



# Koan

*Carole Cummings*

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**Koan** Carole Cummings

*Wolf's-own: Book Three*

After saving his people, killing the man he once loved, and losing his little sister, Fen Jacin-rei has made his way to Tambalon with his surviving brothers and Kamen Malick. But shortly after arriving, old ghosts resurface, new dangers arise, and Malick tells Fen the gods aren't done with him yet.

Fen now knows he's a catalyst for Fate and a magnet for Fate's players, and he's dangerously close to falling over the edge into insanity. But tracking down the vicious creatures that have been abducting and murdering citizens of Tambalon is just as critical as dealing with past lives and legendary beings.

With a threat all too close and a secret he needs to explain, Malick is at odds with those who should be his allies, and no matter how much he wants to protect Fen, it may be more than he can manage when he's trying to keep them alive.

## Koan Details

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# From Reader Review Koan for online ebook

## Shinsetsu says

Going into this book was difficult for me. After the first two in the series, the characters were in a good place and the plot had wrapped itself up pretty nicely. Yeah, it wasn't HEA, but as a reader, I was left the impression that things were going to be alright. So I knew that any continuation of the story was going to be hard to get into right away, and thus subconsciously I delayed purchasing my copy. But eventually, I decided it was time to return to this series, suck it up, and give it a chance. And sadly, once I finished reading, I was disappointed.

What went wrong? Well, first and foremost, there just wasn't a lot going on in this story. The first 75% or so is spent talking about whether Jacin is ready to accept his new role as an Incendiary. There's no action, no danger, just a lot of brooding and arguments. And when there's finally some action, I was already pretty much exhausted with all the characters and didn't really care anymore (Major Spoiler! (view spoiler))

Which brings me to my next point, there was just too much Malick/Jacin. This series has a fairly large cast, and for the majority of this book to be spent from the perspective of these two was just too much. Joori, Morin, Shig, and especially Samin felt neglected, and the less interaction Jacin had with anyone but Malick, the more codependent and creepy their relationship became. (Major spoiler again! (view spoiler)).

And lastly, what I think was the biggest issue with this book, was that there was no villain that had the same sort of presence that Asai carried. Books 1 and 2 were great because Asai was a fantastic villain. He was an utter bastard, and yet, at the same time, you can completely understand why he took the actions he did. I honestly haven't had a better experience with a book villain in a long time. And without a central villain like Asai, there was just an empty void in the plot, which was sadly filled with brooding and codependency.

So unfortunately, by the time I got to the last 25% of the book, I was bored and frustrated beyond wanting to fully read the rest of the story. I just skimmed through the pages, hoping to pick up the plot points without having to slosh through more of Jacin's head trips or another dull argument among Temshiel/maijin. And when I reached the ending, I just can't imagine myself picking up the 4th and final book in the series.

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## Donna Cooper says

Since I consider 'Wolf's Own – Koan' and 'Wolf's Own – Incendiary' to be one book, this review applies to both.

Again, as always, Carole's prose is delicious. The woman can turn a phrase and paint a picture with words. And she can also create extremely complex, deep, and tortured characters. This continues the story of Jacin, the tragic and tortured hero, and Malick, the demi-god who loves him, and the family that has formed around both of them. And these two books drag us even deeper into the tortured soul that is Jacin's. So deep that it is even darker than the first two books, and we spend a lot of time in Jacin's head. Doubly so because Malick, who provided a droll, if dark, sense of humor in the first two books, is missing for much of the time. And we get glimpses of other, equally complex characters as well as their stories continue, but Jacin's is the center and heart of these books. Unbelievably, Jacin suffers even more than in the first two books, but at last he finds his center and grabs hold of his own destiny instead of being dragged unwillingly through, or behind,

his own life.

Both books soar and spin when Malick and Jacin are together. Carole manages to generate a lot of passion and heat with these two without being explicit, and I love the humor that does manage to break through the darkness now and again. Another of her many talents. But Carole is at her best when she is inside her characters' heads. She is, in fact, so good at it that I had to take "comfort reading" breaks to pull myself out of Jacin's dark drama, but that is just the nature of her skill.

These are darker than my usual read, but Carole's writing is always worth the walk on the shadowy side for me.

And the cover art on both of these is to die for.

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## Cole Riann says

Review posted at The Armchair Reader.

**This review contains spoilers for those who haven't yet read *Ghost* and *Weregild*.**

4.5 stars

It is a bit difficult to review this book. As one half of the second part of the series, it really is like a beginning, but without all the needed character and world building required in the very beginning. I think if I had reviewed the first book, *Ghost*, on it's own then it may have gotten this same rating. I certainly *really* like them, but it's hard to get the whole picture. I suppose that's really what can be said about this story -- it's all the same characters and a similar situation in some ways, but it's also very different in others, and even though there is an overall arc between all four books, the questions are still there and there is much left to still be resolved. Though I'm looking forward to it!

*Koan* starts out soon after the end of *Weregild*. The whole group (Fen, Malick, Samin, Shig, Joori, and Morin) have moved to Tambalon, a country across a sea from Ada. There is some reason that Malick is taking them there, other than to get away from the overwhelming change they left behind them, but he isn't talking. Soon, he is being hounded by numerous *Temshiel* and *maijin* of the capital city, the birthplace of the gods and a place that still sits side by side with an older magic, from the time before the six gods. It seems that the cloak of Untouchable Fen was shrouded in hasn't left him after all, and the fateful choices they made in Ada have seen their path even further to a new destination, and possibly an even more dangerous and dire one. The problem is that Fen is almost completely catatonic. With everything he's been through, he's still the Ghost that Asai made him and he's finding it impossible to shed that role. Seeing ghosts himself, and burrowing ever father into madness, he's almost given away complete control of his own fate, which all of the factions of Tambalon are all to happy to decide for him.

As the next to last book of a fantasy series, *Koan* does follow some natural laws. In order to make it to the end, Fen is going to have to take up his own counsel and will and fight, but he can't do that with so many people telling him what to do, even if what they want is what is best for him. Besides, Fen can't tell much of what is going on anyway, most of the time he doesn't trust his own perceptions of the world around him. And

then one more terrible thing, a huge loss to him. Malick's character is interesting in this book. After his choices in *Weregild*, choosing to put Fen above himself in every way, his feelings for Fen sometimes blind him. Still, Malick seems to be able to make it through anything, all with a smirk on his face, so his actions and his fate in this book really brings all of the other character's feelings for him in focus. Also, with this breaking up of the main group of characters and allies other characters get to take on more responsibility which allows their characters to step forward a bit. We see poor Samin with the weight of the world on his shoulders but I never lose faith that he'll fail in any way. Shig, without Yori to temper her, has had to muddle through her grief and the loss of her connection to spirit alone. She can no longer remain the aloof one that sometimes contributes wisdom through sight, but learn to trust herself and show that she does have contributions to make. I really started to like and understand Shig in this book, in a way I hadn't before.

There are lots of new characters, of course, mostly *Temshiel* and *maijin*, and some *banpair*. I liked getting to see a larger group of these, to see how different they are and how they all worship, interact, and take direction from their different gods. The majority of the characters in this series keep their own intentions and counsel, however, so it will be interesting to see where they all fall in the end.

I'm definitely loving this series, and I can't wait to find out what happens in *Incendiary*!

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### **Em says**

This is the sort of book where you read a chapter or a paragraph and then need to read it again, just to fully absorb it and make sure you take everything in, because you don't want to miss a thing and know that every single word Carole put in is there for a reason. I love the *Wolf's-Own* series and I'm looking forward to the next and last installment.

I did however, miss Malick, who is absent for a large part of the book, although I loved how Samin came to the forefront more and took on a fatherly figure role.

This is an absolutely beautiful book, but god is it heart-wrenching.

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### **Pixie Mmgoodbookreviews says**

4 1/2 Hearts

First published at MM Good Book Reviews

<http://mmgoodbookreviews.wordpress.co...>

Oh Fen, poor, poor Fen. Your creator has it in for you. But, god damn, she does it in such a way that we all love you and want you to have a perfect life. Fen thought it was over, the voices of the Ancients are gone, the Jin are on their way to freedom and he has his brother's back, but the gods haven't finished with him yet... far from it.

Carole Cummings, I don't know whether to love you or hate you, because freaking hell, you write one hell of a book, but your ending deserves severe punishment. Fen-Jacin is still floating on the brink of insanity. Oh

okay \*sigh\*, on the brink of complete insanity. He's holding on by his finger nails and he isn't being helped by the ghosts that are following him. Malick is trying to protect him as much from outside influences as possible, but even he can't smother the ghosts completely. Outsiders from all angles want him and then Malick is gone, his touchstone has disappeared and now with no tether, Fen is adrift, haunted and hunted with no one to help him.

This story is a great continuation of Wolf's-own and the constant mental torture that Fen is under. Malick does know what he is doing, even when it seems like he doesn't and putting Fen into danger before he is ready is not a mistake that Malick wants to make, but it is soon taken out of Malick's hands. This book is filled with an awry of clues and hints as to what we are heading towards, but Fen is so not the person who would ever put it together. In fact, all the characters seem to be focused on what their own god wants to recognize the danger that is heading towards them, and in their own selfish need to prevail they make matters worse.

Fen and the characters of this book are in for a ride, who or what is haunting Fen? Is it really Asai? Can any of the Maijin or Temshiel find the truth of what is happening in Tambalon? And will any of the readers' ereaders survive the ending of the book lol. This story is fantastically written it's a well woven story that will make you pull your hair out, have you screaming into your fist and make you wish for some happiness for Fen. These are characters that you will love, hate, or sneer at and wish someone would stab them; we have old characters and new, some making up for past mistakes and some making new ones and through it all we have Fen trying to hold on to what little sanity he has left and being expected to save them all.

So, I recommend this to those who love high fantasy, fights, blood and gore, manipulation, mistaken betrayal and a cliff hanger ending that will frustrate the hell out of you, unless you have the next book ready to read.

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## **SueM says**

Gah! I think this series is wonderful yet it's so damned heartbreaking at times. When I read Ghost, I thought that I had never come across a character like Jacin, who so plainly suffered at the hands of gods and mortals alike, yet who was always so determined to do the right thing, especially for those he loved.

Jacin, in this novel, finds himself deeper than ever in his personal pit of despair, as he finally learns why he is who he is. Haunted by the ghosts of his past till he can no longer determine what is real or what is merely in his head, Jacin suffers loss again, when Malick, the only one who manages to keep him on this side of sane, is taken away from him, leaving him to be hunted and fought over by the gods' and their minions. As Jacin once says of himself, he is tired of shit happening to him, and with the loss of Malick, he finds himself wondering if it is worth the fight to stay alive.

Overall, the tone of this series is dark and filled with despair. Part of what keeps me glued to the pages, is the hope that things might finally turn around for Jacin (pretty foolish, really). But most of the reason is because of Carole Cummings writing: clean and evenly paced, with flawed, troubled characters and excellent world building, the plot is complex and unpredictable. Though this novel, for me, is probably my least favorite of the four (in part due to fact that it ends in a cliffhanger - probably wise not to start it until you have a copy of the fourth and final book close at hand), it is still worthy of 5 stars, simply because, at last, the truth of Jacin's role in life is finally completely revealed. I'd recommend to have a box of tissues close by...

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## Lady\*M says

4.25 stars - This is temporary rating until the final book is published. I'll try to write something more coherent later, but for now...

There is something rotten in the city of Tambalon. In more ways than one. Not only the banpair of old magic are killing and kidnapping the city's magical beings, but Fen has withdrawn into himself again and it seems he is getting worse. Eaten away by guilt, he is tortured by the ghosts of his past and only Malick can anchor him to the reality.

I read author's books for pleasure and it was always difficult for me to write the reviews for them, because, while I'm caught in her world, I rarely stop to think about technicalities. But, it seems to me that this book was tighter, plotted better as individual book than the previous books. It was also easier for me to immerse myself into the world, partly because I was familiar with the characters, partly because the secondary characters have stepped out of protagonists' shadow and taken a good part of the stage - like Shig and, especially, Morin.

*He hasn't just gone 'round the bend — he passed the bend four psychotic episodes ago, and now he's digging grooves in the crazy-ass loops in his head, skidding along and trying to figure out how to act like a normal person so everyone will stop looking at him and waiting for him to grow some sanity.*

Can you say blunt? It was great to watch the dynamics between Morin, previously known as ill-mannered brat, and Joori who just can't *let it go*. Yeah, Jacin and Joori are definitely twins.

The shape of the magical system is slowly emerging and the imminent clash between the "old" and "new" makes me oh-so-excited. Especially, because it seems our boy Fen will play the crucial role in it. Speaking of Fen... \*sigh\*

Let's just say that I'm still not entirely happy with the speed of his "rebuilding", but there are some very promising signs. He could do with more Wil's inner "badger", I think, though I recognize that he is the more damaged one of the two. I was screaming "Stab the motherf\*cker!!!!" a hundred pages before he actually did (you'll know who when you read the book). There was a massive wave cheer in my living room when this happened. \*laughs\* Also, Fen wielding knives is the sexiest thing evah. ^^

I was very, very grateful to Carole for not drawing out the suspense regarding Malick's fate which would nine out of ten authors do. The readers can relax and watch Fen squirm without his safety net. This simply had to happen and I'm looking forward to the final book when he just has to, HAS TO kick some serious ass!

The writing... well, it's Carole Cummings, so this is one department you should never, ever worry about. Also, every time I think Anne Cain could not possibly outdo herself and she always does. I can't wait to see what these two ladies have in store for us. *Incendiary* cannot come soon enough. \*goes to reread\*

EDIT: My personal dream for Fen is to see him laughing or, at least, smiling. ^^

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## Erin says

So fantastic! There's tons I want to say about this book but I'm afraid I'll write something that might give something away so I'll just say this... I hope Jacin keeps getting stronger, I hope Joori gets his shit together, I hope Morin gets his own book 'cause he cracks me up with his caustic brilliance, I hope Shig finds someone who gets her and Samin? I love Samin most of all (OK...almost most of all). Flawless once again, Carole. Thanks! :)

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## L.M. says

I made a mistake in reading this book. I got to about 40% and then took a HUGE break from reading it (even though I loved it and was hooked). Stupid mistake, because when I picked it back up, I had forgotten a LOT of what happened. That being said, I jumped right back into the EMOTION of it all. Fen Jacin is still one of my favorite characters ever. He is so tragically complicated and angsty and I just love it. I hope, for his sake, that he gets a happy ending. I won't go into details (Read the dang book), but just know that I can't wait to pick up the final book after this cliffhanger ending.

Trigger Warning: discussions of and inclinations of suicide.

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## Mello ♥ Illium ★Harry★ ?Myrnin? Torin Ichimaru says

### Synopsis:

Still recovering from the events in Ada, Fen and Malick have apparently gotten all the reprieve they're going to get on their voyage to Tambalon. Shortly after stepping ashore, old ghosts resurface and new dangers arise.

Dealing with past lives and legendary beings is somehow just as critical as tracking down the vicious creatures that have been abducting and murdering citizens of Tambalon. With the threat of banpair all too close, Malick is put at odds with those who should be his allies, in order to protect Fen and hand him the choices the minions of the gods don't necessarily want Fen to have.

### My Thoughts:

This was a wild ride. This book blindsided me and it happened fairly early on. I couldn't even believe it. I should have because *of course* Carole would do that to Fen. I should not have been surprised that she did it, but it was SO left field that I never suspected she would go there. But she did. She went there. I wanted to wail even knowing he would be back, but what it *did to Fen* nearly made my heartbreak. It left him too open and vulnerable and nearly all of the ground that Malick had made with him got lost in the process.

The enemy this time was pretty ruthless. It didn't help that all of the other Temshiel and maijin had their own plans for Fen. Fen has been revealed for what he truly is and that could be a dangerous thing, indeed. They didn't know whether they should use him or kill him. And with a certain someone out of the way, it made it



all too easy to get to him. He was purposefully being driven even more crazy than he already was and the sad thing is, it took way too long for everyone to realize what he was seeing wasn't in his head. It took Shig pointing it out once she realized the same shit was happening to her.

A lot of this book had our poor, bedraggled wolf pack running about with their heads cut off. They had no choice because the one that could best protect them couldn't be there and as they were all mortal, none of them had a fucking clue. And the gods' minions certainly weren't going to be overly forthcoming. Hell, it was one of those minions that ended up making the situation so bad in the first place and all because she thought she needed to teach Malick a lesson. I wanted to throttle that bitch, so I cheered when Xari went off on her.

Jacin spends most of the book running from "ghosts" and trying to be taken somewhere against his will. Malick spends most of the book gone and I was screaming for him to come back and rescue Jacin. Joori, Morin, Shig and Samin actually managed to hold their own for the most part. They did get some help from some immortals and some of them were actually pretty okay, especially Naro-yi.

The book ends on a bit of a cliffy, because you just know that Fen is about to learn something even more important about himself, but... You don't get to find that out until book 4.

This book actually has one of my most favorite opening segments. We get to learn a bit about how Malick's life was like as a mortal and just what it was that brought him to Wolf's attention. We see how he sees himself a Malick, Kamen and Kamen Malick and how that relates to the ways in which he wants to save Fen, Jacin and Fen Jacin-rei. Kamen is Wolf's-own, but Malick is Fen's and that's how it should be. Seriously, I fell even more in love with Malick in this book and he isn't even in the majority of it.

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**??????? says**

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**Trix says**

So, my rating was all over the place as I read this. That's probably why I posted so many progress updates. I wanted to keep track of how the story affected me. And this one rates about 2.5. I just don't have the heart to give it 3 stars. I would be doing other books a disfavor. Books I liked more than this.

I got pretty fed of all the poetry and musing and interpreting/imagining various scenarios and trying to decipher whatever metaphor the author was using to portray a feeling, a reaction, a gesture. The most happy I was around the 38% mark when everything made a bit more sense, there was less talk and more plain speech. And action. Good, old fashioned action. With characters gearing up for a fight, everyone working together for a common goal. (view spoiler) Initially, I was shocked then intrigued. I had such high hopes for where the plot might go after that.

Sadly... it went back to Asai. And for the next 1/3 of the book, that's all we read about. I am f\*\*king tired or hearing about him, having him haunt Jacin. Is it too much to ask for the book to focus on something else?! I understand the value and merit of a tormented soul, of the marks guilt leaves on someone and what an

emotional charge that brings to a book but for crying out loud, enough already. You already had my sympathy for what Jacin went through in book 1 and 2. There's no need to keep playing the same old record. (view spoiler) And there isn't a whole lot happening, action wise.

We keep coming back to Asai and Jacin's obsession with him. (view spoiler) Personally, it was the moment where my rating almost dropped to 1 star.

The last 10% of the book was rather in a daze. Or more accurately put, I lost interest. (view spoiler) I'm left to concentrate on Jacin and his Beishin? No thanks. I was already expecting a cliffhanger ending, so that came as no surprise. Just another way for the author to make a few more bucks. I started book 4 (rather grumbling to myself) and it literally picks up where 3 left off. Like the author just cut one book in two and put the following chapter in a second book.

Bottom line? Nothing to stand out from this book. Good basic ideas but the whole set up leaves a lot to be desired. I still hold hope Incendiary might redeem the series.

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### **Ornella (Nyx) says**

There was not enough Malick and Jacin was breaking my heart while Joori and Imara kept pissing me off to no end. At least there was Morin and Shig.

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### **LenaLena says**

Fen is done with Fate and the gods, but they are not done with Fen.

Everybody wants something from Fen. Everybody thinks they know what's best for him. And while they argue, Fen's grip on reality is slipping away.

And that is how we start a new story arc in the Wolf's Own series. You could have stopped after #2, but I think you'll be glad you didn't. This one starts a few weeks after the end of book #2, when Malick, Fen and their friends and family are settling into their new city of residence. Things aren't well in this city and some of it is tied up with Fen and Malick, and what wasn't tied up with them before, soon will be. That's just how Malick rolls.

If you've read previous books by Ms Cummings you know what to expect: a well crafted story, that is well written, with a few surprises, and where the internal development of the characters is as important as the actual plot. There is no black and white. People make mistakes, however well-meaning. The gods are fallible.

One of Ms. Cummings strengths (besides the world building that is detailed, but never preachy), is the depth of her characters. I feel like I would recognize each and every one of the main and secondary characters if I would meet them in the street. And her characters grow. I'm invested in them, all of them. Not just Fen and Malick.

The pacing in this book is slower than in book #2, much like it was in book #1: putting the chess pieces in

place (no flashbacks in this one, though). If you can't handle stopping in the middle of a story, you should probably wait until book 4 is out before starting this one.

As I said in one of the previous reviews: please consider yourself warned that this is not your standard Dreamspinner romance! If you don't like Fantasy, don't bother. If you're looking for a simple romance with hot guys and lots of smexy times, don't bother. This is an excellent Fantasy series, where the romance isn't simple, and it isn't pretty, even if it's an essential part of the story. What sex there is is written for the emotional impact on the characters rather than to make the reader horny. No 'fluttering rosebuds' and all that. Just so you know.

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**Megan Lillian says**

Too much inner babble. Almost didn't make it through. Hope it ends on a better note in the next/last book.

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