

Excerpt

There's No Room for You, Maddie Morrison

It's lunchtime in middle school. The halls fill with excited, hungry bodies all headed in the same direction with the same two thoughts: getting to the front of the lunch line, and who they would sit with. Maddie's thoughts were a little more specific.

How can I sit at Stephanie's table? Should I mention that we have the same shirt? No she'll think that she's not cool if I'm wearing the same shirt as her. Maybe I'll ask her if she wants to come shopping with my mom and me after school. Yeah, that's it. Oh my Gosh, my stomach has butterflies. I'm so nervous. I'm almost at the table, so here goes nothing.

Just as Maddie was about to talk to Stephanie, Audrey whirled her around, "I've been looking everywhere for you," Audrey said a little out of breath. "You'll never guess what happened."

"Look Audrey, I don't care right now. I was about to..." Maddie was cut off by Audrey's excitement.

"Maddie, I just saw Mr. Campbell in the hall and he was talking to Julie. She was crying, so I asked her what happened." Maddie forgot her quest for popularity for a moment and gave Audrey her full attention.

"What happened?" Maddie cried, hoping to get some juicy details.

"Well, Julie was hoping to be moved up to Stephanie's science class by getting a good grade on today's science test until she found out that she got a 63." Audrey saw Maddie's interest and continued. "She was so upset because Mr. Campbell told her she had no chance of moving up if she continued to get grades like that. She started to cry. I felt so bad for her," Audrey recalled.

"So she is staying in the class with me," Maddie mumbled. "I guess you do have control over it."

Audrey grumbled in confusion, "How do you figure she has control? She can't move up now."

"But Audrey, all she had to do was get a good grade on the test, and Mr. Campbell could've moved her up." Maddie had it all planned. "I can get better grades and move up too."

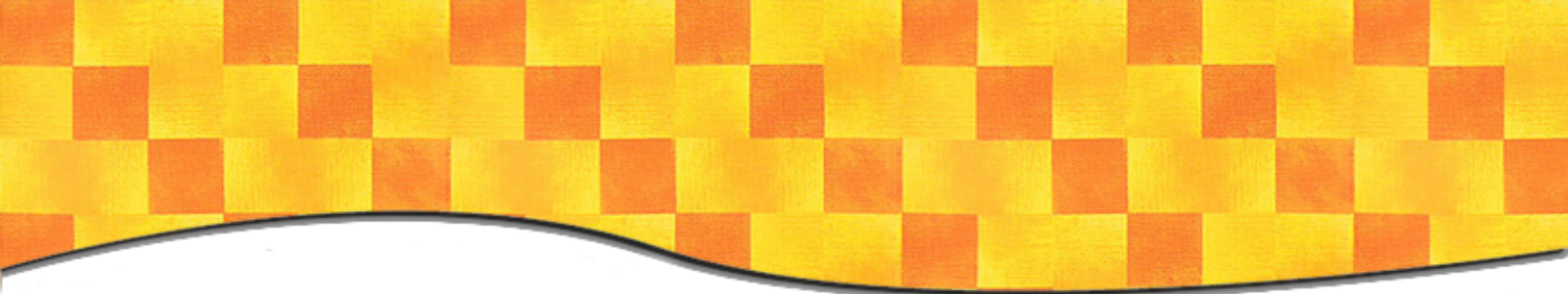
"So this is all about you, Maddie Morrison. How does everything end up being about you and those...those...girls?" Audrey snapped, a little too loudly.

"Shhh, Stephanie might hear you," Maddie worried.

"So what!" Audrey began to worry that she was losing Maddie. "They're not worth my time or yours," Audrey whined.

Maddie had been watching Stephanie and the others. She saw Julie arrive at the lunch table, looking as if she had been crying. She quietly found a spot across from Stephanie. Maddie digested what Audrey had just said and shot back at her. "This is very important to me, Audrey. If you don't like these girls, that's your problem. I'm on a mission here." Maddie's brow was beginning to get deep creases. "I want to be cool, and this is the only way." Maddie rushed over to Stephanie's table and didn't hear Audrey's last comment.

"I think you already are cool, Maddie, I always have." Audrey's admission fell on deaf ears.



“Hi Stephanie!” Maddie’s syrupy voice was greeted with a sideways look from the cool girls at the table. “Steph, how would you like to come shopping with my Mom and me after school?”

Stephanie looked up from her french fries and made that face she always makes when she’s talking about someone she doesn’t like. So Maddie quickly added, “They have that great bubble gum lip gloss that smells so good and makes your lips shine and well, you know the one.”

“So what? I already have that one. Besides, why would I go with you? Anyway, I’m going over Amy’s house after school.”

Maddie’s anxious look turned to disappointment, and she began to sit down at the table. Amy quickly moved down one seat to make it unavailable. Julie was the only one who seemed to notice Maddie’s feelings and was about to say something, Maddie could feel it, but chose not to say anything at all. Maddie quickly went to the lunch line and by the time she paid for her lunch and sat down, the bell had rang. Lunchtime at middle school was harder than science class for Maddie.

