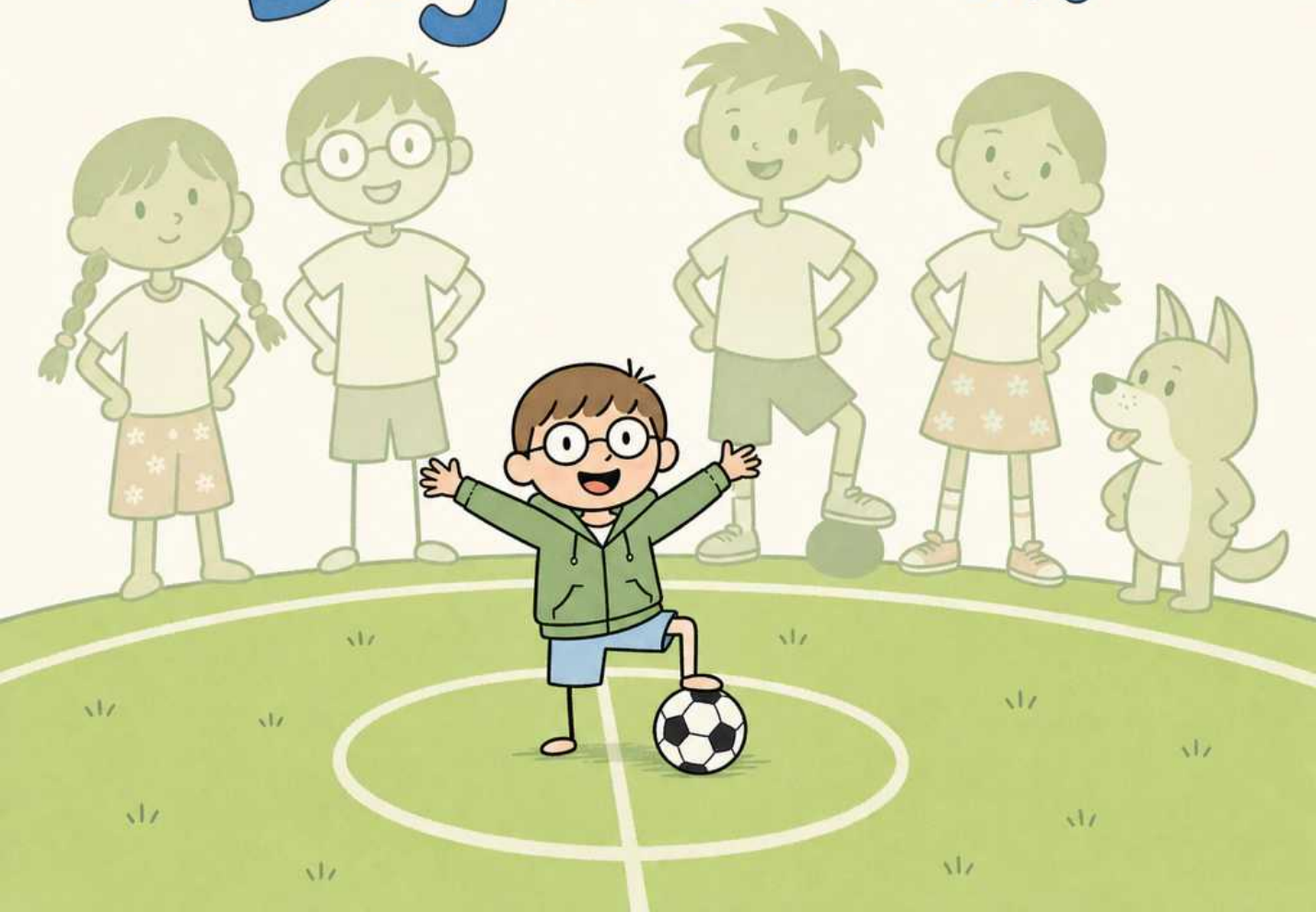
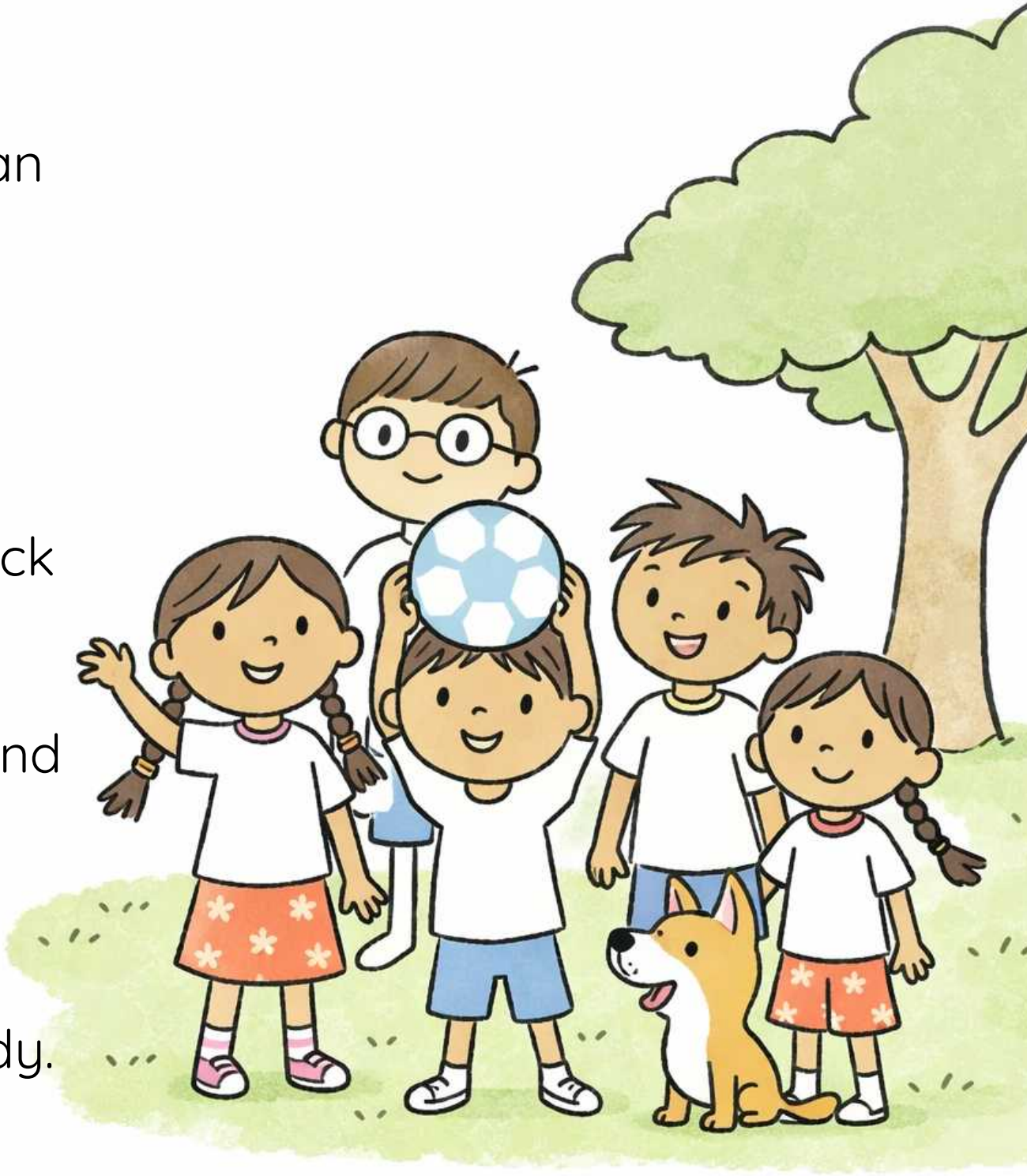
# Big Talk, Big Match!



This is my squad. Five kids, one dog, and a plan that just can't fail. **Hey,** that's what I told the class. 'Big talk,' said Girl with Braids, grinning. 'Back it up today.' I held the ball up over my head and grinned big. Today was the match for the cup, and our squad was ready.

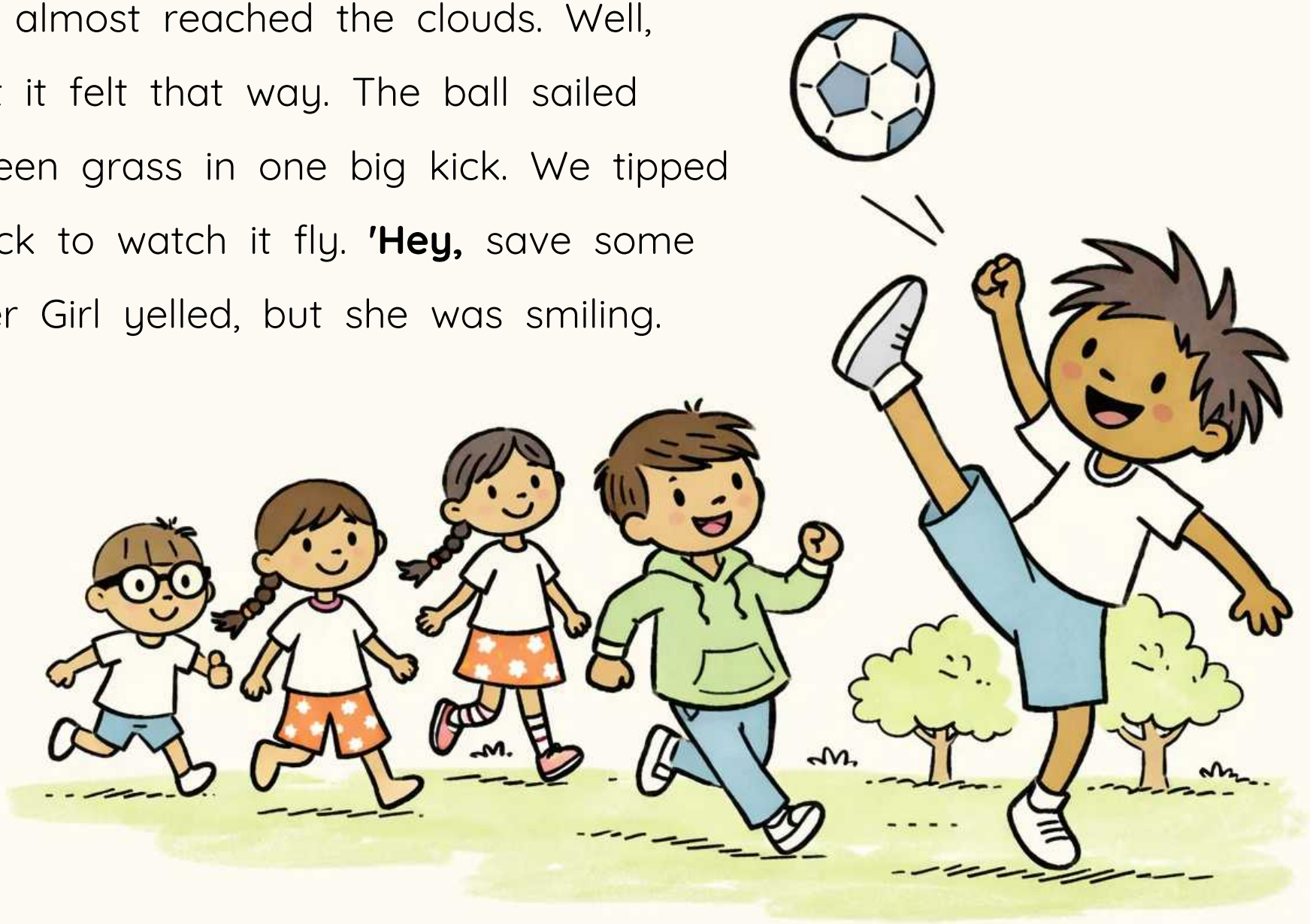


Girl with Braids got the ball first. She always did. She ran **straight** past the bushes so fast the leaves shook. The rest of us ran after her, legs pumping and lungs burning. Even the Dog bounced along next to her, mouth open in the wind. 'Too slow!' she yelled back. No one tried to argue.

Boy with Glasses did not need to be fast. He had something better than speed. He flicked the ball left, then right, then spun around so quick that I tripped over my own feet trying to follow him. By the time I looked up, he had zipped away. 'How does he do that?' I asked. No one knew. He was just that **great.**

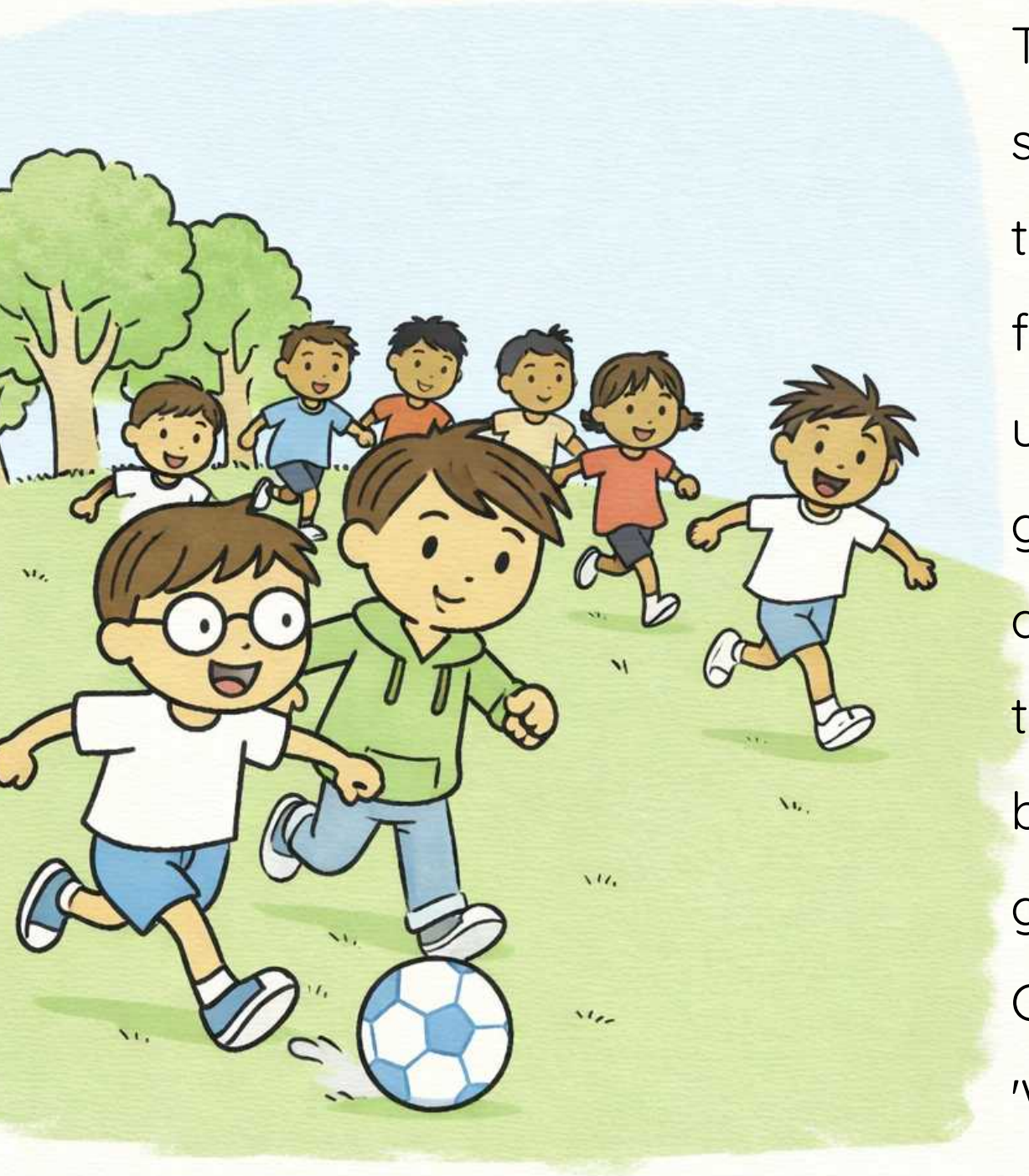
My turn next. I did one thing, and I did it well. Whack! My foot smashed into the ball so hard that it zipped **straight** in and hit the back of the net before the net kid could even blink. All the kids on the pitch just stared at me. I tried not to look too pleased with myself. But I failed.

Then High Kicker Boy stepped up. He swung his leg so high it almost reached the clouds. Well, not really, but it felt that way. The ball sailed across the green grass in one big kick. We tipped our heads back to watch it fly. **'Hey,** save some for us!' Header Girl yelled, but she was smiling.



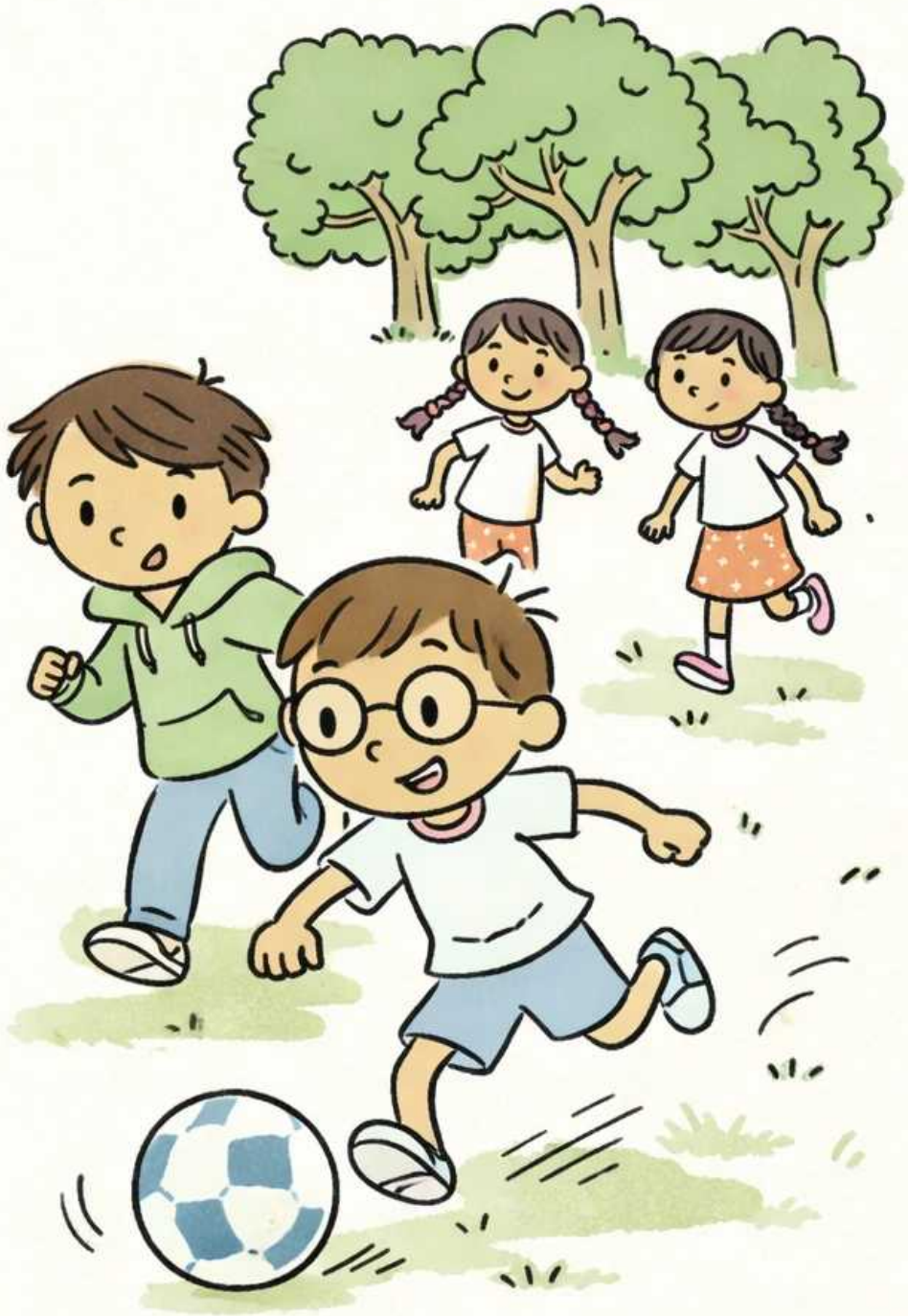
Header Girl did not need her feet at all. She jumped into the air, and bonk! The ball pinged off her forehead like a rocket. She practiced every lunchtime at the park, rain or shine. 'One day,' she said with a grin, 'I will head a ball **straight** up into space.' We trusted her, every single word.

Drills over. Our coach gave a thumbs up from the sideline, and we ran out on the grass, ready for the match. Then the other team's bus pulled up. The doors swung open, and out came the tallest, biggest squad we had ever seen. **They outweighed** us by a lot, every single one of them. Nobody on our team said a word. Even the Dog stopped barking.



That team was strong. Really strong. The other kids tackled hard and passed fast. The ball did not **obey** us at all, and every time we got it back, **they** snatched it away again. Boy with Glasses tried his spin and got blocked, and my big shot got saved. 'What do we do?' Girl with Braids whispered. 'We play like a squad,' I said.

And that's just what we did. Boy with Glasses stretched for a loose ball and reached it just in time, and he flicked it fast to Girl with Braids. She sprinted forward and crossed it to Header Girl. Header Girl jumped up high, and bonk! She knocked the ball right to me on a perfect **breakaway.** One tap, one shot, and the net bulged just like that.



Goal! We jumped in the air with our fists punching the sky. Girl with Braids grabbed my arm, and High Kicker Boy screamed so loud the trees shook. The Dog tossed his head back and barked and barked. The other team was big and fast. But we had something **they** lacked. We had a squad that trusted each other, and we had a dog who barked louder than all of us put together. Go, squad, go!

114

# Big Talk, Big Match!

Five kids, one dog, and a squad that never plays alone. When the championship match brings a bus full of the biggest, most serious players anyone has ever seen, can this little team stay standing? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 114: Alternate /ā/ (ei, ey, eigh, aigh, ea)), this book practices words like 'straight', 'hey', 'great', 'breakaway', 'outweighed'.

**Phonics Focus:** Alternate /ā/ (ei/ey/eigh/aigh/ea)

breakaway, great, hey, obey, outweighed, straight, they

Bookbot is not endorsed by or affiliated with UFLI (the University of Florida Literacy Institute) or Jolly Learning Ltd. UFLI Foundations and Jolly Phonics are trademarks of their respective owners.

**Learn to read with confidence**

The Bookbot app and its carefully designed decodable books help children practise the sounds and words they are learning, building strong phonics and reading skills one step at a time. In the app, children can listen to stories read aloud, follow highlighted words as they are spoken, and read independently when they are ready. Together, the decodable books and oral reading support help develop accuracy, fluency, confidence and a love of reading. Learn more at www.bookbotkids.com.

CC BY NC SA

www.bookbotkids.com