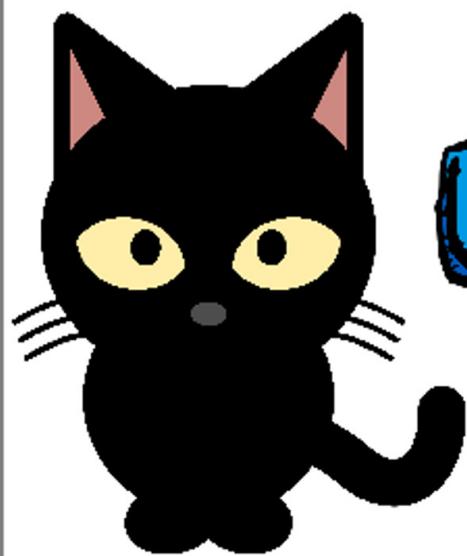


Tania's Slumber Party



By

Kanika G

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By Kanika G

Edited by Pell G

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Website:

www.kanikag.com

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It was 2nd March 2016. So you know what the occasion was, don't you? Yes, you got it right. It was Tania's 6th birthday. Can you believe she is already 6 years old? My goodness! How time flies, when you are having fun with Tania.

Tania's 6th birthday celebrations turned out to be a lot more dramatic and exciting than Mama had planned. This is how it all began.

A week before Tania's birthday, Mama asked, "Tania, how would you like to celebrate your birthday this year? We could have a party at home, or we could take your friends on a picnic. What do you think?"

Tania hesitated. She said, "Mama you just had our room renovated and it is lovely. I was wondering if I could have a few of my friends over for a slumber party. Miss Gupta said school

is closed on 2nd March, because the teachers have to go for a training seminar. So it all works out. My friends can come over on the evening of the 1st and leave on the 2nd after breakfast. Is that okay Mama? Please, pretty please."

Mama thought for a moment before replying. "Of course, Baby. That is a great idea! I'll help you plan out some slumber party activities. Decide who you want to invite. We can't fit more than four or five kids. Sonia can sleep in my room that night."

The next afternoon Tania told Mama that she only wanted her closest friends Tanisha, Karishma and Sonali at the party. She thought it would be more fun if it was an all girl affair. But it would be nice to invite Nikhil, Vivek and Rajiv (the remaining members of Tania's reading club *The Bookworm Babies*) for the birthday breakfast. Mama agreed, and Tania and Mama made a wonderful

slumber party invitation card for her 3 favorite girlfriends.



As the week pressed on, Mama planned the activities and bought supplies, while Tania and her friends waited impatiently for their first ever slumber party. Finally, it was the evening of 1st March.

Karishma, Sonali and Tanisha arrived together at Tania's house at sharp 7:00 p.m. They were all dressed in pajamas as requested in the invitation. Tania too was wearing the

new set of pajamas, Mama had got her for the occasion.

Tania ushered her friends in to her room. The renovations had just been finished the previous week, so her friends had not seen her newly done room yet. They were eager to see how Tania and Mama had set it up.



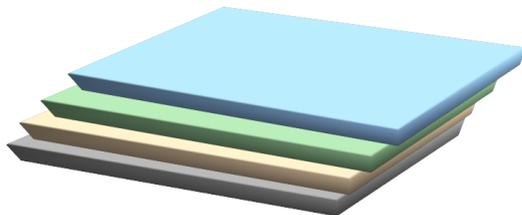
The girls were very impressed with the tastefully furnished and decorated room, but then Tanisha spotted only two sleeping spaces and asked, "Tania there are four of us and two beds. How is that going to work?"

Sonali and Karishma looked questioningly at Tania too. Tania

replied, "Mama has planned some activities for us, so we will need the floor space now. But later, Papa will move in two beds from the guest room. Don't worry. Mama has it all figured out."

"What activities?" asked Sonali curiously, as Mama walked into the room.

Karishma had just picked up a pink box lying on the floor. Mama pointed to the box that Karishma was holding and said, "You will be needing that for your first activity." Karishma opened the box. It had a stack of four freshly laundered, crisply ironed bedsheets.



"What are we supposed to do with these?" asked Sonali, bewildered.

Mama said, "I have got some fabric paints. So you can decorate your sheets by painting whatever picture you like on them."

"Oh! That explains why the beds don't have sheets on them. We get to decorate our sheets, and then make our beds with the sheet we decorated. That is brilliant. When can we start?" asked Tanisha.

"How about right now?" Mama suggested. Tania and Mama went to a cupboard in Tania's room and took out the fabric paints, paint brushes, pencils and erasers.

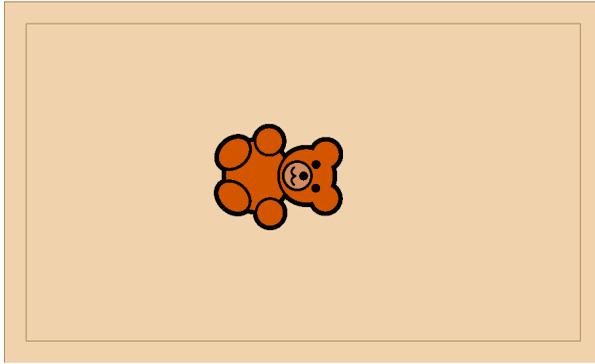
Tania, being a gracious host, let the others choose their sheets first. Tanisha picked the green one, Sonali the blue one, and Karishma picked the brown one, leaving Tania the gray one. Mama spread out a lot of newspaper on the floor for the girls to sit on and paint.

The girls spent a glorious hour painting their sheets and chatting.

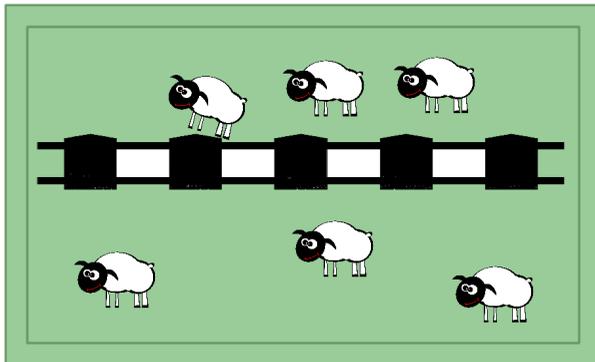
Each of them came up with an excellent idea that really suited the color of the sheet they had chosen. Sonali used the blue background of her sheet as the sky and painted on a rainbow and clouds. She said, "The clouds make me think of pillows, and a rainbow is lovely to wake up to."



Karishma, who loved stuffed animals, and had brought her teddy bear to sleep with, painted a picture of the teddy on her brown sheet.

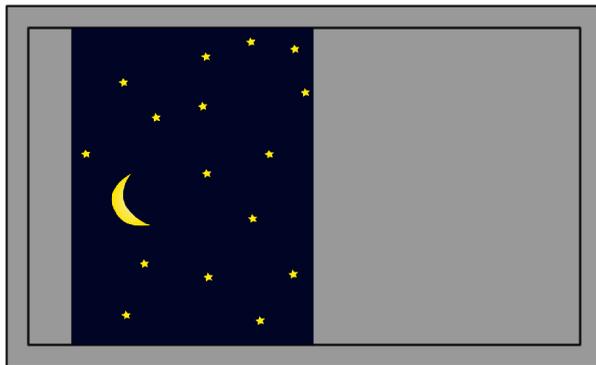


Tanisha, the most artistically talented of the lot, used the green background of her sheet to represent a meadow, and drew sheep on either side of a fence. She said "I like to count sheep when I can't sleep. I picture them jumping over a fence one at a time as I count them."



Tania had the gray sheet, which seemed a little gloomy to her, but

then she remembered the gorgeous night sky she had seen on the night there had been a blackout, and decided to paint it. That would definitely liven up a gray sheet.



Around eight in the evening, when the girls were done painting their sheets, Mama announced dinner. The girls carefully left their sheets to dry, and joined Mama, Papa and Sonia at the dining table. The delicious aromas wafting through the air, were making their mouths water and their stomachs rumble.



The girls gorged on a fabulous meal consisting of *biriyani*, *palak paneer*, green beans and *parathas*. There were fresh strawberries and ice-cream for desert. Finally, when everyone except Sonia had finished eating, Sonali noticed a large gift wrapped item on the coffee table. She asked "What is that?"

Mama said, "Tania, that is the gift Papa and I got you for your birthday. Why don't you open it?"

"Now? I can open it now? Don't I have to wait till tomorrow?" Tania was puzzled.

"I think it is a good idea for you to open this particular gift now," said

Mama.

Excited, and very curious, Tania opened the package. Inside was a beautiful doll house. Her friends helped her arrange the furniture that was included in the set. It was a quaint 2 storey house, with a bedroom, a bathroom, a living room and a kitchen. It also had a garage, a terrace and a yard with a pool.



Mama said, "I have bookmarked some YouTube videos about making doll furniture, and got you some craft supplies. You girls can try making some doll furniture if you like."

Tania was thrilled. She hugged Mama and Papa, and thanked them both. Then

she added, "Mama, you are the coolest mother ever."

The girls spent the next hour working on doll house furniture. But it was a lot harder than they expected. They did well with making curtains, bed covers and pillows, but chairs, sofas, tables and swings were a lot harder than YouTube made it look. Still, the girls had a great time. At 10:00 p.m. Mama came by and said it was bed time. So, the girls cleared up, and Papa brought in the two extra beds from the guest room.



The painted sheets were dry and ready for use. So the girls, with some help from Mama, made up the beds. Mama handed out a couple of fluffy white pillows to each girl. She told them they could each pick out a book if they wanted to read in bed, or they could just chat or play a board game,

but either way she would come at 11:00 to switch off the lights.

The girls were thrilled to have a whole extra hour to stay up past their usual bed time. No one really felt like reading, so they chatted and played the card game *Uno*. Soon, they started feeling really sleepy, and when Mama came in at 11:00 all the girls were fast asleep. Mama quietly switched off the lights and left.

Another hour went by. Everything was quiet. Even Kazoo was snoozing. Suddenly, a chilling, blood curdling scream pierced the silence. Mama woke up with a start. The girls were sleeping soundly, and had not heard the first scream. But the screams continued and the girls woke up too.

"What is going on?" asked Tania

"Do you think someone is being murdered?" asked Tanisha sounding horrified.

The girls came out of their room. Mama was just about to open the main door, when Karishma said, "Don't do that. The burglar may have a gun."

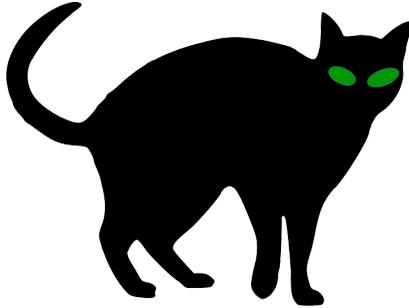
"What burglar? What gun?" asked Mama puzzled.

"There is a woman shrieking. May be someone has pulled a gun on her," said Karishma, her teeth chattering in fright.

Just then the screaming stopped. Mama said "Calm down Karishma. I am going to open the door to find out what is going on. Sounds like Mrs. Sharma next door is in some kind of distress. I am going to see, if she needs help."

Mama was just about to call out to Mrs. Sharma, when Mr. Sharma opened the door. Mama asked what had happened. Mr. Sharma sounded most embarrassed as he explained, "We forgot to close the netting on the bedroom window, and a cat got in. Mrs. Sharma woke up to see two

shinning green eyes staring at her in the dark."



"When her initial fright of seeing something paranormal subsided, she realized it was a cat. Unfortunately, my wife is ailurophobic. I am so sorry you all got woken up," continued Mr. Sharma, apologetically.

"Allure a what? " asked Sonali, amazed that all this drama seemed to be about a cat.

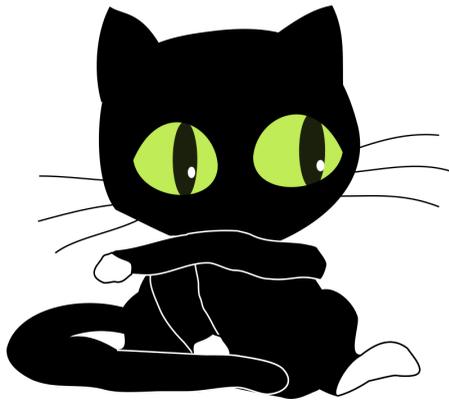
"Ailurophobia is an irrational fear of cats," explained Mama, and then turned to Mr. Sharma. "I see. Is the cat out now?"

"No, my wife is hiding in the bathroom. Her screams frightened the

cat, and it is hiding under the bed. I will now try to coax it out, so we can go back to bed.

Tania said, "I love cats. I can help you get the kitty out." Mr. Sharma gladly accepted her help.

Tania had expected to see a sinister, evil looking cat. But the kitty under the bed just looked terrified.



The bed in Mr. Sharma's house was relatively high, and Tania was small enough to easily crawl under it. But she approached the kitty very slowly. She did not want to frighten it any further. She made soothing soft sounds as she approached. Then,

slowly, she pet the kitty. The kitty began to trust her. Tania had an amazing way with animals. A few minutes later, Tania slowly picked up the kitty and took it out and put it in the stairwell, so it could find its way out.

Mr. Sharma thanked Tania profusely for her help, and apologized again for inconveniencing them all. Mrs. Sharma was still in the bathroom.

After this little midnight incident, everyone was wide awake. Even Papa and Sonia had woken up in all the commotion. Nobody felt sleepy. Mama looked at the clock and said, "Hey look, it is 12:30. Tania it is officially your birthday. Happy birthday, Baby!"

Everyone else wished Tania too. Papa said, "Since we are all here and awake, why don't we cut the birthday cake?"

Tania looked pleadingly at Mama. "Please Mama, please. It will make

this birthday so exciting."

Mama smiled and said, "Lets do it!"
Mama brought out the cake and lit seven candles around it. Tania was only six years old, but there had to be one for good luck.



Tania blew out the candles in one huge puff, while everyone sang *Happy birthday*. Then Tania cut out a slice of cake and fed it to Mama, Papa and baby Sonia. Mama then gave everyone a large slice of cake and a glass of warm milk. The warm milk made everyone sleepy, and they all went back to bed. What an awesome and thrilling start to a birthday.

The next morning, everyone including Mama slept soundly till 8:00 a.m. Mama was the first to wake up. When she saw the time, she hurried through her bath, and then went and woke up the girls. The boys from *The Bookworm Babies* reading club were due to arrive at 9:30 to celebrate Tania's birthday at breakfast. The girls discussed the exciting and funny night's events as they got ready.

At 9:30 the doorbell rang, and Mama opened the door to three boys bearing a large pile of gifts. Tanisha, Karishma and Sonali had asked Rajiv, Nikhil and Vivek to bring their birthday gifts for Tania with them too, so they could all give their presents to Tania at breakfast.

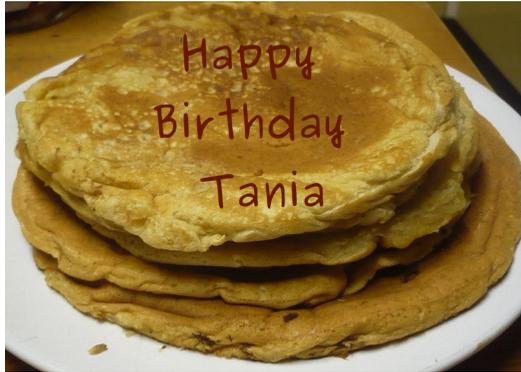


Tania thanked all her friends for the presents, and put them aside to open later. She then helped Mama set up the table for breakfast. Soon the table was laden with chocolate chip and blueberry pancakes, fresh cut fruits, oatmeal porridge, toasts, jam, butter, honey and syrup. There was tea for Mama and Papa and strawberry milkshake for everyone else.



Mama had stacked up about half a dozen pancakes and used chocolate sauce to write 'Happy Birthday Tania' on them. She put seven candles around the pancake stack. Tania blew out the candles again, while everyone sang *Happy Birthday*. The girls were

impressed with how Mama had improvised given that the cake had already been cut in the middle of the night.



Tania, her friends and family had a fun and scrumptious birthday breakfast. The girls told the boys about the midnight happenings. It was a thrilling tale, and the boys were jealous they missed out on the excitement. They were especially sad they did not get to see the effects of Karishma's wild imagination on her expression.

That evening, Mrs. Sharma came by with an awesome surprise for Tania. She had brought a wicker chair and table set and a sofa for Tania's doll

house. Mrs. Sharma happened to be a collector and connoisseur of doll house furniture. She even made doll furniture herself. The chair and table set was from her collection, and the sofa, she had made herself.



At some point, Mama had told Mrs. Sharma, that she was getting Tania a doll house for her birthday.

Mrs. Sharma was really grateful for Tania's help with getting the cat out. She wanted to give her something special. Since she knew Mama had got Tania a doll house, she thought doll furniture was the perfect gift. She even offered to teach Tania how to make some dolls furniture.

What a wonderful birthday Tania has had. I hear Mrs. Sharma has invited Tania over this weekend so they can make dolls furniture together. How

exciting! I wonder what they will
make.

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