



**R.H-K: For my Gaga and Grumps. You mean the world to me.
And for ALL the children who have ever felt like nobody cares - I do!**



N.S: For Rico

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS
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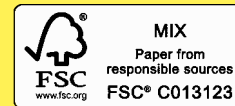
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This is Charlie's personal foster care journey but not every child's story will be the same. We recommend reading and reflecting on this book with a grown-up.

GLOSSARY

- | | |
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| ☆ Adoption: When a person or couple becomes a parent to a child who can no longer live with their birth parents | ☆ Foster parent: Someone who takes a child into their family to look after them for a while |
| ☆ Birth family: The family you are born into | ☆ Judge: A person who is in charge of making important decisions |
| ☆ Contact centre: A safe place where children can meet family members they don't live with | ☆ Social worker: A person who helps children, adults and families with problems |
| ☆ Foster home: A safe place for children to stay that isn't with their birth parents | Look out for these terms in bold throughout the book. |



Rico Hinson-King

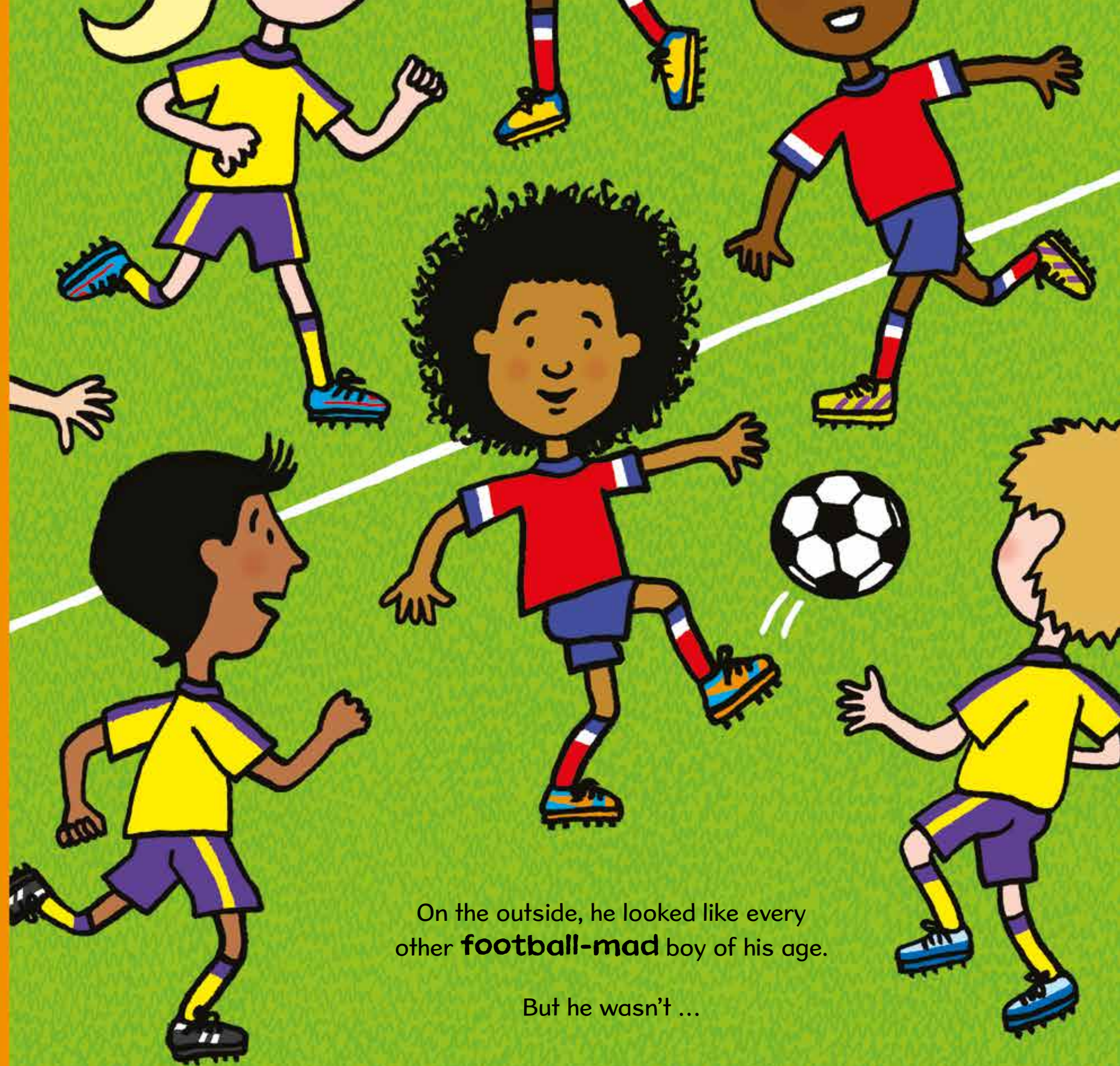
Nick Sharratt

STRONG AND TOUGH



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There was a kid. Let's call him Charlie.



On the outside, he looked like every other **football-mad** boy of his age.

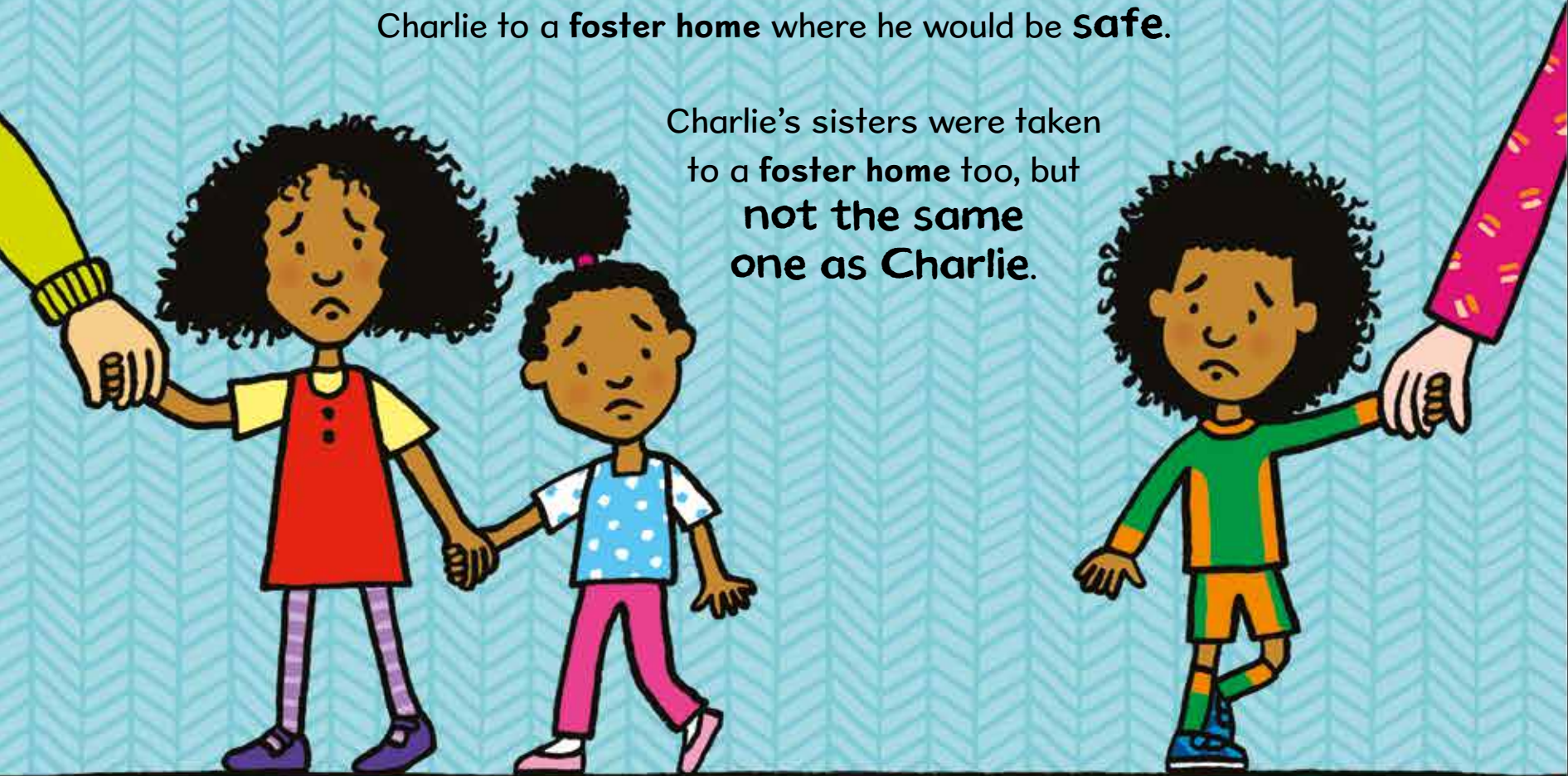
But he wasn't ...

Charlie's life hadn't always been great. When he was very small, his **birth parents** couldn't look after him or his sisters.




Some people called **social workers** came to take Charlie to a **foster home** where he would be **safe**.

Charlie's sisters were taken to a **foster home** too, but **not the same one** as Charlie.



It was **REALLY** scary.






I wish I knew
what was going on ...

Charlie's foster home was nice, but it was **new** and **strange**. He had a small room all to himself, with a few toys to play with. But there was no garden to play football in.

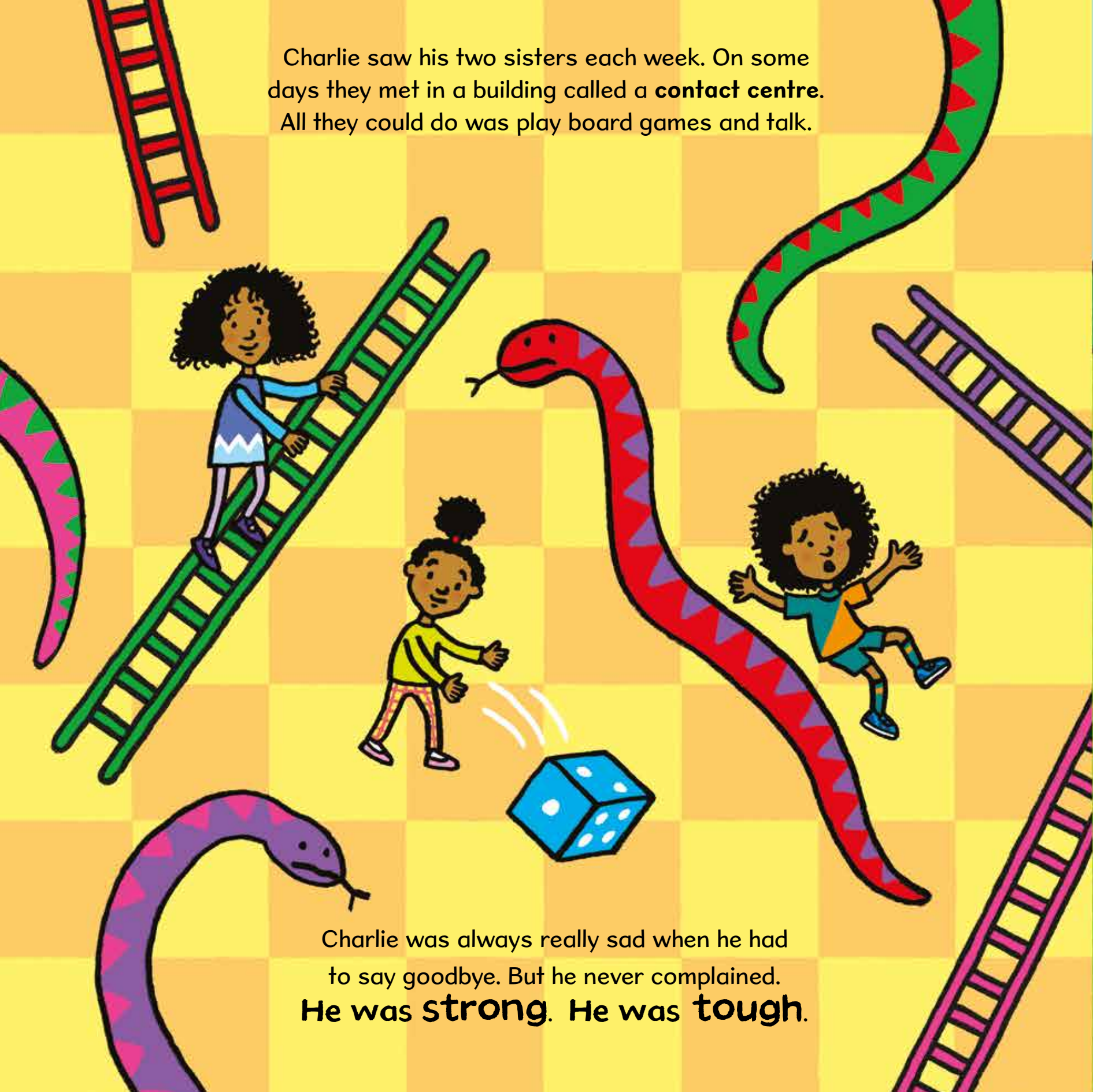
Charlie missed being with his sisters. Alone and afraid, he cried sometimes, but he was **determined to be strong**.

As the weeks went by, he met lots of **social workers**.



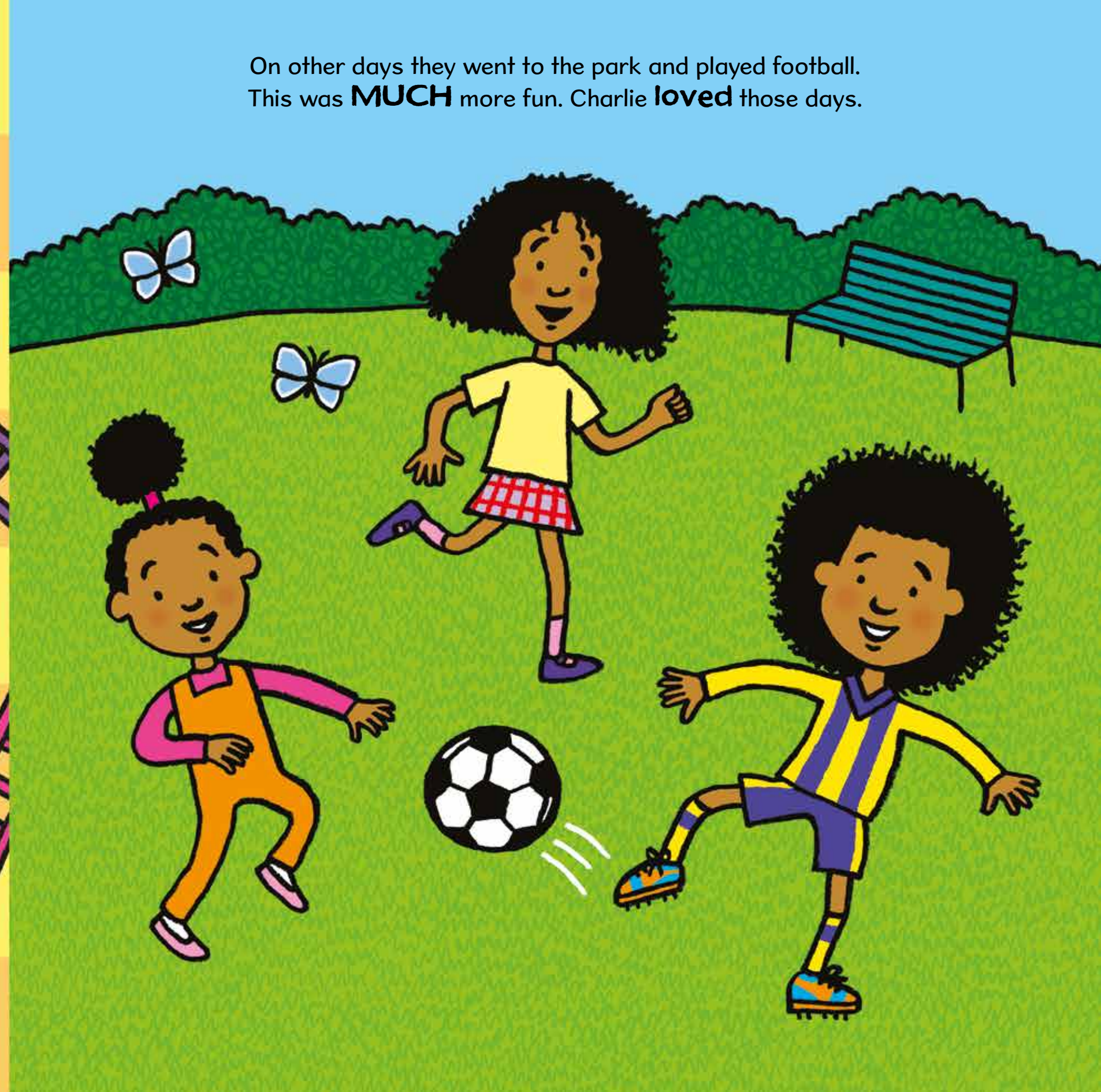
He didn't know how long he'd be staying at the **foster home** or if he would see his **birth parents** again.

Charlie saw his two sisters each week. On some days they met in a building called a **contact centre**. All they could do was play board games and talk.



Charlie was always really sad when he had to say goodbye. But he never complained. **He was strong. He was tough.**

On other days they went to the park and played football. This was **MUCH** more fun. Charlie **loved** those days.



Charlie's **foster parent** encouraged him to talk about his feelings – and sometimes Charlie did – but all he really wanted was a **forever family** and nobody talked to him about *that*.



One day, a **social worker** told Charlie that two **foster parents** were going to look after him AND his two sisters until a wise person, called the **judge**, decided what would happen to them.



Charlie was so **excited**.
Finally, he would live with his sisters!

But he was a little **nervous** too...

When Charlie arrived at his new home all his fears **disappeared**.

When we said we should all help, we didn't mean the dog too!

It was a lovely big house with a huge garden to play in. Charlie had his own room, and his **foster parents** told him he could decorate it **HOWEVER** he wanted.

And there was an excited floppy-eared puppy named Belle. Charlie had always wanted a pet!



But, **best of all**, Charlie's sisters were there too! He ran into their arms and hugged them tight. He didn't **ever** want to let go.



Charlie felt happy, but still he kept worrying. He didn't know how long he'd be able to stay, or if he'd be split up from his sisters again. As always, he tried to be brave.

He was strong. He was tough.

