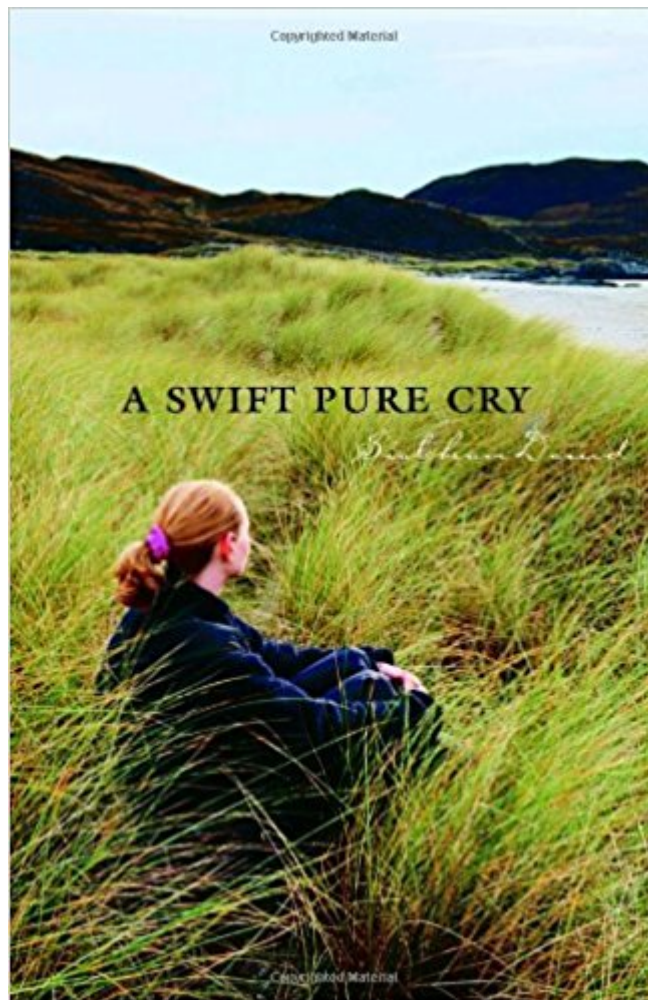


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# A Swift Pure Cry



## Synopsis

Ireland 1984. After Shell's mother dies, her obsessively religious father descends into alcoholic mourning and Shell is left to care for her younger brother and sister. Her only release from the harshness of everyday life comes from her budding spiritual friendship with a naive young priest, and most importantly, her developing relationship with childhood friend, Declan, who is charming, eloquent, and persuasive. But when Declan suddenly leaves Ireland to seek his fortune in America, Shell finds herself pregnant and the center of a scandal that rocks the small community in which she lives, with repercussions across the whole country. The lives of those immediately around her will never be the same again. This is a story of love and loss, religious belief and spirituality— it will move the hearts of any who read it. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up—A poignant tale, set in Ireland in 1984. When her mother dies, 15-year-old Shell Talent becomes trapped in a depressing life with her pious, but alcoholic father. Having given up his job to devote his life to the Lord, he leaves Shell and her younger siblings with no real means to support themselves. Longing to escape this cycle of poverty, Shell pins her hopes and dreams on visions of their new priest, Father Rose, as Jesus Christ come back to Earth. These dreams soon come to a crashing end as Shell turns to a schoolmate for solace. Trapped in a pregnancy that results from this relationship, she must make a decision that could mean life or death for the new life she carries. As Shell struggles to bring her child into her world unnoticed, Dowd drives home her



After her mother died, fifteen-year-old Shell is left to take care of her younger brother and sister and her drunken father. They live in a small Irish village in a little farmhouse. Her mother's death has caused her father to drink even more than he did before, and in sudden religious zeal, he goes out daily to make his "collections." These donations are meant for the church, but he takes out more than his fair share before turning in the remains. Life is difficult. Shell is teased at school and skips out as much as possible. She attempts to look to the church for support, and a new young priest seems to offer a shoulder to lean on. Eventually, Shell seeks emotional release in a relationship with an older boy. They begin a secret relationship spent mostly hidden in the barley field where Declan takes advantage of Shell's need for tenderness. The inevitable happens - Shell becomes pregnant. Without her mother to confide in, Shell hides her condition, using a stolen library book to help her understand what is about to happen. Shell is an amazing young girl. She struggles to hold the family together and deal with her circumstances as best she can. As the story unfolds, readers will be surprised at the unpredictable turn of events for Shell, her father, the young priest, and all involved in the unfortunate tragedy. A SWIFT PURE CRY uses Irish dialect and lyrical prose to draw the reader into Shell's world. Her courage and faith shine clearly through this heartbreaking tale. Reviewed by: Sally Kruger, aka "Readingjunky"

in a sentence or so: Shell's mam died a year ago. she and her brother, her sister, and her dad have been hobbling along ever since...until Father Rose comes to town and changes the way Shell experiences her life without her mam in the world. Shell is 15 and raising her brother and sister on her own. sure, her dad is around, but he's either drunk or off collecting for the church's charity (and pocketing some for his booze). on the rare occasion that he is home, he orders Shell and siblings to pick rocks in the field (that he never plows), eats, and passes out. then, one Sunday during mass, Shell discovers a new priest in the pulpit. Father Rose is kind, warm, genuine, and fills Shell with a sense of purpose and love that she hadn't felt in a year. things seemed to be going well for Shell - Father Rose giving her a new hope and purpose in life, her best friend Bridie and friend Declan as solid school companions, and she was balancing being nice to her siblings while raising them at the same time. then, as soon as things become great, they turn sour. Bridie up and leaves without explaining to Shell why she's mad at her, and Declan (her eventual boyfriend) ditches, leaving Shell alone and feeling hollow. again. i don't want to give anything away plot wise because things i expected to happen in a seemingly predictable coming-of-age-plot turned out not to be that way at all. in fact, there was even a real life gasp+hand over the mouth moment. no joke. this is still a coming of age in that Shell is 15, motherless, raising her sibs, and having to learn the hard (and

incredibly awkward) way about periods, bras, and boys. even though i felt the plot was really solid and took some interesting and unexpected turns, it was the writing that really made this book shine. the opening line - "The place brought to mind a sinking ship"- is vivid and set the tone of helplessness and struggle for the entire book. the writing style was crass and raw, yet tender and emotional. the overarching theme of emotional conflict and spiritual duplicity threaded the multiple plot points together to create a multi-faceted view of Shell and her community. ultimately, this was about Shell figuring out life in the midst of grief and loss, with hope and struggle, failure and success. the thoughtful choice of writing in the Irish vernacular to illustrate delicate and vivid images is icing on this cake. read it, you'll like it. fave quote : "The place fell silent. Mrs Duggan led her down the aisle to the front. She saw a hundred fork-prong eyes, noses twitching, hands fluttering: like small animals salivating." (260) fix er up: the resolution felt cyclical to me. like i wound up where i started...even though Shell was in a different place and the events shaped her.

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