



## Horse Heaven (Ballantine Reader's Circle)

By Jane Smiley

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**Horse Heaven (Ballantine Reader's Circle)** By Jane Smiley

#1 NATIONAL BESTSELLER A NEW YORK TIMES NOTABLE BOOK

"A WISE, SPIRITED NOVEL . . . [IN WHICH] SMILEY PLUMBS THE WONDROUSLY STRANGE WORLD OF HORSE RACING." --People

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--The Washington Post

"A NOVEL OF PASSION IN EVERY SENSE . . . [SHE DOES] IT ALL WITH APLOMB . . . WITH A DEMON NARRATIVE INTELLIGENCE."  
--The Boston Sunday Globe

"WITTY, ENERGETIC . . . It's deeply satisfying to read a work of fiction so informed about its subject and so alive to every nuance and detail . . . [Smiley's] final chapters have a wonderful restorative quality."  
--The New York Times Book Review

"RICHLIY DETAILED, INGENIOUSLY CONSTRUCTED . . . YOU WILL REVEL IN JANE SMILEY'S HORSE HEAVEN."  
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## **Horse Heaven (Ballantine Reader's Circle) By Jane Smiley Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #118911 in Books
- Color: White
- Brand: Smiley, Jane
- Published on: 2001-02-27
- Released on: 2001-02-27
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.30" h x 1.20" w x 5.60" l, .94 pounds
- Binding: Paperback

- 592 pages

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

It takes a great deal of faith to gear a novel this horse-besotted to the general public. Horse love is one of those things either you get or you don't, and for the vast majority of the populace, horse stories tend to read like porn written for 13-year-old girls. The good news, then, is that while a love of all things equine is not a prerequisite for enjoying Jane Smiley's *Horse Heaven*, a love of human perversity is. Racing, after all, is at worst a dangerous, asset-devouring folly and at best an anachronism, as one of her horse trainers notes:

The Industry Leaders had made it their personal mission to bring horse racing to the attention of the general public, with the NFL as their model and television as their medium of choice, which was fine with Farley, though his own view was that horse racing out at the track, newspaper reading, still photography, placing bets in person, and writing thank-you notes by hand were all related activities, and football, ESPN, video, on-line betting, and not writing thank-you notes at all were another set of related activities.

A crucial piece of information for Smiley fans is that, among her many novels, *Horse Heaven* most resembles *Moo*. (And there's even a pig!) In fact, with these two books it appears that this versatile author has finally found a home in which to unpack her impressive gifts: that is, the sprawling, intricately plotted satirical novel. Her target in this case is not academia but horse racing--less commonly satirized but, here at least, just as fruitfully so. Wickedly knowing, dryly comic, the result is as much fun to read as it must have been to write.

None of which means that *Horse Heaven* is a casual read. For starters, one practically needs a racing form to keep track of its characters, particularly when their stories begin to overlap and converge in increasingly unlikely and pleasing ways. Perhaps it says something about the novel that the easiest figures to follow are the horses themselves: loutish Epic Steam, the "monster" colt; the winsome filly Residual; supernaturally focused Limitless; and trembling little Froney's Sis. And that's not to forget *Horse Heaven's* single most prepossessing character, Justa Bob--a little swaybacked, a little ewe-necked, but possessed of a fine sense of humor and an abiding disdain for winning races by anything but a nose.

Then there are the humans, including but not limited to socialite Rosalind Maybrick, her husband Al (who manufactures "giant heavy metal objects" in "distant impoverished nationlike locations"), a Zen trainer, a crooked trainer, a rapper named Ho Ho Ice Chill, an animal psychic, and a futurist scholar, as well as attendant jockeys, grooms, and hangers-on. (Not to mention poor, ironically named Joy, a few years out of Moo U and still having problems relating.) It's a little frustrating to watch this cast come and go and fight for Smiley's attention; you glimpse them so vividly, and then they disappear for another hundred pages, and it breaks your heart.

But there are certainly worse problems a novel could have than characters to whom you grow overattached. A plot this convoluted would be one, if only it weren't so hard to stop reading. There are elements of magic realism, astounding coincidences, unabashed anthropomorphism. (At one point--while Justa Bob throws himself against his stall in sorrow at leaving his owner's tiny, wordless mother behind--this reviewer cried, "Shameless!" even as she began to tear up.) Improbably, it all works. *Horse Heaven* is a great, joyous, big-hearted entertainment, a stakes winner by any measure, and for both horse lovers and fans of Smiley's dry, character-based wit, a cause for celebration on par with winning the Triple Crown. --Mary Park

From Publishers Weekly

The Chinese calendar aside, 2000 may be the Year of the Horse. Almost neck and neck with Alyson Hagy's

Keeneland, this novel about horses and their breeders, owners, trainers, grooms, jockeys, traders, bettors and other turf-obsessed humans is another winner. Smiley, it turns out, knows a prodigious amount about Thoroughbreds, and she is as good at describing the stages of their lives, their temperaments and personalities as she is in chronicling the ambitions, financial windfalls and ruins, love affairs, partings and reconciliations of her large cast of human characters. With settings that range from California and Kentucky to Paris, the novel covers two years in which the players vie with each other to produce a mount that can win high-stakes races. Readers will discover that hundreds of things can go wrong with a horse, from breeding through birth, training and racing, and that every race has variables and hazards that can produce danger and death, as well as the loss of millions of dollars. (A scene in which one horse stumbles and sets off a chain reaction of carnage is heartbreaking.) Characters who plan, scheme, connive and yearn for a winner include several greedy, impetuous millionaires and their wives; one trainer who is a model of rectitude, and another who has found Jesus but is crooked to the core; two preadolescent, horse-obsessed kids; a knockout black woman whose beauty is the entrance key to the racing world; the horses themselves (cleverly, Smiley depicts a horse communicator who can see into the equine mind); and one very sassy Jack Russell dog. Written with high spirits and enthusiasm, distinguished by Smiley's wry humor (as in *Moo*), the novel gallops into the home stretch without losing momentum. Fans of *A Thousand Acres* may feel that Smiley has deserted the realm of serious literature for suspense and romance, but this highly readable novel shows that she can perform in both genres with ?lan. 150,000 first printing; 15-city author tour; Random House audio. (Apr.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

Smiley, author of nine earlier works of fiction including *The Age of Grief* and *A Thousand Acres* (a Pulitzer Prize winner), has written the *Gone with the Wind* of horse books. Those involved in the equestrian world will experience a thrill of recognition when hearing about the various types of trainers, owners, and, of course, the horses themselves. The trainers include a Zen practitioner who considers each horse a koan to be solved; a crooked trainer who gets religion and repents, however briefly; and a married trainer who falls in love with the wife of an owner. The horses are a rogue stallion, a timid mare, and an amazingly focused gelding named Limitless. The horses and people are both talented and flawed yet all find redemption. Mary Beth Hurt is an exceptional reader. Highly recommended for all public libraries. APatsy Gray, Huntsville P.L., AL

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Alyssa Cox:**

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#### **Grace Robinson:**

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**Robert Hightower:**

The guide with title Horse Heaven (Ballantine Reader's Circle) has a lot of information that you can learn it. You can get a lot of advantage after read this book. That book exist new expertise the information that exist in this reserve represented the condition of the world at this point. That is important to yo7u to find out how the improvement of the world. This particular book will bring you in new era of the glowbal growth. You can read the e-book on your own smart phone, so you can read the item anywhere you want.

**Henry Stanton:**

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