

HEART
of the GLEN

A NOVEL

JENNIFER DEIBEL

Books by Jennifer Deibel

A Dance in Donegal

The Lady of Galway Manor

The Maid of Ballymacool

The Irish Matchmaker

Heart of the Glen



HEART
of the GLEN



JENNIFER DEIBEL



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For the honor of my heavenly Father—
may Your name be greater in the eyes
of any who read these words.

For my earthy father, Jerry Martin—
thank you for being the first one to teach me about
God’s “Silly Battle Plans” and for building that foundation
for me to trust Him when all seemed lost.

Glossary of Terms

- a chara*—[uh KHAH-duh]—friend, direct address
- a chairde*—[uh HARR-juh]—my friends
- Ádh mór*—[AH MORE]—good luck
- amach leis*—[uh-MAKH LESH]—out with it
- a Mhaighdean*—[UH WAH-juhn]—oh, heavens!
- An bhfuil tú ceart go leoir*—[AHN WILL TOO KART GUH LORE]—are you alright?
- an laindéir mhór*—[AHN LEHN-jurr WOHR]—the big lantern
- An Píobaire Mór*—[AHN PEE-bruh MOHR]—the Big Piper, the nickname for world champion piper, Charles MacSweeney
- ar aghaidh linn*—[AIR AYE LINN]—let’s go
- a thaisce*—[UH HASH-kee]—a term of endearment meaning “my little dear”
- a thiarcais*—[uh HEER-kish]—oh my
- buíocíhas le Dia*—[BWEE-huhs leh JEE-uh]—thanks be to God
- cailleach*—[KAH-lyahck]—a bed built into an alcove near the fireplace; usually used for the oldest member of the family; also called an outshot or snug; oddly enough, *cailleach* is also the word used for “witch”

Carrageen—[KAYR-ih-geen]—a type of seaweed native to Ireland
céad míle fáilte—[KAYD MEE-luh FALL-chuh]—a hundred thousand welcomes

céili—[KAY-lee]—a type of Irish dance

*cinnt*e—[KINN-chuh]—certainly/of course

comhghairdeas—[kuh-GAR-juh-huss]—congratulations

craic—[CRACK]—fun; good times; fellowship

craiceáilte—[CRACK-ahl-chuh]—crazy

créatúr—[KRAY-turr]—creature; often used to mean “poor thing.”

dáiríre—[duh-REE-ruh]—really

Damhsa bruscar—[DOW-sah BROO-skar]—Brush Dance, a specific style of Sean nÓs dancing using a broom

dochreidte—[DOE-kreh-juh]—unbelievable

dubhín—[doov-EEN]—literally “tiny black,” a term of endearment/pet name

fiodóireacht—[FYOH-juh-rockt]—weaving

gabh mo leithscéal—[GO MUH LEH-shkayl]—excuse me/beg your pardon

gardaí—[garr-DEE]—police

goitse—[GUH-chuh]—come here, West Ulster dialect

go deimhin—[GUH DYEM]—indeed

go díreach—[GUH JEE-rachkt]—exactly

go raibh maith agat—[GUH ROW MAH uh-GUHT]—thank you, to one person

go raibh míle maith agat—[GUH ROW MEE-luh MAH uh-GUHT]—thanks a million

Go raibh míle maith agaibh—[GUH ROW MEE-luh MAH uh-GEE]—thanks a million, to more than one person

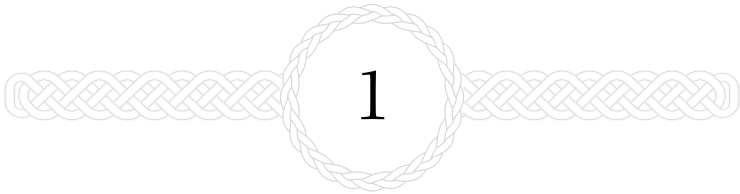
hurley—[HURR-lee]—the “bat” used in the Gaelic game of hurling

iontach maith—[EEN-tahk MOY]—very good

Íosa —[EE-suh]—Jesus
lough—[LOCKH]—lake
Máirt na hInide—[MARCH nuh HIN-yuh-jeh]—Pancake Tuesday/Shrove Tuesday/Fat Tuesday
mo thread caorach—[MUH HRAD KEE-rockh]—my flock of sheep
muise—[MUH-shuh]—oh my
na caoirigh—[NUH KWIH-dee]—the sheep
ná dean é sin—[NAH JANN SHINN]—don't do that
na Scrioptúir—[NUH SKRIP-tooír]—the Scriptures
Naomh Íde—[NEEV EE-deh]—Saint Ide, the woman believed in Irish lore to have written a lullaby for baby Jesus
oh muise—[OH MUH-shuh]—oh goodness/oh my
peata—[PA-tuh]—a term of endearment meaning “my little dear” or “my little pet”
pleidhcíocht—[PLY-kee-awkt]—tomfoolery
plód—[PLAWD]—crowd
Rop tú mo Baile—[ROHP TOO MUH BAH-lyuh]—be thou my vision
scioból—[SHKUH-buhll]—barn
seachtain—[SHAKH-tuhn]—week
seafóid—[SHAH-foj]—nonsense
sin é—[SHIN AY]—that's it/that'll do
siúil ar aghaidh iad—move them forward
sláinte—[SLAWN-chuh]—cheers, literally meaning “health to you”
tá brón orm—[TAH BROHN OHR-uhm]—I'm sorry
tá fáilte romhat—[TAH FALL-chuh ROWT]—you're welcome
Tír na Nóg—[TEER NUH NOHG]—the land of eternal youth

and beauty; the place you go when you dream; also sometimes used to refer to heaven

tóraithe—[TOHR-ee-huh]—historical Irish word for bandit or sheep-stealer



DRUMBOE CASTLE
BALLYBOFEY, COUNTY DONEGAL
FEBRUARY 1, 1912

Saoirse Fagan had blood on her hands. She turned them over in her lap and studied her palms and fingertips. The crimson stain couldn't be seen, but it was there. She knew it. Could feel it seeping into her bones, forever changing who she was.

The carriage slowed and rumbled to a stop. Saoirse's gaze lifted to the roof of the enclosed cabin she'd been riding in—an undeserved kindness from the Harris-Temples as she left their employ at Waterstown House. The walls, covered in a rich burgundy fabric, spoke of an opulence Saoirse would never know. And truth be told, she found it uncomfortable. The blast of fresh air when she opened the carriage door was a welcome reminder of her true station.

She climbed out, grateful that Burke hadn't lumbered down from the driver's seat to open the door for her. She didn't deserve it. The biting February wind whipped her cloak around unsteady legs as she headed to the back to unhitch her small carpetbag from the hold.

“Thanks, Burke,” she called, shielding her eyes from the sun as she glanced up at him.

He nodded gravely. “Sorry I canna stay. Her ladyship made it verra clear I’m to make it to Letterkenny before dark.”

Saoirse flapped her hand. Why should he stay? There was nothing for him to do. She was more than capable of carrying her one bag containing the few possessions that remained to her in this world. All she truly had were the clothes she’d worn that fateful day when she left for Waterstown House. But so many charitable donations had been given to her, and for that she was truly grateful. But now the items weighed down her bag like a hundred pounds of lead, as they seemed to carry with them the weight of all she’d done.

“Don’ give it another thought,” she answered Burke finally. “I’ll be grand, so.”

He tugged the brim of his flatcap and nodded again before hitching the reins and rumbling away. Saoirse watched the rig roll over the hill and out of sight, then turned her attention to the foreboding structure in front of her. Though called Drumboe Castle, it didn’t much resemble what Saoirse considered a castle to be. Vines crept up its outer walls, which had been plastered and whitewashed, and stretched three stories tall. In the center, a rounded bay jutted out, matching the height of the rest of the building, with arch-topped Wyatt windows flanking either side of the bay section. This was to be her new home. Though the help likely resided in a smaller outbuilding or were hidden in the basement.

Steeling her nerves with a deep breath, she hitched her bag onto her shoulder and approached the massive, dark front door. A gust of wind kicked up, whipping around her and carrying with it the echoes of screams. Saoirse

squeezed her eyes shut. The screams weren't real. She knew that. And yet they haunted her. Taking another steadying breath, she lifted the heavy brass knocker and rapped it three times. An eternity seemed to stretch long like a lazy cat.

Saoirse's brows pressed together, and she knocked again. Nothing. She stepped back and looked up at the building once more, as though whether she was in the right place would be written on the wall. After all, how many Drumboe Castles could there be in County Donegal? It was only then that she noticed no smoke curled from the chimneys and every window was dark. She glanced around. The only person to be seen was a farmer herding his sheep in the field neighboring the mansion. She stepped over to one of the windows next to the bay, cupped her hands around the sides of her face, and peered in. But her view was blocked by thick drapes.

"Ye'll have no luck doin' that."

Saoirse squealed and spun around. A hunched man with wiry white hair and leathery skin stared back. Goodness, how did he cross that distance so quickly?

"I beg yer pardon?" she said.

He waved a knobby finger in the direction of the castle. "She's locked up tight. No one's there."

Saoirse's gut sank. "That can't be right." She turned and looked back up at the menacing building. "I'm to start today as the new maid."

The man tsked, and a wheezy chuckle slipped from his lips. "No need fer a maid when no one's livin' there."

The bag slipped from her shoulder and fell to the ground with a muted thud. "No one liv—" The words stuck in her

throat. How could no one be living here? Surely Lady Harris-Temple wouldn't have set her up for a joke? Or, worse, a sentence of abandonment?

The man shrugged. "Lord Hayes died last week. Her ladyship's gone to live wit' her sister."

Saoirse blinked, then pulled her eyes open wide. "Died? How did he die?"

The old man removed his hat and held it over his heart. "He'd been ill closin' in on a year." He turned and called something unintelligible to the sheep growing restless in the field behind him. "Then the coma came over him. Less than a day later, he was gone."

The very air seemed to suck from Saoirse's lungs. She pressed a hand to her belly, trying to stay the churning that began to swirl there. "So . . . they've . . ."

"Left," he said, shrugging as he turned and shuffled across the road. "They won't be back, you can be sure o' dat."

As though she'd been socked in the gut, Saoirse gasped. "What am I supposed to do now?" She wasn't sure if she was asking herself, the old man, or God Himself.

The man sucked in a sharp breath. "Not sure, child. What I do know is that the lord's title died wit' him." He let out a shrill whistle and his herd startled and began moving off to the south. "I s'pose there's only one thing ya can do." He looked back at her. "Go home." With that, he turned and disappeared with his sheep over the crest of the hill.

Home. The patchwork landscape surrounding her blurred as tears filled her eyes and a burning spread in her throat. If only she could go home. She'd give anything—even her own life—to have things back the way they were before. But she couldn't. The only way out of this nightmare was through

and forward. She swiped at her eyes, then bent, picked up her bag, and stepped into the middle of the road. To her right, the road stretched on to the northeast and forked off. To her left, it ambled over the hill toward the Atlantic. The bubbling of the River Finn could be heard just behind the castle. If legend could be trusted, Drumboe Castle guarded a ford in that river where she could cross and head off in a completely different direction.

Spinning in a slow circle, she struggled to rein in her thoughts as the questions flooding her mind threatened to suffocate her. With the next gust of wind, the clouds overhead broke ever so slightly, allowing a thin shaft of cold sunlight to seep through. That beam of light was like a lifeline in a turbulent sea, and Saoirse clung to it with all she had. Taking the road to the west would allow her to follow the light for as long as it remained, which wouldn't be long since the sun typically sank below the horizon near four o'clock this time of year. But the more light she could follow, the better. So, she set her shoulders and started off toward the west to meet her fate.

DUNLEWEY, COUNTY DONEGAL

A guttural cry tore from Owen McCready's throat, the pain of it almost matching that of his hand, even as he swiped at his assailant. Outside, a voice called, and the man who'd attacked Owen ran from the barn, shouting a reply that garbled in his ears. In the distance, Stout's intimidating growl and bark echoed through the chilled night air as the

stampeding of feet faded into the hills. Groaning, Owen cradled his injured limb against his chest and rolled to his side then sat up.

“Stout!”

One final bark punctuated the canine’s warning before he appeared in the doorway of the dimly lit barn. Whimpering, the border collie hurried to his master’s side and nuzzled his cheek.

“I’m alright, boy.” He tousled the dog’s ear with his good hand. “Did ya get ’em?”

Stout grunted.

“Attaboy.” Owen struggled to his feet. “D’ya think Aileen has some bandages somewhere in the house?” His sister prided herself on her domestic abilities, but her logic on how she carried them out left quite a bit to be desired, by Owen’s estimation, anyway. How many quarrels had they had over the years regarding what belonged where in their small bungalow? Eventually, Owen had had to let go and allow Aileen to run the household the way she saw fit. Between the farming and the weaving, he simply didn’t have the time or energy to control every last detail.

Stout stared at him, as though his gaze alone would heal Owen’s injuries.

Despite the pain radiating through his hand, Owen chuckled at his sidekick. “C’mon, let’s go.” The pair ambled across the field toward the house, Owen swiveling his gaze back and forth all the while in case the bandits decided to ambush him yet again. But Stout’s carefree trot toward home was reassuring. That dog could sense scoundrels a mile away.

Once inside the house, Owen scrounged for bandages or some sort of wrapping in all the drawers he thought Aileen

might have stashed them. Finally, he found a rolled strip of scrap fabric and took it to the basin. Mixing water from the kettle on the stove with cool, fresh water from the jug on the counter, he washed his wounds. They were more superficial than he'd guessed, for which he was grateful. The knife had just grazed below the skin, thankfully. But the pain and limited mobility would make weaving almost impossible while he healed. Never mind the fact that he couldn't risk getting blood on the newly woven tweed fabric. He shuddered at the thought of having to scrap a full ream of seventy yards because of one drop of blood. Murphy's set the highest standards for their goods—as well they should. Donegal tweed was quickly becoming the tweed of choice for royalty, landed gentry, and the overall wealthiest members of society in Ireland and Britain. As well as the first choice for most farmers in the area, given its warmth, sturdiness, and ability to block out the damp weather.

At the thought of Murphy's, Owen's musings turned back to his sister. Aileen had driven to Donegal Town to deliver their most recent order—and to find out if they'd receive a contract for another batch. With tonight's turn of events, Owen couldn't decide if he hoped they received the order or not. He shook his head. They had no choice—they needed that contract, and he'd just have to hope he healed quickly enough to get it done.

He shuffled to the stove and absently made himself a cup of tea before crossing the room to one of the two chairs flanking the small fireplace. The warmth of the turf fire spread through the space like a warm blanket on a wintry night. Sighing, Owen lowered himself into the seat and let his head rest back. Before he could even take a sip of his tea, his eyes slid shut and he drifted off into a dreamless sleep.