

Mountain Runaways

Pam Withers

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In Pam Withers's exciting adventure novel *Mountain Runaways*, three siblings have their worlds turned upside down.

Jon, Korka, and Aron's parents run a wilderness training school, so they know how to survive in the wild. Still, they never thought they'd have to do so alone. When their parents are killed in an avalanche, the siblings decide to hide in the mountains until Jon turns eighteen and can become their legal guardian. All alone, they learn that surviving the elements is one matter; surviving the heartbreak, guilt, and bickering that accompanies a major loss is quite another.

The thoughts of each sibling are emphasized in turn. Each has a different skill set. Aron, in particular, has an intuition about the natural world. Details about their survival techniques are abundant and illuminating. Still, though Jon's dedication to his siblings is admirable, his dislike and distrust of the police officer who offers to take the children in borders on petty, particularly when measured against the danger they face in running away. Jon's reasoning—that it may be hard to retrieve Aron (whom the officer thinks needs professional help) from the facility he is planning to put him in—is only brushed upon.

The narrative balances scenes of action, as of the siblings stealing moose meat from a hungry pack of wolves, with quieter moments of introspection. The siblings grieve in different ways, with fiery Korka lashing out at Jon's commands, and quiet Aron withdrawing into himself. Jon often feels inadequate when caring for his siblings, but he never gives up.

Three orphaned siblings work to remain together in the touching young adult novel *Mountain Runaways*, despite the hardships and heartaches they face.

VIVIAN TURNBULL (January / February 2022)

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