

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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Lola's Secret.

McInerney, Monica (Author)

Oct 2012. 352 p. Ballantine, paperback, \$15.00. (9780345534033).

The incomparable Lola Quinlan, garish dresser and confirmed meddler, is the center of a galaxy of family and friends in *Lola's Secret*, McInerney's sequel to *The Alphabet Sisters* (2005). At 84 years old, Lola is still laying plans and changing lives, all from the confines of a South Australian country motel. As Christmas approaches, so do large and small tribulations that face the Quinlan clan and the guests coming to the motel. McInerney brings a light touch and plenty of humor to her on-the-nose depiction of the characters, whose squabbles show everyone's biases—one person's helpful advice is another's insufferable hectoring. As their stories intertwine, the various characters meet challenges with courage and kindness despite their shortcomings, and the love that binds them together is touchingly revealed in the resolution. McInerney believes in the goodness of people. The hectic nature of life and the pressure of the holidays are a potent mix, but Lola sees her loved ones through it all. Lola, and the novel, cheerily salute the extraordinary in the ordinary and the connections of family and friends.

— *Bridget Thoreson*