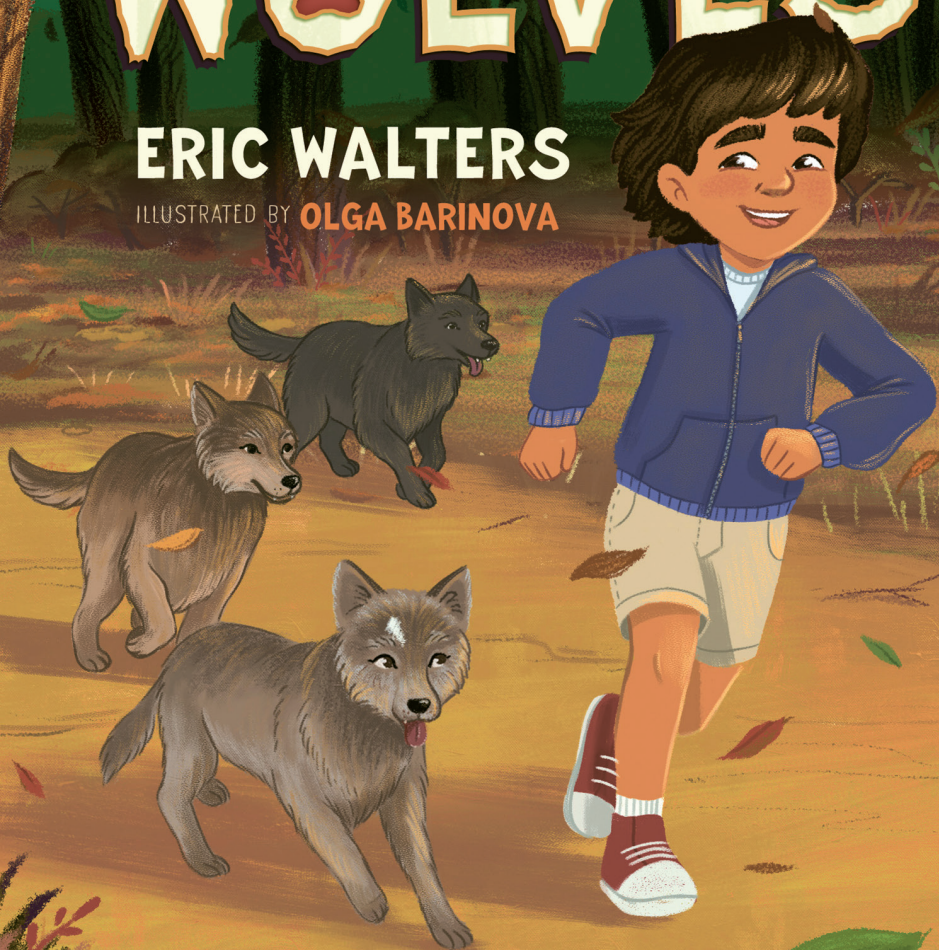


# The THREE WOLVES

ERIC WALTERS

ILLUSTRATED BY OLGA BARINOVA



CHAPTER SAMPLER



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ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS

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Published in Canada and the United States in 2026 by Orca Book Publishers.

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**Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication**

Title: The three wolves / Eric Walters ; illustrated by Olga Barinova.

Names: Walters, Eric, 1957- author | Barinova, Olga, illustrator

Series: Orca echoes.

Description: Series statement: Orca echoes

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20250212382 | Canadiana (ebook) 20250212390 | ISBN 9781459842960 (softcover) | ISBN 9781459842977 (PDF) | ISBN 9781459842984 (EPUB)

Subjects: LCGFT: Novels.

Classification: LCC PS8595.A598 T575 2026 | DDC jC813/.54—dc23

Library of Congress Control Number: 2025938767

**Summary:** In this partially illustrated early chapter book, Andrew's parents run a wildlife rehabilitation center, and they adopt three orphaned wolf pups who need a home. Andrew befriends the pups and helps take care of them until they can be released back into the wild.

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Orca Book Publishers gratefully acknowledges the support for its publishing programs provided by the following agencies: the Government of Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts and the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council and the Book Publishing Tax Credit.

Design by Troy Cunningham.

Edited by Sarah Howden.

Printed and bound in Canada.

29 28 27 26 • 1 2 3 4



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For my grade 5 teacher,  
Miss Christena Gay



# One



I dropped to my knees in front of the cage.

“Stripey and Smelly, it’s time for breakfast!”

The two little skunks came waddling toward me and pressed their faces against the wire.

“I have your favorites—mealworms and apples.”

I slipped the dish into the slot at the bottom of the cage, and the skunks bumped each other to get at it.

I got to name all the animals. More than 150 so far. Some were with us for just a few weeks, until they were old enough or strong enough to be released. Others weren't so lucky.

Like our red-tailed hawk, Hawkeye, who was sitting on a perch in his pen. He'd come to us with a broken wing. My father, along with our vet friend, Dr. Patel, could fix a lot of things, but not a broken wing. Hawkeye would be living out his life in our pen. It was big, but it was still a cage. Was it harder to live in a cage when you used to fly through the skies?

The skunks growled, and I turned back around. We'd had them for five weeks. My parents figured they were about three weeks old when they arrived. They were found by a couple of kids in

some bushes. Their mother was on the road, run over by a car.

Mom and Dad ran a rescue center in our garage and backyard to help abandoned and injured wildlife. Right now we had a groundhog that had been hit by a car, three raccoons who'd been abandoned, a brood of little ducklings, a litter of five squirrels, Hawkeye, the skunks, some bunnies and a baby moose I'd named Bullwinkle.

A truck driver had found him at the side of the road after a forest fire. The baby was alone and skinny, with burns on his side. My parents figured his mother had died in the fire.

Dr. Patel had treated the burns, but that side of Bullwinkle's body still looked strange because they'd had to shave his

fur to fix it. He looked like some sort of Muppet, with his long skinny legs and big brown eyes.

The skunks continued to fight noisily for their food. Even baby skunks had sharp little teeth. They also had the ability to spray. I didn't have to worry much, though.

I always moved slowly and avoided being too loud or unpredictable when I was around them so they wouldn't get scared. So far it had worked. I had to hope it would keep working for the next eight weeks, until they could be released.

The back gate opened and my father walked in. "Good morning, Andrew, how are you doing?"

"Hi, Dad. I've given fresh water and food to all of them. How was your shift?"

"Busy. Lots of sick people."

My father was a doctor who worked in the emergency department at our local hospital.

Bullwinkle made a loud, happy grunting sound.

“The moose is so cute,” I said. “How long are we keeping him?”

“Dr. Patel thinks he might be ready to be released in about four months, so... until October.”

Dr. Patel mostly took care of cats and dogs and other pets at her clinic, but she liked helping with the wild animals.

“Did Bullwinkle get fed?” my father asked.

“Two bottles, and then he wanted more.”

“I’ll give him another this morning,” Dad said. “I’ll also finish cleaning the

pens and replacing bedding material before I head to bed.”

“I can stay and help,” I offered.

“You have to get to school.”

I shrugged. “I could take the day off.”

“Do you really think your mother is going to go for that?”

My mom taught at my school.

“It’s the last week before summer holidays. You’ll soon have lots of time with the animals,” Dad said.

“Nothing much happens the last few days. It’s just boring.” I sat down on a chair beside the rabbit hutch.

He raised his eyebrows. “Go ahead and ask your mother and see what she says.”

I met his eyes. “I know what Mom is going to say.”

“What Mom is going to say about what?” she asked as she walked out the back door of our house.

“Nothing,” I said.

“Too bad,” she said. “This is your only chance to ask. You won’t be coming in with me today. You’re going with your father.”



My ears perked up. “Going where?” I asked.

“I just got a call from Sergeant Ryan,” she said. “There’s been a report of a wolf being hit by a car.”

“How badly is it hurt?” Dad asked.

“He didn’t have much information. He’ll meet you at the scene.”

“I better gather some supplies,” Dad said. He rushed off.

“Thanks for letting me go, Mom.”

“Could I have stopped you if I tried?” She put a hand on my shoulder. “You know this might not end well.”

I felt a nervous rumble in my stomach. “I know.”

Animals hit by cars were often so badly injured that there was nothing we could do to save them.

“You be careful,” she said. “And take care of your father.”

I frowned. “I thought he was supposed to take care of me.”

“How about if you take care of each other,” she said, ruffling my hair.

## Two



As we neared the spot, we slowed down and turned onto a smaller road. The cage in the back of our pickup truck shifted. Along with it, we had some medical supplies and a tranquilizer gun. It fired special darts to put an animal to sleep. We'd also brought a long pole with a loop at the end that could be slipped over an animal's head to hold it in place. We'd used that to capture our orphaned moose.

“How much farther?” I asked.

“I don’t think too far, but it would all be so much easier if we could just call and ask.”

Cell phones didn’t work out here on the backroads.

We rounded a curve and came to a long straightaway.

“There’s the answer to your question right there,” he said.

Up ahead were the flashing lights of a police car. We pulled in right behind



and got out. My father and the sergeant shook hands. I recognized him from when we'd rescued the groundhog a couple of weeks back.

"The wolf is just up here," Sergeant Ryan said.

We hadn't gone far when I saw the wolf off to the side of the road, in the ditch. It was large, gray and white, and had a long tail.

"I think it must have been killed instantly," Sergeant Ryan said.

I felt sad. Poor wolf.

"Not anything we can do. I'm not sure why you called us," my father said.

"It's a female," he said. "There are pups."

"I see one!" I exclaimed. They were in the bushes a bit farther down.



“I’ve spotted three,” Sergeant Ryan explained.

“They’re young,” my father said, peering over at them.

“I think they’re too young to live on their own,” Sergeant Ryan replied.

“But wolves live in packs. Wouldn’t the pack take care of them no matter how old they are?” I asked.

“It depends. Have you seen any other members of the pack?” Dad asked.

Sergeant Ryan shook his head slightly. “They’re too cautious to show themselves when we’re here.”

“Will they come for them once we leave?” I asked.

“They probably will come, but they might not be able to help,” my father said. “The pack could protect them, but if the pups are still nursing, they can’t feed them. Not like their mom.”

“Can you tell their age?” Sergeant Ryan asked.

“I have a rough idea,” Dad said. “But Bert could tell us for sure.”

Bert was older than my grandparents. He lived in a little cabin with no running water, a generator for electricity and a fireplace for heat in the winter.

“Do you want me to radio in and have somebody call him?” Sergeant Ryan asked.

“He doesn’t have a phone,” my father replied.

“I could have another officer pick him up.”

“I think it would be better if it’s me. He doesn’t like guests,” Dad said. “He likes animals more than he likes people.”

Sergeant Ryan laughed. “Well, who doesn’t?”

“Could you stay here and keep an eye on the pups?” Dad asked.

Sergeant Ryan thought for a moment. “I’m off shift in thirty minutes, but I can stay.”

“Hopefully we’ll be back in less than an hour.”

“Could I stay here?” I asked.

Sergeant Ryan shrugged. “The company would be nice.” He turned to my father. “I’ll keep an eye on all of them.”