that Leopard cannot find me?"

Spider thought for a long time while he caught his breath. "I know of only one place where Leopard does not go," he said to himself. "Leopard never goes to the house of man."

So Spider went to the house of man to live. And to this day you will find Spider living in the house of man. If you look in your own house you may find that Spider has built his little hammock somewhere.

It may be in the attic or basement or even in a corner of the living room. But he'll be there for Leopard does not dare to come into the house of man. Only there is Spider safe from Leopard.

And only in the house (family) of God are we safe from the punishment of sin.

What does God Say? "There is no way to be saved from the punishment of sin through anyone else. For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we can be saved" (Acts 4:12). Only in Jesus' house (family) can we be safe. We must trust in Jesus to forgive our sins and save us from punishment for sin.

Are you in God's house?

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