

For Susanna

A True Friend



“We love because he first loved us.”

-1 John 4:19



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The
Bison
and the
Dandelion

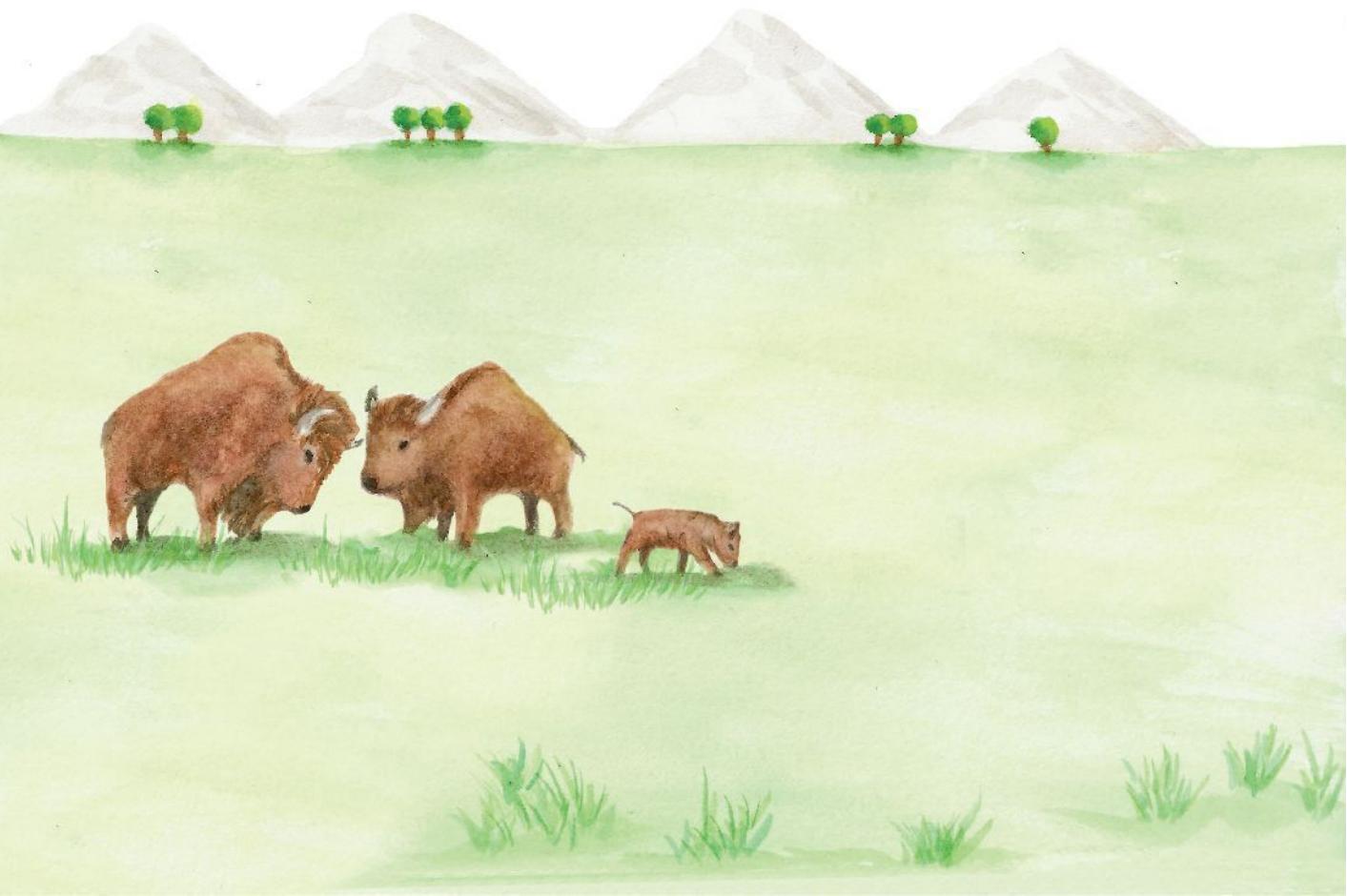


Tessa Raeside

A long time ago, there lived a herd of bison. Their numbers were great, and their leaders were strong. All of the little bison looked up to them knowing they would one day grow to be big and strong.

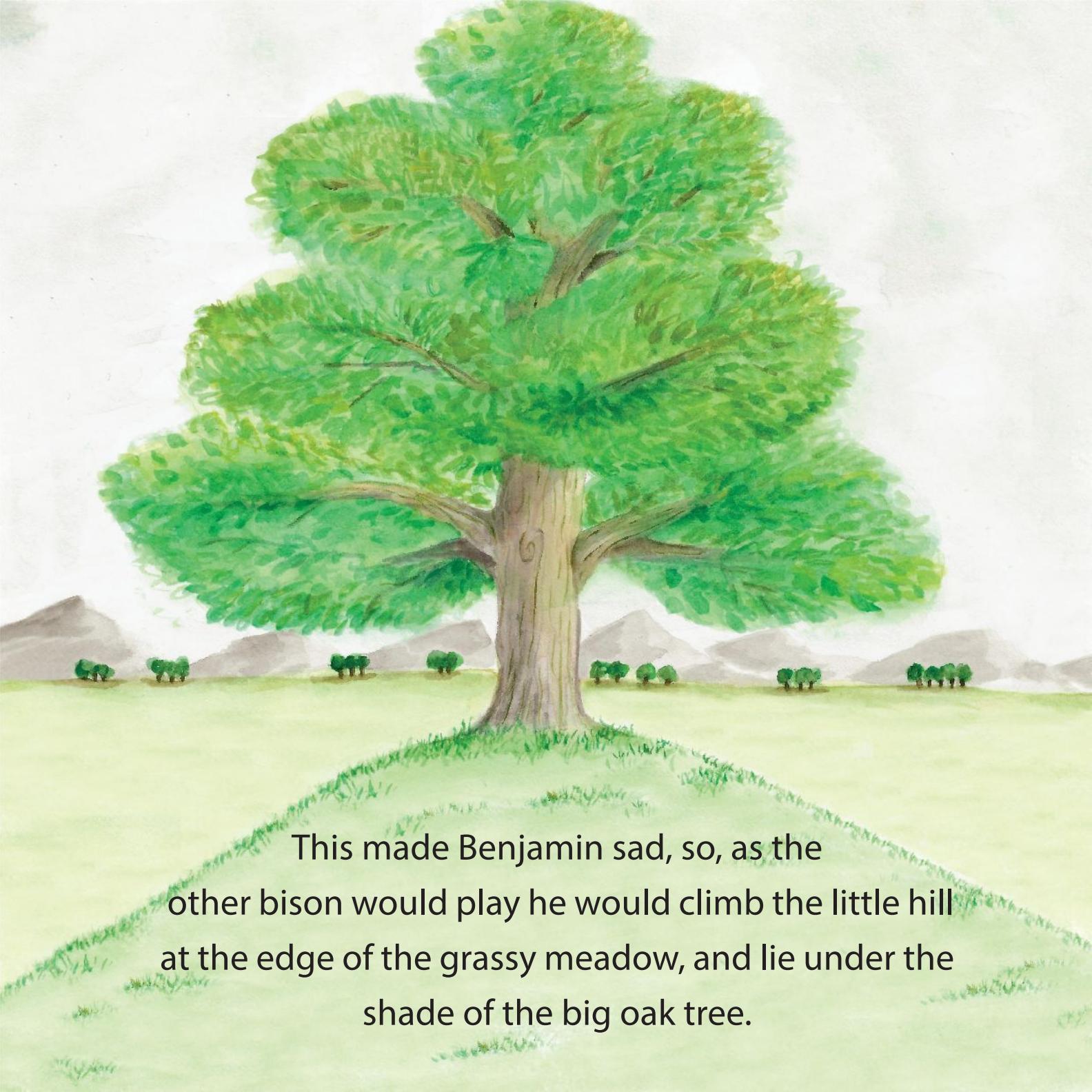


Together, all the young bison would play, and eat, and run around the big bison, playing tricks and games like hide-and-seek. That is, all except Benjamin.



Benjamin was very small, even for a young bison.
His legs were not as strong as the other bison. He
could not keep up with them and would hear them
talk about how he would never grow to be as big
and strong as they would.





This made Benjamin sad, so, as the other bison would play he would climb the little hill at the edge of the grassy meadow, and lie under the shade of the big oak tree.

One early spring day, Benjamin climbed the little hill and found something new that he had never seen before. Among all the blades of bright green grass, there was one that was not the same. It was bigger, and rounder on the top, and Benjamin thought he could see a little bit of the bright yellow sun inside.

He blew gently on it, and it swayed back and forth in the breeze. He watched it all day long, wondering what it could be. Then at nightfall, he went back down the little hill to rest with the other bison.



The following morning, he had never been more excited to climb up the little hill and rest under the shade of the big oak tree. He was so happy when he saw that it had opened to reveal more of the bright yellow sun! He blew gently on it again and watched how all the tiny petals danced in the breeze.

“Hahaha... that tickles” said a small voice. Benjamin gasped in surprise, and before he could speak he heard
“Hi, my name is Dandelion, what is your name?”
“I’m Benjamin,” he said quietly.



That day, Benjamin and Dandelion talked all day long. By the end of the day, they were the best of friends. As the sun began to set, Dandelion yawned and began to close.



"See you tomorrow," said Benjamin.
He was so happy he told his mom all about his new
friend.



He now grazed as fast as he could in the morning, eager to sit with Dandelion under the shade of the big oak tree. They would tell jokes to each other and laugh together. Dandelion would ask what Benjamin saw beyond the big oak tree, and he would tell her all about how the other bison would never include him.

“I think they are wrong,” said Dandelion, “you might not be as big and strong as they are, but you are very big and very strong.”

Hearing Dandelion say this made Benjamin feel big and strong.





Each day Dandelion would get a little taller and a little brighter. Her petals grew longer, and Benjamin would always try to count them. But there were so many he would lose track.

“You are growing into the most beautiful flower in the whole meadow,” said Benjamin.

“Thank you,” said Dandelion.





“ You are getting faster and your hooves are getting stronger. I can feel the earth around me tremble as you run around the big oak tree.”

Hearing this made Benjamin happy. He no longer cared that the other bison didn’t want to play with him or what they thought of him. He was so happy spending his days with Dandelion under the shade of the big oak tree.

Pretty soon, the days started to get shorter and the nights grew longer and colder.

One morning, Benjamin came up the hill excited to show Dandelion just how big the muscles on his back were growing. He was starting to look more like the other big and strong bison in the herd.

When he reached Dandelion on the top of the hill, he was surprised to see her still closed up. She was always shining bright with all her yellow petals out and ready to tickle his nose.



"Hey, Dandelion, wake up! I have something to show you."

But she didn't move. Benjamin lay down softly on the earth beside his friend and gently called out her name,

"Dandelion?"

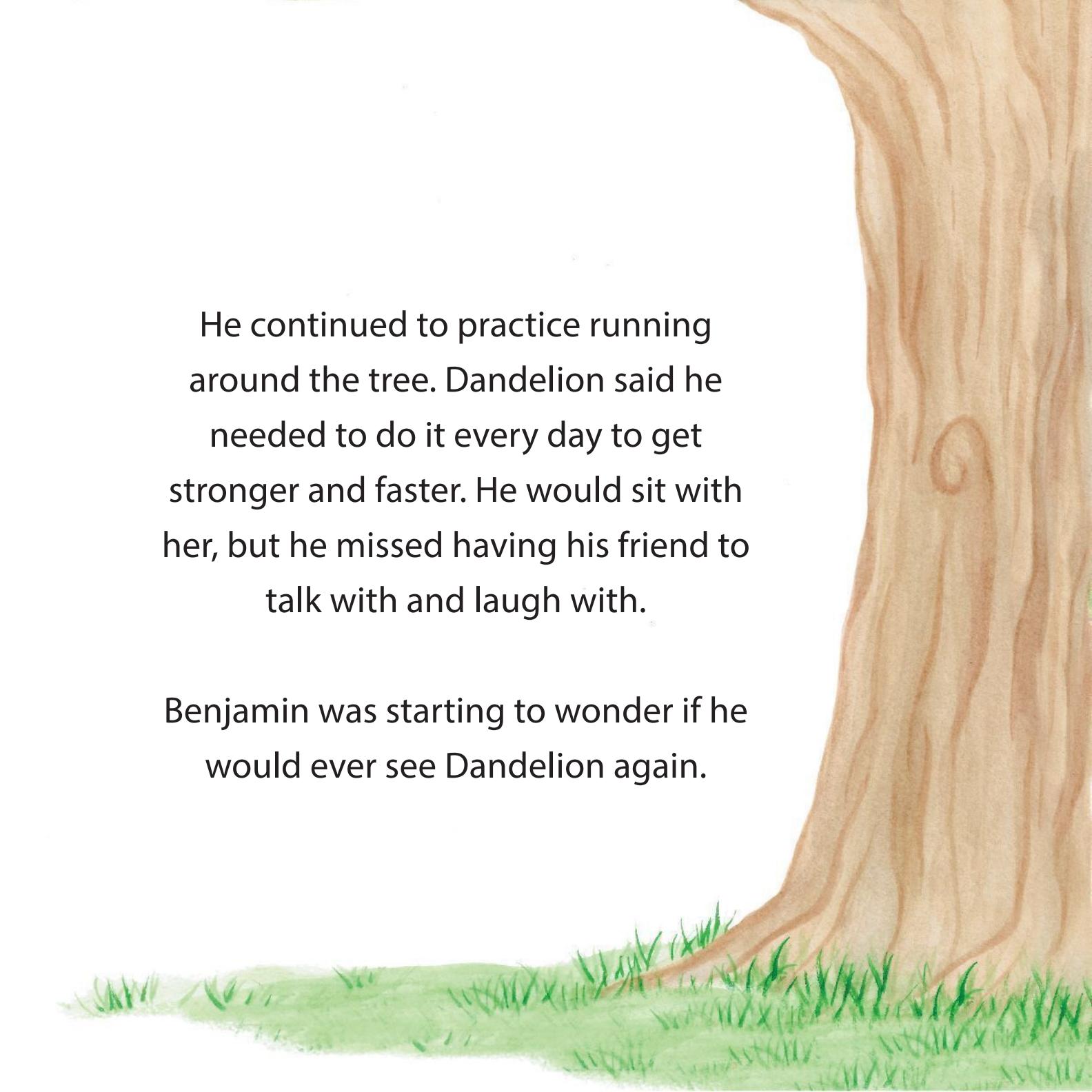
Still, there was no reply. He blew gently on her to let her know he was there by her side.



A few days went by, and Dandelion was still not showing her beautiful yellow color. In fact, the small leaves that rested under her were starting to shrivel and lose their bright green color.

The little bit of yellow that Benjamin could once see peeking from the top was now turning brown like the earth around them.





He continued to practice running around the tree. Dandelion said he needed to do it every day to get stronger and faster. He would sit with her, but he missed having his friend to talk with and laugh with.

Benjamin was starting to wonder if he would ever see Dandelion again.



The next day was an unusually warm autumn day, and the leaves were beginning to turn from green to beautiful yellows, oranges, and reds. Benjamin made his way up the hill to check on his dear friend Dandelion. As he ascended the hill, he heard her small voice call out,

“Benjamin where are you?”

Dandelion is back, thought Benjamin, and he bounded up the hill as fast as he could. When he reached her, he was amazed and a little confused at what he saw.



Dandelion was no longer the color of the bright yellow sun. She was now as white as the snow that covered the tops of the mountains around the meadow. Benjamin greeted her with a light nuzzle from his nose; she felt so soft and fluffy.

"You have been gone for days, what happened?"
Benjamin asked.

"I'm sorry," said Dandelion, "I didn't know I would be gone for so long, but I feel like something amazing is going to happen."



Benjamin had so many questions, but Dandelion didn't know all the answers. They talked and laughed for the rest of the day, and Benjamin was so happy to have his friend back.

As the sun began to set, the air grew chilly. Benjamin blew gently on Dandelion, as he always had, and she danced and laughed in the warm breeze.



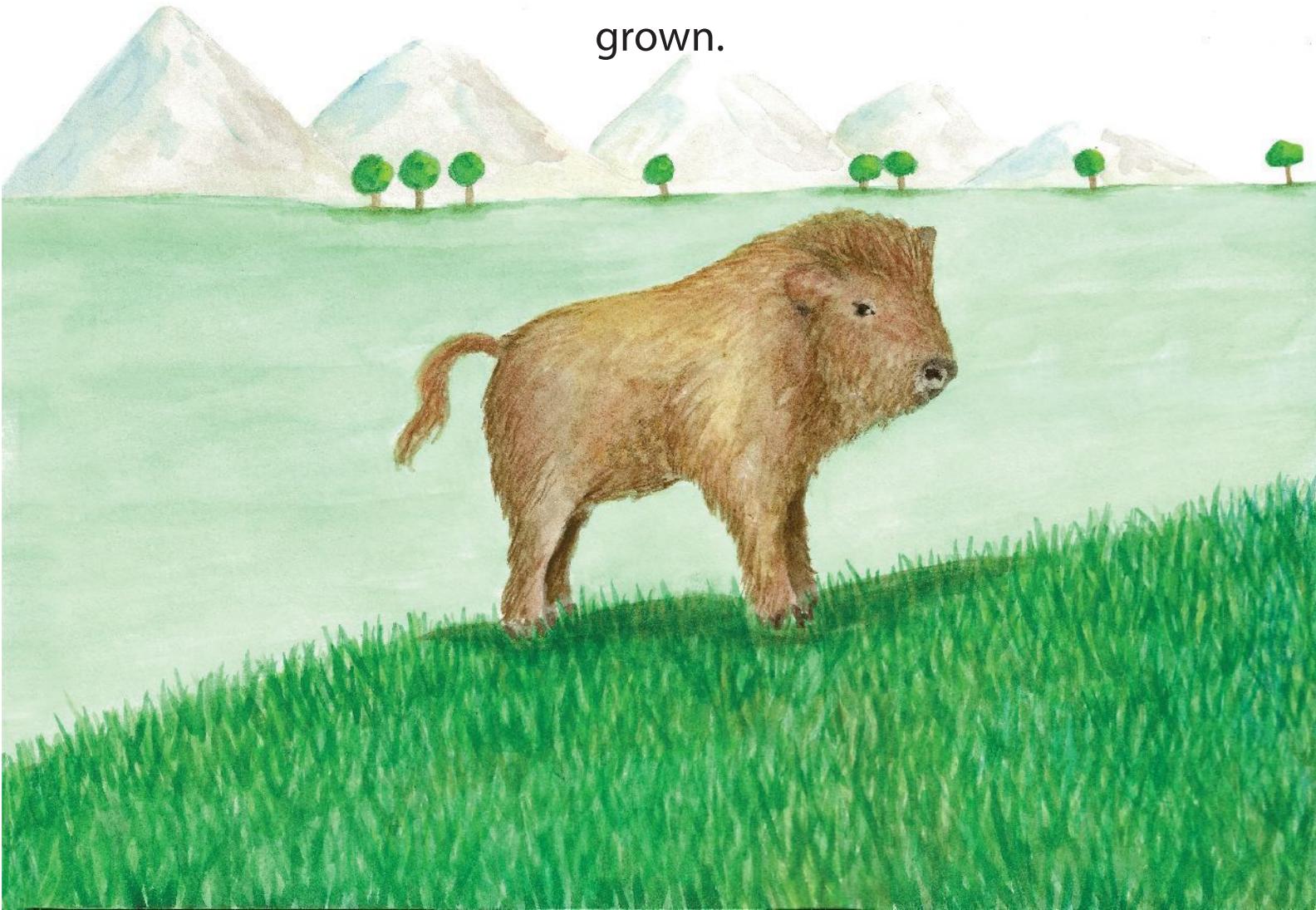
All of the sudden, one of the beautiful white fluffs on Dandelion broke off and drifted away. Benjamin stopped and was so worried he had hurt his friend.

Dandelion giggled and said

“don’t worry Benjamin, I’m ok, you didn’t hurt me. I think that was supposed to happen.”



The following few days were just like old times--they laughed and played. They told each other stories, jokes, and sang songs. Dandelion would count as Benjamin ran around the big oak tree and was amazed at how fast and strong he had grown.



Benjamin would count Dandelion's beautiful white fluffs, but each day there seemed to be fewer and fewer. Dandelion could tell this made Benjamin worry, and she tried to reassure him that she was all right.



On a particularly cold morning, Benjamin was making his way up the hill when he felt the first snowflake land gracefully on the tip of his nose. He went up to Dandelion to show her how white and beautiful it was.

"It's just like you!" Benjamin exclaimed.



Soon after, it melted away, and Benjamin noticed that his friend now had very few white fluffs adorning her.

"I think this might be our final day together," said Dandelion.

Benjamin could feel the tears welling up in his eyes at the thought of being without his best friend.

"I don't want to lose you," sniffled Benjamin.

"Oh silly," said Dandelion, "you won't ever lose me."



At the end of the day, when they had both said their goodbyes, Benjamin knelt softly beside his old friend.

"I'm ready," said Dandelion.

Benjamin breathed in and gave one last long, soft breath of air for Dandelion to dance her final dance.





He watched as the last of
her beautiful white fluffs
drifted around the big
oak tree and landed
softly on the ground.



After that day, the snow began to fall in sheets creating layers and layers of snow over the green grass. Most of the trees had lost all of their leaves, and the big oak tree now stood barren on top of the little hill.

The bison roamed the lower plains, sometimes having to dig under the layers of snow to find the green greass. Benjamin was now just as strong and just as big as all the other bison. To be precise, he was now one of the biggest and strongest bison in the whole herd.





With Dandelion gone and
food getting more
difficult to find, he now
spent more of his time
with the other bison.

Many of them began to notice him, not only for his strong, large size, but also because he was humble and kind. They took such notice despite the fact that they had never included him. Many of the bison apologized to Benjamin; they looked up to him now and many loved grazing by his side.





Once spring came around, the snow melted and the herd began the trip back to the meadow where Benjamin was born. He now had a new best friend, a beautiful female bison, and they were expecting their own little bison.

Many calves were born that spring, and along with Benjamin's little one, they all loved listening to the stories of his adventures with Dandelion.



When they reached the valley, Benjamin saw the little hill. All the little calves were excited to listen to one of his stories under the shade of the big oak tree.

As they made their way to the little hill, he noticed something different. It wasn't as green as he remembered. Instead, there were little spots of bright yellow sun all around. Upon their approach, they heard a chorus of voices all saying



"Hi, my name is Dandelion, what is your name?"

Benjamin could not believe his eyes. All the places he had watched the little white fluffs drift off and land had now grown into beautiful little Dandelions!



The calves were overjoyed, and each introduced themselves to the Dandelions. Benjamin lay under the shade of the big oak tree and smiled, remembering how Dandelion had said something amazing was going to happen.

He watched as all the little calves blew gentle breezes on their new friends. The Dandelions giggled as they swayed back and forth, and Benjamin began again to tell the story of the Bison and the Dandelion.



The End



