



Twisted River

Siobhán MacDonald

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“She would never have fit as neatly into the trunk of his own car.” Limerick, Ireland: the O’Brien family’s driveway. American Oscar Harvey opens the trunk of his hosts’ car and finds the body of a woman, beaten and bloody. But let’s start at the beginning.

Kate and Mannix O’Brien live by Curragower Falls in Limerick, in a lovely house they can barely afford. Their son Fergus is bullied at school, and their daughter Izzy blames herself, wishing she could protect him. Kate decides that her family needs a vacation, and is convinced her luck’s about to change when she spots a gorgeous Manhattan apartment on a home-exchange website.

Hazel and Oscar Harvey and their two children live on Manhattan’s Upper West Side. Though they seem successful and happy, Hazel has mysterious bruises, and Oscar is hiding things about his dental practice. They, too, need a change of pace. Hazel has always wanted her children to see her native Limerick, and the house swap offers a perfect chance to soothe two troubled marriages. But this will be anything but a perfect vacation. And the body in the trunk is just the beginning.

Twisted River Details

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Author : Siobhán MacDonald

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From Reader Review Twisted River for online ebook

Chalida says

Disappointing. MacDonald's plot had an interesting premise but then became too predictable. I also found that it ended very abruptly with no real closure and finding out what happens to the families after, when they return to their homes, feels like where the real story could take place.

Tracy Shephard says

There Is no need to cover the premise of this fabulous read as the blurb covers it brilliantly.

Siobhan Macdonald leads the reader up one path and then takes them on another, in what is a stylish and cleverly written tale. The plot is evidently designed to twist and turn and this psychological thriller covers love-affairs, deadly revenge and family secrets. Even the children have their own dilemmas and struggles.

The descriptions of both Ireland and Manhattan add to the charm of this novel and it is one with a realistic and original scenario.

In equal measures, it has mystery, scares and violence, although I do think Macdonald has missed a trick with the ending. I would have liked to have read about the O'Briens 'run-in with the Bolgers in the next book and think this would have made a fabulous story about class warfare and division between the two families. Spike is a great character and I think he would have come into his own in this second book.....but that's just me.

Twisted River moves at a moderate pace that grips and intrigues, it is also one that I am happy to recommend.

Liz Barnsley says

Twisted River is the story of two families – both hiding secrets of different kinds – who swap houses for holiday purposes, this event bringing things to a head. It starts with a body then tells the tale of what led to this moment. For me, Twisted River was an excellent character study and an intriguing and engaging tale throughout, bit of a page turner and written well with enough difference about it to make it stand out somewhat in the plethora of this type of story around at the moment.

The construction was effective – hearing from four characters, seeing their lives both before and afterwards, the author does a great job of blurring the lines so that things are unexpected and unpredictable. Siobhan Macdonald has a great eye for pace and atmosphere, exploring themes of marriage and loyalty, the things we keep hidden from each other and the cost of lies.

I really enjoyed Twisted River it has to be said, was sympathetic to some characters whilst rolling my eyes at others, you get immersed into the lives of these people and it has a dark tone to it that appealed to me. Overall definitely recommended for fans of psychological thrillers.

Elaine says

2.5

The extra half star is for the premise. With the popularity of AirBnB, a house exchange as the theme the plot revolves around is a great idea.

Too bad I couldn't stand the characters; the women were typical, doormat-y types (is that even a word?), the men were equally cliché and douchey (definitely a word) and I was able to guess the 'twist' before it happened.

Also, I could not buy the stalker girlfriend. It felt contrived and corny. I mean, where did she come from? Okay, I laughed. And rolled my eyes. I could do both.

For some reason, I could only picture Shannen Doherty holding a knife to (insert popular 90s actress name here) and flipping her hair around in a semi hysterical state. Not a pretty picture.

The ending? What ending? Anti-climatic and in a way, exactly as I predicted.

Sharon says

For fans of Gone Girl this may appeal. A house swap between 2 couples from Limerick and New York takes a turn for the worse. Relationships are not always what they seem. Easy read of a book but it just lacked the chill and the thrill I look for in a book, I felt there was a depth missing and somehow the story was skimmed over at times - enjoyable but didn't have the wow factor for me I'm afraid

Rachael says

An American and Irish family swap homes during an October holiday and their lives collide in unexpected ways...

This thriller was fine. There were a couple of unexpected twists which I appreciated and didn't see coming, I liked the unpredictability as I thought I'd figured it out from the start.

The ending was abrupt and left some unanswered questions and as usual, all of the men were cheaters or criminals or a mixture of the two.

The news is full recently of how vile some men, especially those in power, can be towards women, of how women have suffered silently so that they can keep their jobs or because they're scared. This book feels very timely in that respect, as do a great many thrillers lately. I think it's such an important issue that needs to be addressed, however, I believe that there are good-hearted, principled men out there too and I'd like to see some of them in books as well.

Bryony Nelson says

To me, this book was super slow. I enjoyed the last two chapters but apart from that, it just took way too long to actually get anywhere. I liked the plot and the ideas behind it but it could have been executed better.

The characters were great. I HATED Oscar at the start but the further through the book you get, the more you just kind of feel slightly sorry for him as well as his wife Hazel. Mannix was hated through the whole thing. He couldn't really redeem himself. Kate was a very strong character though. I really liked her chapters and how fantastic of a mother she was, always wanting to protect her children and give them the best. I think Izzy was my favourite though. She seemed super smart and mature for an eleven year old and basically didn't take any shit. She was a fab sister too.

I also really enjoyed the home exchange idea. It was something I had never heard about or read before and thought that part of the plot was written very well.

Despite the great plot twists and the ending, I just think this book was a bit too slow for me.

I received this book via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Joanne Robertson says

As people know, there's nothing I love more than a book about a dysfunctional family....well, apart from a book about TWO dysfunctional families!! Siobhan MacDonald brings us a fantastically twisty tale about a house exchange and two families, both of whom seem to be hiding some very big secrets.

The opening scene here is one with great shock value as Oscar Harvey is examining a dead woman in the boot of his car. His kids are asking where their mum is...could it possibly be Oscars wife Hazel lying dead from a massive head wound? We are then spun back in time to meet our two families. Mannix and Kate have two children and are, like many modern families, struggling to find time for each other. They work, look after the kids and have the added worry of Fergus, their son, being bullied due to his autism. There is also an underlying secret causing Manny some troubling thoughts so when Kate finds them a house swap for the October half term holiday, he jumps at the chance to get away and spent some quality time with his family. But both families are heading into trouble and those secrets have a way of following you half way round the world.

I loved this so much I got incredibly caught up in all the drama and read it in one adrenaline filled afternoon. Told by all four main characters alternatively, we are totally misdirected many times into what is actually happening. I just love being surprised by a book and here, the author surprises us many times. I do hope someone has options on this for a film or tv drama as I think it would translate fabulously well! I loved the women, hated the men, felt emotional for the kids and was just thankful there was no dog-that would have been too much!!!!

I had been dithering as to whether to read this book as reviews have been rather mixed but I am so glad that I took the chance as otherwise I would have missed this great character driven study into the secrets that families keep and how they can destroy us. Top notch debut from Siobhan MacDonald and I look forward to more from her in the future!

I received a copy of this book via netgalley in return for an honest review.

Penny (Literary Hoarders) says

Hmmm...I'd almost give this one a 2.5 star rating. Something that was building up steam all along, and marketed to be like "Girl on the Train, like Before I Go To Sleep", sure did fizzle out and come to a dull and pretty abrupt ending. There wasn't so much a shock to the end but more of a That was it? After all of that? That's the end? It certainly left a whole lot of loose plot points left unraveling and spinning out in the air. Not a bad read, but one filled to the brim with the stereotypical abusive, cheating, controlling and jealous men and the pathetic and desperate wives that love them. I don't know...I think it's time to put an end to the "if you liked Girl on the Train" books and plot. I know I'll be finished with this kind of thriller style read for a little bit now.

Chelsey says

Found this to be incredibly slow and the characters were pretty boring. They mystery isn't like the synopsis so that was a bit frustrating. Fairly disappointed with this.

Alison Hardtmann says

I have a great fondness for dark crime novels, so I picked *Twisted River* off of a display labeled "Celtic Noir" with great excitement, having never heard of author Siobhan MacDonald. It's always exciting to discover a new favorite author. What I discovered instead is that while I love the genre, I also love a well-written and well-plotted book, and *Twisted River* was neither of those things.

Two families swap houses for a week in October. Kate and Mannix want to give their sensitive and bullied son the treat of a week in New York and Hazel wants to show her hometown of Limerick, Ireland to her family. Told in chapters that alternate between the adults, the reader learns about the problems both families are facing.

The story starts to take off on page 159, although the two women mention that they are feeling a sense of rising dread or impending doom several times. The tension in the story is based on characters withholding information from the reader even as the chapter is told from their point of view. So one character will ruminate at length on the ominous text messages he's receiving, while failing to think about the actual messages, or a character will make oblique references in a personal journal that point in one direction, but this will be shown to be a red herring later on. And the ending was just silly.

I loved that this book was set in an unrepresented locale. That's what was good about this book.

Kirsta says

The premise was so good.

I wonder if publishers have noted the wild success of *Gone Girl* et al and are rushing things to print without a

thorough edit. These characters needed a lot of development, there were whole wasted passages that did nothing to advance the story (the whole political rant by one of the moms about her sons shirt), I don't even know which woman was which because every female in the story had the exact same interests and hobbies and build, except for poor Helen who had so much potential but even her creator couldn't peg her for anything more than the fat girl. The idea was there for this to be Gillian Flynn level thriller but this author is no Gillian Flynn.

Cardmaker says

It seemed like a good idea for a story and I'm sure it could have been if written by someone else.

The characters were too blah and I had a very difficult time figuring out which couple I was reading about because they were so much alike. They were uninteresting most of the time and plain out dull in between. I didn't really care what happened to any of them.

There was no suspense to the ending. And really, what kind of police force just walks away from a family they're supposed to be protecting from some nutcase murderer because they think she's been spotted up the coast? Yep, just everyone leave so she can come in and do whatever. I saw that coming from a mile off.

No, I wouldn't recommend it.

Sarah says

5 stars

Huge thanks to Siobhán MacDonald, Canelo and NetGalley for this copy in exchange for an honest review.

Oohh this is a tricky book! You think you know what's happening and suddenly the rug is pulled a little from under you, it happens throughout the book until you are surprised and wondering where the rug went.

It's told from 4 perspectives, Kate, Mannix, Hazel and Oscar and from both Ireland and New York, the tale of two families doing a house swap and everything that happens inbetween.

I really enjoyed this book and although a few things were left unanswered I still thought the ending was as it should be. Really recommend this book.

Kristen says

Honestly, I was rather disappointed with this book. It was marketed as a thriller in the same vein as "Girl on the Train", which I read and enjoyed. It felt like a character study, except the characters were all so alike, there wasn't much to be learned. The build-up and foundation of the two families took up most of the book, and the ending was far-fetched and reminded me of a bad, low-budget revenge/horror film from the 90's. I wanted to like this, and I do think MacDonald has talent, but this just felt too contrived for my taste.
