



The Servant

Mary Calmes

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After saving his younger brother's child, Daemon Shar is cursed by a witch and runs far from home, a stray who will seemingly never be anything more. But destiny is hard to outrun, even for a man who is now more cat than man beneath his robes and cowl. A chance battlefield meeting between he and Ehron, a foreign lord, gives him purpose amidst the darkness of his accursed life. Soon Daemon finds that his true nature cannot be corrupted no matter the form he inhabits.

As Ehron's consul, Daemon plots and plans to shape his new lord's future so that he may leave it blessed when he runs away yet again. But he never counted on his soul hungering for Ehron's brother Gareth or for his past to catch him by the tail at last.

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The Servant Details

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From Reader Review The Servant for online ebook

Deja Black says

I had been considering this book for at least a year now, but was unsure due to a few ratings. Knowing myself and my love for Mary Calmes's writing, why would I ever doubt how good this book would be? I do not know. What I do know is that I am glad I have read it. I loved Valian and his heroism, his quick wit, his love for his fellow man. I loved Gareth as he grew to reveal who he truly was becoming the strength and protection that Valian needed. I loved the supporting characters, the foil of Ehran and his family as well as his bounty of friends.

What did I not love? Ending this book. I am sorry that it took me so long to enjoy yet another fantastic story by such a gifted author, and I am thrilled that it was indeed a treasure.

The Servant is an awesome book. Give it a try. You will come away fulfilled.

Relly says

Just ok

2.5 ??

I struggled with this one keeping track of who was who and I found myself confused throughout the book. When I knew who the people were and what was happening I enjoyed it, but I spent too much time trying to understand what was happening.

I didn't really understand why Gareth fell for Daemon. He didn't really have any interactions with him and was declaring his love and could see the man behind the beast, and Daemon didn't really act like a man who was in love either till the very end.

Amy Lane says

Mary Calmes wrote a solid fantasy in this one. Valian Shar is an interesting hero, a 'rat-catcher' among men, and Gareth Terhazian is a surprising protector. The lands of Rieyn and the political structure is thoroughly imagined, and the world-building is first rate. If you grew up on The Blue Fairy Book and Lloyd Alexander (*raises hand*) you will very much enjoy this:-)

Bookwatcher says

I don't like to give rating to a book I didn't finish... But this one deserve it. I don't read just some pages, I read 70% of this freaking book it's impossible to understand, and it tired me.

It's not because the plot is so complex (as many fantasy books) I had a hard to understand. No. Very simple plot, very incompressible story! The switch of narrator is absurd, **all characters talk exactly like another.**

There is no unique voice or behave, everyone is a clone of another. Many times when the narrator changed I didn't even notice and read some paragraphs before understand it.

My English sucks! Oh yeah, it sucks. But I read a lot, and even from this same writer I read other books, and **never was so confused as I was reading The Servant.**

I'm in bitchy mode, so let me say I waste my money for a book that is not cheap, and because I'm in such bitch mode let me say this seems like a story that someone had to write, not want to write.

Giving up. 70% read

P.S.: Acrobat or Frog are AMAZING books... I'm having hard time to believe the same writer wrote The Servant... Seriously... Stay away from this book.

Vivian ?(????)? says

I actually stressed over as to what I should put as the rating for this book. There were times i was like, hmm 3 Stars and a mention that it may be more around 3.5. Or maybe 3.75 with 4 Stars as the official rating.

Well anyway. 3.75 it is.

A In-The-Three's Star rating may sound low, but in actuality it, The Servant was actually a pretty good book. Unfortunately, not much more than that. While I enjoyed certain aspects of it, I also disliked some, or just found others rather mediocre.

One of my biggest (and it isn't really even that big) grievances was at the beginning, with all the sudden foreign terms, words and places all chucked in. With no explanation whatsoever. We were just thrown into the world of ____ (as you can see, none of the names actually stuck with me. Huh.). But apart from that, I rather thought the world was pretty unique in some ways, and nicely built. This probably can't even be classified as a "grievance" because really, I wouldn't be surprised if it was just me. It was late and I was tired but I wanted to just finish this goddamn book. And not exactly for all the right reasons too.

Which leads me to another point. No, the book wasn't *bad* so I wanted to be rid of it quickly. It's just that a while in, I could tell that I'd enjoy but not love this book. I knew I'd think it was "okay" and never really look back. So I really just wanted to finish this book and be done with it. Not in a bad way, but because it just didn't really strike any chord with me.

There was nothing in the book that was really "exciting" to be honest. There were times when I sort of drifted off while reading and conjured up some incredibly sexy, angsty scenario with Daemon and Gareth in my mind. And at times that was more interesting then what was happening at the time.

Overall however, I actually enjoyed The Servant quite a lot, and if it managed to catch your eye, by all means, read and enjoy. As someone said, this was a solid fantasy novel and quite a fun read.

pbj says

[And yet another Mary Sue hero who can do

Adara says

This one had a different feel to me than others of Mary's stories. It wasn't bad, just different—I'm not sure I can describe it. It felt more descriptive than other stories, but that might have just been because she was world-building this time around, and not setting it in a "world within our world" like the *Hearth* series or *The Guardian*.

I liked Daemon's character a lot. He always has a shield up in the form of his cloak, but he's still very much himself as far as his personality coming through. Even so, he's still very lonely while he's surrounded by people who adore him and would quite literally do anything for him.

Gareth felt like Jan Brady at first - always concerned about how he's not his older brother, Ehron (his Marsha). It took me longer to like him. And it took me a while to figure out that he was the love interest - that wasn't immediately apparent. I liked him in the end.

It struck me as a bit odd how fast he and Gareth became so entangled with each other when they had so little knowledge of each other - just a fascination really. But it's a fairy tale, so I forgive it for that.

It's not my favorite Mary Calmes story, but it's not my least favorite, either. It was worth the read.

Julio Genao says

Way, way too brief. Fun and compelling, and then—poof! Very much over. An awful lot of world-building for such a little story—but, never mind. A charming read overall.

UltraMeital says

I liked the idea behind this one, but I gotta say, like the previous book I've read by Mary it was all over the place where POVs were concerned. Each paragraph could be right around anyone's POV and it kept changing. I don't like this style of narration though it wasn't that difficult to understand who was "talking". The world building was all over the place as well, though I don't fault Mary for it, there was a lot to build in very few pages.. I've read the synopsis a while back so actually I wasn't sure what is going to happen or rather who our "cat in a hat" is going to choose. That was fun!

Valian "Daemon" Shar is one of three brothers. Two are constantly fighting over the thrown of Emperor in their land. Loving both of his brothers he has "no other choice" but stay in the middle and try to keep them from each other's throats.. Yet when he is cursed by a witch he shamefully decided to take his leave and find a life somewhere else. Covering his whole body not to show anything of his hideous cat-like appearance. He finds himself in the service of Ehron. After he saved his life and gave him purpose (though he did also a lot of saving and find his true propose on his own) he decided to make Ehron's life perfect offering him and his family everything they could ask for with his special powers and mostly his wisdom.

When the war is finally over, 10 years has passed since he ran from home, leaving his best friend and

companion and his quarreling brothers. He is home sick already but he isn't sure how and when to return. Now he is a free man and he needs to decide his path but it's so difficult with Ehron's brother Gareth is so alluring! He wants him like he hasn't wanted anyone in a long while but he can't offer him anything when he is half human and half cat.. Yet that's not their only problem. There is another war brewing - one with his own country and since they have significantly larger land and armies he is afraid of the consequences. Being so far from home for such a long time he isn't even sure what's the dynamic and if he can make any difference. He is tired of war, he wants a home, preferably with Gareth so a solution must be found..

I liked the characters and the way they were portrayed, we had many POVs so we got glimpses of each person from different angles yet what we mostly got was how damn PERFECT Daemon is. That was my main argument in the previous book I've read by Mary and it's my main issue in this book as well. It's not that I need a significantly flawed character, I just need one I can relate to, which feels genuine. Daemon didn't and it wasn't because he was half cat half human.. the story flowed, it was quite short and yet a lot was going on with many characters (mainly because Daemon was constantly plotting..) and so it was fun seeing everything unfold. The world building was a bit too much for me though, I was confused and at a loss at many situations not remembering characters, cities and lands. It's A LOT to take in when all you got are 158 pages.. but it also means we got a WHOLE story. A very complex one. So even if I WAS frustrated I also appreciated the effort that was put into making this world "real". The romance was a bit clumsy at times but it was also terribly sweet. It's more of a rounded up 4 star rating I guess. Yet it was a fun short read.

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Jacq says

This story is complicated, and just plain hard to follow. A typical lust/love story. The part that stands out- is when Garth said" "MINE"! His Daemon...yay! My least favorite, was the smexy scenes, far and few. I found this story to be bewitching instead of magical. The end was very well worth the complication.

BWT (Belen) says

I love Mary Calmes. I am quite vocal in the fact she is one of my favorite authors. I love Greg Tremblay. I am equally vocal in praise of his stunning talent as a narrator. I reread and re-listen to both their work often. Seriously, *really* often.

So it is with a heavy heart and a stunned sadness that I say this story on literally no level whatsoever worked for me. I was lost, confused, and befuddled for most of the story.

From what I was able to cobble together, and I could be wrong, because like I said I was confused for a lot of this, Daemon Valian Shar is one of three brothers. Two of whom are fighting to reign over their kingdom of Narsyk. When he saves the infant son of one of his brothers from a witch's blade, Daemon Valian is cursed

to take the form of a cat.

Daemon runs from Narsyk to the neighboring country of Rieyn, and, keeping covered at all times, finds himself the right-hand Consul to Ehron Terhazien. He plots and schemes for ten years (off page) to advance Ehron politically. When the war that Ehron has been fighting in is over, Daemon returns with Ehron to Ehron's home, the holding of Deshal Mar in the barony of Kasan, where Daemon meets and becomes much beloved by all of Ehron's family, including his younger brother Gareth who claims Daemon as his own.

There are *a lot* of characters, and they all have difficult names, and the places are all fantasy-named and it was all really confusing for me.

Then there was the narration. Which was good for the most part, except for the accents. Greg's ease with accents was his undoing in this for me, because everyone, it seemed, had a different accent. Which made no sense to me within members of the same immediate family. I didn't get it. How could a mother, father, brothers and sister all sound so completely different from one another? Or most servants within the household? I spent a lot of my time listening to the story wondering why certain accents were chosen and why there were so many.

I even went and bought the book thinking reading it would be an easier time, and while I could then suss out names a lot easier, it didn't help me to enjoy the story at all.

Bottom line, I didn't enjoy this story or the narration.

Audio copy of The Servant provided by Dreamspinner Press in exchange of an honest review.

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

qx says

2.5

A bit of confusion at the beginning.

On page 1, we have:

"Guardians of Yuan defend us," Ostyn Tan gasped as he stared out across the valley and took in the crimson-washed sky. He turned and looked at his friend and servant; wincing as he saw the visible pain and dread etched on the face of the only man he would willingly give his life for, Valian.

So Ostyn is the lord and Valian's the devoted servant? Except no, it's actually the other way around.

Other than that, pretty standard Mary Calmes fare: a main character, adrift, with no place to call home, who's beautiful beyond compare; who's loved, adored, admired by all; who's capable of solving all problems, righting all wrongs; who's the only man who can bring together opposing sides, etc. finds love and a home for himself without much conflict. Nothing really new here.

Altivo Overo says

Complex mystery that unfolds slowly in self revelation, glorying in rich language and emotion as well as history and fate. This book reads like a great classic, often demanding that we pause and ponder its import.

Even so, this is a familiar tale too, of love between brothers long separated, and at the same time the heat of passion between two men who have just found each other.

I found this to be pure delight, but probably not to everyone's taste. The leisurely pace and heavy description is more like a novel of two centuries past than it is of what we expect today. Do not down this heady wine in a gulp. Savor it slowly to get the most from it.

Sally says

The Servant is a 'classic' fantasy novel (in the sense that the story is simple, the scope is intimate, and the magic is kept to a minimum) that takes a while to find its romantic footing. It's not initially clear where the story is headed, and there is a rather abrupt transition in setting and theme, but it eventually comes together in the end.

Valian Shar is introduced as a dashing, yet troubled hero who serves as conscience of his feuding family. Trapped in the middle of a conflict that represents both a family squabble and a civil war, he finds himself cursed to become more cat than man. As the wandering nomad, Daemon Shar, he is a man of mystery, immediately endearing to everyone he meets. He is the archetypal fairy tale hero, perfect in every way, and as admirable as he is amusing. While his altered physical appearance could have made him an outcast, his curse has also made him charming, clever of wit, and as agile as a cat. He is so adept at reading and managing others, in fact, that it's easy to dismiss his initial flirtations with Gareth as nothing more than an attempt to be friendly and polite.

When we first encounter Gareth, he is very much the typical brother of a hero, too young to go to war, and sullen and resentful because of it. Although he initially comes across as petty and selfish, there is a core of strength and goodness within him that is only revealed through his interactions with Daemon. He is the younger brother of a warrior, but he's also growing and maturing into a very competent steward and politician. Although not as immediately likable as Daemon, he is a character worthy of both our respect and our admiration. Initially, his feelings for Daemon seem to be simple infatuation, but they quickly evolve into the kind of true love only a fairy tale can capture once fate provides him with the chance to reveal the true strengths of his character.

After a rousing start, this is a story that settles into a very leisurely pace that is (at times) frustrating, but which allows the romance between Daemon and Gareth to develop naturally. For me, the key to the story was the delightful variation on the traditional fairy tale themes of true love and dashing heroes. Instead of the macho hero swooping in to save the girl (or, in this case, boy) and winning his love, the roles are reversed – it's the love struck young man who takes charge, saving the not so macho hero, and boldly claiming his love for himself. It's a twist to their relationship that is so unexpected, yet so undeniably beautiful, that it really sets the story back on its course, leading us into the reality of happily ever after.

DISCLAIMER: This book was received from the publisher for the purpose of a review on Queer Magazine online.

Daphne says

So much going on. There was so much detail that I couldn't come close to following it and I skimmed a fair amount of the detail of the political intrigue. That said, I could see the seeds of Mary Calmes and I appreciate so much her evolution as a writer.
