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## It's Perfectly Formed

by Sue Haffenden

It's perfectly formed. As they lay it in my arms I realise for the first time that it's not IT, it's HE. His tiny starfish hands reach out and grab my finger. But in reality he is reaching for my heart and with his first movement he captures it. Despite the discomfort I don't want to let him go and when they try to take him to weigh I feel bereft. It's a feeling that will never leave me.

He crawls away from me but turns constantly to check that I haven't left him. I watch him taking his first steps, still holding tight to my hand. His tiny steps become larger as he moves away from me, leaving me without a backward glance as he enters nursery for the first time. It's the same with school; he can't wait to leave me.

He reads voraciously and teaches himself from books. This will never change, he will always be seeking to learn, make or fix things.

Two weeks before his sixteenth birthday he leaves for good and although he will come home again, sometimes even to live for a while it will never be the same again. He is changed now and not my little boy any more.

Over the years there are many, many times I say goodbye to him. On station platforms, at airports, ferry ports, at bus terminals, by car.

All of these times a piece of my heart goes with him and I cry. Sometimes I even manage to wait for him to disappear from sight before I break down. The older we both get the worse it becomes.

Whenever we are together we argue and fight and for years it is difficult to be anything but mother and child. It is a scratchy relationship where I always know best, hard to accept that he is now the teacher with more experience behind him than I will ever have.

Who would have thought that my perfectly formed little IT would have travelled up the Amazon and lived in a rain forest. Counted spider monkeys in a cloud forest, taught conservation skills and learned languages. Taken salsa lessons with his sister, surfed and skied, climbed mountains and scuba dived. Dragged me up Scarfell Pike and almost carried me down. Practiced Capoeira, taken part in Triathlons and leant to swing dance to name but a few. Always travelling, Europe, China, South America searching and learning on the way.

On a mission now to drag me after him, suggesting new and exciting things for me to do in my old age. Refusing to believe that I am not in my 30s anymore and still threatening me with Ben Nevis and Snowdon.

Not so perfectly formed anymore with some damage and breakages over the years but still the best: my beautiful son who has made me proud every single day since he stretched his hand towards me. Still holding my heart, always has, always will.