

# Of Fire and Fate

by Karen Hunter

## Book Club Discussion Guide

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### About the Book

Of Fire and Fate is the debut novel by indie author Karen Hunter and the first book in the Dragon's Flame Series. It tells the story of Seraphine, a woman who has escaped a controlling cult led by her husband, Simon, known to his followers as The Prophet. Fleeing for her life and living under a false name, Seraphine is being hunted when she unexpectedly crosses paths with Draven, the king of a hidden dragon-shifter kingdom. As the two are drawn together by a powerful mate bond, Seraphine must reconcile her trauma, reclaim her identity, and embrace a destiny she never imagined.

Rich with themes of survival, healing, found family, and the reclaiming of self, this paranormal romance blends high fantasy world-building with a deeply human emotional journey.

### Content & Trigger Warnings

This book contains content that some readers may find distressing. Please take care of yourself while reading and engaging with these materials.

- ⚠ Domestic violence and physical abuse (depicted on-page, including in the prologue)
- ⚠ Psychological and emotional abuse / coercive control
- ⚠ Cult dynamics and religious manipulation
- ⚠ References to a character's suicidal death (Laya's mother, depicted in the Book 2 preview chapter included at the end of this book)
- ⚠ Forced claiming / non-consensual sexual threat: the Book 2 preview chapter depicts a ritual (The Chase) in which women are hunted and claimed against their will, with themes of sexual coercion and potential rape
- ⚠ Stalking and being hunted
- ⚠ PTSD symptoms and trauma responses (panic attacks, hypervigilance, flashbacks)
- ⚠ Violence including a near-fatal car attack and physical combat
- ⚠ Explicit sexual content

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**⚠ SPOILER WARNING: The discussion questions below contain significant plot spoilers. Please finish reading *Of Fire and Fate* before continuing.**

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## Plot Synopsis

The story opens with Seraphine in the aftermath of striking down her abusive husband, The Prophet, and fleeing their religious commune. Living under the alias "Sarah," she works in a seaside café, constantly looking over her shoulder as the community's hunters close in. When a white camellia — the symbol of her husband's ownership — appears in her locked room, she knows she has been found.

Meanwhile, Draven, the dragon king of Mont View, is grappling with the slow extinction of his people. Dragon bloodlines are fading, mate bonds are silent, and the ancient fire that sustains the kingdom is dimming. Accompanied by his best friend and advisor Kaeldric, Draven travels to the human world on kingdom business — and unexpectedly collides with Seraphine.

The mate bond ignites instantly. Draven must restrain his dragon's protective instincts while Seraphine, conditioned to fear powerful men, fights her growing feelings. As the hunters escalate their attacks — staging fires, attempting to run Seraphine over — Draven and Kael reveal the truth of what they are. Seraphine must choose: keep running, or trust.

After Draven is gravely wounded protecting Seraphine, she tends to him and her walls begin to fall. The mate bond is fully sealed as the two consummate their relationship, and Seraphine receives the golden dragon mark on her collarbone. She is brought to Draven's kingdom, where she faces doubting Elders and claims her place as Queen with quiet authority and unshakeable truth. The novel ends with Kael experiencing his own mate-vision — of a white wolf from the enemy wolf realm — setting the stage for Book 2.

## Key Characters

**Seraphine (Sarah):** The protagonist. A survivor of domestic abuse and cult manipulation who has been living in hiding. Brave, guarded, and deeply traumatised, she slowly rediscovers her voice and sense of self throughout the novel.

**Draven:** Dragon king of Mont View. Stoic, intensely protective, and burdened by the responsibility of saving his dying people. His mate-bond with Seraphine is the key to restoring the kingdom's fire.

**Kaeldric (Kael):** Draven's closest friend and advisor. Witty and warm, he serves as a grounding, humanising force. His own mate-vision — of a wolf — ends the novel and launches the series' second arc.

**Simon (The Prophet):** Seraphine's abusive husband and cult leader. Never seen in person during the main narrative, but his shadow looms over every chapter through Seraphine's trauma and the hunters he sends after her.

## Major Themes

### 1. Surviving Abuse and Reclaiming Identity

The novel begins in the immediate aftermath of Seraphine's escape from years of domestic violence. Her journey is not just physical — it is the slow, difficult process of unlearning fear, trusting her own instincts again, and discovering who she is outside of Simon's control. The mate mark, placed on her collarbone to represent voice and choice, is a symbolic culmination of this arc.

### 2. Trauma, Trust, and Healing

Seraphine's PTSD is portrayed with notable care. Her panic attacks, hypervigilance, and involuntary physical responses to men who remind her of Simon are depicted as realistic, involuntary reactions — not weaknesses to be overcome but wounds to be understood. Draven's patience and his explicit respect for her autonomy even after the bond is sealed form a central message about what safe love looks like.

### 3. Power, Control, and Consent

The contrast between Simon's coercive control and Draven's deliberate restraint is a thread woven through every interaction. The book consistently returns to the question of who holds power in a relationship and what it means to give or withhold it freely.

### 4. Belonging, Fate, and Choice

The mate-bond raises philosophical questions about destiny versus agency. Seraphine must wrestle with the idea that a bond she did not choose is pulling her toward Draven, and the novel ultimately affirms that the bond only matters because she actively chooses to honour it. Her speech to the Dragon Elders — arguing that the Promise of the Flame is about chosen love, not bloodline — is the thematic heart of the book.

### 5. Worth and Worthiness

From Seraphine's internalised belief that she does not deserve safety, to the Elders' doubts about a human Queen, worth and how it is measured runs as a quiet but persistent theme. The novel argues consistently that worth is earned through character, courage, and dedication — not birth, blood, or the approval of those in power.

## Discussion Questions

### Opening and Seraphine's Escape

1. The prologue is deliberately shocking — Seraphine striking Simon and fleeing. How did this opening shape your expectations for Seraphine as a protagonist? Did your feelings about that moment change as you learned more about the years that led to it?
2. Seraphine has trained herself to suppress joy, laughter, and connection in order to survive. How do you think this kind of conditioning changes a person? What small moments in the novel hinted at who she might have been before Simon?
3. The community sees Simon as a prophet and Seraphine as his chosen, blessed wife. How does the gap between public perception and private reality function as a theme throughout the book?

## **The Mate Bond**

4. When the mate bond activates, Draven immediately wants to claim and protect Seraphine, but consciously holds back. How did you read his restraint — as genuine respect, or as strategic patience? Did your view shift over the course of the novel?
5. Seraphine's first instinct when she feels attraction to Draven is fear — a Pavlovian response from years of abuse. How does the novel handle the complexity of a trauma survivor learning to trust her own body's responses again?
6. The mate bond is described as fated and instinctive. Does this complicate or reinforce the novel's themes of autonomy and consent? Can something be both destined and freely chosen?

## **Trauma and Recovery**

7. The white camellia appears multiple times as a symbol of Simon's reach and ownership. What other symbols or motifs did you notice the author using to track Seraphine's emotional state throughout the book?
8. Seraphine's PTSD responses — flashbacks, hypervigilance, difficulty separating past from present — are depicted without judgment. How did this portrayal compare to other representations of trauma you have encountered in fiction?
9. At what point in the story, if any, did you feel Seraphine begin to genuinely trust Draven? What was the turning point for you?

## **Draven and the Dragon Kingdom**

10. Draven carries the weight of a dying people. How does his loneliness and responsibility mirror Seraphine's isolation, even though their circumstances are so different?
11. The Dragon Elders' doubt about a human Queen is framed as a conflict Seraphine must overcome through her words and presence rather than through magic or lineage. How did her speech in the Council Chamber land for you? Was it earned by that point in the story?
12. The concept of the "mate mark" — a permanent physical symbol of the bond — is placed on Seraphine's collarbone to represent voice and choice. How does this differ from the way Simon used his own form of psychological "marking" (control, ownership) throughout her marriage?

## Broader Questions

13. The novel ends with Kael's mate-vision of a wolf — a member of the enemy clan. How does this cliffhanger reframe some of what we have read about the dragon-wolf conflict? What does it set up for Book 2?
14. *Of Fire and Fate* is an indie publication by a debut author. How, if at all, did knowing that context affect your reading experience or your appreciation of the story?
15. If you had to identify one moment in the novel that you felt most powerfully, what was it, and why?

## Further Discussion Activities

Consider these optional activities to deepen your group's conversation:

- Read the Book 2 prologue aloud together (included at the end of the novel) and discuss how Laya's story parallels and diverges from Seraphine's.
- Write one paragraph from Simon's point of view during the prologue, then discuss what it reveals about the mechanics of abuser psychology.
- Bring a passage that stayed with you. Read it aloud and explain why it resonated.
- Discuss: If the mate bond did not exist, do you think Seraphine and Draven would have found their way to each other anyway? Why or why not?

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### Connect with Karen Hunter

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*Book 2 (Kaeldric & Laya) available for pre-order — Summer 2026*