

He Brings Things Closer

by Steven John Horay

It was early afternoon and sunlight poured through the multi-coloured windows, creating a stuffy, uncomfortable atmosphere in the room. Behind the plastic kitchen, where the special children sometimes sit, a large boy in tight dungarees had grabbed Stephanie's hair in one fist. 'Let me go,' she was saying. 'Come on, let me go,' but instead of releasing her, the bulky boy yanked harder and her head came down. She reached out and tried to prize his stubby fingers apart, but he yanked once more and she felt a sharp, ugly pain which made her eyes water. He was on her knee and he was hurting her. She didn't know what to do. She looked around. The other infants were busy leaning their large sloping heads over the farm animals they were sliding slowly across rubber desks. She wanted to call out to one of the other carers, 'Help me.' She doesn't know the protocol for when they grab you and refuse to let go. She is new to this job. She isn't even qualified, not properly. The boy yanks again and she winces bitterly. 'Okay Stephanie think, *think!*' She pushes all negativity from her thoughts, *forces it out*, and reaches within herself in order to find the ball of strength which her counsellor used to talk about. The ball of strength is the calmness which will see her through. The ball of strength symbolises a clear and positive attitude.

Breathing very slowly, she looks into the boys eyes very softly, with immense kindness. She opens up her freckled face and tries to make him realise that she too is a person, with feelings. He stares back, eyes like pitch black orbs. He is still holding onto her, yes, but there is a lack of pressure across her scalp. After several seconds of eye contact, he points with his other hand towards the plastic teapot on the kitchen top. She blinks. Feeling the scalp pain return, she quickly reaches for the teapot, and he makes an excited gurgling noise as she carefully pours the imaginary contents into a little red cup. She offers him the red cup with a smile, but he tugs the trapped hair violently. She looks at him, confused, eyes watering, until finally,

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it clicks. She takes her own drink from the empty cup, and his grip begins to loosen.

When she has finished drinking she shows him the empty cup, shows him everything she has drunk, and, gurgling excitedly, he sets her free.

