

### Oh my wonders!



We went on a two-week trip to my parents' home in California over the holidays. When we returned with an extra suitcase full of toys, I didn't expect to deal with any more presents. But there were a few more gifts that had arrived in our absence.

I hid them for a few days, just to get past the unpacking and settling in. Then one evening as Melise seemed restless, I pulled them out.

Melise's eyes almost popped out of her head seeing the biggest box. It was three feet wide! There was a slightly smaller box on top of it. Melise said, "Is the big one for me?!" She bounced up and down.

"Yes," I said. I think she would have died of disappointment if it wasn't.

She tore into the wrapping paper with a frenzy. The first thing she uncovered was a book. She paused politely to say, "Oh, wow." Then she set it aside and finished tearing the paper off. The box showed a picture of a four-foot-tall bright pink princess tower.

"I love it! I love it!" She bounced around some more. "Take it out! Take it out!"

I made her clean her room first. It was a pragmatic demand because otherwise there wouldn't have been enough floor space for it. It only took five minutes, but the wait was positively killing Melise.

I opened the box, slid the round, flat unassembled tower out, and glanced at the instructions. It

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was made of nylon with a bendable frame, like a little pop-up tent or laundry hamper. To my dismay, it wasn't exactly "pop-up" in design. There were four poles that had to be put together and inserted ... in the 30 seconds it took me to read the instructions, Melise had pulled the poles out and had created complete disarray.

I made her back off so I could work on it. She stepped back a whole foot and then bounced with anticipation.

Alina, my 11-month-old, did not understand my request for space. So I kept setting her by her toys, and she kept crawling back into my lap. I finally gave up fending her off. Luckily, she contentedly sat next to me chewing on one of the poles. Melise took that as permission to help with the poles, too. As many times as I put them together, Melise and Alina took them apart!

Taking the only pole that I could slip past my two helpers, I decided to try inserting it in the tower. For the first time, I unfurled the tower and held it at its full height. Melise gasped and then shouted, "Oh my wonders!"

I collapsed in a fit of giggles! I had never heard her say that before, and I don't know where she came up with it. Most likely, it is from a princess movie that I don't have memorized just yet. I guess that makes it a fitting reaction.

I was still laughing inside the collapsed tower when Melise said, concerned, "You OK, Mommy?"

"Yes, yes, I'm just trying to figure this out!"

Melise wanted to help and Alina couldn't be stopped from repeatedly crawling into the tower. I clumsily inserted the poles more times than necessary despite all the "help" they provided. In the end, the tower stood erect and two giggling little girls went in and out and in and out until they were absolutely exhausted. Even then, Melise asked if she could sleep in the tower. We compromised by reading bedtime stories in it and then wished the tower a good night!

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