

# SABLE

# GREY



MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2009

## *Features*

**SABLEGREY.NET | 2**

News, Events, and 30 minute vacation

**Rediscover the Magic of Xanth | 3**

A Spell of Chameleon

**Featured Author | 10**

Denyse Bridger

**The Proposition | 16**

Denyse Bridger

## SABLE GREY

*Q & A with the woman  
behind the name*

*Page 6*

*Photo by William Searle*



**Feb 1**  
eBook Club meeting

**Feb 3**  
Sable's Birthday,  
A.L. Debran's Birthday  
Magazine Release

**Feb 6**  
Chat at [Lariats & Latigo](#)

**Feb 13**  
Chat at [Lariats & Latigo](#)

**Feb 20**  
Chat at [Lariats & Latigo](#)

**Feb 27**  
Chat at [Lariats & Latigo](#)

**Feb 28**  
Chat at  
[Cobblestone Press](#)

**eBook Club News**

February book chosen: [The Killer Among Them](#)  
By [Anita Whiting](#)

**Contest News**

Running Feb—July  
Winner to be announced on July 3

*Prize:* Bag from Total Image Salon & Day Spa in Clinton, MS filled with some of Sable's favorite things such as jewelry, books, candy, etc

*How to enter:*

Join the [SableGrey.net](#) website. A name will be randomly drawn from the [SableGrey.net](#) members.

**Member News**

Cover Art Design and Writing Workshops are currently in development for members of [SableGrey.net](#)



Join the Sable Grey newsletter to receive reminders of all of Sable's events and to be entered into special contests only for newsletter subscribers!

Join at [SABLEGREY.NET](#)

We happily interrupt your regular scheduled chaos for an important and much needed

**30 MIN VACATION**



Choose your music and listen FREE online  
<http://www.musiccovery.com/>

Grab a FREE book to read  
<http://www.sablegrey.net/ChristysGhost.pdf>



Set your FREE online timer for 30 minutes.  
<http://online-stopwatch.com>



Now go enjoy your vacation!

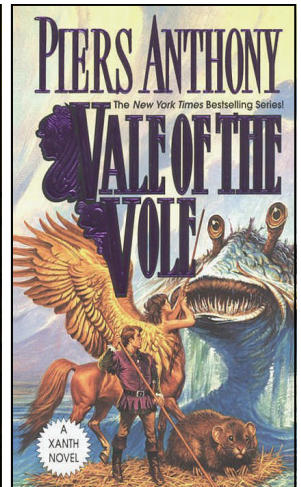
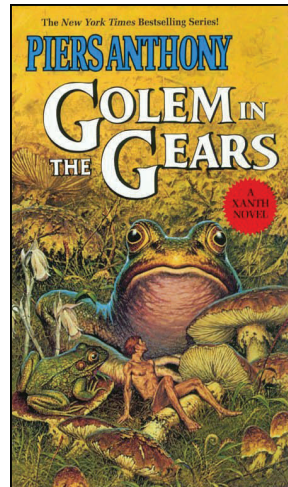
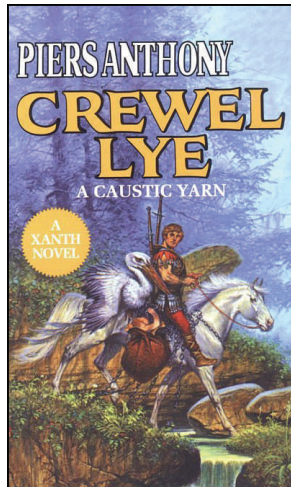
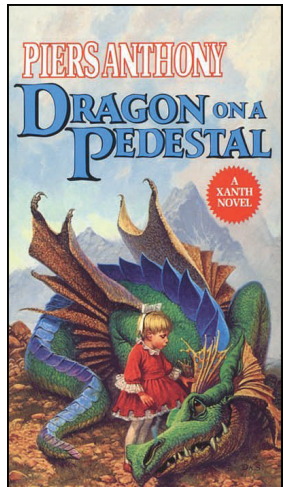
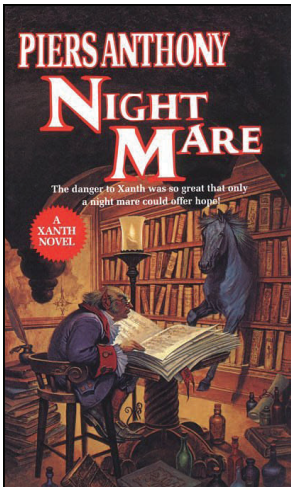
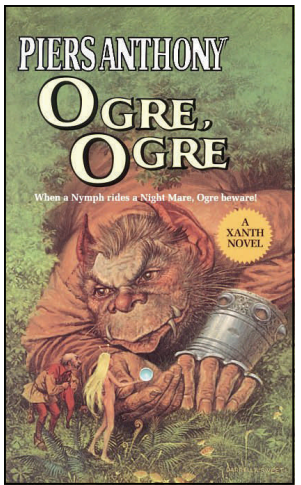
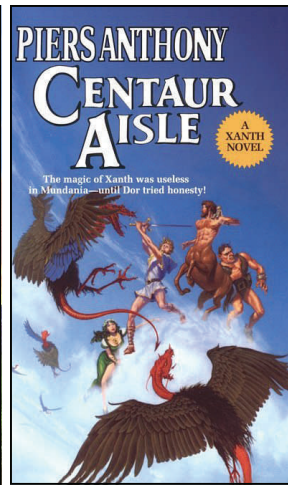
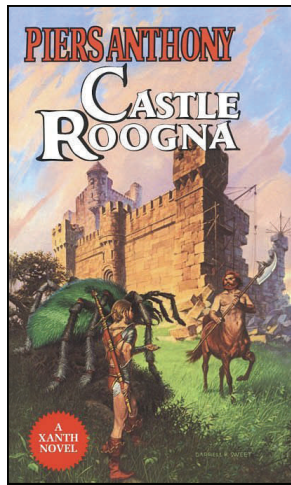
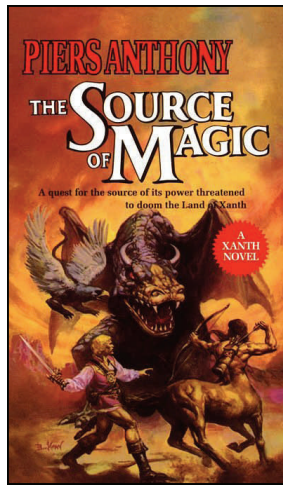
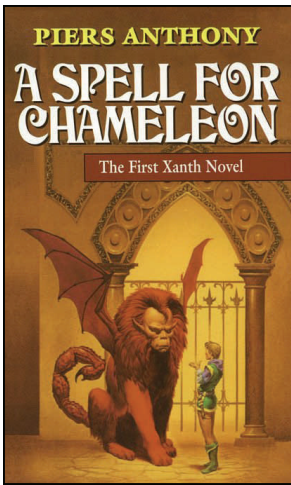


REDISCOVER THE MAGIC OF

# XANTH

PIERS ANTHONY

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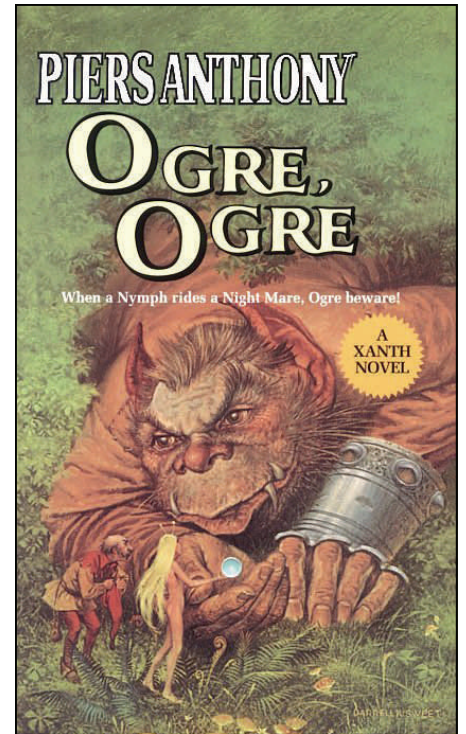
# REDISCOVER THE MAGIC

**It is no surprise that someone as involved in the fiction industry as I am, would** have always had a love of books, even as a child. Most times readers outgrow and discard the books they read in their youth – I do not. I take books with me wherever I go, holding on to them like lifelong companions. Some I've read so many times that they are as familiar to me as my own voice. Among those cherished tomes are the Xanth novels.

I was only twelve years old when I read *Ogre, Ogre*, a book in the fantasy series called Xanth. My mother and father were already huge fans of author, Piers Anthony, and I found the book nestled there on their bookshelf alongside more of his titles.

I was hooked by the first page. Upon completion, I returned to the bookcase to find the first book in the series, *A Spell for Chameleon*. It's no exaggeration to say that the Xanth books were among the first of most influential on my aspirations of becoming a writer.

What I came away from the Xanth books were the characters, how each of them had a believable motivation that guided them through the story, and that at the same time each were also travelling a personal journey as well. Upon looking back at my own stories, I find this a frequent theme in many of my manuscripts, even in earlier works before I knew the "rules" of plot, conflict, and sacrifice.



A few months ago, I attended a writer's workshop at my local RWA group where I was asked to list my five all time favorite movies and name the themes that ran through each of them. It was a fun exercise to nail the type of story to which a writer is most heavily drawn. Once we listed our favorites, we went through them as a group to evaluate the themes. I was shocked to find, though I shouldn't have been, that while many of the other romance author's themes ran along the lines of everlasting love, love conquers all, and other traditional themes of romance, every movie I listed had a character travelling a journey set by the world around them and four out of the five had a huge emphasis on sacrifice and conflict.

Since these books were so very important to my creative development, I've decided to go back and read them all again, now 23 years later. I invite you to journey with me through the books that in my youth wove creativity through my veins and to rediscover the magic of Xanth.

REDISCOVER THE MAGIC OF

# XANTH

PIERS ANTHONY

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## THE BOOK THAT STARTED IT ALL...

**PIERS ANTHONY**

### A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON

The First Xanth Novel



#### A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON First Book of the Xanth Novels

After inadvertently breaking Xanth law by not having a magical talent, Bink returns to Xanth with Chameleon, a woman whose intelligence and beauty changes depending on the time of the month, and Trent, an evil magician, once exiled for attempting to usurp the throne of Xanth.

Bink discovers his magical talent but now he must make the hardest decision of his life: whether to stop Trent from becoming King of Xanth, or to help him succeed.



## MEET THE WOMAN BEHIND THE NAME

Born Amy Jo Watkins on February 3rd, 1974 in Indianola Mississippi, Sable Grey has worked since she was fourteen years old. Starting as a short order cook, she has held positions as housekeeper, waitress, salesperson, department store supervisor, and manager at a fast food restaurant.

In 1996, the year before she married Colorado native, [William Searle](#), she founded and ran for five years a not for profit organization that offered peer counseling for adult survivors of abuse.

Though she'd been an avid reader and writer all of her life, Sable didn't make her way into the literary industry until 2004, when she landed her first publication, [The Pirate's Jewel](#), with electronic publisher, [Liquid Silver Books](#).

Several titles later, she and her best friend, [Deanna Lee](#), started their own romance publisher called [Cobblestone Press](#), thus beginning Sable's drive to help authors achieve publication success.

In 2008, Sable started a second business called [Sable Grey, LLC](#), a company where she could continue to offer literary entertainment and services to authors and other creative individuals.

Sable's unwavering dedication to the success of authors has earned her the respect of authors, publishers, and other industry professionals. She continues her journey with as much excitement and drive as when she began five years ago.

# SABLE GREY

# SABLE GREY INTERVIEW



**Q: Cover Artist, Author, Publisher, and now Literary Agent and second business owner, how do you find time to do it all?**

**Sable:** I have no children and I don't sleep much.

It's true I do a lot but I like to keep busy and to be productive. I've always equated my personal value to the quality of work I do. Quality is not something you can achieve without dedicating yourself to whatever you do. So I've dedicated myself and most times that means working 13 to 15 hour days.

**Q: Do you have ANY spare time and if so, what do you do in that time?**

**Sable:** I like reading and writing of course, but I also enjoy watching movies and reality T.V. with my husband, Bill. I also like to visit the shops in downtown Clinton, usually spending more money that I should at the [Wyatt Waters](#) art gallery.

On the weekends, I like to visit my parent's country home where I can show up anytime to just relax and center myself.

**Q: You are a successful romance author as well as cover artist. Have you always been creative?**

**Sable:** Creativity runs in my family. My mother is a photographer and paints. My father has a knack for building things. My three sisters can all sing, one of which also paints wall and room murals.

I recently learned from my grandmother that my mother wrote stories when she was younger. I can remember her writing a story when I was child but did not realize that it was not a one time instance.

I always enjoyed art and literature in school and I wrote my first story when I was a child. In an effort to get me out of her hair, my mother told me to write a story for her about a duck, a rock, and a fork.

For hours I worked on the project, giving my mother a little peace in the process, and when I was finished I had my first story written, titled The Duck, The Rock, and The Fork.

**Q: In your opinion, what is the best thing about you?**

**Sable:** My loyalty to those I care for. I keep friends forever if they'll have me.

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# SABLE GREY INTERVIEW

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**Q:** In your opinion, what is your worst thing about you?

**Sable:** My patience, or lack of, for stupidity.

**Q:** It's said you can tell a lot about someone by who they hold company with. Who are 7 important people in your life and can you tell us about them?

**Sable:** My mother, **JoAnne Vance**, is a remarkable woman. Since my grandfather has been ill, she has shown so much strength that I am just in awe of her energy and how tough she is. And still she finds time to be there for me if I need her. I try to be there for her too.

My husband, **Bill**, is also an artist. He creates some wonderful metal sculptures and he writes a little too. Lord knows we've been through some tough times in our eleven years together but we still hang on. I will never love another the way I love him.

**Grover Ainsworth** has been one of my best friends since grade school and has always been like a brother to me. His family loves me and my family loves him. Grover is on his third year in the Peace Corps and is currently working in Africa. Even though I miss him terribly, I am so very proud of him and all the wonderful things he does.

I met **Deanna Lee** in 2004. I was running an online writer's group and had a section for authors who were serious about trying to achieve publication. Deanna Lee applied to join the section and in her application said she wasn't sure where the writing thing would go. When I told her that the group was for those who were serious about getting published, she emailed me back with a snotty, holier than thou email, basically letting me know that even though she wouldn't say it, she was indeed as serious as I was about writing and success. I liked her instantly and we've been partners in crime ever since.

**Dan Skinner** is an artist and photographer I met in 2005. His work is as amazing as he is a person. When I'm unsure of myself, he hands out inspiration and encouragement like it's candy. And I know of NO ONE who has such a full life. His philosophy is that everything that happens in life is an opportunity to learn and grow as an individual and he has helped me to learn to embrace life and appreciate my accomplishments by example.

**A.L. Debran** was one of the first authors published at Cobblestone Press in 2006. She came to visit me in

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# SABLE GREY INTERVIEW

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Mississippi and we became fast friends and have remained friends through the years. I love how talented she is but most of all, I love her sense of humor. She's the one I call when I'm trying to find sanity so I don't start choking random idiots on the street.

**Vicki Waters** is the most free spirited of those I call friends. Even when she is dealing with life and whatever it throws at her, there is an energy about her that is pure and seemingly untouchable by life's shadows. She is one of those shining people that radiates light and love. Vicki is the kind of person that can make you feel good about being you just by being herself.

**Q: Has your experience in the romance industry changed you at all?**

**Sable:** Professionally, my experience has given me a better understanding of the industry as well as the tools I need to move forward and succeed.

As for me personally, I don't think I've changed much at all because of my work. I'm still the same nut I've always been. Age has done more in changing my personality, and for the better. I used to care very much what people thought of me. As I've gotten older, I've found I really don't require anyone's approval except my own. I'm happy with who am I and the life I have so that's all that matters.

**Q: Since it's your birthday, is there any life advice you'd like to give before you start your celebrations?**



**Sable:** Work hard, play harder. They say to live every day like it's your last. I say live each day as the first of the rest of your life. Remove the toxic people from your around you, you know who I mean, and remember to tell those dearest that you love and appreciate them. A person's birthday is the celebration of their birth into this exciting world but every day should be a celebration of his/her existence. And...there is no such thing as too much chocolate.

*Photography for this article provided by JoAnne Vance.*



# DENYSÉ BRIDGER

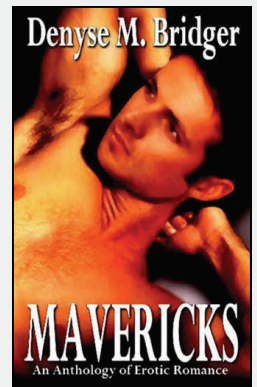
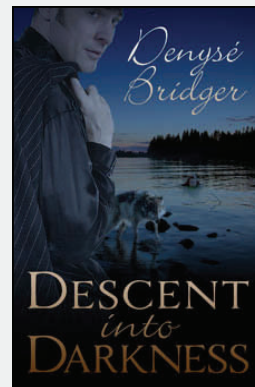
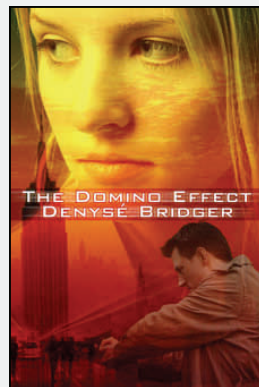
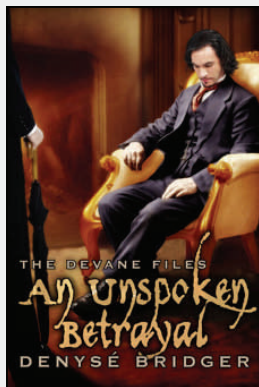
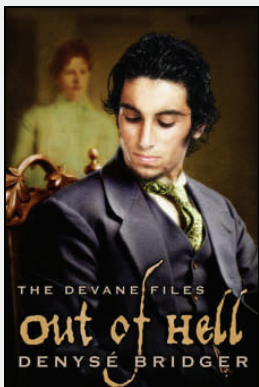
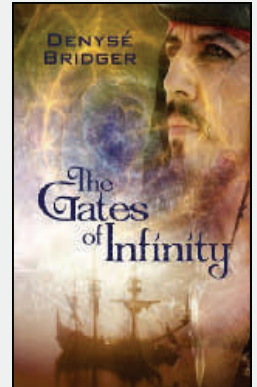
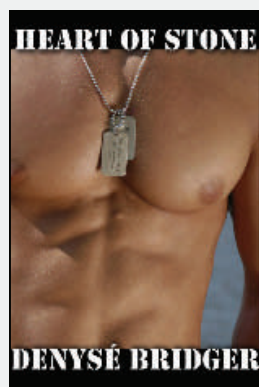
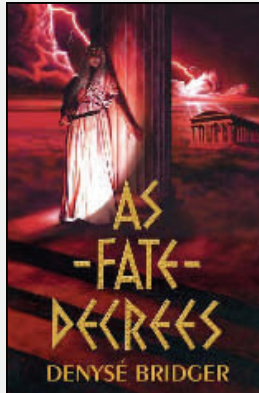
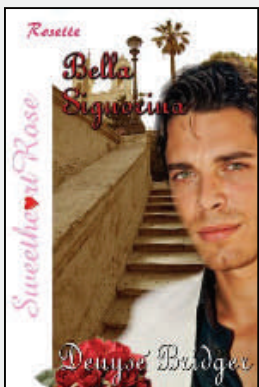


A native of Atlantic Canada, Denysé Bridger was born in the country's Easternmost province, Newfoundland, and raised in Nova Scotia. A lifelong dreamer, She began writing at an early age and can't recall a time when she wasn't creating in some artistic form. She is presently at work on several very exciting projects, many of which are inspired by the wonderful romantic love songs of Italy, and the wonderful men who have brought this music back to today's audience.

With almost twenty titles in publication and over thirty titles on her coming soon list, Denysé has built a fan base in both the erotic and non erotic markets.

To stay current with all projects, or to just say hello, email Denysé through the contact link on her website. Or sign up for her newsletter, which is called Romance and Fantasy. If you prefer to chat with her and other readers, the newsgroup is open to everyone: Denysé Bridger News.

Website: <http://www.denysebridger.com>

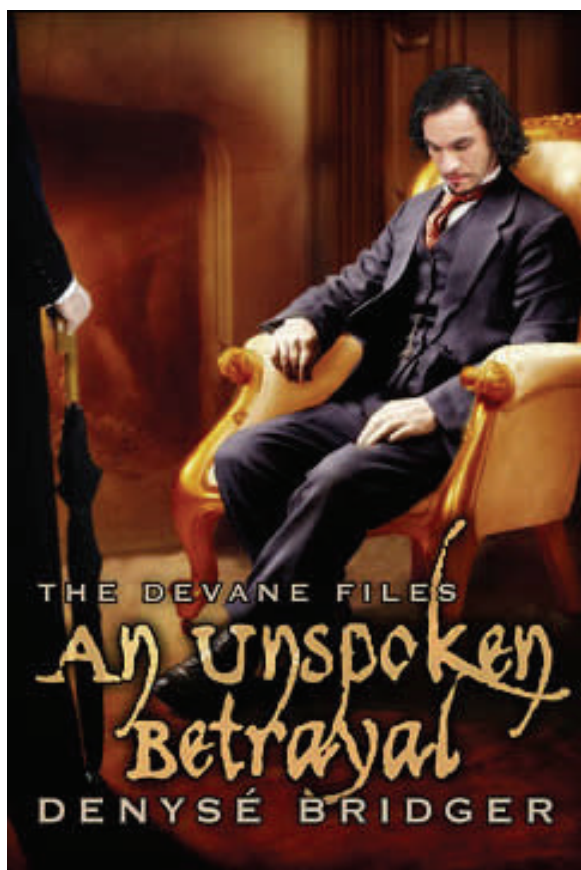
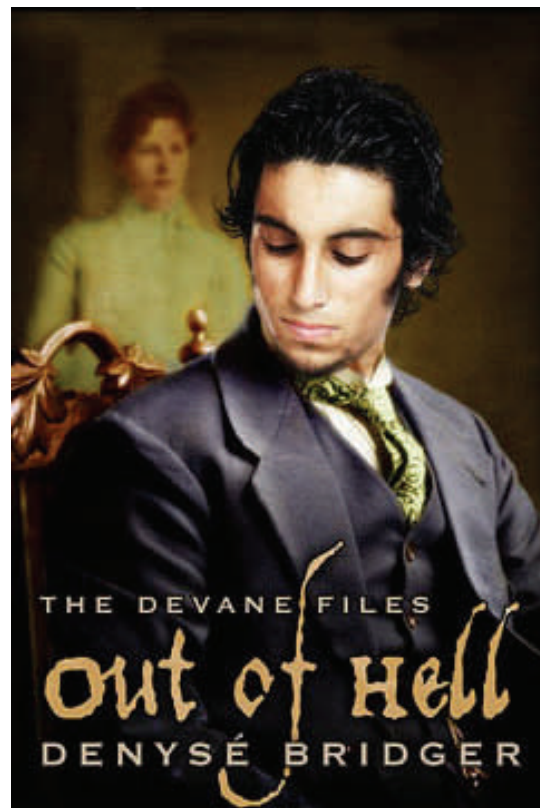


## AUTHOR INTERVIEW DENYSÉ BRIDGER

**Sable:** What do you write and how did you get started writing in this genre?

**Denysé:** I write a little bit of everything, honestly. I don't like staying with one genre, because to me that just gets repetitive to the reader and to me. I like to explore, and mix genres, and see if I can come up with a new twist to entertain people. I love the idea that no one can really anticipate what will come out next. The only true constants are the romance element, and to some extent the happy ending.

My preferred genre is Historical, be it fantasy or romance. I love the elements of weaving history into a new tapestry – as I've done with the Devane books. We take a historical incident, and swath it in a new shroud... add a touch of mystery, and a touch of romance to an existing piece of history. This is the approach I took with my first major release, too, the fantasy novel AS FATE DECREEES. I took Greek Mythology and created a new thread... it was nominated for a major award less than six months after the release, so I guess it worked for people!



**Sable:** Your book, *Out of Hell*, was chosen for the first read in my eBook Club. Can you tell those unfamiliar with *The Devane Files* a little about the series and what inspired you to write the titles currently available in this series?

**Denysé:** *The Devane Files* began when I fell in love with Johnny Depp's interpretation of Frederick Abberline in *FROM HELL*. I chose a bit of that allure to inject into Inspector Michael Devane, then added a lot of original elements to his personality. He has a few things in common with Depp's character, but Frederick Abberline is **not** Michael Devane. They are distinctly different men, with very different motivations for their actions and attitudes.

Devane is a haunted man, an opium addict, and a brilliant clairvoyant. Abberline appears in the second book, and we are told early on that it was his insistence that brought Michael into the Ripper case – it's mentioned at one point that Devane, as a teenage boy, was infatuated with one of the Ripper's victims,

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and there is his personal link to the case.

The third book is in the planning stages, and I'm trying to decide if I want to bring in a paranormal element to the story, or keep it as Historical and grounded solely in the realms already established. Maybe the folks who are reading the book for the club would be willing to let me know their thoughts on it? I was planning to introduce a long-estranged brother back into Michael's life, a man that Bethany finds very intriguing, much to Michael's concern.

**“Success with writing in general is essentially 90% perseverance and 10% talent.”**

**Sable:** Most people who've met me, know I'm a sucker for the hero in a book. A lot of authors compare their heroes to movie stars or movie characters. Can you tell readers more about the yummy Inspector Michael Devane and if was he inspired by any famous person or character?

**Denysé:** Physically, it was very odd “casting” Michael in my mind. I had the Depp image, but it wasn't really Michael, if you know what I mean? Then I saw “The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen” and I almost fell over the moment I saw “Dorian Gray” because Stuart Townsend WAS Michael Devane!! I'd never seen him before, so this was amazing to me.

I often cast for a basic look, and often it is an actor who comes to mind as the basic template. More often, it's only a general thing and by the time the book is done, the character bears little resemblance to his/her inspiration. In my newest books, both heroes are inspired by people in my life, my handsome partner, and my friend, singer Riccardo Foresi.

**Sable:** It's obvious you did a lot of research for this series. Can you give us a little peek into the kind of research you did and how many hours of preparation was needed to write these books?

**Denysé:** I've been fascinated with Jack The Ripper for years, so the research time on this one really can't be determined in terms of hours or weeks. I checked all my references to dates and names, obviously, but mostly this series is fictional, within the historical events, so I can take a few liberties. The streets, the layout of London – those things were helped tremendously when I found a site called Victorian London. It's fabulous, and a wealth of information is available there for anyone who wants to write within this era. There's a listing on the Research Sites section of my links page at my website. The man who owns the site is an author of several non-fiction research books about Victorian London.

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**Sable:** Upon browsing your bookshelf, I'm amazed to see that historical are not all that you write. Do you write for the market or do you write for yourself? Or are you someone who just writes the story in your head regardless of what genre it is?

**Denysé:** I tend to write whatever comes to mind. I never know what will spark a new book. The night I began writing my current vampire novel it all came about because I was watching "Van Helsing" and told my partner in Italy what I was looking at while we chatted. He said he always wanted to be an imaginary vampire, so I told him I'd write him as one. The next day I conceived "A Perfect Beauty" and he offered to be my cover model! All in all it's working out beautifully, and anyone who wants a peek can check my website on the Non-Erotic Romances page, or go to my blog and read a longer excerpt. The link is: <http://fantasy-pages.blogspot.com/2008/07/meet-sebastiano-diadema.html>

**Sable:** What titles are you currently working on and what can we expect from you in the future?

**Denysé:** Aside from the vampire novel, I'm working on a new fantasy release called "Between Two Worlds", the romance novel for Riccardo Foresi, it's called "The Light Within My Soul", and of course, the new Devane story. My next official release will probably be "Royal Consort" which is a short story fantasy/romance with an erotic touch. Firedrakes Weyr has contracted that one. I have so many things in the works, it's hard to nail down what will actually be completed and available next! I have a coming soon page on the website, and on the Non-Erotic Romances page, all the books that are now available are listed, as well as those coming soon in that category – so all in all, I've got something going on that might appeal to almost any taste, and that's the way I like it!

The most important project I'm working on, at least for me personally, is the book with my partner. [Amore Senza Confini](#) is a magical concept, and the poetics and romance of it is really something quite special. I've set up a blog where we occasionally post a new piece from the book, and if you are a lover of pure, old-fashioned romance, you will probably love this one! All the photos being used are the work of my partner, too.

**Sable:** Thank you, Denysé! We appreciate your taking the time to talk to us. One last question. Because you've so many titles and are multi-published, what advice can you give aspiring authors about the research and the writing historical romance?

**Denysé:** Two things come to mind when doing research, and one of them is really a bit odd, but quite effective. If you have chosen to write historical, use the services of your local library, and include Children's Books in your research list. When I started writing pirate tales, I discovered quickly that the best

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## AUTHOR INTERVIEW DENYSÉ BRIDGER

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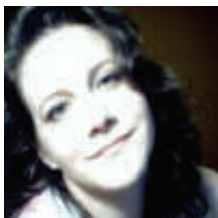
basic research material was found in the kids books!! Adult books are more specific and detailed, but not basic – so use both!

That goes for Medieval research, too, the kids books are fabulous! When you write then, be aware of the language use and the inner voices of your characters. I've read "historical" fiction where what goes on in a character's mind is laughable because it's written in terms of today's mindset – historical people aren't going to phrase things the way we do, so try to stay true to the era in which you write.

Success with writing in general is essentially 90% perseverance and 10% talent. You have to believe in the book to make other people believe in it, and you have to be willing to take the criticism as well as the compliments. No one writes a perfect book, ever – once you accept that, write the best book you can, and don't keep rewriting it. Move to the next one and learn as you go. If we all kept going back to what we'd already done and making changes, we'd never have more than one title to our credit. Listen to editors who are helpful, and reviewers who offer constructive opinions. Your best friend's gushing praise is based on love, the most honest opinions you will ever receive are from readers who don't know you personally. And, ALWAYS enjoy the story you're writing, that pretty much guarantees that your readers will enjoy it, too.

Thanks so much for the opportunity to chat with you, and to be part of the Sable Grey community here!! This is a great site!! Blessings to everyone... today and always.

<http://www.denysebridger.com>



### SABLE'S THOUGHTS ON DENYSÉ BRIDGER



They say first impressions can be deceiving...

My first impression of Denysé Bridger was her charming website and the generosity of offering free reads there. Upon getting to know her better, I found Denysé was even more delightfully charming and her generous nature was not just reserved to fill web space.

I'd chosen *Out of Hell* as the first book for my new eBook Club because of my own interest in the Jack the Ripper murders. This book did not disappoint and left me yearning for more! I personally give this book 5 of 5 stars, though in my honest opinion, both book and author deserve a ten.

Please check out these and other books at Denysé Bridger's website:

<http://www.denysebridger.com>



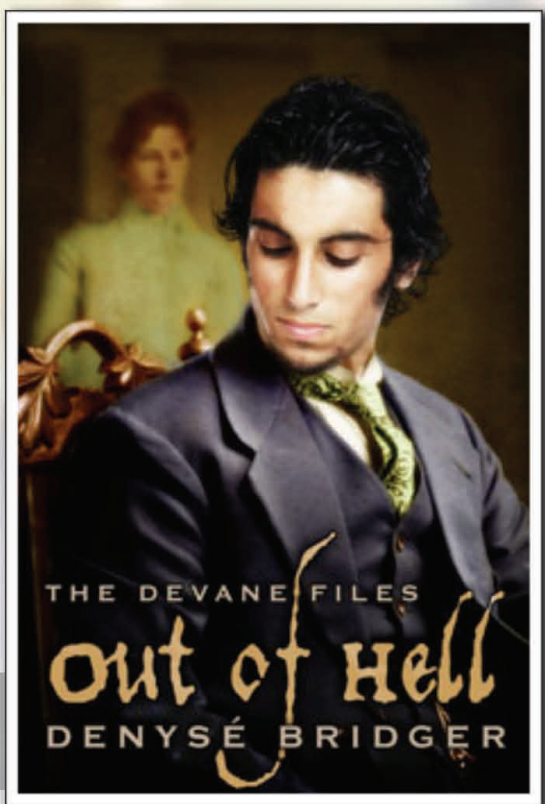
# Denysé Bridger

"...AN ASTONISHING FIRST BOOK...DAYS AFTER READING THIS BOOK, READERS WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE THOUGHTS OF DEVANE AND BETHANY.." - EURO REVIEWS, 5 STARS

*FOUR YEARS AFTER JACK THE RIPPER, ANOTHER MURDER RISES FROM THE SHADOWS OF WHITECHAPEL.*

*INSPECTOR MICHAEL DEVANE UNCOVERS HIS HEART AND FINDS BETHANY BRADSHAW..*

*AS THEY GROW CLOSER, DEVANE DISCOVERS THAT BETH IS A WOMAN OF MANY SECRETS, BUT COULD ONE OF THEM REALLY BE THAT SHE IS THE MURDERER HE'S LOOKING FOR?*



## THE DEVANE FILES BOOK 1: **OUT OF HELL**

*DON'T MISS THE FIRST BOOK OF THIS KILLER SERIES!*

AVAILABLE NOW FROM LIQUID SILVER BOOKS  
[WWW.LIQUIDSILVERBOOKS.COM](http://WWW.LIQUIDSILVERBOOKS.COM)

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**DENYSÉ BRIDGER**  
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## *The Proposition...*

HE KNEW WHAT SHE WANTED  
AND HOW FAR HE WAS WILLING TO GO TO GIVE IT TO HER

**LAUGHING HAPPILY, VENETIA ACCEPTED ADRIAN'S HAND, STEPPED** from his carriage, and made a run for the door that loomed ahead of them. The rain pelted them with every step and in spite of the undeniable ruin of her prettiest gown, Venetia's entire being sang with life and joy. She stopped just short of entering Adrian's large residence and turned to face the chill wind and relentless sheets of rain. Closing her eyes, Venetia luxuriated in the cool shower that poured over her face and soaked into her heavy clothes.

"You're insane, girl!"

Adrian's smooth, sensual voice caressed her a moment before his arm around her waist dragged her back and into the shelter of his home. She whirled to face him, laughter bubbling from her when she saw the scowl that marred his handsome features. He was shaking water from his hat, then gave up and flung it aside in disgust.

"It's only rain, my lord," she pointed out with a giggle.

He looked at her for a moment, then nodded. "Rain that can chill you to the bone, Venetia," he said.

Something in his tone captured her attention and she grew serious.

"You are genuinely concerned, aren't you, Adrian?"

He held out his hand and she took it, surprised when he kept her fingers clasped tightly in his instead of placing her hand on his arm as she'd expected. When he tugged gently she followed him.

"Adrian?"

They were on the stairs, and she stopped to stare up at the many portraits that adorned the shadowy wall. Numerous pairs of eyes gazed down upon her, but one set, those she loved most, were conspicuous by their very absence.

"Why is there no portrait of you?"

His voice contained enough irony to cloud her features, and her eyebrow rose in mocking response to his suggestion.

“Come,” he indicated that she should precede him, “I think it’s time for a brandy and some time in front of a warm fire.”

Venetia held his enigmatic look for a moment longer, entranced anew by the perfect symmetry of his striking face, and the power of his presence. Every hour she spent in his company was both a pleasure and an agony, because Adrian Dalton made her dream the impossible simply by smiling at her.

“If you continue to gaze at me with such adoration, my darling Venetia, I will be very hard-pressed to remember that you expect me to behave like a gentleman.”

“Are you so certain that’s what I expect or want from you, Mr. Dalton?”

They exchanged this subtle, dangerous banter more and more often, yet Adrian never seemed interested in pushing beyond his own imposed boundaries of decorum. Venetia remained both curious and disappointed as to what his reasons were for the uncharacteristic adherence to propriety.

They began to walk and moments later Adrian showed her into a vast library. The large room was home to thousands of volumes, and one wall was dominated by a huge fireplace that crackled and popped as flames stretched upward from the grate, fluid fingers of orange and gold that caressed the scorched stones of the chimney.

“What you think you want from me may be a world away from the truth of what I am willing to offer you, Miss Tremaine.”

Adrian’s voice, soft and thoughtful in tone, whispered close to her ear. She peeped over her shoulder and found herself trapped in the dark mystery of his gaze, mere inches from hers.

“What if it’s not?” she whispered.

The corner of his mouth quirked upward in a fleeting smile, and Adrian tossed aside his silver-topped walking stick, then lifted Venetia’s dripping cloak from her shoulders. He draped the heavy velvet over a nearby chair, and went to the bar. After he’d poured two snifters of brandy, he returned to her side and offered one of the crystal glasses to her.

“I think you’ll find it helps,” he told her when her fingers shook noticeably. He took a generous swallow of the rich liquor and put the glass on a table.

Venetia watched him remove his cape, and his jacket, then unbutton his brocade waistcoat. The silk cravat was loosened then dropped carelessly on a table as he went to retrieve his drink. When he undid a couple of buttons on his shirt and was comfortable, he picked up the brandy and moved to a chair near the fire. The pristine white of his shirt ruffles framed an enticing glimpse of lightly tanned skin beneath the snowy garment, and deep within her, a pulse of desire woke and began to spread throughout her entire body.

“I’m asking you to belong to me...”

Adrian smiled at her intent perusal of him, and his expression was teasing when he gestured to her drenched clothes.

“Would you like to take a hot bath, Miss Tremaine?”

Venetia’s stomach did a wild pirouette inside her, and she could feel the heat rising in her face. Quite unexpectedly, she had no idea what to do next. She lifted the glass and swallowed a liberal amount of the liquor, then promptly choked on the searing heat of it in her throat. Through the sudden fit of coughing that assailed her, she heard Adrian’s impatient hiss.

An instant later he was next to her, leading her to a chair opposite his. Through the haze of her sputters, Venetia was aware of him leaving her for a few seconds, then he returned and handed her a glass of water which she gratefully accepted.

Adrian dropped to one knee in front of her and touched her face, his thumb stroking the contour of her cheek. The concern in his eyes was easily read.

"Your skin is like ice," he informed her. "I think a bath is most definitely in order. I'll have one drawn for you, and while your gown is being dried out, we'll have an early supper."

"You..." Her teeth chattered and she forced the reaction into submission with great effort. "You want me to sit at your table, while my gown is... elsewhere?" she concluded, her voice barely more than a whisper.

"If you prefer we could have supper in bed, darling?"

Venetia wondered for a moment if she was about to faint. The room was spinning wildly, yet Adrian's smiling face remained steady and clear in her focus.

"Somehow, I don't think you are planning to ask me to marry you, my lord," she noted softly.

"I'm not the marrying kind," Adrian assured her with mock regret.

"So you wish to make me the object of scandal and contempt," she said with calm that was like a detached fascination, apart from the wildly erratic pounding of her heart.

Adrian actually chuckled at her words. "In truth, my Venetia, you would be the object of envy and jealousy."

"No decent man would want me."

"Perhaps it would be you who would not want them?" The heat of the fire felt like it was searing her skin then moving inward to scorch her flesh to the bone.

She knew it was an illusion, that the real source of the inferno that raged within her was the man before her. Adrian Dalton, with his mesmerizing eyes and dazzling charm.

"What *are* you asking me, my lord?"

Her voice was tiny and threaded with fear, but there was also sincere curiosity in the breathy words she spoke. Adrian's hands cupped her face, his fingers holding her head so that their eyes never lost contact.

"I'm asking you to belong to me, darling. To be mine as you have never been any other man's. I want you as my mistress, Venetia."

"But not your wife."

Anger flashed in his exquisite eyes.

"In all the ways that matter, you are already my wife, Venetia."

"How can you say that?"

"Easily. It's the truth." When she opened her mouth to object Adrian leaned into her, covering her trembling lips with his and drawing her into a slow, evocative kiss. The soft sigh that whispered into his mouth created a tremor deep within him, and Adrian closed his eyes, let his entire being wake to an emotion so long denied he'd thought it banished utterly. His fingertips caressed the silken skin behind her ears, then traced downward to the soft curve of her jaw, while his tongue stroked the warm recesses of her mouth. He left her lips and continued his trek of discovery along the side of her neck, finding the wildly beating pulse near her collarbone so he could press his tongue to the erratic flutter there. Venetia's shaky moan made him quake inside and he ignored the sudden urge to pull away before he fell too deeply into the trap of his own need. ■

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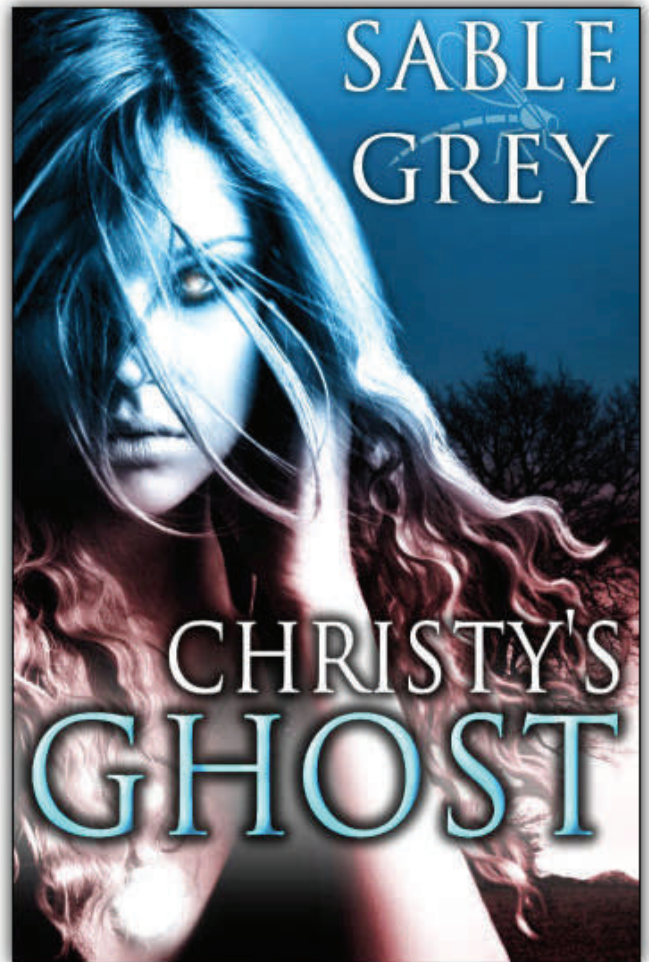
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# CHRISTY'S GHOST

Two very different women, Christina Hale and Christy Monroe, both caught in arranged marriages, find their way across two hundred and fifty years to step into one another's lives.

Cast into strange and terrifying environments, the women are surprised to discover passions that make them both pray never to return to the lives they knew before.



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