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## Hell on Earth

by Sue Thompson

Some people say children should be seen and not heard. I completely agree with this 15th century proverb. In the perfect world children should sit quietly in the corner while their parents enjoy adult time, occasionally acknowledging the little darlings.

Especially after my recent encounter with what can only be described as a hell on earth.

The noise was overbearing. Children running in all directions, a never ending stream of little beings. Crying, laughing, shouting, calling. If this is what hell is like then I will be good for the rest of my life.

Parents sitting around oblivious to the noise it seems, reading, chatting on mobile phones, tapping away incessantly.

A child sees a Milky Way Bar on the next table seemingly abandoned, he stretches out his grubby little hand to take it then catches the eye of the woman sitting close by, their eyes meet and she smiles a knowing smile, mouthing “touch it and you're dead” He withdraws his hand and walks away, the Milky Way Bar saved for another day.

A spotty looking teenager blows a whistle holding up a card with the word ‘RED’ written in bold type, shouting “time out”. Thank god, I think as a third of the little cherubs make their way out. The noise levels decrease and a welcome lull falls over the hall.

Weary parents gather their precious little packages up and make their way into the real world. For this is a world for children, adults aren't part of this world, they may try to understand but their minds do not go back that far. All they know is this world keeps their little ones quiet for a few precious hours so they can regain their strength for the ongoing battle ahead.

They sit stunned and exhausted. Hoping their colour will not be called yet.

A lady holds the hand of a crying toddler desperately looking for her mother, tears fall down her cheeks hot and anxious, the mother runs forward rescuing her child, guilt written all over her face. It's a jungle in here only the strong survive.

Parents greet each other sharing a unique bond an understanding that needs no words, you wouldn't be able to hear them anyway.

When do we lose this child like innocence? When do we turn from children to adults, too old to enjoy the noise of children, their squeals and chatter, it sounds like a roar of an ocean, thunder crashing together. Adults are forgotten and ignored.

Here children are seen and they are definitely heard.

And yet it is quite simply 'Childrens' Soft Play'