

## THE FRIENDS

From TEEN - <https://apt.org.au/product/teen-2/>

MADDY      The day I turned eleven was the worst day of my life.... It started really well...My Mum woke me up early so we could have a birthday breakfast together... (*she smiles gently*) pancakes. Dad was away at work, so we skyped him. I was pretty upset that he couldn't come home for my birthday, and on the way to school mum and I got into a really dumb argument about it. When I got out of the car, she tried to give me a hug. I told her I was too old for it and pushed her away. I guess I was just upset that she would defend him... and probably embarrassed at who would see me. As I slammed the door she said "Please Maddy, it's your birthday! I didn't even turn around. I just walked off.

That is the biggest regret of my life.

At lunch my friends and I put all our food together and we made a birthday picnic on the oval. The kids playing footy got so mad and started kicking balls at us, but we just laughed at them and didn't budge. Then Mr Jones turned up and said he had to take me to the office. At first, we thought those dumb year 4s had gone and told on us for ruining their game, but then he said he only needed me to come. We all laughed and thought it was really weird that they didn't just wait til I got back to class. But then I saw Mr Jones's face.... Will was joking that I had done something really bad. Mr Jones said for them to stay but they followed anyway, Cameron and Michael teasing me the whole time that I was going to get suspended or something... Ange didn't. She saw Mr Jones's face too and held my hand the whole way there. I asked if her and Jess could come into the office with me... Mr Jones said no.

When I got into the office my dad was there, and other teachers, I don't even know who. Dad was crying... I knew as soon as I saw him that something had happened to Mum. He couldn't look at me.... He just looked down and kept crying...His body was shaking. He was making these really weird little hiccupping noises and I almost laughed at him.... Can you believe that? I knew what was about to happen and I felt like laughing. I knew. Someone asked me to sit down...Then someone said it...Not my dad...He couldn't...but someone said the words. (*quietly*) And then my world went black and a part of me died too.

When they took me outside to go home, they were all waiting. My friends. The bell had gone ages ago but they all had refused to move. They knew something had happened ...something bad...and they wanted to be there for me. And that's how it was from then. Through all the really bad stuff, they were there...They made me feel like I still had a family, even though mine had been ripped apart. They cared. They care. Even though our lives are going in different directions now we're in high school, I know they will always be there for me and I will be for them. Always.