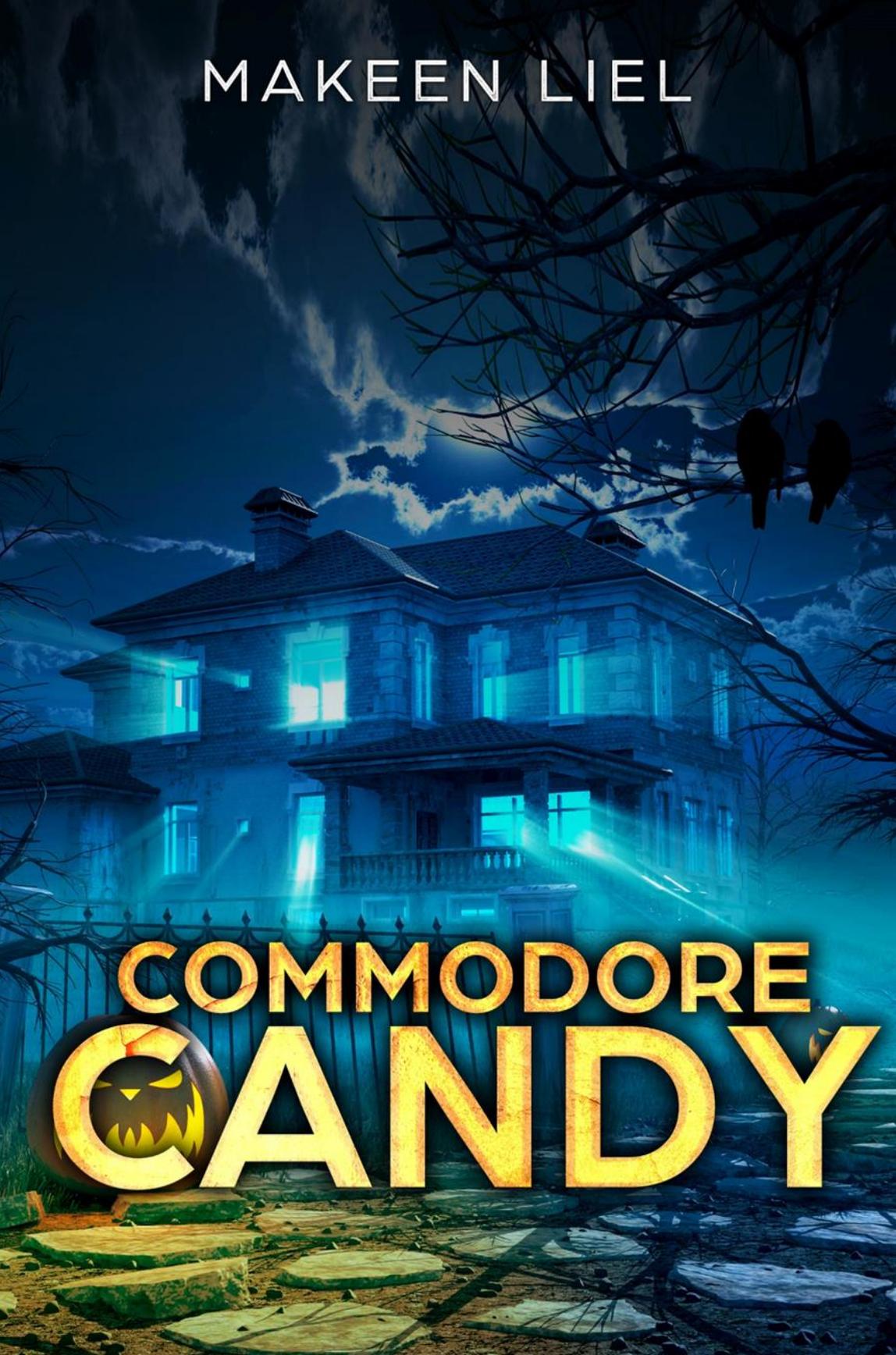


MAKEEN LIEL

A large, two-story house at night, illuminated by a blue glow from its windows. The house has a prominent chimney and a balcony. In the foreground, a jack-o'-lantern is carved into the letter 'C' of the title. The scene is set against a dark, cloudy sky with bare tree branches and two birds perched on a branch in the upper right.

COMMODORE
CANDY

MAKEEN LIEL

COMMODORE CANDY

BY

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Commodore Candy.

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Prologue

It's a clear night in the fall of 1964 in a small town overlooking the sea. And despite the beautiful Halloween decorations outside, it was quiet inside and the moonlight was coming through the windows. It was a wonderful night and certainly not a night for death!

That's what he thought to himself while struggling to pull his weak, wounded body across the place, his body that after bleeding so much blood, wanted nothing more than to fall to the ground, lifeless.

Except that he won't let him. He won't let him or the ones who did this to him get away with it. He had to fight and had to resist, but before that he had to accept. Maybe this was his fair punishment. Maybe it would be better for him to let go of this world and leave it in peace.

After struggling to hold himself up, he now stands in front of a big wooden cabinet with glass doors, full of different kinds and sizes of porcelain and chinaware. Below that are glass jars, wooden boxes, and bottles that contain all kinds of spices, nuts, dried fruit, creamy sauces, and even aromatic oils... everything needed to make the most delicious candy!

It wasn't really the proper time or place for someone who's facing death. He's a scientist, he studied chemistry, psychology, and phonetics. A scientist and doctor who had to choose a side when the second world war broke out and humanity was lost.

He's a scientist yet he never expected or even imagined that all his knowledge would be used just for making candy... but it is not just any candy.

He started preparing the ingredients. He turned on a small stove and brought out a small scale. He read a piece of paper that he copied for the last time before he burned it, and prepared to make it, his last recipe.

He had known for some time now that he was going to need it; even if he denied knowing it deep down within himself. The last piece of candy he would ever make...the last piece! He will never make candy for kids after tonight, at least not by himself. Maybe that's for the best. A soft chocolate powder made from Criollo rare cacao, chunks of Ceylon cinnamon, and some of the most expensive wild Elvish Turkish honey.

Dear God... this is painful!

He must be careful. The ingredients are varied, complicated, and need to be measured accurately. They must blend together, be soft and mixed well. So, when someone first tastes it and begins to chew, it sends sound waves through his jaw to his inner ear, sending encrypted sound waves that only a human brain can understand and memorize.

At the same time, the candy's sweet and delightful smell urges one to enjoy it slowly, and bathe the tongue with its rich taste. It must satisfy all the senses so he doesn't resist the process till the end, and enjoys the candy thoroughly until it is gone.

His work is complicated, but he has done it before.

And since he is the inventor of this candy, he knows that the hardest part was to put that encrypted code of orders into the form of sound waves, though the candy itself was a masterpiece!

His work is complicated but he does his work for the children, he loves the children. He has a little girl, a girl who he won't see any more after tonight. He won't hear her silly, sweet words, he won't see her grow up and he will never see laughter in her eyes again.

A tear dropped from the corner of his eye and fell into the soft mixture in front of him. Dear God, it's ruined! And his clothes are covered with blood... he had to start all over again. This candy must be ready so he knows that he succeeded. He must atone for his sin, and save all those innocents... he had to start all over.

01

Present time, October of the year 1984. The day before Halloween. The 80s, these are good times, or at least that's what Jason's father says. He's 12 years old and doesn't fully understand the meaning of the phrase good times. Good times for him could be anywhere except in this small town. Here they have only one small fishing harbor, one hospital, and one school. These days, the town only has one police officer!

But worst of all, according to Jason, is that the entire town only has one arcade game, after a power outage shut down the small and only video game arcade in the town.

Even the single video game in the restaurant didn't make it. Mr. Cooper, the owner of the arcade games, kept cursing Thomas, the only electrician, all day long.

Now if Jason wants to play he has to come here to the grocery shop. He's not really a fan of Q*bert, but it's the only game available now.

His eyes were on the game when Jeffrey, the grocer, approached him looking at the ceiling hoping that the power problem won't happen again, and puts the mint candy that Jason asked for in front of him.

Jeffrey was a middle-aged man. Yet Jason doesn't really remember seeing him laugh or even smile, a typical and a strict grocer who always insists on wearing his apron when he's in the store. Jeffrey understands if a boy spends his money on candy, but on a game? Especially these video games that have started being put everywhere; even at bars? Never. And if it isn't that this game brings him a few more customers he would've thrown into the street a long time ago. Isn't it enough all that noise it makes?

"I don't know what you see in all this chaos." Said Jeffrey sighing, watching the game monitor without understanding.

"What do you mean? It's fun, it's not like Frogger, but it's okay. I think I may be able to make a new record here."

"More than David Collins? I don't think so, you kids are very good at wasting your parent's money, if you want something valuable why don't you buy that?"

Said Jeffrey nodding towards a small glass cabinet near the store's front counter, which contained a single piece of wrapped candy with a tempting yellow color.

The printing on the wrapper represented the iconic Happy Commodore logo and some letters that indicate that it has smartness features. And even though everything about that piece of candy was tempting, Jason took a glance at it and then ignored it with a shrug of his shoulders going back to his game.

“No.”

“No? Are you kidding me?”

“No, I can't afford it, beside my parents refused. So, I don't care.”

“That's ridiculous! They don't know what's good for you. Don't they care about your future? Look at the beauty of that thing. If it would work with adults I would have had it a long time ago.” Said Jeffrey staring at it before he adds, distracted.

“You don't know kid, people could kill for something like that.”

Jeffrey then stopped thinking, took out his inhaler and used it to control his asthma before he went back to cleaning and organizing his merchandise on the shelves.

He's may be right thought Jason. That candy could be as he said for others, how could it not when it's the famous, mysterious Commodore Candy? Jason doesn't know its history exactly, but it was there a long time before he was even born. Both of his parents had eaten Commodore Candy, maybe when they were his age, and yes it worked with them since both of them are very successful in their work.

The idea behind the candy was simply to make different kinds and varied recipes.

Each recipe and each kind had the ability to motivate a specific area in the human brain to do a specific job to its extreme limits. It all has to do with hypnosis and mind control if his understanding of the whole thing is correct. It simply works while chewing, which is why it should be chewed slowly.

You want to be a lawyer or a successful judge? Take the Commodore piece that motivates memory, and you will memorize all the books of law and rights by heart. You want to be a financial manager or an eminent banker? One piece of Commodore candy that specializes in calculation abilities will turn you into a living calculator.

You want to be an athlete? A star basketball player or maybe a terrific baseball player? Commodore candy that triggers motion and hormones should be enough. You will have vitality and strength with a clear mind without getting tired.

In a word, that candy has a magical and guaranteed effect as long as a child ate it before he turned fourteen. And the effects would be even bigger if he used it before puberty.

Even for the more complicated careers there was a solution, for example, if a parent wants for his son to be a doctor or a famous surgeon, he can buy two pieces of Commodore Candy, one for memory that will make him absorb all medical references and books like a sponge. And another one that will increase his intelligence by double or more.

As many possible jobs for the brain exist, there was a variety of candy that would give a diversity of results.

In a few words, that candy was a revolution, or maybe more. And of course, fathers went after it, bought it for their sons and they paid a lot of money for it.

It was a successful and almost guaranteed investment. With almost no career out of reach, including a decent scientific job in a university, a high rank officer in the army, or a famous journalist in a newspaper. Very few careers were excluded.

He heard that maybe acting, dancing, and singing didn't qualify, and he didn't understand why? Perhaps because its needs more than what money can buy...talent.

Still it wasn't always like that. Over time the candy was harder to find and became quite rare and was barely made anymore for some reason. Of course, the price of the remaining Commodore Candy became astronomically high; even for the purpose it was made for and even if it was guaranteed to bring greatness and success.

The candy's reputation became damaged because of rumors that were spread, probably by those who could not afford to buy it. There was an unfortunate rumor that started an argument that it contained prohibited materials and drugs. Even environmental societies and animal protection organizations attacked it.

Especially because its source was unknown, and no particular side recognized it. Even the government agencies didn't know where it had been coming from in the past few years. Not to mention the fake pieces of candy that flooded the markets in an attempt for a few dishonest people to make some fast money. Fake pieces that nearly killed people, as a result of the unsafe recipes used.

In the end, somehow that candy become illegal, morally at least. People, or at least most of them started to avoid it. But in case a real piece was found, and it was the type someone wanted, it may have been worth some money and adventure.

That's why Jeffrey the grocer owns a piece here, one that he says got to him by coincidence. It's for sale for whoever will pay, but not one of his customers has dared; not even those who really want it. Jeffrey wants a lot of money for it, and Jeffrey wasn't always an honest person.

All of a sudden Jason felt uncomfortable, it was obvious since he started doing poorly at the game. Then he realized the reason, someone was watching him, and out of the corner of his eye he realized who it was. It was Mr. Raymond, or Inspector Raymond as they call him, standing next to one of shelves looking at everyone, but especially at the candy.

Although he's already older than Jason's father, he still acts like a teenager. And no matter how hard he tries to be professional in anything, even if it's just watching others, he always fails. Really, who else besides him would wear a long gray coat, a hat with black glasses, and carry a newspaper to watch others? It's like he came right out of an old spy movie! He didn't even notice that Jason saw him, what a loser.

His tendency to fail at everything made him lose his job and other jobs, Jason even heard that he was an Inspector in the past. What is he doing here? He has noticed that he shows up a lot in Jeffrey's grocery and around it lately.

Jason lost his desire for playing, so he paid Jeffrey the price of the bag of mint candy and left the place...even the only game? At this moment, even he felt hate toward Thomas the electrician.

02

Jason came out of the grocery shop making sure to look behind him to be sure that the loser Inspector didn't follow him, but that caused him to bump into someone. He turned to apologize, and to his surprise, it was Mrs. Jefferson. Seems that she was walking without paying attention too.

“Oh, sorry Mrs. Jefferson.”

“Hmm? oh... It's okay.”

She said, distracted, without really looking at him and went into the grocery shop. That was odd, but what was even more odd was to find both his friends waiting for him at the street corner.

As if they knew that he would be here, it's kind of annoying to have friends that know you so well that they know where to find you and what you are thinking about all day, thought Jason to himself.

“Hi, I knew that we would find you here.”

That was Gwen, Gwen Jefferson. They are the same age, live on the same block, and take the same classes. Gwen is a fun girl often, but these days she insists on tying her red hair like a ponytail to the side with a yellow scrunchie. And to wear colorful tights under a jeans skirt and a shirt that doesn't match her green eyes, with fingerless gloves in a wild mix of colors.

And if it isn't that her mother would punish her, she wouldn't hesitate to also wear big earrings and bright red lipstick. No... she's not a weird girl, she just madly loves pop music and dreams of being a pop singer one day... these are good times.

“Ha! I saw you bumping into her mother. What an idiot!”

That was Brandon Davis, who's as usual trying to be cool. He's a fan of James Crockett from that new TV show. Except that he never managed to pull it off. His words, his messy blonde hair, and that look in his eyes always exposes him. Even if he pulls his belt across his big tummy, and tries to wear tight clothes and roll up the sleeves of his white blazer.

Who else other than Brandon puts his Walkman in a visible place on his belt, and carries a Boom box on his shoulder at the same time? He's either a little slow or very stupid.

He's the only boy who ate a Commodore candy but didn't have any positive effects at all! That was of course after his parents paid a small fortune for it for the sake of their only child's future. But the whole thing turned into a scandal.

“How many times do I have to say it? It was fake!”

This was always Brandon's answer or what his parents told him to say if anyone asks him, still Brandon has a magnificent feature, he has a big, kind heart that nominates him to be one of the Care Bears.

“Hi,” Jason then said apologizing. “Sorry about your mom.”

“Don't worry.” said Gwen watching the grocery shop where her mother went. “It's not all your fault...she has been very distracted lately.”

“Ha! you bumped into her mother. What an idiot.”

“Brandon! you already said that before, when you don't know what to say just shut up!”

Said Gwen angrily while leading the way.

“Who's the idiot now?” Said Jason smiling as he followed her.

“Will, I will...”

Brandon couldn't think of something to say, which always happened to him when he needed a smart, quick answer, where are those smart comments when you need them? So, he just followed them depressed dragging his feet. This would affect his mood for the rest of the day. He doesn't like it when Gwen makes comments about him.

The three of them were on their way to their favorite place, to the old pier at the harbor. Even though it's an abandoned place, it still provides the best place to watch the sunset on the sea. And the three of them really love to watch sunsets.

Even more they love watching it together, it has become an almost daily habit for them.

Even if Gwen forces the others to listen to her while she sings when they watch it. It's still worth it.

On their way, they usually pass in front of the big, elegant villa that belongs to the Adams. Which is where their classmate, Diane Adams lives. And who was, at this moment, outside the villa. Standing with her back to the wall carrying a cat.

Wearing a nice, white dress that somehow suits her brown long hair and brown eyes, while she's playing with her cat staring at nothing really. But the way she looks, and the fact that she's rich added some magic to her that attracts the kid's attention immediately. Something Gwen noticed immediately too.

“Hi Diane!”

Said Jason even though they were still a little far from her. She nodded with her head in a nice way which upset Gwen even more.

“Hi... going to the old pier?”

“Yes!” Said Brandon with unjustified enthusiasm. “We're going to see the sunset, at sunset time... you know.”

Gwen looked at him with half an eye, he really doesn't know how to talk, which he noticed too.

“Would you like to come? It's a very nice scene.” Said Jason.

“Oh, I don't know, it's going to be cold outside.” Said Diane apologizing.

Jason opened his mouth to say something, to encourage her to come but Gwen said before him sarcastically,

“That's right, it's going to be cold and dark which doesn't suit a sensitive girl. Maybe you should go inside and wear a fur coat that matches the color of your cat. Come on guys, we're gonna be late.”

She said, and ignored Diane's surprised look as she walked past. Brandon waved his hand before he followed Gwen; Jason on the other hand didn't think this was appropriate.

"Don't worry about it, maybe we can go another time, deal?"

"Okay, see you at school," she said smiling at him. "And Happy Halloween."

He nodded his head and went after the others, Gwen shouldn't be so harsh with her, so when he gets next to her he said:

"Not nice."

"What is not nice?"

"What you just said back there, to Diane, not nice. You always shut her down."

"And you are always kind to her!" said Gwen upset.

"Me? no! It's just common courtesy."

"Doesn't seem like that to me." Commented Brandon.

"Whatever!" said Gwen. "Why do I have to be nice to a freak like her."

"She's not a freak," said Jason sighing knowing what Gwen is about to say since she said it a lot:

"She is a freak! All rich people are, her father never leaves the house, and her mother is crazy, she really is! She's a constant customer at the pharmacy and she buys a lot of placebos. And her older sister is just her half-sister from her mother side after her mother's ex-husband abandoned them and ran away. Her sister also is a freak, always wearing old-fashioned dresses, and she has a lot of cats. What kind of family is this? And you tell me they are not a bunch of freaks!"

“Whatever.” Said Jason giving up and ending the topic.

Meanwhile they have already arrived at the old pier and sat on its edge.

Good that they saw Diane on their way here, because that made Gwen lose her desire for singing, so everybody was silent for a few minutes watching the sea.

03

Beautiful is the sunset, and it's more beautiful when there are no sounds except the sounds of the sea waves and its birds. And it becomes even more beautiful when you watch it with your friends.

“This is beautiful.” said Gwen watching the horizon after she is completely calm.

“Yes, it is.” Said Jason agreeing.

Brandon on the other hand was still waving his head and feet to the Walkman music that he’s listening to through headphones before he noticed that the others are looking at him.

“What?”

He asked, but the others shook their heads making him turn off his device and stare with them at the setting sun over the ocean, before he said in a loud voice, pointing at the view in front of them since the headphones are still on his ears although he's already turned off the music:

“This is beautiful!”

The other two couldn't help it and start laughing.

“What?” Said Brandon wondering at first then in anger.

“What did I say?”

And when no one answered him he took off the headphones grumbling.

“You're both are weirdos”

“We are weirdos because we have a friend like you.”

Said Gwen smiling while messing with his hair. Jason gazed at the horizon smiling.

“Ah, I feel better now.”

“Aha, that proves how important I am,” said Brandon adding. “Now you feel better? You weren't feeling better before?”

“Of course not,” said Gwen commenting. “He must have been very upset.”

“Me upset?” Jason said denying.

“Please,” said Gwen as if he insulted her intelligence. “The only thing that made you leave home right after school to head to the arcade game, or since it broke down today, to Jeffrey's grocery shop is that you were really upset.”

“Extremely upset, you don't like Q*bert, you can't even stand it.” added Brandon waving his feet over the edge of the pier.

Jason stared at the water, when others know you that well it's not just annoying, it's scary!

“So, what is it?” asked Brandon.

“What do you mean?” Said Jason avoiding the question.

“What's bothering you these days?” said Gwen. “You know that you will tell us eventually, what? Your parents again?”

Seems that there's no use denying so he shook his head yes and started feeling uncomfortable again.

“It's alright.” said Gwen, “these things happen with parents.”

“Not my parents.” said Brandon simply and honestly.

“It's not like that.” said Jason, “lately it has become unbearable at home, and it's becoming worse with each passing day. We don't go out anymore, and if they are not at work then they are at home either distracted or having a fight for strange reasons. Like they are fighting just to fight. And the bad thing is that all of this has already affected their work making things even worse, and I don't know why?”

“Never mind, it's not your fault.” Said Brandon which made the others look at him with resentful looks so he added quickly. “Oh, it's not their fault too, it's the candy.”

“The candy?” said Gwen deprecatingly.

“Yes, the candy, Commodore candy? Haven't you noticed? Your parents, Gwen's mother. All the older ones who ate that candy are having problems lately.”

“And you know that.” said Gwen even more disparagingly yet Brandon shrugged his shoulders carelessly adding:

“I don't know, but my uncle Steve knows. He is, as you know, the police officer in this town and he's very good at noticing these things. He's the one who said.”

Jason and Gwen exchanged looks, they didn't think of it like this before. Specifically that this is Officer Steve's opinion.

"Okay, what else did he say?" asked Gwen.

"Who?"

"Your uncle Steve the officer! What else did he say?"

"I don't know," said Brandon. "He was talking with my parents at dinner last night, so I didn't pay much attention."

"Of course, you didn't." said Gwen indignantly.

"Hey, give me a break." Said Brandon. "If you're interested then go ask him, although probably he will be busy, he has a case."

"A case?" Said Jason surprised, since there never have been cases in their quiet town.

"Yes, he's looking for Thomas the electrician, he's missing and there are a lot of power problems lately. People are angry, my uncle thinks that Thomas is lost outside the town since he drinks a lot you know, or that he decided that he doesn't want this job anymore, so he left without telling anyone.

He's not that responsible as my uncle says, you know how these things go. Anyway, if you want to know more I can ask him for you, these parents' problems have to be solved quickly before it gets bigger and worse. You don't want your parents to get divorced."

"Divorced?" Said Jason after the idea surprised him, while Gwen said scolding:

"Brandon!"

"What? I'm just saying, these things happen. Look at Gwen's parents."

Gwen looked away immediately while Jason nudged his buddy hard.

“What!?”

Jason didn't answer him, because it will only make things worse. Then the three of them went silent staring at the sun that had almost disappeared already. Suddenly time became heavy and minutes were passing so slow. Even Brandon felt that and felt angry at himself, why does he always have to talk like that?

But he suddenly remembered something, so he said, trying to fix things or to go over it:

“Oh, I remember. My uncle said that if anyone knows what's going on because of this candy it certainly will be Mr. Adams.”

“Mr. Adams? Diane's father?” said Jason.

“Yes, the man has a candy factory. And he's an expert in these things, I heard that he's the one who has searched most often for this candy and he has been doing research on it for a long time. There were even rumors that he may be the one who has been making it in secret all these years.

I have always heard that the origins of this candy were from these areas. Maybe you should ask him... Or forget that, maybe you should ask Diane tomorrow at school. Certainly, she knows something, you won't lose anything if you ask.”

“Yes, little princess must know!” said Gwen in real anger.

Jason, on the other hand, started thinking. Maybe there is something and maybe there's nothing at all, but his parent's problems are real and not nothing.

Still he didn't want to talk to Diane tomorrow about things like this, his family issues. But seems that he doesn't have a choice here, then he went back to thinking about his parents again, but with real concern this time.