



# Saddled: How a Spirited Horse Reined Me In and Set Me Free

*Susan Richards*

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One day, at the age of thirty-one, Susan Richards realized that she was an alcoholic. She wrote it down in her journal, struck by the fact that it had taken nine years of waking up hung-over to name her illness. What had changed?

Susan had a new horse, a spirited Morgan named Georgia, and, as she says: *“It had something to do with Georgia. It had something to do with making a commitment as enormous as caring for a horse that might live as my companion for the next forty years. It had something to do with love.”* Every day begins with a morning ride.

Every day Susan lives a little more and thinks about her mistakes a little less. Every day she learns a little more from Georgia, the kind of horse who doesn't go in for indecision, who doesn't apologize for her opinions, and who isn't afraid to be herself. In Georgia, Susan finds something to draw her back to herself, but also something to keep her steady and focused, to teach her about stepping carefully in unknown territory, to help her learn again about balance.

This is a memoir about the power of animals to carry us through the toughest times of our lives—about the importance of constancy, the beauty of quiet, steadfast love, the way loving a good (and sometimes bad!) animal can keep you going. It's a wonderful story for Susan's (and Georgia's) fans, and for anyone who has ever loved an animal enough to keep on living.

## Saddled: How a Spirited Horse Reined Me In and Set Me Free Details

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# **From Reader Review Saddled: How a Spirited Horse Reined Me In and Set Me Free for online ebook**

## **Terry says**

Wow is the first thing that comes to mind about this book, as I frequently find with this author. She is a magnificent writer. Susan writes from the heart, reaching deep within in her soul. Her writings are easily followed and heart felt from front to back. They leave you hungry for more. She shows you that with love and devotion, one can get through anything. Anyone who has ever loved an animal of any kind will be able to relate and understand such a deep devotion that we have to our animal family. Well written Susan, well written! I can only hope she continues bestowing upon us, the gift she has so obviously been blessed with. Her art of touching the very heart of any who read. She shows that there truly is light, at the end of a very dark tunnel of addiction!

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## **Blaire says**

If you're a horse lover and expect this book to be primarily about horses, be forewarned. It's more about dysfunction, alcoholism, and recovery than it is about horses, although the author's relationship with her horse figures prominently. That said, I found it to be well-written and interesting. The author's recounting of her alcoholic years made me pretty irritated with her, but in the end she has some preceptive things to say about her life.

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## **Esther Bradley-detally says**

I bumped into this book, and somehow after flipping through the pages and seeing, memoir, alcoholism in family, transformation, I took the book home from the Pasadena Central Library. I am a memoir addict, and the authentic and well written voice calls me. I couldn't put it down.

those who know me personally will imagine and know my delight in the author's triumphs and courage, but imagine that this reader, a pug devotee par excellence, gasps when she looks at the back inside cover flap and see Susan Richards with what? A pug, a pug, a wonderful looking, high i'm the center of the universe pug. I feel as if I know this lady. The background of book had aspects of Boston, my home town, and so it goes. I highly recommend this book. I'm off to read her others; have to order them too!

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## **Diane C. says**

I have a down side up side perspective on this book. I found the writing style a bit Oprah tabloidy, meaning no diminution of the authors awful childhood and resulting emotional damage. On the upside, the book made me understand (as a non horse owner, rider) how a relationship with a horse is on a whole different level from one with a dog, cat, etc.

The horse in this book did not give the author any quarter, yet gave her mutual love and respect. The first well adjusted relationship the author had ever had. Animals are healers, this book really illustrates that.

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### **Sharon says**

Susan Richards' "Saddled" is about more than horse ownership. It's about love, addiction and recovery as well.

Richards writes honestly about the abusive relationships she endured and about her alcoholism. Until she meets a Morgan mare named Georgia, Richards spends all of her time drinking. She stops because she knows that she needs to be sober to keep the beloved horse, but she continues other addictive patterns that were established early in her life.

Shuttled amongst various unaccepting family members, Richards' best childhood friend is a pony named Bunty. Through her adult life, she finds a spiritual acceptance and friendship amongst equines and decides that she wants to have one again. Thus, Georgia, Tempo and Hotshot come into the story. Even still, she finds that she needs to develop her independence and figure out who she is without alcohol and then begins to truly enter recovery.

This is not an easy book to read because of some of the issues Richards discusses. Her style is open and honest, and I think that people in recovery would benefit from it as long as they were not at a place where they were fragile and find it triggering. Ultimately, it is a story of renewal, success and joy.

As a former equestrian athlete, I also recommend this book to horse and animal lovers who have known the companionship of a snuffling muzzle and a kind nicker.

(Review based on uncorrected advance proof.)

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### **Melissa Kayden says**

Second book I read by Richards and I liked it, though I liked Chosen By A Horse better. I enjoyed the parts about the human/animal bond and about her (very sad) childhood but some of her memories were a little dull. I'd still like to read more by Richards though.

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### **LizG says**

Inspiring and honest story of a woman who finds the strength to change her life and her family legacy of addiction via a strong connection to a spirited horse.

I felt it was her ability to love the horse for, not in spite of, its "imperfection" in attitude that gave her permission to love herself and her own imperfections and begin her journey of healing.

In many ways the horse was a role model for another way of moving through life, with spirit and power and without apology for who she is. The author's choice not to train away all of the attributes that would be

perceived as "negative" (read un-compliant) in traditional horsemanship was a testament of her ability for unconditional acceptance and appreciation for the whole being.

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### **Penny says**

Yes, the horse on the cover was the first thing that caught my attention. When I found out it was a Morgan horse I was even more interested. When I read the dust jacket and found out it was about a woman finding her place in the world after overcoming alcoholism....I wasn't sure I wanted to read on.

I did. It was worth it. Susan talks about how she found herself to be an alcoholic in a family of alcoholics. How she became sober - almost by accident - and discovered that the days were so much better. And now, without alcohol to fill her days, also a bit terrifying.

It's a rather slim novel and worth your time. I may have to read it again just because.

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### **Cheryl Schibley says**

I love the way this author expresses herself. This is her 3rd book - all memoirs and all super good reading. More than just about horses - it's about her complicated and interesting life experiences. Such great reading. Highly recommended.

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### **Faithann says**

Susan Richards is such a talented writer, that I would be willing to read any book that she writes. Reading about her past, and the things that she went through, it just amazes me. So many of us see the family with a lot of money and think, Their life must be perfect, but hearing her story really makes you wonder how true that is. This book certainly made me feel grateful to have grown up in my middle class family. Knowing that I was a loved and cherished member of the family.

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### **treehugger says**

I liked the descriptions of the relationship between Susan and her horse. I think she has the kind of magical connection with Georgia that most horsewomen would dream of having. I also liked hearing about their long rides out in the woods alone with the dog. That imagery really has stuck with me.

Several quotes I found noteworthy while reading:

"It was the first time I considered that anxiety might be rooted in a kind of inflated self-importance, that even being shy had a component of false deference. Who were you to declare yourself so unavailable or so perfect that not living up to your own measure should make you withdraw?"

"I stood with the three of them clustered around me, doling out peppermints and scratching necks. It seemed to me that this was my church, this pasture, this barn, this land surrounded by mountains and forests and

streams, and that to live in the perfection of nature, to live with animals is to know the divine. The texts of man seemed clumsy and didactic compared with the wisdom of a tree, a dragonfly, a horse. It was this wisdom, always present but never preached, that I looked to in moments of despair."

"Probably no book described my scars better than Alice Miller's 'The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self'. In a text combining equal amounts of compassion and psychoanalytic theory (a rare combination in academic writing), Miller laid out the causes and consequences of childhood trauma. I was my own first client, a sometimes frightening prospect. But for the first time, I was able to look at the events and circumstances of my past more objectively."

"I think caring deeply about something outside yourself is essential to any kind of healing."

"One day, as I was sitting on his bed holding his hand, I felt all the anger toward him I'd carried for years leave my body. It was like exhaling a poison I'd inhaled a long time ago, and it had finally come out. In its place I felt an overwhelming sense of love for this terribly flawed father, this human being who had suffered greatly for most of his life. I saw how pointless and self-serving my anger had been, how rigid and self-righteous. I saw how it had stunted my own growth and had kept me from pursuing a relationship with him on more honest terms, terms that would have taken into account who he was rather than who I had wanted him to be."

"I simply felt that animal children were the equal of human children and deserved the best of whatever I had to give."

"There is something intensely solitary about galloping on horseback, as though horse and rider become a single unit, shooting through space with just the smell of pine to hint that they are still earthbound."

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## **Jen says**

I LOVED the first book she wrote (Chosen by a horse), and the second (Chosen forever). This one was touching and beautiful, and harder to read.

She talks about her abusive relationship with her (now ex) husband. She talks about her alcoholism and trying to free herself from her addictions. She talks about wanting to die and feeling helpless and hopeless and not knowing why. I think my favorite part was her description of AA.

"I didn't know that becoming sober meant *really* changing. Not drinking was the least of it. It was the rest of me that was the problem, the part that wanted to stay numb. The men and women in that room (AA) didn't sound numb anymore. They were angry and scared and depressed. They were also hopeful and funny and grateful. They were all over the place. The word that came to mind was *whole*. After years of shutting down all or parts of themselves with alcohol, they were finally whole human beings.

I sat in a corner with my arms crossed and my mouth shut and listened to what whole human beings sounded like. Evidently being human was a messy business. Not a single person said *Everything's fine* - my stock response since I was a child to any question about my state of mind. It had never been true, but that didn't keep from repeating it for the next twenty years. I thought that's what you were supposed to say. I thought that's what you were supposed to *feel*. Anything else meant you were a complainer or worse - a bad person, a wrong person, and wrong was just a code word for crazy. I didn't want to be crazy, because I was already on shaky ground in the wantable department. So the sweet smiley girl became the sweet smiley woman who

drank liquor to help keep the lid on anything that didn't reflect how fine she felt one hundred percent of the time. Never mind the on-and-off suicide fantasies going back to fourth grade. Doesn't everybody have those? I was fine."

While I never used alcohol, I completely identified with everything else... The realization that there was more to life than just not doing the "shouldn't"s... And coming to understand what a whole human being looks like... and letting myself feel something besides "fine".

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### **Sharon says**

So far I am annoyed that the book features a Morgan horse and the cover picture is of a Arabian horse! The book is promising, but details like that bug me.

I am sooo glad I went back and finished this book. I give very few ratings of 5, but this one deserves it. It is an unusual writing style with chapters hopping back and forth between the present and the past. A child bounced from one relative to another; who only feels grounded when at summer camp. Her work to become sober and to live up to the "expectations" and needs of a horse with which she's fallen in love. I am going to recommend it to many friends!

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### **Pete says**

**Saddled: How a Spirited Horse Reined Me In and Set Me Free** by Susan Richards was a book I discovered on GR Recommendations, and **WOW!!** what a discovery!!

I am a firm believer in the **power** of a horse's ability to love, soothe, and gentle an owner's anxiety and tension. This story beautifully exposes the facility of horses (could also be cats, dogs, and other domesticated critters) in diverting us humans away from angst, loneliness and other discomforts. Georgia, Tempo and Hotshot are like huge comforters driving evil spirits (of alcohol) and abusive relationships away much better than AA could.

I loved this story which felt like home to me even though I haven't had to experience any of what Susan Richards endured.

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### **Philippa says**

Why so many people find it difficult to stop drinking "...is the necessity of exchanging one identity for another. I knew who I was as a drinker. That identity, the confident, friendly, easygoing woman, might have been mostly a myth, but as long as I kept drinking, I wouldn't have to face that. But when the wine stopped flowing, there I was - someone I didn't know, someone full of nameless insecurities and fears with a one-size-fits-all coping skill: alcohol".

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