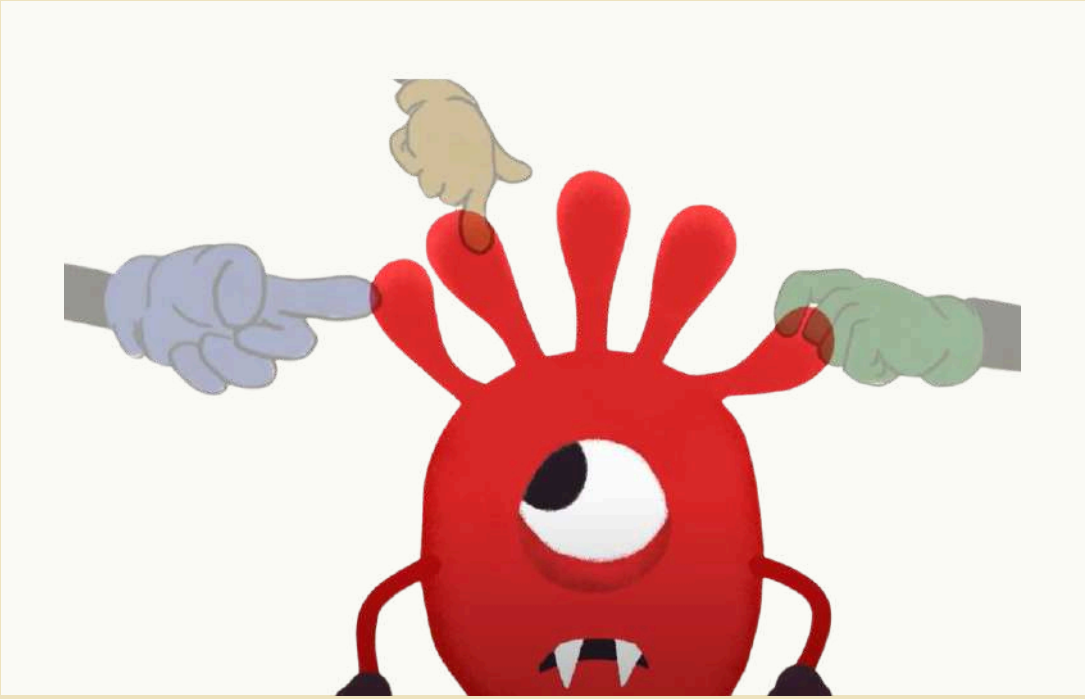
Getting Touchy

Grades 3 - 6

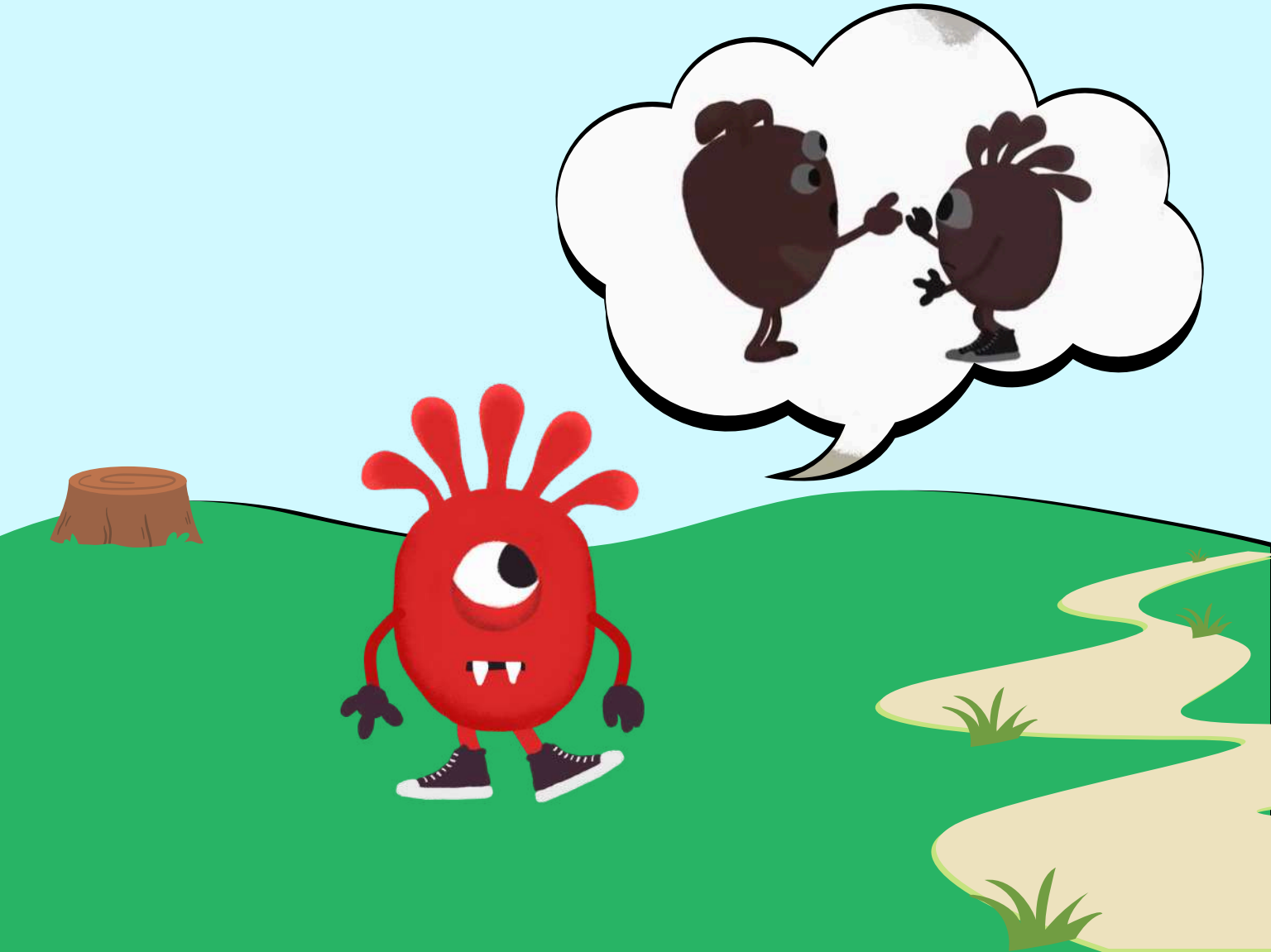
Meet our friends in Beastie Valley

Ahh, Beastie Valley.
This is RedBeastie.

RedBeastie has REALLY ticklish head tendrils and is super self-conscious about it to boot. But they're just so bouncy and blobby that a lot of other beasties can't help themselves from reaching out and giving them a feel or a poke, even though they should know better.



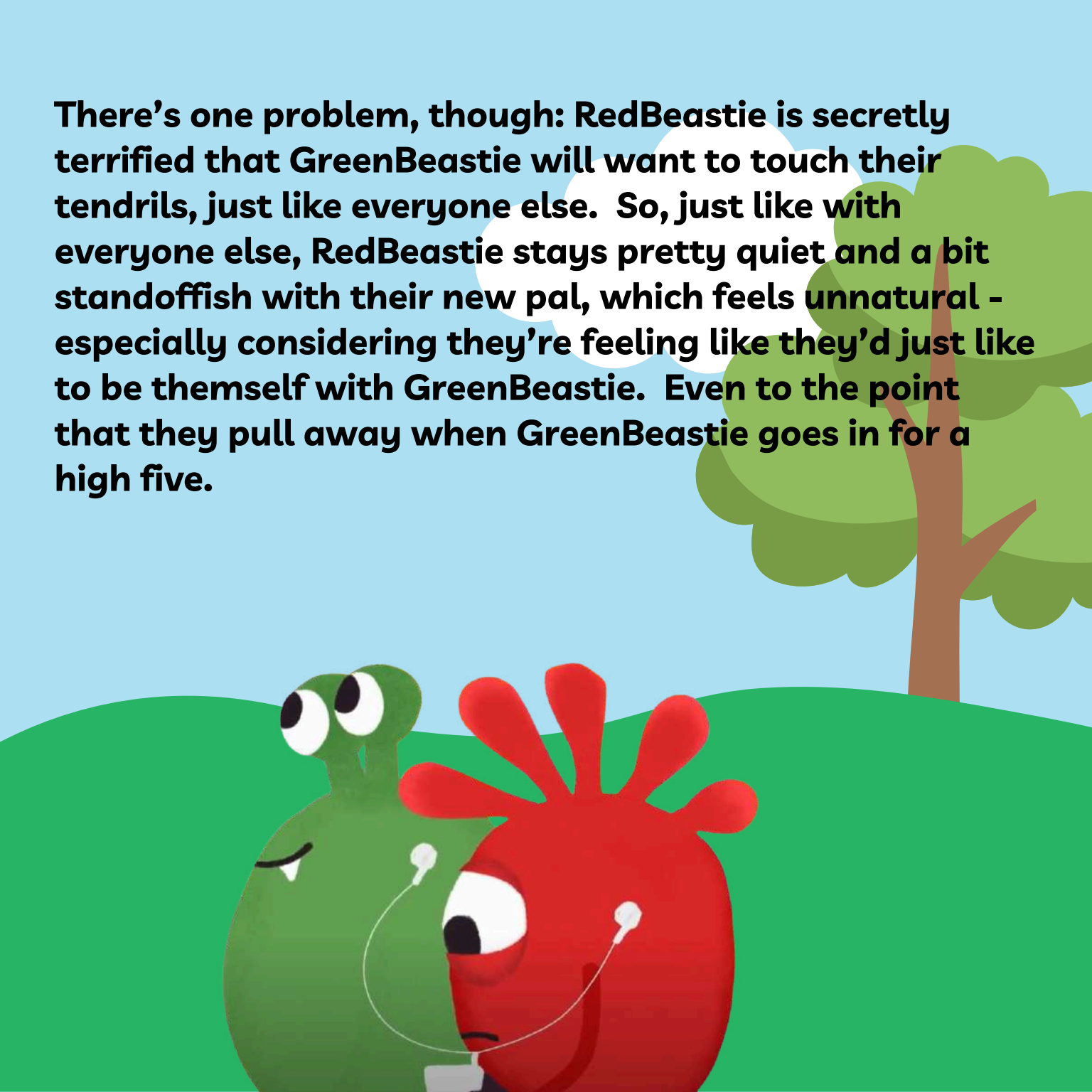
This makes RedBeastie really uncomfortable. It reminds them of when their older cousin used to make fun of their feelings. Sometimes they'd even use RedBeastie's tendrils as little punching bags, which actually kinda hurt.



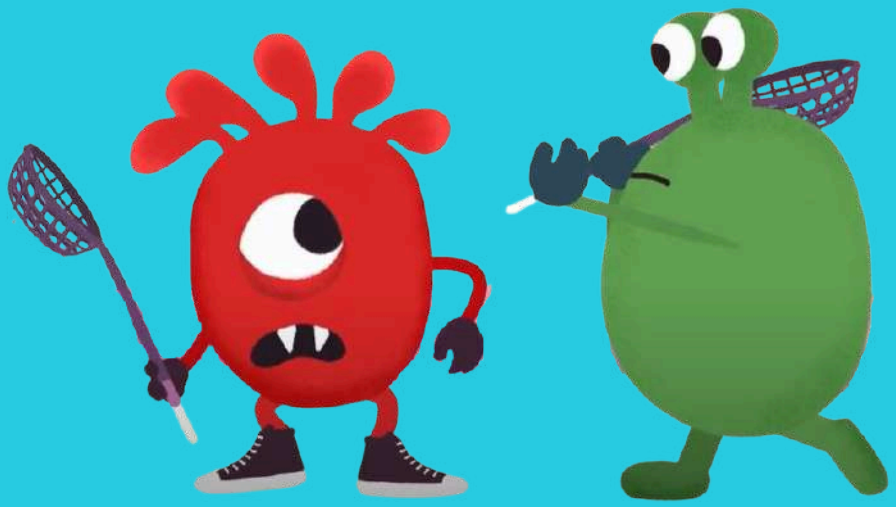
Well, one day, RedBeastie meets this really nice beastie, GreenBeastie. They become fast pals, and their friendship flourishes without too much effort at all.

They have a lot of fun together and they make each other laugh a lot. They both like playing the same games, have the same favourite food, and like the same music. Both GreenBeastie and RedBeastie can't believe how lucky they are to find each other.

There's one problem, though: RedBeastie is secretly terrified that GreenBeastie will want to touch their tendrils, just like everyone else. So, just like with everyone else, RedBeastie stays pretty quiet and a bit standoffish with their new pal, which feels unnatural - especially considering they're feeling like they'd just like to be themself with GreenBeastie. Even to the point that they pull away when GreenBeastie goes in for a high five.

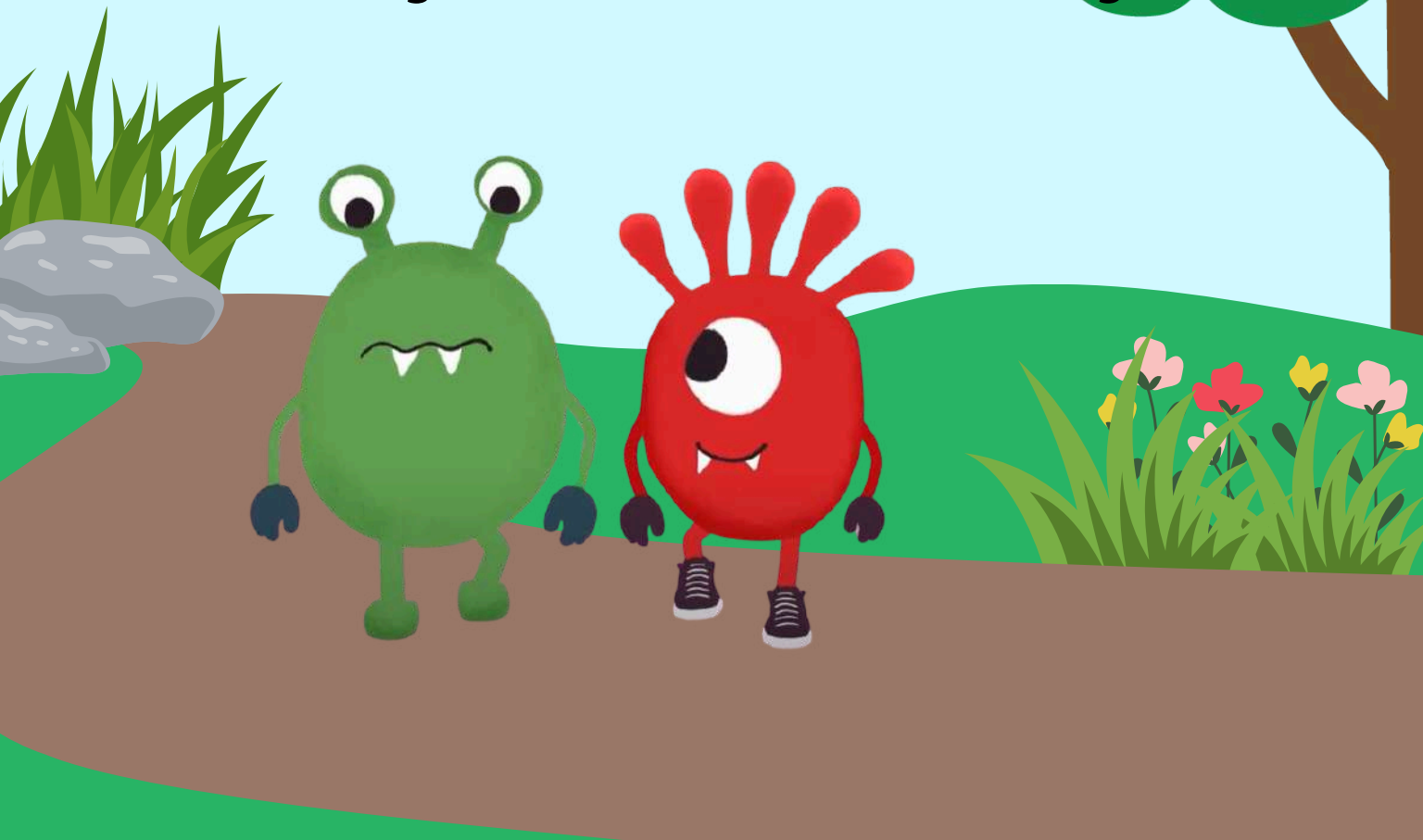


GreenBeastie, on the other hand, is noticing this behaviour and sometimes wonders if they've done something wrong.
For example, when the two of them are playing squirrelball and they score a point against the other team or win a round and GreenBeastie reaches for a high five, RedBeastie flinches and pulls back - then just sorta waves from a distance and says, "yay us!" which, to GreenBeastie, doesn't really cut it. But GreenBeastie likes hanging with RedBeastie a lot and decides to just shrug it off.



Or, when they're on a walk and GreenBeastie is telling RedBeastie all kinds of stories or sharing a problem they're having, RedBeastie never seems to want to do the same. GreenBeastie starts to assume that RedBeastie might not trust them in the same way.

The truth is, RedBeastie had some challenges in the past - so they're just trying to set some boundaries about sharing and touch. And that's A-okay.

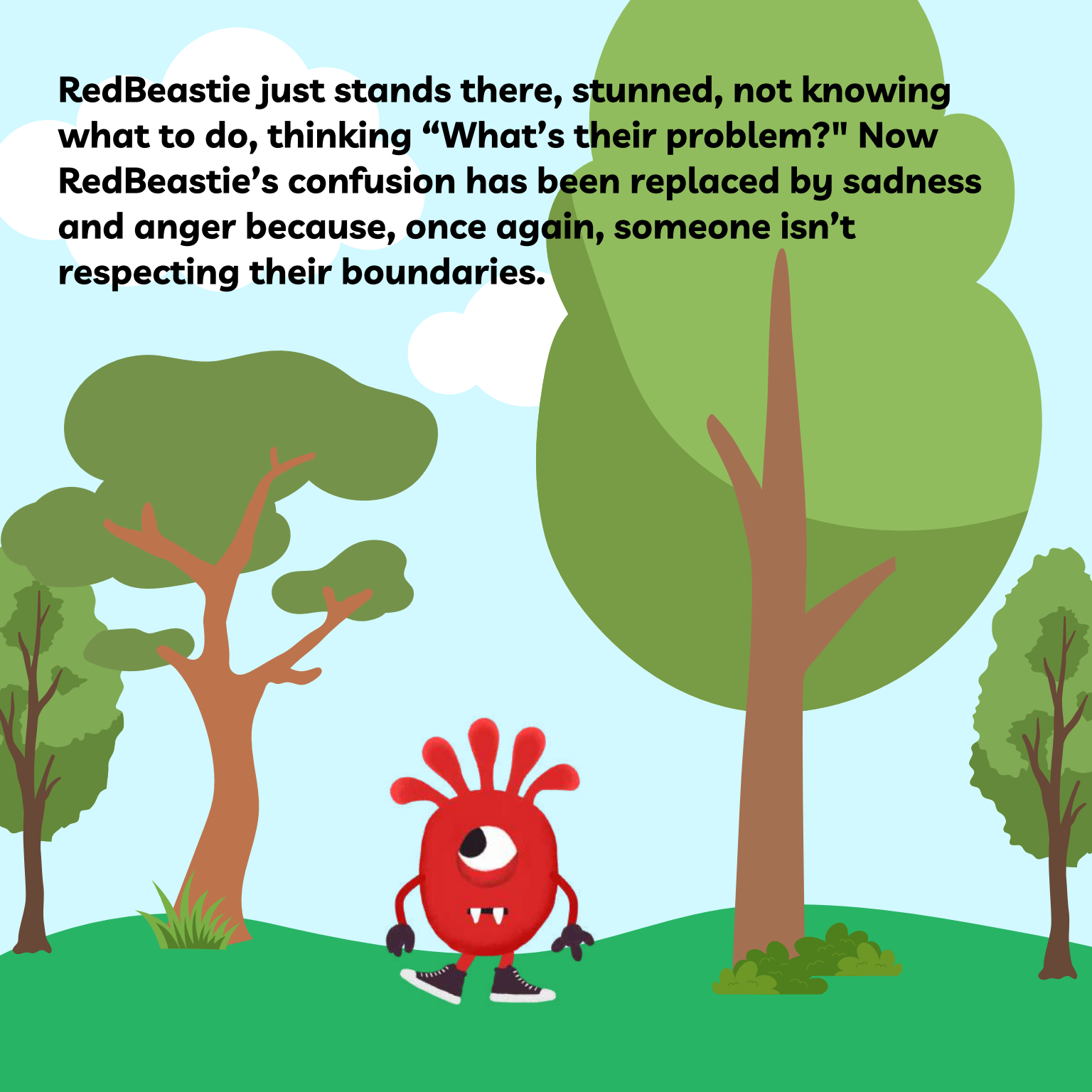


One day, while they're exploring Purple Forest, GreenBeastie reaches out to put a hand on RedBeastie's shoulder and their friend pulls away. I mean, what the heck , right? GreenBeastie is now REALLY feeling like RedBeastie couldn't care less about their friendship.

GreenBeastie can’t take it anymore and loses it. They accuse RedBeastie of acting like they don’t care as much about GreenBeastie as GreenBeastie cares about them. We’re supposed to be beastie besties!

I’m outta here, GreenBeastie says, and they storm off.

RedBeastie just stands there, stunned, not knowing what to do, thinking “What’s their problem?" Now RedBeastie’s confusion has been replaced by sadness and anger because, once again, someone isn’t respecting their boundaries.



Well, as time passes, GreenBeastie and RedBeastie try to live their lives without one another. But, just like in every buddy movie you've ever seen, the two find that they're both miserable and don't want to be apart. They really really miss each other.

Fast forward to what seems like several weeks - but has, in fact, only been a few days - and we find GreenBeastie sulking, sad that there’s no one to talk to and no one to play squirrelball with and no one to talk about music or books with and no one to just laugh with.

That's when BurntSiennaBeastie wanders by. BurntSiennaBeastie is an adult beastie and has lived through a lot of stuff, so they know a lot of stuff - and helps lot of younger beasties with a lot of stuff. BurntSiennaBeastie enquires as to why GreenBeastie looks like someone broke his favorite squirrelbat.

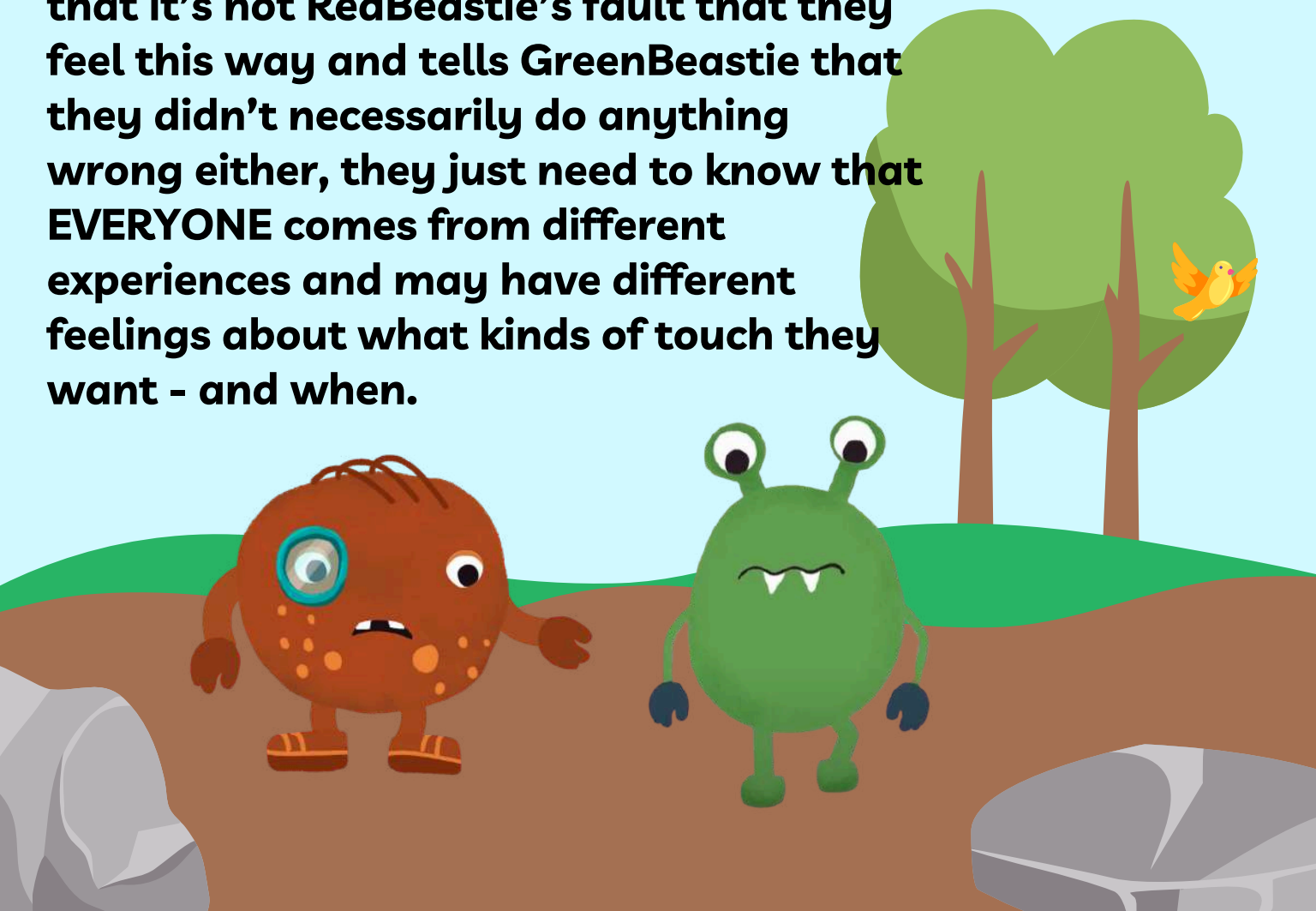
Now GreenBeastie really respects and trusts BurntSiennaBeastie - and they're just so sad that they can't help but spill the beans about everything.

BurntSiennaBeastie listens patiently. Like REALLY listens. Listens in a way that makes GreenBeastie believe that BurntSiennaBeastie really does know how they feel. Once GreenBeastie has spilled their guts, BurntSiennaBeastie just says "Hmmm" and thinks for a moment.

Finally, BurntSiennaBeastie suggests that there are definitely some kinds of touch that are just not wanted or don't feel good, and there are some kinds of touch that feel nice for some and not for others. There's a big difference between someone wanting to punch your tendrils and someone wanting to high-five you or put their hand on your shoulder to comfort you. Or even give you a hug.

But just remember, says BurntSiennaBeastie, while high fives and hugs feel safe for some beasties, not all beasties feel the same. And that's okay.

BurntSiennaBeastie goes on to explain that it's not RedBeastie's fault that they feel this way and tells GreenBeastie that they didn't necessarily do anything wrong either, they just need to know that EVERYONE comes from different experiences and may have different feelings about what kinds of touch they want - and when.



BurntSiennaBeastie asks GreenBeastie if, at any point, did they ask RedBeastie if it was okay to put their hand on RedBeastie's shoulder or high five them.

GreenBeastie says oh sure, but then stops and thinks.

They realize that they never asked RedBeastie if it was okay. Now it's GreenBeastie's turn to feel sad.

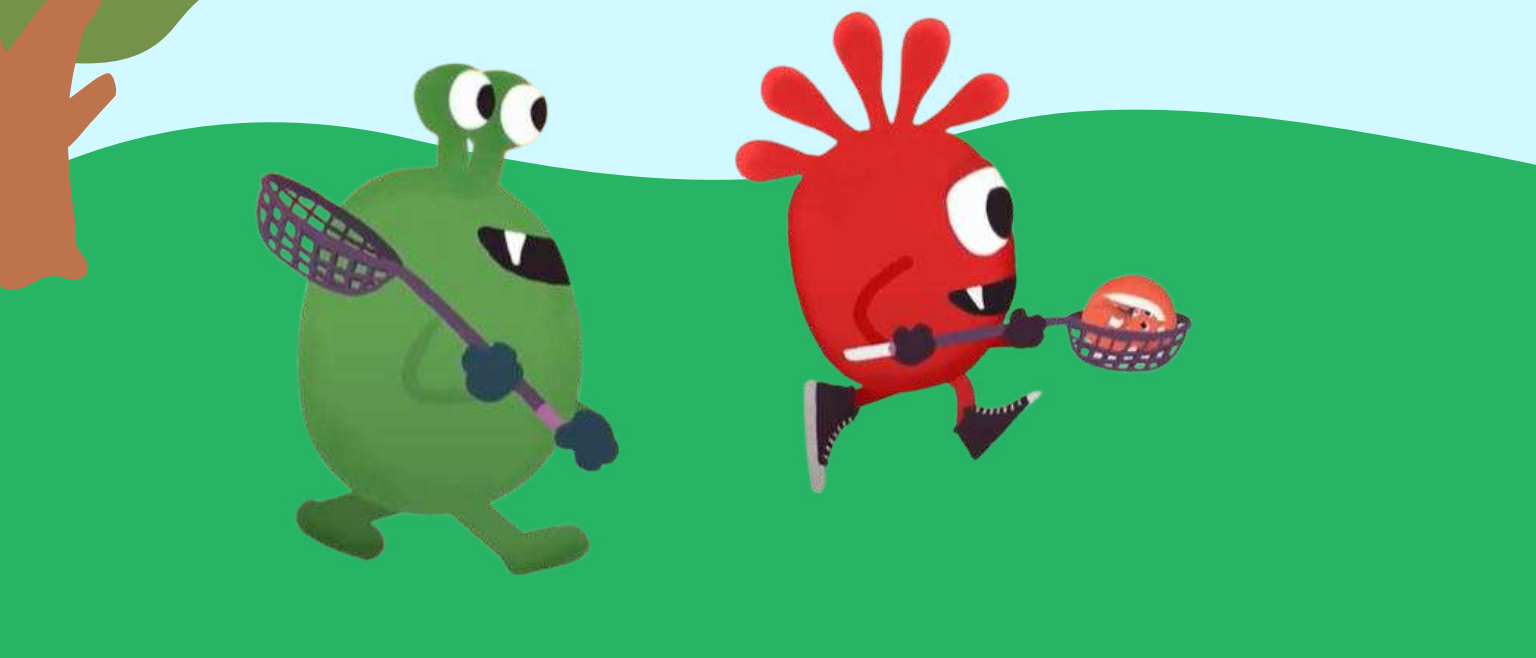
BurntSiennaBeastie reassures GreenBeastie that they didn't do anything bad, they just need to remember to ask first. BurntSiennaBeastie encourages GreenBeastie to go talk openly with RedBeastie and, if everyone is honest and their friendship is as strong as it seems, everything should be cool.

GreenBeastie finds RedBeastie kicking around in the forest, looking miserable. GreenBeastie uses BurntSiennaBeasties's line about someone stealing GreenBeastie's squirrelbat and that makes them smile a bit.
GreenBeastie decides to jump right in and apologize for assuming everyone likes high fives... and RedBeastie suddenly thinks that this is a good time to be completely open and honest with GreenBeastie about touch. And, when they finally come clean, they discover that GreenBeastie is surprisingly understanding. They even reassure RedBeastie that they could not have known without asking.

What a relief. In that moment, RedBeastie feels like they want a hug, and even cautiously asks for one from their beastie bestie. After a dramatic pause as think about it, GreenBeastie bursts out laughing and happily obliges.

Fast forward a few weeks, even though it only feels like it's been a few days, RedBeastie and GreenBeastie are dominating on the squirrelball court.

Woah, nice point R.B! Now these two best friends routinely celebrate with a new beastie-bestie dance they invented together, which ends with a big "Yay US!"



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