

The Little Red Race Car

By Nicola Gray

Joseph carries a red race car in his pocket, and it goes with him to work every single day. It's perhaps not the usual thing to carry in your pocket; but then Joseph never was one to do things in the usual way. He says it reminds him he is a Ferrari, not just an average Ford Cortina – I guess that makes me a Cortina.

Clunk! Clunk! Clunkety Clunk CLUNK!!

“Far OUT Joseph! How many times?! You owe me a new washing machine!”

“Sorry Mum...I forgot it was in my overalls; guess you won't have to worry about that anymore though!” He grinned and winked at me over his soup.

I can't believe he's leaving home.

It was actually the second time that week the car had gone through the wash, and as I folded my sons' clothes and lay them on his bed, I couldn't help but smile. In the corner of his room was his pile of remote controlled toys – I hadn't seen them in years. It didn't seem so long ago that he was just a pre-schooler pulling those things apart and trying to put them back together. He would just toil away for hours, lost in his own dream world. Most of the time, he actually succeeded in building a whole new car from “bits and pieces.” He seemed to be able to study pictures and intuitively know how things were put together. I knew he was smart – and of course I thought I knew best. But then he started school, and that's when the wheels began to fall off.

“Mrs Anderson, Joseph simply must try harder. He is off in a dream for much of the class; his spelling and handwriting are really quite concerning, and I am worried about his general attitude – he distracts others and is now refusing to do a lot of the class work that is set. If it is alright with you, I would like to have him assessed by someone who has a better understanding of learning and behavioural difficulties?”

Bombshell.

I remember it vividly. Here was a boy who refused to get into the box the school had provided. He proclaimed to hate school, and decided he was leaving at the end of the year – at the sprightly age of seven. So we all just held our breath for a while; hoping a miracle would happen.

And in a way, it did.

The Little Red Race Car

Joseph, there is something special about you – something special that not many other people have. You are a Ferrari; an amazing red car; with one of the most expensive, fabulous engines in the world. Your right indicator is a bit sticky though; the mechanic used a different coloured wire when he was connecting you up; so sometimes your indicator flashes too fast - and sometimes it doesn't flash at all! There will be times in your life when you might get really frustrated and angry with the indicator. When you feel like that, you need to breathe, take your foot off the accelerator, slow down and just listen to the power of your engine. Remember that you have a whole car that is amazing - it is probably better than a lot of cars on the road, and the indicator is just one small part of you! When the indicator sticks, you can get around that little problem – just remember to stick your right arm out the window, whenever you go around a right hand corner. If you ever get lost, slow down, and ask for directions. Whatever you do though, keep on driving; because there is no one in the world with a car just like yours!

The special teacher took him to a European car yard, and they spent the morning looking at all of the amazing new cars. Joseph chose the red Ferrari and the salesperson took them for a drive. The roar and power of the engine, the smell of the brand new interior, the braking, the acceleration, the smooth hum as it idled at the lights; and the feeling of being stuck like glue to the seat as it rocketed forwards.

It all made sense to him - he finally had a picture.

Mum, its hard being a Ferrari sometimes; but I still wouldn't change for a regular car....

Joseph left home today. He is an accomplished mechanical engineer, and he is saving for a real-life Red Ferrari.

(Based on a true story. With thanks to Lisa Moffatt (RTLb) for concept ideas)