

Before I can answer, Martina leans in and wants to know what's up. I can see the rest of my friends aren't paying any attention to us. I'm glad! I don't want anybody else joining the conversation. Jade and Martina are my best, best friends. If I'm going to spill my guts to anyone about how I'm feeling, it's them.



“I just asked Anika what’s goin’ on with her, cuz she looks so sad all the time,” Jade tells Martina, who nods like she gets it. “Yeah, I’ve noticed that, too. You’re so quiet. And not like the *shhh, I’m thinking* kind of quiet. More like the *I’m really sad* quiet.”

I look at my two besties, not sure how to explain myself or my feelings. “Nothing’s happened. I almost wish something happened,” I tell them. “That would make more sense. **I’M JUST SAD AND FEEL ALONG, AND I DON’T KNOW WHY.** There’s gotta be something I can do, but I can’t think of one thing to make myself feel better.”

Jade and Martina say nothing. But their eyes tell me they’re worried and want to understand. Then I make another confession. I admit to them that, for a long time now, I’ve just been faking being happy. But now I don’t even have the energy to pretend. I don’t think I’ll ever feel happy again, and it’s scary.

Martina hugs me. “Oh Anika! Maybe you’re just depressed?”

will eat. They'll ask a million questions, and we'll end up sitting there forever.

Mom and Dad start clearing the table. It's now or never.

"HEY, UM! I HAVE SOMETHING I NEED TO TELL YOU GUYS. TODAY, AT SCHOOL, I WENT AND TALKED TO MY SCHOOL COUNSELOR."

"Oh? What'd you need to talk to her about?" Mom asks.

