

Twinklinka

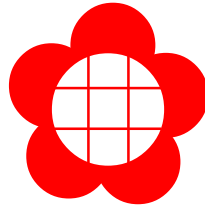


Janaki Sooriyarachchi

INNER COVER

Written & Illustrated by

Janaki Sooriyarachchi



TIKIRI PUBLISHERS

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Tel: ++94 - 11 - 2847438, E-mail: janu@tikiri.com, Web: www.tikiri.com



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**This book is dedicated to
my beloved grand mother**

Twinklinka

One day, not so long ago, a special new doll arrived at the toy shop. Fresh from the factory in her very own box, the doll's name was printed in colorful, sparkly letters across the lid, "Twinklinka."

"Oh, isn't she beautiful?"

The shopkeeper cried out, as he opened the box.

The sales assistants all gathered around, excited at the arrival of the new doll.

"Yes, she's certainly gorgeous. Those jewels on her dress and her hair twinkle like diamonds," said one sales assistant.

"Yes, that must be why she's named Twinklinka," said another.

"A pretty little princess would surely buy this beauty at any price."

"Yes, yes. I'm sure we can put a very high price on her and sell with no trouble," said the shopkeeper.





The sales assistant took Twinklinka out of the box and placed her carefully on the best rack of the shop. None of them knew that the toys from this factory were able to hear everything that went on around them and talk to each other.

So, they had no idea that Twinklinka was secretly listening to all they said.

“Oh, am I really so pretty?”

she wondered.

Glancing around quickly, to make sure no one was looking, she stretched up on her toes and peered into the large mirror on the wall.

She blinked in surprise at what she saw.

“Is that really me?”

She could not believe her eyes.

“What lovely rosy pink cheeks I have! And such deep blue eyes... and all those golden curls! Just look at my silk stockings and all the lace, pearls and sparkles on my dress. Can those be diamonds in my hair, twinkling like stars?”



“.....And they said that a ‘pretty little princess’ would buy me. It sounds like someone really special.”

Of course Twinklinka had no idea what a “princess” was, but she thought that it would be someone very sweet and elegant, like the lovely girls she had seen in picture books.





She closed her eyes and imagined.

“Some day, a ‘pretty little princess’ who has beautiful golden curls, rosy cheeks and blue eyes, will come into our shop with her mother. She will point at me right away, and say, ‘Mum, can I have this pretty doll, please?’ Then her mother will say, ‘Yes, of course, my darling.’ And the shopkeeper will take me down from the shelf and hand me to the little princess. And...”

“...she will take me home wrapped lovingly in her arms. And she will rock me and hold me like her mother does her. She will tell me wonderful stories and play with me the whole day long. All of her friends will say, ‘How lucky you are to have such a beautiful doll!’”

Twinklka was lost in her dream.

Finally, evening came, the lights were turned off, everyone left and the shop was closed up for the night. The other toys that had come from the magical factory all jumped off their shelves and ran around excitedly, happy to be free to play.

Nighttime was when they were their merriest.

But today was more special than usual, and everyone gathered around Twinklinka, curious about the beautiful newcomer.

“You are a very pretty doll. What’s your name?”

“What beautiful eyes you have!”

“Are these really diamonds on your hair and dress, twinkling like stars?”

Twinklinka was showered with questions.





In the middle of all that, a grey teddy bear in a green waistcoat, who had been on the third shelf, ran up to her. And he gave the delicate doll such a strong bear hug, that she almost tumbled down.

“W-welcome to our toy shop!” He blurted out in a sweet voice, despite his gruff looks.

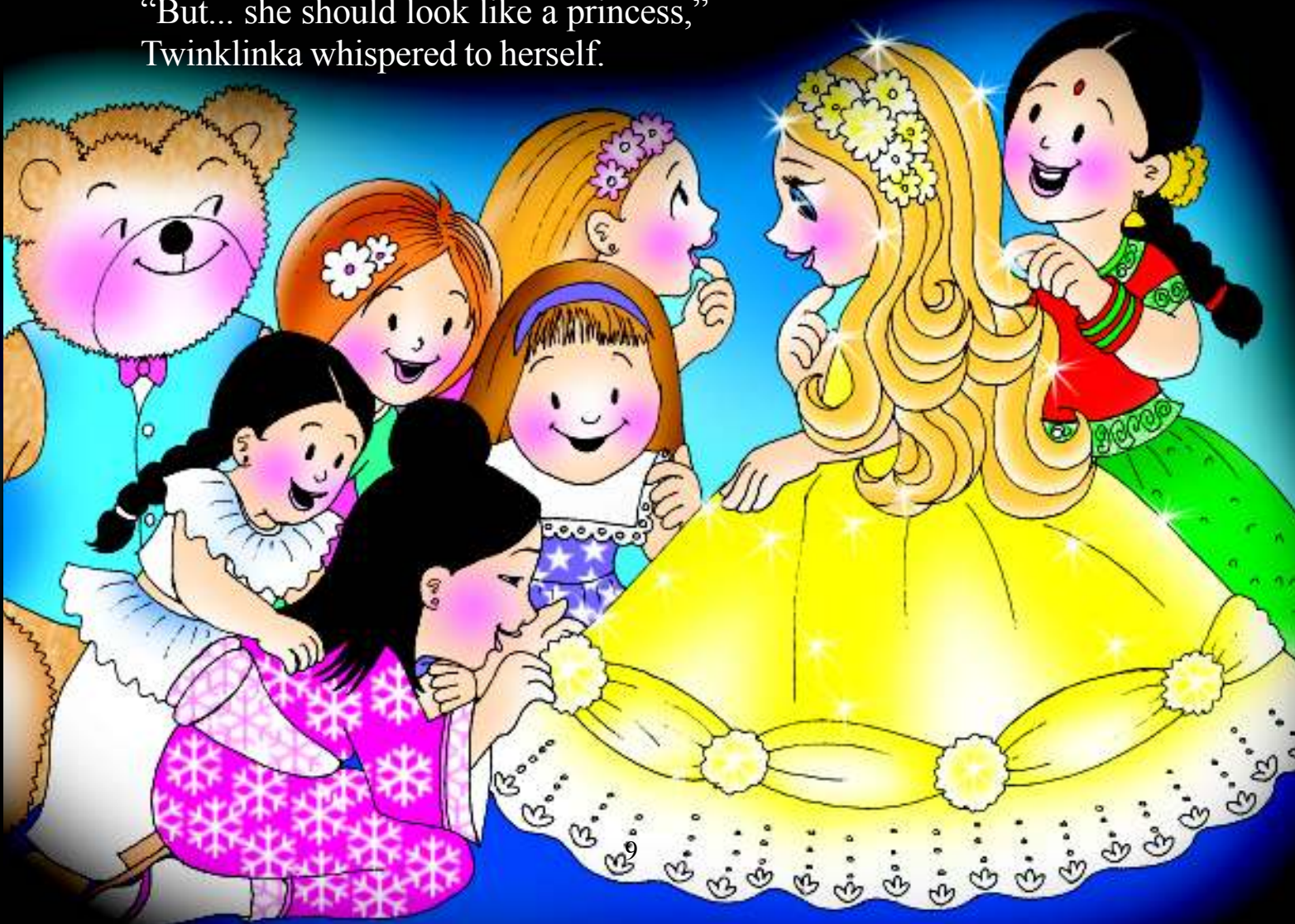
“Oh...thank you!” Twinklinka said, blushing a deep shade of crimson.

There were very happy and bubbly soft toys and dolls of many nationalities. All the dolls, teddy bears and bunnies were indeed dazzled by her loveliness. Every time someone complimented her, she smiled shyly.

“Your dress is very beautiful!” Lilac, the French doll said. The Japanese doll Atsuko, and the Sri Lankan doll Malithi, gaped at Twinklinka’s exquisite dress.

“I’m sure a rich young miss will buy you very soon,” the Indian doll Brindha said, trying to have a closer look at the twinkling things in her hair.

“But... she should look like a princess,” Twinklinka whispered to herself.



The following morning, all the toys were back on their shelves and sitting still. A pretty girl came in with her mother and ran straight to Twinklinka.

“Oh, Mum, this doll is very beautiful. Can I have it please?” she pleaded.

“No darling, I don’t have enough money to buy that one,” said her mother, looking at the price tag. “I’m sure you can find something less expensive.”

The little girl’s eyes narrowed and her happy smile became a pout. And when her mother insisted, she took Bianca, the Italian doll halfheartedly. Still she didn’t take her eyes off Twinklinka, the one she really wanted, the most beautiful doll in the whole shop.

Twinklinka felt very sorry for the little girl. But she knew she couldn’t go with her, because she was not the “pretty little princess” in her dream.



Later that day, two other little girls came in, who seemed to be twins. They were pretty enough, though still not as pretty as the little princess of her dream. And besides, their blue-and-white pinafore dresses had ice cream spilt all over them. They were also quarreling over a honey bear they both wanted. Their mother looked very tired, which was no surprise, since handling two such quarrelsome daughters would be a very difficult thing to do.

Seeing them quarrel, Twinklinda feared the twins would want to buy her. So, when they came her way, she quickly hid her face behind Robbie's outstretched arm. He was the big honey bear in the blue waistcoat, who sat next to her. He was happy to help, as he certainly didn't want to see his sweet, innocent friend have to be owned by such messy, grumpy children. The two girls passed right by their shelf, but thankfully didn't notice Twinklinda.





A little while after that, a short, chubby girl who had her hair in two pigtails, came into the shop. Worse yet, most of her teeth were all brown and rotten. It was no wonder, since she was munching on a big chocolate bar even at that moment. Finished with it, she threw the wrapper on the floor and gathered up three dolls and two Teddy bears in her sticky hands. But the moment she saw Twinklinka, she dropped them all and ran straight for her. Twinklinka panicked, terrified that the untidy child would buy her. There was no time to hide, but she suddenly had a good idea. As the girl came close, Twinklinka crossed her eyes, making herself look horrible.

“Oh no..., she’s squint-eyed!”

The brown-toothed, chocolate-smeared little girl yelped, and turned away. Twinklinka’s friend Robbie almost choked, trying not to laugh at that.



Days and weeks passed. Many little girls came into the shop and many dolls were bought and taken away. But, when anyone came close to Twinklinka, she somehow managed to hide. None of them looked like the little princess in her dream. So she would hide her face behind Robbie's arm, or make herself fall over sideways so that they would not see her properly.

The other dolls didn't mind who they went with. They only wanted a home. So they would leave laughing and waving good-bye to all their friends who were left behind. When their little misses held them close, they would look back at their friends proudly, to see if they were watching. And, one by one, Twinklinka's friends left the shop. Laura, the French doll on the second shelf went, and even not-so-pretty, frizzy-haired Sabrina was bought. Nevertheless, Twinklinka was never envious. She was very happy for them. She wished them happiness with all her heart.





But on the day her best friend Robbie had to go, she was very upset. Whenever she'd felt sad or lonely, he would always be there to cheer her up.

"Twinky, don't worry," Robbie whispered to her, before he was taken down from the shelf.

"You'll surely get your dream princess soon."

And when nobody was looking, he waved good-bye to her.

She waved back, wishing him happiness, too.

Then, she suddenly realized there were tears in her eyes.

"You've been such a great friend, Robbie! I'll really miss you."





More weeks and months passed by, but the “pretty little princess” of Twinklinka’s dream, still didn’t appear. The colors of her beautiful lace-adorned dress began to fade. Her glowing cheeks became dull, and the once-shiny silk stockings had lost their luster. A spider even tried to spin a cobweb on her skirt, one day.

Poor Twinklinka became less and less pretty as time passed. Finally, she looked so shopworn, that she didn’t have to hide anymore.

New dolls arrived from time to time, and Twinklinka was pushed to the back of the shelf. All of them were very pretty and dressed in the latest fashions. They smelled wonderfully fresh and new. All the children loved them at once. But sweet Twinklinka still didn’t feel the least bit envious. She only felt very sad and very lonely.

“When will my dream princess come and take me away?” she wondered.



She waited and waited for her pretty little princess to come. She peeped over the pretty new dolls in front of her and watched the door, until her eyes ached. She kept hoping that her princess would come and take her away soon. Instead, she was just taken to the old rack in the corner, one day.

It made her so sad that she broke into sobs. But she tried hard to hold back the tears. Because, she knew they would only smudge the pink still left on her cheeks, making her even less attractive.

She was so unhappy and tired of being stuck in the toy shop, that she finally made up her mind. She decided she would go with anyone who would want her. But of course, by that time it was too late, because no one even bothered to look at her.





At last, one fine day, Twinklinka saw a very pretty little miss enter the shop from the front door.

“Oh! The very same golden curls, the very same rosy cheeks and the very same blue eyes...” Her heart stopped for a moment.

The girl looked just like the pretty little princess of Twinklinka's dream. She was gorgeous and graceful and her clothes were very, very beautiful. Twinklinka was overwhelmed with happiness.

.....

She stretched up on her toes and stuck her face out as far as she could, to make herself be seen.

"Oh, what if the little princess doesn't see me!" She feared.

But the pretty little girl came right up to Twinklinka's rack and stopped in front of her. She was so excited that she almost couldn't breathe.



The girl pointed at the shelf and said, "I want these dolls!"

Twinklinka noticed that the little princess forgot to say "please" and wondered, "Did she say 'this doll' or 'these dolls'?"

"I'll have a dollies' school and be the teacher," the girl said quite grandly to the lady with her, who had the look of a governess.

"Oh, I thought it would be only me," Twinklinka thought, just a bit disappointed. "But, never mind, my dream is coming true, at last, for this is surely the pretty little princess I've been waiting for."



Unfortunately, things were not to turn out exactly the way she had dreamt. “Pack them all up and put them in the boot of the car,” the lady ordered the sales assistant. And before Twinklanka could think anything at all, she was taken down from the shelf and stuffed into a box with Rosetta the French ballerina, Keiki the Hawaiian doll, Momoko the Japanese doll, two Chinese dolls and three Italian dolls.

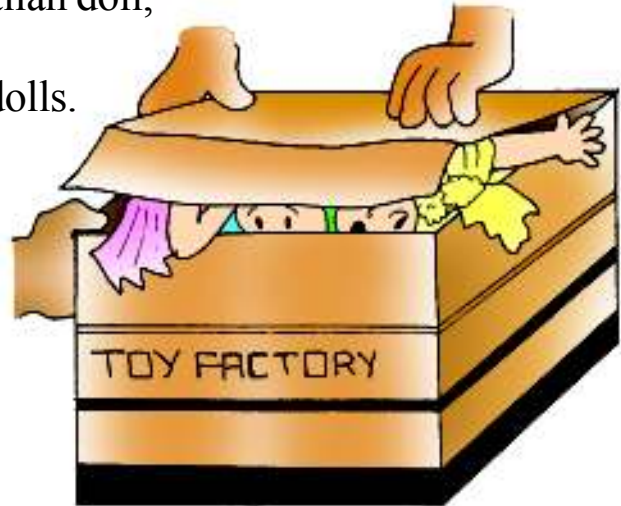
“Ouch!”

Twinklanka’s poor little hand was twisted painfully, when they were all squashed together into the box.

Tears sprang from her eyes and her happiness turned to alarm.

“What’s going to happen to us?” she wondered.

There had never been anything in her dream about being taken away like that, stuffed in a box in the boot of a car! It was a far cry from being cuddled in the lap of her loving little princess as she had imagined.





After a long ride, the car stopped under the portico of a huge mansion. The box of dolls was carried up a flight of stairs and into the little princess' room. It was emptied out onto the floor, like a box of peas. "Oh, nooo!" cried Twinklinda, landing hard under several of the other dolls. She pulled herself out of the pile, rubbing her arms and back, and looked around.

Well, to Twinklinda's shocked eyes, it was more like a storm-tossed zoo, than the bedroom of a pretty little princess! Armless dolls, headless teddies, legless bunnies and tailless monkeys lay everywhere. And a sweet-looking little grey bunny had fallen under a chair and lay there on his head.

Then the pretty little princess entered the room.

“Why did you hop down? I told you to sit still!” She shouted at the poor bunny as soon as she entered the room.

When she shouted at the bunny, it was Twinklinka who panicked.

“She is not as sweet as she looks,” Rosetta whispered into Twinklinka’s ear. She was thinking exactly the same thing.

The following morning, the dolls’ school was set up as soon as the little girl was out of her bed. The dolls were seated on the floor in two rows.

“Sit still, all of you!” The girl ordered. She got terribly angry and shouted quite loudly, if a doll leaned over even the least little bit. And all of this before she had even combed her hair or brushed her teeth!





“Doesn’t she know that she should wash up, first thing in the morning?” Momoko muttered.

Twinklinka didn’t even turn to nod, fearing the little princess would see her. She was so frightened that she didn’t even dare to blink.

Sitting still was not really difficult, after all. But the girl had no love for the dolls whatsoever. She tossed them here and there, kicked them out of her way, and even pinched them, when annoyed.

How could a little doll live without someone to love her?

“I wish I were back on that lonely rack in the toy shop,”

Rosetta whispered when the little miss was not looking.

Twinklinka had already had the same thought, though she didn’t say so.

“I wonder how a pretty little girl could be so mean,” Keiki said.

“That’s because she hasn’t been taught any good manners. I wonder whether she even goes to school,” Momoko said.

“And where are her Mum and Dad? We’ve never seen them. I don’t think they see her very often. That may be why she’s so mean,” Rosetta suggested.

“That’s not a reason to be mean to others.” Momoko said angrily.

Twinklinka was too frightened to say anything.



One day, Twinklinka was kicked beneath the bed for no reason at all. It was so dark and dusty under there that she cried throughout the whole night, terrified. She recalled how she had dreamt of being cuddled lovingly, on the lap of a pretty little princess. But, here she was, kicked under the bed and left to suffer, ignored as if she didn't even exist.

“That is certainly not a proper way to treat a doll, Twinky!” Rosetta said angrily, the following morning. “Little girls are supposed to love their dolls. But it may be that no one has ever loved her and that's why she doesn't know how to love others.”

Twinklinka waited and waited, hoping the “little princess” would behave better later in the day, or the next day, or the day after. But no, she remained the same. Pretty as she was, she clearly did not know how to love her dolls.

One day, the “little princess” sat on top of the reading table, playing with her new remote-controlled fairy, while picking at her lunch. Twinklinka and three other dolls lay in a heap on the floor, where she had dumped them.





Then suddenly, her hand bumped into a dish, and it fell off the table, onto the floor.

Where did it land?

Right onto the top of Twinklinka, spilling the sauce all over her dress!

Not only the dress, but also on her face and hair, as well.

The careless little miss hopped down from the table and picked Twinklinka up by her once golden tresses, with two fingers..





“Ugh, she’s rotten now!” she said, making a face, and tossed Twinklunka into the waste basket.

Her head hit on the edge of it.
“Ow...ouch!” She squealed with pain.
In truth, it was her heart that hurt
more than her head.
Such a pretty doll she had been,
and to end up thrown out like this?
She was so shocked that she
didn’t know whether to
cry or be angry.



Just then a maid came into the room and took the waste basket out to the back alley and put it into a garbage bag. Then she carried the bag to a huge pile of garbage in a yard at the end of the road and dumped there..

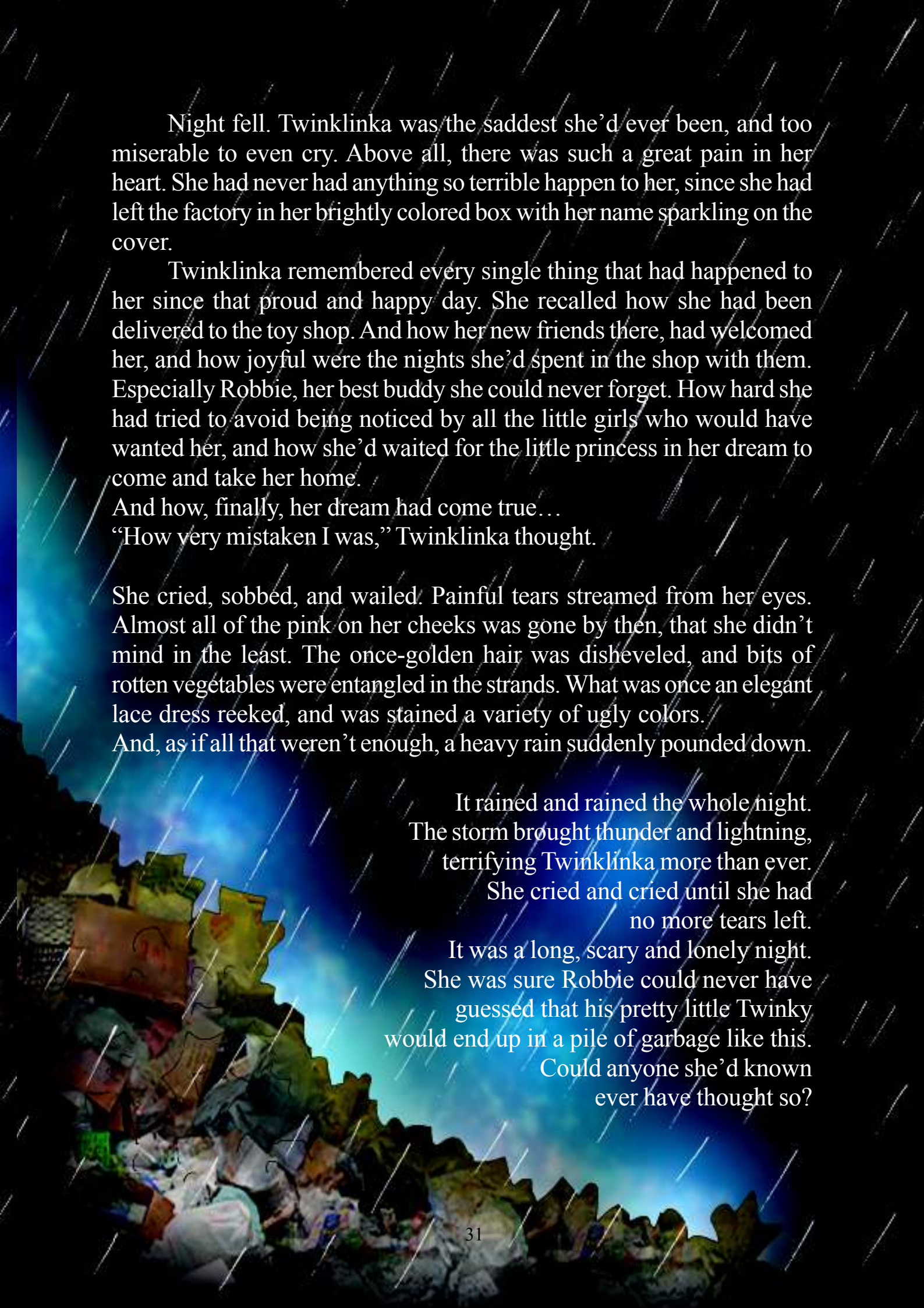
It was a totally different environment that she never knew existed. Bruised fruit, rotten vegetables, empty tins...the stinking mess surrounded poor Twinklanka, the once-prettiest doll in the whole toy shop. She didn't dare cry out, for fear that some of the awful stuff would get into her mouth. It smelled so horrible that she tried hard to not even breathe.



Rats, mice and cockroaches scurried all around and over her. Stray dogs and cats raked through the disgusting mess, looking for a piece of food. One black and brown dog came very close to Twinklinka and sniffed at the sauce. She was so terrified of being eaten that she screamed. But her cry was so faint that no one heard it.







Night fell. Twinklinka was the saddest she'd ever been, and too miserable to even cry. Above all, there was such a great pain in her heart. She had never had anything so terrible happen to her, since she had left the factory in her brightly colored box with her name sparkling on the cover.

Twinklinka remembered every single thing that had happened to her since that proud and happy day. She recalled how she had been delivered to the toy shop. And how her new friends there, had welcomed her, and how joyful were the nights she'd spent in the shop with them. Especially Robbie, her best buddy she could never forget. How hard she had tried to avoid being noticed by all the little girls who would have wanted her, and how she'd waited for the little princess in her dream to come and take her home.

And how, finally, her dream had come true...

"How very mistaken I was," Twinklinka thought.

She cried, sobbed, and wailed. Painful tears streamed from her eyes. Almost all of the pink on her cheeks was gone by then, that she didn't mind in the least. The once-golden hair was disheveled, and bits of rotten vegetables were entangled in the strands. What was once an elegant lace dress reeked, and was stained a variety of ugly colors.

And, as if all that weren't enough, a heavy rain suddenly pounded down.

It rained and rained the whole night.
The storm brought thunder and lightning,
terrifying Twinklinka more than ever.

She cried and cried until she had
no more tears left.

It was a long, scary and lonely night.
She was sure Robbie could never have
guessed that his pretty little Twinky
would end up in a pile of garbage like this.

Could anyone she'd known
ever have thought so?

When the rain did stop the following morning, Twinklanka lay still. She hadn't the least bit of strength left even to cry or to turn her head... or even to think. She didn't feel like opening her eyes. She didn't want to open her eyes ever again. There was nothing out there that she wanted to see, so she kept them scrunched tight.

Then she felt something move the garbage. As if it was being dug through again, but by something bigger than a rat or a dog.

"It may be a bigger dog," she thought and held very still.

"Oh, well...go ahead, eat me up, eat me up! I won't mind... and thanks!" Twinklanka squeezed her eyes even tighter.

But it wasn't a dog at all. And it wasn't a rat, either.



“Oh, a doll! A doll!” A delicate little voice shrieked in excitement. Twinklanka opened her eyes wide, shocked, to see it was no stray dog, but a little girl!

Her cheeks were not rosy pink and her eyes were not deep blue. Her hair was not a mass of golden curls and her dress was torn here and there. The child was not pretty at all, to be perfectly honest. Yet, there was something in her sweet smile that made Twinklanka’s heart swell with joy. The little girl picked her out of the pile at once.



“Oh, I have never had a d-d-doll in my life!” she cried, so incredibly happy herself. She clutched Twinklinka to her heart, in spite of the mess the pretty doll had become, and hugged her and hugged her.

“Oh!” Twinklinka cried. Her heart bounced almost out of her chest. She just couldn’t imagine being loved so much.

Still holding Twinklinka tightly, the little girl ran all the way to her home. “Home”? Well, no...it wasn’t exactly a home. What she ran to, was a little shelter against the back of a bus stop.

She was a beggar-girl!



She took Twinklinka right away to a nearby water tap and washed her clean, carefully.

Then she held her in the sun and fluffed her hair and skirts, until its warm rays dried her...and put her to sleep! The girl found a broken comb and combed her hair very gently, so that it wouldn't hurt her. The little girl was so happy that she kept hugging her and rocking her in her arms, humming lullabies like a little mother.



When the rain began to fall again,
she covered her precious find with her own body,
bending over, so not a single raindrop could reach her.
“Where else could I have found a love so great?”
Twinklinka thought, and her eyes brimmed
with happy tears. She opened her eyes and
looked at the little miss, through tears.

“How beautiful her cheeks are, though they are not pink.
How beautiful her eyes are, though they are not blue.
How comfortable this shelter is, though it’s not a mansion.
And how wonderful this love is,
though it’s not from a ‘pretty little princess’,”
Twinklinka whispered to herself.
“Isn’t this all I wanted!”

Two big, twinkling teardrops rolled down the doll’s cheeks
and fell onto the little girl’s lap.



THE END

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