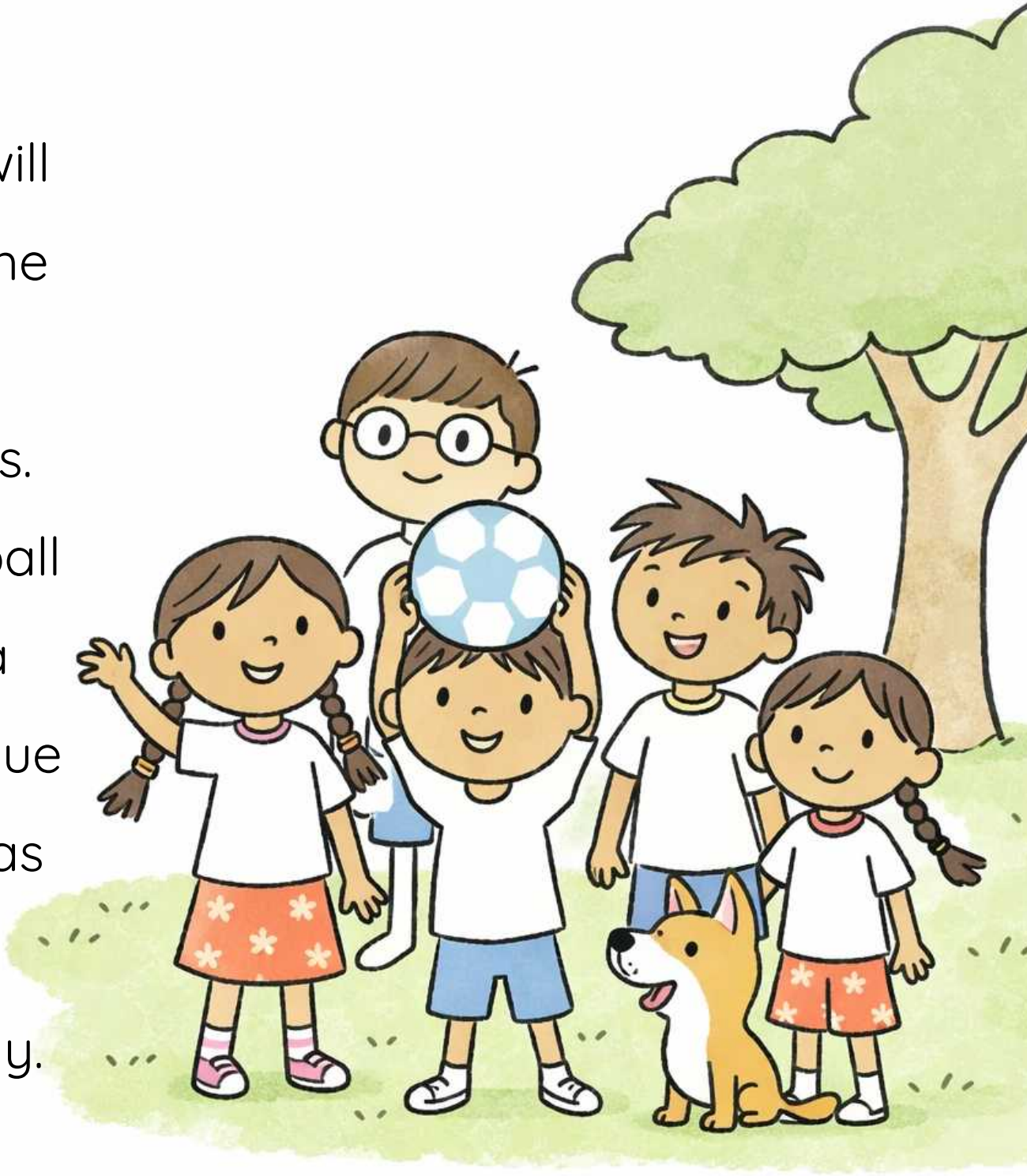
Can We Back It Up?

This is my squad. Five kids, one dog, and we will win. That's what I told the team on Monday. 'Big talk,' said Girl with Braids. 'Back it up.' I held the ball above my head. I had a big grin. The sky was blue and **cloudless.** Today was the title match, and our **hopeful** squad was ready.



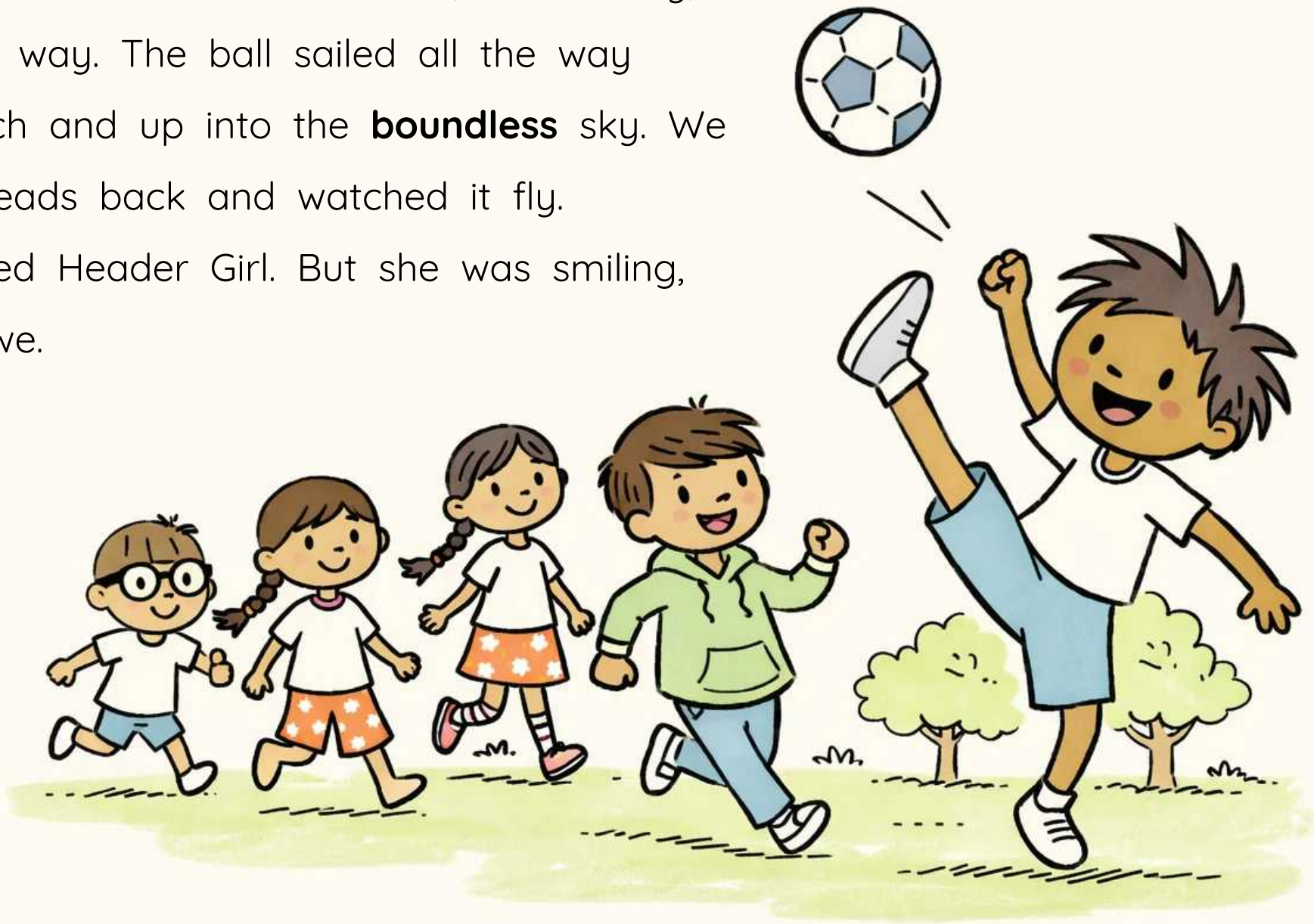
Girl with Braids got the ball first. She always got the ball first. She flew past the bushes so fast they shook. The rest of us sprinted after her, **breathless.** Even the Dog bounced beside her. 'Too slow!' she called back. Nobody argued. She was just too fast.

Boy with Glasses did not need to be fast. He had skill. He flicked the ball left, then right, then spun so quick that I almost fell. By the time I looked up, he was five steps past me. 'How did he do that?' I whispered. His skilful moves left the rest of us **clueless.**

My turn. I do one thing, and I do it well. Whack! My foot smashed into the ball so hard it zoomed into the back of the net. The ball was in before the keeper even blinked. The shot was **powerful** and **flawless.** I tried not to look too **boastful.** I failed.

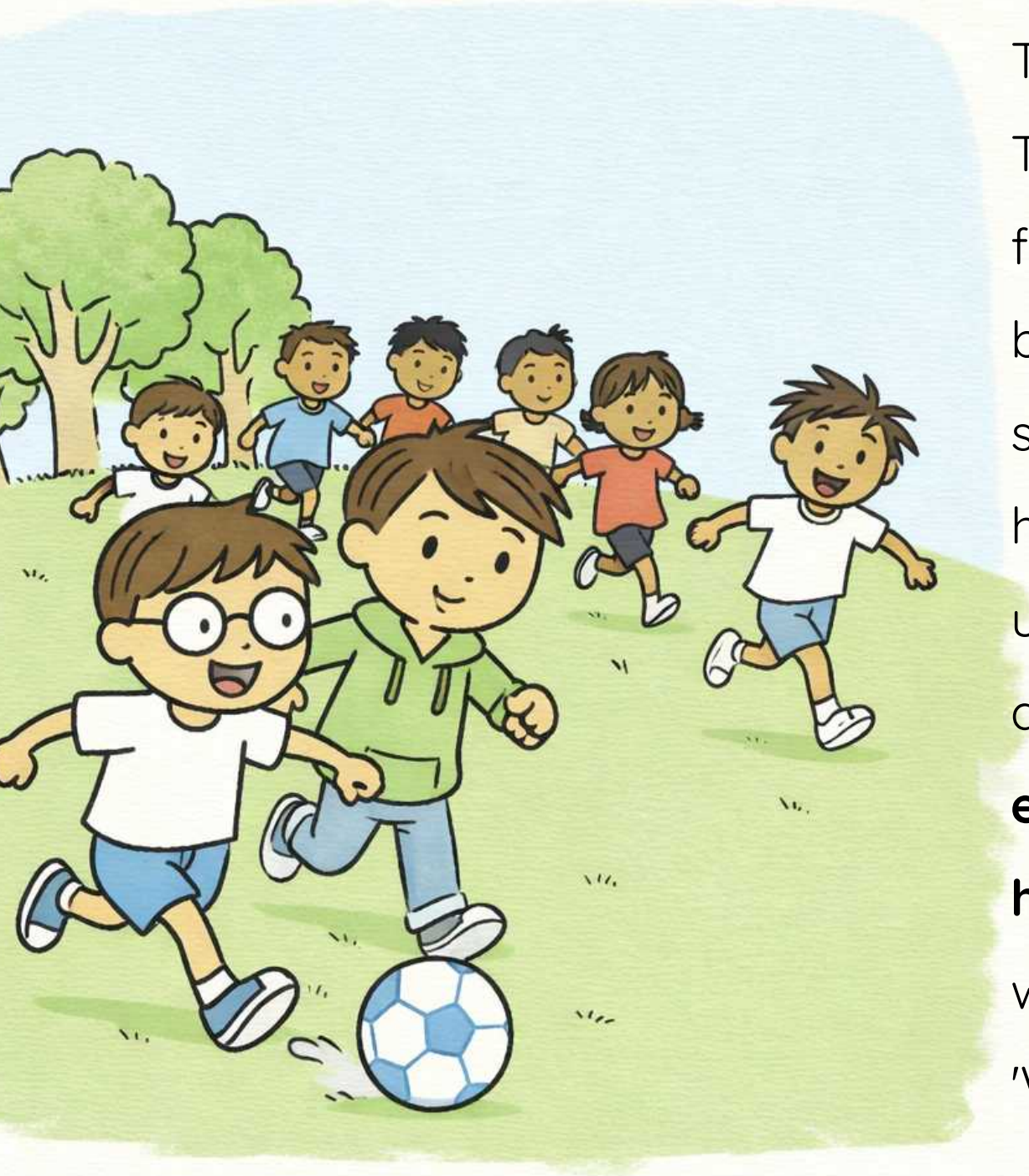
Then High Kicker Boy ran up. He swung his leg so high it came close to the clouds. Well, not exactly, but it felt that way. The ball sailed all the way across the pitch and up into the **boundless** sky. We all bent our heads back and watched it fly.

'Show-off!' yelled Header Girl. But she was smiling, and so were we.



Header Girl did not need her feet. She sprang up high and bonk! The ball flew off her forehead like a shot. She practised each lunchtime at the park, rain or shine, and she never missed a day. She was **faithful** to that practice, and it showed. Her heading was **masterful.** 'One day,' she said, 'I will head a ball so hard it will not come down.' We all trusted her.

Drills were over. Coach smiled and waved us on from the sideline, and we charged out, full of hope. Then the other team's bus pulled up. The doors swung open, and out came the tallest, most **dreadful** squad we had ever met. They looked like they had never lost a match. Not one of us made a sound, and even the Dog did not bark. We were all **speechless.**



They were good. Truly good. They tackled hard and passed fast. Each time we had the ball, a quick foot shot in and stole it. Boy with Glasses tried his spin move. Blocked. I lined up a big shot. Saved. We ran and ran, but the match felt **endless** and a win felt **hopeless.** 'What do we do?' whispered Girl with Braids. 'We play like a squad,' I said.

And that's exactly what we did. Boy with Glasses stretched for a loose ball and reached it just in time. He flicked it to Girl with Braids. She sprinted up the pitch and crossed it to Header Girl, who sprang up and, bonk, knocked it right back to me. Each pass was **seamless,** and the play felt **effortless.** One tap. One shot. The net shook.

Goal! We jumped up with our fists punching the sky. Girl with Braids grabbed my arm. High Kicker Boy yelled so loud the trees shook. The Dog tossed his head back and barked and barked. The other team was big. The other team was fast. But we trusted each other, and that trust was **priceless.** And the Dog's bark was louder than all of us put together. Go, squad, go!

102

Can We Back It Up?

Five kids, one dog, and a squad that never backs down. When a towering, unbeaten team rolls off the bus for the title match, the group's confidence starts to shake. Can this ragtag crew turn their teamwork into a real win? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 102: -less, -ful), this book practises words like 'hopeful', 'breathless', 'clueless', 'flawless', 'faithful'.

Phonics Focus: -less, -ful

boastful, boundless, breathless, cloudless, clueless, dreadful, effortless, endless, faithful, flawless, hopeful, hopeless, masterful, powerful, priceless, seamless, speechless

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