**Life In a Kaleidoscope - Chapter Three**

Nolan opened his eyes blearily, then shut them fast because the sun was shining in his face. It must be morning again, even though he couldn’t remember getting ready for bed the day before. He opened his eyes again and realized with a jolt that he was on the floor, his bed towering over him. Odd. He got up to get dressed but noticed that he was already dressed. In the same outfit as yesterday. Very odd. He changed anyway out of habit.

He cautiously made his way out of the room and into the kitchen. It looked like everyone had already eaten. Extremely strange. He was nearly always the first person up. What was more, there were festive decorations up around the house. He looked inside the living room. There were more decorations and a stack of presents on the coffee table. Nolan started to feel excited. The decorations and the presents could only mean that it was a Cake Day. That meant that someone would be opening all of those gifts, blowing out fire, and sharing cake with everyone! The present part was boring unless you were the one opening them, but cake was always good.

Nolan made his way into his brother’s room. Jordan was up and on his computer. “Hi Nolan!” he said as he saw him come in. “Did you know it was your birthday today?” Nolan beamed. He knew now. That meant that *he* got to open the gifts and blow the fire and get the first piece of cake. His stomach rumbled hungrily. “Cake?” he asked Jordan. Jordan shook his head. “No cake yet bud, but I can get you a granola bar if you want.” It didn’t sound as good as cake, but good enough for now. “Granola bar, n’yes.” he told Jordan, who stood up to get him his breakfast.

Together they found the box of snacks in the pantry. Jordan held out two granola bars. One was in a blue wrapper and was chocolate chip and M&M, the other was in a yellow and see-through wrapper that reveled a honey and nut bar. He took the chocolate candy one. Who would want nuts for breakfast? “I can’t believe you picked that one!” Jordan laughed as he threw the other one back. Well who wouldn’t pick the tasty one? Nolan wondered while following Jordan back to the bedroom.

“What do you wanna do? It’s your birthday after all.” Jordan asked. Nolan thought for a long moment. What he really wanted was cake, but he knew that wasn’t going to happen until later. Presents would be nice, but he most likely couldn’t do that either. “Do you want to try a new game?” Jordan asked, sensing his dilemma. Nolan considered it. Jordan usually knew what he liked, and if he didn’t like it he could always try for cake again. So he told Jordan yes.

“Ok, here’s how it goes. You,” Jordan said, pointing at Nolan who looked down at himself. “You will stand right there while I go and hide. When I say “go” you can come out and try to find me.” Nolan was confused at these complicated directions. Why would you hide to be found? But he followed Jordan’s directions anyway and turned to face the wall. He heard Jordan leave the bedroom and run into the hallway. After another minute he heard a muffled “Go!” coming from somewhere in the living room. Nolan turned and trotted in the direction where the sound had come from.

When he reached the living room he stopped and scanned the room for irregular shapes. He found none except for the presents. So he looked behind all of the chairs and ignoring the stack of presents in the corner. Nothing. Nolan frowned. Either he was missing something or Jordan was a really great hider. He checked the room again, this time looking behind everything. Then he saw it. A little patch of grey fabric the same color as Jordan’s shirt sticking out from the abnormally large pile of gifts. Nolan pulled the big present away, causing the rest to fall off. Jordan was sitting there grinning at him. “You found me! I was sure that was going to be too tough, but I guess Mr. Smarty has me figured out!” Nolan looked around. He saw no Mr. Smarty, but that didn’t matter now. What mattered was that he could do it.

“Again?” he asked Jordan. Jordan agreed, so they played several more rounds of “Hide and Seek”, as Nolan learned it was called, each time finding Jordan quicker than the last. After finding Jordan yet again (in the closet), Jordan decided to switch it up a bit. “Now I’ll stand here and you go hide somewhere. When you are done hiding say ‘Yes’ and I’ll come to find you. And don’t hide in the same spots or I’ll know where you are.” Nolan was a little disappointed. He was getting good at finding and he had no practice at hiding. But he would do it anyway.

He walked through the house, looking for new spots to hide. It took a while, but he finally found the perfect one. In his bedroom and under the bed there was just enough room for a smallish nine year old boy. It was a nice spot, dark and cozy. He wormed his way in and pulled his favorite blanket in after him. When he was comfortable he shouted “Yes!” to Jordan as loud as he could. Jordan must of heard him because Nolan heard footsteps coming closer and closer. His door opened. “Where are you? I know you’re here somewhere!” he heard Jordan say. Nolan smiled. Jordan walked over to the bed, but didn’t see him. Nolan couldn’t keep back his happiness anymore. He started giggling. Louder and louder. Jordan’s head appeared. “Found you! You know you’re not supposed to laugh until I leave or I’ll find you.” Nolan didn’t care. He pulled himself out and lay there laughing in the full joy of the moment.

Kitty’s head poked in the room. “Hi Nolan! Today’s your birthday! And you get presents now!” She was bouncing up and down excitedly. “Come on, come on! Mama and Daddy are up and you can do presents now!” And she was gone. Jordan pulled Nolan up. “C’mon. It’s time for you to start your birthday presents now.” Nolan clapped excitedly and dragged Jordan into the living room. Kitty was bouncing on the couch next to Mama who was holding baby Leah. Daddy was in the big chair next to the presents. Nolan plopped down on the floor near them and Jordan sat himself down against the wall. “Happy birthday Nolan!” Mama said, smiling. “Are you ready to open?” Jordan laughed. “Ready? He dragged me here and was asking for cake this morning.” Daddy laughed too. “He knows how to get what he wants. I’m surprised that he hasn’t found it yet and eaten half of it.” Nolan patted his hands on the carpeted floor impatiently. He already knew which one he was going to open first. It was smallish and made a nice shaking sound which just may be candy. Preferably Skittles.

“Okay, you can open now.” Mama said. Nolan snatched the present and ripped the paper off as fast as he could. He was right! He hugged the beautiful box of edible rainbows happily, then grabbed another package. “I take it he liked that.” Daddy said to Jordan, and gestured for him to open again. He did. Again and again. Getting a light-up ball, a very disappointing shirt, some play dough stuff, a new game, a puzzle, and a squishy thing that felt nice when he rubbed it between his hands. Finally only the big present was left. It was a box shape and quite light for being larger then him. It took him a minute to get all of the paper off and open the taped box. When he opened the box a bunch of colorful plastic balls tumbled out. Nolan was confused. He liked balls, but he didn’t need a million of the same thing.

Daddy stood up. “Now for the fun part,” he said, picked up the box of balls, and headed to the back yard. Jordan followed him. “Come on Nolan. You’re going to like this!” So he put on his shoes and entered the sunny back yard. Daddy and Jordan pulled what looked like a big plastic tub out of the shed and set it under the tree. Nolan looked inside it. There were more colored balls inside. Jordan fetched the balls that Nolan had opened inside and poured them in with the rest. Then, to Nolan’s surprise, he jumped in it. Slowly it came to him. it was like a pool, but instead of water there were balls. “Try it.” Daddy said. So Nolan climbed over the edge and slowly lowered himself in. He couldn’t feel the bottom, but that wasn’t saying much since he wasn’t very tall. “Watch this Nolan!” Jordan said, and sank beneath the surface. Nolan crawled over the balls to where his brother was last, expecting him to be hiding there. But he wasn’t. Nolan looked around. His brother had just disappeared! He looked at Daddy with wide eyes. But he just laughed. “Don’t worry, he’s still in there.” Nolan felt a movement beneath him. He dug downwards and bumped into something. He had found Jordan! Jordan stood up with Nolan on his shoulders and they popped out into the sunlight. They both laughed. “Wanna play hide and seek in here?” Jordan asked. “N’yes!!” Nolan answered excitedly. “You only have about ten minutes to play before you need to come in for lunch.” Daddy said, and headed inside.

Ten minutes later, two sweaty brothers made their way inside for lunch. “Did you like that Nolan?” Jordan asked. Nolan nodded. It was his favorite present other than the Skittles. “My, you look like you had fun in the ball pit, sweaty boy.” Mama said and hugged him as he was sitting down for lunch. “You should of seen him Mom,” Jordan said. “He was having a blast.”

Daddy started dishing out the food, getting Nolan’s and Kitty’s first. Nolan studied his lunch, sniffing and poking everything. There were cheesy noodles, that was good, a buttered biscuit, tasty, and his favorite kind chicken. After Daddy finished praying he dug right in. He saved the noodles for last since those were the best.

Soon they were all done eating and Nolan knew what was coming next. Cake! Sure enough, Mama came out of the kitchen with a delicious looking cake with fire on the top. They started singing ‘Happy Birthday’ to him, Kitty being a bit off key, but whatever. Nolan clapped his hands excitedly. “Blow out the candles Nolan!” Kitty exclaimed. Nolan looked at the fire carefully, chose an angle that would allow him to blow them all out at once, and blew. Everyone clapped. Nolan laughed. He had blown all the fire out at once! It didn’t always work, but when it did he felt very proud of himself. Mama cut into the chocolatey cake and gave Nolan the first piece.

Before he took a bite he inhaled the sweet chocolate smell and tasted the creamy frosting. It smelled perfect. He took a bite. And another, and another, until it was gone. He felt a slightly hyper swing go through and excite him. Nolan kicked his feet on his chair and clapped. Then he saw there was ice cream. He poked Mama and pointed. “Can I have…. Ice cream!!” Mama scooped out a little onto his plate and gave him a spoon. He went through his normal test of smelling and tasting, then commenced in devouring the awesome stuff.

Nolan was feeling really excited now. Before he realized what he was doing he started running. He ran until he came to the couch, then flopped himself onto it, laughing in his hyper state. Kitty ran after him and jumped on top of him. Normally he would of been annoyed, but he fine with it today. “Run with me Nolan!” she squealed. With no way to get rid of the hyper feeling other then to run, he followed her through the house, running into things on the way. He didn’t care one bit.

Eventually they grew somewhat tired and went back to the kitchen. Baby Leah was covered in chocolate and Daddy was trying to clean her off. Mama was clearing the table and Jordan was taking care of the precious cake. Kitty darted up to Jordan. “Can you play with me Nolan and in the swimming-balls?”

“Does Nolan want to?”

“I don’t know. He probably does because.. because I think he does.”

Jordan snorted. “You mean because you want him to.”

“Uh-huh uh-huh! Come on!” And she was gone, again.

“Do you want to Nolan?” Jordan asked. Nolan shrugged too. “N’yes.” he decided after moment. “Come on then. Let’s go find Kitty.” Jordan said. They headed outside, both of them content to chase Kitty for now. Nolan, feeling extra hyper and happy, felt that nothing could spoil this beautiful day.