



WILDER

and the VERY, VERY,

VERY
SHORT DAY



Kids grow better *outside.*

Illustrated by Rae Ritchie



Deep in the Rockies, the sun rose and woke a soundly sleeping, snoring Wilder. “Good morning, Sun! It’s another great day to play!” said Wilder, brushing the snow from his fur.

“Oh, Wilder,” said the Sun, “don’t you remember? Today is the very shortest day of the year! I can’t play very long.”





Wilder was bewildered, confused, and confuzzled.
Then, an idea struck!

“What if we race to the tippy
top of the tallest peak?
If I win, you’ll stay and play.”





The Sun thought for a moment, then smiled.
“You’re on, Wilder.” And so the two set off.

Wilder lumbered up the trail, determined to win.
But all of a sudden, he came to a screeching stop!





n ooey, gooey, chocolatey smell wafted around Wilder. He followed his nose straight to a campfire where silly squirrels were making s'mores.

“Wilder!” exclaimed the smallest squirrel. “So good to see you. Come join us!”









“Well, I *did* skip breakfast this morning,” thought Wilder. “I’ll stop for just *one quick little s’more*.”

One scrumptious s’more turned into two and then three. Before he knew it, Wilder was telling campfire stories and laughing with the squirrels. He had forgotten all about the time!





“Didn’t you say something about a race, Wilder?”
his squirrel friend asked.

“Oh no!” Wilder looked up at the sky. The Sun was
far, far ahead!





ou know, Wilder, whenever we need to get anywhere in a hurry, we call the Falcons!” said Mama squirrel.

“The who?” he asked, but she was already making the call. “Squeeeeeeeek!” Moments later, five mighty peregrines flew in from the west.

“Wilder, meet Freddy, Francis, Fredrica, Filip, and little Frankie Falcon!” she cheered.

“Freddy, our pal here needs a ride. Can you help?”





The birds looked at Wilder's enormous body. Giving squirrels a ride was one thing, but Wilder was way bigger than anything they had carried before!

Determined to help, the falcons carefully grasped onto Wilder's coat and flapped their wings with all their might.

Up, up, up into the sky they raced!







But the birds grew more and more tired carrying Wilder's heavy body.

"Can't... hold... much... longer!" cried Filip Falcon, as Wilder slipped from the gentle grasp of his talons.

The others couldn't hold him either, and suddenly Wilder was falling from the sky!





aaaahhhh!” Wilder screamed.

Just then, an enormous cloud appeared.

“Gotcha!” he bellowed. And with one mighty gust, Wilder floated across the sky to a safe landing on the fluffiest, deepest pile of snow in the mountains.







POOF!

He climbed out of the huge snowbank.

Wilder spotted the Sun heading toward the peak.
He set off west, back on track in the great race with
the Sun.

With each stride, Wilder ran faster and faster.
He was winning!



Suddenly, Wilder came to a clearing in the trees.

“Oh no!” he shouted.

His path to victory was blocked by a rushing, racing river. The current was much too strong for Wilder to wade across.





ilder sat down next to the river,
wondering how he would ever make
it to the other side. As he was thinking,
he felt a tap tap tap on his shoulder.

Wilder looked up. Standing beside him was a
magical forest gnome.

“If going up river is what you wish,
look no further than the mighty fish.”

The gnome smiled and let out a little dance.

“A boat of sticks will
get you going,
then harness the fish
with ropes for towing!”







With a wave of the gnome's arm, a boat appeared.
"Oh, thank you. I don't know how I'll ever repay
you!" said Wilder.

"Silly friend, repay me with fun.
Enjoy this time in your race with the Sun!"

The gnome pranced back into the trees.
Wilder climbed into the boat, then joyfully seized
the reins and mused the magical fish upstream.





They pulled Wilder higher and higher toward the mountain peak. He looked to the sky to see the Sun just behind him!

But the river came to an end at the base of a wondrous waterfall.

Wilder had to get to the top to win the race, but it was much too tall and steep for him to climb!





ilder leapt from the boat and surveyed the base of the waterfall, worrying how he would ever scale the wall and beat the Sun.

Just then, Wilder heard someone call his name.

“Wilder! Hey, Wilder! Up here!”

Perched on the cliffside was his mountain goat cousin Gertie.





Wilder called up. “I’m so glad to see you!
I’m trying to get to the top, but I don’t know how
I’ll ever make it!”

“You’re part goat, aren’t you?” Gertie mused.
“Just climb!”

Wilder thought for a moment. He had always
known he was part goat, and he wanted to win the
race. So he gathered up all his courage and bravery,
and with a deep breath, took his first careful step.





“You got this!” she cheered.

Step by step, rock by rock, Wilder grew more confident as he scaled the wall. He was climbing all on his own, straight to the top. He moved just like a mountain goat!





ilder climbed the final steps to the peak,
sure he'd beaten the Sun in their great race.

But as he cleared the last rock, there she was, shining
brightly and waiting patiently for him.

The Sun had won.





“I tried so hard!
Will you please
stay and play?”
Wilder begged.

“Oh, Wilder,” the Sun laughed, “today was full of fun, new adventures! You ate s’mores with squirrels, flew with falcons, boated with magical fish, and learned how to climb a mountain.

Even though you lost the race, you won the day.”

Wilder smiled. “Can we play tomorrow?” he asked.

“Of course!” exclaimed the Sun.





The Sun tucked behind the Western peak as Wilder happily tromped home down the mountain.

Wilder snuggled under his blanket of moss and leaves. He drifted off to sleep, dreaming of all the magic of the very, very, very shortest day of the year.



THE
END



The adventures of *Wilder and the Very, Very, Very Short Day* were inspired by the creative minds of our Generation Wild community on social media. Thank you to everyone who contributed their brilliant ideas!

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We'll be the first to admit, you don't run into something like Wilder every day. But don't be alarmed. He might look like a cross between a mountain goat and bigfoot, but he's going to be your new best friend. Because he's on a mission to help your kids rediscover all the benefits waiting for them just outside your door, where things are a little wilder, a little happier, and a whole lot healthier.

Today, the average kid spends less than seven minutes a day outside in unstructured play. That's dramatically less than any generation before. It's an eye-opening problem that most people can rally against. Because it's pretty well documented that spending time outdoors is critical to the health of kids and their mental, physical, and emotional development. It's also important that we raise the next generation of stewards to watch over and take care of our outdoor places.

That's why Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) set the ambitious goal of changing an entire generation of kids by connecting them to the outdoor world. This led to the launch of Generation Wild, a research-led, multiyear campaign designed to spark a movement that would reconnect kids to the outdoor world.

