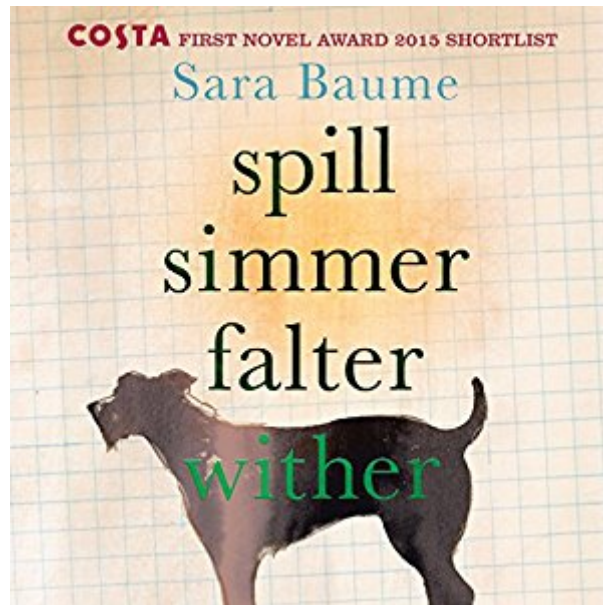


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Spill Simmer Falter Wither



Synopsis

A debut novel already praised as "unbearably poignant and beautifully told" (Eimear McBride), this captivating story follows - over the course of four seasons - a misfit man who adopts a misfit dog. It is springtime, and two outcasts - a man ignored, even shunned by his village, and the one-eyed dog he takes into his quiet, tightly shuttered life - find each other, by accident or fate, and forge an unlikely connection. As their friendship grows, their small seaside town suddenly takes note of them, falsely perceiving menace where there is only mishap. The unlikely duo must take to the road. Gorgeously written in poetic and mesmerizing prose, *Spill Simmer Falter Wither* has already garnered wild support in its native Ireland, where the Irish Times pointed to Baume's "astonishing power with language" and praised it as "a novel bursting with brio, braggadocio and bite". It is also a moving depiction of how - over the four seasons echoed in the title - a relationship between fellow damaged creatures can bring them both comfort. One of those rare stories that utterly, completely imagines its way into a life most of us would never see, it transforms us in our understanding not only of the world but also of ourselves.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One man and his dog. Not an original idea, but this is no ordinary novel. This is my favourite novel of the decade. This debut comes from the winner of 2014 Davy Byrnes Award, so I had a sneaky suspicion that I was starting to read something special. It took me about thirty seconds of reading to know, rather than suspect, that this was a novel to be savoured. From the prologue, to each individual chapter (each attributed to a season) and from paragraph to line, I slowly inhaled the story

and let it take over. I was transported from a cold bedroom in Co. Louth to the rural villages of the Irish Midlands, stopping off in the odd coastal village. The potholed roads, the long twisting laneways, the silent main streets and the family run pubs and petrol stations. What a change from the usual dual carriageways of our daily lives. As I turned the pages, I was reluctant to do so. The knowledge that I had to finish this book was something that I was ignoring, instead choosing to place my bookmark in with hesitation and delaying the inevitable. I would place the book at arms length, glance at it, close my eyes and re-read the latest pages in my mind. Now, I am aware that that this makes me sound slightly deranged, but those who know me can surely picture it. Eventually, I could hold off no more. The bookmark was removed for the last time and I faced the final pages. I felt like I was losing a friend. I was almost certain how the ending was going to shape up, and I was in denial. A big deep breath and it was over. I am still a bit bereft. The protagonist in this tale is not named, however the mystery of his name is easily solved. He has a diminished mental capacity which makes him the same level as a child of approximately nine years old. The reader is left to imagine this gentle giant with an abundance of innocence and years of loneliness and isolation. He adopts an ex-badger baiting dog, who he christens OneEye, and here begins an incomprehensible story of devotion. Sara Baume has taken the concept of friendship to a new level, in my opinion. The 'companionship' concept does not come close to the depth of feeling described in this novel. A child may feel this way about a special blanket, sobbing uncontrollably when parted from it. A recently widowed man may have a shadow of this feeling visible across his face. A mother may feel this as she watches her son head off to war. Such is the depth of the friendship between Ray and OneEye. Each chapter is sprinkled with seasonal sensations and each line is written with the most sensual prose I have encountered from a contemporary author. The mood, the tempo, the minimal dialogue and the outstanding descriptive passages made for an emotional journey, albeit on a small island with basically just one character. I could go on to reveal more plot line and quote some of the poetic verses contained within the narrative, but I am going to leave that to the lucky person who is reading this novel for the first time. I can never have that honour again, but will certainly enjoy my re-reads. A massive congratulations to Sara Baume and Tramp Press. You have raised the bar for Irish, and International, fiction...

He is running, running, running. As I settled in and began reading Sara Baume's *Spill Simmer Falter Wither*, my first thought was that this is a story that begs to be read aloud. The language reminded me of something centuries old; I found the repetition of words and rhythm of the sentences delightfully lyrical. Ironically, the unlike the dog One Eye, the

As described in that first sentence, the book does not run or even jog. Rather, it meanders through four seasons that are described in the title. For me, this was both pleasant and tiresome. What happens when a fifty-seven-year-old man adopts a disfigured, abused dog? The man, Ray, and the dog, One Eye, are almost the only characters in this story, which is told from the perspective of Ray as he speaks to One Eye. He speaks to him not as man to beast. No, he seems to treat him as an equal. A friend. Indeed, One Eye is probably the only friend he has ever had other than the woman he called Aunt. Through their daily jaunts in the countryside, we see their relationship develop and deepen. We also get glimpses of the man's past, the feelings he had about his childhood, the questions he never asked. He has lived a solitary life, and he seems sad and misunderstood. He grew up with his father and had no formal schooling, yet he is like a savant when it comes to naming plants and birds. He seems socially and emotionally stunted. This strange, reclusive man forms a bond with a one-eyed former badger-baiting dog. He becomes One Eye's protector. As the seasons move on, little happens. It's easy to get lulled to sleep by the beauty and the tempo of the writing. In the midst of the daily routine, there are events that signal that perhaps trouble is brewing for one or both of our misfits. I felt the cadence of the narrative and the ambling pace of the narrative became rather sleepy. In a few instances, Ray did shock me with some blunt revelations; toward the end, however, I wish the author had been less cryptic, as I had to read it twice to realize what actually happened. I also had a problem with some of the practical aspects of this story that the narrator does not reveal to us. Questions I have about Ray and his past go unanswered. Several pieces of information that he reveals are quite troubling, and the results are quite puzzling to me. That interfered with my total enjoyment of this book. I really struggle with how to rate *Spill Simmer Falter Wither* because the title beckoned me to embark on the journey, and the prose is extraordinary. As a cat mom, the bond of love between a human and an animal is one that I personally can attest to. (I will add here that I have a friend with a cat named One Eye.) As an entire work, the plot didn't engage me as much as I wanted it to. The characters, despite their individual defects and devotion to each other, didn't draw me to them. I didn't pity them, but I didn't love them either. I felt a bit sad, I suppose, but I just didn't connect emotionally. Back on the plus side, what does this book say about life? About relationships? About love? Sara Baume has created something unique in this little book. Despite the lack of substance, I would recommend this book if you are a lover of poetic language. 3.5 stars

This is the adult version of a book like 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night'. In this book a

middle aged man with some unclear infirmity, possibly from birth, and his rescued cur with one eye find companionship and then desperation as their time together goes by. The man is the storyteller in his conversations with the dog and in his thoughts and dreams, sometimes spilling together.

Baume's prose pulls you into his life, brutal and raw. It grips you and drags you with him through the filth until your gasping for air and then suddenly releasing you into some astonishing vision of simple beauty, some chilled breath of clear fresh air that makes you stay and yearn for more. You get to know him, understand him, loath him and love him, feeling his fears and tension as he loves and fears for his dog. Unforgettable and heart rending.

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