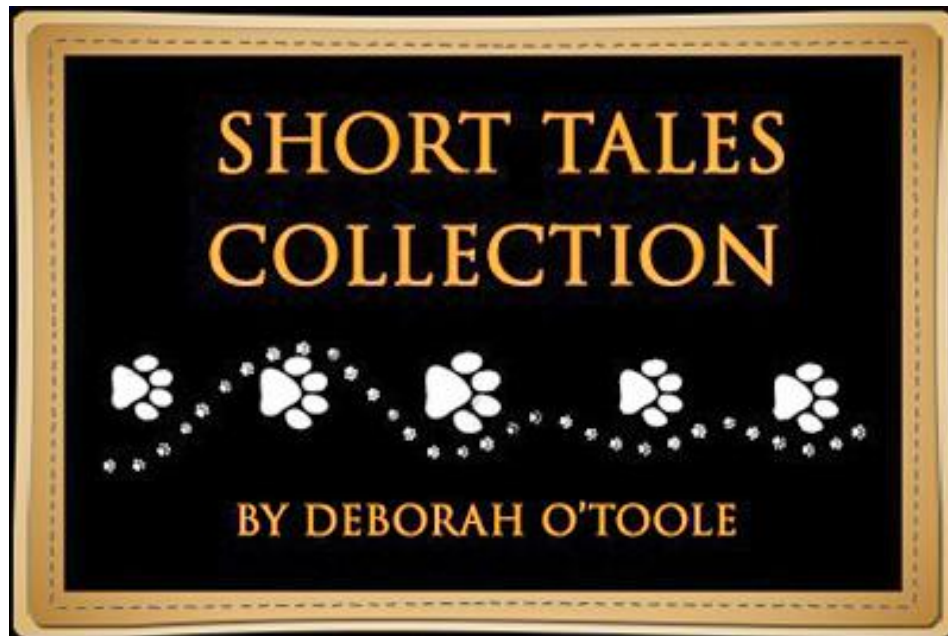


Excerpts/Q & A from the:

Short Tales Collection

By Deborah O'Toole



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Short Tales Collection website:
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Excerpts from "Foofer & the Ham Bone"	4
Excerpts from "Foofer Goes East"	8
Excerpts from "Foofer & St. Nick"	11
Excerpts from "Foofer, the Pooka & St. Patrick"	15
Excerpts from "Foofer Gets Groomed"	19
Excerpts from "Foofer Moves Northwest"	23
Excerpts from "Foofer & the Magic Mischa"	26
Excerpts from "Foofer & the Cat Burglar"	32
Excerpts from "Foofer Meets the Puffins"	35
Excerpts from "Foofer & the Ghastly Ghost"	40
Excerpts from "The Journey to Rainbow Bridge"	43
About the Short Tales Collection	49
Short Tales Collection: Author Q&A	50
About the Author	53

INTRODUCTION

The *Short Tales Collection* by Deborah O'Toole includes eleven short stories written for children.

From the author:

"My pooch Foofer was quite a character. I never really treated him like a dog. We had a 'mother-son' relationship from the time he came into my arms at the age of six weeks until his passing more than ten years later. Foofer not only gave much love, joy and laughter, he also inspired me to write a collection of short stories with his shining character as the star. What began as a few 'shorts' as I like to call them, developed into a series of stories about Foofer and his adventures."

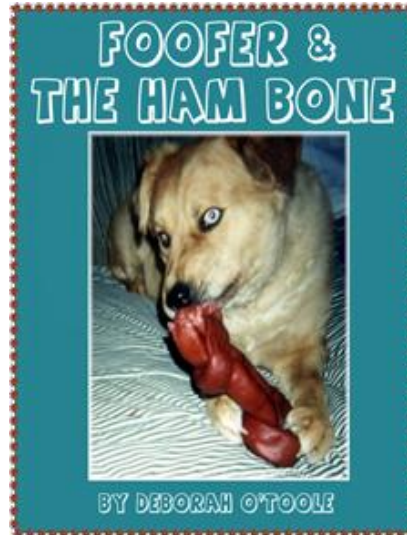
Join Foofer as he chases Santa Claus up the chimney . . . or when he encounters a horde of flying red ants in Wyoming . . . or when he solves the mystery of the neighborhood cat burglar . . . or when he follows a hideous Pooka down a misty path to learn the history of St. Patrick and other Irish legends . . . or when he is granted three wishes by a magic Mischa . . . or when he meets a pair of posh Puffins on the beach . . . or when he banishes a ghost from a spooky old house . . . or read about all of his adventures in the *Short Tales Collection* . . .

"FOOFER & THE HAM BONE"

Foofer & the Ham Bone is Book #1 in the Short Tales Collection by Deborah O'Toole.

Foofer and his Mummy make new friends . . .

Foofer learns to cope with possessive feelings toward his Mummy, and then attempts to wrest a mouth-watering ham bone from his hungry uncle.



"Foofer & the Ham Bone" is available in e-book format at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Kobo Books.

"FOOFER & THE HAM BONE" *(excerpt only)*

From Chapter Two:

Now, to the dang *Ham Bone!* Weren't you wondering about it?

A few weeks later (*it seemed like a year to Foofer*), he and Mummy got into the big Lincoln car and took a long drive on a busy, fast road.

One of Foofer's most favorite things in the world was getting in the big Lincoln car and riding with Mummy. He especially loved long trips. Every night, Mummy clipped Foofer's purple leash to his red collar and put him in the big Lincoln car. They visited a nearby convenience store with a drive-up to a window, where Mummy bought something to drink. Foofer learned that if he barked, the people at the drive-up window would give him a treat before giving Mummy her drink. These "window-people" also learned to be right quick about giving Mummy biscuits for Foofer, for some reason regarding him nervously as they handed over the goodies.

But it was a longer trip this time. Mummy said to him: "You have to be good, honey. We're going to Wilbert's house for dinner, and you're going to meet and get to know your Uncle George and your Granny Elva."

"Wait a minute!" Foofer thought. "*Who's Granny Elva? I kind of remember the Uncle George Dude, but who is Granny Elva? Is she kind of like my Gamma? I love Gamma, so Granny Elva must be nice, too.*" Foofer trusted his Mummy for the most part, so he just listened to her and wagged his tail quickly. Besides, she said they were going to Wilbert's house, which meant Foofer would see Wilbert! That was mighty fine with Foofer.

After awhile (*again, it seemed to take forever to Foofer*), Mummy drove the big Lincoln car into a driveway. Foofer remembered it as the place they left Wilbert before, so he became excited. Surely Wilbert was here again, waiting for Foofer! *He had to be!*

And he was! Wilbert walked onto the driveway. Foofer was overcome with sheer excitement. *It was Wilbert! Yippeeee!!* Wilbert opened the car door and hugged Foofer, while Foofer licked his face and tried to get into his arms. Of course, Foofer was too big to do this anymore, but he didn't realize that.

Wilbert spoke gently and kindly to Foofer: "It's okay, boy. Calm down. That's a good boy."

Wilbert took Foofer's purple leash and led him out of the car. Foofer ran to the nearest tree, dragging Wilbert with him. Wilbert laughed, a loud and full sound, and then he said: "Slow down, boy. You're pulling me too hard. I want you to come into the house and meet George and my Mom."

Foofer stopped in his tracks and looked at Wilbert. Both Wilbert and Mummy always talked nicely to Foofer, with gentle and soothing tones, and he really liked that. But when Wilbert said something about a Mom - which kind of sounded like Mummy - Foofer wondered, did Wilbert have a Mummy, too?

Foofer followed Wilbert and Mummy down the driveway to a doorway. All of a sudden, the Uncle George Dude came out the door with a smile on his face. Foofer felt his whole body stiffen. He then heard his Mummy whisper to him: "Now Foofer, remember what we talked about. Be a good boy. Be *nice*." The way Mummy said "boy" was different from the way Wilbert said it. Mummy's voice was all smooth and comfort ("comfort" being one of Foofer's favorite words), and it came out sounding something like: "BOOOOYAY.....").

Foofer's body relaxed somewhat, but not totally. He kept a watchful eye on the Uncle George Dude. (*Little did Foofer know at the time, but he would be keeping his eye on this Dude a lot that evening!*).

Then Foofer saw a little lady come out the door. The little lady was smiling, too, and she seemed to have the same air of comfort as Mummy. Foofer decided he liked her right away, but he was still a bit reserved about the Uncle George Dude.

Uncle George Dude held out his hand and Foofer stared at it. Mummy put gentle pressure on top of Foofer's head with her hand, but it was soft and more of a warning than a reprimand.

"Foofer, be a good boy," Mummy said again.

But Foofer *wasn't* a good boy. He just couldn't help it. He growled low in his throat, his ears slightly back. Foofer could see Mummy getting mad at him, and Wilbert looked pretty ticked-off as well. Foofer hated it when Mummy and Wilbert got mad at him, so he changed his whole posture to save face. Instead, he began wagging his tail and licking Uncle George Dude's hand. Foofer shook his tail so hard - a few extra times, too, just for good measure - that he felt his whole body wiggling. He could see Mummy and Wilbert smile again, so this made Foofer happy.

"Good boy," Wilbert said, beaming. Foofer felt even happier than before. *Wilbert was pleased with him!* It put Foofer in such a good mood that he licked the "little lady's" hand, too, and she laughed.

"This is Granny Elva," Mummy whispered in Foofer's ear.

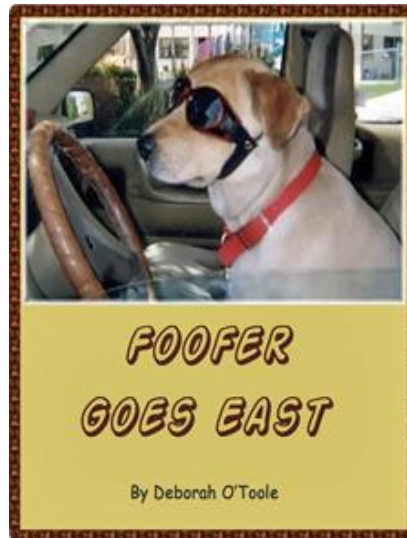
Foofer smiled, although no one could tell. He liked Granny Elva right away. She was nice and warm, and soothingly calm.

"FOOFER GOES EAST"

Foofer Goes East is Book #2 in the Short Tales Collection by Deborah O'Toole.

Foofer takes a road trip through Wyoming and Colorado with his Mummy . . .

Learn what Foofer packs when he travels and how he discovers the meaning of "gangs." You'll get a few laughs, too, as Foofer and his friend are attacked by a horde of flying red ants in Wyoming.



"Foofer Goes East" is available in e-book format at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Kobo Books.

"FOOFER GOES EAST" *(excerpt only)*

From Chapter Three:

Little America, Wyoming, & the Flying Red Ants

Wilbert walked Foofer between the sagebrush and the hot sand just past "Little America." Mummy made sandwiches, using ingredients from the cooler located in the car trunk. Occasionally she would smile and wave at Wilbert and Foofer in the distance (*Wilbert always took him such a long way!*).

Foofer and Wilbert were about halfway back to the car when Wilbert started acting strangely. He ran and slapped at his neck and arms. Foofer looked up at him, frightened and concerned. He started to growl, running alongside Wilbert. Only Wilbert wasn't running any more - he was careening to the left and to the right, like a drunken sailor. He was yelling and still slapping at his neck and arms. Mummy was walking as fast as she could toward them. Foofer could see she was scared, too, and this made him growl even more.

"Get in the car," Wilbert shouted as he started running again. "Close the trunk, get in the car and roll up the windows."

Mummy did as she was told (*for once*), with Wilbert and Foofer right behind her. By this time, Wilbert had pulled off his shirt and was whipping it through the air. Foofer sped up his pace, and they were soon in the car. The doors slammed shut, but the yelling continued.

"What's going on?" Mummy asked, her voice frightened.

"Red ants," Wilbert declared, slapping his legs and arms. It was then that both Foofer and Mummy saw the red beasts: they were big and round and fat, with black wings, and long, pointy back-ends. Wilbert was smashing the ones he could find, crushing them with his powerful hands and the bottom of his soda pop can.

All of a sudden, Mummy let out a loud scream and started slapping at her own legs. Foofer lunged forward between the front seats, his teeth barred and a deep growl roaring out of his mouth. All he could think was that Mummy was hurt, and this panicked and angered him beyond reason. Wilbert held Foofer back, trying to calm him:

"It's okay, boy," Wilbert said. "Mummy just found a flying red ant."

A flying red ant? Foofer shuddered, but kept his stiff stance.

Mummy flipped a flying red from her, and Wilbert squished it. "The dirty little bugg..." Wilbert stopped himself, and looked at Foofer. "Fling red ants are like regular ants, big boy, but they can also fly, and they sting. They're mean...and..." Wilbert paused. "Why were they attacking only me, and not Foofer or you?"

Mummy was giggling. "You used my shampoo this morning."

"So?" Wilbert asked, puzzled.

"My shampoo was apple-scented," Mummy replied. "The ants must have been attracted to that." She laughed again. "Either that, or they're sweet on you, Wilbert Albert."

Wilbert laughed, leaning over to kiss Mummy. Foofer shoved his way between them: "*Hey, what about my kisses?*"

Both Wilbert and Mummy kissed Foofer on each side of his snout. Mummy whispered in Foofer's ear: "I love you, little boy. Love you lots."

And Wilbert whispered in the other ear:

"Love you, big boy."

Foofer wagged his tail, and then sighed. So, which was it? Was he a little boy or a big boy? He sensed they were nicknames said with affection, along with terms of endearment such as *fooferbug*, *baby cheeks*, *bugbag*, *love cake*, *Rowso* and the very ultimate *love muffin*. Mummy had so many nick names for him, Foofer sometimes wondered where in the world she dreamed them all up.

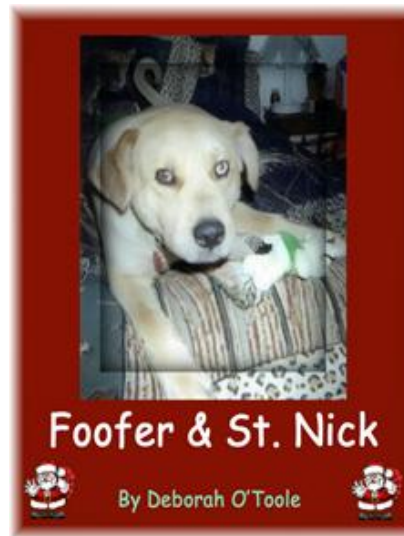
But Mummy was a writer, after all. What else could he expect?

"FOOFER & ST. NICK"

Foofer & St. Nick is Book #3 in the Short Tales Collection by Deborah O'Toole.

Read what gifts Foofer receives, and what he gives to others. Discover how "Santa Claus" is said in different languages as a highbrow friend enlightens young Foofer.

The curious Foofer also learns the true meaning of Christmas, but only after he mistakes St. Nick as an intruder and chases him back up the chimney!



"Foofer & St. Nick" is available in e-book format at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Kobo Books.

"FOOFER & ST. NICK" *(excerpt only)*

From Chapter Three:

Foofer, Christmas Eve & St. Nick

Christmas Eve was cold and snowy. By this time, Foofer had been groomed for the holiday season. His hair was cut short, so he shivered in the cold and snow banks, but he still liked it very much. He tended to snuggle with Mummy in her bed, although he tried to make the effort to get on his new bed once in awhile. Mummy never said another word about it because she liked Foofer sleeping with her.

Foofer was sleeping peacefully with Mummy on Christmas Eve, the house was quiet and still. Mummy lay curled up on her side. Foofer rested his chin on her hip, dozing in and out of sleep. He was ever-watchful over her, protective, and he perked his ears up now and then just to see if he could hear any "bad" noises. It was three in the morning (*it said so on Mummy's table-clock*), and so far not a creature was stirring - not even the proverbial mouse!

Foofer dozed once again, but it was not long before he heard a thumping on the roof of the house. This was extraordinary, proving Foofer had exceptional hearing. For, you see, Mummy and Foofer had a room in the basement. While it was cozy and clean, it was a far distance from the roof of the house. Foofer could hear the noises just the same.

Foofer raised his head from Mummy's hip, his ears perked and alert. There it was again - a thumping noise, with dragging and the faint sound of jingling bells. It was the sort of jingling that only went on when a dog such as himself shook his head, and the tags on his collar clanked together. He looked over at his Mummy, but she was still sleeping soundly. Ever so carefully, he rose up and jumped lightly off the bed. He stopped on the floor, and looked back at Mummy on the bed. Satisfied she was still sleeping, Foofer began walking stealthily out of the room and down the hall toward the stairs.

When Foofer was alert and protective, he walked a certain way and he could be very quiet, almost as quiet as a mouse. His head was slunk low, and his tail went down behind his back. As he walked quickly but silently, he kept his ears perked for more noises. And he could hear them quite well now. Someone was definitely on the roof of the house, and Foofer felt his anger start to build. How dare strangers try and enter his home, the safe haven for his Mummy?

Foofer crept up the stairs, one at a time, going swiftly. When he reached the top of the staircase, he could hear the noises even better. He hurried across the kitchen floor,

and out into the hallway that led to the living room. The noises were coming from there, he was sure of it, and he had to find out now who it was!

The sight before Foofer's eyes was not one he had seen in all his years, nor ever expected to see again. From the barest of light shining through the window on the front door, Foofer could see a very large man standing in the middle of the living room in front of the Christmas tree. The big man wore a long red cap with a white fringe. His coat and pants were red as well. Next to the man was a stuffed yellow bag, with a white sash tied at the top. Mammoth black boots made impressions on the carpet - Foofer could see them leading in a trail from the fireplace - and for a brief instant he wondered how *that* was possible.



Foofer's given birth-name was *Barbarosa*, but Mummy always called him Foofer because he was scared of strange things. He was terrified of flies and bees. Foofer also did not like vacuums, the fiz from soda pop in a can, nor the plastic bubble doohickeys that came in mail packages and made popping noises. But most of all, he hated the water hose. Yet none of these fears mattered to him right now, and he was most definitely *not* scared of big, round men in red suits that threatened the safety of his Mummy.

Foofer curled his lips and snarled, the growl coming loud and deep in his throat. Poising, he lunged ahead and jumped on the back of the big red man.

The man let out a yell. He started dancing around the room, Foofer still on his back. The man waved his arms, trying to grab hold of Foofer by the neck but Foofer snapped and roared and bit the end of the big man's cap, getting some of the white fringe in his mouth at the same time. The man began to yell again, but this time Foofer could understand what he was saying: "Let me go, let me go!!! I'm Saint Nick, you big galoot, I'm Saint Nicholas!!!!"

Foofer gave no quarter. This time he shook his head, weaving the big man's head to and fro with the motion. The man suddenly threw himself to the floor, which sent Foofer flying over him, where he landed safely on the couch.

Foofer looked up. He saw the big red man grab his yellow bag and run for the fireplace. Foofer noticed the man wore eyeglasses and moved quickly for a large sort. Foofer leapt off of the couch and ran after the red man, nipping at his behind and growling all the while. The man yelped as he dove headfirst into the fireplace, his feet hitting the Christmas stockings hung there with care and making them sway. Before Foofer could try to take a nip again, the man scurried up the chimney with his yellow bag intact.

Foofer stood puzzled, not sure what to do next. He could hear noises on the roof again, and this sent him into a round of barking. Foofer wanted to warn everyone so the big

red man couldn't get away. He ran over to the window in the living room, shoving aside the curtain with his nose. Again, he saw a sight to behold.

Just off the roof of the house, Foofer saw the big red man in a sleigh. He held reins on many reindeer, shouting: "Away, Vixen, Away, Blitzen, Away, Rudolf, Away....." Foofer watched in awe as the big red man disappeared into the night on his sleigh, and before long all was quiet once more. For one minute, Foofer thought he must have been dreaming. No one came to see why he barked, so he was convinced he imagined all that just happened.

He turned and looked around the living room, making sure all was right and in its place. Satisfied that it was, he walked slowly down the hall, through the kitchen, and back down the stairs to Mummy's bed.

Mummy was still sleeping, only she had turned over and was laying on her other side. Foofer jumped up carefully, but she woke up just the same.

"Are you okay, honey-pie?" Mummy whispered groggily, calling Foofer by one of the many nicknames she had for him. She had raised her head slightly from her pillow.

He wagged his tail.

"Good boy," she yawned, settling her head back on the pillow. "Go night-night, love-cake."

Foofer sighed and settled next to his Mummy, snuggling closer to her. He lay his head down on her hip - his favorite place, besides being in the crook of her back legs - and he closed his eyes.

No dreams of sugar plums for Foofer - all his visions were of a big man in a red suit. *Up, up and away!!!*

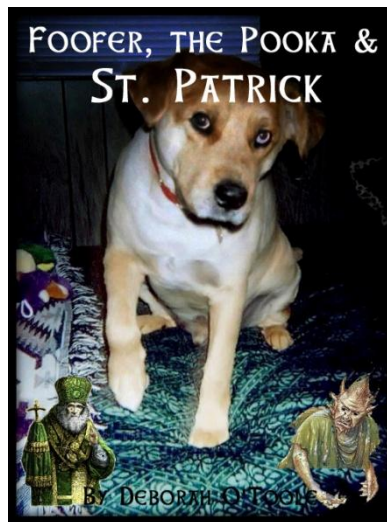
"FOOFER, THE POOKA & ST. PATRICK"

Foofe, *the Pooka & St. Patrick* is Book #4 in the Short Tales Collection by Deborah O'Toole.

Read how *Foofe* learns the true history of St. Patrick, Ireland's patron saint. The history lesson is related to *Foofe* by an Irish Pooka, who also leads *Foofe* down a misty path to meet and discover other Irish characters: the Leprechaun, Dullahan, Changelings, Grogoch and the Banshee. After this awesome adventure, *Foofe* no longer thinks St. Patrick's Day is just about corned beef in the canine tummy!

Foofe, the Pooka & St. Patrick has eight chapters, including: *St. Patrick's Eve, The Irish Pooka, St. Patrick, Leprechauns, The Dullahan, Changelings & the Grogoch, The Banshee, and St. Patrick's Day.*

WARNING: Some parts of *Foofe, the Pooka & St. Patrick* may be too frightening and/or graphic for children under the age of ten.



"*Foofe, the Pooka & St. Patrick*" is available in e-book format at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Kobo Books.

"FOOFER, THE POOKA & ST. PATRICK" (excerpt only)

From Chapter Three ("The Banshee"):

FOOFER AND THE Pooka had only walked a bit further when they saw a light shining at the end of the path. Faint as the light was, it seemed to penetrate the dense mist and act as a beacon, beckoning the Pooka and Foofer forward.

"What is going on?" Foofer asked nervously.

"It's the Banshee," the Pooka whispered, sounding a bit nervous himself. "She's decided to show herself to us."

"What the heck is a Banshee?" Foofer whispered back. At that moment, for all that he mistrusted and loathed the Pooka, he felt closer to him than ever before. He knew the Pooka was malicious and contrary, but Foofer felt a kinship with him - just for an instant - because he seemed to be as scared as Foofer was.

"A Banshee is an Irish she-ghost," the Pooka spoke softly, but keeping his slit-eyes on the path up ahead as it grew brighter. "She is also known as the *bean-sidhe* - woman of the fairy. She terrifies most of all because she is known as the Messenger of Death. She will come to forewarn family members that someone who is their kin is about to die. Her wailing call for the dead is horrible and soul-wrenching to hear. The Banshee appears as a young woman, or a stately old lady, or a wrinkled old hag. She normally wears a gray, hooded cloak, or the white grave robe and veil of the dead. Most often, she appears as a washer woman, and she can be seen washing the bloodstained clothes of the one who is about to die. As a washer woman, she is called *bean-nighe*."



Foofer was still nervous about the approaching light. "Is it her coming in the light?"

The Pooka shrugged. "I'm not sure, but in all likelihood it is."

The light in the mist came near, so Foofer stepped closer to the Pooka. He told himself it was to shield the Pooka, but he knew better. Foofer was scared of the approaching light. Not because it was scarier than the Dullahan, but because it was of the unknown.

"Before I forget," Foofer spoke up. "I'd like to let you know these have been very interesting lessons you have given me, Pooka. But I don't see how this one is going to benefit me at all."

"Steady on, young snapper," the Pooka said softly in Foofer's ear. "The Banshee is not after you, trust me. She does not come after dogs or Pooka's, for that matter. Just stay still, and maybe she will pass us by."

"So you're sure it's a Banshee coming?"

"As sure as I can be," the Pooka said sharply.

The lightened image was swirling to them in the foggy mist. As it came closer Foofer saw that it was indeed a woman, and she was dressed in a light-gray hooded cloak just like the Pooka had told him, with a white dress and veil. She seemed to be floating in the air toward them, almost rising above the mist itself. As she came over them, Foofer thought he could see her looking down at him. And as she passed over them completely, Foofer could hear the low moaning and wailing clearly. The Banshee was keening, calling for the dead.

"Show-off," the Pooka muttered as he watched the Banshee fade into the dense fog.

"What did you just say?" Foofer asked.

"Nothing," the Pooka said quickly. "We had better keep moving now. I have to get you home to Mummy." The Pooka said the last word - *Mummy* - in a slightly mocking tone. This angered Foofer a bit, so he turned toward the Pooka to give him a piece of his mind. But as he did, a great wind blew along the path. It cleared out the cold mist Foofer was so weary of, and at the same time it heaved twigs and rocks and leaves into the air. The wind became fierce, and Foofer felt it raising the tips of his ears into the air.

"Time to go home, young snapper," the Pooka shouted above the windy din. "You have been in this world over-long. The fairies have decided you need to go, so it is time. Hurry now, and follow me."

The Pooka took off running - and this was quite a sight to see, a stubby little Pooka running along a dirt path - but Foofer followed him. With his long legs and light speed, Foofer overtook the Pooka in no time and was soon way ahead of him. Foofer was running so fast he didn't notice the sun rising and the air clearing. But he could hear the Pooka at his heels, and this spurred Foofer on even faster.

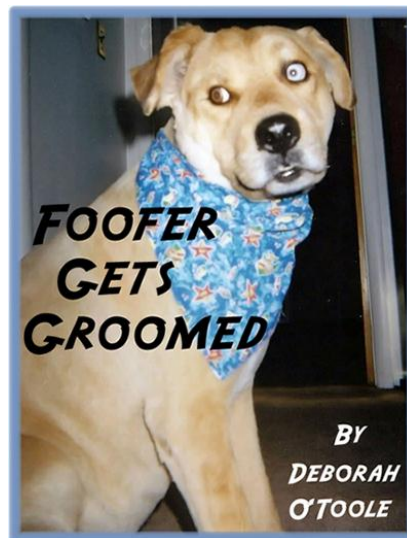
He was going home, and he couldn't wait to see his Mummy.

"FOOFER GETS GROOMED"

Foofer Gets Groomed is Book #5 in the Short Tales Collection by Deborah O'Toole.

There aren't too many things in life that Foofer is afraid of, but being bathed and groomed is one of them . . .

Read how Foofer tries to be a "good boy" so he doesn't have to endure the bathing ordeal, and how he finally sets his own fears aside to comfort his Mummy. After all is said and done, Foofer takes great delight in strutting his stuff in front of other dogs - all the while proclaiming his freedom as a well-shorn pooch.



"Foofer Gets Groomed" is available in e-book format at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Kobo Books.

"FOOFER GETS GROOMED" *(excerpt only)*

From Chapter One:

Foofer O'Toole had been through a lot in his short five years. He managed to travel through six different American states (*living in three of them*), and he and his Mummy had been each other's support for a very long time. Then Daddy Wilbert joined their family, and Foofer was happy as a clam because he loved Daddy Wilbert as much as he loved his Mummy.

There weren't many things Foofer was afraid of (*well, there were a few*). His handful of qualms included fear of bees and flies - he couldn't abide them in any way, shape or form, and ran and hid when he saw them. Although he didn't mind snow, Foofer had a big unease about garden hoses and the water spurting out of them (*sprinklers were a worse dread*). Another particular fear was the loud noise of fireworks, but other than that Foofer was a very settled young man and felt his purpose - or, if you will - his job was to protect his Mummy, his Daddy and the house they lived in. And he did an excellent job!

But his worst fear of all - worse than the flies, the water hoses and the fireworks, was the dreaded trip to the veterinarian's office for his twice-yearly (*sometimes three times*) grooming sessions. You see, most dogs can sit still and have their own Mummy's and Daddy's cut their hair and give them baths, or they will allow proper canine groomers to attend to business. But not Foofer - *oh no*. When it was time for his hair cut and bath, it meant a trip to the veterinarian's office.

This posed a double-dilemma for Foofer because the vet's office was where he also received his yearly vaccinations, which he disliked as well. Foofer's hair tended to grow very fast. Being part-Husky, the hair came back thick and hot. During summer months, Foofer always feels better when his hair is cut. But, *of course*, he forgets this one little fact when it comes time for the trip to the vet!

As you will see as our story unfolds

From Chapter Two ("The Day Looms Near"):

If you have read Foofer's little collection of books, then you know that he lived in Utah for quite some time. However, in early 2002 he moved to Washington State with his Mummy and Daddy. At first Foofer thought it was like another long trip - he had taken so many of those! - but when he and his Mummy and Daddy moved into a little house and didn't leave, he realized they were there to stay.

Foofer didn't mind this so much, although he did miss his Gamma and Gampa very much (*Gamma and Gampa were his Mummy's parents*), but every once in a while Foofer was able to talk with them on the telephone, and this made him feel much better.

The day was cool in Washington, only being the middle of May, and Foofer had just barely gotten used to the news that he and Mummy and Daddy were "homeowners." Feeling a bit lost and friendless since their move from Utah to Washington in March 2002, Foofer had been adrift in a sea of self-pity for a few weeks and was just coming out of his doldrums when he overheard his Mummy on the telephone one cool afternoon.

Foofer's first hint that a visit to the vet was close at hand was when he heard his Mummy on the telephone, calling and asking people how much it cost to get "a 100-plus pound dog groomed with sedation." Foofer went on alert, although he was careful not to let on knew what was going on.

He rested in his favorite spot in the living room, which was in front of the couch with his head relaxed on one end so he could see around the corner. The house wasn't very big, but he liked it anyway. He could see the kitchen from where he rested. Mummy was sitting at the kitchen table with the wireless phone in her ear, the phone book spread out in front of her on the kitchen table. Foofer listened intently with each phone call she made - inquiring about "grooming" rates - although he pretended to doze.

Daddy was sitting on the couch watching Foofer, and he saw him open his eyes once in a while as his Mummy spoke on the phone. Wilbert tried to keep a straight face, but he knew Foofer understood everything Mummy was saying on the telephone and he didn't like it. Foofer was being very watchful, deciding if it was safe to open his eyes.

Finally, Mummy hung up the phone and she walked into the living room. Foofer squeezed his eyes shut, pretending to be fast asleep while Mummy talked to Daddy:

"I have an appointment for Foofer two weeks from now. They were booked, but I managed to get him in."

"What's the place called?" Daddy wanted to know.

"It's called the Animal Medical Center," Mummy replied. "They do vaccinations and grooming." She went on to describe the reasonable prices, and Daddy agreed it would be a good place to take Foofer.

Then Mummy got down on the floor next to Foofer. She smoothed the curly hair on his neck with her hand. "Did you hear that, honey?" she said softly. "We've got an appointment for you to get your hair done, and to get your yearly shots."

Foofer kept his eyes closed and pretended to stretch out, rolling over on his back with his paws in the air. Mummy scratched his tummy. Foofer stretched out even further, pointing his toes in the opposite direction.

"Did you hear me, love-bug?" Mummy asked again, using one of her many nick names for Foofer.

Foofer opened one eye to look at her. She was smiling. He could tell she knew he was pretending *not* to hear her. He could never hide anything from Mummy! He rolled upright to face her. He hung his head, indicating he understood but certainly did *not* like it!

"It'll be okay," Mummy soothed. "Wait and see. You'll feel better now that the weather is getting warmer. Trust me, honey."

Foofer looked at Mummy and licked her hand, but he was thinking:

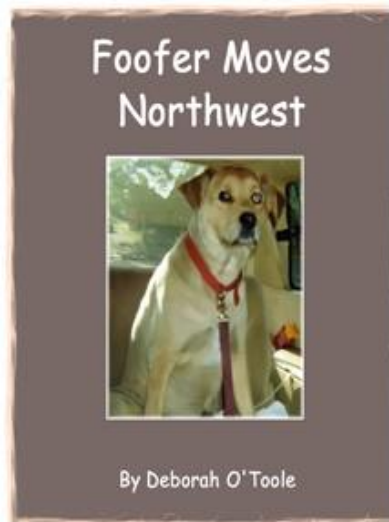
"That's easy for you to say!"

"FOOFER MOVES NORTHWEST"

Foofer Moves Northwest is Book #6 in the Short Tales Collection by Deborah O'Toole.

Foofer's "tail" of woe as he leaves behind his friends in Utah to take a long and eventful trip to the Inland Northwest. Read how Foofer says goodbye to friends and family, and how he fares over the freezing mountain passes with his Mummy toward their destination and new home.

All is not lost, however, as Foofer meets an unusual new friend named Frizbee in the neighborhood.



"Foofer Moves Northwest" is available in e-book format at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Kobo Books.

"FOOFER MOVES NORTHWEST" (excerpt only)

From Chapter Two ("Saying Goodbye"):

After several days of packing, Mummy and Daddy finally declared they were finished. Foofer was relieved because most of their attention had been on packing, and not on *him*. Foofer heard Daddy use the telephone to reserve a moving truck, and then Mummy told Foofer they had to say goodbye to everyone.

"This is the hardest part about moving, cheeks," Mummy told him, using one of her many nicknames for Foofer. He was so used to it he hardly noticed anymore. "We have to say goodbye to Gamma and Gampa, Granny Elva and Uncle George, and worst of all, you have to say goodbye to Odie and Shelby."

Foofer and his Mummy were lying on the bed one afternoon two days before they were due to leave for Washington. When Foofer heard mention of Odie's name, his ears perked up. Odie was his best friend, and lived next door to Gamma and Gampa O'Toole. Foofer had known Odie since he was a pup. Whenever the two of them were outside at the same time, they met at the fence and had a long woofing about every subject under the sun.

Foofer had not considered leaving his friend. If they moved, he wouldn't get to see Odie anymore, and this made him sad. Shelby was a young pup who lived next door to Uncle George, and she was Foofer's newest friend. Foofer knew she had a big crush on him, and he liked her a lot. He would have to say goodbye to her, too.

Foofer licked his Mummy's face because he could see she was also becoming sad at the thought of saying goodbye. Mummy smiled and touched Foofer on the head, smoothing out his hair. "We'll be okay, honey," she said. "As long as we have Daddy, we'll be our own little family together. And moving away doesn't mean you can't ever see Odie again, either. You just won't get to see him as often."

That evening, Foofer went for a drive to Gamma and Gampa O'Toole's to say goodbye to them, and to Odie. This made Foofer very sad. Gamma started to cry as she held onto Mummy and Foofer very close. Foofer started to whine. He didn't like seeing Gamma sad.

After a little while, Foofer went outside to say goodbye to Odie. Gamma and Gampa's backyard was very big. Foofer always met Odie by the fence at the bottom of the hill. And, sure enough, there was Odie, waiting and wagging his tail.

"I've come to say goodbye, Odie," Foofer said, sniffing at the fence.

Odie's tail stopped wagging as he tilted his head to one side. Odie was a small dog. He was part of the breed known as Corgi, and only came to the top of Foofer's front legs. Foofer had known Odie since he was just eight months old, and they had been each other's best friend ever since. "Why are you saying goodbye?" Odie asked. "It's bad enough you moved to your Uncle George's house, but why say goodbye now?"

"Me and Mummy and Daddy are moving to Washington," Foofer replied importantly. "And it's very far away."

"Why and how far?" Odie asked. He tended to ask his questions one right after the other, without pausing for breath.

"We're moving there because Mummy and Daddy want to," Foofer said. "I'm not sure *where* Washington is, I just know it takes two days to drive there. Mummy said it's in the Pacific Northwest."

Odie yipped. "What will I do without you, Foofer? You're my best friend!"

Foofer put his nose close to the fence. "I'll miss you too, Odie. But what am I to do? I have to go with Mummy and Daddy."

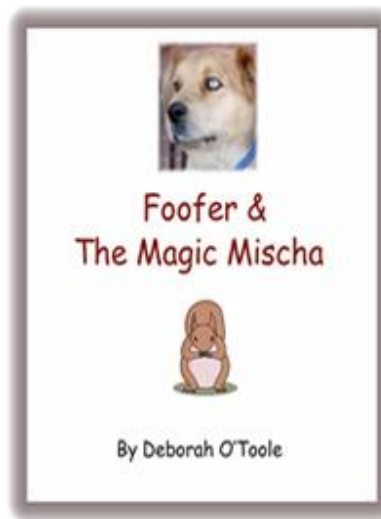
Odie sighed. "I know, Foofer. Well, good luck! Maybe I'll see you at Christmas."

"Maybe," Foofer agreed. "Good luck to you too, Odie!"

"FOOFER & THE MAGIC MISCHA"

Foofer & the Magic Mischa is Book #7 in the Short Tales Collection by Deborah O'Toole.

- *Foofer's adventures with a Magic Mischa . . .*
- *Foofer finds a special Mischa who grants him three wishes.*
- *What is a Magic Mischa, you ask? They are rare little gifts from the squirrel family who have been given special powers by Genie's, which allows them to grant three wishes to anyone who finds them.*
- *The Mischa warns Foofer to keep one of his wishes in case he doesn't like his first two and wants to reverse them. Will Foofer heed the Mischa's advice?*



"Foofer & the Magic Mischa" is available in e-book format at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Kobo Books.

"FOOFER & THE MAGIC MISCHA" *(excerpt only)*

FOOFER WANDERED THROUGH his backyard leisurely, pausing every so often, until he came to the foot of his favorite tree, an oak that was in the corner of the yard. As he stood under the shade of the tree, he thought he could hear a rustling noise in the branches. He looked up and sure enough, one of the branches was moving in jerky fashion, the leaves shifting to and fro.

Then all of a sudden a dark blur fell from the tree, falling on the ground with a thump. With a growl forming in his throat, Foofer crept closer to the object and was surprised to find himself staring eye-to-eye with a squirrel.

Foofer loved squirrels, and thought they were quite lovely, but they were always running away from him, never wanting to play. Squirrels usually had dark, shiny hair and little bodies with long tails. But the sight he beheld in front of him took his breath away because it was simply the most beautiful squirrel he had ever seen. It had blue-black hair, shiny and thick around its body, with long, elegant legs and nails, and a silver streak running down the length of its back. Perhaps the most striking thing about the squirrel was its violet-colored eyes, with long black lashes. All of the squirrels Foofer had seen before always had dark brown eyes, but not this one.



Foofer lowered his head and started his nose inspection. Her scent was unlike that of the other squirrels. She had an air of rose-sweetness that was refreshing, but somehow disturbing at the same time. Foofer nudged the squirrel with his nose, and she at once made a mewling sound. Then she reached out with her clawed-paw and swiped him on the leg.

"Steady on!" Foofer barked. "Who are you?"

"Mischa." The word came in a whisper, almost as if said on the end of a wisp of wind.

"Are you okay?" Foofer asked. "Are you hurt?"

Mischa was still as she watched Foofer. It was almost as if the squirrel was a statue, so still she was. She said nothing in return, and kept regarding Foofer with her violet-colored stare.

Foofer was becoming a bit cranky by Mischa's lack of response. "I asked, are you hurt?"

"No, I just had the breath knocked out of me," Mischa finally replied in a soft voice, although she had not moved from her position on the ground. Foofer still stood over her defensively, as if waiting for her to make a mad dash. Mischa deferred to his dominance and waited patiently. "I was scurrying along one of the branches in the tree and it gave way. Before I could get my balance, I fell to the ground."

Foofer nosed Mischa again, this time licking the side of her face just to make sure she was all right. "You don't look like a normal squirrel. Are you a normal squirrel?" he muttered.

"I told you, I'm a Mischa," the squirrel said in a whispery voice. "I'm from the squirrel family, yes, but I'm oh-so-different than a normal squirrel."

Foofer wagged his tail and nudged Mischa with his nose again. At least she was talking! Mischa stood up, and slowly shook out her long, badger-like tail.

"How are you different from other squirrels?" Foofer wanted to know.

Mischa regarded Foofer with her violet eyes, and continued to speak in her whispery voice: "I was tenderly raised by Genies, and they have sent me out into the world to grant people - and animals - their most heartfelt wishes."

Foofer was dumfounded. "What in the world are Genies?" he asked.

Mischa sighed with a touch of impatience, as if Foofer should know the answer to his own question. Then she told him: "Genies are spirits created from fire and a smokeless flame. Genies are mostly invisible, but can also appear in the form of humans or animals. Genies live in miniature houses of their own construction, confined by a magic vase. Anyone who has the vase can control the Genie and their magic powers. One of these Genies, by the name of Jin, was a free spirit and took an entire race of squirrels and bestowed upon them his magical powers. I am descended from this race of squirrels, and as such, have inherited the magic powers."

Foofer wasn't sure if he believed the Mischa. Who had ever heard of a magic squirrel? The look of disbelief must have been evident on Foofer's face because the Mischa continued: "Jin was a very kind and gentle Genie who sought to do only good deeds for people all over the world. Jin thought the squirrel population was so plentiful that we would make excellent messengers to spread his goodwill as he desired."

Foofer was full of questions, but wasn't sure where to begin. Then he blurted out: "Where is this Genie Jin now?"

"Jin is very old and lives in Arabia," the Mischa answered, a sadness creeping into her voice.

"If he has magic powers, why can't he stop himself from getting old?" Foofer wanted to know, his tone skeptical.

"Jin is more than four centuries old," Mischa replied. "Even Genies are susceptible to the ravages of time after that long."

"But why are you here in my backyard? Are you here by accident?" Foofer asked.

Mischa made a hissing sound, almost like a cat, and said: "In case you haven't noticed, you're a special dog, Foofer. I don't like pointing that out, because it's obvious you're reluctant to believe what I have to say, but it's true. I was destined to help you from the start."

"Help me?" Foofer asked, puzzled again by this creature. "What are you talking about?"

Mischa let out a big sigh, another hissing sound. Then she said patiently: "I was sent out into the world to grant wishes for special people and animals."

"But why me?" Foofer persisted. "You still haven't answered my question."

"I'm beginning to wonder that myself," Mischa replied, irritated that Foofer was asking so many questions. "I told you, for some unknown reason you have a special gift and insight to people. You can see things other dogs will never see, and you possess many human traits - such as compassion and intelligence. This has earned you three of your most heartfelt wishes."

Foofer was not convinced. "I'm still not sure I understand what you mean," he said. "But I'll let it go for now."

"Thank you," Mischa hissed, but she was smiling because Foofer could see her teeth. "Now, tell me, if you had three wishes, what would they be?"

Foofer laughed. "Three wishes? This is silly!"

Mischa made a hissing sound again, baring her teeth. She did not appreciate Foofer's casual regard for what she considered a serious matter. Mischa wondered if Jin had made a mistake by sending her to Foofer.

Foofers saw the irritation in Mischa's face and decided to play nicely. "Okay, okay. Three wishes, eh? Let me think." He paused and thought hard. What did he really want that he didn't already have? He had a happy home, he loved his Mummy and Wilbert, and he had a best friend in Frizbee. That was it! Frizbee! One of Foofers' wishes was that Frizbee be allowed to go to the park with him.

"My first wish is that Frizbee be able to go to the park anytime he wants," Foofers blurted out. "With me."

"Who or what is Frizbee?" Mischa asked, perplexed. "A toy?"

"No, no," Foofers replied, surprised Mischa didn't know who Frizbee was by way of her supposed magical powers. "Frizbee is my best friend. He lives next door. His mother never lets him out of her sight, so he never gets to go to the park with me."

Mischa nodded. "Very well. Wish granted."

Foofers tilted his head to one side. "How will I know my wish has been granted?"

"All of the wishes I grant take one day to come true," Mischa replied. "I'm not as powerful as Jin, so this time tomorrow your wish will be true." Mischa stared at Foofers, her violet eyes bright. "Next wish?"

Foofers thought long and hard again. He thought of all his toys and treats. He liked his house the way it was and had no wish to change that, either. Then he thought about his favorite food, and - for lack of a better idea - told Mischa: "I wish I had one million pieces of chicken."

Mischa's eyes widened. "Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"Wish granted," Mischa said.

Foofers looked hopeful. "I still have one more wish?"

Mischa nodded slowly. "Yes, you do, but I need to warn you about your last wish. If tomorrow comes and you find you do not like any of the wishes you've made, you will not be able to change them. My advice to you is to keep the third wish in case you want to reverse any of your previous wishes."

Foofers was uncertain. "Do I have to decide today?"

"No. I'll be here until tomorrow. You will have to decide before I leave, though."

Foofar was happy. "Wonderful! I'm sure I won't regret either one of my wishes, but just to be safe I'll keep the third one in reserve."

"A very wise decision, Foofar. And very intelligent," Mischa said gravely.

"Can I tell Frizbee about his good fortune?" Foofar asked, hopeful.

Mischa's violet eyes were wide in surprise. "No, you can't. If you tell anyone about me, especially those connected with a wish you've made, all you have asked for will simply disappear in a wisp of smoke."

"How can my wish about Frizbee disappear?"

Mischa was losing her patience with Foofar. He was a smart dog and she expected better from him. "The wish will disappear, Foofar. The wish."

Foofar seemed satisfied with the answer. Then he said: "But where will you sleep while you're here?"

Mischa looked up at the tree from which she had fallen a short time before. "Up in that tree, or another. Never fear. You will see me again." With that, the Mischa turned around and skittered up the tree trunk, soon swallowed up by the green leaves and long thin branches.

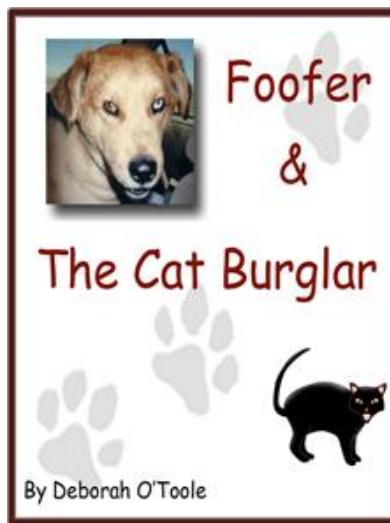
Foofar sighed, turning away from the small tree and the beautiful squirrel. As he walked toward his house - suddenly hungry for his breakfast - he decided to take one last look at the oak tree. As he glanced over his shoulder, he saw the beautiful squirrel in midair as it jumped from the oak into a bigger tree ten feet away. Foofar had to blink his eyes to make sure he wasn't seeing things, but sure enough the beautiful squirrel found its way to the bigger tree and soon disappeared up into the top branches.

"FOOFER & THE CAT BURGLAR"

Foofer & the Cat Burglar is Book #8 in the Short Tales Collection by Deborah O'Toole.

A burglar is loose in Foofer's neighborhood, stealing trinkets from unsuspecting people as they sleep in the night. However, Foofer and his best pal Frizbee find clues that may solve the crime and save the day.

Foofer also receives a surprise when his parents adopt another pet into the family, and struggles with feelings of jealousy before he learns to accept the new family member with "open paws."



"Foofer & the Cat Burglar" is available in e-book format at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Kobo Books.

"FOOFER & THE CAT BURGLAR" *(excerpt only)*

From Chapter Five:

A FEW NIGHTS later, Foofer was sleeping comfortably in bed with his Mummy and Wilbert. The night was a bit warm, so Mummy left the window open. Foofer could feel the slight night breeze as it rippled over his body, giving him pleasant relief from the heat. He was content, lying between his Mummy and Wilbert where he felt he could protect them best.

All of a sudden Foofer heard a slight mewling sound. It was the noise of a cat purring and meowing in low tones. Foofer perked his ears up. A few seconds later Layla appeared in the window from outside, quiet as a proverbial mouse, watching the occupants of the bed. Foofer was very still, but he was quite alert now. He waited to see what Layla would do.

Layla sniffed the air and then carefully dropped down to the bed from the window sill. Her step was so light her weight made no movement as she crept between Mummy and Wilbert. She stopped just short of walking on Foofer. He could hear her purring louder. He made no move, but keenly observed Layla sniffing Wilbert's nose and then Mummy's hand as it lay on the covers. Layla's tail twitched as she turned her eyes to Foofer.

Cats and dogs may be different animals with a different set of likes and dislikes, but one thing they have in common was their ability to see in the dark. Foofer and Layla locked glares; her green eyes seemed to be flashing, while his own brown eye and blue eye were steady and expectant.

Layla hissed slightly. "Don't you ever sleep on the floor?"

"My place is in the bed," Foofer snapped back. "There is no room for you here."

"I'll say," Layla cackled. "You take up a lot of room, Foofer."

"And don't forget it," Foofer pointed out. "It's my job to protect my parents and our house, even if I have to protect them against you."

Layla switched gears and became polite. "No need to threaten me, Foofer. I mean no harm. All I want is to whet my whistle before I go back outside. The water in the gutter and from the fishpond isn't the same as the fresh cool water your Mummy leaves out for you."

Foofers paused, as if he were considering Layla's words. "Fine," he said finally. "Get a drink and then be on your way."

Layla jumped down from the bed ever so lightly. A few seconds later Foofers heard her licking water from his bowl in the kitchen in short, quick laps. Because the kitchen was so close to the bedroom, Foofers could hear everything. He thought Layla was taking forever to get her drink of water.

"Thankfully Mummy changes my water twice a day," Foofers thought to himself in disgust. "I'd hate to drink water after the cat has her fill, drooling and spitting."

Layla was back a few minutes later, jumping back on the bed. She stopped to wash her face briefly but Foofers prodded her on: "You can do your cleaning once you get back outside. Now move along!"

Before Layla could respond, Mummy moaned and rolled over in her sleep.

"If you wake up my Mummy, I'll boot you out the window myself," Foofers said to Layla, becoming angry.

"I'm leaving, you mean beast," Layla hissed under her breath as she stepped lightly past Foofers to the window. "Thank you for the water."

Foofers felt a bit guilty for being so mean. Even though he didn't like Layla, it was still no excuse to be cruel to her. "You're welcome," he whispered. And because he was curious, he asked her: "Where do you sleep at night?"

Layla stopped at the window sill, where she perched and turned to look at Foofers. "Here and there," she purred. "I try to stay in the backyard where I sleep in the grass, but sometimes my fancy takes me elsewhere. You know, all around the neighborhood."

It was on the tip of Foofers's tongue to remind Layla not to annoy the neighbors, but he held himself in check and said instead: "Very well, then. Good night."

"Good night, Foofers," Layla whispered, and she was gone.

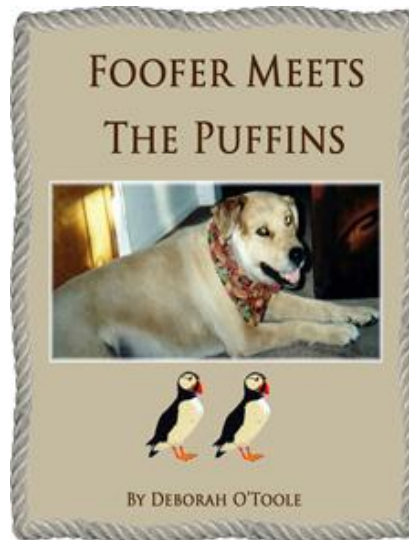
Foofers snuggled next to his Mummy to get comfortable again. He was certain there would be no more interference from Layla that night.

"FOOFER MEETS THE PUFFINS"

Foofer Meets the Puffins is Book #9 in the Short Tales Collection by Deborah O'Toole.

Foofer takes a cross-country trip in a motor home with his parents to visit the state of Maine. Along the way, Foofer sees the sights and learns historical facts about each American state he passes through.

Once in Maine, he meets a pair of well-heeled and posh puffins who have a wonderful surprise waiting for him.



"Foofer Meets the Puffins" is available in e-book format at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Kobo Books.

"FOOFER MEETS THE PUFFINS" *(excerpt only)*

From Chapter Eight:

MUMMY PACKED A wicker picnic basket with potato salad and hot dogs. Daddy drove the motor home to a place called Grimes Cove not far from Boothbay Harbor, where there was a beach. There were also rocks to climb, and a footpath that wound all the way to the cliff at Ocean's Point.

Foofers had never seen a sandy beach up close before now, so he was thrilled when he ran alongside his parents. He could feel the gritty yet soft sand between his paws and he liked it. The he darted ahead of Mummy and Daddy, but he stayed close so he could look back and see them.

Mummy and Daddy chose a spot on the beach underneath a short cliff edge, spreading out a red-and black checkered blanket and setting the picnic basket in the sand.

Foofers was so happy he raced around, sticking his nose in the sand and watching seagulls dive in the sky. Mummy smiled at her little boy, glad to see him enjoying himself in the surf. He was having too much fun to stop and eat so Mummy and Daddy munched on potato salad and hot dogs, watching Foofers frolic about.

"I wish I could bring Frizbee here," Foofers thought all of a sudden. "He would love all this freedom, and the long beach and the ocean." Then Foofers felt guilty. It was the first time he truly thought of the consequences of moving to Maine. Frizbee was his best friend in the whole world so he should be uppermost in his mind, but here was Foofers having fun and contemplating leaving his friend behind.

As usual, Mummy could hear what Foofers was thinking. She patted the sand with her hand, inviting to come and sit by her. Foofers trotted over, licking his Mummy on the face, and then leaned on her as he sat down.

"It's okay that you haven't thought about Frizbee very much on this trip," Mummy said in Foofers's ear. "It doesn't mean you've forgotten about him. You've been busy with other things, your mind has been occupied with the vacation trip and with all the new facts and figures you've been learning. I'm sure Frizbee hasn't been thinking about you every waking moment while you've been gone. He has other things to do, too."

Foofers licked Mummy's face again. She continued to talk in his ear: "So you have nothing to feel guilty about. You're a good boy with a good and loving heart. Frizbee will always be

your friend, as will Odie in Utah, no matter where you live. But that doesn't mean you can't see new places and make new friends."

Happier now that Mummy had made things clear for him, Foofer darted off and ran his nose in the sand. He trotted just close enough to the water to wet his toes, and then charged off again.

All of a sudden Foofer spotted an odd-looking bird perched on the cliff. Mummy and Daddy were still eating lunch and talking, so they were not paying attention to the cliff. Foofer continued to stare at the bird, and was amazed when a second one joined the first. The pair looked like miniature parrots, with long hooky orange bills and orange webbed feet. They had black feathers down their backs and around their necks, and white feathers on their chests and faces. The birds were staring back at Foofer, and this made him all the more curious.

He jogged over to the base of the small cliff, where the footpath led to the top of a rocky crag. Before going up the path to check out the odd birds, Foofer looked back at his Mummy and Daddy. They were still talking and eating, not even looking in his direction. Satisfied they were occupied and wouldn't miss him for a few minutes, Foofer sped up the footpath. He wanted a closer look at the strange little birds.

Once at the top of the cliff Foofer sniffed around, making his way through a few shrubs and big rocks. He came upon the birds in a clearing near the edge of the cliff, right where he had last seen them from the beach.



The birds were even smaller up close, although one appeared slightly taller than the other one. Because of his size, Foofer was used to people and other animals being afraid of him at first glance, but these birds were not intimidated by him in the least. They looked him right in the eyes, just as curious about him as he was about them.

Foofer barked: "Who are you?"

The slightly taller bird spoke up. "Steady on, young man. No need to talk so loudly. Let us introduce ourselves. I'm Lord Posthaste, and this is my lovely wife Lady Boadecia."

Foofer was surprised because Lord Posthaste had an English accent, and because he seemed so sure of himself. Mummy had a few English friends so he knew their elegant way of speaking, but he was unused to a talking bird with the same accent.

"My name is Foofer," he said, remembering his manners. "I'm pleased to meet you in return. Excuse me, I don't mean to be rude, but what kind of birds are the two of you?"

Lord Posthaste cleared his throat. "You seem the intelligent sort. Don't you know what species we are?"

Foofer shook his head. "I'm afraid not."

"We are puffins, my dear," Lady Boadecia spoke up. She had an English accent too, but her tone was higher in pitch.

"Puffins?" Foofer questioned, never having heard of them before.

Lord Posthaste glanced at Lady Boadecia, and then he said: "Surely you know what puffins are, young man."

"Sorry, no."

"Puffins are birds," Lord Posthaste said crisply. "We are native to Maine and belong to the Alcidae family of seabirds. We nest from Maine to Newfoundland and Iceland to Ireland, Great Britain and the northwest coast of France. However, my particular branch of the family has been in Maine for many generations, although we originated from nobility in England."

"What does *nobility* mean?" Foofer asked, still finding it odd that he was having a conversation with two birds. He should be chasing them!

"Nobility is a special class," Lord Posthaste replied a trifle impatiently. "We are better-born and better-bred than average puffins. We are educated, well-mannered and above average."

Foofer snorted, stepping closer. "In other words you're upper-crust sorts, with your bills in the air?" Foofer remembered Mummy using the word "upper-crust" in one of her books, referring to someone who thought they were better than the rest. But Mummy also told Foofer that no one was above anyone else, no matter their circumstances. Everyone was supposed to be equal.

Lord Posthaste looked offended. "We are certainly not upper-crust! We are respectful and considerate of others. We also possess good manners, something you might want to practice more often."

Foofler apologized. "I didn't mean to be rude. I've just never seen birds like the two of you before and I'm curious. What are you doing out here on the cliff?"

"We are perching and looking out over the ocean," Lady Boadecia spoke up. "We also like to swim. We catch most of our food in the ocean, things like small fish, mollusks and crabs. We usually eat underwater, but when we have others to feed we can carry up to thirty fish at one time, storing them crosswise in our bills. You see, puffins have rounded tongues with slight serrations on our upper mandibles. This helps us hold the fish in our mouths."

Foofler was impressed. "Wow!" Then he wondered why Lord Posthaste and Lady Boadecia were alone, why there weren't more like them on the cliff. "Do you travel with other puffins?" Foofler asked politely, trying not to seem as if he were prying. "Do you have children?"

"We travel alone," Lady Boadecia said. "But we meet up with our friends here and there."

"Boadecia and I never had children of our own," Lord Posthaste said sadly. "Carrying on our line will depend on my younger brother Cedric, who lives in Iceland."

"But we do have an adopted daughter," Lady Boadecia told Foofler, flapping one of her wings and glancing at Lord Posthaste. "She's a lovely creature, although quite unlike us."

"You see, our daughter is much like you," Lord Posthaste said. "That's why we were staring when you first saw us perching on the cliff."

Foofler was puzzled. "Your daughter looks like me? How is that possible?"

"She is our adopted daughter," Lady Boadecia reminded Foofler a bit sharply. "That being the case, she wouldn't look like us, now would she?"

Before Foofler could respond, Lord Posthaste was speaking again. "We found our adopted daughter abandoned and alone last April. Her real mother left her to fend for herself, so we took her in and raised her. She is quite beautiful and smart. We are very proud of her."

Foofler put two-and-two together. "Well, if your daughter looks like me then she must be a dog."

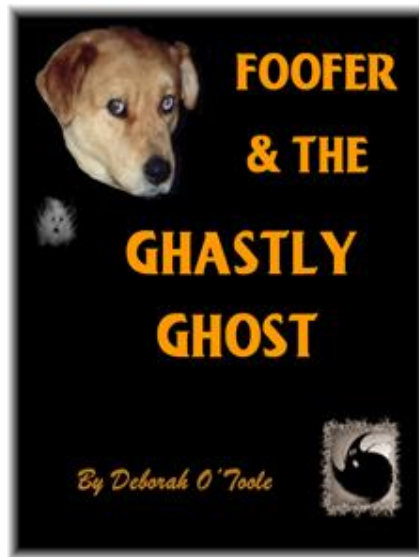
Lady Boadecia flapped her wings together, her voice gleeful. "That's exactly what we've been trying to tell you!"

"FOOFER & THE GHASTLY GHOST"

Foofer & the Ghastly Ghost is Book #10 in the Short Tales Collection by Deborah O'Toole.

Foofer and Rainee find an old haunted house on the beach just before Halloween, where they investigate and unleash its dark secrets and ghostly specters.

Along the way, they make a new friend and Foofer teaches Rainee how to perform the latest canine tricks.



"Foofer & the Ghastly Ghost" is available in e-book format at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Kobo Books.

"FOOFER & THE GHASTLY GHOST" *(excerpt only)*

From Chapter Two:

THE NEXT DAY, Foofer and Rainee took off for their daily run on the beach. They always made a quick stop at the nearby cliff to see Rainee's other family, the majestic Puffins Lord Posthaste and Lady Boadecia, and then they would race along the sand and bite at the surf.

This time they ran along further until they came to a clearing under a bluff. They saw an old, deserted house with splintered shingles, broken windows and overgrown weeds in the yard. Foofer and Rainee looked up at the looming house, wondering who left the structure in such a state of neglect.

"I don't remember seeing this place before," Rainee mumbled.

"That's because we've never come so far on the beach before," Foofer said.

"Whatever. Let's go."

Foofer shook his head. "No, let's go peek into the house. It doesn't seem like anyone lives there, so maybe we've found ourselves a fun place to romp around in."

"It looks spooky," Rainee shuddered.

"Nonsense," Foofer scoffed. "It's just an old ramshackle."

Both of them looked up at the house again, and were surprised to see a white face in one of the upper windows. Steam from the creature's breath fogged a small corner of the window, but Foofer and Rainee could still see its dark eyes so stark against the white.

"It looks like a dog," Rainee said, fear in her tone. "Why is it looking at us like that? Are we trespassing on its turf?"

Foofer stared back at the white dog in the window. Foofer's hair bristled, and he stood with his back legs far apart. This was his protective posture, but otherwise he was very still and watchful.

"Foofer, did you hear me?" Rainee asked irritably.

"It's a dog, but I don't know why it's staring at us," Foofer finally replied. "Maybe it lives alone in the old house, lonely for company."

Rainee was uncertain. "Then let it come out here. I don't want to go into that house, it gives me the creeps. Bark at the dog, tell it to come to the beach."

Foofer was annoyed by Rainee's skittishness, but he did as she asked. He looked up at the white dog in the window and started to bark. Foofer's bark was deep and awesome. It always sent a shiver down Rainee's spine and hurt her ears. Foofer sounded like a giant among giants, his voice commanding attention and rumbling a great distance.

The dog in the window turned its head away briefly, as if it was looking at someone from behind, and then it stared out the window again. It gave a few short barks, its breath fogging the window once more.

Foofer shook his head. "She can't leave, her owner won't let her."

"It's a she?" Rainee asked.

"So she says."

"Where is her owner?" Rainee exclaimed. "What human would live in a house like that?"

"I'm going in," Foofer said firmly, turning to look at her. "Stay here if you like."

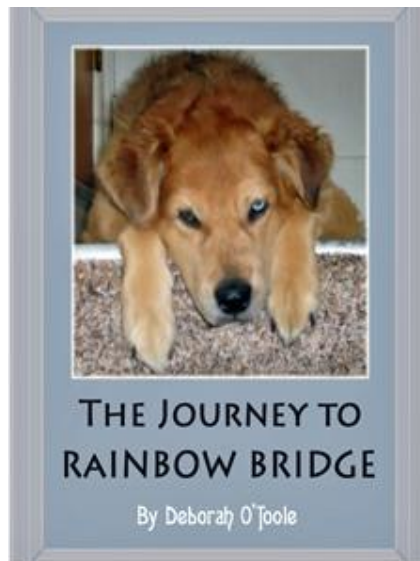
"No way," Rainee said quickly. "You're not leaving me alone. I'm going with you."

"THE JOURNEY TO RAINBOW BRIDGE"

The Journey to Rainbow Bridge is the 11th and final book in the Short Tales Collection by Deborah O'Toole.

Read a heart-breaking account of Foofer's last months of life. The proud, majestic and sweet-natured Foofer lives out his final days in quiet dignity, teaching the lesson of unconditional love in its purest form.

WARNING: *The Journey to Rainbow Bridge* contains adult language and may not be suitable for all children.



"The Journey to Rainbow Bridge" is available in e-book format at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Kobo Books.

"THE JOURNEY TO RAINBOW BRIDGE" (excerpt only)

From the author: *The Journey to Rainbow Bridge* is a genuine life journey, not only an account of the last months of my beloved Foofer's life but a realization that all of us are mortal, whether we possess human or animal form.

The first day I held Foofer in my arms on May 16th, 1997, my biggest fear was that he would be taken from me. The apprehension did not rule my life, but rather settled in the back of my mind and reared its specter once in a blue moon. The definition of this fear was of Foofer escaping and running away, or of being hit by a car. This underlying fear led me to be extra cautious with him. He never went outside the house without a leash unless he was in a fenced area. I never let him wander free at any time, and those who tried to convince me otherwise were studiously ignored.



My reasoning was simple: I would rather have him safe for many years than experience running freedom for brief moments that might cost him his life. I do not regret that decision because I feel it gave me more than ten years with Foofer before the end came.

Never in my wildest dreams did I envision his earthly end would be hastened by a horrific disease.

If there is a heaven and if I ever get there, Foofer is the first thing I want to see and the only person/animal I want to spend my celestial time with. All else pales in comparison with the gift Foofer gave me, the unconditional love that doesn't seem to exist in this world except as it was between us, but which is now temporarily disconnected by death.

Foofer was my shining light and my inspiration. We went through quite a bit in our decade together, and he never failed me.

A part of me is gone which will never be restored. To this day, I miss Foofer so badly that I sometimes physically ache inside.

Deborah O'Toole

"THE JOURNEY TO RAINBOW BRIDGE" *(excerpt only)*

Saturday, 27th October 2007

Mummy Love

I have snatches of despair throughout the day, usually when I accompany Foofer outside and watch him from the deck steps. His favorite place in the yard is atop a hill overlooking the lower yard. It's as if he can survey his territory and remain comfortable at the same time. I typically sit on the steps, puffing on a cigarette. Sometimes he will look at me and wag his tail, other times not.

The despair comes after I realize - following a relatively normal stretch of time - that there is nothing normal about Foofer's life now. He may not be aware of it, but of course I am. He trots about and acts his typical male-testosterone-driven self, and I rejoice in this, but in my solitary moments on the deck steps it hits me that my happiness will probably be short-lived. This is when the tears well up inside me, and I feel a deep sense of anguish that comes from the bottom of my very soul.

Anyone who has dogs knows how a lifelong close bond often leads to an even closer understanding of each other's emotions. Foofer knows when I'm upset, happy or simply neutral. To show hysterics or to display a copious flow of tears in front of him would only agitate him and probably increase his own unfathomable stress level. He typically reacts to my panic or upset by growling with teeth barred and ears back, or by sitting next to me and licking my face.

I try to take Foofer for a ride in the car every day, which I know is a highlight for him. Poor Rainee often gets left behind because in her excitement she knocks Foofer around, sometimes running into his belly, which I am trying to avoid at all costs. I feel guilty about neglecting Rainee every day, and try to do little things for her on the side to make it up to her. It's not as if I am truly neglecting Rainee in a physical sense, but a dog knows when the major portion of attention is diverted elsewhere and it hurts their feelings.

Close proximity to Foofer is important to me right now; although I'm sure he is fed up with what he might see as a rash of "smothering" on my part. If I can, I lie down next to him on the floor and stroke his face, or that sensitive area on the bridge of his nose between his eyes toward the top of his head. This is his calming spot, a trick I have used to put him at his ease since he was a puppy in arms.

If I spend too much time in Foofer's "space" he becomes highly irritated with me. He will only take so much of the mothering, hugs and kisses before he lets me know he's

had enough. I will turn to get into my own bed, and then decide I want one more kiss. Foofer will growl again, his eyes wide and teeth barred, as if to say: "For God's sake, Mummy, leave me alone! Go to bed already!"

My nighttime words to Foofer, after I kiss him for the hundredth time, are:

*Hang on tight for Mama;
Don't let go
Fight like hell and
Make it go away.*

Then I whisper: "Mama loves you."

Foofer looks at me as if I'm insane, because of course he feels fine and chipper, but I say the words anyway. And then I ask God to give me one more day with my baby - over and over again.

The next morning - after a night of broken sleep - I check his face and eyes for signs of health and well-being. I am then grateful for another delightful morning. I get on with the day, writing included, and we traipse through another maze of happiness mixed with anguish.

Nothing in my life compares to the sadness I feel right now, or the gladness I experience when I realize I will be given another wonderful day with Foofer. Nothing - not the end of a marriage, the loss of material possessions or other life surprises - has any meaning when compared to Foofer and the unconditional love he has given to me for ten years and is still giving me.

Thursday, 20th December 2007

Broken Heart

I lost my precious boy yesterday morning, and my heart is broken.

Foofer started having seizures two days ago. They were horrible, unlike anything I've ever seen. I was able to get a prescription of Phenobarbital from his veterinarian, and this seemed to help at first but then the seizures became worse, five minutes apart rather than hours. My poor Foofer tried like hell to fight them, and I stayed with him stroking his forehead and making sure he didn't hurt himself in other ways.

I was up all night with him on Tuesday because he couldn't stand, drink water or eat. The seizures started coming every thirty seconds, and then stayed fixed without any respite. He was aware of me, responded when I tried to wipe his mouth - the seizures

brought on a foam-like saliva than ran continually out of the corner of his mouth - but I also think he was partially blind in one eye (*the brown one*), which might have been the result of a mini-stroke rather than the seizures.

On Wednesday morning, I finally made the decision - after much soul-searching and inner conflict - to take him to the animal clinic. Two girls from the clinic came and wrapped Foofer in a large blanket and carried him to their car. I walked behind them, and at one point Foofer raised his head from inside the blanket and stared at me, his body still twitching, as if to make sure I was coming with him.

At the clinic they decided the seizures were from the progression of his disease - the cancer had probably reached his brain which was causing the strokes and seizures - so I had to make the decision then and there to stop his suffering. I have never felt so terrible, so awful and helpless, in my life. They let me have a few minutes alone with Foofer, and all I could do was hold him, kiss him and whisper in his ear that he was a good boy, and to reassure him that I would be okay (*he was always watchful of me, attuned to my moods and intensely protective*).

I couldn't watch the rest (*I simply could not stay and watch him slip away*), so I left the room but as I looked behind me Foofer was watching from the examination table, still on his side and twitching, but watching me with his blue eye this time. Now in hindsight I feel guilty about that: I should have stayed with him right until the end, as he would undoubtedly have done for me, but I just couldn't stand there as they gave him a shot of medicine that took his life away. I know I made the right decision to end his suffering - he was so majestically proud and wouldn't want to live like he was at the end - but that knowledge does not take away the hurt and pain one whit.

I decided to have Foofer cremated, and I will be receiving his ashes in a small cedar box in a few weeks. At least I will always have him with me that way, and I have already told family members that when my own time comes I want the little cedar box containing his remains buried with me.

I see him everywhere in the house. I burst into tears when I saw his food bowl yesterday afternoon, looking at the teeth marks he left made over a period of years. Every time I walk by the water bowls (*one upstairs, one downstairs*) I think of him taking his big, noisy gulps because he loved fresh, cold water so much; I see him eyeing his favorite treats on the pantry shelf, standing by the back door waiting to go outside, and I envision him when I pass by places where he liked to sleep. I remember the last sight I had of him as I left him with the doctor, as he looked at me with his blue eye. I miss Foofer so badly I ache inside. This is the worst kind of grief I have ever felt in my life. Getting divorced doesn't mean a thing: I'd rather lose a husband - a dozen husbands - than my darling Foofer.

I slept with his collar clutched in my hands last night, and I wrapped myself in the blanket they used in which to take him to the clinic.

If there is a heaven and if I ever get there, Foofer is the first thing I want to see and the only person/animal I want to spend all my celestial time with. The hell with ex-husbands or others - all else pales in comparison with the gift Foofer gave me, the unconditional love that doesn't seem to exist in this world except as it was between Foofer and me, but which is now temporarily disconnected by death. A part of me is gone and it will never be restored. I miss Foofer so badly that I physically ache inside.

Saturday, 22nd December 2007
Stumbling in Darkness

I feel no relief from the emotional pain, or the terrible void that Foofer's death has left inside of me. It snowed ten inches the other day, and the first thought that entered my mind was: "I can't see the footprints he left behind anymore." I miss him so terribly, so painfully that I have to catch my breath during the day just to have a normal conversation with someone. I see shadows and think maybe, just maybe, he is alive - that he somehow got away from the animal clinic and made it home on his own, healthy and anxious to see me.

I know this is irrational. I don't think I'm losing my mind, although there are times over the last several days when I've considered the possibility. Perhaps it's just a normal grief process, which we all seem to manage differently, yet I cannot see myself ever getting over Foofer's death. I may appear normal on the outside to other people, but the sadness and the pain will linger for as long as I'm alive and breathing.

Foofer wasn't just a dog, a family pet. Very few people fully understand that. I had dogs the entire time I grew up and beyond into adulthood. But no animal, no one individual human being has ever touched my heart and soul like Foofer did. There was a connection with him that I never thought possible, but when it came I recognized it for what it was and treasured it. Now it's gone and I am at a complete loss. How does one take more than a decade of extreme closeness, of same-mindedness and just simply forget it ever existed, or be expected to live any other way and truly be happy?

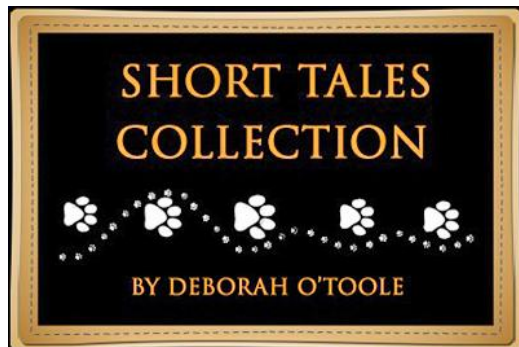
I feel like I'm walking - no, make that *stumbling* - along a dark passageway with no light to guide me.

ABOUT THE SHORT TALES COLLECTION

The *Short Tales Collection* by Deborah O'Toole contains eleven short stories written primarily for children, although adults have been known to like the tales as well.

Books in the collection include:

- ❖ *Foofer & the Ham Bone*
- ❖ *Foofer Goes East*
- ❖ *Foofer & St. Nick*
- ❖ *Foofer, the Pooka & St. Patrick*
- ❖ *Foofer Gets Groomed*
- ❖ *Foofer Moves Northwest*
- ❖ *Foofer & the Magic Mischa*
- ❖ *Foofer & the Cat Burglar*
- ❖ *Foofer Meets the Puffins*
- ❖ *Foofer & the Ghastly Ghost*
- ❖ *The Journey to Rainbow Bridge*



To learn more, go to the Short Tales Collection official web site:
<https://deborahotoole.com/tales/>

Book covers and logo designed by Deborah O'Toole.

SHORT TALES COLLECTION: AUTHOR Q&A

The following is a general "Question & Answer" session about the *Short Tales Collection* by Deborah O'Toole.

* **What inspired you to write the *Short Tales Collection*?**

My dog, Foofer. Each story in the *Short Tales Collection* was inspired by him, and our relationship. He passed away in 2007, therefore bringing the series to a permanent close.

Foofer was quite a character. I never really treated him like a dog. We had a "mother-son" relationship from the time he came into my arms at the age of six weeks until his passing more than ten years later.

He not only gave much love, joy and laughter, he also inspired me to write the collection of short stories with his shining character as the star. What began as a few "shorts" developed into a series of stories about Foofer and his adventures.

* **What is Foofer's back-story?**

He was born in Chubbuck, Idaho on March 31, 1997. At the time, I was living in Idaho with my second husband.

One of my husband's co-workers offered him the only male in a litter of four pups born to his Husky/Retriever cross breed. We got Foofer when he was only six weeks old, and I fell in love with him instantly. I had never felt such an instant and irrevocable kinship with an animal before, or since for that matter.

It was mutual, unconditional love in its most purest form.

* **Why did you name him Foofer?**

His real name was *Barbarosa*, after the Willie Nelson character in the movie of the same name. I thought it was quite mouthful, so I nicknamed him Foofer. It was based on his almost irrational fear of buzzing flies. Yes, my 130-pound dog was scared to death of flies. Every time one of the insects came around, he would dive for cover - under a table, under my legs - anywhere he could go and hide. The name Foofer just seemed to fit after that.

* **When did you start writing stories about him?**

Not until much later. I wrote the first book, *Foofer & the Ham Bone*, near the end of 2000. I'm not sure what inspired me - other than Foofer himself - to write that first story, but it sort of took off from there. I was going through a transitional period at the time - divorce, remarriage, relocation - so it was easy to use my imagination to create the short stories. Many of them were based on real events, albeit embellished on occasion.

*** Is "Foofer Goes East" based on real events?**

Yes. We took a trip through Wyoming and Colorado with Wilbert Alviso, who eventually became my third husband. The flying red ants were real, and the location descriptions were real.

Foofer didn't like Wilbert at first. It was touch and go for awhile. After we left Idaho in 1999, Foofer and I were basically on our own. When Wilbert entered the picture some time later, Foofer was none too pleased. As far as Foofer was concerned, I was his property and he didn't take kindly to any sort of interference. It took him a few months to warm to Wilbert, but once the ice was broken they became the best of friends. In time, Foofer adored Wilbert.

Wilbert and I almost went our separate ways before Foofer finally relented and accepted him. Wilbert was understandably frustrated by the canine hostility, and at one point told me: "It's either me or Foofer." There was no question I would ever abandon Foofer for anyone else, so I replied: "It was nice knowing you. Have a nice life." Luckily, Wilbert persevered and was thereby rewarded with Foofer's lifelong loyalty and love.

*** How did you come up with the story for "Foofer, the Pooka & St. Patrick"?**

I wanted to relate the story of St. Patrick and other Irish legends, but in terms a child would likely understand. Putting Foofer in the center of the story with a grouchy Pooka leading the way seemed to be the perfect setting.

With Foofer being a dog, food had to figure into the equation. Foofer thought St. Patrick's Day was all about corned beef, so he needed a good lesson in history.

*** Where did you get the idea for "Foofer & the Magic Mischa"?**

I'm sure most people recall the fable known as Aladdin. *Foofer & the Magic Mischa* is a loose take on the same premise. Rather than having a genie to grant three wishes, Foofer's experience was with a magical squirrel named Mischa.

It was such a fun story to write, with lots of humor thrown into the mix.

*** How do you compare writing short stories to full-length fiction novels?**

Writing full-length fiction takes longer, but it's easier. Shorts are more difficult because the writer has to get across the complete story in the least amount of space. It's hard to temper dialogue meandering or detailed scene descriptions, which is why I prefer writing long fiction.

*** How difficult was it to write "The Journey to Rainbow Bridge" after Foofer died?**

It was probably one of the most difficult bits I've ever written. I almost didn't release *The Journey to Rainbow Bridge* because it was too painful, but then I thought it might help

someone else going through the same thing. Losing a beloved pet is just as devastating as losing a family member.

I actually took portions of my blog [*Irish Eyes*] to re-assemble the last months of Foofer's life. While he was receiving medical treatment, I was also trying to find natural ways to prolong his time. I wrote blog posts to track my endeavors just in case a miracle occurred. I think my efforts did keep him with me longer. Foofer was diagnosed with *Hemangiosarcoma* in June 2007. His veterinarian gave him until the end of summer to live. However, I was determined he would beat the odds.

I learned about the benefits of cumin to help fight cancer, so I began to sprinkle bits of it into his food. I also prepared most of his meals, which included steamed turkey or chicken with brown rice, scrambled eggs and mashed broccoli. He lived until mid-December 2007, four months beyond the veterinarian's prognosis, so I firmly believe my methods helped to extend his life. This was very important to me because I wanted to keep him alive for as long as possible. I didn't want to lose him.

*** Do you think you will ever write more short stories?**

I won't rule out the possibility, but I can say with certainty none of them will be about Foofer. He's gone, and I just can't see treading on his memory that way. It's sacred to me.

I'm not entirely convinced there is an afterlife, but if there is I hope he is waiting for me.

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 Canada* 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 165 years, most of which are set against the backdrop of a magnificent seaside mansion in Maine. Books in the ten-part family 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, Deborah is author of "The Bloodline Trilogy." The novels follow the uniquely magical yet ominous journey of one family through time. The trilogy includes *Bloodfrost*, *Bloodlust* and *Blood & Soul*.

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



Deborah O'Toole

<https://deborahotoole.com/>