

Six Stories

Matt Wesolowski

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Inspired by the podcast *Serial*, Matt Wesolowski weaves a dazzling fictional mystery in his book *Six Stories*, told in the form of interviews with those involved.

Set twenty years after a teenager's mysterious death in a remote United Kingdom area known as Scarclaw Fell, *Six Stories* offers a Rashomon-style variety of points of view, combined with realistic characters, teen angst, tales of the supernatural, and surprising twists.

Some novelists use an unreliable narrator as a plot device; Wesolowski multiplies the effect, as different interpretations of events are offered by people who were present at the time of the incident. Across a distance of twenty years, the effect is further magnified, as shown in an exchange between interviewer and interviewee:

Have you been in contact with any of the others since?

Not at all. I think a few of them added me on Facebook. God, my memory's so bad.

The book's verisimilitude in characterization, setting, and diction allows fiction to imitate life—in this case the popular nonfiction *Serial* podcast. *Six Stories* is written mostly as a series of transcripts of a fictional podcast, titled *Six Stories*. Its host is one of the primary voices that guide the mystery's revelation—but not the only one.

To call *Six Stories* a fictionalized version of a *Serial*-type podcast doesn't do justice to Wesolowski's gripping writing, inventiveness, or the elements of a classic mystery that appear here in a slightly different format than the norm.

Wesolowski is especially skilled at utilizing the setting to enhance a naturally suspenseful story—he's written horror novellas set on the Northumberland coast and the forests of Sweden, respectively, and in this case, the forbidding landscape of Scarclaw Fell becomes a character in its own right.

While those who enjoy the *Serial* podcasts will probably enjoy *Six Stories* as well, it's perhaps more notable for those who love classic mysteries. *Six Stories* offers a new style of mystery, one that encapsulates the twenty-first century, the Internet, and social media, even as its characters struggle to recall—or forget—a time before such things.

PETER DABBENE (May/June 2017)

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