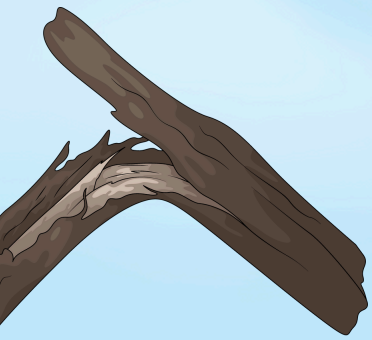
The Crooked Branch

A STORY BY ARKEDELIC

Note to Parents



STORY WALKER 365

BUILDING BEAUTIFUL INSIDE

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The jungle rang with chatter.
Danny the bonobo swung from a vine with a loud “Wheeee!” and landed on a low branch that sagged beneath his weight.

Zeldon the hare hopped in circles below, ears bouncing.

“My turn! My turn!”
he squeaked, eyes shining.

Sherry, the tiny chimp, clapped her hands and giggled.

“Both of you will snap it before I even climb!” she teased.

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Danny bounced once.

Crrreeeak.
The branch wobbled dangerously.

“Strong as stone!” he bragged, pounding his little chest.

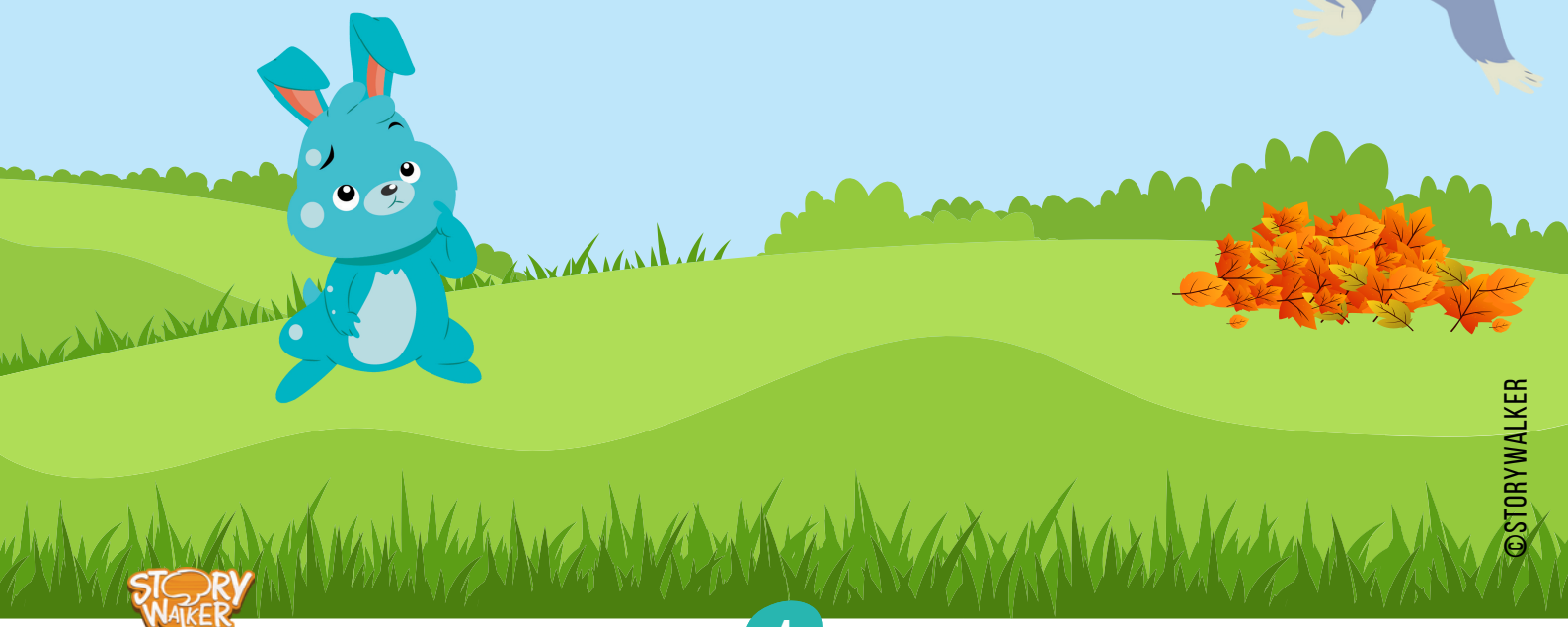
Zeldon hopped onto the edge.
“Make room!” he cried. The branch dipped lower.

Crack! With a sharp snap, the branch split at one side and dropped them into the dust.

Thud! Poof!
A cloud of dry leaves puffed up around them.

“Danny broke it!” Zeldon squealed instantly, pointing a paw. “He was jumping like a buffalo!”

Danny scrambled up, leaves stuck to his fur.
“I didn’t! You made it crack when you hopped on! You’re too bouncy!”



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Sherry folded her arms and smirked.
“I saw everything. And I’m going to tell Kimaya
you both are branch-breakers!”

Danny’s eyes widened. “Don’t tattle!”

Zeldon stamped his foot.
“Yes, tell her! Danny’s the one!”

“I am not!”
Danny shouted back.
“You’re twisting it!
You made me fall!”

Zeldon’s ears flattened.
“You’re the liar, not me!”

The quarrel grew louder than the parrots
squawking above. Each word was a jab —
blame, complaint, finger-pointing.

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Sherry puffed herself taller, enjoying the fuss.
“I’ll tell everyone! I’ll tell Tiara! I’ll tell Mumbo!” she sang.

“Danny is a breaker, Zeldon is a hopper, and Sherry is the clever one who didn’t fall!”

Danny groaned.
“You’re complaining just to make us look bad.”

Zeldon squeaked, “You always complain!”
The branch lay crooked on the ground, split where their weight had bent it. The truth was there for anyone to see, but neither wanted to admit it.

A rustle came from the bushes. Emily the tortoise appeared, head poking slowly from her shell. She blinked at the mess. “What’s all this noise about?”

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Three voices tumbled over each other:
“He broke it!” squeaked Zeldon.

“He hopped too hard!” shouted Danny.

“They’re both naughty!” tattled Sherry.

Emily blinked again, calm and steady.
“Strange. I saw the branch bend when both of you climbed.
And I hear a lot of shouting but not one bit of truth.”

Danny shuffled, cheeks hot.
“Well…I might have bounced.”
Zeldon twitched his ears. “And I…I did hop.”
Sherry sniffed. “And I tattled, because it was fun.”

Emily’s wrinkled mouth curved in the tiniest smile.
“Ah. Now the truth peeks out.
Branches break easier when truth bends first.”

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Danny frowned. “What does that mean?”

“It means lying or blaming twists things,”
Emily said softly. “And twisting only makes the
break worse.”

Zeldon’s whiskers drooped.
“So…we both broke it.”

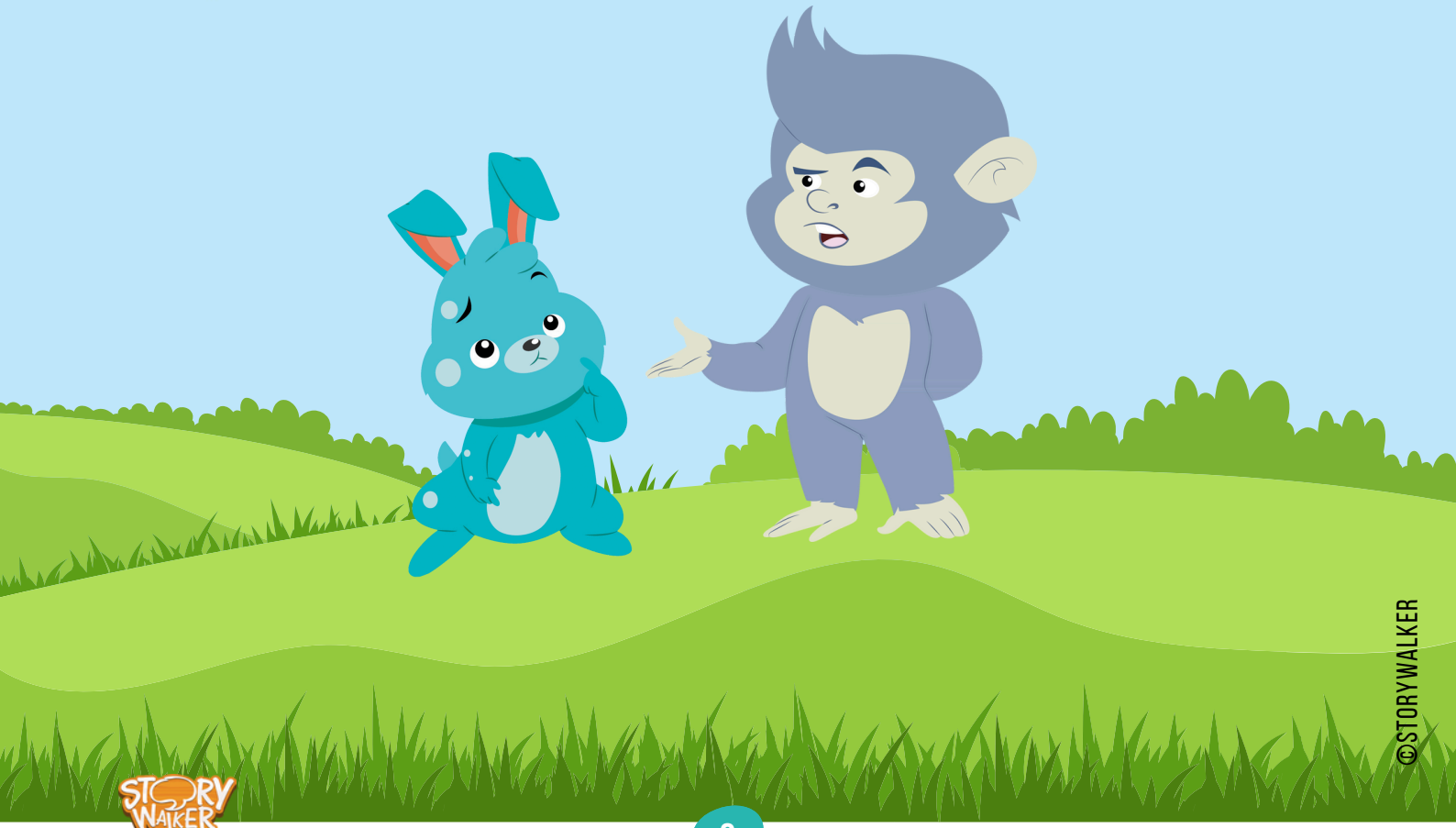
Sherry sighed, “And I made it worse with my complaining.”

Silence settled, except for the rustle of leaves.

Then Danny suddenly giggled.
“We’re a bunch of branch-breakers after all.”

Zeldon squeaked, “Crooked-branchers!”

Sherry snorted, covering her mouth,
then burst into giggles too.



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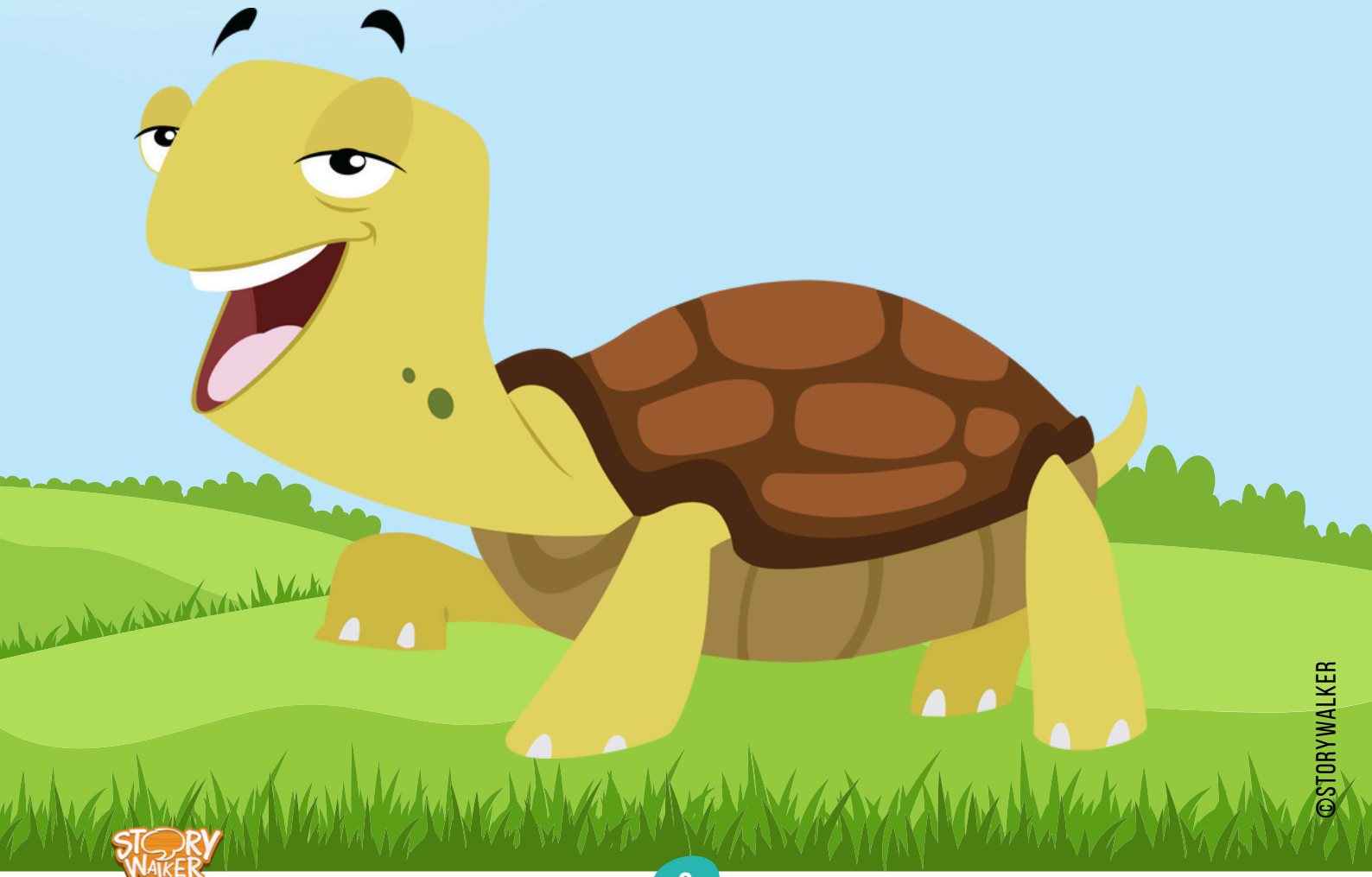
Emily shook her head slowly, amused.
“Better to be honest and laugh, than lie and fight.”

The three nodded, cheeks warm but lighter now.
Together, they dragged the crooked branch aside so no one else would trip.

Danny and Zeldon worked side by side,
and Sherry actually helped instead of tattling.

When the job was done, they plopped down,
breathing hard, bits of dust on their noses.



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"Next time," Danny said, "we tell the truth first."

"Next time," Zeldon added, "we share the blame."

"Next time," Sherry chirped,
"I'll complain less...and maybe giggle more."

They laughed again, the quarrel forgotten.

The crooked branch was still broken, but their friendship had straightened itself out.

— THE END —

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Building Beautiful Inside

VALUE LESSONS FROM 'THE CROOKED BRANCH'

HOW DO I HANDLE IT WHEN MY CHILD TWISTS FACTS OR BLAMES OTHERS TO ESCAPE CONSEQUENCES?

Context in the story: When the branch snapped, Danny quickly blamed Zeldon, while Zeldon twisted the story to point back at Danny. Both tried to escape being the one at fault.

Real-world connection: Children may sometimes bend the truth to avoid punishment or embarrassment. Blaming others can feel easier in the moment, but it creates conflict and damages trust. When children twist facts, it also stops them from learning how to take responsibility.

How parents can use the story: Guide your child to see that honesty is safer than twisting the truth. Stay calm and focus on the real action, not the excuses, so they understand the consequence clearly. Praise them when they admit their part honestly, even if it's small. Over time, they'll learn that facing mistakes openly brings more respect and peace than escaping through blame.

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Building Beautiful Inside

VALUE LESSONS FROM 'THE CROOKED BRANCH'

HOW DO I GET MY CHILD TO STOP TATTLING OR COMPLAINING CONSTANTLY ABOUT OTHERS?

Context in the story: Sherry immediately threatened to tell everyone about the broken branch, enjoying the chance to complain and make the others look bad. Later she admitted that her tattling made the quarrel worse.

Real-world connection: Children may fall into a habit of tattling, rushing to report every mistake or complaint about others. This can harm friendships, as constant complaining makes others feel unsafe and judged. It also distracts from solving problems together.

How parents can use the story: Help your child tell the difference between reporting real danger and complaining just to get others in trouble. Remind them that solving small conflicts kindly builds stronger friendships than running to tattle. Encourage them to speak directly to their peers when possible, showing how to resolve issues calmly. With time, they will learn that understanding and kindness are more powerful than complaints.

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Building Beautiful Inside

VALUE LESSONS FROM 'THE CROOKED BRANCH'

HOW CAN I TEACH MY CHILD TO DO THE RIGHT THING AND BE HONEST?

Context in the story: After Emily arrived, all three admitted their part in the broken branch and saw how honesty made them feel lighter. They laughed together once the truth was clear.

Real-world connection: Children learn honesty best when they experience how it brings relief and restores trust. Hiding behind lies often makes problems heavier, while telling the truth opens the way to fix them. Honesty also teaches children responsibility, showing them they can be trusted to make things right.

How parents can use the story: Create an environment where telling the truth feels safe, even if mistakes are involved. Show your child that honesty doesn't erase consequences, but it does make solving problems easier. Praise them warmly when they are truthful, especially if it was difficult for them to admit. Over time, this builds a habit of choosing honesty first, even in tricky moments.

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Assessment Questions for
'THE CROOKED BRANCH'

Five assessment questions to encourage children's understanding and emotional intelligence:

1. Pointing Fingers

Purpose: To reflect on blame.

Question: What did Danny and Zeldon do right after the branch broke?

Follow-up: Why does blaming others make things worse?

2. Sherry the Complainer

Purpose: To think about tattling.

Question: How did Sherry make the fight bigger?

Follow-up: What could she have done instead of complaining?

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3. The Truth Comes Out

Purpose: To highlight honesty.

Question: What happened when all three admitted the truth about the branch?

Follow-up: How does being honest make you feel inside?

4. Team Fix

Purpose: To show responsibility.

Question: How did the three friends make the play area safe again after the branch broke?

Follow-up: Why is it important to fix mistakes together?

5. Lighter with Laughter

Purpose: To celebrate honesty's effect.

Question: How did the friends feel once they told the truth and laughed together?

Follow-up: Why does telling the truth make friendships stronger?

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with another interesting story!

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