

# Bourne toWrite...

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## Waiting for Words

by Zoé Carroll

“His behaviour is his main method of communication,” the speech therapist looked pityingly at Sarah “the sign language is assisting this, and he can make most of his needs known now, so that’s really good progress”

Oliver lay on his back on the floor, a toy car held above his face in one hand. With the other he was spinning the wheels of the car and perfectly imitating the noise that they made as they spun. He seemed oblivious to the conversation going on about him in the clinical room. He was relaxed and calm. He liked the speech therapist, she let him look out of the window at the cars in the carpark and didn’t insist that he looked at her face.

On a previous visit here he had met a doctor who he hadn’t liked. He had demonstrated his lack of trust in the doctor by repeatedly turning on the taps with their big handles; taps you could easily get to gush out and splash over the floor. He had seen someone operate the big taps with their elbows once. He had liked that. It looked funny. When she had got cross with him he had got up onto the high bed in the room and pulled the roll of blue paper out. It was fun to pull it and watch it unroll. She hadn’t liked that either. That doctor had tried to make him do puzzles and match things but this wasn’t school so he didn’t want to do them. He had thrown them on the floor. She hadn’t liked that either. He did not like that doctor.

“He is making a lot of noises lately though, maybe we should be focussing on helping to make speech sounds rather than his imitation noises and the signing. I’m sure he could speak with the right help,” Sarah knew that she sounded desperate.

It was one thing dealing with a child who was different, who people stared at because he made strange noises and appeared to misbehave everywhere they went. It might not even feel as bad if he was silent, and perhaps she could believe that he was unable to make sounds. But this boy, her beautiful, perfect son, made noise all the time. Often loudly, but she had always wanted words, she loved them; grew up on them.

She had been able to talk from a very young age and when she heard a new word asked what it meant and then used it at the very next opportunity. People had always commented on her extensive vocabulary. She had later excelled in English and loved reading and writing stories. She longed to have a conversation with her son, to ask him about his day and listen to his replies.

“Just keep talking to him Sarah, he understands what you say. He just isn’t ready to talk yet. It’ll come.”

That night she tucked Oliver up into his bed and read him his favourite story. She could recite this one without needing the book and her son pointed at the same parts of the pictures every night, waiting for the explanation she always gave him. She turned off the light and ruffled him hair.

“Good night Oliver. I love you.”

“I love you too Mummy.”

Sarah sucked in her breath, “did you just say something darling?”

Oliver just smiled at her, his eyes twinkling.