

Questions & Answers about:

Glinhaven

By Deborah O'Toole



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ABOUT "GLINHAVEN"

Glinhaven by Deborah O'Toole is a traditional gothic fiction novel in the style of 1970s authors Marilyn Ross and Dorothy Daniels.

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

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

Glinhaven is scheduled for release in 2016.

For more, go to:

<http://deborahotoole.com/>

The following is a general "Question & Answer" session about the upcoming novel *Glinhaven* by Deborah O'Toole.

What inspired you to write "Glinhaven" in traditional gothic style?

Gothic fiction novels were the staple of my teen years. I read everything ever written by Dorothy Daniels and Marilyn Ross specifically, with smatterings of Marilyn Harris, Victoria Holt and Phyllis Whitney. Even more specific, the series of thirty-two *Dark Shadows* paperback novels by Marilyn Ross (*aka Dan Curtis*) were my favorites.

The books were known as Gothic fiction novels back "in the day." All of them contained mystery, the appearance of phantoms (*real or imagined*), and happy endings. The Ross and Daniels titles are simple pleasures I used to enjoy as a late teen and early-twenty-something, but I still find them quaint and entertaining.

Where did you get the story idea for "Glinhaven"?

A foggy seaside village dominated by a sinister mansion...it's the perfect launch for a gothic novel. The influence of "Glin" comes from the Irish town of the same name in County Limerick. As for the main character's name of Piper Hunt, the combination came from echoes of my second husband (*Hunt*) and the television icon known as Piper Halliwell (*Charmed*), although my character does not possess special powers.

As for the story itself, it sort of developed on the backburner for several years. I wrote the first few chapters in June 2008. I pecked at it over time, but the story took a back seat because my focus was on finishing the eight novels in the *Collective Obsessions Saga* first. It wasn't until early 2014 that I was able to return my attention to *Glinhaven*.

Re-reading the first few chapters of *Glinhaven* gave me several more ideas and plot twists, which I went about implementing as I pushed the story forward. Keeping in mind that most traditional gothic novels have happy endings, I envisioned a way Piper could get to the truth about her past and still come out happy.

There is an interesting back-story in "Glinhaven," which only reveals itself as the narrative develops.

The fictional setting of Glinhaven Village is situated between the existing Massachusetts towns of Gloucester and Rockport, founded by the Scottish branch of the Glinhaven family in 1656. The Mochrie family arrives in Glinhaven three years later, where they establish *The Thistle* curio shop. The story dynamics in *Glinhaven* do not begin for another three centuries.

A lovely young socialite named Alexandra Sinclair (*later known as Lady Glinhaven*) meets Edmund Glinhaven when he takes a holiday in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1945. Although she is not in love with the wealthy American, she follows him back to Glinhaven



Village, where they marry and become the parents of one child, son Colin. Later, Alexandra meets Duncan Mochrie and falls deeply in love for the first and only time in her life. Duncan rejects the married Lady Glinhaven, instead wedding his childhood sweetheart Mary Stewart. Duncan and Mary have one child, daughter Kenna.

Edmund Glinhaven dies after a heart attack in 1978; Mary Stewart Mochrie dies the same year after falling from the harbor dock and hitting her head. Little does anyone know, Lady Glinhaven instigated both deaths in hopes and she and Duncan could finally be together, but he rejects her yet again.

While dating her high school sweetheart Hugh Hunt, Kenna becomes involved with Lady Glinhaven's son, Colin. They have a summer affair when Kenna works as a maid at the Glinhaven estate, which results in Kenna becoming pregnant. Lady Glinhaven refuses to accept their liaison, firing Kenna and sending her son away to study abroad in Switzerland. Hugh Hunt assumes Kenna is pregnant with his child, so the couple marries. One month before Piper's birth, Hugh is killed in an auto accident near Gloucester.

Lady Glinhaven later reveals her son Colin was killed in an airplane crash while studying in Switzerland, although in truth she is hiding him at Glinhaven Monastery under the care of Brother Albert, whom she pays to keep her secret. After the split with Kenna, Colin suffered a mental breakdown from which he never recovered.

Kenna dies from breast cancer just after Piper turns ten years old; Duncan Mochrie then raises his only grandchild until she is old enough to leave for a new life in Boston.

The storyline in ***Glinhaven*** begins when Duncan Mochrie dies, forcing Piper to return to Glinhaven Village to deal with her grandfather's legacy. As she decides what to do, she uncovers an unfinished note written by Duncan Mochrie the night he died. It gives her vague clues about her true parentage. Duncan's note hints that answers about her past are to be found within Glinhaven Monastery. Meanwhile, Lady Glinhaven is pressuring Piper to sell *The Thistle* to her. Piper does not believe the old woman's reasons for wanting to buy the curio shop, nor is she aware of the history between her grandfather, her mother and the Glinhaven family.

There are a few mishaps as Piper and her new friend Cam try to discover the truth (*Piper is attacked outside the walls of the monastery and then again inside the curio shop*), but I don't want to give too much of the story away. Suffice it to say ***Glinhaven*** ends in typical gothic fiction fashion – happily ever after – which is *definitely* not my style.

How do you reveal the back-story as "Glinhaven" unfolds?

Hints are found in old documents as Piper tries to get at the truth, and she also has conversations with people in the know. The story is peppered with references to the past, which is essential when threading the bits and pieces together.

Although there is a hint of romance in "Glinhaven" when Piper meets Cam MacDevitt, they do not consummate their relationship for the reader. Was that intentional?

There are no explicit sex scenes in *Glinhaven*, which is par for the course in most traditional gothic novels. However, innuendo is present when it needs to be. I actually enjoyed writing *Glinhaven* without the added pressure of detailing sex scenes. I'm not comfortable with constructing highly intimate encounters, but I've undertaken them in other books when the storyline calls out for it. Thankfully, *Glinhaven* did not require the creation of passionate physical interaction.

Attraction between two people can be conveyed with gestures, eye contact and simple physical contact, such as hand-holding or accidentally brushing against someone. Piper and Cam share an obvious mutual attraction, but they don't leap into bed in *Glinhaven*. It just isn't necessary to the storyline.

What are your typical writing habits?

I prefer an atmosphere of calm and quiet, although I've been known to write even under the worst of circumstances such as dicey living conditions, loud noise levels and general misery. I write best at night, usually by hand. The next day, I'll input my notes on the computer along with any needed adjustments.

I spend almost every day - *all day* - on the computer. This includes writing, web design and various other projects. I rarely use the computer for fun, unless it's to play games in the form of a break. If I forget to wear my reading glasses, I often end the workday with a headache (*complete with jagged, lightning-bolt eyeball spasms*) after I shutdown. By evening time, I'm thoroughly fed-up with my computer screen. I just want to get away from it for awhile.

Enter night-writing. I still enjoy writing by hand, finding it a rare form of relaxation. Admittedly, I'm set in my ways in regards to the way I write by hand: black ink pen (*medium, round point*) and only on a quadrille pad. I never use red and blue ink pens or, God forbid, pencils. And when I'm finished inputting my handwritten notes into the computer, I draw a line through the page.

I'm often inspired by images, so my spreadsheet for *Glinhaven* included thumbnail pictures of people I felt represented my fictional characters and various structures. The images were not indicative of personality traits of real people or meant to be about real places, but rather a general idea of what I envisioned as the "outer shell" of each character and setting.



For instance, the physical appearance of Lady Glinhaven (*pictured*) was based on Dame Gladys Cooper, an English actress who died in 1971. She had a stern and inscrutable countenance at times. In my mind, Duncan Mochrie's visage is similar to a bearded Sean Connery as he appeared around 1989. The butler at Glinhaven Mansion, only

known as Roxby in the storyline, physically resembles Gene Hackman circa 2008. It's kind of fun to put the spreadsheet together as I write the story. I can see the snapshots in my head as I construct scenes and dialogue, a method which has always worked well for me as far as writing style or creative inspiration.



Glinhaven Monastery (*pictured above*) is loosely based on the appearance of Forde Abbey in Dorset, England. However, I made a few fictional alterations as I wanted the place to be surrounded by forbidding walls and a gothic entry gate.

Did traditional gothic novels influence your writing style in other genres?

Most definitely, especially in my formation of the *Collective Obsessions Saga*. My books are not light in the original puritan gothic sense, however. Grisly details are often revealed, which was not typical in traditional gothic novels.

Aside from the *Dark Shadows* paperback series, a collection of seven novels known as the *Eden Series* by Marilyn Harris were of great inspiration to me. The Eden books are dark, detailed and could be described as a twisted historical family saga of sorts. They are not a set of torrid romance novels but rather a dark saga that begins in 1790 and ends in the 20th century. The stories touch upon obsession, Gothicism, psychos run amok, murder, mayhem, madness, history, and yes, some romance however twisted. They are brilliantly written, detailed without being monotonous, and a standard for the genre.

The books inspired much of my penchant for obsessive and twisted sagas, a style I have carried on for many years to date. I tend to lean toward the twisted and off-the-mark. I don't write like Marilyn Ross and Marilyn Harris per say, but their styles and genre interest has definitely inspired me for more than two decades.

Yet "Glinhaven" is not a family saga.

Glinhaven is a one-off. It's basically my tribute to the gothic paperback genre in one fell swoop. The book is not long and complex like some of my other work, especially *Celtic Remnants* and the *Collective Obsessions Saga*, but I think it's a nod in the right direction.

How would you define traditional gothic novels?

Although I'm a fan of the genre, I'm not an expert in all the nuances. I learned quite a bit from reading the article *Elements of the Gothic Novel* by Robert Harris. I wrote a blog entry (*Gothic-Writing Points*) about the article in April 2011, part of which went as follows:

According to Harris, gothic novel elements include:

- 1) Setting in a castle.
- 2) An atmosphere of mystery and suspense.
- 3) An ancient prophecy connected with the castle or its inhabitants.
- 4) Omens, portents, visions.
- 5) Supernatural or otherwise inexplicable events.
- 6) High, even overwrought emotion.
- 7) Women in distress.
- 8) Women threatened by a powerful, impulsive, tyrannical male.
- 9) The metonymy of gloom and horror.
- 10) The vocabulary of the gothic.

Harris defines "vocabulary of the gothic" as the following:

- Mystery (*diabolical, enchantment, ghost, haunted, omens, ominous, portent, secret, spectre, spirits*).
- Fear, terror & sorrow (*anguish, apprehensions, commiseration, concern, despair, dismay, dread, frantic, grief, hopeless, lamentable, melancholy, miserable, mournfully, panic, sadly, shrieks, sorrow, sympathy, tears, terror, unhappy, wretched*).
- Surprise (*alarm, amazement, astonished, shocking, staring, thunderstruck, wonder*).
- Haste (*anxious, frantic, impetuous, sudden*).
- Anger (*enraged, furious, incensed, provoked, raving, resentment, temper, wrath*).
- Largeness (*enormous, massive, tremendous, vast*).

In addition, elements of romance are considered part of the gothic genre. These are: *powerful love, uncertainty of reciprocation, unreturned love, tension, lovers parted, illicit love and rival love*.

Gothic tales and the writing thereof may not be to the taste of everyone, but the genre continues to fascinate me. Whatever the case, *Elements of the Gothic Novel* is a good read for those with an interest in the style.

Do you think traditional gothic novels will ever make a comeback?

I don't think the books will ever be as popular as they were in the 1970s, but people from a certain generation will probably always enjoy the genre. I know I do. However, sparks from the past are sometimes known to make a comeback – such as clothes, hairstyles, etc – so one never knows. In truth, future trends are unpredictable.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Deborah O'Toole is the author of *Celtic Remnants*, a novel of enduring yet impossible love and betrayal set in the turbulence of Ireland, glamour of London and the wilds of Scotland. She is also author of the mystery/suspense novel *Mind Sweeper* and the gothic fiction novel *Glinhaven*.

In addition, she writes short-story Juvenile Fiction (*Short Tales Collection*) and darkly abstract Poetry, and is the author of a series of historical essays, articles and book reviews for *Ambermont Magazine* and *Class Notes*.

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

Also writing as Deidre Dalton, she is author of the "Bloodline Trilogy," which follows the mysterious and magical journey of one family through time. Books in the trilogy include *Bloodfrost*, *Bloodlust* and *Blood & Soul*.

Using the pseudonym Shenanchie O'Toole, she also writes for the cooking/recipe web site Food Fare. She is writer and co-editor of the *Ambrosia Cookbook*, *Community Garden Cookbook*, *Food Fare Cookbook*, *Furry Friends Cookbook*, *Larkin Community Cookbook*, *Recipes-on-a-Budget Cookbook* and the *Soups & Stews Cookbook*, along with more than forty titles in the *Food Fare Culinary Collection*.



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