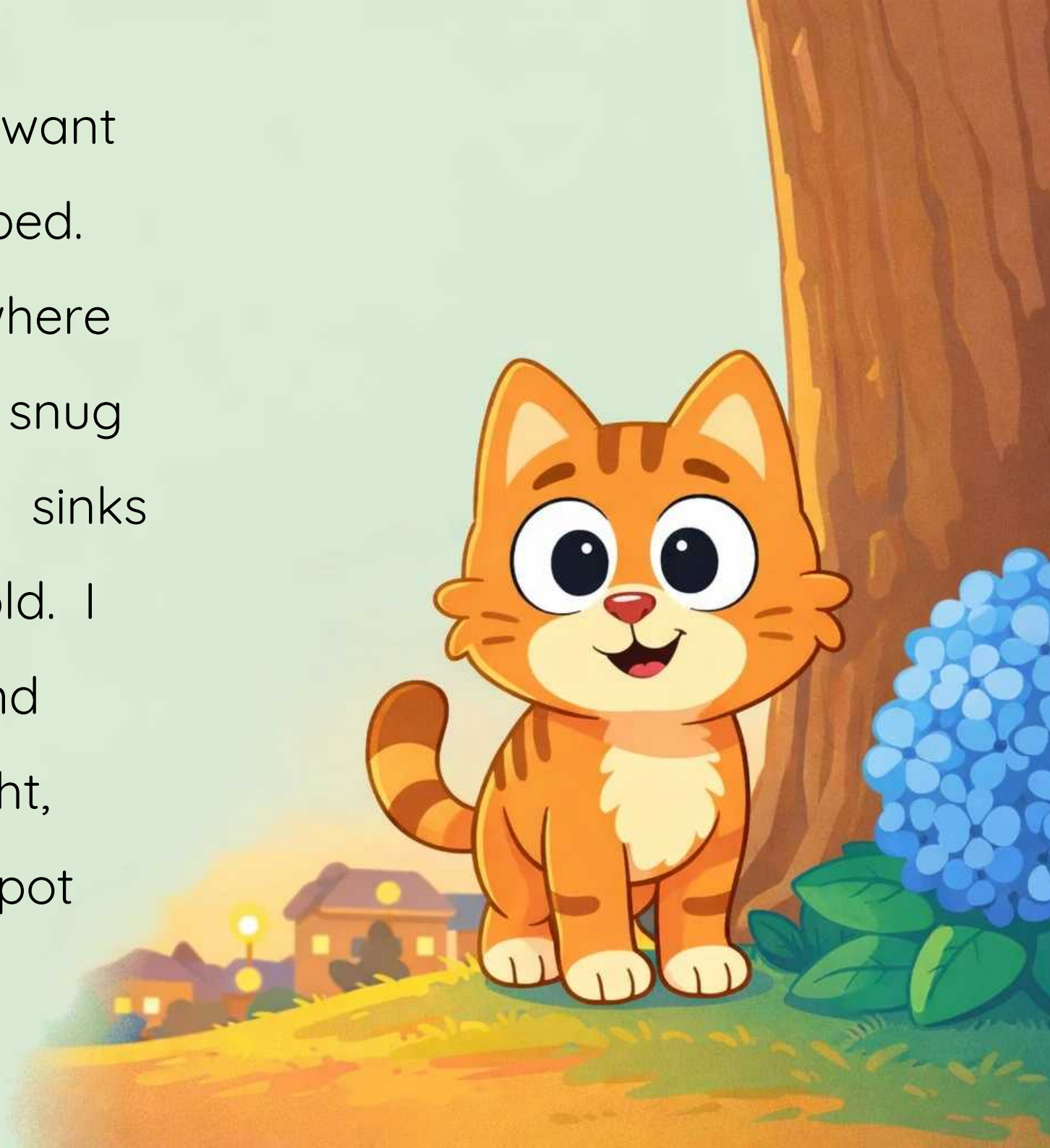


Pokey and the Big Box



My name is Pip. I want
a bed. Not a big bed.
Just a little spot where
a cat can **curl** up snug
and sleep. The sun sinks
and the wind is cold. I
trot past a tree and
blue flowers. Tonight,
Pip, get the best spot
on all the street!





A box! A big box on the ground. I peek inside.

It is full of cats! Cats on cats on cats. Legs and tails stick out.

'What do you want, Pip?' snaps the patch cat, **her** tail flat. 'This box is full!' yells the puppy. 'No room! No room for Pip!' they all chant. Well. No need to be rude.

Fine. There are **other** spots. **Better** spots! I get to a row of trash bins in the lane. They are big and round, like beds with walls. I lift the lid of the **first** bin. A black cat **stirs**, then blinks up at me in the dark.





'This is my bin!' snarls Inky, teeth sharp. 'But look,' I say. 'There is room for two if you **turn** your tail a bit.' 'No room for Pip!' Inky growls, and shuts the lid. Clang! That is two spots lost. And the sky gets **darker** and **darker**.

Then it starts to rain.
Not a little drip. Not a
soft mist. Big, fat, chilly
drops go splat on me. I
sit in the wet plants with
my mouth open, and my
fur gets soaked. No box.
No bin. No bed. And
now no dry **fur**. Can this
night get any **darker?**





Yes. Yes it can. But wait!
Up by that roof, there is
a hole. A Pip-sized hole! If
I can just get up there. I
dig my nails into the wall
and go up. The rain
makes the wall slick. My
feet slip. My legs shake,
but I **never** stop. Up there,
a spot is calling: come on,
Pip. There is room for Pip.

I did it! I pull up onto the ledge and flop down, panting. It is not snug. It is not soft. But it is dry, and right now dry is the best thing **ever**. Down below, the rain hits the street. I **curl** up tight and try to sleep. But one thing keeps poking at me. What about the **others?** The patch cat and puppy in that thin box. Inky in that bin. Are they safe out there?

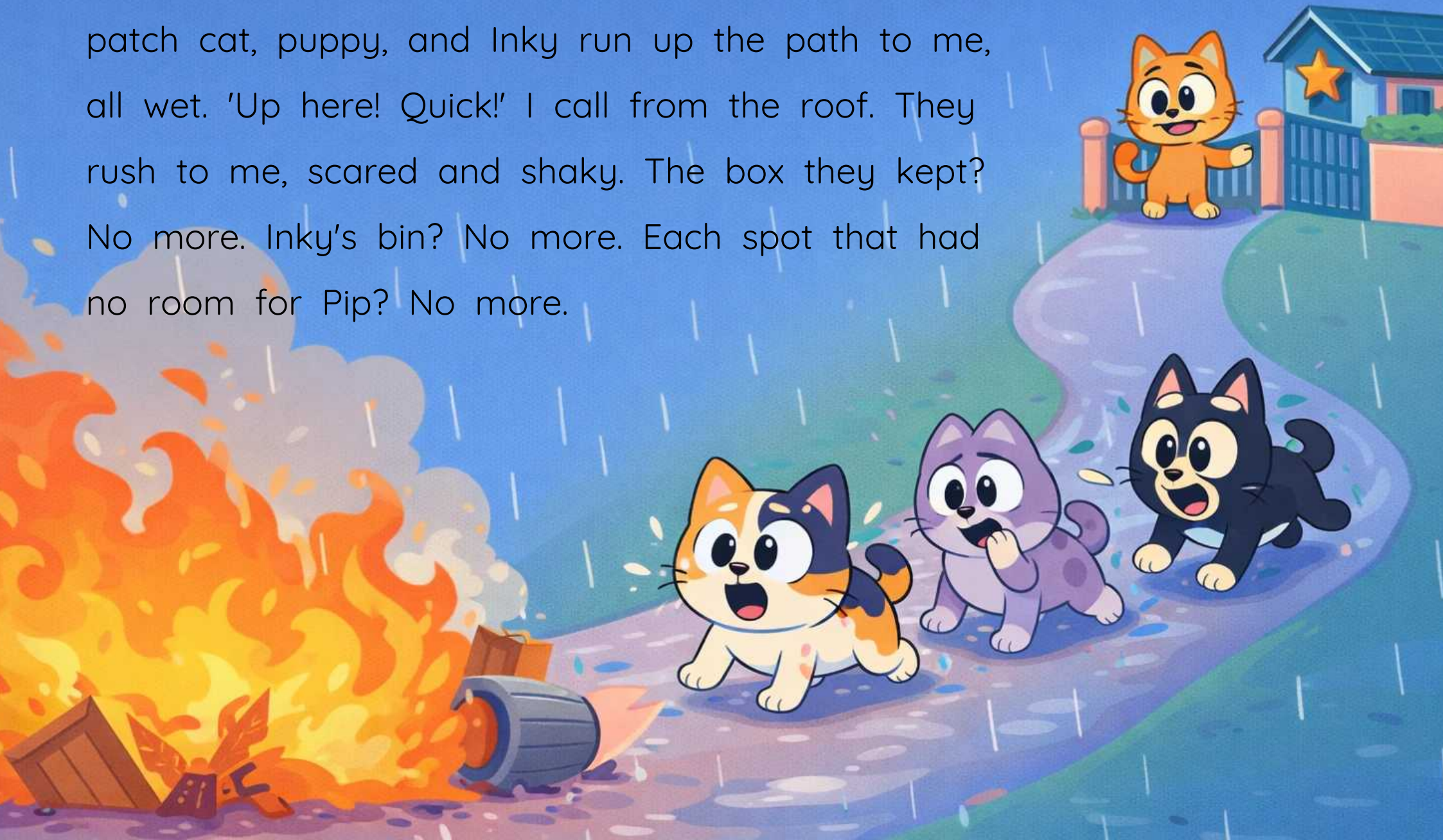




Flash! Bang! Crack!

Lightning splits the sky and **thunder** shakes the roof **under** my belly. I think of them out there, by the fence, wet and scared. The patch cat. Puppy. Inky with no place to hide. 'Get out of there!' I yell into the storm, even if they are so far away. 'Get to a safe spot!'

The lightning starts a blaze! In the smoke and rain,
I see the box **burn** and the bin on its side. The
patch cat, puppy, and Inky run up the path to me,
all wet. 'Up here! Quick!' I call from the roof. They
rush to me, scared and shaky. The box they kept?
No more. Inky's bin? No more. Each spot that had
no room for Pip? No more.



'Pip?' **whispers** puppy,
gripping the rail in the rain.
'Can we come up?' I look at
them. Three wet, sad faces.
They all said it: no room for
Pip. Part of me wants to say
it back. No room. No room
for them. But I think how
cold and scared I was down
there in the rain. So I reach
my foot down. 'Come on up.
Hurry, before the next flash.'





Now four of us are
squashed **under** one little
roof. The patch cat's elbow
jabs my chin. Puppy's tail is
up my nose. Inky sits on all
of us. Rain swirls below, but
we are safe and dry. Well.
Safe and damp. 'Pip?'
whispers the patch cat. 'I am
sorry we said there was no
room for Pip.' 'It is all right,'
I say. 'We had a hard night.'

We are squished. We are squashed. We are packed so tight that if I twist a bit, I bump a nose. It is the lumpiest, tightest bed on all the street, but it is snug. We **curl** up tight. And here is the thing. There is room for all of us.





Pokey and the Big Box

Pip just wants one small, dry spot to sleep. When a cozy box is packed with cats and a trash bin already has an owner, every place seems taken, leaving the streets colder and darker by the minute. Will Pip ever find a place to rest? Written for Jolly Phonics classrooms (Step 3, Unit 11: /er/ mixed), this book practices words like 'curl', 'darker', 'fur', 'under', 'better'.

Phonics Focus: <mixed>

better, burn, curl, darker, ever, first, flower, fur, her, hurry, never, other, others, stirs, swirl, thunder, turn, under, whispers

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