

Movie 'Bori' presents child's eye view of disability, differences

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Actors Kim Ah-song, left, and Kwak Jin-suk in a scene from "Bori" / Courtesy of JinJin Pictures

By Kwak Yeon-soo

Unlike a myriad of tear-jerking films that tell the story of disabled characters and their struggle to fit into society, the family drama "Bori" approaches the issue of disability and difference with a child's eye.

As the title suggests, the movie is centered on 11-year-old Bori, who is the only hearing member of her family. As a CODA, an acronym for children of deaf adults, Bori often feels left out of the close-knit circle of her deaf parents and younger brother because she finds it difficult to join in sign language conversations at home.

One day, she gets lost at a crowded firework festival. After being temporarily separated from her family, Bori strongly feels alienated and wishes that she was deaf, too.

So she makes several attempts to lose her hearing by first listening to music at ear-splitting volumes and then by throwing herself into the sea.

When she finally wakes after having been pulled out of the water and hospitalized, it appears that she, too, has lost her hearing.

However, it is later revealed that she faked it the whole time after being rescued from the sea as if she couldn't hear. However, she learns that whether she can hear or not, she is the same precious daughter to her parents.

"Many parts of this film, including scenes of getting lost at the firework festival and the deaf mother being discriminated against at a clothes shop, were drawn from my personal experience," director Kim Jin-yu said during a press conference held in Seoul, Tuesday. "My mother is deaf, so there was a time when I wanted to lose my hearing, like Bori."

The film has a clear message that disabled people are the same as everybody else. "People with physical or mental disabilities can be your next-door neighbor. I'd like the audience and society to become more inclusive for them," he said.

The 12-year-old child actor Kim Ah-song won her first lead role as Bori, outpacing 200 competitors.

"When we were auditioning, I read articles saying that actresses struggle for visibility. My film is about minorities in our society, so I thought it'd be better to make Bori a female character," director Kim said.

Lee Lyn-ha, 9, plays Bori's brother Jeong-woo, while Hwang Yu-rim, 12, plays the role of Bori's best friend Eun-jeong in the film.

Actors Kwak Jin-suk and Hur Ji-na, who are married in real life, play Bori's father and mother, respectively.

"Since we're a married couple, we didn't have to carve out time in our schedule to practice. We consistently shared our thoughts about scenes together, and that's how we ended up having a good chemistry onscreen," Hur said.

Kwak, a stunt performer, expressed satisfaction with playing an ordinary role for the first time, other than a killer or a villain. In fact, there are several lovely scenes in which Bo-ri and her father chat together in sign language while he fishes in the sea.

"Shooting this film was like a fantasy to me," he said, citing that he has never shot such a relaxing film in his life.

Throughout his career, Kwak has performed many death-defying stunts, including being stabbed with a knife and shot with a gun.

"Bori" will hit local theaters, May 21.



A poster for film "Bori" / Courtesy of JinJin Pictures