



## Thrawn Janet

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

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## Thrawn Janet Details

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## From Reader Review Thrawn Janet for online ebook

### Kate Nell-Johnson says

Even reading the story out loud to myself, I could hardly decipher the brogue in which it was written.

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### Panagiotis says

This little story does not have many things to offer, i just read it because it happened to be included in the greek version of the book "Dr Jekyll and mr Hyde". Interesting and scary, just helps you spend half an hour, nothing more-nothing less. I guess the fact that the main part is written -in the original text- in the Scottish language, might give to the original version some extra credit and interest.

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### Leah says

**"Gude guide us, but it was a fearsome face..."**

Old Reverend Murdoch Soulis is minister of Balweary in the Vale of Dule. Outwardly severe and composed, his eye is 'wild, scared and uncertain' and he seems to see the terrors that may lie ahead in eternity. Once a year, on the 17th August, he preaches a sermon on 'the devil as a roaring lion' that terrifies all who hear it, frightening the children into fits. Both Reverend Soulis and the manse where he lives alone and untended are surrounded by an atmosphere of terror...and sometimes one of the older folk in the village can be persuaded to tell the old story that made them so...the tale of Thrawn Janet.

*It was before the days o' the moderates – weary fa' them; but ill things are like guid – they baith come bit by bit, a pickle at a time; and there were folk even then that said the Lord had left the college professors to there ain devices, an' the lads that went to study wi' them wad hae done mair and better sittin' in a peat-bog, like their forbears of the persecution, wi' a Bible under their oxter and a speerit o' prayer in their heart.*

The beginning of this story is written in fairly standard English, but once the old villager takes over the narration it changes to a broad Scots dialect, much of which is now so archaic even I (a fairly ancient Scot) had some difficulties with the occasional word or phrase. But this really is a classic horror story, based solidly in the witchcraft superstitions that lasted well into the eighteenth century in Scotland. Although the dialect makes the story a bit difficult to read, it's worth the effort – it's amazingly well written and really demands to be read aloud to get the full effect of the speech patterns and rhythms.

*He lay an' he tumbled; the gude, caller bed that he got into brunt his very banes; whiles he slept, and whiles he waukened; whiles he heard the time o' nicht, and whiles a tyke yowlin' up the muir, as if somebody was deid; whiles he thocht he heard bogles claverin' in his lug, an' whiles he saw spunkies in the room. He behoved, he judged, to be sick; an' sick he was – little he jalooseth the sickness.*

When the new young and naïve minister decides to ask Janet McCleour to be his housekeeper, the women of the village are horrified since they believe she is a witch. But to refute their superstition, as he sees it, Soulis demands that Janet publicly renounce the devil and his works. Since the option is to be put to death, Janet

does so...but next day she is struck with a mysterious affliction that twists her neck to one side as if she had been hanged - hence the name Thrawn (Twisted) Janet. The minister believes this is a result of the palsy, but the villagers suspect the devil's work...

*Syne she turned round, an' shawed her face; Mr Soulis had the same cauld grue as twice that day afore, an' it was borne in upon him what folk said, that Janet was deid lang syne, an' this was a bogle in her clay-cauld flesh. He drew back a pickle and he scanned her narrowly. She was tramp-trampin' in the cla'es, croonin' to hersel'; and eh! Gude guide us, but it was a fearsome face.*

Stevenson builds the atmosphere masterfully, showing how the minister, with all his book-learning, gradually begins to suspect that he is wrong and the villagers are right about the evil that seems to surround Janet. The climax is nicely terrifying, with some really horrifying images, though completely gore-free. This is about good and evil in the traditional sense – God and the devil battling for the soul of mankind. Definitely one to chill the spine! (But unless you're an archaic Scot, try to get a version with a glossary...)

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### **Rachel Blackney says**

hard to read but it's a really scary story

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### **Nick says**

I think the story was good and the reason why I say, I think, is because it was just so damn hard to understand. Its like he wrote it using an extremly thick scottish accent. It was another scary story, I think.

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### **Raina Tellado says**

This was a nice classic horror story. The only thing was that it was kind of difficult to read since most of it is in a broad Scots dialect.

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### **Conor O'mahony says**

Not memorable

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### **Ajeje Brazov says**

*"Con tutto quello che aveva per la testa, era difficile che il reverendo Soulis riuscisse a prendere sonno. Si girava senza requie, perchè il letto fresco su cui s'era disteso sembrava una graticola per le sue carni. S'appisolava un po', ma subito dopo era desto; sentiva battere le ore, poi l'ululato d'un cane nella brughiera*

*che sembrava annunciare la morte di qualcuno; talora gli pareva di percepire all'orecchio il brusio degli spiriti, talaltra di scorgere folletti per tutta la stanza. Pensò senza dubbio di essere malato. E malato lo era davvero... anche se non s'immaginava la natura del morbo."*

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### **Sydney says**

Written with heavy Scottish slang. Did not understand.

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### **Philip Yao says**

This was an extremely difficult read. I could not understand the slang until more than 3/4 of the way through the book I found that it was easier to fill in my unknown words if I skimmed through rather than slowly try to figure out what each word meant. Reading aloud did not help me at all.

Although I only understood a tiny portion of the ending, this small part made the plot appear somewhat interesting.

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### **Ro Tu says**

Written in Scottish dialect which is difficult to fully understand though easy enough to get the gist of the plot. Beneath the language however is a fairly boring ghost story the likes of which you'd tell around the campfire as children.

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### **Madeline Noelle says**

Luckily I had hardly any problem with the Scottish accent, except for the word "ken" which was used quite often. I may have to look over it again today because I read it last night in a rather sleepy state. Slightly on the creepy side. One reviewer said she felt like she kept hearing noises in her house that night and I must say I did as well. If I hadn't have been so tired it probably would have freaked me out too.

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### **Quirkyreader says**

This was a lovely story written by Stevenson in Scots dialect. If you are unfamiliar with the dialect and words be patient with it. Take it slow and enjoy the story.

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### **Epiero says**

Janet la torcida fue la primera obra de Stevenson que se etiqueta como novela de terror, publicada en 1881.

Qué sucedió la noche del 17 de agosto de 1712 al reverendo Murdoch Soulis es lo que nos narrará el autor tejiendo lentamente mente sobre nosotros un manto negro que al caer nos hará lanzar un grito.

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### **D.M. says**

Thrawn Janet is a bit of a stand-out for Stevenson: not only is it a strange supernatural tale unlike any I've read from him, but he made the interesting choice to write it almost entirely in (I presume) Scottish dialect. The latter can make it a challenging read, but once one is familiar with Stevenson's phoneticism's it becomes easier.

It's a bit of a shame he made this bold choice (one that other writers would surely warn him against today), as within the narrative is a truly chilling tale of strangeness akin to the better stories of M.R. James. The tale is introduced without dialect, describing a rural minister with a uniquely guarded look to him. Stevenson shifts into dialect when recounting the events that made him the way he is, suggesting the presence of an old local telling us a town yarn. What follows is how Mr. Soulis took in a strange woman who was about to be 'dunked' as a test of her suspected witchery. Things rapidly go peculiar in Soulis' house and his life, and he finds himself dealing with matters he hadn't expected. If a reader can get past the dialectic style, this is a terrific little horror story. If not...don't bother, because it will never be worth the time it takes to read.

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### **Peter Macdonald says**

Sorry for any of those that see this as pretentious, those complaining about the language barrier don't see the story in the way it was meant to be understood. The whole aspect of the "old Scots dialect" was chosen cleverly by Stevenson, as even at time of writing in 1881 no one in Scotland was speaking like this, especially not now as well. It was used as a tool to suspend disbelief and make the reader feel as alienated as Soulis is in the story. So the language cannot be something to complain about for any of those who are and rate it less because of it. Definitely one of the best short stories ever written though

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### **Kelly says**

Very hard to read in the old Scots language. I suggest reading it out loud with a scottish accent - I know it sounds ridiculous, but I understood the words better out loud. This was so freaky once I understood it, that right after reading it noises in the house were scaring me to death!

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### **Alex says**

More like 3.5

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### **Dianna says**

This short story is written in Scottish dialect, and it is one of the hardest things I have ever read! At times I felt that Scottish was an entirely different language.

But, I still understood the story. I drew upon every little bit of knowledge hanging out in the back of my head from Shakespeare, the Bible, Middle English, and who knows what else. I sounded out the words in my head, and I did get it in the end, even though some words still eluded me. Even though I didn't understand every word, I was still able to understand what was happening in the story.

This is a scary story! I should have saved it for Halloween. It involves a bargain with the devil and some other creepy stuff. I still can't decide if the dialect made it spookier, because it increased the mystery, or if it kept me from having nightmares by blurring over the details.

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### **Lisa says**

This short story has been written in Scottish dialect and it makes you kind of look like an idiot reading this out loud - which is the only way to make sure you understand it. Although I probably totally butchered it. :')  
#myonlyexperiencewithscottishisthroughoutlander #yeken

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