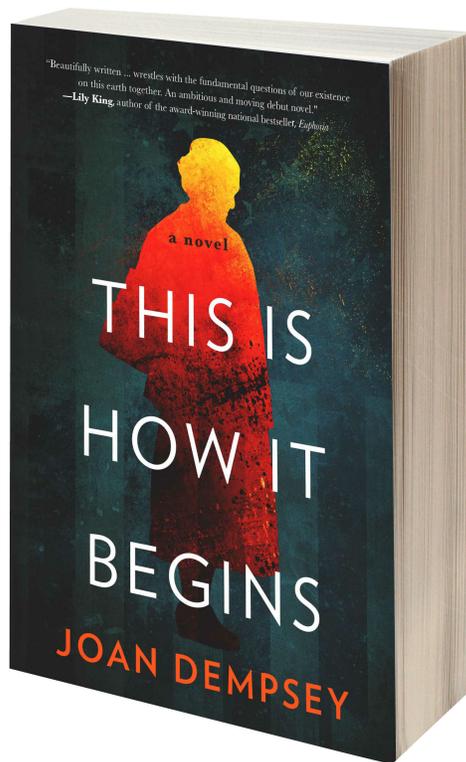


Winner, 2017 Maureen Egen Writers Exchange Award
from *Poets & Writers*

THIS IS HOW IT BEGINS By Joan Dempsey



“ In a time when religious liberty is on trial, [this is] an extraordinarily pertinent novel dripping in suspense and powerful scenes of political discourse ... a must-read” —**FOREWORD REVIEWS** (starred)

“... Dempsey’s fine first novel [is] notable for the evenhanded way it addresses hot-button issues. The result is a timely and memorable story.”
—**BOOKLIST**

“A gripping and sensitive portrait of ordinary people wrestling with ideological passions.”
—**KIRKUS REVIEWS**

“Beautifully written ... An ambitious and moving debut novel. —**Lily King**, author of the award-winning national bestseller, *Euphoria*

This October, She Writes Press releases Joan Dempsey’s first novel, **THIS IS HOW IT BEGINS**, winner of the 2017 Maureen Egen Writers Exchange Award from *Poets & Writers*.

In the novel, Ludka Zeilonka is an 85-year-old art professor and member of an esteemed political family in Massachusetts. Her only troubles—at least on the surface—are protecting her renowned and delicate Polish contemporary art collection and that she gets cold in museums. But then Ludka receives a disturbing phone message about a secret she has kept for more than sixty years. Shortly thereafter, her grandson, Tommy, is fired along with a handful of other gay teachers across the state for allegedly discriminating against Christian students in the classroom.

The teacher firings are the brainchild of Warren Meck, a deeply religious local radio host and father of three who is hoping to pass a religious freedom bill in Massachusetts. Meck favors achieving his goals through careful planning and legislation, and is concerned when violence erupts. But concern quickly turns to alarm when he realizes the violence may be being incited by those within his inner circle.

As a young Catholic woman in WWII Poland, Ludka joined the Resistance as an artist, her surviving drawings serving as testimony to Nazi crimes. Also, her family sheltered Jews, and her parents died because of it—and right in front of her. As Ludka watches Tommy navigate the political firestorm erupting over his job loss, she knows that what she sees doesn't compare to her childhood. But she also recognizes the danger in dehumanizing a group of people. As the tensions escalate, she's forced to decide once again to keep quiet or to act.

In this novel about free speech, family and secrets, Dempsey brilliantly depicts both sides without creating caricatures, emphasizing the importance of empathy in public discourse today. **THIS IS HOW IT BEGINS** is page-turning, thought provoking, and timely.

New England native **Joan Dempsey** received an MFA and teaching certificate in creative writing from Antioch University, Los Angeles. Her writing has been published in *The Adirondack Review*, *Alligator Juniper*, *Obsidian: Literature of the African Diaspora*, and *Plenitude Magazine*, and aired on National Public Radio. Dempsey was the recipient of a significant research grant from the Elizabeth George Foundation for her work on *This Is How It Begins*. She lives in Maine with her partner and their family of animals. Find her online at www.joandempsey.com and <https://www.facebook.com/Joan.Dempsey.Author/>.

[She Writes Press](#) is an independent publishing company founded to serve members of She Writes, the largest global community of women writers online, and women writers everywhere. It is a curated press that's both mission-driven and community-oriented, aiming to serve writers who wish to maintain greater ownership and control of their projects while still getting the highest quality editorial help possible for their work. She Writes Press titles have traditional distribution nationwide through Ingram Publisher Services. The company is a division of Spark Point Studio, LLC.

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MORE PRAISE FOR *THIS IS HOW IT BEGINS*

“... remarkable ... a riveting, essential story for our time.” —**Matthew Goodman**, *New York Times*-bestselling author of *Eighty Days: Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland's History-Making Race Around the World*

“... spellbinding Reading this moving adventure compels us to bear witness to the past and present and think about our own complacency to everyday discrimination in our midst.” —**Eva Fogelman**, Ph.D., author of the Pulitzer Prize nominee *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*.

RE: THIS IS HOW IT BEGINS

By Joan Dempsey

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