

LEVELED BOOK • Q

SPRAK!



Written by Alyse Sweeney
Illustrated by Stephen Marchesi

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A Cup of Cider

Whack! Mark sent the soccer ball sailing down his front lawn.

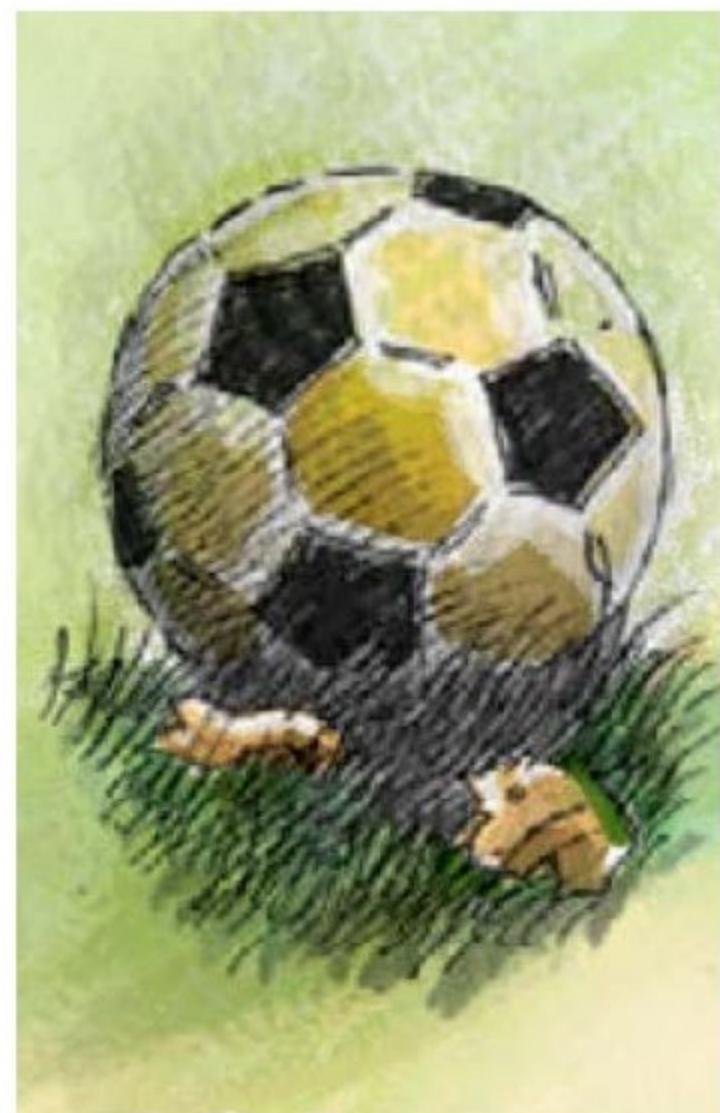
“Goooaaal!” he cheered with both arms in the air.

As he jogged to fetch his ball, he noticed that his neighbor, Mia, wasn’t getting much business at her warm-apple-cider stand.

“Warm cider for sale!” Mia yelled from across the street. “Do you want some warm cider, Mark?”

“No, thanks!” Mark called back. Mark didn’t really like warm cider. Besides, he was thirsty for a cold drink.

As Mark continued to practice for his big game the next day, he wondered about Mia’s regular Saturday morning customers. *Where are the kids and joggers and bike riders?* Then he remembered that it was a holiday weekend. *People are probably out of town.*



After nearly an hour of dribbling and kicking, Mark finished his practice. He had glanced at Mia several times, but she never received a customer. Looking at her one last time, he went inside to get fifty cents from his mom. A few moments later, he was at Mia's stand.

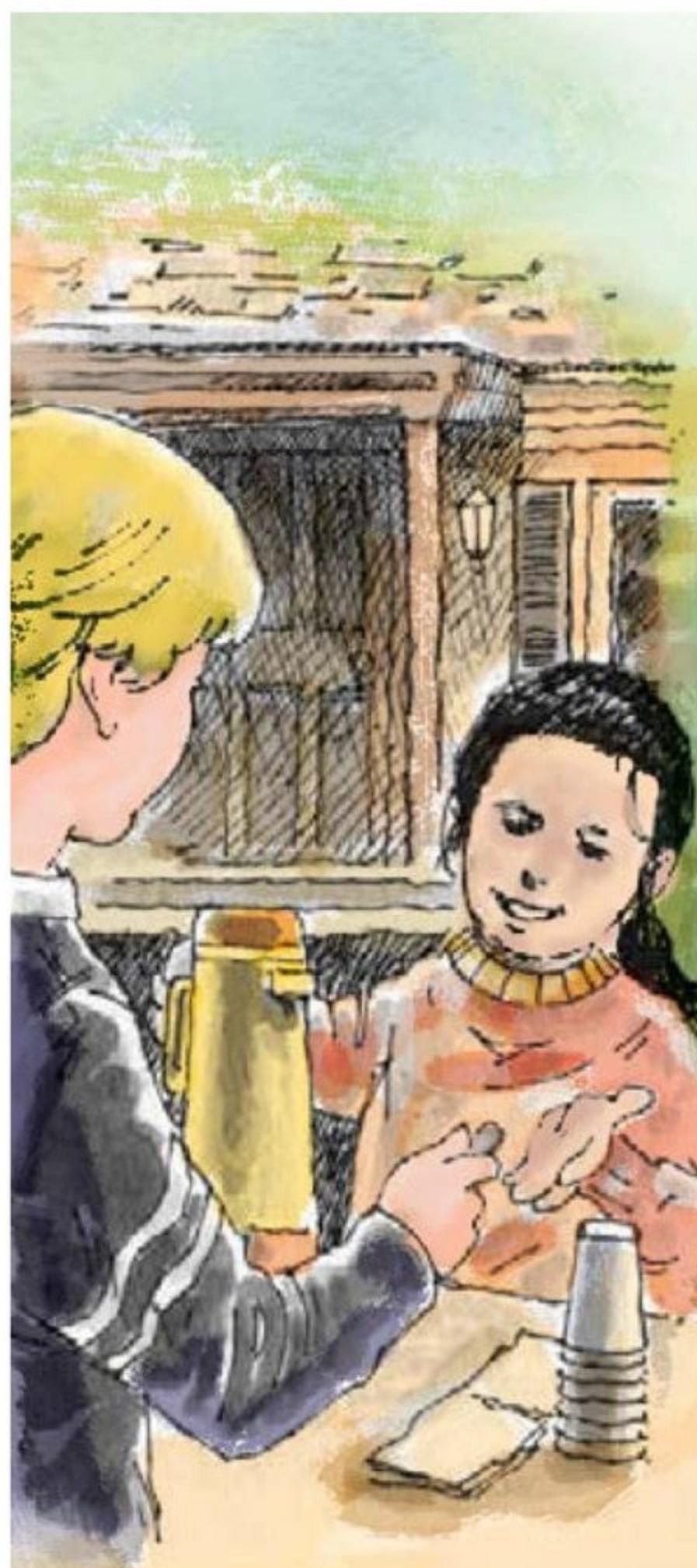
"I'll take a cup of cider." Mark handed Mia the money.

"Really?" squealed Mia, dropping the coins into her jar.

"Mia!" her mother called from the front door. "Time to come inside!"

"Okay!" Mia called back to her mother before turning back to her customer.
"Thanks, Mark."

"No sweat."



A Favorite Sweater

Inside her house, Mia's mother was reading the newspaper.

"Oh goodness, it's going to get cold tomorrow night. I'm so glad your father fixed the furnace last weekend."

Mia, still beaming, thought for a moment before turning to her mother.

"Mom, what about all of those people who don't have heat or any warm place to stay at all?"

"What do you mean, dear?"

Mia paused for a moment and then pulled off her sweater. "Oooh, Mamma. I love this sweater. I wear it almost everyday, but it's getting too small. Maybe it's time for it to be another little girl's favorite."

Mia's mother smiled.

"I think that's an excellent idea. I'll meet you upstairs with some bags. I'm sure the **donation center** is open for a few more hours."



A Lost Kitten

Mia and her mother filled two bags with warm clothes and hopped in the car. On the way over to the donation center, Mia's mother slammed on the brakes.

"Mamma! What's wrong?"

A small kitten walked slowly in front of the car. "Do you think it's lost?" Mia continued.

"I haven't seen a house in a while. And this is a busy street. Let's take the kitten to the animal rescue center where it will be safe." Mia's mom jumped out of the car, scooped up the kitten, and placed it on Mia's lap.

"It's so tiny!" said Mia, as she gently stroked the kitten. "And it's shaking!"





A Thank-You Tip

“And who do you belong to, little kitty?” asked the young man from behind the desk at the rescue center. He wore a nametag that read, “Duane.”

“We don’t know,” said Mia.

“It was lost on Highway 54,” continued Mia’s mother.

“You were right to bring it here,” Duane said, scooping the kitten from Mia’s arms. “We’ll take good care of it. And I’m sure its owners will check in soon.”

Mia and her mother felt **relieved** that the kitten was safe and off the street.

For the next several hours, Duane bathed, fed, and soothed the kitten. When its owners finally came for their pet, Duane and the kitten were tangled in a ball of yarn.

“Charlie!” A young boy rushed toward the kitten.

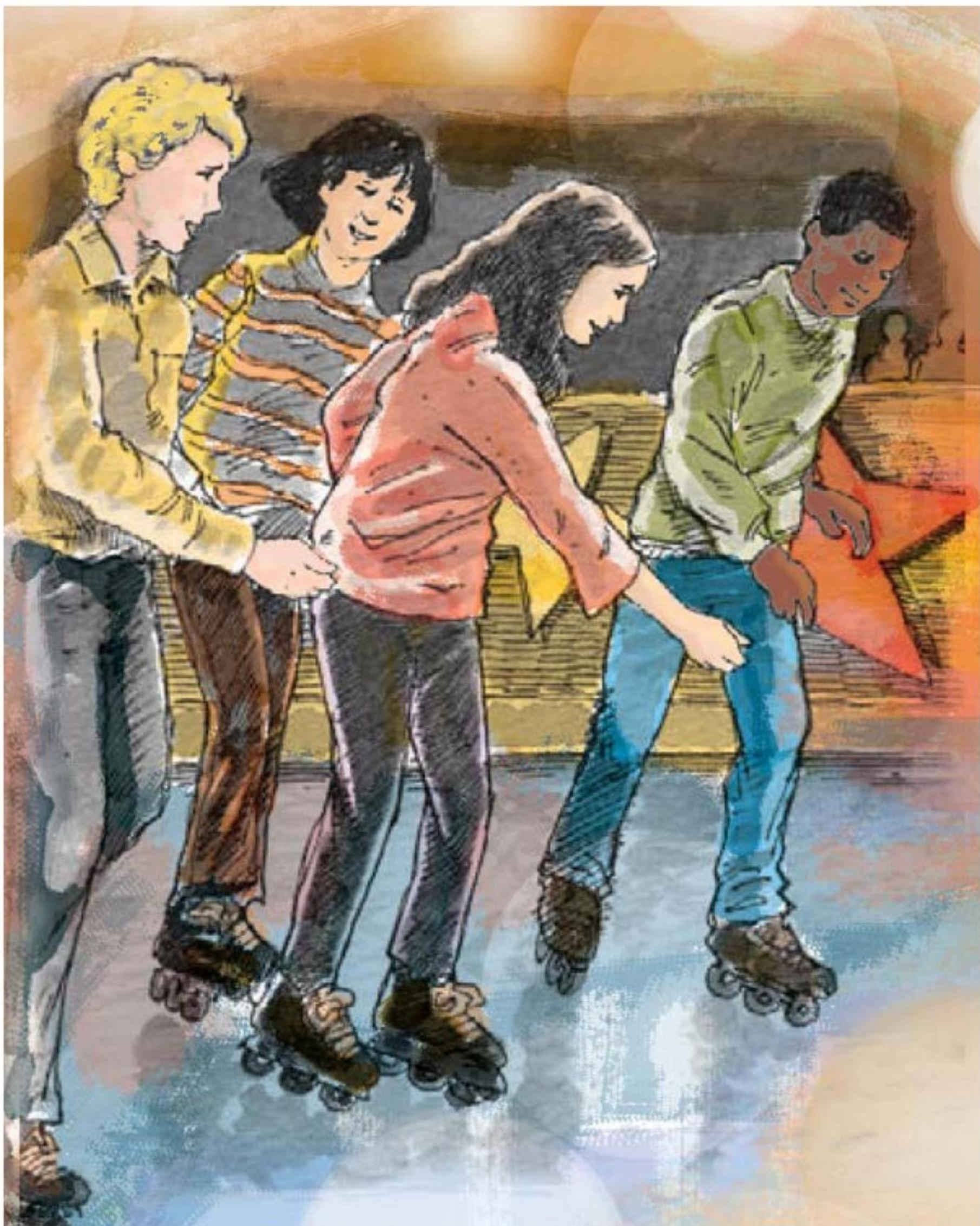
“Thank goodness he’s safe,” sighed the boy’s mother. “And thank goodness someone found him and brought him here.”

After the woman donated some money to the center for the kitten’s care, she reached again for her wallet.

“Oh, no, no, no, you don’t need to do that,” Duane pleaded, shaking his hands in front of her. “I’m a volunteer.”

“But I insist,” the woman said, “You took such good care of our Charlie.” She handed Duane a tip.





A Snack

When Duane left the shelter that evening, he met his friends at the skating rink. The friends taught each other new skating moves. They raced. And they made up funky dance moves to the loud music.

"Let's take a break. Anyone up for hot cocoa and popcorn?" Duane asked.

At the snack bar, everyone pulled out his or her money—everyone but Rosaria.

Duane knew her family was going through some hard times, and she didn't have any extra money for snacks. Duane, however, did because of the tip he received from the woman at the shelter. He planned on putting it toward the digital music player he was saving up for, but Rosaria was his friend. Consequently, Duane **furtively** slipped a couple dollars into Rosaria's hand.

"Thanks," Rosaria whispered to Duane, blushing.





A Song

The next morning, Rosaria's mother made pancakes for breakfast.

"How are my **chiquitas** today?" she asked her daughters.

"Great!" Rosaria chirped.

"Horrible," Anna whined. "For three weeks I've been sitting home with this broken leg. I'm bored out of my mind. My leg itches. And I'm missing another soccer game!"

Rosaria's smile fell. Usually, Anna **annoyed** Rosaria. But today, she made Rosaria think. While she ate her pancakes in silence, she thought about how she could make Anna happy.

After breakfast, Rosaria invited Anna to her room, which was normally off-limits.

"Sit down, Anna. I'm going to give you a concert!" Rosaria pulled out her guitar.

"Are you serious?" Anna squealed. "You never let me hear you play!"

Rosaria played slow songs, fast songs—even a song she wrote. When the concert was over, Rosaria gave Anna one final treat: she taught her sister to play three guitar chords.

"With these three chords, you can play tons of songs," Rosaria said.

Anna was so happy, she could burst.



A Letter

Anna was so **engrossed** with the guitar concert, she nearly forgot about the soccer game she was missing. Once Rosaria left, she thought about her team and her amazing coach. So, she pulled out a piece of **stationery** and began to write.



Dear Coach Jake,

I am miserable that I can't finish the season, but I want to thank you for teaching me so much about soccer and for showing me that I am faster and stronger and tougher than I ever thought before!

*See you next season,
Anna*

Anna hobbled to the mailbox in front of the house and mailed her letter.

A Blanket

That afternoon, Mark arrived early at the soccer field to practice. His dad and grandmother came to watch the game.

"Hey, Mark. Hello, Mr. James. And who is this?" Coach Jake held his hand out for Mark's grandmother to shake.

"Hello, dear," Grandma smiled. "I've heard so much about you, Coach Jake."



"No kidding? Well, I'm glad you could make it. Mark is quite a player, you know." Coach Jake paused, then looked closer at Grandma. "Are you cold, ma'am? You're shivering!"

"You know, dear,
I am a bit chilly,"
Grandma said.

"Hold on a second," Coach Jake dashed to his car.

When he returned, he placed a plaid wool blanket on Grandma's lap.

"Well, aren't you thoughtful! I sure do **appreciate** this, Coach," Grandma said with a big smile.



SPRAK!

"Thanks for doing that for my grandma, Coach Jake."

Mark and Coach Jake jogged out to the field to practice.

"Hey, it was nothing. I'm in the mood to SPRAK," Coach Jake replied.

"You're in the mood to *what*?" Mark asked.

"You know—SPRAK. SSpread Random Acts of Kindness. It feels good to think about others."

"I've never heard of SPRAK," laughed Mark.





“I see you SPRAK all the time, man! Remember last week when that little kid dropped his warm pretzel and cried? You went over and made him laugh. And a few weeks ago when it was warm, you poured water into a cup so that dog got a drink. I felt like spreading some kindness today, too.” Coach Jake head-butted the ball to Mark.

“Cool,” Mark said as he caught the ball on his foot and dribbled toward the goal.

“Yeah. It is cool to SPRAK. Now let’s see what you’ve got!”

Glossary

annoyed (<i>v.</i>)	disturbed or bothered (p. 13)
appreciate (<i>v.</i>)	to be grateful for (p. 17)
chiquitas (<i>n.</i>)	(Spanish) little girls (p. 13)
donation center (<i>n.</i>)	a place where people bring their clothes and household items so others can have them (p. 6)
engrossed (<i>adj.</i>)	completely interested in something (p. 15)
furtively (<i>adv.</i>)	slyly or sneakily (p. 12)
relieved (<i>adj.</i>)	freed of worry (p. 9)
stationery (<i>n.</i>)	paper for writing letters, especially the kind with matching envelopes (p. 15)
tip (<i>n.</i>)	a gift of money that is given in return for a service (p. 10)
volunteer (<i>n.</i>)	someone who offers a service without being asked or paid (p. 10)

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Level Q Leveled Book

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