



## Warders: Volume One

*Mary Calmes*

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Mary Calmes

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Most humans live in blissful ignorance, never dreaming of the frightening surprises and paranormal danger that lurks in the night. Most... but not all. These few who stand against the darkness are the Warders, men who fight demons and square off against all kinds of creatures from the pit with only their brothers-in-arms and their lovers-their Hearths-to strengthen them in the unending battle of good versus evil.

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Note: Contains books #1-3 in the Warders series. *His Hearth* (July 2010), *Tooth & Nail* (November 2010), *Heart in Hand* (May 2011) were previously published individually in eBook format by Dreamspinner Press.

## Warders: Volume One Details

Date : Published June 11th 2012 by Dreamspinner Press (first published July 28th 2010)

ISBN : 9781613724910

Author : Mary Calmes

Format : Paperback 330 pages

Genre : Romance, M M Romance, Fantasy, Paranormal, Anthologies, Action, M M Paranormal

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# From Reader Review Warders: Volume One for online ebook

## UltraMeital says

### Review only of the first novella - His Hearth

DNF 33%

This one was VERY disappointing. I don't think I have very good things to say about it but frankly. Yet. it's MY personal preference and it has nothing to do with the quality of the book. The things that made me put this one aside might be the exact ones to make you appreciate it, so as usual read with caution ;)

This novella is a part of a Urban Fantasy series, each book is actually novella length. As this is Mary and I've loved so many of her books in the past (I've read MOST of them) I bought the compilation of the first three installments in the series. It starts as a regular Contemporary Romance novel and as it seems the Paranormal side of things starts very close to the end (which I haven't gotten to since I DNFed it at 33%).

Julian Nash is our sole POV in this one, like all the people around him, he is successful and good looking (though he doesn't consider himself THAT good looking). Yeah he might have started the evening with the guy he was seeing cheating on him, but it didn't take long for the hunkiest guy he knows to proposition him. They end up eating dinner together as it was Julian's and his partner's promotion party. I didn't like the whole vibe around the issue. First there were FAR too many people introduced, and second all of them were pitch perfect or were absolutely blown with how Julian and his partner are wonderful at what they do. Great for them. I felt like I was intruding on someone else's perfect life simply by reading it.

My other issue was Julian's date for the evening - Ryan Dean. Naturally he was perfect - good looking AND successful and naturally he was floored with Julian - how gorgeous HE is and how good at what he does, giving him and his company EXACTLY what they needed. Now he wants Julian and though he was considered a "player" in the past he assures Julian he is nothing but dead serious about him. How does he show it? By asking him TIME AND TIME AGAIN to come to his apartment with him. It might be a "girl instinct" but frankly, if this was a MF romance or even a scenario in real life there is NO DOUBT Ryan would have been either a serial killer or a rapist. It sounded SO bad to me the way he kept asking Julian to come, trying to convince him even saying they are not going to have sex, he is going to make Julian a desert (?!). For me it was simply too much.

So getting to the second chapter, right around the third of the novella I had enough. Julian and Ryan were getting TOO comfy as it is, shortening each others name and using endearments and all I was thinking was - hey, this is the first time you've interacted outside of work, what's going on?

Yeah. Not for me. Sorry.

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Absinthe says

This could be a really exceptional book, plot wise. The author seemed to not want the book to be serious though, just porn with enough plot to keep you interested if that's what you like. This could be a really great urban fantasy series though. The world building could get more complex and it's clear that the author has a good idea of what that world looks like, its just that they're not interested in presenting all of it.

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## **Relly says**

### **Good**

4 ??

Not sure why I haven't read these before. I read the first one years ago and never continued on with the series. So unlike me.

Enjoyable series, that got stronger as they progressed. My fav amazingly was Leith and Simon's book. I think because it looked at an established couple, still relatively new but they were together in the previous books, and showed that they still had problems and were working at their HEA.

Looking forward to continuing on

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## **Mollien Fote Osterman says**

**Title:** Warders Volume One

**Author:** Mary Calmes

**Series:** The Warder Series

**Publisher:** Dreamspinner Press

**Reviewer:** Mollien

**Release Date:** December 28, 2016

**Genre(s):** Male/Male Romantic Fantasy

**Page Count:** 326 pages

**Heat Level:** 3.5 flames out of 5

**Rating:** 4 stars out of 5

**Blurb:**

Most humans live in blissful ignorance, never dreaming of the frightening surprises and paranormal danger that lurks in the night. Most... but not all. These few who stand against the darkness are the Warders, men who fight demons and square off against all kinds of creatures from the pit with only their brothers-in-arms and their lovers—their Hearths—to strengthen them in the unending battle of good versus evil.

His Hearth

Tooth & Nail

Heart in Hand

**Review:**

This is the first volume of The Warder series. It contains three novellas depicting how the mysterious men who serve as Warder's fight evil to protect us from the demons of the underworld. A Warder is not complete and needs his Hearth to stay stable and focused. A Hearth is the Warder's true love or soulmate. This book is really three books. His Hearth is the first story. It his about Ryan and Julian. Ryan is a sexy former supermodel. Now he has his own show. Everyone wants him, he is just so beautiful to men and women alike. He, however, wants Julian. Julian works in PR and has done some work with Ryan in the past. When they meet up in a bar, Julian is shocked to see how interested Ryan is in him. Ryan knows that Julian has to be his Hearth. He feels settled and protective when they are together. Now he just has to convince Julian that they belong together. The second book is about Malic and Dylan. Malic is the most threatening of the five Warders. When he rescues Dylan from being attacked in a club's restroom. Dylan who is only 19 years old knows that Malic is it for him and chases him like a dog would chase after a steak bone. Even though Malic is attracted to Dylan, he knows that he could do damage to the innocent Dylan. Having sex with anyone other than your Hearth sucks the life out of the person temporarily aging them. The third book has the most fantasy. In this story, Simon and Leith with a bunch of Simon's co-workers get sucked behind the veil and are held captive by a demon lord. There is some pretty hot chemistry going on with all of these couples. The pacing is pretty fast and exciting with some bloody fighting parts between the Warders and the demons. Each story has its own conclusion, but some of the stories have some common characters. I would say that each story is a little over a hundred pages, even so, the author does an excellent job developing the characters so we become interested in their stories.

PLOT: 4 Stars

CHEMISTRY: 4 Stars

PACING: 4 Stars

ENDING: 4 Stars

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: 4 Stars

Review Copy of Warders Volume One provided by the Dreamspinner Press I voluntarily reviewed an Advance Reader Copy of this book. Reviewed by Mollien from Alpha Book Club

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**BWT (Belen) says**

Three novellas included on one volume. All three stories are single POV.

***His Heart* 4 Stars**

*Julian Nash should be excited: he's just earned a huge promotion at work and is going out to celebrate. But his happiness fades when he discovers his date cheating on him an hour before. Suddenly alone when everyone knows he's supposed to have a plus one, Julian is set for a long night until longtime acquaintance Ryan Dean bails him out of the embarrassing situation. During dinner, they discover they have more than just friendship between them: there is mutual*

*admiration and heated attraction. But getting to know Ryan better—and finding a place in his life—will bring Julian frightening surprises and paranormal danger he never expected or dreamed existed.*

**I really enjoyed this story**, from Julian's stiff upper lip at having just being cheated on, to the super-steamy heat generated between Ryan and him, to the side characters who are well fleshed out for a novella.

### ***Tooth & Nail* 3 Stars**

*Nineteen-year-old Dylan Shaw is possibly the most beautiful thing Malic Sunden has ever seen. After Malic rescues Dylan from an attack, Dylan makes it very clear that he is more than interested, but Malic won't even consider sleeping with Dylan because of his age. Malic is sure he's not good enough for Dylan, who has his whole life ahead of him, and can't conceive of burdening Dylan with his secrets.*

*But the darkness in Malic's life won't be denied, and soon Dylan is drawn into the dangerous paranormal world that is Malic's reality. Malic fights tooth and nail to push Dylan away, to keep him safe... no matter that Dylan is the key to Malic's strength and the only hope for his future.*

I liked how Dylan persevered going after his man, but I got a little tired of Malic constantly pushing him away and also taking unnecessary risks. Though I liked that there was a bit more meat to the plot and a bit of conflict to spice things up.

### ***Heart in Hand* 2.5 Stars**

*Simon Kim is very much in love with Leith Haas, but Leith is a Warder. His job—hunting demons—is dangerous and important, and Simon doesn't want to distract the man he loves more than life with the small stuff. But he doesn't quite get that when a Warder takes a Hearth, the Warder gives his heart without reservation. When Leith claimed Simon, Leith bared his soul, leaving himself vulnerable before the only man he's certain he'll ever love.*

*When Simon is sucked further into Leith's perilous world—and into an alternate dimension—Simon realizes that the only strength he can give his Warder is the strength of his love. Can Simon sacrifice the control he has come to treasure for the man who already owns his soul?*

We come in to the story with Simon and Leith as an established couple, which is a huge departure from the meet and insta-love of the first two stories. Also different, instead of the single POV being from the Warder, this time it's Simon who narrates the story.

\*\*\* \*\*

Three different tales set in a fantastic paranormal world where demons, vampires, kyries, and all manner of things that go bump in the night are not only real, but are fought against by an elite group of chosen who are stronger, faster, and able to heal better than any normal human.

I liked the premise, and it's certainly an interesting one, but the world-building needed filling out. I wanted more information about the Warders - how they're chosen, tests, trials, etc., and just didn't get it. The bones are here, and it was certainly a page turner, but, ultimately, I felt like *something* was missing.

(3.5 Stars for all)

*Advanced Review Galley copy of Warders: Volume One (Warders #1-3) provided by Dreamspinner Press in exchange of an honest review.*

*This review has been cross-posted at Gay Book Reviews.*

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## **Diverse says**

### His Hearth (book 1)

This is book 1 in Mary Calmes Warder Series. I wanted to try it out and see how it was. I found it to be pretty adorable actually. It was more a novella than a full length book but she packs quite a bit in that space. I really loved Julian and Cash's friendship immensely. I loved how Cash was important to Julian and that Cash got Julian's nerdness lol. So when Julian comes face to face with Ryan (The Warder) and pretty much they have insta love, Julian needed to know that Cash and Phoebe (Cash's wife) loved Ryan. That was my favorite part of this story. Protection. Not from the evil demon spirits Ryan tries to rid the world of, the protection Cash and Julian provide for each other and Ryan loves the whole thing. It's a fun read and I will absolutely check out the rest of the series.

### Tooth & Nail (Book 2)

Book 2 in Mary Calmes Warder Series, for me, was better than book 1. I found Mal to be a very interesting character. Dylan made me nervous for a while because I couldn't understand his obsession with Mal. I don't know if it's a pull of Hearth to Warder or what. If Dylan didn't become his hearth I'd fear for Mal because Dylan was borderline mental in his NEED to be with Mal. I loved the demon battles, they were very exciting and I hope in future books we see the demons that got away in this one. Some interesting things were brought to light in this one and I hope they all connect. This was a fun read.

### Heart in Hand (Book 3)

So I found book 3 to be the most "Out There" of the three. I mean, these Warders fight demons so yeah it's strange and scary and dark; but I liked it a lot. Simon is such a wonderful character. He's Leith's Hearth and he's probably the strongest one we've seen to date.

When he goes on a business trip and ends up in a façade that sucks him into Hell; things get a bit insane. I almost lost my mind with Leith's situation (I won't tell you!) But I was happy with the HEA. I will say that Simon is my favorite Hearth at this point in the series.

Heart in Hand is a great addition to the series.

WARDERS Vol One is a lot of fun and suspense. Possessive love and strong need. I enjoyed it a lot and recommend this for people who love paranormal books with alpha male characters!

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## Elaine White says

Book – Warders Volume 1

Author – Mary Calmes

Star rating - ★★★★★?

No. of Pages – 280

POV – 1st person, one character per story

Would I read it again – Book 1 and 2, yes. Not book 3.

Genre – LGBT, Paranormal, Fantasy, Romance, Anthology

**\*\* I WAS GIVEN THIS BOOK FOR MY READING PLEASURE \*\***

Reviewed for Divine Magazine

For me, Mary Calmes is one of those hit and miss authors. Sometimes I love her work, sometimes not so much.

So let's start with warnings:

Book 1 – cheating

Book 2 – violence

Book 3 – violence involving a gun, dub/con (if not outright rape)

~

Book 1: His Hearth

Length: 0-33%

★★★★?

This was a good start to a new-to-me series. I'm also pretty new to Mary Calmes (having only read Romulus before).

I enjoyed the plot of a regular guy finally finding his fit, only to discover that Mr Wonderful is actually a ninja sword-wielding demon hunter. The dynamics of the storyline were good and the writing was well done. Though there were a few pet peeves – slang words, shortened words (Ohmygod, hafta, g'head, willya, Yessir, helluva, Whaddya etc) and a few lazy styled sentences, such as “Heavy sigh.” - the overall quality was good. There were some editing issues, of missing or extra words (“he still sometimes he ran into prejudice.”) and the flashbacks were often disorientating.

When it comes to characters, that's where I had some issues. Although I enjoyed the story, I found the relationship to be lacking a certain something. It didn't feel organic. I mean, we had Julian as our MC and our sole POV. He began as this shy, retiring, always-in-the-background guy, who didn't believe in jumping into bed with anyone, but taking his time even if that meant no sex for six months.

In fact, that's how the story starts – his current non-boyfriend that he's dating was caught on his knees with another man, all because Julian wouldn't have sex with him. Then we got to hear all about how he had a certain way he functioned, that he could never deviate from it. Until, enter Ryan. Suddenly, though they've known each other for ages, oblivious Julian doesn't realise that Ryan is jonesing for him until he makes it obvious. They have one date-like night, then go back to Ryan's and end up all over each other. I get that



there's a paranormal, mate element to the story, but it didn't really justify this rush to get into bed with each other or the way that Julian took it all in his stride.

And can we talk for a minute about the complete 180 Julian took personality wise? He went from meek, in the background Julian to raging hormones, Alpha male in bed. Then, suddenly, he stayed that way and it made NO sense. Ryan went from the suave, sophisticated celebrity with a nervous habit when around Julian, to some lap-dog puppy, begging Julian for more attention. Julian also had a bit of an ego (“One thing I knew: I was a world-class kisser.”) and though that his kisses were good enough to get a guy off, without any need for more, somehow justifying his lack of sexual promiscuity. As an asexual person, it kind of bothered me that this was never addressed – that there were sexualities that defined a person who wanted an emotional or meaningful connection before committing to sex, but also the claim from the cheating ex that there just weren't people who didn't have sex. I felt that there was a key chance to add in how clueless this guy was and how wrong he was, especially in relation to what Julian needed from a relationship, by not addressing these points. From everything I've read of Julian so far, he seems to be of a romantic attraction orientation (not demi, though, since he's clearly sexually attracted to the guys he's been with)

I was also a little confused by the interaction between Julian and Winters at the restaurant. Winters seemed very focused on Julian and gloated about having his mobile number, as though it was some personal prize. It suggested a history between the two – perhaps of a fling nature, which wouldn't fit with Julian's personality – that was never addressed.

It took 25% of a 33% story to reach anything paranormal, but in hindsight I didn't mind that. I got a decent chunk of that side of the story and it needed that extra time spent on Julian and Ryan getting together. I just would have liked more insight into how much they liked each other, them becoming friends and getting to know each other, even a flashback of their first meeting or their last, before the events of the story, when Ryan insisted that he'd asked Julian to call him. Both events would have been interesting to see as well as important in allowing us to see how they blend together.

Overall, it was an interesting story, with a good plot but some flaws. Not enough that I'd seriously mark it down and never read it again, but enough that I'm going into the next story with more questions than answers.

~

#### Favourite Quote

““Do you have people in your life you trust?”

“For some things,” he answered vaguely, “not all.”

“I'm sorry, baby.”

He caught his breath. “That's okay,” he got out, “and you just called me baby.”

I'd gotten familiar way too fast. It always happened when I liked someone. “Crap. I'm sor—”

“Don't be,” he cut me off, tightening his fingers that were entwined with mine so I couldn't pull my hand away. “You wanna talk like I belong to you...it's fine with me.”

Which was a dangerous statement to make.”

~

Book 2: Tooth & Nail

Length: 33-67%

★★★★★

I loved this one!

First off, I'll admit to being a little disgruntled and frustrated when I began reading the 1st person POV only to discover half a page later that it wasn't Julian's, like I'd expected. It was, in fact, Malic's POV. However, once I settled into the story I was happy about that. I'm still a little confused and frustrated that there was no ending or explanation for the overly familiar Winters episode and the pissed off Peyton, from book 1, however.

For me, Malic's story had a better balance between romance and action, equally exploring his search for a hearth as well as his mission as a warder. There wasn't an equal footing of that sort in the first story. Book 1 felt much too much like the only focus was on getting Julian and Ryan together, the end. Malic's story is a much more indepth explanation o the life a warder leads, though I'm still confused as to what a warder actually is. The implication is that they're human, but it's never really been explained how they become the way they are – fast, skilled, trained and inhuman in the sense that they can be healed from wounds that would kill a regular human. Both their origin story – being chosen and discovered – and the healing aspect lie at Jael's door, but are never explained.

There were a few personality traits that were a little too close to Julian and Ryan's relationship status for comfort, at first. The rehash of Graham not being a one-night-stand kind of guy and being more into relationships and the non existent gag reflex, to name two in particular.

However, this story had exactly the kind of chemistry and building romance that I'd wanted to see in book 1. Exploring how Malic and Dylan meet, how they revolve around each other, their dogged persistence, Dylan's feistiness and more, all made for a great relationship story that was pleasantly mixed in well with a real action story of Malic and little Sophie.

I don't, however, know what a 'clutch' is despite it being used in a similar essence as a hearth. I don't know if or how the kyrie Raph fits into Malic's future or if he'll abuse the bond they've created or not. I still have unanswered questions, but I'm not sure if later stories will answer them or not. I'll take care to find out, though, as I'm intrigued who will pop up next, if Malic was the last warder searching for his hearth.

~

#### Favourite Quote

““Will you buy me a drink?”

I gave him a look. “Sure. Whaddya want? Milk?”

He scowled up at me. “Hah, funny. I'm twenty-four, ya know.”

“Really.” I nodded because that was interesting. He had aged five years from the bathroom to the floor.

He cleared his throat. “Yeah.”

“That's funny, because you already told me you were nineteen in the bathroom.”

“I did?”

I nodded.

“Shit.””

~

#### Book 3: Heart in Hand

Length: 67-98%

★★★??

It's really nice to see an established couple getting some page time, since they go through trials and difficulties just as much as new couples. Leith and Simon are cute together, both big strong men who are vulnerable with each other. However, their relationship felt wrong in so many ways. It was the main reason that I gave this story a lower rating than the others. It didn't feel good. It felt forced and more sexual,

physical or lust-filled – however you want to describe it – than based on something real and deeper, like the other relationships.

First off, my pet peeve is the whole pouncing-on-a-stranger thing that happens in the first flashback to how Leith and Simon met – which isn't separated or italicised like the other flashbacks in the previous books. Secondly, I had a real issue with their relationship. It was the unhealthiest relationship I've read in a while – including some Master/slave stuff this past week. To start with, I'm all for spontaneous sex, especially for an established couple, but this right here has two strangers tangling tongues after two minutes, then one giving the other a 'deep rimming' a minute after that. Now, there's no request for consent, there's not even a whisper of hygiene care (except a vague admission of having recently having had a shower) and Leith actually says "What're you...no, wait, you – God!" and is told to shut up when he follows that with "You shouldn't do—" Now, I'm sorry, but that's dubious consent in the very least and practically rape. I don't care if the first part ended with God! or if he moaned; that's no excuse or reasoning for what follows. The fact that this story presents this situation as somehow sexy or exciting really, REALLY, doesn't work for me. A simple rephrasing of the description, a question asking for consent or, you know, actually BACKING OFF when the guy says no is definitely needed.

It doesn't help that their relationship – especially the excessive sex (four big, detailed scenes when only two – when Simon first bottoms and the first sex scene in Hell – are needed) – is littered with words like 'invasion', 'stalked' and 'assaulted'. I'm sorry to say that everything about this relationship is unhealthy, borderline frantic and definitely fuelled by lust, no matter what lessons Simon claims to have learned later on. I wasn't surprised by the following quote, as it seems natural for Leith to persistently instigate sex if that's the only time he feels true affection and truly feels needed by Simon. "He liked to start his day with me bending him over the bed. I never argued."

Furthermore, it felt like two stories crammed into one. The first being Simon dealing with his ex, the second being the façade in Hell. They didn't seamlessly merge into one story, even at the end when it had all blown over, though I get that both incidences were supposed to teach Simon to open up more within his relationship with Leith. However, it just came across as disjointed and two split stories.

For me, this story lets the other two down. It just has too many issues.

~

#### Favourite Quote

““Why wouldn't Jackson just come himself, or Leith? I asked, my voice cracking on my boyfriend's name. I had been missing the man before my world took a turn into the creature-feature nightmare, but now I felt like my skin hurt because he wasn't there to hold me.”

~

#### OVERALL

This was a tangle of good, great and then not-so-good stories all about the one universe.

The problem with 1st person POV, in a series like this, is that you can't clump them together into a volume or anthology without creating confusion. Unless you include the blurb for each 'story' of the volume, explaining who the POV is for (which doesn't happen here) or the reader checks the individual blurb of each story (and who has time or patience to do that?) then it takes far too long to find out who the POV is referring to.

When I transitioned from story 1 to story 2, I believed it was still in Julian's POV until halfway down the first page, when I'd already begun to get confused and form a narrative based on Julian being the POV. In

story 3, I had no clue who the POV was for. It took until page 2 to find out it was Leith's boyfriend (and heck if I could remember who that was) thus taking until halfway down page 2 to discover it was someone called 'Simon'. Who I didn't remember from the previous stories.

I'm growing ever more intrigued by Raphael, who I'd like to see getting his own story at some point. I could definitely see him complicating Jackson's life and relationship with Frank, if he wanted to. But it was definitely be interesting to read.

I also noticed a theme here – boyfriends who can't let go. First it was Julian dealing with his ex Mitch, now Simon has a clingy ex trying to get back with him, too. However, these issues are never really dealt with, especially not in a healthy manner. Coincidentally, both ex boyfriends are those that were in the closet and willing to date/marry women to stay in the closet, while hoping their ex-boyfriend would be strung along on the side.

~

Individual book reviews will be copied to their corresponding Goodreads book pages.

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## **Helle says**

In this book you hear about warders.

In every City there are a Sentinel and every Sentinel has five Warders. They fight creatures and demons. The Sentinel is the oldest, seen the most action, and so is in charge.

Every Sentinel, every Warders, has to have a hearth: a home, a channel for safety, peace, love. A Warder must have a hearth or eventually they die.

For a Warder, their hearth-home is vital and necessary. A hearth makes a home for the Warder. There very few men that can be a hearth to a Warder as the Warder's energy drains the life force of most humans.

They live two complete and separate lives that need to be connected. The connection. If you're not grounded in the Real world, the day-to-day existence of a regular man, you lose your mind. You avoid that by having your hearth make a home for you, provide a life for you that has nothing to do with hunting and killing creatures of the night.

It's being with him/the one, knowing that he know everything about him and want him anyway. It's acceptance and unconditional love and safety.

Myth Incubus: just their presence alone would drain their partner once they're joined for the first time.

As Warder you should be ready on a moment's notice to make a life or death decision, and not wonder if what you was doing was right or wrong.

Him and Malic, him and all the others, they work great together, the killing is seamless, but that part is just training and ability. A Sentinel can find his Warders, know them when he sees them, and when he trains them, it triggers the speed, the strength, the power. Jael finding Ryan made him a Warder, but that's all it is.

The Real part, the true part, is just about being a man and being loved. Having a hearth, a home, that's who he is, what he is.

In this book you will meet:

Jael Ezran the Sentinel

Warders:

Jaka

Marot

Malic

Leith

Ryan/Rindahl

The pov change from the hearth to the Warders. Two of the stories is the hearth that tell about what happens and one story what it is the Warder that that tell the things.

These stories are not just about finding love, but to preserve the humanity and not end up in the madness.

I think this is a new way to look at the guardians of humanity, but also how difficult it is to maintain hope of finding his heart, his home.

This is not a bed of roses, but battles after battles. All Warders have a regular job and like everyone else has the problems of everyday life, either at work or with other people.

I love to read this serie and like the different pov of the Warders and their hearths. A different supernatural book, about monsters and them that fight the monsters.

I would recommending this book to them that love to read about fights, supernatural and monsters. If you like to see Angel and Buffy the vampire slayer this books is something you will love to read, but more different from the tv Series.

Re-read and love the book as much as the first time, can they not make a movie with gay warders? That would be so cool and fantastic to see a series with gay protectors/warders

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## **Lisa The Novel Approach says**

This title is a collection of three previously-published novellas: *His Hearth*, *Tooth and Nail*, and *Heart in Hand*. Each novella follows a different Warder (aka demon hunter) as he finds/keeps his one true love.

Finding that one true love is more of a challenge for a Warder than it might seem on the surface. Finding a partner isn't based on love alone. Warders have the unfortunate side-effect of draining the life force from almost everyone they're intimate with. A one-night stand leaves their partner feeling sick and weak, and the

more the Warder is around after sex, the weaker their partners get. Because of that, life partners—or “hearths”—have to be someone a Warder can fall in love with and someone a Warder cannot drain.

An interesting conundrum.

In *His Hearth* we meet Julian first, an advertising/marketing genius who literally just found out his boyfriend was cheating on him. The problem with that, even beyond the cheating, is that he’s supposed to be celebrating his recent promotion with the higher-ups. Who wants to show up without their plus one on such an occasion?

Luckily, Ryan is there to save the day. Ryan is a local TV host who had previously worked with Julian on various professional projects. Unbeknownst to Julian, Ryan is also a Warder. Ryan has been attracted to Julian for quite awhile, but he doesn’t trust his own instincts and doubts himself. When Ryan takes a leap and Julian is receptive, Ryan then gets to introduce Julian to all things that go bump in the night. Can they trust each other enough to see them through?

I liked this one well enough. It was an easy read, laid out the bare bones (and I do mean bare bones—details are scant) of the Warder world, and introduced two likeably flawed characters. One detail I really enjoyed was the way the dynamic between the two develops and changes over the course of the story. It’s not something I see all that often in paranormal romance, and I always like to celebrate when I find it.

The second novella is *Tooth and Nail*, where we get two *completely* different characters. Malic is a gruff guy in his 30s with a life to lead and no time for nonsense. He’s drinking with friends at a bar when he breaks up an attempted rape in the men’s room. There he rescues angelic—and barely legal—Dylan, who immediately latches onto Malic as his knight in shining armor.

Malic is completely resistant to the idea, of course. He sees Dylan as entirely too young and too beautiful for someone like him, and decides it’s better to stay far away. Dylan is beyond stubborn, though, and determined to have Malic as his very own. Finding out about Warders just sweetens the pot as far as Dylan’s concerned, and he sets out to win Malic by any means necessary.

I have to admit this is my very favorite of the three stories in the book. It’s rare to see the sassy twink character as the aggressor, and yet that’s exactly what we see here. Dylan might be nineteen, but he knows who he is and what he wants, and he has no shame in pursuing it. I also love that big gruff badass Malic is complete putty in Dylan’s hands. His confusion at this switch in circumstances is palpable and endearing. Add in the nice balance between romance and action, and I loved it to pieces.

Then we come to *Heart in Hand*, where we get to know Simon and his Warder Leith. They’re an established couple going through a rough spot. Leith needs more openness from Simon than Simon is able to or ready to give, and it creates distance between them. At the beginning we see this distance, and then something happens to get Simon to give a little.

Once that happens it’s like we start a completely new story, complete with a drastic setting change. While Simon stays the same character, Leith is practically unrecognizable. I don’t want to spoil it, so I can’t give too many details, but it was incredibly jarring to read. I also found my interest in the story nose-diving the further I got into it. Leith doesn’t even *appear* for the majority of this book! He’s certainly able to have sex, though. There were *four* sex scenes in a novella.

Of the three stories, this one was my least favorite. We get some interesting world-building details here, but

Leith honestly wasn't around as a speaking character long enough for me to really develop an attachment to him. The story also seemed to focus more on sex than character development or plot, which is not a balance I tend to enjoy reading.

Overall, the first story was interesting enough to keep reading, the second was a "hell yeah!" with a fist pump, and the third completely fell flat for me. Characters were (aside from story three) interesting and engaging, but the world-building was a little light for my tastes. I'd still recommend the book, but have some wine when you tackle the third story. Then get Volume Two! There's more Dylan and Malic in there!

Reviewed by Caer for The Novel Approach Reviews

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### **Kristie says**

I liked these a lot... but they needed more. More world building, more story development, more character development. They got better as I moved on to each book, but I still feel like they're in need of more. There is so much potential for full length novels with these characters. Novellas made me feel like they weren't important enough to focus that much energy on.

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### **Sara says**

Buddy read and review with my girl Jenni Lea.

## **5 Hearts for this Volume**

### **Book 1, His Hearth**

This was a great start to the wonderful series that has me hooked, but it's Mary Calmes so that is just par for the course. Yanno?

Told in the POV of Julian Nash, we get to know about who he is, meet his BFF Cash and his amazing wife Phoebe and we get Julian as he sees his date on his knees for another man on Julian's big night. WTAF you say? Right? I mean, from the first word you get that Julian is an amazing man and it was crazy to see how well he took his date cheating on him because you have to know someone as amazing as Julian deserves nothing but the best in life, work and romance, eh? \*nods\*

Enter one Ryan Dean aka sex on two legs. Good lord I adored Ryan and how he shows up and pursues the hell out of Julian with an intensity that was making my fingers tingle through my Nook. It was all sorts of swoony to realize that Ryan has had a crush on Julian and Julian on Ryan and then they hold hands and I fell outta my chair! Really Sara? You fell out of your chair?? No, not really because while that touch was electric, their first kiss had me on my ass! OMG Julian Nash kisses with his soul and let me tell you, I felt it

in my toes! Good lord.

You spend the good part of this story in a cat and mouse chase with Julian and Ryan. I was anxious waiting to see what would happen and if Julian would give in to going home with Ryan and how far they would go and then holy plot twist, shit got real!

***Warders. I had no idea what that was.***

Yeah, me neither but once I did and once I was told all about them and why they need a hearth I got the biggest heart eyes and melted into a puddle of good.

***He, their hearth—home—is vital and necessary. A hearth makes a home for the warder.***

Yup, a hearth is important to a warder and a warder is kinda like Buffy and all sorts of amazing. I loved this story and meeting the other warders who will be getting their own books in the series.

### **Book 2, Tooth and Nail**

I loved grumpy ass Malic when we meet him as he interrupts an important moment with Julian and Ryan in His Hearth. I have this thing for redeemable assholes and Malic fit the bill to a T and we got his POV in this story! But just as much as Malic is grumpy, you know he is missing what a warder needs most, his hearth. I just never expected his heart to be a feisty angel in need of rescue.

Dylan! Goodness. As my girl Jenni Lea puts it; Dylan is so adorable I need to put him in my pocket! I loved him. From the moment he is rescued by Malic, Dylan is in love. He wants Malic at any cost and it was so sweet to know how much he hung around the strip club to talk to his knight in shining armor.

Now what I liked about this is how it seamlessly moves from the first book and continues on with its stroll through the next couple. We know what warders are and what they do. We know they are so much better when they have a hearth and we know that Malic is stubborn AF! So it was enjoyable to see him, well fuck up over and over again and his fellow warders and even his sentinel to come to his rescue. Yup, even warders need rescuing from time to time.

But these two, they were so much fun because you know Malic wants Dylan but fights with the age gap and you know Dylan could care less. Hell, Dylan didn't bat an eye when he found out what Malic was from the ever mysterious yet intriguing kyrie named Raphael. Nope, he found out and was ready to be with Malic and hopefully be his hearth.

That end though? OMG was that not the sweetest and most perfect ending ever? Le sigh.

### **Book 3, Heart and Hand**



We met Leith before and we know that the warder is gorgeous with his long hair and even in the shape of a shepherd to help save a girl from a blood demon and we know he has a hearth already. So this was a bit different as we get an established couple but just because they are established, doesn't mean that there is any loss of romance or discovery in this world we are just beginning to explore.

Told from Simon's POV, we know that he has been Leith's hearth for the last six months. We get how they met and boy oh boy was is all sorts of sexy and just be still my heart, but we get that it's not easy being a home and grounding force of a man who fights demons and keeps the innocent safe. Simon and Leith are so in love with one another but they treat each other with kid gloves so they don't lose their love and really, are trying to figure out this whole warder/hearth relationship.

When Simon has a run in with his ex-boyfriend, he begins to open up and let Leith take care of him which is all Leith wants to do. But when Simon is called away for work and has to leave, it causes stress with the couple.

This story goes a bit darker than the previous ones as Simon seems to be at a work training at the Overlook hotel that has more than Jack as a resident and is pretty Buffy-ish over the hellmouth. Yup, he is in a crazy hotel where a demon wants to recruit all that are there for his new army. When Simon and his friends/co-workers start to feel uneasy about the hotel and are cut off from the outside world, he gets a visit from Raphael who explains it all. But just when a rescue shows up, Simon knows he can't leave his friends and that's when this story gets deeper.

I really adored seeing how in tune Simon and Leith are with one another even when Leith doesn't actually know who Simon is. They have this connection that cannot be broken and this need for one another that cannot be satisfied regardless of form or place. It was simply gorgeous to watch the moments Leith came through and how Simon could remind him of who he really was.

Once again, that end was pretty much perfect but um, what Raphael asked of Simon and knowing who the next book is about? Yeah, I need that because um, Jackson has a hearth already but what do you do when a kyrie wants a warder of his own and how in the world will that work out?

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Check out our emails about this series because... damn we're chatty... on the blog!

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## **Tina says**

Warders Vol. 1 by author Mary Calmes has His Hearth, Tooth & Nail, and Heart in Hand. The first three books in the Warders series.

His Hearth

Julian just found out the guy he was with has been cheating on him. He is pretty disillusioned.

Ryan he is a hot male model. He really wants Julian. He will do anything to be with him. Julian just has to get through his own pain and loss to see Ryan.

Julian is very scared of being hurt. He cannot wrap his mind that someone like Ryan would even want him. These two are the perfect balance together. They each bring something the other needs. They are good men who really deserve the happy ending.

#### Tooth & Nail

Malic finds his hearth by rescuing him. He knows he is way too young for him but he never counted on how much Dylan was determined to be with him.

Dylan young, sweet, and persistent. He might be just nineteen but he knows he who he wants and he is determined to get him.

I loved Dylan. I like sassy twink and Dylan is very much that. But he also has a strength to him. He can be an asset to Mal if Mal could just get over the age thing and see it.

#### Heart in Hand

We have Simon a bartender and Leith his boyfriend.

Simon has an old boyfriend draw a gun on him and demand that they get back together. When he says no way things really get interesting.

Leith is a warder by day and artist.

These two are working out just how to be a couple in the real world. With all the problems and obstacles that come with that.

Over all I really liked that these all came in one set. It really gave me an insight into the world, and the men that live there. I also want more!! Bring on the box sets I will be in line to read about them.

#### Five Shooting Stars

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### **Morgan Skye says**

#### His Hearth

Julian Nash should be excited: he's just earned a huge promotion at work and is going out to celebrate. But his happiness fades when he discovers his date cheating on him an hour before. Suddenly alone when everyone knows he's supposed to have a plus one, Julian is set for a long night until longtime acquaintance Ryan Dean bails him out of the embarrassing situation. During dinner, they discover they have more than just friendship between them: there is mutual admiration and heated attraction. But getting to know Ryan better—and finding a place in his life—will bring Julian frightening surprises and paranormal danger he never expected or dreamed existed.

#### Review

So if you know Mary Calmes' work, you know that she has this penchant for giving us these guys who are super awesome but don't know it. That's Julian. He's hot, pulled together, sweet but tough, warm-hearted, forgiving, fantastic in bed and (of course) totally unappreciated and somewhat clueless.

Then we have Ryan. Ryan is a super-hero. He fights demons and all sorts of bad creatures that go bump in the night. But... he also has a day job and in this case it's doing a morning show as a talk personality. He's also super hot, kinda quirky, a little insecure, and great at anything he puts his mind to.

The story of the Warders is this: there are a group of Warders for a given area who protect the people from the bad guys. They have some “powers” but are also well trained. Something about them drains the life force from their lovers unless their lover happens to be their “hearth”. In that case the “hearth” is their perfect mate, able to be the home they need when not fighting against evil, a place for them to rejuvenate and relax. They all want to find their hearth, but they have to be careful in their search because the process damages each lover unless they are the hearth.

Julian gets thrown over by a lover and Ryan is there to help him out and acts as his date. The mutual attraction between them is combustible and Ryan decides to test if Julian might be his hearth.

Now Ryan must introduce Julian to his world and in the meantime fight off the bad guys that have already found him

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I love this series! It’s fun and moves quickly. Each book has a different Warder but sort of takes place sequentially so you can read them separately but reading them in order gives you the most flavor.

Julian and Ryan are hot together and the magic and the action are fun and breath-taking. The huge payout is that once they realize who they are to one another there is lots and lots of sentimentality and lovey ooey goodness.

(This is my favorite book in the series, but not my favorite couple ;) )

5 of 5 stars

## Tooth & Nail

Nineteen-year-old Dylan Shaw is possibly the most beautiful thing Malic Sunden has ever seen. After Malic rescues Dylan from an attack, Dylan makes it very clear that he is more than interested, but Malic won’t even consider sleeping with Dylan because of his age. Malic is sure he’s not good enough for Dylan, who has his whole life ahead of him, and can’t conceive of burdening Dylan with his secrets.

But the darkness in Malic’s life won’t be denied, and soon Dylan is drawn into the dangerous paranormal world that is Malic’s reality. Malic fights tooth and nail to push Dylan away, to keep him safe... no matter that Dylan is the key to Malic’s strength and the only hope for his future.

## Review

We met Malic in book one, the once lover to Ryan Dean. He’s big, scary, cold and distant. He also seems to constantly be doing things that put his life in danger, making his other warders worry about him.

One night he rescues the very, very young Dylan from an almost rape and Dylan immediately latches on to Malic as his hero and wants to be with him in all the ways that count.

Malic doesn’t want to hurt the young man with the anime eyes so he ditches him over and over. Finally, it takes another brush with danger for Malic to give their relationship a chance, knowing it could hurt Dylan in the end.

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This book had quite a bit of world-building in it and if I didn't know about the coming sequel this couple gets, I'd feel a bit cheated for their romance. But we do actually get to see a lot of them again, so just trust that this world building and initial relationship stuff is the tip of the iceberg. Dylan is PERFECT for Malic and we'll see more about this in *Cherish Your Name*. (The non-romance in this that is important later on, so don't just skim it, it comes into play later.)

I love this series and this book (especially later) and highly recommend it.

3.5 of 5 stars

### Heart in Hand

Simon Kim is very much in love with Leith Haas, but Leith is a Warder. His job—hunting demons—is dangerous and important, and Simon doesn't want to distract the man he loves more than life with the small stuff. But he doesn't quite get that when a Warder takes a Heart, the Warder gives his heart without reservation. When Leith claimed Simon, Leith bared his soul, leaving himself vulnerable before the only man he's certain he'll ever love.

When Simon is sucked further into Leith's perilous world—and into an alternate dimension—Simon realizes that the only strength he can give his Warder is the strength of his love. Can Simon sacrifice the control he has come to treasure for the man who already owns his soul?

### Review

Simon and Leith are a Heart and Warder. They knew from the start that they were meant to be, but neither has really trusted the relationship. Leith resents the time away from him when Simon has to work and Simon has a hard time leaning on Leith like he'd want.

Simon goes on another work trip, but this time things go horribly wrong.

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This was a really interesting story. In addition to being hot and sexy at times, it also had a bit of a psychological/ thriller component. This is a bit scary at times!

Simon is snarky and sweet at the same time. His friends and lover are willing to follow him (literally) through hell, but he doesn't see his own value.

Warders are super heroes but they have flaws and Leith's is insecurity despite everything to the contrary. Having Simon literally see him and love him at his worst was the perfect way to cement in his mind that Simon really and truly loved him.

I love this series and have read it over and over. Each couple are so unique and different from the others but with that underlying thread of deep, unshakable love.

One thing I appreciate the most about Mary's writing is that she isn't afraid to have flaws in her characters- they make "human" choices even when those aren't always the "best" choices to be made. Even her "super heroes" are down to earth and approachable in their "imperfectness".

4 of 5 stars

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**Annie (Under the Covers Book Blog) says**

review to come

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**Jenni Lea says**

### **BOOK ONE: HIS HEARTH**

Truth be told, I had mostly forgotten about this series. That isn't to say that I didn't love it, 'cause I did, but after reading so many stories written by The Crack Goddess this series sorta got lost in the mix. I'm so glad this series is being re-released because it gave me the opportunity to rediscover this vibrant world of warders and their hearths.

At the opening of the story, Julian has just received a promotion at work and is attending a celebratory dinner in his and his partner Cash's honor. He's a bit downtrodden, though, as he witnessed something disheartening just an hour or so earlier. He doesn't want to ruin his partner's night so he puts on a brave face and tries to make the best of it. Then, in walks Ryan Dean. Well, as you can imagine if you've ever read a Mary Calmes book, sparks ignite an explosive relationship filled with want and need. And a bit of quirky humor too.

There's so much fiery passion that I was afraid my screen was going to catch fire. Ryan just cannot stop touching Julian. He needs Julian more than he needs air to breathe and Julian, bless his heart, tries his best to keep Ryan at arms-length so as not to get hurt by Ryan and his manwhoring ways. But Ryan has a secret. There's a reason why he's always been a player. It takes a special man, a one in a million type, to settle him and he's hoping beyond all hope that Julian is that man.

Once Ryan's secret comes out the story takes a turn to action and adventure and you get the idea of what the series is really about. The worldbuilding expands to reaches further than you can ever imagine. I thought it was brilliant, even more so this time around and I'm eager to get to the next book right away.

### **BOOK TWO: TOOTH & NAIL**

This is my favorite of the series. Malic is so curmudgeonly and Dylan just needs to jump right in my pocket.

From the moment Malic set eyes on the cherubic angel he was a goner. Dylan may have been three sheets to the wind when Malic happened upon him being accosted in the bathroom of a nightclub but what does that

matter when faced with such beauty? It's too bad Dylan's just a baby, though, 'cause Malic would tear that shit up in a heartbeat if he were older. Dylan, though? Well, Dylan ain't having it. Malic WILL be his, by God, and he's not taking no for an answer.

I could go on and on about Dylan. He really made this story for me. There is a plot in this book, complete with demons and fighting and heroism but, really, all I wanted was more Dylan. This book could have been entirely written as one long conversation between the two and I would've been just fine with that. There's just something about Dylan that makes me go all gooey inside. I could read about him for days and never get tired of him. And his interactions with Malic? Out. Of. This. World!

If you read this series for nothing else, read it for Dylan. I'm smitten.

### **BOOK THREE: HEART IN HAND**

Wow, this one was great! It took everything I loved from the first two books and kicked it up a notch. It's a bit different from the other two books as Simon and Leith are already a couple when we meet them. I wouldn't say an established couple as they've only been together for six months and they're still in the process of settling into their life together. Simon was just coming from a failed relationship when he met Leith by happenstance. He's not used to being someone's whole world so he keeps a bit of himself apart from Leith. It's not until both he and Leith are put in danger and separated that he finally understands all that it means to be a hearth.

This story had me on the edge of my seat! Since I know Mary has a tendency to go really dark at times I was a bit scared to read parts of this story. I was afraid of what she was going to put Simon through and for good reason. Poor Simon!

But, in true Mary fashion, she managed to make it all okay in the end.

This is why I love Mary's writing so much. She never ceases to surprise me. She will throw a twist in and get me so worked up that I'll be afraid to turn the page because I just know it's gonna kill me. And she does this to me every single time. Even though I know she would never let me down, she writes in such a way that I end up thinking, "Is this it? Is this the time she actually goes through with the terrible thing?" I imagine she's sitting there in her home cackling about what she just put me through. She's an evil genius, that Mary.

***See Red's review and our chat on the blog!***

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