

Heart of the Glen

Jennifer Deibel

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An Irish woman finds solace with a Donegal weaver in Jennifer Deibel's warm historical romance novel *Heart of the Glen*.

Saoirse, running from her past, is set to become a housemaid. When the job falls through, she's taken in by Aileen and Owen, siblings who depend on the sale of Owen's exquisite tweeds to maintain their farm. Saoirse becomes fond of them, though she's still fearful that they'll learn about her personal tragedy. When Owen is injured by bandits and rendered unable to fill a crucial order, he accepts Saoirse's offer to become his apprentice.

Set on a rural, picturesque homestead that its characters tend to with care, even while facing ongoing threats from thieves and questions concerning Owen's healing, the story is told via alternating sketches. Owen's weaving room inspires Saoirse; the loom's rhythms and intricacy enthrall her. Owen's initial skepticism about Saoirse's abilities is tempered in the course of their lessons, and they reach quiet acknowledgments of each other's needs. Their edges soften with the passage of time; they develop emotional intimacy. Their handiwork is established as an able metaphor, showing how tangled threads can sometimes be made into beautiful art.

Herein, faith helps people overcome their troubles. The nascent couple leans into church traditions to buoy their hopes, even as a local tragedy tests their resolve. And the biblical story of Gideon and the Midianites is one of the book's throughlines, with the central trio finding similarities between his circumstances and theirs. They meet their challenges with courage, working past their doubts. When Saoirse discloses her past, she is rewarded with compassion.

In the romance novel *Heart of the Glen*, a couple weathers uncertainties because of their renewed faith.

KAREN RIGBY (January / February 2025)

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