

Picnic Nit-Pick?

Randy is enjoying a community picnic. Close by, some neighborhood kids are crowded around Lisa, age seven, who is easily beating one second-grader after another in chess. As she continues to quickly dispatch her opponents, and as her victims run to tell the adults how good she is, Randy begins to watch. Immediately, he sees that Lisa is cheating, subtly moving pieces when the others aren't looking, and making up rules that suit her as the games progress ("you have to say 'check' when you're about to take my queen, too").

After a while, adults begin to take notice of Lisa's dominance, stopping by to compliment her, and remarking to each other about her impressive skills. Soon, the picnic is abuzz with talk of the neighborhood's little chess prodigy. Randy, who, as far as he can tell, is the only adult who can see how Lisa is winning, can barely stand to watch her soak up the applause. As parents line up to praise her, Lisa puts on a totally unconvincing show of modesty and makes remarks such as "well my dad does teach me Latin phrases..." which the adults eagerly lap up.

Tempted as he is to expose Lisa's cheating, Randy wonders if doing so is a good idea. He doesn't have kids himself, and something about the idea of a grumpy neighbor intervening in a board game played by seven-year-olds doesn't sit right with him. If he had a relationship with Lisa's parents, he might feel comfortable telling them what he witnessed, but he doesn't know them or their daughter, and they don't seem to be present at the picnic, anyway.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What should Randy do, if anything, about Lisa's cheating?
2. To what extent should adults care about the bad deeds of others' children?
3. If Randy gently confronts Lisa and she denies wrongdoing, how should he respond?