

# I LOVE FOOTBALL

Luke lived with his mum but he loved it when his dad came to see him on Sundays. The best part was when they drove around the carpark next to the flats. Luke's dad would put Luke on his knee and allow Luke to steer the wheel.

"I'm driving!" Luke would say. "Look, Dad - it's me! I'm driving the car!"  
"Yes, you are," smiled his dad, even though, secretly, he was one working the pedals.

But there was something missing. Luke's dad never hugged him or told him he loved him. Luke really wished he could get a hug from his dad. He knew in his dad's big, strong arms he would feel so safe.

One weekend, Luke's dad said he was going to take Luke to a football match. But, even before they arrived, Luke didn't really like it. As they approached, he could see the huge stadium rising up above them like a scary monster. Then, when the game started, the noise was so loud Luke had to cover his ears because he thought they might burst.

As soon as the game stopped, Luke pulled on his dad's sleeve.  
"I want to go home," he said.  
"You know it's only half time?" said his dad but he could see Luke wasn't enjoying it.

So Luke and his dad left the stadium and Luke thought that would be the last football match he ever went to. But a few weeks later Luke's dad said he wanted to take him again. This time, Luke wasn't so scared. He knew where he was going and, when he saw the stadium in the distance, it seemed much more friendly and welcoming.

When the game started, Luke watched what his dad did. If there was a close chance, his dad jumped off his seat and shouted: "OOOOOOhh!"  
Luke found it funny and started copying him.  
"OOOOOOhh!" they shouted together whenever it was nearly a goal.

At half time, Luke's dad handed him a drink.  
"Do you want to go home?" he asked. "It's ok if you do."  
Luke thought for a second.  
"I want to stay," he said. "I want to see our team score a goal."

Then the game re-started and the best player on the whole pitch had a shot. Suddenly everyone in the stadium went silent. They all watched as the ball raced through the air like a bullet. The goalkeeper dived to catch it but his fingers could not reach far enough... The ball hit the net and there was an explosion of noise!

Luke leapt out of seat and screamed: "GOALLLLLLLLLLL! It's a GOAAAAALLLLLLL!"

And before he knew what was happening his dad had swept him up into his arms and was hugging him so tight.

"We scored, Dad! We scored!" shouted Luke, hugging him back. He buried his head in his dad's big chest and screamed for joy.

After that day, Luke and his dad never missed another match. And nothing in the world felt as good as when they celebrated a goal together:

That was because, deep down, Luke knew that when they were jumping up and down, hugging each other tight, what they were really saying was: "I love you."