

Mia's Mystery Birthday Party

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'I'VE GOT SOME AMAZING IDEAS,' Mia said to her parents one morning. 'I want to have the BEST birthday party ever!'

She placed her scrapbook on the kitchen table. On the glittery cover she'd written *Mia's Marvellous Birthday Party Ideas*.

'You have been a busy bee,' said Mum, 'but Dad and I thought ...'

Mia interrupted. 'Mum, Dad ... I've got some great ideas that you might NOT have thought of. I could have a pirate party,' Mia said, opening her scrapbook. 'We could cover the backyard in sand and dig for buried treasure. We could build a pirate ship and have sword fights and make the pirates walk the plank into the swimming pool!'

'It's a bit too cold to walk the plank,' said Dad. 'We don't want your friends getting pneumonia!'

Mia grumbled and turned the page. Her face lit up again.

'Well, what about a castle party? We could dig a moat around our house and build a drawbridge and fly a flag from the TV antenna.'

And knights could have a jousting competition!’

‘We’d have to jackhammer the driveway to dig the moat, and that takes time,’ said Mum.

‘Besides,’ added Dad, ‘knights would need horses to ride, and we don’t have any horses.’

‘Hmmm ...’ said Mia, turning another page.

‘How about a circus party with Zoltar the Fortune Teller and a fairy floss machine! We could build a flying trapeze and a tightrope ... and everyone could walk on stilts!’

Mum and Dad shook their heads.

Mia sighed. There weren’t many options left in her scrapbook.

‘Mia,’ said Mum, ‘what about an old-fashioned party with games like Pass the Parcel and Musical Chairs? We could have sack races and a treasure hunt and a piñata. And Grandpa can do a sausage sizzle!’

Mia slumped in her chair. ‘You mean an *Old-Fashioned and Boring* party! This is going to be the worst party ever!’

When Mia sent out the invitations, she didn’t call it an *Old-Fashioned* party, she called it a *Mystery* party.

On the morning of her birthday, Mia heard a toot out the front. It was Grandpa. He’d come in his ute. He was a plumber and liked to joke about it. On the side of the ute was written MR DRIP. PLUMBER. NO DRIP TOO DROPPY.

While Grandpa was on his ladder tying the piñata to a branch of the jacaranda tree, Mia’s friends arrived for the party. ‘I see Grandpa Drip is here,’ smirked Paige, handing Mia her birthday present.

‘So, why’s it a *mystery* party?’ asked Cosmo, who was dressed as Sherlock Holmes. ‘I didn’t know what to come as.’



'You'll see,' sighed Mia.

'Come on, everyone,' called Dad.
'Let's get this party started!'

'So, what's the mystery?' Cosmo asked again. 'Is it a mystery because it's full of lame party games?'

Mia felt her cheeks go hot as her dad started the music for Musical Chairs.



While they danced around the chairs, thunder rumbled and black clouds rolled across the sky.

The music stopped and everyone scrambled for the chairs. Dad took a chair away and started the music again as the thunder got louder.

'I don't like the look of that sky,' called Grandpa as he turned the sausages on the barbecue. 'It's turning sickly green and that can only mean *disaster*!' He wheeled the barbecue under cover of the verandah.

Lightning zizzed and everyone squealed.

'Okay,' called Dad, 'a storm's coming and we don't want to get frizzled like Grandpa's sausages!'

'Roll up! Roll up!' called Grandpa as he tonged burnt sausages into bread rolls. 'Who's for tomato sauce?'

The temperature dropped. The wind whooshed through the treetops. Whizz Ping ... Whirr ...

The piñata spun like a crazy wind-up toy.

With the next crack of thunder, the sky exploded with ice.

'It's hailing!' shouted Cosmo.

'This is SO COOL!' shouted Paige over the noise.



The piñata snapped off its rope and burst open, scattering lollies over the ice-covered lawn.

'This party rocks!' said Cosmo, throwing a handful of lollies and ice into his mouth.

The sky rumbled again. The kids looked up. The green clouds were back.

'What type of music does lightning listen to?' called Grandpa. 'Rock and Roll! Ha ha! I'll go inside and set up a disco.'

By the time Mia got everyone into the loungeroom, Grandpa had his 1970s music on. He'd covered the kitchen strainer with blue cellophane and balanced it over a lamp. He twirled it and disco danced as the blue light swirled over their faces and across the ceiling.

Mia followed Grandpa's dance moves. Soon everybody was disco dancing around the lounge room. Flash ... blzzt! The music stopped. Everything went dark.

'Blackout!' everyone squealed.

'No problem,' called Mum. 'Come into the kitchen.'

Mia led her conga line of friends through the dark house.

Mum, Dad and Grandpa were standing behind the kitchen table. Mia's birthday cake glowed with nine bright candles. It was the shape of a scrapbook and in the middle was written Mia's Mystery Birthday Party.

Everyone sang 'Happy Birthday' and ate their piece of cake in the glow of a camping lantern.

'Oh, no!' Mia cried, pointing outside.



The pool was overflowing and the yard looked like a lake. The water rose higher and higher until the house was circled by rushing torrents of icy, muddy water.

'We're surrounded by a moat,' Mia beamed. 'Just like a castle!'

'It's awesome!' said Paige, 'but Mum will be picking me up soon. I wish I could stay longer.'

Mia was worried. What if they were trapped in the house? She whispered into Grandpa's ear and he nodded.

'And to finish off the mystery party, we have a special treat,' announced Mia.

Mia and Grandpa carried the ladder through the house. They propped it on the edge of the front

porch and laid it across the moat to the edge of the driveway.

Mia handed out lolly bags as her friends teetered across the ladder drawbridge over the moat to their parents.

'Thank you, Mia!' her friends called.

Cosmo was the last to leave. 'Great Storm Party, Mia. It's the BEST MYSTERY BIRTHDAY PARTY I've EVER been to!'

'It sure was!' Mia giggled. 'It sure was.' ■

Well, everything
turned out for the
best, in a sloshy sort
of way!

