



Another Kind of Cowboy

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Alex Ford wishes his father had seen the movie *Brokeback Mountain*. Because then he might understand that it's possible to be a gay cowboy. Trouble is, Alex doesn't even want to be a cowboy; his dream is to ditch Western-style riding and take up dressage. But with his mother long gone, his father ensconced in an RV in the driveway, his messy Aunt Grace the Hair Stylist installed in the kitchen (whose cooking tastes like her hairdressing smells), and his Kung Fu-obsessed younger twin sisters, Alex knows that his dream is highly unlikely. So when he does get the chance to try the meticulously intricate art of dressage riding and then bumps into the supremely self absorbed Cleo at a competition, it's a whole new world for Alex.

Cleo's been sent to a very posh, very horsey boarding school nearby because of an unfortunate incident with her handsome chauffeur. Cleo doesn't get why Alex is so serious about everything, especially when his family is so...interesting. But now Alex is about to lose even the slender hold he has on his dream—and on the secret he's not yet ready to reveal. Meanwhile, Cleo has fallen in with the party crowd, forgetting all about her precious horse. Does this mean Alex and Cleo's fledgling friendship is doomed from the start?

Juby weaves growing up, coming out and fitting in into a hilarious but always compassionate story set against the fascinating world of dressage riding. Guaranteed to be a huge hit with its YA audience!

Another Kind of Cowboy Details

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From Reader Review Another Kind of Cowboy for online ebook

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Sally Kruger, aka "Readingjunk" for TeensReadToo.com

Cleo O'Shea rides horses. Her wealthy parents work in the movie business and have raised Cleo through a series of housekeepers, drivers, and other assorted caretakers. When Cleo's poor choices lead her into troubled times, they decide to enroll her in a boarding school on Vancouver Island.

An early interest in horses prompted Cleo's mother to enroll her in riding classes. In keeping with this interest, Cleo finds herself at Stoneleigh, a school that focuses on equestrian training. As a hobby, riding had always been fun, but now that Cleo's school experience revolves around riding and competition, she is not so sure about it. Finding Alex Ford seems to improve things a bit.

Alex has never truly fit in. His early childhood was spent pretending his bicycle was a horse. His odd obsession with competitive dressage didn't win him many friends or even acquaintances. When his mother left, Alex became more and more responsible for his twin sisters. His father's interests became more focused on staying drunk and living in the driveway in an old RV. Grappling with a drunken father, a lack of money, and the possibility of being more interested in boys than girls, has Alex feeling anxious and alone. Meeting Cleo gives Alex a courage he never realized he had.

Life in *ANOTHER KIND OF COWBOY* revolves around dressage riding and competition. Cleo and Alex meet and then find themselves sharing the same trainers, a couple of retired horsemen living on a nearby farm. Filled with Susan Juby's refreshing humor, one-of-a-kind characters, and some serious teen issues, this book is sure to be popular with both male and female readers. As a result of the detailed dressage descriptions and interesting storylines, I found myself imagining what might be a fun film version of the book.

Dana Kenedy (Dana and the Books) says

Review from March 2016:

During high school, I was part of the region wide book club that would read 10 new YA books by Canadian authors every year. Out of the many books that I read, *Another Kind of Cowboy* is definitely the most memorable (an accomplishment since I read this almost 10 years ago). The wittiness stands out most, and I think it may be deserving of a reread soon!

Original Review from Nov 2007

I loved this book. The characters were well developed and the plot was really fun. A lot of people dubbed it the 'gay cowboy book', but Alex being gay really isn't the most important part of the plot - it's more of a subplot. The main story was his switch to Dressage from Western riding.

As a horse person, it was refreshing to read a horse book where the author actually knew what she was talking about when it came to the horsey stuff, and be able to do so in a humourous way.

I loved it, and if you're looking for a laugh then I'd recommend it!

Andrea says

Original post at The Little Bookworm

Alex is gay and he knows this but no one else does. Alex loves horses and he is good with them and has a lot of natural talent. He rides Western-style to please his father but really wants to ride dressage, loving the precision and style of it. Alex is afraid to tell his father about both his sexuality and the dressage. He is a very introverted boy, afraid of doing the wrong thing, that people will think the wrong thing about him. His family is very dysfunctional. His mother left their family and his father lives in an RV in the driveway and is drunk about 95% of the time. His aunt lives in the house with him and his twin ninja-wannabe sisters. Finally when Alex meets Cleo O'Shea he is able to come out of his shell (pun intended) and realize that life is not about hiding what you are.

Cleo O'Shea accidentally let her parent's house get robbed. Since they are never around, they send to an equestrienne boarding school. She is a spoiled rich girl who is one of those girls that just assumes people like her or want to hang out with her. She has no concept of earning anything. But she has parents that don't pay any attention to her unless she is doing something negative. Without any direction in life, she falls easily into the party girl mode. But when she meets Alex Ford, she realizes that sometimes you have to work for the good things in life.

I've had this book for a long time. I just had it. I didn't really know what it was about. It was by Susan Juby and so I figured it had to be good. (Read Alice, I Think)

It was really good. So good that I wished I had read it earlier good but then I couldn't have used it for this challenge good. So good that I was a little teary (in a good way) at the end good. It was told from first person perspective on Cleo's part and third person on Alex's part. I'm not sure why. But it worked. Alex and Cleo are an odd pairing but in the end they help each other realize what is missing from their lives. There's a lot of horse talk but it's not overwhelming. If nothing else, it makes you want to look up dressage. That is some amazing stuff.

Stacy268 says

Alex was a bit of an odd kid. He rode his bike around his home of Vancouver Island, pretending it was a horse. Things got even stranger when he saw *dressage* for the first time on television. He was obsessed, but somehow knew that boys weren't supposed to like dressage.

He was surprised one day when his father gave him a horse that he had won in a gambling situation. Alex loves Turnip and takes great care of him. He gets a riding coach, and trains as much as he can. But he can still never let go of dressage.

When his coach is getting ready to move to Texas, he confesses that he wants to switch over from Western

riding. She is supportive, and wishes him the best of luck. In a strange turn of events, two dressage coaches are willing to barter some of Alex's hard work for lessons.

Crashing into Alex's life is spoiled rich girl Cleo, who attends the equestrienne school on the Island. Cleo is a bit of a cast off, and her rich parents don't seem to care so much about her as buy off her school and lessons in lieu of parenting.

Questioning sexuality, crushes, drug parties, alcholic fathers, horses, riding competitions, dysfunctional families...these are all found in Susan Juby's touching and highly entertaining novel. The characters leap off the pages (even small players like Cameron), and the pacing is perfect. I read this in one sitting, and was entertained the whole way through.

And hey, something else for my Canadian book challenge! Woot.

Elisa Rolle says

I read somewhere that the author started to plan this book as the story of Cleo, the spoiled daughter of absentee parents who is living in a boarding school, and she ended to write about Alex, a gay teenager living in a small town where they barely know what riding is, let aside what dressage means. And sincerely it's clear that, while Cleo is a nice supporting character, Alex is the real life of this story.

Alex's passion for riding, and dressage, is almost an obsession; and if you read between the lines of his childhood, you will understand that is also an escape from reality. His mother divorced not only her husband, but also her children; Alex is alone in raising two little sister, since not his aunt or his father are of much help, his father even moved in a roulotte in the front garden, probably to not have to live in an house without the woman he loved. But Alex's father is not a bad man, nor when he is sober or drunk, he is only extremely sad; he is really not able to take care of his children but that doesn't mean he doesn't love them, and so, when he gets a chance, he brings home an horse, a real horse, for Alex (see living in a country small town? You can have a barn in the backgarden instead of a shed for a dog...).

Problem is that, a) the horse is not a dressage horse and b) even if the horse was, there is no one around there that can teach Alex dressage. And so Alex becomes a little champion of western riding, with cowboy hats and boots, all the while dreaming of tight breeches and top hats. If an external viewer can see that, other than being an escape from reality, Alex's obsession for dressage is also a proof that he has a sensibility that is completely different, and greater, than a normal boy, it's not until he hits puberty that Alex realizes that he is gay. But there is no "gay" in the small town, no one he knows who is, no one he can relate, same as it was for dressage: dressage and gay are "stranger" things, not "normal", and if you like them you are not normal as well.

Alex's luck changes when Ivan and Fergus move in town: both former dressage champion, they have a beautiful house with attached horse riding and they are willing to teach Alex. To an adult reader, it's clear that Ivan and Fergus are a couple, but there is no hint of sex, no kiss, nothing: Ivan and Fergus are two horse lovers who are eager to share their love with the others. They are not an example for Alex of how being gay is, but maybe they are giving him an idea of what being gay and having a career related to horses can be. Alex will discover his sexuality (but only for what concerns kisses) with another teenager, finding out that he is not so strange after all, and that even in the small town where he lives there are other like him, and more than what you will expect.

Another Kind of Cowboy is a really sweet and tender story, a romance between teenagers that remains on a teenager level, not adult feelings or issues to ruin the discovery of first love; and even if you read it from an adult perspective, the sweetness is so nice that is good to lose yourself in an innocent world.

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B003NHRB6I/?...>

Reader Rabbit says

One of the first authors that springs to mind when I think Canadian YA lit is Susan Juby. Her first book, Alice, I Think featuring the amazingly quirky and amusing adventures of a girl named Alice was a hit inside Canada and outside of it (giveaway of the second book of the series here). In fact the main character is so bizarre, that whether you loved her, hated her or questioned her sanity, you most definitely couldn't forget her. It was refreshing to read about a character who didn't try to fit in and preferred to revel in her strangeness. In fact, all of Susan Juby's character's ultimately choose to be themselves (no matter how strange or not strange they are).

Another Kind of Cowboy introduced to us more loveable and quirky characters. The novel is told from the point of view of two such characters, namely Alex and Cleo.

Alex has wanted to ride for as long as he could remember (in fact, as a child, he used to ride his bicycle around the neighbourhood pretending it was a horse). And, as a cowboy he's got the chance to do for years. But what he really wants to do is dressage (an English style of riding) and now, he's finally got that option.

Cleo is rich and bratty. After a rather stupid mistake, she finds herself exiled to a boarding school and enrolled in dressage lessons.

The two couldn't seem more different and yet they might just be exactly what the other one needs.

(Okay, I realize this isn't the best summary. But trust me, it's much, much better than I'm making it sound).

Don't rule this book out if you're not a horse fanatic (I'm not!), it's a fully relatable story about friendship and growing up. There's a lot going on in this book (Alex being truthful about his homosexuality, both of them dealing with family issues, alcohol and drugs, and of course, horses). Juby manages to pull all of these with relative ease-the book never seems overwhelmed.

And, of course, one of the best parts of the book (as with Juby's other books) was the sense of humour-there are plenty of laugh-out-loud moments.

My only qualm was that it took a little while to adjust to the shifting points of view especially since Cleo's sections were in first person and Alex's were in third.

Nevertheless, if you're looking for a fun read with a high dose of humour, this is definitely one you'll want to pick up.

Lydia says

Susan Juby has a wonderful writing style, develops an interesting plot line around the subject of show horses, and managed to create a heartwarming gay character as well as a typical female teenage angst character who does not make you want to vomit! I truly enjoyed this book.

Alex Ford has what he considers a truly dysfunctional family, but learns, as he comes into his own while pursuing the fine art and horsemanship form of dressage, that maybe the family has certain redeeming qualities. Between his alcoholic father, his ninja-desiring twin sisters, his big-haired hair dressing aunt, and the three other people who want to be his friends, Alex learns some amazing lessons, including how to "come out of the closet".

This book was so enjoyable to read. The humor laced throughout the storylines help with the parts that could cause so much pain. I highly recommend this book.

Faith says

MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS

Actual Rating: 2.5 Stars

I thought this book was decent. The author touches on some of the problems that teens deal with today: coming out, over-drinking, absent parents, and people who don't seem to care about anything. Juby tells the story of Alex, a guy who is gay but hasn't come out to anyone and Cleo, a rich chick who hangs around with the wrong crowd. The author writes about their problems while focusing on the sport of dressage, which brings the 2 characters together taking Dressage lessons together. Throughout the story, the characters become friends and begin to become better people.

The author effectively writes about realistic Canadian teenagers in this novel. She manages to create characters that teens can relate to in some way. There is the naive rich girl, Cleo, who seems to do the wrong thing and has parents who are never there (Let me just admit, I did want to slap Cleo in the face at times). There is the gay guy, Alex, who has made himself a social outcast because he is ashamed of himself and his family. While I found both of the characters realistic, nothing about them made me love them. I couldn't even find myself really relating to them a lot because the characters were about the polar opposite of me personality and life wise. However, I'm sure a lot of readers could relate because the author writes about these problems that do affect other teens, just not me.

This book is all about horses, as you can probably tell from the title. I've never been one to read about horses. When I was younger, I tried to but I honestly gave up after a while because I would get bored (I'm a fantasy lover so contemporary fiction is not my cup of tea). So this book was a bit hard to get through when it came to the horse terms used in the novel. When the characters were at a competition, they would describe what they were doing and I'd totally zone out and end up skimming the paragraph. So, if you're a horse fanatic, you might understand all the terms and really appreciate this novel. But the good thing about the book is that there wasn't too much of the horse terminology to read about. Yes, there was a bit of it but there wasn't too much that I gave up on the book.

The plot was a little iffy for me. It's something I couldn't identify in the story. Sometimes in other books, the characters will come out and say it throughout the novel but this was not the case. I seriously can't think of it, I'm completely stumped on that. But the plot wasn't really what made me like the book. This book didn't have any real "OMG!" factor, no cliff hangers or real suspense for me (thanks fantasy books, you have desensitized me!). I just found the pace was a good speed and it was interesting to watch the characters grow out of their shells, open their eyes and see the world and life in a different way.

I also found the ending really rushed. I was at the last maybe 30 pages and BOOM, four events happen at once. I seriously think the author just threw in those events to make the last pages not seem boring. Additionally the ending leaves a lot to the imagination (which I despise because my mind comes up with the weirdest things...). Honestly, don't throw those happenings in and leave the reader with no idea what happened afterwards.

So, as you can see this book wasn't my favourite but it was an interesting read. Maybe you will like it better than I did because you love horses, connect to the characters or like the story.

Terri says

I liked this book. It is another piece of literature that includes a GLBT character. I would not hesitate to recommend it not just a GLBT teen but to any teen. Though it contains drinking and drug use by both adults and teens, it is a cautionary tale in that regard. The character involved figures it out and has redeeming qualities. There really is no objectionable language and only some harmless kissing in the "sex" area. It would be appropriate for all grade levels. It is a coming-of-age tale of self-discovery that calls up all sorts of emotions and responses from the reader from the reader. The characters are memorable including from the two main characters, an unlikely pair, Alex and Cleo. They come from entirely different worlds and have very different personalities, yet become very good friends. I like that there are both flawed and strong, supportive adults in the story. I also enjoyed some of the minor characters. Placing the story in the world of horses - in both Western and dressage horsemanship is unique - and surprisingly interesting! All in all, this is a "good read."

Kristina says

I did enjoy this book, but perhaps it just wasn't the sort of book for me. The characters were interesting enough, especially our lead male. I enjoyed reading about the horses and the training bits, because they were knowledgeable and interesting to learn about. In fact, they made me want to get on a horse and try to learn something. However, I just wasn't getting as invested in the story line as I hoped that I'd be, and this had

nothing to do with the writing.

Ever since he was a small child, Alex Ford knew that he liked horses. So, when his father finally bought him one, he was a little beside himself. Even though his parent's went through a rough patch and eventually separated, it was his horse that kept him going. When he was on that horse, he didn't have to worry about anything else in the world. It was just him and the horse. Nobody could judge him, and it was best this way. From a young age Alex had always been fascinated with dressage. He finally works up the courage to seek out lessons, and eventually meets the spoiled and bratty Cleo O'Shea. Cleo's life hasn't exactly been a walk in the park either. Sure, her parents spoil her plenty. but they're never around. They just foot the bill and ship her off to places that are meant to fix her bad decision making. Little does anyone know, that this last place might actually help her gain some perspective.

The writing was nice. It was informative, especially the bits dealing with the horses, and it was very descriptive. The characters were described well enough and they did develop, but not in a mind-blowing realizational kind of way. That's not a strike against the writing, but I'll delve farther into that later. Honestly, I didn't find myself feeling attached to any of the characters, as much as I really wanted to. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the story was a bit blah, and I didn't feel like it was going anywhere. I mean, obviously things happened, but it just wasn't what I was expecting and there wasn't very much pizzazz.

Pacing-wise, things weren't bad. It wasn't that things were written slowly or all wonky, it was just that I wasn't feeling anything.

The characters were also nice and interesting enough. Their lives and backstories were described and detailed very nicely. Truly, we knew a lot about them, but even with all of this knowledge I still wasn't in overwhelming love with either of them. I don't know exactly what it was, but I just wasn't feeling either of them. They both also didn't seem to develop very much either. I found Alex, our lead male, interesting for his love and knowledge of horses, but also kind of boring. While he did come to terms with who he truly was and others found out about it, but it wasn't really because he told them. From the writing we could feel that he was a bit socially anxious and unknowledgable of what to say to most people, but even still, he didn't seem to do very much. It was a bit sad for me. I wanted him to do something, to say something, and he didn't. I was happy for him there in the final pages, but my mind still wasn't blown, you know?

Then, our lead female Cleo was a bit annoying. She was so jumpy and all over the place, that I never knew what the hell she was going to do next. Also, she was very spoiled and very bratty, and it really put me off of her character. Surely her character was supposed to come off as the uppity brat who was supposed to come into herself with being surrounded by hard workers and horses, but even there at the end, she was still uppity and annoying. While she did have a small realization, I still don't believe that she was really changed. I can't bring myself to believe it.

The synopsis makes this book sound like their meeting each other was vital and that they leaned on each other for support and everything. I didn't take this from the story at all. Sure, they did talk every now and again, and Alex's secret was revealed, but none of it seemed like integral character growth to me. They hung out, yes, but it didn't lead to any phenomenal realizations or confessions. To me they were more acquaintances than real friends as they're described as being in the book synopsis..

Overall, *Another Kind of Cowboy* was a decent read. The horses were fantastic, and the writing was nice. Sadly, the characters were a bit lackluster and didn't make me feel anything for them. Truly, this book was too blah and understimulating for my taste. There wasn't anything mind-blowingly awesome or any phenomenal realizations. Maybe that was the point. To illustrate that phenomenal things do not happen to

everybody. I don't know, but it just didn't do very much for me.

??~/5

Recommend?: If you're a big fan of horses.

Kate says

This book is super amazing! I still can't believe you can take this average setting - kind of nowheresville bc - and make the revelations about life and relationships and being yourself so relevant and heartbreaking. This book is cool and contemporary, and makes me laugh (and sometimes breaks my heart) the whole way through.

Md says

I'm not really a fan of alternating character pov but this one worked pretty well. Alex is a great kid who is dealing with both coming out and horse problems. His Turnip sounds like such a sweet horse and it also quite realistic. I wasn't as fond of Cleo's story but there is some growth there.

Jules says

I've had very, very bad experiences with a lot of queer-themed YA lit, and with YA stories about young women with gay friends -- at least one group of characters, either the women or the gay males, end up as caricatures. So I was pretty cautious going into this book. I am pleased to say that I thoroughly underestimated it.

The characters, first of all, were lovely -- Juby manages to walk the fine line of over-the-top ~characters~ without ever completely going overboard into cardboard. Alex and Cleo, of course, are wonderfully flawed, likeable characters, but so is much of the rest of the cast: Grace, who's a flake but genuinely loves and does right by her family, and even (especially?) Alex's father, who's trying his best to deal with things he really doesn't want to deal with, and who, moreover, I'm actually rooting for.

And Cleo. Oh, Cleo. I can't lie, I adored Cleo. I was deeply concerned, because she's a character who, in the wrong author's hands, could've been absolutely awful and flat-out offensive. Again, I vastly underestimated Juby. Cleo's a rare "poor little rich girl" who manages to be genuinely endearing -- who has an odd little sense of humor that shines when she's confident enough to let it do so, and who genuinely cares for other people but doesn't have any idea how to show that concern in any constructive way, and who learns lessons without Learning Lessons. Relatedly, another example of "things that nine times out of ten don't work for me but that Juby managed to pull off here": the flashback. We know, roughly, the backstory of how Cleo ended up at Stoneleigh, but when we finally get the flashback to Cleo and her father, his reaction to the incident that, for her, started it all, it actually works. More than works, it's downright *heartbreaking*: we know already that this desperate loneliness and sense of worthlessness was under the surface of her relationship with her

parents; Juby has done the work to build that already. But to see how it was made explicit in the flashback is an absolute punch in the gut. That, I think, is what's key, here: this flashback augments, rather than replacing, the work Juby's done with Cleo.

On a more cheerful note! There's a lovely dry humor to ANOTHER KIND OF COWBOY -- a humor that I really don't know that I'd have gotten at sixteen or seventeen, but that, ten years later, I absolutely love. It's almost Meg Cabot-ish (and reading the acknowledgments section, Juby got a fair bit of input from Cabot), and fills the PRINCESS DIARIES-shaped hole in my heart the way not even other Meg Cabot books have managed, barreling in and being not just a decent methadone, but a lovely little gem in its own right.

That said, what happened to Detroit??? DON'T LEAVE ME HANGING, JUBY, NOW I'M ALL WORRIED. I mean, no, obvs, as Alex says, he's not going to be sold for dog food, but he's SAD, he misses Alex and Turnip and saaaaaaad. :(Also I was kind of irritated by Alex's athletic younger sisters declaring that they were gay, as well, because OBVIOUSLY athletic girls who like martial arts are lesbians (says the gay girl with a black belt in tae kwon do), and had in fact been hoping that Cleo would realize that she was gay herself, but oh well. These were tiny little missteps in the wrapping up of a thoroughly enjoyable book, and this was actually one of the few books where I got it out of the library and promptly headed to Amazon to buy a copy, because I knew I'd want to read it again. There are only a very few books that have ever managed that, so well done, Juby, well done.

Jessica says

This book turned out a bit differently than I'd thought. It's about a young boy from a poor family who has always wanted a horse, not so he can be a cowboy, but so he can learn to ride English dressage. Meanwhile, his foil is a girl from a privileged family who is being punished for a rather large misdeed by having to go to boarding school and learn dressage (she is afraid of horses). There was loads of fun information about dressage, and the family dynamics on both sides were real and interesting. What made the book different from what I expected, is that it is most definitely not a romance. Most definitely not.

Jennifer Thorne says

This is a sweet, innocent story that very peripherally deals with some very deep, disturbing topics. I like the way the author deals with the different voices of the two main characters by giving them different depths of perspective- Cleo is first person and Alex is a slightly distant third. At times sad, and at others dry, witty and laugh-out-loud-worthy. You don't have to be a (former) horse-mad kid to enjoy this story (although, if you've had experience with horses it will add just that fillip of shadenfreude to enjoy Cleo's struggles with Tandava).
