

DEBORAH O'TOOLE

Autumn Newsletter, 2020

TOPICS

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Hello dear readers,

Being a writer has its ups and downs. Whether you're an amateur or a published author, the process of writing a book can be excruciating, peppered with bits of relief and elation. There are times it all feels like an emotional rollercoaster. Those who are near and dear to us can also feel the impact of the long process on a daily basis.

I've been writing for years, long before I was even out of my teens. Throughout my life, every relationship and marriage has suffered accordingly. Be that as it may, I've never been able to relinquish my love of writing, no matter how much anger or resentment it may cause in those around me. To stop writing to please someone else is unthinkable to me, and in the end, proves to me the person involved could care less about my happiness and is only concerned with their own. In a romantic relationship, I fully understand the other person's need to feel front and center, but being an author does not often allow for such singular focus on anything other than writing.

Granted, writing is not like a nine-to-five job where work stops at the end of the day. Writing goes on at all hours and on all days, sometimes for months on end without respite. Then again, there are those times the creative juices stop for a stretch, leaving an author with a sense of loss and frustration. In other words, writing is a never-ending process of imagination, creation, joy and despair, research, rewriting and editing, all with no set time frame. And when one project is complete, at least in my case, it's often right into the next one.

Seven years ago, my blog post [Peripherals](#) enumerated the life of an author, and it still rings true today.

“As a writer, one thing you will likely discover in quick fashion is the lack of moral support from various people around you. Positive reinforcement is almost a non-entity, even from those closest to you.

A writer's friends or family typically fall into two categories: dismissive or encouraging. Unfortunately, more than one of my former husbands fell into the first peripheral category. Instead of being swayed by naysayers, I tend to dig-in deeper. One has to cut away the negative people and situations in order to keep on. To that end, I've frequently become the "dismitter" rather than the one being dismissed.

Writing is a very solitary business, so it's a good idea to realize it early on and learn to cope with all that it entails.

I'm very lucky now, at this stage of my life. My significant other gives me room to write and rarely complains. He does not protest when I take along my spiral notebooks so I can write when the mood strikes during our camping trips, but sometimes pulls me away when he senses that I need a break (even if I don't). He knows full well when I'm in wandering-mind writing mode, yet he remains patient. He even offers suggestions that have frequently found their way into my books.

One of my tendencies is to take care of mundane things (*laundry, cooking, dishes, and other domestic chores*) early in the day, if I can. I realize life happens and interruptions are inevitable. There is no way around it sometimes. That being said, the one thing that powers me through the slog is the knowledge that once I'm finished, I can settle back into writing again.

I never lose sight of what drives me in the first place.

~ THE CRYPT ARTIST ~

The Crypt Artist was released by Club Lighthouse Publishing on June 6, 2020. The novel is available in multiple e-book formats from Club Lighthouse, and in both Kindle and paperback editions from Amazon.

A near-starving artist finds himself inspired by a group of long-dead classic painters and a quirky Irish poet in a rundown loft in SoHo, New York.

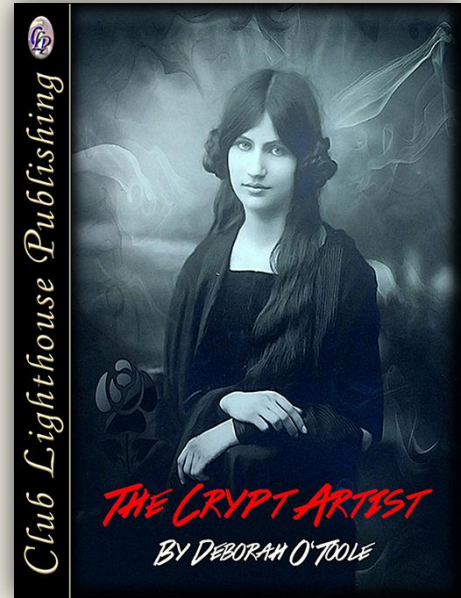
Struggling artist Luca Wolfe lives in a dilapidated warehouse loft in SoHo, New York, barely eking out a living from sales of his work. One night he begins to paint a reproduction of art from the past, but becomes too inebriated to continue. When he awakens, he finds the painting complete, but unlike the creation he began the night before.

Frequent visits from the ghost of Malachy O'Leary - a quirky Irish poet from the far distant past - convinces Luca he is on the verge of losing his mind. He hears strange music and sees lights coming from the vacant apartment Malachy used to occupy while he was alive, and soon discovers Malachy is not alone: he is often accompanied by a perpetually hissing cat, and shares his old apartment with a selection of famous artists from long ago. Luca is the only one who can see the phantom visions and hear the ghostly talk, further convincing him he is slipping into a well of insanity from which there is no return.

An unexpected windfall places Luca into a different arena, forcing him to deal with those who would take it away from him, even take his life for the circumstances he suddenly finds himself in. With the help of Malachy O'Leary and his odd stable of ghostly companions, Luca prevails. But if he cannot alter the course of his own life in the process, all he has achieved will be in vain . . .

What can I say about The Crypt Artist? The book was a definite labor of love for me, without a doubt. There was something about it that drove me, day after day, until the story was complete. I was enchanted with all of the characters that I developed over time, my two favorites becoming Irish poet Malachy O'Leary and the indomitable Howard Russell Baker. The verbal exchanges between Malachy and Howard had me laughing out loud on several occasions, even in the quiet and solitary world of creation. The fact that Malachy and Howard are both ghosts made their well-aimed barbs all the more deliciously comical.

A book reviewer on Amazon wrote the following about The Crypt Artist:



The Crypt Artist grabbed me from the first page. I felt for struggling, depressed, and drunk Luca despite of his attitude or maybe because of it. Luca lives in a ramshackle old building where he reproduces classic paintings. A loner, the only interest he has in his neighbors is in room 2E where no one has resided since the 1950s. Why? Then his world is turned upside down when psychologist Izzy moves in next door. Both are immediately smitten with each other. Add to that a lonely elderly lady Elva Peabody and a plethora of ghosts who have devoted themselves to helping Luca. Why? Maybe a kindred spirit. The ghosts whom Luca thinks is a figment of his drunken imagination makes his paintings come alive. Enter still the landlord and his brethren who complicate his life all the more. Despite all this, the book is a quick and very enjoyable read.

After reading The Crypt Artist for the first time earlier this year and during the editing process, my publisher sent me the following message:

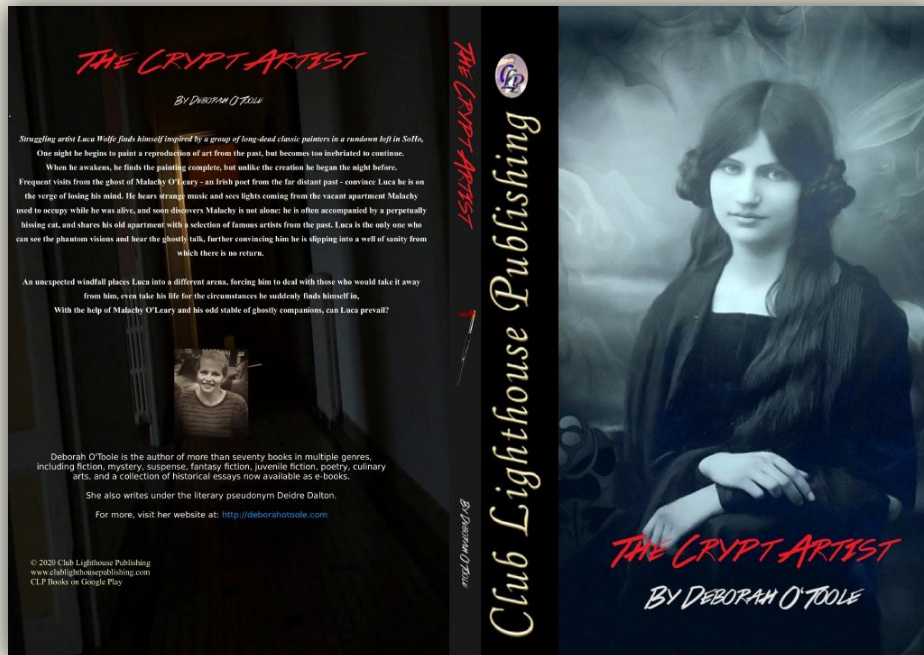
“ I have to say I really loved this one. It's different from your other works and I wouldn't mind seeing more along these lines. Too bad this one couldn't have been set up for a sequel. I really fell in love with just about all of the characters . . . including the ghosts, even the curmudgeonly one, Howard.

I'm indebted to Terrie Lynn Balmer, CEO of Club Lighthouse Publishing, for a variety of reasons - such as her enduring friendship and humor, not to mention our mutual love of cats and animals in general - but also for giving me a chance in the first place.

Nearly a decade ago, Terrie took on the eight novels that comprise the Collective Obsessions Saga (written by me as Deidre Dalton), and for that I will always be grateful.

I'm also very pleased with the front and back cover designs for The Crypt Artist. Many thanks to James Wason for his talent, and for his patience in working with me to finalize the creations.

Here's a sample:



And there is now an official website for The Crypt Artist, where news about the book will be posted regularly.



There are three other people I would like to thank, for without them The Crypt Artist would not be what it is today.

- ❖ **Tracy Jon Powell:** For giving me the initial idea for [The Crypt Artist](#). Some of his ideas brought forth my inspiration for the storyline. While I did all of the writing, he also deserves credit for gifting me with initial brainwaves in the first place.
- ❖ **Brendan Gallagher:** Brendan gave me several quirks for the character Malachy O'Leary (*including the drunken lamppost scene*). Malachy was based on a real man, the late Mick Egan from Birr, County Offaly, Ireland. Brendan's humorous "ideas" came from incidents he witnessed involving Mick Egan in his hometown of Birr, making them all the more hilariously funny. His re-telling of them put me in stitches.
- ❖ **Jerry Dalton:** And last, but not least, thanks to Jerry for guessing female cat ghosts are subtly more vicious than their male counterparts, and for giving me the idea for Malachy O'Leary's pet feline, Hissy, who happens to be real and very much alive. ;) Jerry also deserves credit for being patient with me during the writing process, as he had to live with me day in and day out, and to see firsthand the joys and frustrations of being an author.

I'm also very fortunate that most of the people around me are patient, understanding the writing process and giving me indulgences to do so at my own obsessive pace and style.

You know who you are, and *thank you*.

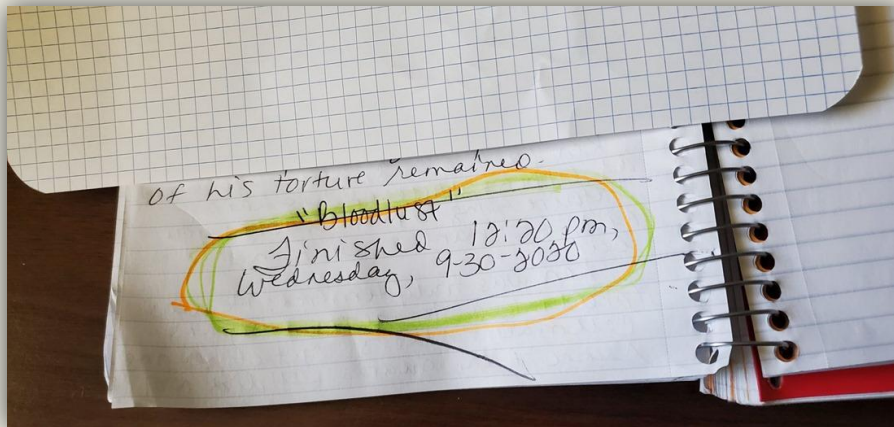
~ BLOODLINE TRILOGY ~

I began writing the [Bloodline Trilogy](#) (*as Deidre Dalton*) in November 2012. The first book in the series, [Bloodfrost](#), was essentially completed six months later but wasn't published until December 2019. I shelved the trilogy for quite awhile after [Bloodfrost](#) was finished, not certain if anyone would be interested in reading about three women with special powers that spread out over three books. However, I finally convinced myself it was worth a shot and submitted [Bloodfrost](#) to my publisher, [Club Lighthouse Publishing](#).

I began work on book two in the trilogy, Bloodlust, in late 2013. However, because of prior commitments to finish the Collective Obsessions Saga, as well as four other stand-alone novels (Celtic Remnants, Glinhaven, Mind Sweeper and The Crypt Artist), Bloodlust sat on the backburner for nearly seven years.

It wasn't until January 2020 that I was able to resume work on the second novel in the Bloodline Trilogy. To that end, I finally completed Bloodlust nine months later (*on September 30, 2020 at 12:20pm, to be exact*). After my own editing process, which took me to the end of October 2020, I sent the manuscript to my publisher. I was then flattered and humbled that Club Lighthouse offered me a publishing contract soon thereafter. As I've said many times before, I never take being published for granted.

For the publisher's edit of Bloodlust, I will again be working with Palvi Sharma (who also edited Bloodfrost), which I'm very happy about. Bloodlust is tentatively scheduled for release in spring 2021.



While writing Bloodlust, I did some extensive research to add a touch of realism to certain events. My browsing history for research purposes was quite an eye-opener for awhile, including strip clubs in the Boston area (*because the fictional serial killer visits one*), and laws regarding prison conjugal visits in Massachusetts and the United Kingdom. And, as twisted and sick as it sounds, assembling the fictional victims of the serial killer in Bloodlust proved to be quite entertaining. Not because of the ill-intended fictional results, but because I was able to invent backgrounds and evidence, and pick names out of the air. It was imagination at work (*overdrive, at that*).

Bloodlust was 428 pages long upon completion, prior to my first round of editing, which entailed reading through the entire book several times before I even sent it to my publisher for consideration. It ended up increasing in size (to 432 pages) after the editing process, despite having done away with two incidental characters. I'm not complaining, but it's a lot of material to read through to make sure all aspects are consistent and in sync with the storyline (*scenes, dialogue, location and objects, along with the physical appearances and quirks of the characters*).

It's just one of the many facets of writing that I continue to find fascinating, all of which contain the aspiration to reach an end result.

~ IN PROGRESS ~

Now that Bloodlust is complete (*for all intents and purposes*), I'm on to Blood & Soul, final part in the Bloodline Trilogy. My current goal is to have the book finished by spring/early summer 2021.

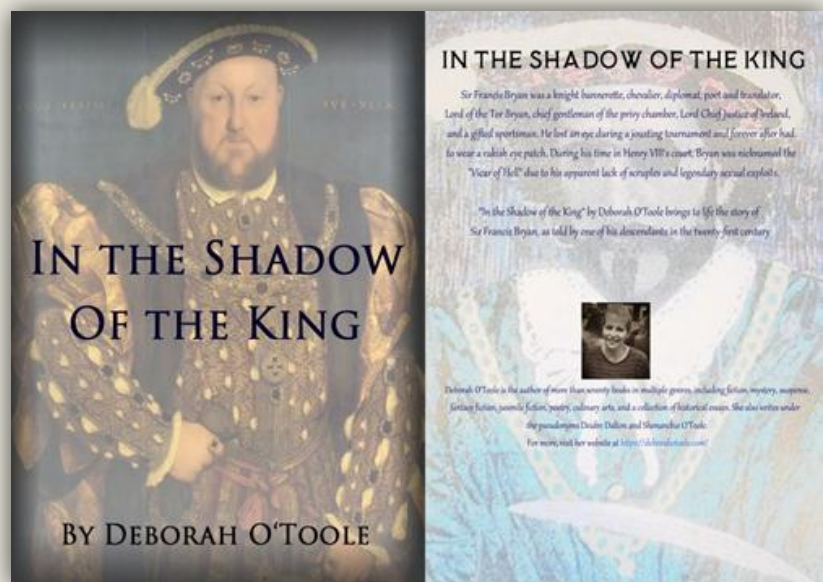
The blurb for Blood & Soul is as follows: *Emma Beckett is adopted into a loving home as an infant, never knowing the true circumstances of her birth. As a teenager, she discovers she has unique powers of healing. She soon realizes her abilities are an instrument of evil, begotten by a bloodthirsty monster.* More to come . . .

Kingly Matters

A few months ago, when I needed a short break from the intensity of Bloodlust, I toyed with new book cover designs for another upcoming novel, In the Shadow of the King.

My hope is to get back to the actual writing of In the Shadow of the King next year after the Bloodline Trilogy is complete, but it

might be some time before I actually finish it (*estimated completion around Christmas*



2022), only because of the amount of historical research that will be required. When last left off, I was sixty-seven pages into the story.

In the Shadow of the King was created in Corel Word Perfect when I began writing it several years ago, which presents its own set of unique problems today. I don't recommend opening a document in Microsoft Word that was originally created in Word Perfect. General formatting, ampersands, commas, apostrophes, inverted commas . . . anything other than the actual words come out a bit skewed. I'm mostly bothered by inverted commas. I prefer them to be straight up and down, not angled on a curve. I've since fixed all of the issues, so the book is ready to get back on track when the mood strikes me.

I'm also in the early stages of gathering new resource material. This involves obtaining historical documents and books (old and new), and poring over *Henry VIII's Letters & Papers, Foreign and Domestic* from British History Online. I'm basically looking for reference to Sir Francis Bryan in any context from multiple sources. While In the Shadow of the King is semi-fictional with the inclusion of characters from my imagination, I'm keen to get the history right.

A brief description of In the Shadow of the King:

In the Shadow of the King by Deborah O'Toole is a fictional account of the dramatic life of Sir Francis Bryan, confidant to King Henry VIII.

Sir Francis Bryan was a knight bannerette, chevalier, diplomat, poet and translator, Lord of the Tor Bryan, chief gentleman of the privy chamber, Lord Chief Justice of Ireland and a gifted sportsman. He lost an eye during a jousting tournament and forever after wore a rakish eye patch, which merely added to his allure. During his time in Henry VIII's court and one of the few who escaped the King's wrath, Sir Francis Bryan was dubbed the "Vicar of Hell" by the King's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, because of his apparent lack of scruples and legendary sexual exploits.

In the Shadow of the King brings to life the story of Sir Francis Bryan, as told by one of his descendants in the twenty-first century.

Estimated dates of completion for upcoming novels (*as of this writing*):

- ❖ [Blood & Soul \(2021\)](#)
- ❖ [In the Shadow of the King \(2022\)](#)

As per my usual notation, storylines, estimated release dates and book cover designs may be subject to change.

~ LOCKDOWN ACTIVITIES ~

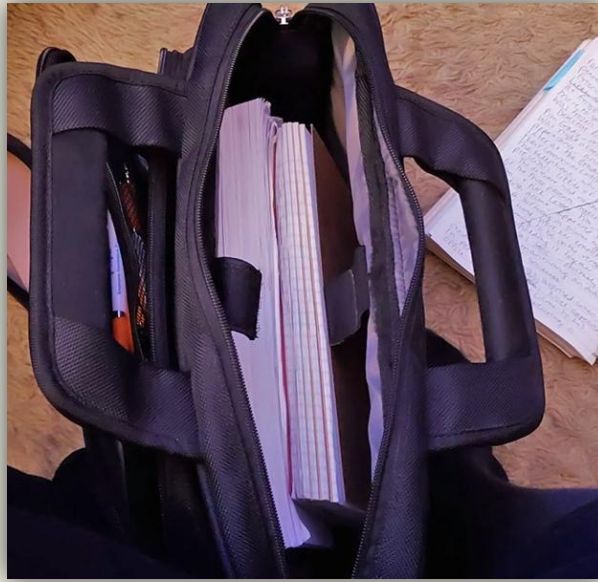
As the interminable lockdown continues, and when I take a rare break from writing, we devise ways to keep ourselves entertained.

Jerry and I went on another camping trip last July, spending five days at Wolf Creek Pass in the Uinta Mountains. We found the perfect spot to camp, just off the road and down a slight incline. It had its own fire pit and plenty of trees to provide shade. We also had a stampede of sheep run through our camp, which I managed to [get on film](#).



<https://youtu.be/BdpLevAU1eY>

And guess what I pack first for a camping trip? My "book bag." It includes pens, paper clips, sticky notes, spiral notebooks, printed material from the current book I'm writing, research notes, my iPad and the current book I'm reading (*not writing*). We recently invested in a laptop, so it comes along for the ride as well.



Reading is an ongoing activity for me, and always has been. My current stack contains *And Furthermore* by Dame Judi Dench, *A Breath of Snow & Ashes* by Diana Gabaldon (#8 in the Outlander series), *Inside the Tudor Court Through the Eyes of the Spanish Ambassador* by Lauren Mackay, *The Pawful Truth* (#11 Cat in the Stacks Mystery) by Miranda James, *Lovecraft Country* by Matt Ruff, and *Say Nothing* by Patrick Radden Keefe. I never leave a bookstore empty-handed, and I'm especially partial to collecting different bookmarks.



Jerry has an odd habit of rearranging my stuffed animals into a variety of positions, providing a display - usually the current even more bizarre than the last - every time I walk into the computer room. Once, I came upon the stuffed animals playing cards, another time they were surrounding an empty bottle of whisky. Other occurrences included the group watching the iPad, draped over the TV in the bedroom, perched on my computer before I start my day, wearing face masks, riding in the back seat of the truck, or staring at the camera wearing sunglasses. I also once found Hissy on the

couch with a bottle of whisky and a pack of cigarettes (pre-arranged by Jerry, of course). [View larger photos on my blog, Irish Eyes >](#)



In addition, a family of ducks began visiting us during the summer of 2020. The mother is an albino who had six ducklings at the time, all of them seemingly ravenous at all hours. Bread was their favorite, of course, but we started feeding them healthier fare, such as kibble and dried corn. But they do love their bread! **Postscript (10/09/20):** The family of six ducks has now turned into about sixty daily visitors. Apparently, they spread the word about our "Duck Diner" along the canal. ;) They come at 7am sharp, and then again during the afternoons and early evenings. [Click here](#) to view a short video of the ducks on You Tube.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGLrXVMREJ4>

I recently created a page at [All Author](#), which is basically a social platform for published authors. A few weeks ago they offered-up banners for the Halloween season, so I decided to use the following for three of my "spookier" books, including [Bloodfrost](#), [Glinhaven](#) and [The Crypt Artist](#).



Happy Halloween!

~ UNTIL NEXT TIME ~

Another newsletter will be coming your way in late spring/early summer 2021, so keep your eyes peeled.

Meanwhile, visit my [website](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages for updates, or go to my blog [Irish Eyes](#) to view recent posts.

And until next time, *happy reading . . .*

Deborah O'Toole 🍀

Saturday, 24th October 2020

