



The Guardian Herd: Starfire

Jennifer Lynn Alvarez

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Fans of the Warriors, Survivors, and Guardians of Ga'Hoole series will love this first book in an action-packed tween fantasy series about winged horses from debut author Jennifer Lynn Alvarez. The Guardian Herd: Starfire tells the thrilling story of a young foal, Star, who controls the fate of the land of Anok and the five pegasi herds that live there.

Once every hundred years, a black foal is born, prophesized to either unite or destroy the five herds of flying horses that live in the land of Anok. He is fated to become the most powerful pegasus in all of Anok.

Star is this black foal.

Even though Star has malformed wings that make him unable to fly, the leaders of each herd will take no risks and want to execute Star before his first birthday. With the help of his friends, Star must escape the clutches of the powerful leaders, and his epic journey of self-discovery turns into a battle between good and evil that will keep readers eagerly turning the pages.

A gripping new animal fantasy series!

The Guardian Herd: Starfire Details

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Author : Jennifer Lynn Alvarez

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From Reader Review The Guardian Herd: Starfire for online ebook

Maria Stoica says

I love animal fantasy (it's my favorite style), but I'm skeptical since I've found fewer and fewer good books falling into this category. First, I was drawn in by the cover and I decided to read the first 20 pages. No sample has ever gripped me this tight (yet). Every century, a black pegasus was born and on his first birthday, the Hundred Year Star would cast its fire down onto him making him the most powerful pegasus alive thus turning him into the Destroyer or the Healer. With immense power, he could either kill or heal. This outcome was unpredictable and this is why all the clans of pegasi were nervous about Star's existence and most didn't want to take chances at all. What made me want to read the rest of the story was the fact that Star, the black foal (a mere child really) knew he would be executed on his next birthday by his own herd and he was at peace with the thought. He enjoyed the little time left with his best friends in a world of hostility and bullying.

And I find that to be a very powerful emotion to start a book with. Very well done Jennifer. I relished this story. And it only gets better and better. I loved the constant duality between dwindling hope and unshakable belief - would Star become the Destroyer or the Healer? And what choices do we really have in life? In this book, I saw our own world from two different perspectives - one is raging war, the other, soul healing forgiveness.

Simply awesome. A beautiful story, really well and smoothly written with a great flow (it feels like you're drinking nectar). The characters feel real, the details of their winged lives make you feel like a pegasus yourself. There are a couple of shocking scenes in battle as the war ravages the lands and the souls of the pegasi, but they only enhance the message at the end. This book is a wonderful example of the depth of the animal fantasy category. When bulgy ornaments are removed from the picture, exposing the simple truth, all becomes clear. This is why children books are good for adults, too :)

I can't wait for book 2 ^^

Chloe says

Is this copied off of warrior cats?!?

Erik This Kid Reviews Books says

Star is the "black foal" – a black pegasi that is born once every 100 years. On the black foals' first birthday (at midnight), the Hundred Year Star gives its power to the black foal of the century. With this power, the black foal can become either the Destroyer or the Healer of the herds. Either way, the foal will become more powerful than any pegasi in Anok. Thunderwing (and most of Sun Herd) thinks that Star will become the Destroyer, if he lives. Star doesn't blame them – he isn't so sure himself! Thunderwing, the over-stallion (chief) of Sun Herd now is the head of the Guardian Herd, the herd to which the black foal is born. It is the Guardian Herd's responsibility to keep track of the black foal and to determine it's fate when the time came. Thunderwing gave Star until his first birthday to live and then declared that Star must be killed in case he

becomes the Destroyer. When the lead-mare of Sun Herd helps get Star to safety by bringing him to a secluded cave, she gets kicked out of Sun Herd. She dares to go back only to warn the Sun Herd about the pegasi army about to attack the Guardian Herd because they lost track of Star. The warning didn't help. Now Star's friends' lives are in danger! What can he do?

This is an amazing book! It reminded me a little bit of the Warrior Cats series by Erin Hunter, with all of the Herds and all – but it was also very different (not just because it's about pegasi). I liked it. The Guardian Herd series is very unique and I like that it hooks you right in the first paragraph! I could not put it down! (Seriously. I didn't really leave my bean-bag chair at all until I was done... ;))! Ms. Alvarez is a great author with a descriptive writing style that gets the reader involved. Star is a character you really come to care for. He is a great main character, and is a nice guy pegasi. I like how Star's character developed during the time he spent exiled in the cave. I love how Ms. Alvarez describes the world of Anok. It felt like I was really there, diving through the trees, galloping through the plains! I thought all the interactions between the herds and members of each herd was interesting. You got to learn about their society and chain of command and such. I can't wait for the other books in this series! Bonus points for an awesome cover too!

NOTE I got a free copy of his book in exchange for an honest review

Sarah says

Overall, an OK book. It struck me as violent, but that is one of the themes of the book (overcoming a natural tendency to violence). I read it because my 9yo wanted it and I thought I'd read it first...I'm glad I did, because there are a few items I'll discuss with her as she reads it. Though the characters are all pegasi, they are very human in many ways, and this book could be an opportunity for discussion about bullying, growing up, war and fighting, and even group dynamics.

I was hooked, and the writing is good. I don't know that I would let very young readers read this without some guidance or at least previewing it.

Mary says

This book is not a happy one. It may be marketed for middle schoolers-8 and up-but, seriously, I have to say the subject matter is VERY controversial. You might be thinking, "Oh, Pegasus! That's so friendly and for kids!"

Hate to say it, but children's books usually are some of the most morbid shit you will come across.

If you are familiar with the Warriors by Erin Hunter you will notice right away that the way the character's are named are practically identical. In fact, I am wondering if this could be violating some sort of copyright.

HOWEVER, I must say that I was thoroughly impressed with this first book. Immediately you are drawn into this world of Anok, and Alvarez's prose is smooth and flows just like the Erin's. So, Warriors fans

should find themselves right at home.

Star is the character you instantly feel for. We all know what it's like to be left out, to feel lonely. Star faces this everyday, and on his birthday he is destined to be killed by the leader of his herd, his family. His mother died giving birth to him, and the only Pegasi he can have a relationship with are his friends Bumblewind, Echofrost and Morningleaf-whose mother, Silvercloud, adopted Star to watch over him after promising Star's mother to protect him. Star feels terrible about this because Silvercloud and her mate, Thunderwing, have broken up over this dispute, and Star wonders if his friends would still have a united family had he not been born.

Add in the fact that he has basically accepted his upcoming birthday gift of execution and it makes for a pretty depressing beginning.

Don't worry though! Amidst the death, violence, depressing things and a um...well attempted rape, this book manages to bring some happy moments into the equation. Don't be expecting rainbows and unicorns and stuff, because these Pegasi are warriors-oh shoot, there's so many parallels to Warriors.

Read the first pages and you will witness cruel bullying. That cover fooled you, didn't it? Trust me, this might scare younger children-I certainly found myself balking at some of the s=passages, like WTF did I just read? Did I just read that? This is for freaking CHILDREN!

Then again, the Warriors were pretty messed up, now that I think about it...wow, how did I never realize the morbidity of my favorite children's books?

So if you can handle trigger-moments, death by fire, depressing themes, cruel bullying, DA POWER OF FRIENDSHIPP!!!!!!!, and basically a really good read, this book might be for you. If you let your child read this make sure you discuss these things with them. Don't get me wrong, it's not so depressing and violent that you would have a hard time reading it, it's just a very difficult book to get through if you're really sensitive. It's pretty short, though.

Anna Sobczak says

I loved this book! at first, I thought it would int be good but then I started to read it And finished it in a day! Fellow Reader,If your looking for an book you can never put down READ THIS!

ps-Read with caution, once its over you have to wait for the 2nd to come out ITS KILLING ME!

Raven says

I'm going to start off by explaining that I am 28, so that may weigh my opinion a bit. I don't think it's a huge deal since I was reading 'adult' fantasy when I was 12. I don't imagine I would have had any problems

enjoying this series then, and I don't know.

The biggest problem with this novel is that it feels less like a novel and more like a character introduction. It feels like the entire novel is spent getting to know who Star is so that by the end of it we're ready to start involving some more fleshed out story elements and character interactions. The Kindle price tag of 1.99 usd only reinforces that opinion for me, as that is significantly cheaper than every other book in the series - a significantly more expensive 9.99 usd.

The story is a little overplayed. Once every century a star appears, a special snowflake is born, and if he can survive one year the star will gift him with its powers and he will become either savior or foe. The saving grace is that his special snowflake syndrome does result in some pretty serious problems birth wise, and these issues are things he has to suffer through before surviving to his first birthday. It has the typical schoolyard bullies, but they are so vastly minor to the adult bullies who are basically afraid that he will end their entire species. That's not largely a unique idea, but the factions rallying either around or against a little black foal was just interesting enough for me to get over it.

Which brings us to the saving grace of this series - the characters. The characters are very endearing and grew on me, even the villains. I became invested in what everyone was trying to accomplish.

Except Rockwing, he's just... Yeah he's likely the worst thing about this series, especially with how he handles the climax at the end of the second book, but that's a criticism for 'that' review. Suffice it to say there is nothing of value to his character, and he's as shallow a villain as you can get. The series doesn't need him, there were plenty of other interesting antagonists who weren't just terrible people. The author has already shown that she can do better, and then she gave us Rockwing, it's almost unacceptable.

Some other criticisms of this novel include:

Fire doesn't work that way, living creatures are not inherently flammable and don't go up in a blaze due to a few embers.

You've made a race of sapient beings—not sentient; the pegasai in this novel build things, they have complex social systems, they have intricate plans—but you also have them as able to talk before they're even off milk, and they physically mature in a year or two. The average terrestrial horse lives 25-30 years, many of the older characters in these books are in their 70s, with one in her 90s. Human beings develop in a very different way than non-sapient animals for a reason. I understand this is fantasy, but please. Please pick a side of the fence. Either they're horses that can communicate among themselves, like the rabbits in *Watership Down*, or they're a magical sapient race that has more in common with humans than horses. The way it's done in this is just weird.

To conclude, it's a fun book, but it warrants the cheaper price tag from the other books in the series. It has fun characters. (I wish my mom were more like Silvercloud, if I'm being honest.) But often those characters will do things that don't make a lot of sense for the sake of a story that needs to play out the way it did. The conclusion left me dreading the next novel, but I picked it up anyway, and will be reviewing that as well.

PickyReader says

[After all the horrible things that happened to Star, he totally had the right to become the Destroyer. But he chose to become the Healer, based on what his mother said to him: "Don't fight them. Heal them." Star recognized that the herds were divided, and craved violence and dominating power. He felt them abuse him, verbally and physically yet still became t

Kelsi says

Review to come.

graveyardgremlin (formerly faeriemyst) says

I honestly don't know what to rate **Starfire**. It was beautiful, it was ugly. It was heartbreaking, it was triumphant. I loved it, I hated it. The book just made me emotional. I don't know if it was my mood, or if it reminded me of growing up "different", something altogether different, or a mix of all three, but it hit me in the feels and I've been left reeling. I need to let the story sink in more for an accurate rating.

Amanda says

So, this is a pretty violent book for an elementary level reader.

Like, we're talking full on implied rape(to be fair, I probably only picked up on this because I'm older than the target demo. But it's still implied), genocide, fairly graphic (describing the sound of a spinal cord being broken, the rush of blood after a killing blow, etc) fighting, and the entire premise is based on the idea of a horse dying violently before it's first birthday.

It's also pretty full of tropes that are kind of toxic to youngsters (the mother gets fridged, women only have positions of power if they marry (sorry, mate) into them, lots of fathers casting out their children, cheating, and there's even a scene where one of the horses is mocked for the way she looks. Like, what's the point of a fantasy world if you're just going to make everything resemble a western european medieval fantasy ideal?

I mean, on a technical level, this was a decent book. The plot worked, the characters worked, the worldbuilding was solid, but I can't say that I'd recommend it.

Sarah Amelia says

Well, sadly I had hoped to like this book better, but I just didn't connect with the characters and found it simaler to other animal fantasy books I have read. On the back it says, "Perfect for fans of The Gardians of Ga'Hooole, Warriors, and Survivors!" Being a Warriors fan, I wish I had enjoyed it more. Also, I love fantasy books but some things didn't make sense.

Overall I didn't enjoy this book as much as I had hoped:(

S Reeb says

Kept me on my toes!

Sriya Mudumba says

its full of mystery and tension

Lolly's Library says

Reading this made my inner child (who often escapes and runs amok as an outer child, but that's an issue to deal with another day) gleefully, squealingly happy. About the only thing that would've made the whole thing even better would've been the presence of unicorns. But that's just my horse-obsessed inner child speaking.

The story revolves around a very familiar theme, that of loneliness and not belonging and wondering if everyone would be better off if you just ran away. Believe me, as a teenager, I ran the gamut of these emotions, so I could fully empathize with Star, the protagonist of the story. As a black pegasus in a world where black pegasi aren't an everyday occurrence, Star feels like an outcast. Add in an ancient prophecy attached to those rare black pegasi, one of which is born every hundred years, which states that the pegasus foal will either unite or destroy the herds and become the most powerful pegasus in the land, and it's no wonder Star is either shunned or actively bullied by the other foals, not to mention many of the adult pegasi. As a final insult, Star doesn't fully belong to his herd: His mother had been driven away from her herd and was taken in by the Sun Herd, then died after giving birth to Star; the lead mare, Silvercloud, promised Star's mother she'd protect him, a promise she's kept all these years, to the detriment of her relationship with the herd's over-stallion, Thunderwing. So not only is Star concerned about his destiny, he feels guilty for destroying the lives of those protecting him. This makes for one sad, lonely little youngster. The fact that, on top of all these issues, Star is a pegasus who can't fly . . . Well, it's no wonder he feels depressed! In the end, Star comes through his trauma and finds his place in the world, but it's a bumpy road he has to travel before reaching that peak.

This is definitely not a light and fluffy book, an impression one might get upon hearing that it's all about pretty, pretty pegasi. But right from the start, in the first chapter, we deal with bullying and fear and the threat of death. From there the book gives us fighting between herds and even within the herd--fighting that ends in a lot of death--more bullying, physical violence, betrayal and vengeance, near-death experiences due to starvation and infection, a forest fire that kills yet more pegasi . . . you get the picture. But don't be put off and think it's too dark for a kid. Trust me, at heart kids are sociopaths, and I mean that in the most positive way: They're still forming their moral compass and books that show how things can go wrong, how life isn't always fair, but how things like love, compassion, cooperation, and sacrifice can save the day provide helpful guidance. Kids are plastic, elastic, and flexible; they can handle more serious issues that we adults might want to shield them from. But exposure to the darker side of life, even viewed through the lens of fantasy, gives kids a more well-rounded attitude and the potential to cope with any future issues that might

befall them. They'll sympathize with Star and root for him even as they growl at Star's enemies, especially Brackentail; they'll cry when things go wrong and yelp for joy when Star finally starts to fulfill his destiny. In short, I can see both girls and boys devouring this book and any follow-up volumes.

I've noticed some people ding the bit where Star's tears cause flowers to spring up in their wake, complaining it's too far-fetched and silly. Um, we're talking about a book concerning talking pegasi and a star on a hundred-year cycle that gives one particular pegasus a unique power. You're going to complain about the idea of flowers growing from tears? *opens mouth, pauses, shuts mouth and shakes head* Yes, Star's tears bring forth flowers, which I took as an obvious and overt sign that his destiny isn't written by an ancient prophecy. Star's destiny is one he will write every day, one of his own making. A destiny I'm eager to read about in however many sequels Ms. Alvarez decides to write (very, very many, I'm hoping).
