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The Wolf Wilder



Synopsis

“A fairy tale and history merge seamlessly” • (Publishers Weekly, starred review) in this enchanting and lyrical novel about love and resilience from the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award winner, Katherine Rundell. Feo’s life is extraordinary. Her mother trains domesticated wolves to be able to fend for themselves in the snowy wilderness of Russia, and Feo is following in her footsteps to become a wolf wilder. She loves taking care of the wolves, especially the three who stay at the house because they refuse to leave Feo, even though they’ve already been wilded. But not everyone is enamored with the wolves, or with the fact that Feo and her mother are turning them wild. And when her mother is taken captive, Feo must travel through the cold, harsh woods to save her and learn from her wolves how to survive.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 640 (What’s this?)

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (September 6, 2016)

Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.6 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars • See all reviews (22 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #237,682 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #183 in Books > Children’s Books > Animals > Foxes & Wolves #3679 in Books > Children’s Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Friendship #6199 in Books > Children’s Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

I’d noted The Wolf Wilder for its beautiful covers. Both the UK and US covers are simply gorgeous. Despite my love of wolves and of beautiful covers, I hadn’t really marked the book down to actually read. As anyone who reads my blog regularly knows, I’m super picky about middle grade, so I’m rather hesitant to add them to my to-read list. When a copy of The Wolf Wilder showed up on my doorstep unsolicited, there was no doubt I would be giving this gorgeous

book a try. And, you know, turns out *The Wolf Wilder* is beautiful both inside and out. I read it in one night because I couldn't put it down. As a title, *The Wolf Wilder* intrigued me. I wasn't quite sure what it meant, and I hadn't bothered to read the blurb, which is also my style. Wolf wilding was apparently a real thing in Russia. Turns out nobles would have wolves trained up as pets/toys/status symbols. However, when the wolf got too fat or injured someone, they would get rid of them. Luckily for the wolves, killing a wolf was considered bad luck, so they were sent to wolf wilders, who would teach them how to fend for themselves in the wild. Feodora (though she'll ignore you if you call her that "she only answers to Feo") and her mother are wolf wilders. Feo's done all of her growing up with wolves as best friends. The rumors about them are that Feo's half wild herself. Though that's going a bit far, Feo does have a lot that's wolfish in her way of thinking, which means that she's fiercely loyal to her pack but very dangerous to those who mess with her pack. Enter General Rakov, there to mess with her pack. The Tsar and/or Rakov are sick of the wolves in the area killing the Tsar's animals.

• Once upon a time, a hundred years ago, there was a dark and stormy girl. • With these words, a twist on cliché story openers, Katherine Rundell invites us along on her latest middle-grade adventure. Just as Feo Petrovna is no conventional heroine, the villain of *THE WOLF WILDER* is no Big Bad Wolf, but a despotic Russian general set on destroying everything the 12-year-old girl holds dear. Feo lives with her mother in the remote and wintry Russian wilderness, where they train domesticated wolves to survive in that same landscape. Through the process known as wolf wilding, they take society's unwanted pets and transform them back into creatures fit for the woods. Feo and her mother bear the tell-tale scars of their profession, and to General Rakov, they pose a dangerous threat that must be tamed. When Rakov and his men accuse the Petrovna's wolves of attacking army supplies, Feo's idyllic (if unusual) life is put in jeopardy. And when the family continues to defy his orders, the general places Feo's mother under arrest for treason, carting her off to prison in St. Petersburg. Feo embarks on a perilous trek to rescue her mother and defend the wolves. Along the way, Feo's circle of companions expands beyond her three most beloved wolves to include a conflicted young soldier named Ilya, a teenage revolutionary and his neighbors. Feo lets her new comrades into the pack, without sacrificing a scrap of her independence. While the adults of a nearby village are busy debating how to resist General Rakov's oppression, the kids devise a plan of attack. The scene in which the children prepare for battle is pure comedy. Having more in common with wolves than buttoned-up soldiers, these kids are not afraid to spit, bite and kick their enemies in the shins --- and more delicate areas.

I absolutely loved this novel. I tore through these pages like a mad woman. As I slammed the novel shut each time something horrific or startling moved me, my husband would ask, "What happened to the wolves now?" I was enchanted by this story. Mesmerized by the bond between Feo and the wolves, I was fearful that something would split this bond apart, leaving both parties helpless and empty. There was this urgency in this story, an energy pulling me as Feo tried to protect herself and the wolves from the enemy. She was only a child, yet others believed in her, they saw through to her heart and its goodness. I started to think that perhaps this might make a great bedtime story but then I wondered where, oh where would you quit in this book each night as the bedtime hour came closer? Who also could get any sleep as Feo and her wolves contented to survive in a world who viewed wolves as vicious and evil? Wired and with your adrenaline pumped, sleep is not going to happen as you wondered what would happen next. In the forest, Feo lived with her mother and these two were wolf wilders. Training wolves back to their wild natural state is what these two would do. Individuals who no longer want their pet wolves or who could no longer care for their pet wolves would drop them off at their home in the forest. They lived peacefully until one day when the Imperial Army's soldiers came and accused their wolves of attacking the tsar's elk. No one really owned the wolves as they lived in the wild now but since they are seen with Feo and her mother, assumptions are made. Threats are made by the tsar to the family and now Feo and her mother lived in fear. As a new wolf is left in their care, Feo takes to training her.

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