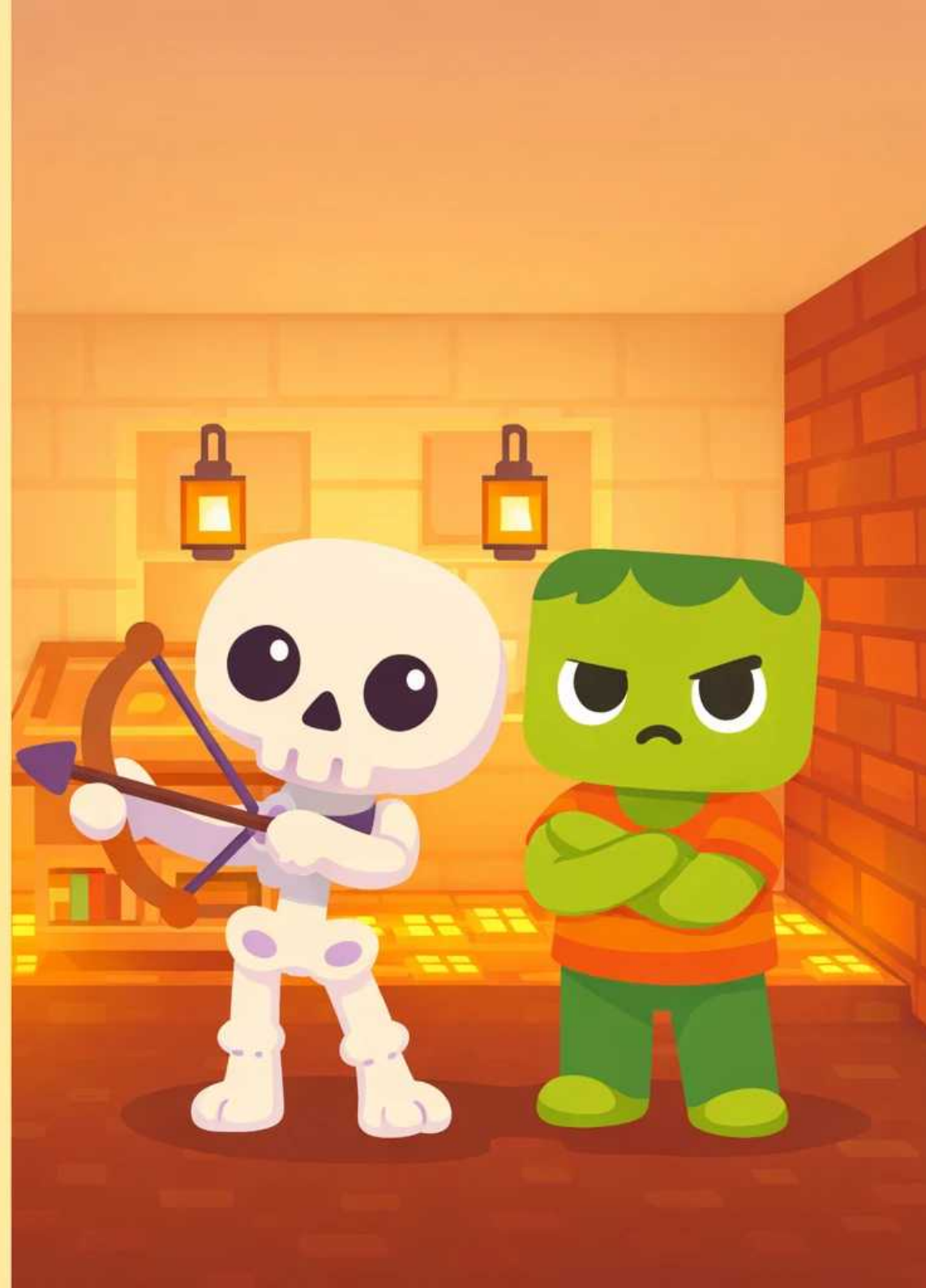


Zom Says **Dirt Is Fine**



Skel likes his brick house a lot. Each **day** he sweeps the room and sets his books on the shelf in a **line**. 'A clean house is a **fine** house,' Skel says. Zom folds his arms. 'Dirt is **fine** too,' Zom says.





Jack is less good. Skel hands him a mop. Jack drops it. Skel hands him a cloth. Jack drops that too. Then Jack just shrugs and grins a **wide**, smug grin.

'Cleaning,' Jack says, 'is not my thing.'

Skel looks at the sticky counter. He looks at the muddy boot prints. He looks at the toast scraps Jack left by the rug. Skel grips his broom hard.

'Fine,' he says. 'I will stop cleaning up. Clean it, or **stay** in the mess. Good luck, Zom and Jack.'



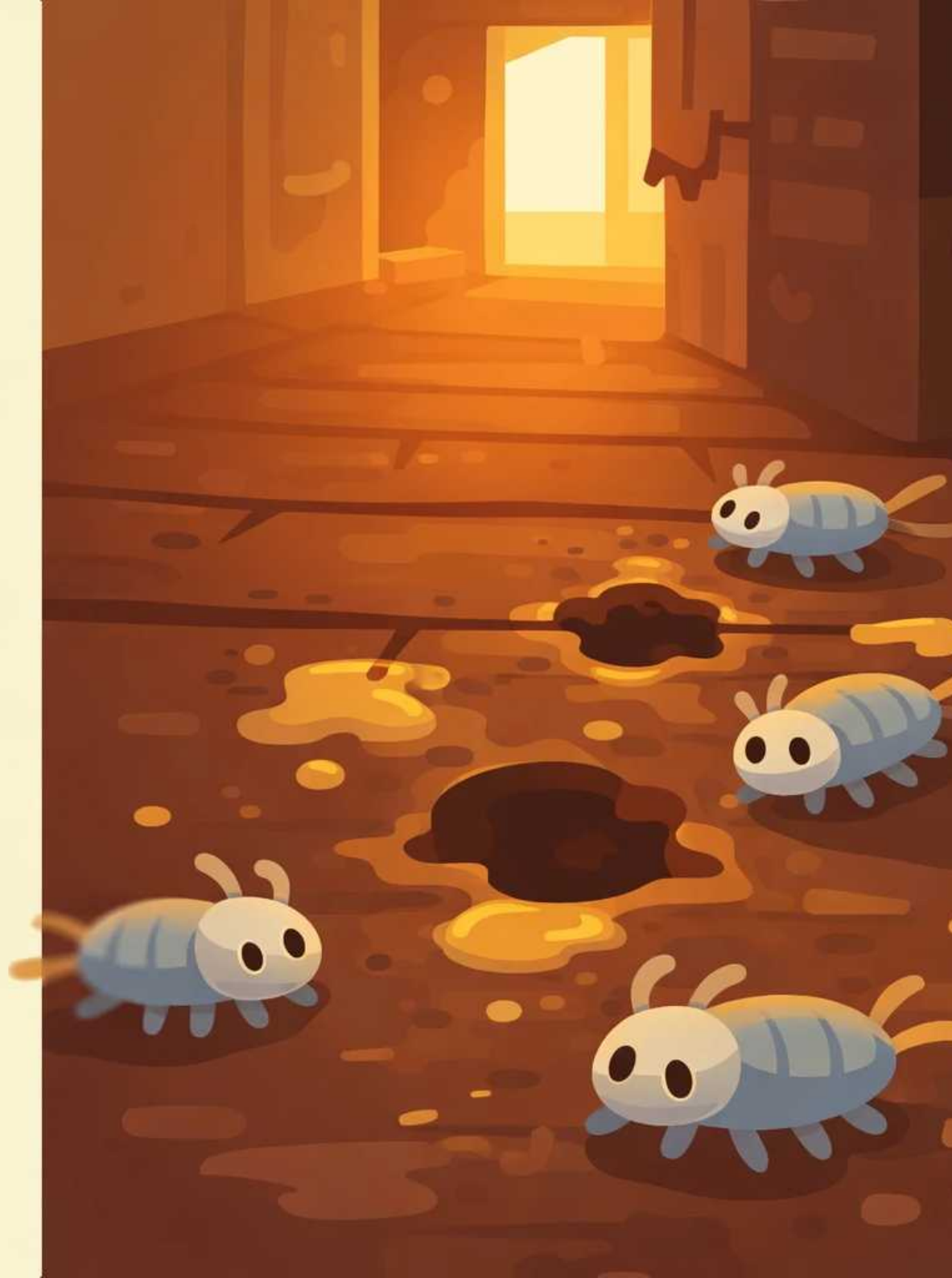


Zom and Jack see Skel
go out the **gate**. They
look at the sunny yard
and grin. 'No more
sweeping!' Jack says.
'No more scrubbing!' Zom says. They flop
on the grass and **laze**
like kings. No jobs. No
Skel. **Life** is **fine**.

On **day** one, a sock sticks to the wood. No big deal. The next **day**, the kitchen starts to smell. Zom sniffs it and shrugs. By **day** three, the muck is so thick it holds his boot print. Zom looks down and grins. 'Still **fine!**'



It is not **fine**. The sticky wood gets stickier. Then it gets crunchy. Odd little **shapes** dart in the **shade**. Wee legs tap across the wood in the dark. Pests. A dozen pests. They **race** across the muck like it is a track.



Zom is hungry. He reaches for the last slice on the counter. Pie! Buzz! Flies. A thick cloud gets in his **way**. He reaches one more **time**. He leaps. The flies get there first. 'Stop! That pie is **mine!**' Zom yells.





Jack lifts the cloth he left in a heap three **days** back. A thing creeps under it. A dark thing. A thing with legs. So many legs! Black bugs rush from a crack in the wall. Jack steps back, arms up. '**Nope. Nope. Nope!**' Jack yells.

The pets try hard. They pounce. They **chase**. But they **fail**. For each bug they get, ten more come. Pests on the shelf. Flies in the food. Bugs in the sock. One huge pink bug just sits there, bold and smug. Zom and Jack look at each other. 'We need Skel.'





Skel is back! There he stands, bow in hand, with the widest grin. 'So,' says Skel. 'Dirt is **fine**, is it?' Zom looks down at his boots. Jack looks up high. 'I will help,' Skel says. 'But now we all clean. No slacking. Deal?' Zom grabs a mop. Jack grabs a cloth. This **time**, no one drops a thing.



Zom Says Dirt Is Fine

Skel keeps his brick house spotless, but Zom and Jack think dirt is fine. When Skel finally walks out the gate and leaves them to their mess, the pair grin at their newfound freedom in the sunny yard. No chores, no fussing, just lazing about like kings, what could possibly go wrong? Written for Jolly Phonics classrooms (Step 3, Unit 4: /ai/ mixed), this book practices words like 'stay', 'gate', 'laze', 'fine', 'day'.

Phonics Focus: <mixed>

chase, day, days, fail, fine, gate, laze, life, line, mine, nope, race, say, shade, shapes, site, stay, time, way, wide

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