

# INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR DEBORAH O'TOOLE

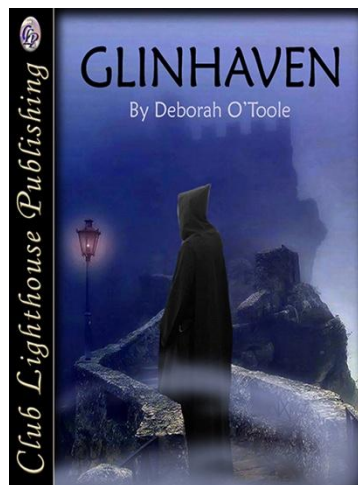
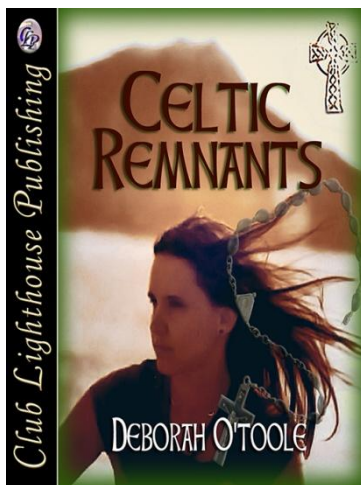
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<https://www.nfreads.com/interview-with-author-deborah-otoole/>

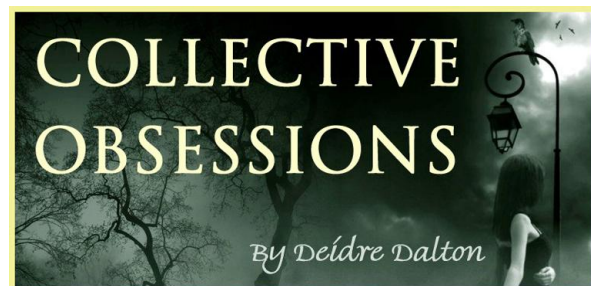
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## **Please introduce yourself and your book(s)!**

My name is Deborah O'Toole, and I'm the author of more than seventy books in multiple genres. My fiction novels include [Celtic Remnants](#), [The Crypt Artist](#), [Glinhaven](#), [In the Shadow of the King](#) and [Mind Sweeper](#), along with a book of poetry known as [Torn Bits & Pieces](#), and the juvenile fiction series [Short Tales Collection](#). In addition, I've written a series of [articles](#) and [book reviews](#) for *Ambermont Magazine Canada* and *Class Notes*.



Writing as Deidre Dalton, I'm the author of the [Collective Obsessions Saga](#), a ten-part series which chronicles the lives of two families sweeping a span of more than 165 years, most of which are set against the backdrop of a Gothic seaside mansion in Maine. Books in the saga include [Hearts in Sorrow](#), [The Advent](#), [Quixotic Crossings](#), [The Twain Shall Meet](#), [Enthrallment](#), [The Keeper's Journal](#), [Hearts Desires](#), [The Twilight](#), [Megan's Legacy](#) and [Limb of Iniquity](#).



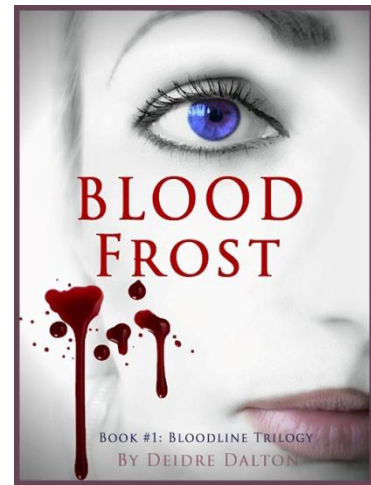
Also writing as Deidre Dalton, I'm the author of the [Bloodline Trilogy](#), which follows the magically ominous journey of three woman through time. The trilogy includes [Bloodfrost](#), [Bloodlust](#) and [Blood & Soul](#).

Writing as [Shenanchie O'Toole](#), I've written [thirteen cookbooks](#) and more than forty titles in the exclusive [Food Fare Culinary Collection](#).

### ***What are the real-life stories behind your books?***

When I first began putting together the [Collective Obsessions Saga](#) (writing as Deidre Dalton), some of the characters and scenarios were loosely based on my rather large Irish American family. While I was an only child, I watched the spirited antics of my many cousins over the years, which in turn provided great fodder for my imagination. I used fictitious names for my literary characters, of course, but several cousins have recognized themselves in my work nonetheless. Perhaps the best example of this can be found in book three of the saga, [The Twain Shall Meet](#).

[Bloodfrost](#), part one of the [Bloodline Trilogy](#) by me writing as Deidre Dalton again, also contains elements of my real-life experiences and the characters within. When I first began writing [Bloodfrost](#), my mother was in the second and third stages of Alzheimer's Disease. Up to that point in my life, she had read everything I'd ever written, frequently offering me creative advice. However, as her disease progressed this became an impossible task for her. The mother of the main character in [Bloodfrost](#) suffered from acute memory loss, along with the anger and denial when it was brought to her attention. Despite the advance of her own memory-related disease, my mother recognized the similarities between her and the fictional character. She was reading a print copy of the text, and unbeknownst to me until much later, she scrawled in the margins in red ink: "This isn't me, I'm not like this!" Sadly, [Bloodfrost](#) was the last work my mother ever read.



In my book [Celtic Remnants](#), the characters are all fictitious but some of the scenes were real, based on stories related to me by my uncle, Mike O'Toole, and a dear friend of mine named Brendan Gallagher, who grew up in Ireland but now lives in England. What is known as "The Troubles" in Ireland touched off a lot of strong emotions in certain people, often leading to violence. I tried to balance the knowledge of that with my fictional tackle on the subject, which kept me mindful of what I was writing.

### ***What inspires your creativity?***

So many different things inspire me, or give me ideas for new stories. Creativity can be struck during a conversation, in a dream, or by something as simple as an odd character - to my eye - walking down the street. Creativity can also be triggered by aromas (scented candles, incense and food in my case), or music that strikes me a certain way or conjures up

a memory. Ideas and inspiration can be gleaned from just about anything – people, animals, cities, movies and other books. The creative supply is endless.

### ***How do you deal with creative block?***

Creative block at its worst is being in the middle of writing a book, and the flow stops for no apparent reason. I've never been able to fully explain the dreaded phenomena, but it has to be at the top of an author's hate list. The creative juices just suddenly cease, bringing with it an all-consuming sense of panic, with no immediate fixes seeming to be within reach.

It happened to me in the midst of writing [Celtic Remnants](#), and again while I was penning and editing [The Keeper's Journal](#), fifth book in the [Collective Obsessions Saga](#). Both [Celtic Remnants](#) and the novels in the [Collective Obsessions Saga](#) were long-term endeavors, written over a period of years, which may account for the sudden block. It was as if I was suddenly saturated, with nothing left to offer. It was horrible, and nothing I would ever wish on a fellow author.

But how to deal with it? The same methods don't work for everyone, but in my experience two options gave me some headway, although they are almost diametrically opposite of one another. With the block I suffered through [Celtic Remnants](#), I merely set the book aside for a bit, to give my mind a breather, and then it suddenly came back to me. With [The Keeper's Journal](#), I forced myself to press on as I was on a deadline to complete all the books in the [Collective Obsessions Saga](#) for my publisher.

Both methods worked for me, to some degree. In essence, getting away from the work for a span can sometimes return objectivity and creativity, or pressing on - no matter how painful and difficult - can often result in the same.

### ***What are the biggest mistakes you can make in a book?***

Simple but noticeable errors to be made in a book can be typos, or using a character name repeatedly when there are only two people in a scene (to be replaced with she/he as the case may be). Perhaps the biggest mistake is loss of consistency in the storyline. This can include interruption of story flow (or "threads" as one of my editor's termed it), or loss of a repetitive fact lost in text, which again harkens back to typos.

To avoid this, I always create a character and locations spreadsheet for each book I write. This helps me track character facts and quirks, location specifics and other pertinent information. If the storyline is long and complicated, such as is the case with the [Collective Obsessions Saga](#), I also use family tree software to organize the characters and how they are related to each other in the story.

### ***Do you have tips choosing book titles and covers?***

Choose something that hints at the storyline in subtle fashion. In other words, an element that is memorable from the story expressed on the cover. The same can be said for selecting book titles.

For example, I chose the title [Celtic Remnants](#) because the main character - a female Irish terrorist - has her world shattered by one event and lets it control her destiny. The cover depicts the character, with a broken rosary offset to the side. In selecting the title for [Bloodfrost](#), I based it on the one particular action in the story, which also plays itself out on the book cover, blood drops and all.

***How do bad reviews and negative feedback affect you, and how do you deal with them?***

I never take negative feedback personally, for starters. I'm very open to constructive criticism, but generally nasty comments aimed at being hurtful and little else have no affect on me whatsoever. I find myself dismissing those almost as soon as I read them.

When I first started writing and putting myself out there, a bad review might upset me for a day or two. Experience has taught me not to worry about it overmuch anymore. On occasion, I will examine the basis for a negative review or comment, whether it refers to writing style or the storyline, and then just carry on. Luckily, I've had very few bad reviews. I realize there is always room for improvement, but I never let the negative bog me down. It's waste of time and energy, which is better spent writing the next story.

***How has your creation process improved over time?***

Very much so. Years ago, I needed complete quiet and isolation in order to write. Those days are long gone, thankfully. Now, I can write anywhere, anytime, no matter what is going on around me. I've learned to zero-in and focus, 100%, shutting everything else out.

I prefer to write by longhand first, and then type into text. This is when I typically get brainstorm for other aspects of the story, or a certain character, which expands as I type from my notes.

The ability to completely focus, to the exclusion of all else, was something I learned to do over time. It might annoy the people around me on occasion, but the process works for me.

***What were the best, worst and most surprising things you encountered during the entire process of completing your books?***

The best is when the story suddenly gels in your head, with no loose ends remaining. It's similar to a lightning bolt of clarity, and it's truly amazing. One of my prime examples is when I suddenly hit on the ending for the ten-part [Collective Obsessions Saga](#), as I was nearing the end of writing for the final book in the series. It came to me out of the blue, and it worked.

The worst is not so much the writing, but rather the editing process, and then finding a little facet that throws the entire storyline off, which then has to be addressed and may require a partial or complete re-write. The other "worst" aspect is that no matter how many times one reads and re-reads the story for editing purposes, something that needs changing can always be found.

The most surprising thing about writing, for me, is finding a little gem that causes laughter. In most instances, it is something a character says or does that will put me in stitches, even

though I created it in the first place. With every book I always find the comical grains, either during the writing process or when I get mired in the editing thereof.

***Do you tend towards personal satisfaction or aim to serve your readers? Do you balance the two, and how?***

It is a tricky balance, to be sure. In its initial stages, the story germinates from the imagination that has nothing to do with pleasing others. However, as certain novels progress, I often find myself working on bits that I know will please readers. This can be something as simple as referencing a charming or comical character quirk, or taking a fresh look at a familiar location setting.

***What role do emotions play in creativity?***

Oftentimes they can have a large impact, especially when it involves anger or romantic love. Other times, it's easier to channel specific emotions elsewhere to maintain objectivity. It takes years of practice to put a lid on emotions when necessary, but it can be a useful creative tool. Letting go and allowing emotions to influence writing can also be a good thing, depending on the circumstances and the book involved.

***Do you have any creativity tricks?***

If I'm having trouble with a particular scene or some specific dialogue, I'll light scented candles, burn incense, eat a chocolate and have a glass of wine to relax my mind. Subtle, soothing ambience can often trigger creative flow for me.

***What are your plans for future books?***

I recently signed contracts with Club Lighthouse Publishing for [Mind Sweeper](#), [The Crypt Artist](#) and [Bloodfrost](#). All three books are scheduled to be released in 2020.

I'm currently working on three more novels.

[Glinhaven](#) is already about 3/4 finished, and I'm hoping to finish it by the end of the year. I know the end story for [Glinhaven](#), it's just a matter of writing it and then undergoing the editing process yet again. [Glinhaven](#) is not meant to be long and complicated, but rather my appreciative nod to the gothic fiction genre of novels I read during the 1970s and 1980s. The books gave me many hours of reading enjoyment, especially those written by Dorothy Daniels, Marilyn Harris and Marilyn Ross (*aka Dan Curtis/Dark Shadows*). [Glinhaven](#) is basically my attempt at the same, and I must admit I'm relishing every moment of the process.

After [Glinhaven](#) is complete, I plan to move on to [Bloodlust](#), which is not quite halfway written at this point. Since its predecessor [Bloodfrost](#) is scheduled for release early next year, I need to get myself in gear and finish the second part in the [Bloodline Trilogy](#).

I've also had a few other projects on the backburner over the past year, which I hope to complete in 2020. These include [Blood & Soul](#) (part three in the [Bloodline Trilogy](#)), and an [historical essay about Lizzie Borden](#). There are also talks with my publisher about writing another part to the [Collective Obsessions Saga](#), and penning a sequel to [Celtic Remnants](#). In

addition, I would like to continue work on [In the Shadow of the King](#). I began the book many years ago, and would dearly love to see it come to fruition. The story is a semi-fictional account of the dramatic life of Sir Francis Bryan, confidant to King Henry VIII.

I'm just hoping to find time for it all, alongside with living my personal life. It can be difficult to find the perfect equilibrium between writing and a happy home, but I'm doing my best. Writing often wins out, although I've tried to temper it somewhat over the past year in order to achieve a fair and equal balance for those near and dear to me.

***Tell us some quirky facts about yourself.***

- I'm usually very quiet unless I've got something to say, which some people mistake for timidity or reticence on my part. Nothing could be further from the truth. People soon find out otherwise if they persist, discovering I can give as good as I get, usually with rapid-fire responses.
- I could live in a rainy climate all year-round, and I'd be as happy as a clam. Autumn is my favorite season, and I love Halloween. Somewhat related, my nickname in high school was "Morticia."
- I collapse with laughter when I see people slip and fall on the ice. Finding humor in pratfalls is a sickness that runs in my family. ;)
- I began reading about the Tudor era of history (*Henry VIII et al*) when I was about eleven years old. To this day, I still read non-fiction or fictionalized accounts based in the time period.
- I'm happiest with a good book to read, a storm outside my window and a glass of Irish Cream in my hand.



**LINKS**

**Deborah O'Toole**

<https://deborahotoole.com/>

**Deidre Dalton**

<http://deidredalton.com>