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Riding with Reindeer

Robert M. Goldstein
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Robert Goldstein's *Riding with Reindeer* is a classic epic of one man's journey to discover himself and his limits. Quitting his job as a Chief Financial Officer, fifty-two-year-old Goldstein combines his passion for cycling and his affinity for Finland into the adventure of a lifetime. Perfect for travelers, armchair or otherwise, cyclists and thrill seekers, *Riding with Reindeer* is a modern-day travel narrative filled with humor, poignancy, history, and beauty.

Fueled by a childhood fascination with the stamps of Suomi, or Finland, Goldstein's curiosity is apparent on every page. He begins his journey with an eight-hundred-dollar collapsible bike, a small suitcase on wheels latched to the back of the bike, and an ambition to conquer the Finnish landscape. Pedaling his way from Helsinki to the Barents Sea to Lapland to his final destination of Arctic Norway, Goldstein endures bad luck, wrong turns that take him miles and miles out of his way, and a spate of Mother Nature's mercurial moods.

After reading about his travails on this bicycle venture, the reader thinks that Goldstein will quit, surrendering his dream to ride through Finland as an impossible childhood fantasy. Due to his own over-zealousness, he decides to bike beyond his daily goal of fifty miles. Unable to make it to the next campground, he is forced to set up camp in a forest. After discovering berries in the forest, he eats them out of sheer hunger but his joy becomes horror when he is attacked by a swarm of mosquitoes. And Goldstein experiences a few technical mishaps—his wagon becomes unhitched, careening into traffic, and on another occasion he loses the wagon tire and has to search with a swollen, moth-bitten eye. Yet, the reader is greeted with Goldstein's humor at these crisis moments and all our worries are assuaged.

When Goldstein himself questions if he can proceed, nature handily delivers a reason for him to continue. All the obstacles seem to fade into the past when he spots his first reindeer, which he aptly names Rudolph. Throughout the rest of his journey, the reindeer accompany him as silent guides and protectors.

Through physical agony matched only by will, Goldstein draws an honest portrait of the good and bad side of loneliness. This endearing and engaging travelogue takes the reader through an adventure that most will never experience; Goldstein pulls it off with the finesse of a wise tour guide. His shortcomings and successes make his journey of self-discovery one that any traveler will not want to miss.
MONICA CARTER (September 4, 2010)

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