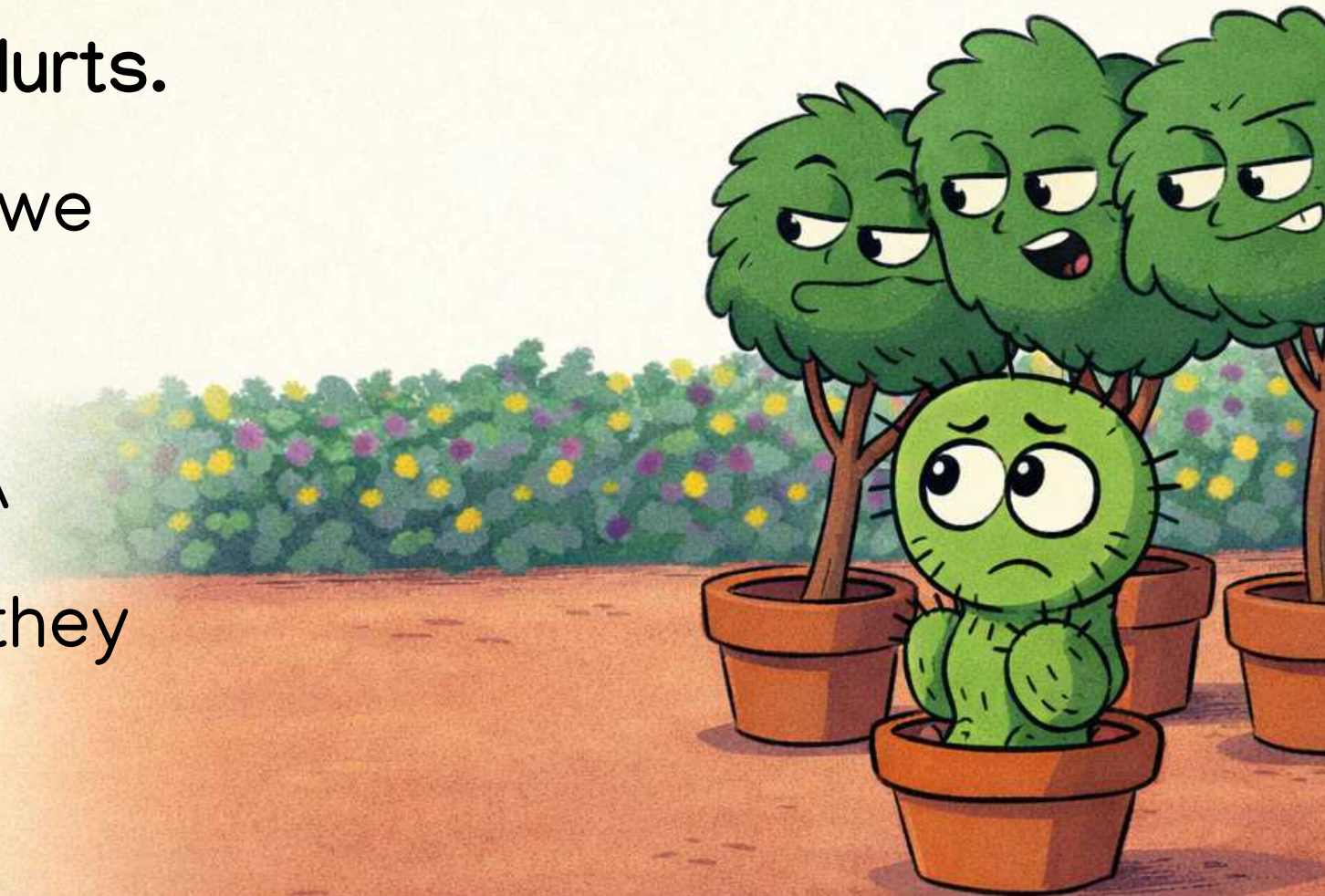


Best Buds!



Spike wants a friend.
He has never had
one, not once. Not
ever. 'Hi!' Spike blurts.
'I am Spike! Can we
hug?' The plants
smirk at Spike. 'A
hug? No, Spike,' they
say. 'Go!'



Did Spike sob? Did Spike quit? No!

Spike hops off with a grin. He turns and **twirls** in his pot. He hums a glad tune as he hops.



Spike spots a plant that sits by itself. 'Hi! Can we chat?' Spike chirps. The plant squints at Spike. 'No,' it says. 'No chat. Go!' That plant is so curt.



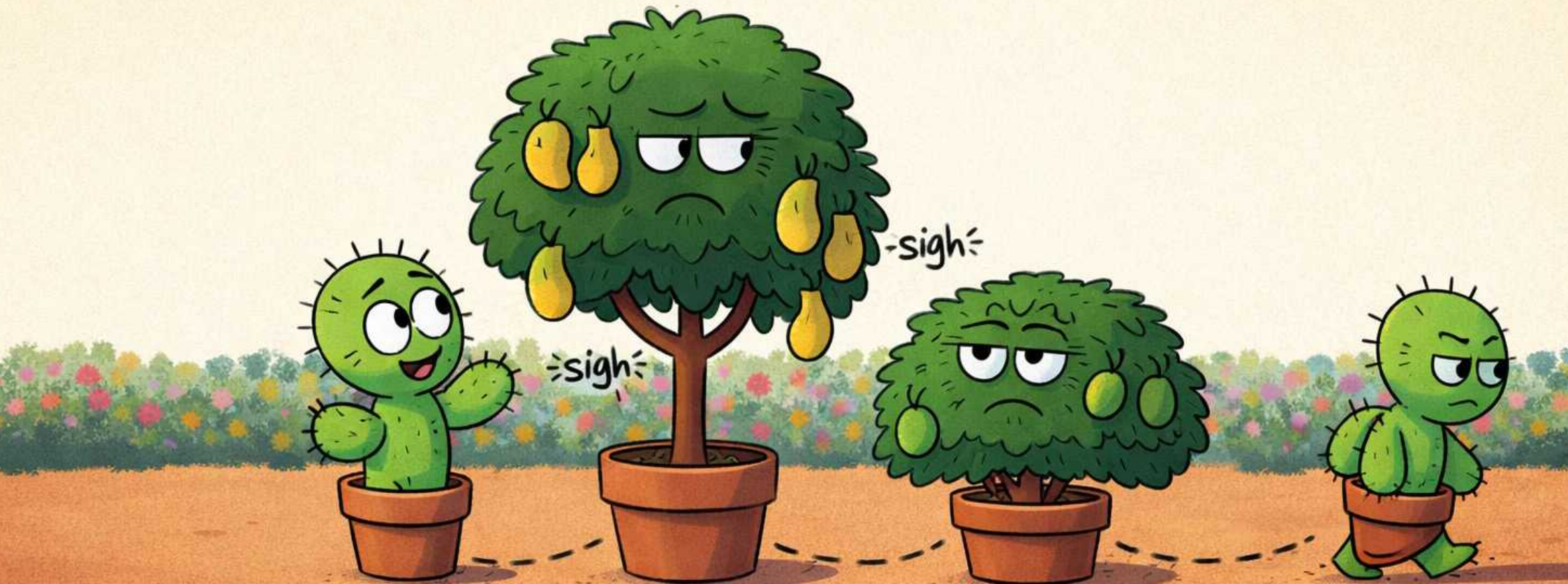


Spike finds another plant. 'Hi, I am Spike! Can we be...'

The plant **squirms** and yells, 'Sharp! Spike is so sharp!' Two small plants dash off fast.

Spike looks at his spines. 'Well, yes,' he says. 'I am a bit sharp.'

Spike asks another plant, and then another. 'No, Spike,' they say. 'You will prick us.' They spurn him. Spike walks off, and his glad tune stops.





One tall plant is left.
Spike hops to it and
looks up. 'You want a
pal,' says the tall
plant. Spike nods.
'Well, Spike, you are
in luck. I am **firm** and
sturdy. I will not run
off.'

The tall plant opens his big tops wide, like arms. 'The rest were unkind to you,' he says. 'Sit with me, Spike.' Spike blinks. 'Yes!' For the **first** time, Spike grins a huge grin.



They chat and joke. It
is so fun!

Then Spike hops in for
a hug, and pop! A
spine jabs the tall
plant.

'Ouch!' he yells. 'That
was my leaf! That
hurts!'



The tall plant quivers.
He is stern and mad.
'Go, Spike!' he yells.
'You hurt plants! Go
find another pal!' 'It
was a mistake!' says
Spike. But the tall plant
is firm. Spike hops off,
so small and hushed.





Spike sits in the empty garden. No plants. No pals. No one. Then Spike looks at his spines, and he makes a plan. 'I look for pals that are not sharp,' he whispers. 'What if my pal must be sharp, like me?' He grins and turns to the path.

Spike hops to the sand dunes. There in the sand sits a **sturdy** ball of thorns. 'You are so sharp!' Spike **blurts**. 'You are so sharp!' says the ball of thorns. They gaze and grin. 'I am Spike. Can we hug?' 'I am Tom. Yes!' **chirps** Tom.





They hug, and no one yelps 'ouch'. Spike and Tom set off up the dunes at sunset. They sing duets and twirl in the sand. Then a flower bursts from the top of Spike's head. His first flower! But Spike does not see it. He is so glad to be with his pal.



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Best Buds!

Spike the cactus has never had a friend, not one, not ever. He hops through the garden asking every plant for a hug, but they all say no. Will he ever find someone who won't turn him away? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 81: ir, ur /er/), this book practices words like 'blurts', 'chirps', 'smirk', 'sturdy', 'twirl'.

Phonics Focus: ir, ur /er/

blurts, bursts, chirps, curt, firm, first, hurt, hurts, smirk, spurn, squirms, sturdy, turns, twirl, twirls

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