

Road Longer than Memory

Melanie McCabe

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A woman's homecoming stirs dark suspicions in Melanie McCabe's brooding historical thriller *Road Longer Than Memory*.

In 1976, Sara, a high school senior, witnesses a fellow student, Nina's, heated argument. Fear prevents her from intervening, though she makes an anonymous phone call to the police. A decade later, Sara, now a teacher at the school, encounters Mark, a fellow faculty member whose distinctive white forelock she recognizes from Nina's fight.

The slow-burning dual timelines advance through Sara's memories about her family, a fatal car accident, and the discovery of Nina's body. In the present, her doubts about whether Mark murdered Nina persist as she settles into her new job, resulting in coiling tension; she worries that he will recognize her, too. She also confides in a former classmate and reunites with a friend who desires a deeper relationship. Background about the controversial construction of Interstate 66 serves as Sara's personal, somewhat fragile metaphor for her own paved-over guilt as she engages in an anxious search for the truth.

The prose is unadorned. Mark is fleshed out via hearsay and Sara's presumptions, typecast as a sexually inappropriate teacher, while others are developed in terms of their ties to the interstate: some protested its construction, others were in favor of it. Indeed, the past permeates the present, reinforced by circumstance: Sara lives in her childhood home with her mother, amid reminders of past events.

The mystery advances through rumors that are at first tough to prove. Sara's amateur investigating is curtailed because of abrupt twists, including another death. As people make confessions, secrets spill toward the harrowing realization that sometimes exposing the truth pushes justice even further away.

In the contemplative thriller *Road Longer Than Memory*, a woman's recollections of a past crime complicate her new life.

KAREN RIGBY (May / June 2026)

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