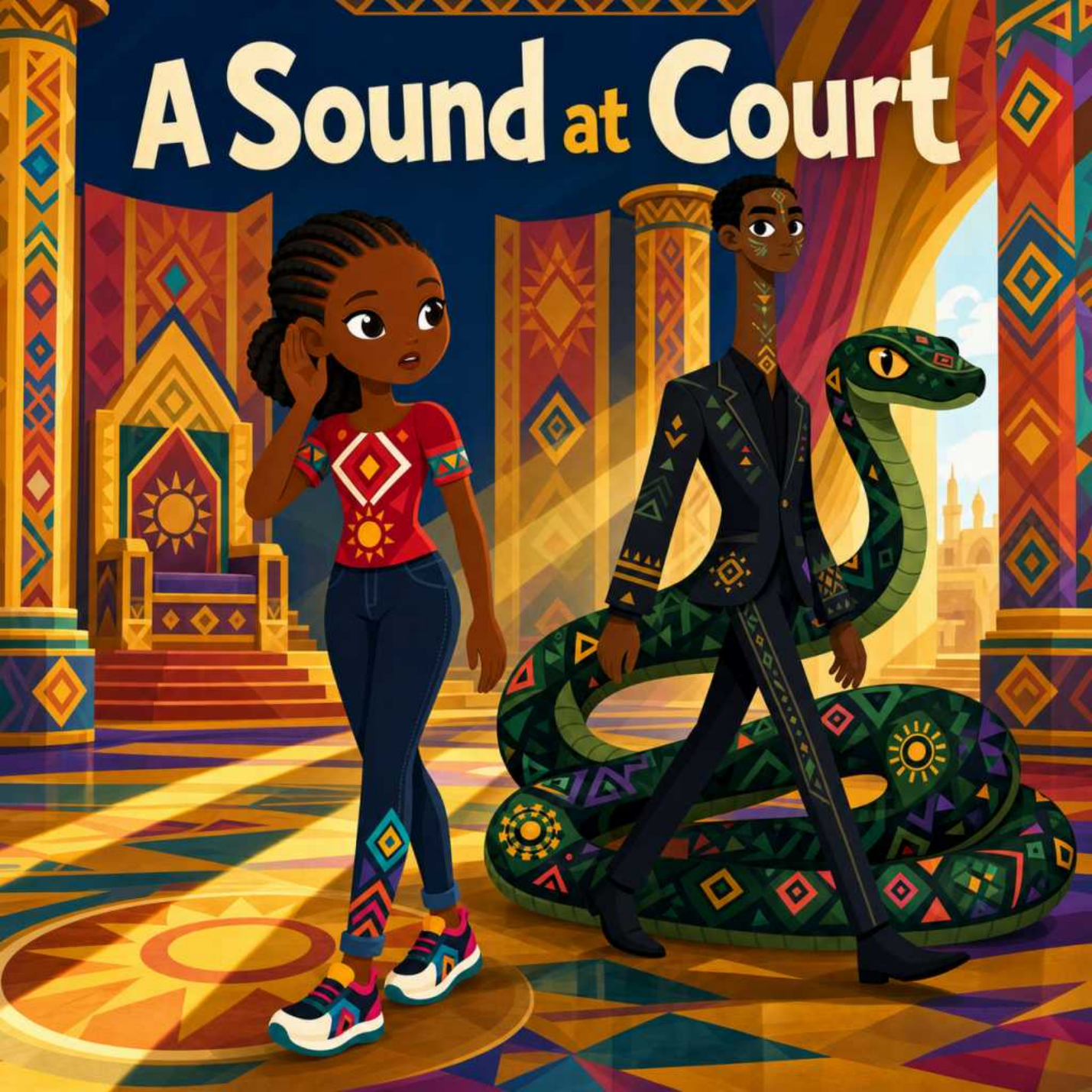


A Sound **at** Court



Adaeze lives by a wide, still lake. She can read the sky and name all the trees. But most of all, she loves to work out a hard puzzle.





A tall man came to ask for Adaeze's hand. When he moved, Adaeze heard a soft sound, like dry grass. All the court loved him. Adaeze did not.

That night, old Mama Nhaji came **out** from the reeds. She gave Adaeze a small white ash disc. 'A snake can wear a man's skin,' she said. 'Set it down, and look at what **you** find.'



At dawn, Adaeze
set the ash disc
flat by the door.
Soon the tall man
came out of his
room. He walked
past the disc and
did not look down.





No shoe print sat
in the ash. Just
two long lines,
wide and low.

What sort of man
leaves no feet on
the ground?

'Here by the lake, a man must **pour** water on his hands,' said Adaeze. 'Keep both hands flat and still.' She made the rule up, but the old men agreed.



Adaeze poured
water on the man's
hands. His right
hand went dark,
with snake scales in
it. Then it was just
a hand again. The
whole court saw it.





'Adaeze saw no such thing,' the man said. 'I read tracks, no doubt,' said Adaeze. She held up the ash disc with the two long lines. Then the man rose up, and up.

The dark coat fell off. A great green snake
stood there, wide as a chest, with eyes
like lamps. The court called out loud.
Adaeze did not move. 'Found out,' she said.



'Adaeze sees more than the last three towns,' the snake said. 'I will go.' 'And do not come back,' said Adaeze. 'And if I do?' She held up the round ash disc. 'I will make more of these.'





The great snake
slid out through
the lake and was
gone. The town
could breathe
again. That night,
the king held
Adaeze's hand for
a long, long time.

Other towns sent word to ask how she knew. Adaeze gave the same reply each time. 'Look close. Trust what **you** find.' She still sits by the lake at dusk, **proud** and wise.





A Sound at Court

Adaeze can read the sky and name every tree by its smell, but the smooth-voiced stranger at her father's gate leaves a strange, soft sound wherever he walks. Why does no shoe print sit in the ash by his door? When Adaeze pours water over his hands before the whole court, what will everyone finally see? A clever puzzle-solver, one hidden guest, and a truth waiting to be uncovered. This Bookbot level practices the 'ou' sound with words like 'pour', 'court', 'found', 'doubt', and 'proud'.

Reading Skills: <ou>

could, court, doubt, found, ground, loud, out, pour, poured, proud, round, sound, you

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