



## **At Risk**

*Kit Ehrman*

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### **At Risk** Kit Ehrman

Stubbornness has its price. So does pride.... Stephen Cline will pay heavily for both when he drops out of college against his father's wishes and lands a job as barn manager at Foxdale Farm, one of Maryland's premiere equestrian facilities. An obnoxious trainer and difficult, demanding boarders are all part of the job, but Steve will need every bit of his smarts when he interrupts a bunch of thieves very early one morning and is hijacked along with the horses. In making his escape, he unwittingly jeopardizes a lucrative scam and challenges a sadistic killer. When the police investigation stalls, Steve uses his connections in the horse industry and launches his own fact-finding campaign. As he moves closer to uncovering the rustlers' ring, he learns that nearly everyone else around him also runs risks.... Praise for At Risk "Both horse lovers and crime fans who've never stepped into a stirrup will relish Ehrman's riveting debut, set on a Maryland horse farm....With his youthful zeal and perseverance, Steve Cline makes a captivating hero and sleuth, one readers will be eager to see again." -Publishers Weekly "As a former groom, vet and barn manager, Ehrman knows her way around horses and show barns...." -Marilyn Stasio, New York Times Book Review Kit Ehrman currently lives and writes on a horse farm near Columbus, Indiana. The sequels to this first Steve Cline mystery are Dead Man's Touch, Cold Burn, and Triple Cross. [www.kitehrman.com](http://www.kitehrman.com)

### **At Risk Details**

Date : Published January 5th 2010 by Kit Ehrman (first published October 15th 2002)

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## From Reader Review At Risk for online ebook

### Dlora says

Ehrman's Steve Cline Mysteries are the successor to the Dick Francis novels in my mind, more so than Felix Francis's books that are trying to cash in on his father's success. While I like Felix's books, Ehrman actually has more feeling for the horses, their personalities and habits, than Felix does. I very much enjoy that connection not only with the horse world but especially with horses' interaction with their world and humans. Not that the books are told from a horse's viewpoint but that Steve Cline, the main character, loves the horses and notes various horses' unique and different quirks and abilities. In the first book, *At Risk*, Cline is working as a manager for a horse stable. In the next, *Dead Man's Touch*, he is working as a "hot walker" in the backside of a racing barn, then in *Cold Burn*, he is working in a stud farm. And in all of them, he is solving a mystery, which most often ends up with a murder or two. My one complaint is that there is too much sexual detail. I think the sexual relations are important to character and plot development but I don't think we need so much graphic detail. I would have taken a star off for that because it lessened my enjoyment of the book but I so much enjoyed the rest that I stayed with five stars. Be forewarned if graphic sex bothers you.

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### Denise says

It was a good mystery- wish there was more "horsey" to it.

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### Wendy Hellwig says

Not quite Dick Francis, but I did find that it was difficult to put down.

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### Patricia Kruger says

#### Good read

A gripping page turner. The author kept me in. Suspense all the way to the end. He could have left Elsa out of it.

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### Shoshana Frank says

The mystery was thrilling. Unfortunately the romantic elements were a bit weak due in large part to a lack of relationship development. On camera romance.

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### Sharon Michael says

As a Dick Francis fan since his first few books, I see where the references to his writing are coming from.

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Just the accurate horse knowledge is a big plus for me, as I've been involved in the horse world all my life. An author who places his story within an equine framework and then obviously knows nothing about horses or the horse business will lose me fast.

The plot is believable and focused on things that actually do occur in the horse world and the author makes no mistakes with the horse related references. I did think the multiplicity of criminal activities by the villains might have been somewhat overdone.

For me, the rather graphic sex scenes were intrusive as I prefer mystery to love story. I don't object to romance, but I expected the mystery to be the primary focus. I would have rated the book higher if the romance had been minimized and less graphic. Overall, however, this is the best attempt at an equine mystery I have read since the last book written exclusively by Dick Francis.

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### **Tamra LeValley says**

OK book. Overly predictable and slow on many occasions.

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### **Sophie says**

Kind of amateur writing with some grammar errors which I find annoying. I do give it some points for the terminology about horse stables and the riding business. Maybe it is me but I found the love scenes corny and the main character did not have much dimension. It was not intolerable as some books I've forced myself to read. Plus it was free.

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### **Rick Bylina says**

A mystery about greed and revenge is at the center of At Risk by Kit Ehrman, but horses dominate the page. I don't know anything about horses other than the one time I rode a horse named Buck. I should have taken the hint from his name. Nevertheless, all the horse terminology and possible horse shenanigans (in and out of the business) kept me in the story despite some level of detail that I didn't fully understand. Make no mistake about it, this story starts out and ends violently. There is a fair amount of foul language and some mild sex scenes. It may not be everyone's cup of tea. If those elements bother you, just find another story. To me, it felt like an honest, if sometimes a bit raw, slice of life given the players involved.

While the protagonist, Steve Cline, acts responsibly beyond his 21 years, he chooses some terrible moments to act clueless. That reversal threw me a few times. Also, I felt the investigation was slightly off, looking for the microscopic evidence when real evidence sat in plain sight as big as a barn. I won't spoil it, because it was good read, but I wasn't super impressed with the professional investigators. It led to some yelling at the electrons on my Kindle.

Some unanswered questions remain by the end of the story, but I assume a few of these are answered in other books in the series. Not sure why other reviewers (yes, I peeked) had issues with the love aspect of the story. For me, it heightened my interest and gave the story a bit more depth. I did have some difficulty though with character identification and how Steve managed with multiple episodes without sleep (ah, youth). This is a

solid read. Horse fanciers might neigh at my rating, wanting it higher, but I think it is a solid "4".

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### **Deb says**

What can I say this book had a little bit of everything I enjoy. Horses, murder, a strait forward no non-sense kinda book. If you are a Dick Frances fan then you just might like Kit.

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### **Mary Pagones says**

I found out about this book in a very unusual way--I'm an author myself and my recently-published novel set in the eventing world features a male protagonist. One of my reviewers mentioned Kit Ehrman's Steve Cline--so of course I had to read this book! I'm not a mystery author but I love mysteries and I was drawn in by Steve's sarcastic, funny voice as a character, a voice that was often coupled with hidden fear and vulnerability. I liked the realism of the plot and the fact that Steve was believably frightened at times as well as driven to figure out what was going on. The end chase scene is particularly thrilling for horse lovers!

Some reviewers have complained about one of the scenes as gratuitously sexual and graphic. I wasn't bothered by it--I didn't consider the purpose of it to be 'sexy' per se but rather believably written in Steve's voice. It was reflective of the way he would see things.

Anyway, I am hooked and I'm going to buy the second in the series!

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### **Maya Bohnhoff says**

Kit Ehrman definitely had all of the equestrian details right in this book. I've sat up nights with colicky horses; she hit every note. The story was compelling; the pacing was spot on. Every character was fully realized. I liked the protagonist very much ... most of the time.

One thing only kept me from giving the book five stars and that was what seemed to me out-of-character behavior on the part of the protagonist, Steve Cline. He's described in the book description on iBooks as a "principled character". but he had a rather epic fail in principle in At Risk.

I can understand a man being attracted to a beautiful woman who's coming on to him, but I can't understand a man who's dating a gorgeous woman he seems more than just physically attracted to, yet lets himself fall into a raunchy sexual encounter with a married barracuda that he barely knows and actively dislikes. It played right to the stereotype of men as creatures that think with their sex organs and who can't control themselves even when they want to.

"God help us if this is the good guy," I thought and wondered how long it would take for Steve's weakness for anything female to get him killed in a moment of inattention. (Instead of "Squirrel!" it's "Boobs!")

It bothered me, too, that after expressing disdain for the woman he shags in the tack room (in a scene that felt completely gratuitous as well as out of character) the hero's conscience didn't kick in until late in the game, and only when a friend wonders what will happen if Steve's girlfriend, Rachel, finds out about his wild ride

with another man's wife. Until that happens, Steve is terribly blasé about the encounter in a boys will be boys way, and when the subject of his exclusivity to Rachel is raised, no one seems to remember that the other woman is married.

Quite suddenly, there seemed to be no emotional depth to the character at all. Ehrman just skated around questions of principle or how much Steve really cared about his girlfriend. All in all, it was a bit confusing and, as I said, seemed out of character for the man Ehrman established Steve Cline to be in every other way. As I read on it became apparent that Steve did have a conscience and some capacity for more than animal attraction, though his fondness for Rachel comes in a poor second in that contest. Perhaps Erhman intends this to be Steve's one character flaw, but it's not played as a flaw, just normal guy behavior.

Did that keep me fro enjoying the book? Nope. Neither did the occasional word misuse ("Squelching" instead of "stanching", "would of", "could of", "should of" instead of "would have" "could have" should have".) I couldn't put the boo down because the other elements were that strong.

Already purchased the next one...

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### **Carol McKnight says**

I enjoyed this book. Steve Cline is a hard core hero, but with a soft spot underneath. Fast moving and easy to read. If you like the horse world, you will probably like this book.

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### **Kathy says**

I would recommend this book for followers of horse mysteries who don't mind reading about intense situations and episodes of animal cruelty. It seems that every mystery centered around the horse industry is compared to Dick Francis's books. I am going to contribute to that practice with this review. This book features a likable main character who is subjected to violence. Typical Dick Francis. However, this book involved multiple episodes of violence and much more death than a DF book would typically have. Did I mention animal cruelty? I did manage to get through the book to a satisfying ending.

I can't believe it was evidently categorized as a Christian mystery. I imagine it was quite a shock to those readers attracted by this label if they made it more than halfway through the book.

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### **Angie says**

Very enjoyable read

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