



'The Crying Tree'

WHAT: A new novel by Naseem Rakha, of Silverton

PUBLISHER: Broadway Books/Random House; \$22.95; also available as an eBook

MORE INFORMATION:
www.nasemrakha.com

ONLINE CHAT: Rakha will take questions from readers from noon to 1 p.m. today. Submit questions now at StatesmanJournal.com.

BOOK SIGNING: Reading, book signing, and wine and cheese social, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Tea Party Bookshop, 420 Ferry St. SE, Salem

JOIN THE CONVERSATION: See how other mothers think about forgiveness at Salem.MomsLikeMe.com

Silverton author Naseem Rakha is having her first book published by Broadway, a division of Random House.

TIMOTHY J. GONZALEZ
Statesman Journal

Silverton author explores forgiveness

'The Crying Tree,' Naseem Rakha's first novel, tells the story of a mother whose teenage son was murdered

By BARBARA CURTIN
Statesman Journal

"The Crying Tree," Naseem Rakha's first novel, is about a subject almost too painful to imagine: a teenage son's murder and the toll it takes on all involved.

But Rakha, 49, of Silverton believes parents will be among those who buy the book, read it and discuss it.

"It is not about death, but surviving the death," she said last week at a Silverton coffee shop. "That is one of parents' greatest fears ... It takes on my fears and allows me to come out at a safe vantage point and see how people did it."

The novel's main character, Irene Stanley, the mother of the boy killed early in this book, does survive. But hate for the man on Oregon's death row consumes her for a decade. Then she writes a letter of forgiveness, drops it in the mail and feels a weight lift from her shoulders. Little does she realize how the consequences of her action will affect others.

The seeds for this novel were planted in 1936, when Rakha was a public radio reporter covering Oregon's first two executions in many years. She had interviewed prison staff, Sister Helen Prejean, author of "Dead Man Walking," and men who had been on death row and were exonerated.

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Silverton author of
'The Crying Tree'**

The daily coverage never developed into the ambitious long feature Rakha hoped to produce. But the project never left her, either.

In 2004, while undergoing treatment for cancer, Rakha reassessed her priorities. One of them, she decided, was to write a novel.

She started on one book, then set it aside in 2005 to work on "The Crying Tree." That effort, she found, had gained depth and power from one of the key events in her life: the birth of her son, Elijah, now 9, with husband Chuck Sheketoff.

"I do not think I could have written this novel without my experiences as a mother," she said.

She found new empathy toward the characters she was creating. She better understood the depth of love that could build among them.

Her agent put the resulting novel out for bid, and it was published last week.

So far, the reactions that mean the most to Rakha come from people who have experienced forgiveness in their own lives.

"It is very gratifying, of course," she said, "but it feels like something bigger than me."

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