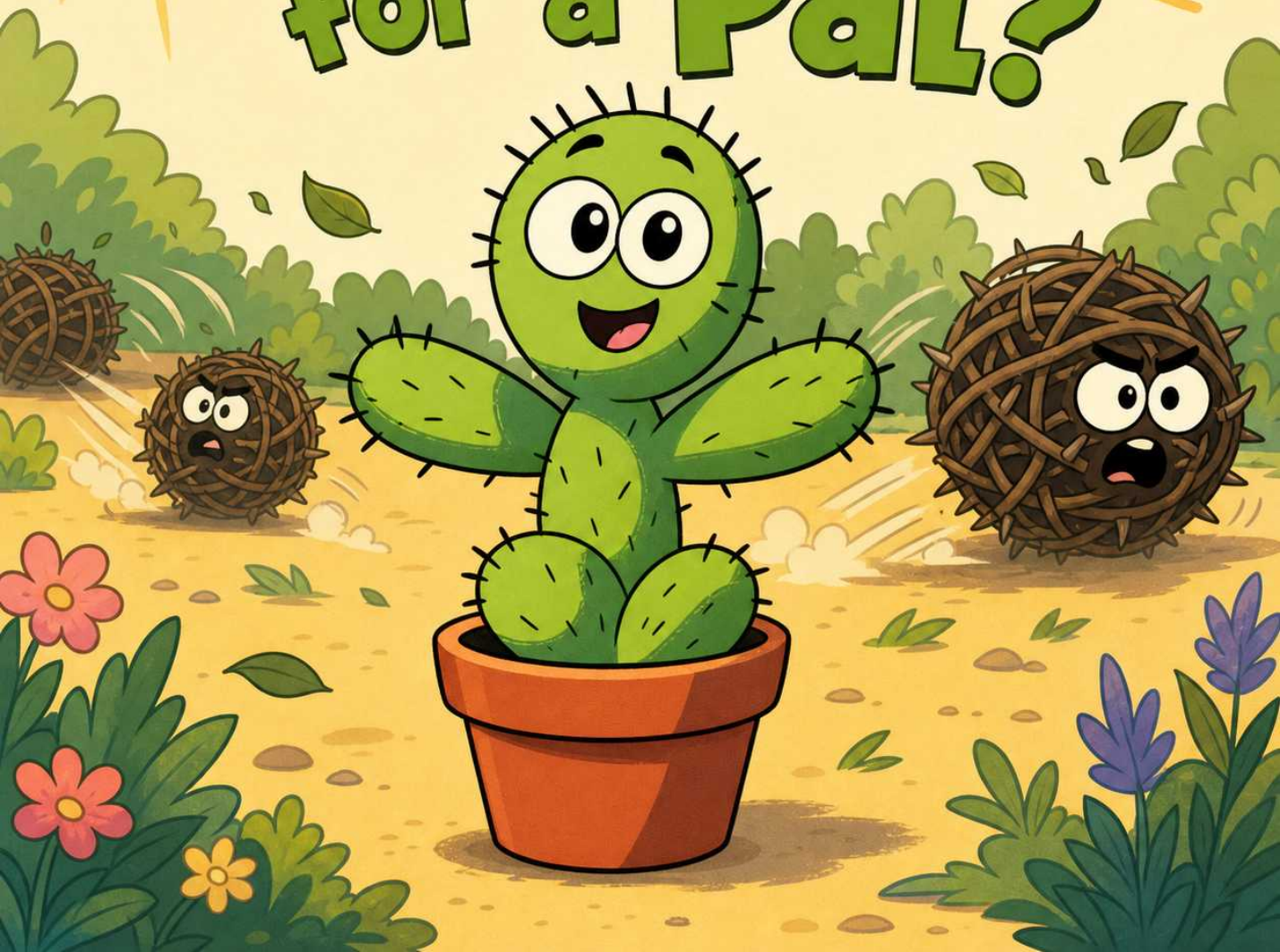


Too Prickly for a Pal?



Spike the cactus did not have a pal. Not one. Not ever. But this was the day he would **try**. He could feel it in his spines.

'Hi!' said Spike, hopping up to three trees. 'I am Spike! Want a hug?'

The trees looked at each other. Then they laughed **crazily**, shaking their leaves. 'A hug? From you? No way, Spikes. Get lost.'

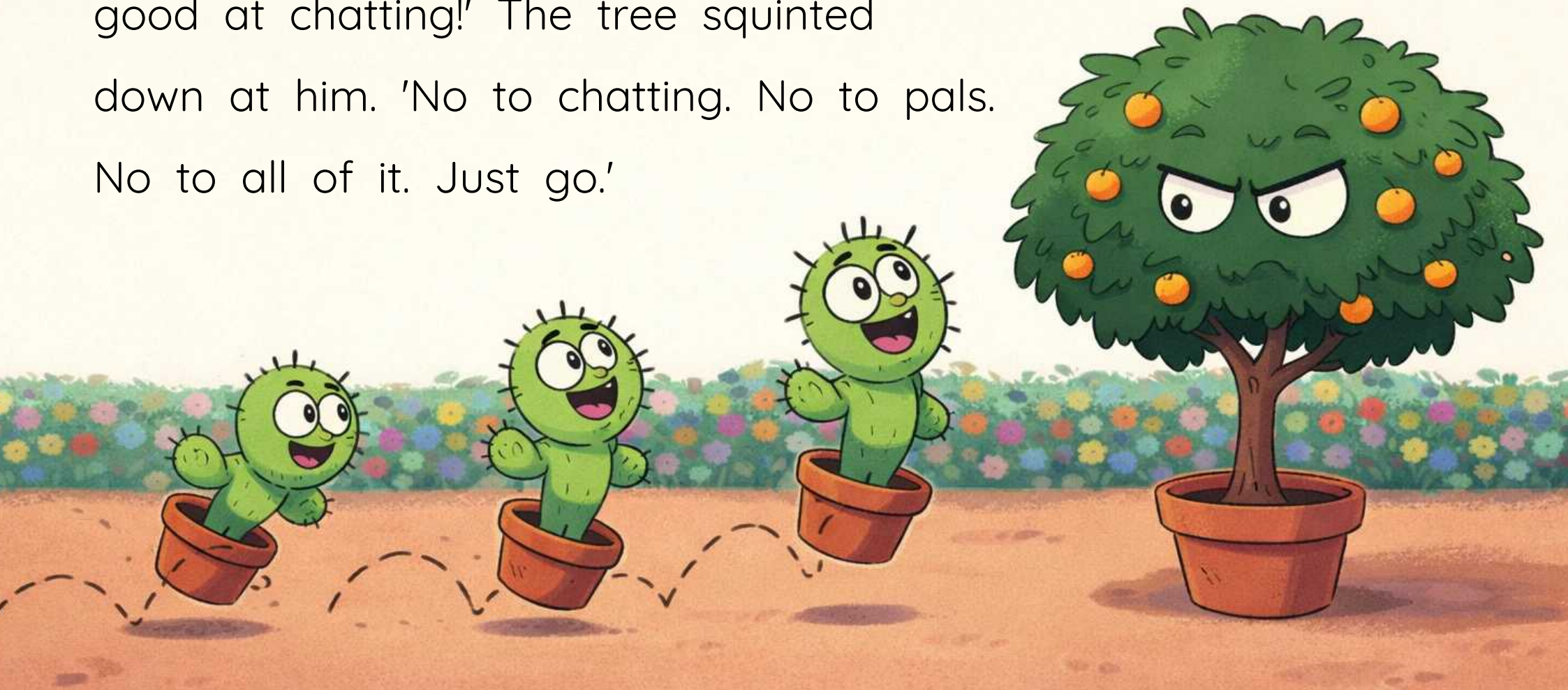


Did Spike **cry**? Did Spike give up? Did Spike go home and sulk? Nope. 'That is fine!' said Spike **happily**, hopping off with a grin. 'Those trees are just not **ready** for a pal as **jolly** as me.' He hopped across the yard, his pot clinking. He hummed a **happy** little song he had made up himself.



Spike **spied** a tree standing by itself.

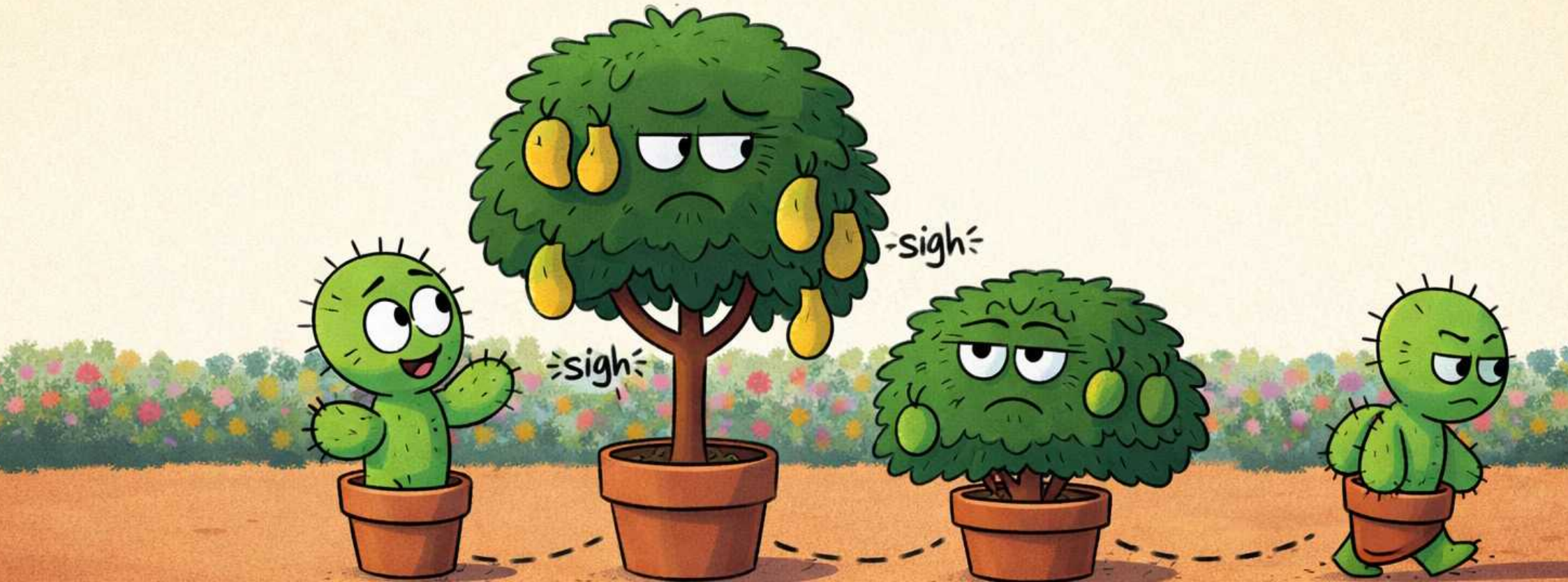
'Just right!' he said. 'You look like you need a pal to chat with, and I am very good at chatting!' The tree squinted down at him. 'No to chatting. No to pals. No to all of it. Just go.'





Next, Spike spotted a tree with big leaves and a **worried** yellow face. 'Hi! I am Spike! Want to be pals?' The tree took one look at his spines and **cried**, '**Pointy! Pointy! Pointy!**' It shook so hard that two little plants ran off in a **hurry**. 'I am not that **pointy**,' said Spike, looking down at himself. He was, in fact, very **pointy**.

Spike **tried** a tall tree. It sighed. He **tried** a bush. It sighed louder. 'We know about you, Spike,' they said. 'You are that **prickly** fellow who wants hugs. Please do not poke us.' Spike walked off slowly. His song went quiet.





Just one plant left to **try**. A big tree at the far end of the yard. Spike hopped over, but this time he did not bounce. He just stood there, looking up. 'I bet I know,' said the big tree, peering down at him. 'You are Spike. The one looking for a pal all day.' Spike nodded. 'Well,' said the big tree. '**Lucky** for you, I do not get **jumpy easily**.'

The big tree spread his leaves wide, like open arms. 'The rest of them judged you before they even gave you a chance. That was not right, was it? Come sit with me, Spike.' Spike's eyes went round. 'Really? You mean it?' 'Really.' Spike **hurried** over. For the first time all day, he felt that his song just might be right.





They chatted for ages.
Spike told **funny** jokes. The
big tree told **stories** of
wind and rain. It was the
happiest day of Spike's
life. Then Spike got so
happy that he leaned in to
laugh, and... pop! One of
his spines pricked the big
tree's leaf. 'Ouch!' yelled
the big tree. 'That was my
leaf!'

The big tree pulled away,
his leaves trembling. 'I
knew it! They all warned
me! Get out, Spike. Go
find a pal you will not
hurt.' 'I am so **sorry!** I
did not mean to! Please...'
'Out!' Spike did not finish.
He just hopped off,
feeling very small and
very quiet.





Spike sat alone in the **empty** yard. No trees. No bushes. No one. Maybe they were right. Maybe a cactus could not have a pal. Maybe he was just too... Spike stopped. He looked at his spines. Then he looked at the road past the fence. 'Wait!' he said. 'I have been looking for a pal who is not **prickly**. What if I need one who is?'

Spike crossed the road and headed out to the **dry, sandy** dunes. And there, sitting in the sand like a **bumpy** brown ball, was a bush with thorns from head to toe.

'Wow,' said Spike. 'You are really **pointy.**' Thorn bush blinked its big **funny** eyes. 'You are really **pointy.**' They stared at each other.

'I am Spike. Want a hug?' 'I was hoping you would ask!'





They hugged. And nobody said 'ouch!' Spike left his pot by the road, and the two of them set off across the dunes, singing songs and telling **stories** and bumping spines without one yelp. And between the second song and the third **story**, something happened that had never happened before. Spike grew a flower, right out of the top of his head. He did not even see it. He was too **busy** laughing with his pal.



Too Prickly for a Pal?

Spike the cactus has never had a friend, and every tree in the yard laughs at his spines or screams that he's too pointy. He hops off happily anyway, sure someone out there is ready for a pal as jolly as him, but tree after tree turns him away. Will Spike ever find a friend who isn't afraid to get close? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 110: -y to i Rule), this book practices words like 'happy', 'try', 'cried', 'worried', 'pointy'.

Phonics Focus: -y to i Rule

bumpy, busy, crazily, cried, cry, dry, easily, empty, funny, happiest, happily, happy, hurried, hurry, jolly, jumpy, lucky, pointy, prickly, ready, sandy, sorry, spied, stories, story, tried, try, worried

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