



*The King's Cadets and Little Joe* is a collection of five short stories following the characters from the land of Little Pilgrim. Early readers will be absorbed in the delightful tales and captivated by the enchanting woodland illustrations as they adventure with three brothers, Matthew, James, and Little Joe.

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**2 Corinthians 12:9a**

**My grace is sufficient for you,  
for my power is made perfect  
in weakness.**

## A Gift for Innocence

In the Land of Delight, birthdays are celebrated every day. But one very special birthday had Matthew, James, and Little Joe scrambling around in a flurry. Their baby sister, Innocence, was turning a year older.

The three brothers did everything they could to make the day extra special.

Matthew blew up balloons. James invited his sister's friends for a dinner party. Little Joe taste-tested the frosting on a carrot cake that Mercy, the squirrel, baked for the occasion.

“Almost everything is ready,” said Mercy. She flicked the end of her bushy tail to dust crumbs off the party table. “We just need to wrap her gifts.”



“Oh, no!” cried the brothers. “We forgot to get her a birthday gift!”

“That’s okay,” said Mercy. “The party isn’t until tonight. You have all day to find a gift for Innocence.”

The three boys thought and thought. What gift could they give their sister to let her know how much they loved her?

“A boat?” Matthew asked, but they all said no.



“A teacup?” James asked, but again, no.



“She loves flowers,” Little Joe said.

“We could find a special flower for her.”

They all agreed that was a very good idea.

They ventured out to the Meadow of Wonder, where all kinds of wildflowers grew. Daisies, daffodils, day lilies, Easter lilies, tiger lilies, polar bear lilies, and roses of every color popped their heads



above the green grasses. The wind had carried seeds from the good King's garden and planted them here to grow and spread the King's cheer.

"I'll find the most colorful one," said Matthew. He hunted and found the brightest yellow Easter lily he'd ever seen. But when he pushed it down into his vest pocket to take home, the lily crumpled into a bright yellow mess.



“I’ll find the biggest one,” said James.

He searched and found a daisy the size of his head. He cut it down and hoisted it up to show his brothers. But a gust of wind carried away the petals until only the nub was left.



“I’ll find the best-smelling one,” said Little Joe. He sniffed around and found a rose that smelled sweeter than any other. He tried to pick it, but the thorns poked him so badly he tumbled backward into



a thicket. Weeds  
and thistles stuck  
to his fur, and his  
hands hurt from  
the rose thorns.



It was getting late.

Soon the party would start. So, the  
brothers returned home sad with their  
ruined gifts.

Their sister met them at the door and  
hugged each of her brothers. “What’s  
wrong?” Innocence asked.

They told her how they had wanted to

find her a special flower as a gift and how they had failed.

“But it’s perfect,” she said. “I love it!”

Innocence reached up and plucked a lovely little dandelion from out of Little Joe’s ear. She tucked it behind her own ear and showed everyone at her party the special gift her brothers had given her.



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