

Little Miss Understanding

by Rebecca Proenza

rebeccaproenza@gmail.com

EXT. LETTLE HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

The silver truck's trunk has three suitcases, bulky trash bags, a full backpack, and a pile of books. ALLEN LETTLE JR. (17) closes the trunk, SLAM. He wears blue sweatpants and a black hoodie. He moves his straight brown hair out of his grey eyes. ALLEN LETTLE SR. (40) smiles at Junior.

SENIOR

You got everything, Junior?

Junior looks at the upstairs window and gives his head a small shake. Yellow star lights shine and move around on the inside through the green curtains. Senior SIGHS and rubs the back of his buzz cut.

SENIOR (CONT'D)

You know how she'll be. If we wait until morning . . .

Junior nods.

JUNIOR

It'll be impossible to leave.

Senior PATS Junior on the shoulder twice.

SENIOR

She'll be impossible with you gone *and* with the news about the baby.

Senior walks to the driver's side as Junior walks to the passenger door. Junior OPENS the passenger door as he looks at the upstairs window again with a small smile.

JUNIOR

I'll see you on Thanksgiving, Candy Cane.

Junior sits in the car and CLOSES the door.

INT. LETTLE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

CANDY LETTLE (5) runs down the stairs with a smile. Her long light brown hair in pigtails. She wears a red polo and a blue skort. She holds a brown stuffed bear with a green stomach and ears, MINT. Candy's grey eyes look at the empty couch.

CANDY

Allen!?

She runs off.

INT. LETTLE HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Candy enters and looks around. MADELINE LETTLE (37) flips a pancake at the stove. Madeline's light brown hair tied in a ponytail, and her sunflower dress stained with pancake batter. White chocolate chips, blueberries, and pancake batter sit next to Madeline on the counter. Candy looks at the fridge, which contains fifty letter magnets. Candy walks to the fridge and opens it.

CANDY

Allen?

Candy runs to Madeline (without closing the fridge) and tugs on her dress.

CANDY (CONT'D)

Mommy, where's Allen?

Madeline looks at Candy and takes a deep BREATH.

MADELINE

Sweetie. Allen's . . . Not here.

CANDY

When will he be back?

Candy holds up the bear.

CANDY (CONT'D)

Mint learned a new trick. We need to show him.

MADELINE

He's . . . Gone.

Candy's smile falls and she drops Mint.

CANDY

What?

Madeline rubs Candy's back. Candy stares at Madeline with a look of shock. Madeline talks, but only a RING echoes the room. Madeline's hands move as if she's driving, then reading, then sleeping. Tears roll down Candy's face.

MADELINE (O.S.)

(Over RING)

It'll be okay. Come eat before school. I made your favorite.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Candy clutches Mint. MS. SOPHIE WILLIAMS (29) points to a subtraction problem, $10-5=?$ Only a RING echoes in the room, even as Ms. Williams' lips move and she counts backward on her fingers. Ms. Williams writes a 5, then puts a thumb up and looks at the children. Seventeen thumbs go up. Candy does not move. Ms. Williams puts her thumb down and looks at Candy.

WILLIAMS

What confused you, Candy?

Candy shakes her head hard and tears fall. A boy who sits next to Candy LAUGHS off-screen.

BOY (O.S.)

What're you crying about?

Candy SCREAMS in his face.

WILLIAMS (O.S.)

(Concerned)

Candy.

The boy LAUGHS again off-screen. Candy stands and grabs her chair. She lifts it over her head and makes a motion to throw it at him.

WILLIAMS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(Terrified)

Candy, no!

INT. LITTLE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Senior enters from the front door, slouched over, eyes glazed over. He CLOSES the door.

SENIOR

I'm home!

Madeline on the couch, shakes her head. Senior SIGHS.

SENIOR (CONT'D)

How bad?

MADELINE

She threw a chair at a boy. I know you had a long day but . . .

Madeline points upstairs. Senior SOFTLY GROANS then nods.

INT. LITTLE HOUSE - CANDY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Candy lays on her bed in fettle-position. Her starlights on, and the big light off. Her door OPENS. Senior and Madeline enter.

MADELINE

Sweetie, can we talk about today?

Candy does not move. Madeline SITS on her bed. Senior kneels next to her bed.

SENIOR

I just got home. Sorry, I wasn't here today. How are you feeling?

Candy does not move.

MADELINE

I know you didn't like the news about your brother, but it'll be okay.

SENIOR

We miss him too, but we'll all get used to him not being here.

Candy SNIFFLES. Madeline rubs Candy's back.

MADELINE

It's okay to be upset, it's natural, but we can't be throwing chairs. That can hurt someone.

SENIOR

We need you to be a gentle girl. Especially around the new baby.

Candy lifts her head and looks at Senior.

CANDY

What new baby?

Madeline looks at Senior.

MADELINE

I didn't tell her that yet.

SENIOR

Oh . . .

Madeline smiles at Candy.

MADELINE

I'm pregnant. You're going to be a big sister.

Candy's pillow hits Madeline's face.

CANDY (O.S.)

You replace him after one day!?

Candy kicks in Madeline's direction, but does not touch her. Madeline jumps off the bed and backs away. Candy grabs her starlight base, but Senior grabs her wrist and she lets go.

SENIOR

Candy--

Candy head-butts him. Senior GRUNTS and pins Candy to the bed. She THRASHES and SCREAMS as tears fall.

CANDY

I hate you!

Madeline stares at Candy and silently cries.

INT. LITTLE HOUSE - KITCHEN - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Madeline sits at the table, slouched over. Her phone rests on the table, on speaker.

MADELINE

I'm glad you've settled in so soon.

JUNIOR

(over phone)

Thanks. Dad helped out a lot. I want to get some lights like Candy though.

MADELINE

Just make sure to focus on your school work too.

JUNIOR

(over phone)

I will. How is she doing?

MADELINE

Not . . . Not good at all.

JUNIOR

(over phone)

Oh no.

MADELINE

She threw a chair at a boy, head-butted
your father, and said she hates us.

Junior SIGHS over the phone as Madeline wipes tears away.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

I just don't know how to help her.

JUNIOR

(over phone)

Should I call again tomorrow and talk to
her?

Madeline shakes her head.

MADELINE

I'm afraid she'll scream at you.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Super: "Three Days Later."

Candy and Ms. Williams sit at the teacher's desk. A thin
stack of printer paper and a box of twenty-four crayons
sit on the desk. The door propped open with a door stop.
No one else present.

WILLIAMS

I'm really worried about you, Candy.

Candy does not move.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

Your parents told me a bit about what
happened. I know you don't like it.

Candy shakes her head.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

I'm here for you if you want to talk
about it.

Candy CRIES. Ms. Williams gives Candy a hug. Candy hugs
her back. After three beats, she lets Candy go and
gestures to the paper and crayons.

SOPHIE

Try drawing how you feel so I can better
understand what you're going through.

Candy nods and carefully opens the box of crayons.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Ms. Williams sits at her desk. Senior and Madeline pull out a chair and sit across from her.

MADELINE

Were you able to talk to her?

Ms. Williams nods.

WILLIAMS

She wouldn't talk, so I had her draw.
It's very serious in her mind.

MADELINE

Thank you.

SENIOR

What happened?

Ms. Williams grabs Candy's drawing and sets it in front of them. The drawing has a stick figure with pigtails (Candy) that cries. She holds a baby with a blue pacifier and blue blanket (new baby). The stick figure holds a hand up to a stick figure angel in the sky with straight brown hair (Junior).

WILLIAMS (O.S.)

It seems like she believes your son is--

Madeline jumps and KNOCKS the chair over in the process. She CRIES. Senior stares in shock at the drawing.

MADELINE

Oh my gosh!

INT. LITTLE HOUSE - CANDY'S BEDROOM - DAY

SUPER: "One Month Later"

Candy holds Madeline's phone. Junior smiles on the video chat. Candy holds up a subtraction and addition test with a red "100%" written large at the top.

JUNIOR

(over phone)

Nice one, Candy Cane!

Candy GIGGLES.

CANDY

All my tests look like that! Except reading. Those say ninety.

JUNIOR
 (over phone)
 I'm proud of you.

CANDY
 They say I can be advanced next year.

JUNIOR
 (over phone)
 That's amazing!

CANDY
 Not as amazing as my Halloween costume!
 Will you be here to see it?

JUNIOR
 (over phone)
 I won't be able to, but you can send me a
 video. I'll be home for Thanksgiving.

CANDY
 Will the baby be here then?

Junior LAUGHS over the phone.

JUNIOR
 (over phone)
 Still too soon for that.

CANDY
 I want his name to be Gummy! Candy Cane
 and Gummy Bear!

Junior CHUCKLES.

JUNIOR
 (over phone)
 Let's see if that slides with mom and
 dad. Also, it's too soon to know the
 gender. What makes you think it's a boy?

CANDY
 Just a crunch!

Junior CHUCKLES.

JUNIOR
 (over phone)
 Just a *hunch*.

Candy GIGGLES.

CANDY
 That doesn't sound right!

Madeline enters and KNOCKS twice on the open door.

MADELINE

Come on, Sweetie. Let's go see the baby.

CANDY

Yay! Where is he?

Madeline rubs her stomach.

MADELINE

In my belly.

Candy tilts her head and puts her hand on her own stomach. Madeline comes next to Candy, rubs her head, and looks at the video call.

MADELINE (CONT'D)

Hey, Sweetie. You good?

JUNIOR

(over phone)

Yes, mom. I have a paper due soon. Trying to finish it tonight, but it sucks.

Madeline CHUCKLES.

MADELINE

Happy to hear that you're not procrastinating. Take a small break. We'll talk later, okay?

Candy looks away from her stomach and waves at Junior.

CANDY

Bye!

JUNIOR

(over phone)

Bye! Love you, guys!

Candy smiles.

CANDY

Love you too!

Candy presses the hang-up button.

THE END.

Thank you for reading!

THIS SCRIPT IS LOOSELY BASED ON SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED TO ME WHEN I WAS A CHILD (ALTHOUGH THE REAL STORY IS DARKER).

I was ten when my older brother (Alex) left for college. My eldest brother (Adam) had previously left, so I did this already. I missed them both being around, but I was adjusting.

Right before Christmas, we got a call saying that my brother Alex's best friend had just died.

I understood that my brother Alex had just died and I lost it.

My mother had to force the phone on me so I could talk to my brother to be there for him.

I understood, "Adam is hurting as well. Talk to him."

Having ASD, I didn't know how to say how angry and hurt I was. I just flailed.

When I finally had the phone and heard Alex, I started bawling and I told him, "I thought you were dead!"

WHETHER ASD IS AN ISSUE OR NOT, CHILDREN LASH OUT MORE THAN ADULTS. THERE'S MORE GOING ON IN THEIR HEADS THAN WE REALIZE. LET'S BE PATIENT AND CLEAR WITH THEM.