

The Three-Berry Tangle

A STORY BY ARKEDELIC

Note to Parents



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It was just a berry.
One little berry.
Round and red.
Nestled under a sunny leaf.
But oh, what trouble it caused.

Danny spotted it first.
“BERRY!” he yelled, leaping like a springy frog.

Zeldon blinked.
“I saw it too!”

“Nope! First dibs!”
Danny tapped it with his toe.

“But I called it in my head before you shouted,”
Zeldon said, puffing his cheeks.

“Then why didn’t your head say it out loud?” Danny huffed.



“It was thinking! My head thinks very quietly.”

“I saw it first!”

“I did!”

They both turned to Milo.

“Well?” Danny asked.

“Who gets it?” Zeldon added.

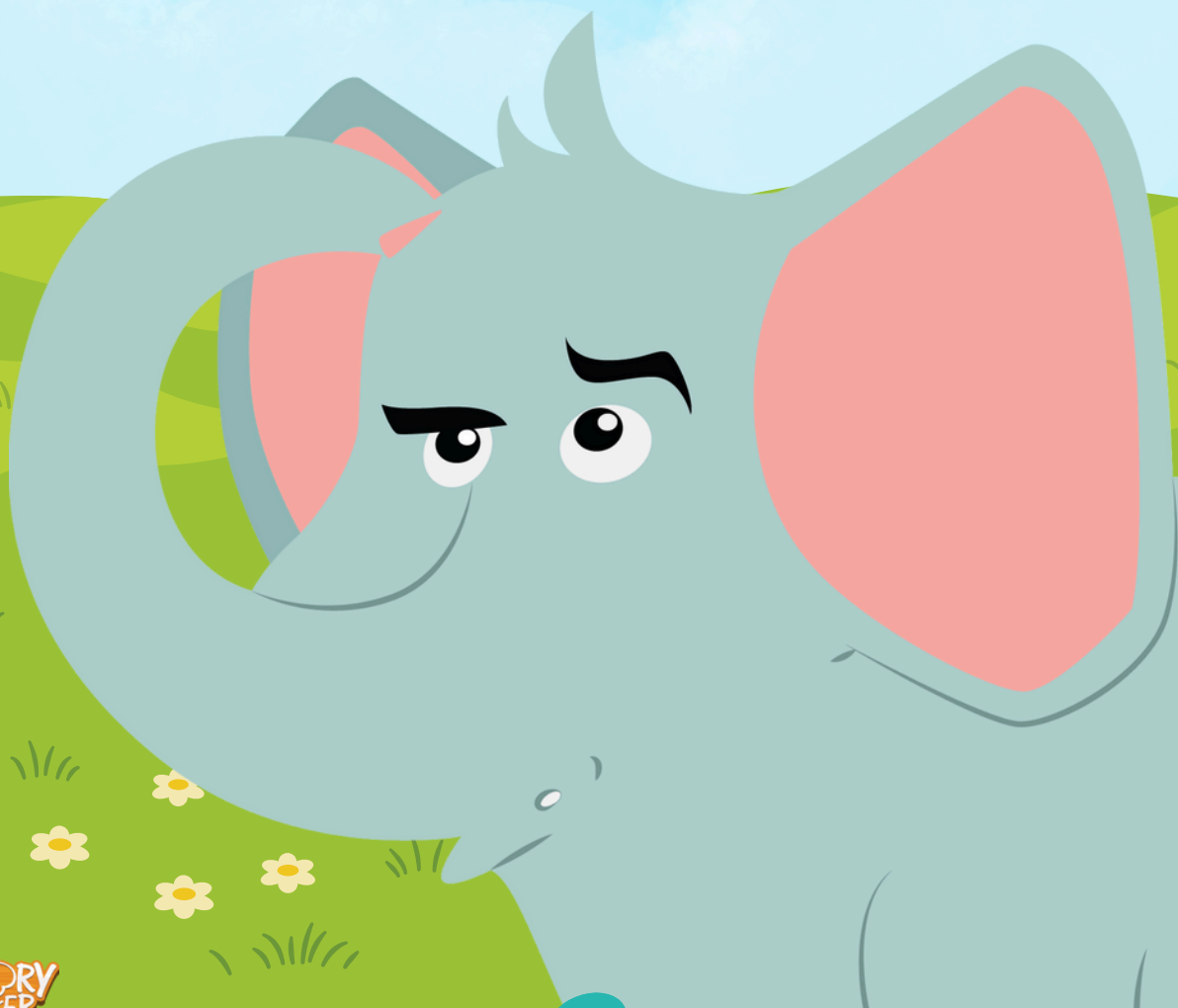
Milo froze.

He liked berries.

He liked Danny.

He liked Zeldon.

But he did not like being in the middle.



“Umm...” Milo kicked at the dirt.

“Maybe... you both...?”

“Nope!” said Danny.

“It has to be fair!” said Zeldon.

Milo’s ears drooped. “I don’t want to choose.”

Danny folded his arms. “You’re my friend, aren’t you?”

Zeldon leaned in. “But I shared my yam bites with you yesterday!”

Milo backed away. “I—I just like berries.”

Danny and Zeldon glared at each other.

Then they both walked off.
In opposite directions.



Milo sat under a log and sighed.

He didn't take the berry.
He didn't want it anymore.

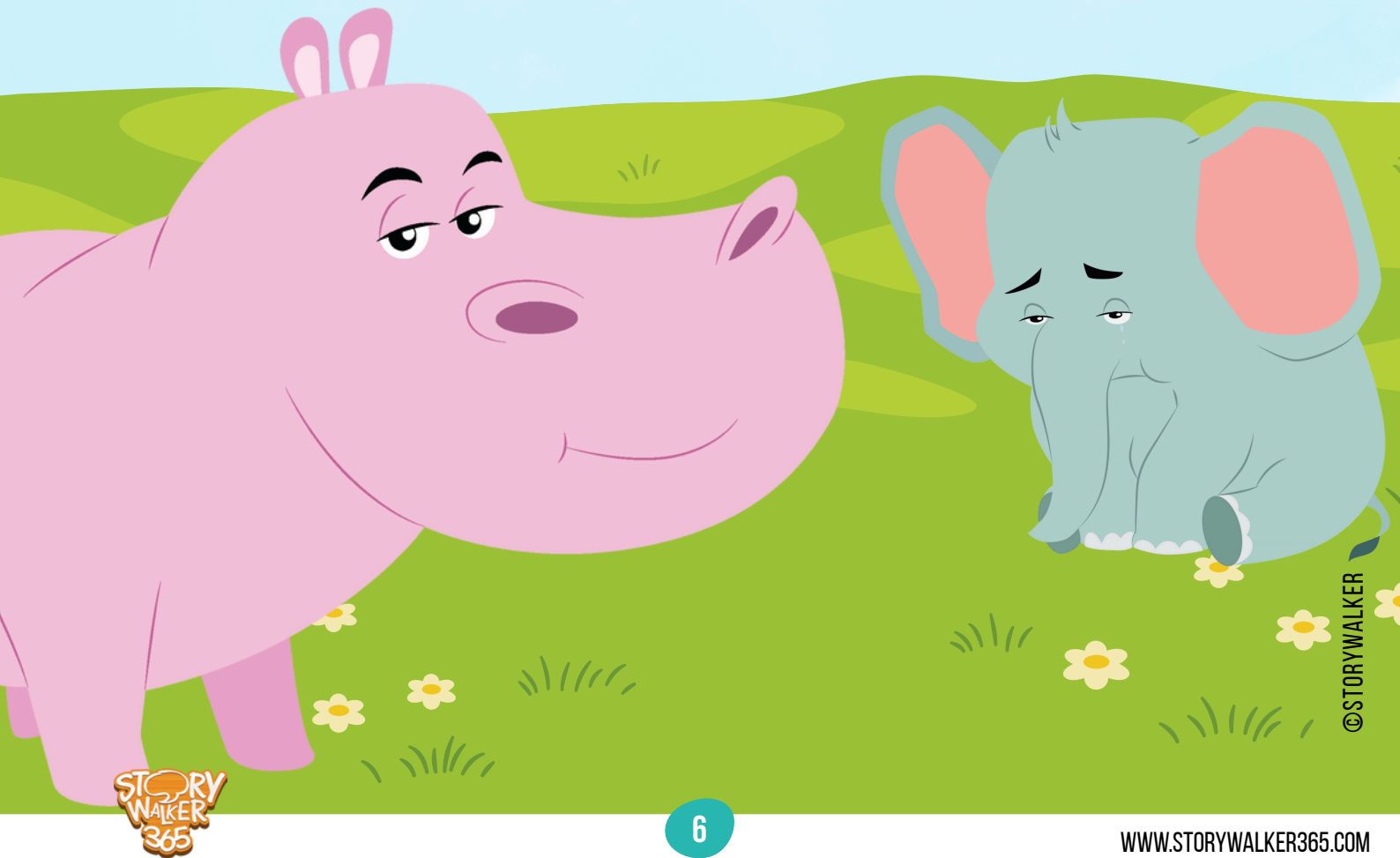
He wanted his friends to stop being grumpy.

Later, Mombino found Milo sitting quiet.

“Why the long face, moon-ears?”

“There was a berry,” Milo mumbled.

“And a fight. And now they both want me to say who's right.”



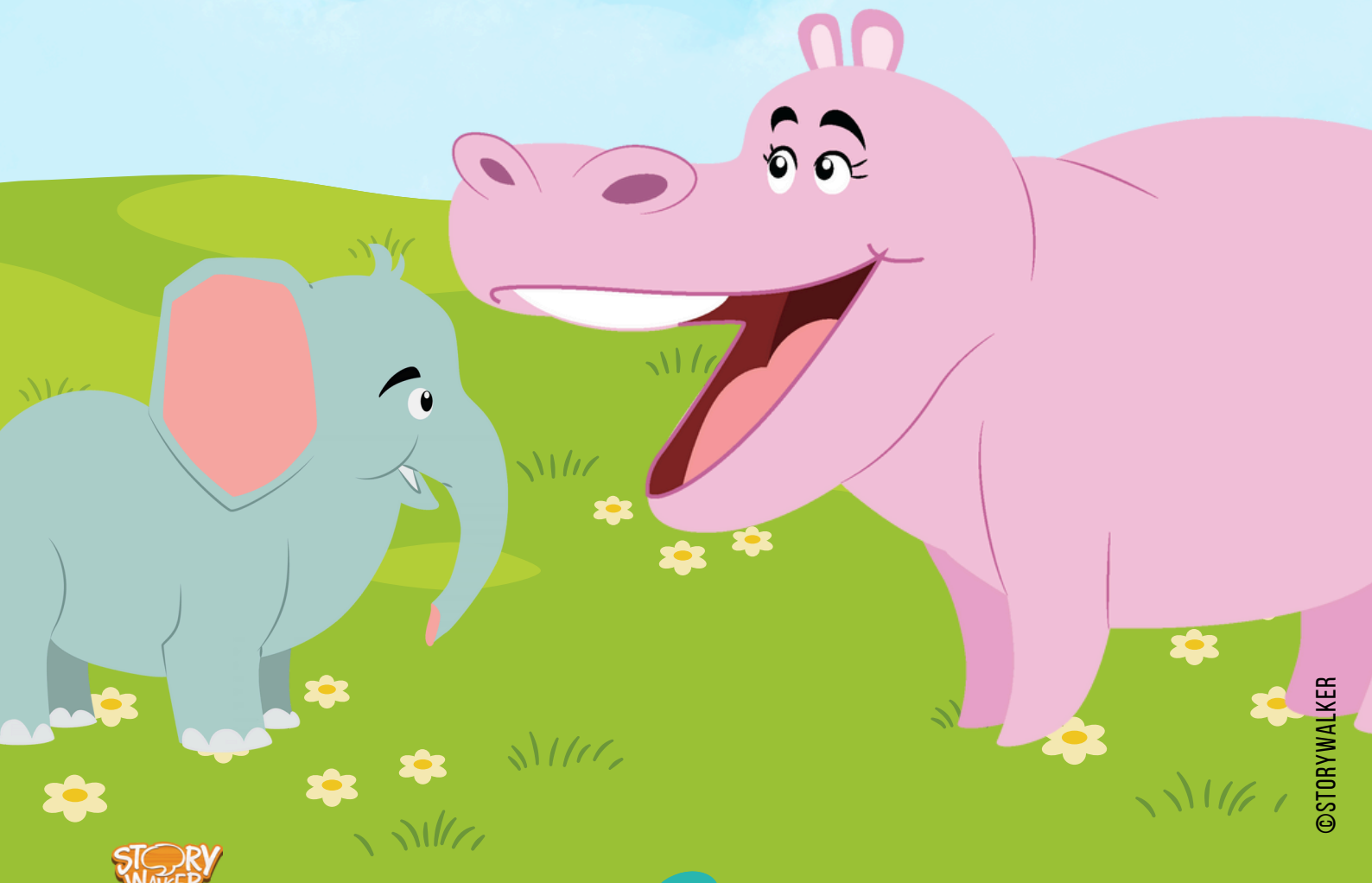
“Ah,” said Mombino.
“The squishiest place to be — stuck in the middle of a tug.”

“What do I do?” Milo whispered.
“Do you want to pick sides?” she asked.
“No.”

“Do you want to say nothing?”
“No...”

Mombino nodded. “Then maybe you speak for something,
not against someone.”

Milo blinked.
“Try telling your friends what matters to you.
Then listen to what matters to them.”

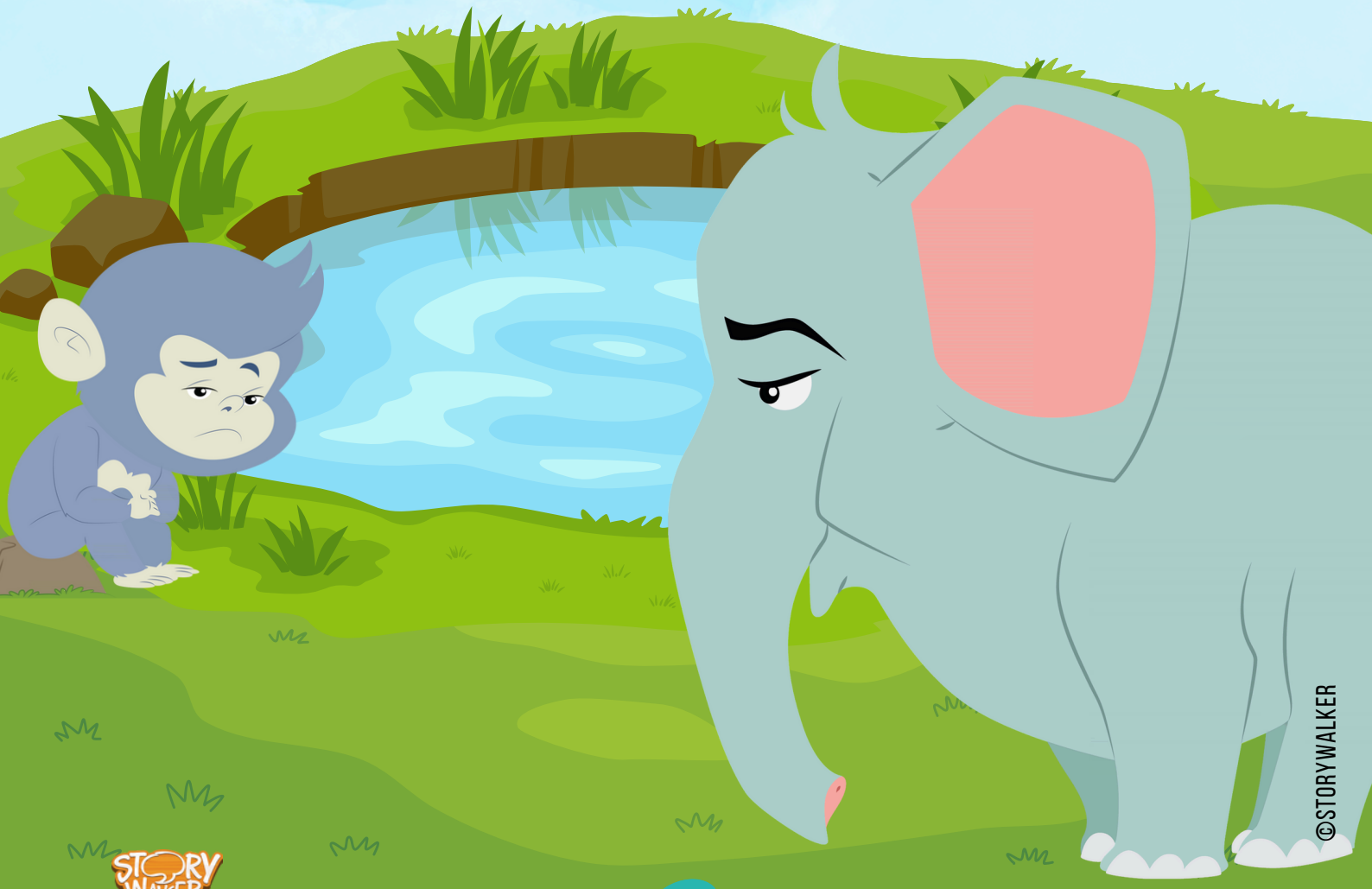


So that's what he did.

Milo found Danny near the puddle patch.

“I don't want to take sides,” he said.
“But I didn't like the way you made me pick.”

Danny looked down. “I just really wanted that berry.”



Then Milo found Zeldon, hiding behind the banana bush.

“I didn’t want to choose between you both,” Milo said.

“But I don’t like when you pull me into it.”

Zeldon sniffed. “Danny always gets the best stuff.”

“But you’re the best jumper,” Milo said.

“And you always share.”

Zeldon smiled. “That’s true.”



The next day, the three met by the berry patch.

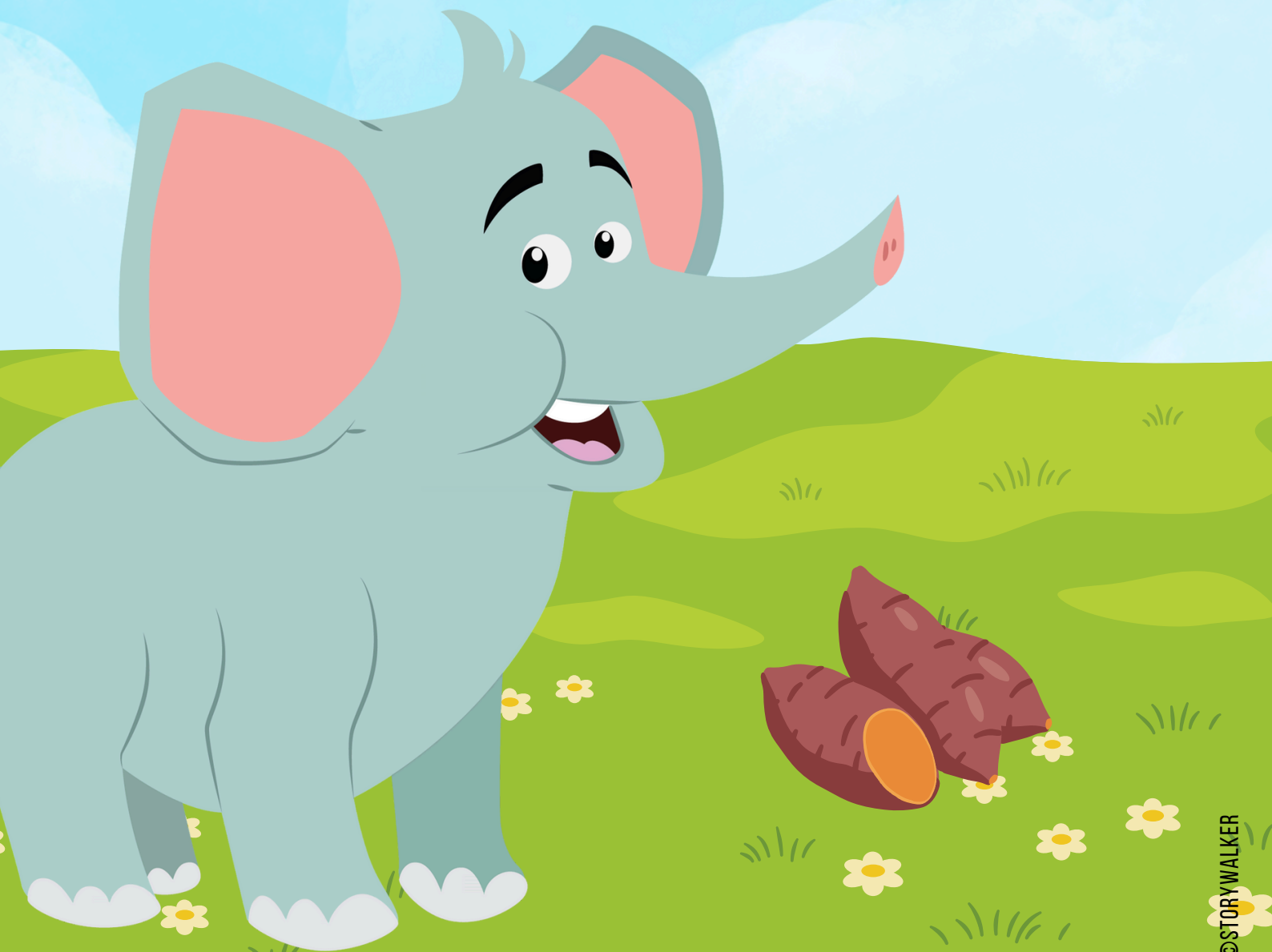
The berry was gone.
But Milo had three yam bites in a leaf bowl.

“One for each of us,” he said.

Danny smiled. “Want to play catch-the-pebble?”

Zeldon grinned. “Bet I can win.”

“Bet I can!” Danny shouted.



Milo rolled his eyes.

“Fine,” he said. “Just don’t make me pick who’s best.
You’re both a bit loopy.”

They all laughed.

And for once... it wasn’t about the berry.
It was about the bounce.
And the bowl.
And the bit of bravery it takes
to stand in the middle — and stay whole.

—THE END—



Building Beautiful Inside

VALUE LESSONS FROM 'THE THREE-BERRY TANGLE'

HOW DO I HELP MY CHILD WHEN THEY DON'T WANT TO CHOOSE SIDES BUT DON'T WANT TO STAY SILENT EITHER?

Context in the Story: When Danny and Zeldon argue over a berry, both pressure Milo to take their side. Milo freezes — he doesn't want to upset anyone, but he doesn't want to say nothing either. With gentle guidance from Mombino, he learns to speak for what matters to him, not against anyone else. His honesty brings the group back together.

Real-world Connection: Children often get caught between friends in conflict — whether over toys, turns, or opinions. They may fear hurting someone or being left out. This can lead to silence, people-pleasing, or emotional stress they can't name.

How parents can use the story: This story offers children a middle path: speaking up without taking sides. Parents can use Milo's experience to start a conversation: "Have you ever felt stuck like Milo?" or "What could you say if two friends ask you to choose?" The story shows that being fair doesn't mean being silent — it means being thoughtful. It also teaches that strong friendships are not about taking sides, but about helping everyone feel seen and heard. For children who tend to retreat in social tension, this story can help them find the courage to use their voice with kindness and clarity.

Building Beautiful Inside

VALUE LESSONS FROM 'THE THREE-BERRY TANGLE'

HOW CAN I TEACH MY CHILD TO SHOW LOYALTY, CARE, AND STAND BY LOVED ONES?

Context in the Story: Milo's loyalty to both friends puts him in a hard spot — but instead of picking one, he chooses to speak honestly to each of them, naming how he felt and what he needed. His version of standing by them wasn't about taking a side — it was about caring enough to help them understand each other.

Real-world Connection: Young children often think loyalty means taking one person's side no matter what. This can lead to exclusion, echoing, or saying things they don't mean. But true loyalty is rooted in care — not in conflict.

How parents can use the story: Milo's example helps reframe loyalty as presence, not partisanship. Parents can point out how Milo didn't run away — he stayed close, but also stayed true. This is an ideal story to help children rethink how they support friends: by helping them see, not fight. Parents can guide children to explore what being a “good friend” means — is it always agreeing, or is it being honest and fair? Over time, this reflection helps children develop a deeper sense of relational maturity and kindness, especially in social situations that feel divided.

Building Beautiful Inside

VALUE LESSONS FROM 'THE THREE-BERRY TANGLE'

HOW CAN I RAISE A CHILD WHO VALUES THEMSELVES — NO MATTER WHAT OTHERS HAVE OR DO?

Context in the Story: Zeldon becomes upset when Danny seems to claim the berry and the spotlight. His quiet frustration reveals a deeper feeling of not having enough or being enough. It's only when Milo reminds him of his own strengths — being a great jumper and always sharing — that Zeldon begins to smile again.

Real-world Connection: Even at a young age, children compare — toys, attention, abilities. When another child seems to “win” more, it can trigger feelings of not being good enough. These moments can slowly chip away at confidence if left unaddressed.

How parents can use the story: This story shows how comparison can create invisible hurt, and how naming a child's unique strengths can restore balance. Parents can use Milo's words as a model: “What do you love about your friend — and what's something you love about yourself?” When children are taught to notice and appreciate their own gifts, they become less likely to measure themselves against others. This story also encourages children to lift others up — like Milo did — instead of competing. It's a gentle way to build self-worth without putting others down.

Assessment Questions for 'THE THREE-BERRY TANGLE'

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



1. Finding Fair Words

Purpose: To help children understand how to respond kindly and fairly when caught between two friends or choices.

Question: In the story, Milo didn't take sides but spoke in a way that kept both friends' feelings safe. Why do you think that worked?

Follow-up: Can you think of a time when you had to be fair to two people at once? What words could you use so neither person feels left out?

2. Standing in the Middle

Purpose: To help children see that being in the middle can be a chance to help, not just a problem to escape.

Question: When Milo was between two friends who disagreed, he didn't just walk away — he helped find a solution. What might have happened if he stayed silent?

Follow-up: If you were in the middle of a disagreement, what could you do to help it end well for everyone?

3. Friends Over Winning

Purpose: To help children value friendship more than proving a point.

Question: In the story, Milo showed that keeping the friendship strong was more important than proving who was right. Why do you think that's important?

Follow-up: How would you feel if you “won” an argument but lost a friend?

4. Listening First

Purpose: To help children practise listening before making a choice.

Question: Milo listened to both sides before saying anything. How did that help him choose the right words?

Follow-up: How could you remind yourself to listen first when two people ask you to take their side?

5. Choosing Words Carefully

Purpose: To help children notice how words can make peace or make trouble.

Question: Milo's words didn't blame or tease — they helped both friends feel understood. Why do you think those words worked better than blaming?

Follow-up: Can you think of a “peace word” or “peace phrase” you could use when helping friends solve a problem?

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with another interesting story!

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