

Madison Gets It All Wrong

Dad and Madison were walking through the party store, gathering decorations for Madison's upcoming birthday party. Even though Madison was a twin, she and her sister Ella always had separate birthday parties for their classmates.

"But I don't want to invite Lucy Gilbert!"

"We already discussed this. You are inviting all the girls from your class. Hey! Look at this volcano! We could use it as a centerpiece!"

"But I don't like Lucy Gilbert!"

"Madison, you are being unreasonable. How would you feel if every girl in your class was invited to a party but you? And what do you think about this volcano?" Dad tapped on a huge grey volcano made of paper mache. Orange and red crepe paper flowed from the top, mimicking lava.

Madison shrugged. "I don't know."

"You don't know about the volcano?"

"No. I don't know how I would feel if everyone got invited to a party but me. I know about the volcano. I don't like it at all. It's ugly."

"But this is supposed to be a luau birthday party! Hawaii has volcanoes!"

"No, Dad. No volcanoes. I want grass skirts and pretty tropical flowers. Not ugly volcanoes. No one likes volcanoes."

Dad shrugged and put the volcano back on the shelf. "I do. I think it's totally cool."

Madison rolled her eyes. Sometimes Dad just didn't get it.

"And I know how you would feel, Madison. If all the girls in your class got an invitation and you didn't, it would hurt your feelings. You'd feel left out. It would be a big mistake to not invite Lucy to the party."

"She never even talks to me!"

"Hey! How about a tiki totem pole!"

Madison looked at the brown plastic totem pole. It was almost as tall as her and had angry faces carved into it. "Dad! Please! I want a cute party. This is not cute."

Dad sighed and moved down the aisle. "Lucy is a new girl in class. They just moved here a little over a month ago. Think about how that must feel. She doesn't know anyone. Not one single person in the school. She left all of her old friends behind and now she has to try to make new friends. You can help her with that. Your party will be a great chance for her to get to know everyone."

“No it won’t. She will probably sit in the corner by herself and not talk to anyone.”

“Why would you say that?”

“Because that’s what she does! Every day at lunch she sits all by herself.”

“Well, maybe you should join her. No one wants to eat alone.”

“Lucy Gilbert does.”

“Madison, I’m done discussing this. You will invite every girl in your class, including Lucy Gilbert. Hey! How about an inflatable palm tree?”

Saturday morning, Madison and her sister were blowing up balloons. Even though they were twins and looked very much alike, it was easy for everyone to tell them apart. The girls both had long blonde hair and brown eyes. Their faces looked similar and their voices even sounded the same, but everything else about them was different.

Ella was dressed for the day, already wearing her new blue dress. Her hair was pulled back into a neat braid and a matching blue ribbon was at the end of the braid. Madison still wore her pajamas and her hair had not seen a brush yet this morning. The girls even loved different things. Ella loved to be in the house planning outfits to wear. Madison loved to be outside riding her horse.

Ella carefully tied a blue balloon and added it to the line of balloons beside her on the couch. “Are you excited about your party?” she asked her sister.

Madison gave the red balloon she was holding a last puff, quickly tied it, and then dropped it to the floor where many other balloons were gathered. All the balloons shifted slightly as the red balloon bumped against them. “Sort of,” Madison told Ella. “I just wish that Lucy Gilbert wasn’t coming. I’m afraid she’s going to ruin everything.”

“That’s just silly.”

“You just wait and see. She’s going to sit in the corner and not talk to anyone.” Madison got to her feet. “I’ll be right back. I have to go to the barn and feed Star.”

“Well, hurry up. We still have a lot more balloons to blow up!”

A few hours later, most of the girls were at the party. “I don’t see Lucy,” Ella told Madison. They were standing near the door wearing long grass skirts. Both had bright pink flower leis around their necks.

“Good! Maybe she won’t come!”

“Madison! That’s not nice!”

Madison lowered her voice. “Why would I want someone to come to my birthday party who won’t even talk to me? I tried to talk to her once and she hardly even answered me!”

At that moment, Lucy Gilbert walked through the front door.

Ella gave Madison a gentle push on the back. “Go put a lei around her neck and tell her you are happy she

could come to the party.”

Madison picked up a pink lei from a nearby table and walked to the door. “Here. Put this around your neck,” she told Lucy.

Lucy put the lei around her neck and then tried to give Madison the present she was holding.

“You can just put it on that table over there with the other presents,” Madison said before turning and walking back to her sister.

“That was rude!” Ella said.

Both girls turned to watch Lucy as she placed her present on the table. She looked around the room for a moment and then walked to a chair in the corner and sat down by herself.

“See! I told you!” Madison said with a satisfied smile.

Later, all the girls were gathered around the table as Madison opened her presents. Lucy’s present was the very last to be opened. Madison picked up the present and ripped open the giftwrap paper. Inside was a worn cardboard box that was taped shut. Madison frowned. What in the world could be inside this old box? She pulled the tape off and opened the box. Some sort of thick blue and white braided rope was inside. Madison started to pull the rope out of the box and then saw a gold snap buried underneath. Shocked, she looked up at Lucy.

“It’s a lead rope for your horse. I had my mom drive me by here so I could see what color halter he wears. This lead rope will match his blue halter!”

Madison pulled the lead rope out of the box and placed it on her lap. “It’s beautiful! I’ve never seen one like this before. Where’d you get it?”

“I made it! I made one like that for my horse too. It works great. That snap is strong.”

“You have a horse?”

Lucy shook her head. “No. Not anymore. He died a few months ago, right before we moved here. He was really old. But when I heard you talking about your horse at school, I thought you’d like to have a lead rope like this for Star.”

“How did you know his name?”

“I heard you say it at school. That’s when I got the idea to make you a lead rope.”

Madison held the lead rope in her hands. It really was beautiful. It was, by far, her very favorite birthday present of the day. She suddenly felt so bad. She had been so mean to Lucy. She wasn’t unfriendly. She was sad. Madison thought about how she’d feel if Star died and then she had to move to a different state and a different school. Madison thought about Lucy sitting alone in the corner of the lunchroom. She blinked hard to fight the tears that were building in her eyes.

“Who wants cake?” Mom asked quickly.

"I do! I do! I do!" everyone shouted as they followed Mom to the kitchen.

Madison wiped her eyes. "Hey Lucy," she said to Lucy who had just turned to follow everyone to the kitchen. "Thanks so much for this lead rope. It's the prettiest one I've ever seen."

"I'm glad you like it."

"I love it! Hey, do you think you could stay after the party? We could go for a ride on Star."

Lucy smiled. "I'd love to! I'll call my mom and ask if it's okay, but I'm sure she will say yes. She's always saying I need to try harder to make new friends. I'm kind of shy, though. So it's always hard for me."

"Well, Lucy. You made a friend today. Now let's go get some of that cake!" Madison put her arm around Lucy's shoulders and the girls walked toward the kitchen, both smiling.

Questions

1. What is the theme of Madison's party?
2. What are Madison and Ella wearing when Lucy arrives at the party?
3. What is the name of Madison's horse?
4. What color was the lead rope Lucy made for Madison?