

'The Crying Tree' author visits Corvallis

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CORVALLIS - Naseem Rakha's first novel "The Crying Tree" tells the story of a mother whose teenage son has been murdered. It's a story of hate, forgiveness and redemption.

Rakha will give a reading from the book at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 13, at The Arts Center, 700 S.W. Madison Ave.

The inspiration for the fictional tale came to Rakha, a former radio reporter, after she was assigned to cover an execution at the Oregon State Penitentiary in 1996.

For her research she interviewed death row inmates who had been exonerated, prosecutors and defense attorneys, but the breakthrough moment came when she interviewed a woman who had actually come to forgive a man who stabbed her daughter to death.

"That was the primary motivating force for me to do a story because I wanted to understand what execution looks like through a victim's eyes as well as the eyes of people who have to perform it," Rakha said.

The story, which is based in a fictional Oregon town, is likely to strike a chord with mid-valley readers who have followed the events of the Brooke Wilberger case.

"I've been thinking about it quite a bit as I approach the Corvallis talk," Rakha said. "The community must be asking itself a lot of questions about it. We vicariously put ourselves in these situations of 'what if it was me, how would I react?' and I don't think we can ever know."

"I've written a book about it and I don't know how I would react if put into

any of these terrible situations, but I wanted to examine how does one come to forgive the unforgivable, and that was the purpose of the book," she said.

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- Nancy Raskauskas