



Goal!

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Level 4



What?

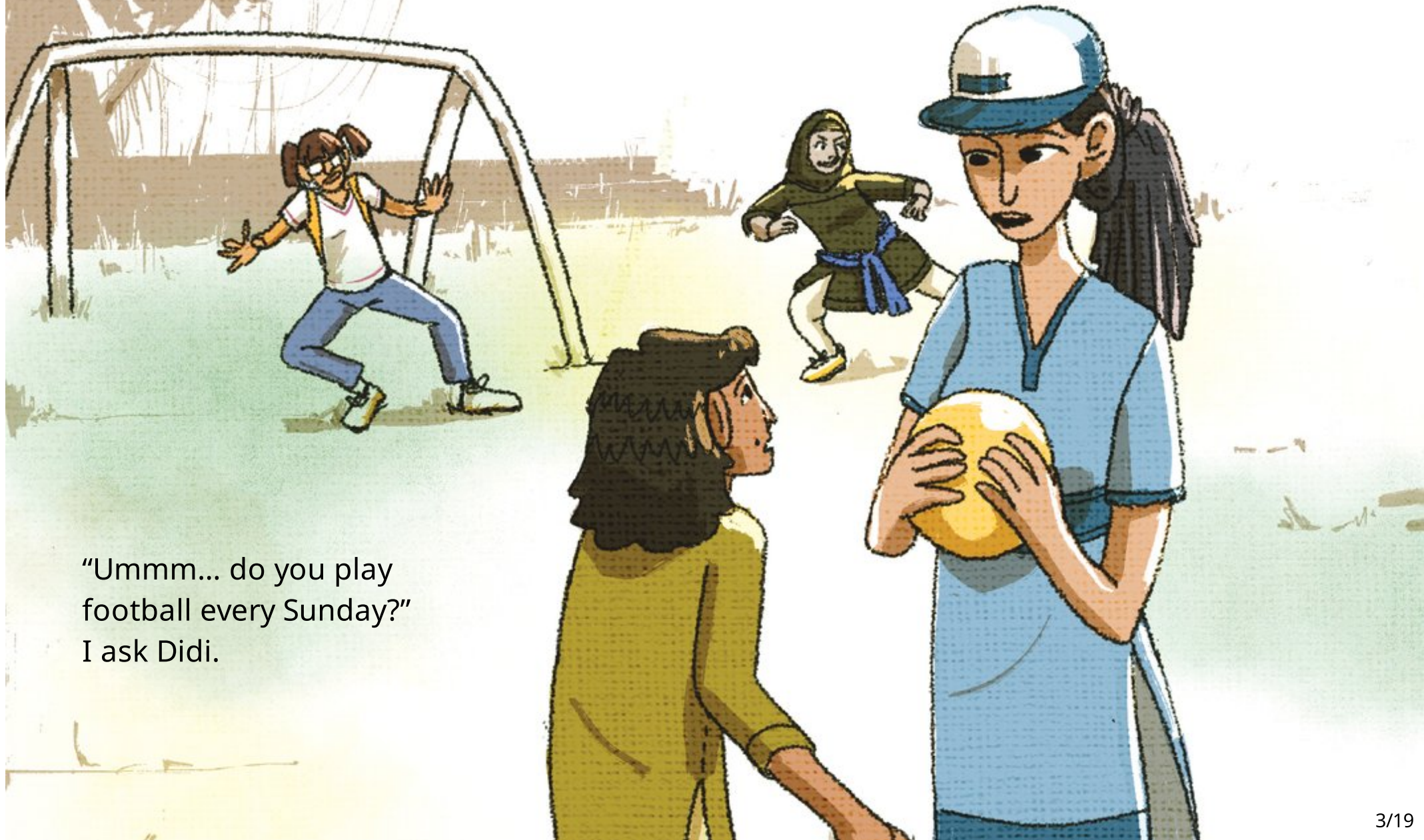
Are those girls playing football?

Girls like me? Girls my age? Girls from my Mumbra?

Every Sunday, Bhai plays cricket there with his friends.

Every Sunday, I help Ammi in the kitchen after I finish my homework.

It's Sunday again. I tiptoe out of home and run to the playground.



"Ummm... do you play football every Sunday?"
I ask Didi.

“Yes, we play here every Sunday. Would you like to play with us?” Didi smiles.
I shake my head.



“Heena!” Bhai roars. “What are you doing here? Go home.”
I run home.

Another Sunday.
The same team of girls.
The same football.
The same energy.
The same passion.

Oh, is that Inayat?



"Inayat!" I call out. "Talk to my mother?"

"To let you play football?" Inayat asks, as she kicks the ball.



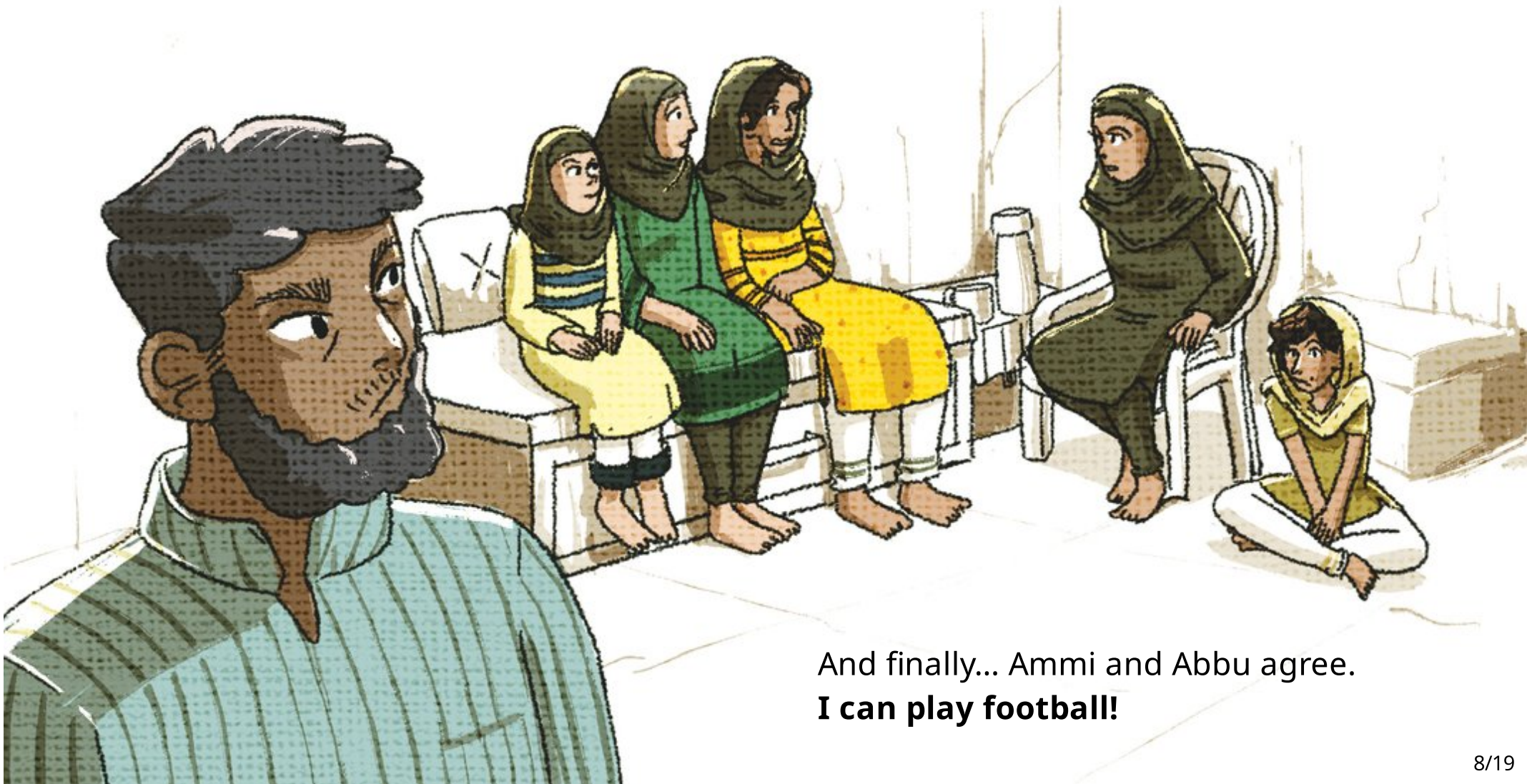
A few days later.

It's Inayat! She's come home with her mother, and the same Didi.



"We teach girls football," Saba Didi says.
"How does that help?" Ammi is surprised.

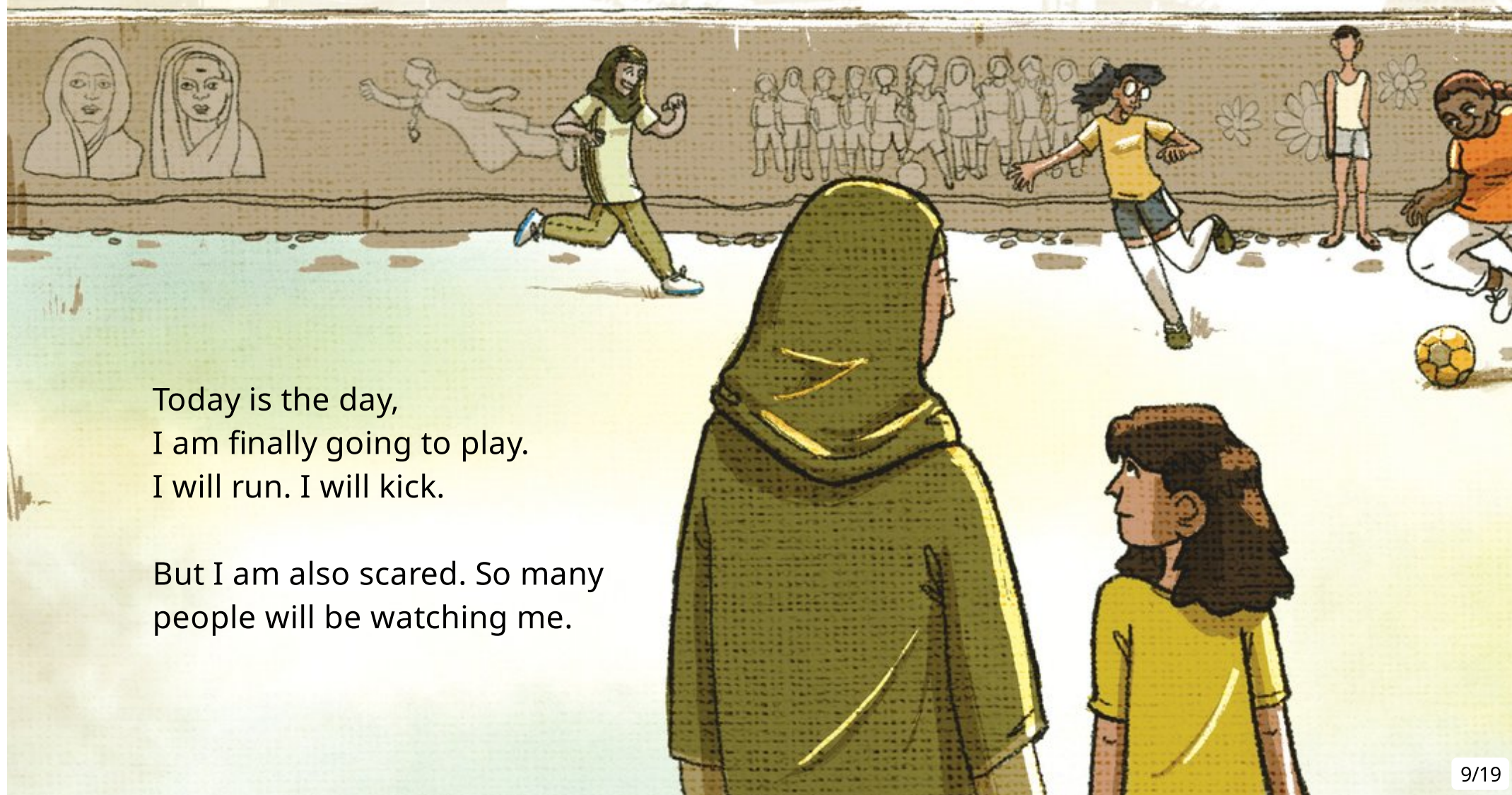
They talk. They listen.
They talk and listen for one hour.



And finally... Ammi and Abbu agree.
I can play football!

Sunday again.

My heart — it is happy, it is scared. Can everyone hear it?



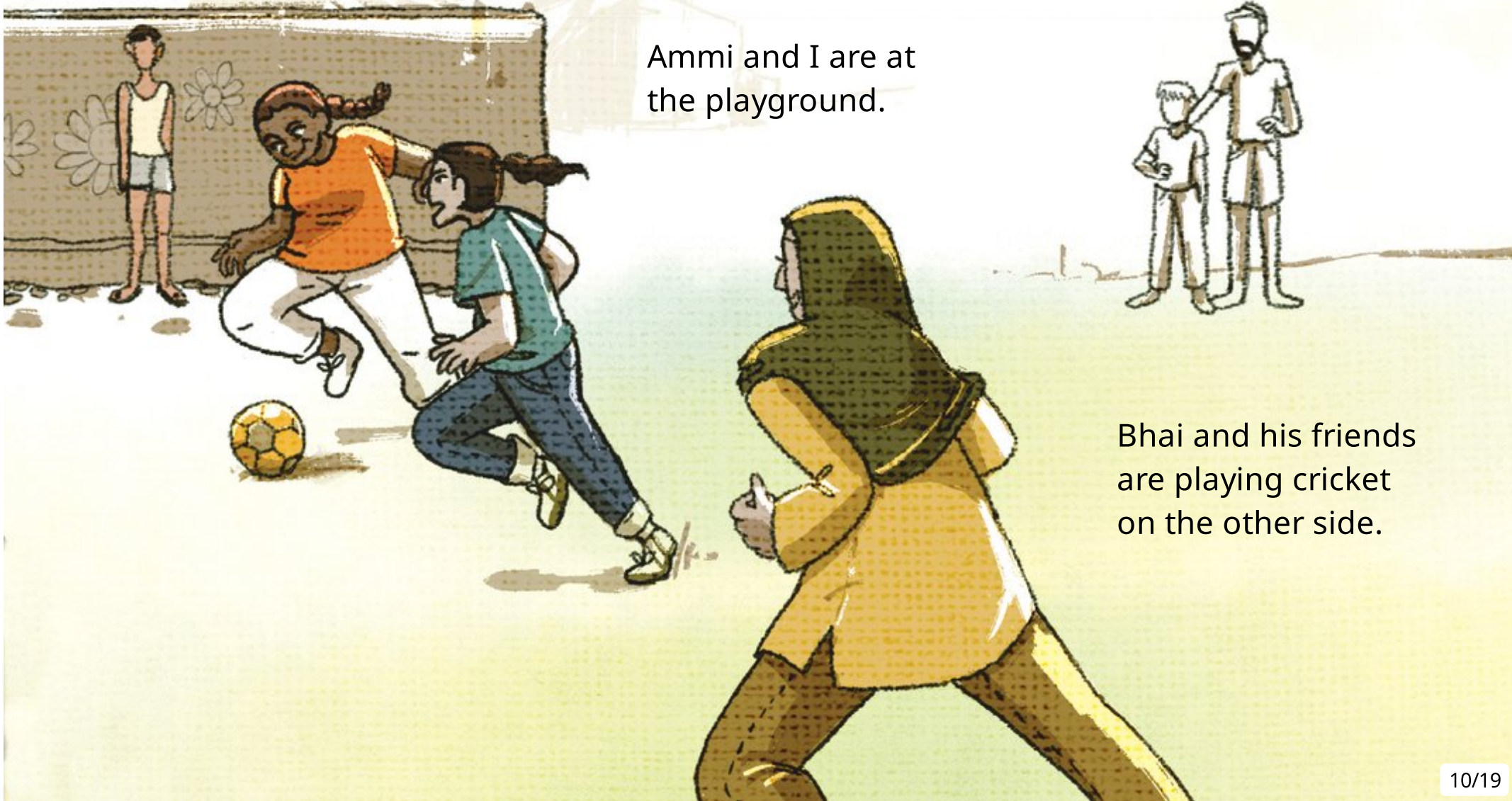
Today is the day,
I am finally going to play.
I will run. I will kick.

But I am also scared. So many
people will be watching me.

What if I fall and break my bones?
Or if I don't know how to play football?

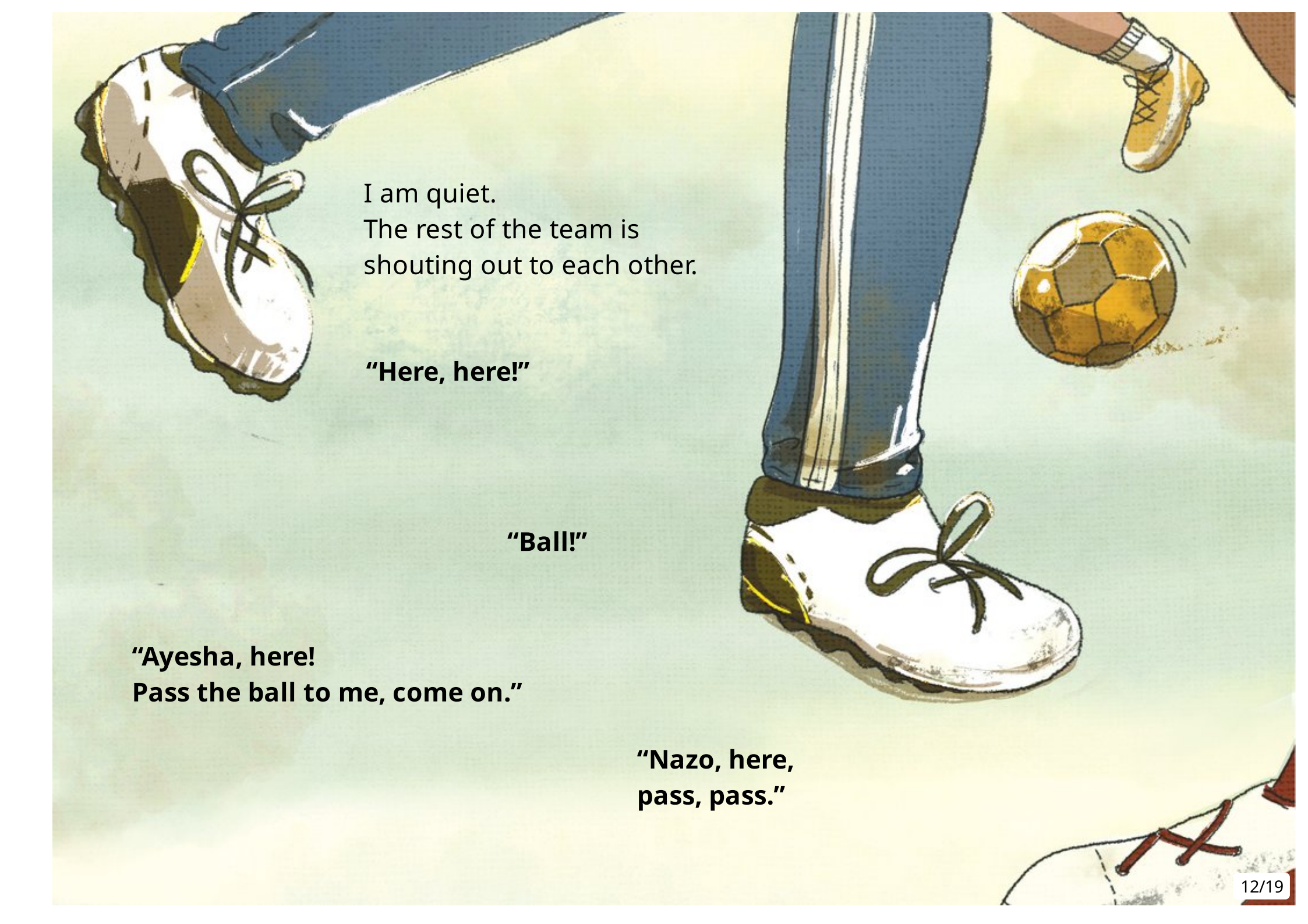
Ammi and I are at
the playground.

Bhai and his friends
are playing cricket
on the other side.



"Heena, just focus on the ball," Coach says.
"Pass it to someone the second it comes to
you. Or kick it towards the goalpost."



An illustration of a soccer game. In the center, a player's legs in blue pants with white stripes and white sneakers are shown. To the left, another player's leg in blue pants and white sneakers is visible. To the right, a third player's leg in brown pants and brown shoes is seen. A yellow and brown soccer ball is on the ground near the center player. The background is a light green field.


I am quiet.
The rest of the team is
shouting out to each other.

"Here, here!"

"Ball!"

**"Ayesha, here!
Pass the ball to me, come on."**

**"Nazo, here,
pass, pass."**

An illustration of a soccer game. A player in a yellow shirt and blue pants is kicking a soccer ball with a powerful kick. A player in an orange shirt and white pants is watching the kick with a surprised expression. The background is a bright, hazy yellow with large, soft shadows. The text is positioned in the upper right area of the image.

Suddenly —
The ball is in front of me.
I forget everything. Everyone.

Now, it is just me.
And the football.

I kick it hard...

Everyone claps,
even Ammi.

"Wow, Heena!"
"Amazing, Heena!"

Bhai? His jaw has dropped
to the ground.



The ball is out of the ground,
but I am in.
Oh yes! I am now part of this
dream-team.

The times are changing. Can you feel that?

People used to say, "How can girls play football?" Now, the same people — friends, neighbours, family members, even strangers — support us. They whistle and cheer for us at our matches.



Now, it feels like there's a future
beyond the kitchen, home and family.

Our future, full of possibilities.
Our dreams, limitless like the sky.



Simran

If not for Parcham,
a lot of girls from
Mumbra would be
at home, preparing
for their weddings.

Madina

When I talk to Abbu,
I am motivated because
he understands me.
He is the best Abbu.

Kulsum

Earlier, I wanted
to be like Ammi.
Now, I want to be myself.

Mantasha

The word I love the most is "to soar".



Jhuveriya

I want to tell girls that struggles are a constant. But you must decide what you want to do, what you want to be.

Shabnam

When I go to the field, I think that today I will learn something and also teach something.

Fatima

If I were Prime Minister for a day, I would erase hate from the country.

Sonali

For me, Parcham means joy and freedom.





Is this a true story?

In a way Heena's story is true for the girls at Parcham Collective, a non-profit feminist collective in Mumbra, Thane. In 2012, a group of teenage girls and women came together to form the collective and break stereotypes based on religion, caste, class and gender.

The collective's name, Parcham, is inspired by Majaz's Urdu poem and means flag or banner. Parcham Collective wishes to empower young girls to dream of a financially independent future.

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Goal!

(English)

Every Sunday, Heena watches a group of girls playing football from her window. She wants to join them. But convincing Ammi and Abbu is not going to be easy. Will she be able to join the team? Run, kick and score goals and experience freedom like never before?

This is a Level 4 book for children who can read fluently and with confidence.



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