

Jacky Daydream by Jacqueline Wilson

I was more than a fortnight late for my own birth. I was due at the beginning of December and I didn't arrive until the seventeenth. I don't know why. It isn't at all like me. I'm always very speedy and I can't stand being late for anything.

My mum did her level best to get me going. She drank castor oil and skipped vigorously every morning. She's a small woman – five foot at most in her high heels. She was nearly as wide as she was long by this time. She must have looked like a beach ball. It's a wonder they didn't try to bounce the baby out.

When I eventually got started, I still took forty-eight hours to arrive. In fact they had to pull me out with forceps. They look like a medieval instrument of torture. It can't have been much fun for my mother – or me. The edge of the forceps caught my mouth.

When I was finally yanked out into the harsh white light of the delivery room in the hospital, my mouth was lopsided and partially paralysed. They didn't bother about mothers and babies bonding in those days. They didn't give us time to have a cuddle or even take a good look at each other. I was bundled up tightly in a blanket and taken off to the nursery.

I stayed there for four days without a glimpse of my mother. The nurses came and changed my nappy and gave me a bath and tried to feed me with a bottle, though it hurt my sore mouth.

I wonder what I thought during those long lonely first days. I'm sure babies do think, even though they can't actually say the words. What would I do now if I was lying all by myself, hungry and frightened? That's easy. I'd make up a story to distract myself. So maybe I started pretending right from the day I was born.

