

THIS IS HOW IT BEGINS

A NOVEL BY JOAN DEMPSEY

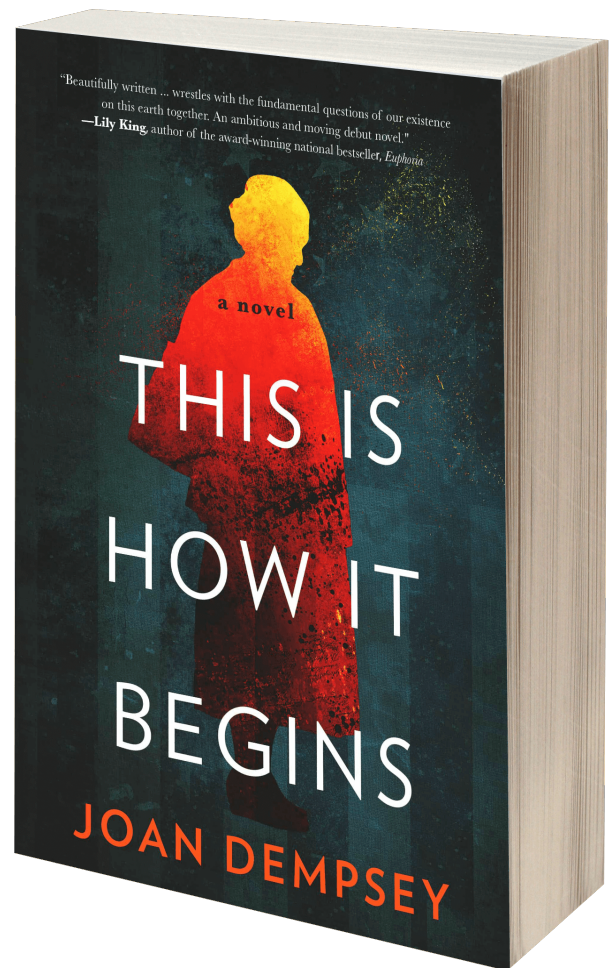
"... an extraordinarily pertinent novel dripping in suspense and powerful scenes of political discourse ... a must-read." —FOREWORD (starred review)

In 2009, eighty-five-year-old art professor Ludka Zeilonka gets drawn into a political firestorm when her grandson, Tommy, is among a group of gay Massachusetts teachers fired for allegedly discriminating against Christian kids in high school classrooms. The ensuing battle to reinstate the teachers raises the specter of Ludka's World War II past—a past she's spent a lifetime trying to forget.

The 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 disturbed when violence erupts. His concern quickly turns to alarm when he realizes those within his inner circle might be inciting the violence.

As Ludka's esteemed political family defends Tommy under increasingly vicious conditions, a stranger with connections to Ludka's past shows up and threatens to expose her for illegally hoarding a valuable painting presumed stolen by the Nazis. Only one other person knew about the painting—a man she's been trying to find for sixty years.

Compulsively readable, *This Is How It Begins* is a timely novel about free speech, religious freedom, the importance of empathy and the bitter consequences of long-buried secrets.



Publisher: She Writes Press
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Named one of
"5 more over 50" writers to watch by
Poets & Writers

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Beautifully written ... An ambitious and moving debut novel.

—Lily King, author of the award-winning national bestseller, *Euphoria*

"... an extraordinarily pertinent novel dripping in suspense and powerful scenes of political discourse ... a must-read ..." —FOREWORD (*starred review*)

"... 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 ... ideological passions." —KIRKUS

"Dempsey's fine debut ... explores how hate, fear, and intolerance cast a lifelong shadow. Current events have only made this gripping story more relevant." —LIBRARY JOURNAL

"... a thought-provoking and timely novel." —THE ADVOCATE

"... [Dempsey's] talent is evident ... a fast-paced, entertaining read." —MAINE SUNDAY TELEGRAM

"... timely, suspenseful and powerful exploration of the ... conflict between religious freedom and civil rights ... a provocative hit." —KENNEBEC JOURNAL

2017 Independent Publisher Book Award Bronze Winner (literary fiction)

2018 Lambda Literary Award Finalist (gay fiction)

2018 Sarton Women's Book Award Finalist (contemporary fiction)

2017 Foreword Indies Book of the Year Award Finalist (historical fiction)

2018 American Library Association Literature Title—Over the Rainbow



MEET JOAN DEMPSEY

Winner of the 2017 Maureen Egen Writers Exchange Award from Poets & Writers



Winner of the 2017 Maureen Egen Writers Exchange Award from Poets & Writers and named by "Poets & Writers" magazine as one of "5 more over 50" writers to watch, Joan Dempsey is the author of the novel, *This Is How It Begins*, which won a bronze medal for literary fiction in the Independent Publisher Book Awards (IPPY) and was shortlisted for the 2018 Lambda Literary Award, the 2017 Foreword Reviews Book of the Year Award and the 2018 Sarton Women's Book Award. Joan received her MFA degree and teaching certificate in creative writing from Antioch University, Los Angeles. She lives in New Gloucester, Maine with her partner and their family of animals.

MORE PRAISE FOR *THIS IS HOW IT BEGINS*

"Beautifully written ... an ambitious and moving debut novel." —LILY KING, award-winning national bestseller of *Euphoria*

"A remarkable novel ... an essential story for our time." —MATTHEW GOODMAN, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Eighty Days*

"A spellbinding novel ... a moving adventure ..." —DR. EVA FOGELMAN, Pulitzer Prize Nominee for *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*

"A riveting story ... this striking debut is essential reading for our times." —JUDITH FRANK, Lambda Literary Award Finalist for *All I Love and Know*

"... a compelling story that seems to rise out of ... current national headlines." —FRANK O. SMITH, Bellwether Prize finalist for *Dream Singer*

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Please consider *This Is How It Begins* for reviews,
author Q&As, and any plans for upcoming book coverage.

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