

Dhegdheer Has Mom



On the red sand plains stands a bad hag named Dhegdheer. Her name means Long Ear. She has one huge ear, flat as a sail and stiff as dry hide. That ear can hear a **whistle** a hundred miles off. Every family says her name and shakes with dread.





A girl named Ada lives on the edge of the plains with her mum and three camels. She is ten, quick to see and quick to **listen**. One night her mum does not come back from the well. She finds just the empty water jug in the sand, and next to it, one huge footprint.

Ada runs to old Nuur, who sits weaving rope in the shade of a thorn tree. 'Dhegdheer has Mum,' he says softly. 'That one ear **listens** to it all.' He sets a small gift in her hand, a dry seed pod that rattles like camel bells. 'Keep this,' he says. 'Sound can be a door, or sound can be a wall.'



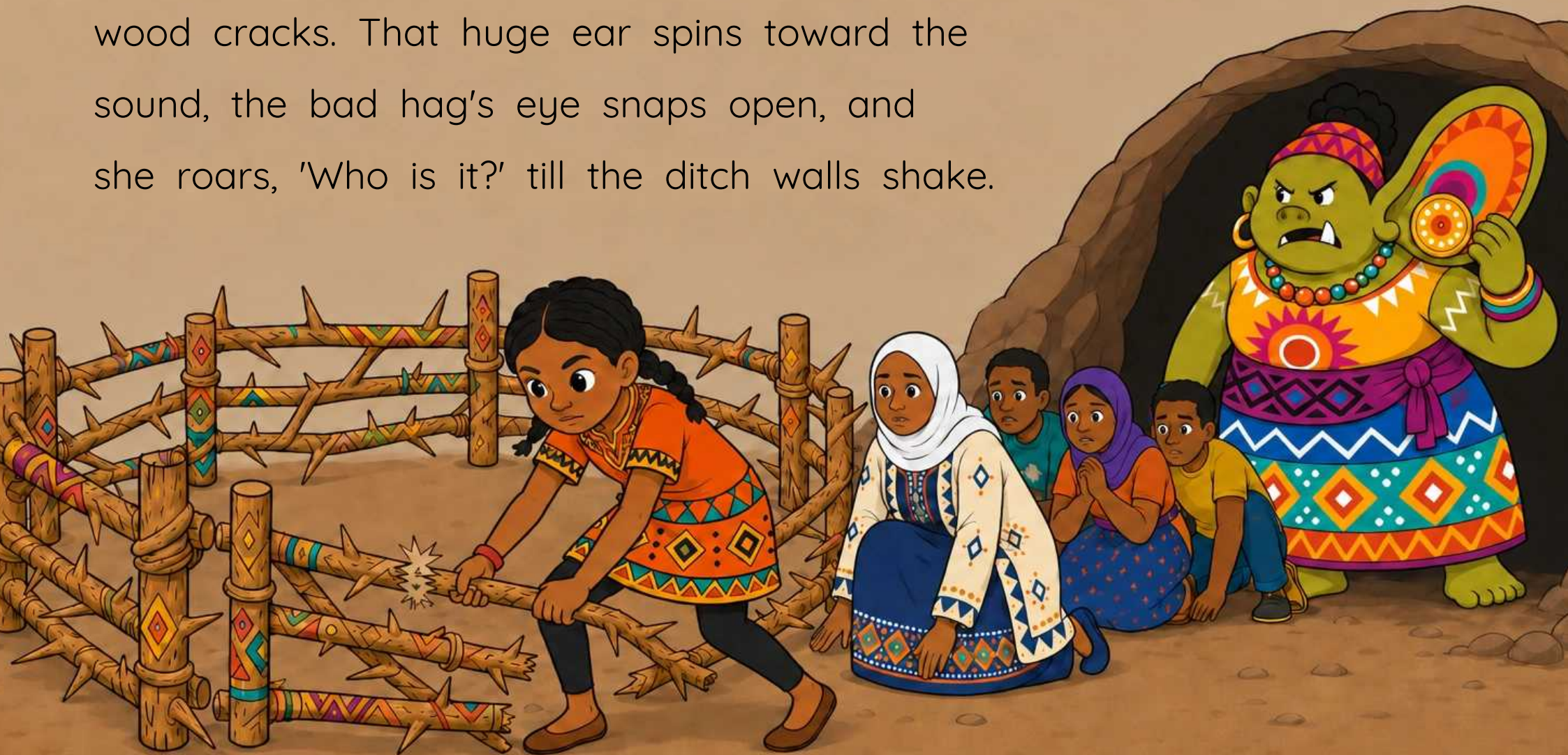
Ada ties the seed pod to her wrist and tracks the huge footprints north. The trail leads to a salt pan, a white flat where the ground cracks like a broken pot. Each step she takes rings out sharp and clear. Sound runs far on a salt pan and **echoes** back. She keeps that fact in mind and walks on.





At the edge of a dry ditch, the girl finds the bad hag's cave. She has made a pen from thorn twigs. In the pen sit lots of held ones, mums, kids, men, all too scared to call out. The girl spots her own mum at the back. The bad hag sleeps, that huge ear **nestled** over her face, and one sound will snap it wide open.

The girl creeps down to the thorn pen. She **signs** to the held ones: wait. She tugs the thorn twigs free one by one, but the dry wood cracks. That huge ear spins toward the sound, the bad hag's eye snaps open, and she roars, 'Who is it?' till the ditch walls shake.



The girl runs. The bad hag booms after her, that huge ear turning, locking on each step. She can track a sound the way a hawk tracks a shadow. No matter which way the girl twists and ducks, the ear finds her. Her **stomach aches**, for she can not outrun the bad hag, not on sand, not in thorn scrub, not on the open plain.



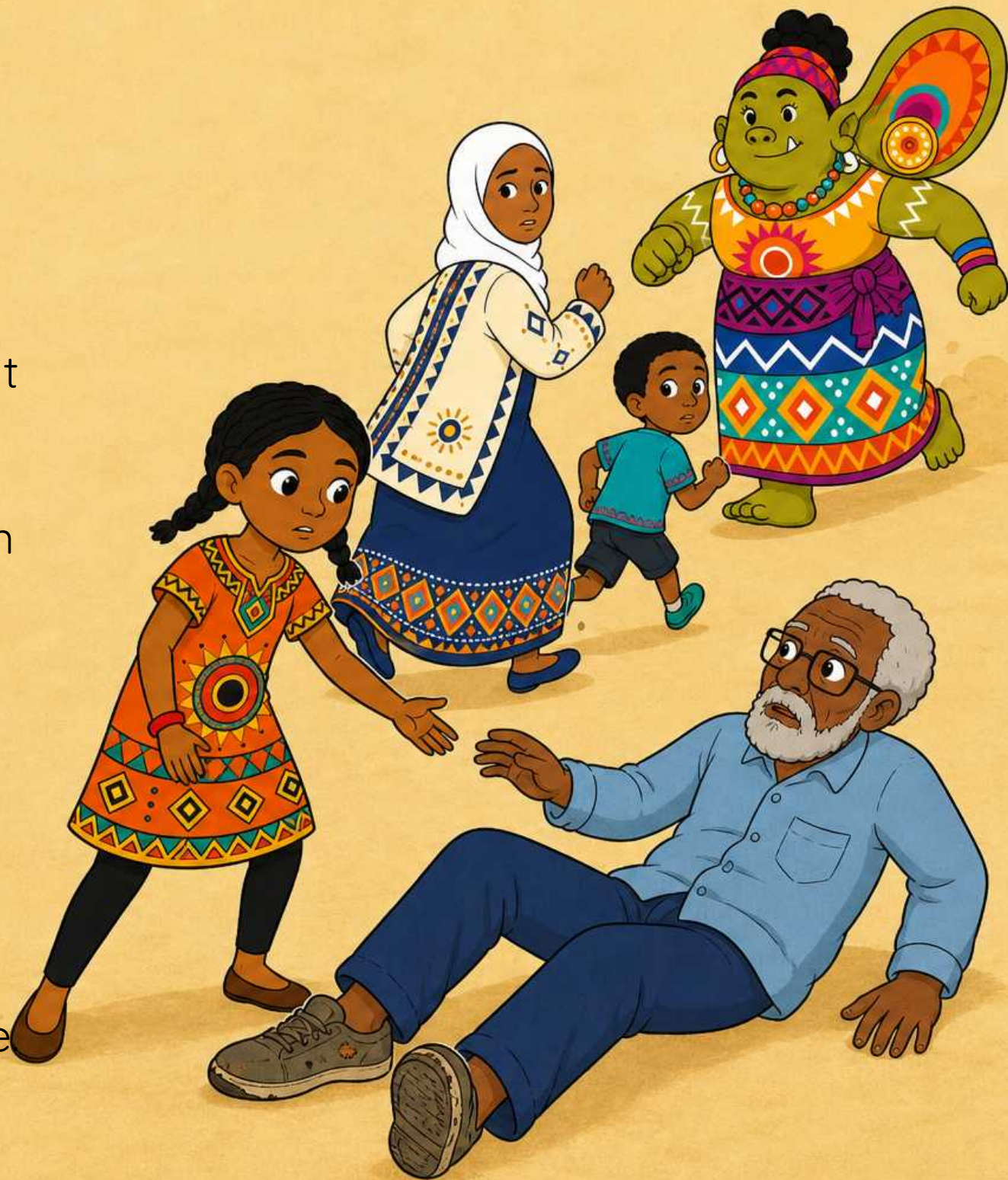


Then the girl's feet hit the salt pan, crack, crack, crack, and a plan comes to her. She stops, unties the seed pod, and flings it hard across the **glistening** white crust. It skids and rattles, just like a girl running in camel bells. The sound shoots across the salt pan in a wide arc, far to the left. The bad hag's ear swings hard, and she lunges after the rattle, away from the girl, away from the cave.

The girl sprints back to the ditch. She rips the thorn pen wide, grabs her mum's hand, and calls, 'All of us, move! Hush, and move!' The held ones stream out, one by one, into the dark. She leads them south, to the far edge of the salt pan. There the ground **softens**, and their feet make no sound.



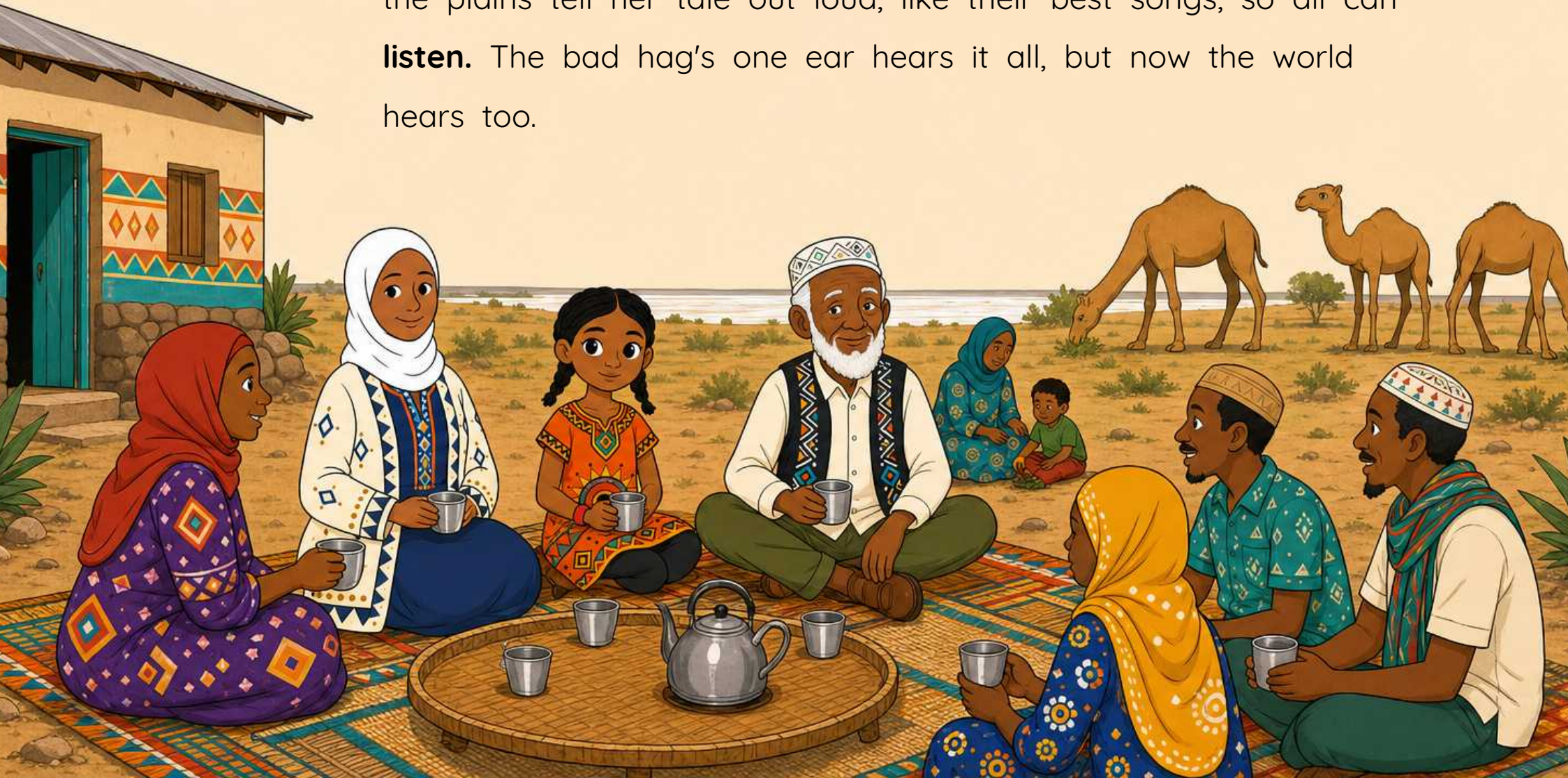
A huge howl splits the night. The bad hag has found the seed pod, still and silent, just a trick. That one ear hears it all, and now it hears feet **rustle** on soft sand. She spins and comes booming back. The slowest held one, an old man with a bad ankle, trips and falls, and the bad hag is close, too close





The girl runs back to the old man, pulls him up, and drags him out to the salt pan, the one spot where each sound rings out every which way at once. She stamps and shuffles and scrapes her feet, and fills the flat with a storm of noise. The bad hag's ear spins left, right, left, too many sounds from too many ways, all at once. She claps that huge ear to her head and **gnashes** her teeth and howls. So much sound, all at once, is the one thing that ear can not bear. She stumbles and flees north into the dark hills, and is never seen on these plains again.

By morning, all the held ones are home. The girl's mum mends their little home and brews tea so strong the smell drifts three houses off. Old Nuur grins when he sees the girl's bare wrist. 'First the door,' he says, 'and then the wall.' From that day on, all on the plains tell her tale out loud, like their best songs, so all can **listen**. The bad hag's one ear hears it all, but now the world hears too.





Dhegdheer Has Mum

A girl named Ada tracks her mother's kidnapper by the huge footprints left across the sand. The only clue is an old man's gift: a rattling seed pod, and his strange warning that sound can be a door, or a wall. Can Ada use sound itself to outwit the one ear that listens to it all? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 118: ch /sh/, /k/; gn /n/; gh /g/; silent t), this book practises words like 'listens', 'nestled', 'glistening', 'stomach', 'rustle'.

Phonics Focus: ch /sh/, /k/; gn /n/; gh /g/; silent t

aches, echoes, glistening, gnashes, listen, listens, nestled, rustle, signs, softens, stomach, whistle

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