**Life in a Kaleidoscope**

**Chapter Two**

Nolan was slouched in his favorite chair and watched the raindrops splat against the window. The chair he was curled in was a nice chocolate color, and had comforting fuzz all over it. And at the moment he was trying to think of something to do. Something that he wanted to do. But the only thing that came to mind was playing with Jordan. And he wasn’t available to play because he was too busy doing “school”. So Nolan went over his list of activities that were enjoyable again. For the inside activities there were movies that he could watch, Rainbows to drop, puzzles to solve, or the squishy stuff that Kitty called “Play-dough”. In the outside category there was the Trampoline, his dirt puddle, the swing, and climbing their tree. He did want to swing, but that was out of the question since it was raining. He whined sadly. All his chores were done and he had done almost everything on his inside list. Except for the puzzles. But he wasn’t in the mood to do one right now.

“Nolan!” Mama was calling him from the kitchen. He left the chair reluctantly and slowly trudged in to her. She was in the process of making food. He didn’t know what, but it was food. His finger found its way into the mixing bowl and was pulled out and stuck in the mouth before Mama noticed. She did notice, but only smiled. “Are you ready to do your laundry?” she asked, not unkindly, but he knew it was just another way of telling him to do it. He frowned while licking the rest of the gooey food off his finger. It was sweet. He wanted more, but he knew that he would be stopped, at least till he did the laundry.

So he did it. First pulling the hamper that held all his dirty clothes into their laundry room and dumping it all out. Next, sorting it out into two relatively equal piles and tossing one of them into the washer. Then came his favorite part. He grabbed the washer’s dials and turned it to the number 30. He wasn’t sure what it did but it made a nice sound. The laundry detergent was hastily poured in and the lid was slammed shut. Done.

Back to the chair. He curled in it, again faced with the awful boredom. He moodily stared out the window because he didn’t know what else to do. He wished that he could be outside on the Trampoline or Swing. He couldn’t stand this any longer. So he got up and trotted into Jordan’s room. Jordan was busily scribbling in a notebook, concentrating hard. If he had noticed Nolan invading his room he didn’t show it. Nolan sat down in the blue bean bag chair and watched. He was waiting for him to finish so he could tell Jordan what he wanted. He had the words all figured out, and he was sure Jordan wouldn’t mind taking a break to do something fun.

*Scratch, scratch scratch*

Said the pencil.

*Taptaptap*

Said Nolan’s fidgeting fingers. He was really growing impatient.

The scratching stopped. Nolan looked up hopefully. “What do you want Nolan?” Jordan asked, somewhat tiredly. Nolan bounced up excitedly. “Can I play… Jordan!”

“What do you want to play?”

“Game!”

“What game?”

Nolan couldn’t remember so he dashed to the closet and pulled out the one that he wanted to play. He ran back to Jordan and showed him. “You want to play Sequence?” Nolan bounced up and down excitedly. “N’yes!” They usually played it as it was a game they both enjoyed. And it was better than Go Fish. That game required too much talking. It was their special game.

“Ok Nolan, I’ll play. Set it up while I finish this last bit.” Nolan happily obliged. The game was set up in no time. Nolan took the red chips and gave Jordan the blue chips and mixed up the cards as best as he could. Jordan sat down across from him and they engaged in several battles for the win.

“Haha! Beat you!” Jordan said as he laid the fifth chip in his row. Nolan just laughed. “Man little brother you’re hard to beat in this game!” Jordan grinned. “How many times did you win?” Nolan counted, that was something he could do. “One… two… three… four!”

“Whew. You defiantly won the tournament this time. I’ll beat you next time though!” Jordan said good-naturedly. They cleaned up the game together and Nolan put it away. He ran back to Jordan’s room and pushed the door open. Jordan was rummaging through a drawer, looking for something. “Ah ha! Here we are.” he pulled out a little pouch of Skittles and gave it to Nolan, who was eagerly peering over his shoulder. Nolan shrieked with joy and tore it open. “Don’t eat your prize too fast. Savor it cause I’m gonna beat you next time.” Jordan smiled. Nolan knew that he would always win so he devoured them anyway. “That was fun Nolan, but now I need to finish my work. Why don’t you go do a puzzle or something while everyone is working?” Nolan’s lip protruded slightly and he sighed. He didn’t really want to do one, but since Jordan played with him he should probably do what Jordan wanted.

So he left the room silently and went to find a puzzle. He spread them all out and inspected the box of each one. There were six choices. There was the blue one that had weird looking creatures scattered all over it, the colorful one that was rather difficult to complete, the boring one, the quick but childish one, the princess one that was Kitty’s, and the dizzy one, as he called it. It was mostly black and white, and where it did have color it was striking. Every time he looked at it it seemed to be something different. He decided to do that one. After all who would choose a princess puzzle? Only odd people like Kitty would do such a boring and disgustingly pink activity.

The pieces were spread out over the floor and arranged. Nolan studied all of the pieces before continuing. Then each corner was placed just so. It would be bad if he got the size of the puzzle wrong. The outside pieces soon followed in order. This next part was the hardest bit by far. It might take him a half hour or more to finish. But he didn’t think much about that. All that was on his brain was the puzzle.

Time ticked by. He was still snapping pieces together when Jordan came looking for him. He told Nolan that it was time for dinner. Nolan looked at his unfinished puzzle, then at Jordan. He felt frustrated. Jordan was the one who had told him to do this! And now he wanted him to put it away while it was still unfinished? “No!” Nolan protested loudly. “Don’t you want to eat?” Jordan tried. “No!” Nolan said again. Why wasn’t Jordan getting the point? “Are you coming boys?” Mama called from the kitchen. “Hang on Mom! I need to help Nolan finish this puzzle!” Jordan shouted back, then sat next to Nolan, who was desperately trying to find a spot for the piece he was holding. “Calm down buddy, I’ll help you finish the puzzle, ok?” Nolan took several quick breaths and calmed himself down.

*Click!*

Jordan’s piece went as he snapped it in.

*Click!*

*Click!*

Nolan found the places for two more. Before he knew it the puzzle lay finished before him and Jordan. Nolan studied the finished product. Today it looked like the the branches from their maple tree that hovered over him when he played underneath it. They sat admiring it for a minute, then jumped up as they heard Mama call again. “Are you finished?”

“Yes, we’re coming!” Jordan replied. “C’mon Nolan, it’s time to eat now.” Nolan stood up and hugged Jordan. “Thank n’you.”

“You’re welcome. Race you to the table!” Nolan giggled and followed his brother. The table was set and a pot of soup sat on it along with a bowl of salad and a basket of bread. They sat down. Nolan sniffed and looked down at his filled bowl and plate. Uh oh. The salad smelled normal, the bread smelled good, but the soup… He identified it as the spicy soup. He hated the spicy soup. It burned his tongue and only contained beans. And a little bit of meat. And sometimes noodles. He liked the noodles, but there weren’t any in there. He stirred it just to make sure. Nope. No noodles.

After they prayed, Nolan ate the bread. And the salad. He even ate the carrots in the salad. But that was it. Kitty noticed. “Aren’t you gonna eat your soup Nolan?” Great. Daddy noticed too after that. “Nolan,” his deep voice commanded, “you need to eat some of your soup.” Nolan blinked. Then he started breathing faster. It would burn his tongue. He wouldn’t be able to taste anything else after that. No. No! NO. NO! He started shaking. His fingernails bit into his palms. Everything outside his mind went fuzzy.

“Nolan’s mad.” Kitty informed no one in particular. His ears detected it. He kicked the table fiercely. He had a mad desire to hit her. He screamed. “Calm down Nolan!” Daddy’s voice floated through his head. Nolan couldn’t. He stood up and put his hands over his ears. He screamed again. Nolan didn’t even remember what he was angry about anymore. He only knew his panic and rage. He kicked again. He didn’t know what he kicked since everything was getting mixed together.

“Nolan!” He felt hands on his shoulders. “Go to your room!” The hands were pushing him. He didn’t know where. They stopped and a door slammed. Nolan collapsed on the soft carpet and cried.