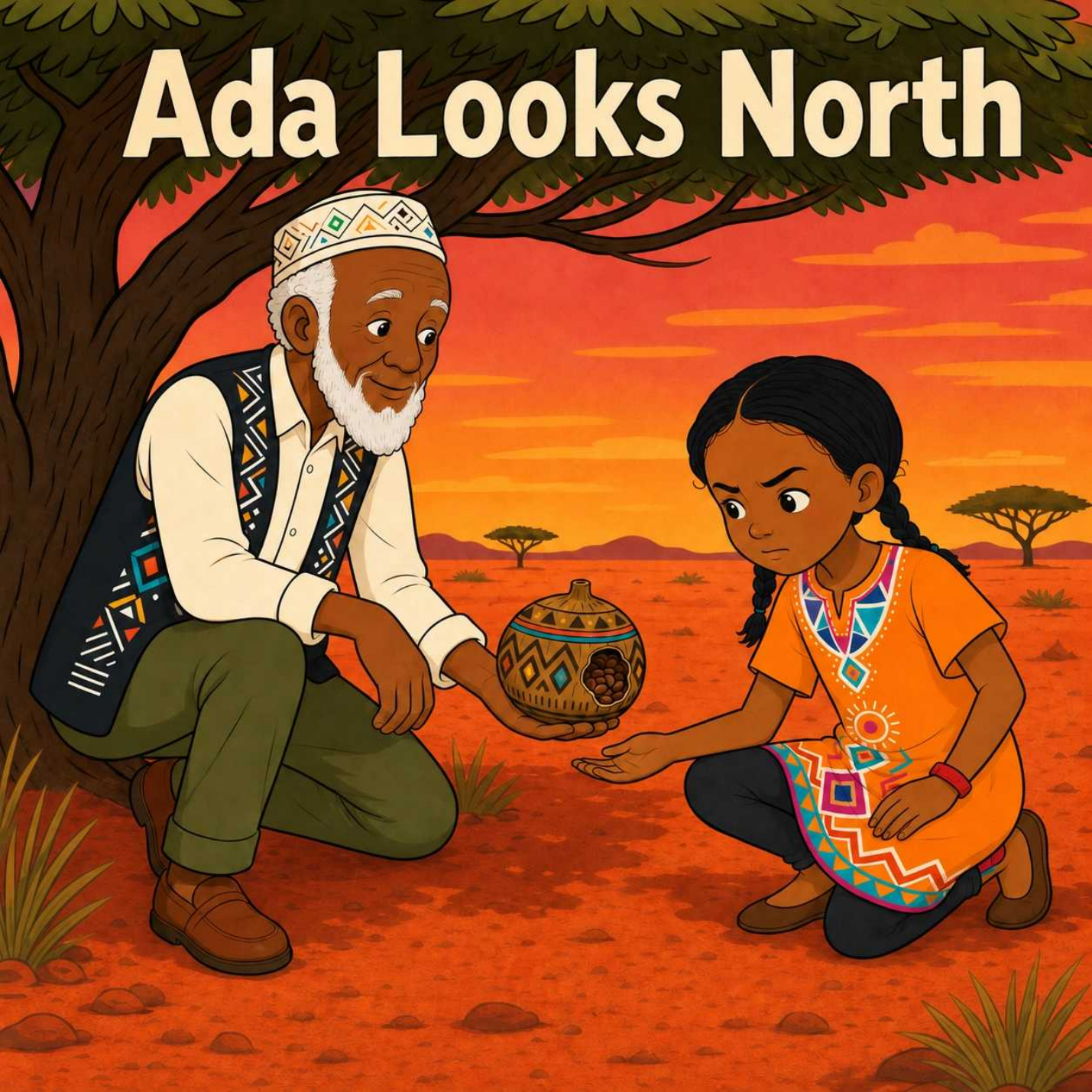


Ada Looks North



On the red sand lives a bad hag.
Her name is Dhegdheer. She has
one big ear, flat as a sail. It picks
up every sound, even a twig snap
in the bushes far off. Each mom
and dad can say her name, and
they hush when they say it.





A girl named Ada lives on the edge of the plains with her mom and three camels. She is ten. She is quick, and she thinks fast. One evening, her mom does not come back from the well. The girl sees the empty jug in the sand. Next to it is one big footprint.

The girl runs to Old Nuur. He sits in the shade and makes rope. 'The bad hag **took** her,' he says. 'That big ear got every sound.' He **puts** a small seed pod in the girl's hand. She shakes it, and it dings like camel bells. 'Keep this,' he says. 'A sound can be a door, or a wall.'



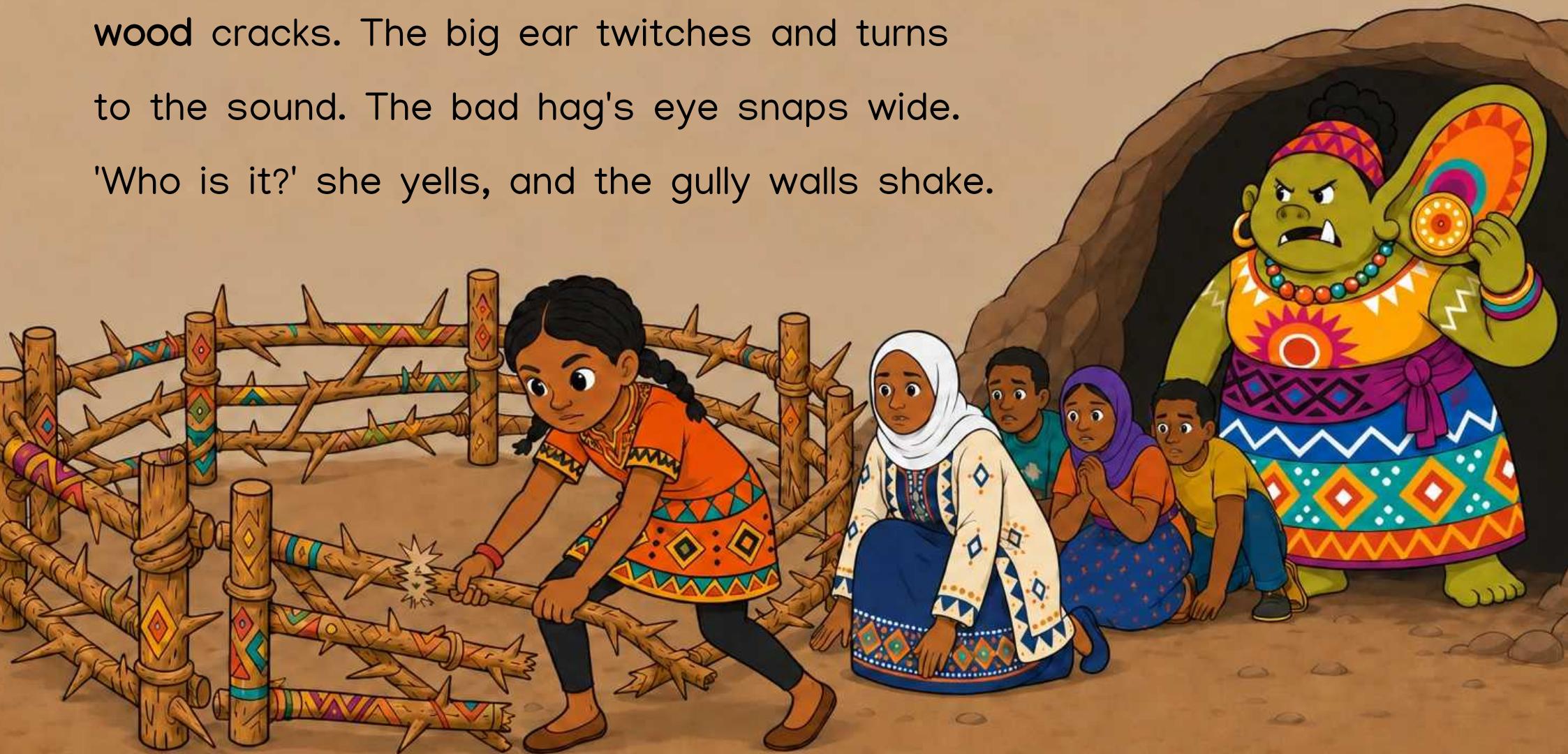
The girl ties the seed pod to her hand. She **looks** for the big **footprints** and follows them north. The trail cuts across a salt pan, a flat white land that cracks like an old pot. Every step she takes rings far and sharp. On the salt pan, a small sound goes a long way. She **puts** that fact in her mind and keeps walking.





At the edge of a dry gully,
the girl **looks** and sees the
bad hag's cave. The hag has
a pen made of thorn **wood**.
Lots of men and moms sit in
the pen, all scared and still.
The girl spots her own mom
at the back. The bad hag is
asleep, her big ear folded on
her face like a blanket. If the
girl makes one sound, that
ear will snap wide.

The girl creeps to the thorn pen. She waves to the men and moms: wait. She tugs at the thorn wood, one branch at a time. But the dry wood cracks. The big ear twitches and turns to the sound. The bad hag's eye snaps wide. 'Who is it?' she yells, and the gully walls shake.



The girl runs. The bad hag thumps after her, that big ear locked on every footstep. The hag hunts by sound. The girl twists and ducks, but the ear still finds her. Her chest thuds. She can not get away: not on soft sand, not in the thorn bush, not on the flat plain.



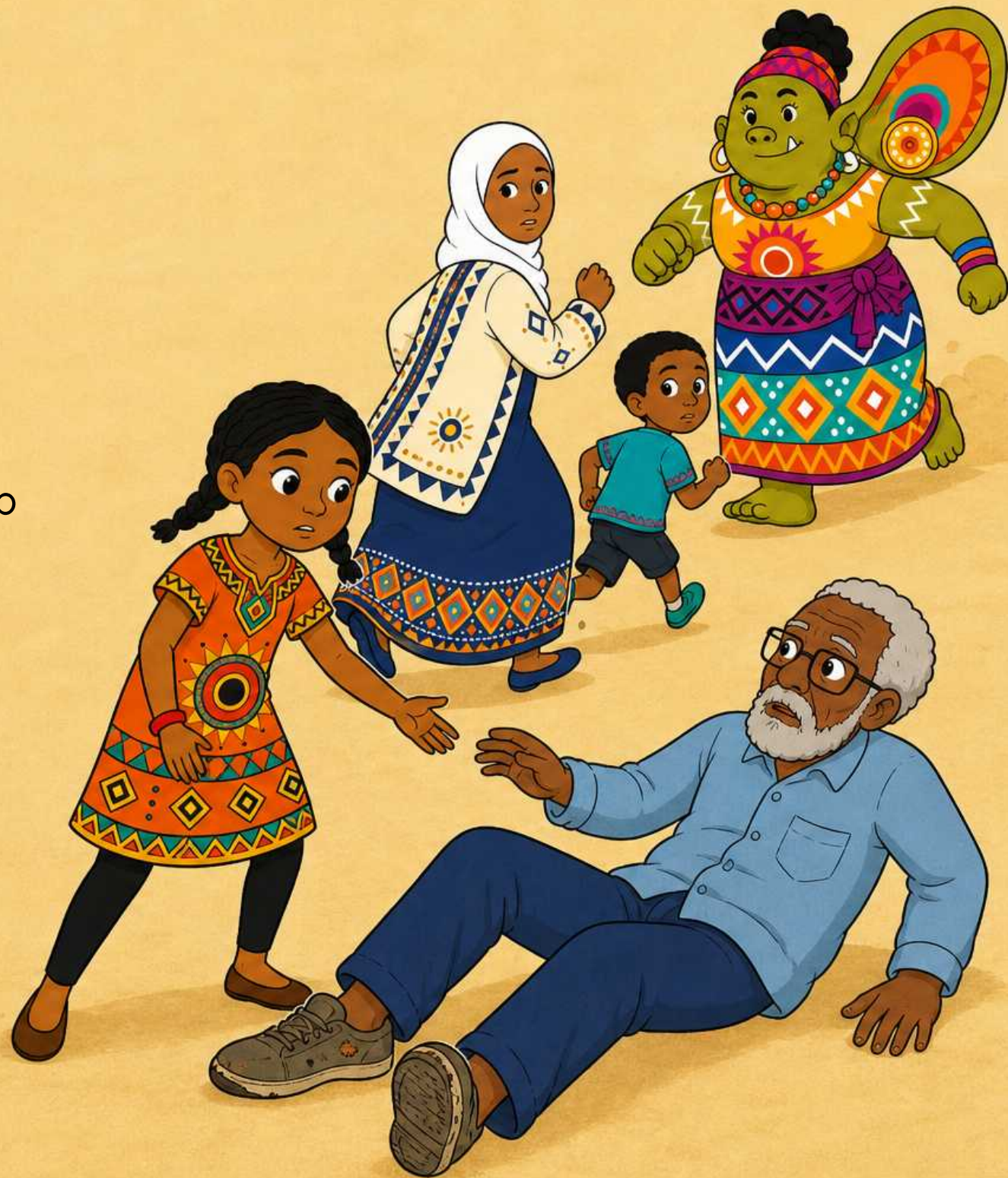


Then the girl's feet hit the salt pan. Crack, crack, crack. Quick as that, she has a plan. She stops and **pulls** the seed pod off her hand. She flings it hard across the flat white crust. It skids and dings, like a girl with bells on her feet. The sound zips off to the left. The bad hag's big ear swings hard, and she runs that way, away from the girl, away from the cave.

The girl runs back to the gully. She **pulls** the thorn pen open and takes her mom's hand. 'Move!' she calls. 'Hush, and move!' The men and moms creep into the dark, one by one. The girl leads them on, to the far edge of the salt pan, where the sand is soft and their feet make no sound.



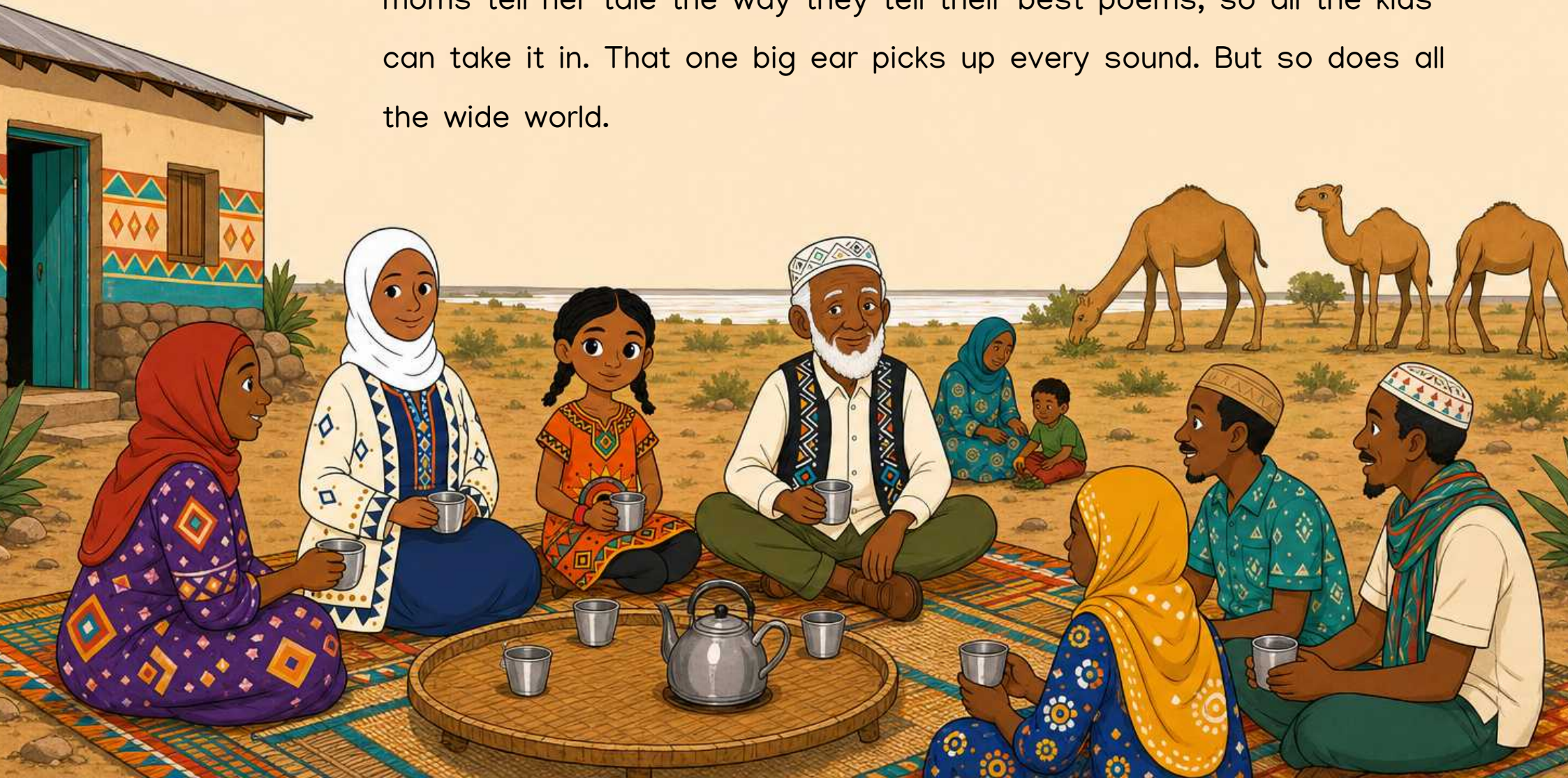
A big yell splits the night.
The bad hag has the seed
pod in her hand. She **looks**
at it. It is still. It is a trick.
But that big ear picks up
every sound. Then it picks up
the soft **footsteps** on the
sand. She spins and comes
thumping back. An old man
with a bad leg is the
slowest. He trips and falls.
The hag is close, and she
gets closer fast.





The girl runs back to the old man. She **pulls** him up and drags him to the salt pan, the one spot where every sound rings far and wide. She stamps and shuffles and scrapes her feet. She fills the flat with a storm of sound. The bad hag's big ear spins left, then right, then left. So much sound, from so many spots, all at once. The hag claps her big ear shut and yells in pain. A wall of sound is the one thing that ear can not stand. She stumbles back, and then she runs off, north into the dark hills. She does not come back.

By morning, all the men and moms are home. The girl's mom fixes their little home and makes tea. Old Nuur comes to sit. He looks at the girl's empty hand and smiles. 'First the door,' he says. 'Then the wall.' Ada grins and hands him a cup. From that day on, the men and moms tell her tale the way they tell their best poems, so all the kids can take it in. That one big ear picks up every sound. But so does all the wide world.





Ada Looks North

Ada's mom vanishes from the well, and all she finds is an empty jug and one huge footprint. An old man gives her a rattling seed pod and a warning: sound can be a door, or a wall. Ada follows the footprints north across a cracking salt pan toward a cave where a fearsome ogress sleeps, her one giant ear tuned to catch every whisper. Can Ada free the prisoners without making a single sound? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 89: oo, u /oo/), this book practices words like 'looks', 'pulls', 'wood', 'footprints', 'took'.

Phonics Focus: oo, u /oo/

bush, bushes, footprint, footprints, footstep, footsteps, looks, pulls, puts, took, wood

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