

Jojo Smith
Mrs. Womp
English III
October 31, 2014

Just a Girl Next Door

If I were a guy, I may have had the same ideas about a girl like me: **a preppy girl whose makeup was always flawless before she dared step out of her house, whose hair was always fixed stylishly, whose nails were always elegantly French-manicured and whose attire never included sweats or dirty sneakers.** This all would lead a guy to think that a girl like that would not be able to play a game as rough as football. However—unlike other girls who would sit on the soft grass watching the boys play, talking about how hot the boys were, and ranking the guys against each other—I wanted to be in the game, covered in dirt, sweat, and blood. At the end of the day be so exhausted and sore that **even the hairs on my head ached.** To the guys on the field, I was just the girl next door. **I was determined to prove that I could “hang with the guys.”**

When I asked them if I could play, they all started to laugh; they couldn't believe I was serious. I had to prove them wrong. I had to prove that I was just as good as they were...so I stole the ball. They tried to take the football back, but since none of them would dare tackle a female, their efforts were futile. I refused to give up. Still, none of the boys wanted “the girl” on their team, having this crazy fear that whoever got stuck with the girl would be the losing team. They tried to dissuade me, telling me that I would get hurt so badly that I would not be able to move, let alone breathe. “You can't handle it,” they all insisted.

When it came time for the first play, my boyfriend's best friend, Keith, who was as lovable as a child's first teddy bear and as strong as a grizzly bear, decided to step up and let “the girl” be on his team. As we huddled for the first play, the guys decided to be smart-alecks and use football terms, thinking I wouldn't know any and thus make me look dumb so I wouldn't want to play. On our first game plan to have me run the ball in a wedge formation, I ran the play through the broken wall, and the other team didn't touch me. As I sauntered to the goal line, they all just stood there watching me **like I was Lady Gaga on the red carpet at the Grammy's in one of her outlandish outfits.**

I was so disappointed in them. I had wanted someone to tackle, someone to throw me down on the ground as hard as they could just so I could prove that I could take the pain. I knew I could make Sean, a boy as round as a tire, but as fast as a cheetah, tackle me. Knowing that, eventually, if I made him mad enough, he wouldn't care that I was a girl, I began to taunt him, telling him how much of a

baby he was and how scared he was of not being able to take down a girl because, he, himself, was just a little girl. It worked. After being pummeled to the ground on the next play, I stood right back up and mocked the rest of the Neanderthals. It was a bluff, but a bluff they bought.

Less than an hour later, the score was forty-two to fourteen. My team was in the lead, and I had the ball. During the next play, when Keith tackled me from the side, we rolled down the hill into the woods. When we finally ended our “**Jack and Jill**” rendition, I noticed a big twig was sticking out of my inner thigh. Keith helped me walk back up the hill toward my house where I nonchalantly pulled out the stick. Then, I walked back out to the game where I was greeted by stunned faces, for no one believed I would return to finish the game.

The next day, Preston, the strongest guy in the neighborhood, wanted to join us. This guy was 6’2” and built like a tank, but he didn’t scare me. By the third play, the other team had the ball. Brad, our beanpole quarterback, shuffled the ball to Preston to run it. I was going to be in his way. I tried to tackle him, but I was unable to bring him down. However, the fact that I had tried was enough for the guys. The fact that I was brave enough to get in his way *more than once* made them realize I was serious—or really stupid—and they liked that.

I loved proving my male counterparts wrong. However, years later, as I reflect on that experience, I have to admit that while I still enjoy a friendly game of flag football, I find that I would rather watch hardcore football on television...where I can check out the player’s tight pants... while I paint my nails. I guess I’ve become what I used to disdain: just a girl next door.