we had heard those words. In California, in Illinois, in Oklahoma. Almost every state had a residential school for the deaf, a place where young children were separated from their mothers and fathers.

From what we had read, from all we had learned at the John Tracy Clinic, from what audiologists and speech teachers had told us, we were confident it would never be necessary to send Lynn to a residential school. Only the few deaf children who did not develop speech attended residential schools to learn a manual trade and to learn to communicate with one another by means of gestures. What could we find out here that would benefit Lynn?

I looked at Lynn, then back at the school. She had no way of knowing what it meant, no way of knowing that other children like herself lived there. But in a sense, the children there were not like Lynn. Out of such schools, we had heard, came the manual deaf adults, the ones who couldn’t communicate with the rest of society.

I looked at Louise: “What do you think?”

“Should we take the time?” she asked, and the tone of her voice reflected my feelings.

I pulled away from the curb and headed out of town. Soon the residential school was far behind us. But each of us thought about it for hundreds of miles. At the same time we hoped and prayed that a good oral school would accept Lynn soon.

Twelve

A hint of fall filled the air one day in late September when Louise and I set out for Chickasha, Oklahoma, to register Lynn in the Jane Brooks School for the Deaf. It was about forty miles west of Norman.

For more than a year we had felt that if Lynn was to learn to talk, it would require professionally trained teachers. The few lessons Jill Corey had given Lynn underscored everything we had read. Start your child in school as early as possible. The earlier, the better. Most hearing-impaired children, we learned, didn’t begin school before the age of three or even four. Some waited until six or seven, with disastrous results.

During our first week back I had gone to a professor associated with the speech and hearing program at the University of Oklahoma, which had a special school for deaf children. To my surprise, I discovered that Lynn was too young to attend. We would have to wait until she reached three or three and a half before they would accept her.

“But we wanted to start her right away,” I said to him, trying to hide my disappointment.

“There’s an excellent private school in Chickasha,” he suggested. “It’s an oral school. It’s on the campus of the Oklahoma College of Liberal Arts. They might take your daughter even though she’s only two and a half.”

A nationally recognized institution, the Jane Brooks School for the Deaf had been founded by Mrs. Margaret Brooks as an outgrowth of teaching her own daughter, Jane, who became deaf at an early age when stricken by meningitis. Our first letter from
children. We were invited to make a visit. We had pored over the admission requirements and discovered that Lynn would not be accepted if she had multiple handicaps. The letter read: "We function as a school for the severely deaf, teaching oral communication skills, and we cannot accept a student if he knows or uses the manual language." Lynn's only handicap was her deafness. She still used her own gestures but certainly did not know the manual language, whatever that referred to. We had consistently avoided responding to her gestures except with spoken words.

The goals and expectations of the Jane Brooks School were impressive.

When a deaf child starts to school at the age of three we expect to have him ready, by age seven to begin formal academic work in the first grade; reading, spelling, number concepts, phonics, speech-reading and speech, etc. The Jane Brooks School provides rehabilitation for the congenitally deaf child and for the child with an acquired deafness so as to prepare them to enter high school in public school as does a hearing child.

The letter said that while most classes had waiting lists, there was an opening two days a week in a preschool class for Lynn.

We drove into Chickasha, a rural town of 15,000, and quickly located the Oklahoma College of Liberal Arts. We stopped to ask a student for directions to the Jane Brooks School; she pointed to an old brick building in the distance. We entered a small windowless door, climbed a short flight of stairs, and walked down a narrow hallway to the director's office.

Mr. Harold Taylor wore rimmed glasses and spoke in a pleasant Oklahoma drawl. "Please come in and sit down." His office seemed more like a large living room in an old house. We sat on a maroon overstuffed sofa that faced Mr. Taylor's desk.

"Have you had your daughter's hearing tested?"

"Yes," Louise said, "at the John Tracy Clinic when Lynn was seventeen months. Then at several places in Chicago since then. All the tests have shown that she is profoundly deaf."

"Well, we have many children come to the Jane Brooks School who are severely and profoundly hearing-impaired and we have had a fine record with them. Each child who has completed the ninth grade has gone on to a public high school in his hometown and graduated. Of course, there are a few who don't complete the ninth grade. We had a boy two years ago, he was fifteen, and we had to send him to the state residential school in Sulphur. They learn the manual language there and finish school.

"An oral education is the most important thing you can give your daughter," Mr. Taylor went on. "And no school can do that job alone. We expect parents to continue our work at home. And if the parents are faithful to the oral approach, in all probability their child is going to be successful."

We nodded in agreement. We certainly didn't want to turn the entire job over to the school. At the same time, we needed professionals who knew how to teach the deaf. The Jane Brooks School had a staff of nine full-time teachers and two part-time speech instructors. Classes were kept small. We talked about tuition, and although the $35 each month was a substantial chunk of the $222 we had to live on, it was worth it.

"I think it would be good if Lynn began two mornings a week, and she can come for the remainder of the school year." Louise nodded eagerly when Mr. Taylor asked us if we would like to visit some of the classes in session.

As we started down the hallway we met a young woman. Mr. Taylor stopped. "I'd like you to meet one of our best teachers," he said with a friendly smile. "Carolyn Graves, this is Mr. and Mrs. Spradley. Their two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Lynn, is going to start in our preschool."

"That's wonderful! I'm sure she'll like it here. And you're lucky to be able to start her that young. That's so important!" I liked Carolyn Graves immediately. She had sparkling eyes and
there was a calm warmth about her that I could sense included a love for children.

When she excused herself and moved down the hallway, Mr. Taylor turned to us. "We are very proud of that teacher. She was a student here and is profoundly deaf herself."

Louise and I looked at each other in amazement.

"Profoundly deaf?" I asked incredulously. Mr. Taylor nodded. I couldn't believe it. Suddenly I wanted to look around, to see what Carolyn Graves looked like, to find some clue that revealed her deafness.

"She was a student here?" I asked, trying to sound unsurprised. This was the first deaf adult we had ever met and I quickly realized we had not been able to visualize what life would be like for Lynn when she grew up. We had read about oral deaf adults, but actually meeting Carolyn Graves had an immense effect on both of us. Not the slightest clue that she was deaf! Her speech had been perfect! She had read our lips perfectly without our even realizing it! And profoundly deaf!

We were still thinking about Carolyn Graves as we entered the back of the first-grade classroom. Instantly we were met by a barrage of strange noises. Groans, howls, wails, screeches, brays, grunts and snorts came from a group of seven or eight children sitting in a semicircle around the teacher at the front of the room. It was unnerving. Lynn's sounds, though few, were not unnatural like these. I wanted to leave but could tell that Mr. Taylor, the teacher and a teacher's aide all acted as though these were routine noises.

We moved closer to watch. The teacher worked on reading and speaking individual words printed in large black letters on cards.

"Dog."

The teacher enunciated clearly and held up a picture of a brown-and-white collie with the word printed below. The children had become quiet. I waited, eager to hear the class repeat the word. I could see Lynn sitting in a class like this in two or three years.

Again came the same sounds. High nasal rasping. Grunting, animal-like noises. Vowel sounds that came out like groans. I was startled! Not one child had said "dog." Whatever they did say, I could not understand a single word from any child. I could see that most were at least three years older than Lynn. My God, I thought to myself. There must be some reason why they can't talk!

"Horse." The teacher was holding up the next picture with the word printed below it. There followed another chorus of hissing, moaning sounds, unnatural and weird. It was anything but speech. Questions flooded my mind that I wanted to ask the director. How long had these children been in school? How much had their parents worked with them? Why couldn't they speak? Were any mentally retarded?

I could tell that Louise was stunned by what we were hearing. Before we had a chance to collect our thoughts, Mr. Taylor calmly motioned for us to follow. We walked down the hall to a second-grade room, where the same strange noises greeted us, sounds that seemed to come from another world. Trying to speak, these seven-year-olds struggled to control the muscles in their mouths and throats. It took enormous effort. I felt my heart pounding. I wanted to turn and run out of the room, to ask what had gone wrong, to find some explanation. We moved closer to the front and I strained to understand the words these children were saying. A phrase went through my mind that I had read somewhere but hadn't understood: sounding like a deaf person. Now I knew.

Louise and I had envisioned teachers sitting with young children Lynn's age, teaching them to speak the words they already knew how to lip-read. By the time these children reached the first grade, we assumed they would certainly be able to talk clearly and only need to improve their pronunciation.

Now we left the second-grade class filled with doubts. We walked across the hall to a fourth-grade classroom and slipped quietly into the back. Five or six eight-year-olds sat attentively in small chairs around their teacher. It was Carolyn Graves! She
was working on speech pronunciation. Fascinated, we edged closer and watched. A small freckle-faced boy was trying to say a word printed on a card held by Carolyn Graves.

"Baaonnn." He strained to say the word correctly. It came out heavily nasal. We could hardly hear the consonants, but knowing the word he was trying to say, we recognized it as "bacon."

"No, not quite. Try again. Bacon." Carolyn Graves shook her head and emphasized the middle consonant as she repeated the word. Her movements seemed to suggest to the boy how to move his muscles to produce the right sound.

"Baaadonnn."

"That's better. You're getting closer." Carolyn Graves watched his lips, his tongue, his teeth, and from the movement she helped him correct the pronunciation of this single word.

"Bacon," she said again, then waited.

"Bagon." The strange hollow quality remained, the nasal tone that permeated the word from beginning to end, but even we could sense the improvement. Carolyn Graves praised him for this nearly perfect utterance and then went on to the next child.

Leaving the room, I felt bewildered. The very tediousness of the task must be overwhelming. I marveled at her patience. How could she correct their speech when she couldn't even hear mispronounced sounds herself? She must have known by watching their mouths and tongues. Was her class an average fourth-grade class? Did all deaf children have to go through this kind of learning process? Would it take Lynn this long? I found it hard to comprehend why it was so difficult for these children to learn to speak. I thought of our last letter from the John Tracy Clinic. "Just keep pouring the words into her and sooner or later, they will all come back to you." We had presumed this meant Lynn's words would come pouring out in a stream of speech. 

In the sixth-grade classroom that we visited next, Mr. Taylor took us to the front of the room. "This is Mr. and Mrs. Spradley. Their hearing-impaired daughter is going to start in our preschool."

"Hello." A chorus of six or seven voices greeted us. The hollow, nasal sounds were less noticeable, but still present.

"Mr. Spradley goes to the University of Oklahoma. He and Mrs. Spradley are visiting today." The teacher spoke to the class, which sat in a semicircle around her. I could see the children watching her lips as she spoke.

"John, can you speak to Mr. and Mrs. Spradley?" Mr. Taylor had told us that John was the teacher's son. He wore a pair of hearing aids, but unlike Lynn's, which was strapped to her chest because of its bulky size, John's small and less powerful aids fit neatly behind each ear. At the time we didn't recognize that this was a clue to the fact that his hearing impairment was not profound. We saw all these children as deaf. Lynn was deaf and so were they.

"I like the football team at Oklahoma," John said slowly, with some effort. The words were understandable, but still distorted. I remember thinking that Bruce could speak more clearly, though only half this boy's age. The teacher then had each of the other children read a sentence from their books. Although none spoke as clearly as John, we understood most of the words. But their voices all had a hollowness, the sound of struggle with every breath.

We left those classrooms deeply shaken, the sounds of deafness ringing in our ears. Driving home, we talked and wondered out loud about the children we had seen.

Each day for the first month, Louise deposited Lynn with Mrs. Park, the teacher. "I'll be back when class is over," she said firmly to Lynn, who began to cry and fought to free herself from Mrs. Park's hand. When she returned at ten-thirty, there was Lynn lying on the floor, her head buried in a pillow wet with tears. Each day Lynn cried herself into exhaustion and refused to enter into any class activities.

Louise would arrive home equally exhausted. "If I could just
tell her that I'll be back!" she would say. "If there was only
some way to explain about school, some way for Mrs. Park to
talk to her, to say her name, to remind her that I'll return! Or if
she could talk to the other kids. I think she just feels terribly
alone and isolated."

Then one morning after about a month, Lynn decided to join
the class. She took her seat in the row of chairs, waved good-
bye to Louise and met her with a smile at ten-thirty.

The week before Thanksgiving I took Lynn to school for the
first time. The fields of corn were dry and brown, most of the
leaves had fallen from the tall elm and ashtrees along the way,
and the air felt crisp. Lynn pulled on my hand to hurry as we
entered the brick building; she walked to the rear of the room
and hung up her coat, ran up and gave Mrs. Park a hug, then
went to a board that had name tags pinned up for each child. I
took a seat. Lynn picked out her own name, pasted it on the front
of her dress and sat down.

"Good morning, children. It's time for our prayer and flag
salute." Mrs. Park smiled and looked from one child to the next
as she spoke. She bowed her head and recited a brief prayer.

The row of five little heads bowed together, revealing five sets
of hearing aids. One child had an aid like Lynn's, strapped to
her chest with wires running up to plastic receivers that protruded
from each ear. The other three were smaller, over-the-ear aids.
The prayer ended and all the children stood up, hands over their
hearts, ready for a simplified flag salute. Mrs. Park had written
out the words on a large newspaper tablet; I could hear a few
soft noises coming from the children but no one actually said
anything except Mrs. Park as she pointed to the written words.

"Now it's time for roll call." Mrs. Park held up a card.

"Johnny," she said in a normal voice, looking directly at a little
girl at the end of the row. The girl went to the teacher, took the
card, walked over to Johnny in the middle of the row and held
the card in front of him while looking back at Mrs. Park.

"That's right." She spoke distinctly but did not seem to em-
phasis her lip movements in any exaggerated way. The girl
returned Johnny's card to the teacher and went back to her seat.

"Lynn." Mrs. Park held up the next card and a red-headed
boy who looked older than Lynn went up, took the card and held
it up in front of Lynn. She looked around to make sure I had
seen this act of personal identification. I had often thought about
the name we had given Lynn. Our names—Bruce, Mommy,
Daddy—these words stood out clearly on our lips. But Lynn was
almost invisible. The only clue that we had said anything was a
quick, tiny movement of the tongue hidden deep inside the mouth.
The lips remained motionless. Even when we called her Linnie,
it only added one more flick of the tongue.

"Maybe we should change her name," Louise had said to me
on more than one occasion. "She can't even lip-read her own
name and it's so hard to see I don't think she'll ever be able to."
But I had felt that eventually Lynn would be able to lip-read her
name, and now, seeing her read the letters printed on the card
confirmed my feelings. Someday she would be able to say it.

Fifteen minutes later the door opened and several students from
the Oklahoma College of Liberal Arts came in. Lynn went with
a tall girl who wore glasses; they sat at a table to work on copying
letters. Each child sat at a different table with one of the college
students; Johnny went with Mrs. Park to a table at the front for
an individual speech-therapy lesson. After about ten minutes Lynn's
turn came and I moved closer to watch.

Mrs. Park sat at a low table. She lifted Lynn to the edge of
the table so that their faces were on the same level. Lynn smiled
at me as she squiggled back on the table for a firmer seat. A
large mirror hung on the wall behind Mrs. Park. She helped Lynn
pull a pair of black headphones over her ears, then reached across
the table to turn up the amplifier unit.

"Ball. Ball." Mrs. Park held a microphone in her right hand;
with her left hand she pressed Lynn's fingers carefully on the
side of her own throat as she spoke into the microphone.
“Ball. Ball.” She said the word again, then quickly moved Lynn’s hand to her own throat and held the microphone close to Lynn’s lips. Everything about her facial expression, her movements, the way she held the microphone seemed to say, “Now it’s your turn. Say ‘ball’ and you can feel the vibrations in your own throat.”

“Aaaaah. Aaaaah.” Lynn struggled to make some sound. It was working. I leaned forward, tense in my chair, straining to hear her voice. It didn’t seem to matter that she hadn’t said “ball”; she had said something!

“Airplane. Airplane.” Smoothly Mrs. Park moved the microphone back to her own mouth, then back to Lynn’s at the same time that Lynn’s hand went from Mrs. Park’s throat to her own.

“Aaaaahhhhn.” Again Lynn said something and I could see by her eyes in the mirror that she also seemed to feel a vibration in her own throat. Lynn was learning to speak by using her sense of touch. She had grasped the connection between the vibrations in Mrs. Park’s throat and the movement on her lips, and she had now made the transfer to herself. In the future she would have to gain more control of the muscles that coordinated the vocal cords so she could make the right sounds. But could she actually feel the right sound? Probably not, I thought to myself; all sound must feel like the same vibration. In order to shape the sounds more precisely, to make them into the English words we spoke, she would need someone else to listen for her. And somehow communicate how to change her voice. On and on the lesson went with familiar words that Lynn could already lip-read. Although Lynn seemed far from speech, I could see she clearly understood the idea of speaking.

Mrs. Park dropped Lynn’s hand after several minutes of intense work and began showing her the shape of several sounds. She turned so Lynn could see her face in the mirror.

“P-p-p-p-p-p.” I watched Mrs. Park in the mirror; her lips came together repeatedly, each time followed by the brief puff of air. Lynn watched her every moment.

“P-p-p-p-p.” As Mrs. Park made the sound for “p” again, her animation and the look in her eye urged Lynn to try it. She finished the sound and turned to Lynn, nodding her head, looking at Lynn’s lips, waiting patiently, expectantly. Since Lynn had not yet learned to blow out a candle, I wondered if she could even come close to making this sound.

“Bh-bh-bh-bh.” Lynn smiled her lips together, sucking air in as she struggled to imitate Mrs. Park. She had come close and her teacher nodded encouragement, then went immediately to the next sound.

“B-b-b-b-b.” I watched in the mirror; her lips moved in a pattern that seemed identical to the “p” sound she had just made. I was aware Lynn could not hear the difference, but I could.

“Mh-mh-mh-mh.” Again Lynn mouthed her lips, sucking in air through her mouth and nose at the same time. I was amazed at the way Mrs. Park could get Lynn to respond, to use her voice and to come so close to the right sounds. Only ten minutes had passed, but it seemed more like half an hour. Lynn began to grow restless; Mrs. Park removed the headphones and Lynn ran off to one of the tables while another girl took her place.

Recess followed the end of speech therapy; the children went outside to play on swings. I talked with Mrs. Park while we watched them work off their pent-up energy.

“Lynn’s really a good lip reader,” Mrs. Park told me during recess. “I’m amazed at only two and a half she has such advanced lip-reading skills. She will do well.” We chatted casually about Lynn and about teaching the deaf. My respect for Mrs. Park and her talent as a teacher had taken a sharp climb in the last hour.

After recess Mrs. Park went through reading-readiness exercises. She placed pictures of a cow, a ball, a tree, an airplane, a car and a car in slots on a large manila board. Inch-high letters printed on cards below the pictures gave the names for each object.

“Steve, give me the car.” Mrs. Park looked directly at Steve
as she spoke. "Where is the car?" Steve jumped up, ran to the
board and pulled the picture of the car from the appropriate slot
and handed it to the teacher. "Good for you!" Steve was ob-
viously pleased and looked around at the others. The teacher
returned the picture to the proper slot.
"Lynn, bring me the picture of the tree." She looked at Lynn,
who went quickly to the board, reached up for the picture of the
tree and gave it to Mrs. Park. Slowly they worked through the
pictures until each child had retrieved all of them at least once.
Then Mrs. Park went to the board and removed all the pictures;
only the printed words remained.
"Steve. Cow. Can you give me cow?" Steve moved with the
same quick assurance, picked up the card that said cow and gave
it to the teacher.
"Airplane. Airplane. Nancy, can you give me airplane?" A
little blond two-and-a-half-year-old with hearing aids over her
ears retrieved the correct word and returned to her seat. Each
time a student handed Mrs. Park a card, she would praise them
and then place it back in its slot. Lynn went next and correctly
read the word "cat." I sat entranced. All the months of talking,
talking, talking to Lynn were beginning to pay off. At least she
was progressing in a special school, with a teacher of the deaf
who really knew how to teach.

In January and February the weather turned so nasty that Louise
was unable to drive to Chickasha for nearly six weeks in a row.
We hated for Lynn to miss school, but reminded each other that
we were now doing many of the same things at home. A mirror
hung on the wall over the dining-room table, where Lynn watched
herself move her lips, where Lynn and Louise practiced the shapes
of sounds and where Lynn sat to feel the vibrations in my throat
or Louise's throat as she read the words on our lips.
During those weeks without school the John Tracy course was
a constant reminder and resource. We reviewed Lesson Four,
which had come early in the fall, and worked on lessons Five,
Six and Seven. Talking to Lynn on every occasion had become
routine; we did it without thinking. We felt confident that we had
provided her with an oral environment. It was gratifying to both
of us when we came across the following list of principles in one
of the lessons. They summarized the things we practiced all the
time:

1. Speak to the deaf child exactly as you would to any other
child.
2. Show the child what you are talking about.
3. Do not speak in single words. Use complete sentences.
4. Do not talk baby talk. Use good English.
5. Keep your hands still. He will not look at your mouth if
your hands are moving.
6. Don't try to talk to him when you are smoking or eating
or chewing gum.
7. Don't talk to him if he is sitting or standing on the floor
and you are rocking in a rocking chair.
8. If you are out of doors and wearing dark glasses, take them
off when you talk to your child. They cover up the expres-
sion in your eyes, always extremely important to a lip reader.
9. Never forget that light is important to a lip reader.

By late fall our report to the John Tracy Clinic had showed
that Lynn could lip-read fifty words. By spring that number had
doubled to more than a hundred words. We now had stacks and
stacks of cards she could pick up from seeing the names on our
lips. Lip reading has been called an art; Lynn was obviously a
budding artist and she had not yet reached three. We could now
ask her dozens of simple questions which she understood. "Do
you want to ride your bike?" "Shall we go outside?" "Where's
the moon?" "The possibilities for direct statements like "Get the
box," "Come in the house," "Shut the door," "Get your coat,"
"Look at the rabbit," had far surpassed what we had anticipated.
She lip-read so well that by March, Louise wrote to the John
Tracy Clinic: "With many of the things we do together it almost
seems she is not deaf for she responds immediately to suggestions
to help and get ready to do something together."

By the end of the school year, Lynn could lip-read more than
two hundred words. We often recalled the day in Wheaton only one year earlier when she had finally mastered the word “ball.” It seemed far in the past. As our time in Oklahoma drew to a close, Lynn passed another hurdle.

It happened one evening after dinner. Sitting around the table we had listed the names for all the dishes, silverware and the nearby furniture. Lynn had made a variety of sounds, trying to imitate me or Louise or Bruce. She seemed more vocal than usual that night. She looked in the mirror and constantly checked her own mouth, to see if it looked like our mouths, I had pointed to Bruce and said his name several times. There was a moment of silence.

“Bruuuu,” Lynn said and pointed at her brother with a proud smile on her face.

“That’s right!” I almost shouted. “You said it!” I looked at Louise, then at Bruce. “She just said her first word!”

“Bruuu,” Lynn said again, watching herself in the mirror, smiling proudly at all of us. She knew she had said it and now came a whole series. “Bruu, Bruuu, Bruu, Bruuu.” I looked at Louise, who was wiping her eyes and trying to fight back the tears. For days after that we listened proudly to Lynn go around the house saying “Bruu, Bruu, Bruu.”

Thirteen

Lynn stood expectantly at the end of our driveway, a few feet from where it met the street. Every few seconds she looked up and down the street.

“She’s been out there for fifteen minutes!” Louise said, shrugging her shoulders in resignation. “I tried to explain. No bus. No school. It’s Saturday. She just didn’t understand.”

From the window of our kitchen I saw that another smoggy day had begun to spread over Los Angeles and all the surrounding towns. Before we left Oklahoma I had applied for college teaching jobs in California but had finally taken an interim position at Northview High School in Covina. A few weeks earlier we had rented this green ranch-style house only a mile from where my mother and father lived.

I watched Lynn at the curb. She stamped her feet impatiently. One white knee sock sagged down toward her sneaker. The white straps of her hearing-aid harness contrasted sharply with the red flowers on her summer dress. Her sandy hair, cut short to keep from becoming entangled in cords, barely reached down to the protruding receivers. A car went past and I could see the driver do a double take; Lynn looked more like a miniature paratrooper than a three-and-a-half-year-old child.

“Shall I go bring her in?”

“No,” Louise answered. “Let’s wait; she may have to learn this one by herself.”

Shortly after seven o’clock that morning Lynn had crawled out of bed, dressed herself and then headed straight for the kitchen as she had done every day for the past week. She walked right past Bruce lounging on the living-room floor in his pajamas watching
a rerun of *Leave It to Beaver.* After a bowl of cereal she came to Louise with her hearing-aid harness partly on and pointed to the aid for Louise to fasten it. She pushed the earmolds into place herself, then went blithely out the front door.

She waited for half an hour, then, as decisively as she had left, she turned around, came back into the house and curled up in the wicker chair to watch a Bugs Bunny cartoon.

"At least she *likes* school," Louise said to me with a smile when we slipped into the kitchen out of Lynn’s sight.

The yellow eight-passenger GMC bus had arrived one afternoon the week before school began. "Covina Valley Unified School District" announced the large black letters on the side of the bus; red lights blinked brightly on top. Bruce went with Lynn on that trial run; she came back excited and pleased. When the bus arrived on that first Monday morning, she climbed aboard without a backward glance.

Sunday morning Lynn woke early and came into our bedroom. We could tell she wanted breakfast immediately.

"No school today. The bus won’t come," I said sleepily, shaking my head. At her insistence I crawled out of bed, went to the kitchen and fixed a bowl of cereal while Louise slept a few more minutes. As the Cheerios and milk disappeared I reviewed for the hundredth time the weekly cycle of days.

"Sunday there is no school," I said, pointing to the date, September 22, 1968, on the calendar. "The bus will come tomorrow, but not today. This is Sunday. No school today."

She watched attentively. I pointed to the squares on the calendar and named the days of the week. She finished eating, insisted that I fasten the harness, and though I shook my head and told her again that the bus wouldn’t come, she headed out the front door.

Lynn threw me a confident grin through the window as she marched out to the end of the driveway. I pointed up and down the street, shaking my head.

"The bus won’t come today. No school. It’s Sunday." Lynn looked confused. I took her hand and started back into the house, but she pulled away defiantly and turned back to look up and down the street. I left her standing there. It took forty minutes, but finally she grew restless and came in looking disconsolate.

Monday morning she went out to wait again. This time the yellow bus arrived on schedule. When she saw it, she looked back at Louise, who was watching from the house, and waved triumphantly as if to say, "See, I knew it would come if I waited long enough!"

The driver came around and opened the door for Lynn, who smiled at the other children as she crawled into a seat at the back next to the right-hand window. The bus pulled away and she waved to Louise.

Saturday morning, one week later, Lynn dressed herself, then came in and woke us up. All week long Louise had showed her the calendar. "The bus will come today," she had said, nodding, and marking a large X through each date. Now Louise went with Lynn to the kitchen, took the calendar down from the wall and showed it to Lynn. Five red marks had been made for each day of the week.

"Today is Saturday and there is no school today. No bus." She shook her head and pointed to the calendar, and together they drew black diagonal lines through Saturday to show it was different from the other days.

"Tom, she’s gone out to wait again!" Louise said as she came back into the bedroom. "How can we make her realize it’s not a school day? They’re all the same to her. She just doesn’t understand some days are different."

Saturday and Sunday couldn’t be seen or touched like cows and cars and shoes. When Bruce was three and a half, he had heard us say the days of the week hundreds of times. He had repeated them in nursery rhymes. He asked questions like "Is
tomorrow Saturday?" With almost two thousand words in his vocabulary, he could use their names in sentences new to all of us. Lynn couldn't even lip-read the name of a single day, much less say their names.

Half an hour went by and then we heard the front door open and close. She had given up for now.

We continued crossing out the days of the week—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—and we spoke them to Lynn as we showed her the calendar. But week after week, on Saturday and Sunday mornings, she took up her post, unwilling to be dissuaded from her loyalty to the little yellow school bus.

Then, near the end of the fifth week, Lynn came into our bedroom, still in pajamas, mouthing "Ooooo! Oooooo!" Her eyes and wrinkled forehead filled in the missing words: "Is there any school today?"

"Yes"—Louise nodded excitedly—"today is Friday. There's school today and the bus will come." Lynn's face broke into a wide grin of understanding. The next morning Lynn woke early as usual. Louise produced a picture of the school bus, pointed to the marks which now filled the calendar and said, "No school today. It's Saturday. The bus won't come today."

"Ooooo!" Lynn's mouth silently formed the tight circle that we had come to take for "school," her eyes adding the question mark. "No!" She shook her head vigorously in answer to her own question.

A few minutes later Lynn left the breakfast table, ignored her hearing aid, which sat in a heap on the counter, went into the living room and walked over to the window. For one long, wistful minute she looked out at the street, then stretched out on the floor beside Bruce to watch cartoons. Within a few minutes she began to search for something more interesting to do. Television held slight attraction for her. The flapping lips of cartoon characters, even the precise speech of trained actors, remained a complete mystery. She had no way of following the development of a story.

"I think she finally understands!" Louise said with a sigh as we both sat down at the kitchen table for another cup of coffee. I looked around the room, thinking how strange our house would appear to an outsider. White cards pasted everywhere with the names printed in large black letters. CUPBOARD, SINK, CHAIR, TABLE, STOVE, OVEN, WASTEBASKET, TOASTER, FLOOR, WINDOW, DOOR, DRAWER. Even the broom standing in the corner had a name tag attached to its handle. In the other rooms, additional tags identified every item of furniture in the house. Lynn could already read many of them and we had noticed that reading the printed words also helped her lipread them when we spoke.

Through the kitchen window I saw the top of Mount Baldy, a deep purple on this October morning. We hadn't even known you could see it when we moved into this house. One morning strong winds blew the smog out of the L.A. basin and Old Baldy loomed close enough to touch, reaching higher than any of the other San Bernardino mountains. That year we not only watched the mountain change with the seasons but frequently drove to its base, shouldered our packs and set out to explore the trails that snaked back and forth along the steep canyons that led to the top. Lynn and Bruce loved these wilderness hikes even more than we did.

Before we had finished our second cup of coffee, the doorbell rang; several of Bruce's second-grade friends wanted him to play baseball in the street. Louise invited them into the kitchen while Bruce finished eating.


"What did she say?" asked a tall boy with a Dodgers baseball cap pulled down over his eyes.

"She's talking German," Bruce replied in a serious tone, then gobbled down the rest of his cereal. The boys looked at Lynn in disbelief.

"Really?" one of them asked.
Bruce smiled faintly. "No. She's deaf. She can't hear or talk." Before they could ask another question Bruce added, "Come on. Let's go play." Then he got up and headed for the front door.

"Watch out for cars," I reminded them as they filed across the lawn and into the street. Working in the yard later that morning, I heard one of the boys holler routinely, "Car!" I looked up. Bruce in center field, his back to the oncoming car, walked to the edge of the street and waited as a pickup truck delayed their game for a few seconds.

Reed Avenue, where we lived, did not have sidewalks; the fences and hedges between houses went right out to the street. Even to walk from one house to the next meant going out in the road. We restricted Lynn to riding her tricycle on our walk and driveway, but she watched others her age pedal along the side of the street and soon begged for the same kind of freedom.

At first one of us walked alongside; later we marked chalk lines about three or four feet out in the street from our house down five houses in each direction. Saying "No! No!" repeatedly, we pointed to the white marks. At the fifth-house boundary we pointed again to the chalk line. "This is as far as you can go. You must turn around and ride back to our house." Louise allowed her to ride over that line, then shook her head and pulled the tricycle back to make sure she understood.

For nearly two weeks, every time Lynn went riding in the street Louise or I went along. Slowly she assimilated the idea; we watched from the yard as she pedaled by herself in each direction, turned her tricycle around and pedaled back.

She was riding when I came home from school that Friday. She stopped and made me understand that she wanted to tie a small wagon to her tricycle as she had seen others do. In the wagon sat a stuffed dog and a small doll. I tied the wagon securely, then watched as she pulled her little trailer to the street, turned left and pedaled down her usual course, well within the chalk lines. She passed the fourth house and turned to wave to Mrs. Anderson in the yard. At the fifth-house boundary, she stopped, got off and turned the tricycle and wagon around.

I froze! Careening around the corner, tires squealing, a battered old Ford came speeding directly at Lynn. It couldn't have been more than fifty feet from her. The driver hadn't seen her!

"Look out!" I rushed into the street. "Look out!" I screamed again. The car crossed the middle of the street and the teenage driver was looking at the passenger next to him. Lynn, intent on getting into motion didn't even look up. She edged into the car's path. She heard nothing!

Suddenly the driver saw her. He swerved back toward the center of the street, tires screeching loudly. He had missed her by no more than two feet. I ran into the street, pointing wildly at Lynn, shaking my fist, shouting angrily at the car. I dashed down the street.

I wanted to explain. To warn her. To tell her what had happened. Overwhelmed by the futility of words, I said nothing. My legs felt shaky as I walked back. Lynn pedaled happily along beside me, looking back now and then to check her passengers.

Bruce and Lynn now enjoyed the special attention that only grandparents can give. Both Louise's and my parents lived nearby and every few days Lynn brought her experience book, turned to a picture of either my parents or Louise's parents and pointed with a questioning look that said, "Can we go visit Grandma and Grandpa?"

I often wondered who she thought they were. These special people who came to our house, who smothered her with silent hugs and kisses, whose homes we entered without knocking. Did she understand even the most basic ideas about kinship?

"My mama, my daddy," I repeated each time we saw them, pointing first to my parents, then to myself. Did she understand this relationship? Did she grasp the idea that I had once been their little boy? We couldn't tell.

Early one morning that fall our phone rang, waking us both from a deep sleep.

"Dad's in the intensive care unit," my mom said. "He's had a severe heart attack."
“Grandpa’s very sick,” we said to Bruce and Lynn at breakfast. “He’s in the hospital. He had a heart attack last night.” Lynn looked at us mystified, watching impatiently as Bruce pried us with questions. Louise brought out the experience book and showed Grandpa’s picture to Lynn.

“Sick. He’s very sick.” She made a pains face and tried to make Lynn understand.

Louise and I went together to the hospital. We talked to Dad for a brief moment, then picked up Bruce and Lynn and went to see my mom. A few minutes after we arrived Lynn pointed at Grandma and looked around. “Where’s Grandpa?” she seemed to ask.

“Grandpa’s sick. He’s in the hospital.” We drove past the Covina Intercommunity Hospital on the way home; we pointed and explained. Lynn looked at us blankly. Dad survived the crisis and several weeks later he came home to recuperate; only then did Lynn seem to grasp that something momentous had happened.

Lynn attended a regular elementary school that fall, one with two preschool classes for deaf children. Each teacher worked with six or seven children on lip reading, auditory training, speech therapy, reading readiness and a whole new set of matching games. Mrs. Monroe, a dark-haired woman in her late twenties, taught Lynn’s class. Louise visited once a week to observe carefully, and we repeated some lessons at home.

School that fall presented a new problem, however. We both were surprised at how the children treated one another. Louise became apprehensive. “You’re overanxious.” I told her. “Her problems aren’t that serious.”

But when Louise described how the children behaved in school, I found myself wondering about it. I had never seen Lynn act the way Louise reported when she played with one or two hearing children at home.

“They all sat around the table coloring these pictures,” Louise told me after one visit. “I saw Lynn reach over and make a big mark on Vanessa’s paper. She didn’t appear the least bit concerned when Vanessa cried, pointed at Lynn, then at the mark. It was as if Lynn had just turned to Vanessa and said ‘Hi.’ I think a lot of the problems come because those kids have no way to communicate with each other.

“I’m really discouraged. The teacher said that last week Lynn started bothering other children, as if she is the only one causing all the trouble in class.” Later that same day, several children had lined up for a drink and Lynn seemed to bump intentionally one of the boys, who went crying to the teacher.

But Lynn wasn’t alone. Except for Ruben, who could talk much better than the others, most seemed to have problems. Linda cried constantly. Mrs. Monroe and her aide struggled unsuccessfully to elicit even the briefest periods of cooperation from her. Later we talked to Linda’s parents. When they suspected her deafness at about six months, they had gone to a new clinic in Los Angeles which advocated intensive hearing-aid therapy. Linda was given a hearing aid that amplified sound to enormous levels. The theory was to stimulate the auditory nerve and thus increase the residual hearing.

“They assured us that Linda would function as a normal child by the time she was three or four,” her mother said wistfully to Louise one day. “I wish she could lip-read as well as your Lynn. Linda hardly understands anything we say.”

Another girl constantly sucked on her middle finger; the sore between her first and second knuckle never healed. Lynn developed a habit of picking at any scrape or sore; each time the scab formed she picked around the edges. It took weeks to heal the smallest scratch.

The two classes of deaf children went out on the playground at recess. Lynn and another child filled a small wheelbarrow with sand; then they began pushing and fighting over who should dump the sand. Shoving, screaming, pointing at the wheelbarrow, each one struggled to gain possession. Lynn wanted to lead, to teach, to dominate; she pointed to a spot on the ground and nodded her head in a way that said to her playmate, “You stand there and wait!” Like the others, Lynn appeared bossy and aggressive. No
matter how many times the teacher intervened, explained or showed by example, cooperation seemed beyond the children's ability. Whereas hearing children this age talked, argued, laughed and often achieved cooperation when someone assumed the leadership by shouting out a simple instruction to the others, the deaf children appeared to intentionally create chaos and hurt one another.

They all loved to ride tricycles on a course marked like a set of miniature streets and alleys. Some days each child had a tricycle, at other times they shared them with hearing children from a kindergarten class.

"Line up now and take turns," the teacher would say to the hearing children. They quickly lined up, talking and laughing. They took turns. When differences of opinion emerged, language proved to be the great arbitrator. "You're next. Wait your turn. Time to get off." The children waiting in line talked about the ones riding through the miniature city, bragging about their own skill, created fantasy worlds with real cars and grown-up business to accomplish.

"Line up, children. You must take turns," Mrs. Monroe said to the twelve or thirteen deaf children, trying to look at all of them so they could see her lips. In one rush, they descended on the two red-and-white tricycles. They screamed, pushed, pulled and hit out at one another. Lynn held the handlebar and straddled the front wheel of one tricycle. She shoved Vanessa, who also had a grip on the handlebar. A boy pulled on the seat.

"Line up! No! No! Children! Line up! You must take turns!" Without realizing it, Mrs. Monroe and her aide both were shouting as they pulled the deaf children apart and stood them against the wall, physically cutting off their path back to the tricycles. As the aide blocked and talked, Mrs. Monroe ushered Russell and Vanessa to the tricycles. But once through the course, neither wanted to give up their prize. Lynn broke from the makeshift line along the wall and the aide forcefully brought her back, then removed Russell and Vanessa, one at a time so that the next ones could take their turns.

Tricycles and wheelbarrows had one overwhelming advantage for Lynn. It was easy for her to tug on shiny handlebars, to scream, to push others away. Everyone knew what she wanted. But how do you tell Mommy that you don't like your cereal with that much milk on it? How do you ask Daddy to swing you upside down when all he seems to understand is that you want to be held? How do you tell them that you want to go to other people's houses like Bruce? How do you make them understand you want the same kind of Kool-Aid that you had two weeks ago at your cousin's house and just now remembered? How do you say, "I forgot what I wanted"? Faced with such impossibilities, Lynn increasingly expressed her frustration.

Communication tantrums. They started about the middle of October. By Christmas they came several times each week. Sometimes we found what Lynn wanted; most of the time a tantrum ended with the mystery unsolved.

I can still see her marching up the front walk, a determined expression on her face. The door opened and shut with a decisive bang; she headed directly for the kitchen, where Louise had started an apple pie.

"Listen to me!" She pulled on Louise's skirt, harder than usual. Then she pointed to a small cupboard over the refrigerator, her cupboard. It held paper and pencils for drawing pictures, a couple of clothespins, a Baskin-Robbins ice cream cup. Louise held up each item; Lynn shook her head and pointed more insistently at the cupboard.

"Ooohhhhhhhhh!!" Lynn began to cry out, pointing, demanding in her silent fashion. "Aaaahhhhhheee!!" She pointed again, jabbing her hand into the air in the direction of the cupboard, shaking her head until everything that had found its way to the shelves had been presented.

"No! No! No!" Her hair flew as she shook her head in raging. "Show me what you want!" Louise presented Lynn with a pencil and paper.

"Aaaahhhhhheee!!" An angry swat sent them flying across the floor. Now she pointed at other cupboards, more insistently, anger showing in her eyes. "Aaaahhhhhhhheee!!" she screamed.
louder. Out came pans, dishes, a few plastic containers. Lynn refused them all.

Now she stopped, as if an idea had pushed its way past her anger. With her hands she drew a large half-circle in the air, pointing with each index finger as the picture was completed. “That’s what I want! Can’t you understand?!” The expression on her face punctuated the dramatic, baffling gesture.

“Tom! Can you come and see if you can figure out what she wants?” Louise called me from my books.

“What do you want?” I asked Lynn who had calmed down for the moment. Again the sweeping semicircles, the pleading expression for me to understand. Suddenly, in response to my puzzlement, Lynn began jabbing her fingers in the air.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEOOOOOOOO!!!” she screamed. Tears of anger streamed down her face. I took her by the hand and we went to her room. I pointed at each of her toys.

“Is that what you want? Is that what you want?” Through her tears she screamed and shook her head, pulling on my hand back into the kitchen. I brought out her experience book. She hit it out of my hand and kicked it at me. I began pointing to the cupboards, the refrigerator, the stove.

“What does she want?” I looked at Louise, bewildered and angry myself.

Head shaking, screaming, Lynn now threw herself on the kitchen floor, kicking out in every direction. Louise knelt beside her. Overwhelmed with human helplessness, we waited. Slowly the torrent of anger and frustration subsided. Then Lynn got up, completely ignoring us, walked out the front door and climbed up on her tricycle.

“Tom, I don’t think Lynn is ever going to talk.” Louise looked at me dejectedly, fighting back the tears. “I don’t know what’s wrong with her, but I just don’t think she’s going to talk.”

Lynn’s communication tantrums forced Louise and me to resort to limited gestures—pointing, imitating, pantomiming.

I recall one night when we had nearly finished dinner. Lynn sat at one corner of the table dawdling over her food. Both Louise and I had prompted her during the first part of the meal. “Eat your peas. Drink your milk. Look. Bruce is almost done.” But still she picked at her food, rearranged the peas in a long row on her plate and took only the smallest sips from her milk.

“Eat your dinner,” Louise said, exasperated. At the same time she unconsciously lifted an imaginary fork to her lips, imitating the action she wanted from Lynn. Instantly Lynn lifted her empty spoon, copying the gesture perfectly.

“Don’t do that!” I said to Louise in an irritated tone of voice. “Can’t you see how quickly she understands your gestures and copies you? She’ll never learn to lip-read and speak the words if you always gesture!”

One Tuesday evening, the week following Thanksgiving, we had attended a meeting for the parents of children in Lynn’s class. Mrs. Monroe wanted to discuss the curriculum and answer our questions. She introduced herself, then described how she conducted the speech-therapy sessions.

“Are there any questions about what goes on in class or anything else?” Mrs. Monroe had concluded her fifteen-minute orientation. Louise and I had taken the last two chairs; directly in front of us sat Russell’s parents. To the left, dwarfing their small chairs, sat Vanessa’s mother and Ruben’s mother and father. Three more couples sat in the front. A sandy-haired man at the front raised his hand. He wore glasses and a pin-striped business suit. Mrs. Monroe nodded in his direction.

“Are deaf people able to obtain good jobs?” he asked. “You know, can I expect that my son will someday be self-supporting?” He looked uncomfortable on the small chair; with one finger he pushed his glasses higher on the bridge of his nose.


“There are some things that deaf people can’t do,” Mrs. Monroe began slowly. Then she hesitated, almost groping for words. For the first time I sensed her feeling ill at ease. “But some do
get good jobs and we just have to keep trying and hope they do all right." She stopped and looked around for other questions. I looked at Louise, surprised and wondering. Why hadn't she given this man more assurance? She had been working with deaf kids for seven years and I couldn't believe she didn't know. Mrs. Monroe pointed to Vanessa's mother, who had raised her hand.

"I'm worried about Vanessa," she blurted out. "She lip-reads very well and we've worked on speech for a long time. But she doesn't say much. We can understand three words, but no one else can make them out. When can I expect that Vanessa will begin to talk?"

"That is difficult to answer," Mrs. Monroe began. "Some children talk sooner than others, just as with hearing children. The important thing is to work on auditory training and speech therapy. The more you do at home, the better. I think we have to be patient. Sooner or later, if you maintain a good oral environment, Vanessa will talk. We have to keep trying and keep hoping."

And now I felt more than uneasy. Was that all Mrs. Monroe could say? Vanessa's mother needed to know. Louise and I needed to know. When would we find someone who could tell us, "Lynn will talk when she starts first grade," or "Lynn will talk when she is about five and a half." When would all those words come pouring out? Why were professionals always so evasive?

Yet, at the same time I realized that there were enormous difficulties in teaching Lynn or any other deaf child to speak; you had to admire people like Mrs. Monroe for their persistence and courage. It had taken all fall just to teach Lynn how to say one word—"blue." Sometimes it came out "bru", other times she said "boo." The "i" sound came from deep within our mouths, and since Lynn couldn't see anything, she couldn't easily learn to make it.

Other questions followed which I can't recall. As we drove home that night I kept thinking over and over to myself, We just have to keep trying and hoping. Someday Lynn will talk.

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**Fourteen**

"When you read, face your child and hold the book down low like this. That way your child can see your lips but won't see the pictures in the book." Dr. Barrington turned sideways as if to face an imaginary child and held a picture book up to demonstrate her point. I listened half-heartedly; Louise and I had read books to Lynn this way for nearly two years.

"With a picture book you can make up short sentences that identify things in the story; you may want to do that even when the author has written a story to go along with the pictures if it has too many unfamiliar words in it. Now, after you have talked about one page, show your child the picture and check to verify what has been understood on your lips. 'Where is the bird?' 'Where is the wagon?'"

Dr. Barrington shifted her position as she spoke and held the book to illustrate how her imaginary deaf child could look at the pictures and also see her lips.

I was tired. The announcement about this evening had arrived right after New Year's Day; Dr. Barrington, a psychologist, would speak on "How to Tell Your Deaf Child a Story." The babysitter had canceled out at the last minute; I decided to come alone and Louise stayed with Bruce and Lynn.

The cold rain splattered against the windshield as I drove along the Pomona Freeway. I had left home feeling at an all-time low about Lynn's progress, or what seemed more like total lack of progress. Even after Dr. Barrington began her lecture I couldn't shake the gnawing sense of depression. Day after day Lynn's anger had built up inside, burning more intensely whenever she