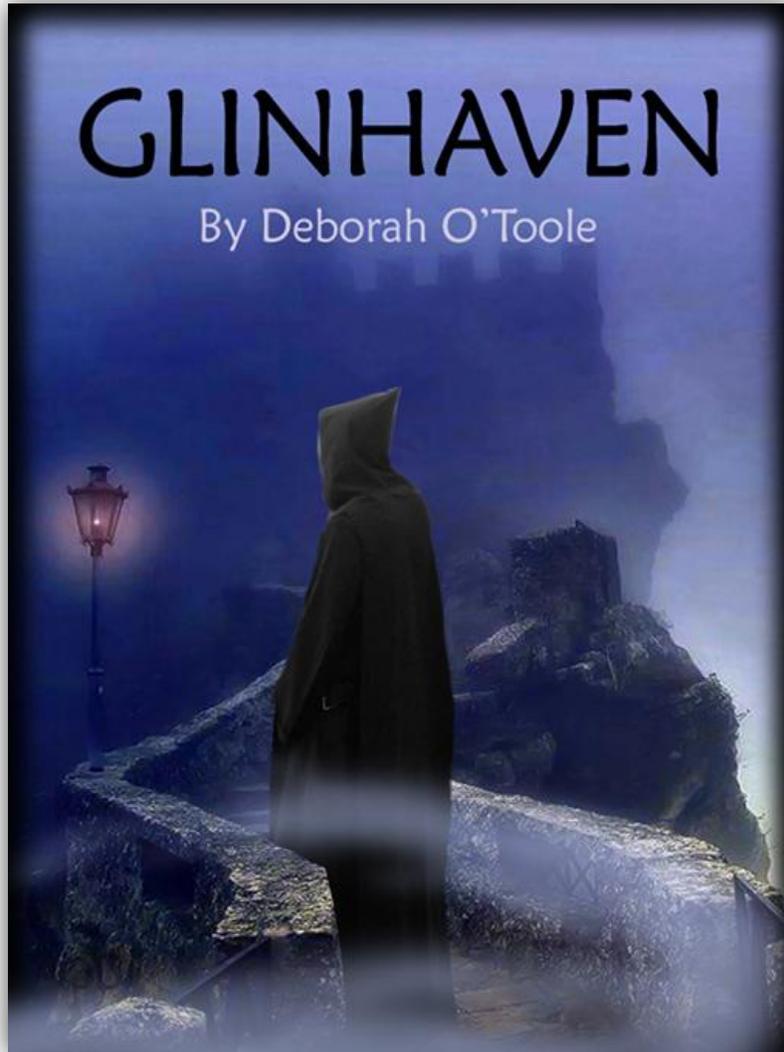


Excerpts from:
Glinhaven
By Deborah O'Toole



"Glinhaven" is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and beyond the intent of the author.

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ABOUT "GLINHAVEN"

Glinhaven by Deborah O'Toole is a traditional gothic fiction novel similar in style to classic 1970s paperbacks written by Dorothy Daniels, Marilyn Harris, Victoria Holt, Marilyn Ross and Phyllis Whitney.

Piper Hunt leaves Boston to take over her grandfather's unique curio shop in Glinhaven. While adjusting to life in the quaint seaside village, she uncovers dark secrets hidden at the forbidding Glinhaven Monastery which may unlock mysteries from her past.

Glinhaven Monastery drips with sinister eeriness, especially at night when bone-chilling fog rolls in from churning North Shore sea waters. The centuries-old stone structure appears as a hulking ghost in the mist, its walls bloated with history and unspeakable secrets. Yellow light from carriage-style lamps intensify the monastery's forbidding effect, the black-squared globes positioned in four-foot intervals on massive walls which surround the holy nucleus, gazed upon in deadly fear by residents of Glinhaven Village . . .

Glinhaven was released by Club Lighthouse Publishing in April 2020.

For more, go to:

<https://deborahotoole.com/>

**GLINHAVEN:
Excerpt from the Prologue**

DUNCAN MOCHRIE SAT ON A tall barstool behind the smoky-glass counter of his curio shop. He was somewhat out of breath by the trek back from Glinhaven Monastery, and slightly damp from the misty fog.

The Thistle curio shop was located on Main Street in Glinhaven Village, displaying aisles of knick-knacks, books and other Scottish and Celtic sundry. The shop was dark now, long past closing time. A small nautical lantern-style desk lamp illuminated the counter, giving Duncan just enough light in which to write.

He gazed fondly at his jet-black fold, Sith, who sat calmly on the counter next to him. The cat had great yellow eyes and a clumsy nature, although in his mind he was elegantly appointed. The barest hint of a white spot adorned his chest, offsetting the onyx black of his fur. He watched with great interest as Duncan wrote quickly.

The shop was eerily quiet apart from the sound of Duncan's ballpoint pen scratching across a sheath of white paper. He was not at a loss for words, but wanted to get his thoughts down while they were still fresh in his mind. The hastily scribed note was addressed to his granddaughter.

A noise from upstairs caused Duncan to pause in his writing. He glanced apprehensively toward the staircase leading to the upper floor, where his apartment over the shop was located. He listened intently for a moment, but heard no other sounds. He continued to write, intent on his task.

He stopped writing after a few minutes, his ears alert to sounds from upstairs again. He heard distinct hissing and growling, which could only come from Sith's mother, the indomitable Moggy Malone Mochrie. She was a white and cream fold with blue eyes, who typically spent the evening on Duncan's bed in the apartment above, but enjoyed wandering the shop during the day. She was a feisty one, his Moggy Malone, giving birth to Sith after mating with the black male Milo from the monastery, after which she chased him off every time she saw him. If Moggy was hissing and growling in the dark, something was surely amiss.

Duncan hesitated only briefly, but then gathered the sheet of paper in his hand. He walked around the counter near the base of the staircase and headed to the aisle directly adjacent. The display housed a collection of first-edition books of Scottish origin. At random, he grabbed a book from the shelf. Glancing down, he noticed it was the 1941 printing of *The Monarch of the Glen* by Compton Mackenzie. After folding the piece of paper in half, he slid it between the pages of the book and returned it to its place on the shelf.

He heard light footsteps in the upper corridor. Frowning, Duncan made his way to the staircase. He was part-way up the steps when he saw a dark figure at the top, inky black and silently menacing.

"Who the hell are you?" Duncan demanded, angered by the intrusion. "And what in blue blazes are you doing here?"

In a flash, the dark figure darted down the stairs and pushed against Duncan's chest with force. Duncan fell backward, tumbling to the bottom of the staircase and landing on his back. Momentarily stunned, he was still for a few seconds.

The dark figure suddenly stood over him, face masked by the blackness. The intruder fell upon Duncan before he had a chance to move or cry out, jabbing him in the neck with a slender, sharp object.

The pain was intense, yet brief. Duncan felt himself slip away into oblivion.

**GLINHAVEN:
Excerpt from Chapter One**

THE AIR WAS THICK WITH fog when Piper Hunt took the Glinhaven exit from Route 128. She descended into the village slowly, her headlights on high-beam. The glare barely cut a swath through the veritable pea soup, allowing her to see only a few inches ahead. Her lifelong familiarity with the area helped, but she remained cautious nonetheless.

It was a typical November evening in Glinhaven, bone-chilling cold, damp and dreary. Piper was used to it, having been raised in the Massachusetts fishing village, a scant five miles from Gloucester and a thirty-minute drive from Boston on a good day.

She hadn't been back since late summer, and probably wouldn't be here now if she hadn't received word about her grandfather's sudden death.

Piper felt numb inside as she maneuvered her silver Honda Civic onto Main Street. Old-fashioned gas lamps, usually striking with their black crown tops, barely illuminated the road tonight. In the murky light, she made out Purdy's Café (less than lively at the moment, which was no surprise considering the weather), the post office and Crow's Nest Lodge. She had a brief flashback of her graduation from Glinhaven High nearly ten years ago. Piper joined the senior class in celebrating their freedom with dinner and dancing in the Crow's Nest, staggering home near dawn. At the moment, it seemed like another lifetime.

She stopped in front of the Glinhaven Funeral Home a few doors down, which had been a village mainstay for more than three hundred years. Whether by sea, disease or natural causes, those who died inevitably found their way to the establishment. While she didn't remember much about her mother's funeral, Piper knew this time would be much different.

She drew in a ragged breath as she stared at the mortuary. There was light in the two windows facing Main Street, muted by sheer white curtains. She felt hot tears stinging her eyes, as if suddenly realizing her only living relative in the world now laid in repose within its historical environs. Her grandfather never seemed to have a sick day in his life, which made his passing all the more devastating. When he came to see her in Boston just a few short weeks ago, she had no inkling it was for the last time.

Piper turned off the car engine and sat quietly, reaching back in her mind to replay the telephone call that came to her apartment in Boston earlier that evening. She had barely arrived home from work with Chinese takeout, balancing the bag of food in one arm as she unlocked the front door with the other. She was looking forward to spending a peaceful evening alone, having been inundated with demands from co-workers and members of the paying public in her position as assistant director of the Museum of Fine Arts on Huntington Avenue. One of the nicer aspects of her job was her apartment was only a few blocks away, located on Isabella Street.

She answered the telephone, which rested on a table near the front door. The bag of food was still in her arms. "Hello?"

It was Annabelle Drummond, the middle-aged Glinhaven native who worked as her grandfather's cashier at The Thistle curio shop. "Piper?" the voice said. "Is that you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Drummond. I recognize your voice after all these years."

"Sorry to bother you at home, but . . ."

"Is something wrong, Mrs. Drummond? You sound out of breath."

"It's about Duncan . . . your grandfather," Annabelle replied, her voice audibly shaky over the phone lines. "He's gone. He had a stroke at the top of the stairs in the shop, and then tumbled down. It must have happened last night. I found him just lying there when I arrived for work this afternoon . . . there was no pulse . . . the ambulance arrived, but the EMT's said he'd been gone for several hours already." The woman began to sob. "Oh, Piper, I'm so sorry . . ."

Piper recalled standing in her apartment, the telephone receiver against her ear as she held onto the Chinese food. In an instant, the bag slipped from her arm and fell to the floor. She couldn't remember much after that. After talking with Mrs. Drummond, she stepped over the bag of Chinese food and left her apartment, back down to her car on the street.

Now here she was, nearly an hour later, sitting in her car outside Glinhaven's only funeral home. She recalled Mrs. Drummond saying EMT's had taken her grandfather's body directly to the mortuary after leaving the curio shop. Where else could they take him? What was the point of a hospital, after all? He was gone in one fell swoop.

Gathering her purse, she stepped out of the car. She stood still for a moment, breathing in the cold air. Her reddish-black hair fell just past her shoulders, with the side part falling over her right eye. She had a slight frame, adorned by slender limbs and thin hands, with a wide-tipped nose that flared at the nostrils. She wore a fashionable hat perched on her head, as was typical of her style and which gave her a distinctive appearance. Tonight she sported a black, bell-shaped cloche with a dark grey bow, the attire she had worn to work that same day. Her brownish-green eyes were somewhat sunken into her face at the moment, her skin seeming to be paler than usual as she stood in the swirling mist.

Locals rarely gathered with any force during a heavy bout of fog, so she felt utterly alone on the street. She hurried to the double doors of the funeral home, feeling the misty chill penetrating through her clothes. She opened the doors and slipped inside.

It was warm, and quiet. The light had an amber quality about it, which was intended to soothe those who came to the mortuary to say goodbye to loved ones. A small office and long corridor led from the foyer, with two rooms on each side opened by double doors. Piper was aware these were the final service rooms, used when the dead were prepared and ready to be seen. Further back into the building were more offices and two large prep rooms, where bodies were taken to be made presentable for public viewing.

Piper stood in the foyer for a moment, listening for human sound. The silence seemed deafening, but then she heard a delicate sneeze come from nearby.

"Hello?" she called out. "Is anyone here? Audrey?" There was a slight edge to her voice, a twinge of anxiety. Since exiting her car on the street, she felt as if she'd stepped into the mystical twilight zone, alone and left to defend herself.

She heard a chair scraping from the small office near the foyer, and then quick footsteps. A second later she saw Audrey Glade. The plump, dark-haired woman was dressed in a wine-colored pantsuit, frills from the creamy white blouse underneath tickling her chin. Audrey was the local mortician and funeral director, in the process of taking over the business from her aged father, Maurice.

"Piper," the woman said softly as she drew closer. "I'm so sorry."

Piper didn't know what to say. She was suddenly wordless, devoid of coherent thought. Instead, she gave Audrey a blank stare. The older woman gave her a quick hug, drawing back slightly to look into Piper's eyes.

"Losing your grandfather was such a shock," Audrey continued, her voice hushed. "So unexpected. Duncan was always so strong and healthy."

Piper continued to stare at the woman, who was also her godmother for all intents and purposes. Audrey was the same age as her mother; the two were friends during their high school years. Piper had known Audrey all her life. The older woman had seen her through her mother's death, and would undoubtedly provide a strong shoulder of comfort now that Duncan Mochrie was gone.

She finally found her voice. "Thank you, Audrey. Thank you for taking care of him."

Audrey flushed slightly, bringing a natural hue underneath her artificially brushed cheekbones. "I haven't had a chance to work on him yet," she confessed in apology. "It was all so sudden. By the time I was informed Duncan had passed, you were already on your way here." She gazed at Piper with sad eyes. "But he looks good, like always. He seems almost - well, he looks *peaceful*." She hesitated. "Would you like to see him?"

"I'm not sure," Piper stammered. She wanted to remember her grandfather as he was, not as a dead body lying on a slab.

"There's nothing to fear," Audrey promised. "As I said, he looks peaceful. If one didn't know better, you'd think he was just sleeping."

Piper nodded. "Okay."

She followed Audrey to the rear of the mortuary, where they entered a large metal door marked "EMPLOYEES ONLY." The room was relatively small, but decidedly chilly and rather forbidding with its stainless steel tables and cabinets.

Duncan Mochrie lay flat on his back on the central metal table, a white sheet pulled over his body.

"Would you like to be alone with him?" Audrey whispered.

"No, please stay."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm a bit undone," Piper admitted. "I feel as if I'm in stuck in a horrible nightmare. My grandfather was always larger than life to me. He was steadfast and always present. I just can't believe he's gone."

Audrey touched her shoulder. "I know, my dear," she said sympathetically. "I'll stay right here with you."

Bolstered by the older woman's presence, Piper pulled the sheet from her grandfather's upper body. She gasped. Other than an unnatural waxy paleness, he did indeed look like he was just sleeping. The trim white beard traveled to long sideburns at the jaw, both stark against dark eyebrows and peppered gray hair. His long body was slender rather than thin, remarkable for a man of eighty-nine years. How could a stroke topple such a healthy giant of a man? A good and kind soul housed in a clean temple? And why did God take the noble and worthy, only to leave behind the cruel and undeserving?

Piper blinked her eyes. "Did he suffer?" she asked softly.

Audrey shook her head, keeping her voice low. "I don't think so. Annabelle called 911 just seconds after she found Duncan, and they came rather quickly after that. One of the EMT's told me your grandfather must have been dead several hours before they arrived at The Thistle. They believe he had a stroke and died almost instantly."

"He died in his curio shop," Piper noted vaguely. "Doing what he loved." She had to reason his death, put a positive light on the unthinkable.

Audrey touched her shoulder again. "Do you need a place to stay tonight?"

Piper looked puzzled. "No. I'll stay in the apartment above the shop. There's no need to avoid it, Audrey. I lived in the flat for most of my life, and have many happy memories."

"Of course," Audrey replied quickly. "I just thought you might be uncomfortable."

"No, not at all."

"If you're up to it, we can get together tomorrow and plan Duncan's memorial."

Piper gazed at her grandfather's peaceful face again. "We never talked about death," she told Audrey. "He never told me what he wanted, nor did I tell him my final wishes. All I know is we have plots at Glinhaven Cemetery, next to my mother and Grandma Mochrie."

"As it should be," Audrey agreed. "We can figure out the rest in due course."

**GLINHAVEN:
Excerpt from Chapter Two**

THE NEXT DAY WAS OVERCAST, threatening rain, but early fog was nearly dissipated by mid-morning. Piper drove her car along the main thoroughfare that led out of the village, making a left turn on North Shore Road. The two-lane blacktop led to the Glinhaven family mansion first, which was followed by the connecting spread of the monastery. As far as Piper knew, Lady Glinhaven lived alone at the mansion, along with her hired staff. Her husband had died from a heart attack more than three decades ago, and her only son was killed in an airplane crash a few years later.

She had dressed with care, wanting the confidence of looking her best when she spoke with Lady Glinhaven. For today's visit, Piper wore a dark blue pencil dress with cream pumps, and atop her head was a well-chosen midnight cloche hat with a burnt umber wrap-around.

The Glinhaven family mansion had overlooked its namesake-village for more than four centuries, reminiscent of the Elizabethan architecture from which it hailed. Long streams of ivy clung to the outer walls of the house, once burnished gold in autumn but now brittle and dead in winter. It gave the mansion a gray appearance, easily blending into the foggy mists that often permeated the estate.

The red-pink brick house was barely discernible underneath the ivy, virtually hiding the style of the structure. The estate was rather modest by modern standards, but it held an unmistakable elegant air. A circular driveway swept by the front of the house, in between which nestled a grass patch and small water fountain, now dormant. Bare trees dotted the landscape, pathetic and gnarled in the cold, their branches appearing like bony fingers reaching out to the mansion in supplication.

Piper drove her Honda Civic through the open gate, parking in the driveway near the front double doors. She had few memories of the mansion, although her mother worked there as a maid in her youth. To Piper, the mansion was the "spooky house on the hill" where crazy old Lady Glinhaven lived, a sentiment shared by most of her adolescent school chums - including Jude MacSween - from Glinhaven High. It was a common teenage dare to creep onto the estate grounds during idle summer months, always at night, and a thrill to retreat unscathed by imaginary ghostly specters or worse, the old woman herself.

The front doors of the mansion were opened by Roxby, whom Piper remembered. He had been the Glinhaven family's butler for years, his crusty countenance seemingly unchanged over time. No one in the village knew whether Roxby was his first or last name. He made frequent appearances at the local grocery store but rarely spoke to a soul. When he did utter a word or phrase, it came with the distinct remnants of a Scottish burr. He was of medium height and build, with a thin wisp of hair clinging stubbornly to his pate. His dark, coal eyes were striking and rather intimidating against his milky white flesh. A large, brown mole perched just over his upper lip, made somehow repulsive by his habit of

touching the tip of his tongue to the growth every few minutes. However, he was impeccably dressed in typical black tie and tails, a gray vest emphasizing his thin middle.

"May I help you?" Roxby asked Piper formally, his eyes regarding her passively.

"Yes," Piper replied. "My name is Piper Hunt. I'd like to speak with Lady Glinhaven."

"Is Her Ladyship expecting you?"

"No, I'm afraid not. This is a rather spontaneous visit, but if you tell her I'm here I'm sure she'll see me."

Roxby nodded slightly. "Come in, Miss Hunt."

She stepped inside, immediately struck by the austerity of the dwelling. She stood in place as Roxby disappeared behind a set of double doors adjacent to the foyer. While well-tended and elegant, furnishings and carpets in the foyer showed obvious signs of wear. The grand estate was not shabby by any means, but it gave the impression of gentry gradually gone to seed. Piper wondered how Lady Glinhaven felt about that.

Roxby returned to the foyer quickly. Without a word, he motioned for Piper to follow him. He led her back behind the double doors, where they entered the drawing room of the mansion. Piper noticed a large white-curtained picture window overlooking the front of the estate, and a tall fireplace, which burned brightly with flame. In front of the fire sat Lady Glinhaven in her wheelchair, bony hands folded primly in her lap. Piper came forward slowly, feeling as if she were being presented to royalty and then mentally chiding herself for the brief lapse in self-confidence. The old woman regarded her stoically, her face as inscrutable as a statue.

"May I present Miss Piper Hunt," Roxby said formally.

Lady Glinhaven nodded. "Yes, we know one another, Roxby." She glanced at Piper. "Please have a seat," she said, motioning to a settee near the fireplace.

Roxby left the room quietly as Piper sat down on the brocaded cream and navy-colored settee, her eyes going to the older woman.

"May I offer you some refreshment?" Lady Glinhaven asked politely, the deepness of her voice dichotomous to her tiny frame. "A cup of tea, perhaps?"

Piper shook her head. "No, thank you. I won't be staying long."

"To what do I owe your visit?"

"I apologize for barging in on you without calling first," Piper began. "But I needed to have a word with you about . . ."

"No need to worry," Lady Glinhaven spoke abruptly. "It's not as if my social calendar is full at the moment. Please continue."

Piper came to the point. "Why do you want to buy The Thistle?"

Lady Glinhaven did not flinch, as if she fully expected the question. "The Thistle is an important historical landmark. I'm quite proud of Glinhaven Village, naturally, and I want to make sure our collective history is preserved."

"What makes you think I won't preserve my grandfather's legacy?" Piper prodded.

Lady Glinhaven shrugged. "It's not that I doubt your abilities, Piper. I just thought you were happy in Boston. It was my intention to relieve you of the burden of running a business so you could get on with your life. Glinhaven is not exactly a hotbed of youthful entertainment, as you well know."

"I was perfectly happy growing up in Glinhaven."

"Yet you left shortly after graduating from high school," Lady Glinhaven was quick to respond. "Apart from sporadic visits to see your grandfather, I haven't seen you moving back lock, stock and barrel. I think we both know the reasons why."

Piper regarded the old woman, taking in her steely eyes and rigid stance despite the wheelchair. "I'll never regret my time in Boston," she said softly. "But maybe I'm ready to come back to Glinhaven. The Thistle was my grandfather's pride and joy, and I can't see just tossing it away."

"You won't be tossing it away if you sell to me," Lady Glinhaven insisted. "You can keep your life in Boston, secure in the knowledge that your grandfather's lifework won't be compromised."

"The Thistle has been in my family for more than three-hundred-and-fifty years," Piper pointed out.

"I'm aware of that," Lady Glinhaven said crisply. "The Thistle will continue, regardless. It has been a local mainstay ever since my husband's family founded the village."

"The Thistle has been a mainstay ever since a Mochrie settled here," Piper broke in, unwilling to grant the older woman prominence in the pecking order of family importance.

Lady Glinhaven's smile was cold. "I'd hate to see your grandfather's shop sold to an outsider, to someone who might change things."

"There are several landmarks in Glinhaven," Piper noted. "Why focus on The Thistle?"

Lady Glinhaven regarded Piper passively for several seconds, her expression unreadable. Then she spoke, her tone measured but neutral. "Aside from my family home and the monastery, The Thistle is perhaps the oldest structure still standing in Glinhaven. I've always taken great interest in it."

"Since when?" Piper interrupted. "I don't recall ever seeing you in the shop. I grew up in Glinhaven. I was raised above the shop, so to speak. When did you ever take an interest in it?"

Lady Glinhaven's eyes narrowed. "My dear, you've spent many years away from Glinhaven. Perhaps you were not aware . . ."

"Aware of what, pray tell?" Piper snapped, interrupting the older woman again. "Grandfather never mentioned you when I called him or saw him in person. Not once in all those years."

Lady Glinhaven's face turned to ice. "Duncan had become quite forgetful in recent months. Perhaps he merely failed to mention my interest to you."

"Grandfather was certainly not forgetful," Piper scoffed, annoyed by the woman's implications. "He was as sharp as a tack, and then some."

The old woman's thin lips disappeared into a frown. "I didn't mean to upset you, my dear."

Piper leaned forward slightly. "Let's be frank, shall we? You aren't known to do things out of the goodness of your heart. Why do you really want The Thistle?"

Lady Glinhaven took on an injured air, her bony and blue-veined hand rising to rest against her throat. "I beg to differ, Piper. Must I remind you who keeps Glinhaven Monastery alive and well? Or that the local soup kitchen remains open because of me, not to mention the pension fund I established for disabled or retired fishermen?"

The old woman's self-serving litany irritated Piper further. "I agree you've contributed much to Glinhaven," she replied cryptically. "However, are the deeds so much to help people or are they done in exchange for moral debt and reluctant gratitude?"

"I have the best of intentions in all of my philanthropic endeavors," Lady Glinhaven insisted, although Piper sensed the latent anger and lack of sincerity in her tone. "I can assure you of that much."

Piper stared at the old woman, noting the barely-concealed disdain in her dark eyes and the unhappy curl of her lips. The Glinhaven matriarch was not accustomed to being refused by anyone, much less the upstart granddaughter of a local shopkeeper. Lady Glinhaven possessed an air of self-entitlement that she obviously felt was unspoken, and certainly not to be questioned or denied by a mere minion. The arrogance and irrational expectation repulsed Piper thoroughly.

She made her decision in that moment. "I can save you the trouble of badgering or buttering me up," she said strongly. "The Thistle is not for sale, nor will it ever be as long as I'm alive to keep it going."

Lady Glinhaven did not miss a beat. "I believe you are making a mistake, Piper, one of such great magnitude that it will change the course of your life forever."

Piper laughed harshly. "You're being a tad overly-dramatic, don't you think?"

The older woman offered a brittle smile. "As I indicated before, you are young with your whole life ahead of you. Surely you don't want to waste your fleeting youth in a small fishing village on the edge of nowhere. There's hardly a bright or exciting future awaiting you here."

"That's my decision to make," Piper rose from the settee. "The Thistle is much better off in my hands. No offense, but you are alone with no heirs. God only knows what might become of the place if something happened to you and the shop was held in legal limbo."

There was no mistaking the flash of virulent dislike in Lady Glinhaven's eyes, although she was quick to mask the enmity. "No need to become hostile, Piper. I meant you no harm."

Piper smiled sweetly. "No harm, no foul. Since I plan to stay in Glinhaven indefinitely, I'm sure we'll meet again."

Before Lady Glinhaven could respond, Piper turned and left the drawing room. She hurried across the foyer and out of the house, anxious to put distance between herself and the old woman. She was out of breath by the time she reached her car in front of the house. She slid into the driver's seat, momentarily resting her head on the steering wheel.

"I don't believe it," she muttered to herself as she started the car. "I just boxed myself into staying in Glinhaven." She sighed. "Maybe it's what I wanted all along, but Lady G's vague answers gave me the final push," she reasoned.

As she drove away, Piper glanced in the rearview mirror. Her mouth opened slightly as she spied Lady Glinhaven watching her from the drawing room window. The old woman sat in her wheelchair, gazing straight ahead as Piper disappeared from sight.

She felt an involuntary shiver go up her spine.

**GLINHAVEN:
Excerpt from Chapter Three**

PIPER FELT AS IF SHE had only been asleep for a few minutes when she awoke with a start. She glanced to the bed-stand digital clock and saw that it was half-past three in the morning. Rubbing her eyes with a yawn, she sat up and leaned against the pillows. The room was inky dark and deathly quiet. Why had she awakened suddenly? Annoyed, she closed her eyes and slid back into a prone position. Sith was curled up beside her, sleeping.

Then she heard a muffled crash. The sound came from downstairs, as if something in the curio shop had been knocked over. Piper sat upright again, her eyes wide in the dark. She pulled the bedcovers up to her chin, listening for more. She heard Sith give a sleepy, weak meow next to her, but he did not move. The silence stretched on for several minutes, almost deafening in its mockery. She had just about convinced herself nothing was amiss when she heard light footfalls on the staircase leading from the shop to the apartment. In that same instant, Moggy Malone came running into the bedroom, a low growl emanating from her chest, to be followed by a long, threatening hiss. She ran under the bed, as if to hide herself.

She swung her legs over, resting her feet on the floor. She had begun using her own bedroom the second night back in Glinhaven, eschewing her grandfather's quarters because they made her melancholy. She knew her own bedroom like the back of her hand, having grown up within its four walls. Nothing much had changed since she was a teenager. The chintz draperies were as old as she was, and the four-poster double bed had once been her mother's.

Piper ran her hand along the mattress, stopping at the foot of the bed where she'd left her thick, blue terrycloth robe the night before. She shrugged into the robe quickly, standing to secure the sash. She paused briefly, her ears alert. The footfalls on the staircase were closer now. Whoever was coming her way didn't have much further to go. She had no escape, unless she wanted to meet the intruder on the steps. Meanwhile, Moggy Malone was still growling and hissing from under the bed, which further alarmed Piper.

She walked on her tiptoes across the floor, halting when she reached the doorway to her bedroom. She stepped into the hallway, using the soft fuzziness of her winter booties to slide-walk on the hardwood floor in the direction of the bathroom. Once inside, she left the door ajar and hurried to the tub-shower arrangement on the far side of the room. She got into the long tub, slowly drawing the shower curtain closed. She leaned against the tiles, taking short breaths to steady her nerves.

Piper still felt exposed and helpless. As her eyes adjusted to the dark, she used her hand to feel for the heavy wooden back-brush she knew rested on a peg by the shower nozzle. Once she held it secure, she stood motionless, waiting expectantly. If someone found her in the shower, she'd give them a good head wallop with the brush. She was

determined not to go down without a fight, outraged that someone was trespassing into her home.

"My cell phone," she thought with a sense of panic. "Where did I leave my cell phone?" Then it came to her. The cell phone was in her purse, which she'd left in the living room the night before. Fat lot of good it did her now. She could not call out for help, and even if she screamed, who could hear her? Cam was surely sound asleep on his boat by now, and none of the establishments along Main Street were open at this hour.

The footfalls were in the hallway now, their pace slow and measured. Piper held her breath, gripping the back-brush tighter. Then it went quiet. She strained to hear encroaching steps, but there was nothing. The minutes seem to stretch on interminably, broadening her already raw nerves in the process. Was the intruder out in the hall, waiting for her to make a move? Or had they left the building, unable to find her in her bed?

As if in answer to her questions, Piper heard the distant jingle coming from the front door bell of the curio shop. Someone had just entered or left the premises. Had another intruder arrived, or was she now alone in the dark? She decided to wait another five minutes. If there were no more sounds of movement, she'd take a chance and leave her hiding place. If the intruder was still present, flipping on all the lights might scare him or her away.

After the self-allotted time had passed, Piper drew aside the shower curtain and stepped out of the tub slowly. She held the back-brush firmly, making her way to the bathroom door. Reaching her free hand around the frame, she found the hallway light switch and flipped it to the ON position.

A soft glow flooded the hallway, revealing the empty space as it always appeared. She left the bathroom, back-brush upraised in readiness, and made her way down the hallway to the living room. Her skin tingled with fear of the unknown. Her intruder could still be in the flat, waiting in the dark to attack her. She forced herself forward, reaching down to turn on the tiffany lamp in the living room. She spied her purse resting on her grandfather's glider rocking chair. Darting across the room, she dug inside until she found her cell phone. She immediately dialed 911, her hand shaking as she looked around the room. Her eyes wide with fright, she fully expected to find someone watching her, but she was blessedly alone.

"Glinhaven Police," her call was answered. "Deputy Ross speaking. What is the state of your emergency?"

"My name is Piper Hunt," she hissed into her cell phone. "I live above The Thistle curio shop on Main Street. Someone broke in just a short while ago. I'm here alone. *Please help me.*"

"Is the intruder still present, Ma'am?"

"No, I think they left but I'm not sure. Please, send help."

"Hold tight, we're on our way."

Piper flung the cell phone back into the rocking chair, a slight sob escaping her lips. The adrenalin of fear drained from her body, leaving her weak and clammy. Her muscles felt like jelly as she sagged against the back of the rocking chair for support, her mouth agape. She heard a siren in the distance, which seemed to give her little reassurance.

Gripping the back-brush with both hands, Piper retreated to a corner of the living room, her eyes wild. She raised the brush over her head again, waiting for an attack she was certain was still to come and for which she was fully prepared to defend herself against.

That was how Deputy Ross found her five minutes later.

**GLINHAVEN:
Excerpt from Chapter Four**

THE KITCHEN AT GLINHAVEN MONASTERY provided three square meals a day for the thirty-two monks in residence. They kept true to their vows of celibacy, obedience, poverty, stability and fidelity to the monastic way of life, and the ethos also spilled over into mealtimes. Everything was undertaken in moderation, including food and wine, the latter of which was only served on special occasions such as Christmas and other religious celebrations. Most meals revolved around the daily prayer schedule, which consisted of *Matins* at dawn, followed by *Lauds*. There was also a midday prayer, followed by Mass in late afternoon, *Vespers* in the evening and lastly, *Compline* at night.

Brother Albert sometimes assisted with lunch preparation, realizing that feeding more than two dozen monks required a great deal of effort, resulting in approximately ninety-six meals a day, not counting tea and snacks. It was no easy feat. The three primary meal presenters were brothers James MacLaird, Samuel Dunn and Kenneth Webster. There were days even their seasoned skills were not enough.

Breakfast was usually simple, consisting of either toast with mounds of scrambled eggs, or a big pot of hot porridge accompanied by brown sugar, assorted fruits and cream. Lunch might include greens from the garden during the summer months, or simple soups with plenty of fresh-baked breads. Dinner was also simple: casseroles (Shepherd's Pie being a favorite), turkey burgers and homemade French fries, with plenty of vegetables.

All meals were taken in the refectory, which was located on the main floor of the monastery. It was just off the foyer, with an additional entrance leading from the kitchen for ease in the serving of food and returning dirty dishes.

Three long-style picnic tables were placed end to end, giving the impression of one long board. Thin black grillwork outlined two large windows in the room, overlooking the direction of the mansion. A tall, jutting fireplace completed the simple quarter, only lit to blaze during autumn and winter months. The room was spartan, with medieval-style rushes comprised of sweet-smelling pine and herbs on the floor, which were swept daily.

Meals were usually quiet, somber affairs, with Abbot Magee seated at the head of the joined picnic tables. However, on occasion, there was the chanting of psalms and readings about saints to compliment the food they were consuming to nourish their bodies.

Just after Thanksgiving, Brother Albert found himself seated next to Brother Eugene Baird in the refectory, who was the Prior of the monastery. Tall and thin, with black-rimmed glasses and brown eyes, Brother Baird was generally a serious-minded and unsmiling personage. His primary role was to assist Abbot Magee, a job he took very seriously.

After saying a prayer and crossing himself, Brother Baird dipped a slice of warmed and buttered bread into a bowl full of Shepherd's Pie. As he chewed, he addressed Brother Albert without looking at him.

"Why did the police come to the monastery today?"

Brother Albert paused in mid-air, a spoonful of Shepherd's Pie in his hand. After regarding the Prior for a brief second, he replied: "The sheriff was investigating a break-in at The Thistle curio shop."

"What does that have to do with us?"

Brother Albert hesitated. He wasn't sure if the Prior was aware of the attack on Piper Hunt. It was not in his nature to lie, but in this instance he felt the need to keep the truth to himself. What good would it do to elicit undue concern, when the so-called attack was not even proven?

He shrugged as he spoke evenly. "I'm certain the sheriff was just covering his bases, nothing more."

The Prior watched him carefully, but seemed to accept the explanation. He sipped from his glass of water. "Hopefully that will be the end of it, then."

"I'm sure of it."

"Our order maintains itself on peaceful contemplation," Brother Baird reminded him unnecessarily.

"Of that I'm fully aware," Brother Albert responded shortly. "And I'm in complete agreement."

The Prior pushed his bowl away, delicately wiping his mouth with a napkin. "Now, onto more important business. As you know, the election is coming up just after the New Year. Have you arranged everything?"

Brother Albert nodded, relieved they had moved off the topic of the sheriff's visit. Every eight years, a secret ballot was cast at the monastery to elect an abbot. Since his arrival thirty-two years ago, Abbot Magee had always been unanimously re-elected. He did not foresee it changing anytime soon.

"Indeed," Brother Albert replied. "I have put together a Eucharistic adoration for the election process, and have organized a prayer that addresses our discernment, the election process, and the individual we shall choose as abbot. I've also prepared the library for the various stages of the *scrutinium*, and have arranged for *Mass of the Holy Spirit* in the chapel. Just before the secret ballot is cast, we will sing the hymn *Veni, Creator Spiritus* ("Come, Holy Spirit, Creator Blest"). Afterward, for the meal here in the refectory celebrating the election, we will also have a modern flair. I've obtained a Clannad music CD, featuring *Rí Na Cruinne, Ancient Forest* and *Caislean Óir*. Hopefully, it all meets with your approval."

The Prior appeared pleased. "Excellent, Brother Albert. Although it is our God-given duty to elect the most qualified of men as our spiritual leader, I'm sure you will agree Abbot Magee has never failed us. His integrity and devotion to God has never wavered."

Brother Albert smiled. "You'll get no argument from me there."

The Prior rose from the table. "Good. Then I'll leave it in your capable hands."

Brother Albert watched the Prior walk away, toward Abbot Magee at the head of the table. Letting out a sigh of relief, the monk returned his attention to the bowl of Shepherd's

Pie in front of him. He had managed to allay the Prior's fears about disrupting their peaceful life at the monastery.

He hoped, for all their sakes, that nothing else occurred to threaten the tranquility of the order.

**GLINHAVEN:
Excerpt from Chapter Seven**

CAM WAS TRUE TO HIS word. After they closed their respective shops for the night, he made a quick trip to the grocery store - which was located between the bread store and the library on Main Street - and came up the stairs to Piper's apartment bearing two plastic bags full of foodstuffs.

"Once you've had my meatloaf, you'll never go back," he teased her as he set the grocery bags on the kitchen counter.

Piper laughed. "Do you need help putting it all together?"

"Sure. Can you chop up the veggies?"

"Gladly."

Piper retrieved a large, wooden cutting board from its place alongside the stove, placing it on the counter. Then she poured two glasses of sangria wine, handing one of them to Cam. While he mixed ground beef and various spices in a large aluminum bowl, Piper chopped onions and stalks of celery, and then peeled two long carrots. The twosome talked about their day as they worked side by side, discussing business aspects of their shops.

"Even though I practically grew up in The Thistle, I had no idea what was involved in running it," Piper confessed as she used a hand grater to shred the carrots. "Before I left for Boston, I'd help out on weekends, sure, but I was unaware of the day-to-day business angle. Inventory, insurance, payroll, taxes . . . the list goes on."

"Running the show is harder than it looks," Cam agreed as he broke two eggs on top of the meat mixture in the bowl.

"My grandfather kept meticulous records," Piper said. "And having Annabelle stay on has also been a tremendous help."

Cam took the cutting board from her, deftly sliding the chopped and shredded vegetables into the bowl, using the backside of her knife. "Working on Wall Street was a good experience for me," he told her. "It was a preview of sorts to running my own business, you could say."

Piper leaned her hip against the counter, sipping her wine as she watched Cam assemble the meatloaf. After combining the chopped vegetables and shredded carrots with the meat mixture, he poured a can of tomato sauce over the top and began mixing it with his hands. He asked Piper to add prepared fine breadcrumbs into the bowl as he continued to work the meat with his hands.

On impulse, Piper reached over and gave him a sip of her wine as his hands were otherwise occupied. He met her eyes and winked. She felt a rush to her stomach, thinking how handsome Cam looked in his navy blue turtleneck shirt and black jeans.

Still with his hands in the bowl, Cam leaned over slightly and brushed his lips against hers. Piper felt the rush to her stomach again as their kiss lengthened. She drew in her breath when he finally pulled away.

"I'd better get this into the oven," he said in a husky voice, watching her. "Otherwise, we'll be eating at midnight."

"Of course," she murmured.

Cam shaped the meat into a loaf pan, and then placed three strips of raw bacon lengthwise on the top.

"Raw bacon?" she questioned.

"Don't worry, it will cook right along with the meat and be just fine."

"It smells delicious already."

"It will be."

After Cam placed the meatloaf in the oven, he helped Piper prepare a salad using Boston lettuce, otherwise known as butter lettuce, along with sliced radishes, green onions and cubes of cheddar cheese, all bathed in a dressing of olive oil and red wine vinegar. He covered the salad and set it in the refrigerator while Piper tidied the kitchen. She poured them a second glass of wine, and then they repaired to the couch while dinner baked.

Cam glanced at her. "Any thoughts?"

"Thoughts about what?" Piper was unsure what he was asking her.

He smiled gently. "Oh, living in Glinhaven for starters. Anything about Lady Glinhaven, or the monastery? Or about the nefarious individual, or individuals, who attacked us? Or how about *us*. Have you thought about me and you?"

Piper was stunned, and a little nervous. She did not know what to say. Should she tell Cam how she really felt about him - she knew deep in her bones she was falling in love with him - or was it too soon? He answered her question next.

"I'm in love with you, Piper," he said quietly, before she could speak. He watched her closely for a reaction.

"Cam," was all she could say, suddenly struck speechless.

He smiled. "It's okay, Piper. It's nothing to be afraid of."

She stared at him, open-mouthed.

He continued. "I know you care about me. I can feel it."

"I love you," she said simply, without hesitation this time.

He leaned over and began kissing her. Then he stopped, taking their wine glasses and setting them on the coffee table. Then he drew her into his arms, kissing her tenderly. Piper closed her eyes, reveling in the feel of his touch, and the pressure from his lips.

It was true. She loved Cam MacDevitt with every fiber of her being.

He pulled her even closer, and she lost herself in his embrace.

It was a long time before they sat down to dinner.

**GLINHAVEN:
Excerpt from Chapter Eight**

"ANOTHER DREARY DAY," PIPER OBSERVED as they drove toward the Glinhaven mansion that afternoon in Cam's dark blue van. For the outing, she had chosen to wear a long brown skirt, knee-length soft brown boots and a belt, along with a long-sleeved brown and white polka dot blouse and dark brown neck scarf. Her ensemble was complete with a dark cream-colored pillbox hat.

"Maybe it won't be so bad," Cam said, trying to cheer her. "Somehow or other, I have the feeling Audrey or Neal alerted Lady G. to the fact that you found out about their collective friendships. Perhaps having you to tea is her way of finding out."

"And mine," Piper replied with a grim smile. "Although I find it hard to believe Audrey would be loyal to that lethal old woman over me."

"I doubt that's the case," Cam tried to reassure her. "It's probably just like Neal said. Lady G. is human after all, and she's just lonely in her sunset years."

"It doesn't gel with her personality as I know it."

"I agree, but people can change. Even one as advanced in years as Lady Glinhaven."

"We'll see," Piper conceded as the Glinhaven mansion came into view.

It was then Piper noticed the figure of Brother Albert hurrying across the circular driveway. He did not look right or left, but went straight ahead without a glance in their direction. Within seconds, he disappeared into a copse of trees that Piper knew contained a path to the monastery.

"Did you see him?" she asked Cam as he pulled in front of the mansion.

He nodded. "Yes. I wonder what's afoot?"

"It's no secret that Lady G. is a big supporter of the monastery," Piper noted as they alighted from the car. "Maybe Brother Albert's visit was in connection to that."

"Could be," Cam granted as they came to the front doors. "Maybe you should ask Lady Glinhaven about it. She's certainly not shy about being blunt with you, so I suppose it's all fair game."

Roxby opened the doors just seconds after Cam knocked. He regarded the couple passively, his coal dark eyes expressionless.

"Lady Glinhaven is expecting us for tea," Piper said pointedly. Her eyes went to the large, brown mole perched over his upper lip, unable to help herself.

Roxby nodded slightly, aware of her perusal as he met her eyes. "Yes, of course. Her Ladyship is waiting for you in the drawing room. Please follow me."

Lady Glinhaven was in her usual place, sitting in a wheelchair in front of the tall fireplace, hands folded in her lap. The fire burned brightly, spreading an uncomfortable warmth into the drawing room. Piper noted the older woman was wearing a mauve chiffon dress, her white hair in a tight yet elegant bun. Black-framed spectacles were perched on her nose, the dark eyes watching the couple with avid yet somehow detached interest. Neil

Keith stood by her side, his hands folded behind his back. Piper nodded his way in greeting, and he graced her with a slight smile. She noticed he was neatly dressed in black wool slacks and a dark maroon pullover sweater. Even in the confines of Lady Glinhaven's home, he managed to appear dapper.

"Thank you for coming," Lady Glinhaven spoke graciously, gesturing to the cream and navy-colored brocaded settee near the fireplace. "Please, have a seat. Roxby will bring tea momentarily." She glanced at Cam. "Nice to see you again, Mr. MacDevitt."

Cam looked in her direction as he sat down. "Likewise, Mrs. Glinhaven. Thanks for letting me tag along."

"My pleasure. As Mr. Keith has told me many times, the more the merrier."

Piper crossed her legs, placing her hands on her lap. "I saw Brother Albert leaving as we arrived. Cam recently started ordering baked goods from the monastery to sell in his bookshop."

Lady Glinhaven cleared her throat. "It's a good thing for our little community, buying local. Brother Albert often visits me to discuss business to do with the monastery. I donate quite a bit of money to the holy order, mainly to see to their basic needs."

"That's very kind of you," Piper ventured. She wasn't sure how to respond to the older woman's admission to acts of charity.

Before the older woman could continue, Roxby appeared in the drawing room, slowly pushing a two-tiered wooden tea trolley laden with a large silver teapot, several cups, a pitcher of milk, a white bowl full of quartered lemons, sugar, and several plates adorned with foodstuff. Neal stepped forward to help the butler serve tea, and then sat in a high-backed chair near the fireplace, which gave him a view of the entire room.

"Please help yourself to the goodies," Lady Glinhaven gestured to the tea trolley. "These are some of my favorites: *Tichenilles*, an Italian creation also known as pepper biscotti, cucumber sandwiches, potted shrimp, and still warm Irish soda bread with butter. For the sweet tooth, we have pumpkin coffee cake, Aussie Lamingtons, Russian tea balls and Scottish shortbread, the latter of which was made from a recipe that has been in my husband's family for generations."

Piper snagged a piece of pumpkin coffee cake, while Cam filled a plate with the tiny, crust-less cucumber sandwiches. After they had eaten in silence for a few minutes, Lady Glinhaven spoke again.

"How are Duncan's cats faring without him?" she asked, looking at Piper over the rim of her tea cup as she took a sip of the hot brew.

"They've been great company for me," Piper admitted. "Moggy seems to miss my grandfather the most. Sometimes I find her walking around the curio shop, as if she is looking for him, and her favorite place to sleep is on his bed. Sith, on the other hand . . ." She shrugged with a slight smile. "Sith is just Sith. Goofy and uncoordinated as ever."

"Your grandfather always had cats," Lady Glinhaven responded, her tone almost wistful. "Years ago," she gestured to her wheelchair. "Before I became a slave to this

contraption, I used to see Duncan walking down Main Street in the village, a cat trotting after him on the sidewalk. It was a big, gray feline with yellow eyes. I think its name was Marnie, if I'm not mistaken."

Piper smiled. "I remember Marnie. She lived to be almost twenty-one years old, when I was all of ten."

"I noticed there are several Scottish Folds living at the monastery," Cam spoke up, sipping his tea. "Is that a long-standing tradition as well?"

The older woman nodded. "Yes, indeed. Monks have been rearing and keeping the cats for many years, for as long as I can remember." Her eyes suddenly clouded over. "I kept cats my entire married life, too. But shortly after my husband died, my beloved fold Queen passed away. She was beautiful, white and cream in color with large blue eyes, and such a gentle and loving creature." She dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief quickly provided by Neal. "I haven't had a cat since then. I couldn't bring myself to replace Queen."

Piper listened to Lady Glinhaven speak, almost touched by the woman's words. If she didn't know better, Piper might believe her sincerity and sense of loss. But doubt and suspicion continued to nag at her, keeping her alert for signs of a change in the matriarch's demeanor. It did not take long to resurface.

Just as Cam and Piper finished their tea, Lady Glinhaven cleared her throat. Her voice took on a decidedly sterner edge. "I know you're wondering why I asked you to tea," she began, her eyes focused on Piper. "My main objective is to become better acquainted with you, Piper. I knew your grandfather for so many years, meeting him after I arrived in Glinhaven in 1946. Duncan was a genuine, no-nonsense soul, one of a kind. Just like a precious gem." She smiled thinly. "That being said, I would like to reiterate my offer to buy The Thistle from you, one last time. I understand you now wish to remain in Glinhaven and the shop would be your sole source of income, but I'm willing to make one final offer for the place that will see you financially comfortable for the rest of your life."

Piper drew in her breath quietly. *There it was, the old woman's true purpose for today's get-together and final declaration to snag The Thistle.* Piper was surprised it had taken Lady Glinhaven so long to get to the point. Cam reached over and took her hand, giving it a light squeeze of reassurance. She glanced over and noticed Neal staring at her expectantly. He was anxious for her answer, too, although he concealed it better than his employer did.

Silence lengthened in the room as Piper met Lady Glinhaven's expressionless eyes. The older woman broke the stare by brushing imaginary lint from the lap of her dress.

"I'm not selling The Thistle," Piper finally returned in a calm, measured voice. "Not now, and certainly not in the future."

Lady Glinhaven smiled tightly. "So be it, my dear. And I do respect your decision."

Piper's eyes flew to Neal Keith. He looked saddened, somehow defeated, as if his last hope had just fled. She wasn't sure what to make of his dismal expression. What did he

really care, anyway, if Lady Glinhaven acquired The Thistle or not? He was probably paid the same, regardless.

"Thank you," Piper replied.

"But if you do change your mind someday, do know that my offer still stands."

"Of course," Piper said graciously.

Lady Glinhaven's brief smile did not reach her eyes.

"I'm the new kid on the block here," Cam said with a smile. "I don't know about any of the people you're talking about, apart from Audrey."

The older woman looked at Cam with a warm smile. "If you remain in Glinhaven, it will all become clear in time."

Cam stood and returned his empty tea cup to the trolley. "Thank you for the wonderful repast, Ma'am. It was enjoyable, and I hope we can do it again soon."

Piper also stood, taking the queue that Cam was ready to leave. "Yes, thank you. We really need to get back to our respective shops, but hope to see you again."

"You're welcome," the older woman nodded her head in their direction. "And don't worry, you will see me again. Sooner rather than later, I'm sure."

Neal also stood as Piper and Cam took their leave, watching as they made their way from the drawing room. Piper wasn't sure, but she thought she detected a look of longing in the dapper man's eyes as they departed.

Roxy saw them to the front doors, bidding them good day. It wasn't until they reached Cam's van that Piper spoke again. As he pulled the vehicle away from the mansion, Piper turned and observed his profile. There was a slight smile on his face.

"Why are you smiling?" she asked him.

"All in all, it was a nice afternoon. I quite enjoyed myself." He glanced at her as he drove the van onto North Shore Road. "What did you think of Lady Glinhaven's sudden lurch of memory? Seems out of character for her."

"It is out of character," Piper agreed. "And it made me wonder if she was putting on an act for our benefit."

"But why? To what end?"

Piper shrugged. "Who knows why the old woman does anything?" She sighed. "One thing I sense, for sure, is that she will never give up trying to get The Thistle from me. Despite her words, I think she will still try to find a way to obtain my grandfather's shop." She shook her head. "And it's still beyond me as to why she wants it so badly."

"It's *your* shop now," he corrected her gently.

"True," she smiled at him. "At first, I didn't want to take it on. I liked my life in Boston. Then it was sort of a guilt thing, of not wanting to let my grandfather down."

"And now?" he prodded.

"Now I truly want to stay here," she told him. "I want to spend the rest of my life in Glinhaven, to carry on my family's legacy with The Thistle. It's as if I've come full circle in a

way, coming back to where I'm from. And I hope someday to have children who will also want to carry on the legacy."

Cam entered the village, guiding the car toward their shops on Main Street. "And I hope I'm part of all of that, with you." His voice was husky, but full of the newfound love she knew he felt for her.

"Me too."

A few minutes later, Cam parked in front of their shops. Being Sunday, they were not open for business during the winter months. The excuse to leave the Glinhaven mansion was not altogether flimsy, however, as both Cam and Piper had work to do tidying their establishments and stocking the shelves.

He kissed her as they alighted onto the sidewalk. "I'll come over later, and we can think about doing something for dinner."

"Sounds good," she said, returning his kiss with a light in her eyes. "See you soon."

Cam went on his way, and Piper approached the front of the curio shop. She glanced toward the display window and saw Sith sitting near the glass, looking at her and making "meow" motions with his mouth. His eyes were wide and urgent, seeming an even brighter yellow in their intensity. Then he raised on his haunches slightly, and began pawing the glass.

She chuckled, assuming Sith was hungry and wanted attention. "I'm coming," she said, more to herself, as she unlocked the door. She stepped inside and shut the door behind her, reaching over to flip the light switch on. Sith came darting from the display window and began making circle eights around her ankles, his purr audible in the quiet room.

Piper stood stock still, her mouth slightly agape as she surveyed the inside of the curio shop. Books were thrown to the floor in front of their respective shelves, and several knick-knacks were scattered or completely destroyed: two garden gnomes with heads removed lay on their sides in front of the counter, cat and raven bookends looked as if they had been smashed against the floor and were now in several large pieces, tankards had been similarly tossed about, leaving fragments of glass in their wake; shiny tarot cards had been scattered throughout the shop and nearly covered the floor, and a pair of black widow shoes had been placed upright at the bottom of the stairs leading to her apartment.

Her eyes went to the staircase, and then she saw Moggy Malone on the top step, glaring down at her balefully. Piper bent over and placed Sith in her arms, kissing him gently on the top of his head. "At least the two of you are unharmed," she murmured, tears rolling down her face. "I wish you could both speak and tell me what went on here. And who did this?"

Sith meowed loudly, licking her face.

Piper approached the counter, Sith still in her arms. She avoided the headless gnomes and made her way around, coming to stand at the cash register. One of the stray

tarot cards had made its way to the counter, or had been deliberately placed there. She glanced down and drew in her breath.

It was the Death card. The image depicted a skeleton in a suit of armor, riding a horse.

Piper backed away slowly, coming out from behind the counter and standing at the bottom of the stairs. She set Sith on the bottom step. Moggy Malone was still glaring at her from the top. If the shop was a mess, there was no telling what state her apartment was in. She was terrified, and not foolish enough to go upstairs alone. She needed Cam, and she needed the police.

Turning on her heel, Piper fled the shop.

"GLINHAVEN" INFORMATION

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EXTRAS:

***Glinhaven* (official website):**

<https://deborahotoole.com/glinhaven/>

***Glinhaven* @ Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/glinhaven/>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deborah O'Toole is the author of *Celtic Remnants*, *The Crypt Artist*, *Glinhaven*, *In the Shadow of the King* and *Mind Sweeper*.

In addition, she writes darkly abstract poetry (*Torn Bits & Pieces*) and short-story juvenile fiction (*Short Tales Collection*), and is the author of a series of historical essays, articles and book reviews for *Ambermont Magazine* and *Class Notes*.

Writing as Deidre Dalton, Deborah is author of the "Collective Obsessions Saga," which chronicles the extraordinary loves and dark obsessions between two families sweeping a span of more than one hundred years, all set against the backdrop of a magnificent seaside mansion in Maine. Books in the eight-part family saga include *The Advent*, *Quixotic Crossings*, *The Twain Shall Meet*, *Enthrallment*, *The Keeper's Journal*, *Hearts Desires*, *The Twilight* and *Megan's Legacy*. The novels were released by Club Lighthouse Publishing.

Also writing as Deidre Dalton, Deborah is author of "The Bloodline Trilogy." The novels follow the uniquely magical yet ominous journey of three women through time. The trilogy includes *Bloodfrost*, *Bloodlust* and *Blood & Soul*. The books were released by Club Lighthouse Publishing.

Using the pseudonym Shenanchie O'Toole, Deborah also writes for the cooking/recipe website Food Fare. She is writer and editor of thirteen cookbooks, along with more than forty titles in the *Food Fare Culinary Collection*.



Deborah O'Toole

<https://deborahotoole.com/>

GLINHAVEN

Piper Hunt leaves Boston to take over her grandfather's unique curio shop in Glinhaven, Massachusetts. While adjusting to life in the quaint seaside village, she uncovers dark secrets hidden at the forbidding Glinhaven Monastery, which may also unlock mysteries from her past.

Glinhaven Monastery drips with sinister eeriness, especially at night, when bone-chilling fog rolls in from churning North Shore sea waters. The centuries-old stone structure appears as a hulking ghost in the mist, its walls bloated with history and unspeakable secrets. Yellow light from carriage-style lamps intensify the monastery's forbidding effect, the black-squared globes positioned in four-foot intervals on massive walls which surround the holy nucleus, gazed upon in deadly fear by residents of Glinhaven Village . . .



Deborah O'Toole is the author of more than seventy books in multiple genres, including fiction, mystery, suspense, fantasy fiction, juvenile fiction, poetry, culinary arts, and a collection of historical essays now available as e-books.

For more, visit her website at: <http://deborahotoole.com/>