

the *R*ainbow *R*unners
a sled dog adventure



Kristen Snyder & Martin Wagenius

Contents

Chapter One: The Dream

Chapter Two: Roundup

Chapter Three: Race Plans

Chapter Four: Fall Training

Chapter Five: Snowfall

Chapter Six: Bumps and Bruises

Chapter Seven: The Rainbow Runners

Chapter Eight: A Lead Dog Emerges

Chapter Nine: Plump

Chapter Ten: Mountain Calling

It started as a dream.

Not the kind of dream you have when you are sleeping.

It was the kind you have when you're awake. It sits deep inside of you. You can feel it. You can taste it. You can hear it. It's a dream that makes it hard to sit still and concentrate on anything else. The only way to quench your thirst is to follow your dream.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DREAM



We sat there on the porch one beautiful evening in July watching the sun set gently behind the mountain that lay far off in the distance. The white capped mountain top glistened as the midnight sun began to move toward the moon. Even in the heat of the summer, the mountains reminded us of what was to come that winter. That was when my two-legged friend Krispy turned to me and said,

“Nija Jaja, do you see that mountain?”

“You mean that mountain that’s forever far away?”

“Yeah, that mountain, Nija. We’re gonna climb it this winter.”

“What? Climb that mountain? How are we gonna do that? I’m just a young dog.”

“We’re going to gather your Uncle Buncles and put together a sled dog team.”

I was in awe of her calmness and her sense of self-assurance. It didn’t take long before I found myself dreaming away, lost in the mountains of my mind. I envisioned us running like the wind up and down the slopes of the snow-covered terrain. And then it hit me:

“That’s a big mountain,” I said “and it’s really far away. Have you ever climbed something so big before?”

“A couple of years ago, your Uncle Buncles Mohkki, Zetor, Kellarak, Chenoa, Ajano and I climbed a part of it. It was tough, but magical.”

“But what if you get caught in a big snowstorm and don’t make it?” Or you meet a big moose?”

“The mountain is always a challenge, Nija, and you have to show respect and be prepared. The weather can change in an instant. So, you have to know how to take care of yourself in a snow storm; how to stay warm and dry; how to keep your energy going; how to know where you are; and how to build a camp if the winds get too strong.”

“Why would you want to do all that when you can stay at home safe and sound?”

I could hear the depths of her lungs bellow as she breathed in memories from earlier journeys. “Because,” she said, “it is a most incredible experience to be out in nature together, and to climb that mountain. Each part challenges and at the same time fills your soul with the beauty and magic of nature. It’s a big adventure, Nija Jaja, and you were born for it.”

“Wow Krispy, all nine of us dogs out on a big adventure.”

“Well Nija, all nine of you can’t make the trip. Only six of you have the strength to make it. Your three oldest Uncle Buncles are a little too old to go the distance and speed.”

“But Krispy, who will lead the team if the Divine Uncle Buncle Kellarak won’t be in front with Buncle Braggi?”

“Nija Jaja, since you were a little puppy, you showed the world that you were born to run and you were born to lead. You inspire the whole team with happiness and zest for running, you are focused, and you know all the commands. You have what it takes to lead the team.”

“You mean Braggi and I are going to lead the team this year?”

“Yes. This fall your Uncle Buncles Kellarak and Braggi will train you how to be the best lead dog ever. Kellarak might not be able to make the distance to the mountains, but he would love to train you to be a super lead dog.”

Wow. I was bursting with energy. And before you knew it I was flying off the porch.



CHAPTER TWO ROUNDUP

