

## Rodica

The little hand reached through the darkness and found mine. It startled me, but somehow I could feel a sense of need in that touch. And so I did not pull away, but stroked the hand as we went along. It was my fate somehow that children were attracted to me. Some thought I was sort of a 'kid whisperer', and indeed, they did seem to be drawn to me in a way that was hard for me to understand.

Even so, this was still such a surprise to me, as I sat in the Universe of Energy ride at Walt Disney World. I glanced back, and could see that I was holding hands with a girl in a wheelchair. In my years as a teacher I had become very familiar with handicapped children of all types. I wasn't sure what her disability was, but I knew that I couldn't let go of her hand.

I didn't learn much about energy during the ride, as I couldn't keep my mind off the girl. Eventually the rows of seats were returned to their auditorium configuration and the lights came back up. I saw now that I was in the presence of a real princess – all dressed up in full princess regalia including a pink gown and a crown! She was beautiful, but she could barely raise her head to look up at me.

There was a lady (an angel, really), who was taking care of her. As we went out of the building into the sun, she told me that the girl's name was Rodica, and that she had rescued her from an institution in Rumania. Rodica had myasthenia gravis, such that she could not swallow safely and had to receive food through a special port. The records were so poor in the institution that she came from that her exact age was unknown – her caretaker had set it to sixteen. Her future was very uncertain, as her muscles continue to weaken. But she had such a magnificent spirit, and enjoyed being with me and knowing that I was talking to her.

When they first left, I couldn't walk because of the tears flooding my eyes. I was so moved that we had met each other – could it possibly have been a coincidence? And just for a moment I decided that I didn't want to be a kid-whisperer anymore. But then I got over myself and went in search of the rest of my group, knowing that I couldn't change that if I wanted to.