Alyson Noël Makes Magick

By Lauren Spierberg

Long-time author Alyson Noël has come a long way since the publication of her debut novel, Falling (Feb. '95), which was the New York Times bestseller that made her name. In her fourth book, The Immortals, Noël returns with a compelling new story filled with mystery and romance.

The story is set in the fictional town of Enchantment, S.M., where Daire Santos is sent away to live with her grandmother. She's never met her after she's plucked from her childhood and given the responsibility of being the chosen one. Daire is determined to find her way back to her mother, who abandoned her years ago.

While researching another one of her YA series, The Immortals, Noël was struck by how often the theme of samhain and its connection to Halloween has been omitted. She decided to bring the concept back into her writing. From there, not only did Noël read many books on Samhain, but she also took a three-day workshop to learn more about the tradition.

Many of the author's personal experiences are infused into Daire's own journey. "Daire Santos is a Secker—a sort of new generation of shamans. And while some of the imitations of her story's forced to endure harsher back to those of the old world, much of the truth is so different that the characters are unlike anything of her ancestors have faced before. While the concepts of spirit animals and the various worlds are all shamanic at heart, I engaged in a liberal amount of tweaking in order to build the world of the Soul Seekers in the way that best suits the story I wanted to tell," says the author, who also traveled to New Mexico to conduct interviews with youth and Native American residents on their respective ways of life.

With four books in the series—Fated, Echo, Mystic and Tarot—to be released within six months of each other, Noël promises that this continuing series (which should read in order) will have an extremely satisfying and climactic finale—just like the one she's so excited to finish herself.

Based on a reservation, Dacre is kindhearted and loyal and all of the series are filled with the various worlds. Tall, dark and handsome, he's not yet uncovered the truth of his origins and his tie to Daire's destiny. One thing he does know is that the attraction he shares with Daire is absolutely explosive.

As the 19 books that Noël has written to date, Fly Me to the Moon (Dec. '06) is for adults. However, when her sister published Falling 19, she didn't set out to write a YA. "I didn't think of it in terms of being young adult until it was time to go on submission," she says. "The teen voice is the one that comes most naturally to me because I'm still very connected to that time. My own adolescence was rough, once I would not volunteer to repeat, and yet I left me with a lot of empathy for the teenage experience. It's a time of massive growth, self-definition and the sort of life-changing, first-time events that can never be experienced in quite the same way again. While all of my books are initially inspired by a theme of a question I'm trying to explore for myself, I'm equally focused on writing the kind of romantic, suspenseful, fast-paced story that I like to read."

Noël's website, AlysonNoel.com, is not only a fantastic resource from which to find out more about her life and career, it's also filled with interesting tidbits for aspiring authors. So, what comes to her is no surprise to offer these insights of the trade?

"When I first got serious about writing for publication, I didn't know any other writers, and consequently I made every newbie mistake one could possibly make, embarrassing myself in innumerable ways. She continues, "It's so incredibly tough to get published—and it's like this cold, dark, and frigid agents and editors and rules that's impossible to navigate. For me, it was definitely a learning-as-you-go experience, so being able to share a little light on the path and make it easier for others to find their way is a really gratifying way to give back."

It's safe to say Noël knows her way around the industry. She's hit both the New York Times and USA Today bestseller lists and is even ready to see her books come to life on the big screen! All six books in The Immortals series and all four installments in The Riley Bloom series have been optioned by Summit Entertainment, the studio behind the Twilight movie franchise.

"I don't have any new updates I can share, but I will say that after meeting with a few of the Summit producers, I'm totally thrilled to have my stories in such capable hands," she says. As for her only adult novel, Fly Me to the Moon, "It was optioned by Ridley Scott's Scott Free Productions, with Sharon Maguire set to write the screenplay and direct. I'm a huge fan of Giovanni Ribisi—I absolutely loved what she did with [director] David Gordon Green's Pineapple Express and having been in touch with her on several occasions, and learning firsthand just how anxious and funny she is, I've no doubt she'll do a great job on adapting my novel," says Noël.

In the meantime, readers can look forward to the release of the second book in The Soul Seekers series, Echo, due Nov. 12. Pick up right where Fated leaves off, it follows Dacre as the race to discover the truth behind their connection while confronting an obstacle of such magnitude proportions that their entire world will be shaken to core.

For more on the author, visit her website at AlysonNoel.com.
YOUNG ADULT AUTHOR Alyson Noël has come a long way since the publication of her first release, *Faking 19* (Feb. '05). Although the New York Times bestselling author is no longer inclined to gawk at her own books on the shelves of bookstores—which is what she and her mother did upon *Faking 19*’s release—she’ll never quite forget that moment of seeing her dream come true. Now, with The Soul Seekers, Noël is ready to delve into her new four-book series, starting with *Fated* (May ’12) from St. Martin’s Griffin.

The story is set in the fictional town of Enchantment, N.M., where Daire Santos is sent away to live with the grandmother she’s never met after she’s plagued with sudden—and terrifying—hallucinations. Enchantment is a “dark and mysterious place brimming with magic, mysticism and powerful vortexes that link the spirit worlds between the living and dead,” Noël shares.

Fortunately, Daire’s grandmother recognizes the visions for what they truly are: the call to her ancestral destiny as a Seeker, one who navigates between the otherworlds while reining in the forces of evil.

No ordinary 16-year-old girl, Daire lives the glamorous life that the author used to wish for herself as a kid. “As the daughter of a Hollywood makeup artist, Daire’s spent her entire life traipsing the globe, surrounded by celebrities, moving from movie set to movie set. When I first began writing her, I had to admit to a heavy dose of envy,” Noël says. “It wasn’t until I fully immersed myself in her experience that I realized how unstable her life was and how lonely it’s made her.

“She’s never had a permanent address, never had an opportunity to forge lasting relationships. And while all of that non-stop travel has made her very self-assured and fiercely independent, it’s also left her a bit jaded and emotionally guarded. It’s only when she leaves it all behind and goes to live with her grandmother that she learns the true value of family and home. Daire’s burdens are heavy, there is so much at stake, and it’s up to her to protect the people she’s come to know and love. In order to succeed in her role as a Seeker, she’ll have to endure a brutal initiation and allow herself to become vulnerable in ways she’s always sought to avoid.”

While researching another one of her YA series, The Immortals, Noël was struck by how often the theme of shamanism emerged in her reading; she quickly decided it would be the next subject she explored in her writing. From there, not only did Noël read many books on Shamanism, but she also took a three-day “Introduction to Shamanism” class. Many of the author’s personal experiences even shaped Daire’s own journey.

“Daire Santos is a Seeker—a sort of new generation of shaman. And while some of the initiations she’s forced to endure harken back to those of the old world, much of the trials she confronts are unlike anything any of her ancestors have faced before. While the concepts of spirit animals and the various worlds are all shamanic at heart, I engaged in a liberal amount of tweaking in order to build the world of the Soul Seekers in the way that best suits the story I wanted to tell,” says the author, who also traveled to New Mexico to conduct interviews with teens and Native American residents on their respective ways of life.

With four books in the series—*Fated, Echo, Mystic* and *Horizon*—to be released within six months of each other, Noël promises that this continuing series (which should be read in order) will have an extremely satisfying and climactic finale—one having very much to do with Dace Whitefeather.

Raised on a reservation, Dace is kindhearted and loyal and all too aware of the delicate veil that separates the various worlds. Tall, dark and dreamy, he’s not yet uncovered the truth
Fate smiles on this YA author as she starts a brand-new series

By Lauren Spigelberg

...
Paranormal
FATED
Alyson Noël ★★★★½

Noël has done it again! With fantastic characters and an amazing plot, this book will suck you in and leave you breathless. Fans of her Immortals series, as well as Rachel Vincent’s Soul Screamers series, will fall in love with The Soul Seekers. Noël is a master with words, and readers will realize anything is possible in her world. With passion and thrills around every corner, this book is a must read and a definite keeper in my collection.

SUMMARY: Does fate exist? Daire has never had a typical life, with animals following her and strange people appearing everywhere, but the worst is her visions. When she is sent to her grandmother’s she learns that she is a Soul Seeker; she can travel between the real world and the world of the dead. This makes things complicated, especially as Daire realizes that the mysterious boy from her dreams, Dace, is real. To make matters worse, she cannot figure out if he is allied with the enemy or not. What is a girl to do? With fate, one can never tell. (ST. MARTIN’S Griffin, May, 320 pp., $18.99, ISBN: 9780312664835, HC, 12 & Up)

Meera Patel

Mystery
UNRAVELING
Elizabeth Norris ★★★★½

Man! This is one awesome book. In Norris’ debut, she takes an oft-used premise in YA today (girl dies, then wakes up and turns it into a rip-roaring, sci-fi adventure. The plot twists and turns at the end of almost every chapter. Janelle is a great heroine, tough but relatable. There is officially a science fiction romance trend happening in YA, and this reviewer is officially loving it!

SUMMARY: Walking home from the beach, Janelle Tenner is hit by a pickup truck and dies. She just knows it — only she wakes up in the hospital with the memory of a character Ben Michaels healing her. Trying to get to the bottom of things, Janelle snoops into her dad’s FBI files to find that the driver of the truck (a type of car no one’s ever heard of) died of terible radiation burns. Then there’s a bomb that no one knows how to defuse… (BALZER + BRAY, May, 464 pp., $17.99, ISBN: 9780062103134, HC, 13 & Up)

Marie Bongiorno

Who’s That Girl?
Michele Jaffe ON SEEING DOUBLE

DOUBT TROUBLE!

This month, author Michele Jaffe’s Ghost Flower (Razorbill) tells the story of Eve, who takes over the rich and missing Aurora’s identity, in order to gain the girl’s inheritance. It wasn’t a stretch for Jaffe, who’s also written adult fare, to pen such a daring undertaking.

“Writing a novel is essentially taking over someone’s identity, getting into another person’s head and guessing how she would respond, what she would say and think and do,” Jaffe tells us. “So writing about Eve’s assumption of Aurora’s identity was a kind of delicious way to explore what I do anyway for every character. Some of the tricks she uses — notes on index cards about who people are key to images — are things I do when I’m trying to flesh out my characters. Basically, as a novelist, I look for the seams of identity, the crucial places that define a person and how she will act. Writing about Eve becoming Aurora, I got to lay some of those out for readers.”

Jaffe also told us about another case of mistaken identity she’s got strong feelings about: the question of who really wrote Shakespeare’s plays. The author, who covered the topic in her dissertation, jokingly asked us, “How long do you have?” before launching into this explanation of the Bard’s true identity:

“I believe there (probably) was someone called William Shakespeare. But almost none of the plays were published while he was alive, and the one that was, Hamlet, came out in a very different version than the final play — for example, there’s no ‘To be or not to be’ speech.”

“She’s got a lot more to say on the subject, and promises anyone who finds her at Chicago’s RT Teen Day can ask her all about it (you know, if you’re interested). But how will you know Jaffe? She says her personal celebrity doppleganger in high school was Minnie Driver (though Minnie is more generously endowed). But to impersonate Jaffe, the author swears it’s pretty simple.

“Some characters are more complex than others. I am a not-complex character, so to impersonate me all you would need is a big wig and a taco. OK I lied: four tacos.” Sounds easy enough to us! — Elissa Petrucci

For more, visit MicheleJaffe.com.