

# BENEATH THE RUG

story by Tracy Weldon

art by Dominika Bozic

What's my favorite thing to do?  
Easy!

Play with my best friend Ava!  
We laugh until our tummies hurt,  
we play tag until we both NEED lemonade,  
and we fill my tree house with treasures.



THIS IS  
AVA  
my BFF

But one day while we were playing

Ava said something  
that hurt my feelings.  
I don't think she  
meant to do it,  
but the words  
felt MEAN.  
We were having fun  
though, so I decided to  
ignore it.



I just PUSHED the feelings away.



Each day we would meet and play,  
but after a while I realized my hurt  
feelings were still there.

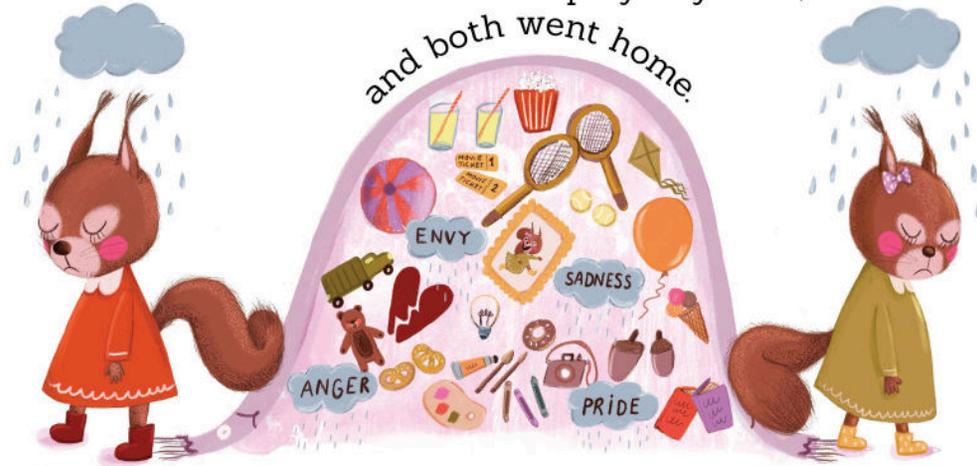
I tried to ignore them, but they just  
got bigger. "Maybe I should say  
something," I thought. But I decided  
it would be more fun if we kept playing.

I started to feel different inside.  
Like my feelings were going to burst  
out of me, maybe even explode. And  
then I said hurtful words to Ava.  
I didn't mean to, but I couldn't control  
what I was saying.



Ava was quiet the rest of the day.  
We didn't want to play anymore,

and both went home.



Then, I saw her at the playground.  
We started to talk about what  
happened and slowly I felt  
that space between us get  
smaller and smaller.

We shared our thoughts for a  
while and eventually things  
started to feel just like they  
were before our fight, in fact,  
maybe even a little  
BETTER.



Hot summer days turned crisp and chilly.



I was still angry,  
but I missed seeing Ava.  
I wished we could just  
play tag again.

I wondered  
if I should have  
shared my feelings.

We pinky-promised not to push our feelings aside again.  
I realized that it's hard to share your thoughts,  
but it's even harder when your best friend's not around.

We play together now more than ever.  
From time-to-time things come up  
that we pause to talk about.  
And that's okay.

We learned that when  
you share what you're feeling  
on the inside, the world feels  
better on the outside. ★

