

Amber Hollow

Edgar Swamp

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The supernatural events that plague the residents of Amber Hollow make this a unique and thrilling story.

In Edgar Swamp's horror novel *Amber Hollow*, a town's inhabitants are cursed to suffer until justice is served.

Detectives Jeremy and Sadie have been partners for a long time, but their newest case is unlike anything they've ever seen. Almost all of the inhabitants of Amber Hollow just died in a mysterious fire, and the survivors' stories don't match up. Still, the truth is even stranger than their lies. As Sadie and Jeremy unravel the secrets of the isolated town, they experience supernatural events that they can't explain. Their sanity, along with their trust in each other, is tested.

Jeremy and Sadie have a classic partnership, marked by entertaining banter and an underlying though unspoken attraction that adds romantic tension. Jeremy's likability is conveyed through his humorous dialogue and protective attitude toward Sadie, whose bravery is balanced by her vulnerability. Their relationship speeds up toward the end, when Sadie's logical and determined mind becomes lovestruck, resulting in actions inconsistent with her established personality.

The story is first narrated from Jeremy's perspective, in a way that builds empathy for him when his loyalty is questioned by others. By its end, it is relayed from Sadie's point of view. This shifting narration makes room for unpredictable twists in their stories.

The supporting cast is moderate in size, and while some context is provided to help distinguish characters from one another, many characterizations are glossed over, making *Amber Hollow's* residents hard to track. Their plight raises themes of classism and injustice; the story includes brutal examples of corruption. Though they fall into tropes, the novel's women show strength in the face of oppression, and they come to represent the reclamation of power.

Supernatural elements are introduced in a slow way that builds suspense, though some subplots are rushed through. Imaginative descriptions of Amber Hollow result in a moody, eerie backdrop. Flashbacks lend context for the surprises that arise.

While much of the book is a detective drama, its chilling and downright gruesome battle scenes between cursed villagers and demonic entities cement its place as a horror story. It becomes more and more unpredictable as it moves toward its exciting ending, in which not all questions are answered, but which is filled with instances of gratifying vengeance.

Amber Hollow is a novel whose horror elements arise to make familiar concepts thrilling.

DELIA STANLEY (September 12, 2019)

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