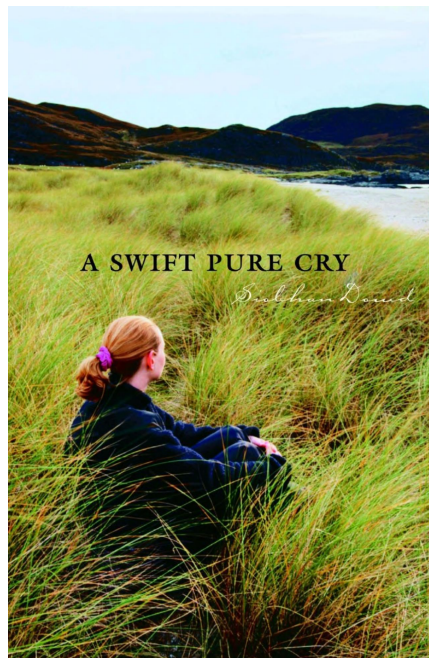


A Swift Pure Cry



Book Summary

Inspired by a true story a 15-year-old girl in rural Ireland mother dies, she cares for her siblings while her father descends into alcoholism and she falls in love with the wrong person.

Summary of Concerns

This book contains; abortion (mentioned), alcohol used by minors, alcohol addiction, child neglect, controversial cultural/social commentary, death (adult/infant), deception/lying, depression, derogatory terms (minor), graphic childbirth, grief, infanticide, physical assault, profanity (minor), religious obsession, smoking, stealing, and teen pregnancy.

Young Adult

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CONTENT WARNING

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Youth Restricted

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89	<p>She woke up. She couldn't tell where she was at first. In a coffin, or a field? By the gravestone of her mam? No. She was in her own bed. Mam's fingers had surely just fluttered past her face. 'Moirá.' A voice, familiar. Him again. She froze. The curtains were ajar. Moonlight toppled in over the counterpanes. Her father loomed at the foot of the bed, swaying on the spot. Only he'd no clothes on. His nakedness was appalling. She'd forgotten to bolt the door. Her heart hammered. Her breath came sharp and fast. He was fumbling towards her. 'Moirá.' His voice was slurred. There was a sizzling in her ears. One of his hands pawed at the hem of her dress. The other came up to her hair, pulling at the ribbon. His eyes were half shut, half open. His breath was stale and old. The flab on his pale arms wobbled as he groped. Jimmy murmured something in his sleep. The sound he made unfroze her. She knew what she had to do. She rolled swiftly off the edge of her bed, too quick for Dad to catch. His hands wondered over the sheets, shifting a pillow as if in search of her. She crouched on her hands and knees and began to move away. He sat on the bed rummaging, muttering. It was hard to tell if he was asleep or awake. She crossed the floor as soft and supple as a cat. She reached the door. She heard him groaning, stretching out on the bed. 'Moirá. Don't turn away, lovey, turn to me.' Shell's belly heaved. Jimmy tossed and sighed, Trix breathed smoothly. She slunk through the door. Then closed it firmly behind her.</p>
120	<p>took a nose-dive. Suddenly something flip-flopped inside her. Like a leaf falling from a tree. Or a guitar chord hovering after it's been strummed. She grabbed her belly. What the hell was that? Declan's head bobbed up. 'C'm in, Shell. It's gorgeous.' She couldn't breathe. Something was twitching under her hands. God Almighty. What's happening?</p>
122	<p>Anything not to think about the strange twitching she'd felt inside her on the strand. I was imagining it.</p>
156	<p>Back in the kitchen, there was a surprise. Jimmy and Trix had cleared away the paint things. On the table lay a ball of twine, a pair of scissors, a plastic bin-bag and a set of Trix's old doll's clothes. In the middle was a small cardboard box, a little bigger than a shoebox. It was lidless and thickly lined with cotton wool. 'We've got everything ready, Shell,' Jimmy said. Shell stared. 'Ready?'</p>
157	<p>Shell nodded. 'I think so,' she admitted. She went up to the table and looked at their offerings. She picked up the twine and scissors and shuddered. What if...episiotomies and caesareans... 'Doubt we'll need these,' she said. She put them down and examined the plastic bin-bag. 'What's that for?' 'S to catch the goo. The afters.' Shell shook her head. She picked up the shoebox and prodded the cotton wool lining. 'That's nice,' she said. 'It's a manger, Shell,' Trix said. 'I made it. I put cotton wool in, not straw.' Shell nodded. 'Much better than straw,' she agreed, bending over. 'She's off again,' Jimmy said. The pain came up this time like a juggernaut, mowing her over, rolling her flat on the tarmac. In the middle of it came a hot gushing between her legs. 'S coming!' she yelped. But after the pain grumbled away, all that was left was a puddle on the floor. Jimmy got the mop out. 'What is it?' Trix asked, peering down. 'S a funny colour.' 'It's bath water,' Shell said. Her teeth chattered. 'Never.' 'It is.' 'Ick.' 'Get rid of it.' Jimmy mopped it up. 'I'm all wet.' Suddenly Shell was sobbing and she couldn't stop. 'I'm frozen. I'm wet through.' Jimmy put the mop away. He put his hand on her elbow. 'C'mon, Shell,' he coaxed. They led her into the bedroom. Trix helped her into her nightdress. They tucked her in and heaped their own blankets on top of her. 'Jimmy?' she croaked.</p>
158	<p>He came in with the bowl. Trix followed with a cup of tea and a Marie Rose biscuit. Instead of being sick she ate the biscuit and drank down the tea. For a moment she felt nearly normal. Then the next pain came on, and the next, and the one after that, until they were lining up like monsters, grabbing at her as they passed, munching on her insides, tearing her limb from limb. She remembered coming out of a tunnel, wanting to know the time. Jimmy was saying something. Two o'clock. How could it be two? It was pitch-dark outside. 'You should be at school, the two of you. What are you doing here?' 'S two at night, Shell.' 'S coming, 's coming.' 'You said that last time.' 'S really coming. Jesus.' She was on the floor, crawling towards the kitchen. 'God help me.' Her knees flew apart. Her hair was down around the boards in matted folds.</p>

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158	<p>'Get the bin-bag, Trix. The twine. The scissors,' she heard somebody say. It was like the voice of a torturer. He was going to carve her in two. She hollered as loud as she could, but there was nobody to hear her for miles around. A knife was in her gut with a fiery blade, savaging her. 'No! Spare me,' she screamed. 'I didn't mean to do wrong. Please.' She was Angie Goodie on the steeple. The lightning was striking her, not the wand, again and again, cutting her to ribbons. The room went white and silent.</p>
159	<p>She was in the kitchen, crouched in the middle of a blanket. Her nightie was rolled up around her hips. Her forearms were dug into the seat of the armchair. Under her knees was black plastic. On the black plastic was a lump. It was red and blue and brown and white. Jimmy was touching it. He'd a damp flannel and was stroking it clean. 'You did it, Shell,' he gasped. 'You got it out.' As he wiped, a face appeared. Two button-blue eyes. A tiny nose. Little, pursed lips. 'I did it?' she gasped. Its arms were curled around its chest, ending in tiny fingers, like a doll's. There was something caught around its neck. 'What's that-what's that thing there?' she whispered. Jimmy was doing something, pulling at it, yanking at it, slipping it over the baby's head. 'Don't take it off-it's--' She shook her head, touching it. It was whitish-grey, like a strange necklace. 'Is it twine? You didn't pull it out with twine?'</p>
160	<p>No,' Jimmy said. 'Didn't use the twine. It came out like you said. On its own.' He got the scissors out and cut the round thickness of the thing in two. It oozed round the baby, a long, truncated worm. 'Ick,' said Trix. "S horrid.' One bit of it ended in the baby's belly button. Jimmy did another snip to cut it away. The other bit dangled from between Shell's legs. She remembered what it was now, from the body book: the umbilical cord. Jimmy went on wiping the baby. 'Is it a boy or girl, Jimmy?' Trix said. 'A girl, silly. Any fool can tell that.' 'A girl?' Shell breathed. 'Give her over, Jimmy. Let me hold her.' Shell reached out and touched the strange, alien creature. Minutes past, silent and still. A gloop tickled her thighs. 'It's the afters,' Jimmy yelled. A purple sludge, liverish and dark, came out. Shell didn't care. She hardly noticed. By now, she had the little girl picked up, and was holding her like cut-glass, hunched on her kneecaps, smiling. The little face blurred, then sharpened again. She touched the head. It was soft, like apple skin. There were tiny purple veins inside it, and no hair on top of it. Her heart missed a beat, then a surge of warmth flooded over her. 'Rosie,' she whispered. 'My Rosie, love.' She touched the little nose. 'Is it really you? Did I do this?' She started to hum her mam's favourite hymn. 'Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down.' The little baby, daintily creased, lay in her arms asleep, making not a sound.</p>
162	<p>She woke late next day. Panicking, she searched for the baby. She was where she'd left her, rolled on the side, hugged into Shell's shoulder by the pillow, with her head under Shell's armpit. Shell picked her up and sang some more. Slowly she got to her feet. Soreness stung from her stomach to her knees. She hobbled out of the bedroom, through the kitchen and made it to the bathroom. She ran another bath. She stepped in, carrying the baby with her, scooping the water over the little wrinkles on the forehead. 'I baptize thee Rose,' she said. The child was cold through, however hard she tried to warm her. Milk dribbled from her breasts but the baby was too tired to drink. She got out and wrapped her up warm in a towel. She put her in Trix's cardboard box, in the snug cotton-wool lining. She folded up some clean socks to support her precious head. Then she made the breakfast.</p>
163	<p>on her lap. The baby was still asleep. She stared across the room to where the sunshine came in through the window. She tried to hum the hymn but the notes wouldn't come. A great lid slammed down in her heart. She made herself look down at what was in her lap. The baby was blue and stiff. It was dead.</p>
184	<p>A dead baby was found this morning by a woman walking her dog on the strand. The dog went sniffing into the cave and wouldn't come when called. So she went in-and found, in a carrycot, skimpily clad-a baby. Stone dead from cold. She called the gardai. When we got there we confirmed what she found.</p>

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184	<p>The pathologist is still preparing his report. But there is no doubt in his mind that the baby was born recently and was brought there by a person or persons unknown, and cruelly left there to die. Brutally, deliberately exposed to the elements. Do you know about exposure, Miss Talent?' 'No,' Shell whispered. 'I'm told they did it in Roman times. And in China. Who knows where else? Exposure is a way to kill a child as sure as dashing out its brains. Or smothering it with a pillow. Or plunging a knife into its heart. But exposure, Michelle, is the coward's way of killing. The person maybe thinks it's not as bad as actively murdering the thing. Let the cold do the trick, they think, and I'll have nothing on my conscience. But the child, Michelle. See it from the child's point of view. It suffers more. Just think how that little baby felt, alone in that strange, damp cave. With the sound of the tide, ebbing and flowing outside. The cold in its fingertips. Think how it must have cried, Miss Talent, cried as hard as its little lungs could manage. But no good. All to no good. Think, Miss Talent, think. Then tell me the truth.'</p> <p>Shell sat in her chair, her gullet frozen, mesmerized. Haggerty's Hellhole. The encrusted black walls. The cold sand and stones. The groan of the wind in the hidden crevices. The tiny white flesh, wriggling to keep warm.</p>
255	<p>A team of Dublin pathologists has proved conclusively that the two dead babies, a boy and a girl, found near Castlerock are not twins. Fraternal twins can sometimes have different blood groups, as these did, but it has now been further established that the babies had different gestational ages. Although born at the roughly same time, they were conceived at least five weeks apart, the team concludes. The baby found on the beach was thought to be born at around 40 weeks (at full-term), whereas the one born to the unnamed girl at the heart of the case was born premature, at about 35 weeks.</p>

Profanity & Sexual or Derogatory Terms	Count
Ass / Jackass / Asshole etc.	1
Bastard	1
Feck	1
Shite	1
Whore	5