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ASL I
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Children of a Lesser God

This movie was a love story about a hearing instructor who came to a school for the deaf to teach. He struggled a little getting through to the teenage students in his class, but eventually found ways to get them more engaged by figuring out what they liked and using that to teach them. This didn't work for all the students, but helped with most. He eventually taught them to “feel” music through the floor, and watching him for timing, as well as teaching them to “sing” in synch with the music. The song was “Boomerang-rang-rang”. These students in his class eventually had a performance on parents night that completely amazed the parents and others. This was done in the face of some resistance from the school head master to these alternative methods.

Another student he managed to “get through to” by teaching him how to verbally swear up a storm, especially derogatory statements about the teacher. This eventually developed a light-hearted mocking-confrontation between them that was good natured in calling each other names. Meanwhile, the speaking teacher became fascinated with a temperamental deaf woman, played by actually deaf and now famous actress Mareen Matlin. Her character had been relegated to menial labor around the school, because she refused to learn to lip read and/or speak, though very intelligent she was coddled as though incapable.

There was indicated a lot of history between her mother and her father. Her mother insisted that she was sent away to the school because the father couldn't deal with their deaf daughter. But it seemed that the mother up to that point was unable to deal with it as well. Though as the years passed, she became a little more open to her being around, since she did love and miss her.

Meanwhile the speaking instructor and Matin's character eventually became lovers. The school headmaster adamantly warned against this, stating “These things never work out”. Eventually the stress of communication and cultural differences became enough of an issue that they did unfortunately painfully break up. This was promulgated by a number of events, but the big trigger was the visit of a famous Deaf person who was highly successful, and it seemed to trigger a lot of the frustrations in Matlin's character, and at the same time exacerbated the speaking instructor's frustration and feelings of being an outsider to the deaf culture.

The final blow up between them included him yelling at her to read his lips and to speak, even though he'd promised never to do that again. She stormed off hurt and furious, with them both feeling terrible about what had transpired, but both too proud, especially Matlin's character to go back. She felt he wasn't treating her as an equal, and she didn't want to be “taken care of” like that.

Matlin's character ran off. The speaking teacher was heart broken, and tried to find her. She eventually showed up at her mother's house, and they made amends. Meanwhile he kept calling the mother but would not let them connect, and denied her daughter was there.

After time though, they eventually met, apologized to each other for their inconsideration, stubbornness, stereotypes, and the movie ended with them showing that they had work to do, but were back together to get through it, now on new terms.

This movie seemed to show extensively some of the experiences of a residential school for the Deaf, and the interaction, and unfortunate stereo type, even belittlement of hearing people, even the teachers and staff of these institutions.