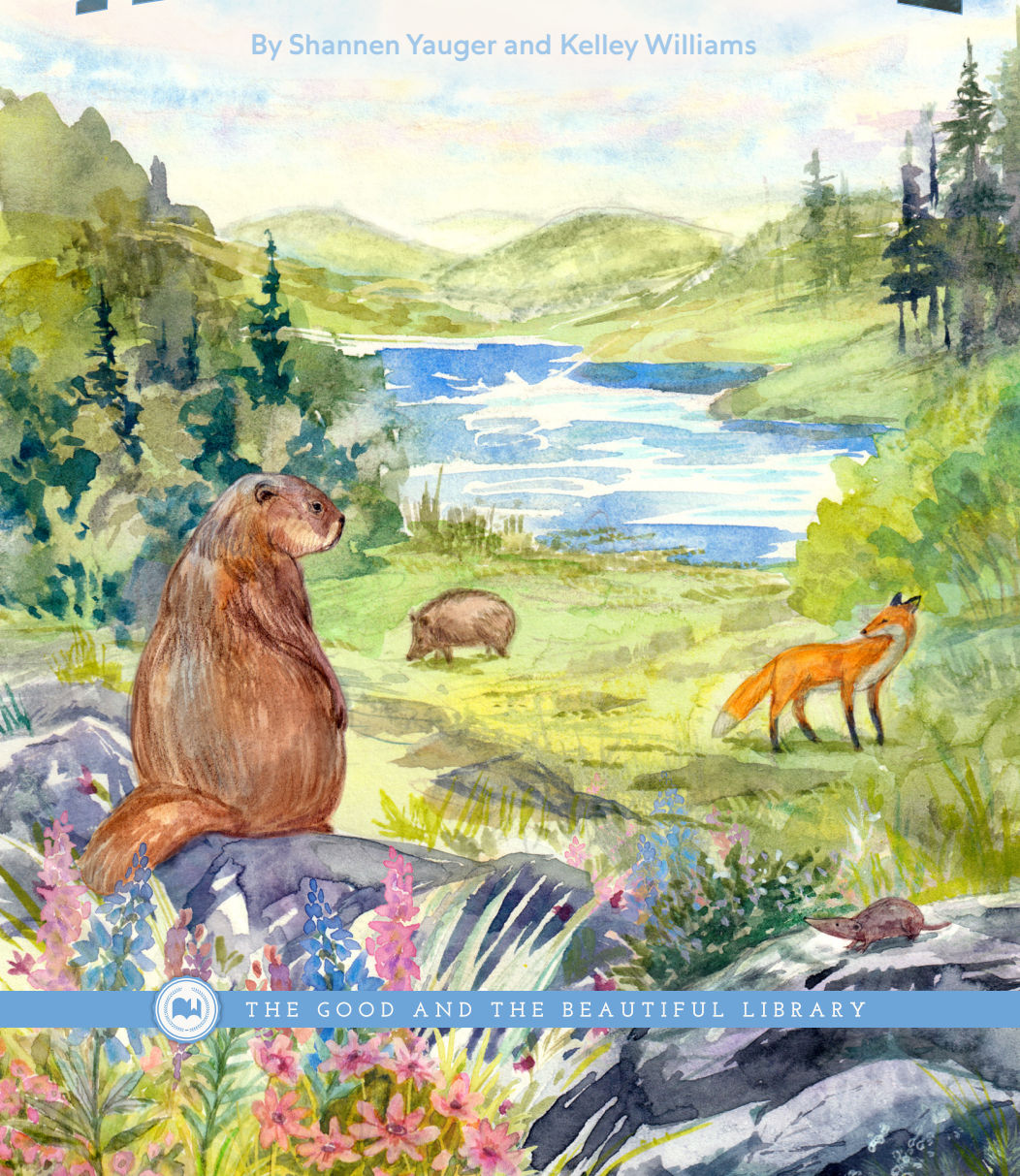


Along the **MOUNTAINSIDE**

By Shannen Yauger and Kelley Williams



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Winter

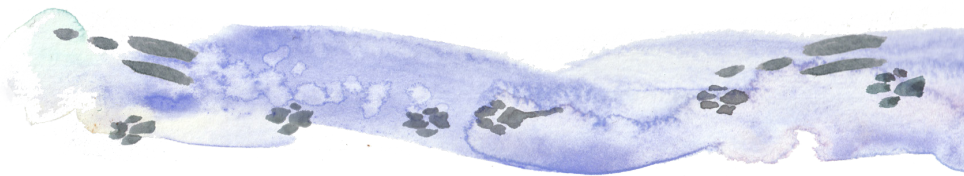
The Silent Snowfall

Along the base of the North Georgia mountains, winter arrives, a blanket of snow covering the forest floor. As the temperature drops and the days grow shorter, Red Fox prepares for the challenges that lie ahead. With her thick fur providing insulation against the biting cold, she ventures forth from her den in search of food. She relies on her keen hunting skills to navigate the chilly landscape; her long snout tracks along the forest floor, trailing the scent of a cottontail rabbit. Sleek black-tipped paws tread quietly on the freshly fallen snow as she works throughout the night



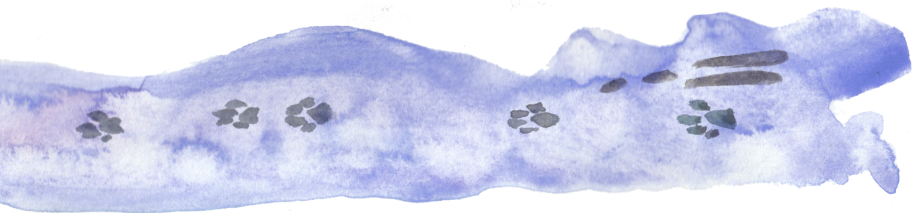
and into the early morning. As a golden sun rises over the mountains, her orange-red fur glimmers as it reflects the rising sun. She knows this mountain well, having lived here since she was a pup. Suddenly, she stops and turns her large ears to and fro. What is that she hears?

Not far from Red Fox, Wild Boar is foraging for acorns under the oak trees. Anything but quiet, Wild Boar sniffs and snuffles, his snout buried in the snow. Red Fox keeps a keen eye on Wild Boar's methodical





search for food. Intrigued, she follows him, keeping her distance as she watches him uncover hidden treasures on the frozen ground. Intent on his search for breakfast, the large animal presses along, snout to the ground, unaware that he's being watched. Acorns, roots, tubers, and even small mammals become his targets as he roams his territory. Despite his messy appearance, Wild Boar is a creature of routine and habit. He follows well-trodden paths through the woods, his thick hair providing protection from the biting cold.





Spring

A Time of Renewal

Red Fox emerges from her den, her coat now sleek and shiny as she basks in the warm rays of the late-afternoon sun. She spent the last few weeks of winter preparing a cozy space in her den to have her litter of fox kits. Spring has arrived, and with it, her kits. Now that they're here, blind, helpless, and covered in a soft gray fur, Red Fox's mate must find food for all of them. He trots away, bushy tail swishing from side to side,

to forage for mice or grasshoppers in the surrounding woods for his babies. Stretching in the sun one last time, Red Fox heads back into her den for the evening to keep the kits warm.

Sniffing along a fallen tree after sundown, Red Fox's mate has detected, with his keen hearing, the sound of a mouse digging under him. He crouches behind a large root, waiting for the mouse to make its appearance. The unsuspecting mouse pops out of his hole, and the fox pounces in one giant leap. Proud to have caught the next meal for his family, he runs back to the den with the small rodent in his mouth.





Summer

A Time of Abundance

June brings heat and humidity to the North Georgia mountains as the summer months blossom and bloom. Waiting for the heat of the day to pass, Red Fox and her little pack of kits roam the many tunnels of their shady den. Needing more space for the young ones to run, Red Fox cautiously heads out from the den to make sure the area is safe for her littles. Seeing no danger, Red Fox barks *wow-wow* to her offspring—a signal that it is safe to come out. The kits, who are now much bigger and busier than they were in the spring, spill out of the den entrance, wrestling with each other and playing chase. Every few minutes, a kit stops to drink nourishing milk from Red Fox.





Ears swiveling and nose sniffing, Red Fox picks up her head at the sound of her mate returning with a large fish for the family. Freshly caught in the cold mountain river that flows nearby, it is a tasty meal for the family, and the kits immediately hunker down and ambush the fish. They are practicing for the time when they will have to find their own food. Tearing at the fresh meat, each kit gets enough food to fill its belly for a while.

Red Fox is suddenly on alert. She has spotted a bald

eagle soaring overhead. With a long, shrill bark, she warns her babies to rush back to the safety of their den. The eagle circles and flies back over them, lower this time. One kit is slower than the others. Determined to protect her young, Red Fox turns back, rears up on her hind feet, and bares her teeth at the eagle, growling and barking. The eagle gives up, and the baby fox safely makes it



into the dusty den to join its siblings.

The heat of the midday sun beats down on Mama Wild Boar and her piglets. They've spent the early morning rooting in a nearby field for juicy strawberries. With their bellies full, it's time to cool off. Unable to





sweat like other animals to cool their bodies down, the boars must head to their wallow—a muddy pit next to a stream. The piglets happily slide into the wallow nose first and roll around, coating their heated skin with cool mud. Mama Wild Boar follows them with a satisfied grunt, as the mud will also help remove the parasites that have made her skin their home. After a while, she calls to her piglets to leave the wallow and find somewhere to rub off the mud, as she is ready to take a nap until the sun sets and the air is cool again. One by one, the little boars trot after their mother.

Along the MOUNTAINSIDE

Seasons transition from one to the next in the beautiful North Georgia mountains. As the weather and foliage change, mammals of the southeastern United



States go about their busy lives.



Wild Boar scrounges for food in the underbrush while Pygmy Shrew seeks shelter in his burrow.

Red Fox is alert for trouble as Woodchuck prepares to hibernate for the winter. Follow these industrious animals as they are born, learn to find food, escape danger, and build cozy homes in



Along the Mountainside, a story that will leave you feeling like part of this amazing ecosystem.

