

HOLY SMOKES, the fourth Aisling Grey book, was published November 2007.

It was a long year's wait between LIGHT MY FIRE and HOLY SMOKES with all sorts of questions hanging in the air...did they get married? Would Aisling give in to the dark powers? Was she preggers? But with HS, there were new questions, such as how can both of Aisling's parents be stepparents? Did Drake actually have that dream while he was in Nepal?

The biggest question was answered right at the start of the book: Aisling *was* pregnant. That had a huge impact on her actions in the book because she had to think about the future, wanting to make sure that it would be a good place for her child. That was pretty much the final stage of the emotional growth I felt she needed to find her happy place.

Drake settled down as well, finding a balance between his natural tendency to dominate Aisling with a recognition that she doesn't have to be micromanaged. He's also a bit more forthcoming with his emotions and thoughts, both of which weren't easy for him.

Aisling's uncle Damien came as a bit of surprise to me. I had a different sort of person in mind for him, way back when I was writing YOU SLAY ME, but he stepped out as kind of a modern day Ernest Hemingway minus the more annoying traits. I liked his quiet confidence a lot, and although he appears only tangentially in the upcoming Christmas novella, I really do need to bring him back.

Since this confuses so many people, let me explain Aisling's family dynamics. Aisling's mother was never together with her father, but when Aisling was about two, her mom married David. Her mom died when she was fairly young (around ten), and David became her legal guardian, and she lived with him. A few years later, David married Paula, and thus, became her stepmom. They both loved Aisling, and she considered David to be her real father and usually referred to him as Dad, although she sometimes called him David (usually when she was exasperated).

Trivia for HOLY SMOKES: I'm a notorious softy, so it won't come as surprised to anyone to find out that I frequently make myself cry while writing. I had a good old fashioned sobfest at two points in this book: one was when Aisling walked away after Drake told her she wasn't a part of the green sept and couldn't hear sept business. That was actually a pivotal moment in her personal growth, and to this day, it makes me tear up when I listen to that part in the audiobook because I empathize so much with the pain I knew she felt, but fortunately for my sanity and the readability of the book, Aisling realized in time what it cost Drake to say he loved her in front of everyone.

The second big moment that 100% makes me cry is when Jim's form was destroyed. I've always been a person who considers her pets as furry little family members, so for me to write a scene where Jim looked like he was dying—even though both Aisling and I knew he couldn't actually die—was downright traumatic. Years later, those two scenes bring me to tears every time.