

Sammy and the Wrong Trail



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Memory Verse

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to
become children of God, to those who believe in His name
(John 1:12)*



Morning sunlight warmed
Maplewood Forest.
Sammy the squirrel watched
the older squirrels racing
through the branches and
wished he felt as big and
brave as they looked.



The older squirrels strutted across the branches, loud and confident. One pointed his paw at Sammy.

"You want to be big? Then come with us," he said. "We're taking the Big Trail. Not everyone can handle it."

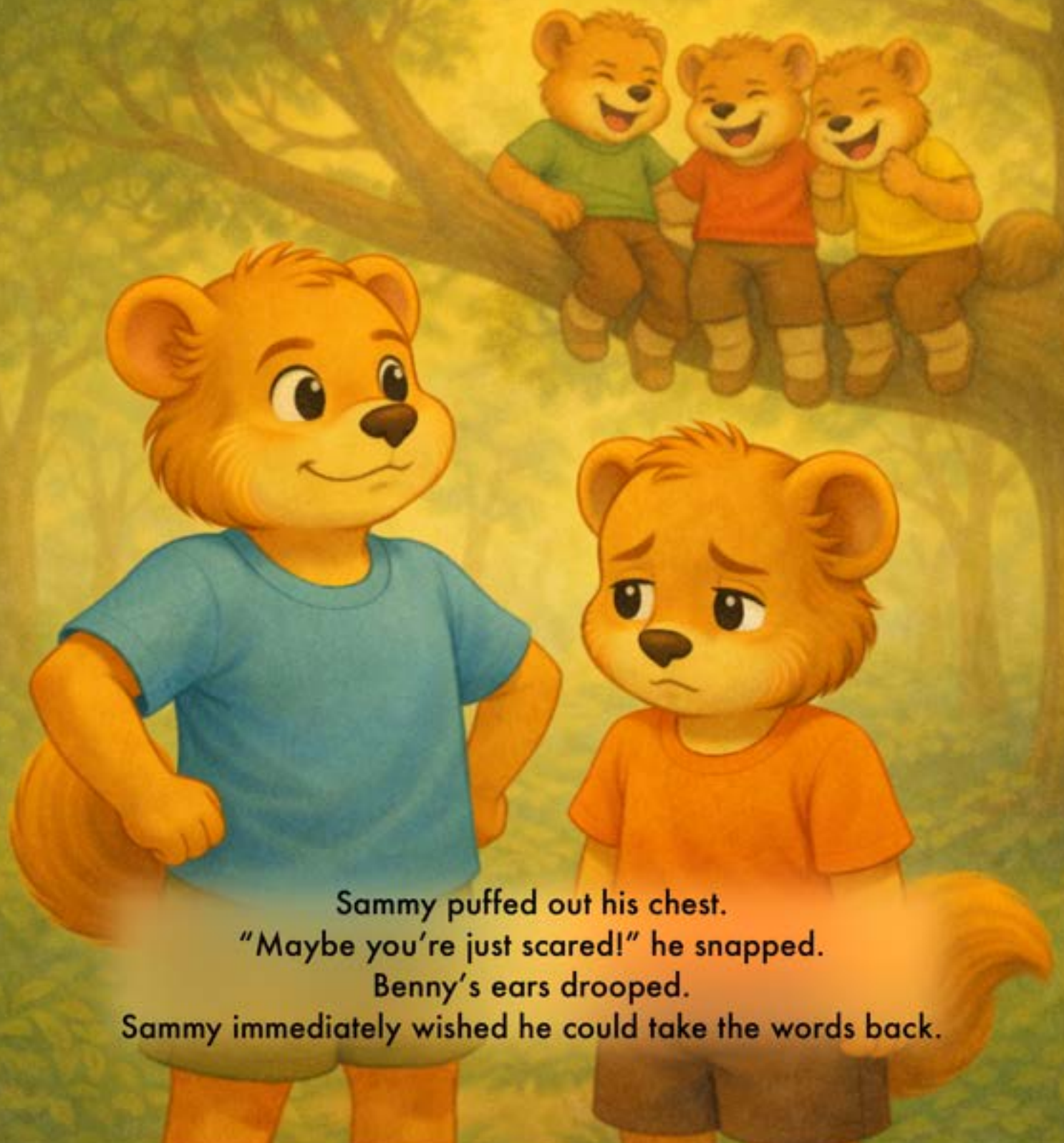
Another smirked. "Yeah—let's see if the little guy can keep up."

Sammy's heart thudded.



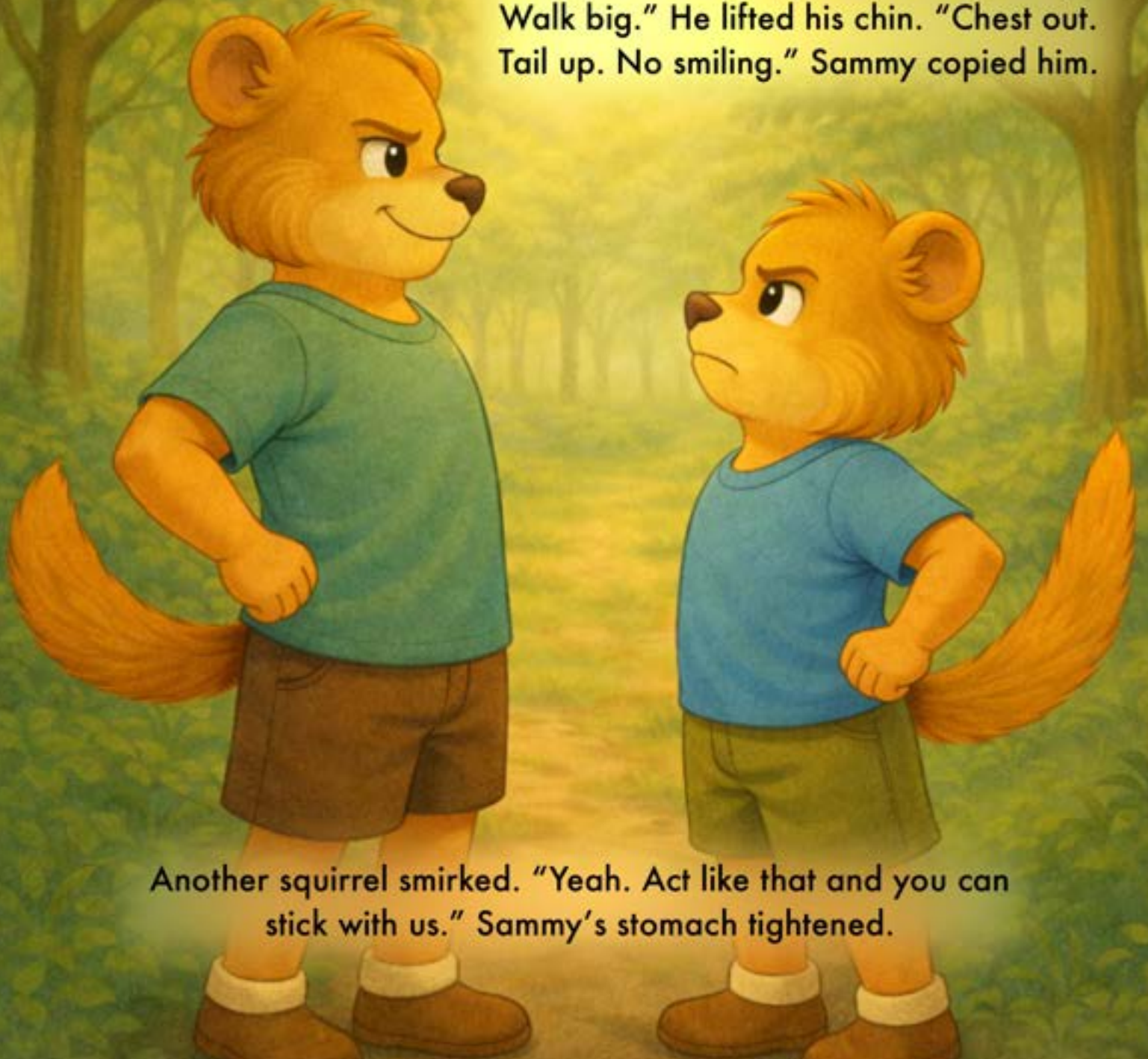
Sammy's friend Benny shuffled beside him.
"I think I'll take the regular trail," Benny said. "The one your dad likes."
Sammy felt a pinch of embarrassment.





Sammy puffed out his chest.
"Maybe you're just scared!" he snapped.
Benny's ears drooped.
Sammy immediately wished he could take the words back.

One older squirrel strutted beside Sammy.
"That's more like it," he said. "Talk big.
Walk big." He lifted his chin. "Chest out.
Tail up. No smiling." Sammy copied him.



Another squirrel smirked. "Yeah. Act like that and you can
stick with us." Sammy's stomach tightened.



The first trail split came fast.
"Left!" the leader barked.
No explanation. No checking
if Sammy kept up.



Sammy sprinted next to them,
nearly tripping.
"Try to keep up, rookie,"
another called back.
Sammy pushed himself harder.



As the trail twisted, one older
squirrel hopped a root.
"Come on, Sammy! This is nothing."
Sammy tried to follow—
but he stumbled.



He slipped again—hard.
One squirrel glanced back... then
laughed.

"Whoa! Sammy's crashing again!"
Another shouted,
"Hurry up! You're slowing us
down!"

Sammy forced a shaky laugh, even
though his paws stung.



The path dropped steeply.
The older squirrels leapt down it easily.
"C'mon, Sammy!" they shouted. "Jump!
Don't be a baby!"



Sammy's paws skidded. He stumbled halfway down
before sliding the rest. Laughter echoed above him.
"Wow... and he wanted to come with us?"

"Keep moving!" someone shouted from ahead.

Sammy pushed forward, but his paws trembled too much to run. He blinked—and the older squirrels were gone. Already around the bend. No one looked back. No one even noticed he'd stopped.

Sammy's chest tightened.



Heart pounding, Sammy tried to retrace his steps.
But the trail no longer made sense. Paths looped and crossed.
Some led in circles. Others faded into shadows.
The Big Trail had become a maze.





Panicking, Sammy rushed forward—
straight into a patch of brambles.
Thorns tugged his fur and tail.
He winced in pain.

Stuck in the brambles, sore and afraid,
Sammy let the pretending fall away.
He curled up small and breathed a trembling whisper:
"Dad...?"





Soft footsteps rustled through the leaves.
Dad appeared, calm and steady.
He lifted Sammy gently from the thorns
and brushed the twigs from his fur.

Dad studied the twisting maze of trails.
Then his eyes settled on Sammy.
"Son... this isn't the path you were made for."





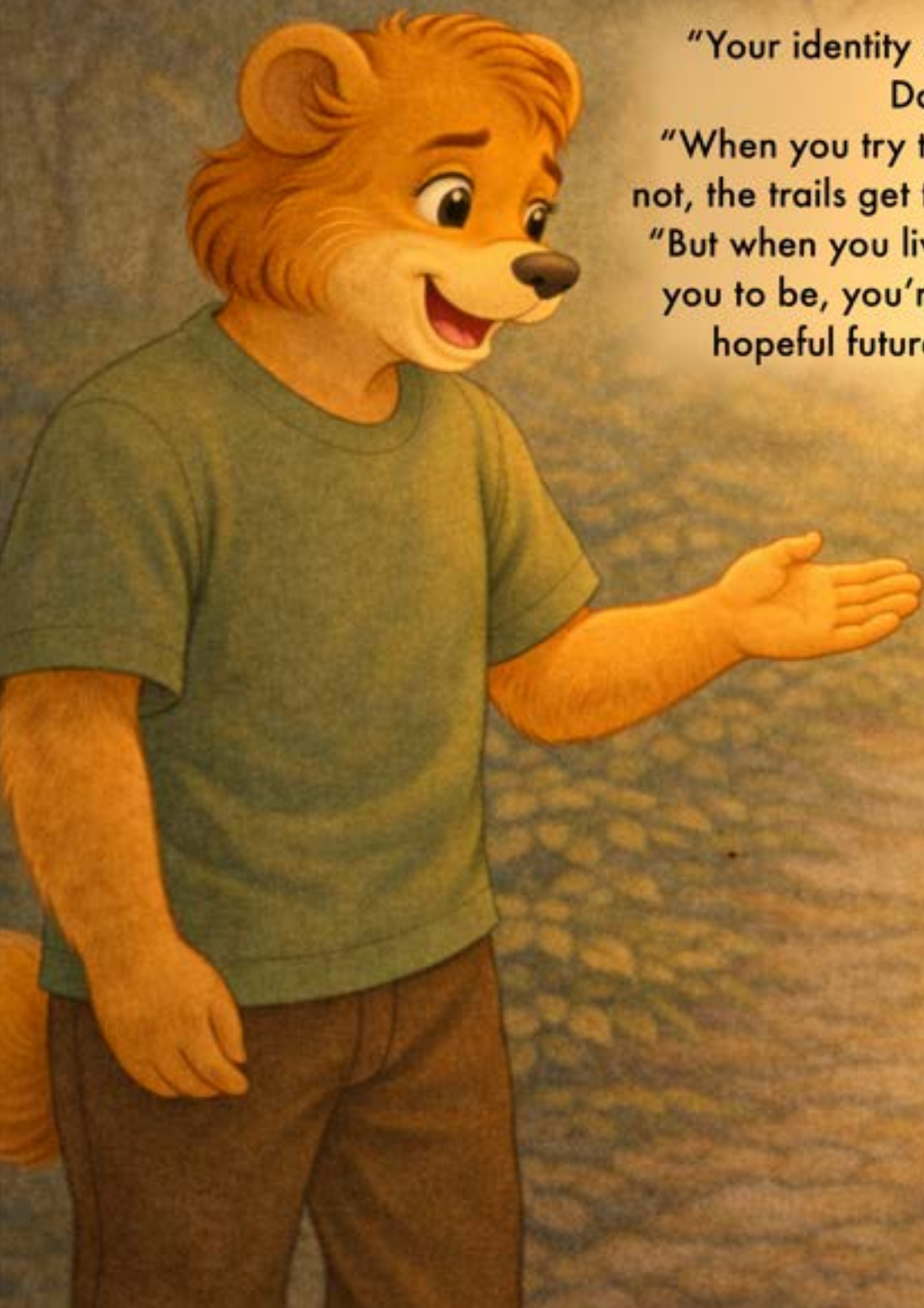
Sammy began to speak,
but Dad's voice was gentle and steady.

"Sammy, listen. The real problem isn't
what happened out there. It's the lie you
believed about who you needed to be."

Sammy's eyes burned.



Sammy looked down at his paws.
"I just... wanted to feel important," he whispered.
"I thought if I acted like them, they'd like me more."
A tear slipped down his cheek.
"But it didn't work. I only felt lost."



"Your identity sets your direction,"
Dad said.

"When you try to be someone you're
not, the trails get twisted and confusing."
"But when you live out who God made
you to be, you're walking toward the
hopeful future He has for you."



"The King made you
in His image, Sammy,"

Dad continued.

"That means you don't need
to pretend or copy anyone else.

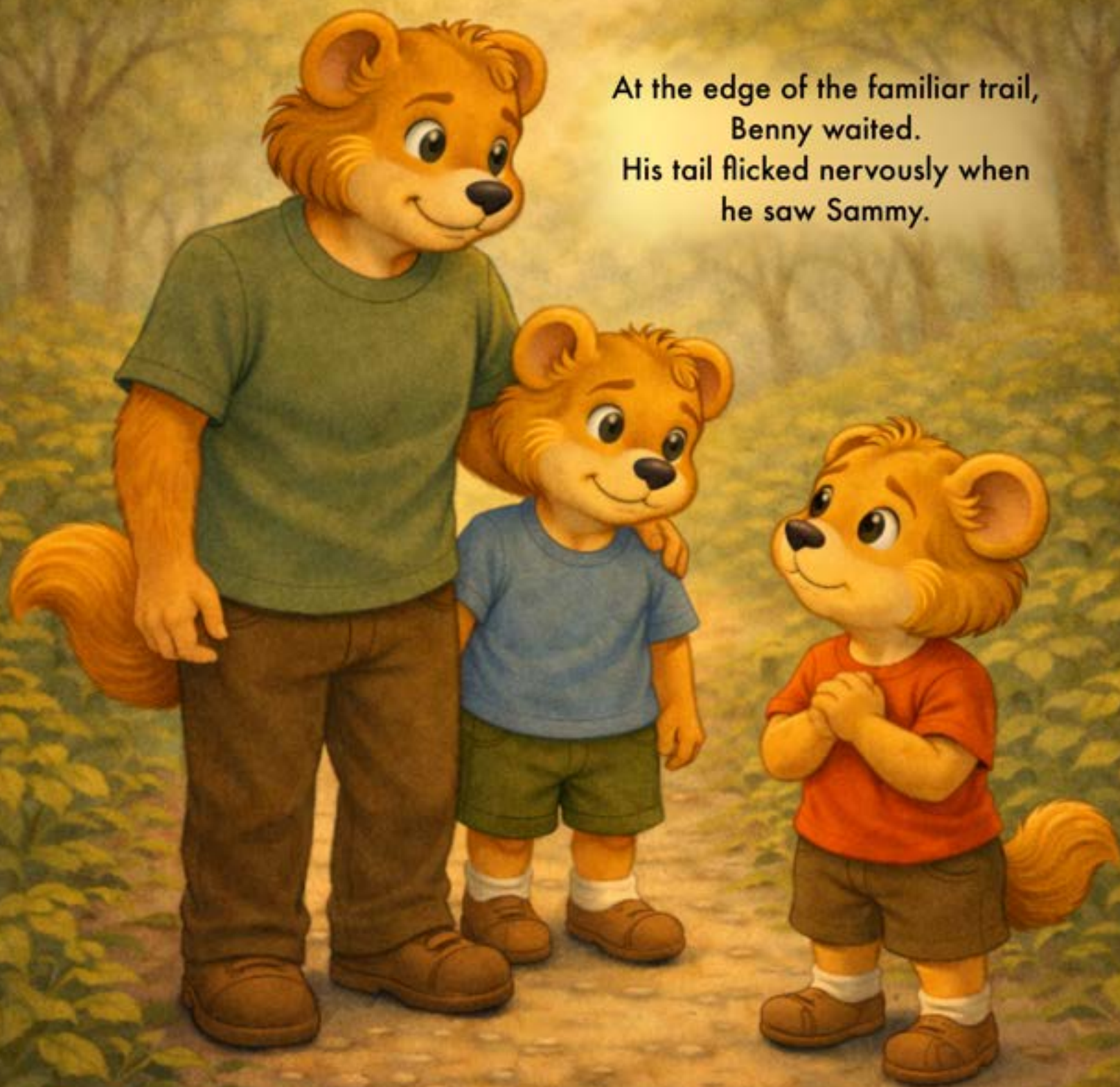
The real you is what
this world needs."

Sammy breathed in deeply.

An illustration of a large, friendly-looking father bear and a smaller cub walking through a sun-dappled forest. The father bear, on the left, has orange-brown fur, a green t-shirt, and brown pants. He is holding the cub's paw. The cub, on the right, has similar fur, a blue t-shirt, and green shorts. They are walking on a path covered in fallen leaves. The background is a soft-focus forest with sunlight filtering through the trees.

Dad held out his paw.
"Come on, let's go home."
They stepped out of the maze
and back toward the sunlight.

At the edge of the familiar trail,
Benny waited.
His tail flicked nervously when
he saw Sammy.

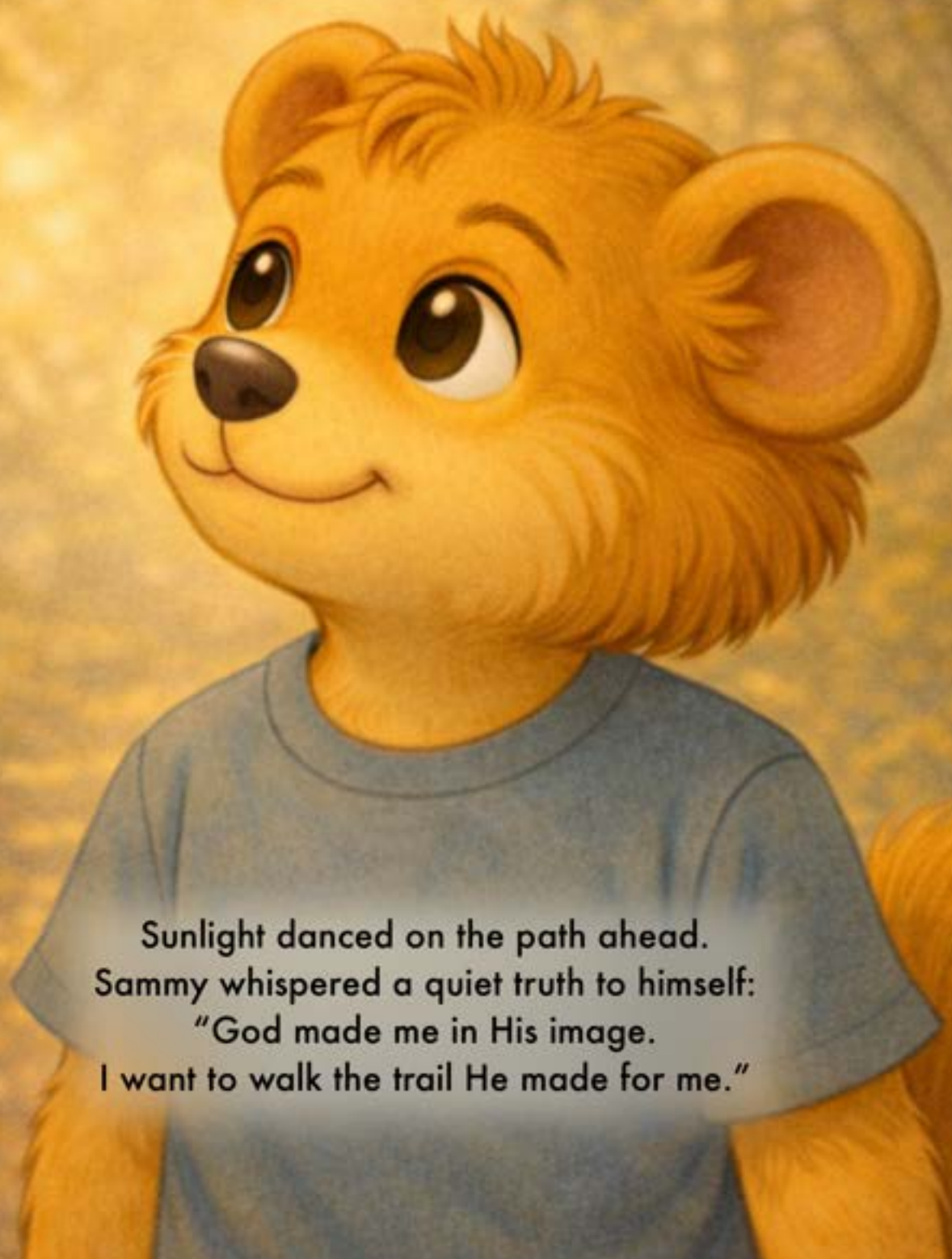




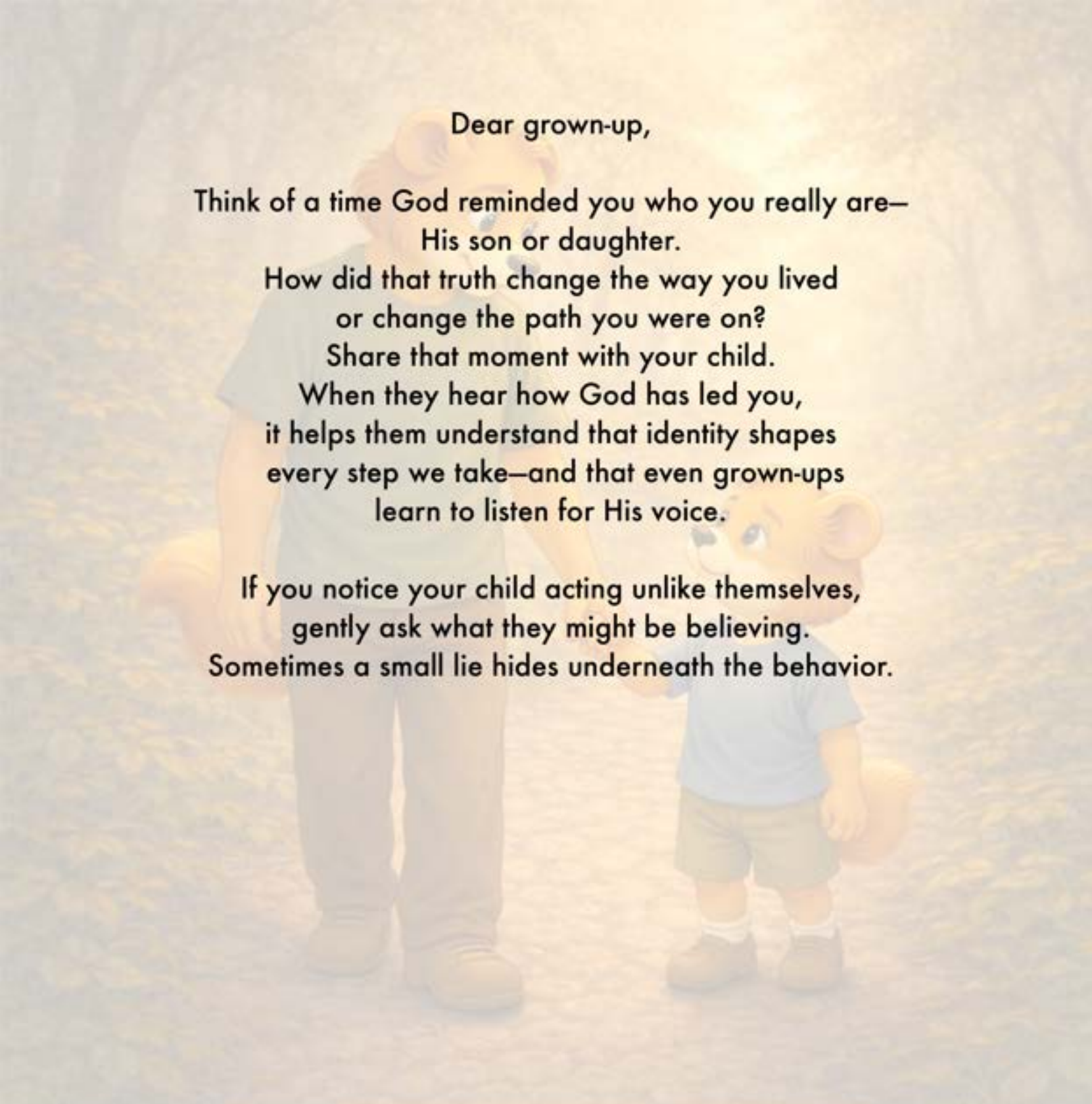
Sammy approached with his ears low.
"I'm sorry I was mean," he said.
"I was trying so hard to look big...
and I didn't listen when you tried to help me."

Benny smiled and nudged him.
"It's okay. I'm really glad you're back."
Together they walked on, with Dad
leading the way home.





Sunlight danced on the path ahead.
Sammy whispered a quiet truth to himself:
"God made me in His image.
I want to walk the trail He made for me."



Dear grown-up,

Think of a time God reminded you who you really are—
His son or daughter.

How did that truth change the way you lived
or change the path you were on?
Share that moment with your child.

When they hear how God has led you,
it helps them understand that identity shapes
every step we take—and that even grown-ups
learn to listen for His voice.

If you notice your child acting unlike themselves,
gently ask what they might be believing.
Sometimes a small lie hides underneath the behavior.

Your Turn!

Have you walked down a wrong trail?
Was it trying to look big? Trying to fit in?
Or pretending to be someone you're not?

Draw or write it in the space below.

When you're ready, imagine stepping off that wrong trail—
and taking the first step onto the one God made for you.

Then say this out loud:

"God, You made me in Your image.
I choose Your path for me."



