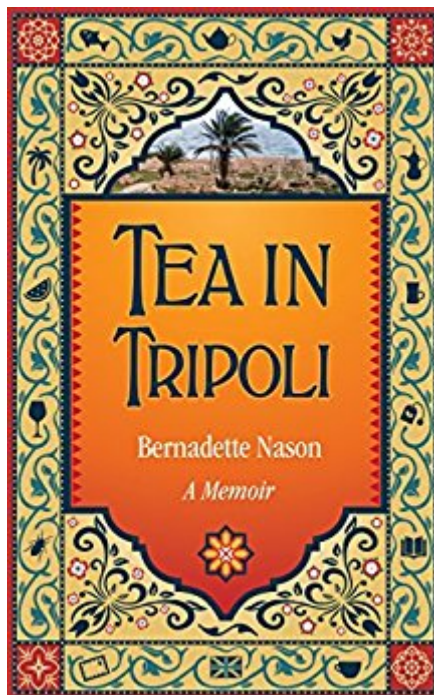


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# TEA IN TRIPOLI: A Memoir



## Synopsis

Broken by divorce, debt, and workplace sexual harassment, twenty-six-year-old Bernadette Nason is hanging by a thread. When her cat is run over by a garbage truck, Nason makes an impetuous decision. With almost no travel experience, she grabs the first available overseas job and, within two months, finds herself in Libya. Fitting in has never been her strength, yet here she is, the most unstable, self-loathing, slightly overweight fish ever to throw itself recklessly out of its own water. Move over, Bridget Jones, there's a new, real-life idiot in town. Inspired by her expatriate adventures during Gaddafi's turbulent regime, c. 1984-85, Nason covers her thwarted desire to fit in, from bizarre daily life to terrifying confrontations with the Morality Police. Told with candor and wit, TEA IN TRIPOLI, follows a young woman's attempts to escape her past on an extraordinary, often perilous, journey of self-discovery. It's sure to resonate with anyone who has ever run away from problems instead of taking care of business.

## Book Information

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Biography

## Customer Reviews

If you're like me, the notion of getting out of bed on a Sunday morning and reading about Libya in 1983 appears at first like a chore, not unlike mowing the lawn and working out: the "eat your

spinach" brain suggests you'll be better off in some faraway, difficult-to-grasp manner for broadening some horizon you can't quite imagine you possess. How wonderful to be completely wrong when served instead with an eminently edible nugget that is every bit as capable of serious human introspection as it is of hilarious and quintessentially English self-deprecation. There is a scene near the end of the book in which our heroine is back at home in England, talking to a couple of chaps at her local pub. Bernie, who by this point has already had Many Adventures, is surprised to discover how difficult it is to connect with the English Control Group who have probably spent the entire length of the book at that pub while she has been away. They don't have a frame of reference for "small Englishwoman just back from Libya in 1984" and while they're well-meaning, it becomes apparent that they don't know what to do with Bernie or her Adventures. This scene stands out not because of its monumental importance in the narrative; at first blush it may not even seem worth mentioning alongside the Moonshine Geologists and Cartoon Italian Oil Executives that pepper Ms. Nason's travelogue. I found it a subtle reminder that most of us are those two chaps in the pub: we lack the necessary equipment to relate to, comprehend, or internalize "what it was like" under Col. Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 1983. We can't imagine what it has possibly got to do with us and the creeping feeling of impending ignorance frightens one away from the subject entirely beyond, perhaps, a general sense of relief that we don't know firsthand what Bernadette Nason learned for us in 1983. The brilliance of TEA IN TRIPOLI is that "Bernie"'s superior storytelling, humor, and plain old pathos smash this inhibition to such a degree that her decision to take a job in Tripoli and her ultimate, mystifying affection for the place are entirely relatable and always engaging. As a memoir, it entertains, asks questions without browbeating you with answers, and deftly leaves you enlightened before you even realize you were open to enlightenment on the subject. It is simultaneously meaningful and an accessible, which in other hands than the expert Ms. Nason might be a criticism (would your life story be 'an easy read?') but here is due entirely to the the storyteller's affability and a respect for her audience that is "not available" in more long-winded works but is the bread and butter of the professional storyteller.

First off, an admission -- I've know Bernie for decades, worked with her on stage, and seen her stage version of this book. That being said, I'm not the type to praise anything just because people I know were involved with it (as anyone who knows me will attest). This book is spellbinding. I read it in two days, literally damning Bernie for making me go to bed way later than I had intended the first day. The extra depth afforded by putting these stories on paper really lets them breathe, and sink in (although I did miss her delivery of them from the stage). Funny, yes, because she's a funny person,

but also painful, when you read how quickly funny situations could turn threatening, and when you can see her humor (even at the time) trying to mask the horror of being in Libya during that dangerous time. All woven into a fascinating tapestry by a master storyteller. Can't wait for the follow-up, *Dinner in Dubai* (which I've also seen on stage). Buy it, read it. You'll be glad you did. I am.

Bernadette is such a great comedienne that I was expecting a very funny book. It was very funny, in places, but it was much more. I found her honesty and thoughtful introspection very brave. I wondered if I could ever be so open about my own foibles and mistakes. The book's stories were compelling and made this quite the page-turner. I thought over the stories I had already read and wondered what would happen next when I was forced to put the book down. It leaves me anticipating what comes next. Thank you for sharing your funny, sad, inspiring tales, Bernie!

*Tea in Tripoli* is a smart, laugh-out-loud funny, sometimes frightening offering by master storyteller, Bernadette Nason. It is her brilliant memoir of a life lived in Libya during the acid reign of Muammar Gaddafi. *Tea in Tripoli* is a wonderful read. I thought so both times. Very highly recommended.

Having seen Ms. Nason's stage presentation I was very interested in reading the complete story of how it all came about, greater detail of what went on during her stay in Tripoli and how it all shaped her life today. I was not disappointed. Ms. Nason proves to be as excellent a story-teller on the printed page as she is on stage. The events leading up to her decision to leave her family, her job and her country rang very familiar to me, having had similar experiences. However, her doing so as a young single woman, was much more risky and unusual during those times and in such a potentially dangerous country. Ms. Nason's humor and "pluck" as she careens from one situation to another carries the reader along with her. I encourage you to brew yourself a nice "cuppa" and sit down and join Ms. Nason on her journey. You will be glad you took the ride.

Bernadette's writing style is like listening to a close friend tell you a fantastic story. I could hear her musical voice in my hear telling me the tales of the adventure of a lifetime. The evocative imagery she employed to describe the sights, sounds, and (not always pleasant) smells of Libya really made me feel like I was there, with sand in every one of my crevices and desperate for a good cup of tea! Bernadette's sense of humor put me at ease, even when I was reading about absolutely terrifying events. I couldn't believe the level of detail and am very glad she did keep everything from

her time in Tripoli. Take that Marie Kondo, maybe clutter isn't so bad!! I knew very little about the history of Libya beyond "Gaddafi is a tyrant", (or "Goofy is a tyrant" as Bernadette calls him so affectionately), and I found this book to be a great starter and overview from one person's very personal perspective. It definitely inspired me to find out more about the events she details in her memoir. Anyone who enjoys memoirs, travel stories, history, or just a great tale told by a fantastic storyteller will love this book, I highly recommend it!

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