

The BEST Football



“Jesus said love ev’ryone; treat them kindly, too” (Children’s Songbook, 61).

By Angie Bergstrom Miller

Based on a true story

I clenched my fists, bit my lip, and kicked the ball that was rolling toward me. Then I frowned as I watched it soar out of bounds instead of going into the goal.

A girl named Nan had been standing by the fence watching our game. She ran to pick up the ball, tripping in her excitement. Everyone laughed. No one thanked her as she threw the ball back to us.

I felt guilty. I knew Nan wanted

to play, but I didn’t want to be the one to invite her.

Nan was quiet, with messy brown hair, thick glasses, and a squeaky voice. She didn’t have one friend in our whole class. It wasn’t that I didn’t like her. I had just never talked to her.

That afternoon our teacher announced that she was going to move our desks around. She would make a new seating chart.

The room buzzed with excitement. My best friend, LeAnna, and I smiled at each other.

Just then Caroline leaned toward me. “I heard Nan tell Mrs. Martin she wants to sit by you. Gross!”

I sat in shock. “Why me?” I wondered. I had never been mean to Nan, but I had never been nice to her either.

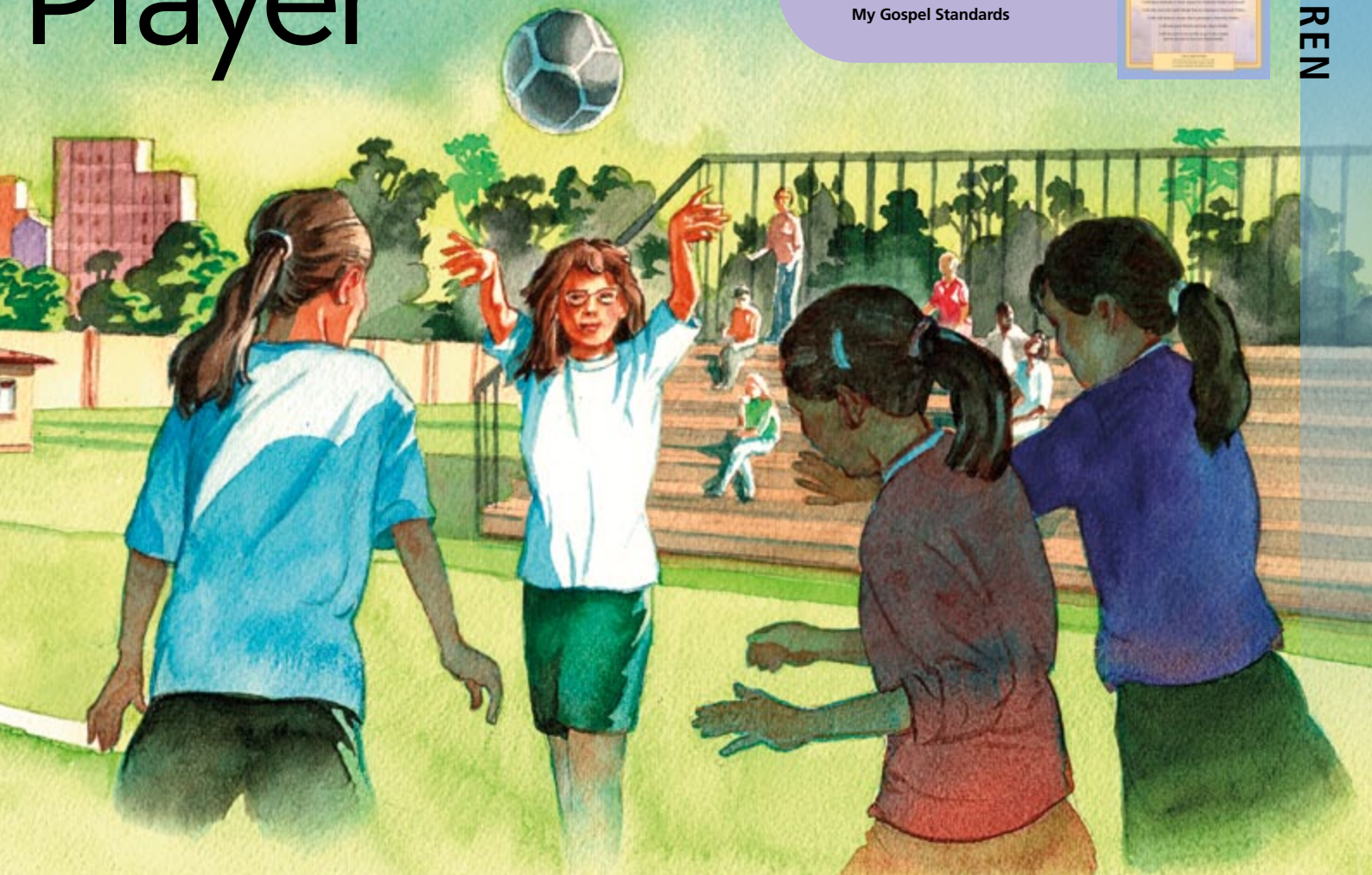
“Tell the teacher you don’t want to sit by her,” Caroline whispered. “Otherwise no one will want to sit by you.”

I looked at Nan. Her head was lowered. She must have known what everyone in the room was thinking.

Player

"I will seek good friends and treat others kindly."

My Gospel Standards



Mrs. Martin called me up to her desk. I knew Nan was a child of God and that Jesus said to love everyone. But if I became friends with Nan, everyone would think I was weird.

"Who do you want to sit by?" Mrs. Martin asked me.

"LeAnna," I said. That was easy. Mrs. Martin smiled. "Would you be willing to sit by Nan too?"

I looked down at the floor and whispered, "I'd rather not."

Mrs. Martin looked surprised. "Are you sure, Angie?"

"Yes," I muttered.

The next day our desks were rearranged. I sat by LeAnna. Nan was across the room. The two girls sitting by her pushed their desks away from hers so it looked like she was sitting alone. She looked like she was going to cry.

A few weeks later Nan changed schools. A girl in my ward went to that school, and I asked her if she had met a new girl named Nan.

"I think so. What does she look like?" she asked.

"Well, she's really quiet. Her hair is

messy, and she wears thick glasses. No one in my class liked her."

"Really? It must not be the same girl," she said. "The new girl I know is really fun. Everyone likes her. She's a great football player."

I thought about the day Nan had watched us playing football. She only needed a chance and a friend. And I could have given her both.

That day I made a promise to myself to always be nice to everyone and never let a girl like Nan slip by me without trying to be her friend. ■