

THIS IS HOW IT BEGINS

A NOVEL BY JOAN DEMPSEY

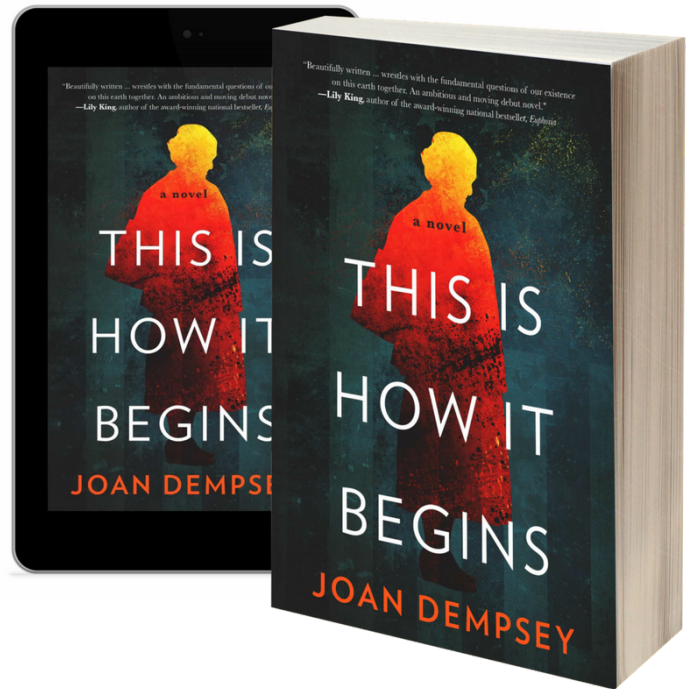
"... an extraordinarily pertinent novel dripping in suspense and powerful scenes of political discourse ... a must-read." – FOREWORD (starred review)

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 dismissals 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.



Named one of
"5 more writers over 50"
to watch by
Poets & Writers



SheWritesPress

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"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

2018 Lambda Literary Award Finalist

2018 American Library Association Literature Title—Over the Rainbow

2018 Sarton Women's Book Award Finalist

2017 Foreword Indies Book of the Year Award Finalist

2017 Independent Publisher Book Award Bronze Winner

"... 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

"... 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



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PRAISE FROM READERS

"This Is How It Begins grabbed me on the first page and never let me go. Given the social issues polarizing this country today, the story Joan Dempsey told could not be more relevant or timely." Holly S

"Dempsey has taken two stories that could have been ripped from today's headlines and woven them into one fascinating, can't-put-it-down book." Edwina C

"No spoilers but there's an unexpected moment towards the end that gave me goosebumps and made me want to sing ... a must-read." Eric M

"I absolutely loved this book! I literally couldn't put it down. At the same time, I didn't want it to end." Karen D

"This book was hard to put down. On the day I received it, I read up to Part III, turned out the light but couldn't close my eyes. So back up, light on, reading until I finished at 2 am." Donna

"... [the novel] drew me in and then I couldn't put it down. The only problem for me was the book ended! I wanted these people in my life. I need to know what they are doing now." Annette

"... engaging and thought provoking, a 'can't put it down' read." Willow

"The characters draw you in, and the story is intriguing, moving, and intense. Could not put it down, had to know what would happen next." David B

"A page-turner literary novel ... worthy of becoming a New York Times bestseller. One of my top favorites, new and old." Cathy K

489 Goodreads Ratings



4.24

104 Amazon Ratings



4.7

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 writers over 50" 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 a finalist 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 from Antioch University, Los Angeles. She lives in New Gloucester, Maine with her partner and their family of animals. Learn more: thisishowitbeginsnovel.com.

MORE PRAISE FOR THIS IS HOW IT BEGINS

"Beautifully written ... an ambitious and moving debut novel."

LILY KING, award-winning, national bestselling author of
"Writers & Lovers" and "Euphoria"

"A remarkable novel ... an essential story for our time."

MATTHEW GOODMAN, New York Times bestselling author of
"The City Game" and "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"

CONNECT WITH THE AUTHOR

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