



Hi, my name is Dave. I am a dog. Not your ordinary, run-of-the-mill dog. Oh, No! I am a sled dog. Not just a sled dog, mind you, but a lead sled dog. Now, you may ask, what is a lead sled dog? Well, let me tell you a little bit about myself.

I am the guy in charge of a fast, fabulous, fantastic, ferocious dogsled team. Alaska is my home. Alaska is a land of wonder! The summers are glorious with wildflowers everywhere, wild berries behind every bush and long, beautiful days. It is called the land of the midnight sun because at midnight in the summer it is light as day. It is a land of mountains and ocean, bears, wolf and moose and, of course, your famous sled dogs, which is where I come in.

The winters are so gorgeous that words fail me when I try to describe their beauty. Imagine, snow falling gently in large fluffy flakes, covering the green spruce trees from top to bottom and covering the ground with foot after foot of powdery wonder. Imagine, winter nights with the stars shining brilliantly against a black sky and northern lights in spectacular display. The moon shines so brightly as it reflects off the snow-laden land that the nights, at times, appear as light as day. This is my home.

Now, I am going to tell you about a little adventure I had. One day we were out on the trail with me leading a 14 dog team. My musher, whom I will call Doug because, well, that is his name, was standing on the runners of the dog sled. His job is simple: Keep the sled in an upright position and hang-on. Unfortunately, this proves to be a little difficult for him at times.

On this particular day, we were running at a steady pace down a snow-packed trail. The white-capped mountains could be seen in the distance and the nip in the air excited me. The sun was out. I was feeling light-hearted and content. I took a deep breath of fresh air, laid back my ears and picked up speed. I could tell the team was really enjoying this. I was thinking of the trail ahead of me. There was a flat stretch for about 2 miles which led immediately into an extremely steep climb. I made a decision to roar into the beginning of that climb with pure supersonic speed so that we would not lose any momentum as we rounded the top.. We were headed towards Suicide Hill! Suicide Hill has one of the steepest descents on the planet. I love Suicide Hill!!! I could feel the adrenaline pumping through my body. My legs seemed to have an unlimited source of strength. The peak of Suicide Hill came into view.

Once I rounded the top I immediately headed straight down. It was almost a free fall. I felt as if I were in another dimension. My legs stretched out in front of me as they flew down the hill. We were dropping at an incredible speed.

Now, there was one hitch in this whole beautiful scenario and that was Doug. At the top of a hill when traveling at supersonic speed the sled tends to become air-borne. It really must be the ride of a life-time for Doug. His only job at that point is to apply the brakes as the sled comes back to the ground so that the sled does not overtake my team.

I happened to glance back and there was Doug, mouth hanging wide open and a stupid look of pure shock on his face just as the sled began to top the hill. I thought, "Oh, No. What's next?" I watched as he experienced that moment of a lifetime, the sled was airborne! As the sled landed, Doug, looking lost, forgot to apply the brakes! Great Gads! The sled started to run over my team! I was forced to pick up speed in order to save my dogs. No problem, I urged my willing muscles forward again. The fall..... I mean, the run down that hill was simply thrilling.

Our woes were only just beginning, though. You see, Suicide Hill has a very sharp turn at the bottom. I knew that at the speed of lightning at which we were traveling, that turn was going to be a little bit tricky for me to negotiate, let alone Doug. I began concentrating on that turn. It was coming up fast. Slowing down was an impossibility. Speed was my friend at that moment and I was comfortable with it. I knew my timing had to be perfect. I hit that turn at the speed of light. I timed everything just right. My team and I were a blur of speed as we whizzed perfectly around that turn. I only wish you could have been there to see it.

Now, it was time for Doug to make that turn and he was already having issues. I knew he would never make it in one piece, but there was nothing I could do about that. My first responsibility is always to my team. I heard Doug's screams of sheer terror behind me, but I didn't have time to worry about it. I kept speeding down the trail. At this point, Doug and the sled parted ways I am sad to say. He didn't find out what it was like to make that sharp turn at the speed of light on that day. Running a little further down the trail I, finally, brought the team to a halt. Everyone seemed fine.

Normally, at a time like this, I would leave Doug sitting on his behind because he had behaved so poorly and I would take the team on home without him. I firmly believe that a long, quiet walk in the wilderness always helps him to focus on his mistakes and search his heart about improvement possibilities in the future. Today, however, since I was stopped anyway, I decided to wait on Doug. It occurred to me that maybe he might have been injured as he flew head first into that snow bank with the speed of a bullet. I took this opportunity to lie down and relax.

I fell asleep, so I do not know how long it took Doug to get his wits about him & pull himself out of the snow bank. Finally, he limped up to the sled and I could hear his groans behind me. I glanced back and could see that the look of shock had left his face. It was replaced, instead, with some darkening bruises and scrapes. I stood up, stretched and took off. I was satisfied with a day well-spent and the knowledge that my musher had learned another valuable lesson.