

Wilbur, Buffalo King of the Prairie
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Performance set to the themes of
Vivaldi's Four Seasons

Once upon a time, in the early spring, on the prairie of South Dakota,
a little buffalo named Wilbur was born.



Wilbur was a very happy buffalo. All summer long he played buffalo games with the other young calves down by banks of the white river on the prairie.



One evening, in early fall; when the leaves had just begun to turn, Wilbur's mother took him aside to talk. "Wilbur " she said, "next year at this time you will be crowned the new king of the prairie." Wilbur was shocked. "Me, be King?" He said doubtfully. "How can I be King? I don't know how to be king". "Don't worry", said his mother reassuringly. "Just follow your Lakota virtues and you will be a great leader. Do you remember your Lakota virtues? Lets say them out loud together: Be kind and compassionate, show courage, be generous, respect your elders, show wisdom and most importantly, never give up." Wilbur snuggled up to his mom repeating the virtues over and over again until he was soon fast asleep.



The next day, Wilbur, who was having serious doubts about becoming the new king of the prairie, decided to take a long walk to clear his head. So he set off for sage creek, in the Badlands, where the tastiest prairie grass grows. Along the way he came across a very sad looking prairie dog, named Bob, who was sitting on the side of the path with his back up against a rock and his head tucked beneath his arms.

"Hey, what's wrong?" said Wilbur concerned.

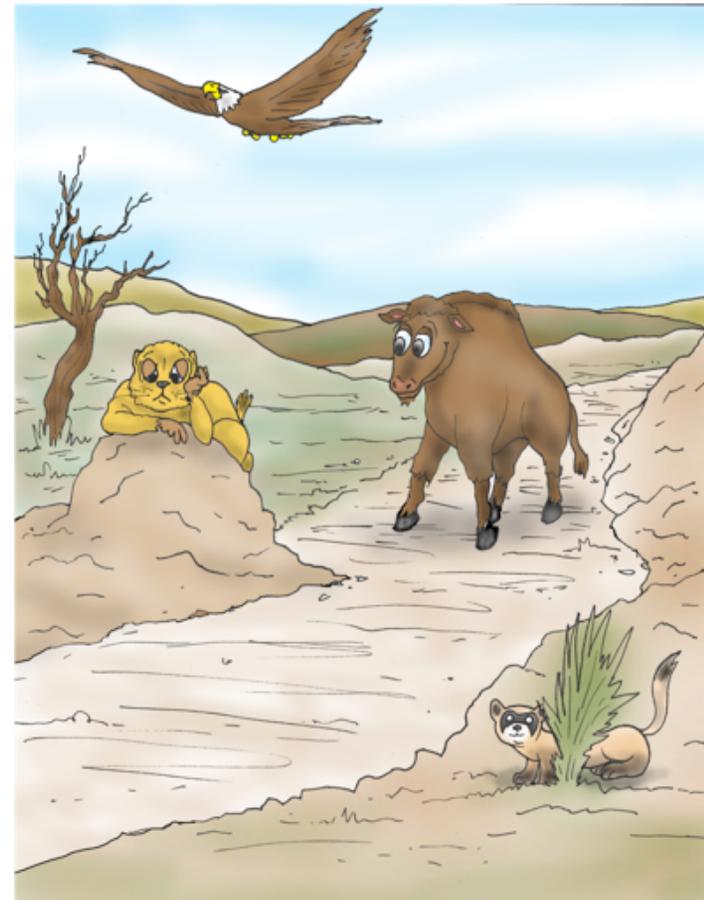
Bob sighed, "I don't want to be a prairie dog anymore" he said dejectedly, not even bothering to lift his head.

"Oh, ... well what do you want to be?" asked Wilbur.

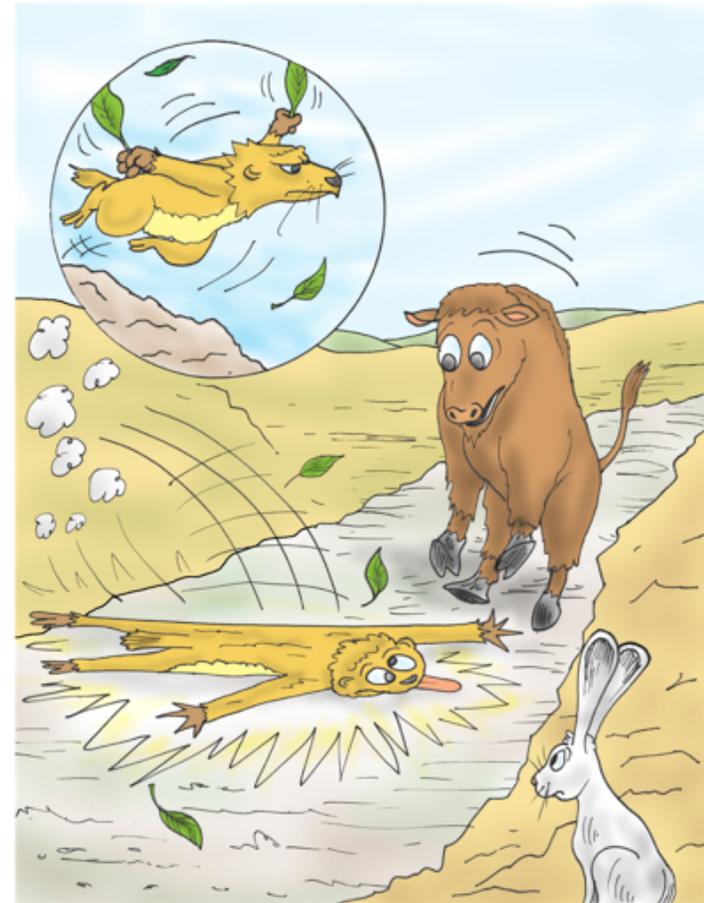
"I don't know," said Bob, wiping away a tear and sniffing a bit. "I never really thought about it."

"Well, I'm supposed to become King of the prairie next year," said Wilbur. "Can you imagine me being King of the prairie? I don't know how to be a King. I mean, look at that bald eagle up in the sky," pointing overhead. "He's flying so high, he can see over the whole prairie. I can't do that. He should be King."

And as Bob looked up at the bald eagle he got an idea. A bald eagle, ...flying.... hmmm. "Yes, I could be a bald eagle and fly!" he said excitedly.



And before Wilbur could stop him, Bob grabbed two big leaves for wings, scrambled up the rock and jumped shouting, "I am Bob the Bald Eagle!" ... and splat! He immediately fell to the ground in a heap. "I guess I'm not a bald eagle," said Bob dusting himself off. "Well, you have to fly to be a bald eagle, said Wilbur logically, So, no,... You are not a bald eagle."



The two new friends continued on, walking and talking and sharing their troubles with each other. In the distance, they could see several male Elk with their antlers locked in combat.

"Look at them," said Wilbur. "The way they are protecting their territory. **They** are mighty warriors. They should be King, not me. I'm not a protector."

Bob looked over at the Elk in awe. Suddenly, he had another idea.. Ohh, he said. "A warrior... A mighty warrior ... I could be a warrior" he stated, saluting Wilbur.



And then Bob grabbed 2 tree branches for antlers.
Shouted, "I am Bob the elk, the mighty warrior" and started to attack Wilbur.
(Fortunately for Wilbur, Bob only came up to his kneecaps.)
"Hey that tickles", said Wilbur good-naturedly, and shooed Bob away like a fly.
Bob sighed and dropped the branches. "Guess I'm not an Elk either."



As they continued to walk down to Sage Creek, they came upon a baby bird who had fallen out of a nest from a near by tree and was hiding in the tall grass crying out for his mother.

A wise owl on a fence post was trying to be helpful by giving the baby bird a lecture on how to fly. "Now you see," said the owl. The propulsion of flight where $e = mc^2$ where c is the constant speed of light and $m = \text{mass}$..."

But his lecture only made the baby more confused and he started crying harder. Wilbur went over to the baby, kneeled down and had the baby jump on his back. And, when Wilbur stood up, the baby hopped back into the nest. Just then the mother bird returned and thanked Wilbur profusely.

*Now, this made Bob think,... "hmm....I am smart. I could be a wise owl, and then everyone could come to **me** for answers!"



And with that Bob scrambled up a near by fence post and with his arms held high he started to, pontificate:
 "To be or bumblebee....for whichita stands.... $1 + 1 = 5$ and the moon is made of a tasty blue cheese" ...
 "Did I get any of that right?" he grinned and looked hopefully over at the wise old owl.
 Both the owl and Wilbur shook their heads in unison and said
 "Nooo,!"(Trying not to laugh, yet wanting to be supportive)
 "Ohhh,... okay," ...he said. "Well, I guess I'm not a wise old owl either."
 "Come on," said Wilbur. "Let's get going down to Sage Creek, I'm hungry."
 (Now, Wilbur did not know this, but near by a white-tailed deer was looking on approvingly.)



Soon it was winter. And the prairie was blanketed in snow. The creek and the river were both frozen solid. It was very cold with a strong bitter wind. Some of the smaller animals were curled up around Wilbur for warmth. Another snowstorm was about to start.



The snowstorm finally ended and the skies became clear again. The prairie was covered in snow. Huge drifts, 5-6 feet deep were everywhere. Wilbur and Bob set out to find some food. Along the way they came upon an elderly buffalo, who was having a hard time clearing the snow to get to the prairie grass underneath to eat. Without even thinking twice, Wilbur went over to him, and shoved all the snow out of the way, clearing a path so that the elderly buffalo had enough to eat. Wilbur didn't notice, but near by a big horn sheep was watching.



Finally, it was spring. The snow had mostly disappeared. The first green grasses and spring flowers were just starting to bloom. The birds and animals had begun to return to the prairie after having migrated to the warmer south for winter.

"Do you hear that singing?" said Wilbur pointing at a nearby tree full of birds. "Those are meadowlarks. The return of the meadowlarks means the end of winter! Don't they have a beautiful song?"

Bob poked his head out a bit from Wilbur's fur and said. "Sing? Singing... hmmm..."

Wilbur turned his head and said, "Oh no, you're going to sing, aren't you?"

"Well," said Bob, crawling out completely and fidgeting with a bow tie. "I think singing is my specialty!"



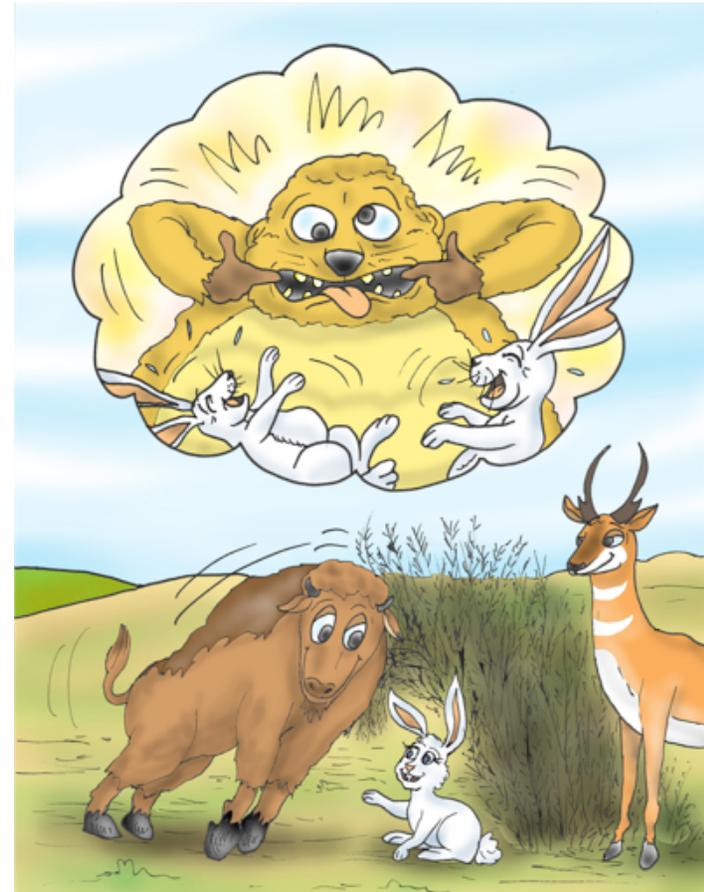
Bob climbed up into the tree with the other birds and with his arms outstretched started to sing. "It's spring. It's spring. And I am singing because its Spring ."
Ohhh, it was not good.
The other birds and animals covered their ears.
The coyotes started to howl, "awhooo.."
Stopping and shaking his head, Bob said, very good-naturedly by now, "Well, I guess I am not a singer either."



Wilbur and Bob decided to head on down to Cheyenne River for lunch when they came across several baby rabbits crying and obviously scared. Wilbur looked around and saw in the distance that the mother was stuck underneath some thicket. "Bob, can you entertain the babies?, and keep them happy while I go help their mother?" "Why sure!" said Bob. "Us prairie dogs are the comedians of the prairie you know."



So Bob weaved in and out of the rabbit holes playing peek a boo and making faces, keeping the baby rabbits laughing and happy, while Wilbur went over to the thicket and pushed it up out of the way long enough for the mother rabbit to break free. "Great job, Bob" said Wilbur. "You are very funny!" Bob, beaming with pride said, "Thank You. It is what us prairie dogs do best." Off to the side, the pronghorn antelope stood by listening.



It was a hot summer day on the prairie. Storm clouds were rolling in from the distance. Wilbur and Bob were headed to the White River to cool off. When all of sudden, the skies turned dark and it started to rain. Splat Splat Splat. At first there was just a few drops here and there but then the winds picked up and it started to pour a pounding rain. They got to the river to find the other animals scurrying around frantically.

"The river is about to overflow," said the black-footed ferret.

"All our homes are about to be flooded", said the long eared jackrabbit.

Wilbur looked around and said, "We need to block the river."

The beavers spoke up and said, "if you can push those big logs to the water we can build a dam."

"Can you come over here and help me push some of these logs into the water?" shouted Wilbur to the elk and sheep.

And the bald eagles called "we can help with the smaller branches."

And soon all the animals and the birds of the prairie were pitching in, each contributing with what they do best to help stop up the river and prevent the flood.

But it wasn't enough! The waters continued to rise.

"Bob" said Wilbur; you can dig holes, right?

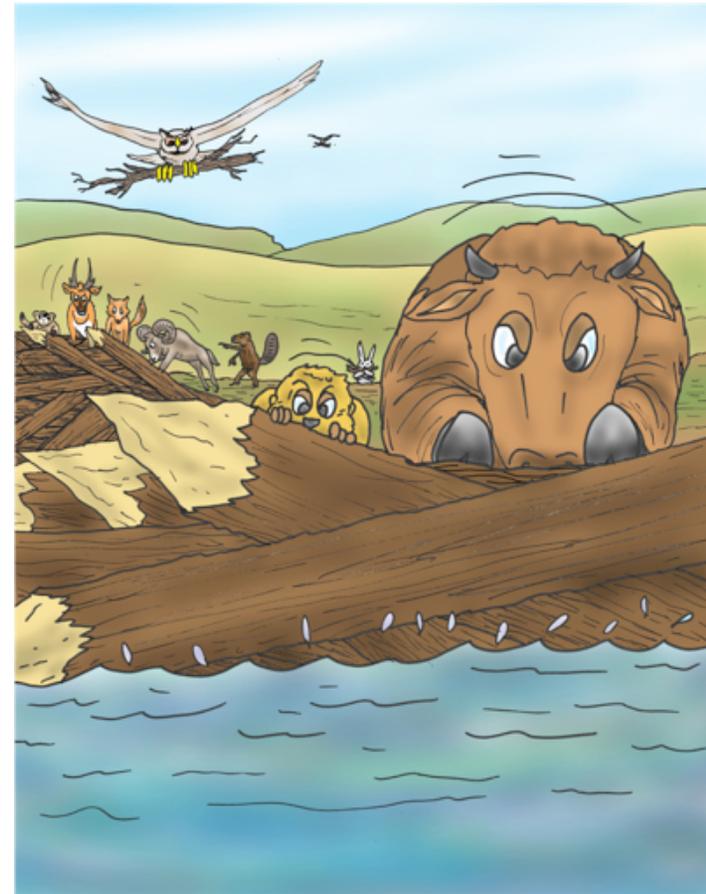
"Of course", answered Bob, it's what us prairie dogs do best".

"Can you and the other prairie dogs go over to bank of the river and start digging holes to divert the water?

"Sure thing", "Come on prairie dogs" shouted Bob, "lets get to work."

And Bob and the prairie dogs worked furiously digging....And it worked! The water was diverted, the dam held and everyone's homes were saved!

"Three cheers for Bob and the prairie dogs. Three cheers for Bob and the prairie dogs," shouted the animals of the prairie. And they put Bob and the other prairie dogs on their shoulders and paraded them around the riverbed.



After the storm was over and the animals had gone back to their homes to clean up the damage, Wilbur took Bob aside and said, "You know Bob, I think you make a wonderful prairie dog." And Bob smiled and nodded, "Yeah, I think I like being a prairie dog again". And the two friends hugged. Nearby, the black footed ferret smiled.



Finally, a whole year had past and it was time for Wilbur to be crowned king. As he and his mother made their way down to sage creek, where the other animals were waiting for him, his head hung low, worried that everyone would be disappointed in him.

But instead all the animals started cheering, "Here he comes! Yea King Wilbur!"

"But how can I be King?" questioned Wilbur.

"I can't fly like the eagle, I am not smart like the owl, and I am not a warrior like the elk."

And then Wilbur's mother spoke up, "But remember your Lakota virtues?"

- "You showed wisdom with the baby bird," said the white tailed deer.

- "You showed respect to your elders and were generous with food to the elder buffalo," said the big horn sheep.

- "You showed compassion to the mother rabbit and her babies," said the pronghorn.

- "And, you showed great courage during the flood," said the owl.

"And even though it looked like all was lost, you never gave up and everyone's homes were saved.

- "But most importantly, you were kind to Bob," said the black footed ferret. "You were a good friend to him and you helped him see the best in himself."

- "And even though you had self-doubt about being King, you followed the Lakota virtues and never gave up on yourself," said his mother.

Wilbur was very proud.

And everyone on the prairie started to cheer:

*"Three cheers for king Wilbur"

"Three cheers for king Wilbur, king of the prairie."



THE END

Special thanks to Game Fish and Parks for their assistance.

