

THE VILLAGE: Fulfilling a prophecy

ANANSI goes back to Africa

Astrid Noorden

Colofon

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I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In *The Village*, a collection of stories, Anansi or Nanzi the Spider plays an important role. However, now in a different setting than the original Anansi stories that I grew up with. We know that telling stories is intrinsically linked to our human history. You carry with you forever the emotions, the images, and the feeling they create. For me, that was telling a story before bedtime, or a family member with an exciting story, which was probably an “Anansi Tori,” also meaning one with a lot of imagination. You had to take it with a grain of salt. But it was mainly the atmosphere and the coziness of home, *my home*, was the overall feeling given by the telling of these stories. As a child, I also found books about Anansi the Spider fascinating.

The word Anansi means spider in the language of Ghana’s Akan people. The stories or fables of the spider were brought from West Africa during slavery to the Caribbean and South America and then spread all over the world. In these stories, the spider is cunning and possesses magical powers and not always sympathetic or reliable. Understandable given the fact that the spider was the symbol of silent resistance against the oppressor or slave owner.

But even later on the timeline when it was no longer about the original oppressor, there was this “trickster” and the spider wanting to achieve his goals at the expense of others. However, in *The Village*, it is the altruistic side of the spider that emerges. Anansi has a mission here and that is to share his grandfather’s legacy with the world—a world where health and well-being are central, where everyone can thrive and live in dignity.

In addition in this book, the spider goes back to its origins to achieve this unselfish goal. Anansi goes back to Africa. It is a village in Central Africa which becomes the epicenter in the quest and the manifesting of a world where norms and values revolve around

love, peace, and respect for each other and Mother Earth. This starting point, and at the same time a turning point, forms the basis for a different view on many facets of society. The village and its community in Central Africa plays a vital role in this transition point and is part of a prophecy. It was Johan Ferdinand Noorden, my father, who emphasized that this was a story that had to be told.

I did not write the stories all alone. My family and my dear friends have all contributed in their own special way to an ever clearer storyline. Synchronicity was a guiding principle from the very beginning and at exactly the right moment when needed.

I mention here some of my friends who were always there at the right time.

An essential moment of ordering and general overview came when my dear friend Jetty Mathurin asked me an important question. From her work as a professional actress experienced with the world of cinema and television, she asked me if she could read the synopsis of the story. This question immediately made visible what was going on in my head up till then.

Rian van der Pauw who, besides translating the stories into Dutch, always gave me space to voice the scenes playing on my mental screen, thus helping me in arranging and streamlining the “scenes.”

Mila Streng-van Dijk has been involved and supported the idea and values of the stories from the beginning of the project. Mila telling about the miserable life bears had in some countries, motivated me to introduce Grandma Bertha the Bear and the little cubs Gruba Gruba and Halona into the story.

Then there are my friends Winny and Kees van de Velden, who from their work with the dolphins and whales inspired for the arrival of the Atlantic friends in the African village. One day, after a horrific slaughtering of dolphins, Winny called me in tears and said it is time the world knows about your village where love reigns. Are

there dolphins in the story? I said, my dear, I am the author of the stories-if you want dolphins in them, then dolphins there shall be. Ptah's speech to this day gives me goosebumps.

The message of Ptah the Whale is inspired by the work of our international network of friends, "the Unity" symbolic for a large group of friends. We are committed to and working for a world where love and compassion are leading principles. Fred Matser, Claes Noremark, Alex Orbito, Marika Verheijen, Milagros Herrera Vargas, Rosa Casada, and Jan van Hemert, thank you for your friendship and inspiration.

Very needed are politicians such as my late friend Chantal Gill'ard who represented a new ethic in politics, one which was based on mutual respect and not on separatism. A political movement that places people in a holistic and empowering setting at the heart of deeds and that refrains from hollow rhetoric.

Then there is my family, my parents, my brother and sister, the family where I am rooted. They are the ones who have always supported me in everything, through thick and thin. There are no words to describe my love and gratitude. Families are mini-villages and it is there where important values are passed on.

Also important to mention are my dear Canadian friends Danielle, Skip and Lise Brooks, beautiful people. Sitting in their kitchen in Canada in 2008 wrapped up in a blanket enjoying a cup of tea, I read out loud the story about the arrival in the village of Amba the Tigress. At that time, I was somewhat hesitant and wondered if anyone would be interested in my work. It was their kindness and warmth that gave me the confidence to go on in the direction I was heading.

My thanks and gratitude also for my friend in the USA, Andrea Tovar. As the owner of an online English editing service, she sponsored the project by proofreading and editing the English version of the stories in the early beginning. It has been a delight having

met you and Albert in the Netherlands. Working with you, Andrea, on the stories was inspiring. You were heaven sent, a gift from the universe.

And then there were those, wonderful souls who contributed by just being who they are, special and precious. All inhabitants of the village in one form or another. My nephews and nieces: Edgard, Sophie, Christina, Chelsea and Savannah. Mariëlla, Marvin, Le-Mar and Jayleigh. And Boni. Representing the youngsters in the stories in reference to their importance for the future, and their love for family, parents and grandparents. It is said that a civilization that does not acknowledge the elderly is spiritually poor. Having lived the mystery of life and thus able to share their wisdom and understanding of life, they bridge the gap between humanity and divinity.

John Deighton, Eric Smalley my co-founders of the Teaching Tree Foundation, who were always supportive of this project, Annemiek Le Noble, with a name that justifies the lady she is, Heleen Lambers, a special lady who was one of the first I recognized in one of my stories, who has always supported this project. Esther Akpomukai and Erno Pikee, with whom I had interesting and inspiring conversations about the potential of the stories.

Robert Holden, English author renowned for his work on happiness, whom I met in Tenerife during a workshop with Winny and Kees. Our conversation and the insights I had when we spoke about several of my stories gave me an even deeper understanding of my own process as a writer. Thank you for a special and inspirational encounter, Robert.

A big thank you also to Mrs. Gloria Estefan and her band. Famous artist and well-known for her music. Salsa, Latin music, *your* music, Mrs. Estefan, being one of the favorites of my Villagers. Thank you for making my village rock!

This work would not be complete without mentioning and acknowledging the Honorable Mister Johan Ferrier, first President

of the Republic of Suriname. Ferrier was known as a wise man, a great teacher and a master storyteller of Anansi stories. It is safe to say that many would have loved to have met mister Ferrier at a party or during his lectures. But, luckily we are blessed with his books.

And finally I want to thank Naomi Horii, a beautiful multi-talented and special lady, for being my final editor. Naomi brought her decades of experience to assist with the edits. In what better hands can I trust my village and precious characters. Without a doubt Naomi, your contribution took this book to a higher level.

My heartfelt thank you to all of you for being part of “My Village.” A well-known saying goes: “It takes a village to raise a child.” In this case, it is this little magical village in Central Africa and its community who lays the foundation for a better heart-based world. Teaching their kids and all who are drawn to them to be who they are free and joyful Spirits. And you beautiful people, my family and friends, are all part of it.

I dedicate this book to my parents Johan Noorden and Alma Brunings, my brother Dennis Noorden, and my sister Ingrid Noorden who laid the foundation for me to become who I am today, who provided me and enveloped me with their warmth, joy and unconditional love.

II. PREAMBLE

Writing these stories was a fun and intense experience for almost eleven years. I started writing these stories after my brother Dennis passed away in 2007. I have long entertained the idea of difficult themes as metaphysical and philosophical subjects being voiced by animal characters in stories -at least- that was how it started. So “Celestial Fireworks” was born.

I was chopping onions, preparing my evening meal, when I could suddenly literally see how the concept of Tao, flowing into yin and yang, ended up in “the 10.000 Things”. The ten thousand things is an Eastern philosophical concept used to signify the indefinite multitude of all forms and beings in manifest existence.

Seeing so clearly the beauty of God’s creation, which of course included the onions and their sulphur fumes, brought tears to my eyes. One has no idea of the importance and almost sacredness of onions in the Surinamese kitchen. I remember the image of our neighbor throwing three onions over the fence to my mother. At that time, many things were scarce in the country, including onions. My mum ran out of the kitchen door when she heard her neighbor shouting from her balcony: “Noortje!, Noortje kom halen mi gudu, uien, uien!” Roughly translated from Dutch: “Noortje, Noortje dear, onions, onions!” And the utterly moving part of this gesture was that though she had only three onions to share, she kissed each one before throwing it over the fence, thus potentizing the already golden onions to an even higher value. In Suriname and the Dutch Antilles, I saw people give freely from the little they had. It was a blessing to have had this example in my youth. As Kahlil Gibran so beautifully expresses in *The Prophet*, on giving; “These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty.”

So returning to the soup cooking on my stove, it was no surprise

that existence came into being while God was sipping His tea in the kitchen. That is first and foremost the place of warmth and love.

Although I wrote “Celestial Fireworks” in no more than four minutes, this explosion of quantum stuff did not repeat itself. Almost eleven years after I started writing the first story, the epilogue was written. There were times I could feel the eminent “birth” of a story and I would sit down, not having a clue where to start. What I learned during such a creation process was to fully trust and go with the flow. There were numerous days where I sat down at my kitchen table on a Friday evening after work, writing the whole weekend and finishing the story on Monday morning.

What often surprised me but also moved me deeply were the reactions from my family, inner circle, and closest friends. I was so touched when my father said that my stories with Anansi the Spider in a key role were so different than the ones known in the Caribbean and Surinamese culture, that I just had to do something with them. Gratitude is what I feel knowing that my dad at least saw and could hold in his hands the special Spanish edition of story number one before he closed his eyes in 2012. This was a little book made for the street kids of Chiclayo, Peru who also contributed to the book by means of their drawings. The revenues went towards their nutrition and education. *“El Pueblo: Esto es lo que hay,”* was funded by the Teaching Tree Foundation and an important tool in the activities of the organisation in Peru.

There are many stories to tell about “hooking up” the right character to the appropriate animal. Circumstances and people just “showed up” during the birthing of these stories. I remember Lothar Boksteen, my brother-in-law, and his disappointed face when he said: “Why didn’t you ask me to help you find the right animal?” He just loved the idea of a Rastafarian lion singing Bob Marley. After reassuring him that there was still a lot of research I needed to do, for example what kind of animal would embody Sjanna the

midwife, he came with the idea of making her a capybara. “As such, she could then assist during the birth process on land and in the water,” Lothar explained.

The name Sjanna and her profession was inspired by my sister Ingrid her work as a specialist in sociology and genealogy. Sjanna was our great-grandmother born in 1863 in Suriname. All the way from our current family tree branches back to our African roots, we see a dominance of medical professions. This is how Sjanna the Lady Capybara midwife came into being.

Another thing was that after the animal characters “showed up,” I began to recognize some of them in my family, friends, and international network. This is another story in itself. This synchronicity during the years of writing *The Village* has been an even more jaw-dropping experience.

In June 2009, I was in the Philippines and part of an international network of doctors, therapists, and healers. We were there together from all over the globe. After the seminar, the group traveled through the country and provided free medical assistance to those who needed it. These “Heart & Healing” tours were our way of contributing to the health of the residents in often remote areas.

After returning home, I received a phone call from one of the healers. During a walk in the forest, she received a message: “Tell Astrid that she also has to write a book about the synchronicity behind the stories.” For her, a somewhat cryptic message. As for me, today as clear as the water of a pristine mountain stream.

Calling me was the same young healer I met during my seminar in the Philippines. While I was giving a presentation on the origin of my stories, she entered through the side corridor of the auditorium and sat down in the back row. Later it turned out that she had been asleep and woke up to a voice saying, “You have to go to Astrid’s lecture.”

The resemblance with story number 11, now converted in chapter 11 in this book, is striking and almost uncanny. Anansi also woke up to the voice of his grandfather telling him to get up and go to the forest where he would find an important shrub.

And so the writing, the quest, my own journey to *The Village* became a magical experience full of synchronicity and wonder. This has been the greatest gift I received, an exhilarating feeling of being connected and part of an abundant and creative Source.

While I sometimes did not have a clue where this all was leading I knew I was part of a larger story, a greater story that had to be told. Just as my father had told me. And as such, the first twenty-seven stories in this book are only the beginning, marking the words of Grandma Phoebe the day Amba walked into the village. To this day, they give me goosebumps: *“The Prophecy is being fulfilled, brother Anansi. The time has come brother Nanzi, the time is Now.”*

III. INTRODUCTION

The Village is a series of short stories that are each a piece of a larger one. Each story is complete within itself yet, when put together, makes up a greater story. While going through the material, the reader will see that the meaning and plot will evolve and unfold as a total entity. The characters evolve as the story proceeds. All the characters are animals. And all the primary characters are introduced in the first series of twenty-seven narratives.

The Village is located in the jungle in Central Africa where animals live in harmony with nature and each other, and where they take care of each other, and educate their children to be what they are: free and joyful spirits.

In this place, the principles of peace, love, and compassion rule the community. Thus, valuable virtues such as loyalty and respect for nature are common and natural to these wonderful beings. Happiness and joy are seen as basic rights for everyone.

The Village and the inhabitants are part of a prophecy that will be known once the signs are all aligned. Two characters play an important part in this revelation; namely, Grandma Phoebe and Amba the Healer. Grandma Phoebe has been chosen in her family as the one who will recognize the signs, and Amba is the one to appear as the manifestation of the beginning of the prophecy.

From this point on, the different talents and skills of the main characters in the story are lining up to show their role in the fulfillment of the prophecy. Their mission is a joint one: to work for the benefit of All. The prophecy clearly states this, and as Amba prophesizes at the end of Grandma Phoebe's historical meeting with the women:

“They will come, they will come and we will all know what to do. Just by being who we are, we will bring joy and healing to many. My tears are from joy.”

Short description and introduction of the main characters:

- *Anansi*, also called *Nanzi* is a spider, and his wife is *Ma Akuba*. They have a special heritage to pass on. Abiba is their daughter and married to Ujana, a South American artist. They have two children Zuna and Aarush, grandchildren of Anansi and Ma Akuba.
- *Joey the Scorpion* is a party animal, a salsa expert who owns a club that is “party central.” He is married to Oesinda the Scorpion whom he met in Spain. She is a master chef and excels in making little snacks called tapas.
- *Sandjie* and his wife *Aisha* are cobras who lived in India and recently became inhabitants of *The Village*. Aisha specializes in karma-free cooking while Sandjie is a teacher and a master in Eastern philosophy and an advocate for neem trees.
- *Kwame the Lion* is a great storyteller a wise and clairvoyant sweet soul. His neighbors are the colorful Pig family Gullin, Colinda and kids. Gullin short for Gullinbursti, meaning Gold Mane or Golden Bristles. With a name rooted in Norse Mythology and a rugged appearance, Gullin is in fact a big softie. The latter especially when it comes to his six adorable unruly little ones. The piglets almost always speak in unison, calling anyone older than their parents grandfather or grandmother. However, it goes without saying that the lion was unanimously adopted by the little ones as the favorite grandfather. They simply adore Grandpa Kwame and are always begging him for a story.
- *Jimmy the Rastafarian* is a lion and he is Kwame’s cousin. His roots are in the Caribbean Islands. He plays guitar and drums and has a center with a shop and a bar where trainings and meetings take place. The center has a beautiful garden with flowers and trees and lots of space for outdoor activities like picnic parties. It is referred to as “the Garden.” Jimmy’s bar is

famous for its sugarcane juice, occasionally, depending on the event, sprinkled with a wee bit of rum.

- *The Rabbit family* is harmonious and loving. *Anthony* the father is a renowned researcher with a special Carrot Project. He is deeply in love with his wife *Ghizy*, and their children are Gregory, Alice and Patty.
- *Amba, the White Lady* is a Royal white Bengal Tiger. She is a wise and great healer who has been a legend since she was young.
- *Grandmother Phoebe* is a wise woman. She is the Keeper of the Prophecy and is the one to recognize that the time has come for it to be fulfilled. The latter with the coming of *Amba* to *The Village*.
- *Rufus the Dog* is *Amba's* student. He is devoted to her and more like a son. *Rufus* is also good friends with Gregory, the eldest son of the rabbit family.
- *Quillermo de Gallus de Quiquiriqui* and *Helena de Gallina from Aragon* are Spanish chickens. They met while studying at the University of Madrid. *Helena* majored in Agricultura Ecologica and *Guillermo* in Botany. They fell madly in love with each other.
- *Manut Equus de Asinus* is a donkey. He is a nobleman and doctor in allopathic medicine and very much into vibrational medicine and quantum physics. *Manut* has a soft spot for *Sjanna*. He traveled to *The Village* with *Sjanna*, *Abiba*, the Spanish chickens *Quillermo* and *Helena*.
- *Sjanna is a Capybara* and the world's largest rodent. She is strong and a professional midwife. *Sjanna* met with *Manut* at a medical convention in Barcelona. She is part of the extended family of *Abiba*.
- *Pakira* is a wild pig who lives in South America. She majored at a university in Uruguay in music science. She plays the flute and has been friends with *Abiba's* family for several years. *Pakira* met them while backpacking in Brazil and Suriname.

- *Oki Yuma*, meaning God of oaths and agreements and Son of the Chief, is a horse. He is the son of Mirabel and was born with a special mission. Oki is a very wise and talented child. Mirabel is a horse and the mother of Oki Yuma. He calls her Gaho which means Mother. She knows her son must go on a special journey to prepare for his life's work. Tatonga Gladys is a horse, Mirabel's sister and the aunt of Oki Yuma. Tatonga is an Indian name and means buffalo or large deer. She is a master in martial arts. Oki is her biggest fan and very proud of his Auntie Tatonga.
- *Gruba* is a little bear and his sister is Halona. The little cubs were found by Oki Yuma in the woods where they had been trying to survive after the death of their mother. They got adopted by Oki Yuma's family.
- *Boris Ivanovitz Dimitrov* is a Russian black crow from the Secret Service Interface (SSI). In classified CBI-documents (non-accessible secret documents), aka "Crows-in-Black." A very sour-looking crow, he is in fact a warm-hearted creature with heavy worries concerning the army of Anatevka and his grey wolves.
- *General Anatevka* is the Grey Great Wolf. He and his army are much feared and occasionally referred to as "the Grey Mob." In fact, they are Boris Ivanovitz Dimitrov's worst nightmare. However unexpectedly after a twist of fate, "the Mob" becomes the bodyguards of Oki Yuma, "the one they have been waiting for," with Boris playing a significant role in their saga.
- *Prince Mikhael Nicholai* is a horse. He is an aristocrat of the family Prezewalski. He owns a castle. His army is renowned for their good deeds.
- *Big Bertha* is a bear with severe eye problems who is taken to *The Village* by Oki's family. Immediately upon arrival, she is brought to Anansi for treatment.
- *Iva* is a beautiful Black lady panther with powerful connections in the media. She has her own company which produces a real-life

TV series which is known and loved by many. She has a “thing” for Jimmy. Her new project will be the Village and its inhabitants starring in a new TV program titled “Grooming Jimmy.”

- *Richard the Chameleon* is Iva’s favorite camera operator and a genius at blending in with his environment. He manages within seconds to set the actors at ease, nobody ever noticing him, which results in Richard doing a perfect job.
- *Hapi the Hippo* is a beautiful but sad lady. On the outside looking as strong as a rock, but on the inside fighting an internal battle slowly breaking her bit by bit. However, through her nursing and helping her friend Obya with his healing process, she eventually healed herself.
- *Obya is a giraffe* who has been severely injured by a fall. Hapi, who was on her way to the lake and was about to plunge in never to surface again, found him lying nearby under a tree. It is there where their lives changed forever.
- *Sarah the Elephant* of the House of Loxodonta and her young son Junior are on their way to *The Village* where Junior will join a special course for gifted children. Halfway there, they are scheduled to meet Pillar. He is Sarah’s life-long partner and Junior’s father. Pillar will go with his family to this place his son was called for. This journey has a great impact on their lives.
- *Father Stripes*, wife *Chordetta* and daughter *Zasja* are the Zeb family. They are zebras on their way to *The Village* with QuiQui and CouCou. These French little monkeys were placed under the custody of Father Stripes and family. Wonderful mischievous boys destined to be great healers and always chasing the wind with Papa Stripes. Hanging onto his manes speeding through the savanna, like grease lighting, was their hearts’ delight. They joined with Sarah and her family who were also going to *The Village*. It was en route to Lake Asante where Sarah and her extended family met with Obya and Hapi.

- *Leroy the Lion*, Jimmy's nephew is from the Caribbean. Leroy, who had dropped out of school was sent to live with his uncle James by his desperate mother, in hopes that her brother could prevent further derailment by taking him under his wings. Paco, a son of Leroy's mother's best friend, made a last-minute decision to join Leroy on his trip to "the old world," as he describes Africa. Eventually, Leroy and Paco met a group of friends who had heard of *The Village* through the legend of the Grey Wolf Anatevka and decided to join their new friends.
- *The Atlantic Friends* are a group of whales and dolphins who are on their way to the Village to deliver a message. They have been traveling for months. Before reaching the Village they had to leave the sea to travel through the river that is called "the lifeline of all creatures." Ptah, the leader of the group, had asked for the Villagers to gather on the river shore so he could deliver their message.
- *The O-Team* or "*the One Energy*" also known as the Unity, is a group on a mission. The Unity consisting of Nelia the Leopard Lady, Ypsilon the Lion, Sealcus fondly called Papa Bear, Dederic the friendly German Shepherd Dog, Asor the Owl from Tarragona often referred to as the wise one and Zula Mamma Quilla the Condor, left their specific countries to rendezvous with Grandma Phoebe and Manut the Donkey who were already in The Village. Ptah the Whale's speech had laid the foundation for their work and it was time for them to begin their job as a unity.

Important locations in the stories:

Key places are the main road of the jungle, the marketplace or agora, Jimmy's Center, the neem tree, the Garden, Joey's music club, The river of The Lifeline of All Creatures and lake Akoma.