

A Warm Understanding part 1

by

Zorrawa Jefferson

FADE IN:

**EXT. DARKNESS**

Three tiny pellets drop onto the black screen, causing sound waves shaped like rings to appear. They slowly become smaller in size and disappear.

**EXT. RIVER - DAY**

Three Betta Splenden fish swim over and consume the pellets. Another fish tries to join them, but the Betta Splendens swim off quickly.

**EXT. TOWN BRIDGE - DAY**

JUSTIN SCOTT, 12 a short-haired boy with piercing brown eyes frowns and tries to escape out of a hug with MARIA SCOTT, 31, a woman who also has the same piercing brown eyes.

JUSTIN  
Come on, stop, mom! I'm fine  
let go!

Maria lets go and looks at him.

MARIA  
I know, but I worry about you  
sometimes baby.

JUSTIN  
I'm in sixth grade now. I  
promise I'll be just fine.

MARIA  
Did you remember your notes?

JUSTIN  
Yes.

MARIA  
Did you pack your lunch?

JUSTIN  
Yes, mom!

MARIA

Okay then, have a nice day at school, Justin. Are you sure you don't want me to walk with you?

JUSTIN

I'm fine, mom.

Justin turns around and starts walking across the bridge, Maria waves to him.

MARIA

Have a great day!

**EXT. TOWN ROAD - DAY**

School children walk in packs on the sidewalk. Cars drive by. Justin bumps into a girl but keeps walking. Justin comes towards a crossing light. The lights flash green.

JERRY TILEY, 12, a baby-faced looking boy with long straight hair walks up behind Justin and quickly places his hands on his shoulders.

JERRY

BOO!

Justin screams, flinches, and quickly turns around. The crossing light turns red, and the other kids cross the street. Jerry and ALEX KEYTES, 11, a boy with two different colored eyes laugh hysterically.

JUSTIN

Jerry!

JERRY

Man, you scream just like a girl!

Justin blushes.

JUSTIN

No, I don't!

ALEX

Yes, you do man.

JUSTIN

No, I don't!

JERRY

I thought by this age you'd at  
least have more bass in your  
voice, boy I was wrong!

Jerry and Alex laugh more. Justin balls up his fists.

JUSTIN

At least I'm not 12 and still  
getting spanked!

Jerry and Alex stop laughing. Justin glares at him; Jerry  
steps towards him.

ALEX

Come on, Jerry. It's not worth  
it.

Jerry sighs, the light turns red, and they all cross the  
street.

#### **INT.ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY**

MISS EMILY BROWN, 37, a teacher with long shiny brown hair  
writes on the chalkboard as children start pouring into the  
classroom and taking their seats.

She turns to the students and smiles wide.

EMILY

Good morning, everyone! Take  
your seats, and we should be  
starting soon.

Justin takes his seat near the window and sighs. He unzips  
his backpack and pulls out a pencil case, a math book, a  
notebook, and sets them all on his desk.

EMILY (CON'D)

Now before we start today, I'd  
like to introduce a new  
student.

Justin furrows his eyebrows and sits up. The door opens, KAI  
AMARI, 12, a black-haired boy with a tender heart drags his  
feet into the classroom with his head down.

He looks up and stares at Emily for a few seconds. She  
smiles and nods.

EMILY

Go ahead.

Kai picks up a piece of chalk and starts writing on the board. The children start whispering amongst themselves. Kai puts the chalk down and faces the class. The board says, "Hi, my name is Kai, and I am mute."

Justin's eyes widen.

JUSTIN

Mute?!

JERRY

Sounds like bullshit to me.

EMILY

Kai was born with defects in his vocal cords that make it painful for him to speak. But he does know how to write and read. I'd like for you all to be kind to Kai and help him out. Kai will communicate with us through his notebook. And try not to scream at him, his ears are very sensitive.

A GIRL in the back of the class raises her hand.

EMILY

Yes, Katerina?

GIRL

Can he hear?

EMILY

Yes, Kai can hear just fine. Just try to speak a little louder when you talk to him.

GIRL

Yes he can, you said it's just painful for him. Why can't he just toughen up and speak anyway?

The class goes silent. A boy raises his hand.

BOY

I agree.

EMILY

Kai has recurrent laryngeal nerve paralysis. He doesn't choose to not talk, you kids need to learn how to be more understanding to other people.

Emily turns to Kai and rests her hand on his shoulder. Kai flinches.

EMILY

Alright, you can sit over there next to Tim. Tim, can you raise your hand, please?

BOY

Oh, come on! Can't he sit somewhere else?

Emily sighs. A BOY sitting up front stands up.

BOY

Uh, me and Kai can trade. It'll be easier for him to take my spot.

Emily smiles.

EMILY

Okay, thanks a lot, Zack.

The BOY stands up, takes his backpack, and leaves the spot. Kai takes his seat in front. Kai reaches into his bag and grabs his notebook. Jerry chuckles softly.

EMILY

Alright, let's get back to today's lesson!

**INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PLAYGROUND - DAY**

Kids laugh and run around the playground. Some playing kickball, while others talk with friends. SELENA SKY, 12 a blue-eyed girl with short hair stands around a group of kids.

SELENA

Hey, does anyone wanna play hide and seek?

BOY

Sure!

GIRL  
I'll play too.

Kai walks over and looks at Selena.

SELENA  
What?

Kai closes his hand into a fist, then pokes out his pinkie and thumb. Kai does the same for his other hand and smiles.

BOY  
huh?

SELENA  
Let's go guys.

Selena and the other kids walk away, leaving Kai alone. Kai looks at the ground, Justin peeks out from behind a tree and watches him closely.

#### **INT. SCHOOL - ART CLASS - DAY**

Children sit at their seats painting. DAVID STAR, 34, a rough-looking man with a harsh tone stands in front of the class watching the students.

Kai sits in his chair, painting quietly. Jerry looks at him and smirks. He walks up to Kai.

JERRY  
Hey Kai, whatcha paintin?

Kai turns and looks at him.

KAI  
(In American sign  
language)  
I am painting a house.

JERRY  
What?

KAI  
(In American sign  
language )  
Let me get my notebook.

JERRY  
Whatever freak.

Jerry knocks over the paint container on Kai's desk, it spills on the painting. Jerry walks off, Kai looks at his painting. The bell rings.

DAVID  
Alright, kids, that covers  
today's lesson.

Kai stands up and starts packing up, a girl walks by and pushes him out of the way.

GIRL  
Get out of my way!

**INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY**

Kids walk around the classroom talking, laughing, others sitting at their desks writing.

Jerry sits on top of his desk. Alex stands next to him. Jerry looks at Kai who's sitting and writing in his notebook. RENA SANDERS, 11 a skinny girl with short wavy hair stands by.

Jerry smirks.

JEERY  
Hey Rena, Alex, wanna have  
some fun?

Rena nods.

ALEX  
Alright.

JEERY  
Hey, hey, Kai! HEY KAI.

Kai looks up.

JEERY, ALEX, AND RENA  
(In American sign  
language)  
Fat ass, fat ass cunt.

Kai gasps and blushes. Jerry and his gang laugh. Emily walks over.

EMILY  
What's wrong Kai?

Jerry smirks.



JEERY  
(In American sign  
language)  
Fuck that cunt!

Emily gasps.

EMILY  
Who- who in the world taught  
you that?

JEERY  
Huh? Taught me what? Is it a  
bad word?

EMILY  
Yes it is, who taught you  
that?

JEERY  
Kai.

ALEX  
Yup! He sure did!

Emily glares. Kai looks like he's about to cry. She grabs Kai's hand and drags him out of the classroom.

#### **INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY**

TOM CARTER, 33, a slightly overweight balding man holds a small textbook in his hand while standing in front of the board.

TOM  
And don't forget to start  
working on page seven tonight.  
We will be reviewing the first  
three problems tomorrow.

Kai smiles and writes notes down. A GIRL sitting behind him pokes him in the back. Kai turns around, and she gives him a note. Justin stares at them.

GIRL  
Take it.

Kai takes it, turns back around, then opens it. The note reads, "Tom is a fat ass." Kai gasps.

GIRL  
Hey teacher, Kai wrote  
something offensive!

TOM

Hmm?

Kai moans with agony and covers his face. Justin balls up his fist.

TOM

What did he write?

GIRL

Come look! Who knew sweet  
little Kai could be so crude  
right?

Kai's lips quiver, he moans and almost screams out. He then covers his throat. Tom walks over and takes the note from Kai. He looks at it.

TOM

Kai, did you write this?

Kai looks like he's going to throw up and covers his mouth.

**EXT. CITY STREET - EVENING**

Maria and Justin walk along the street.

MARIA

How was school, today Justin?

Justin sighs and looks at the ground.

JUSTIN

It was okay, I guess.

MARIA

Really? Doesn't sound like it.

Justin stops walking; Maria keeps going.

JUSTIN

Mom?

Maria stops walking, and turns around.

MARIA

Yes?

JUSTIN

Can we stop at the library  
before we go home?

**INT. JUSTIN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

An ASL book lays on the table with a jacket covering it. Justin sits at the table with Maria eating, he gazes at his other hand and does various strange movements with it.

ELLA SCOTT, 18, a skinny girl with long black hair walks in.

MARIA

Ella, why are you so late?

ELLA

Relax mom, I was just out with friends.

MARIA

You could of at least told me something honey.

Ella sighs. Her backpack plops on the floor and she takes a seat. She looks at Justin who's still wiggling his hand around.

ELLA

What are you doing?

MARIA

Oh, Justin recently got interested in learning signlanguage.

ELLA

Really now? That's actually pretty sweet! I can teach him a little ASL.

Justin smiles and perks up.

JUSTIN

Really?

ELLA

Yeah!

**INT. JUSTIN'S HOUSE - JUSTIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Justin and Ella sit on the bed.

ELLA

(In American sign language)

Nice to meet you.

JUSTIN

Uh...?

ELLA

Nice to meet you.

JUSTIN

Oh!

ELLA

You try.

Justin tries, but fails.

ELLA

No, not like that. Like this,  
see?

Ella does it again, but slowly signs the sentence, "Nice to meet you." Justin tries again, failing. Ella sighs.

JUSTIN

Damn it!

ELLA

Keep trying, it's not easy  
learning a new language. Good  
night.

Ella gets up and walks out. Justin sits on the bed for a few seconds. He then stands up, goes towards his mirror, and practices more sign language.

JUSTIN

Damn it!

The clock hits 10:30 PM; Justin struggles more and makes various strange hand movements. The clock hits 11:30; Justin yawns but keeps trying, but fails each time.

The clock hits 1:30 AM.

JUSTIN

(In American sign  
language )  
Can you be my friend?

#### **INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY**

Kai strolls down one of the bookshelf aisles, then picks up a book off the bookshelf. He examines the cover, then opens it.

ALEX V.0  
Hey, freak!

Kai flinches then takes two steps back.

ALEX CON'D  
Why don't you talk?

JERRY  
Don't worry. we'll make him  
talk today.

Kai shakes his head, then looks like he's about to vomit.  
Jerry slaps the book out of Kai's hands, then pushes him  
violently. Justin runs over.

JUSTIN  
Stop it!

JERRY  
What?

JUSTIN  
What are you deaf? I said,  
stop!

Alex smirks.

ALEX  
Is Kai your friend or  
something?

JERRY  
This is none of your business  
Justin. How about you keep  
your scary ass out of it.

Justin runs over and stands in front of Kai.

JUSTIN  
If you fucking touch him, I'm  
telling everyone your mommy  
still spansks you!

Jerry steps back and gasps with surprise. Then he glares.

JERRY  
Fine, tell everyone, I don't  
care, pussy!

Justin tackles Jerry to the ground. Jerry kicks him, bites  
him, Justin screams with rage. The two boys fight like  
animals.

Justin puts Jerry in an arm lock on the ground while hitting him with his other hand. An older man runs into the aisle.

MAN

Hey, stop! Break it up!

The man grabs Jerry.

# **INT. SCHOOL - PLAYGROUND - DAY**

A group of boys laugh and kick a ball around the playground. Kai stands alone. He stares down at the ground. Justin slowly walks towards him. Kai gazes up at him.

JUSTIN

(In American sign  
language with mistakes )

Hello, can you be my friend?

Kai stares at him for a few seconds with shock, then takes two steps back.

JUSTIN

If you don't want to, that's  
okay.

Justin starts to walk away. Kai grabs his shirt. Justin turns to Kai, who has a few tears streaming down his face, but he's smiling.

JUSTIN CON'D

Huh?

Kai nods.

# **INT. KAI'S HOUSE -KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - DAY**

The doorbell rings. KARA AMARI, 31, a woman with dark green eyes and long curly hair stands up from the sofa and walks towards the door.

She opens it and sees Maria and Justin. Kara's eyes light up as she smiles wide.

KARA

Come on in guys!

Justin and Maria walk in. Kara closes the door and giggles.

MARIA

My son is here to see Kai.  
That's his name, right?

KARA

That's right! Thank you so much for coming. He's always been so isolated due to his disability, and I've been trying so hard to get him to be social! Kai is going to be so excited to see you! Kai, come downstairs! I have a surprise for you!

We hear feet coming down the stairs.

KARA CON'D

Come on, Kai, don't be shy.

Kai comes down the stairs and walks into the living room. He freezes and slightly jumps when he sees Justin and Maria. Justin smiles and waves. Kai runs towards him and gives him a big hug.

Justin chuckles and hugs him back.

JUSTIN

I told you I'd come.

Kai lets go, smiles, and nods.

MONTAGE - Justin and Kai have fun.

--Justin's house-- Kai and Justin play a game of tag in Justin's backyard. Justin falls over laughing.

-- Kai's house-- Kai and Justin climb a tree together, they get to the top and high-five each other.

--Neighborhood street-- Justin and Kai ride their bikes down the street laughing and racing each other to the bottom.

-- Apartment complex pool-- Kai and Justin swim in the pool. Kai swims to the middle of the pool then turns around and sees Justin isn't there. Kai swims around looking for him. Suddenly, Justin pops up from under the water in front of Kai. Kai gasps, then they both start laughing.

-- Neighborhood park -- Justin and Kai throw a ball to one another. Kai catches it and tosses it towards Justin, Justin jumps up into the air and catches it. Kai smiles.

-- Justin's house -- Kai and Justin sit on Justin's bed while playing a game of rock paper scissors.

JUSTIN

Rock, paper, scissors!

Justin closes his hand and makes a fist. Kai places his palm over it; they both smile.

END OF MONTAGE.

**INT. JUSTIN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY**

Kai and Justin sleep and cuddle together on the bed.

KARA V.O

Kai? Kai, its time to go home  
now. You can play with Justin  
tomorrow.

Maria and Kara open the bedroom door and sees Kai and Justin cuddling and sleeping together on the bed.

MARIA

Awe, so cute.

Kara walks over to them, tucks them both under the blanket, and kisses Kai on his forehead.

KARA

Kai can stay over for tonight.  
Is that okay?

MARIA

Yes, that's fine.

Kara smiles warmly, then walks out of the room.

**INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY**

JACOB SMITH, 34, a short-haired middle-aged man stands in front of the board.

JACOB

So, since five and six go  
together with seven-

Kai pokes Justin's back. Justin turns around, Kai smiles and hands him a note. Justin opens it, looks down and smiles.

JUSTIN

Yeah, she really did a great  
job.

Justin turns back around, facing the front of the class. Kai takes a note out of his pocket and pokes Justin in the back again. Justin turns back around. Kai hands him the note. Jacob glares.



JACOB  
KAI, JUSTIN, are you two  
passing notes again?!

Justin blushes.

JUSTIN  
This is how-

JACOB  
Bring me the note.

JUSTIN  
But I-

JACOB  
BRING ME THE NOTE NOW!

Justin stands up and walks up to the front of the class.

JUSTIN  
Fine.

Jacob takes the note from Justin. Jacob opens the note. The note is colorful, has a few hearts on it, and says our friendship.

JACOB  
What are you guys, a freaking  
couple?! You guys are dating  
and aren't even in high school  
yet?

The children laugh. Kai tilts his head to the side slightly. Justin blushes and shakes.

#### **INT. SCHOOL - LUNCHROOM - DAY**

Kids walk in groups, some talking with friends while waiting in line to get lunch. Kai and Justin wait in line together.

Kai grabs Justin's hand and holds it, Justin smiles. A girl sitting at a nearby lunch table points and laughs at them.

GIRL  
Eww gross.

Justin pulls his hand out of Kai's and puts both of his hands in his pockets.

CUT TO: Justin grabs his lunch tray, smiles, and sits next to CARRIE SKY, 12, a brown-eyed girl with short red hair.

JUSTIN

Hey Carrie, what's up? Wanna go to the park and get some ice cream again? All snacks are on me, just like last time.

Carrie quickly stands up and grimaces.

CARRIE

Uh, no thanks, Justin.

JUSTIN

Why not?

CARRIE

I don't want to get into the crossfire with you and your boyfriend.

Justin is stunned into silence.

JUSTIN

Who told you Kai was my-

CARRIE

Bye Justin, I think its best if we don't talk anymore. You're disgusting.

Carrie walks away.

**INT. JUSTIN'S HOUSE -KITCHEN - EVENING**

Maria sits at the table, eating soup. Justin throws a bouquet of flowers in the trash.

MARIA

Wait, why are you throwing those away? Do you know how much money I spent buying those?

JUSTIN

I don't need them anymore.

MARIA

Why, what happened?

Justin walks out.

**INT. JUSTIN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY**

The door opens. Justin walks into his room and slams the door behind him. Justin kicks the wall, throws himself on the bed, and hyperventilates.

GIRL (V.O)  
Eww, Justin is so disgusting!  
No wonder no one likes him.

JERRY (V.O)  
He's a faggot, what do you  
expect?

ALEX (V.O)  
Him and that freak need to do  
this school a favor and get  
lost.

CARRIE (V.O)  
Justin is so disgusting, I  
wish I never met him.

The voices become more intense as if everyone were all talking at once. Justin grabs his head then sinks his fingernails into his hair.

**INT.ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - BOYS LOCKER ROOM - DAY**

Justin opens his locker. Hateful, crude, and homophobic remarks are scribbled all over his notebooks. Spilled juice, and open food packages are also scattered inside his locker.

Justin opens his notebook. He quickly flips through the pages. There's scribble all over his class notes.

ERIC JEFFERSON, 34, the class gym teacher walks towards Justin.

ERIC  
Justin?

Justin slams his locker shut and turns around.

JUSTIN  
Yeah?

ERIC  
Did you bring your PE uniform?

JUSTIN  
Sorry, uh, I forgot.

ERIC

This is the fourth time this  
month Justin. I'm sorry but  
I'm going to have to give you  
a zero for today.

Kai walks towards them.

KAI

(In American sign  
language)

I have an extra pair of  
clothes.

ERIC

Huh?

JUSTIN

No thanks, I'm okay, Kai.

#### **INT.ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - GYM - DAY**

Kai and Justin sit on the bleachers. The rest of the class  
play dodge ball. Kai places his hand over Justin's. Justin  
looks at him, then pulls away.

KAI

(In American sign  
language )

What's wrong?

JUSTIN

Nothing, I'm okay.

A ball flies over and hits Justin in the face. Justin grunts  
and grabs his nose. A boy walks over and picks up the ball.

BOY

Oops, sorry! Didn't mean to  
interrupt your lovers'  
quarrel.

The boy walks away, laughing to himself.

#### **EXT.ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PLAYGROUND - DAY**

Children run around laughing happily. A boy with a baseball  
cap turns around and covers his eyes.

BOY

One, two, three-

Justin and Kai walk towards him. The boy with the basketball cap turns around.

JUSTIN

Hey, can me and Kai join?

The boy wearing the baseball cap turns around and looks them up and down.

BOY

Well uh, too many kids are already playing?

JUSTIN

Says who?

BOY

Says the main leader. I'll go ask him if you two can join.

The boy walks away, leaving Justin and Kai alone. Suddenly, Alex and Carrie stroll by. Justin stares at them. Alex looks at Justin, smirks, puts his arm around Carrie, then kisses her on the cheek. Justin looks like he was punched in the stomach.

MONTAGE - JUSTIN'S SERIES OF FLASHBACKS

-- At school during lunch-- Justin sits at the lunch table, Carrie stands up with her lunch tray in her hands.

CARRIE

I don't want to get into the crossfire with you and your boyfriend. You're disgusting.

JUSTIN

Who told you Kai was my-

--At school in the classroom -- Alex and Carrie sit side by side, Alex leans over and whispers something in Carrie's ear. She gasps and blushes.

END OF MONTAGE.

**EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PLAYGROUND - DAY ( END OF FLASHBACK)**

Justin shakes with rage.

KAI  
(In American sign  
language )  
Why are you sad?

Justin closes his eyes, opens them, then wipes his face.

JUSTIN  
I'm fine, don't worry about  
it, Kai.

Kai smiles, and pulls a chocolate bar out his pocket. He offers some to Justin.

**INT.ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY**

Emily writes on the board.

EMILY  
Here are a few examples of  
action verbs.

Kai squirms in his chair. He tugs on Justin's shirt. Justin turns around.

JUSTIN  
Yeah?

Kai blushes and gives him a note. Justin opens it and reads it.

EMILY  
What's wrong?

JUSTIN  
Kai needs to use the bathroom.

EMILY  
Could you go with him?

Justin sighs and stands up.

JUSTIN  
I guess.

JEERY  
I wouldn't let them go,  
they're probably gonna do it  
doggy style in the stall.

A few kids laugh. Emily frowns. Kai looks at Emily, then at Justin with a confused look on his face.

EMILY

Jerry! Go to the principal's  
office now!

**INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - BOY'S BATHROOM - DAY**

Justin leans against the wall and whistles. The bathroom door opens, MALCOLM RICHARDSON, 11, a long-haired boy with dark brown eyes walks into the bathroom. He glares and looks at Justin.

MALCOLM

Yuck, good thing I don't need  
to piss.

Malcolm goes towards the sink and washes his hands.

JUSTIN

Who are you saying ew to?

MALCOLM

You, you're a faggot.

JUSTIN

Say that again?

MALCOLM

You're a faggot, a cunt, a  
freak, and a bitch. So is your  
little friend Kai. should I go  
on?

Kai flushes the toilet. The stall door opens, Kai walks out. Malcolm pinches his nose and waves his other hand around.

MALCOLM

Shit! Your friend also smells  
pretty awful, do you guys fuck  
when he smells like that?

Malcolm laughs. Justin glares.

JUSTIN

That's it!

Kai grabs Justin before he punches Malcolm.

JUSTIN (CON'D)

Let go of me!!

Kai lets go, Justin punches Malcolm in the face.

**EXT. TOWN ROAD - DAY**

Justin walks down the road alone. Footsteps follow him.  
Justin turns around and sees Jerry and Alex.

JUSTIN  
What the hell do you guys  
want?

Jerry and Alex smirk.

JEERY  
Do you really think this is  
over bitch? No one gives my  
cousin a black eye and gets  
away with it!

Justin smirks.

JUSTIN  
Fine, let's fight!

Suddenly, two other guys step out of the bushes and walk  
behind Justin. Justin flinches and steps back.

JUSTIN ( CON'D )  
(Tearful and scared)  
Jerry! Jerry, stop! I'm  
serious! This was only  
supposed to be between me and  
you!

Jerry chuckles.

JERRY  
Not anymore. No one messes  
with my family.

The two boys grab Justin's arms. Justin kicks and screams,  
but he can't get out of their grips.

JUSTIN  
Stop, stop!

Jerry pulls a taser out his pocket, turns it on, and smirks  
at Justin. Justin screams louder and violently thrashes  
around.

**EXT. TOWN PARK - EVENING**

Justin sits in the water fountain. He has a black eye, messy  
hair, a busted lip, a couple of minor bruises, and his eyes  
are bloodshot red.



His school supplies and papers are scattered all over the park. Justin grabs his backpack, hugs it, then shakes all over as tears run down his face.

**INT. JUSTIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Maria sits on the sofa with her cellphone to her ear.

MARIA  
Yeah, thanks for inviting me,  
I'll be there at seven.

Maria hangs up.

MARIA  
Justin? Justin, its time to go  
to school, are you ready?

Maria waits for a few seconds.

MARIA  
Justin?

**INT. JUSTIN'S HOUSE - JUSTIN'S BEDROOM - DAY**

The door opens. Maria walks in and looks around, turns around, but sees nothing. She then notices Justin shaking in the corner of his bed with a blanket covering his body.

MARIA  
Justin?!

She yanks the blanket off and sees his black eye, cuts, and bruises all over his body. Justin's eyes are bloodshot red, he's pulling his hair, and shaking all over. She gasps.

JUSTIN  
It's all my fault! It's all my  
f- fault!

She grabs him, then looks at his face.

MARIA  
Oh my god, what happened? WHO  
DID THIS?!

Justin screams out and pulls his hair.

JUSTIN  
I'm sorry!

**INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL -PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY**

Maria, Justin, and LUCAS SCOTT, 35, Justin's father, sit on the chairs as SOPHIA JEFFERSON, 34, the school principal sits at her desk filling out paperwork. Justin is wearing a hat and has visible eyebags.

SOPHIA

Okay, all the paperwork is complete. Jerry and his gang are all suspended for a week. I'm really sorry that you all had to experience this.

Sophia hands Maria a packet and a pencil, she fills it out.

LUCAS

Suspended for only a week? What if they come back and do this shit again?! I want to press charges.

SOPHIA

If you want to press charges, that's fine, but the school has nothing to do with it.

Lucas sighs. Maria stands up and hands the packet back to Sophia.

SOPHIA (CON'D)

Thanks.

Maria turns to Justin.

MARIA

Me and your father are about to leave, are you going to be okay?

Justin looks down at the floor.

JUSTIN

Yeah, I'll be fine.

LUCAS

Are you sure?

Justin nods. Maria kisses Justin on the forehead, then her and Lucas walk out.

**INT.ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY**

Justin walks out of the office as the bell rings. Kai walks up behind him and tugs his shirt. Justin yelps, quickly pulls away, and turns to Kai.

KAI  
(American sign language)  
I missed you, let's keep being  
friends.

Justin shakes his head and walks away.

**INT.ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MATH CLASS - DAY**

Emily sits at her desk writing in a notebook. Justin walks in, he walks up to her desk.

EMILY  
Yes?

JUSTIN  
Can I change my seat?

EMILY  
Why?

JUSTIN  
I just-I just want to be  
alone, I want the seat in the  
back.

EMILY  
That's okay, I guess.

Justin walks to the very back to the class and takes his seat. Kai walks towards him.

KAI  
(In American sign  
language)  
Why don't you want to sit  
together?

JUSTIN  
Leave me alone.

KAI  
(In American sign  
language)  
Answer me.

Justin puts his head down on the desk and puts his arms around his head. Kai places his hand on Justin's back. Justin jerks away.

**EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PLAYGROUND - DAY**

Justin sits under a tree reading a book, Carrie stands in front of him.

CARRIE  
Please, I'm really sorry  
Justin! I didn't know Alex was  
lying, I broke up with him and  
everything!

JUSTIN  
I don't care. You listened to  
those stupid rumors and didn't  
even bother to ask me or Kai  
if they were true or not. Get  
away from me.

CARRIE  
But I-

JUSTIN  
I SAID, GET LOST!

Carrie flinches and steps back. She walks away.

**EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY**

Kids walk out of the school, some talk to friends while others meet up with their parents. Justin walks out of the building, then turns left. Kai runs in front of him and lifts his notebook up.

JUSTIN  
No Kai.

Justin starts to walk off. Kai grabs his shirt. Justin turns back around.

KAI  
(In American sign  
language )  
What is wrong? I want to help.

Justin glares, snatches the notebook out of Kai's grip and tosses it into a nearby water fountain. The book falls into the water. Kai covers his mouth and looks sick.

JUSTIN  
I said, leave me alone! LEAVE  
ME ALONE!

A few people start looking and whispering.

WOMEN  
Is he okay?

GUY  
Where's his parents?

Justin hyperventilates with rage. Kai walks over to the fountain. He gets in and grabs the notebook.

GIRL  
Eww gross!

BOY  
What a freak.

Justin turns and walks away.

#### **INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY**

Justin leans against the wall reading a book. Kai walks up behind him and tugs his shirt, Justin turns around. Kai grabs his hand.

JUSTIN  
Kai?

A few kids laugh. Jerry smirks.

JEERY  
How cute.

Justin pulls away and glares. Justin starts to walk away, but Kai follows him.

JUSTIN  
Stop following me!

Kai keeps walking towards him, Justin runs away.

#### **INT.ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY**

Kids talk and walk around the classroom. Justin sprints into the classroom and looks at the board. There's a drawing of two stick figures kissing on it with the names Justin and Kai labeled next to them. Students snicker in the background.

Justin glares and balls up his fists. He goes to the board, picks up an eraser, and clears it off. Kai steps in, he turns to Justin and walks towards him.

JUSTIN

Leave me alone, Kai! Are you deaf? I said, get the hell away from me!

Justin runs to the back of the class. He grabs two desks and pulls them together.

KAI

(In American sign language)  
I care about you.

JUSTIN

I don't care, GET LOST!

Kai runs to the back and attempts to pull the desks apart. Justin picks up a textbook and throws it at Kai. Kai tries to dodge, but it strikes him in the face, hard. A few kids gasp hearing the impact.

ALEX

Oh shit!

Three drops of blood fall to the floor.

GIRL

Oh no, he's bleeding!

Justin looks shocked and a little scared. Kai shakes uncontrollably and holds his nose as the blood trickles down his hands, clothes, and onto the floor. A girl runs out of the room.

GIRL

Someone get the teacher!

GIRL (V.O)

Miss Carson! Miss Carson, come quick!

Kai falls to his knees and vomits.

**INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY ( TWO WEEK LATER)**

Emily, who has a red puffy face, grabs an eraser off of her desk and clears off the board as the kids walk in and take their seats. Justin throws his bag on the floor and sits down.

The door opens, NICK GATES, 54, a middle-aged man with grey hair walks in and closes the door behind him. Justin furrows his eyebrows and sits up.

NICK

We have an announcement to make. As of today, Kai will no longer be attending West Wood elementary. In fact, we don't even know if he's going to be okay. Lets all just hope wherever he goes is better than this place.

Emily snuffles and wipes her eyes. The class goes silent for several seconds, then they all start whispering amongst themselves.

JUSTIN

Wait, what do you mean you don't know if he's going to be okay? WHAT HAPPENED?!

EMILY

Kai is just a little sick that's all.

Nick slams his fist against the board.

NICK

Kai went home and tried to do the unthinkable because he was being bullied! It's obvious someone here was bullying him. Justin, Justin stand up!

Justin stands up.

NICK

Did anyone see Justin bullying Kai?

A girl in the back dressed in white raises her hand.

BOY

He didn't exactly bully Kai, but they did tussle every now and then.

GIRL IN WHITE

He called Kai so many things! I told him to stop, but he just kept at it. He even threw Kai's notebook in the river!

JUSTIN

Me? your saying I did all the  
bullying? Selena would trip  
him in the hallway, Jerry  
would mess up his paintings,  
and YOU wrote notes pretending  
to be him!

Justin points to the GIRL dressed in white. Her eyes swell  
up with tears. She covers her face.

GIRL

I- I would never do such a  
thing! You're a liar! A sick  
liar!

The girl dressed in white starts whimpering.

**INT. JUSTIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

The rain patters against the window. Maria is sitting on the  
sofa with a cordless house phone near her ear. Justin stands  
on top of the stairs listening carefully.

MARIA

Please, just let Justin see  
him one more time! I said I'd  
pay all the hospital bills!

Maria glares and tightens her grip on the phone.

MARIA

What?! I never encouraged  
Justin to bully anyone! I just  
said he should be able to see  
Kai before he moves away!

After a few moments, Maria screams with rage.

MARIA

Well, fuck you too!

Justin flinches as Maria slams the phone down, ending the  
call. Maria sighs and frowns. She curls up into a ball on  
the sofa and closes her eyes for a few seconds.

Maria opens her eyes, Justin stands in front of her with his  
shoulders drooped.

JUSTIN

I'm sorry.



Justin's eyes swell up with tears. The tears run down his face.

JUSTIN(CONT'D)  
I'm really sorry, I'm sorry,  
I'm sorry. It's all my fault.  
I'm pathetic. I couldn't  
protect him.

Suddenly, Justin breaks into sobs and covers his face. Maria grabs him and embraces him into a warm hug. Justin hugs her tightly and sobs louder as she softly rubs his back.

MARIA  
It's okay. I still love you.

Justin continues to sob.

The

end.