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***"For three years we had accepted the axiom: all deaf children can learn to lip-read and talk almost as well as their hearing peers. This axiom was conditional, we knew that. It required an early start and a pure oral environment, but we had not denied Lynn either of these conditions. Now we had encountered contradictory evidence."***

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The parents meet with a deaf couple, their interpreter, and the parents of another deaf child who have given up on the pure oral method and have learned sign language. Thomas Spradley is surprised that the deaf adult who spoke so well at the PTA meeting has difficulty lipreading him. And, for the first time, Spradley experiences the feeling of being left out when those around him converse in sign. He begins to understand how his daughter has felt in family gatherings, at the table, and on the many camping trips they have taken when she was completely shut off from the family conversations. Finally, the Spradleys decide to give sign language a try. They are amazed at the speed with which

their daughter and hearing son, Bruce, learn sign language. Within three days mother and daughter have communicated to each other and understood those three magic words, "I love you," for the first time in their lives.

Sign language opens up a new world for them . . . a happier world . . . a world of reality, one they can accept.

The Spradleys have discovered the world of the deaf. They have come in out of the darkness. They no longer hold the false hope that some day their child will talk and lipread so well that she will fit effortlessly into the hearing world as they have been led to believe she would. Instead, they have discovered *her* world, the real world of the deaf, and by learning to communicate, have accepted it. It is a world where

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***"Mrs. Garvin looked down at the floor, then back at the group. 'Well,' she said slowly, 'we can't be one hundred percent sure. We have to keep trying. When a child gets older, if they still can't communicate orally when they are in their teens, it's best to send that child to the state residential school.'"***

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***"I looked around the room at the teachers. They had special training in the education of the deaf, but none were deaf. I looked at the principal. He had talked about Starr King (school) having one of the best programs in the United States, and of the deaf who use manual language ending up in the deaf ghetto, but what, really, did he know of other deaf programs, of deaf ghettos? Not one adult at Lynn's school knew how to communicate with these deaf people in their language. None of them, so far as I knew, were deaf. I thought about Louise and me. We had no deaf friends. We know nothing about the day-to-day lives of honest-to-God deaf adults."***

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communication is somewhat different than their own, but a world where a deaf person is recognized and accepted as an individual. Through self-acceptance, a deaf person is better prepared to cope in a hearing world.

Thomas, Louise, Lynn, and Bruce Spradley have finally found the best of both worlds.