

T W O ♥ P R I N C E S

Kenneth "Pipe" Wood – <http://liberative.tripod.com> – January 14th 2008, Winston-Salem, N.C. (USA)

With the sun above growing higher and stronger, coursing through the sky each day over Bodobia, winter's ice melted and their seasonal snowfall receded back to the feet of the mountains. Amidst blurry visions that seemed to him like just bizarre dreams about a strange woman with candles, a crystal ball, and some burning brushes, the young Prince Pat slowly returned to good health. He was fading in and out though, sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious and dreaming, unable to tell which was which. Suddenly, there was a change. Lying in bed one day, once he was feeling right again, Prince Pat began to wonder whether what he remembered had actually taken place that winter.

"Your vision is so clear!" the kind old grandmotherly figure had told him. "You will grow up to marry the same in time, sweet child." Prince Pat didn't like his parents' relationship, so he was confused. "Is that good or bad?" he had asked. "Look into the crystal ball again," the good old lady had advised him. "What do you see?" Blinded by awe, Pat beheld beauty within the polished sphere. Then sleep overwhelmed him. But before passing out, Prince Pat heard the nurse answer his question, "Your two will be a love beyond reckoning, so strong as to align the stars of heaven." Pat was only five years old, however, and he fell unequipped yet to understand what the sage's grown-up words meant. Would it be the same as with his parents, two mean people named King Manny and Queen Distaff, fussing and fighting with corruption and broken bondage?

Over and over, Prince Pat visualized the gypsy standing over his bed with magical knowledge and healing ways. Now and then it seemed like perhaps a distant dream, but Prince Pat could see the gypsy's wrinkled old face and her paisley red turban, her fingers with rings on all bearing elaborate spiritual symbolism. He saw her illustrated Tarot cards and green herbs from which she made a tea she gave him for health. He heard again the songs she performed to entertain him. He remembered her name being "Abbey".

As Prince Pat drifted into complete awareness, that first day when he woke up in his bedroom without Abbey there, he noticed this mother was present instead. "Sit up, son," Queen Distaff ordered. "You're getting better." Thinking back, Pat inquired, "Who was that gypsy?" "Gypsy? There's no need to talk of silly things," the Queen soothed. "You slept all winter. That's strange enough. Rest a while."

Soon, Prince Pat was out of bed and on his feet again, climbing trees and fishing – normal activities for a boy of means his age in that day – most of the time spent with other royal children, blue-blood progeny of aristocracy.

Such elite parents thought their families too good to associate with commoners. These couldn't cut themselves or they'd bleed to death. Occasionally, however, Prince Pat would see commoner children fishing down by the riverside, or wherever else, and found himself entertaining the idea of playing with them, which was absolutely against the rules. However, after a while, Pat would doubt his freedom and remember his parents' strictness. Besides, Pat felt like an alien, as through he were looking at them through windows or a veil of mist and couldn't reach toward them even if he had wanted. Perhaps the commoners felt somewhat the same, because many of the little girls he saw would have scratched, pulled hair, and killed one another to be that magical chosen maiden who would one day inherit the crown. But the commoner children just looked at Prince Pat as he just looked at them.

Prince Pat's heart was filled with wanderlust, restlessly imagining the limitless extent of his executive power when that Kingdom one day became his own. Racing thoughts across his mind developed improvements that he could establish – things such as citizens' council meetings and voting like Parliament. Yet, there was something missing, and Pat knew it. Maybe it was he didn't have any siblings – no fellow Princes and Princesses to share his royal life. No, he thought, maybe it was simply alienation from his troubled parents and their oversized attitudes. Well, whatever it was, Prince Pat felt lonely most all the time.

The year rolled on, the sun tracing higher orbits across the sky each day. At night, Prince Pat stayed up past dark, catching lightning bugs to put them in gossamer webbing and watch them flash. When summer arrived on June 21st (the longest day of that year), Pat happened to wake right before the dawn, seeing the next moment the rays of sun beginning to rise. Pat had been asleep dreaming about catching fish, but his eyelids noticed a broken lightness, twilight changing across the horizon. His eyes opened, gazing through the lightening window. Various hues of light swept across that sky, spanning from purple, through blue, green, yellow, orange, and red, in great swaths. The purple was the first to break the twilight. Then the rest of the colors came sweeping across the sky. At last, the sun zoomed across the horizon of Beacon Hill. Built as the Kingdom was, most of the castle's viewpoints aligned with celestial changes. As Prince Pat gazed at the sunrise over Beacon Hill, he remembered having missed it other years and was glad to catch it this time. The hill was prepared with firewood which sentinels could light and warn their Kingdom of foreign invasions, but mainly it was artifact.

All of the Kingdoms located around those Northern lands, where pilgrims had come before histories were written, sought the “Light of Lights” in a physical form, hoping once they found it all their problems would be solved. They wanted their guilt and shame removed, and did not understand the secret to so doing rests within oneself. No one remembered the name of those ancient pioneers, but they were celebrated as the “Flowers of Antiquity”, and so the current people cultivated splendor – whatever kinds of flowers and amazing plants would grow in their clime. Looking out his window, Prince Pat could see on and on across the realm. Bright plants were growing everywhere! Invoking the name of the sun – “Sol” – Pat visualized fire descending from the Morning Star. Pat wondered a while what he would find beyond the horizon, should he ever go.

That forenoon, Queen Distaff informed Pat that, three days later, the *crème-de-la-crème* of society would attend a masked ball at Citadel Castle for the Feast of Saint John the Baptist. All the children were to be dressed up, with masks especially, and they were not to take the masks off under any circumstances, so as not to interfere with the dealings of the adult aristocracy. What kind of costume did Pat want? Pat thought. “A unicorn.” “What?” Evil and distraught, Distaff was caught off guard. She continued, “Are you going to prance around too? Like a little girlie, too, Prince Pat? Like she said you would. I can’t forget she said. Is it some kind of miracle? Well, I think it’s some kind of curse, a price we have to pay for bringing you back to life. She said...” “Who said?” Prince Pat interjected. Distaff really said, “Abbey” but she swallowed the sounds quickly. “Abbey?” asked Pat. “I’ll fashion you a costume,” the Queen softly assured him cold.

Three days later, as nobility rode in their carriages on a caravan across the country, they paraded colors, banners, and seals, all brightly in the sun. “Many people fall in love at masked balls such as the one we’re going to,” spoke Queen Distaff. “Now, usually, it’s not until their older. But tell us if you find a nice lassie and we’ll get with her parents and see what kind of partner she’d make.” “Yes,” King Manny interjected. “Sometimes people fall in love at such balls, and with people they’re not even married to.” “People they’re not married to?” caught Queen Distaff on the rebound. She added, “Not married to yet. So if you want to marry a lassie, we’ll see if you’re compatible.”

Pat leaned his head against the carriage wall and dazed out the window. Abbey’s face came to his mind again, except this time it was moving and he wasn’t controlling her. It was as though she were really there. “You will find the one today,” she said. “You will meet your love. Look forward to it. Don’t be afraid of what you find. Now I must go, but keep looking up, good Prince.” Prince Pat had never had a girlfriend; he was too young, he thought. Maybe today his parents’ expectations for his flirtatious interactions with the opposite sex would materialize. Could Pat convince Manny and Distaff he was a big boy?

His heart filled with butterflies. “What are you thinking about?” King Manny asked him. Pat thought about it momentarily and answered at last, “Something she said.” “Who?” asked the King, “Your mother?” “No,” Pat leveled with him. “Abbey. She said I would grow up to marry the same, but as I imagine looking out into a field of little girls whom I might one day marry, my desire is empty.” “Now son,” spoke King Manny declaratively, “I don’t want to hear you mention your wonderland of dreams about the gypsy Abbey anymore. She’s not real. Never was. Why would we resort to arts like crystal gazing and candles? I don’t know what you saw when you were sleeping all winter, but there is no Abbey.” Prince Pat felt upset, and this transformed into guilt, so he said, “I’m sorry, Father.” Queen Distaff sighed, “We’re almost there.”

They continued to the Kingdom of Citadel, through the gates under the wall of the city and across the drawbridge, up a street lined with shops and finally into Citadel Castle. Colorful banners flew gaily, brightly displaying their Lords’ and Ladies’ coats of arms. Tables were set up with epicurean fancy: fine foods and colorful garlands. The Kingdoms’ knights were there too, armor shining in the sun, some on horseback and some with bugles. “Certainly, no expense was spared to hold this feast,” King Manny told his lad. “Now, your mother and I will taste some wine and cheese with the other adults. After that we’ll get back together for dinner. They’ll bugle so you know it’s time. Go and play with the other children now. Look for her.”

The parents having split for a moment in the afternoon of Saint John’s Day, Prince Pat found a group of children playing Blind Man’s Bluff. Also there was Prince Chris, the five-year-old son and only child of King John and Queen Mary. “Chris?” asked Pat. “Pat?” asked Chris, laughing with a gay release, thinking they must have never met anyone with a name that could also be male or female. Prince Chris was costumed as a lion, wearing an ornate gold mask with whiskers and a mane. Pat was the unicorn, and together they were symbols of the greatness within monarchy as it was practiced around those Northern lands.

“Look at the Lion and the Unicorn!” some of the older children joked. “They make a nasty pair!” Still, the two Princes were drawn to one another, so Pat and Chris stared at each other through the masks, wishing they could see what the other looked like. Then they hugged a friendly hug and it felt weird – like there was vast love in the hug rather than one generally would get. As they would find out later, their faithful romance was love at first sight. The couple looked at each other in the eyes some more. The love was incredible, so they played together before supper, abandoning the other children. Climbing maple trees, skipping rocks across the surface of Citadel Lake, and hopping stone to stone across Turbot River, the couple lost track of time. But suddenly they heard the buglers. “I’ll never forget you,” Pat told Chris. “Same here,” said Chris. “That’s what my gypsy nurse Abbey told me,” echoed Pat.

Over subsequent years, Prince Pat and Prince Chris thought about each other oftentimes – just about every day. As they excelled in their schooling and played sports as well as any of the other youngsters in their respective Kingdoms could, they felt empty hearts of longing to be filled with the other, bodily. The two princes came under a lot of social pressure to partner up with the young damsels in their Kingdoms, but becoming teenagers, Pat and Chris were learning of their identity as males. Remembering their identity as a team that day in childhood was so good that their same gender even made the miracle of their friendship (albeit distant) better. They were best friends and more in each other's dreams. "If only we could be together!" both of them thought. And if "Pat" or "Chris" had been the opposite gender, their social pressure might have released. What a wedding-day present that would be, if only it were!

The two Princes could visualize their Kingdom's chapel all set up with flowers, ribbons, and bows, then glittery confetti drifting from the ceiling as the new spouses, Pat and Chris, would walk back down the center aisle and out of the church. But then, in the sunlight of a spring afternoon, the masculine face of the other Prince would be plainly seen. And so the illusion of "Pat & Chris" would shatter. How could there be two Princes, married like that? Never yet had such a thing been heard of. So maybe they would go back and try visualizing the wedding scenario again. This time, maybe they walked in opposite sides of the chapel but wound up at the same place, in the center, before God and all the people assembled to celebrate their partnership there. Chris and Pat exchanged their vows, kissed, and walked out arm in arm under a rain of birdseed.

Through all of this, their dreams were combining and their souls growing naturally attuned to one another. It wasn't just imagination that Pat and Chris shared thoughts. The two Princes could see their reception ballroom too, and all those dances sharing breath, over those many nights they had romanced and won deepest love of one another – over the occasional mug of ale once they had reached drinking age. It was psychic and partly magical, but they couldn't help fearing it was "schizophrenic" (to use the modern term) delusion, each hearing the other's voice as though he were there. "Why can't I visit Prince Pat?" Chris would ask his parents on occasion. Prince Pat requested likewise. But their parents answered, "It would not be proper, son."

Pat and Chris weren't effeminate. They were normal and healthy young males in every way – except one: that is, they longed romantically for the companionship of one another. In visions waiting to be consummated, Prince Pat and Prince Chris gave each other chocolate and flowers many times. Sometimes they would really get chocolate or flowers to enjoy like playing tea with imaginary friends. One would sniff a flower and the other would receive the scent psychically. Or one would eat some chocolate and the other would taste it. And black colly birds across the mountains seemed to sing of their thoughts back and forth.

But Prince Pat and Prince Chris lived in different realms, separated by perilous mountain ranges full of bandits, and they could only correspond once every few months, with messages delivered via horse carriers. Every pen pal letter was dear, and they told one another of their activities – school, and sports, and all. They told each other of their common love and their hopes to spend a lot of time together just as soon as they could. They were in accord. Many nights, both would burn away the oil lamps as they scrolled their hearts out, aching for the other's company.

Finally, when they had been teenagers for several years, Prince Pat and Prince Chris were both invited, with their families, to the wedding of King Albus and his new wife, Queen Mabeya. The wedding brought them to Citadel Castle again. It was scary in a way, because the previous wife of King Albus, Annabelle, had died under mysterious circumstances. Some people spoke of murder, but the masses were assured she had fallen ill from cold drafts in the castle. Whatever the truth was, this would be their chance for love – Prince Pat and Prince Chris! Their hearts pounded inside their chests when they heard news of this opportunity for them to meet once again. Excitedly, they yearned even stronger for one another than they had before.

One by one, the days passed until the wedding crept up. The royalty from many Kingdoms journeyed to Citadel Castle, including the families of Prince Pat and Prince Chris. Suddenly, they just saw each other standing there. And it was like, "Hey! It's you – my missing piece!" There they were – the same gender – with beards, big voice boxes, and all – adults! They looked one another over for a minute, amazed with the beauty that they found free from masks and costumes. Pat had red hair; Chris had blonde. Pat had blue eyes; Chris, brown. Chris was a little bit taller than Pat, but Pat was strong and burley. They looked good.

As fate would have it, the families of the two Princes got seats side-by-side in the chapel. In sync with the vow, Prince Chris whispered to Prince Pat, "To have and to hold." It seemed to ring throughout the chapel. And Pat could feel the firmness of his love. He reached over and felt the firmness of Chris's too. "That's going a bit far," Prince Pat apologized. "But I liked it," responded Chris. Pat's mother saw them and almost had a nervous breakdown. But she didn't say anything and just waited.

As the bride and the groom exited into the vestibule, Prince Chris and Prince Pat clasped hands, squeezed firmly, and shed a few tears. "You know, don't you?" asked Prince Pat. "You cannot be mine . . . I fear you cannot." "Yes?" Prince Chris returned. Pat continued, "My parents won't let me inherit their Kingdom if I profess my romantic feelings for you, dear." "Why is that?" asked Prince Chris. Prince Pat explained, "My mother and father tell me it's wrong. They want me married to a woman, and they've even set me up on a few dates, but you're the only one I want – the only one I've really ever wanted – I love you!"

At the reception banquet, the combination of those two young men was driving Pat's parents mad. "They act like crazy infidels," King Manny said. "How could they believe that a man and a man going together is right? Just seeing them together makes me lose my appetite." Queen Distaff thought and said, "I detest homosexuality. Religiously enlightened ministers tell us that it's wrong. Let's devise a plan to kill the two Princes." "Yes," said King Manny. "It would be better for our rightful heir to be dead – and some noble appointed by consensus – than for the monarchy to end for lack of progeny. 'Be fruitful and multiply,' God has said to generations through the ages. We should believe in God not in a gender-based deviancy."

King Manny and Queen Distaff agreed to let Pat invite Chris over, as he had requested. "You're old enough to travel without us across the mountains now," said Queen Distaff. Let Prince Chris do the same and come to visit you. It will be good for us." So soon Chris came, and Pat's parents laid their trap – poisoned food. Still it tasted fine and neither Prince suspected what was about to happen. After lunch, the two Princes went to Pat's bedroom. Chris took off his shirt, and Pat gave Chris a firm massaging. Pat was about to take off his shirt also and let Chris massage him also, but the poison was kicking in.

Their stomachs churned and they grew dizzy. But they couldn't throw up. Prince Pat realized, "My parents must have poisoned us with that food." "Will we die together?" Prince Chris wondered. Then a knock came on the door. It was Abbey, Prince Pat's nursemaid who saved him from that winter cold so long ago. She was more aged now, and beyond years like one big wrinkle. Abbey brought her magical healing knowledge and pouches filled with green herbs for giving them. In her crystal ball, she had foreseen the murderous plot between Manny and Distaff. She had second-checked it with her Tarot cards, charted it in the stars on the charts and in the sky, and seen that the time was now. But if things went well, as Abbey could cause, their lives would improve a thousand-fold. Naturally, Abbey wanted to keep her dear Pat and his beloved Chris from dying, but advocating for their homosexual romance was revolutionary, something she and her magic friends had been waiting on many lifetimes. Suddenly Abbey had known Pat and Chris were eating poisoned food. And as hard as she had ridden her horse, she could not warn them on time. With a mortar and pestle, she ground up green herbs, mashed them with some water into a paste, and gave the two princes the curing remedy, measure by measure.

While Abbey looked toward eventual revolution and a redistribution of the power to be evenly held among the people, she knew that it would be a long time if ever when she could finally take over the realm and change it into a fair democracy. Still, holding her agenda of establishing an even greater justice, she had come on this night to give Pat and Chris the freedom to be together – true partners for life, as God had always meant for the two princes to be.

"Thank you very much," Pat released with a bow. "It's a miracle to see that you're still alive. I never forgot you, you know. My parents claimed you were imagination, but I distrusted them. So, in my mind, I always knew you were real." Having purged Pat and Chris of the poison, Abbey snuck them out a back castle passage to her horse. The three loaded onto it and made a hasty exodus toward the Kingdom of Neopea, home of Chris's parents, King John and Queen Mary. There the two princes would fare safely.

On the way to Neopea, Abbey guided their horse deftly up trails around hairpin curves, ever so slowly upward, until there was snow all around. Afternoon was coming to a close as they sojourned. The trees gave way to dirt and rock, they were so high. But they kept going until above them there loomed the gigantic mouth of a cave. The floor went downward and into the some warmer mountain, and Abbey told them. "This is where we will spend the night."

The mouth of the cave faced west, and as the sun hung low in the sky, Abbey held a large quartz crystal aloft, breaking the sunlight into a spectrum of colors. She was standing at just the right spot for the colored swaths to intersect smaller crystals, further distributing the sunlight. As she turned her crystal ever so slightly, the refractions swirled like moths, illuminating the inside of the cave, rainbow ripples swimming on the walls. Also, there was a spring inside the cave, which ran to a stream, down and out of sight, further inside the mountain. "Now the setting sun and its rainbows foreshadow your sojourn," Abbey said. "There will be war. But the underground river will wash away the pain. May the bridge of rainbows signify your righteousness, my future Kings. This is your wedding!"

Abbey took the two suitors and presented them both with gold rings. "Do you take each other, to have and to hold, now in everlasting life, forsaking all others, for more good than the evil, for better or for worse, through thick and through thin?" "Yes," answered the two princes. "Then put these rings on each other's hands and let the marriage be consummated," declared the gypsy. The princes exchanged rings. "My two Princes, you may kiss," she smiled to them.

Pat and Chris were bonded. They felt almost as twins now, a fact that came from them first individually but also was helped by Abbey's marriage ritual. Like two colors of light combining in the same space, they were freer in joint unity than they ever had been apart, feeling capable to somehow do more than both just combined ever could – almost anything needed – as something like "Pat & Chris", a joint business partnership, with both holding equal stock.

Enough wood was there to build a fire in the cave, because this was one of Abbey's favorite routes through the mountains and she had been storing pieces, bit by bit, over countless years, kept safe from bandits. Her wood stack was designed for nighttime stays, precisely such as this escape. So Abbey started supper cooking. The gypsy had brought plenty of food – sausages, cheese, and bread.

That night, Prince Pat and Prince Chris slept snuggled closely together under the covers there in the security of the cave, where Abbey had provided release and marriage. There, they gave and found the love that they had searched and always longed for, sliding into one another face to face, diving like porpoises in their oceans of love – and the mutual ocean of love between them – to a peak in rocking perfect synchronicity that filled one another to completion.

The next day, on the other side of the mountain sojourn, both Princes came before the sovereigns of Neopea – Chris’s parents, King John and Queen Mary. They told them what had happened and, upon learning of the mountain wedding, Chris’s parents were shocked. “But how can two Kings inherit the throne?” “Ah,” the gypsy Abbey replied. “Two good Kings really can inherit the throne.” “Then how is that?” King John asked. “Well,” answered Abbey, “I believe your Kingdom has a wizard-priest named ‘Zapaya’.” “Yes,” answered King John. Momentarily, servants went and fetched the sage. “What do you think, Zapaya?” asked Queen Mary. “Our son, Prince Chris here, says he’s married this other young man here, Prince Pat, without us even knowing. And now, the two men want to inherit our Kingdom without a Queen.” “Well,” spoke Zapaya, “Give me a minute to look it up.”

Zapaya discussed their Holy Book which was written about the Kingdoms of Yahuda. Those were the Kingdoms that honored the god “Yah”, or “YaH-eWeH” at pivotal times – thus “YaHWeH” or one of similar variations. Speaking of YaHWeH’s covenants, Zapaya asked, “Why can’t eunuchs figuratively ‘join’, only ‘hold fast’? Foreigners can both ‘join’ and ‘hold fast’. It says so here in Isaiah. Is it an error in the text?” King John and Queen Mary couldn’t think of the answer. “It’s like apples and oranges – ‘join’ and ‘hold fast’,” King John protested. “No. It’s bananas,” said Mary. Zapaya laughed. Then Zapaya added, “Neither will I tell you the reason why you should let your son inherit your Kingdom, John and Mary; still, you should pass it on to him and his new spouse, Pat. This is the word of God I pass on now on to you – Marriage is only right for true partners. These two have been struck by love since their childhoods, waiting only to grow up and find one another again. Now here they are, your son, Chris, and his true love, Pat. Please try and accept them.” King John and Queen Mary had the utmost respect for Zapaya, so they prayed and prayed, trying to understand the will of God in light of what Zapaya had told them. Exasperated, Queen Mary asked, “Should we kill Zapaya? No. No, of course not.” “Letting our son and his partner inherit our realm,” King John reckoned, “would mean the end of the holy bloodline, carried like a chalice maternally for æons. And the end of our bloodline would be devastating, as our world depends on its holy power for survival. This is the blood that our ancestral Lord Yeshua shed on the Cross. It is His Spirit that all good Kingdoms hold dear and rally around. And now to let our Grail just go to loss seems too much.”

King John and Queen Mary returned to the wizard-priest Zapaya, full of reservations. “We have prayed, my wife and I,” King John started. “We know that you are very wise, Zapaya, but you laugh at our earnest thoughts. ‘Bananas’ my wife said. You laughed at her like she was describing herself as insane. We prayed and decided that letting the holy lineage of our Kingdom just stop, ending with Prince Chris, would be too much.” “You don’t quite understand,” returned Zapaya. “There is a larger scope to the picture. You see, a barren peasant woman in Bodobia would gladly bear twin children. So, with a wave of my wand, I can pass the royal bloodline coming through the Princes, combined, into her womb. But the peasant’s name only I know.” “What?” the startled King and Queen said. And, in agreement, the monarchs both said, “Yes!” “Then let it be so,” Zapaya stated, waving his wand. And it was.

Then King John and Queen Mary declared they would let Prince Chris and Prince Pat inherit their Kingdom after all, with special consideration given to the holy-blooded twins who would now be alive within the peasant woman, should fate reveal her giftedness. They even held a wedding in the Kingdom’s chapel, all set up with flowers, ribbons, and bows. Pat and Chris walked in opposite sides of the chapel toward each other, winding up right at the front in the middle together, beneath the pulpit before God and all the people assembled there. Zapaya presided and delightfully pronounced Pat and Chris “Spouses – Partner and Partner” after they had said their same-gender vows for one another.

As Spouses Pat and Chris walked out of the chapel, glittery confetti released from the ceiling, and outside the door fell the traditional rice in addition to birdseed. “Thank you, guys!” said Chris, “Your appreciation is considerable. But really we’re only celebrating again the solemn vows that we took in the lofty cave with Abbey (Pat’s nursemaid who saved him from a winter cold with magic long ago.) I wish that you all could have seen it.” “That’s right,” said Pat, “the light of the setting sun, cast through a special crystal, sent rainbow patterns swimming on the cave walls, and an underground stream there gave us comforting reassurance that our problems would wash away like the tide. Then we consummated our wedding! Besides, we’re the ones who should be celebrating your acceptance of our dream to be a true couple, as we often did dream about in our youths.”

After their wedding, King John and Queen Mary came to the two Princes, saying, “We want to retire from work and let you take care of us now. That means we will pass our Kingdom on to the two of you. And we feel we can do this now that you’re married.” King John took off his crown and placed it on Chris’s head – “King Chris!” Then Queen Mary pulled out something wrapped in velvet. “This is for you, King Pat,” said the Queen. She unwrapped it – a crown identical to King Chris’s. “You see, King Pat,” explained John, “we’ll put the Queen’s crown in storage. Perhaps you’ll pull it out, dust it off, and to give to a future monarch – one of your twins born in our grafted lineage.”

Meanwhile, in King Pat's native Kingdom of Bodobia, the peasant woman Magada suffered an assassinated character for bearing not only one but two illegitimate children. Her problems were compounded by the instability of the Bodobian political state, and many among the masses thought like a lynch mob. Over the passing winter, King Manny and Queen Distaff had died, ironically both from a virus that Manny had contracted from "falling in love" at a masked ball. Abbey did not save them, being scorned by their alliance since revealing Prince Pat's homosexuality. As the ice thawed, Bodobian nobles negotiated amongst themselves, with an occasional murder plot, for control of that Kingdom. They needed a hero and God sent one.

But first, King Pat and King Chris sent their messenger, Oxalon, to find the mother whose twins lacked a father – the peasant woman enchanted by Zapaya to carry on the lineage of the Grail. King Pat and King Chris knew of the political struggles in Bodobia, and they reckoned that the Divine Right of Kings meant Pat had the right to determine who would ascend to the throne, if not himself because of their same-sex marriage. King Chris decreed, "Neopea shall fight, if need be, to see that the first-born twin ascends to the Bodobian throne, because this child and its sibling bear the seed of royal blood. Until the child is an adult, the peasant woman (whoever she is) can be Queen."

Their messenger Oxalon found the peasant woman, Magada, carrying her twins who had been conceived immaculately. She was destitute, desperately begging for change in an alleyway. "Two copper coins! Won't anyone give me two copper coins so I can eat today?" She knelt, adjusting the straps that held her babies one around each shoulder. "Please feed me and my babies!" she begged. They introduced themselves, and Magada told Oxalon of her pregnancy. "You have borne royal children," Oxalon explained. "Here is all my money. I must return to Neopea and with word of finding you, the holy one whose gestation carries on the line of royalty for these Kingdoms, for King Chris and King Pat. Blesséd are you and blesséd are the fruits of your womb. What are the twins' names?" Magada answered him, "The older one, the boy, is Graleus, because I saw the Holy Grail as he was being born. And the younger one, the girl, is Mary. I don't know where that name came from. She just looked like a Mary to me." "That's odd," Oxalon stated. "The mother of King Chris is also named Mary. Well, I must depart right away. I hope the money will provide you a temporary room in the city. Look for me in the main square daily. I will return with others very soon." Oxalon left, and Magada had another load to carry. The coins were nice, but they weighed her down, just enough more to make it painful to travel. Still, she made it into town and found a nice boarding house. She bought some food, ate, and then retired for the night.

Knock! Pause. Knock! "Witch!" Pause. "Witch! We know you're in there. Prostituting yourself for magic, and today your warlock came to visit, bringing money.

Oxalon, they said his name was. He made it little secret that he was looking for you." "No!" shouted Magada. "No!" There were vibrations in the air and she could hear Zapaya and Abbey talking strangely, as if in a séance. Suddenly, things started transforming. Magada's coat became shining armor; her children were still safely at her breast, but were now inside armored jackets; and she could feel that her muscles had grown larger. A mouse came running across the floor and it transformed into a large horse. Some ants, which were there, turned into knights in black armor. Roaches became buglers. The twin children now felt weightless, as Magada climbed on the new horse. It ran outside through the door the witch hunters had opened, where their horses were tied up. The manager of the rooming house had woken. "I want no part of this," he advised Magada. "If you are a witch, put no spell on me. I'll have you hung. If you are a prostitute, take your children and go away." "But," Magada exclaimed, "I'm not a witch or a prostitute." Just then, one of Magada's black knights picked up a broom and it turned into a red flag, with two gold rings interlocked. "Please leave," said the manager. The buglers started playing and clouds swirled through the heavens. The knights mounted horses too and they slew the lynch mob. Then it began to rain.

The rain grew harder for about three quarters of an hour before it tapered off. "Who is that?" The village people marveled upon seeing her, once the rain let up. "It is the beggar-woman Magada," some answered. "Only look how she has changed! Are you blind? Now she's got her own army." "She's a witch!" someone yelled. "Yes, and she stole her babies from other Kingdoms," someone else accused her. "Witch! Witch!" the people started chanting. "But I'm not a witch," Magada protested. "I tried to tell them before. I don't know why miracles happen to me. They simply do." Nonetheless, the growing mob scared her. Should she set her newfound army upon them all? No, she decided, retreating then to the outskirts of Bodobia.

In the meantime, Oxalon had returned to Neopea. King Pat and King Chris had started quickly on their way to visit Magada, Graleus, and Mary. There, on the outskirts of Bodobia, Pat and Chris came trudging along soaking wet, having weathered the stormy day. From the description given by Oxalon, she did not appear to be the peasant Magada, with her army. Besides, it was not day and they were not in the town square. But King Pat noticed the twin babies at the woman's bosom and no man around her near.

"What can I do for you?" Magada asked. "Who are you," King Pat inquired. "I am Magada," she answered. "They say that I am a witch. But I'm not. Miracles happen to me. I don't know how God gave me fatherless twins. And I don't know why I'm dressed up like a military leader. Yesterday, I was a beggar. Are you here to establish the new government of Bodobia? Lord knows we need it! The whole kingdom is in disarray, since the mysterious deaths of King Manny and Queen Distaff this past winter."

“We have been told about you,” Pat began to explain. “We are both your children’s fathers, and our bloodline is holy. A wizard-priest carried forth our bloodline of the Lord on the Cross, Yeshua, through you.” “You are well-armed,” Chris spoke. “Yes,” King Pat agreed. “Help us overthrow the government and we will crown your son Graleus King here. And you can be Queen until he grows up. I grew up here, you see,” Pat continued, “and the Kingdom is mine by birthright. But my parents, all my life, tried to keep me from inheriting it. That’s because my true love is the same gender as me. I guess it has to do with holy progeny. My parents even tried to kill us both – Chris and me – with poisoned food. I doubt if the other nobility would let me have the crown either. They too are intolerant of love’s free expression. But now that Chris and I are married, we are Kings of Neopea. Take over Bodobia castle, Magada, and we will establish our reign with you. The Kingdom is in great disarray. Many people are in need of leadership and I believe enough will follow us so as to make it work.”

“Yes,” replied Magada. “I think we can do it.” Despite the mob’s hate, she felt triumphant, and Magada’s enthusiasm spread to King Chris and King Pat. Then, suddenly, a rainbow arched across the sky and Magada gave a shout. All the black knights and buglers started shouting along with her. “Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!” The two Kings and Royal Mother rode toward the Castle, with their enchanted guard of ants, roaches, and a mouse. Their mission at the castle indeed was mandated by God, as the wizard-priest Zapaya had shown Chris’s parents through that riddle they said was about apples, oranges, and – ironically – bananas. True to word, Pat and Chris would pass the divine rulership on to Magada’s twins, starting with Graleus, the elder son.

As the magical army approached the castle, they didn’t yet have a battle strategy. But God surprised Magada and her comrades by gifts falling from the sky. There were tops and kaleidoscopes, jewelry and dolls. Together with her transformed army of creatures, Magada picked up the gifts, realizing they could give them to the castle host. “Then they will think we mean good will.” So they continued on to the drawbridge and shouted up at the guards above the door, “We come bringing gifts!” The drawbridge lowered down and they went across it, into the castle. The noble leaders welcomed them in, giving them food and rest. It all seemed lovely enough, but at what cost was the Bodobian royalty suppressing subjects? Enough to make them hunt Magada like a witch. After nightfall, the Princes’ army rose and snuck around the castle, slicing the throats of all their political foes, one by one, and also a few guards that they had to eliminate for the takeover to work. It required about an hour and a half to kill everybody they had to, but they succeeded, replacing the corrupt Bodobian regime of feuding nobles. When the sun rose the next morning, King Pat and King Chris invited the commoners to the castle. The two new Kings put Queen Distaff’s old crown on Magada, saving King Manny’s crown for Graleus later.

Again, Pat and Chris celebrated their spiritual marriage – a union that always was and would be with, since their meeting at the Feast of Saint John the Baptist, even apart from recognition in regular religious ways. This time, they held the union ceremony in the main chapel of Bodobia. Crystals on chandeliers reflected and refracted the light, much like the rainbows had in the mountain cave the first time where Abbey had taken them as they escaped from Bodobia. The chapel was all set with flowers, ribbons and bows, with candles and glittery confetti drifting from the ceiling as the spouses, King Pat and King Chris, walked outside, arm in arm, into a falling rain of rice and birdseed.

Abbey went on to serve as the spiritual head for the Kingdom of Bodobia; and Zapaya, head for Neopea – fine advisors for the two Kings. Abbey and Zapaya agreed that romantic partners, with God’s law on their hearts, could best complete one another by signifying through covenants. Such would be an open statement, such as a statement of faith in religion, which was required for inclusion into the family of God. Although there had been same-gender couples such as King Pat and King Chris before, no longer would extramarital sex be condoned. Rather, spouses would be distinguished with the title “Spouses [So-and-So]”. In those Kingdoms, same-gender relationships thus achieved a very similar status to cross-gender ones. Many similar couples made their life-long orientations known, and beautiful weddings followed in both Kingdoms, each more innovative than the last, with flowers, ribbons, and bows, glittery confetti, rice, and birdseed present at all.

As the movement honoring all one-to-one impassioned relationships spread across those Northern lands, other Kingdoms began to pick up the new definition of marriage: as something that exists before the ceremony. They began encouraging same-gender couples to wed. King Chris and King Pat felt called upon to give back some of what God had given them, through inheritance and war for Bodobia. So they issued a call out to all of the Kingdoms’ orphans and widows: that they should come to their rightful castles and be taken care of. King Chris and King Pat pampered the widows and spared no expense giving the new royal children an upbringing full of knowledge and pleasure.

The political aspirations of the old gypsy woman Abbey would have to wait for the time being. There simply was not enough understanding even of what democracy was or mass support for such political reform. Most of the people in Neopea and Bodobia, especially with their newly-gained freedoms (citizens councils and voting) from executive mandate, had no interest in commandeering the reigns of their Kingdoms away from King Pat or King Chris, away from Queen Magada or King Graleus. The troupe fades into Middle Ages’ history and a conversion to democracy only came in later years, sparked by news from across the ocean that the colonists had broken free and were now calling the shots in a New World that measured up to the Old-World empires in technology and egalitarian authority.