

# Big Snow



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出版者:St Martins Pr

出版时间:

装帧:Pap

isbn:9781582342931

From Publishers Weekly The central conceit of this acclaimed Irish author's poignant and compelling American debut is a snowstorm that shuts down Northern Ireland. A series of interlocking short stories about various smalltown characters precedes a taut, riveting urban murder-mystery involving a prostitute and a city councilman. The book starts on a wistful note as schoolteacher Martin Stevenson prepares for the death of his wife from a terminal illness that is wicking away her beauty and energy. From there, Park moves to a precocious young man's attraction to an older woman when the storm forces him and his father to help her husband after a minor auto accident. Other short interludes include a woman's efforts to buy a wedding dress for her daughter, and an encounter involving a prudish principal who winds up sleeping with one of his teachers. Park saves the best for last, when the mysterious death of a

prostitute sparks a young detective named Swift to defy his boss and pursue a prominent councilman in the title novella. Park is a superb writer who focuses on interiority in the early stories, briefly but sharply bringing his characters to life with compassion and verve as they grapple with their passions and shortcomings. The impeccable plotting in the murder mystery is just as noteworthy, as Park focuses on Swift's head butting with his boss to increase the tension for the final pursuit. Structurally, the story line poses challenges, but the author incorporates a stunning beauty and a sense of mystery into his prose that makes it smooth and seamless. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition. From Booklist Four short stories and a novella, set during the 1960s in the north of Ireland in the midst of a blinding blizzard, are linked by the theme of love. In "The Light of the World," a husband is haunted by his memories of infidelity as his wife lays dying; "Snow Trails" follows a student's infatuation with a wealthy woman and her rarefied world; an old woman buys a wedding dress and slips into madness in "The Wedding Dress"; and a deeply lonely schoolmaster forges an unexpected connection in "Against the Cold." In the moving title story, a new detective doggedly searches for the murderer of a beautiful woman, somehow convinced that his investigation will lead him to love. In setting these explorations of passionate human emotions against the austere, snow-covered landscape, Park throws his themes into sharp relief. Skillfully depicting how the snow has transformed the neighborhood into something only partly recognizable and temporarily released people from the predictable, Park uses the imagery of his setting in every conceivable fashion and to powerful effect. Masterful fiction. Joanne Wilkinson Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition. See all Editorial Reviews

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