



Wild Hearts

DOG
sledding
THE ROCKIES

Daeny McKinley


Wild Hearts

DOG SLEDDING THE ROCKIES





The grace and beauty of sled dogs fills my heart with awe. For a year I've spent time with over a hundred dogs. I've watched puppies grow up and run for the first time. I've watched veterans keep teams steady when they run. I've had more hugs than I can remember — from the dogs. No matter what happens in my life, the dogs are quick to give a wag of a tail and a lick, or a rub against my face. This book shares the beauty and spirit that has touched the depths of my soul.



Out of the shadows of dawn, shapes appear. Some mornings exhaustion sets in after a night of howling at the moon. Other days the dog's energy can't be contained and they race in circles around their kennels, nip and play with the dogs near them. Tails wag and dogs jump on the roofs of their shelters for a better view.

Bandit loves to greet strangers with an upraised paw, his way of waving to people, beckoning them closer for a pet or a snuggle.

Before anyone shows up, before the sound of a car can be heard by human ears, Darryl begins his warble. Sometimes it takes two or three times before the rest of the kennel catches on: people are coming. The warble turns into a howl. The howl ripples through the kennel until over a hundred voices join the chorus. As the sun comes up over the hill to start a fresh morning, the choir reaches a crescendo then dies as suddenly as it began.





Many a winter morning covers bushes and grasses with hoar frost. Nature's icy fingers don't miss a single dog either. Icicles cling to eyelashes, hang onto fur and whiskers.

The thicker the coat the more the frost takes hold and a dog with black fur, like Danny, turns a silvery gray before the sun reaches up to melt it off.





When the sleds come out of the shed, the dogs know they will run. It's hard to get them to settle down as guests filter in. Every dog wants to go and the excitement manifests itself in different ways for each dog. Annabelle rolls on her back while other dogs bark incessantly, some tremble, some run in circles.

