

Gran Has Ears





Gran always says the same thing at mango time. 'Every. Mango. Matters.'

She says it so often that even Dog knows. Dog sits under our big mango tree with his nose in the air, sniffing like he is counting every last one. The branches hang so low and heavy, I can **nearly** reach one on my tiptoes. Two birds watch me from **near** the top, like little feathery scouts.

'Do not even think about it,' I tell the birds. 'Those mangoes are ours.'

Harvest day is the best day of the **year**. I balance a big sack of mangoes on my head and walk very, very carefully across the yard. One wobble and splat. Gran would never let me **hear** the end of it. Joy cradles a mango against her chest like it is a baby. Will waves from the trees, already racing ahead. 'I will pick the most!' he shouts. 'You always drop the most,' I mutter. Dog trots beside Joy, tail wagging fast.



Will scrambles up the tree like a monkey who is late for lunch. I climb past him, picking mangoes one by one, careful, careful, careful.

Will **clearly** has no **fear** of falling. He grabs two at once, then three. 'No hands!' he yells. A mango slips. It tumbles down past the leaves, spinning, falling. Gran catches it in the basket below without even looking up. 'Don't drop that mango!' she calls.

Joy giggles. Dog trots **near** the trunk, hoping the next one will not be caught.





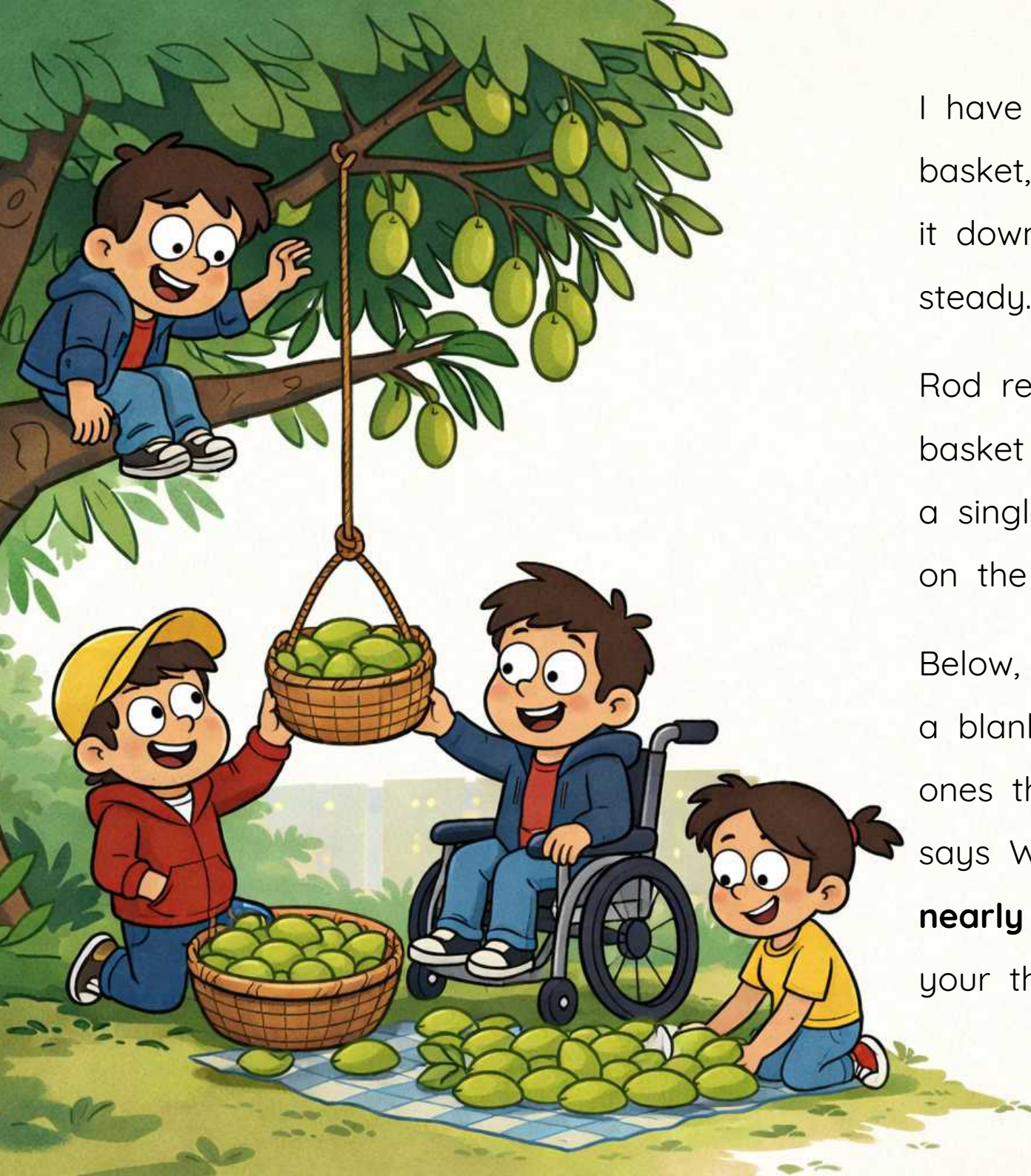
Gran cuts the mangoes for our picnic and we sit around a big wooden dish of golden fruit. This is our treat for working hard, and no one works harder than their mouth at mango time. Will bites into a thick slice. Juice runs down his chin, down his neck, down his shirt. 'You look like a mango, Will,' I tell him. He just grins and takes a bigger bite. I chew the skin and suck every bit off the seed. Gran points at me. 'That is how you do it, **dear**. Not a scrap wasted.'

Our friends arrive after lunch and the yard is suddenly loud and busy. I can **hear** Rod before I can even see him. He rolls up with a grin so wide it goes from **ear** to **ear**. 'Put me on catching duty!' he shouts.

Gran sits by a tray of golden mangoes, shaking her head. 'More helpers means more hands. More hands means more chances to...'

'Drop a mango!' we all yell together. We know the speech by now. Dog barks once, like he is joining in.





I have a plan. I tie a rope to a basket, fill it with mangoes, and lower it down from the tree. Slow and steady.

Rod reaches up and catches the basket perfectly. 'Got it!' he calls. Not a single bruise. He is the best catcher on the farm, and he knows it.

Below, Will and Joy sort mangoes on a blanket. Big ones on this side. Best ones there. 'This one has a dent,' says Will. Joy inspects it. They are **nearly** nose to nose. 'That is from your thumb,' she says.

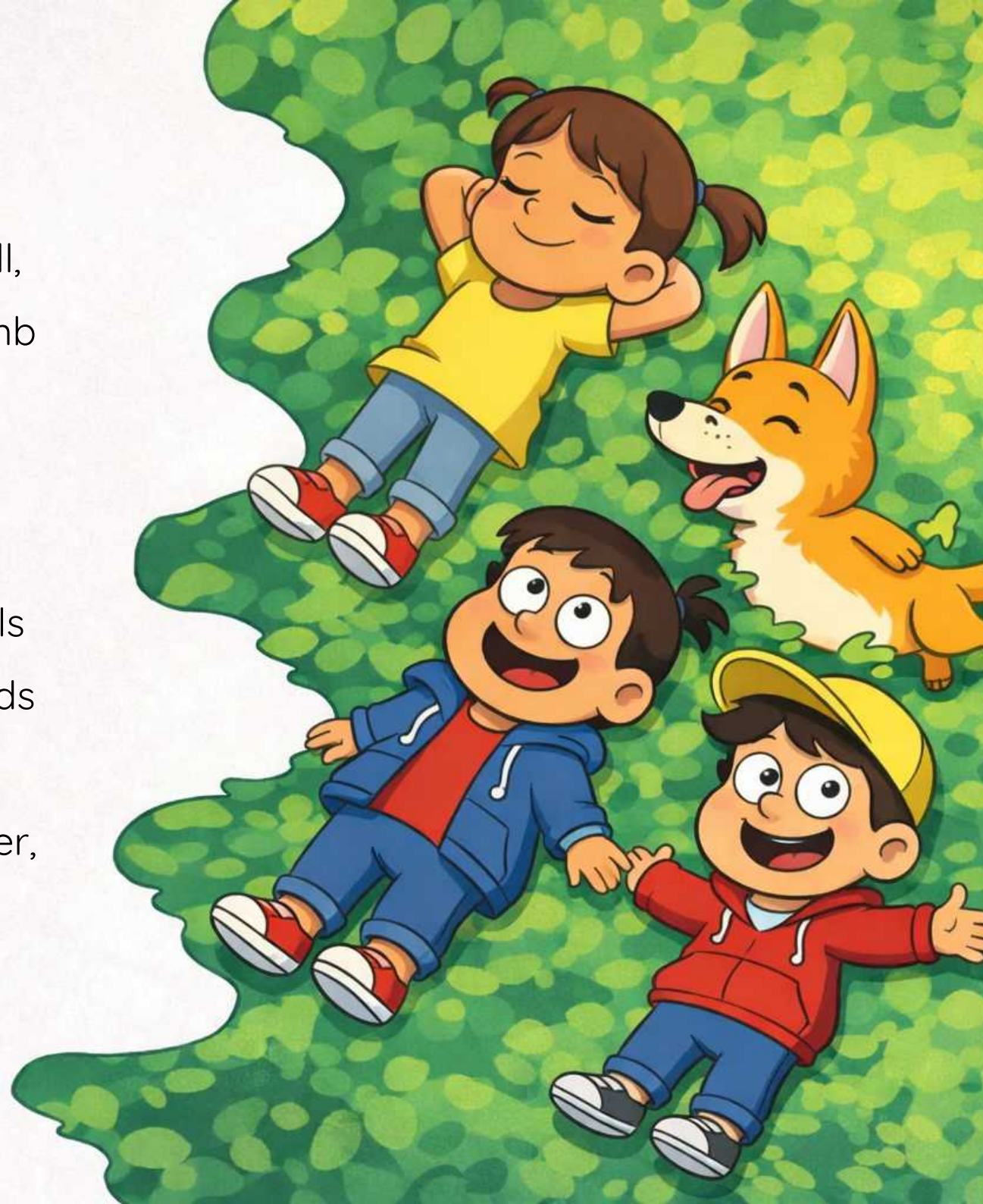
Dad packs our best mangoes into the truck and we drive down to the market. Rod stays back at the farm. My belly fizzes all the way there. This is the real test. We spread our blanket under a striped awning and pile the mangoes high, like a golden hill. Shoppers **appear**, one by one. A shopper crouches down and picks one up, turning it, sniffing it, squeezing it softly. I hold up our finest mango and grin. 'No dents. No bruises. Not a single drop.' The shopper smiles. 'I will take ten.'





But the market on land is only part of the fun. We load the rest of our mangoes into a wooden boat and paddle out onto the floating market. Boats bump and rock all around us. Will is **fearless**, which is the problem. He stands up to wave at a passing boat and our boat tips. Joy grabs the mangoes. I grab Will. 'Sit. Down.' 'Don't drop that mango!' shouts a vendor from the next boat, laughing. Even strangers know the rule.

The harvest is over. Every mango picked, sorted, sold, or swapped. Not one dropped. Well, not one that Gran saw. We climb into the big tree one last time, not to pick but to rest. Joy stretches out on a wide branch and closes her eyes. Will sprawls below her, finally still. Dog stands beside us, mouth open, warm and happy. 'Next **year,**' I whisper, 'I bet we pick even more.' Dog opens one eye, thumps his tail once, and grins like he knows.





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Gran always says the same thing at mango time: "Every. Mango. Matters." Harvest day means climbing high, catching carefully, and making sure nothing splats. But when the whole crew joins in, from tree to market to floating boats, can they get every single mango home safe? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 113: ear /ear/), this book practices words like 'hear', 'near', 'clearly', 'dear', 'fear'.

Phonics Focus: ear /ear/

appear, clearly, dear, ear, fear, fearless, hear, near, nearly, year

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