

SCARED OUT OF

HER WITS



BY

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Shiv was intrigued. Why was his best friend, the typically level headed Kaira, draped over the lip of a dumpster, with her bum sticking out in to the air? Had she taken leave of her senses? He had to find out.



The stench was unbearable. Shiv supposed Mona had used the society dumpster to dispose off the half boiled egg her mother had given her for breakfast, again.

Holding his nose with one hand, Shiv gently tapped Kaira on her calf with the other. Shiv had hoped to draw Kaira's attention, but he hadn't expected her to jump, scream, and then fall on him. He managed to crawl out from under her,

only to see that she looked completely deranged. Her hair was a stinky, tangled mess with a banana peel hanging out of a half done plait. There was black goo on her nose. But none of this was as frightening as the look in her eyes.

She seemed to be trying to frantically scan the whole area at once resulting in some rapid and bizarre eye ball movement while her head jerked from side to side.



"What's wrong Kaira?" Shiv asked, not sure he wanted to

know the answer. He was alarmed by Kaira's behaviour. What could have happened to make her act this way, he could not imagine.

Just then, a butterfly fluttered by, and Kaira fainted. Shiv was astonished. He knew that Kaira was afraid of butterflies, but she had never fainted before at the sight of one. Runaway shrieking, sure, but never fainted.

Shiv shouted out for help. Mona and Rohan came running. "You really need to find another way to get rid of your egg." Rohan told Mona as they walked over.

"Oh my! Is Kaira dead?" Mona screamed.

"Of course not you idiot. She has fainted. Can you two help me?" Shiv asked.

"I could get some of my mom's smelling salts." Mona offered.

"I think she is immune to smell after the stench from that dumpster." Rohan sneered as he left to fetch some water from the tap next to the swimming pool. The kids sprinkled the water on Kaira and managed to revive her.

"We will take you home." Shiv said kindly to Kaira, but a haunted expression clouded her face as she pleaded "Not home, not home. Please, not home."

Baffled and stumped, the kids looked at each other. Then

Shiv had an idea. "Kaira, you can come to my house." Shiv offered.

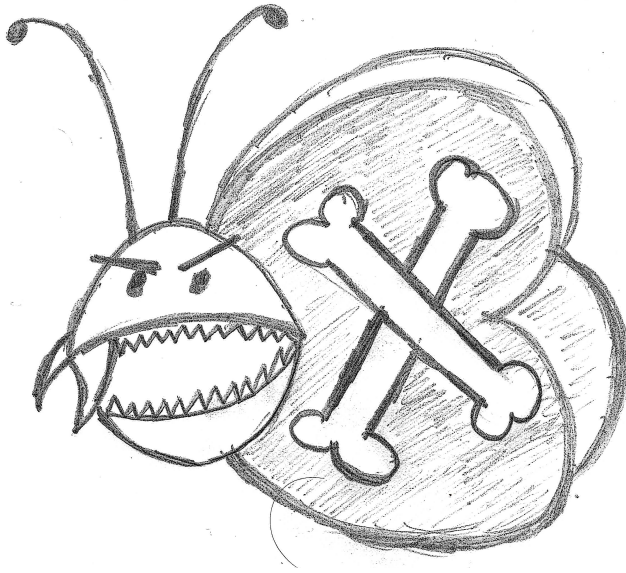
Kaira nodded and the kids were relieved. They helped her up the steps to Shiv's house. Shiv rang the doorbell. The cook opened the door and let them in. She was busy with dinner and did not even notice the mess Kaira was in. Thank goodness, Shiv thought. His parents would not be home for another hour, so he had some time to sort this mess out.

While Kaira was cleaning up in Shiv's house, Rohan and Mona went to fetch her mother. But Kaira's mother wasn't home, so they returned with Kaira's sister, Padma.

Kaira stepped out of the bathroom looking slightly better with her hair combed and her face clean. But at the sight of Padma, she started trembling and sobbing. "I looked, Padma. I looked everywhere." Kaira wailed. "But I couldn't find it anywhere. I am so sorry I lost your bracelet. I promise I won't touch your stuff again. I promise. Please, please, just take away the butterflies. Please."

Shiv, Mona and Rohan looked at each other confused. What was Kaira talking about?.

Padma flushed bright red. "Its okay Kaira. You can come home now. The butterflies are gone. I took them out myself. I was really mad at you for losing my bracelet. So I locked you in the room with the butterflies for revenge."



"How could you be so cruel?" Shiv asked angry and aghast. Mona and Rohan looked at Padma in disbelief.

Padma quelled under their accusing gaze, but decided it was best to address Kaira.

"I would never have locked you in with the butterflies, if I knew that you would be this terrified. It is hard for me to understand your fear, but I see now, that it is quite real to you. I am very sorry." Padma bit her lip and took a deep breath.

Kaira sat down on the sofa exhausted, and Padma approached her slowly. Then Kaira buried her head in Padma's lap and Padma caressed her hair.

"You know, I was really worried about you, the way you ran

out of the house in fright. I came running after you. But you had run off too fast and I did not know which way you went. I thought you may have come to Shiv's house, so I called here, but no one answered the phone. Then I called Nisha and Vidhi but they had no idea where you were. I tried to spot you from the window but I couldn't see you. I was just about to call Mama, when Rohan and Mona showed up. "

"I am so glad, I have found you. I promise I won't frighten you like that again."

Kaira nodded and even managed a smile. Her friends all patted or hugged her. She felt almost normal again. Kaira's friends said nothing to Padma, but at least they had stopped frowning at her.

Padma took all the kids home and treated them to ice cream. Later, when all the kids had left, Padma followed Kaira to their room. Still apprehensive, Kaira stepped gingerly in to her room and checked for butterflies. When Padma turned the fan on, a piece of paper started fluttering around and Kaira jumped in fright. Padma gave her a hug and held her tight till she calmed down and her muscles relaxed.

"Kaira." Padma said. "You need not be ashamed of your fear of butterflies. We all have fears like that." She picked up her stuffed tiger. "You know Tiger Woods, right? Papa gave him to me when I was three. I was so scared of him."

"But you love Tiger Woods." Kaira was puzzled.

"Yes I do now. But initially, I was terrified of him. Eventually I got over my fear, but it took a year and Tiger Woods never did anything unpredictable like butterflies. When I got over my fear, I loved Tiger Woods mainly because he reminded me of that achievement. You may get over your fear of butterflies, or you may not. Every one has something that frightens them that may seem silly to others. It's okay."

"You are not scared of anything any more though." Kaira pointed out.

"That's not true." Padma said. "I am no longer scared of Tiger woods and I have never been scared of butterflies, but I have an irrational fear of water and drowning. That is why it is taking me so long to learn to swim. All my friends are learning so much faster." Padma looked sad, so Kaira put her arm around Padma. Heartened Padma continued, "I do my best to fight the fear but I haven't succeeded yet. You too can try to fight your fear, but if you don't succeed that is okay too. I was wrong to take advantage of your fears. Will you forgive me?"

Kaira smiled. "Yes Padma, but only if you help me fight my fear of butterflies. Tell me how you go about it."

"Deal!" Padma said and the sisters shook hands.