

story about the people in
at will happen to them?



has two key responsibilities
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they have a well-founded
(yusa.org/refugee/)
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ger hun vågen og tænker
nen er væk, ligesom den
vad skal der ske med den

The New Girl

by Marc Mitchell (Florence, Alabama)

Entry



Norman Rockwell: *New Kids in the Neighbourhood* (1967)

Describe the picture: body language, surroundings and focus. Discuss how you think these kids are going to get along together.

The New Girl

It was a hot, bright day. Everything was burning – the roofs, the shrubs, the asphalt, our bike seats, our skin, our hair. Allison's father was watering the lawn, and Allison and I rode our bikes over the soggy grass and through the whirling water that jetted out of the sprinkler.

I lived on Prospect Street then. I was eight and Allison was ten. We were the only kids on the block, so we were best friends by default. I looked up to Allison, even though I didn't share her interest

shrub busk
soggy gennemblødt
whirl hvirvle
jet sprøjte
prospect fremtidsudsigt
by default "fordi der ikke
var andre"

Hall and Oates popduo
fra 80'erne
Clue detektiv-brætspil
tire dæk
score lave mærke i
scar ar
straddling overskrævs
sturdy solid
gnarled trunk knudret
træstamme
squat lav og kraftig
Kelly-green græsgrøn
expansive åbenhjertig
contempt foragt
glue klistre
slit sprække
strand tjavs
halo glorie
blast stød

in Barbies and Hall and Oates. During the summer, we spent a lot of time riding our bikes, playing Clue, and pretending to be married. But I don't think she liked me very much, and I don't know if I liked her either. I also don't remember what we talked about most of the time, but this is one conversation I can't forget.

As we rode, our bike tires scored the lawn with deep muddy wounds that would never completely heal. Four years later, when my parents and I moved away, the scars in the ground were still there.

I was the first to see the younger girl standing in the middle of Prospect Street, straddling her bike, watching us. I heard someone laughing when I almost collided with Allison. I looked up, and there she was.

I smiled. She smiled back.

Prospect Street was in a white, lower-middle-class neighborhood. Most of the houses were about seventy years old, of simple, sturdy design. There were a few thick trees with gnarled trunks, but mostly there were short, squat shrubs that provided little shade. The girl, dressed in Kelly-green shorts and a T-shirt, looked small against the plainness of the road, but her smile was expansive. The house across the street from Allison's had been sold the week before, and I guessed the girl must have moved in there with her family.

As Allison came out from under the arc of water, she looked at me. Then she stopped her bike and turned to see what I was grinning at. As I said hi to the girl, I heard Allison say, "Get out of here, nigger," with such contempt that I froze, my smile still glued on my face.

The girl kept smiling, too. Allison swung one leg over her bike seat and faced the girl. Holding her bike with one hand, Allison pointed to the house across the street with the other. "I said get out of here, nigger, or I'll beat you up."

The girl's smile disappeared. I also stopped smiling and looked at Allison. Her eyes were drawn into slits, and her long hair was dripping with the water that shot against the small of her back every time the sprinkler swung in our direction. The sunlight was burning in the strands that had come loose from her ponytail, giving her a sort of halo. The water hit me between my shoulder blades, pushing me forward with each blast.

I turned back to the girl and twisted my mouth into a sneer, trying to imitate the hatred I had seen on Allison's face. I avoided the girl's eyes.

The girl said, "I

Allison spat back

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And here's what
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The girl said, "I thought maybe we could play. My name is –"
Allison spat back, "I don't play with niggers."

I watched the girl roll her bike across Prospect Street and dump it
on the lawn of her house. She shuffled up the porch steps, her head
down, her chin quivering, and disappeared into the house. After a
few moments, the curtains of one of the windows parted a bit – not
so I could see a face, but just enough to feel the hot eyes of the lit-
tle girl's mother. I remember it all so clearly: standing there with
my bike, watching the rose-colored curtains of the house across
the street parting, the large brown hand pushing them open just
enough to let someone inside peer out.

"Who was that?" I asked Allison, watching the hand lower out of
sight and the curtains drift back together.

"Who cares," she said. "They moved in last week, and Mom says
they're going to ruin our house."

"How are they going to ruin your house?"

"I don't know. I don't want that black girl anywhere near me,
though," she said.

And here's what I said back: "Niggers are stupid. Maybe they'll
move."

We rode our bikes up and down the lawn for a little while longer,
but I felt the house across the street as if it were a living, watching
presence. I kept thinking of the hand parting the curtains. I kept
expecting the younger girl's mother to emerge from the house and
demand that we apologize to her daughter. But that didn't happen.
As the sun began to set and I rode home for dinner, my stomach
was twisted in a tight knot.

Afterward, from time to time, I would see the little girl in her front
yard, playing with friends, but I never spoke to her, and I never said
I was sorry. I was usually with Allison. All through the summer, the
knot in my stomach swelled and grew tighter until it became im-
possible to untie. When the girl and her mother moved away a few
months later, I hoped the knot would disappear. It didn't.

This happened twenty years ago, but I still think about that af-
ternoon almost every day. I never spoke to Allison after my family
left Prospect Street, but I hope she thinks about the little girl as
well. And I hope more than anything that the girl and her mother
have forgotten about me, but I know they haven't.

True Tales of American life, ed. by Paul Auster (2001)

shuffle slæbe på fødderne

quiver skælve

peer kigge

lower sænke

presence væsen

emerge dukke frem

demand kræve

untie løsne