

Heritage

Suzanne Buckner Knoebel

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A jumble of family ties betrayals and criminal behavior relating to racehorses form the basis of Suzanne Knoebel's novella *Heritage*. Protagonist Seth Stevens first becomes a player in the thoroughbred industry when his father drowns in the San Francisco Bay. He inherits lands in Kentucky and Indiana long ago granted to the Stevens family by an unspecified English king though in actuality no British royalty ever dispensed legal titles to those territories. The accident upsets Seth only marginally but he becomes quite emotional when that inheritance is put into jeopardy due to questions over his paternity.

Because of a rift with his malicious and promiscuous mother the protagonist briefly allows her to believe that he died along with his father. But as the author puts it "No one was ever free of their ancestry their dreams or obligations." The mother has been such a wayfarer during her marriage that a previously unmentioned half-brother named Tom pops up halfway into the story. Tom a physician telephones from his Doctors Without Borders assignment in Chad. Seth is so glad to hear from someone friendly that he gives Tom his choicest property right away.

Seth's girlfriend Cindy just happens to also be Tom's cousin. Cindy will never be Seth's wife though because he nobly refuses to saddle her with the product of his genes predisposed as they are toward a neuromuscular disease. She seeks solace in greener horse pastures. When suspicion arises that someone may be altering the outcomes of races through the use of illegal technology Seth is tapped to subtly investigate. Answers to the probe begin to turn up and so do a number of Cindy's closest associates. This could be a coincidental red herring or a sign of dark motivation entwined with someone's convoluted family interests.

Heritage has an alarming number of errors and inconsistencies for a novella. Many aspects don't work beginning with an irrelevant indulgent prologue. Set hundreds of years before the main action the prologue features ancestors of the story's lead character arriving at Jamestown settlement saying "Let's get started building a new nation" though the actual settlers were English in both self-identity and loyalty. The two prepare to go to the "Blue Grass" about 165 years before Daniel Boone actually arrived there.

Between problems with plot credibility historical inaccuracies and a lack of clean copy this book simply shows inadequate diligence. Knoebel the author of four previous novels and the former president of the American College of Cardiologists is capable of much better work as seen in the full-length novel *Destiny*. Readers should look for that instead to get their money's worth.

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