

FIRE ME UP, the second Aisling Grey novel, was published in 2005.

When it was time to write FMU, I was braced and ready for an onslaught of email from readers who are unhappy that by the end of the second book, Drake and Aisling still weren't officially a couple. I did receive a few unhappy messages, but for the most part, I received emails from readers who sought reassurance that there was going to be a happy ending. At some point I felt (and still do feel) their pain at not seeing Drake and Ash happily shackled up together.

By the end of FIRE ME UP, however, I knew that something worse was in store for Aisling. There wasn't going to be a happy ending for her...at least not yet. Drake wasn't yet ready to put Aisling ahead of everything else in his life, and she was too unsure of what she wanted for them to be happy. So she ended the book devastated by what she perceived as Drake's betrayal, and he had some decisions to make.

Part of me hated writing the ending because it caused Aisling so much pain, but at the same time, I knew that their relationship had reached a point where both of them were going to have to learn to give a little. And since neither wanted to do that, they had to be miserable in order to learn a lesson.

Regardless, even though I knew the book was going to end that way, I had to move their relationship forward. Aisling had some time to think about what it meant to be a Guardian, and had accepted that she was meant for that role.

Drake had also spent some time thinking, but he was more concerned about how to get what he wanted rather than what was best for them both.

I set FIRE ME UP in Hungary partly because Drake had Hungarian roots, but also because one of my long time readers was Hungarian, and had mentioned that it would be fabulous if I could set a book in Budapest. Although I prefer to write about places I've been, I hit my reader up for tons of information, watched copious travel documentaries, and dug into online research. One of the things I ran across while doing research on the city was the official site of the hotel on Margaret's island. I happily browsed information about the hotel, including pictures, tourist, blogs, and posts about the area and ended up using it as the basis for the setting of the book. All of the other locations mentioned in the book, including the parks, are actual locations in the Budapest.

FIRE ME UP was the first book to bring all four wyverns together. I'd known all along that the red sept wyvern Chuan Ren ran was a beautiful if somewhat cold female, and Fiat had already made his debut in YOU SLAY ME, but it was Gabriel who surprised me.

I hadn't intended for him to become a challenger to Drake for Aisling, which is what the dynamic was shaping up to be. Although it never went that way, it did cement my intentions to find someone for him.

Tiffany, the professional virgin, owes her birth holy to the amount of time I spent perusing tourist blogs and Hungarian photo sites. One of the sites I visited had a photo gallery of woman who had modeling aspirations and posted a ton of pictures of herself, visiting all sorts of tourist attractions. Her descriptions were wholly and shamelessly self-centered and extremely flattering to herself, which I found fascinating. I love the fact that she was so incredibly self-confident, and was determined to saddle Aisling with someone just like her.

Nora Charles was a character I love from the first moment I wrote her. And yes, I picked the name deliberately; I've long been a big fan of the Nick and Nora Charles mysteries by Dashiell Hammett. I

lovee the fact that she was so completely unfazed by Drake and Aisling, and how she saw through all of the catastrophes that seemed to strike Aisling to appreciate her true qualities.

A little trivia about FIRE ME UP. This was the first of my books to hit the *New York Times* bestseller list. I wasn't expecting it, so it was a complete surprise when my editor's assistant called to tell me the news. All I did was repeat "Oh my god!" about ten times in a row while she laughed and laughed and laughed. Once I hung up the phone, I was so overwhelmed, and burst into tears. Then I called my husband and babbled at him for a few minutes. He told me later I made no sense.

Then I called my darling agent Michelle, and when I told her, she screamed in my ear, literally screamed with excitement, making my hearing go a bit wonky in that ear. Then we both cried and screamed and cried some more. It was a moment I will remember for the rest of my life. And thankfully the hearing in my ear came back a few hours later.