



The Guardian

Mary Calmes

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Jude Shea's life is turned upside down when he rescues a dog he names Joe. Even though Jude has enough trouble taking care of himself-he doesn't even have a job-he can't resist the animal that needs him. Then one night, a man shows up on his doorstep looking to claim Jude's new companion. As they run from a surprise attack, Jude finds out that "Joe" is not what he seems. Eoin Thral is a guardian from an alternate dimension, and once he leads Jude through the veil that separates their worlds, he transforms into a handsome hulk of a man known for his fighting skills, not the capacity for love. Jude finds himself immersed in Eoin's world, and he's faced with the fight of his life to secure a happy future for them both.

The Guardian Details

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Joyfully Jay says

A Joyfully Jay review.

3.5 stars

The Guardian requires a significant amount of “just go with it” because the plot is absurd even for a paranormal. There’s shifting, inter-dimensional travel, fated mates, and that’s really just the first third of the book. Really this is one of The Guardian’s biggest issues — it tries too hard to be too many things. Instead of picking one paranormal genre to focus on, The Guardian wants to be all of them, or least a lot of them.

Jude is relatively easy for readers to relate to and he seems like an average Joe, who just happens to accept whatever weird stuff comes his way. He’s been hurt badly by his ex and been forced to leave his job as a result. Eoin is an Alpha male to the extreme, all chest thumping and territory claiming. Jude seems to enjoy it, but it was so excessive that I didn’t find it particularly endearing. The author has done a good job setting at least a basic sense of time and place for Eoin’s realm (think medieval Scotland) and the characters from this world speak oddly, at least to us. This makes reading the conversations a little tiresome, but it does help to give the book a real sense of personality.

Read Sue’s review in its entirety here.

Lightreads says

Abandoned at 60%. I am far too exhausted to work up the outrage this book deserves, so let's do this the quick and clean way.

Blah blah blah gay romance where the ad executive saves a giant dog from a fight, except the giant dog is actually a hot dude from a fantasy dimension.

Item the first: The first time they hook up, hot dude from fantasy land is startled to discover, mid sex act, that the protagonist is willing. This apparently never having happened to him before.

Item the second: Shortly thereafter, the protagonist meets up with the group of women who were hot fantasy dude's previous sexual partners (for financial remuneration). And these ladies elucidate that, indeed, hot fantasy dude is sexually brutal and violent, that it was rape at least some of the time, and that one of them frequently believed that he would kill her during sex.

...

You know how I often say that I don't care what a book's kinks are as long as the author knows it? Like, go ahead and have a watersports kink, whatever, it's not my thing but I won't stop you. But for the love of God, own it. Don't pretend it was an accident. 'Oops, my word processor slipped!' 'I just wrote a story about a dude

sexing up someone who is drugged unconscious, but it's not rape and how dare you say I would write a story about rape, because I'm the author and I know the unconscious dude secretly wanted it, so there!'

There is very little more secondhand embarrassing than watching someone shame themselves over the kink they are writing stories about, often within the stories themselves.

So yeah, you know how I often say that?

Well, this book is the counter argument. This book explicitly makes sure we know hot fantasy dude is a violent rapist because that makes him sexier to the protagonist, and that is supposed to make him sexier to the reader. There's nothing coy about this, no inference games. Calmes thought being a violent rapist -- being an uncontrollable brutal animal, nearly a direct quote -- makes this guy hotter, and she owned that.

And it was so fucking gross, I have a bad taste in my mouth over a week later.

Karel says

This is Jude Shea.

Everybody loves Jude Shea

I mean everybody. No, like seriously, this is the list of people who wants to get into Jude's pants:

- Eoin
- his ex
- his ex's ex
- his ex's friends
- his friend Tyler
- Winian the guard
- Kennis the whore
- some random guard I can't remember
- Drist

And that's just the people I can remember. Now let's take a look at the list of people who loves Jude without wanting to get into his pants. Here:

Everyone except Cuyler

Jude's a complete Stu. He's just fuckamazing at his job, so much so that his boss begs him to come back after stealing his boyfriend. Everybody loves him, everybody wants to get into his pants, everybody thinks he's gorgeous, and he even saves two fellow's lives. Two! People who feel absolutely nothing about him falls for him within like, two seconds, and either want to have sex with him or marry him. I mean, really?

This is the other main character, Eoin.

He is great. He kills things and is handsome and hot. He haz sad past.

This is how Eoin talks:

GRWARRR RAWRRRR MINE YOU NO TOUCH

I could be kinder here, but honestly, I'm not being charitable after seeing the same tropes repeated in all three books I've read of Calmes'. The people in her books are so two dimensional, they're like parodies of two dimensional characters. Easily forgiven, that, because I'm so used to seeing 2D characters in romance novels that by now it's just par for the course.

But Gary Stus, to boot? Calmes needs to understand that real people don't have everyone fawning over them. They make mistakes. They are not perfect. They are not the sole victim of every bad thing that happens to them. And they also do not magically have a brother who can fake IDs for their otherworldly lover just like that.

Which had me going like

Suspension of disbelief is always necessary when you're reading a book, but in this case I was frankly worried my disbelief would be frozen in suspension, permanently. Like, the Golden Gates bridge of disbelief. This book was clearly meant to be heartwarming and fluffy, and in some regards, it succeeded. Unfortunately, it's weighed down by a lot of problems.

My suggestion for anyone about to pick this book up? Don't. Pick something else by her if you really must; Maybe you'll have better luck with it.

P says

“You are mine, cairn, you cannot fight me. I stayed longer than was needed only to be at your side. You make me mad with wanting you. You will not deny me; 'tis not your right.”

Why does everybody seem to love Jude Shea ? I just don't understand. Gah ! The writing style was hard to focus, too, it swapped the point of view so rapidly in the next paragraph without me being ready I was so confused and had to reread it over again as if I did miss something and I was to recheck it. Anyway, Eoin is the only good thing in this book, and I can't count how many times I swooned over this man. Loved it ! Loved the way he thinks of Jude, even though they just meet and they are already in love.

Apart from my satisfaction in the beginning, the book is weird when the hero goes in to time and the world he sets his foot has very strange settings and people. It's just weird.

Cera Taylor says

I feel as if Calmes got bored halfway through this book and ended it early.

It starts out very good, focusing on Jude, his crappy life, his past, a dog that he saves and becomes attached too; I really enjoyed this part. However, when Jude passes through the dimensional rift called "the vale", everything goes down hill.

I can excuse the way Eion and Jude fall completely heads-over-heels in love for each other in a matter of hours, simply because there seems to be some magical force that has destined them to be together. However, Eion is a very Marty Stu character. He's perfect in every sense of the word. You will not find flaw with this man, and when a possible flaw is mentioned, it's quickly swept under the rug by his sheer perfection and lost forever.

Jude and Eion have the perfect relationship. Whenever it seems they may break out in a fight, they just end up having hot sex. Anytime a third party tries to step in and steal Jude (which happens a lot, because Jude is apparently the most attractive man alive), Eion steps in and resolves it in a matter of seconds. Nothing bad can possibly happen to these two, and it gets old really quick.

As for beyond the vale, there's an interesting storyline going on concerning a war, a baroness, and a struggle for power. And right as you think you're going to get some really juicy action; you're swept away with Jude. The next SIX MONTHS, the entire war, the fates of all the characters that you've become connected to, is summed up in four paragraphs from Eion's point of view.

Honestly, that alone could have been another 100 pages of story; but this book doesn't focus on plot, it just focuses on the insatiable lust and unconditional love of Jude and Eion.

I don't regret paying for this book; but I wouldn't put it on my list of recommendations.

Ravyn says

Eh. What to say? Beautiful cover, but I just wasn't that into the accompanying novel.

The book starts out pretty promising, with the whole dog rescue and subsequent interaction between Jude

(rescuer) and his new, eerily intelligent and well-behaved pet, "Joe" (rescuee). In fact, I got a real kick out of all that. Unfortunately, the amusing and playful tone I so enjoyed totally changes when "Joe's" supposed owner comes to reclaim him. Said owner turns out to be a bad guy, so "Joe" and Jude must run for their lives, escaping to the alternate dimension from whence "Joe" came.

Once back in his medieval-esque homeland, cuddly doggie "Joe" changes back into his badass, warrior, human self, Eoin Thral. This is where my issues with the book begin. Eoin has a total multiple personality disorder at times. One minute Eoin is gagging Jude and threatening to knock him out in order to keep him quiet as they travel through a dangerous area, the next he is practically forcing Jude to have wild, *loud* sex with him (still in the "dangerous" area), and the next minute he is professing his undying love. Then there are all the "I own you, you will do what I say"-type lines that come out of Eoin's mouth. (Specific example: Eoin tells Jude, "*You belong to me, and now I will show you,*" about two minutes after they first meet.) Ugh. After getting to know sweet, protective, cuddly "Joe" the dog, it was a real jolt to be introduced to Eoin the domineering he-man. Although, to be fair, I'm not typically a fan of uber-alpha male characters in general, so perhaps Eoin didn't stand much of a chance with me to begin with. Also, I have to say that Eoin did tone down the "Do what I say" vibe pretty quickly, and turned on the "I love you madly, have sex with me now" attitude instead, which I suppose was moderately better.

Anyway, I found myself losing interest after all that, and somewhat skimmed through the rest of the story from there.

Bottom Line: Unfortunately, this paranormal/fantasy novel wasn't really my cup of tea. If you want to try Mary Calmes' work, I would recommend her *A Matter of Time* series instead.

Trisha Harrington says

Um... Yeah, I'm not really sure how to rate this yet. So I'll leave it for now and see how I feel later.

Shelby says

Ok, so yeah, I just don't know what to do with Mary Calmes anymore. Some of her books I absolutely love, and yet others drive me batshit. This one drove me batshit. This is the bad side of her adorable twink boy trope that everyone is obsessed with. No one, male or female, can resist them, but their devotion to their chosen one is all consuming. So insta-love with everyone wanting one person...yeah so not real. Sometimes strangely I'm ok with, mostly because I liked the couples or the story. But most of the time it drives me nuts.

This one absolutely drove me nuts. The story was on the absurd side. Shifting that really never went anywhere. A different world that seemed rather purposeless in the end. Eoin's character seemed perfectly fine with the modern world as a dog, but then all of a sudden reverts to this old world warrior type with strange speech and a baffled nature. Again, ugh. Jude is just a bad version of her other perfect boys. Never thrown by being in this other world. But willing to wait for any scrap thrown his way. Yeah, really didn't enjoy this one.

Amanda says

I really wanted to like this story. I absolutely loved the other stories I've read by Mary Calmes. Unfortunately, I just couldn't sink my teeth into this one. Nevertheless, I'll keep an eye out for her next story and hope this was just a fluke for me.

Angel Martinez says

3.5 stars. Let's say 3.65. I enjoyed this book, loved the concept, and found the characters very likeable. They're both a mess in their own ways, just how I like my romance heroes.

It starts off with a bang - late night jaunt for reasons Jude can't fathom, but still feels compelled to do, ending in nearly getting killed by three monstrous dogs in order to save a fourth dog. Now, we the readers know early on that this is no dog, though Jude hasn't a clue. Loved this idea of Alpha in dog form (and he's a beautiful dog - I want one.)

The tight, tense story arc began to unravel a little for me once they crossed the Veil, though. I wanted to see a fully realized world, wanted to see complicated things going on and plot twists revealed. While Midrin was interesting, as far as the reader is allowed to see, we don't really see as much as I would have liked.

The ending gave me pause. This is a two person POV story. But just when we reach what promises to be the climactic conflict, we get whisked away back to our world to do marketing stuff with Jude while Eoin battles the forces of evil. Um. Oh, dear. As a reader, I found this an odd choice and being told about it all in sketchy terms after the fact made me feel shoved aside.

Despite the odd ending (and, OK, the last scene is just adorable) this is a fun read and I did find myself smiling quite a bit throughout.

Midnight says

I give this book 2-stars, only because I did like the beginning, and the ending was mildly amusing, too.

It started out very promising. In the beginning, the book is funny, promising and pulls you in quickly. Jude is walking out at night, finds and saves a dog. The dog is cute, he keeps him. Just when things start to look up for Jude, however, he's forced through 'the veil' along with the dog and finds himself in a middle ages setting instead of modern day Chicago. This is when the book takes a dive downhill, for me.

The adorable dog turns into a man named Eoin Thral. The man is nothing like the dog, he's basically a he-man brute who treats Jude like his property, something he owns, not a person with thoughts and feelings. This is also when Jude turns into a chick-with-a-dick, all of a sudden.

Eoin first gags Jude, then threatens him, while offering no explanation about anything whatsoever. Then he decides to have sex with Jude, and says, *"You will not deny me; 'tis not your right."* Which is the exact moment I realized there's no way in hell I can remotely like this character. When Jude goes along with it like it's the best idea ever I realize I can't really like Jude either. Eoin is then surprised that Jude is willing to have

sex with him, because apparently no one's ever been willing before. He either raped women or paid for sex, as it later turned out.

Jude however, is ecstatic that *he found someone to love and treasure him, someone who made him feel safe*. Um, what? So, being treated like a blow-up doll or a property, basically, is a show of love? Just what the hell. At this point, I started to really wonder what the author was thinking.

All right, so after having sex (with no lube or preparation btw, and Jude loved it because it only hurt for a second. wtf), they continue on to Eoin's 'keep' where they meet his baroness. She takes one look at Jude and says, "*Brown,*" *she said breathlessly. "I have never seen such a color."* referring to his eyes. She lives in a medieval whatever country and she's never seen the color brown? What? That's never explained, but throughout their journey in the medieval side of the 'veil' everyone who meets Jude reacts like that to his eyes.

The other Guardians need to have a talk immediately, so Jude is sent away to Eoin's rooms. Eoin didn't bother to think whether or not Jude was hungry or needed anything, it was just like, "see you later", only in his medieval talk. But Jude doesn't care much that he's in a strange place and there's no explanations, he's too busy thinking the following, *"He could depend on Eoin. Eoin would be his rock, and that certainty was filling him with thoughts that were new and disturbing as well as warm and solid. Jude, who had never wanted a home, suddenly wanted one desperately. He could see himself cooking for the man, ironing his shirts, buying vitamins, and going grocery shopping."*

What. He's a man, for fuck's sake. Or, at least, it's what he was supposed to be. Hm.

The story continues, there's a show of Jude's foolish heroics (apparently he's fearless to the point of sheer idiocy,) when they are chased through a forest at night and the only way to escape their pursuers is to jump into a roaring waterfall, Jude grabs the baroness and is like, "let's jump, it's cool I'm a trained lifeguard". Then he saves her, and even one of their pursuers.

Then Jude goes back through the veil, while Eoin stays to fight a war promising he'll be back. Jude goes back to work, where everyone loves him, his ex tries to win him back, and the man his ex cheated on him with is desperate for a date with Jude, as well. I don't think there was a single person who did not love Jude in this book. None.

Everyone loves Jude, he charms people left and right at the drop of a hat, and halfway through the book I was thinking, "This should've been titled Everyone Loves Jude, or Jude the Fair, or something." He is described as perfect, elegant, graceful, perfect, beautiful, charming, **perfect**, fragile, etc. His perfect looks (smooth skin, full lips, luscious locks etc) are described in full detail several times. Okay, we get it, he's beautiful and perfect. In fact, there seemed to be no flaw in Jude. He's amazing, unforgettable, irreplaceable, etc. He gets several swift promotions at work, because he's just that good, okay?

Eoin comes back, offers little explanation to the events that took place in his six months absence, but what does Jude care when now they can have a sex marathon? Fast forward some months, Eoin seamlessly transferred into an entirely new and different world of modern day Chicago, his business is booming, everyone thinks he's amazing, he's doing extraordinarily well, Jude's family loves him, and bla bla you get the idea, he's now also perfect.

There wasn't a single likable character in the book. There was too much happening too fast with no real explanations or solid conclusions. Too much 'tell' not enough 'show', where the descriptions would do good there wasn't any, but when it came to describing Jude's virtues there was an abundance. The characters seemed

flat, their thought processes I never could figure out, there were no explanations for most their actions, no real background or, anything.

What the 'veil' is and how it works is never explained. Why the other side of the 'veil' is middle ages? Never explained. The fact that Eoin talks medieval and Jude speaks modern day language is jarring, also, Jude keeps going, "I hafta go to the store, I hafta bla bla, HAFTA." What the hell? Is that supposed to be a show of his accent or something? It was annoying as hell, because save for numerous 'hafta' and 'ya' there weren't any other indications to his accent.

Another thing that annoyed me to no end is the continuous use of the character's full names, as in, "We hafta talk Eoin Thrall!" or, "You are my own Jude Shea!" Annoying. I got their full names the first fifty times they were used.

The ending was amusing, though, and there were some funny moments in the book, but they couldn't outweigh all the other things I mentioned that were less than stellar.

Anyone who likes a "he-man + chick-with-a-dick = adventure" will probably like this book.

Jennifer?Pher? says

It's a lot of fun to go back and read Mary's earlier stuff.

It's like Jory is just right on the tip of her tongue ;o)

When she found her groove she really found her groove.

Still good stuff.

Julio Genao says

Rough.

So many good ideas packed into it I think it could have worked as a multi-volume epic. Herky-jerky and slapdash, but still rewarding.

Kassa says

I wanted The Guardian since I'd read Calmes' Change of Heart and enjoyed it as a guilty pleasure read. I figured the writing may not be perfect and likely there could be slight problems with the book but there is something really engaging and entertaining about the author's writing that I just wanted to read this anyway. The same positive qualities start The Guardian well with a warm and funny start only to go horribly awry with an ill-conceived and executed time travel portion and characters that completely alter their personalities. While The Guardian does have some cute moments, most notably the portions of the book set in modern times, it also suffers from classic mistakes and themes seen in old Harlequinesque romances (and not the

good ones).

The story starts out well with the hero Jude finding a stray dog. Now immediately there is a suspension of disbelief required as Jude ventures out in the heart of Chicago at 3 am in chilly temperatures to take a walk, totally unconcerned that he may be hurt, attacked, or worse. Further stretching your mind is that Jude breaks up what he thinks is a pack of wild dogs attacking another. Yet he doesn't pick up a stick or weapon, he merely calls out and stands his ground as they charge. Oy. Well thankfully some pimp type folks with a gun and diamond studded tooth help Jude and he's off to the vet with his new dog. This is a stretch but one that can be overlooked since Jude is pretty cute as an overwhelmed young man that just wanted to do a good deed and ends up with a huge dog and expensive vet bill.

The rest of the first half spends time setting up just how fabulous Jude is. Although he recently lost his home, boyfriend, and job when he found his boyfriend sleeping with his boss, he still has a bunch of great friend and a new dog to cheer him up. He's perfect in everyway; beautiful, intelligent, kind, witty, sexy, and has no clue about his affect on others. The third person point of view switches paragraph to paragraph from Jude to others simply to show how they all adore Jude and think he's fabulous. Supposedly Jude is brilliant but difficult to work with, although you wouldn't know it since his co-workers and clients all threatened to leave the public relations agency unless Jude came back. We're never shown that Jude is egotistical and impossible to work with since Jude doesn't actually work in the book except a brief mention at the end. Instead he's re-hired, given a substantial raise, and immediately allowed a lengthy vacation to recover from the horror of quitting. So you understand early on that Jude is perfect, everyone loves him – in fact there is not a single person in the entire book that ever says a bad word about Jude – and he's given up on finding the perfect boyfriend.

Although it's somewhat annoying at how perfect Jude is at absolutely everything, he's still cute and charming and the affectionate dog in "Joe" helps carry the beginning scenes with interest. Unfortunately this all changes when the bad guys come for the dog and Jude is thrown through the "veil." Now the dog is actually a guardian named Eoin and they're in medieval times. Here Eoin decides he owns Jude and proceeds to tie him up, issue several contradictory demands, and then screw Jude until he can't sit straight with a huge, unlubed cock. Instead of being somewhat concerned Jude is totally into the sex because it's a dream and well he can just tell that Eoin really, truly loves him. The rest of the time in this century is spent with Eoin and Jude proclaiming their instant love for each other while a war is going on.

I'm not sure what the purpose of adding this section is since there is almost zero descriptive quality. Everything is massive, huge, and large. These terms are used so often the language and prose becomes redundant and flat. There is almost no explanation about the veil other than it's a portal. There is no surprise or concern in any characters about Jude's appearance, in fact each person introduced is interchangeable with the next offering little to no discerning elements. They all blend together into a mass of acceptance and happiness for Eoin and Jude. Never mind that Eoin has never been with a man before, they don't care and everyone's happy. The time frame depicted is weakly described and mostly shown through stilted dialogue and repetitive phrasing. There are a few ridiculous elements such as everyone awed by Jude's brown eyes since they've never seen that shade before, the number of men that fall in love with Jude due to his dynamic personality, and the instant deep, absolute, and binding love Jude and Eoin feel based on.. good sex I think.

Similarly Eoin is at best a two dimensional character. He is funny as the dog but as a human, he's dominating, insecure, and speaks in redundant, short statements such as "you belong to me Jude Shea." He and Jude have sex all the time yet Eoin is obsessed with Jude telling him they're in love just hours after they've met. Eoin is by turns deeply needing reassurance to a sex starved man with instant knowledge of gay sex to a dominating overbearing man that places Jude neatly into the little woman box. He contradicts

himself in saying that he can't remain a warrior since his concern and life is all about Jude now and yet needs to leave Jude so he can be a warrior again. These contradictions continue for the length of the book until the end when Eoin is suddenly now beloved by all, has a stunning career, and is perfect as well.

The characterization and weak plot which includes random scenes with no real purpose isn't book throwing, merely eye rolling. Jude turns into a little wife Eoin wants, content to be left out any discussions and waiting for his man to come home. Just hours after meeting he's planning on cooking for the man, buying his groceries, setting up a home, getting married, and having lots of endless sex. This is shown in the lengthy ending that is nothing but one sex scene after another showing how much they're in love but without any additional context. There seems to be no emotional connection yet they both know how absolute their love is. I didn't buy into this instant romance nor the ever lasting love since it is all one sex scene after another with internal thoughts of how in love they are. This type of telling typifies the story itself and how rarely the narrative ever shows anything, preferring to state everything as fact.

Beyond these issues the writing has some problems with left out words and weak editing. There are scenes and characters included that don't enhance the story and too many sex scenes. The abrupt changes to Jude and Eoin's personalities make both men difficult to like and understand. The time travel aspect could have been interesting yet the lack of tension and conflict combined with little to no explanation and description reduces this section greatly. There is no question that both men will leave and return to modern times, this is stated very early on, so the entire time feels immaterial and unimportant.

While I didn't hate *The Guardian*, it feels silly, ridiculous, and poorly written. I still like the author's inherent charm infused into her leading men so with some tight editing, focused plots, and less over the top exaggeration, the stories could really shine. I think readers will respond to flawed characters much better than paragons of perfection and sex. So I'd recommend even fans of the author skip this one and wait for the next, let's hope for a contemporary.

Cole Riann says

Review posted at [The Armchair Reader](#).

This book is one of the main reasons I decided that I wanted to do an Author Backlist Project. Mary Calmes was my first choice from when I first thought of the idea directly to it's debut last Fall, and this was one of the handful of books that I've had forever and intended to read for years now. Somehow, it never seemed to happen, and even in the case of a book like this, which I always had such high hopes for but ultimately didn't live up to my (possibly) too-high expectations, it is still really nice to read more of Mary's backlist and assuage my curiosity about this book.

Jude Shea is job-less and boyfriend-less, which all stems from one terrible betrayal. Now, all alone in his new (and sad) studio apartment, Jude is woken in the middle of the night with an inexplicable desire to take a walk in the park. While there, he comes across a pack of dogs killing another dog. The dog is absolutely huge and almost dead, but Jude has a sudden bout of confidence and runs off the pack of dogs. He soon starts to call the dog "Joe" after their trip to fix him up at the animal clinic, where the vet, vet techs and workers of the clinic are at once awed and afraid of Joe. To everyone else, he's a wicked beast, but when he's around Jude he turns into a big teddy bear. In a small amount of time they become best friends -- Jude has never had a dog before and finds the companionship strangely comfortable, and Joe The Dog seems very attached and

protective of Jude for such a short relationship. Jude is inconsolable when faced with the thought that Joe's real owner might come looking for him.

When a man shows up at Jude's apartment claiming the dog has his own and calling him Eoin, Jude is wary. The man seems strange, not only in his speech and mannerisms, but in his completely lack of emotion when talking about Joe/Eoin. Soon, both man and dog find themselves being chased through Chicago at night, only to disappear into a very strange fog bank.

Eoin isn't just a dog, he's a guardian for a baroness in the land across the veil. Guardian's are the fiercest of protectors, with no love for anything but the safety of their charge. Across the veil, in his homeland, Eoin is a man like any other, but in Jude's homeland he reverts to his shifted form, a dog. In rare instances, a guardian might find his *cairn*, his heart, in a mating bond that immediately severs ties to their old allegiances, purely because their mate will now forever be foremost in their mind. Now, with the gryphons once again on his tail, he knows that he must get Jude across the veil and back to his home in order to protect him from their pursuers and give their bond a chance to solidify, something that Eoin will not allow to go undone. He has found his mate, and he won't give him up.

But life across the veil is very difficult for Jude, not only because he doesn't understand anything about the lives they lead, but because of the political turmoil that followed them across the veil in the first place. Navigating their allies and enemies will test their relationship and Jude's own self-worth, as he puts his life back together and looks forward to a possibly incredible future with Eoin back in his own world.

I didn't really know what this book was about, honestly. I really liked the story -- it's almost a time travel story, but without explicit description about the veil and the technical aspects of the fantasy world and how it is connected to our world. I liked the characters also. Jude is a pretty typical Calmes' character, almost perfect in every way, while it is impossible to hate a character like Eoin with a heart of gold, completely noble and loyal and moral and self-sacrificing, who speaks in a thick brogue and is the epitome of rough highlander warrior. The book is heavy on the sex (which I didn't mind because it was so hot), but in the end, I had a lot of problems with it.

Perhaps my feelings are indicative of the upward trajectory of Mary Calmes' writing. Reading this, one of her earlier novels, I could definitely see where her recent work has been of higher quality. The change in POV over the story bothered me somewhat. At times it is very frequent between especially Jude and Eoin. I actually liked getting the POV of secondary characters in this instance, though the transitions between all of them are what bothered me, usually because it got confusing. I also felt rather jarred when Jude and Eoin when through the veil into Eoin's homeland. The first part of the story, in our world, was really enjoyable and easy to read, but once in the other land things sometimes became dreamlike and at other times simply confusing. With only small pieces of information about the political issues, I felt a bit like I had one foot in the world and one foot out. I wanted to know what was going on, but nothing was ever really described past a superficial level, which made my investment in the story less than usual.

So even while I enjoyed parts and liked the characters, it wasn't even near my favorite Calmes' books. I am certainly glad I have read it though, and if you haven't either it is something to consider. It might be more your cup of tea than mine, or you might at least not feel the same way as I did about these specific issues. Now, I'm forward into the backlist and looking forward to next week's book by Mary Calmes!
