

The Kingdom of Colors

Brenden Kleiboeker

I pushed away from the overflowing clutter that consumed my desk. My head spun with all the documents, files, and tax forms that still needed to be completed for my clients. April 15th was right around the corner, so naturally, everyone was looking for a professional to personally handle their taxes. Well, “When taxes are due, Jonathon Marshall is the man for you.” That slogan ran across the bottom of my business card just like it now ran through my head each time I completed filing someone’s taxes. I pinched my forehead in the hopes of seizing the repetitive phrase. It stopped the phrase momentarily, only to have the reminder ring in my ears that I needed to call about having the two bills that had been lost in the mail re-sent to me. As an accountant, I should be more organized, yet during this time of year I lose all control in the chaos. This year had been by far the toughest. It really was the true test of how much I could handle before completely quitting my job, leaving my family behind, and moving back in with my parents for total financial support. My wife had spent the last week on a team-bonding work trip, leaving me with the housecleaning, cooking, maintenance, as well as trying to keep track of our daughter Vanessa... all while trying to balance my clientele who were just as needy as my 4-year-old.

Cursing my wife and the fortunate luck of her work retreat, I made my way towards Vanessa’s room. Mid-step over Bandit, our dog, I stopped to take in the smell that radiated off of his fur. The stench of rotten animal, which I’m sure he thoroughly enjoyed rolling in, traveled from his blood-crusted hair, filling my nose and spiking my headache into a migraine. I mentally added ‘Dog Bath’ to my to-do list.

Songs of innocence traveled down the hall as I approached the cracked bedroom door. The Christmas icicle lights that hung from the ceiling of her room overflowed into the darkness of the hallway. I poked my head in, careful not to disturb her playtime. Her room imitated my office. Yet, toys took over papers, and pretend tea replaced cups of coffee.

“Daddy, just in time! Cinderella is about to go on vacation with Rapunzel. Prince Charming is taking the horses out to the courtyard to play fetch while the castle is getting painted pink!”

I would love to have the leisure time of Charming, even if it was playing fetch with horses. I’d skip out on the pink castle, though.

Actually, no, I wouldn’t. A castle meant a support system. No more dog grooming or bill paying or tax filing. I wonder who she has doing all of that. Wait, what am I saying? She doesn’t think of that stuff. All Vanessa wants is for her horses to have a good time and to have a pink castle. I looked over at my daughter as she threw a small bouncy ball across the room, only to fling the horse right after it.

“Way to go, Bullet! Daddy, Bullet is the fastest horse in all of the Kingdom of Colors!” She made her way across the enchanted forest I called her room. She picked up the horse and brought it back to the castle. “I call it the Kingdom of Colors because all the trees in the forest are a different color and the magic waterfall looks like a rainbow.”

I sat down next to her, picking up the other horse.

“That’s Gimper. He isn’t as fast, but he is the prettiest horse. Cinderella rides him. It’s only fair since she’s the prettiest princess.”

Amazing. I began to imagine her riding around the carpet that built itself into trees and grass. The horse was no longer being moved by hand, but running on its own, dodging socks that had turned into boulders. The blankets tumbling off the side of her bed had changed into the rainbow waterfall that ran just on the far side of the Kingdom of Colors. Cinderella’s hair bounced as Gimper trotted over the Legos that...

“Careful, Daddy! The red ones are from the volcano!” Her hand reached out and stopped



Gimper before he stepped on the Lego Brick.

I snapped back into reality. A flushing of all the real world jobs that needed to be completed filled my head again as Vanessa's room came back into focus, the Kingdom of Colors that Gimper had just been trotting through fading back into my imagination. I glanced down the hallway, over Bandit, and into the slightly ajar door of my office: home of all my stresses and everything else that comes along with adulthood. I took a deep breath, stood up, walked towards Vanessa's door, and shut it.

"Well, then let's get the Kingdom guards to clean up the forest." I grabbed some of her stuffed animals and brought them to the carpet that again began its transformation back into the magical forest. I returned to my position next to my daughter and re-entered the Kingdom of Colors with Gimper in one hand, Cinderella in the other, and a smile of relief across my once stress-crinkled face.

