



Discussion: "In the Shadow of the King"

By Deborah O'Toole

"In the Shadow of the King" is a work of semi-fiction. Some of the names, characters, places and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to a specific portion of actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and beyond the intent of the author.

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ABOUT

In the Shadow of the King by Deborah O'Toole is a semi-fictional account of the dramatic life of Sir Francis Bryan, confidant to King Henry VIII.

Sir Francis Bryan was a man of letters who distinguished himself as a cipher, diplomat, poet, sailor and soldier. He was also knight bannerette, chevalier, Lord of the Tor Bryan, chief gentleman of the privy chamber, Lord Chief Justice of Ireland and a gifted sportsman. He lost an eye during a jousting tournament and forever after wore a rakish eye patch, which merely added to his allure.

During his time in Henry VIII's court and one of the few who escaped the King's wrath, Bryan was dubbed the "one-eyed Vicar of Hell" by the King's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, because of his apparent lack of scruples and legendary sexual exploits. Bryan had a well-earned reputation as a self-indulgent libertine, and was said to have been a willing accomplice in the King's tangled love affairs.

Bryan's irresistible charm masked an inveterate intriguer full of barely-contained energy. He could be duplicitous, manipulative and promiscuous as well as highly articulate, ferociously witty and generous when the mood struck him. In videlicet, he was the perfect courtier. Many observers were astounded by the familiarity he used towards Henry VIII, especially in speaking his mind. However, Bryan was no creature of principle. By bending his opinions to fit the King's policy, he managed to remain in favor throughout Henry VIII's reign.

In the Shadow of the King brings to life the story of Sir Francis Bryan, as told by one of his descendants in the twenty-first century.

The book was released by Club Lighthouse Publishing in July 2023.

STORYLINE DISCUSSION

- Were you aware of the history of Sir Francis Bryan prior to reading *In the Shadow of the King*?
- Did you learn anything new about Sir Francis Bryan and his life after reading *In the Shadow of the King*?
- Did you like or dislike the storyline shift back and forth between modern time to the 1500s *In the Shadow of the King*? If yes or no, why?
- Did you find Sir Francis Bryan to be a likeable character *In the Shadow of the King*? If yes or no, why?
- Did you find historical events depicted *In the Shadow of the King* to be accurately portrayed in scenes and pertinent dialogs? If yes or no, why?
- Was the interaction between Sir Francis Bryan and Henry VIII in the storyline of *In the Shadow of the King* what you expected it to be?
- In what ways did the semi-fictional treatment of Sir Francis Bryan's life differ from historical accounts as portrayed *In the Shadow of the King*? Is it apparent where the author created fictional retellings of events and dialogs?
- Is Henry VIII portrayed as a likeable character *In the Shadow of the King*? If yes or no, why?

AUTHOR-SPECIFIC DISCUSSION

- Did the author succeed in creating clear and understandable dialog *In the Shadow of the King*? If yes or no, why?
- Sir Francis Bryan's cause of death was actually never determined in history. Were you satisfied by the author's depiction of his last day *In the Shadow of the King*? If yes or no, why?
- Even though Marsworth and Greenwich Palace no longer exist, did you find their descriptions in the storyline of *In the Shadow of the King* to be realistic and easy to imagine?
- Did the author blend the factual and fictional aspects of *In the Shadow of the King* in a seamless manner? If yes or no, why?
- After reading *In the Shadow of the King*, did you learn anything new about Tudor history that you didn't know before? If so, what did you learn?
- There are no existing portraits of Sir Francis Bryan. Did you find his physical description in the pages of *In the Shadow of the King* to be visible in the mind's eye? If yes or no, why?
- Did the portrayal of the joust in which Sir Francis Bryan lost an eye seem realistic *In the Shadow of the King*? If yes or no, why?

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*.



Deborah O'Toole

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BOOKS BY DEBORAH O'TOOLE

Celtic Remnants
The Crypt Artist
Glinhaven
In the Shadow of the King
Mind Sweeper
Torn Bits & Pieces

WRITING AS DEIDRE DALTON

THE BLOODLINE TRILOGY:

Bloodfrost
Bloodlust
Blood & Soul

COLLECTIVE OBSESSIONS SAGA:

Hearts in Sorrow
The Advent
Quixotic Crossings
The Twain Shall Meet
Enthrallment
The Keeper's Journal
Hearts Desires
The Twilight
Megan's Legacy
Limb of Iniquity

MISCELLANEOUS

Glinhaven Cookery

(Scottish-themed recipes mentioned or prepared by characters in "Glinhaven" by Deborah O'Toole).

Historical Essays by Deborah O'Toole

(Billy the Kid, Anne Boleyn, Jack the Ripper, Loch Ness Monster, U.S. Political Parties)

The King's Table

(Tudor recipes mentioned or prepared by characters in "In the Shadow of the King" by Deborah O'Toole).

Larkin Community Cookbook

(Recipes mentioned or prepared by characters in the "Collective Obsessions Saga" by Deidre Dalton)

For more, go to: <https://deborahotoole.com/books.htm>