



Cool Hand

Mark Henwick

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“If you don’t believe your whole life has been a path leading to this one point, you’re not focused enough.”

The Athanate are on the brink of war.

Amber has to search for Diana in the forbidden zone of New Mexico, for the good of the paranormal world and her own sanity. Every step she takes is another opportunity to precipitate more conflict. Every easy choice is denied her and she must work without the support of the powerful paranormal factions in Colorado. When she most needs help, she has nothing.

But sometimes, nothing can be a real cool hand.

Cool Hand Details

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From Reader Review Cool Hand for online ebook

Anna (Bobs Her Hair) says

So good! A couple of loose ends are tied up. Relations between Adepts, Weres, and Athanate increases in intensity. Amber grows stronger, but there's always a cost.

One more book then I'll have to wait for the next release.

Steve Isenhower says

Excellent

An outstanding addition to a wonderful series. Lots of thrills and action and some very surprising developments. Very well done!

Gallandro_83 says

Amber returns to shake up the world.

Amber and company have just come off their most important battles, House Farrell and Pack Deauville have reached detente with the counterparts in Denver. The Matlal have been contained; Nagas are on the run, the Confederation has been sent packing, and Nobel the rogue has been revealed and killed. The time has finally come for Amber to deal with her own problems. If only it could be that easy... for every problem that Amber deals with it seems two come up in their place.

Diana her chosen Athanate mentor has still not returned to Denver. The FBI still wants to know how Amber fits into the puzzle that surrounds her. Olivia is getting closer to her time of change and Amber still does not have any idea how to help her change to wolf. Her relationship with her sister is broken and her family has never been farther from her. In addition her were and athanate natures are starting to overwhelm her and she's worried that they will start to push her to rogue behavior.

In the midst of all this we come in on Amber finding herself sidelined by the commitments she has ended up binding herself to with her allies. Yet her instincts are telling her that she needs to be in New Mexico. The Confederation has been spotted there, Diana was last seen in the area and House Romero that was allied with Matlal is silent. In addition she must discharge her duty and find the kin of Larry Dixon and rescue them if she can.

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I really enjoyed the story but found it a little too action packed.

The characters are not really getting any down time and because we are bouncing crisis to crisis we still are

in the dark about just how everything in the world works. In addition the effects from what has already happened in the story may not have reached the entire hidden world. I realize that this is fiction but so much has happened and we haven't seen the full reactions of the world. This means that in my mind we need the time so everyone allies and enemies can come together before anything else can conceivably happen; because I can't see so many of these long lived beings ready to improvise more and more in such a changed world. I was also really hoping that more information about the world would be passed on as we see Amber build her own house and Pack.

The ending was well integrated and showed that no matter what happens the story is moving forward. I wouldn't be surprised if echoes of that event become more significant as the series goes on. So many threads are finished or move on that I wouldn't be surprised if events in the background could or did occur. In many ways this book ended the first part of the series Amber has now entered the hidden world and now must assert her role and work for Emergence.

That being said I am upset how Amber's crisis was left. It's been hanging over her head for the last few books and while interesting in my opinion it doesn't add much to the story. Having her "working toward equilibrium" and making it less fatal would have left the stories just about the same at this point. It sound as if it might be resolved quickly for the next novel which I look forward to because she only has a couple of days to meet the FBI.

Here's hoping that the books keep coming ASAP because I know that I'm hooked and can't wait for the next one.

ParaUrban Review says

Henwick just keeps getting better and better! Cool Hand is a gripping, superbly written tale that explodes across the senses, leaving you gasping for breath and reaching for more!

Amber is an anomaly, a mysterious blend of Athanate, Were and Adept - a hybrid and a potential monster. Under pressure from all sides, Amber knows she needs to find the balance between her gifts soon, or risk going rogue. The only person who can help her control her Athanate side is Diana - and Diana has gone MIA.

Time is not on her side. In usual Farrell style, Amber ignores the commands of those who believe they know what's best for her and goes in search of Diana in Mexico. The trip is mentally and physically perilous - she's not only entering a volatile Were environment where her actions could have far-reaching ramifications for all US Were, she's fighting a terrifying battle internally to keep her own personal nightmares contained. And she's losing.

Throw into the mix the added pressure of promises made ... to find a cure for those in the Were community that can't change, to bring her House together harmoniously, to keep her own family close but uninformed, and to protect those vulnerable few who depend on her...all the while trying to build binding ties between the different communities in preparation for Emergence, has left Amber with very little time to look after the one thing that could bring it all crashing down.... Going rogue! I watched with bated breath as the strong box in her mind strained and groaned under the growing pressure, wondering all the while how the author was going to bring this particular challenge to a plausible close.

This book combines the multi-faceted gem that is Amber Farrell and culminates in an ending that left me awestruck, and did it beautifully! I had to go back and read the ending again, firstly to relive the thrilling ride and secondly, to grasp the ironic brilliance surrounding the safe place in her head!! Stunning, totally unexpected yet unmistakably logical!

Mark, you've outdone yourself again with Cool Hand, just as you've consistently outdone yourself with each new book from the start of the series! I love them, and just can't wait for book 5....

Note to readers, if you haven't read the previous 4 books, do yourself a favour and buy all 5, lock yourself away for a week and go on a wild romp through Amber Farrell's world!

Llaph | No Frill | No Shill says

I liked this book a lot more than the last one. I would like to think I got a better hold on all of the threads that go on in these books. I know I enjoyed them more this time around. One thing I liked was the were-centric sort of storyline that went on. Yes, there were the Athanate bits—but since she wasn't in Denver for the bulk of it it didn't seem to be center stage—at least to me. I'm curious to see how things will be with the New Mexico alphas in the future—Cameron is—well I want to see what is up with that guy for sure. I liked the intrigue going on, the warrior nuns, the Carpathian angle, and finally a resolution to the “halfie” problem that had been brewing since it was first introduced. Amber didn't have her normal crew, but Tullah and her dragon did a lot to make up for it. One thing I like is Amber's plotting—it's inspiring. I look forward to the next book to see what all happens now since she basically kicked the ant hill with her actions at the end of this book.

So, I Read This Book Today says

Best book of 2015!!! It's particularly hard to take being stabbed in the back close to home. There's always a feeling of betrayal when people of your own group oppose you. - Catharine MacKinnon
Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power. - Abraham Lincoln
The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire. - Ferdinand Foch
Amber Farrell knows everything about betrayal. Betrayal by the US Government, friends, coworkers. Betrayed in every way she ever thought possible – and some ways no one could have ever imagined. As a hybrid of Athanate, Werewolf and Adept, life is a complete misery. Athanates don't trust her wolf side, wolves don't trust her Athanate. And the Adept – well, they just want her dead. War is coming, the first shots have been fired, and without her mentor, Diana, Amber may be going rogue. So, in a desperate bid to salvage her sanity Amber and Tullah make a desperate bid to find Diana by entering the forbidden territory of New Mexico. Now, they are trapped in plots within plots as enemies are revealed as friends, friends as enemies, and death. "You tread a difficult path, Amber, where every way bears death and sorrow and pain and loss" As the story continues to wind tighter and tighter, and war becomes inevitable, Amber and her kin, her friends, and even her enemies, walk the razors edge – the edge of death, sorrow, pain and loss – and the brutal fires of a world war between humans, Athenate, were, and adept. Mark has outdone himself this time. His books have continuously gotten better, but this edition is beyond amazing. If you haven't read the series, I can't recommend it highly enough. But this one? This one is the best I have read this year. The hard part? Now I have to wait for the next one!

Sigh. Write faster, Mark!!Highly, highly recommended!

Madhellenasays

I have to say I was really excited about this series at the start, but as the story progressed I became more and more annoyed with the complicated politics.

I read the first 3 books, then I listened to the audio versions of all - I like the narrator voice, but I lost the enthusiasm for the series.

Amber is better than average when it comes to being kickass - I can compare her to my favourite heroine Kate Daniels in these terms. Which is a great compliment :)

My issues are with the rest of the characters - and they are too many to count at this stage. Jen is a paragon of a woman, Alex is absolutely boring, Bian should be more interesting... I stopped caring about the rest somewhere along the way.

I get that the author tried to create a complex world, but I lost track of names at a certain point. And the politics are sooo boring.

Jeanny says

4.5 stars

cliffhanger ending

RachelW (BamaGal) says

Cool Hand begins with tying up some loose plot threads from the previous book in the series; and with Amber dealing with her Athanate/Were hybrid issues, as well as issues dealing with her kin. The first quarter of the book was a little slow and overly detailed in places, sometimes getting lost in the minutiae. At about 28%, when Amber and Tullah left for New Mexico to hunt for her missing mentor Diana, the story took off and never looked back. It was an action-packed, exciting rollercoaster ride to the end as Amber faces off danger from every direction from several paranormal factions. Once again, we are left hanging just a bit with the ending; although there is finally a little closure on some of Amber's personal issues.

Despite the slightly slow beginning, this book has the most ambitious, broadest overall scope of the Athanate world to date in the series. A lot is happening in this world, with more to come. This series continues to be one of the best and most innovative UF series currently being written.

Kara says

“Cool Hand (Bite Back #4)” continues the adventures of Amber as she tries to balance her own inner turmoil over being an Athenate, Were, an Adept and a human with the violently political battles within and between each of those communities.

Previous books have focused on the Athenates, Weres and humans. In Cool Hand we learn more of the

Adept community, along with Were communities outside of Denver and hints of ancient and secretive Athenate orders. I've always liked Tullah, and I was glad to see her working with Amber again. Along with Kaothos (her dragon), of course!

Amber is desperate to find her mentor Diana. Otherwise, Amber will be unlikely to control herself and will go rogue...and will be executed. While there continues to be lots of action, much of this book focuses on Amber's mental struggles with finding a way to stay sane. Her house members begin working together to help Amber, and it's nice to see relationships continue to evolve among the secondary characters.

Several interesting new characters are introduced, and I especially like Rita...I can't wait to see if my guesses about her come true in Book #5!

I've listened to several books by other authors that use similar paranormal plot devices (e.g., J.R. Rain's Vampire for Hire series, and Rose Montague's Three J'amigos). Mark Henwick's Bite Back Series presents a much more complex MC, excellent secondary characters and a very intricately detailed world within which they can operate. Narrator Julia Motyka has done an amazing job picking up the series that began with a fine narration by Kimberly Henrie. If you like well-written paranormal action with frequent flirtations with only (sadly) occasional brief interludes of sex (ff and mf) you'll really enjoy this series!

"Cool Hand" is another excellent entry in the Bite Back series. 4.5* rounded to 5*

Janine Orlando says

I hate that I read it so fast!! I hate that it will be months before the next book comes out. But I LOVE this freaking book!! Unbelievably detailed, so many story lines connect and conclude while more spin out to taunt the imagination with possibilities. I am literally speechless and spellbound. I re-read the first three books this week knowing Cool Hand was coming out today. I would highly recommend doing that just to familiarize yourself with the world of Amber Farrell and kin. I just spent the last four hours gorging on this book. I wish I had lingered more but it was just too engrossing to sip - it must be gulped and guzzled. Tomorrow I'll sit back try to savor it slowly.

Ian says

Reread January 2017.

A rare series because all the books seem to be better the second time you read them.

There are moments in this book that are amongst my favorite in fiction.

-Friday Night Poker with the Alpha of the Albuquerque Pack.

-Amber's ritual to help Olivia change.

Solid gold.

Ian says

Great books can be read and read again...many times.

There is a scene in this book and in its companion *Angel Stakes* that I wanted to revisit. Then I just decided to reread the whole book.

Valérie says

excellent à tout point de vue, un de mes préférés de la série sans hésiter.

Sarah Leenart says

LOVE LOVE LOVE this series. These books just keep getting better and better. If you want an urban fantasy that is unique, multi layered, complicated, has characters that make you want to laugh, weep and shout and just generally make you totally forget the world everywhere than but your head you have found the perfect read. Mark Henwick put himself firmly into my top 10 favourite authors about 3 books ago and these just keep getting better! Mind blowingly good.

Why are these so great? I won't go on about what happens as a story, the synopsis is just up there and to be honest so much happens I'm not sure I could sum it up. I think one of the things I love is that my brain is constantly turning over and thinking about who is in league with who, who is friend, foe or something grey in-between. So many things all happen at once it is hard to keep pace, but Mark spins us all in a direction that doesn't make it too over the top, it all seems to come together to make sense eventually. A few plot points are cleared up in Wild Card and it is satisfying to see them resolved but there are so many more opened up I wish the next book was here already!

As always Amber is the driving force of the book, always thinking, always learning, and always moving forwards. She never makes a decision that she doesn't have to and all three sides of her nature are coming together as a whole now. I enjoyed hearing more about the Adept side of Amber this time round and I'm very intrigued to see where she will go with this in the future. The story takes place mostly outside of Denver for this instalment and so we don't get to see a lot of Jen and Alex and the gang. However we do get to see Tullah and Kaothos, I love that dragon, she is awesome! Tullah really is, like all the other characters, simply wonderful and is not so much a 'secondary' character as one of the many main cast of this set. We got to see more of Felix this time round and I'm beginning to understand a little of the wolf packs, utterly fascinating. We also get introduced to another wolf pack or 2 down in New Mexico and I for one hope this is certainly not the last of them. Please more page time! The Athanate world and the Wolf Packs and to some extent the Adept worlds are beginning to collide and it is all beautifully orchestrated towards the end in one awesome scenario. No detail is skipped, none too small, the book satisfyingly long and infuriatingly too short, I could read on and on. There are other new characters, in particular a new member to Amber's house that had me totally fascinated. Beautifully crafted characters, this is the sort of book that makes even the best of TV shows one dimensional. Simply put, this is a perfect example of why I read, the sheer joy of a world waiting to be discovered.
