

Maddie World

(The Three Lost Kids Special Edition Trilogy, #3)

by Kimberly Kinrade

Illustrated by Josh Evans

Chapter 1 - Bullies on the Playground

"Hey, Maddie-Brattie, nice bracelet! So nice, I think I'll keep it."

The mean girl from Mrs. Baker's class grabbed my wrist so hard I could feel the bruise I would have the next day. She tore my favorite friendship bracelet off and put it on her own wrist.



I choked on the tears in my throat. "You can't have that. My sister made it for me. Give it back!"

"Yeah, you gonna make me?" Her face wrinkled up in a mean mask and she pushed me to the ground.

My elbow smacked the cement, and bits of sand and rock burrowed under my skin, sending sharp spikes of pain up my arm. This time the tears didn't stay in my throat.

"Cry baby, cry baby," she said as she skipped away laughing.

I hated her. Why couldn't she just leave me alone?

My sister Bella ran up and put her arm around me. "Maddie, what happened?" She saw Mean Girl running away, and noticed the bracelet missing from my wrist.

"I'm going to go punch that girl for hurting you, and I'll get your bracelet back!"

I grabbed her hand before she could do something so Bella-like. "No! Remember what you learned in Bella World? You've got to control your temper! Besides, it'll just make things worse."

She helped me stand up and wipe dirt off my clothes. Her face clenched in frustration. "You have to at least go stand up to her, or tell the teacher. Nobody treats my big sister like that."

I stretched out my arm and winced from the pain. A trickle of blood ran down my arm. "No, it's better to just let it go. I don't want to make trouble." I wanted the bully to just forget about me, and telling on her would not help that.

With twenty minutes left of recess, I made my way to the nurse's station to get a bandage for my cut, then returned to my classroom and got out my sketchbook to draw. At least when I was sketching no one bugged me.

By the time class started, my page had come to life with colorful Fairies, their rainbow-like wings spreading across the page, with glitter to represent their magic.

I wanted to escape to Maddie World, with Fairies and magic... and no bullies. We'd gone to my six-year-old sister Lexie's world and met Unicorns, and to my eight-year-old sister Bella's world, where she got to ride a Dragon. But no doors had yet appeared to my world, I was almost ten-years-old!

When another tear fell onto my paper, I blamed it on my skinned elbow.

I spent the rest of the day avoiding Mean Girl by reading or hiding in my sketchbook.

After school, my sisters raced back to our house from the bus while I walked behind them, still miserable. I would *not* be going to school again. It just wasn't fun anymore.

Unfortunately, my parents didn't take to this news well.

Instead of taking off my shoes and putting away my backpack with my sisters, I sank into the big blue couch in our living room – my mom always thought it was green, but it was blue.

Mom sat next to me and stroked my hair. "Honey, you have to go to school. It's required."

Daddy sat on my other side and wiped a tear from my eyes. "What happened?"

I wasn't going to say anything. What could they do anyways?

But Bella just had to stick her nose in and tell everything. "Maddie's being bullied at school. They hurt her and took the bracelet that I made her."

Mom hugged me and Daddy kissed my head.

Bella wouldn't be quiet. "She won't tell the teacher or stand up for herself. You have to talk to her."

And talk they did, but it was just the same old stuff. Standing up to her wouldn't help; neither would telling my teacher. I just had to deal with it.

Nobody understood.

I sulked to my room and closed the door, with TayTay, my faithful pooch and best friend, right at my heels. I just wanted to be left alone with my dog, but sharing a room with my sisters made that nearly impossible.

Lexie and Bella barged in, full of noise and chaos.

Bella rattled my bed. "Come play with us. It'll cheer you up!"

TayTay cuddled up next to me and we burrowed ourselves under my blankets, allowing the thick cotton to dampen the animated play from my sisters, so I could wallow in self-pity.

Lexie tugged at the blanket and exposed my frowning face. "Maddie, please."

Irritation dug its claws into me. "Not now, Lexie. I don't feel like it."

Bella set up the big cardboard box Mom and Dad had given us after removing our Christmas tree from it. It was big enough for us to play in and to set up as a house.

"Look," Bella said, "we can pretend we're going to Maddie World."

That just depressed me more. Maddie World wasn't in a box. It wasn't anywhere. We'd looked in trees and ponds and under rocks and.... Nothing.

Lexie stepped into the makeshift playhouse. "It'll be fun. We can...."

All went silent.

TayTay whined and I sat up in bed. "Lexie?" *Weird, it's not that big.*

Bella peered into the cardboard, and her eyebrows shot up so high they almost became her hairline. Then she disappeared too.

TayTay jumped off my bed and ran over to where Lexie and Bella had been, his little tail wagging behind him. He whined and waited for me to join him.



I looked everywhere, but my sisters were gone. The box was empty.

This could only mean one thing.

I stepped into the box....

...and emerged in Maddie World.