

The story behind the book –
Heather Barbieri’s THE LACE MAKERS OF GLENMARA



When I was a child, my Irish-American grandmother loved to tell stories, pulling tales from memory or making them up as she went along, a master of the form, me listening, mesmerized, at her feet. Despite a hardscrabble upbringing in the shadows of the copper mines of Butte, Montana, she was an elegant woman, fond of the theater and partial to velvet coats, high-heeled mules and jewelry. She taught me the value of style—and the art of storytelling, myth and reality woven together in the most tantalizing ways, bringing the streets of Butte and the hills of Donegal, where her parents were from, to life. So vivid were her words that I knew I had to go to Ireland someday.

Years later, I fulfilled her dream, discovering that the Gaelic Ireland of her imagination still existed in small villages scattered along the west coast, away from major roads and tourist attractions. One rainy summer evening, my husband and I passed a crafts museum while motoring along those narrow lanes, and I remembered a short piece in the *New York Times* fashion supplement about a group of Polish lace makers who had run afoul of their village priest for designing lace panties.

Eureka: the plot for *The Lace Makers of Glenmara* was born, those two threads of setting and plot converging, leading me to a cast of colorful, memorable characters who lived in my imagination before finding their place on the page—and in the fictional village of Glenmara. In a burst of inspiration, I wrote the novel in four months, then began searching for an agent and signed with one within a week. And then HarperCollins decided to publish it. A magical ending for a writer indeed.

—**Heather Doran Barbieri**