



The Whitefire Crossing

Courtney Schafer

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Dev is a smuggler with the perfect cover. He's in high demand as a guide for the caravans that carry legitimate goods from the city of Ninavel into the country of Alathia. The route through the Whitefire Mountains is treacherous, and Dev is one of the few climbers who knows how to cross them safely. With his skill and connections, it's easy enough to slip contraband charms from Ninavel - where any magic is fair game, no matter how dark - into Alathia, where most magic is outlawed.

But smuggling a few charms is one thing; smuggling a person through the warded Alathian border is near suicidal. Having made a promise to a dying friend, Dev is forced to take on a singularly dangerous cargo: Kiran. A young apprentice on the run from one of the most powerful mages in Ninavel, Kiran is desperate enough to pay a fortune to sneak into a country where discovery means certain execution - and he'll do whatever it takes to prevent Dev from finding out the terrible truth behind his getaway.

Yet Kiran isn't the only one harboring a deadly secret. Caught up in a web of subterfuge and dark magic, Dev and Kiran must find a way to trust each other - or face not only their own destruction, but that of the entire city of Ninavel.

The Whitefire Crossing Details

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From Reader Review The Whitefire Crossing for online ebook

Dan Schwent says

A smuggler named Dev is hired to escort a young man from Ninavel to Alathia, taking him through the treacherous Whitefire Mountains. But when the young man turns out to be an apprentice Blood Mage with an angry master on his backtrail, Dev gets a lot more than he bargained for...

I had this on my radar for about a year. When the ebook went on sale for \$1.99, I knew the time was right.

The Whitefire Crossing is a refreshing change of pace from most fantasy novels on the racks. Gone is the pseudo-medieval Europe setting and generic quest story. The setting of The Whitefire Crossing reminds me much more of the American West. Ninavel is an analog to Las Vegas, with its dependence on Mages for water and its lawlessness. The Whitefire mountains are a stand-in for the Rockies and the protected border of Alathia could easily represent the US-Mexican border.

Dev, smuggler with a heart of gold, reminds me of a mountain-climbing Han Solo, in it for the money but also having a kind streak. Kyran, apprentice Blood Mage, is a pretty believable pissed off young man wanting to escape his master's hold on him.

The magic system was pretty interesting. I like the idea of kids born with magical talents, The Taint, and losing them once they hit puberty. Dev's origins did a lot to explain why he was who he was. Ruslan was a pretty vile villain and Blood Mage reminds me of the dark side of the Force quite a bit.

The Whitefire Mountains setting did a lot to separate this one from the rest of the fantasy herd. I saw on Courtney Schafer's bio that she's into mountain climbing and her love of it shows through in the descriptions of mountain terrain, flora and fauna.

I liked the book quite a bit but it wasn't without its flaws. For one thing, the story took a nosedive for me at the 60% mark, once they left the Whitefire Mountains behind. A new threat was introduced and the story lost some of its luster. That's about my only complaint, though.

The Whitefire Crossing is the first book in a series but it stands pretty well on its own and was well worth the \$1.99 price tag I paid for it. Four out of five stars.

Blake Charlton says

4.5 stars. an excellent start to what promises to be an lively and epic series. the two PoV characters are likeable, vastly different. the interplay between the two as they cross a vivid mountain scape make the book come alive. in fact, the whitefire mountain range and the surrounding lands place such a vibrant role they become, in effect, as memorable as the characters.

my only qualm is with the magic system, which is to my tastes too soft. to be clear, there is nothing wrong with soft magical systems; some of the best fantasies out there use soft magic system (e.g. game of thrones, harry potter, lord of the rings). however, the lack of rules to magic, or in this case, the multiplicity of different rules, can lead to some confusion about what is possible. here characters sometimes had to explain why special circumstances of magic--for which the reader could not have had an appreciation--were necessary. i admit to being biased on this front, given that i write only hard magical systems. moreover, i

have in the past been guilty of requiring characters to explain the laws of magic, so i am perhaps hypersensitive to the issue. most importantly, though i object to the softness of the magic systems, it was not significant enough to detract from the book, which was wonderful fun.

i'm very excited for the next book in the series. highly recommended for any fan of epic fantasy.

T. Frohock says

First of all, I enjoyed this novel. I wouldn't be writing like this if I didn't. I mean, I really, really had a good time reading it, and hey, isn't that what it's all about?

So what can you expect from Schafer's debut? I know we all like to pigeon-hole books into categories. It's not a bad thing, it's just so we can have some kind of idea of what to expect. I think the best way to describe *The Whitefire Crossing* is to use Schafer's label of an "adventure fantasy." With a heavy emphasis on adventure.

I'm not going to rehash the blurb. You're smart. You read it before you ever scrolled down to the reviews and if you didn't, go read the blurb and come back. Otherwise, I'm going to talk to you like one fantasy reader to another.

I quit reading epic fantasy for a long time, mainly because the emphasis was on epic and the reader could have inserted cardboard standouts for the characters. Schafer brings in wonderful, full dimensional characters without missing a beat on the adventure side of the story. I was pulling for Dev and Kiran from page one.

Dev is a smuggler, who was abandoned to the streets as a child, and Schafer hits the right note with Dev's adult character and his myriad trust issues. Kiran, a mage of great power, was also abandoned, but he had the advantage of being taken into a structured home. The two characters counterbalance one another beautifully and Schafer leads them to trust one another with skill.

Schafer creates a believable world full of magic and danger. I especially liked the tension between the two rival countries of Ninavel and Alathia. The delicate balance between Ninavel and Alathia mirrored the complex relationship between Dev and Kiran throughout the novel.

It was just a wonderful read and I'm looking forward to the next book in her Shattered Sigil series, *The Tainted City*. I think you will be too.

Gavin says

This was a decent fantasy adventure story. The plot was interesting and the characters were a likeable enough bunch.

Dev is a guide who takes merchant caravans through the Whitefire Crossing mountain paths. The mountain crossing is what links the city state of Ninavel to the country of Alathia. Dev also has a secondary job as a smuggler. He mostly smuggles small charms into the restrictive Alathia. In need of money quickly Dev accepts a riskier than normal job. Instead of smuggling goods he agrees to smuggle a Ninavel noble to Alathia in disguise as his new apprentice. The runaway is Kyran. What Dev does not know is that Kyran has a few secrets of his own and is not just running away from his family, but from one of the most powerful

men in all of Ninavel and that the man will do anything to get him back!

The story was engaging without ever really being all that exciting. Both Dev and Kyran were likeable characters and I did enjoy watching their friendship grow as they learned more about each other.

The world was a small one but it was well developed. I'm on the fence about the magic system. It had an old school fantasy feel to it.

All in all this was an enjoyable read, but probably not a memorable one.

Rating: 3.5 stars.

Audio Note: This was narrated by Andy Caploe. His performance was nothing special but it was decent enough.

Jeff Salyards says

There are two things I really look for in any fiction: compelling characters that feel fleshed out, full of contradictory impulses, doubts, jealousies, and all the other human foible stuff; and a clever or unique take or treatment, an angle that separates it from everything else out there. The second is especially important in fantasy novels, which has a history almost as long as storytelling itself if you go back to Odysseus and Gilgamesh, so sometimes falls into the unpleasant habit of recycling tropes without bringing anything new to the table.

And I'm here to say, *The Whitefire Crossing*, the debut effort by Courtney Schafer, has both of those elements in spades. On its surface, it doesn't appear all crazy unusual. It has a scoundrel with a complicated history named Dev, who's a smuggler, but in the Locke Lamora mold as far as criminals go—he's clever, likable, and not completely amoral or bloodthirsty. His sections of the book are told in first person.

And then there's Kiran, a young secretive mage's apprentice who's on the run for reasons that aren't immediately clear. He needs to get out of the city of Ninavel and into the country of Alathia undetected. There are plenty of obstacles (most won't touch for fear of spoilage) but none greater than the inconvenient mountain range in between. In an interesting and bold choice (perhaps to help maintain the mystery for the bulk of the novel), Kiran's sections are presented in third person limited.

This violates a cardinal precept most creative writing instructors proclaim from on high: don't mix and match your POVS—pick one, and stick with it. So the story goes, mixing them confuses, frustrates, and potentially alienates readers. And while that's not the worst advice, Schafer pulls it off here. It does take a chapter or two to adjust to the shifts between the characters/alternating POVs, and while this helps maintain some of the secrets both from Dev and the reader, it seems a natural rather than contrived choice once you get used to it.

So, structurally you have something that sets the novel apart (and in a good way, since it works!). But once of the other things that immediately sets this novel apart is the smuggling itself—it requires traveling through the mountains, and while Dev is skilled at transporting gems and small charms over the mountains, getting an inexperienced person through the mountains is a different proposition.

The characters themselves are well-drawn, their exchanges believable, and they're both pretty well layered, as they each harbor their own secrets. But while there are plenty of other good things going on in the novel,

the mountain crossing itself is where it truly shines. Most authors, gloss over travel of this kind (ocean in pre-modern times, mountains anytime, desert pretty much any time, hellish swamps, etc.), and because most readers aren't experts on the topic, we grant authors a lot of latitude and suspend our disbelief, unless the writer clearly makes some horrible gaffes.

But when an author DOES know the terrain and territory, and is really familiar with all the challenges and dangers involved, it can turn a rote journey into a gripping one filled with tension and terrific realism. And boy, does Schafer know mountaineering. While the sections of the book that take place in urban environments are certainly handled well enough, the mountain crossing is absolutely fantastic in its rendering,

At the end of the day, the main characters are front and center, and they carry the novel, but the pure verisimilitude achieved in the mountaineering section really elevates this novel (pardon the pun) to another level.

I look forward to reading the next in the series. Although I'll be sad if the mountains don't feature prominently. Unless Schafer is also an expert in spelunking. Which is entirely possible.

Michael says

I've had this on my to be read pile for some time now, and thanks to being picked by a group I'm in I have a good excuse to move it to the top of the TBR pile. I'm excited to get started.

Mark Lawrence says

woah, I've been reading this book forever! Just as with my last 10 books this is a reflection of my stupidly small amount of free time! I'm now supposed to read 2 books by the 5th of May for a newspaper review - help!

Anyhow, putting the focus back on The Whitefire Crossing: This is an excellent fantasy tale with an original form and interesting setting. The story is told from two points of view, two halves of a developing friendship, one told in the first person and the other in third person. It's cool to see events interpreted by two very different characters.

The setting isn't so much new (it's mountains for a lot of the book) as given new meaning by one character's particular interest/skill in climbing (the author is given to scaling sheer rockfaces too and this expertise gives the climbing scenes great authenticity and fills them with enthusiasm.)

So we have a twisty plot with unexpected turns, an odd couple/buddy movie vibe, an interesting type of magic with lots of possibilities, and all sorts of problem solving going on. It's good, trust me.

There aren't any knights in shining armour, no sword fights, it's ... refreshing. I insist you try it.

Here are two reviews by bloggers I like to read:

<http://staffersmusings.blogspot.co.uk...>

<http://fantasybookcritic.blogspot.co....>

Book 2 is just as good - now waiting on the concluding volume of the trilogy.

Edit: I now have book 3! But my wife's stolen it as per normal.

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...

Kaila says

I honestly don't even know where to begin with this review. I LOVED this book. And if you look through my review history, you'll know that's a rarity. How do I even write 5-star reviews? I don't get much practice!

The story:

The story presented is a simple enough concept: Dev is a smuggler of magical goods. He crosses the Whitefire Mountains in order to smuggle these goods into a neighboring kingdom. This time, his cargo isn't merely a few trinkets or amulets, but a young man, Kiran. Hijinks ensue.

The characters:

Sounds simple, right? I thought it was going to be, too. I thought it was going to be formulaic, but immediately I was caught off guard - the narrator changed to Kiran, the young man paying to be smuggled across the border. Not only does it change to him, but it shifts from Dev's first person narration, to Kiran's third person. That means that while we get to listen in on Dev's thoughts and get to know him intimately, Kiran remains a mystery for much longer. I'm pretty sure Dev only swears in his thoughts, never out loud, but I can't find my notes now. Have some examples! These are each character's opening lines.

Dev:

I knew right from the moment I opened Bren's back room door this job was going to be trouble. See, here's how it should go: Bren, waiting, alone, with a packet on the table and my advance payment in his hand. Simple and no surprises. So when I saw Bren, waiting, not alone, and no package on the table, I got a little twitchy.

Kiran:

Kiran shifted from foot to foot beside a trellis covered in night-blooming jasmine. For the hundredth time, he stared up at the pattern of stars visible above Lizaveta's courtyard wall. The hour of his rendezvous with Dev was fast approaching. Yet without Lizaveta's promised aid, he dared not leave Ninaval.

You can already tell so much about the characters just from those few lines. Dev is abrupt and a little uncouth, Kiran is educated and cautious.

So just the simple act of reading is an enjoyable experience. You jump back and forth between the two narrators, but it is never jolting, it is always a fluid transition. You never get to see the same scene twice, for example. If something happens during Kiran's chapters, Dev's will pick up right where it left off.

This book was character driven. I fell instantly in love with both characters for completely different reasons, but I HAD to know what was going on.

The setting:

Like most fantasy novels, we're dropped in the middle of a setting and expected to play catch up. This novel REALLY expects you to play catch up, as the characters drop hints to their back story that we *do not get to see until they say it to each other*. This might drive you crazy. I thought it fit in *perfectly*. Why would Dev be thinking about his past in simple black and white terms for us to understand? That's not how thoughts work! We only get to see his past when he starts explaining it to Kiran.

A lot of fuss has been made about making the mountains in this book approachable. I live in the PAC NW so I get to see beautiful mountains a lot. Driving over the I-405 bridge on a clear day is an amazing treat, offering a view of both Mt. Hood and Mt. St. Helens. I think they are very pretty mountains.

And that's about where my knowledge of mountains ends!

Trust me, you do not need to know *anything* about mountains to still find them majestic, gigantic, and deadly in this book. They are the background for the journey part of the novel, but they are just as easy to imagine as any well-written fantasy setting.

Honestly, the first part of the book, being the actual "crossing" part, is a little slow. Everything I said earlier about loving that we don't get the character's pasts right away also means we have to stay interested without much to show for it for a while.

Trust me my friends, it is worth it!

The bottom line:

One of my favorite novels of the year so far. The character voices are unique and memorable, without any unnecessary romance, blood, or evilness mucking it up or forcing the characters into stupid decisions.

I loved it.

Justin says

<http://staffersmusings.blogspot.com/2...>

I always hear the phrase, "write what you know." My reaction has typically been who the hell would want to read a fantasy novel about bodybuilding, basketball, or energy policy? Of course the answer is - my mom. Thankfully for me, and everyone else who will have the pleasure of reading **The Whitefire Crossing**, Courtney Schafer's knowledge of mountaineering has a much broader appeal.

When I received my advanced copy of **Whitefire**, I took a minute to read about the author's background. As it turns out she's an avid rock climber with years of experience. She even has a picture of herself inverted on her "About" page on her website. I always find it difficult to walk the line between writing what I know and committing mental masturbation. Look how much I know about this! In a surprising development (notice the sarcasm here) Schafer is a better writer than I am. While she may have shared my same concerns, she shouldn't have.

Every second spent on rock climbing or related activities in **Whitefire** is a breath of fresh air. Her enthusiasm bleeds through the page infusing her main character Dev with vigor and life that couldn't have been accomplished any other way. It's clear that when Schafer put fingers to keys she was excited to write this story. This passion sustains the novel in its early stages and provides the momentum that carries it to a great conclusion.

Schafer's main character Dev is an outrider for a merchant caravan with a penchant for scaling difficult mountain sides. He's also a part time smuggler who gets talked into bringing the mage Kiran across the border that divides two nations with diametrically opposed viewpoints on the legality of magic. Kiran ends up posing as Dev's apprentice which provides Schafer adequate opportunities to wax about talus, pinions, scree, and a host of other climbing nuances.

Once Dev and Kiran get out of the mountains, the story is only half done. Schafer proves that she's not a one trick pony immediately delving into a far more gritty and urban setting. While some of the urban world felt flat in comparison to the lushness of the mountains, by the novels conclusion it starts to reveal itself in more depth opening up a host of avenues for future installments in the series.

I always find that when reading a review, one of the things I want to know about is point of view and how the novel handles it. In this case, **Whitefire** is written with two different narrative perspectives. Dev is given the first person treatment where Kiran's point of view is from the third person. If I'm being honest, I really struggled at times from the switching points of view. When I read my eyes train themselves on where to focus in sentences for pertinent information and when the switch occurs in point of view from first to third these information cues switch too. Ultimately, it was a small annoyance (and possibly exclusive only to me and the way I read) and given the inherent bias in a first person narrative getting an additional point of view was refreshing.

Equally refreshing was Schafer's decision to write two male protagonists. Every female fantasy reader is now saying - ugh, all fantasy books have male protagonists! And they'd be right. But not all male protagonists are written by women - in fact, very few are. The only thing rarer is male writers writing female protagonists. I can only hope that more male authors look to Schafer's cross gender example and attempt to write stronger women. There's no doubt a few male fantasy authors could use to imagine being in woman's shoes a little more and in their undergarments a little less.

Whitefire is one of the best novels I've read in 2011 (out of 38 so far, but who's counting?). What starts off as an adventure novel of rock climbing and trekking quickly turns into a full blown fantasy romp full of magic, ne'er-do-wells, and flawed heroes. I'm always nervous when I recommend a book this highly, especially when it doesn't do something that's going to change the genre. But what can I say? Schafer's debut novel totally charmed me and I can't wait to read her sequel, **The Tainted City**, due out late next year.

The Whitefire Crossing will be available in stores on August 16.

Bastard says

I posted my review on Only the Best, while Seak posted his on Bastard Books and other crap.

You read fantasy and you wish you could become a wizard detective, a clever thief, Superman...but, a rock-climber? That's precisely what I wished to become after I was done with Courtney Schafer's debut novel, *The Whitefire Crossing*. Not that the book itself was about rock-climbing, but the passages in which it was featured, were quite compelling. I'm scared shitless of heights, so one can dream. It's the first book in *The Shattered Sigil* series, followed by *The Tainted City* projected for a 2012 release.

Dev is an outrider for caravans as they travel from one city to another, particularly through the mountains in which he uses his mountaineering expertise to scout for any danger. He also takes smuggling jobs on the side. He's been lauded to be very good at his job, though a risk taker for his love and thrill of rock climbing, he's been risk averse on the smuggling jobs he takes; until now. Losing all his savings due to some circumstances, savings he needed to save the life of someone he cares and is responsible for, he's forced into smuggling a young man, Kiran, into a city with a heavily guarded border against his better judgement. Unbeknownst to him, Kiran is a mage on the run from a very powerful and dangerous mage who'd stop at nothing to get him back.

The book is narrated in both first and third person limited perspectives. First person belongs to Dev, while the third person limited belongs to Kiran. I personally love this exercise, while I know some will find the style not to their liking, but I thought it was handled quite well. The switches in POV are marked preceding the passages, so there will be no confusion. I don't think readers will have problem getting into rhythm if that is of concern.

The Whitefire Crossing was a real treat of a novel. I'm not a fan of books that spend a good portion travelling, yet this novel packs some good energy and enthusiasm along with a thriller element through this making it quite entertaining and fresh. It's in fact the best part of novel. Two thirds of the novel in or so, the energy of the book drops substantially as the action and movement slows down and the plot not as interesting as what came before it. Main problem for me that some of the "reveals" were already heavily foreshadowed and easily inferred so they lost the impact when introduced along with the emotional impact in our characters. Picks right back up towards the end though with some exciting turn of events followed by an aftermath portion which sets up the next stage of the series in a manner which is of great interest to me with some promise of political intrigue which I enjoy very much.

The novel itself can be characterized as one about choices and consequences, juxtaposed with themes of trust and freedom. Throughout the whole novel both of our main characters are presented with a myriad of choices, choices that weigh heavy on them. It's these dilemmas that drive the character conflicts throughout the novel. There's a lot of introspection in which these struggles are depicted, in particular when they involve questions of trust versus risking freedom. If that isn't enough, both characters are confined by self-interest agendas that may force them to betray each other, and themselves for that matter, as they view it as an inevitability of their situation charged by shackles from their past and potential future, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The book features plenty of magic use, and I thought some of it was quite interesting when considering the cost-benefit analysis of magic usage. Personally would like to see more details of how the magic works and what limits does it actually have. For purposes of what was featured in this novel, they're not that important but some events towards the end hints to me that they might be in the future. *The Whitefire Crossing* is limited in scope as plot needs demand, so worldbuilding suffers a bit because of it. But don't ignore that which was featured coming to life in the pages, particularly through the mountain trek. There's plenty of

anecdotal evidence throughout the novel though, which fuels the imagination about the possibilities in this world. Very much looking forward to how the boundaries of what we've been educated on expand in future installments.

Courtney Schafer has written a very promising debut which I highly recommend. Well written in an unorthodox style giving a fresh energy to some traditional ideas among the new. Main strength being the character conflicts presented throughout, and the enthusiastic and detailed narrative of mountaineering portions of the novel energized by Schafer's expertise of rock climbing. Plenty of action and a fast moving book which should keep readers entertained and turning the pages. Sequel of the novel is *The Tainted City*, very much looking forward to it, and hope many of you give this series a try.

Bibliotropic says

(Rereading because when you have a dream about resisting blood mages, what else are you supposed to read, hmm?)

There comes a time in every avid reader's life when their biggest regret about a book is just how long it took them to pick the thing up and open it to the first page. This is how it is with me. *The Whitefire Crossing* originally looked like it would be an enjoyable novel, but I had other books I wanted to read first. Then when it finally came time for me to read this one, I couldn't believe that I'd put it off for so long.

The Whitefire Crossing is a lovely combination of many traditional fantasy elements that made the genre so good in the first place. Smuggling, magic, secret identities, a dark mage coming after the heroes, a grand adventure and trek over dangerous mountains. Reading this made me feel like I was stepping back in time to the days when fantasy authors didn't feel the need to be gritty and edgy and dark just to catch somebody's attention. For all that the book wasn't exactly thin, I still tore through it, the sense of nostalgia and mystery and adventure driving me on far more effectively than reading yet another story about an assassin with a tragic past who's trying to kill hordes of zombies. It's no bad thing to work with the tried and true, and this is a fine example of that.

Schafer's world-building was exquisite, giving us a richly-developed culture and sub-cultures. Her knowledge of geography and mountaineering added fantastic detail that could have been glossed over without much problem, but its very presence gives you another way to learn and feel the world, to connect with the characters and really get into their heads and understand what they understand. There's established slang, herb lore, terminology, and best of all, Schafer didn't only throw in terms and plants and things that would be essential to the plot. The casual mention of various herbs, places, gods, and all sorts would prove to be another piece of the support structure that worked so well in turning this from a very good story to a amazing world.

And the characters! Schafer's characters were wonderful, complete and fleshed-out people with pasts and passions and complex psychologies. Kiran's reactions to the mage who trained him are a study in just how much hurt/comfort can screw a person you. Kiran hated him while still eager for his approval, clung to him for reassurance even while trying to fight his way free. Ruslan provided the standard abuse dynamic of hurting Kiran while still, in his twisted way, caring for him. And I don't doubt that it was actual affection that Ruslan felt. He himself was twisted enough to consider that being cruel to be kind was the best way to handle Kiran. The complex psyches that each and every character demonstrated were a treat to see, and it was easy to feel that they were real people instead of just names and descriptions on a page.

It's worth pointing out that this is Schafer's debut novel. *The Whitefire Crossing* would be notable enough if

it came from an author who had 5 books under their belt already, but that this is her first novel is an inspiration. If this is what she starts with, just imagine where she'll go, and what her literary journey will be like for the fans that I have no doubt she's going to be piling up as she goes.

I can't recommend this book enough, especially to people who grew up loving more traditional epic fantasy. More pleasing is the fact that while this is mostly a complete story in itself and could well have ended where it did, *The Whitefire Crossing* is just the first part of a series. And believe me, nothing will stop me from getting my hands on the second book as soon as I can. It won't be out until 2012, and I'm already counting down the days until I can continue the story of Dev and Kiran and the rich world they live in. Don't let a chance to read this book pass you by!

seak says

In 2007, a good friend of mine took me to a movie called **Into the Wild**. You may already know it, but the short version of this true story is that a guy on his way to Harvard and a hugely successful career decides to give up all his money and stuff and make his way to Alaska.

When I walked out, all I wanted to do was go on one big, epic adventure meeting random people, learning how to survive on leaves and grass (hehe) and sky and rainbows.

I think we ended up heading to Vegas a week later on a sweet road trip, nothing too life-changing though.

Now, this does have a point. When I finished **The Whitefire Crossing**, not only did I want to be able to wield sweet magical powers and amulets and charms and stuff, but I really wanted to go mountain climbing.

That's one of the greatest parts of this book, you can just feel the author's love of climbing and the outdoors and then she's created this amazing world around it that will suck you in right from the beginning.

Dev is a guide for caravans through the Whitefire mountains from Ninavel to the country of Alathia, but he also makes money on the side by smuggling. And by makes money on the side, I mean the side job is really guiding the caravans.

You see, the country of Alathia is a highly restrictive place when it comes to magic and you can make good money smuggling charms and magical artifacts through the border. If you get caught, though, you're in really big trouble...not to mention the border magic that detects and prevents magic from entering the country.

So his job ain't no walk in the park (wow, did I just write that?) on an average day, but this time he's agreed to smuggle something else into Alathia...a person. Not that easy to do, but still Dev isn't getting the whole story. Luckily for Kiran, the person to be smuggled, Dev's in dire need of money and the price is right. They head out on the first caravan of the season.

Just when you think things are going well, or about to go well, there is always another problem around the corner, whether it's the weather (go homophones!), people in the caravan, or other things I'm really trying not to spoil, but it's so cool, but I promise I won't spoil.

And the best part is it's not contrived. Each new problem is logical and fits so perfectly in the world Schafer's created. I've always been a fan of more magic over less (although *A Song of Ice and Fire* is still a favorite),

it's one of the reasons I love Erikson so much.

The city of Ninavel, where the story begins, was founded to be place for magicians to practice freely and some are even really scary. There are charms for most things such as healing or hurting things, there are all types of magicians, including the worst of which, bloodmages, and the story involves magic constantly.

Told in first person from Dev's point of view and then third person limited when it comes to Kiran, there are chapters, but each section is also divided up between (Dev) and (Kiran). I thought this was a bit odd at the beginning, but it proved to move the story along quite well and it worked, so who am I to say.

When To Read The Whitefire Crossing?

I'm going back to discussing when you should read a book. Sometimes you need to be in a certain mood to jump into a book no matter how good it is.

As you may have noticed, I really enjoyed myself with this one. **The Whitefire Crossing** is perfect if you want something straight-forward and fun, focused on only a few characters and filled with magic. Also, be ready to go on your own adventures, this may just be the incentive you need.

4 out of 5 Stars (Loved it)

I just got an interview up with the author herself.

Milda Page Runner says

4.5*

Loved it! It's been awhile since I had so much fun with epic fantasy. Story hooks you in with mystery from the get go and then keeps the suspense with the journey through treacherous mountain passes, murder, blood magic, twists and betrayals, politics and budding friendship. Smooth and flowing prose without unnecessary flourishes or philosophising; there is no romance and it's not too dark – all focus is to action adventure and characterisation. Very engaging book with likeable characters and good pacing.

It is clear that author has first-hand experience in rock climbing. Passion for the mountains is palpable and along with the knowledge adds an authentic touch to this story. Adventures there felt so real I was exhausted and exhilarated just as the characters! :)

Highly recommended for anyone who likes fantasy. A must read for people who love mountains.

Nimrod Daniel says

The Whitefire Crossing is a very enjoyable adventure-fantasy read, that is somewhere between epic fantasy and sword & sorcery. It starts more like a S&S novel but gets a lot of epic fantasy flavors as you go along. Fantasy enthusiasts who like these sub-genres might find it to their liking. I definitely count myself as one of

them :)

Setting - the setting is pretty interesting, and mainly focuses on two cities and the mountains between them. While one city allows the use of magic with almost no limitations, the other city has very strict rules against any use of magic beyond very simple charms. These rules are enforced by pretty strong magic wards. Yeah, you got it right, they have mages that enforce the rules against the use of magic :).

As for the mountains - it's very clear that mountaineering is more than just a hobby for the author. Writing about things you love is always a good recipe for a great outcome, and I liked that part. There's some added value for the readers, as they get a glimpse into this world, that's at least how see it.

Magic system - the magic system is intriguing and it seems like more will be revealed in the following books, as there are still a few types of mages that we're not familiar with yet. Plus, there's another type of magic that only children can use. Unfortunately for those kids who can tap this special power - they lose it on puberty, which is in contrast to what we're familiar with in the genre as magic users gain more power as they get older. That puts those children in a very interesting situation when they get older and lose their power. Ask yourself, how losing a special power would affect you psychologically?

Characterization - the characterization is really good and is definitely among Courtney's strengths as an author. Dev and Kiran, our two main characters, are very-well portrayed characters and both are also very compelling. The supporting cast of characters were also well-drawn and feel quite real.

Plot - The plot is quite intriguing with a few twists that I liked, especially one surprising plot-twist towards the ending. More than that, the book has a satisfying ending and leaves a few loose ends that make you curious to know how things will turn for Dev and Kiran.

Writing-style - the writing-style is very engaging and fun to read. Most fantasy books have a third person narrative (excluding UF and YA, I guess), but never combine first and third person narrative in one book. Here we see a different approach. Kiran's POV is written in a third person narrative, while Dev's POV is written is a first person narrative. This approach works really good here, and this did a great service to the plot, as it keeps Kiran's secrets not only from Dev but also from the reader. The switch between the two narratives felt very natural to me, so there's nothing confusing here.

All in all, it's a good debut, that would appeal to S&S/epic fantasy enthusiasts. I really liked it, and I'm looking forward to reading book 2 :)

4-4.25/5

Note: if you live outside of North-America then you can get the ebook only directly from the author only (at least for now), that's what I did :) . You can find her email address on her site.

Liviu says

I finished the novel and while the style flowed well and the book makes you want to turn the pages and see what happens, I ultimately did not care that much about it.

To be honest this is a book I would have taken a look and after the first page said, nice prose but I have 50 or more books of much higher interest and put it down, but Robert's review (my coeditor at FBC) made me curious so i gave it a higher priority. In the end as mentioned I enjoyed it more than i expected but it never rose to the level of something like Sword of Fire and sea by Erin Hoffman to which this book has some

similarities in style and content - frantic action, fasten your seat belt and ride but do not think too deeply and so much magic to make any consistency/possibility of taking the story seriously, moot.

In structure there are also similarities to the superb S. Monette Melusine series but this book is very light and fluffy and you cannot really take the dark parts seriously, the tension/believability is not there.

All in all if you want a fast adventure with lots of magic, this one may be for you and while considering the semi-cliffhanger ending I may take a look at the second book, I do not feel a particular urge to do so since I simply do not care enough to see where the characters go from here

As compared to recent fantasy reads, I definitely enjoyed this more than Prince of Thorns and a little less than Heart of Iron which despite its very YA second half action had a very believable and enchanting voice, while here Dev is a by the numbers character I've seen a million times before, Kiran same though he gets a little more interesting as the story goes, while the baddies are really caricatures - Ruslan for example is a very pale imitation of Malkar, Felix's "mentor" and the uber bad guy in Melusine...
