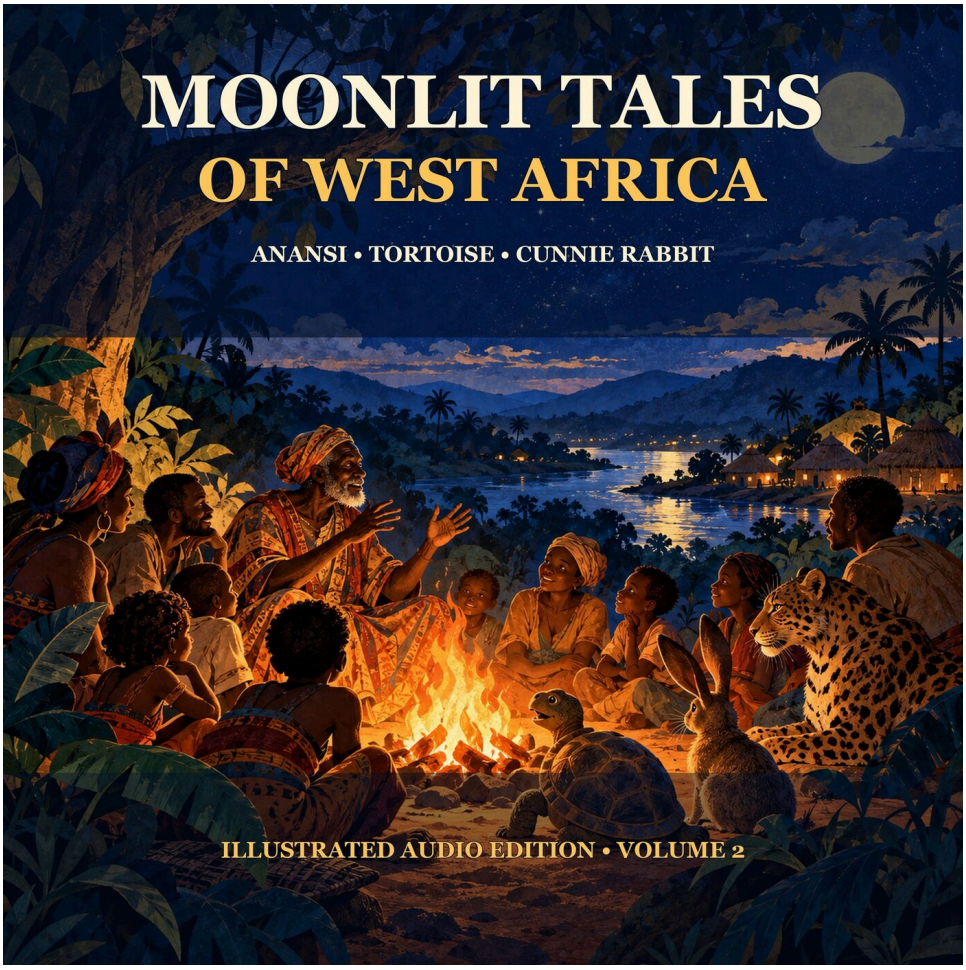


Moonlit Tales of West Africa

Anansi, Tortoise, Cunnie Rabbit, and Stories of Wonder

Illustrated Audio Edition — Volume 2

> Press play at the beginning of each chapter to hear the complete narration by the Piper en_US-amy-medium digital voice.

The Robber and the Old Man

Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) — West African Folk-Tales (1917)



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In a big town lived a very rich gentleman. The fame of his wealth soon spread. A clever thief heard of it and determined to have some for himself.

He managed to hide himself in a dark corner of the gentleman’s room—while the latter was counting his bags of money. As soon as the old gentleman left the room to fetch something, the thief caught up two of the bags and escaped.

The owner was astonished, on his return a few minutes later, to find two bags short. He could find no trace of the thief.

Next morning, however, he chanced to meet the robber just outside the house. The dishonest man looked so confused that the rich man at once suspected he was the thief. He could not, however, prove it, so took the case before the judge.

The thief was much alarmed when he heard this. He sought a man in the village and asked his advice. The wise man undertook to help him—if he would promise to pay him half the money when he got off. This the robber at once said he would do.

The old man then advised him to go home and dress in rags. He must ruffle his hair and beard and behave as if he were mad. If any one asked a question he must answer “Moo.”

The thief did so. To every question asked by the judge he said, “Moo, moo.” The judge at last grew angry and dismissed the court. The thief went home in great glee.



Next day, the wise man came to him for his half of the stolen money. But he could get no answer but “Moo” from the thief, and at last, in despair, he had to go home without a penny. The ungrateful robber kept everything for himself. The wise man regretted very much that he had saved the thief from his just punishment—but it was now too late.

The Leopard and the Ram

Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) — West African Folk-Tales (1917)



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A ram once decided to make a clearing in the woods and build himself a house. A leopard who lived near also made up his mind to do the very same thing.

Unknown to each other they both chose the same site. Ram came one day and worked at the clearing. Leopard arrived after Ram had gone and was much surprised to find some of his work already done. However, he

continued what Ram had begun. Each was daily surprised at the progress made in his absence, but concluded that the fairies had been helping him. He gave them thanks and continued with his task.

Thus the matter went on—the two working alternately at the building and never seeing one another. At last the house was finished to the satisfaction of both.

The two prepared to take up their abode in the new home. To their great astonishment they met. Each told his tale, and after some friendly discussion, they decided to live together.

Both Leopard and Ram had sons. These two young animals played together while their parents hunted. The leopard was very much surprised to find that every evening his friend Ram brought home just as much meat or venison from the hunt as he himself did. He did not dare, however, to ask the other how he obtained it.

One day, before setting out to hunt, Leopard requested his son to find out, if possible, from young Ram, how his father managed to kill the animals. Accordingly while they were at play, little Leopard inquired how Father Ram, having neither claws nor sharp teeth, succeeded in catching and killing the beasts. Ram refused to tell unless young Leopard would promise to show his father’s way also. The latter agreed. Accordingly they took two large pieces of plantain stem and set out into the woods.

Young Leopard then took one piece and placed it in position. Then, going first to the right, then to the left—bowing and standing on his hind legs and peeping at the stem just as his father did—he took aim, sprang toward the stem and tore it.



Young Ram then took the other piece and placed it in position. Wasting no time he went backward a little way, took aim, then ran swiftly forward—pushing his head against the stem and tearing it to pieces. When they had finished they swept the place clean and went home.

In the evening the leopard obtained all the information about the hunt from his son. The latter warned him that he must always be careful when he saw the ram go backward. He kept this in mind, and from that day watched the ram very closely.

Some time afterward it rained, making the floor of the house very slippery. The leopard called the ram, as usual, to dine with him. As he was coming, the ram slipped backward on the wet floor. The leopard, seeing this, thought the other was about to kill him. Calling to his son to follow, he sprang with all his might over the wall of the house and fled to the woods.

The ram called him back, but he did not listen. From that time leopards have made their abode in the woods while rams have remained at home.

Why the Leopard Can Only Catch Prey on Its Left Side

Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) — West African Folk-Tales (1917)



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At one time leopards did not know how to catch animals for food. Knowing that the cat as very skilful in this way, Leopard one day went to Cat and asked very politely if she would teach him the art. Cat readily consented.

The first thing Leopard had to learn was to hide himself among the bushes by the roadside, so that he would not be seen by any animal passing by. Next, he must learn how to move noiselessly through the woods. He must never allow the animal he chased to know that he was following it. The

third great principle was how to use his left paws and side in springing upon his prey.

Having taught him these three things, Cat requested him to go and practise them well. When he had learnt them thoroughly he could return to her and she would give him more lessons in hunting.

Leopard obeyed. At first he was very successful and obtained all the food he wanted. One day, however, he was unable to catch anything at all.

Being very hungry, he bethought himself what he could have for dinner. Suddenly he remembered that the cat had quite a large family. He went straight to her home and found her absent.

Never thinking of her kindness to him—Leopard only remembered that he was hungry—he ate all her kittens. Puss, on discovering this dreadful fact, was so angry that she refused to have anything more to do with the great creature.

Consequently the leopard has never been able to learn how to catch animals that pass him on the right side.