



# London Road: Linked Stories

*Tessa Smith McGovern*

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**London Road: Linked Stories** Tessa Smith McGovern  
GOLD MEDAL WINNER 2012 eLIT AWARDS, AMAZON BEST-SELLER

On the morning of her release from prison, the hottest day on record in England, Janice Bailey makes her way to a boarding house in London, and discovers a bizarre new world.

This moving collection of linked short stories begins with 'When Janice Bailey Walked', an award-winning story first published in the Connecticut Review, and continues with six more stories that take place on a single day, as told by the eccentric residents of Number 17, London Road, thus illuminating a little-known side of the most beautiful city in Europe.

Praise for LONDON ROAD: LINKED STORIES:

"...reminiscent of the writer who appears in one of the stories: the great Katherine Mansfield."

Cynthia Rogerson, winner, V.S. Pritchett Memorial Prize for a Short Story, 2008, UK

KIRKUS REVIEWS: In seven short stories, residents of a London boardinghouse reach moments of clarity. On London Road, lined with scruffy shops, stands No. 17, a detached red-brick Victorian that's been turned into a boardinghouse. Its residents tend toward hard luck and desperation: Janice is just out of prison; Mandy is on probation; Bitty has a good education, but is scarred by her mother's frequent abandonments; and Isobel is mentally unstable. Nora, the landlady, writes romance novels but has experienced little romance herself, and her daughter, Anna, is disgusted by Isobel's outbursts.

Their interconnected stories take place on a day of unusually hot weather, and focus on one resident at a time, with Janice's story told in two parts. In each, characters have a chance to make a leap of faith in other people, or in the future. In "The Walls of Buckingham Palace," for example, Nora--who adores the queen--reflects on an uneasy encounter with Len, her local pub's new landlord, who drank too much and frightened her off: "But every night since, her sleep had been disturbed by longings she thought had long since been vanquished." It takes queenlike courage for her to return to the pub, where she finds that Len is apologetic, sincere, and kind. Pointing to a framed photograph of the queen, he remarks, "You remind me of her, you do"; nothing, of course, could better gain her trust and win her over.

Though spare and fast-paced, McGovern's (Cocktails for Book Lovers, 2014, etc.) tales evoke entire biographies. She focuses on illuminative details and subtle, turning-point moments, as when Mandy, a young woman on probation, reacts to her mandatory book group's reading of Katherine Mansfield's 1922 short story "The Garden Party." It stokes her resentment, as she doesn't even know if people still give garden parties. Mandy makes plans to shoplift again, but something about the book group leader's hopefulness and the invitation to give her honest opinion sparks her determination to win--maybe a literary argument, or maybe more chocolate wafers. Tales with subtle, positive but never saccharine transformations that feel fully earned."

REVIEW BY NINA SANKOVITCH, READALLDAY.ORG: "Whatever way you take in the words of McGovern, just make sure you do. Her stories link the lives of residents in a halfway house on the outskirts of London. Based largely on McGovern's own experiences -- her mother operated a Halfway House -- , her characters come alive through a style that is unique and lovely. McGovern uses words both easily and

luxuriously and her ability to evoke place, emotion, and possibility all within the confines of a very short story is amazing. I felt as if I personally knew each character, from Janice to Nora to Isobel to Bitty, and even Len down at the pub, and I cared about them all."

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