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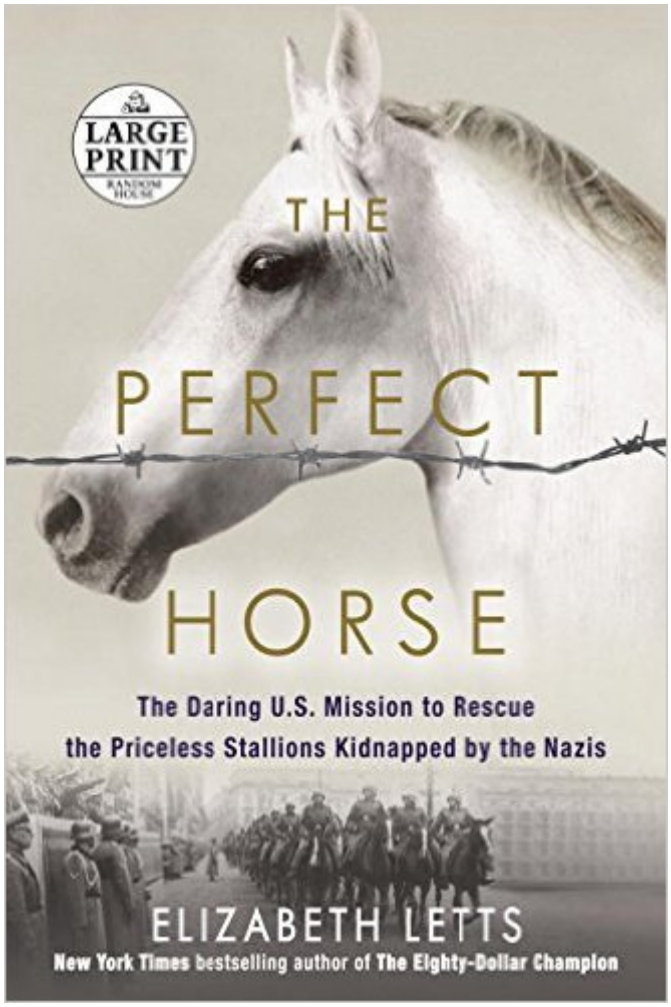
The Perfect Horse: The Daring U.S. Mission To Rescue The Priceless Stallions Kidnapped By The Nazis (Random House Large Print)



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Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER â ¢ From the author of The Eighty-Dollar Champion, the remarkable story of the heroic rescue of priceless horses in the closing days of World War II Â In the chaotic last days of the war a small troop of battle-weary American soldiers captures a German spy and makes an astonishing findâ ”his briefcase is empty but for photos of beautiful white horses that have been stolen and kept on a secret farm behind enemy lines. Hitler has stockpiled the worldâ ™s finest purebreds in order to breed the perfect military machineâ ”an equine master race. But with the starving Russian army closing in, the animals are in imminent danger of being slaughtered for food. Â With only hours to spare, one of the Armyâ ™s last great cavalrymen, American colonel Hank Reed, makes a bold decisionâ ”with General George Pattonâ ™s blessingâ ”to mount a covert rescue operation. Racing against time, Reedâ ™s small but determined force of soldiers, aided by several turncoat Germans, steals across enemy lines in a last-ditch effort to save the horses. Â Pulling together this multistranded story, Elizabeth Letts introduces us to an unforgettable cast of characters: Alois Podhajsky, director of the famed Spanish Riding School of Vienna, a former Olympic medalist who is forced to flee the bomb-ravaged Austrian capital with his entire stable in tow; Gustav Rau, Hitlerâ ™s imperious chief of horse breeding, a proponent of eugenics who dreams of genetically engineering the perfect warhorse for Germany; and Tom Stewart, a senatorâ ™s son who makes a daring moonlight ride on a white stallion to secure the farmâ ™s surrender. Â A compelling account for animal lovers and World War II buffs alike, The Perfect Horse tells for the first time the full story of these events. Elizabeth Lettsâ ™s exhilarating tale of behind-enemy-lines adventure, courage, and sacrifice brings to life one of the most inspiring chapters in the annals of human valor.Praise for The Perfect Horse Â â œLetts, a lifelong equestrienne, eloquently brings together the many facets of this unlikely, poignant story underscoring the love and respect of man for horses. . . . The authorâ ™s elegant narrative conveys how the love for these amazing creatures transcends national animosities.â •â ”Kirkus ReviewsFrom the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

If you can picture a book which covers "two continents and more than eight decades", as author Elizabeth Letts puts it in her acknowledgements, you will begin to get an idea of how remarkable a story The Perfect Horse is.Letts weaves an intricate tapestry which eloquently tells the story of how the American military manages to rescue priceless horses from imminent death at the end of World War II. These horses include the extraordinary, balletic Lipizzaner, the breathtakingly beautiful Arabians, and the powerful, stocky Russian horses. All would have died if this daring mission had not occurred. Why was this mission undertaken? No one really knows, but all the people who participated were dedicated to the horses. Possibly it was message of hope after all the horrors the world had been through.A large and varied assortment of courageous men from Europe and the US fell into place, almost haphazardly, to accomplish this rescue. You will read about each of them in this book, and love them all. They manage to trick the Nazis into releasing these precious horses, which they had been hiding in order to breed them eugenically. What united these men on this mission? The answer to that one is easy. They all loved horses.Each of these men is presented to the reader as a full character. The horses are beautifully depicted as well. When the author writes about them, the love she has for them is so powerful and passionate, yet so honest and true, the reader cannot help but understand what it is that drew her to such a massive undertaking. This chronicle of a barely known story which is a part of World War II, the most horrible war we have ever known, sends us messages from the past which restore our hope for the future.

This book should draw interest from those interested in WWII and those interested in horses, as well as anyone who enjoys an intriguing true story, well told. There is also a tie-in to the Olympics, as several of the men involved rode in the Olympics.The men involved in the rescue of Lipizzaner and Polish Arabian horses are the heart of this book. (Arabian horses from Poland are a special strain,

well known for their racing ability and distinct conformation). There is an overview of the war throughout the book, but only as it relates to events concerning the horses. This will not bore horse lovers who are not interested in reading about WWII, in general. There is also coverage of aspects of horsemanship, especially classical dressage and horse breeding, but again, this provides the reasons why these horses were special and why men on both sides of the war wanted them. So readers reading this book for the WWII content wonâ ™t be bored by aspects of horses that arenâ ™t relevant to the story. Donâ ™t let this make you think that this means there is little of interest here, because there is quite a lot. There is much about the war and about horses, but it all has meaning and it well presented.This reads like a story, both because Letts writes well, and because a main focus is on the individual men involved, on both sides of the war effort. I, personally, as a horse lover, was aware of the Naziâ ™s accumulation of high quality horses of a number of breeds, and was aware of the rescue of the Lipizzaners, but there is much that is new here, for me. I was captivated by this book and will be buying a copy of two for Christmas. I have read, and enjoyed Lettsâ ™ The Eighty-Dollar Champion, but I enjoyed this one more and I expect The Perfect Horse: The Daring U.S.

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