



The Bride of Thaddaeus McGregor

J. P. San

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Be Kind.

About the author

J.P. San, also known as Jimmy, is an American novelist known for weaving suspense, drama, and a touch of the surreal. From a young age, he was deeply attuned to the spiritual world, receiving a profound vision through his grandparents' intercession. This sparked his lifelong journey as a dreamer, seeking hope and guidance through divine signs. Drawing inspiration from everyday moments and human complexities, Jimmy creates emotionally resonant narratives. Outside of writing, he enjoys hiking, coffee, and exploring new places. He currently lives with his family in Rockville, Maryland, USA.



Jimmy San

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Foreword

My dear readers,

I am Telel. By now you may suspect that wherever impossible things occur, I eventually wander in with a notebook and too many questions. That suspicion would be justified.

Before we begin, allow me one small courtesy. The people you are about to meet speak as they ought to speak. They belong to famine-era Donegal, not to your century, and Professor San has taken considerable pains to let their voices remain their own. Some turns of phrase may feel unfamiliar. Let them. Language is a place as surely as any village, and if you listen long enough, you'll find yourself standing beside them in the mist instead of merely reading about it.

You will want to know whether Thaddeus is the monster. Mortals always do. You will begin measuring teeth, claws, and blood, certain that wickedness announces itself with sufficient spectacle. It is a comforting habit. It is also how people miss almost everything worth seeing.

Watch this instead: a woman who refuses to abandon someone the world has already condemned. Watch the bargains she makes, the promises she believes she can keep, and the quiet little compromises that never seem important until they have become a life. Monsters rarely arrive all at once. More often, they knock politely and ask to be let in.

There is something else I ought to confess. There are powers in these pages that predate my employment, and at least one gentleman whom I have found profoundly difficult to investigate. He possesses the irritating habit of knowing I am watching him while revealing almost nothing in return. I dislike him on principle. I suspect you may as well.

Professor San has recorded these events as faithfully as I was permitted to recount them. I advise you not to hurry. The fog conceals more than the cliffs, love is heavier than chains, and every Blood Moon asks a question that daylight prefers not to hear.

Now come along. The tide is rising, the cave is waiting, and someone has already begun to sing.

—Telel

The Cave

Ireland, 1842.

They'd been walking since dawn: Thaddeus and Cara, climbing toward the cliffs where the cave waited. Neither spoke of what would happen when the Blood Moon rose. They didn't need to.

Fog hugged Donegal's hills, muffling the world in a wool-woven hush, smothering the quartzite headlands that punched straight into the Atlantic.

The land rolled like a chain of sleeping giants: rounded, hunched, their backs rubbed raw by centuries of wind and rain. Beyond, the Blue Stacks crumbled into bog and blanket peat moor. Small strips of tillage crouched in glens and beside the loughs. Rain fell two days in three. Summers were soft, winters seldom froze, perfect for potatoes, and for misery alike.

Around Sliabh Liag, the cliffs rose like torn pages of the earth: jagged, sheer, their edges ripped by centuries of waves that slammed the stone with thunder-voiced fury. Gulls, gannets, the odd puffin rode the updrafts; salt and kelp hung on every breath.

From the cliff edge, the Atlantic stretched endless and iron-grey, and the wind never rested. It didn't whisper. It howled.

Far below, the sea muttered; the land held its breath, as though bracing for an ancient leviathan to stir. Bog pools glimmered in the hollows; sheep tracks zigzagged their flanks like old scars. Morning crawled in beneath a lid of mist, the hills surfacing slow from the white hush like half-remembered myths. A brooding quietness hung where green met grey, and time dragged its heels.

Cara led the way, a short lass, trim and sharp, her red hair a wild banner in the breeze. Freckles lit her face like embers beneath pale skin. She stepped lightly over slick stone, her shawl trailing behind like the second skin of a nathair: dark, fluid, alive with old spirits, as if drawn from the mythic laggáns whispered of in cradle songs and warnings.

Thaddeus followed a pace behind, loose-limbed but watchful, a wolf trying to forget the scent of blood. His coat flapped around his knees, hem sodden, as though it belonged to someone already buried.

Here, in the silence, words felt brittle, too thin for the weight in the air. The path wound down through heather and shale, dropping toward the cave-mouth: dark, waiting, the edge of the world.

The cave was still hidden, but Thaddeus already felt it: a tremor in his bones, a copper tang on the September air. The Blood Moon was stirring.

It wasn't a place people chose to go.

But Thaddeus wasn't exactly people.

The hunger came in tides: slow, then sudden. It carved his insides hollow, filled his lungs with static, pushed his pulse to the edges of his skin. A familiar terror warmed his throat.

Cara knew. She always knew.

Sometimes, she called herself his wife, when it made him feel human, or made her feel clever. Sometimes he let her, amused by the theatre of it. But today, they weren't lovers or liars.

Today, they were, if anything, pilgrims.

"Not far now, so it's not," Cara said over her shoulder, voice no louder than a hush.

Cara paused, eyes scanning the trail. "Think there's a place for the likes of us beyond Donegal?"

Thaddeus didn't answer. The question hung there, too fragile for the truth. Instead, they lingered at the edge of the trees, wrapped in silence.

Cara caught something in the corner of her eye. Lately, her walks had been strange: echoes where there were none, cold spots that lingered too long. Some of the townspeople spoke of demons and spirits. Cara had run into stray dogs. Not wild. Just unclaimed. Hungry.

Unexpectedly, Thaddeus said, "More for you than me."

She blinked, surprised. "What was that?"

"I'm not expecting anything new outside of Donegal. But you. You've the eye for spirits where others see shadows."

The hush of grass brushing their ankles, the soft press of boots in damp earth. Then Cara's voice cut through, low and sharp: "We need to stay quiet now. And watch for rolling fog."

She slowed, head tilted slightly, as though listening to the air.

"I know these cliffs better than most," she said. "But if we can't see our feet, we'll step into nothin', an' where I'm from, nothin's never just nothin'. It's somethin' waitin' in the dark, ready to catch ye wrong."

They'd reached the clearing above the cave. Cara perched on a rock, grinning like she knew the shape of the night to come.

"No worries," she said, eyes bright. "Ye'll let me handle it this time: no devilment."

Thaddeus didn't believe in knowing, not when it came to Cara. He shook his head at her sudden brightness, this wild optimism that always preceded trouble. She'd claim she'd care for him properly, keep him safe through the turning. She always did.

Until she didn't.

She looked coy, but her eyes betrayed the mischief. She wanted it again: that feeling of shedding skin, becoming something other. Needed him to call on Essence and remake her, just for the night.

Thaddeus turned, eyes like wet stone. "And who might ye be this evenin', a stór? A new name with an old hunger?"

"An' d'ye think it matters?"

"Depends. I remember the priest."

"He folded too easy. And couldn't even sin proper."

Thaddeus nodded without looking her way and carried on down the path.

She'd made her mark. Now he weighed how to help her without birthing a monster worse than the one already at his side.

The sky was dark. The sea thundered beyond the cave mouth.

Cara followed, hand closing around the first shackle, whispering something that might've been a prayer. Or a promise. Or both.