

Written by **BRYAN SMITH**

CATCH



THE

BALL!



Illustrated by
LISA M. GRIFFIN



*I dedicate this book to all the students
who can verbalize their feelings the right way
and respect others who do the same thing.*

**A story about confidence, communication,
and kids empowering kids**

Catch the Ball!

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My name's Ezekiel, and my nickname is

ENDZONE.

Everybody at school just calls me EZ.





I'm good at sports.
All kinds, but
especially football.

When we play in gym class, I'm always picked first for a team. My buddy, Joel, gets picked last. But he's more of a baseball guy anyway.



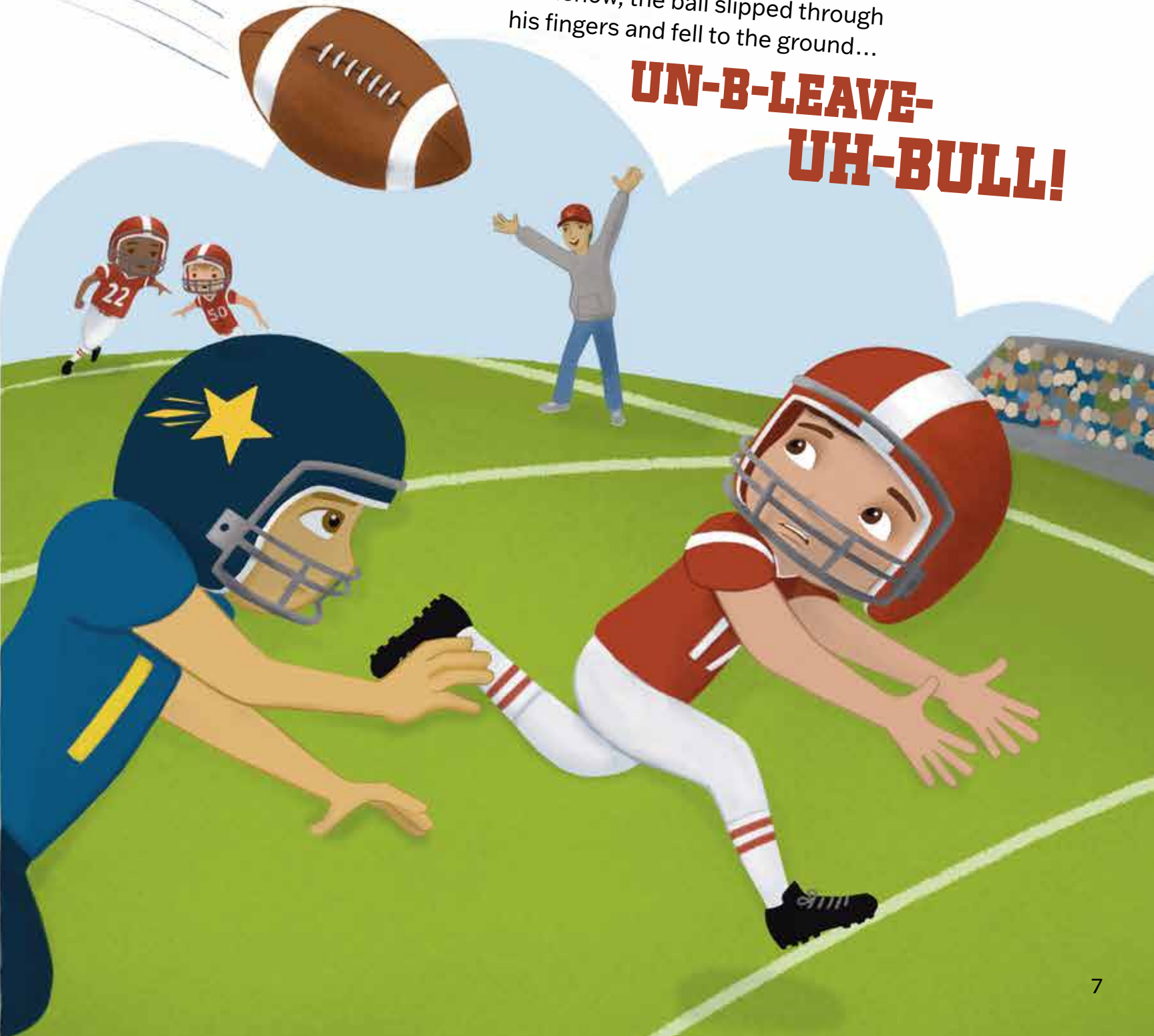


Last week, Joel and I were on the same team. Time was running out, and we had to score a touchdown to win. When Ollie, our quarterback, stepped back to pass, every defender swarmed around me. They figured Ollie wouldn't throw to anyone else, so Joel was wide open.

Ollie threw a tight spiral right to him. The ball hit Joel's hands and **BOUNCED UP** in the air. Joel stretched out to grab it again.

Somehow, the ball slipped through
his fingers and fell to the ground...

**UN-B-LEAVE-
UH-BULL!**



Pages 8-31 are not included in this excerpt.

THE THREE INTIMIDATING WORDS EZEKIEL AND JOEL NEVER WANT TO HEAR AGAIN: CATCH THE BALL!

Ezekiel, a star player, hears it from his football coach all the time. Joel, a kid just trying to have fun, hears it from Ezekiel. Now both boys are dealing with self-doubt, stress, and even sadness. The pressure to play perfectly and not mess up has stripped away all the fun of playing the game they love.

Will they let their fears and frustrations win out, or can they work together to come up with a winning play that will let them seize the confidence and sense of fun they've lost?

This is more than a story about football. It's a lesson about life and harnessing the power of empathy, courage, and perseverance to become a more independent problem solver and an even better friend.

A special page for parents, caregivers, and educators includes practical strategies to help children learn how to identify their feelings, use flexible thinking, and encourage independent problem solving.



Kids Can Do It Too is a storybook series written to inspire young readers to use peer-to-peer collaboration and develop their independent problem-solving skills.

“Catch the Ball! is a great book not just for kids to read but adults as well. It's a great guide to helping kids communicate with adults when they are feeling too much pressure. It's also a great reminder to adults that their words matter and to be mindful of what you say. Whether your child is more similar to EZ or to Joel, there's a great lesson to be learned.”

– Richard Wager, Educator, Parent, and Coach



BRYAN SMITH is an award-winning author who comes from a family of educators. Bryan began his career as an elementary school teacher before realizing he had a talent for helping children deal with difficult issues. He has since become a school counselor, where he flourishes teaching students life skills that will take them far and help them succeed. Bryan is married with two children.

LISA M. GRIFFIN holds a BFA in illustration and is an active member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Lisa is married and has three children.