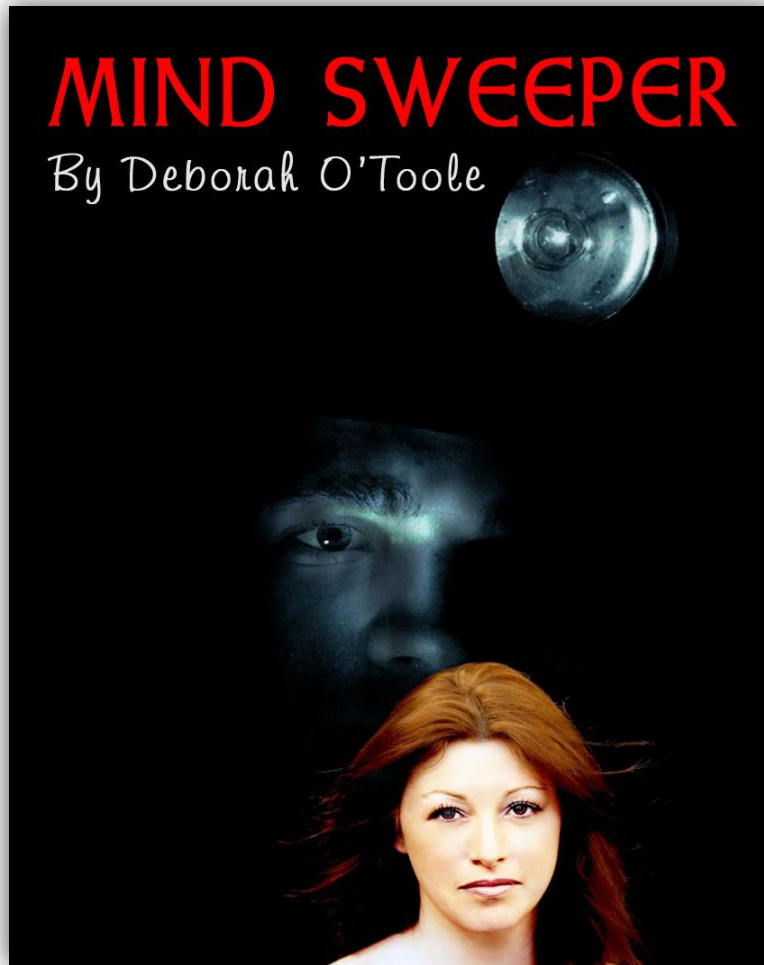


Questions & Answers about:

MIND SWEEPER

By Deborah O'Toole



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ABOUT "MIND SWEEPER"

Mind Sweeper is a uniquely haunting mystery/suspense novel by Deborah O'Toole was released by Club Lighthouse Publishing in 2021.

Newly-widowed Beth Mills accepts an outpouring of sympathy from her community after a freak mining accident takes the life of her husband, Aaron. Unbeknownst to anyone, she is secretly delighted that her cruel husband is lost to her, but never expects his vicious ghost to return and haunt her in more ways than one.

For more, go to:

<https://deborahotoole.com/>

The following is a general "Question & Answer" session about *Mind Sweeper* by Deborah O'Toole.

Where did you get the idea for the storyline in "Mind Sweeper"?

It was August 2007. I was watching *MSNBC News* on television at my house in Spokane, Washington when there was a break in regular coverage to report the Crandall Mines disaster in Utah. While the accident was tragic, within minutes the idea for *Mind Sweeper* began formulating in my head. I don't typically get inspiration from bad news on the tube, but this time it was different. I think I had the complete outline for my story within an hour, all jotted down on paper. Later that day, I began writing in earnest.

The main character in the story – Beth Mills – is a battered woman who is frankly relieved her abusive husband was killed in a mining accident. Did you draw on her circumstances from personal experience?

Fortunately, I've never been in a physically abusive relationship. However, I've been on the receiving end of emotional and verbal abuse before, as I'm sure most people have been at one time or another. It wasn't hard to equate the feelings of anger and resentment from verbal abuse into a fictional aspect, although all incidents in the book came from my imagination.

Physical abuse is not something to be taken lightly. I tread *very* carefully when writing certain scenes for *Mind Sweeper*.

Beth's abuser – her late husband Aaron – appears in her dreams following the mining accident. Were the scenes meant to portray her as emotionally vulnerable because of the years of violence she suffered at the hands of her husband?

Beth lived in fear for many years before Aaron died. She can't help but be relieved that he is out of her life for good, or so she thinks. The stress on her emotional makeup was tremendous, which caused the core of her entire personality to shift. Even after he was gone, Beth still felt residual terror in her own home, especially when he begins to appear in her dreams. When she realizes there is more truth than fiction to her dreams, the sick dread of her marriage returns. Even though she thinks he's safely buried in the family crypt just yards from her home, he is ever-present in her mind as if he's still alive.

After her dreams, Beth can smell the lingering aroma of her dead husband's "Aqua Velva" aftershave, which makes her think she might be losing her mind. Why did you choose "Aqua Velva" as a trigger?

Smells can often trigger memories, or reactions to certain situations. Odd, isn't it? We can forget about an incident for years – whether it's bad or good – and one little thing, such as a particular smell, can bring it all back. The human mind is an amazing organ, obviously. I wanted to explore Beth's senses in relation to her memories of Aaron.

Aside from the physical violence, Aaron was also verbally abusive. Before he died, he used to castigate her for the way she looked, the foods she ate and the way she kept house. When she's finally rid of him, she lets cleaning slide and eats what she wants.

For Beth, it's like being set free for the first time in years. She can now enjoy even the most simplest of things, whereas before she wouldn't dare. She waits until after Aaron's funeral, and then loads up on her favorite foods: frozen burritos and waffles, TV dinners, chocolate ice cream, candy bars, popcorn, butter, and real cream for her coffee.

In the early years of her marriage to Aaron, Beth miscarries after Aaron beats her. Later, on the same day her mother dies, Aaron also shoots and kills Beth's beloved dog Gaby. How difficult were those scenes to write?

Just when Beth thinks it can't get any worse, more hell comes her way. Writing the scenes of physical abuse were perhaps the most difficult. I found myself getting angry even as I put the words to page. Of course, it's all fiction but one can't help be disturbed by the events as they unfold. Knowing such acts of violence can and do occur on a daily basis in real domestic settings is the most alarming part of all. In other words, wrapping the scenes in a cloak of fiction does not detract from acts of violence that happen in real life.

I also dislike writing about animals being hurt, but I had to underline the extent of Aaron's depravity. In a way, it makes it easier to understand when Beth is overjoyed by his death.

How did you become knowledgeable about mining specifics – such as common mining terms and possible causes for mine collapses?

I did a great deal of research. I also read available documents in relation to mining accidents, such as MSHA (*Mine Safety & Health Administration*) reports in order to comprehend the lingo. While the Crandall Mine disaster inspired *Mind Sweeper*, I didn't use their statistics in creating the mine collapse in the story. I drew from several resources, inside and outside the United States, to devise my own fictional - yet plausible - disaster.

In addition, my late father (*Bernard "Barney" O'Toole*) was a Geophysicist, and his life's work revolved around various types of mining in all parts of the world. I learned much from him about the industry. Of all my books, dedicating *Mind Sweeper* to him seemed the most apropos.

Beth falls in love again, despite the hell she's been through.

At first, I wasn't going to give Beth a romantic interest after her husband died. Then as I went along, I realized she needed something to give her hope; *something* that makes her believe love exists in good form rather than the ugliness she grew accustomed to.

Real life doesn't always lend itself to fairytale scenarios, but it was nice to write a happy ending for a change.

"MIND SWEEPER" INFORMATION

Mind Sweeper by Deborah O'Toole was released by Club Lighthouse Publishing in 2021.



BOOK DETAILS

Paperback ISBN: 979-8-59325-262-3; Amazon.

Paperback ASIN: B08T79LZZM.

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-66623-721-4; Barnes & Noble.

Paperback BNID: 1102802196.

Paperback released: January 14, 2021.

E-Book ISBN: 978-1-77217-148-8.

Kindle ASIN: B08SGS3T17; Amazon.

Kindle released: January 7, 2021.

Nook BNID: 2940162564966; Barnes & Noble.

Nook released: January 14, 2021

Model photo: (C) Arlen Roche.

Cover Art: Terrie Lynn Balmer, James Wason & Webs Divine.

EXTRAS:

Mind Sweeper (official website):

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

Mind Sweeper @ Facebook:

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

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

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

Writing as Deidre Dalton, Deborah is author of the "Collective Obsessions Saga," which chronicles the extraordinary loves and dark obsessions between two families sweeping a span of more than 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 three women through time. The trilogy includes *Bloodfrost*, *Bloodlust* and *Blood & Soul*.

Using the pseudonym Shenanchie O'Toole, Deborah also writes for the 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*.



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