

# The Travelers

WRITTEN BY KATHY KRANKING ■ ILLUSTRATED BY CHRISTIAN SLADE



Tickle, tickle. Something touched Ricky Raccoon's nose as he slept. Ricky rubbed his nose without opening his eyes. Then he snuggled deeper into his pillow.

Tickle, tickle. Just as Ricky started to rub his nose again, he heard a giggle. He opened his eyes to see Bizzie Beaver's big, toothy grin.

"Good morning, Ricky," said Bizzie. "Look what I found." He held up a big dandelion puffball.

Ricky yawned and sat up. "That's pretty," he said sleepily. "And tickly!" They both giggled.

"You know what, Ricky?" said Bizzie. "We've got a mystery to solve."

"A mystery?" Ricky asked. He climbed out of bed. "What mystery?"

"Well," said Bizzie, "I showed my dandelion to Mrs. Cardinal. And she said, 'How exciting, Bizzie! This is the time of year when plants are on the move.' Then she flew off before I could ask any questions."

"Plants on the move?" asked Ricky. "I wonder what she means." But before he could finish his thought, there was a knock on Ricky's door. It was Flora Skunk and Mitzi Mink.

"You're just in time to help us figure out a mystery," said Ricky. Then Bizzie told them what Mrs. C had said to him.

Flora looked puzzled. "How can plants move?" she asked. "They're stuck in the ground."

"Come on," said Mitzi. "Let's go look for moving plants."

They went outside and looked around. Bizzie walked up to a big tree trunk and pushed on it. "Trees sure don't move," he said. "Mrs. C must have meant another kind of plant."

"Let's go to the meadow," said Ricky. "Maybe some of the plants there will be moving."

As they headed off, Mitzi scratched her head. "It's hard to picture a plant moving from place to place," she said. "I mean, what would it do—pop out of the dirt and tiptoe along on its roots?" Everyone giggled.





They walked along slowly, keeping their eyes on the plants. "It's no use," Ricky said. "These plants are staying right where they are!"

"Hey, what's this?" Flora asked. She had found some prickly brown things caught in her fur.

The others noticed that they had the things stuck in their fur, too. Ricky pulled a few off his tail and looked closely at them. "What do you think these are?" he asked.

A familiar voice answered, "They're plants on the move!" They all turned to see Mrs. C perched on a bush.

"Huh?" asked Bizzie. "These aren't plants!"

"But they will be someday," said Mrs. C with a wink. "They're seeds!"

"I don't get it," said Ricky.

Mrs. C smiled. "Plants make seeds so that more plants can grow," she explained. "But if all the seeds just fell off the plants and grew right where they fell, what would happen?"

"I know," said Flora. "The plants would soon be way too crowded together."

"That's right," said Mrs. C. "So plants have ways of traveling to other places to grow." She pointed at the prickly seeds. "Some, like these, are hitchhikers. They catch rides to different places. Then they fall off and grow there. Others land in the water and float to a new spot. And many kinds of seeds ride the wind."

"Like dandelion seeds," said Bizzie. He held up his dandelion puffball.

"Right," answered Mrs. C. "All those tiny hairs are like little parachutes that help the seeds float."

Just then, a breeze blew past, ruffling the friends' fur. And suddenly, the seeds on Bizzie's puffball went blowing into the air!

"Look at them go!" said Bizzie. "They're on the move now, too."

They all watched as the dandelion's feathery seeds blew up, up, and away across the meadow.

"Bye, little travelers," Ricky called. "Have a nice trip!"

