

Anancy, Dog and Old Higue Dry-Skull *by James Berry*

One day Anancy decides he doesn't want to go hunting. Bro Dog and the others go hunting, and everybody shoots and catches something, except Dog. Every hunter has a bagful of birds and wild animals, but Bro Dog turns home with an empty bag. Sad, tired and hungry, Bro Dog decides to hang back from the others and take a short cut home by himself.

Alone, halfway in the woods, Dog stumbles on something like a bone. Bro Dog can't resist a bone so he stops to pick it up. But when he finds out what it is, he is disappointed.

"O blow it!" Dog says to himself. "Why couldn't it be a fresh bone with flesh? Why couldn't I have a meal?" But Dog can't help looking at the bone closer and as he does he sees it's a dry skull. He decides he'll just leave it, then finds himself thinking, "I'm so hungry I might as well put it in my bag and have a bit of a chew off it later." So Bro Dog picks up the dry-skull and puts it in his empty bag.

As Bro Dog walks on, he notices the bag hanging from his shoulder is getting heavier and heavier.

"Nonsense," Bro Dog says to himself. "How can my bag get heavier? I must just be hungry and weak."

But as Bro Dog walks on, his bag gets so heavy that his shoulder can't take the weight any longer. He has to rest the bag down. And Dog naturally has the urge to look inside the bag to see what's happened. Dog is dumbfounded. Dog can't open his bag. Dog struggles and struggles and no way can he open his own bag.

"Blow it!" Dog says to himself. "I'm too hungry and tired to bother with all this. I'll just leave it – the whole lot." Bro Dog takes his hands off the bag, stands up and begins to walk away. But things aren't so simple.

"You can't leave me," a squeaky voice from the bag says. "Pick me up, Bro Dog. Put me on your back."

Bro Dog knows he's really in trouble. He knows he has picked up Old Higue Dry-Skull. Old Higue is the worst thing in the whole world. It holds you in its spell and takes your blood. Old Higue Dry-Skull is equally nasty and horrible and terrible. Dog could have died. All his bad-luck has come in one day.

Bro Dog hesitates. But Bro Dog finds himself trying to lift the heavy bag.

"You can pick me up," the squeaky voice says, "You can pick me up. Put me on your back."

Bro Dog somehow manages to lift the bag onto his back and put the straps round his head. Bro Dog walks and walks with his load. He comes into the village wondering what he'll ever do with his burden or what it'll ever do with him.

The first person Dog sees is Bro Anancy. Seeing Dog under his big load, Anancy's greedy eyes pop at what Bro Dog could have possibly caught when he was hunting. And poor Bro Anancy can't help himself. He steps brisk-brisk up to Dog.

"Oh, a good-good evening to you Bro Dog. Seems for certain the hunt has favoured you with best-best luck."

"I'm tired, Bro Anancy," Dog says. "Tired-tired! I have more on my back than I can manage."

"Bro Dog," Anancy says, "you know I'll help you. Let me help you."

"Oh Bro Anancy," Dog says, "it's just what I need. I won't even bother to put it down."

"No Bro Dog," Anancy says. "Just put your load straight onto my back."

"Thank you. Oh thank you Bro Anancy," Dog says, "I'll just sit down right here a bit."

"That's all right Bro Dog," Anancy says. "Now it's on my back, I'll just walk on. I'll take your load to your house. Or my house."

"Bro Anancy," Dog says, "it doesn't matter. I know where you live. You know where I live."

Bro Anancy goes off with Old Higue Dry-Skull. Relieved, Bro Dog merely goes off to his own house. Bro Dog well knows Anancy will take the heavy bag to his own house expecting to find a bagful of fresh meat. But instead of finding fresh meat Anancy will find trouble.

Bro Anancy opens the bag easy-easy. But Anancy jumps back. He can't believe his bad luck when he sees Old Higue Dry-Skull in the bag staring at him.

"You take me, you take me out of the bag," the squeaky voice says. "You take me out the bag, Bro Anancy."

Anancy knows he's in the spell of Old Higue Dry-Skull. He knows Old Higue Dry-Skull has to be given something alive every two days to eat. He knows, under Old Higue Dry-Skull's spell, you become his slave and can't go anywhere beyond a certain distance.

Anancy has to take Old Higue Dry-Skull out of the bag. He has to look after him and be his constant companion. All the same, Bro Anancy is not a man to put up with anything. He racks his brains to find a way to free himself of Old Higue Dry-Skull.

One day Anancy hears his chickens making a big-big noise. He knows it is Chicken Hawk. Anancy runs off from Old Higue Dry Skull saying he must protect his chickens. But as he goes outside, Anancy sees Hawk eating one of his chickens on a tree stump. Hawk is about to fly off with the chicken when he sees Anancy waving and calling in a panicked voice. Hawk knows Anancy wants to talk to him badly, so he waits and listens.

Anancy tells Hawk he'll give him a whole coop of chickens if he'll do a job for him quickly.

The next day, Anancy puts Old Higue Dry Skull outside in the open to sun himself, as he does every day. Then he stands back in hiding to watch everything.

Chicken-Hawk comes overhead and begins to circle round. Hawk's shadow moves over Old Higue Dry-Skull and he's thrown into terrible terror. More than anything else in the world, Hawk's open wings terrify Old Higue Dry Skull

"Anancy! Anancy!" the squeaky voice calls in panic. "Hawk's overhead. Hawk's overhead! Come and take me in. Take me in, Bro Anancy! You put me here. Come and take me in! Take me in!"

Hawk swoops down with open talons, picks up Old Higue Dry-Skull, flies off on and on and drops him in deepest woods.

To get even with Bro Dog, Anancy takes Hawk and shows him an easy and quiet way into Dog's chicken coop. For seven days Hawk comes and carries off one of Dog's chickens.

Bro Dog complains to Bro Anancy about what Hawk has done.

"Ah Bro Dog," Anancy says, "you know how people say '*If there's trouble up at bush, Anancy always brings it to the house.*' But now you see how poor Bro Anancy doesn't bring all the trouble."

Bro Dog says nothing.