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Be Bigger



"Hmph," said the girl.

"Is something bothering you?" came a voice like a warm breeze.

"No. I'm fine. I have the whole thing figured out," the girl snapped.

Just then, she started to look around. She saw an old elm tree next to her, the school far across the playground, and not another person close enough to talk to.

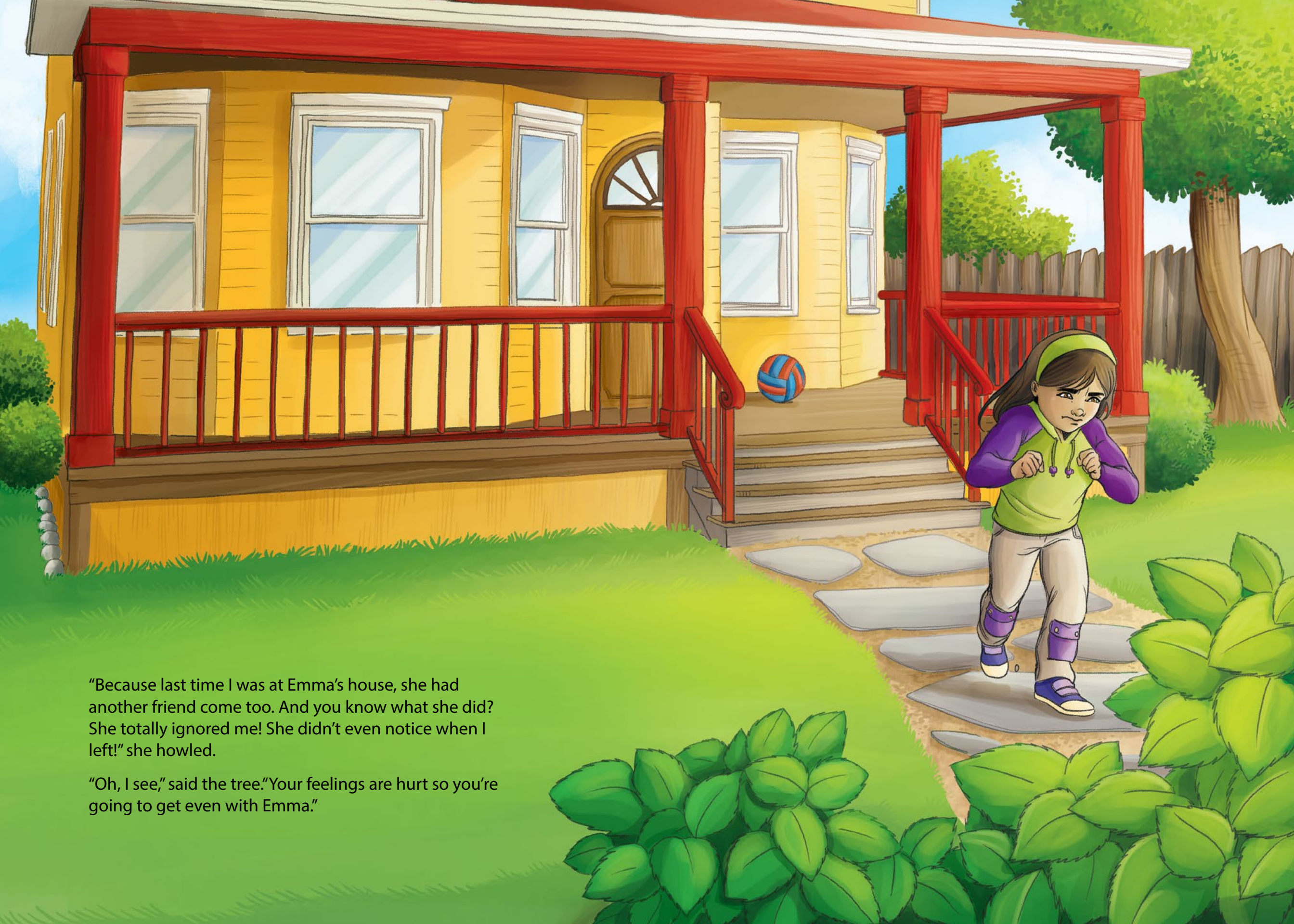


"Am I talking to a tree?" she wondered aloud.

"Well I am the only one here," said the tree with a wink. "So what's bothering you? Kids at this school have been telling me for a long time that I'm a very good listener."

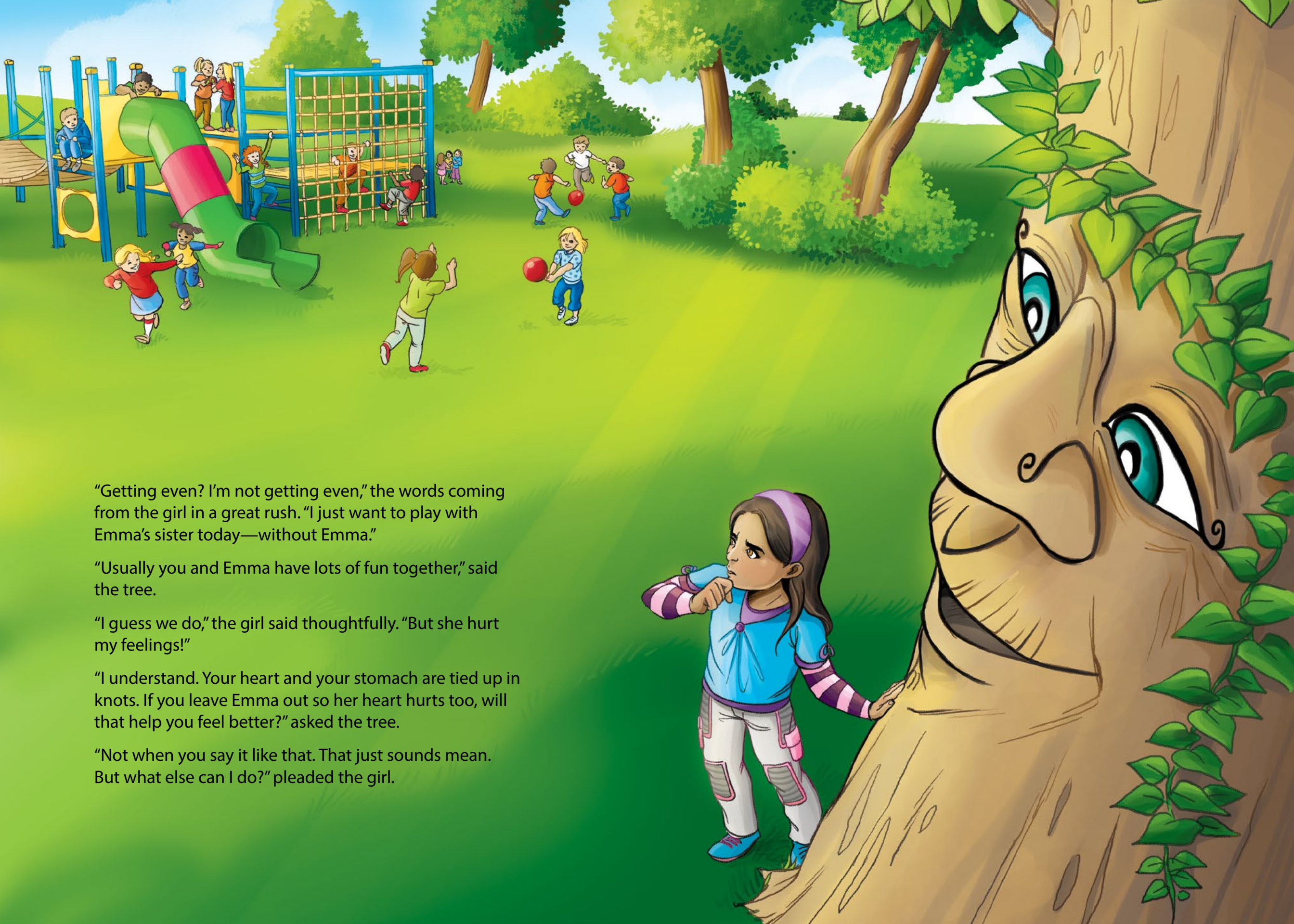
"I don't need to talk. I've figured it out. I'm just going to invite Emma's sister over after school. But I am *NOT* going to invite Emma," the girl said, with her arms crossed and her chin in the air.

"Why not?" asked the tree.



“Because last time I was at Emma’s house, she had another friend come too. And you know what she did? She totally ignored me! She didn’t even notice when I left!” she howled.

“Oh, I see,” said the tree. “Your feelings are hurt so you’re going to get even with Emma.”



“Getting even? I’m not getting even,” the words coming from the girl in a great rush. “I just want to play with Emma’s sister today—without Emma.”

“Usually you and Emma have lots of fun together,” said the tree.

“I guess we do,” the girl said thoughtfully. “But she hurt my feelings!”

“I understand. Your heart and your stomach are tied up in knots. If you leave Emma out so her heart hurts too, will that help you feel better?” asked the tree.

“Not when you say it like that. That just sounds mean. But what else can I do?” pleaded the girl.

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What would you say if you could talk to a tree?

Trees make great listeners, and so do your grown-ups. So go ahead and speak up. What are you thinking about?

The tree said to the girl, "I understand your heart and your stomach are tied up in knots." Have you ever felt that way? Why?

What does it mean to "be bigger"? Does it mean you need to grow taller or does it mean you can choose to rise above your anger and hurt to make a good choice?

In the story about the girl's grandma, we see Gran had her feelings hurt. How did she handle it? What could she have done differently?

The tree talks with the girl about choosing between "the easy way" and "the right way". Have you ever been in a situation when you could choose the easy way out, but decided to do the right thing?

How would you handle these friendship troubles?

You hear that one of your good friends said something mean about you to someone.

- March right over to her and tell her she's not your friend anymore.
- Go to your friend and ask if she really said it. Then let her know that it hurt your feelings for her to talk about you like that to someone else. Tell her you'd rather she talk to you if she doesn't like something you do.
- Ignore it. It'll go away on its own.

You are surprised to find out that everyone in class got an invitation to your friend's birthday party, except for you.

- Plan a super fun party and don't invite him. He left you out—you leave him out.
- Tell everyone you didn't want to go to his boring party anyway.
- Ask him if there's been a mistake. If he didn't invite you on purpose, try to work out what's wrong in the friendship.

Your friend was so rude today. She snapped at you and wouldn't share at recess.

- Think about how nice she usually is. Ask her if she's having a bad day or if something's bothering her.
- Forget her as a friend. Nobody treats you that way.
- Tell all your friends how rude she was.



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