

Ada's Empty Water Jug



On the red-sand plains, the thorn trees grow low and twisted. Here lives an ogress named Dhegdheer.

That name means Long-Ear. She has one **enormous** ear, flat as a sail and stiff as dried hide, and it turns toward any sound for miles.

Every **family** knows her name, and they whisper it with dread.





A girl named Ada lives with her mother and their three camels on the edge of the plains. Ada is ten, quick-eyed and quick to think.

One **afternoon**, her mother does not come back from the well. Ada finds only the empty water jug lying in the sand.

Beside it sits one **enormous** footprint.

Ada runs to the elder, old Nuur, who sits weaving rope in the shade of a thorn tree. 'Dhegdheer has taken her,' Nuur says softly. 'That one ear hears **everything**.' He presses a small gift into Ada's hand. It is a dry seed pod that shakes like a camel's ankle bells. 'Keep this,' he says. 'Sound can be a door, or a wall.'



Ada ties the seed pod to her wrist and follows the great footprints north. The trail leads to a salt pan, a white, blinding flat, **dangerous** to cross.

The ground cracks like broken pots under her feet. Each step rings out sharp and clear, for sound carries across a salt pan like a shout across still water.

Ada keeps that fact in mind and walks on.





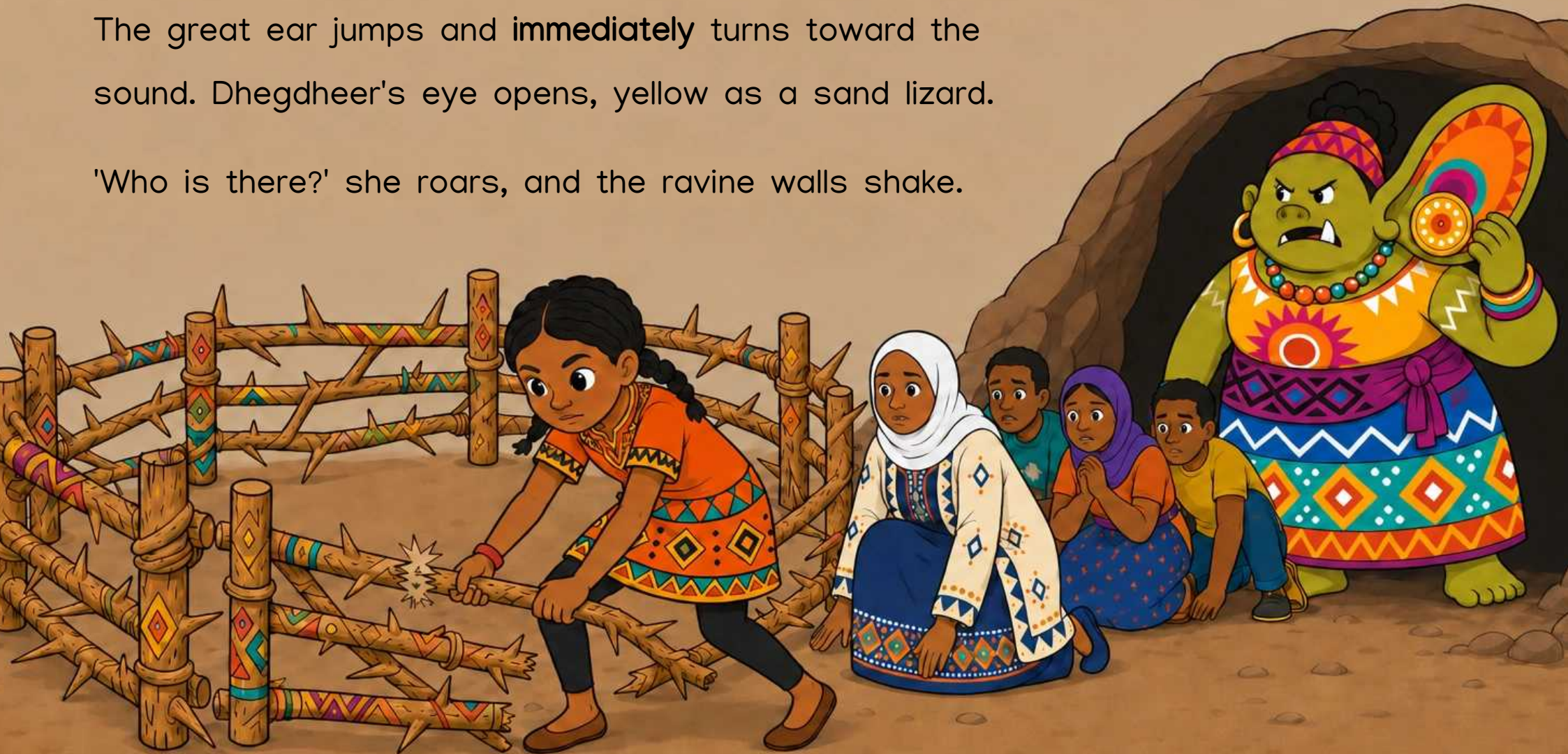
At the edge of a dry ravine,
Ada finds Dhegdheer's cave.
The ogress has built a pen
from thorn branches. Inside sit
many **prisoners**, men, women,
and children, all too **terrified** to
call out.

Ada spots her own mother
crouched at the back. The
ogress sleeps, her great ear
folded over her face like a
blanket. One sound, and that
ear will snap open.

Ada creeps down to the thorn pen. She signs to the **prisoners**: wait. One by one she pulls the thorn branches free, but the dry wood cracks.

The great ear jumps and **immediately** turns toward the sound. Dhegdheer's eye opens, yellow as a sand lizard.

'Who is there?' she roars, and the ravine walls shake.



Ada runs. Dhegdheer comes fast after her, that great ear turning, set on every step. The ogress can follow sound the way a hawk follows shadow.

No matter which way Ada twists and dodges, the ear finds her. Her heart pounds furiously.

She cannot outrun Dhegdheer, not on soft sand, not through thorn, not on the open plain.





Then Ada's feet hit the salt pan. Crack, crack, crack. **Suddenly** a plan lights up in her mind.

She stops, unties the seed pod, and throws it hard across the white crust. It slides and shakes, just like a girl running in ankle bells. The sound races across the salt pan, far to the left.

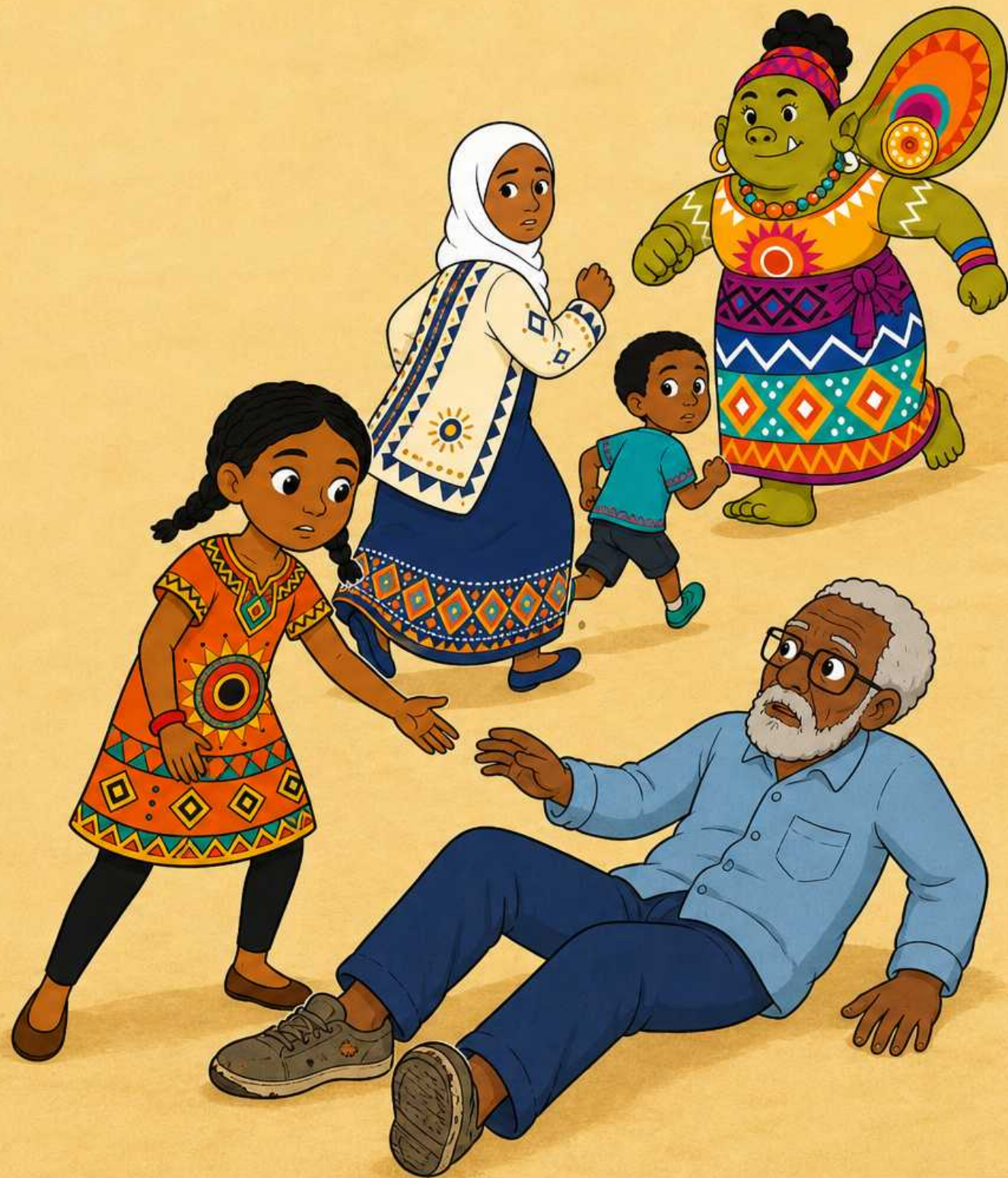
Dhegdheer's ear swings hard, and the ogress leaps after it, away from Ada, away from the cave.

Ada sprints back to the ravine. She tears open the thorn pen, takes her mother's hand, and calls out. '**Everyone**, move! Stay quiet and move!' The **prisoners** stream out, one by one, into the dark. Ada leads them south, toward the far edge of the salt pan. There the ground is soft, and their feet will make no sound.



A great howl splits the night.
Dhegdheer has found the
seed pod: silent, still, a trick.
That one ear hears
everything. Now it hears feet
shuffle on soft sand. She
turns and comes **thundering**
back.

The last of the freed
prisoners, an old man with a
twisted ankle, stumbles and
falls. Dhegdheer is close, too
close.



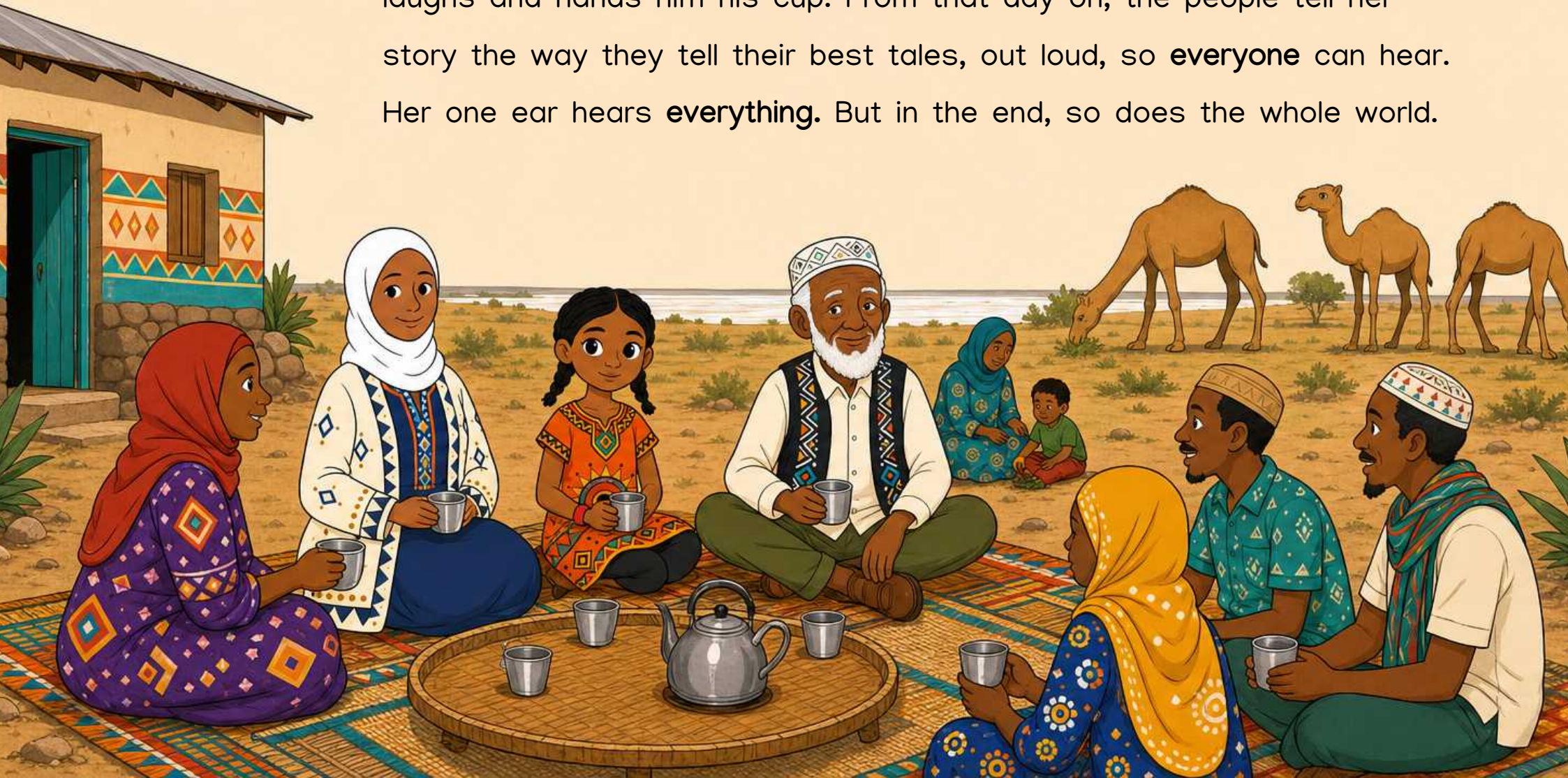


Ada runs back to the old man, pulls him to his feet, and drags him onto the salt pan, the one place where every sound rings out in every **direction** at once. She stamps and scrapes and drags her feet, filling the whole flat with a storm of noise.

Dhegdheer's ear spins left, right, left again. Too many sounds, from too many ways, all at the same moment. The ogress claps her own **enormous** ear against her head and shrieks in pain.

A flood of sound is the one thing that ear cannot bear. She stumbles, and **finally** flees north into the dark hills, and is never seen on those plains again.

By morning, all the **prisoners** are home. Ada's mother fixes their little home and makes tea strong enough to taste three houses away. Old Nuur comes to sit with them, and he smiles when he sees Ada's empty wrist. 'Ada used the door,' he says. 'And then Ada used the wall.' Ada laughs and hands him his cup. From that day on, the people tell her story the way they tell their best tales, out loud, so **everyone** can hear. Her one ear hears **everything**. But in the end, so does the whole world.





Ada's Empty Water Jug

Dhegdheer the ogress has one giant ear that hears everything for miles, so when a girl named Asad wakes one afternoon to find her mother gone, how can she possibly sneak past a monster who catches every footstep? Asad follows the great footprints toward a cave full of frightened prisoners, but the danger is only beginning. Can a rattling seed pod and a clever plan outwit an ear that never sleeps? This Bookbot level practices reading longer words of three or more syllables, like 'afternoon', 'dangerous', 'prisoners', 'suddenly', and 'immediately'.

Reading Skills: 3+ Syllables

afternoon, dangerous, direction, enormous, everyone, everything, family, finally, furiously, immediately, prisoners, suddenly, terrified, thundering

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