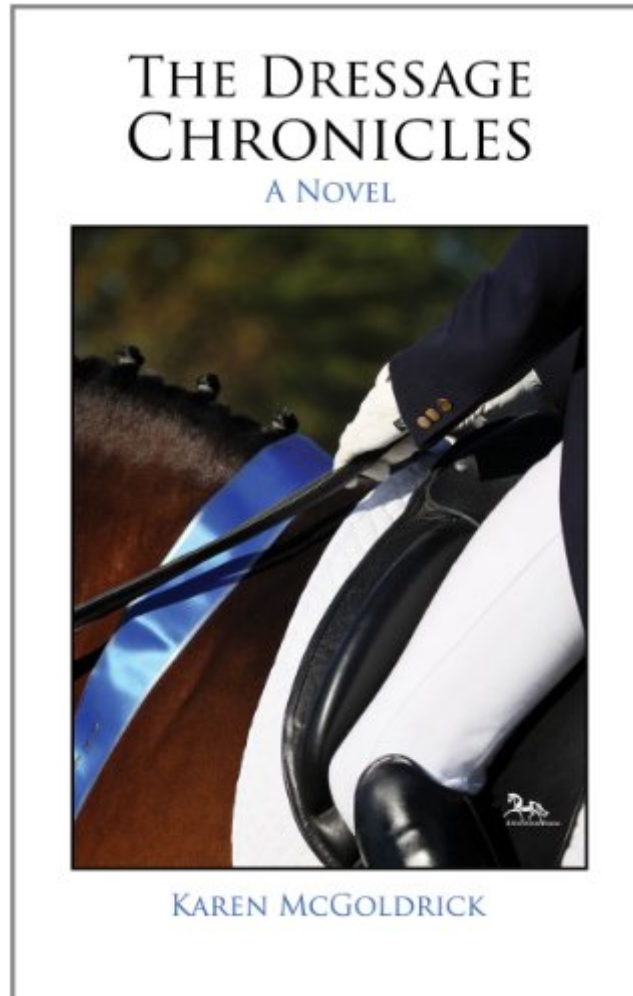


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# The Dressage Chronicles



## Synopsis

You know what happens to all those girls who are just crazy about horses? Once they discover boys, the horses are history. Or maybe not. For Lizzy, and others like her, no boy, no man who knows what's good for him, speaks the unspeakable. It's me or the horse. It's no contest. And so Lizzy snips the threads that hold her, however tenuously, to a conventional life, and begins her journey into the world of horse sports. She signs on as a working student for dressage superstar Margot Fanning, heading to south Florida with her six year old mare, for the season. She immerses herself in an extraordinary world of high-dollar horses and ambitious women and receives an education in more than just riding dressage. Welcome to The Dressage Chronicles.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I reviewed this book at [...] but here is a summary: First, does it capture the dressage culture? Well, I'm pretty confident in saying that every syllable of this novel will ring true to dressage enthusiasts. McGoldrick brings the reader lots of authentic detail about dressage and barn life, whether it's describing the horses' bloodlines, the cut of an expensive pair of breeches, or the experience pulling

the mane of an unwilling horse. One of the things that drew me into the story was the feeling of shared experience, especially as described the the main character, working student Lizzy. Forget she's a fourth level rider -- she's one of us. I found myself nodding and smiling as I read. It's a slice of life, or at least life on a pretty good day. Dressage Chronicles has engaging, believable characters, all of whom have flaws and strengths. As a reader, I enjoyed the parade of divas and diva behaviors, but it is never nasty, and always relayed in a spirit of good humor. The author gives thoughtful treatment to each character, from the barn worker to the manager, the working student, the trainer, and even to the imperious and difficult barn owner. I feel like I know them, and I have versions of some of them in my own life. I guess this is what novel critics would call character development. The people feel real to me. And they're likeable. I guess in summary, this isn't just a fun "dressage novel" or "horse novel" -- there are lots of those out there. This writer can write, and this novel could have come any major publisher, except that I think the editors might have made McGoldrick dumb it down for the masses, or worse yet, turn it into a romance. I loved it, and I'm envious -- this is the kind of novel I wish I could write. Thumbs up.

First, I want to say that I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and can't wait for the sequel. It's simply written, but that's not a bad thing at all. The author is a good storyteller with a sense of humor. Still, I think the five star reviews are a bit overblown. The characters are somewhat stereotypical and predictable. Lizzy and Margot are just a little too nice, Margot's rich sponsor is a little too mean. The horses also seem somewhat generic. There are no memorable horse characters like Justa Bob in Jane Smiley's Horse Heaven, or QL in Barbara Moss's In and Out, or any of the quirky horses in Jilly Cooper's novels. I'm also a bit surprised that some reviewers find Lizzy's experiences to be realistic. Do working students really get to do tempis on the trainer's FEI mount on their very first lesson when they've never done a flying change before? While this review may come across as negative, I try to be brutally honest and fair in all my reviews. This is a fun read, but I think it would have been better with human and horse characters that had a little more soul.

Terrific book, it was fun to read with well developed and likeable (for the most part!) characters. I laughed out loud over some sections. Even if you are not a dressage fan you will enjoy this book. For the rider, there is the bonus of some great "take aways", as if you just audited a really good riding clinic.

I've been around horses all my life, and really appreciated the author's grasp of the reality of the

working student/big show world environment. She brought it to life with her well developed characters and it was easy to follow the action as she laid out the scenes. I look forward to reading more from her, maybe a collection of short stories, or a sequel to track Lizzie's journey.

Okay, so the dialogue can be a little stiff at times. But it doesn't take much effort to look past that issue when the horse life is so authentically portrayed. At last, a horse story that doesn't dumb down the horse stuff! I was thrilled to see the term "rising trot" used without two or three pages of super simplified explanation to go along with it (and then repeated every time the term is used). As a reader would expect from an author who is already deeply and authentically immersed in the world of dressage, there are no occurrences where a supposedly experienced horse-person character does something that no true horse person would do. Who hasn't picked up a novel set in the horse world and then set it right back down again because we can't get past the horrible errors in use or action committed by a character? I can't think of one instance of that happening while I read this book. And that makes me a happy reader! ETA: I enjoyed the book a lot more before the author started "sharing" Facebook links that gave me too much information about the author's political leanings. Is there no corner of the universe left where business people (and I include authors who openly court readers like Ms. McGoldrick does) DON'T feel the need to pass along the latest out-of-context proof that President Obama is anti-business or that Romney is an elitist Richie Rich? If I wanted your political opinion I would ask for it. Until then, stop sharing...or at least Factcheck the latest breathless missive you just can't wait to share (and yes, that last is directed at you, Karen).

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