



## THE NEW GIRL

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It is a fun evening in Andy's neighborhood. Meena, Andy and two of their friends are playing Hide and Seek in the neighborhood park. After an hour of running around, they get tired. They lie down in the grass and look at clouds in the sky, imagining different shapes in them, cracking jokes and laughing.

After a few minutes, they see a tall girl walking towards them. Meena says, "Who is she? I have never seen her before. She's coming here!" One of the boys in the group says, "Eww, look at her dress. Did she borrow it from her grandma??"

The new girl walks up to them and introduces herself. "Hi, I'm Stella. I moved to this neighborhood last week. Can I play with all of you?" she asks with a big smile.

"Of course, you can!" says Andy, with excitement. Meena looks at Andy with irritation, and the others let out a low groan.

Stella doesn't notice and says, "Ok cool! Do you want to see a magic trick?" Hearing this, Meena rolls her eyes, and loudly says, "Sure, I'd like to see you disappear!" and sniggering, nudges Andy and the others. They smirk and laugh - all except Andy, who is shocked at what he just heard. He turns to look at Stella.

Stella's face falls. Embarrassed, she turns around without another word and walks away. Meena calls out after her, "Hey, it worked!! Her magic trick worked!!" and laughs loudly. There's a riot of uproarious laughter as they point and loudly poke fun at Stella's retreating back. Meena says, "Hey guys, let's go after her! She wants to PLAY with us! Let's "PLAY" with her!"

As Meena and the others get up and begin to run after Meena, Andy stays rooted on the spot, still in shock. He wonders, "What just happened? Why are they being mean to her? Should I stop them? But Meena is my best friend - I don't want to fight with her over this! What do I do?"