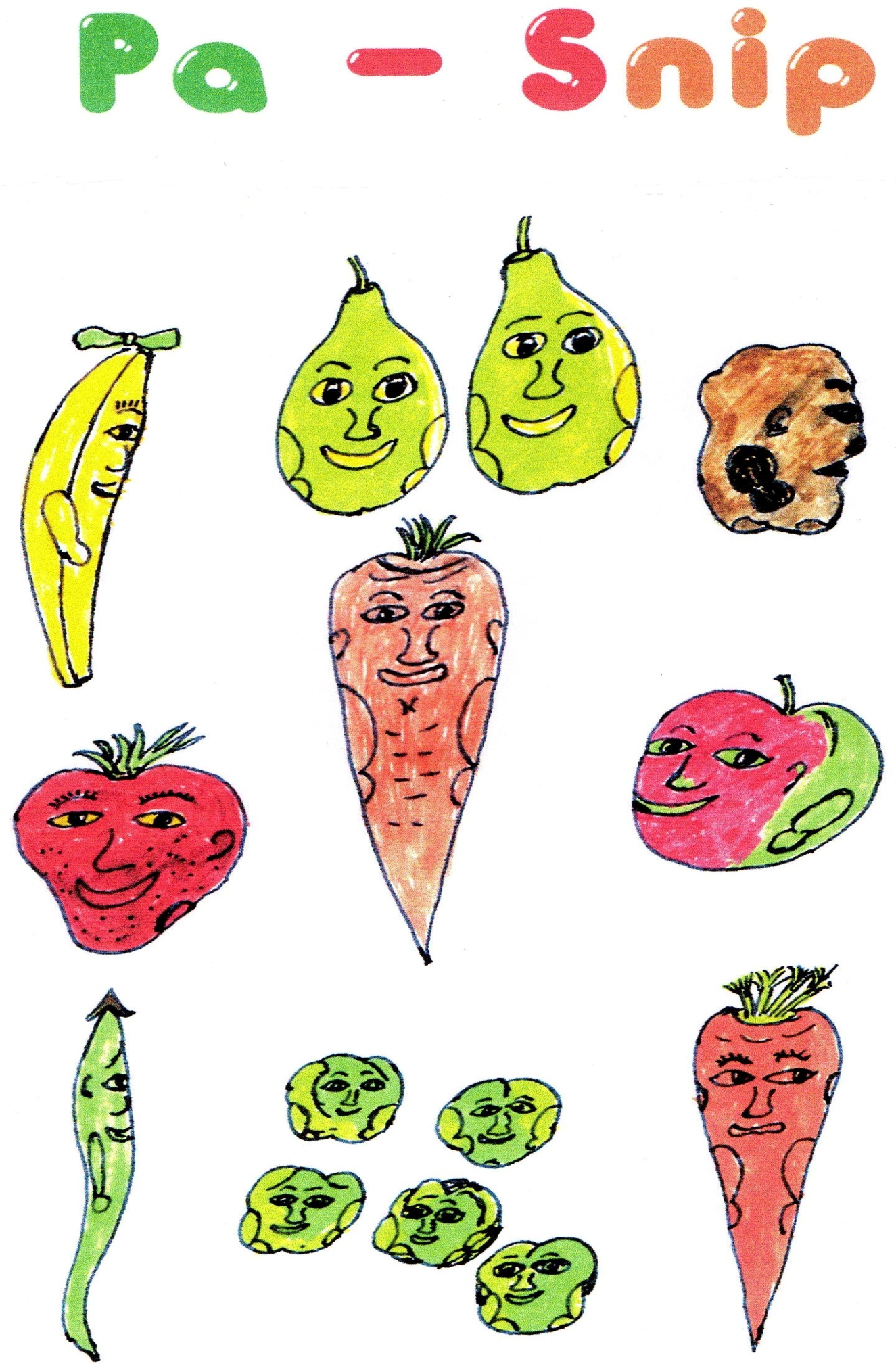
**Saying Sorry**

[Lady Anna]

In the pink box the fruit and vegetables had all been quiet again while they thought about the story of Paul and Peter pears. Suddenly Tatti gave a loud snore which woke up Slim and Carrie.

“I am so worried,” said Lady Anna, the banana. “It is so warm in here. I’ll start getting brown spots on my lovely yellow skin. I’ll go all squashy and no-one will want to buy me.”

I have just been thinking of a story about a banana,” said Pa Snip to them all. A banana just like Lady Anna, so that’s what we will call her in the story. Would you like me to tell you her story?”

“Yes please,” shouted Peter and Paula and the four Brussels sprouts all together.

There was once a great banana plant. It stood waving its great branches outside a house in Africa. The house was built of mud bricks and had a roof made of straw. It was very hot and steamy and people felt sticky all over because the sun was drying up last night’s rain. A few raindrops still rolled down the leaves of the trees and you could seem steam rising from the red road. All round the banana plant ran a stream of water and between its waving leaves grew big stalks of bananas. They were made up of many bunches which we call hands because the bananas on them look like people’s fingers.

“Like the hand which picked me!” Mr. Appy called out. Pa Snip took no notice - just in case Mr. Appy started to sing again - and went on with his story.

Most of the bananas were small and green, but one was bigger than all the rest. It was just beginning to turn yellow. It was Lady Anna. She was a really beautiful banana. She was the biggest and the best banana ever to grow on that plant. Lady Anna knew she was special, and it made her very proud.

She puffed out her sides, but not too much in case they split open! She kept telling everyone how beautiful she was. Sometimes she would push the other bananas out of the way.

“Let me see the sunshine,” she said. “I need it more than you.”

Every evening the wind rustled through the leaves of the banana plant and they

murmured and sang together:-

*It will soon be time to cut the fruit*

*Each dressed up in a yellow green suit*

*What a wonderful, beautiful sight*

*When they’re all so yellow and ripe.’*

Just then an enormous furry spider walked across the ground in front of the banana plant! He was as big as a saucer! His eight big legs and feet moved so quickly. He paddled through the muddy stream, climbed up the plant and across the bananas. He walked all over Lady Anna!

“Get off!” she cried. “Your great muddy feet have made marks all over my smooth shiny skin.” She went on to say the most dreadful things about the spider. It was not the way you would expect a fine lady to talk!

“Sorry!” said the spider. He really meant it. He was so upset by what Lady Anna had said to him. He tried to rub the dirt off Lady Anna with his two clean feet.

“Sorry!” Lady Anna exploded. “Sorry ! Your not a bit sorry. Look you’re making it worse. There’s a big black smear all down my side. Get off me you horrid furry thing!”

The spider was upset. He was so sorry, and he really had tried to help make things better. He sat on a swaying leaf and looked at Lady Anna. The wind blew through the banana plant. The leaves whispered together and called to Lady Anna. “Please be kind to the spider. He did say he is sorry.” Lady Anna took no notice. She could not think about anything except herself, and how her looks had been spoiled.

“I’m getting too much sun now,” she said, though nobody was listening to her. “I’ll be yellow and ripe before all the others. I will go all mushy and no-one will want me. It’s not fair!” She twisted herself around to get out of the sun and pressed against the next green banana. Straight away there was a shout.

“Ouch!”

It was the spider. Lady Anna had pressed one of his feet between her and the next banana. She moved back a little. The spider pulled his foot free and shook it to get rid of the pins and needles feeling. Lady Anna didn’t think to say sorry. She could only think about how she looked, so she just rolled towards the other banana again to get away from the sunshine.

The wind blew through the banana leaves and they whispered loudly now.

“Lady Anna. Say sorry to the spider. You hurt him.”

“Humph!” was all she said. “I can’t think about that now. I’ve got to keep out of the sun. Anyway, why should I say sorry? Look at the black mark he made on me!”

The spider moved again. He climbed along a leaf, beside Lady Anna.

“Keep away from me, you horrible ugly thing!” Lay Anna shouted at the spider. “And wipe your feet before you walk across bananas!”

The spider did not take any notice. He sat for a while, rubbing his legs together. Then he jumped right over Lady Anna to the next leaf. In no time at all he was spinning a cobweb. Backwards and forwards he jumped until the web went right over Lady Anna.

“What are you doing?” she kept asking. She thought at first he was angry with her, but then she saw what the spider was doing. He was making a shade for her, to keep the sun from burning her. The wind blew through the banana leaves and they whispered again.

*“Lady Anna aren’t you ashamed? Spider is showing you he is sorry by helping you. Can’t you say sorry too!”*

Lady Anna listened this time, She waited a little while and then she looked up into the cobweb where the spider was resting.

“Sorry spider,” she mumbled. “Thank you for the sunshade.”

“That’s all right,” said spider. “I needed a new web anyway. There’s a lot of new flies hatching out. I’ll catch them in my web just in time for tea.”

Next morning, a man came out of the little house made of mud bricks and straw. He took a long sharp knife and carefully cut off the bananas. He spread a brightly coloured mat on the ground and gently laid the bananas on it. A little later, just as carefully, he put them into a sack and tied the sack to the front of his bicycle.

He rode all the way to the market, where he placed the bananas on the mat on the ground, ready to sell. As he laid them out, the banana man from the little house pulled Lady Anna off the hand of bananas. He held her up in the air.

“What a fine big banana you are!” he said. He rubbed away the black mark the

spider had made with his muddy feet and took two stickers from his pocket. He used one sticker to cover what was left of the muddy mark on Lady Anna’s side, and the second sticker went on her other side . They looked just like a pair of earrings. The man laughed and drew a face on the banana. When he had finished, he put Lady Anna on a shelf above the table where everyone could see her smiling at them.

Lady Anna did smile too. She was so proud. She felt so important. She would not have been like this if she had not been shaded from the sun. She was so glad that she had said sorry and made friends with the spider. Many people looked at her and because she looked so wonderful they bought bananas from the man.

One customer, - a very important looking lady in a big white hat - asked the man if she could buy the big banana.

“Sorry, I’m not selling Lady Anna,” the man said. “She’s special. I’m having her for my supper.” And he did!