

Lenny kissed him and said 'You're right, but let me go now because someone might come in and that would NOT be good.'

'It's not good anyway, Lenny. Is it?' Seth's face was now very serious.

'Oh, shut up. I knew you would try to stop me.'

'Lenny, I don't want to stop you doing anything, but there is no future in this. Sooner or later somebody will find out that you're not a man and there will be big trouble. Tell Mr Wilson the truth, now. It might not be too late.'

'Tell Mr Wilson what?' a voice said.

Lenny jumped. 'Oh, Mr Wilson,' Lenny said. 'I'm afraid my best friend Seth used a lie to get into the referees' changing rooms. He's not actually a doctor, he's a medical student. He just couldn't wait to congratulate me.'

'I'm sorry, Mr Wilson. I don't usually lie, but I needed to talk to Lenny,' said Seth.

'Well, never mind that now. By the way, congratulations! You refereed that game brilliantly. In fact, it's your lucky day, because the President of the Board of the National Officials was watching and he wants you to come and talk to him. I'll wait upstairs in the VIP lounge. Bring your friend with you. There's no hurry. Mr Hedges said he had to make a phone call first, Mr Wilson left the changing rooms.'

'Lenny, please tell them the truth. You're going to get in such trouble,' Seth begged her.

'Oh, I know I shouldn't have done it. But can't you see Seth? Now they think I'm a man it's all coming together for me. Oh, why wasn't I born a boy? It would all have been so simple then.'

'No, it wouldn't, Lenny. Not for me anyway. I'm really glad you were born a girl.'

And then his face became serious again. 'Oh, come on. Let's go up and see what these men have to say. We're just going to have to find a way out of this ridiculous muddle.'

Red card

Lenny's heart was beating very fast when she walked into the VIP lounge, but then it nearly stopped beating when she saw who was standing next to Mr Wilson. The man with the cigar from the football ground!

Of all the bad luck! Lenny knew now that her days as a referee were over. She should have listened to Seth. She shouldn't have been so stupid. Perhaps he would report her to the university and she'd get thrown out. If only she hadn't gone to that football match.

Mr Hedges was no longer smiling the way he'd smiled when he'd offered her a cigar at the match. He was looking very stern.

Lenny took hold of Seth's hand. Seth realised something had gone badly wrong in the last two minutes and squeezed her fingers comfortingly. Mr Wilson looked very shocked and Seth nearly laughed in spite of the seriousness of the situation.

'No, no, Mr Hedges. You must have got it wrong. Lenny explained it all to me – Evelyn is a man's name as well as a woman's name.'

Mr Wilson was trying to put Mr Hedges right.

'I'm sorry, Alf,' Mr Hedges said to Mr Wilson. 'I've known Colin Piper all my life and I've just rung him up to talk to him about his "fourth son", Lenny, who has just impressed me so much. I thought he was Neville and I wanted to check we'd got the right person. Well, I found out a lot more than I expected. Colin doesn't have a fourth son but he does have a daughter, whose nickname is Lenny. Lenny, it seems, is football mad. And Lenny has wanted to be what she calls a

proper referee, which means refereeing Premier League games, since she left school. Lenny, Colin says, often has the maddest ideas and is very determined to get what she wants. But not even Colin thought she would do something like this.'

Lenny sank into the nearest chair and put her head in her hands. This is where lying got you. She had disappointed everyone. Her parents must be very ashamed of her. A wave of black despair flooded through Lenny's body.



Lenny straightened up and looked at Mr Hedges. She started to speak.

'Football is a man's game. Those are the rules, aren't they? But who made those rules and when were they made?'

'I believe in rules,' she continued, 'but only when they are fair rules. Am I now a bad referee because you know I am a woman? A few minutes ago you wanted to find out about Colin Piper's son who had impressed you. Now you have found out that it was Colin Piper's daughter who impressed you. Out there on the pitch, I was the referee. It was the referee who impressed you. Remember that when you complain to the university and to the Football Association. I am sorry I lied. But you have to see that if you men at the top don't give us women a chance, we only have two choices. We can give up our hopes or we can cheat. I am sorry I cheated, but I cannot give up. Now I suppose you'll make me give up.'

'That will do, Ms Piper,' Mr Hedges said. 'You have behaved very badly. I have decided not to report you to the university, but you will be banned from ever refereeing again. And you will not be allowed to play women's football at a national level for the next season. Now I think your boyfriend should take you home. Goodbye.'

As they were leaving the room, Seth turned back to the two men watching them.

'I have just one question,' he said. 'If you needed an emergency operation, Mr Hedges, would you ask if the surgeon was a man or a woman? Or would you just be glad that whoever it was who did the operation was a good doctor? Have some courage gentlemen. You could make history.'

As he shut the door behind them, Lenny turned to Seth and said 'Oh, Seth. I do love you so. If I was a man, I'd ask you to marry me.'

'And if you asked me to marry you, I'd say yes. You're mad but you're brave, honest and wonderful and I love you too. Come on let's go home.'

Extra time

In spite of the fact that Lenny was so happy with Seth, her experiences over the last two weeks had left her hurt and depressed about her professional future. Nevertheless, she tried to be brave about it all.

She and Seth went to see her family to tell them that they were engaged and to explain about Mr Lenny Piper. As always, her parents showed her love and understanding. Her father even said he was extremely disappointed in Mr Harold Hedges, whose nickname was Happy Harry. 'I thought he would have been a bit more tolerant, and shown a sense of humour. He didn't need to stop you playing woman's football as well.'

Lenny's brothers thought Lenny had been stupid to think she could have got away with pretending to be a man, but they also admired her bravery.

They tried cheering her up and teased her. 'You know, Sis. You're just not good-looking enough to be a male Piper.' Neville said to her. 'Remember, there's always netball!' he joked.

Three weeks later, a letter arrived from the Football Association asking her to attend a special meeting of the Board of Referees at St James' Park. Lenny was very frightened.

'Oh, dear. What are they going to do now?' she asked herself.

She rang Seth, who was finishing his time at Leeds.

'You'll just have to go and find out.' said Seth. 'It might not be as bad as you expect. Look on the bright side. Now

they've had time to calm down perhaps they'll let you play football next season after all.'

'And pigs might fly!' said Lenny. Seth burst out laughing.

She decided to drive to Newcastle in case the train was late, but she couldn't find a parking space. Driving round, she saw that there were an awful lot of people standing at the entrance to St James' Park. Then she saw television vans driving up from the BBC and ITV.

'All those people must be journalists,' she thought. 'They must have got some exciting news about one of the players. I read something about Newcastle buying in a new star from Spain.'

Suddenly, she saw someone waving just in front of the entrance gate. The person was obviously telling her she could park there.

'Great! A space at last. What a kind man! I wonder why he wants to help me,' she thought.

Then, as she was parking, she saw who it was. 'Oh, no. Not him again. He really wants to make sure I get kicked out of university, doesn't he?'

As she turned the engine off, her knees started to shake.

Mr Hedges opened the car door and flashlights went off. Lenny couldn't see anything – she was blinded by the dozens of cameras.

'We over-reacted, Lenny,' she heard Mr Hedges say. 'I behaved like a dinosaur. I'm sorry. It was wrong of me.'

'Come on, my dear. Let's go and make some football history.'

There was a pause and then he said 'And don't look so shocked. The press want some happy pictures of the first woman who is about to start training as a referee in the Premier League.'

Points for Understanding

1

- 1 What is Lenny Piper's proper name?
- 2 How many brothers has Lenny got?
- 3 Where did Lenny first meet Seth?
- 4 Why is Newcastle United known as 'The Magpies'?

2

- 1 How many kilometres might a referee run in a football match?
- 2 Which part of a football match is the most difficult part of a referee's job?
- 3 When did Lenny pass her referees exams?

3

- 1 Lenny told her mum that everyone else in her class had refereed at least one game. What had Lenny been given to do?
- 2 Why was another player needed to play for the village team?
- 3 Why did Seth fall asleep on the bus?

4

- 1 How many goals did Lenny score for her village team?
- 2 Why did Lenny go up into the attic?
- 3 Why did Lenny decide to copy her elder brother's walk?
- 4 What did the man at the football stadium offer Lenny?
- 5 Who did the man at the football stadium think Lenny was?

5

- 1 Why did Lenny get peculiar looks in the railway carriage?
- 2 Mr Wilson thought that Evelyn Piper was a strange name. Why?
- 3 What did Lenny have to do in the interview?
- 4 Who were Newcastle due to play at St. James' Park?

6

- 1 What excuse did Lenny give Seth when he invited her to Leeds?
- 2 How did Lenny feel when she walked out onto the pitch?
- 3 How did Seth manage to get into the changing rooms?
- 4 After congratulating Lenny, where did Mr Wilson invite Lenny to go?

7

- 1 When Lenny walked into the VIP lounge, who did she see that made her panic?
- 2 Mr Hedges decided not to report Lenny to the university. What did he decide he would do?

8

- 1 Who was Happy Harry?
- 2 Why did Lenny say 'And pigs might fly!'?
- 3 When Lenny saw the journalists, why did she think they were there?
- 4 Why did Mr Hedges say 'Let's go and make some football history.'?

Discussion questions

- 1 Why do you think the book is called Fair Play?
- 2 Do you think that pretending to be a man was the right thing for Lenny to do?
- 3 Do you think Lenny was brave doing what she did? Why? Why not?
- 4 If you were Mr Hedges, what would you have said to Lenny after the Newcastle versus Sunderland match?

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