

SOUL'S FIRE
THE NORTHWOMEN SAGAS



SUSAN FANETTI

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Astrid has been a warrior since the day she was old enough to make the choice to live and die with an axe in her hand. She is strong and stoic, powerful and brave, and she has the life she desires, free of complications and distractions.

She is a shieldmaiden, and that is all she wishes to be.

She has been the strong right hand of her jarl since the day they and their allies overthrew the cruel Jarl Åke. Jarl Leif is mighty and honorable, and with Astrid's help, he has brought great prosperity to their people. Every summer, the raiders sail into new lands, traveling farther and farther, claiming treasure to enrich their people. They meet little resistance from the rulers or the people of these strange worlds.

Until they land in a country whose king has learned the lessons of his neighbors and meets the raiders with a cunning and brutality that matches their own. In that clash, and after it, Astrid's shieldmaiden's strength and will is put to the harshest tests.

Leofric is the second son of a king. Without the expectations or attention imposed on his older brother, he is free to live more or less as he chooses. But he is a seasoned warrior and not half so dissolute as his reputation suggests. When his father and brother seek to salve their rage by torturing a captive barbarian woman, Leofric sees their action for the evil it is and does all he can to save her, and then to heal her.

To love her had not been part of his plan.

The captive is strong and stoic, powerful and brave. She is a marvel unlike any woman he's ever known. But if she is to live, she must learn the ways of his world. If she is to thrive, she must cast aside what she was and become something new. Leofric would give her all that he has and more, but there is one thing he cannot offer.

His world has no word for shieldmaiden.

Note: Explicit sex and violence. Dark themes.

Soul's Fire Details

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From Reader Review Soul's Fire for online ebook

Pam Godwin says

This is by far my favorite book in the series. The soul-gutting events that unfold ripped me apart. The world-building and character depth submersed me in the horrific beauty of the era. And the love story is one I'll never forget. It has the perfect amount of violence and devastation and sexy romance. One of the best books I've ever read.

Maria11 says

Heart wrenching as always

Another bleed out of the soul book. The story is full of emotion and runs you the gambit of feelings.

Wow I never finish one of the northwomen books without being touched by the growth of each character in ways that I wish I could grow.

Forgiveness and acceptance are very hard thing to learn and at times to put into action. Perceiving something that is unforgivable to you in so many ways, yet putting it behind you offering up clear and honest forgiveness/regret and trying to make things right in spite of yourself. That is awe inspiring to me.

The characters put that into action throughout. They also learned that what the perceived as being weak is really being stronger then you have ever known. Also what is deemed bad or different doesn't mean evil or bad.

There are some dark things in this story and I think the author was so right when she offered at the beginning; that it isn't about the darkness that happened it is about what takes place after that needs the details.

Amy | Foxy Blogs says

SOUL'S FIRE is a story that won't let you go. I've been thinking about it non-stop. Shortly after I finished I quickly googled *Vikings the TV show* on the History channel. I've never seen it but I did spend some time watching some clips on YouTube. Now, I'm wishing I could binge watch the show.

At the amount of feels I'm having since I finished *Soul's Fire* I might transport myself back into the Viking Age and become a Shieldmaiden. Actually, that's not true. *Soul's Fire* had some pretty brutal and savage scenes. I know I'm not cut from the same cloth as a shieldmaiden to handle that kind of treatment.

One driving force in the beginning of *Soul's Fire* is **revenge**. A loved one is wrongly killed and a war is waged to avenge that death. The king has come up with a savage plan to right a wrong against the Vikings. **Astrid** is stolen and made to pay the price for what her people did to the king's family. Astrid is one strong shieldmaiden because what she endured is beyond comprehension.

” Did love always change a person so completely? Or had she been changed already, in the black place, and simply loved the man who'd saved her from it?”

The king's second son, **Leofric**, was not behind the treatment of the prisoner. He takes it upon himself to save her from that hell and use her for the good of the kingdom. His plan is to have her learn their ways and language and then have her give them inside info on how the Vikings world worked. What he didn't expect while caring for her was to fall in love with her.

Soul's Fire is set during the Viking Age. It's the third book in Northwomen Sagas and the main characters in the previous books play a role in Soul's Fire. To grasp the overall arc of this series it's recommended you read them in sequential order.

Complimentary copy in exchange for an honest review.

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Liz says

(I apologise for the shouty caps.)

IT'S SO GOOD TO BE BACK IN THE VIKING WORLD AGAIN!

I had my shield and armor at the ready, and I DEMOLISHED Soul's Fire. My word, this series HAS ME!. It has to be my all time favourite series, by far. AND I JUST WANT TO SHOUT IT FROM THE ROOF TOPS!. More people need to read this!, honestly, it's EVERYTHING.

Now, I'm not usually one for a book that makes me cry, did this story make me cry?...yes, numerous times, did I enjoy it?...yes. I cried at least 3 times, and I ENJOYED IT!. My goodness the shore scene, that was heartbreaking. Absolutely heartbreaking. Astrid shows SO much strength in this, she just powers through anything thrown at her...until she breaks.

Leofric, oh Leofric, you're just so swoon worthy, you picked her up when she needed it the most... and managed to keep your head atop your shoulders.

An unlikely duo, who faced tragedy, and let's face it some pretty gruesome punishment. But along the way, they found something that neither was expecting, forgiveness. But forgiveness isn't granted over night, and people need to atone for their sins. Buckle in for one hell of a journey.

Leif/Vali/Brenna/Olga/Astrid/Leofric, it's been a pleasure.

It felt like the end of this series in a way. I just hope that I'm wrong.

[image error]

Alissa says

Oh, this book...

Astrid is like most of Susan Fanetti's female characters, especially in this series: courageous, powerful, fearless - a true force. She is the product of how she was raised and the world she lives in. She is faithful to her core, loyal as f*ck, and fights for who and what she believes in. A true warrior. Then, while out on a raid, things don't go as planned, and she is forced to survive the unthinkable.

"She would not be able to fight forever. But she would not be broken."

This part was hard to read because the suffering people caused others to go through back then (and some that still happens today) was beyond savage and unimaginable. But SF writes these brutal scenes in a way that instead of dragging out the details and making it feel gratuitous, it serves only to reinforce your deep respect, admiration and awe of Astrid for all that she goes through and the survivor she is.

"It wasn't pain that had broken her. It was tenderness."

Leofric - the way he is able to really see her, to accept her, to learn about her, to understand her; how he does everything he can to support her and fight for her. He is so in tune with her and loves her unconditionally. He is willing to set aside his own needs, his own pride, his own fears, time and time again, to help her find her way.

"People at court often remarked that Astrid would have been a spectacularly beautiful woman if not for all her scars. Leofric thought she was spectacularly beautiful because of them."

This book was really special, and I can't wait to read Solveig's story, though I'm so sad it will bring this series to an end. :-(

Bev says

5+ mindblowing stars.

Wow! Just WOW. I was so, so scared to start this because I know that SF doesn't pull any punches with her

writing, and she certainly doesn't with this series. And my god, she didn't let me down with Soul's Fire. Instead she totally blew my mind and managed to pull every emotion from shock, horror and despair at Astrid's plight through to hope, love, triumph, happiness and peace for our Astrid. It. Was. Magnificent!!

Astrid is hands down the BEST heroine I've ever had the pleasure to read about, her strength, courage, determination and fortitude left me in total awe. That a woman should endure and suffer such hideous torture and brutalisation from another human being is beyond comprehension. SF has such a gift with words, and as much as I didn't want to read what she endured I couldn't put the book down because there's so much truth in her fiction. Yes it was hard to read at times but SF has done it so well that it never felt gratuitous but instead necessary to the story.

And then we get to Leofric. OMG the love that man had for Astrid was (I'm going to use the M word again people!!) Magnificent. He was totally gone for her, gave himself to her totally and unconditionally. He was kind, compassionate, supportive, patient ... sigh ... I could go on and on. If ever two characters were perfect for each other it's Astrid and Leofric.

This truly was an amazing read that's left me in one hella book hangover. This one is going straight on my 2017 favourites shelf and is so going to be one of my top reads for 2017. I read a lot, so that's saying something.

Stacie says

5+"Astrid, of the North" Stars!

Absolutely brilliant! Wow, wow, wow. This book took me through so many emotions. Wonder, fear, anger, sadness, anger again, disgust, repugnant, anxiety, hope, confusion, passion, elation, relief, happiness, love.

Astrid is my hero and the star of this show! This woman was forged in fire. I love everything about her, from the beginning to the end. Strong doesn't even begin to do her justice. She is strong in every sense of the word; body, heart, mind and soul. Leofric completely captured my heart. He is the best kind of book hero. He is a leader. He's smart, compassionate, understanding, self sacrificing. Strong willed, calculating. He loved her unconditionally and without reservation. Love, love love him. Both these characters are freaking fantastic!

Every word of this book seems so genuine and true. Susan Fanetti, with this Northwomen Sage, has been able to complete capture me and transport me to this extremely brutal, but beautiful world she has created. From scenery to clothing, daily life, religious practices, it all feels so authentic to the time, to me. Not that I'd actually know for sure. But the characters feel like real people. All their trials, and tribulations; triumphs, and heartbreak; perseverance, and love all feel so real. I loved it all. Even the extremely hard parts.

About those hard parts. They are more than hard... from the author:

CONTENT WARNING *The Northwomen Sagas takes place in a brutal, combative world, and, as is sadly always the case, women in such a world suffer in particular ways. The leads of these stories experience things that reflect the realities for women during this period of history. Even by the harsh standards of this series, Astrid's story gets quite dark. She suffers badly through a few chapters. It is always my tendency not*

to go into much specific detail about the hard things that happen while they are happening and instead focus on the aftermath, and that is the case here. I don't dwell long on such events, but I do dwell on their consequences. Soul's Fire is a romance, and Astrid's story ends happily, but if you thought God's Eye and Heart's Ease had some tough moments to deal with, this one will likely be even tougher. So have your shield and armor at the ready.

So, you've been warned. BUT! If you are looking for a true love story, with strong complex characters, this book is well worth the dark, if you think you can handle it. So, strap on your Shieldmaiden armor and dive into this brutal, violent, but when it comes to love, beautiful, beautiful world.

I think this book could be read as a standalone. This story starts five years after Heart's Ease (book 2). What you would miss is background on side characters from the North, but I believe you can catch on easily. However, I highly, highly recommend God's Eye (book 1) because it is freaking fantastic!! And I also liked Heart's Ease too. Happy reading!!!

Paula says

Susan continues to blow me away with her words.

Stephanie says

I love this series. This book was really all about Astrid. As much as I liked Leofric, this was Astrid's show and she was the star. She was a strong, amazing woman. This book was not easy to read. There were so many difficult things that Astrid went through, and it was heartbreaking, but she was awesome and the two of them were terrific together. I don't even have adequate words for how much I love this series, and it is not in my normal type of reads at all. I am already sad that there is only one more book in the series. If you still haven't ready God's Eye (book 1), go.... read it... now!

Judy.Ca says

5+* for Astrid's story. As hard as it was to take at times, this was an amazing journey. The triumph of a true warrior!

Danielle Thomas says

Susan Fanetti has outdone herself once again!

Soul's Fire, the third book of her Northwomen Sagas is the best yet. When she announced she was writing a Viking series about Shield Maidens I was surprised. I had mixed feelings about reading a historical novel. There was a time when all I read were historical novels. Lords, Ladies, pirates, rebels, highlanders, Vikings. If it was set in the past and had a damsel in distress, I was all over it. So I went into this series rather halfheartedly. Trusting that I loved every other book she's written, how could I not like these? Well it was a

gamble I won.

I enjoyed the first two books in this series, God's Eye and Heart's Ease. Her world building and knowledge of Norse culture are thorough. Her research shows but she doesn't overwhelm us with it. Both prior books in this series also had strong female protagonists.

Soul's Fire is Astrid's story. We first met her in God's Eye. She's strong, in body and mind. Fierce, physically tough, and independent, her whole being, her self image, the core of who she is, is a Shield Maiden. A true warrior. She's equal to any man, and in Viking society that's respected. She has earned her place as her Jarl's second. But Astrid... she broke my heart. From the outset of the book we feel Astrid's restlessness, her discontent, though she's oblivious to it. She's hard, brusque and impatient with her comrades. To her, they seem to have different priorities. They have mates and children. She can't understand it. She's somewhat contemptuous of their happiness, judging it's made them soft and vulnerable.

Now this is where we get what I think of as the Fanetti treatment. The total deconstruction of someone's id. You know, the essence of what makes you, well you know, you. This story was deep. The total deconstruction of a strong woman's psyche. I'm not minimizing the physical trauma, it was heinous. The torture brutal. I can say that, while assuring you that Susan Fanetti is so good at her craft she conveys this physical torture without gory drawn out scenes. We live Astrid's pain and bafflement without feeling like we've spent the afternoon with Hannibal Lechter.

The emotional devastation is extremely well written. Susan Fanetti's understanding of the essence of someone's soul is remarkable. Her talent continues to grow, getting better and better. Her reconstructing of Astrid was brilliant. Without using any cliché plot devices, Astrid rises from the pits of hell. With the help of Leofric. His perspective, his motivations, his helplessness as he tries to work out the puzzle that is Astrid is riveting. His kindness and intuitive, if painful understanding of just what has been done to Astrid is heartbreak. Leofric's strength, both emotional and physical is intrinsic in her reconstruction. To not understand love, of any sort, from any relationship - that touched me.

When I read Susan Fanetti's books, I want to give them my full attention. She draws you in with superb writing. Her main and supporting characters become living, breathing beings. They're complex, intelligent and interesting, bordering on intellectual. Their characteristics and personalities resonate. It was evident to me that Astrid was special to her. Leofric has joined Luca, Badger, and Nolan on my special list of Fanetti men. Her capturing of his perspective, the way she did with Luca Pagano from her novel Touch was fascinating and believable.

As always, after I read one of her books, I'll be thinking about it for days after I finish it and that is priceless.

Friday, February 3, 2017

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Rebecca says

3.5 STARS

I enjoyed Astrid's story, but it did not feel as compelling as the first two books. I think it was in large part because of the new setting and the absence of the other leading female characters.

Still a great series, and I'll definitely read the finale.

boogenhagen says

I think I am just a bit too bloodthirsty to be happy about the way this ended. I loved Astrid, tolerated Leofric and wanted to see the death, destruction after much pillaging and the beheading of pretty much everyone in England.

Leofric POS father should have been staked, maybe blood eagled, and I just can't find it in me to forgive his pious crap or his actions. I understood why Astrid chose the way she did, but it ended way too kumbaya and holding hands for me. In the previous books there was sense of justice served and I did not feel that here.

The story is well written and excellent in that regard, I just don't like a lot of the choices and I really wanted to see a lot more death and destruction outside of the horrific abuse that Astrid endured. Leofric should have suffered for his part more and while Astrid was a wonderful character, she got devolved in my POV and deserved a ton better.

This one was just okay for me, but I still look forward to further books in the series and I am glad the Northmen got a settlement at least.

TeriLyn says

5 "Would she know how to get there?" Stars

Susan Fanetti once again satisfies with her no-holds-barred story telling. It's fitting for you to know that Vikings aren't in my wheelhouse but I slip so easily into Fanetti's Viking world that I forget why I've not been more into this culture before. That being said, for those of you who follow my reviews know that this author most definitely IS in my wheelhouse. With each new release comes a new sense of awe in her delivery of powerful stories. I find myself short of words and new explanations to adequately review her work so I'll stick with what I love about her stories like the broken record I am.

Strong. Women. Susan Fanetti loves women of strength. What's unique about her love shows in the multitude of ways she portrays strength and twists it to mean even more than it did when her stories start. She dives deep into the unforgiving depths of darkness. And she does it without apology. A true test of a woman's strength stems from how she responds in her darkest hour. It's a lesson that's as old and true as time. It's a real life theme ever present in Susan Fanetti's stories that I take with me, deeper into my heart, after each book she writes. To always remember my own strength will shine out of shadows I face. It's a belief we must hold onto and maintain. We must persevere.

With that, *Soul's Fire* to me was completely Astrid's story. Yes, it's a romance so don't worry. And it's a beautiful one at that. But more so than the others in this Northwomen Sagas series I felt as though reading Astrid's tale was a true calling to her power and all she could be even as she faced severe darkness, even if she didn't understand her own desires in embracing change. She made her own way with her own heart in times when she had desperate limitations. The romance was a subtlety connecting her and humanizing her more fully throughout the book. The complete maturation of Astrid and the strength of her spirit are the embodiment. She's a warrior at heart, through every facet of her life (this was the absolute key for me, recognizing warriors come in all forms and how Astrid shows us all her warrior sides), and Fanetti let her shine through the shadows.

Leofric. Um, yeah. Leofric. He rivals other heroes in his acute awareness of Astrid. Of her strength and courage. His acceptance makes him vulnerable in such a way that we want him to love us and believe in us. To see our struggles and bravery. His tenacity leaps from the pages and had me embracing him just as much.

The setting and depictions within the pages of the book as well as the culture provide an even richer reading experience. As I stated above I know next to nothing of Vikings or Norse mythology and I never feel out of the loop while reading these books. The intelligent writing of Fanetti allows for a novice Viking fan like myself to still be immersed within the culture. And to Google and learn more if I need clarification. It's obvious the amount of time and care spent in crafting this Viking world and it helps readers fully embrace it.

Soul's Fire is part of series. I recommend reading the series in its entirety to gain the full insight and impact of the world Fanetti has created.

Lisa - (Aussie Girl) says

So glad that Fanetti's back with this instalment of her Northwomen Sagas. Strong heroine, great relationship development and an interesting tale of a woman's place in different cultures. Who knew that the work/family balance was an issue as far back as the Dark Ages!
