

COMING OUT: This book has been described as a gay romance and *also* as a love story between two people who happen to be guys. When do you think Griff and Dante each realized their romantic feelings for the other? Did you see them as “gay” or simply two guys who happened to fall in love?

BROOKLYN: How did you feel about the way working class Red Hook appeared in the book? Did it feel authentic or exaggerated? Did it connect to any neighborhood you’ve ever inhabited? What was the most memorable detail about the book’s setting?

SLANG: This book is infamous for its use of local idiom and crazy slang. How did each character’s mode of speech affect your opinion of them? Was there any vernacular that stuck with you particularly?

WOMEN: Most gay romance readers are straight women, but the books sometimes veer into misogyny and stereotyping. How did you feel about the role that women played in the world of the book? In what ways did the female characters support or impede the relationship as it developed?

9/11: The tragedy at the World Trade Center establishes much of the book’s backstory. How did you feel about seeing something catastrophic in a romance? How did it resonate with your own memories of 9/11?

FAMILY: Families (and their absence) play a huge part in the story’s arc. In what ways did familial interactions help and harm the heroes? How did they each understand family and its role in their lives? What family members did you feel were the most important to each of them and why?

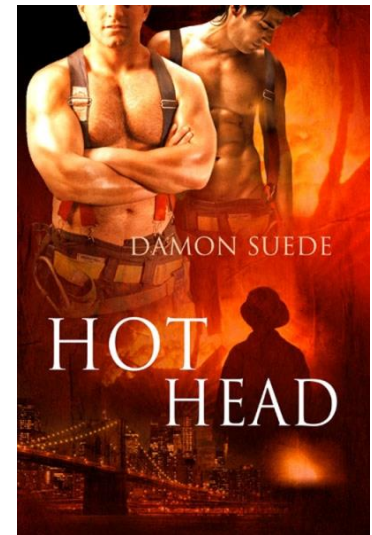
FIREFIGHTERS: Firemen are a perennial favorite in romance. What makes firefighting so sexy? How would another “sexy” profession like cops or cowboys change the story? Many fans in the first responder community praise *Hot Head* for its authenticity. Did you believe Griff and Dante as active FDNY members?

VIOLENCE: This story features a fair amount of action sequences that put characters in peril and cause serious injury. Did that violence add or detract from the love story? What scene affected you the most and why? Was there ever a moment of danger that you worried that the happy ending was simply impossible?

INTIMACY: What was the most erotic part of the book? What was the most moving? Did you feel that the male perspective changed the way sex occurred and changed the characters? How did the moments of public intimacy performing at HotHead.com differ from the private moments shared by the characters?

PORN: How and why did the porno subplot affect the heroes and the plot? How did you feel about their decisions and logic? Did you find the porn-performances at HotHead.com sexy or not? What was your opinion of Alek? Did it change? Why? How would you compare Alek’s filming of the guys to Beth’s sexy photography?

MALE POV: Damon Suede is a guy who writes romance. Did you feel like having a male author changed the flow and focus of the story? Where and when? Did it make you feel closer or farther from the two heroes? How did it affect the characterization? Would a woman write the book differently, and if so, how?



READING GUIDE:

Hot Head by Damon Suede

MISTAKES: Assumptions and wrong conclusions pop up over and over in this book. What errors did you spot that had a major impact on the plot? How? Did you notice any mistakes that ended up being blessings in disguise? What characters made the most mistakes and what did they cause?

COMEDY: What purpose did comedy serve in advancing the story and the relationships? Did anything stand out to you as particularly funny? Why? Did you find any of the humor inappropriate or off-putting? What differences did you observe in different characters' senses of humor?

TRAGEDY: Although there are light moments, many of the book's topics are serious (9/11, bankruptcy, sex work, arson, coming out, bashing). Did any of those topics make you feel uncomfortable or upset? How did they add or detract from the central love story?

JEALOUSY: Many of the characters act on intense feelings of envy: about sex, money, class, work, family, and more. Did the jealousies change (or change them) over the course of the book? Did you sympathize?

FRIENDSHIP: Bonds of affection drive most of the plot. What friendships work for or against the characters? Did you feel like the friendships were evenly balanced? How did the friendship between Griff and Dante accelerate/impede the growth of their romantic feelings? Have you ever had romantic feelings for a friend?

GROWING UP: Griff and Dante have known each other since High school and have matured a lot in the decades since then. How does their maturity affect their feelings? Who seems more grown up and about what? When did they each become "adults"? Do they still have growing to do at the end of the book?

CULTURE: Griff's parents are Scottish. Dante is a proud Sicilian. They both grew up in working-class Brooklyn around first responders. How did each character's heritage and environment affect their actions? Which cultures seemed the most influential and why? Did other cultures play a part in the narrative?

PREDICTIONS: What do you think happens to the characters in the book after the last scene? Project into the future and describe what comes next for Griff, Dante, and the rest of the characters. What would you want to see in a sequel? What would suck in a sequel?

READING: One of the most common phrases in reviews of this book are folks reading it in a single sitting? Why do you think that is? Did you feel pressure to finish the story or take it in easy doses? Where would you suggest as a reading location for this: a commuter train, the beach, or curled up on the sofa?

COMPARISON: How would you compare *Hot Head* to other novels you've read? Or other romances you've read? What did it remind you of? What was unique about it? How would you categorize/shelve it for a bookstore? Would you recommend it to someone and if so why/who/how?

IMPRESSION: Is there any section of the book you think you'll remember for a long time? Which and why? What do you think the most important element of the story is? What would you change about the book if you could alter just one detail? How would you explain the story to someone who'd never read it?

AUTHOR'S VOICE: If you've read any of Damon's other books, how does this book relate to the rest of his work? What do you think makes his books like or unlike other authors? What strengths and weaknesses do you notice? Do you see any overlapping themes, characters, or situations that recur in his stories?