



# The Race

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Ricky Raccoon, Flora Skunk, Bizzie Beaver, and Mitzi Mink were outside Flora's house. Ricky and Bizzie were getting ready to race each other around Deep Green Wood. Whenever they had raced in the past, Ricky had always won. But Bizzie kept trying.

"I've been doing a lot of extra swimming lately," Bizzie said. "That makes my legs super strong. So maybe I can win for once!"

Flora picked up a stick and scratched a line across the ground. "Here's the starting line," she said. "You can run through the woods, across Sunny Meadow, around Clear Lake, and back to here."

Ricky and Bizzie lined up next to each other behind the line.

"Good luck, guys!" exclaimed Mitzi.

"Ready?" said Flora. "On your mark, get set, GO!"



When Flora said "GO!" Bizzie took off as fast as he could. But Ricky began running much more slowly. He watched as Bizzie disappeared down the path ahead of him. "I know I'm faster than Bizzie," he said to himself. "I can take my time and still win."

As Ricky jogged along, he looked up at the trees. "Wow!" he said. "The trees are already starting to lose their leaves. Winter will be here before we know it."

Then Ricky saw something in the sky. A group of geese was flying over. They had formed a V shape. "Cool!" Ricky exclaimed.

He stopped running and watched the geese. They all honked noisily as they flew. "I wonder what they're saying," Ricky thought with a grin. He watched the geese until they had gone. Then he started running again.

Soon Ricky came to Sunny Meadow. As he ran along, he saw a squirrel digging in the ground. He stopped. "What are you doing?" he asked the squirrel.

"I'm burying an acorn," the squirrel answered.



“Really?” asked Ricky. “Why?”

“It’s how I store food for the winter,” the squirrel answered.

“Oh, I see,” said Ricky. He began to run again. He crossed Sunny Meadow. As he ran, he noticed that lots of the bushes had pretty fall berries on them.

Now Ricky had reached Clear Lake. He ran along, taking his time. Suddenly, something bright on the ground caught his eye. “What’s that?” he wondered. He bent down to look closely. It was a group of orange mushrooms!

Ricky began running again. Now he was headed back to Flora’s house. “If I put on a burst of speed,” Ricky thought, “I’ll get there before Bizzie.” He began running as fast as he could.

When Ricky got to Flora’s house, Mitzi and Flora were waiting outside. There was no sign of Bizzie. “I did it!” exclaimed Ricky. He flopped onto the ground, panting hard. “I won!”

“Well, not exactly,” Flora said.

“Huh?” Ricky asked. The door to Flora’s house opened. Out came Bizzie, drinking a glass of water.

“Oh, hi, Ricky!” he said. “Finally made it, huh?” Bizzie grinned, showing his long front teeth.

“When did you get back?” asked Ricky in amazement.

“A little while ago,” said Bizzie. “I couldn’t believe I beat you!”

“Congratulations, Bizzie,” said Ricky with a smile. “I guess that explains why I don’t remember passing you.”

Bizzie smiled, but then he looked confused. “Ricky, you always beat me when we race. But you finished way after I did. What took you so long?”

“Well,” said Ricky, “I was taking my time, so I got to see lots of cool stuff. I saw a flock of geese flying south. I saw a squirrel burying food for the winter. And there were pretty fall berries and some really cool mushrooms!”

“Wow,” said Bizzie. “I was going so fast, I didn’t see any of those things.”

“*Hmmm,*” said Ricky. “You know what? You won the race. But I got to see all kinds of neat things in nature. So I guess you could say we both won!”

