**THE GREATEST GIFT OF WEEGLEWOOD**

Written by: Crystal L. Sanders

[CLSanders888@gmail.com](mailto:CLSanders888@gmail.com) | 734-417-0196

Illustrated by: Mindy M. Harvey

MANUSCRIPT

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Once upon a time in the wonderful world of Weeglewood, there lived an old wise Weegleman named Grandpa Aldo.

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Now there were many weegles and wee little weeglets in Weeglewood and whenever they would listen, Grandpa Aldo would teach them the most special lessons in life.

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Hammy, Brammy, and Shammy were three of those weegles and at the prime of their youth, they came to a point in their lives when they knew there had to be something more to weeglehood than they had experienced.

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The three remembered that when they were just little weeglets, Grandpa Aldo would gather them together and teach them that one day, if they *really really* wanted to know, he would share life’s GREATEST gift with them- and that would be a most special day.

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Wondering in their hearts about this greatest gift, the three weegles decided to visit Grandpa Aldo. They asked him, “*Now that we are older, please share. What is the GREATEST gift in the whole wide world*?”

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Grandpa Aldo replied, “*My dear weegles, the greatest gift cannot be explained. You must experience it to understand- but I do have a portion of this great gift for whoever would value it most. I assure you that what I share will answer your questions.*”

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Now the first weegle, Hammy, grew up to be very handsome. He was remarkably dapper, had the fastest weegle wagon, and the best paying weegle work.

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Hammy said to Grandpa Aldo, “*I would value the greatest gift the most. I am rich and far better than these two weegles. Everyone loves me most because I am so good-looking. I, Grandpa Aldo, must know this great gift so that I can share it with all the weegles of Weeglewood who love me so much.*”

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Hammy proudly stepped back as the second weegle, Brammy, stood before Grandpa Aldo. Now Brammy grew up to be a very intelligent weegle. He invented witty weegle gadgets, worked world-saving wonders, and seemed to know the answers to all things weegles wished to know- except *this*.

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He chimed in, “*No, Grandpa Aldo, I would most value it. I am very bright. I have done great deeds and taught many weeglets many things. I, sir, must know this great gift so that my accomplishments can further advance the wonderful world of Weeglewood*.”

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Brammy stepped back feeling very smart as the third weegle, Shammy, came forward. Now Shammy did not have much to brag about. Most of the other weegles looked down on him because he did not seem to measure up or do any good, though he wished he would.

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Shammy sadly proceeded, “*I, Grandpa Aldo, would really like to know this greatest gift; but I know I am unworthy. I am not handsome like Hammy or smart like Brammy, nor do I feel loved by any weegles. I am ashamed that I have come to dislike all the weegles of Weeglewood. If only I could have this greatest gift, I am sure this would change.*”

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Grandpa Aldo replied to the three, “*You all have good reasons. Therefore, I will give you ALL the chance to receive this most treasured gift.*” They all smiled and replied, “*Great, yay!*”

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As they reached out to receive the gift, Grandpa Aldo said, “*Not so fast! There is something you must first do for me, my dear ones. From now until the time you receive the gift, you must love and be friends with the most detested, dullest, and loneliest weegle who ever existed in Weeglewood*.”

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Suddenly, at the turn of their heads, they all met this wearisome weegle whose name was Mabel. She was hunched over in a most worrisome manner and smelled of a very bad odor.

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Hammy took a glance and her unsightly looks quickly ran him off. “*This is not worth it!”* he shouted, *“I will find a special gift some other way!*”

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Brammy became her friend. After a couple days, he became used to her haggard appearance, and it did not bother him. Then, her stench started making him feel woozy. A week had passed, and his gift still had not come.

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“*This is making me feel sick. How long will this last? When will the greatest gift come and when it does, could it possibly be worth all of this*?” He ran off yelling, “*I’ll do my deeds without this gift!*”

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Then came Shammy’s turn. He became Mabel’s friend. After a while, her looks did not bother him, and after a longer while, he became used to how she smelled. They talked about things they had in common. They talked about the dreams in their hearts and their desire to be better weegles.

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After a long while, Shammy had almost forgotten about Grandpa Aldo’s gift, but then one day, he began to wonder when it would arrive. He decided that he would not walk away or give up but would visit Grandpa Aldo to see what was going on.

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“*Grandpa Aldo, I have been with Mabel for a while now and I cannot help but notice that I have not yet received the gift. Have you forgotten*?”

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Grandpa Aldo smiled, “*Ahhh, my dear Shammy, you HAVE been found worthy. First, I must free you from being her friend. You never have to see her again. In fact, I will remove her from your part of Weeglewood*!”

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The thought of this broke Shammy’s heart. He had never felt this way before- it was a strange feeling for him. He could not imagine her leaving him. If that was what it took to receive the gift, then he did not want it. Holding back tears, he replied, “*No! I don’t want that silly gift! No gift could possibly be better than the friend I have found in her*!”

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Just as he was about to storm off, Grandpa Aldo said, “*My dear Shammy, I thought you dislike everyone*.”

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Shammy stopped in his tracks. “*No, she is my friend*.”

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It was just then that he realized what he had said. It had been a long while. Never had he thought that his test could hold his answer. Never had he imagined that the best gift could be held inside the most unlikely weegle.

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Grandpa Aldo smiled, “*You see, Shammy, the greatest gift cannot be explained. The most wonderful gifts in life are sometimes hidden right in front of you- only to shine when the eyes of your heart are open to see them. Also, my precious weegle, this gift is not just for you to receive, it is for you to give. The more you give, the more you receive. That is what makes the greatest gift of love found in friendship so very special.”*

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It took a while to sink in, but Shammy knew what Grandpa Aldo was sharing was true. He was excited to share his new-found gift with the other weegles and weeglets of Weeglewood. He held dear this special gift- the gift of the LOVE of friendship- as he and Mabel together learned how to love each other and all of Weeglewood.

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…*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love*. 1 Cor 13:13

ACTIVITY PAGE

1. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7- “*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us*.”
2. In our story, Shammy found the greatest gift and a beautiful friendship in an unlikely weegle, Mabel. List some of the hidden treasures in your own life.

1. Write some ways that you can show kindness to those who are on your list.
2. Now let’s have some fun! Can you find the treasure chest hidden on each page of our story? It will look like this: ::::*insert pic drawn by Josie*::::

* Activity Page Inspired and Illustrated by Josie Sanders

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

From a young age, Crystal Sanders has had a heart for teaching biblical truths in creative and practical ways through written expression. She has her master’s in organizational leadership and over 25 years of experience sharing God’s love by volunteering in a variety of capacities both in her local church and in her community.

Crystal lives in Oklahoma with her husband and two daughters, Kylee and Josie. She treasures time with her loved ones and enjoys listening to podcasts, traveling, and reading good books.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Mindy Harvey, often referred to as "Mindo", credits her relationship with the Lord as the accelerant that pours into and feeds the fire of her creativity. Even as a child, she would eagerly look at a blank piece of paper with excitement- often wondering what the next drawing could be. The possibilities were endless!

Born and raised in Ypsilanti, MI, Mindo earned her associate’s degree in graphic design and illustration followed by furthering her education at Eastern Michigan University.

Throughout her life, Mindo has faced many battles including major health issues, and even drug addiction and homelessness. Despite these setbacks, God has brought Mindo through to a place of sobriety and security and she gives Him all the glory for that. It is her desire to share the love, joy, strength, and peace that comes in knowing Jesus. She hopes to always be an instrument of His as she continues to use and display the creative gifts that He has placed within her.

DEDICATION

To my greatest gifts, Kylee and Josie. May you always see treasures even where others may not.

BACK INTRO COVER:

A treasure of great value is rarely found on the surface of an open field. You often must look closer, dig deeper to find it. In this book, Grandpa Aldo invites Hammy, Brammy, and Shammy on a quest to unveil the greatest gift of Weeglewood- a hidden treasure of sorts. Each young weegle has their own reason for embarking on such a journey, but will they be willing to scratch below an unlikely surface to find it? As you and your little ones read this story together, it is my hope that you, too, will look closer and dig deeper for the hidden treasures nestled within your own lives. May God richly bless you as you experience “The Greatest Gift of Weeglewood”!