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Winter Circuit (Show Circuit Series -- Book 2) (The Show Circuit)



Synopsis

WARNING: CONTAINS MATURE CONTENT. RECOMMENDED FOR AGE 16+ After the Vermont Summer Circuit, Hannah Waer said good-bye to her first love, grand prix rider Chris Kern, and headed off to college. But once she's there, she can't stop thinking about Chris competing in Florida all winter along with his ex girlfriend, Mary Beth. Hannah is determined to join them in Wellington for the Winter Circuit, but when she finally gets there, it's not everything she hoped it would be. Chris is busy and stressed, trying to rebuild his career. Meanwhile, the frustratingly charming and beautiful Mary Beth seems set on winning Chris back. Zoe Tramell is in over her head with some seriously bad people and might need Hannah's help if Hannah is willing to forgive Zoe enough to help her. And then there's Dakota, the difficult, young junior rider Hannah is supposed to be taking care of who wears Louboutin shoes, barks orders at Hannah, and chases after older guys. The Winter Circuit is the pinnacle of the country's glamorous show jumping circuit it's also where Hannah, Chris, and Zoe must face big questions of what's next for them in life and how far they're willing to go to get there.

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Customer Reviews

One of the things I like the most about Kim Ablon Whitney's books is the realism that runs through them. These are not horse stories for the faint-hearted, and if you're looking for your fairytale ending, you might want to look elsewhere. That's not to say that her books aren't worth reading, because they definitely are! But I often find that the more experienced in the actual horse industry that a writer is, the less likely they are to write the kind of horse stories we are used to reading - where a young girl with a rejected, half-starved horse grows up to beat all the horrible rich people and win the Olympics, etc. I'm tired of those books, and clearly so is Kim, because this book is definitely not telling that kind of story. The characters in *Winter Circuit* are all people who could easily step out of the pages of this novel and onto the show grounds at any major show in North America, and nobody would blink an eye. They are very, very human and that means they're not always smart, or sensible, or even likeable. They do stupid things, and make stupid decisions, and behave in inappropriate and sometimes cringe-worthy ways. But that's who they are. I have to admit that I didn't exactly fall in love with Hannah in this book, but everything that she did made sense for who she is. She starts the book feeling insecure and mildly depressed, and she runs back to her boyfriend Chris, hoping that being around him will fix her. He doesn't, because he can't. He's far too busy trying to get his own life on track to deal with Hannah's mood swings, and she's far too insecure in herself to see that as reality, not rejection. This isn't a new side of Hannah - it's been there all along. Her mother suffers from severe anxiety, and Hannah's feelings of failure as explored in *Summer Circuit* (book 1) have long been leading her in this direction. Coming of age isn't pretty, and it isn't glamorous. Sometimes lessons have to be learned the hard way, and boy does Hannah find that out first-hand. (A quick shout out to Hannah's father, who is probably my favourite character. That is one sensible, smart man. Respect.) As for the ending - as far as I'm concerned, this book ended in the right place, and in the right way. It wasn't a fairytale, but neither is life, and being in love with someone is sometimes not enough to make it work forever. It's an ending that will stay with the reader long after they finish the book, whether they liked it or not at the time. Looking forward to book 3!

After finishing *Summer Circuit*, I went right into this one. What a joy to find an author who is not only a very good writer, but who knows the intricacies and details of the hunter/jumper show world in

such depth, and is willing to share them. I think anyone at all interested in horses, or who likes realistic contemporary coming-of-age stories, would enjoy this book. But for this reader, as someone who has participated in this sport at lower levels for many years, it was fascinating, and felt absolutely spot-on realistic in every way. While sympathetic to Hannah's (the main character's) journey, here the realistic nature of the writing made it difficult to really like her, although I did root for her, and everything she (and every other character) went through was completely believable. The author captured well how someone with Hannah's age and experience might think and act, and fortunately, Hannah does have a character arc, so by the end of the book, the reader feels she is learning and growing as a person. I will absolutely continue to read all of Kim Albon Whitney's published books for new adults and children, but I would also love to see what she would do with a more mature protagonist - perhaps a judge or steward - so we could get inside that aspect of the show world as well, while the author applies her considerable talents for character development and storytelling to a somewhat more adult set of challenges.

I absolutely loved this book. Unfortunately, I don't have the funds to spend the winter in Wellington, so reading this book was the next best thing! The details about the types of riders you might encounter, the different types of horse show money, the politics of monitoring the different in-gates, even the logistics of getting to the show grounds - all of them just felt so realistic. Even the description of the food and vendors! The book is also deliciously funny without being mean-spirited about some of the wealth that inevitably is involved showing on the A-circuit. Hannah's emotional struggles are also very believable. She is a shy young woman who finally experienced her sexual awakening right before leaving for college. This results in her becoming obsessed with her absent boyfriend. I think I am a bit less in love with Chris Kern than Hannah is but I enjoy accompanying her on her emotional journey as she tries to find her way in the world and a more independent and assured sense of her identity.

I'm so torn on this book. I loved Summer Circuit and devoured it. Winter Circuit is definitely darker and if the author's intention is to make you remember fondly Summer Circuit as the main character does - she's dead on. One of the other reviewers is right, this book will make you think to a certain degree whether you like it or not. I'm a little sad at how dysfunctional the Chris/Hannah relationship became without it being clear to the reader that it was dysfunctional from both sides. Too many girls get into the situation of thinking that the guy they are dating defines them and their life and I really

didn't like it seeing portrayed in this book without a clear caveat. Instead the book ends with the taste that everything that went wrong was Hannah's "fault" and she needed to make a big sacrifice to prove she was sorry but would not change the course of the relationship going forward. Of course, everything is always very realistic in Kim Ablon Whitney's books and that's why I love them. I am always going to be a little sad that the young rider Hannah was minding for the summer wasn't the girl from Blue Ribbons (because that book tears me open a little bit every time I think about it) but that's ok :)

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