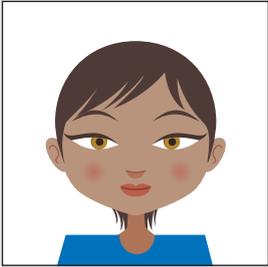
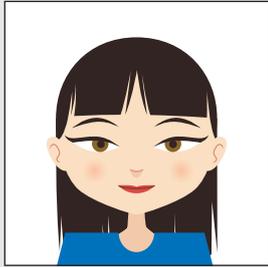


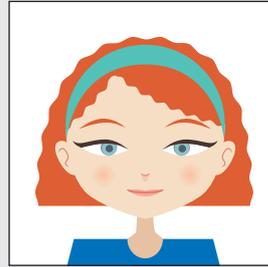
THE TEAM



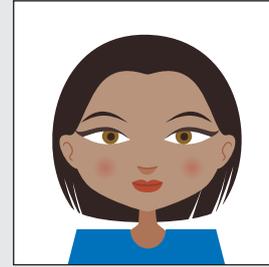
Gemma Hurst
DEFENDER



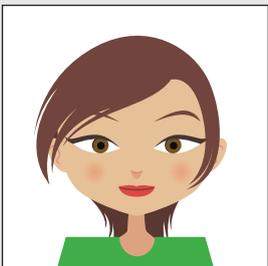
Holly Woolcock
DEFENDER



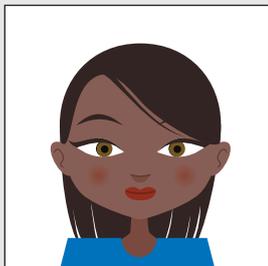
Dylan McNeil
LEFT WING



Tabinda Shah
STRIKER/MIDFIELDER



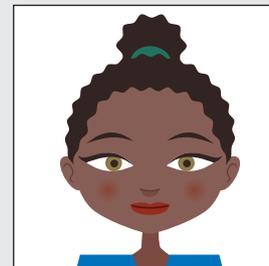
Megan Fawcett
GOALKEEPER



Lucy Skidmore
DEFENDER



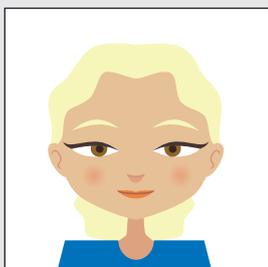
Jenny-Jane Bayliss
MIDFIELDER



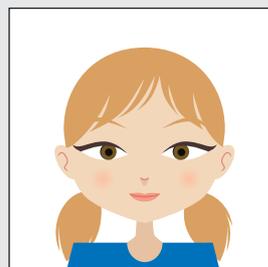
Eve Akboh
STRIKER



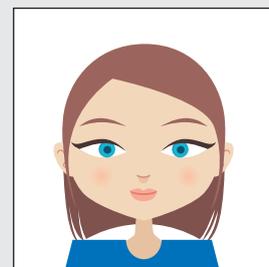
Petra Ward
DEFENDER



Veronika Kozak
MIDFIELDER



Daisy McNeil
RIGHT WING



Amy Minter
SUBSTITUTE

THE CLUB – THE FACTS

Name: Parrs Under 11s, also known as “The Parsnips”

Ground: Lornton FC, Low Road, Lornton

Capacity: 500

Plays in: The Nettle Honeyball Women’s League

Sponsor: Sweet Peas Garden Centre, Mowborough

Coach: Hannah Preston

Assistant coach: Katie Regan

Veronika plays for “The Parsnips”, a girls’ football team. In the extract below, Veronika is running late and has just got back to her house. Her sister (Sofi), brother (Yuri) and uncle are all waiting for the arrival of the team bus to pick her up. She is very excited because this is the day of the team’s biggest challenge.

THE PARSNIPS

Waiting for me by the gate was Sofi, her wispy hair stuck to her chubby cheeks, her bottom lip jutting out. “You didn’t come when I called you! You didn’t come and I didn’t know where you were.”

“I am here now, silly,” I said, offering her my hand.

She yawned and slid her hand in mine. It was warm and sticky. “You didn’t come,” she repeated.

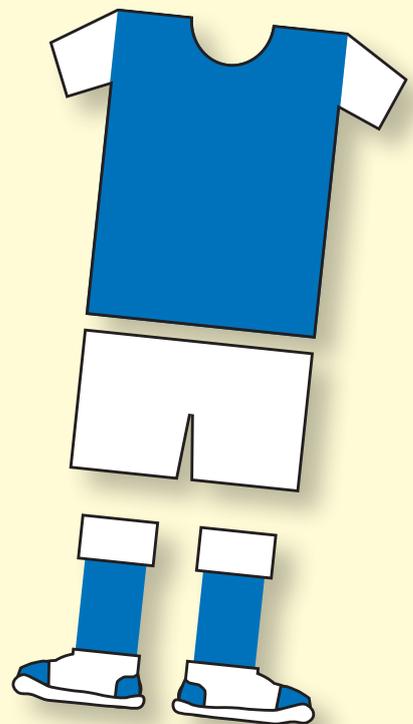
“Veronika, your boots,” Uncle reminded me as I helped him and Sofi up the steps.

“Yes, Uncle, thank you.”

“Always look after your boots. Look after your boots and they will look after you...”

Before I could reply, a banging on the front door startled all three of us. They were here!

Megan, my captain, beamed at me, her face shiny and excited. “Last port of call for Sherburn Sands! All aboard! Who’s coming?”



Behind her, I could see our minibus parked in the middle of the street. Several faces peered through the windows and my team-mates waved at me.

"Please wait," I said, panicking. "I just have to..." I turned, almost bumping into Yuri.

He dumped my bag at my feet. "Your belongings, ma'am."

I frowned at him. What was this? My brother being helpful!

"Is everything in there? My toothbrush? My kit?" I asked anxiously.

He bowed. "Your toothbrush. Your kit. Your Highness."

"You're sure?" I said. If he was playing one of his tricks...

"I'm sure." He gave me a sheepish grin.

"I believe you," I said, giving him a swift kiss on the cheek. I dashed into the front room and kissed Uncle and Sofi, too, then darted back into the hallway. "Be good," I instructed Yuri, hoisting my bag onto my shoulders and following Megan into the street. My heart began beating fast. It was actually happening. World Cup tournament, here I come!

I turned and waved at the three figures at the window – and for a moment I didn't want to go. But only for a moment.

