

YOU SLAY ME, the first Aisling Grey, Guardian book was published September, 2004. One of the most common question I receive about the dragon books is how Aisling is pronounced: it's ASH-ling. I've also been asked why I picked that name...the answer is simply that I liked it, and thought it would fit someone with spirit and intelligence yet was someone who was very grounded and down to earth.

The idea for the dragons hit me out of the blue one day in 2003. I had a mental image of a man who was so sexy, it stripped breath from my lungs; an arrogant domineering man who just happened to be a dragon in human form. I was so intrigued by the idea of an entire society of dragons who lived alongside mortals that it took less than a day for the plot of **YOU SLAY ME** and the first three books in the Aisling Grey series to coalesce.

I knew right from the start that Drake was going to be an anti-hero possessing heroic qualities, but not necessarily acting in a heroic manner. I especially did not want him rushing into save Aisling, and knew he wouldn't always be acting in her best interests. Once I had those ideas, he wrote more or less wrote himself.

Aisling, like Drake, was also born pretty much in one fell swoop. I wondered what sort of a woman would most irritate a man like Drake and instantly Aisling came to mind almost wholly formed. Aisling's flaws were based a lot on the feelings I've experienced in my life: being an outsider where everyone else was hip to what was going on, wanting to be competent and dignified, but inevitably falling flat on my face. She was also impulsive, generous, very caring, and oh, so over her head. But most of all, Aisling represented every woman's need to love and be loved.

When I originally conceived of the idea of the Aisling books, I intended for them to be thrillers with a blossoming love story between Drake and Aisling that would take several books to describe rather than be crammed into one book. The publisher and my editor Laura at Penguin loved the idea, but really wanted to see them with a romantic relationship. In other words, they wanted love scenes. I was hesitant at first with their plan to market the books as romances, since I knew that although ultimately Drake and Aisling would end up together, their path was going to be a rocky one, and it would take more than one book for them to find their happily ever after. But there was a reason my publisher is a publisher and I'm just the author, so the books were revised to be romances.

I get a lot of questions about why I chose a Newfie as Jim's physical form. The answer is that a bit of an Easter egg: it's a tip of the hat to Christine Feehan, who, at the time I was writing **YOU SLAY ME**, told me about one of her daughters who had Newfies. When I got to the part of the book where Jim first took form, he emerged as a Newfie in Christine's honor. His flip attitude is all his own.

The last thing that came with **YOU SLAY ME** was the name of my paranormal world, which had expanded from the Dark Ones to now include dragons, the Venediger, a Guardians' Guild, and a formalized version of Abaddon and the demon lord princes.