

Samuel's Trail West

Takiya Genji



Before the sun peeks over the tall grass, Samuel wakes to a meadowlark's song and chilly morning dew. He helps Pa roll up their heavy canvas tent while Ma packs the wool blankets for another day on the trail.



Breakfast is crispy bacon and crunchy hardtack biscuits cooked in a skillet over a small fire. Nearby, two giant brown oxen stand patiently while Pa slips heavy wooden yokes over their shoulders.



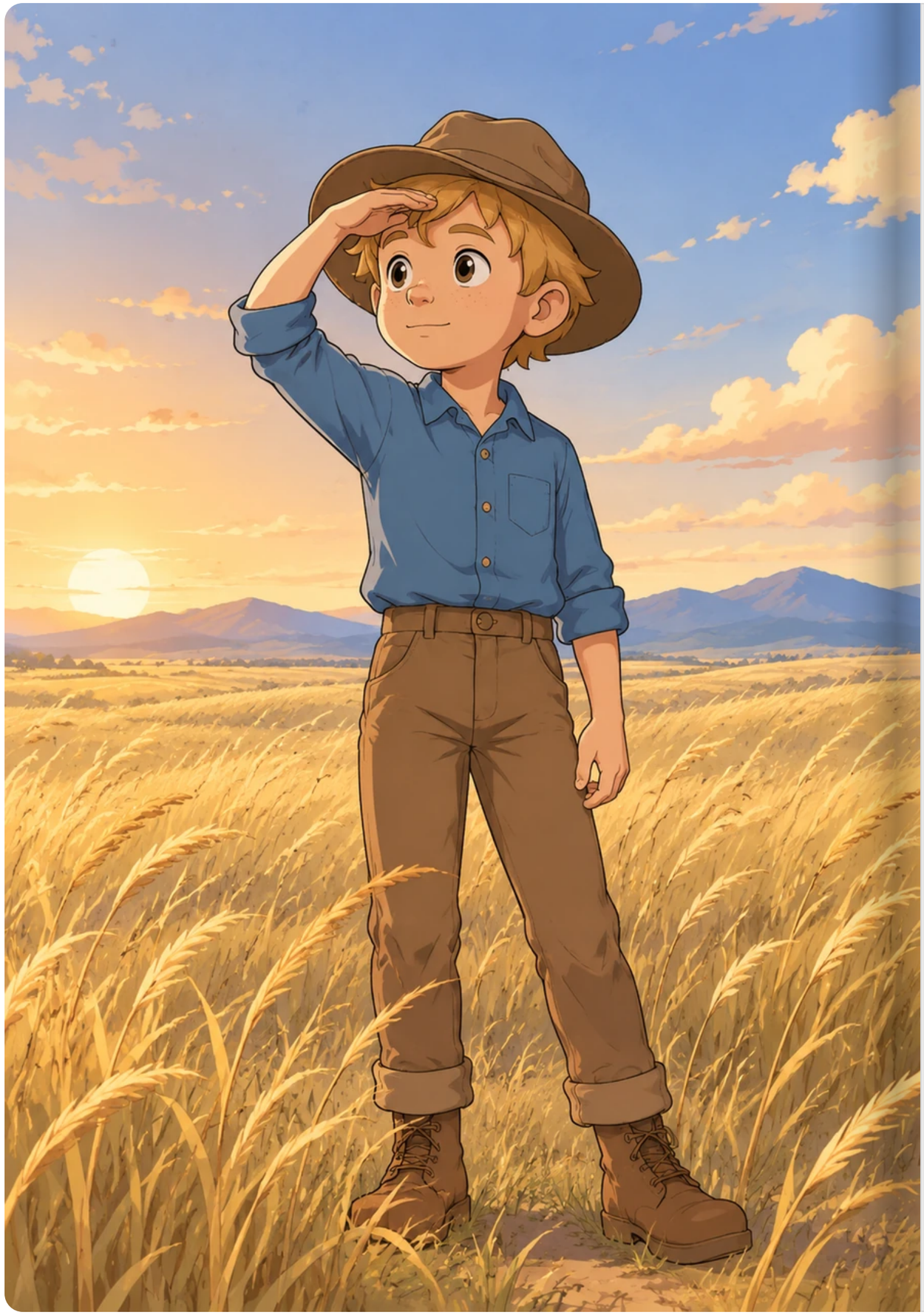
To save the oxen’s strength for pulling heavy supplies, Samuel walks mile after mile beside the creaking wheels. His chore is gathering dry buffalo chips in a burlap sack for tonight’s fire.



When the trail meets a rushing river, everyone holds their breath as the wagon splashes into the cold water. Samuel grips the wooden sideboard tight while the wheels sink deep into the riverbed mud before pulling free.



At noon, the wagon train stops so the tired animals can graze and rest. Samuel finds a smooth river pebble and challenges his trail friends to a lively game of marbles in the dirt.



As afternoon stretches on, the wind whistles through endless waves of grass where the earth meets the sky. Dusty and tired, Samuel shades his eyes and gazes west toward the distant blue silhouettes of the mountains ahead.



As the sun sinks in brilliant streaks of orange and violet, the families guide their wagons into a protective circle for the night. Inside the ring, children fetch water while smoke rises from evening fires.



Under a velvet blanket of bright prairie stars, the day's hard work melts away as Pa plays his wooden fiddle. Wrapped in a warm quilt by the embers, Samuel listens to the music and dreams of their new home in Oregon.



A sudden afternoon thunderstorm sweeps across the plains, bringing heavy sheets of rain that drum loudly against the canvas wagon top. Samuel and his sister play a quiet counting game inside while the storm passes quickly over the damp earth.



After many long weeks of travel, the weary travelers finally crest the final ridge and see the lush green valley of their destination stretching out below. Samuel smiles proudly, knowing they have crossed the vast frontier together.