

A Dangerous Game

By ReadWorks

“Hi, I’m the new student intern, Lisa Martinez.” Lisa smiled at the receptionist and held out her ID. The receptionist inspected the driver’s license and looked up her name in the computer. “Your security has been cleared,” she said. “Mr. Pizmo is observing a trial in Lab 302. I’ll take you back there to meet him.”

The receptionist rose up and led Lisa down the hall, high heels clicking briskly across the polished marble floor. Lisa snuck glances at the hall around her as she scurried to keep up. Everyone she passed moved as quickly as the receptionist, as though they had to be somewhere incredibly important. Lisa couldn’t believe that she was in the headquarters of OneThing, one of the biggest companies in the world. OneThing had first made its business as an Internet company fifteen years ago, but then it had expanded into electronics, energy production, and too many other fields to count. Now it made billions of dollars every year. OneThing’s success was driven by its charismatic and mysterious president, Noel Pizmo.

Pizmo was a genius inventor who seemed to succeed at everything he tried. He had written the computer programs that led to OneThing’s first achievements and was responsible for most of their scientific breakthroughs in other fields. He refused to speak to the press or to even have his photograph taken. This only made him more popular with the public. Everyone wondered what the “mystery genius” would come up with next.

Lisa could feel herself growing nervous as they neared Lab 302. If Pizmo was so smart, would he be able to tell who she really was? Would he know that her cover as a student intern was all a lie? She faced the door of Lab 302. There was only one way to find out, and she had to try.

Lisa pushed open the door and was quickly shushed and pushed to the side of the dark room by someone. As her eyes adjusted to the lack of light, she saw that she was in a room full of people on one side of a thick sheet of Plexiglas. On the other side of the glass was a second room with a tiny object about the size of a golf ball in the middle of a large table. On Lisa’s side of the Plexiglas, scientists in crisp white lab coats were staring at that tiny object with complete attention. Lisa heard a ticking and saw that a clock on the monitor was counting down the seconds. With a crisp “beep,” the countdown reached zero. Behind the Plexiglas, nothing happened. In unison, the scientists’ shoulders sagged and a small anticlimactic sigh entered the room. Another failed trial.

Only one man seemed unfazed by the failure. A man dressed in black who had been slouched in the corner beside Lisa sprang to his feet. “Well,” he said, clapping his hands together abruptly. “That just means we’ll have to get started on round two.” He walked out of the room, a blur of action, leaving the scientists to stare in confusion at his retreating back.

Then he ducked his head back in through the door and stared at Lisa. “You. You’re my new intern assistant, right?”

Lisa nodded. “Yes sir, Lisa Martinez.”

“Come on, Lisa Martinez,” said Pizmo. “I’ve got places to be. If you’re going to be of any use this summer, you’ll have to learn to keep up with me.”

Lisa apologized and moved to follow Pizmo out the door and down the hall. “So this is the mythic Pizmo,” she thought. He was bigger than she had expected, well over six feet tall. No disfiguring scars that would make him want to hide from the public, like some people had imagined. Just a very tall man, moving very quickly through the halls. Lisa followed Pizmo into an elevator. As the doors closed, she noticed something strange. The elevator didn’t have any buttons.

Pizmo smiled at her confusion. “Wondering where the buttons went?” he asked. “We don’t have any. They’re unnecessary. Imagine how much more efficient it would be if elevators knew where you wanted to go before you got into them. No more stopping at every floor to pick up other people or waiting five minutes for an elevator to arrive. Our entire system of elevators works with this.” Pizmo pointed to a tiny device on his wrist that looked just like a watch. “This device is plugged into my calendar. That information, combined with my body gestures and pace, warns the elevators when I’m approaching and tells them where I want to go. It’s all behind the scenes. Elegant.”

“Wow,” said Lisa. “But what if you change your mind?”

“The elevator adapts,” said Pizmo. “I just signal it if my destination changes. We knew that we had to allow for human inefficiencies. This is the elevator of the future.”

As if on cue, the elevator doors slid open and they exited into Pizmo’s office. There were sweeping views of the Manhattan skyline behind an enormous wooden desk. Pizmo gestured to an armchair facing the desk, “Sit, Lisa. Let’s have a chat.”

Lisa smiled and thanked him, but her heart rate was speeding up and her hands were growing clammy with sweat. “Relax, Lisa,” she told herself. “You’ve passed security and you’ve been practicing for this moment for months.”

“Do you know why I take a student intern each summer?” Pizmo asked Lisa.

“Because you don’t have to pay us as much?” Lisa asked.

Pizmo laughed. “Here at OneThing, we have plenty of money to pay top salaries. No, it’s because I like to be around someone young, to observe the way they use technology. People change a lot from generation to generation.”

“I hope I can be of help,” Lisa said.

Pizmo nodded. “I know that you had to do a lot of security tests before we could let you start. Thank you for your patience. I wanted to talk to you about the lie detector results.”

“Yes?” Lisa asked. Her heart was pounding so loudly in her chest that she was sure he could hear it.

“They were unusually...uniform. Most people tend to tell a few small fibs during the test. You, Lisa, are exceptionally truthful. That can be a useful quality. I need people to be honest with me,” Pizmo said.

Lisa smiled and relaxed. He had believed the falsified lie detector results. “I’ll do my best to do that,” Lisa promised.

“You can go for now,” Pizmo said. “The real work will start tomorrow, so go ahead and take this afternoon off.”

Lisa smiled again and left. As she exited the building, she picked up the phone and called her boss. “I’m in,” she said. “He has no idea that I work for one of OneThing’s biggest competitors. I’ll start stealing the designs and prototypes tomorrow.”

From the window of his office, Pizmo watched Lisa exit the building and called his own business partner. “She’s definitely a corporate spy,” he said. “No one is that calm during a lie detector test. Put a tail on her and see who’s paying her.” He hung up the phone and sat back down at his desk.

“Lisa Martinez,” he said to himself, shaking his head. “Someone should have told you that it can be dangerous to tell lies.”

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Lisa is pretending to be a student intern at OneThing. Who does she actually work for?

- A a government spy agency
- B one of OneThing's biggest competitors
- C her own small company
- D one of OneThing's closest partners

2. What motivates Lisa to pretend to be a student intern at OneThing?

- A She wants to learn about science and technology.
- B She wants to explore the OneThing headquarters.
- C She wants to become friends with Pizmo.
- D She wants to steal designs and prototypes from OneThing.

3. Read these sentences from the text.

"Pizmo nodded. 'I know that you had to do a lot of security tests before we could let you start. Thank you for your patience. I wanted to talk to you about the lie detector results.'

"'Yes?' Lisa asked. Her heart was pounding so loudly in her chest that she was sure he could hear it."

Based on this evidence, how does Lisa most likely feel when Pizmo brings up her lie detector results?

- A anxious
- B excited
- C relaxed
- D annoyed

4. The tone of a story is the general mood or atmosphere of the story. How could the tone of this story best be described?

- A cheerful and light
- B tense and mysterious
- C calm and relaxed
- D formal and stiff

5. What is the main idea of this story?

- A A student intern joins the company OneThing and begins working with the company's president.
- B A student intern at the company OneThing learns that it can be dangerous to lie.
- C A corporate spy from the company OneThing prepares for a dangerous mission.
- D A corporate spy pretends to be a student intern at OneThing and worries about keeping her true identity a secret.

6. The author does not reveal to the reader who Lisa really is until the end of the story. Why might the author have waited till the end of the story to share this information?

- A to show the reader why it can be dangerous to lie
- B to make the reader feel sympathetic towards Pizmo
- C to make the reader feel curious about who Lisa really is
- D to make the reader dislike Lisa as a character

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Most people tend to tell a few small fibs during the lie detector test. _____, Lisa's results were unusually uniform.

- A Therefore
- B Because
- C However
- D For example

8. As Lisa goes to meet Pizmo in Lab 302, she feels herself growing nervous. What does she wonder about Pizmo as she nears the lab?

9. At the end of the story, Pizmo calls his business partner and says that Lisa is a corporate spy. Explain whether Lisa knows that Pizmo realized she is a spy. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

10. Suspense is a feeling of excitement or nervousness that comes from uncertainty. How does the author create a feeling of suspense in this text? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
