



# Mare's Nest

*Lesley Kagen*

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## **Mare's Nest** Lesley Kagen

From award-winning, New York Times bestselling author, Lesley Kagen, a mostly true story.

"It's hard not to feel at points in Mare's Nest that author Lesley Kagen isn't talking about you. Add in the fact that not a parent in the world hasn't had her heart in her throat as she watched her child compete, and you can't put it down."

---Jo Anne Normile, bestselling author of *Saving Baby: How One Woman's Love For a Racehorse Led to Her Redemption*

"The last thing in the world I wanted was for my daughter to climb onto the back of a horse. Riding is dangerous. Not only physically, but fiscally. Most of all...emotionally. I had the scars to prove it."

Annie Bellamy is a woman struggling to come to terms with her painful past. In her daughter, Teddy, she sees the opportunity for redemption. The chance to balance the scales by giving her girl the support and nurturance she feels she didn't receive from her own mother. What Annie didn't plan on was her daughter falling head-over-heels in love with horses the same way she had as a youngster. The buying, selling, and showing of horses had led to the bankruptcy and break-up of her family, and perhaps, her mother's death. Annie vows not to allow history to repeat itself. Yet, her Teddy's persistence and talent are not easily denied.

Torn between her distressing childhood and her daughter's passion, concerned about how the astronomical cost of the sport will impact her son and husband, Annie embarks on a journey through the Midwestern horse world, where she and Teddy are swept up in a "saddle soap opera" that she couldn't have imagined. Crooked trainers, ruthless barn owners, shady veterinarians, and viciously competitive show moms lie in wait for the unsuspecting twosome. Too late, Annie realizes that her unrelenting pursuit to make her daughter's dreams come true will end up mirroring her own troubled past unless she finds the courage to stand up to her demons.

Based on a true story, MARE'S NEST is a wrenchingly funny, poignant, and ultimately uplifting tale about mothers and daughters, horses, and the redemptive power of love.

Lesley Kagen is an actress, voice-over talent, former restaurateur, sought-after speaker, and award-winning New York Times bestselling author of seven novels. Her works have been translated into seven languages. She's the mother of two and grandmother of two. She lives in a hundred-year-old farmhouse in a small Wisconsin town.

## **Mare's Nest Details**

Date : Published November 9th 2012 (first published November 1st 2012)

ISBN :

Author : Lesley Kagen

Format : Paperback 466 pages

Genre : Animals, Horses, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Mare's Nest for online ebook

### Jenn says

Overall, I really liked this. I think it was fairly over-the-top - no single commutable area can have THAT many horrible dishonest trainers! But I see why the author did it.

If the author writes more horsey stuff, I'll read it.

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### Erin says

My fourth Lesley Kagen read and it pains me to give one of my favorite authors a low rating. Especially because "Mare's Nest" is **her most biographical to date**. Kagen brings her readers into the inner circle of the horse circuit. A world which seems as competitive and cutthroat as the cheerleading or figure skating world. A place where at every corner, someone is ready to backstab and cheat.

This is a **mother and daughter tale** that is told through the eyes of mother, Annie and her much adored daughter, Teddy. It would be wrong to just label Annie as a helicopter parent when it appears that she becomes obsessed or consumed by the need to make all of her daughter's dreams come true. **I am not sure exactly what words I should use to describe Annie and Teddy's relationship. Unhealthy? Controlling? But then doesn't that make me(as the reader) seem judgemental?**

The book starts with a horse riding accident that situates Teddy into a precarious situation and Annie desperate to find answers. A perfect cliffhanger to set up the story BUT what then occurs is chapter upon chapter of the past, including Annie's own troubled childhood and unfilled horseback riding dreams. When Kagen leads back to the big event it fizzled out into absolutely nothing. **I found myself quite bored** at the way in which all secondary characters in the story ended up being so ruthless and constantly taking advantage of Annie and Teddy. I also wondered when her husband would actually be supportive or tell Annie to be less all consuming. Despite one brief episode the guy was a dud!

But maybe that is just me, perhaps there **is a part of me that became bogged down in so many other elements that I fail to see what Lesley Kagen wanted me to see**. I see a few high ratings and I am sure those readers were able to connect with it in a way that truly escapes me. Whatever the case, I am truly confident that my next Lesley Kagen read will be a much better experience.

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### Miriam says

I received this book as a Goodreads first-read giveaway. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It made me very thankful that my kids are not competitive and even more grateful that my kids love animals but were not involved in the horse show world. I couldn't have handled what the main character had to do.

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## **Maia says**

This book to be honest was harder for me to get through. Being a horse person there were somethings I agreed and disagreed with. A lot of stuff I had to process. A very intriguing read if anything. At times it kind of annoyed me the way Annie would freak out over the little things but at the same time it made me think about the mother's point of view. Made me think about my riding career right now and how it is affecting my family. All in all a good read for those who enjoy something that'll make you think.

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## **Karen McQuestion says**

Right up front I'll tell you that I know Lesley Kagen and admire her as a person and an author. I don't however, give positive reviews unless I really love a book.

Mare's Nest is based on a real story; a fictional account of the experiences Lesley and her family had when her daughter was training and competing in the local horse world. When I first starting reading the novel I found it intriguing, but I also had trouble connecting with the fact that families spend tens of thousands of dollars each year on what, to me, is essentially a hobby. Very soon within the book, Kagen does address this issue, many times in fact, in a way that even my frugal heart eventually understood.

Once I was on board with the story, I found it fascinating to see what went on behind the scenes with the parents, trainers, judges, and barn owners. Emotions flared and there was backbiting and petty jealousy and sabotage. All the drama of the TV show Dance Moms, and then some.

I don't want to give away the story, but I would recommend this book to anyone who is an animal lover, or wants an inside look at the world of riding competitions. The mother/daughter theme will resonate with female readers as well.

Book clubs will have a lot to talk about, and there are reader questions and an author interview at the back of the book to guide in discussions. Highly recommended.

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## **LORI CASWELL says**

Annie Bellamy loves horses. She grew up showing horses and the buying, selling, and showing of horses led to the bankruptcy and break-up of her family, and perhaps, her mother's death. She now is trying to come to grips with her past as her own daughter, Teddy, falls in love with horses the same way she did. She vows that history will not repeat itself. Teddy's talent cannot be denied. She connects with these horses like Annie never did.

Her daughter's passion does come with a hefty price tag and she wonders how that will impact her family. She also never imagined the ruthless barn owners, the crooked trainers or the viciously competitive show moms they would meet on this journey in the horse world or "saddle soap opera". Annie realizes that making her daughter's dreams come true is going to take courage to stand up to all those around them wanting them to fail.

Dollycas's Thoughts

A captivating and inspiring story of a mother's love and the special bonds of mother and daughter. Based on a true story, Lesley takes us into world of showing horses. What happens behind those barn doors and in the practice rings. The greed, the jealousy, the corruption, she tells all.

Mare's Nest is a term defined as "an extraordinarily complicated situation". That's what the horse world is, a series of extraordinarily complicated situations. I love the way Kagen writes with heart and humor and the strength she gives her characters. Annie and Teddy had quite an uphill battle and a few missteps but it made each of them stronger and their relationship stronger as well.

As a mother with two daughters myself this book touched my heart. It also made me thankful they played volleyball, basketball and softball. The competitive parents are still there, the coaches did have their favorites, but the equipment can be put in a closet or the garage in the off season. A horse needs care year round and my heart would break every time one got hurt or would have to be sold.

You do not need any knowledge of horses or the competitions involved in showing a horse to love this book. I sure didn't and I absolutely loved this story. It is a powerful story that every mother or daughter would enjoy. It is a truly awesome book! Definitely worth 10 stars!!!

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### **McGuffy Morris says**

This may be Lesley Kagen's most important novel. It is based on a true story, her own story.

I am a longtime fan of Lesley Kagen and all of her books. I am not a horse-person, because my life never offered the opportunity. However, I learned much from this very well written book.

In this special novel, Lesley takes us into the world of horses. She writes not only about caring for horses and riding them. She also delves into horse training, and the arena of showing and competing. Lesley further explores and exposes the effects of this upon the people involved, and their relationships.

Annie, the main character, deals with her own lifelong issues of anxiety and struggles with depression. As a mother, she tries to protect her daughter, Teddy, from the pains of the world, including the arena of show horses. Teddy is determined to follow in her mother's footsteps. The story of Annie, Teddy, and their relationship is beautifully told. The layered story of the world of competitive horse showing was fascinating and very real.

This is a most brave and beautiful novel. I highly recommend Lesley's Mare's Nest, as I do all of her novels. She is wonderful.

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### **Amanda says**

This captivating and inspiring story of a mother's love and the special bonds of mother and daughter is based on a true story. Lesley Kagen takes us into the world of horses- the judges, the other parents, the barn owners, the trainers. What happens behind the scenes? The greed, the jealousy, the corruption, the sabotage she tells all. A powerful and moving story of a mother's love and determination and commitment to her daughter's confidence and dreams. Highly recommended! I received this for free through Goodreads First

Reads.

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### **Alison Vaillancourt says**

What is it with this book?? I am a huge Lesley Kagen fan; loved her previous novels. But this one seems so hastily slapped together. I'm only a few chapters in, but all the typos, missing words, etc. are distracting and embarrassing! Some sentences make absolutely no sense. Did no one proofread this before going to print? I am guessing this is self-published as I see no publisher identification on the book. The story is fine, and I'm interested because of my own mother/daughter history in the horse showing world. But to read a book so sloppily produced just undermines the story. I sincerely hope this author returns to the quality of her previous works.

OK, so I finished the book. I did enjoy the story, mainly because of my personal history with the topic. But the editing/proofreading was a downright disaster.

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### **Morgan Egge kiedrowski says**

Great read! Very relatable as a parent because it shows how parents will do anything to ensure their children are safe and happy. I highly recommend it for a great discussion in book club or just for friends, it would be perfect for mothers and daughters to share. The harshness and cruelty of the horse world would shock those not in it but make for an intriguing story.

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### **Mrs Mommy Booknerd <http://mrsmommybooknerd.blogspot.com> says**

First I am going to start by saying that I love Lesley Kagen, as a person and as an author. There is an authenticity to her writing that few can rival. She writes stories that grab your heart and keeps you turning pages. She has a talent that cannot be ignored.

"The last thing in the world I wanted was for my daughter to climb onto the back of a horse. Riding is dangerous. Not only physically, but fiscally. Most of all...emotionally. I had the scars to prove it."

Kagen opens herself up in her newest novel Mare's Nest. Mare's Nest is based on a true story that captures not only the complexities of mother/daughter relationships, but also a mother's desire to give to her child an experience better than her own. This story is really a universal story about parents' undying love for their children. About every parent wanting what is best for their children, trying to avoid making the same mistakes their parents made. The Mare's Nest is simply...love.

Annie Bellamy is determined to do better than her parent did. Annie saw her childhood ruined by bankruptcy and her parents' dissolved marriage, both due to horses. Although Annie loved horses she was going to shelter her daughter from the evils that horse world contains. She was not going to let her daughter Teddy ride. Period. But then Teddy fell in love with horses, just like Annie did years before. Annie tried to hang tough and keep to her no riding policy, but her desire to give her daughter the world quickly dissolved her resolve. Teddy was talented, she was in love with all things horses and was going to ride. If only the story was so trouble-free and happy. With villains, shameful horse practices, disappointments and heartbreaks this

novel takes you on a journey of love, friendship and recovery. With Kagen's brilliant voice and great dialogue you find yourself once again engrossed in an amazing, well written story that is both emotional and exciting. Do not pass up reading this 5 STAR novel.

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### **Heather says**

Mare's Nest is my first introduction to Lesley Kagen's books. I have been wanting to read one of her books for a while and I wasn't disappointed! I participated in horse back riding lessons as a teenager and have relatives (in which I will be passing this along to) involved in the "horse world." This unique story hit home for me.

Annie Bellamy is the mother to daughter Teddy and son Louie. She is also the wife of Pete. She is a protective mother who fears for the safety of her children. Outstandingly, Annie is conscientious and avoids passing on her feelings of fear/anxiety to her children. Struggling to resolve her past feelings of loss, Annie begins to see that her childhood passion for horses may have been the cause of her parent's bankruptcy. Annie never imagined that her daughter Teddy, would also fall in love with horses. Teddy's growing passion and talent in riding is evident; therefore Annie is unable to refuse her. Many in the 'horse world' community seem to be out for money, rather than the joy of riding. I was inspired by Annie's commitment to foster confidence in her daughter. Despite all the setbacks, Annie remained positive and ensured Teddy's dreams would be reached.

Thank You, this is my first goodreads giveaway!

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### **Jessica says**

1.5 stars. I enjoyed her fictional books much more than this book which is mostly biographical. However, I am not a horse fan and this book contained everything I never wanted to know about horses and horse shows. I am almost speechless regarding Annie's divide and conquer approach to parenting. I felt like Annie abandoned the rest of her family, ignored her own mental health and her family's financial welfare so she could relive a childhood fantasy through her daughter, Teddy.

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### **Fran says**

Lesley Kagen's deeply personal style of writing sheds light on the darker side of the horse lifestyle, as well as the trials of motherhood we can all relate to. Her books read like an afternoon of bonding with a friend over lunch. She is always thoroughly enjoyable.

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### **Carla says**

I really enjoyed this book. Being a fan of Lesley's previous books, it was fascinating to read one that was mostly based on her own experiences. It gave some insight into her and what makes her the excellent writer that she is. I related to the story on a few different levels. Having been in love with horses and pleasure



riding as a child and teen, it was interesting to read about the goings-on in the world of competitive riding. Lesley makes you feel what Teddy feels as she grows and advances through the ranks. I also connected to Annie, Teddy's mom as she dealt with issues in her past and present. It was a good read!

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