

A woman with dark, wavy hair is seen from behind, wearing a long green dress with a white collar. She is looking out over a dramatic coastal landscape. In the background, there are steep cliffs, a body of water, and a small stone church with a tall tower. The sky is cloudy.

A DANCE IN DONEGAL

JENNIFER DEIBEL

“Jennifer Deibel’s debut is rich in atmosphere, family mystery, and sweet romance. Her love of Ireland and her years spent there shine through in her depictions of characters and setting. Her vibrant descriptions make me want to visit the Emerald Isle myself. A gem!”

Julie Klassen, author of *The Bridge to Belle Island*

“Journey to the Emerald Isle with *A Dance in Donegal*! With an authenticity born of having lived in Ireland herself, the author deftly paints a lush landscape, colorful customs, and memorable characters with personal journeys of their own. Certain to appeal to fans of historical romance, this impressive debut marks Jennifer Deibel as an author to watch. I can’t wait to read what she writes next.”

Jocelyn Green, Christy Award-winning
author of *Veiled in Smoke*

“Set against the backdrop of romance, beauty, and a firmly held faith, Jennifer Deibel’s debut paints a lavish portrait of Ireland’s Emerald Shores. *A Dance in Donegal* is a reader’s dance with the beauty of well-threaded words, a storied Irish hamlet, and a vintage-inspired journey worthy of turning pages while cozied up by an old, stone fireplace. Fans of Catherine Marshall’s *Christy* will want to clear room on their favorites shelf because this one’s earned a place alongside!”

Kristy Cambron, bestselling author of *The Paris Dressmaker*
and *The Butterfly and the Violin*

“The misty air of Donegal will seep into your soul just as swiftly and surely as the characters do in Jennifer Deibel’s debut novel. Jennifer clearly knows and loves Ireland, and she fills every scene with vivid description and lilting dialogue. *A Dance in Donegal* is a romance, to be sure, yet there

are secrets to uncover and a tender spiritual journey at its heart. Pour a cuppa and curl up with this gem of a story.”

Liz Curtis Higgs, *New York Times* bestselling
author of *Mine Is the Night*

“Jennifer Deibel’s debut is a hallmark of atmospheric and immersive writing. Her obvious passion for Ireland is a deft brushstroke against a lush green canvas. Featuring a strong heroine and themes of resilience through adversity, this lovely and impeccably researched debut is a treatise on belonging and the many facets of home. Unabashedly romantic both in setting and in tone, *A Dance in Donegal* firmly establishes Deibel as a must-read author for fans of Kristy Cambron, Jennifer Delamere, and Sarah Ladd.”

Rachel McMillan, author of *The London Restoration*

“Rich in atmosphere, deep in meaning, and sweet in nature. Jennifer Deibel’s *A Dance in Donegal* captivated me. Moira’s courage and compassion and Sean’s solid strength make them endearing characters, and the supporting characters were both flawed and charming. I truly loved this story.”

Sarah Sundin, bestselling and award-winning author of
When Twilight Breaks and the Sunrise at Normandy series

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JENNIFER DEIBEL



a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Published by Revell
a division of Baker Publishing Group
PO Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.revellbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Deibel, Jennifer, 1978– author.

Title: A dance in Donegal / Jennifer Deibel.

Description: Grand Rapids, Michigan : Revell, a division of Baker Publishing Group, [2021]

Identifiers: LCCN 2020019533 | ISBN 9780800738419 (paperback) | ISBN 9780800739638 (hardcover)

Classification: LCC PS3604.E3478 D36 2021 | DDC 813/.6—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020019533>

This is a work of historical reconstruction; the appearances of certain historical figures are therefore inevitable. All other characters, however, are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

Scripture used in this book, whether quoted or paraphrased by the characters, is taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

The Ballyeamon Cradle Song, found on page 79, is a traditional Irish lullaby. The author is unknown.

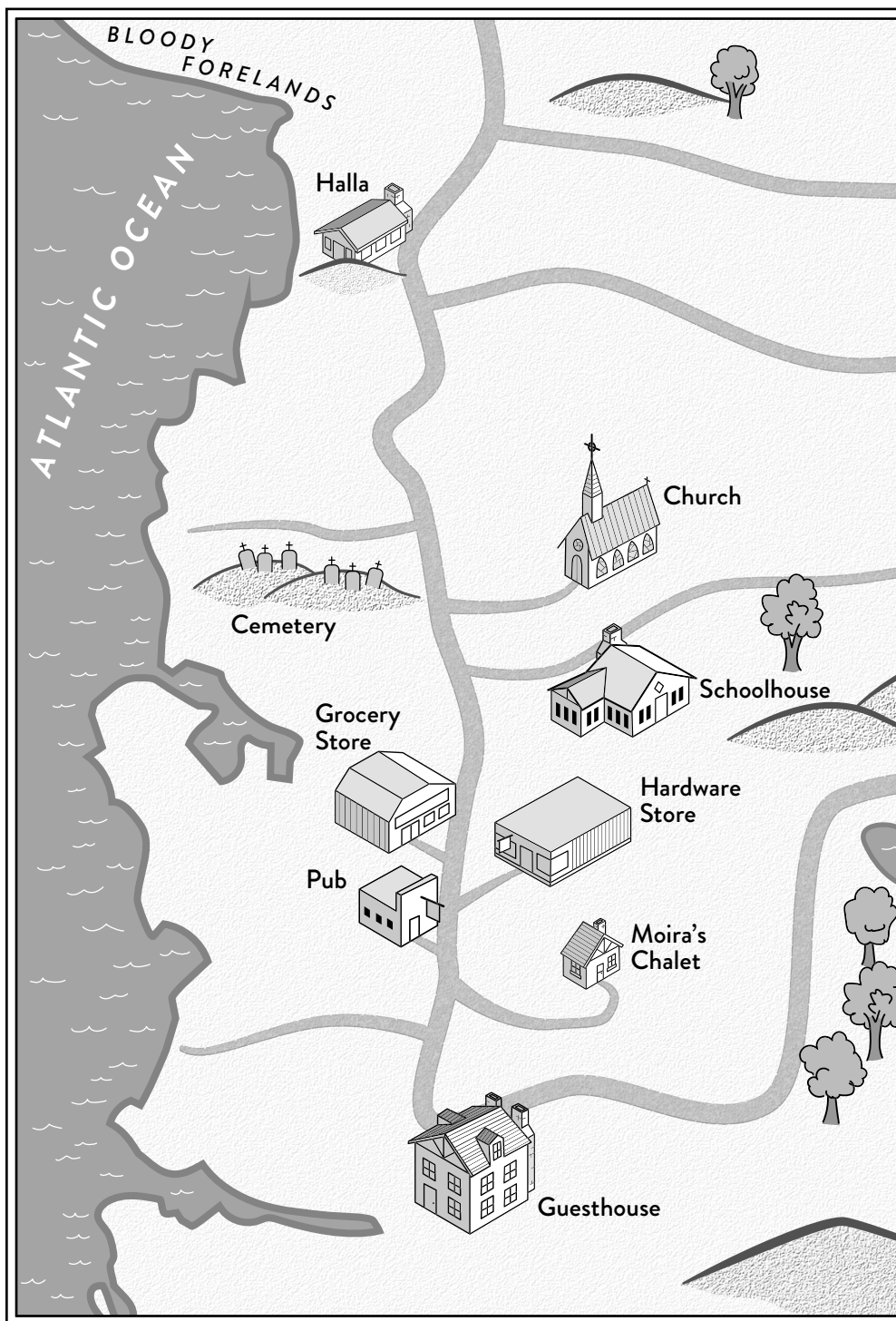
Published in association with Books & Such Literary Management, www.booksandsuch.com.

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To the Author
of the Greatest Story



And for Seth—my real-life
dreamy handyman hero



Colm & Peg's
House



BALLYMANN

IRELAND

Áedach's Hovel



MT. ERRIGAL

Letterkenny →

Poisoned Glen

GLENVEAGH



CHAPTER 1



BOSTON

OCTOBER 1920

The grandfather clock downstairs chimed the hour, its clangs all too reminiscent of the funeral bells presiding over Mother's service just yesterday morning. Silent tears slipped down Moira Doherty's cheeks—each one punctuated by the unforgiving *clang, clang, clang*.

I never did care for that clock.

Moira's gaze fell on the street below, though she truly saw nothing more than blurry figures and blotches scurrying in the rain. Her burlap travel bag lay forgotten on the bed, surrounded by all the trappings of her impending overseas voyage. Moira feared if she returned to packing, she would find herself hurling each item in anger, rather than carefully rolling and placing them in the bag for her journey—a journey she was no longer sure she wanted to take.

How had it come to this? Only weeks ago life was simple and good. Moira, having just graduated from Boston Normal School, was set to begin her teaching career not far from the brownstone where she grew up. Her mother was alive and well, and Moira was content to daydream about

someday embarking on a grand adventure to see her mother's homeland. Today, life was drastically different.

Thunder rumbled across the sky, sending a chill down Moira's spine. Hugging her shawl tighter around her shoulders, she turned to the bed and travel trappings strewn across it. Heaviness weighed her down like an anchor. Neither able to continue packing nor clear the bed for sleep, she shuffled to the tufted chair near the fireplace and slumped into the seat.

The flames danced hypnotically in the grate, drawing Moira into their spell. No thoughts flitted through her mind as she absently watched the fire. Time released any grip on sense or logic, and she gave herself over to the trance as the flames slowly died. Her eyelids growing heavy, Moira rested her head on the quilted back of the chair and let her lids fall closed.

"Goodbye, Mother," she whispered into the darkness.



The explosion rocked the building, and Moira shot up in her seat, gripping the armrests so firmly she feared the fabric would tear. Beads of sweat dotted her forehead and dropped in dark stains on her shawl. She struggled to catch her breath, and she clutched one hand to her chest to quell the pounding underneath.

Rain pelted the windows, lightning split the sky, and another peal of thunder shook the room.

"Not an explosion," she spoke to the room and gulped. "Thunder."

Falling back in the seat, she wiped her brow with the hem of her shawl. Chills crept up her neck as the details of the dream floated to the forefront of her mind.

Mother.

The door to her bedroom squeaked open, and dusky-

haired Leona entered. "Are you alright, Miss? I thought I heard you cry out."

Leona looked at Moira with an expression of sadness and sympathy. A look Moira had grown to hate in the short days since Mother's passing.

"Yes, Leona." She pasted on her most authentic-looking smile. "I'm fine. Thanks for looking in on me though."

"Of course, Miss." She bobbed her head before scurrying to the window to draw the drapes. "It's a frightfully awful storm tonight, if I say so. I've not seen one like this in years."

Moira straightened her shawl once more and poked at the embers in the grate. "Goodness, it sure is."

Leona finished her task, then came to rest a hand on Moira's shoulder. "Are you sure you're alright? You're as pale as a white rose, and despite the chill in the air, I can't help but notice the perspiration on your face."

Sighing, Moira measured the loyal housekeeper. Leona had proven to be an invaluable help and comfort these last weeks. She, more than most, would likely understand. "It was a dream," Moira began at last.

"A dream?" Leona's brow furrowed.

Moira motioned to the stool across from her, and the woman sat down.

"I saw a far green country with hills rolling on for eternity. Waters crashed upon the shore, and when the sun shone on the hills, they glistened like emeralds."

"Ireland." A small smile dawned on Leona's face.

Moira nodded. "I can only assume so. It was breathtaking—like nothing I'd ever seen before. It felt so familiar, yet I know I've never been to this place."

Leona knitted her brows together and leaned over to place more coal on the grate. "Interesting."

"Indeed," Moira continued. "But then, out of nowhere, pewter clouds darkened the sky and fog as thick as I've seen

closed in around me. In the distance, I could just make out the figure of a woman standing on a hillside. I squinted to try and make out her face, but it was too dark, and the fog too thick. But I could see her skirts blowing in the wind.”

“That sounds . . . eerie.”

“It was, and yet I felt compelled to press on. In a flash, the scene swept forward and I found myself standing right behind her.”

Leona scooted forward on the stool, her eyes as wide as saucers.

Taking the cue of Leona’s interest, Moira continued. “I extended a trembling hand to tap the woman on the shoulder, but before I could touch her, she turned around.” Moira squeezed her eyes shut and took in a slow, steady breath. Her heart already quickening, she could feel the sweat pricking the back of her neck.

“Well, who was it?”

“It”—Moira paused—“It was Mother.”

“*Tsk!*” Leona wagged her head. “Oh, you poor dear. That must have been shocking.”

“Yes, truly, it was. But more than that, it was the look in her eyes.” Moira turned her own gaze back to the fire, searching for the best way to describe the haunting look she’d seen on her mother’s face. “She looked . . . terrified. And sad.”

“Goodness, I wonder what that could be about?”

Moira slowly raised her eyes to meet Leona’s. “That’s not the worst of it.” Her throat tightened, and she suddenly wished she hadn’t shared the dream. Not because she worried about Leona’s reaction but because she wasn’t sure she could get through the rest of the telling.

“Oh, sweet Moira.” Leona rested a hand on Moira’s knee. “It might ease your heart to share the burden.” She offered a kind smile, and compassion shone in her eyes.

Moira sighed and rubbed her palms up and down her skirt, drying and warming them at the same time. “She looked me square in the face and said, ‘Save me, Moira. Come to Ireland and save me!’”

Leona’s jaw fell open. “But—”

“I know.” Moira shrugged.

“It’s as if she was trying to tell you—” Leona stopped short and shot her eyes to meet Moira’s. “Never mind.”

Moira furrowed her brow but, eager to be done sharing her dream, chose not to question what Leona was referring to. “Before I could ask her what she meant, she disappeared. And that’s when I woke up.”

“No wonder you were so upset when I came in.”

The two sat in silence for several minutes before Leona turned her attention to the window. “It seems quieter out there.” She stood and made her way across the room to the window. On the way, she kept her eyes on Moira’s clothes and travel bag on the bed. “So, you’ve decided to go?”

Moira’s shoulders rose and fell. “Maybe. I don’t know.”