

A Hiss in the Grass



This is Adaeze.
She stands at
the lake bank,
still and happy.
The lake is flat
and glassy, and
the sun is up.





A tall man comes
to see the king. He
grins and chats,
and the king is glad.

But Adaeze is not
glad. The man is
odd, she thinks.

At dusk, Mama Nhaji comes from the reeds at the lake bank. 'That man is a snake spirit,' she **tells** Adaeze. 'Set this ash disc on the floor, and check it **well.**' Adaeze grips the disc and nods.



In the morning,
Adaeze sets the ash
disc flat on the floor.
The man steps out.
He does not spot the
disc as he passes,
and he grins a
smooth grin. Adaeze
is still. She waits.





Adaeze checks the ash disc. There is no foot print at **all**. Two long marks **cross** the ash. It is a snake track! Adaeze does not flinch. She has a plan.

Adaeze stands up and **tells** them **all**, 'Here at the lake, we drip wet drops on the hands. Keep both hands flat and **still**.' The man grins a smooth grin. 'I can do that,' he **tells** her.



Adaeze lifts a
pitcher and tips wet
drops on his hands.
His hand flickers!
For a blink it is thin,
with dark snake
skin. All gasp, and
the room is still.



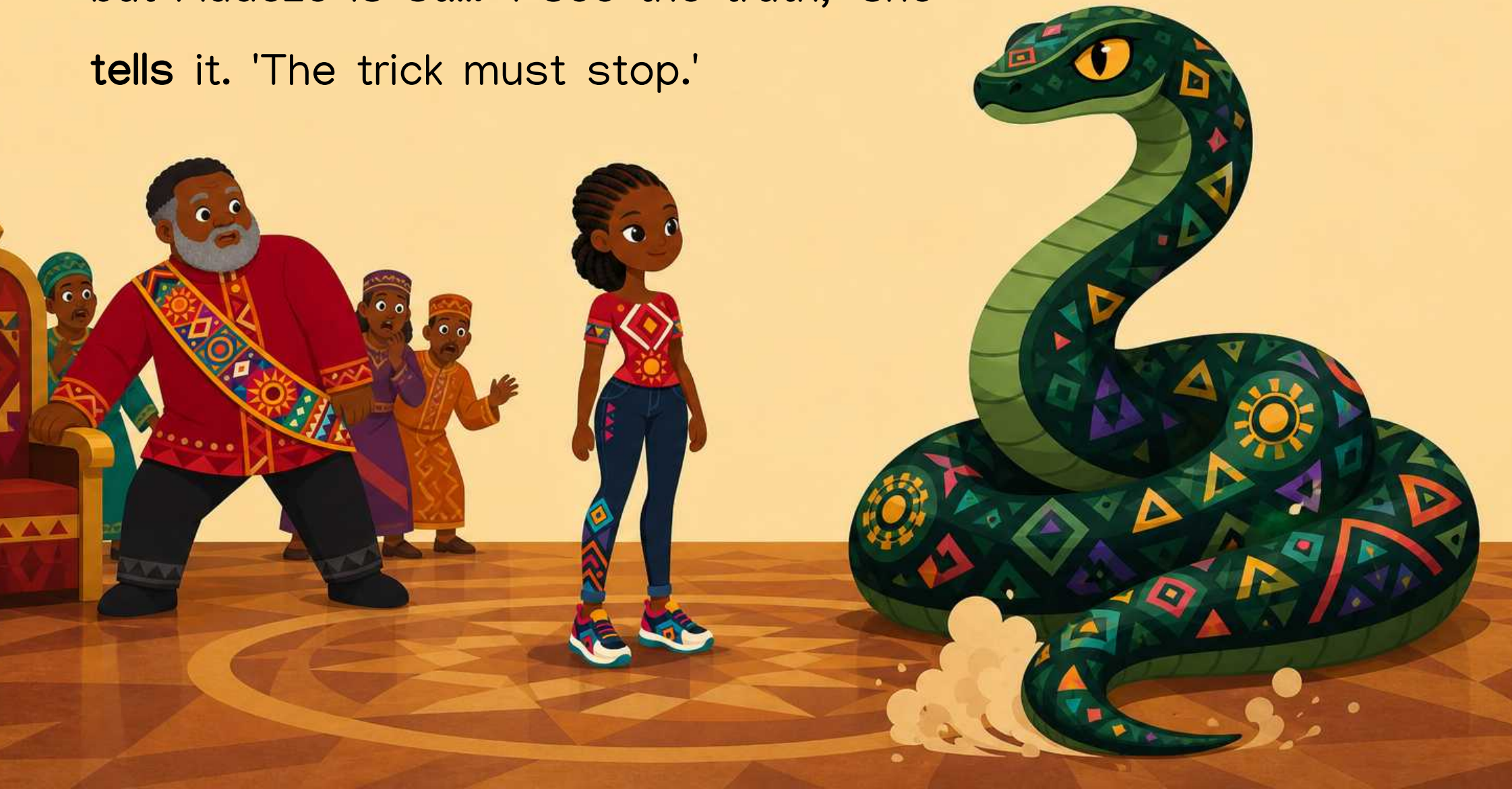


'That is a trick!' the man yells. 'Adaeze is a silly lass!'

But Adaeze lifts up the ash disc. 'See the snake tracks,' she tells them all.

The man gets grim. Then he swells up, and up, and up.

Off comes the dark coat. A vast snake fills the room and hisses. All rush back, but Adaeze is still. 'I see the truth,' she tells it. 'The trick must stop.'



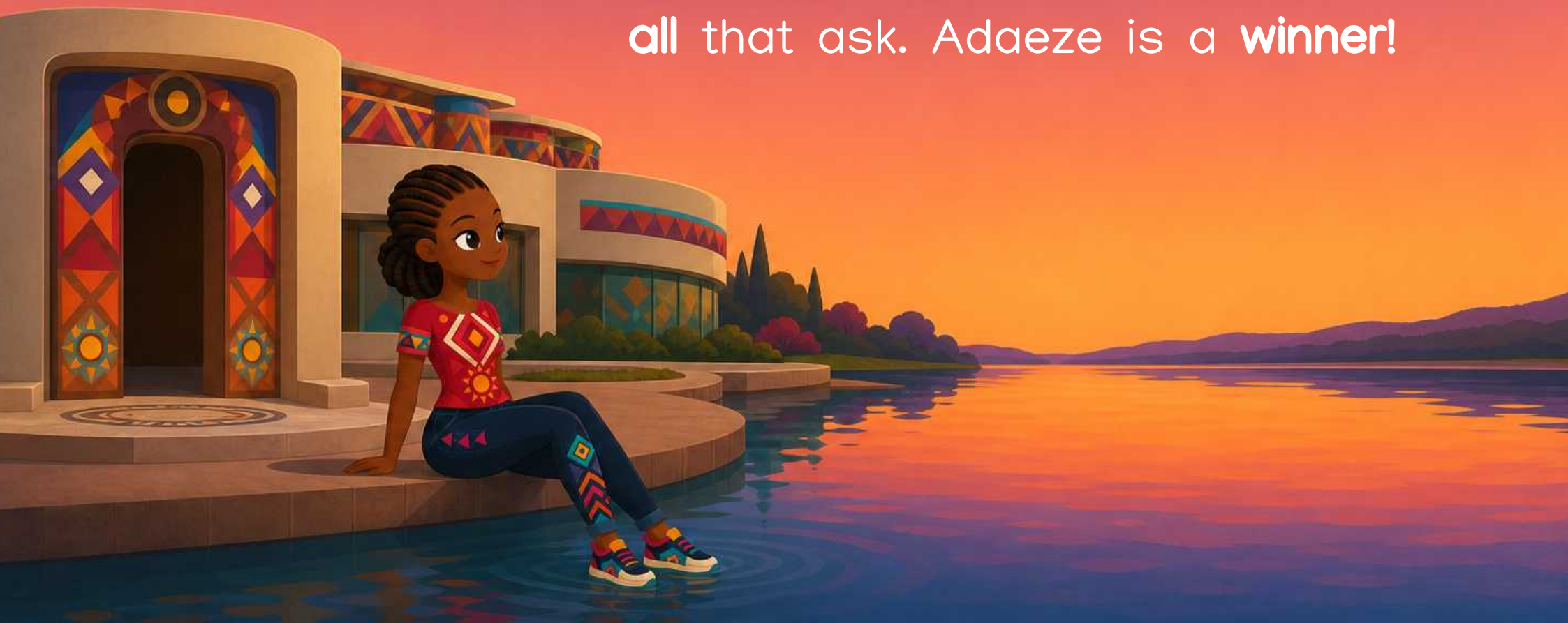
The vast snake
looks at Adaeze.
'Adaeze is smart,' it
hisses. 'I will go, and
I will not come back.'
'Go then,' Adaeze
tells it, and she lifts
up the ash disc.

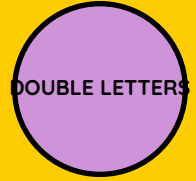




The snake slips
off into the deep
lake. Then **all** is
still. The king sits
with Adaeze at
the bank, hand in
hand. He is
happy. Mama
Nnaji nods in the
reeds.

At sunset, Adaeze sits at the lake bank. She keeps a faint ash ring at the step, as a good habit. 'Look **well**, and trust the ash,' she **tells** **all** that ask. Adaeze is a **winner**!





A Hiss in the Grass

Adaeze stands still and happy by the glassy lake until a tall stranger arrives to win her hand, but she thinks he seems odd. When Mama Nnaji tells her to check an ash disc well, Adaeze sets her trap and waits by the lake bank. Will the tracks in the ash tell her the truth about him? Written for Jolly Phonics classrooms (Step 2, Unit 4: double letters), this book practices words like 'still', 'happy', 'odd', 'glassy', 'tall'.

Phonics Focus: <double> <letters>

all, cross, fills, glassy, happy, hisses, lass, odd, off, passes, silly, still, swells, tall, tells, well, will, winner, yells

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