



## November Road

*Lou Berney*

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Set against the assassination of JFK, a poignant and evocative crime novel that centers on a desperate cat-and-mouse chase across 1960s America—a story of unexpected connections, daring possibilities, and the hope of second chances from the Edgar Award-winning author of *The Long and Faraway Gone*.

Frank Guidry's luck has finally run out.

A loyal street lieutenant to New Orleans' mob boss Carlos Marcello, Guidry has learned that everybody is expendable. But now it's his turn—he knows too much about the crime of the century: the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Within hours of JFK's murder, everyone with ties to Marcello is turning up dead, and Guidry suspects he's next: he was in Dallas on an errand for the boss less than two weeks before the president was shot. With few good options, Guidry hits the road to Las Vegas, to see an old associate—a dangerous man who hates Marcello enough to help Guidry vanish.

Guidry knows that the first rule of running is "don't stop," but when he sees a beautiful housewife on the side of the road with a broken-down car, two little daughters and a dog in the back seat, he sees the perfect disguise to cover his tracks from the hit men on his tail. Posing as an insurance man, Guidry offers to help Charlotte reach her destination, California. If she accompanies him to Vegas, he can help her get a new car.

For her, it's more than a car—it's an escape. She's on the run too, from a stifling existence in small-town Oklahoma and a kindly husband who's a hopeless drunk.

It's an American story: two strangers meet to share the open road west, a dream, a hope—and find each other on the way.

Charlotte sees that he's strong and kind; Guidry discovers that she's smart and funny. He learns that's she determined to give herself and her kids a new life; she can't know that he's desperate to leave his old one behind.

Another rule—fugitives shouldn't fall in love, especially with each other. A road isn't just a road, it's a trail, and Guidry's ruthless and relentless hunters are closing in on him. But now Guidry doesn't want to just survive, he wants to really live, maybe for the first time.

Everyone's expendable, or they should be, but now Guidry just can't throw away the woman he's come to love.

And it might get them both killed.

## November Road Details

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Author : Lou Berney

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## From Reader Review November Road for online ebook

### **DJ Sakata says**

Favorite Quotes:

What if someone happened to come round that corner right now and caught them skulking? Trouble in this business had a way of spreading, just like a cold or the clap. Guidry knew you could catch it from the wrong handshake, an unlucky glance.

The only poor decision was a decision you allowed someone else to make for you.

Charlotte longed to live in a place where it wasn't so hard to tell the past from the future.

Her favorite movie, as a child, had been The Wizard of Oz, her favorite moment when Dorothy opened the door of her black-and-white farmhouse and stepped into a strange and wonderful land. Lucky Dorothy. Charlotte dipped her brush again and not for the first time imagined a tornado dropping from the sky and blowing her far away, into a world full of color.

My philosophy is that guilt is an unhealthy habit... It's what other people try to make you feel so you'll do what they want. But one life is all we ever get, as far as I know. Why give it away?

My Review:

It is still unclear what actually transpired and how deeply tangled the web had to have been leading up to that awful November day in Dallas in 1963. This book wasn't about JFK but proposes a possible, highly likely, and often speculated version of events culminating and occurring after his horrific demise with additional storylines that provided a realistic slice of life for those along the path. The writing was superb and highly engaging. I was riveted to my Kindle and soaked in each well-chosen word like a sponge. I don't often read this genre and this was my first exposure to the talents of Lou Berney, who is a gifted scribe. His storylines were dynamic, well-crafted, and ingeniously woven with mind prickling details. Yet I felt the true treasure of his creation was his vibrant and oddly endearing characters. I was thoroughly transported and only wished for more, but I'm greedy like that.

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### **Debra says**

"Frank Guidry's luck has finally run out."

Frank Guidry is a loyal lieutenant in the New Orleans mob who dropped off a car very near to where President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was assassinated. Was it a coincidence or was the car part of the assassination plan? Now Frank has been asked to get rid of the car. Is this a set up or a means to an end? Either way, Frank knows too much about the crime and is expendable. As those with any knowledge of the assassination begin to disappear, it becomes obvious to Frank that it is only a matter of time before his luck runs out. He hits the road hoping to meet with a possible ally who can help him disappear.

Charlotte, is a married housewife from Oklahoma who has had it with her husband's drinking and the constant stress about being able to pay the bills. She has packed up her two daughters and the family dog and begins driving to California. She is a photographer who dreams of a better life for her and her children.

Frank is no fool. He has been at this game a long time. He knows that there is someone trailing him. That the man is most likely hot on his trail. He knows he should not get involved with this Mother and her two children. But in the midst of trying to survive, he learns what it truly means to live.

Barone has been tasked with taking care of Frank. He must tie up this loose end and will not be deterred and will not let anyone get in his way. He is a man on a mission and will not stop until he achieves his goal.

This book is part cat and mouse and part love story. It's about starting over, redemption, hope, vengeance and determination. Conspiracy theories have surrounded JFK's assassination since the day he was killed, and the Author uses the mob hit/conspiracy theory as part of the plot in this book. We may never know what really led up to the deadly shooting in Dallas, but this book shows a plausible explanation. This book felt like it was happening in black and white and yet was extremely vivid at the same time (I know I am contradicting myself but read the book maybe you'll get what I mean). It has an old Hollywood Noir/mobster/crime feel to it. I imagine that soon the rights will be bought up for this book and we learn that there is an actual movie in the works.

I really enjoyed this well written and well thought out book. There are three main characters in this book with minor supporting characters. The execution of their story-lines was effortless. This is a great book for book clubs as there is a lot to discuss ranging from the plot, the characters, the real-life assassination and subsequent conspiracy theories, to the desire to re-invent one's self, divorce, romance and starting over.

I enjoyed traveling Route 66 with these characters. I felt compelled to keep reading for most of the day to see what was going to happen. Would Frank get away? Would Charlotte get her chance at a new life?

I received a copy of this book from William Morrow and Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review. The thoughts and opinion expressed in this review are my own.

Read more of my reviews at [www.openbookpost.com](http://www.openbookpost.com)

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### **Marialyce says**

I was a young girl when John Kennedy was assassinated. It was and is one of those times that you will never, forget, always remember where and when you heard of this tragedy, and began to wonder if anything in this country would ever be the same again.

Kennedy's assassination has often been hinted at as being done by the Mafia. It was well known that he and his brother, Bobby, the attorney general at the time, were despised by the Mafia. Perhaps it is not such a stretch of one's imagination to believe they had a hand in JFK's untimely death.

"With every decision we create a new future. We destroy all other futures."

Frank Guidry, for lack of a better term is a hit man, a man who is controlled by a mob boss named Carlos

Marcello, and for Frank, who knows plenty about the assassination of the President, he soon becomes the prey, instead of the predator. Frank knows his days are numbered as he follows his philosophy off don't stop. Eluding his predator and the tentacles of Carlos Marcello will not be easy. However, Frank, who often quotes the bible and famous books, is smart. He is cunning and when he meets up with a woman, Charlotte, her two daughters, and their dog who are also on the run from an alcoholic husband and a life of dullness, he establishes the perfect cover. Unbeknownst to Charlotte, who Frank is, she accepts his kindness when her car breaks down and she is left with little choice in order to reach California. Together they set out on an adventure that is both threatening and perilous. Along the way, Frank and Charlotte develop feelings for one another, but can a hit man, a man who has killed when orders came down to do so, be in love and find a relationship with a woman while fleeing from his imminent death?

Told with the backdrop of the assassination, Mr Berney takes us into the underside of organized crime, the wanton killing and a trip through America that could perhaps bring these characters to a place where they will be safe and able to have something they both thought they never would.

My reviews can also be seen here: <https://yayareadslotsofbooks.wordpress...>

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### **Kemper says**

If someone offered me the choice between taking a long road trip with a couple of kids or being murdered by the mob, I'd have to really think it over.

It's November 1963, and Frank Guidry is living well in New Orleans thanks to his top position with Carlos Marcello's mob outfit. However, one of Frank's recent chores was leaving a car in a parking garage in Dallas very near the spot where President Kennedy would be assassinated just days later. It doesn't take a genius to make the connection especially when several other people on Carlos' payroll start turning up dead. Frank just became a loose end, and he flees west with lethal hit man Paul Barone hot on his trail.

Meanwhile, Charlotte Roy has been trying to raise her two daughters in a small Oklahoma town which isn't easy thanks to her drunken loser of a husband. When Charlotte has enough she takes the girls and starts heading to California, but she's consumed by guilt and uncertain if she's done the right thing. After Frank meets Charlotte at a motel he realizes that traveling with a lady and two kids would make him a lot less conspicuous so he engineers circumstances so that they all go together. Frank is surprised when what started as a con to help him get away begins to turn into a real relationship with Charlotte and the kids. But that pesky hit man is still right behind them...

I read Berney's *The Long and Faraway Gone* earlier this year and enjoyed it quite a bit. Then I heard a tremendous amount of good buzz about this one before it released, and I'm pleased to report that it lives up to the hype.

In the wrong hands this concept could be just some cheesy tale about a 'bad man' who sees the error of his ways after becoming part of a family, but the strong character work done with Frank, Charlotte, and deadly Paul Barone is where this really shines. You thoroughly understand all of them, and despite the historical backdrop it all feels grounded and realistic with Frank and Charlotte struggling to deal with how their lives have been forever changed while Barone has to deal with a variety of setbacks as he just tries to complete his mission.

I particularly liked how Berney used the JFK assassination as the jumping off point, not the center of the

story. It's obviously the thing driving the plot, but what's presented comes across as a believable scheme by one pissed off mobster instead of some vast shadowy tinfoil-hat conspiracy theory. So we're not dragged into some Oliver Stone style fever dream.

The work done on the settings and time is top notch, too. We get an authentic sense of the places like New Orleans, Las Vegas, crappy motels, and roadside tourist traps. It all builds the mood of what it must have been like back then. There's nice touches of how the mob operated at the time, too.

It's a damn fine piece of crime fiction, and I'll be tracking down more of Berney's work.

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### **Larry H says**

Yes, it certainly was!!

"Guidry had always taken a simple approach to life: live it loose and easy, let it roll off and over you. Well, easier said than done these days. But he couldn't let himself brood about it, just how badly fucked he was."

Frank Guidry has always been a loyal foot soldier to Carlos Marcello, the mob boss of New Orleans. Carlos, and his lieutenant-of-sorts, Seraphine, have always been able to count on Frank for whatever needed to be done. And Frank has reaped the benefits—he's treated with respect, and sometimes fear, by those looking to do business with Marcello; he carries his clout with him wherever he chooses to go; and it's not just his good looks that entice women to want to sleep with him.

But in November of 1963, it looks like Frank's luck has just run out. The world has just been stunned by President Kennedy's assassination, and Frank realizes he may know a little more about that crime than he should, as he was down in Dallas on an errand shortly before the president was shot. And when Seraphine sends him back to Texas to tie up a loose end, he realizes he's just one more expendable detail—but he's not quite ready to give up without a fight.

In an effort to save himself, Frank tries numerous diversionary tactics which take him across the country, and all the while he's wondering if there's anyone left he can trust. When he runs into Charlotte, a housewife who took her two young daughters and fled her humdrum existence in Oklahoma to pursue a more exciting life, Frank realizes that he may have just found the perfect camouflage—no one will be looking for a man traveling with his wife and daughters.

Charlotte thinks Frank is just being a Good Samaritan, as he poses as an insurance salesman who offers to help Charlotte and her daughters get to their final destination in California. She has no idea of the danger that he's in, nor what that could mean for her. And while Charlotte is exactly what he needs, Frank is surprised to realize how independent and feisty she is, and how irresistible the path she represents suddenly seems.

As Frank tries to outrun his fate, and figure out his next steps, Charlotte wants to prove to herself and her daughters that she can give them the life she believes they deserve, and she isn't sure if Frank is a distraction or a choice worth pursuing. Will what Frank initially saw as his salvation ultimately be his undoing?

"With every decision we create a new future. We destroy all other futures."

Lou Berney follows up his fantastic ***The Long and Faraway Gone*** (see my review) with another stellar book which is part thriller, part character study, and part historical novel, as it so accurately captures the mood and social issues of the early 1960s. Berney is such an exceptional storyteller that I was hooked from start to finish, even if I had suspicions about how things would end up.

This book is so rich in character development. Even though you don't get to know some of the characters as well as you do Frank and Charlotte, there are incidents in the book that really wowed me. You know Frank hasn't been an entirely good person but you find yourself rooting for him, hoping he may outsmart all of those looking to destroy him.

My dad used to read thrillers, and I used to introduce him to all of my favorite authors. When I found a book or author that impressed me, I couldn't wait to recommend it to him. He passed away before I read anything by Berney, but I know that he would have loved him, too, and he also would have found ***November Road*** a fantastic achievement by an author who deserves significant notoriety.

Whether you're a thriller fan, or just a fan of exceptional writing, this is one to pick up and savor.

See all of my reviews at [itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com](http://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com), or check out my list of the best books I read in 2017 at <https://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com/2018/01/the-best-books-i-read-in-2017.html>.

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### **Cheri says**

*"Oh, the shark, babe, has such teeth, dear  
And it shows them pearly white  
Just a jackknife has old MacHeath, babe  
And he keeps it, ah, out of sight  
Ya know when that shark bites with his teeth, babe  
Scarlet billows start to spread  
Fancy gloves, oh, wears old MacHeath, babe  
So there's never, never a trace of red*

*"Now on the sidewalk, huh, huh, whoo sunny morning, un huh  
Lies a body just oozin' life, eek  
And someone's sneakin' 'round the corner  
Could that someone be Mack the Knife?"*

--*Mack the Knife*, Bobby Darin, Songwriters: Kurt Weill / Bertolt Brecht / Marc Blitzstein

### **"Behold! The Big Easy in all its wicked splendor!"**

**"Frank Guidry paused at the corner of Toulouse to bask in the neon furnace glow. He'd lived in New Orleans, the better part of his thirty-seven years on earth, but the dirty glitter and sizzle of the French Quarter still hit his bloodstream like a drug. Yokels and locals, muggers and hustlers, fire-eaters and magicians. A go-go girl was draped over the wrought-iron rail of a second-floor balcony, one boob sprung free from her sequined negligee and swaying like a metronome to the beat of the jazz trio inside. Bass, drums, piano, tearing through 'Night and Day.' But that was New Orleans for you. Even**

**the worst band in the crummiest clip joint in the city could swing, man, swing.”**

It was only another minute before he's entering the Monteleone and heading to the Carousel Bar, and I was hooked. One of my favourite spots on the planet.

***“Everyone here looking for an angle to work, a tender spot.”***

I really wanted to just keep reading this one straight through, it's such a mesmerizing, compelling read with just enough mystery to keep you fully in the story, to return to it as soon as possible, but life had other plans for me.

When news of the shooting of President Kennedy begins to spread through the airwaves, Charlotte is at the bank, trying to get them to grant an extension on their mortgage payment for that month. Dreaming of a life without these problems, where she's married to a responsible, loving husband who is a good father to their two daughters, Rosemary, who is seven, and Joan, who is eight. But dreams won't change her husband Dooley into any of those things, his only need is for a drink, and then another.

Frank Guidry was trying to hustle the brunette out of his apartment that he'd met the night before, tossing her clothes from the night before to her and counting down for her to get out while she is caught, mesmerized by the news on the television. She tells him, “They shot him.” He asks, “Shot who?” and turns to the TV.

***“A sniper had fired from the sixth floor of a building in Dealey Plaza. Kennedy, riding in the backseat of a Lincoln Continental convertible, had been hit. They'd taken him to Parkland Hospital. A priest had administered last rites. At 1:30 P.M., an hour and a half ago, the doctors had pronounced the president dead.”***

His head is spinning, and all he can think of as the newscaster talks about where Dealy Plaza was located. But he already knew - between Houston, Elm, and Commerce Streets – where he'd been asked to drop off a sky-blue '59 Cadillac Eldorado in a parking garage on Commerce a week ago. He knows he's in trouble, and he knows that Carlos Marcello - the man who provides the “income” that pays for his easy, generous lifestyle - likes to take care of trouble by getting rid of the problem, and right now, Frank's become the problem.

Frank's thirty-seven years old, but he already knows he needs a magic wand to disappear, or some incredibly good luck to turn this around, or he won't live to see his next birthday. Time for him to hit the road.

All it will take for Charlotte to realize she must leave her husband has happened, and so she does, taking their two daughters, leaving him a note. They're on their way to California.

Meanwhile, Paul Barone is on an assignment, and on the road to take care of a problem for Mr. Marcello.

Across the nation women were burning bras (or so the news was fond of reporting) and women began to refer to themselves as feminists. The Beatles music had invaded, if not themselves, in person – yet, but that was mere months away, but these changes were felt in the music, as well. It was also a time of change for the Civil Rights movement, a time when progress was being made and the air was electric with the possibility of a better way of life, a more fulfilling way of living. Equality. And then the assassination of John F. Kennedy. A country in mourning, but also poised for change.

Against that backdrop, and with the atmosphere of this era casting a spell, leaving you feeling as though you'd just stepped back in time as you follow these lives, and their stories gradually weave together.

Many thanks for the ARC provided by William Morrow / Harper Collins

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## Will Byrnes says

**“With every decision we create a new future,” Leo said. “We destroy all other futures.”**

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**If it’s a fair fight, Barone learned early on, you’ve screwed up somewhere.**

*November Road* is a page-flipping, compulsive read that will pull you in and hold on until it lets your lapels go and you fall to the floor in a heap, checking for damage.

Frank Guidry’s got it made. A lean thirty-seven-year-old New Orleans native, he is a sharp dresser, with olive skin, green eyes, a dimpled chin, a comfortable income, an appreciation for smooth jazz, and a lively love life. Of course, his source of income derives from one Carlos Marcello, one of the most dangerous mob bosses in *The City That Care Forgot*. He has a slight problem though. One of his recent assignments was to drop a sky-blue '59 Cadillac Eldorado in a parking garage two blocks away from the site of the crime of the century, the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. That bad day in Dallas transformed Frank from a loyal lieutenant to a loose end that needed to be cleaned up, with extreme prejudice, however many years of loyal service he might have given.

**Lou Berney**- image from 75th Indiana University Writer’s Conference

Paul Barone is a professional. A big guy, he has honed his craft, and has more brains than his looks might suggest. He does not concern himself with the reasons why this or that person has been selected to receive his particular services. His latest assignment is to see to the elimination of one Frank Guidry. And the chase is on.

*Charlotte longed to live in a place where it wasn’t so hard to tell the past from the future.* She has about had it with Logan County and her alcoholic husband. Dooley is not a bad guy, but has been drinking his prospects into the past, and what lies ahead for him can only be seen through the bottom of a bottle. She has ambitions, for herself and their two daughters. Working for the local newspaper, she has a feel for photography, but the guy making the photo choices at the paper won’t give her a shot. She knows that staying will be the death of her spirit. One more episode of daddy being “under the weather” is the final negative. She decides to finally leave, with their girls, and see what develops. Can’t be worse than Dead-End-Ville, Oklahoma.

The three stories intertwine. After spotting her broken down on a desert highway, Frank finds Charlotte and her girls a particularly useful disguise for a man on the run. He gets more than he bargained for. Barone follows the clues to Frank’s whereabouts and relentlessly tracks his prey, leaving a trail of collateral damage in his wake. Frank’s only hope to come out of this alive is to get the help of a man he knows in Vegas. But can Big Ed Zingel be relied on, just because he hates Carlos, and would appear eager to do anything to hurt him? Or is Frank trading one brand of awful for another?

Frank may not be anyone's vision of a good guy, but Lou Berney makes you care about him. A creep who finds that there is a human being beneath the cynicism, good looks, slick clothes, and ever-present piece. Paul Barone is more of a killing machine, but even he develops a paternal fondness for the black teen he hires to drive his car. He dreams of leaving his dark NOLA life behind and heading north to Alaska for a fresh start. Charlotte is someone you can care for unreservedly, a talent, a person withering in a dustbowl of stasis. The life that spreads out ahead of her is a black blizzard that will choke the life out of her. Running is really the only sane option for her, and you will want her to get as far as she can.

That city rat Frank and country mouse Charlotte will connect in a special way is something you can see coming a long ways away on those flat desert roads. (Route 40 specifically. I have had the pleasure) No surprise there, although the dance, the telling, is a thing of beauty. It is not the only meeting of cynicism and innocence. Barone develops what seems a genuine affection for the black teenager he engages to drive his car. This notion is echoed in other relationships, where cold-heartedness mixes unevenly with decency.

**The era** plays a significant role here. 1963, big changes are afoot. The Civil Rights movement is making progress and confirming enemies. The second wave of feminism was getting underway, with the 1963 release of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and Gloria Steinem's writings. Charlotte may not have read those works, but well represents the fallout that the nuclear family represented for many women, her talent ignored, her potential unrealized. She has an analytical mind, both to manage the challenges of survival, and to understand things of an artistic nature. "*When I have a camera in my hand, it reminds me to look in new places. To have new thoughts, I suppose.*" Barone expresses feelings that are decidedly not of the era regarding racism directed against his driver.

**Parent-child matters** permeate, in both light and dark. Charlotte is, of course, a wonderful mother. Her husband is not an unkind father, merely unable to take on that responsibility in a meaningful way. Frank had serious issues with his father, enough to make him leave home as a teen, but he was taken in by an older man who brought him into his until-recently successful life. He begins to develop paternal feelings for Charlotte's girls.

**Second chances** figure large. Frank is hoping to get a new start, albeit of a criminal sort, in that up and coming nation, Viet Nam. Charlotte hopes for a chance to put her abilities to use in a real city, like Vegas or LA. Barone dreams of a life reset in Alaska. His teen driver, Theodore, hopes to become a lawyer someday. Not all second chances will necessarily be granted. Charlotte's husband has been using his up for a while and is probably counting on a ninth or tenth chance. Charlotte may not be rocked by the assassination, as so many people around her clearly are, but she is determined to make her own second chance. Frank is faced with a decision on helping a colleague in need of a way out of a sticky situation.

*November Road* uses **the Kennedy assassination** as a backdrop. It is not a serious look at whodunit, and why. But Berney does bring in some reality in support of his tale, Carlos Marcello was a real person, the biggest mob boss of his time in the area. And there was talk that the assassination might have been a mob hit. So that is not out of nowhere. But neither is that mystery the point of the book. 1963 marks a high point of anxiety for the nation, the JFK murder, civil rights, women demanding a greater role in society, fears that a nuke might go off at any time, resembling in many ways the world of 2018. Today, the nukes we fear might be from North Korea or terrorists rather than from Russia or China. Women are still struggling for societal respect and rights, even seeing some of the gains of the past being eroded. We have an erratic leader whose actions are both potentially catastrophic and unpredictable. So there is resonance in the anxious feel of the early 60s era to today's world.

Berney uses **music** to set a mood. Barone and Guidry share an appreciation for classic jazz. Barone hears

*Round Midnight* in multiple venues. Guidry listens to Art Pepper, his favorite tune, *How Can You Lose*. Charlotte and Guidry talk about the meaning of Dylan's *Don't Think Twice*. (Links to all in EXTRA STUFF)

I was reminded a bit of a famous sequence in the neo-noir film Chinatown, when Evelyn Mulwray, played by Faye Dunaway is confronted about the presence of younger women in her life. "She's my sister...she's my daughter...she's my sister..." and on it goes. If someone tracked me down to a favorite barstool and was slapping me silly demanding to know what kind of book *November Road* is, I would have to say it's a crime story, it's a thriller, it's a love story, it's a crime story, it's a thriller, it's a love story, and as I sit, unable to find any purchase for my hands on the slick, saw-dusted floor, trying to spit the blood out of my mouth, I might mutter something about it also being a road trip of self-discovery, but let's just keep that between us, ok? I don't wanna make any trouble.

Publication – October 9, 2018

Review posted – July 27, 2018

#### =====EXTRA STUFF

Links to the author's personal, Twitter and FB pages

Lou Berney knows a bit about writing crime fiction. He won an Edgar Award (among several others) for his novel *The Long and Faraway Gone*. His novels include *Whiplash River* and *Gutshot Straight*. He has also written a story collection *The Road to Bobby Joe*, and has done screenwriting as well. His short fiction has appeared in diverse publications. He teaches in the MFA program at Oklahoma City University.

The character of Charlotte was inspired by Berney's mother, an Oklahoma native who grew up during the depression. Moved to California, and several times more. Her parents died when she was a teen. She always wanted to be a writer, or an artist, or run her own business. Charlotte got to do what her mother never could. Berney's father was a particularly sociable sort, always ready to strike up a conversation and make new friends. Berney incorporated this social facility into Frank Guidry. Dad, who, so far as we know, was not a gangster.

Movie rights have been sold, to a top-tier Writer/Director - Lawrence Kasdan To Script & Direct Film Adaptation Of Lou Berney Novel 'November Road' - something to look forward to

Here is a wonderful article by Berney, in which he tells about many interesting facts he came across in his research for this novel - I Wrote an Historical Novel About the JFK Assassination. I Was Shocked By What I Found. - Thanks to GR friend, Idrissa, for letting us all know about this.

#### Music

----How Can You Lose - by Art Pepper – an upbeat piece, that well reflects Guidry's feeling at the time. Youtube kept feeding me more Art Pepper and I was very well seasoned by the time I switched off the light at my desk, not long before sunup.

----This version of Round Midnight features Billy Taylor on piano. In addition to noting Billy Taylor's rendition, Barone also enjoys hearing it played on the street by a junkie with serious licks.

----Don't Think Twice, It's Alright - The version of Dylan's song by Peter, Paul, and Mary, which would have been on the charts at the time. There is a fair bit of info on the song in this wiki entry.

---- Will U Still Love Me Tomorrow – The Shirelles – with a bit of obvious significance

## Interviews

-----Library Love fest – audio – 17:01 - An Interview with Lou Berney, Author of November Road - by Chris Connolly

-----Author Interview – Lou Berney - Mysteries and My Musings

-----The noir, the music, and the faraway gone – an interview with Lou Berney - by Michael Engelbrecht

*Michael Engelbrecht: Can you remember what, in the first place, made you want to write crime novels? Was it a TV show, a book, an event of personal history?*

Lou Berney: I think I gravitated toward crime novels because I have a bit of a criminal mind myself. Nothing violent! But when I was a kid I had a natural aptitude for thinking of schemes and figuring out how to break rules. Now I'm happy to use those talents for good fiction (I hope) and not evil.

## Other Reviews

-----ABC News - Lou Berney keeps tension high in 'November Road' - by Oline H. Cogdill, associated press

-----Washington Post - John F. Kennedy's assassination sets a thriller in motion in 'November Road' - by Bill Sheehan

## Final bit

----- Carlos Marcello, the Man Behind the JFK Assassination - A Sicilian journalist, Stefano Vaccara, makes his case for Carlos Marcello being the man behind the killing of JFK –a short video – 5:25

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## Brandon says

Career criminal Frank Guidry is sent to Dallas to retrieve a getaway car that was to play a part in the assassination of President Kennedy. The car wasn't used, so Frank is tasked with retrieving it from the scene of the crime and dumping it into the ocean so that a link cannot be established back to Frank's boss, Carlos. Fearing he may be killed following the disposal of the vehicle, Frank heads west for Las Vegas, looking to Carlos' rival for help leaving the country.

Charlotte Roy is fed up with her life. Stuck in a dead end marriage with a useless drunk of a husband, Charlotte makes the difficult decision to leave. She gathers up her two kids as well as the family dog, and hits the road for California looking to shack up with a distant Aunt. Struck with car troubles in New Mexico, Charlotte and her daughters take out a room in a motel while waiting for her car to hopefully be fixed.

It's in this motel where Charlotte and Frank meet.

With a killer hot on his heels, Frank looks at Charlotte and her little ones as the perfect cover for his long trip to the West Coast. Posing as an insurance salesman traveling with his family would certainly help alleviate the bull's-eye on his back. Can Frank make it safe and sound on his road to rescue or will his sudden feelings for Charlotte cause all four to meet a dead end?

Make no mistake: this is an excellent read. Lou Berney effortlessly weaves together multiple threads to craft an intricate and compelling novel that had me captivated from start to finish. This is a story that is bursting with 1960s Americana and the power of the open road to both change lives and alter destinies.

The three main characters all brought something different to the table. Charlotte represented hope; a hope for a better life for herself and her two daughters on the gold coast. Frank represented redemption; a desire to

finally make something of himself, even if his intentions were misguided. Barone, my favorite of the three, represented the past. Try as he might, Frank was delusional to think he would be able to get a fresh start so easily. The bodies that Barone leaves in his wake as he relentlessly pursues Frank – and by proxy, Charlotte – across the Southern US adds an undeniable urgency to the novel that allowed the book to maintain a brisk pace. When the three finally come together, it's more of a collapse rather than a collision as all three are worn out by their individual journeys.

November Road is tailor-made for a big screen adaptation and I would be shocked if someone didn't pick up the film rights for this shortly. Being a screenwriter, I can only imagine Lou had this in mind while writing the story. I don't mean to suggest it was meant to be anything other than a book first, but a lot of scenes seemed paced well for a visual medium – especially the few action scenes. While there aren't many, the intensity of those scenes helped to raise the stakes for all involved. It had me speed-reading!

Along with Megan Abbott's Give Me Your Hand, Lou Berney's November Road is right up there as the best thing I've read in 2018. This is a noteworthy novel, do yourself a favor and pick this one up when it hits shelves this fall. You will not be disappointed.

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### **Jeanette says**

Wow, can this guy tell a story. He has the tension pulled perfectly throughout the length too. Presently (2018) that is as rare as a smokeless room at the old Dunes or Stardust circa the 1960's.

Is it a perfect 5? Really, I don't think it is. But it's a 4.5 star I'll round up for pure adventure quotient, posits of opposites, and also supreme era exactness. And the entertainment factor is not shabby either. This was a book I couldn't leave. And it embedded the reader into intrigue nearly immediately.

A great audible for this one. Or film! Mack the Knife, Coltrane, Lesley Gore, oh, oh "Will You Love Me Tomorrow" by the Shirelles! The music was SO much better.

How great/phenomenal per word count is that onus grasped for the relationship between the two 7 and 8 year old sisters in this book? I doubt I've come across such a superb dynamic to tit for tat or sibling real for such length of actual prose fiction (developed almost instantly) in years and years. Maybe not since Little Women. And with far less stereotype description base either used in the process.

And Charlotte. I know her.

Is it brutal and way too darkly murderous? Yes. But without the foul language that usually accompanies that evil reveal in most likewise genre of such vicious body count. And also with a certain panache to the dichotomy of the "opposite" closely tuned to the beastliness. So that the Cindy quotient is exponentially multiplied. She was for me. Isn't it amazing that Lou Berney could do that within such a narrow dynamic of where she "appears" or is at all present in this story? That's a skill I seldom observe in this 2018 "norm" of a 400 pager or even 500 pager overblown and obtuse over explaining "thriller" genre.

When you do it succinct and right to their cores- you are a pro.

If you have the stomach for old 1963 Vegas- try this one. It's bloody. And it's full of duplicity. And it's exactly how Vegas was then. I do remember it well. And also the Stardust when Tony Orlando and

Dawn or the Smothers Brothers would cha-cha you in conga line style through the bathrooms. And the "rules" were "take it out to the desert" for more than just the disagreements of "gentlemen". And the pools were so dinky!

The most shocking factor? That I could give a book 5 stars which highlights the JFK assassination as a prime event factor. All of you youngsters have no idea what nights of smoke and ice cube clinks were spent arguing "who did it". Warren Investigation? LOL! Most of us had FBI/CIA high up on the list and the refusing to "play" in courses of SE Asia coming to the top.

But what is the most shocking is that I would rather "like" that ending and be able to some degree to accept it as possible! A fairy tale indeed. It isn't just Dorothy who I could paraphrase in likewise observation "Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas (Oklahoma) any more".

New Orleans before the tourist overdrive phony baloney and Vegas in its prime before it became a massive amusement park trying to get "family friendly." Framed as they were. And also some finely, finely drawn and carved (literally and figuratively) baddies.

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### **Katie B says**

I love historical fiction but I wasn't entirely sure if a thriller style plot about JFK's assassination was going to be my thing. I'm pretty picky when it comes to choosing thrillers but thankfully there were enough regular fiction elements to the story so it didn't feel like it was guns and violence the entire time. Adding in a story line about a mother with two young daughters really gave the book a nice balance.

Frank Guidry is a street lieutenant to New Orleans' mob boss Carlos Marcello. When people he knows wind up dead, Frank can see the writing on the wall. He knows a little too much about the assassination and so he better go on the run if he wants to save his life.

Charlotte is the mother of two young daughters. She hopes leaving Oklahoma and her husband will lead to a better life for both her and her girls. Charlotte and Frank's paths cross and well, things are never the same.

I really think this book is going to appeal to a wide audience because there's a little something for everyone. There's definitely action but there are some heartfelt moments too. This was an entertaining read for sure.

I received a free advance copy from the publisher but was under no obligation to post a review. All views expressed are my honest opinion.

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### **Bianca says**

Without knowing it, *November Road* was exactly what I needed to read.

The blurb says too much about the plot, so I won't go into it.

This was one sleek novel, with interesting characters and perfect pace that kept me turning the pages. The ending was unexpected, but I respect the author's choice.

I would have never paid attention to this novel had it not been for some GR friends' raving reviews.

Recommended

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### **Elyse Walters says**

The cumulation of this story takes place in Texas- November 1963 - when a distraught housewife from her deadbeat drunk husband- her two daughters & their epileptic dog take to the road and connect with a mobster on the run. ( he knows too much about the JFK assassination)

Even though this is a conspiracy JFK story - with fascinating plausible speculations -I felt that the conspiracy was more a backstory to a love story, ( not mushy).... and a general nostalgia of stepping back in time. I can hear the music playing - see the old cars - and that old Hollywood 'feel'.

...Irresistible characters from different backgrounds...

...A bittersweet ending!

I was pulled in right away- reads quickly - but in general this is not my favorite 'type' of book I gravitate towards.

3.66 route 66 ... ?

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### **James Thane says**

I've long been a huge fan of Lou Berney's novels, especially *The Long and Faraway Gone*, which won an Edgar in 2016, along with several other prestigious awards, and which remains one of my favorite books of the last few years. Consequently, I've been very anxious to finally get my hands on his new book, *November Road*, which was released last week, and which has gotten rave notices in advance of the publication date. Simply put, the wait was more than worth it. *November Road* is a great novel and, like its predecessor, it's one of those books that I'll be rereading often in years to come.

The story is set in November 1963, in the days following the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and it features two expertly-drawn protagonists. The first is Frank Guidry, a ranking member of the New Orleans mob, under the command of Carmen Marcello. A couple of weeks before the assassination, Guidry ran what seemed at the time to be a fairly inconsequential errand for Marcello. But the moment Guidry learns that the president has been shot in Dallas, he realizes that the task he performed was anything but inconsequential.

Guidry has always been loyal to Marcello and has been a valuable lieutenant to the mob boss; he should have no reason for concern. But then other people close to the Marcello family who had tenuous connections to the errand that Guidry ran are suddenly turning up dead and Guidry is reluctantly forced to recognize the fact

that, in a situation as explosive as this, anyone can be deemed expendable.

Guidry decides that he has no choice other than to run. With a deadly killer hard on his trail, he heads for Vegas, hoping to connect with an old friend who becomes his only hope of escaping the fate that Marcello wants to deal him. But the mob has eyes and ears practically everywhere, and the challenge of reaching Vegas alive will be a daunting one.

The book's second protagonist is Charlotte Roy, a housewife from Woodrow, Oklahoma, who was once the most adventurous eleven-year-old girl in her tiny town. But that was seventeen years ago, and in a place like Woodrow, life happens—especially if you're a young woman and most especially if it's still the middle of the Twentieth Century. Charlotte is married now with two young, precocious daughters. Her husband, Dooley, drinks, has trouble holding down a job, and has even more trouble supporting his family.

Charlotte wonders if she's selfish to want more out of life, both for herself and for her daughters. "Woodrow was idyllic in many ways. Quaint, safe, friendly. But it was also interminably dull, as locked in its stubborn, small-minded ways, as resistant to new things and ideas, as Mr. Hotchkiss [her boss]. Charlotte longed to live in a place where it wasn't so hard to tell the past from the future."

Her husband would never consider the idea of moving to a larger city and, Charlotte knows that he's never going to stop drinking and become the kind of husband and father that she and their daughters deserve. And so, practically on a whim, a few days after the Kennedy assassination, Charlotte quickly packs up some things, gathers up her daughters, and hits the road for Los Angeles, planning to stay with a distant relative for a short time while she begins a new life for the three of them in California. Along the way, her path will intersect with that of Frank Guidry and when it does, everything will change—for Frank, for Charlotte, and for her daughters.

It would be unfair to reveal any more, but suffice it to say that this is a richly textured novel with characters that are fully realized. Berney has clearly done a great deal of research, and the reader finds him- or herself fully immersed in the early 1960s. The settings, the attitudes, and the atmosphere feel exactly right, and the story grabs you from the opening page and then refuses to let go. Frank Guidry and Charlotte Roy are characters that will remain with the reader for a very long time, as will this excellent novel. A great read, and an easy five stars.

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### **Stephanie says**

What drew me to *November Road* is that it's set in the days on and following the assassination of JFK, and I'm drawn to books with anything related to the Kennedys. While this book didn't focus on what happened that fateful day in Dallas on November 22, 1963, the murder of JFK is the trigger for events that lead two people from completely different walks of life to leave their existing lives and go on the run for the chance at a brand new life.

Frank Guidry is a handsome ladies man who is high up in the mob and thinks he's invaluable to mob boss, Carlos Marcello. Or so he thinks until he hears that JFK has been killed and his mind immediately thinks of a certain car he dropped off in Dallas just days ago--a car Marcello now wants him to get rid of for good. It's clear Marcello is cleaning up all ties to the assassination, and Frank knows he's the next loose end.

Running is his only alternative but how long can he possibly outrun a man with such a long and powerful reach?

Charlotte Roy is tired of feeling suffocated by her marriage to an alcoholic husband and by her hometown that hasn't changed in decades. She wants to prove to herself and her two daughters that she's a strong woman and can stand on her own two feet, so she makes the spur-of-the-moment decision to take her kids and make a run to LA for a better life. It's a decision she doesn't regret until her car breaks down on the side of the road, and it looks like her dreams of escape and independence are nothing but a short-lived fantasy. Then along comes Frank offering to save her as long as she'll come along on a detour to Vegas. He brings adventure, suspense, mystery, and a bit of romance along for the ride (little does she know he has so much to hide)!

*November Road* is so much more than I expected when I started to read it, and I'm so glad that it was so much more than I imagined! I'd never read a book by Lou Berney before, which is my loss since he writes books that read so effortlessly and realistically. His writing is so intelligent, fluid, and expressive about an age that was filled with such dramatic and world-altering changes. JFK's assassination marked a true end of an era and the changes these characters go through seem to reflect those changes in an almost poignant way.

I found the novel to be a fascinating character study of Frank and Charlotte, as well as to some degree the other minor players in the novel. Frank's not a character who you want to like at first, but there's just something about him that makes you root for him. Maybe it's because he's being set up by the very people he trusts not to betray him, which is funny to say about a mafia guy, a killer. But then along comes Charlotte and her girls into his life and you see a completely different side to this man, one who is seemingly at heart a lost soul looking for salvation. Charlotte's independence and fight for escape seem almost to symbolize the era itself when changes in men and women's roles were really starting to shift into a fight for women's rights and more independence.

I think this is a book that will appeal to so many types of readers! It's cleverly plotted and written, it's historical fiction, it's a thriller, it has lots of action, the character studies are phenomenal, and it has just the right amount of romance! I can't tell you how glad I am that I read it, and I highly recommend it! *November Road* comes out on October 9, 2018, so make sure you grab a copy!

**\*\*Thank you Edelweiss and William Morrow for an ARC to read in exchange for my fair and honest review.\*\***

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### Faith says

After Kennedy is assassinated in 1963, anyone who could connect New Orleans mob boss Carlos Marcello with the assassination must be eliminated. Frank Guidry is a fixer for Marcello and he is one of those people who must die, so he goes on the run, headed to Las Vegas. Along the way he picks up Charlotte Roy, a runaway wife from Oklahoma, her two young daughters and their epileptic dog. He hopes that they can pose as a family in order to hide his identity. Paul Barone is the killer dispatched by Marcello to mop up the potential witnesses against him. It's not a good sign that the most interesting character to me was Barone. I liked his unsentimental relentlessness. Frankly, I saw no need to root for Guidry.

I loved "The Long and Faraway Gone" by this author, but this book was just OK for me. The backdrop of the Kennedy assassination served as an allure to get people to read this book, but it's only a device to create a

reason for Guidry to go on the run. Charlotte and Guidry don't meet until about the halfway point of the book, and there are no romantic sparks when they do meet. I didn't mind that at all. In fact, I found Guidry's later instalove to be totally out of character. At least Charlotte was not an idiot and she turned out to be perfectly able to take care of herself. I wasn't crazy about the ending of the book, and I really hated the epilogue. Please don't tidy things up for me. I'll probably read more by this author, but this one was a little disappointing.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher.

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