

COLLECTIVE OBSESSIONS

By Deídre Dalton

*Trapped incandescent swirls;
like raptly churning ocean waves.
Through milky, translucent pearls
and collective misty mind caves.
Kith and kin disavow as one;
twelve decades and seven of obsessive love.
No one has forgotten, and no one has won;
and yet forever dwell spellbound thereof.*

ABOUT THE BOOKS:

The **Collective Obsessions Saga** by Deidre Dalton chronicles the extraordinary loves and intricate obsessions between two families sweeping a span of more than one-hundred-forty years, all set against the backdrop of a Gothic seaside mansion in Maine.

Follow the twists and turns of the Larkin and Sullivan families, who settle in America in the mid-1800s. John Larkin builds his vast business empire while daughter Molly and lighthouse keeper Colm Sullivan establish a connection that will endure for generations.

Amidst murder, madness, perverse self-indulgence and avarice the two families struggle to free themselves from a dark legacy of secrets and obsessions.

More than twenty years in the making, **Collective Obsessions** is a unique family saga set in the combined genres of mystery, the paranormal, historical romance, and dotted with a touch of the macabre and hints of classic Gothicism.

The nine-part family saga includes *The Advent*, *Quixotic Crossings*, *The Twain Shall Meet*, *Enthrallment*, *The Keeper's Journal*, *Hearts Desires*, *The Twilight*, *Megan's Legacy*, and *Limb of Iniquity*.

Visit the **Collective Obsessions Saga** website:

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

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#1: THE ADVENT

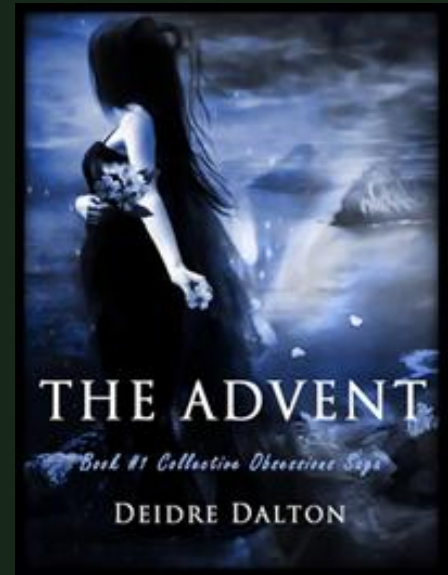
Forbidden love and dark secrets haunt two Irish families hacking out a new life in 19th-century America. When Molly Larkin's father discovers her affair with lighthouse keeper Colm Sullivan, his reaction pitches her into madness. Yet the legacy forges a bond of blood that will endure for generations.

The *Collective Obsessions Saga* begins in 1865 with ***The Advent***, when John Larkin emigrates from Ireland to America and settles his self-named township in Maine. John builds a wealthy empire and grand estate, becoming one of the richest merchants on the Eastern Seaboard.

Hiding behind wealth and social position are quirky English servants, the effervescent family chef Claude Mondoux, John's paranoid-alcoholic wife Anne, their steadfast son Roderick and their mercurial daughter Mary Margaret, also affectionately known as Molly.

In ***The Advent***, Molly falls in love with lighthouse keeper Colm Sullivan, bringing shame and tragedy upon her family. Although cloaked in secrecy and madness, the love affair establishes a connection between their families that will endure for generations.

The Advent was previously published as "Passion Forsaken" by Club Lighthouse and Tyborne Hill. The paperback edition of the novel was released in 2016.



BOOK DETAILS:

- *Club Lighthouse Historical Romance/Family Epic*
- Series: Collective Obsessions Saga, Book One
- Paperback ISBN: 978-1-534880-76-4
- E-Book ISBN: 978-1-310126-67-3
- Paperback Release: June 26, 2016
- E-Book Release: February 1, 2014

Official page:

<https://deborahotoole.com/collective/advent.htm>

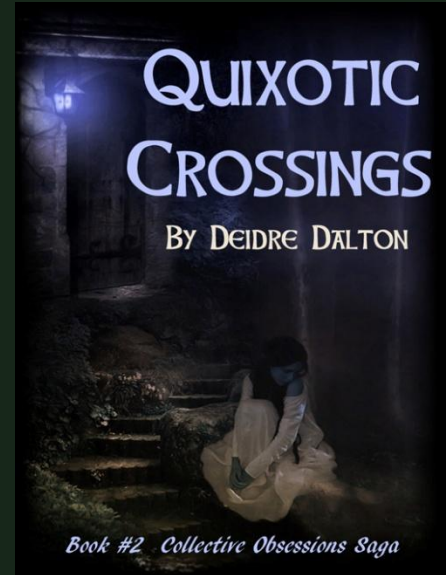
#2: QUIXOTIC CROSSINGS

Fate continues to entangle the Larkin and Sullivan families amidst madness, murder and obsessive love. Colm and Molly's grandson Jean-Claude Sullivan finds his life driven by greed and perversely tainted pleasures. Beloved family chef Claude Mondoux watches helplessly as Colm slowly loses his mind in ghostly visions of Molly, while Colleen Larkin seeks love in the arms of another man with deadly consequences.

The *Collective Obsessions Saga* continues with book two, *Quixotic Crossings*.

After the death of family patriarch John Larkin in 1926, the strains of madness filter their way into the new generation of the irrevocably entangled Larkin and Sullivan families.

Colm and Molly's grandson Jean-Claude Sullivan finds his life driven by greed and perversely tainted pleasures, while Molly's coldly-calculating nephew Patrick Larkin propels the family business to impressive heights as he fosters a new generation with his wife Colleen McGarren.



Murder, obsession, self-indulgence and avarice continue to haunt the Larkin and Sullivan families. Patrick is then rendered less than a man after an accident. He retreats to the attic in the family mansion to ponder his fate much like Molly Larkin did before him, where he becomes increasingly ominous yet ever vigilant.

Beloved family chef Claude Mondoux watches helplessly as Colm slowly loses his mind in ghostly visions of Molly Larkin, while Colleen seeks love in the arms of another man with deadly consequences.

BOOK DETAILS:

- *Club Lighthouse Historical Romance/Family Epic*
- Series: *Collective Obsessions Saga*, Book Two
- Paperback ISBN: 978-1-534956-27-8
- E-Book ISBN: 978-1-311440-97-6
- Paperback Release: June 29, 2016
- E-Book Release: July 5, 2014

Official page:

<https://deborahotoole.com/collective/quixotic.htm>

#3: THE TWAIN SHALL MEET

An innocent meeting as children sparks a fateful yet perilous liaison between Shannon Larkin and Mike Sullivan. Will their romance follow the same tragic path forged by their mutual ancestors Colm and Molly?

The *Collective Obsessions Saga* continues with book three, ***The Twain Shall Meet***.

Shannon Larkin and Mike Sullivan are presumably unaware of the long connection between their two families. Yet their love affair seems destined to follow the same tragic path as the one forged by their mutual ancestors, Colm Sullivan and Molly Larkin.

Mike, who bears an eerie resemblance to his great-great grandfather Colm, is committed to an insane asylum after he attacks Shannon at the Larkin mansion and savagely kills one of her friends. Even while confined, Mike is still obsessed by Shannon and schemes to escape his mental prison.

Although Shannon finds happiness with newcomer Scott Page and begins a family with him, she cannot erase the memories of Mike from her mind.

Madness has consumed this fourth generation in the guise of Mike Sullivan, and he will stop at nothing to make Shannon his own.

BOOK DETAILS:

- *Club Lighthouse Historical Romance/Family Epic*
- Series: *Collective Obsessions Saga*, Book Three
- Paperback ISBN: 978-1-542996-20-4
- E-Book ISBN: 978-1-927337-17-2
- Paperback Release: February 11, 2017
- E-Book Release: January 29, 2012

Official page:

<https://deborahotoole.com/collective/twain.htm>



#4: ENTHRALLMENT

George Sullivan reunites with his long-lost love Susan O'Reilly. Their daughter Carly enters into an unholy alliance to secure her position as Liam Larkin's wife. As secrets unfold and more madness takes root, Carly plots a twisted scheme to exact revenge on the Larkin family.

The *Collective Obsessions Saga* continues with book four, ***Enthrallment***.

Wary after a miserable marriage to the beautiful but empty Marianne Chamberlain, Sean Larkin finds new love with Shannon's best friend, Dana Maitland.

Their marriage yields another set of twins, Derek and Diana, and provides Sean and Marianne's son Brose with a happy home.

Too late, George Sullivan reunites with his long-lost love Susan O'Reilly. Their daughter Carly, who is also Mike Sullivan's half-sister, works her way into the Larkin family unknowing she is related to them by blood.



Her marriage to Liam Larkin is a happy one at first, but she enters into an unholy alliance with his father Rory when she discovers Liam cannot father a child.

As secrets unfold and more madness takes root, Carly plots a fatal and twisted scheme to take revenge on the Larkin family with her sister Sara Sullivan.

BOOK DETAILS:

- *Club Lighthouse Historical Romance/Family Epic*
- Series: Collective Obsessions Saga, Book Four
- Paperback ISBN: 978-1-544056-95-1
- E-Book ISBN: 978-1-927337-36-3
- Paperback Release: March 4, 2017
- E-Book Release: June 22, 2012

Official page:

<https://deborahotoole.com/collective/enthrrall.htm>

#5: THE KEEPER'S JOURNAL

Shannon Larkin is forced to confront demons from her past, while her daughter Angie discovers Colm Sullivan's journal in the old lighthouse keeper's cottage. The diary sheds light on the history between the Larkin and Sullivan families, but may be too late to stop the sisters of Mike Sullivan from wreaking vengeance on the Larkin family for sins and tragedies of the past.

The *Collective Obsessions Saga* continues with book five, ***The Keeper's Journal***.

Shannon Larkin is forced to confront demons from her past. Her yearly visit to Mike Sullivan's gravesite strains her marriage to Scott Page, but she finds herself unable and unwilling to forget Mike's memory.

Shannon's daughter Angela Page finds love with her new boss Tom Cimarelli, a New York City newspaper editor.

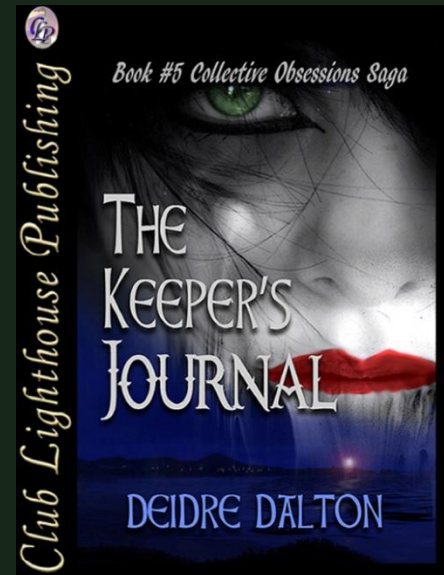
While on assignment, Angie discovers Colm Sullivan's journal in the old lighthouse keeper's cottage. The diary sheds light on the history between the Larkin and Sullivan families, but may be too late to stop the sisters of Mike Sullivan from wreaking vengeance on the Larkin family for sins and tragedies of the past.

BOOK DETAILS:

- *Club Lighthouse Historical Romance/Family Epic*
- Series: *Collective Obsessions Saga*, Book Five
- Paperback ISBN: 978-1-547197-36-1
- E-Book ISBN: 978-1-927337-62-2
- Paperback Release: June 7, 2017
- E-Book Release: December 31, 2012

Official page:

<https://deborahotoole.com/collective/keepers.htm>



#6: HEARTS DESIRES

Shannon's son Jamie Page begins to understand his lifelong yearnings but fears his family will never accept them. His first love affair with a nefarious character nearly costs his life, but brings to light his hidden desires. Happiness continues to elude the family, as if a dark shadow of evil has settled over the family estate.

The *Collective Obsessions Saga* continues with book six, ***Hearts Desires***.

Brose Larkin finds himself falling in love with a local "tomboy" who bests him at every turn. Despite having known her since high school, she is the antithesis of his ideal woman in her simple attire and direct manner. Brose knows he has met his ultimate match in Bridget Gallagher.

Shannon's son Jamie Page begins to understand his lifelong yearnings but fears his family will never accept them. His first love affair with a nefarious character nearly costs his life, but brings to light his hidden desires.

Jamie's sister Angela Page suffers an emotional collapse after discovering she cannot have children. She holes herself up in the attic at the Larkin mansion, much like her ancestors Molly and Patrick Larkin did before her.

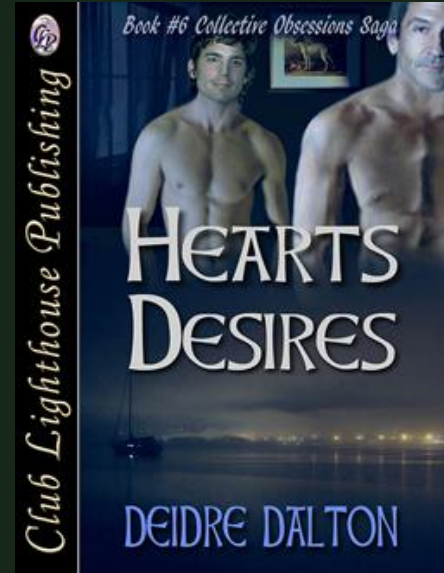
Happiness continues to elude the family, as if a dark shadow of evil has settled over the Larkin estate.

BOOK DETAILS:

- *Club Lighthouse Family Epic/LGBT/Romance*
- Series: Collective Obsessions Saga, Book Six
- Paperback ISBN: 978-1-975754-07-5
- E-Book ISBN: 978-1-927337-67-7
- Paperback Release: August 26, 2017
- E-Book Release: February 27, 2013

Official page:

<https://deborahotoole.com/collective/hearts.htm>



#7: THE TWILIGHT

Shannon Larkin and Scott Page are happy in their long marriage, but a tragic loss forces her to delve into the past in order to face ugly truths about her husband. Devastated, she retreats into her own solitary world. A stranger brings her out of self-imposed exile and shows her the beauty of unconditional love exists after all.

The *Collective Obsessions Saga* continues with book seven, ***The Twilight***.

Shannon Larkin and Scott Page are happy in their long marriage, but a tragic loss forces her to delve into the past in order to face some ugly truths about her husband.

Devastated, she retreats into her own solitary world. A stranger brings her out of self-imposed exile and shows her the beauty of unconditional love exists after all.

Although hurt and disillusioned by Scott's secret life, Angie Page finds surprising happiness as a result of her father's duplicity.

Her brother Jamie finds unlikely harmony in his marriage of convenience to Désirée Sansovino. In despair over his father's deception, Jamie turns to his flamboyant wife for comfort with life-altering consequences.

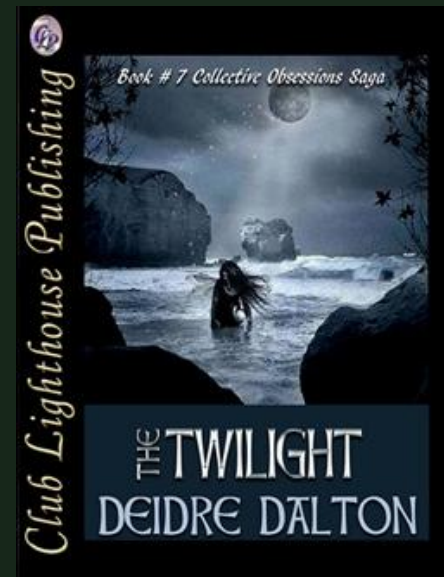
The brash and grumbling Kevin Larkin finally marries his long-suffering girlfriend Mariko Woods, bringing a much-needed jolt of love and happiness to the family. But will it last?

BOOK DETAILS:

- *Club Lighthouse Historical Romance/Family Epic*
- Series: Collective Obsessions Saga, Book Seven
- Paperback ISBN: 978-1-979181-36-5
- E-Book ISBN: 978-1-927337-80-6
- Paperback Release: October 29, 2017
- E-Book Release: August 16, 2013

Official page:

<https://deborahotoole.com/collective/twilight.htm>



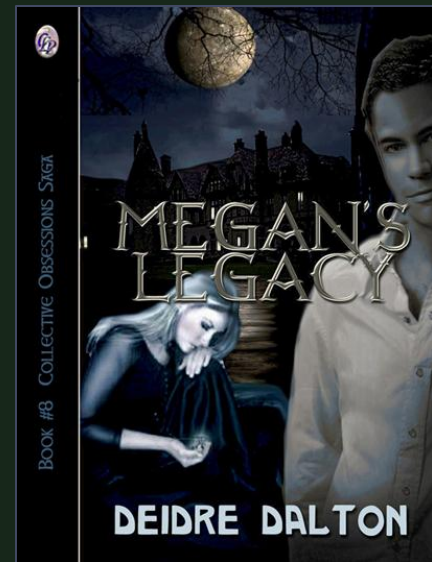
#8: MEGAN'S LEGACY

Megan Larkin falls for dashing Boston attorney Luke Castaneda, a newcomer to Larkin City. Locals try to warn Luke about Megan's family, their history of madness and tragedy, but he is determined to make her his wife. Other elements are at work to ensure the union never takes place, bringing another veil of evil over the Larkin's and their self-named city in the guise of a serial killer. Megan is forced to discover the truth and to set herself free from a legacy of family secrets and obsessions.

The *Collective Obsessions Saga* concludes with book eight, ***Megan's Legacy***.

A serial killer is on the loose in Larkin City, targeting women with long, blonde hair.

Megan Larkin, only child of Liam Larkin and Carly O'Reilly Sullivan, falls for Boston attorney Luke Castaneda, a newcomer to her city. Locals try to warn Luke about Megan's family, their history of madness and tragedy, but Luke falls in love with the shy and retiring Megan, determined to make her his wife.



Other forces are at work to ensure the union never takes place, bringing another veil of evil over the Larkin's and their self-named city.

Megan is forced to discover the truth and to set herself free from a legacy of family secrets and obsessions.

BOOK DETAILS:

- *Club Lighthouse Historical Romance/Family Epic*
- Series: Collective Obsessions Saga, Book Eight
- Paperback ISBN: 978-1-790495-07-8
- E-Book ISBN: 978-1-927337-88-2
- Paperback Release: November 30, 2018
- E-Book Release: December 1, 2013

Official page:

<https://deborahotoole.com/collective/mlegacy.htm>

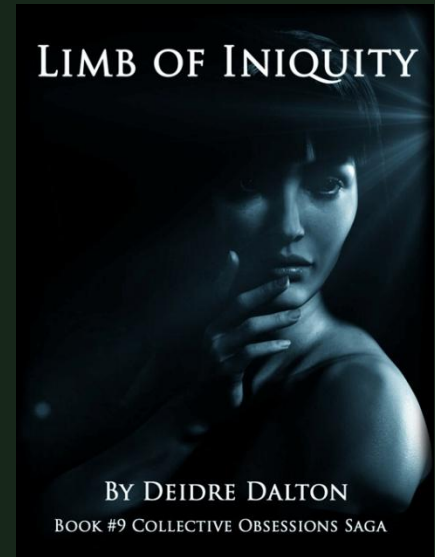
#9: LIMB OF INIQUITY

Alexandra Page Cimorelli, the illegitimate daughter of Scott Page and Andrea St. John, wreaks havoc on the Larkin estate, luring her young nephew Gabriel Page into a web of lust and revenge. Will Alex be the downfall of the Larkin family, once and for all?

Limb of Iniquity brings to light the deadly antics of Alexandra St. John, who made her debut in *The Twilight*, Book #7 in the *Collective Obsessions Saga*.

Alex was the illegitimate daughter of Scott Page, who was the longtime beloved husband of Shannon Larkin. Alex was abandoned as a child by her biological mother Andrea St. John, only to be adopted by Angela Page, Scott's oldest daughter.

Alex and Shannon have a difficult relationship. Shannon has little use for her late husband's bastard, barely civil to the child even as she grows into an adult. The hostility also creates tension between Shannon and Angela, a friction that endures for years and creates a breakdown of the mother-daughter bond.



Alex wreaks havoc on the Larkin estate, luring her young nephew Gabriel Page into a web of lust and deceit. The grisly death of a prominent member of the Larkin family seems to cement the St. John vow of revenge, and leads the local police chief to investigate Alex's background and the sudden reappearance of her birth mother.

Will Alex be the downfall of the Larkin family, once and for all?

Limb of Iniquity is the ninth and final book in the *Collective Obsessions Saga*. The novel is tentatively scheduled for release in 2023-24.

*ESTIMATED COMPLETION: 2025.

**Storyline, estimated completion date and book cover art may be subject to change. Check back for updates.*

Extras

Bonus Guide, Colm Sullivan's Journal, Larkin Community Cookbook, Larkin-Sullivan Family Tree, Cast of Characters, Author's Note

BONUS GUIDE: ABOUT LARKIN

About Larkin is a bonus guide to the *Collective Obsessions Saga* by Deidre Dalton (aka Deborah O'Toole).

The guide offers insights to the backdrop in the series, such as anecdotes and images of Larkin City and the lavish family estate. Because the story spans more than one hundred years, facts and entertaining personal trivia were compiled by the author during the writing process.

Written over a period of two decades, the nine titles in the *Collective Obsessions Saga* link together the lives of two Irish families who somehow manage to overcome unique adversities and tragedies to join as one.

About Larkin contains details about Larkin City and its environs, as well as little-known facts about the Larkin estate and the family's imposing mansion overlooking the Banshee Point Lighthouse.



Learn how John Larkin settled in Maine, turning his self-named village into one of the most popular destinations on the Eastern seaboard. Discover how the harbor town went from an obscure New England hamlet to a centre for education, commerce and leisure.

Visit the *Banshee Point Winery* to taste the exclusive Larkin Cognac, which comes in an elegant periwinkle bottle containing the perfect flavor bouquet of nuts, fruits, spices and flora. Make a reservation at the *Silver Tassel Restaurant* to indulge in sumptuous fare, or try the *Amber Whale Tavern* overlooking the harbor for fresh seafood. *Bruno's Café* offers homemade foodstuff, with all the latest gossip served up by waitress Berty Soames. Take a walk in *Colleen Larkin Memorial Park*, or visit the beautiful student Quad at LCU. The *Larkin Harbor Tour Company* will take you for a sail on the *Lady Banshee* to see the sights and hear the sounds. If water rides are not to your taste, try a day of shopping at *Azoulay Gems*, *Brickyard Square*, *Harbor Hill*, *Larkin Co-Op*, *Nook & Cranny* or the *Wee Book Shop*. Wind down with a drink or two at the *Coven Nightclub* or *Suds Pub*. If you're in the mood for a good scare, pay a visit *Larkin City Cemetery* to have a chat with former locals.

Befriend a member of the Larkin family and tour their grand estate. The elaborate mansion attic holds years of secrets that might curl your hair, or bypass the bitter memories to view Larkin City from the breathtaking Widow's Walk. Stroll down to the Banshee Point Lighthouse to take a long gander over

the Atlantic Ocean, or visit the keeper's cottage to relive the tragic romance of Molly Larkin and Colm Sullivan. Head back to the mansion to take tea with the family in their drawing room, or wait until dinnertime to partake vittles in the imposing and opulent dining room.

After dinner, take a stroll in the eerie family graveyard - but be warned: don't go alone or you might never come back . . .

Download a free copy of ***About Larkin***:
<https://deborahotoole.com/collective/aboutlc.htm>

COLM SULLIVAN'S JOURNAL

Colm Sullivan's journey from Ireland to Maine begins the *Collective Obsessions Saga* by Deidre Dalton (*aka Deborah O'Toole*).

As the first lighthouse keeper at Banshee Point, Colm records his private musings, dreams and desires as he begins a new life on the Larkin estate:

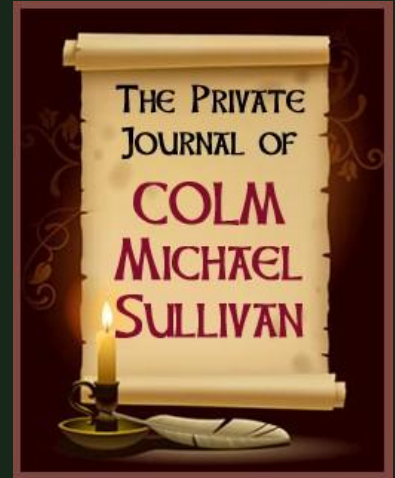
I am the first lighthouse keeper at Banshee Point, and this is my first day in Maine, on the demesne of Mr. John Larkin. He hired me a few days ago in New York City, finding me on the docks with other immigrants from Ireland. Because I worked with lighthouses in my beloved Malahide, Mr. Larkin hired me to look after his new one. He seems like a fair-minded man from the old sod, and has sympathy for us just arriving in America.

Colm also falls in love with John Larkin's mercurial daughter, Molly:

Molly is mine. She came to me last night in the cottage, alone. The ocean was beating on the shore. I was lying in bed, listening to the sounds of the sea. I did not hear her enter the room, but all of a sudden she was there, standing at the foot of my bed. She must have come in through the door leading to the porch. She left the porch doors open, and the wind blew in behind her, moving the curtains and her hair.

But he soon despairs over their secret affair:

How could I have been so wrong about Molly Larkin? I thought she was different from other well-bred women, but she is not different - she is the same, only much worse. I love a mere image, not a vibrant, passionate woman. I am bereft, like never before. I have lost the love of my life, only she was not a love at all. She was a farce, a concoction in my stupid, peasant brain. Molly is a dirty, heartless bitch, but I will not let our time together be in vain. I will make it matter, make her take notice. I swear it. . .



Download a free copy of **Colm Sullivan's Journal**:

<https://deborahotoole.com/collective/csjournal.htm>

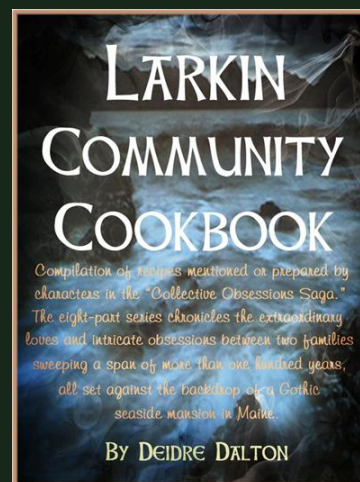
CHARACTERS IN THE KITCHEN

The *Larkin Community Cookbook* is a compilation of more than forty recipes mentioned or prepared by characters in the *Collective Obsessions Saga* by Deidre Dalton (aka Deborah O'Toole).

A number of fictional characters found in the *Collective Obsessions Saga* are exceptional cooks.

It begins with the first family chef Claude Mondoux (*The Advent*), and carries on with the ill-fated Nicholas Bertrand (*Quixotic Crossings*), the much-beloved Mae Jensen (*The Twain Shall Meet*), and the drunken Cora Ann Hogan (*The Twilight*).

Diabolical Amber Whale executive chef Jack Sansovino (*Hearts Desires*) is also a dab hand in the kitchen, where he brews more than just seafood specialties.



Various members of the Larkin family have culinary talent as well, including Shannon, Derek and Dana, who prepare mouth-watering dishes for family and friends. Derek (*Hearts Desires*) also becomes a professional chef and opens his own elegant restaurant in Larkin City, known as *The Silver Tassel*.

Before her grisly demise, Carly O'Reilly (*Enthrallment* and *The Keeper's Journal*) whips up delectable dishes for her highly successful Harbor View Catering Company, where she also sells homemade foodstuffs.

The *Larkin Community Cookbook* is available in Kindle, Kobo and Nook editions.

Official page:

<https://deborahotoole.com/collective/charecipes.htm>

LARKIN-SULLIVAN FAMILY TREE

Learn how the Larkin and Sullivan families connect in the *Collective Obsessions Saga* by Deidre Dalton.

SPOILER ALERT: *Tree details may reveal final outcomes for fictional characters.*

| - *subject*

| - *children*

| - *grandchildren*

| - *great-grandchildren*

| - **John Larkin** 31 Oct 1829-15 Jan 1926

m 1855 Anne O'Quinn 1834-1889

| - **Roderick (Roddy) Larkin** 1859-1946

| m 1881 Sascha McShane 1864-1953

| | - **Patrick Larkin** 1895-1947

| | m 1918 Colleen McGarren 1901-1962

| | | - **Brian Larkin** 1920-1998

| | | m 1947 Mary LaBrecque 1931-2015

| | | | - **Shannon Larkin** 20 Aug 1951-

| | | | (twin to Sean Larkin)

| | | | m 1 Dec 1971 Scott Page 1939-2002

| | | | | - **Angela Page** 12 Oct 1972-

| | | | | m 21 Dec 1995 Thomas Cimarelli 1960-

| | | | | | - Alexandra St. John (adopted) 19 Dec 1995-

| | | | | | - **James (Jamie) Page** 12 Dec 1973-

| | | | | | m1 (common law, 1996-98) Jack Sansovino 1967-2007

| | | | | | m2 10 Jul 2000 Désirée Sansovino 1971-2007

| | | | | | | - **Gabriel (Gabe) Page** 15 Jun 2003-

| | | | | - **Sean Larkin** 20 Aug 1951-

| | | | | (twin to Shannon Larkin)

| | | | | .m1 (1974) Marianne Chamberlain (div 1975) 1947-1995

| | | | | . | - **Ambrose (Brose) Larkin** 12 Aug 1974-

| | | | | . m (common law) Bridget Gallagher 29 Jan 1974-

| | | | | . | - **Tara Larkin** 5 Nov 2007-

| | | | | m2 (1981) Dana Maitland 12 Feb 1951-

| | | | | | - **Derek Larkin** 11 Feb 1983-

| | | | | | (twin to Diana Larkin)

| | | | | | - **Diana Larkin** 11 Feb 1983-

| | | | | | (twin to Derek Larkin)

| | | | | | ~ m 17 Apr 2011 Andrew Gilyard 11 Dec 1982-

| | | | | | | - Colin Larkin Gilyard 31 May 2013-

| | - **Rory Larkin** 24 Feb 1924-9 Feb 1999

| m 1944 Denise O'Toole 1927-1995

| | - **Kevin Larkin** 28 Mar 1945-

| | m 6 Dec 2003 Mariko Woods 17 May 1963-

| | | - Daijiro (Dary) Larkin 31 Jul 2004-

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|      |   |- Daitaro (Kaito) Larkin 31 Jul 2004-
|      |   |- Liam Larkin 14 Aug 1948-
|      |   .m1 (1980) Carly O'Reilly 1949-1995
|      |   .   |- Megan Larkin 1 Jan 1985-
|      |   .   ~1 m (2006) Luke Castaneda 1969-2008
|      |   .   ~2 m 12 Feb 2012 Finley Cooper 9 Jun 1979-
|      |   .   |- Kerry Larkin Cooper 29 Oct 2011-
|      |   .   |- Sascha Larkin Cooper 26 Aug 2015-
|      |   m2 (2007) Petra Fortescue-Pemberton 1959-
|- Molly Larkin 7 Aug 1864-26 Nov 1886
   m (love affair) Colm Sullivan 17 Mar 1860-18 Apr 1933
   (love affair resulting in twins)
     |- Michael (Mick) Sullivan 1881-1945
     | (twin to John Sullivan)
     | m 1905 Layla Barton-Brooks 1878-1956
     |   |- Jean-Claude Sullivan 1907-1985
     |   m1 1927 Jennifer O'Connor 1911-1990
     |   .   |- George Sullivan (aka Ben Webb) 15 Mar 1932-
     |   .   .m1 Susan O'Reilly 1932-1992
     |   .   .   |- Carly O'Reilly 1949-1995
     |   .   .   m 16 Dec 1980 Liam Larkin 1948- (see above)
     |   .   m2 1954 Linda Bisiker (div 1961) 1937-2004
     |   .   |- Michael Sullivan 1956-1975
     |   .   |- Sara Sullivan 1961-1995
     |   .   .m1 1977 Franklin Hardy (div 1982) 1960-
     |   .   .m2 1984 James Standish (div 1987) 1959-
     |   .   m3 1989 Steven Halloway (div 1993) 1960-
     |   m2 (common law) Mason Berger 1896-1985
     |   (Mason Berger lover of Jean-Claude Sullivan from 1934-1985)
|- John (Johnny) Sullivan 1881-1886
   (twin to Mick Sullivan)

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*Chart produced using [Fam-Tree](#) software.

Tree updated March 2024.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Get to know the cast of characters found in the *Collective Obsessions Saga* by Deidre Dalton.

THE LARKIN FAMILY

Luke Castaneda, attorney and first husband of Megan Larkin
Thomas (Tom) Cimarelli, editor of the *Manhattan Daily Journal*; husband of Angie Page
Finley Cooper, son of Petra Fortescue-Pemberton and second husband of Megan Larkin
Kerry Larkin Cooper, daughter of Megan Larkin & Finley Cooper
Sascha Larkin Cooper, daughter of Megan Larkin & Finley Cooper
Petra Fortescue-Pemberton, Sommelier for Larkin Winery, second wife of Liam Larkin
Bridget Gallagher, girlfriend of Brose Larkin, mother of Tara Larkin
Andrew (Andy) Gilyard, KXLC meteorologist, Diana Larkin's husband
Colin Larkin Gilyard, son of Diana Larkin & Andrew Gilyard
Ambrose (Brose) Larkin, son of Sean Larkin
Anne Larkin, wife of patriarch John Larkin
Brian Larkin, great-grandson of patriarch John Larkin
Colleen McGarren Larkin, wife of Patrick Larkin
Daitaro (Kaito) Larkin, son of Kevin Larkin & Mariko Woods; twin to Daijiro
Daijiro (Dary) Larkin, son of Kevin Larkin & Mariko Woods; twin to Daitaro
Dana Maitland Larkin, Shannon Larkin's best friend and wife of Sean Larkin
Denise O'Toole Larkin, wife of Rory Larkin
Derek Larkin, son of Sean & Dana Larkin; twin to Diana Larkin
Diana Larkin, daughter of Sean & Dana Larkin; twin to Derek Larkin
Grace O'Larkin, aunt to patriarch John Larkin
John Larkin, founder of Larkin City and family patriarch
Kevin Larkin, son of Rory & Denise Larkin; older brother of Liam
Liam Larkin, son of Rory & Denise Larkin; younger brother of Kevin
Mariko Woods Larkin, wife of Kevin Larkin, mother to twins Daitaro & Daijiro
Mary Labrecque Larkin, wife of Brian Larkin and mother of twins Shannon & Sean
Mary Margaret (Molly) Larkin, daughter of patriarch John Larkin
Megan Larkin, daughter of Liam Larkin & Carly O'Reilly
Patrick Larkin, son of Roddy Larkin, father to Brian & Rory
Roderick (Roddy) Larkin, son of patriarch John Larkin
Rory Larkin, great-grandson of patriarch John Larkin
Sascha McShane Larkin, wife of Roddy Larkin
Sean Larkin, son of Brain & Mary Larkin; twin of Shannon
Shannon Larkin, daughter of Brain & Mary Larkin; twin of Sean
Tara Larkin, daughter of Brose Larkin and Bridget Gallagher-Larkin
Angela (Angie) Page, daughter of Scott Page & Shannon Larkin
Gabriel (Gabe) Page, son of Jamie Page and Désirée Sansovino
James (Jamie) Page, son of Scott Page & Shannon Larkin
Scott Page, husband of Shannon Larkin

THE SULLIVAN FAMILY

Carly O'Reilly, illegitimate daughter of George Sullivan & Susan O'Reilly
Aidan Sullivan, priest, son of Colm Sullivan and Maureen Kelly
Colm Sullivan, Lighthouse Keeper & lover of Molly Larkin
George Sullivan (aka Ben Webb), great-grandson of Colm Sullivan

Jean-Claude Sullivan, grandson of Colm Sullivan and father to George
Jennifer O'Connor Sullivan, wife of Jean-Claude and mother to George
John (Johnny) Sullivan, twin to Mick Sullivan
Layla (Barton-Brooks) Sullivan, wife of Mick Sullivan and mother to Jean-Claude
Linda Bisiker Sullivan, wife to George and mother of Michael and Sara Sullivan
Maureen Kelly Sullivan, wife of Colm Sullivan and mother to Father Aidan
Mick Sullivan, son of Colm Sullivan and father to Jean-Claude
Michael (Mike) Sullivan, son of George and Linda Sullivan
Sara Sullivan, daughter of George (*Ben Webb*) and Linda Sullivan
Ben Webb (aka George Sullivan), great-grandson of Colm Sullivan

OTHER FAMILY

Marianne Chamberlain, first wife of Sean Larkin; mother of Brose
Vittorio (Vito) Cimorelli, father of Tom Cimorelli
Phoebe McGarren, sister of Colleen Larkin
Elliot McShane, NYC newspaper publisher and father to Sascha Larkin
Dary O'Quinn, father of Anne Larkin
Maeve O'Quinn, younger sister of Anne Larkin
Carol O'Reilly, Susan's mother, Carly's grandmother
Samuel O'Reilly, Susan's father, Carly's grandfather
Susan O'Reilly, lover of George Sullivan & mother to Carly O'Reilly
Alexandra St. John, daughter of Andrea St. John & Scott Page, adopted by Angie Page
Adelina Sansovino, Jack Sansovino's mother
Antonio (Tony) Sansovino, Jack's older brother
Desideria (Désirée) Sansovino, Jack's younger sister, Jamie Page's wife
Mario Sansovino, Jack's father

LARKIN MANSION STAFF

Clea Barton-Brooks, head maid (worked 1873-1914).
Nigel Barton-Brooks, butler (worked 1871-1930).
Nicholas Bertrand, family chef (worked 1926-1947); lover to Colleen Larkin.
Daniel Borelli, carriage driver (1880).
Claire Colby, Phoebe McGarren's caretaker; sister to Amber Whale night manager Martin Colby.
Cora Ann Hogan, family chef (2002-2003); grandmother of Alexandra St. John.
Mae Jensen, family chef (worked 1951-1989).
Maureen Kelly, Molly Larkin's maid and Colm Sullivan's wife.
Bridget Maloney, nanny to Kevin and Liam Larkin (worked 1945-1964).
Claude Mondoux, beloved family chef (worked 1875-1936).
Bertrice (Berty) Soames, former waitress at Bruno's Café; family chef (2015-present).

FRIENDS & LOVERS

Kyle Adkins, OR tech at Larkin Animal Clinic, Jamie Page's lover
Kipling "Kip" Bathers, real estate agent and friend of Megan Larkin
Mason Berger, reporter for the *Larkin Gazette* & lover of Jean-Claude Sullivan
Lizbeth Bisiker, owner of Amber Whale Tavern & mistress of John Larkin
David Bonham, friend of Shannon Larkin, murdered by Mike Sullivan (1970)
Mia Bouchard, Jack Sansovino's lover in St. Catharines (Ontario)
Oliver Cooper, ex-husband of Petra Fortescue-Pemberton, father of Finley

Joe Dobson, fifth husband of Marianne Chamberlain
Lee Gunther, English professor at LCU; close friend of Shannon Larkin
Steve Halloway, Sara Sullivan's third husband, owner of *Knightshades* bike shop
Anita Howard, fashion designer and former lover of Scott Page
Elena Quiroz, old girlfriend of Brose Larkin
Jacopo (Jack) Sansovino, sous chef; Carly O'Reilly's rapist; lover to Jamie Page

LARKIN CITY CHARACTERS

Melinda Allen, legal secretary and daughter of Larkin family cook Mae Jensen
Patricia Alvarez, nurse at St. Patrick's Hospital
David Azoulay, Jewish merchant (*Azoulay Gems* on harbor), also Mayor
Deborah Azoulay, daughter of David & Lydia, runs *Azoulay Gems*
Lydia Azoulay, owner of *Azoulay Cleaners* on Main Street; wife of David
Rachel Azoulay, daughter of David & Lydia, victim of serial killer
Melinda Jensen Allen, legal secretary and daughter of Mae Jensen
Jameson Balsam, LCPD detective (worked 1945-1969)
Mark Balsam, LCPD detective (worked 1969-1996), son of Jameson, retired
Julian Bathers, Larkin City medical examiner (1920-1959)
Kipling (Kip) Bathers, real estate agent and friend of Megan Larkin
Kristoffer (Kit) Bathers, mortgage loan officer, Kip's father, mayoral contender
Lynn Bennett, architectural firm *Bennett Blueprints*, works for Jamie, Luke & Megan
Mason Berger, reporter for the *Larkin Gazette* & lover of Jean-Claude Sullivan
Adam Bisiker, pub owner and son of Lizbeth Bisiker
Lizbeth Bisiker, owner of Amber Whale Tavern & mistress of John Larkin
Nicholas (Nick) Brooks, station manager at KXLC
Thomas Callahan, sheriff of Larkin Village (*The Advent*)
Carolyn (Caro) Clyde, secretary to Larkin City attorney John Milkenson
Claire Colby, Phoebe McGarren's caretaker
Janey Colby, kitchen maid at Amber Whale, granddaughter of Martin Colby
Martin Colby, night manager at Amber Whale Tavern
Paul Collins, Captain of Larkin City Police Department (1979-present)
Celeste Corcoran, office manager at Amber Whale (*Hearts Desires*)
Kelly Davis, dress shop owner, later operates the *Nook & Cranny* in Larkin City
Teresa Davis, took over "Phoebe's Boutique"
Curtis Day, assistant to Detective Lyle Gould (LCPD)
Mavis Donnelly, stationary store employee (*The Keeper's Journal*)
Erik Fowler, judge presiding over Sean Larkin's divorce from Marianne Chamberlain
Chrissie Fox, intern at KXLC, Diana Larkin's assistant, victim of serial killer
Gerald Frazier, Larkin family attorney (*Quixotic Crossings*)
Edwin Gallontine, editor of the *Larkin Gazette* (*Quixotic Crossings*)
Lyle Gould, police officer at LCPD, later promoted to Detective and Chief
Justin (Boyo) Grady, LCU football player, friend of Derek and Diana Larkin
Dale Grainger, Larkin City coroner (1959-present)

Kelvin Hearn, priest at St. Patrick's Church, buries John Larkin (*Quixotic Crossings*)
Shelley Hove, Larkin City district attorney
Daniel Hunter, priest at St. Patrick's Church in Larkin City (buries Phoebe McGarren)
Samuel Jurgen, Larkin City attorney, represents Andrea St. John (*The Twilight*)
Katie Kirk, KXLC news anchor, victim of serial killer
Peg Landry, Scott Page's secretary at Larkin Mines
Padriac Mahoney, Catholic priest (St. Patrick's), marries Shannon Larkin & Scott Page
Miriam Maitland, Dana Larkin's mother
Seth Markham, airplane pilot
Deacon (Deke) Marshall, *guardian ad litem* for Alexandra St. John
Hyrum Mason, groundskeeper at Larkin City Cemetery
Kerry Matheson, Megan Larkin's assistant, victim of serial killer
Ainslie McFadden, owner of the *Wee Book Shop* in Larkin City
Alasdair McFadden, Ainslie's grandfather
Angus McFadden, opened the *Wee Book Shop* in 1890
Rory McGarren, doctor and father of Phoebe McGarren & Colleen Larkin
Richard Miles, second husband of Linda Bisiker Sullivan
John Milkenson, Carly O'Reilly's attorney
Nathaniel Mintz, Bridget Gallagher's obstetrician
Peter Naughton, Shannon Larkin's attorney
Martin Neeson, priest at St. Patrick's Church in Larkin City (during *The Advent*)
Ryan Nichols, district judge in Larkin City; presides over St. John case
Kay O'Neill, assistant to Megan Larkin after Kerry Matheson's murder
Kathy Overstreet, nurse at Larkin Animal Clinic
William (Willie) Perpetty, landlord of duplex at 212 Blue Harbor Lane
Mark Petrie, executive chef at Harbor View Catering
Malcolm Riddle, President of Larkin City University
Julie Rooney, receptionist at Harbor View Catering
Catharine Rountrup, secretary for Clamshell Employment Agency
Andrea St. John, Scott Page's lover, mother of Alexandra
Bertrice (Berty) Soames, senior waitress at Bruno's Café
Basil Tunstall, butcher at Larkin Grocery Store (*The Advent*)
Niles Wharritt, doctor and fiancé of Phoebe McGarren
Robert Wilbourn, Carly O'Reilly's doctor during pregnancy (*Enthrallment*)
Percival Wilson, clerk at the *Larkin Gazette* (*Quixotic Crossings*)
John Young, friend of Mike Sullivan; dated Dana Maitland

LARKIN CITY MAYORS

Edwin Aldridge (during *Enthrallment*, wife Maya)
David Azoulay (during *Hearts Desires*, *The Twilight*, *Megan's Legacy*, wife Lydia)
James Bretherton (during *The Advent*)
Clarence Southwick (during *Quixotic Crossings*, wife Abigail)

BOSTON

Allison Benney, TV news reporter; dated Luke Castaneda

Mark Marsala, attorney friend of Luke Castaneda

Sam Molson, security guard at Moakley Courthouse

NEW YORK CITY

Brad Fisher, sports writer for the *Manhattan Daily Journal*

Lynn Masters, secretary to Tom Cimorelli at the *Manhattan Daily Journal*

Kari Scott, reporter at the *Manhattan Daily Journal*

Earl Smith, doorman in Manhattan where Shannon Larkin owns a flat

BANGOR

Walter Hill, janitor at Bangor Mental Hospital, befriends Mike Sullivan

Glenn Wallin, friend of David Bonham (*The Twain Shall Meet*)

Melody Weiss, former girlfriend of David Bonham (*The Twain Shall Meet*)

IRELAND

Neve Egan, draftswoman at Larkin Mines in Dublin

Ned Fallon, bartender at McDowell's Pub in Dublin

Erin Feeny, housekeeper at Beara Peninsula cottage

Brian Laverty, Larkin Mines crew chief

©Deidre Dalton (*Collective Obsessions Saga*)

<http://deidredalton.com/>

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The following "Author's Note" is about the *Collective Obsessions Saga* by Deborah O'Toole writing as Deidre Dalton, which details the twenty-year writing process of nine novels in a series.

And so it begins...

I've always been partial to lengthy book reads. Quick "airport novels" are not my style. I prefer abundant, well-written stories that carry the reader through several days rather than just a few hours. What's the point of settling down with a good book if you can't enjoy it for a period of time?

The *Collective Obsessions Saga* was originally hatched from my first novel titled "Larkin" (now book three in the saga, known as *The Twain Shall Meet*). I wrote the story in its initial form in 1984. Over the ensuing years, the tale took many different directions.

More than a decade after the book was finished I had the seemingly impossible notion to continue the family saga. Some of the characters cried out for more - *closure if you will* - so I went back and created the beginning.

Evolution of the "Collective Obsessions Saga"

In essence, more than half the "Collective Obsessions Saga" was already written with the likes of *The Advent*, *The Twain Shall Meet* and *The Keeper's Journal*. These books turned into "parts" in the saga with their corresponding time periods in the storyline. However, since I was never too thrilled with the book titles (one of which was out of my control), they were changed for their appearance in the saga. The "missing years" also have new scenes and characters, most of which were created as I went along.

The series begins with *The Advent*, which runs from 1865 to 1920. John Larkin emigrates from Ireland to America and settles his self-named township in Maine. John builds a wealthy empire and grand estate, becoming one of the richest merchants on the Eastern Seaboard. Hiding behind the wealth and social position are quirky English servants, the effervescent family chef Claude Mondoux, John's paranoid-alcoholic wife Anne, their steadfast son Roderick and their mercurial daughter Mary Margaret, also affectionately known as Molly. Perhaps the blurb says it best: *Forbidden love and dark secrets haunt two Irish families hacking out a new life in 19th-century America. When Molly Larkin's father discovers her affair with lighthouse keeper Colm Sullivan, his reaction pitches her into madness. Yet the legacy forges a bond of blood that will endure for generations.*

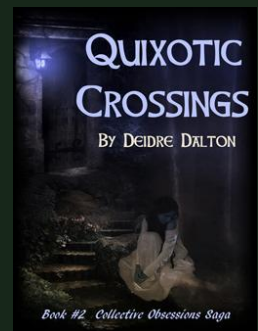


The book was originally known as *Passion Forsaken*. Quite frankly, I always disliked the title *Passion Forsaken*. However, through various publishers over the years, the moniker was beyond my control. The book is not a steamy romance in typical Harlequin fashion, nor is it a fluffy piece about unrequited love. The story launches the "Collective Obsessions Saga," which follows two Irish families from their arrival in America to the present day. It is

the beginning of a somewhat twisted family saga that has nothing to do with happy endings or white-picket fences. The books weave through more than one hundred forty years of fictional family history filled with avarice, madness, murder, mystery, paranormal activity, romance, self-indulgence and macabre Gothicism. It's hardly light reading.

Larkin family chef Claude Mondoux is one of my favorite characters in the "Collective Obsessions Saga." Although he only appears in the first two novels – *The Advent* and *Quixotic Crossings* - his exuberance for life, fluid intuition and deeply-felt compassion leave a lasting impression. Claude was an unusual and striking figure of a man. Tall and slender, he had blond hair and blue eyes, with a stylish gold earring stud in his left earlobe. He was energetic, forthright, effervescent, naturally friendly and slightly effeminate, but not the least bit subservient. His sexuality remained a deliberate mystery throughout his tenure in my imagination. I used the last name of "Mondoux" for Claude in tribute to my maternal grandmother Irene Mondoux, who was French-Canadian.

Since there was a forty-one year gap between *The Advent* and book three *The Twain Shall Meet*, I wrote a new second part for "Collective Obsessions" titled ***Quixotic Crossings***, which takes place between 1926 and 1958 and involves more about the characters of Claude Mondoux, Phoebe McGarren and Colm Sullivan. Molly Larkin also makes several ghostly appearances in *Quixotic Crossings*. Certain early scenes in the book include dialog and settings in Paris, so I boned-up on the area in which they took place. I find it ironic how a writer will sometimes endeavor to achieve location authenticity even though the story takes place in a work of fiction. A turn of a phrase or a visual often makes me think about a particular story I'm working on or inspires a new idea. One time, I heard the word "porcine" and immediately thought about the character named "Gerald Frazier" in *Quixotic Crossings*. Frazier is an attorney for the main family in the story, and also conducts himself rather luridly in his private life. In my working spreadsheet for the book, I described Frazier as a "short man with a rounded middle, all but bald with square spectacles perched on his bulbous nose." Because of his physical appearance, I included the words "porcine mouth" in one of the scenes where Frazier is entertaining a friend under dubious circumstances. Frazier is basically a decent guy in character, but he is still immensely repulsive at almost every turn.



"Larkin" was renamed ***The Twain Shall Meet*** (running from 1961 to 1975). The book was actually the first story I wrote in the saga, which mainly focuses on Shannon Larkin and her relationships with Mike Sullivan and Scott Page. Mike almost didn't make his debut as planned. I was inches away from a major character re-write before the final draft of book was settled, much to my alarm. I had to zealously pitch the character of Mike Sullivan to my editor, who was of the initial opinion he was far too young to have feelings of intense love and incapable of the emotional temerity to methodically stalk Shannon Larkin. I managed to convince my editor otherwise, so Mike's character remains unchanged in *The Twain Shall Meet*. As he is an integral part of the story, especially in the beginning of the

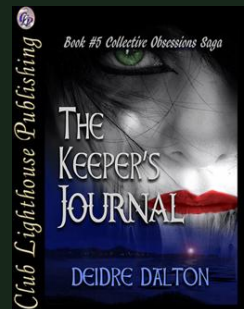


book, I'm relieved the artistic hurdle was overcome. And yes, I did base Mike's character on a "real" person. This particular fellow was someone I knew many years ago, and we did have a romance of sorts. However, the "real" Mike was not a demented stalker and we remained friends long after our summer fling. He read bits and pieces of *The Twain Shall Meet* and was tickled by the embellishments I chose to weave into his character.

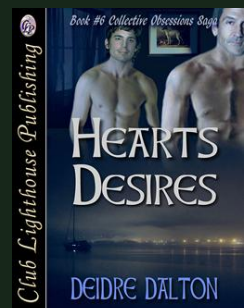
Book four ***Enthrallment*** (1980-1992) brings to light the origins of Carly O'Reilly and her relationship with the unknowing Liam Larkin. The late-in-life reunion between George Sullivan (*aka Ben Webb*) and Susan O'Reilly is revealed, and the gentle romance between Sean Larkin and Dana Maitland is explored. Jack Sansovino makes his debut in *Enthrallment*, the fiendish character becoming a dramatic part of the saga finale. A disturbing rape also takes place in the book. Writing the scene was particularly difficult. I was surprised by my emotional reaction as I wrote specifics, with anger and disgust being at the forefront. Second only to animal cruelty, sexual abuse and violence ranks high on my intolerance barometer. Rest assured, I didn't add the salacious content for shock value. However, the scuffle was necessary in the development of the loathsome Jack Sansovino, who reappears in *Hearts Desires*, *The Twilight* and *Megan's Legacy*.



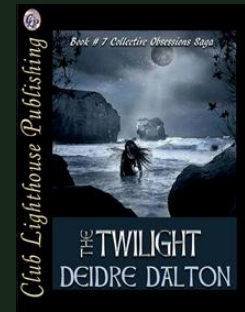
"Fall of the Curtain" is next (renamed ***The Keeper's Journal***), which takes place between the years 1994-1995. Shannon Larkin's daughter Angie Page discovers Colm Sullivan's old journal in the lighthouse keeper's cottage. The diary sheds light on the history between the Larkin and Sullivan families, but may be too late to stop Carly and Sara - the sisters of Mike Sullivan - from wreaking vengeance on the Larkin family for sins of the past. I developed the idea for *The Keeper's Journal* in 1998, when I lived in a crappy little trailer on the outskirts of Chubbuck, Idaho. My personal life was literal misery as my second marriage ground to a halt and financial resources were non-existent. Submerging my mind into a fictional world was the only way to deal with stress at the time, but in the end it proved fruitful on a creative level.



Hearts Desires (1996-2000) follows, interweaving the next generation of Sullivan and Larkin families, as well as the lives of Brose Larkin, Jamie Page and Angie Cimarelli. Jack Sansovino also resurfaces, his influence heavily felt by Jamie. *Hearts Desires* is the first and only of my books to be classified in the LGBT genre. Throughout all nine books in the "Collective Obsessions Saga," there are two central gay characters in relation to the Larkin family (Jean-Claude Sullivan in *Quixotic Crossings* and Jamie Page in *Hearts Desires*). This wasn't something I did on purpose, but rather the characters just happened to blend into the storyline with their lives already written in my imagination. In other words, the two specific characters simply - and inadvertently - worked out that way. They are also related by blood (second cousins twice removed), but never actually meet as they appear in different time periods.



The Twilight is part seven of "Collective Obsessions," covering the years between 2001 through 2004 and detailing the surprising death of a long-time character. Let me qualify that *The Twilight* (named such about sixteen years ago), has absolutely nothing to do with vampires and the like, but rather the sunset years of a long relationship. It was a difficult part to write because I killed off one of the main characters, much beloved by his fellow fictional counterparts despite some ugly facts that came to light after his death. A much-needed dash of humor appears as the brash and grumbling Kevin Larkin finally marries his long-suffering girlfriend Mariko Woods.



In ***Megan's Legacy***, the idea to include a serial killer in the storyline came to me like a lightning bolt one winter evening as I wrote the book. The direction became an integral element of the story.

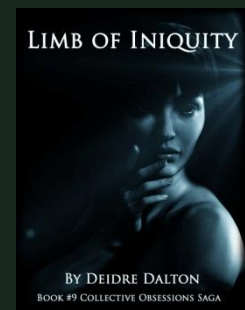
Megan Larkin - daughter of Carly O'Reilly (*Entrallment* and *The Keeper's Journal*) and Liam Larkin - is forced to discover the truth and to set herself free from a legacy of family secrets and obsessions.



Megan falls for Boston attorney Luke Castaneda. Locals try to warn Luke about Megan's family history of madness and tragedy, but he falls in love with the shy and retiring Megan, determined to make her his wife. Other forces are at work to ensure the union never takes place, bringing another veil of evil over the Larkin's and their self-named city in the guise of a serial killer.

Limb of Iniquity, the final book in the saga, brings to light the deadly antics of Alexandra St. John, who made her debut in *The Twilight*, Book #7 in the Collective Obsessions Saga.

In many ways, Alex's character begged for a continuation. She was the illegitimate daughter of Scott Page, who was the longtime beloved husband of Shannon Larkin. Alex was abandoned as a child by her biological mother (Andrea St. John), only to be adopted by Angela Page, Scott's oldest daughter. Alex and Shannon have a difficult relationship. Shannon has little use for her late husband's bastard, barely civil to the child even as she grows into an adult. The hostility also creates tension between Shannon and Angela, a friction that endures for years and creates a breakdown of the mother-daughter bond.



Alex's driving force is her hatred of Shannon. She blames the older woman for Andrea St. John's unhappiness and sorry lot in life, and begins to do everything in her power to destroy the Larkin matriarch. The grisly death of a prominent member of the Larkin family seems to cement the St. John's vow of revenge, which leads local police chief Lyle Gould to investigate Alex's background and the sudden reappearance of her birth mother.

The process brings the storyline full circle. *Limb of Iniquity* ends in 2022 fictional time, signaling the coda for "Collective Obsessions."

Considering I began writing the "Collective Obsessions" storyline a few decades ago, I'm stunned rather speechless that it's finished, once and for all. Even better, I'm very happy with the way the story ended. I envisioned agonizing over the finale, but it didn't happen that way. I knew exactly where I wanted to go, and that's where I took the story and its characters.

Writing Process

Part of the long writing process with the "Collective Obsessions Saga" involved killing off some of my favorite characters in the storyline. It's only natural as people age with each additional story. They cannot live forever. It might have been easier to leave the saga at four books, with some of the characters remaining immortal because I hadn't written proper endings for them. In creating the new book parts, I was forced to look at existing characters that were obviously aging. Some of them were "killed off" while others died naturally. I did away with some of them kindly and gently, while others met insidious endings.

I'm ever-watchful for inconsistencies, such as locations, physical characteristics, nick names and other generalities. For a series of nine books the size of "Collective Obsessions," the task becomes magnified. I mapped out a detailed family tree so as to avoid inconsistencies throughout the "Collective Obsessions Saga" and created spreadsheets for every part of the book to track character quirks and descriptions. The books became one enormous project which involved more than twenty years of writing and research, with several pit-stops in between as I carried out my own life.

Since I'm a writer often inspired by images, my character spreadsheet for "Collective Obsessions" became naturally larger as time progressed, but also included thumbnail pictures of people I felt represented my fictional characterizations. The images were not indicative of true personality traits of real people by a long shot, but rather a general idea of what I envisioned as the "outer shell" of each character. For instance, I based John Larkin's appearance on actor David Selby, who portrayed Quentin Collins in the *Dark Shadows* television serial. The physical aspects of Mayor David Azoulay, who appears in *Hearts Desires*, *The Twilight* and *Megan's Legacy*, was inspired by Mark Feuerstein, star of the USA Network series *Royal Pains*. Colm and Mike Sullivan, who are described as closely resembling one another in the various storylines, are based on Jason Connery as he appeared in *Robin of Sherwood*.

Each major character had a snapshot. That being said, I would like to emphasize that all books in the "Collective Obsessions Saga" are works of fiction. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead is purely coincidental.

Larkin City, Maine is entirely my own creation, although in my mind it exists between the real cities of Searsport and Stockton Springs. People assume I chose the locale because of

Stephen King's predilection for the place, but the selection was actually a result of my childhood fascination with the TV serial *Dark Shadows*, which was set in the fictional town of Collinwood, Maine.

Even though I'm a fiction writer first and foremost, more than once I've integrated the physical appearance or character traits of real people into my writing. These people can be family members, friends or complete strangers who just happen to catch my eye during the course of a normal day. The aforementioned people rarely recognize themselves after I've written fictional accounts around their characters, unless I choose to tell them about it.

Animals and treasured pets also figure into the mix on occasion. Aside from his own fictional wonderland found in the *Short Tales Collection*, my late pooch Foofer also makes an appearance in *The Keeper's Journal* where he is discovered abandoned by Jamie Page. Jamie, who is also a veterinarian, adopts Foofer. The two become inseparable, exemplifying the master and devoted canine relationship. There is more to Foofer's seemingly casual presence in the book, which is scant when compared to the unfolding human drama in the storyline. Foofer is Jamie's vigilant protector in *Hearts Desires*, where he distrusts his master's new friend Jack Sansovino with spot-on canine instinct. However, Foofer's true purpose becomes quite clear in *Megan's Legacy*, the final book in the "Collective Obsessions Saga." My cat Kiki also appears in *Megan's Legacy*, where she is found abandoned by the main character Megan Larkin. Kiki is mentioned fleetingly throughout the book, but she is part of the dramatic saga finale albeit in subtle fashion.

For a writer, fictional characters come alive and take on characteristics of their own. I can't claim to hear my characters actually speaking to me, but they do develop faces and personas of their own in my sometimes unpredictable imagination. There were times I become daunted by the size of "Collective Obsessions," but because I know the characters and the story so well I never lost faith. The process was still very long, however. There were days I felt as if I was getting absolutely nowhere, but then there were others that moved quickly to boost my confidence.

As anyone who submits their own written work knows, the pursuit of a publishing contract is not the easiest of undertakings. Preparing samples, queries and multiple synopses' is a lengthy process, not to mention the work involved in writing and completing a book in the first place. Rejections are numerous, and frequent. The ego can take quite a battering as time marches on, and any sort of personal life is almost out of the question. Perseverance is a necessary component, no matter how many rejections and critiques come your way. Some days it's not easy to stay positive when the inbox is full of form-letter-declines and short shrifts. Then there is the added negative bonus of "friends" who roll their eyes every time writing is mentioned, in essence relaying the message: "Why doesn't she just give up and get a real life?" It's difficult to communicate the passion that often comes with writing, especially to family and friends. I've left several friends in my wake because they were upset by the time I spent writing. When I'm focused I don't much care what people think, so needless to say the friends I've made over the years have sort of disappeared into the woodwork. It's sad, but I wouldn't change anything. If there is anything I can offer in the way of encouragement to aspiring authors, it is to *never give up on your dreams*.

I will never be blasé about receiving a publishing contract, whether it's for my first, eighth or fiftieth book. Each time it's exciting beyond words, and not to be taken for granted. I'm never likely to forget the years of hard work that came before the contracts, and the amount of work still to follow. I do give myself credit for maintaining dogged persistence, but I also believe keeping a positive outlook - no matter how desperate or unhappy life may seem at times - is an important factor. I decided to cut most of the negative from my life a long time ago, whether in relation to circumstances or people. It was the only way for me.

The completion of the "Collective Obsessions Saga" was bittersweet. While elated the story is finished I'm also a bit reluctant to let my characters go. They have frolicked in my imagination for so long, as if a part of my very being, that it was hard to turn that final page over, once and for all.

The writing process may have left me threadbare on a personal level, but it has been deeply satisfying in all the ways that truly matter to me.

Deidre Dalton

(aka Deborah O'Toole)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deidre Dalton is author of the *Bloodline Trilogy*, which follows the uniquely magical journey of three women through time. Books in the trilogy include *Bloodfrost*, *Bloodlust* and *Blood & Soul*.



She is also author of the *Collective Obsessions Saga*, which chronicles the extraordinary loves and intricate obsessions between two families sweeping a span of more than one hundred years, all set against the backdrop of a Gothic seaside mansion in Maine. Titles in the nine-part family saga include *The Advent*, *Quixotic Crossings*, *The Twain Shall Meet*, *Enthrallment*, *The Keeper's Journal*, *Hearts Desires*, *The Twilight*, *Megan's Legacy*, and *Limb of Iniquity*.

Deidre is author and editor of the *Larkin Community Cookbook*, which is a compilation of recipes mentioned or prepared by characters in the *Collective Obsessions Saga*, and the electronic versions of *About Larkin* (companion guide to the *Collective Obsessions Saga*), and *The Private Journal of Colm Sullivan*.

Writing under the her real name of Deborah O'Toole, Deidre is also author of the fiction titles *Celtic Remnants*, *Glinhaven*, *Mind Sweeper*, *The Crypt Artist*, the *Short Tales Collection* (juvenile fiction), and a book of poetry known as *Torn Bits & Pieces*.

For more, visit <https://deborahotoole.com/>.

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

For more, visit <https://deborahotoole.com/FoodFare/>.

Deidre is a native of Greenwich, Connecticut. She has also lived in San Francisco, Reno and Spokane, among other US cities. She currently resides in the mountain west.

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