

Got It!





Jack pressed his nose to the chain-link fence and stared. On the other side, a kid in blue was juggling a ball. Knee, foot, knee, foot. The ball never hit the ground. Not once. That kid was no **dropper**. 'I can do that,' Jack whispered. He squeezed his own ball a little tighter. 'Probably.' This kid was fast. Really, really fast.

Jack found a gap in the fence and squeezed in. He waved. The kid grinned, then whacked the ball high into the sky. It came down fast, and Jack puffed up his chest. Thud. The ball hit him hard in the ribs. 'Chest trap!' Jack grinned. 'Easy.' His ribs felt **hotter** than the sun. The kid just kept on smiling.





They started to play, and the kid was fast. His feet were a blur. Jack was **bigger**, but the kid zipped past him like he was standing still. Jack's lungs burned. His legs wobbled. The kid did not even look tired. 'This is fine,' Jack panted. 'I am just getting set.' He was not winning this one.

Jack stopped chasing and just watched. The ball rolled from the kid's left foot to his right, then back. Tap, tap, tap. It stopped exactly where the kid wanted it, every single time. Jack's mouth fell open. Every move was a **stunner**. He had never seen a kid run the ball like that. Not ever. 'Fine,' Jack said quietly. 'Maybe he's a little bit good.'



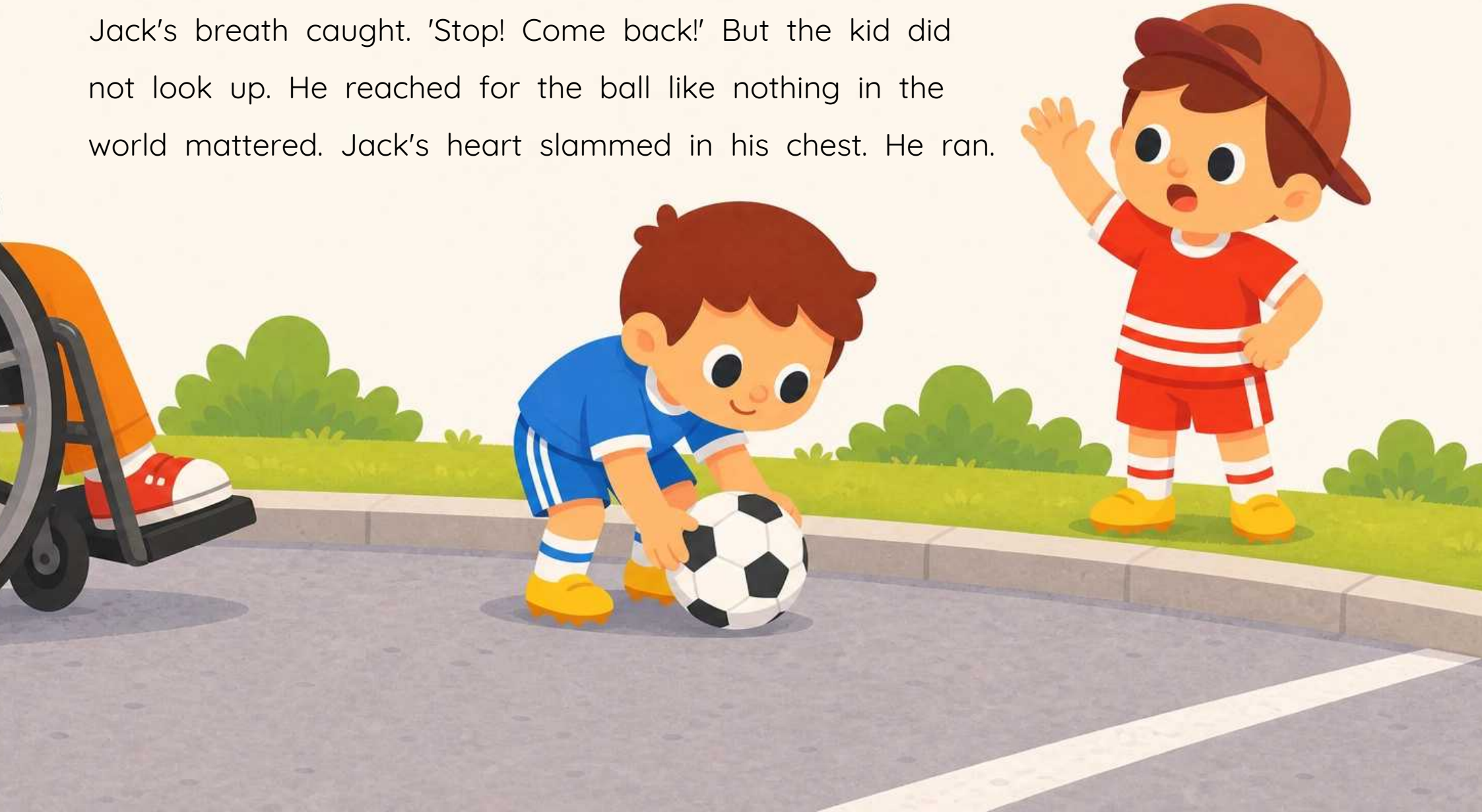


'Rest!' Jack called out, hands on his knees. 'Time out! Please!' But the kid kept dribbling, dodging, dancing with the ball. He did not even look up at Jack. Jack lunged and reached out to steal the ball, but the kid was past him in a flash. 'Does this kid have an off switch?' Jack huffed. He was getting **madder** and **madder** by the second.

Jack swung his leg with everything he had. Crack! That was his **biggest** kick yet. The ball sailed over the kid's head and flew right off the grass. They both froze. 'Oops,' said Jack. The kid's eyes went wide. He spotted the ball rolling to the road and took off running after it.



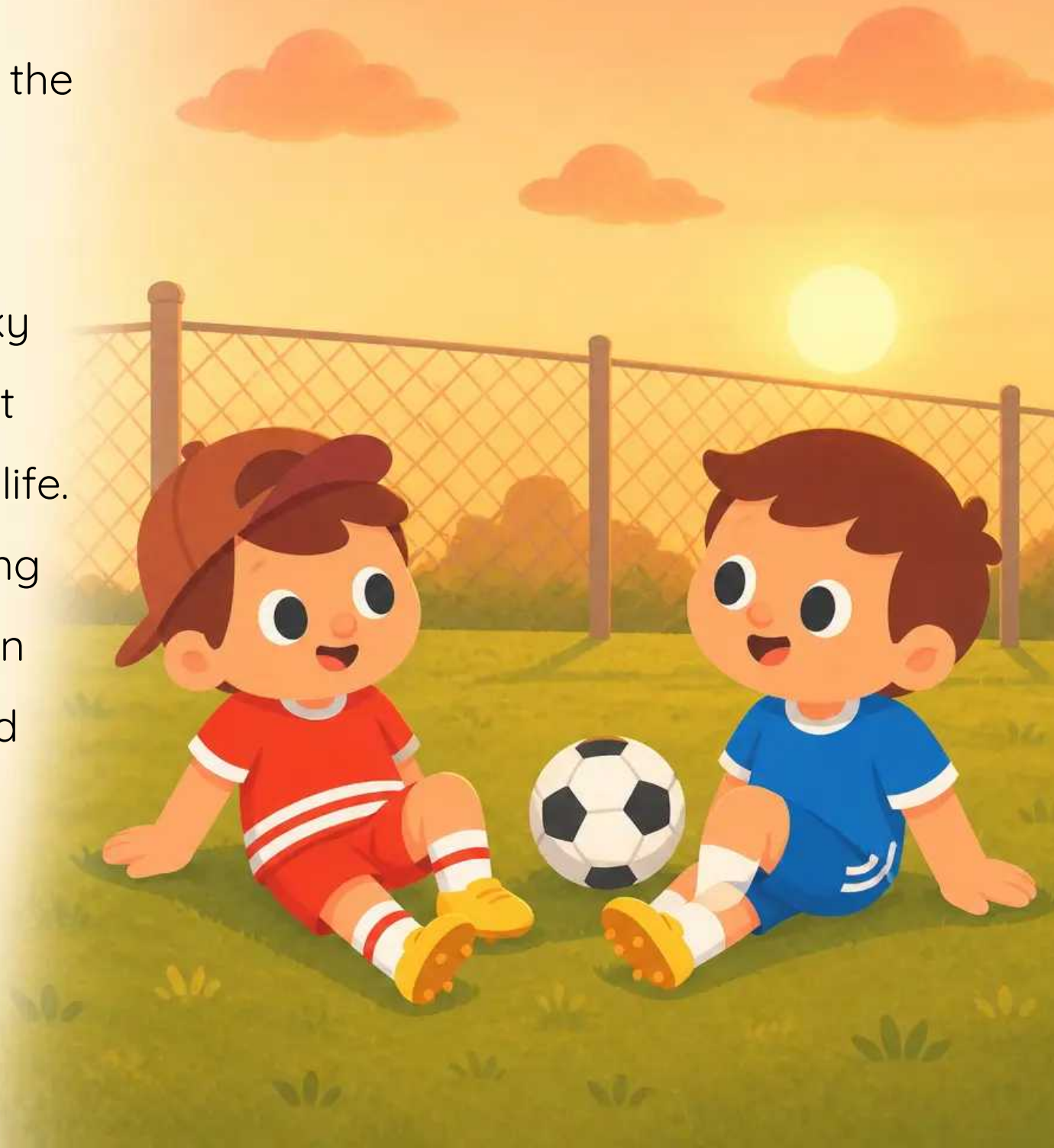
The kid was a fast **runner**. He sprinted right into the road, head down, eyes on the ball. 'Stop!' Jack screamed. A bike was speeding right at him, getting closer and closer. Jack's breath caught. 'Stop! Come back!' But the kid did not look up. He reached for the ball like nothing in the world mattered. Jack's heart slammed in his chest. He ran.



Jack grabbed the kid's hand and pulled. They tumbled on the grass just as the bike whooshed past, so close Jack felt the wind on his face. For a moment, both of them lay still. Then the kid looked up, eyes huge and round, still clutching the ball. He squeezed Jack's hand. Twice. Jack squeezed back. He was the **gladdest** boy on the block.



They sat side by side on the hill by the fence, catching their breath. The sun was sinking low, turning the sky red and gold. Jack let out the longest breath of his life. His hands were still shaking a little. He had never been **gladder** to sit still. The kid gave Jack's arm a soft bump. Jack bumped him back. That felt just right.





The kid drew his name in the dirt in big letters: BEN. Then he faced Jack and moved his hands fast, spelling his name with his fingers. Jack stared. And then it all made sense. Ben was not ignoring him. Ben was deaf. Not one shout had ever reached him. Jack made the same hand shapes, going slow. Ben laughed and gave him the **biggest** thumbs up.

Jack tried to spell out his own name with his hands, but his fingers got all mixed up. He tried again. They just flopped. 'Hang on,' he said, but he knew Ben was deaf. He bent down and traced his name in the dirt with his finger: JACK. Ben leaned over, read the name, and broke into the **biggest** smile Jack had ever seen.





They lay on the grass
watching clouds drift across
the golden sky. Two boys.
Two balls. No words needed.
Jack smiled to himself. He
had come hoping to kick a
ball with a pal. He had
found a far better thing. He
had not won one game. But
he felt like a **winner**.
Tomorrow, he would learn
the sign for 'Rest!' first.



Got It!

Jack watches a kid juggling a football through a chain-link fence, and he's sure he can keep up. But this kid is fast, faster than anyone Jack has ever played against, and totally impossible to catch. Can Jack figure out why this kid never once looks up when he shouts? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 108: Doubling Rule -er, -est), this book practices words like 'bigger', 'hotter', 'madder', 'winner', 'runner'.

Phonics Focus: Doubling Rule -er/-est

bigger, biggest, dropper, gladder, gladdest, hotter, madder, runner, stunner, winner

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