

The Pencil Parade



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Lily was a curious girl with warm light-brown skin and wavy honey-blonde hair tied with a red ribbon. She loved to draw more than anything in the world. Every night she opened her big pencil case and made pictures full of color and imagination. Tonight she drew a castle, a river, and a smiling sun. Then she yawned, left the case open, and fell asleep in her star pajamas.



The moment Lily's eyes closed, something magical happened. Twelve colored pencils wiggled, stretched, and hopped out of the case. Scarlet, the bright crimson pencil with a little red cape, puffed out its chest. Azure, the calm sky-blue pencil in round glasses, straightened its blue beret. Sunny, the golden-yellow pencil with a sunflower pin, grinned a wide, sunny grin. "Let's draw a kingdom!" Sunny cheered.



The pencils marched across Lily's desk, tiny feet tapping on the wood. They reached a big white sheet of paper and climbed onto its snowy edge. Scarlet raised its sharp red tip like a sword. "This kingdom needs a ruler, and red is the boldest color!" it declared, stamping a proud red line across the bottom of the page. The other pencils gasped and gathered around.



"Wait!" shouted Azure, adjusting its round glasses. "A kingdom needs a blue sky and a wide ocean first!" It drew a wobbly blue wave that bumped right into Scarlet's red line. Sunny giggled and drew a yellow sun on top, but it landed sideways. "Oops! My sunshine rolled away!" Soon every pencil was drawing at the same time, and nobody was listening to anybody.



Green drew grass over the blue ocean. Orange sketched a tower that leaned to the left. Purple started a castle door but wandered off halfway. Pink tried a road that curved into a circle. "My color should be everywhere!" Scarlet argued loudly, scribbling more red across the page. "No, mine!" squeaked little Violet. The paper grew crowded and confusing.



Buildings stood unfinished, with walls that stopped in the middle of nowhere. Roads zigzagged in mismatched colors and led to nothing at all. The sun had three corners, and the ocean sat on top of a hill. The twelve pencils stepped back and stared at their messy kingdom. "It looks like a jumble sale," said Sunny, scratching its yellow head. Nobody laughed.



Scarlet frowned at the crooked red walls and folded its cape. "This is not the kingdom I wanted," it said quietly, and for once its proud voice was small. Azure sighed and tapped its paintbrush behind one ear. "Maybe ruling alone is not the same as making something beautiful," it said softly. The other pencils nodded, looking at the tangled picture.



Just then, the bedroom door creaked open. Lily shuffled in wearing her fluffy white slippers, rubbing her hazel eyes. Her little gap-toothed smile popped open when she saw the tiny pencils standing on her desk. "Oh! You're alive!" she whispered, kneeling down beside the messy paper. The pencils froze, holding their breath.



"I heard arguing," Lily said gently. "And I can see why. Look at this picture — everyone drew alone, and nobody shared." Scarlet lowered its sharp tip. "But my red is the best," it mumbled, half joking, half not. Lily giggled softly. "Red is wonderful for capes and roses. But a kingdom needs blue for the sky and yellow for the sun, too. Every color matters."



Azure's teal eyes lit up behind its glasses. "So if we each draw our own part, and then join them together..." Lily nodded. "Teamwork! Each of you is clever and creative. Just take turns, listen, and cooperate." Sunny bounced on its tip and tied its yellow scarf tighter. "I have an idea! Let's start again, but this time we plan together!"



The pencils huddled close. Azure drew a calm blue sky across the top and a wide ocean below. Scarlet made bold red rooftops and a proud castle door. Sunny painted a round golden sun and warm yellow windows. Green rolled out grassy hills, and Orange added a friendly bridge. Each pencil chose the perfect place for its color.



Working together, the picture grew faster and more beautiful than before. Purple finished the castle door with a swirl. Pink laid a straight road that matched the bridge exactly. Brown drew strong tree trunks, and the other pencils hung bright leaves on every branch. The kingdom sparkled with imagination, and no color pushed the others away.



Lily clapped her hands softly. "Look what you made together!" she said. The pencils stepped back and admired their work. Scarlet's red rooftops glowed against Azure's blue sky. Sunny's sunshine warmed every little window. "It's the most beautiful kingdom I have ever seen," Azure whispered, and everyone agreed.



"You see," Lily said, kneeling to their level, "every talent contributes something valuable. Alone, each of you drew a piece. Together, you drew a whole world." Scarlet straightened its gold star badge and smiled at Azure. "Your ocean is the best part," it admitted. Azure laughed. "And nobody could paint red roofs like you."



Before the sun came up, the twelve pencils marched back into their case, chattering happily. Scarlet waved its little red cape last. "Same time tomorrow?" it whispered. Lily climbed back into bed and pulled up her blanket. "Every night," she yawned, "we'll draw together." The case snapped shut, and everything fell quiet and warm.



In the morning, Lily's mother gasped at the paper on the desk. A whole kingdom glowed there, full of friendly towers, a round golden sun, and roads that all joined hands. Lily smiled her gap-toothed smile and hugged her pencil case close. "Remember," she whispered to the twelve pencils inside, "every color matters, and so does every friend." Then she picked up her pencils to draw again.