Press Release

If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things
by Jon McGregor

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"The 'remarkable things' of the title are the small moments of the here-and-now that rival angelic visions. These are what McGregor is celebrating . . . [HIS] SHARP EYE AND BROAD SYMPATHIES SHOW A TRUE NOVELISTIC SENSIBILITY AND A SIZABLE TALENT." — Kirkus Reviews

About the Book

"It rained towards the end of the afternoon, suddenly and heavily, but that was all, there was nothing else unusual or unexpected about the day . . . and somehow it seems wrong that there wasn't a buildup . . . a premonition or a warning or a clue. I wonder if there was, actually, if there was something I missed because I wasn't paying attention."

When Jon McGregor's If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things was listed for the Booker Prize last year, literary insiders were astonished. Who was this twenty-five-year-old dishwasher, and what was the story behind his debut novel, compared by many to the works of Ian McEwan and Virginia Woolf? In November, American readers will have a chance to discover this truly remarkable novel for themselves when Houghton Mifflin publishes it as a Mariner Original paperback.

If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things perfectly captures the anonymity of urban life in a fame-obsessed culture and the ways in which everyday events — both beautiful and tragic — can bring strangers together. The story unfolds over the course of a seemingly ordinary late summer day on an ordinary street in an unnamed city. It is a day filled with unspoken confessions, bittersweet acts of love, private triumphs, and brief moments of both soaring happiness and bottomless despair — the flotsam and jetsam of everyday life. Skillfully, McGregor visits each home and immerses the reader in the private dramas playing out behind closed doors.
After a night of partying, a group of friends return to number 18, where they break off into a series of romantic and dreamlike entanglements. The elderly man in number 20 sighs from his window as the rowdy children from number 19 run into the street to play. Later, he and his wife will be watched by the red-haired woman in the attic apartment of number 21 as they walk up the block past the man with the burned hands from number 16 and his beautiful young daughter. Through it all, the haunted young man from number 18 obsessively photographs the comings and goings of the neighborhood, adding the pictures to his odd collection of urban detritus.

Underlying the vivid and poetic descriptions of these seemingly mundane activities is an exquisite tension, which foretells the looming disaster that will break the cadence of this unexceptional day and forever change the lives of the street's residents. Honest, heartbreaking, and refreshingly un-ironic, *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things* is a beautiful evocation of the uncertainty of modern life, and the ways in which every existence is remarkable.

**About the Author**

Jon McGregor was born in Bermuda in 1976 and raised in England. His short fiction has appeared in various publications, including *Granta*. The media attention surrounding the death of Princess Diana in 1997, together with the comparatively scant attention paid to the death of a young man in McGregor's neighborhood around the same time, inspired him to begin writing *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things*, which he completed while supporting himself as a dishwasher in a vegetarian restaurant. The novel was published to outstanding reviews in Britain. Long-listed for the Booker Prize, *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things* was also nominated for the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book. In addition, McGregor has won two prestigious awards for young fiction writers: the Somerset Maugham Prize and the Betty Trask Prize. McGregor and his wife, Alice, live in Nottingham, England.

**Praise for *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things***

"Luminous . . . there is something devotional about McGregor's simple prose, seeking as it does to finish all those sentences that trail away with the words 'It's just . . . ,' to chronicle all the good intentions, the unspoken understandings and misunderstandings, the wordless yearnings that define our days . . . This is a novel of wonders." — *Observer*

"The work of a burning new talent . . . Jon McGregor writes like a lyrical angel." — *Daily Mail*

"McGregor's remarkable use of language infuses the ordinary with a fresh perspective . . . it's the finest book I've read this year and, do you know, I'm just about ready to read it all over again." — *Belfast Telegraph*

"A powerfully moving vision of contemporary Britain, a remarkably accomplished first novel." — *Times* (London)

"This is a debut that has no need to draw attention to itself with exotic locales or literary
fireworks; but it is not every novelist who has the gift, as Jon McGregor does, of reminding his readers of that heaven in a wild flower, that infinity in a grain of sand." — *Times* (London)

"This is an ordinary world, shabby and melancholy, but McGregor describes it with mesmeric power . . . You won't read anything much more poignant than this." — *Daily Telegraph*