

8. The Sound of the Sun

In the chapter titled "The Sound of the Sun," the narrative begins by contrasting the glamorous imagery of California—beaches, Hollywood, and Silicon Valley—with the reality of Stockton, a city significant for its location at the meeting point of the San Joaquin River and the larger world. In 1975, Linda and Roger Adams arrived in Stockton with dreams of establishing a stable life for their two young boys, Kirk and Keith. Both had roots in Inglewood, where they worked hard, but were motivated by their families' migrations from Oklahoma to pursue a better life in California.

Stockton has experienced a rich history, from the gold rush to being a hub of significant innovations. However, it has faced challenges, including poverty and segregation, underscoring the complexities behind its diversity. The couple settled into a typical Californian neighborhood, grappling with both their hopes for a future and significant personal challenges stemming from their son Keith's profound deafness, which went undiagnosed for months.

Linda's concerns about Keith's development were initially dismissed by medical professionals, but a jarring realization hit her when he showed no reaction to a loud dinner bell, leading to a diagnosis at the John Tracy Clinic which confirmed his profound deafness. Roger's reaction was fraught with anger and frustration, seeing the condition as a defect. As Linda took on the role of advocating for her son's education in Stockton, she faced a dual challenge: navigating a new city and learning about deafness.

Despite the difficult path ahead for Keith, the family was determined. Linda experimented with speech and sound awareness techniques, though these yielded minimal results. A pivotal moment arrived when her sister Mary introduced sign language to Keith, illuminating a new way of communication that sparked newfound engagement from him.

With the support of Dale Delp, a sign language teacher, the family immersed themselves in learning sign language, fostering a deeper relationship with Keith and enhancing his understanding of the world around him. This connection between mother and son highlighted the urgency of communication, with Linda transforming her approach to help her son navigate his deafness. The chapter paints a vivid picture of resilience, adaptation, and the importance of communication in familial relationships amidst adversity.