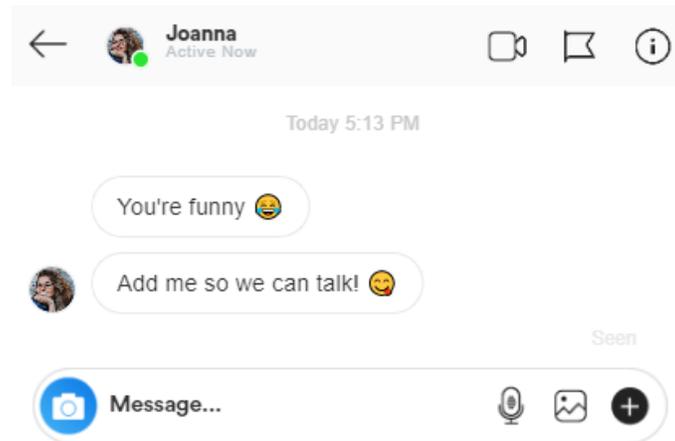


Online Grooming

Scenario B

Mark is 13 years old. He is quite popular in school and he has a lot of followers on social media. He spends a lot of his spare time making funny videos, and shares them on TikTok and Instagram. A lot of people comment on his posts daily, and he even has a few loyal fans. One day, Mark gets a message on Instagram from a girl called Joanna.



Mark does not recognize this person, but he thinks her profile picture might look nice (even though you can't really tell, it's very small), so he heads over to her profile to learn more about her. It's a private profile, so he sends Joanna a follow request to get a better look at her pictures, and see if maybe he knows her from somewhere.

A few minutes later, Joanna accepts his request, and Mark goes to her profile to explore. There aren't many photos, maybe 5 or 6. She isn't tagged on any posts, either, but her bio says that she is 14 and that she likes sci-fi movies. "She's pretty, and we have things in common", Mark thinks, and replies to her message.

Over the next few days, they get to know each other. Joanna tells Mark how much she likes the videos he often makes where he jokes about the sci-fi films he likes and about other things she has in common with him. Mark likes her more and more! A few days later, Joanna asks Mark to meet her in the park next to the school, but asks him not to tell anyone where she is going because she is shy and she doesn't want people to know about them yet. Mark agrees and goes to the park. There's no one else there at this hour, except a man with a hat and sunglasses, so Mark sits waiting for his new friend. He sends her a message, saying he's there waiting for her. The man's phone pings, but Mark doesn't think anything of it.

A few minutes pass by, and Mark is playing on his phone. Suddenly, he hears a noise behind him. He turns around and sees the man with the hat trying to approach him stealthily. Immediately Mark feels scared. He gets up and starts to run. Thankfully, he knows the neighborhood quite well and he manages to escape the man.

He gets home, closes the door behind him and leans his back on it, panting. His parents ask what the matter is, and he tells them the whole story, including Joanna, fearing that the man might hurt her when she goes to the park for their meeting. His parents exchange a worried look, and ask to see Joanna's messages and profile.

They immediately call the police, who come over to their house and get a full statement from Mark. A few days later, the police calls the house to say that Joanna wasn't real, and that the Instagram account was run by someone trying to hurt kids - probably the same man with the hat that chased Mark.



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