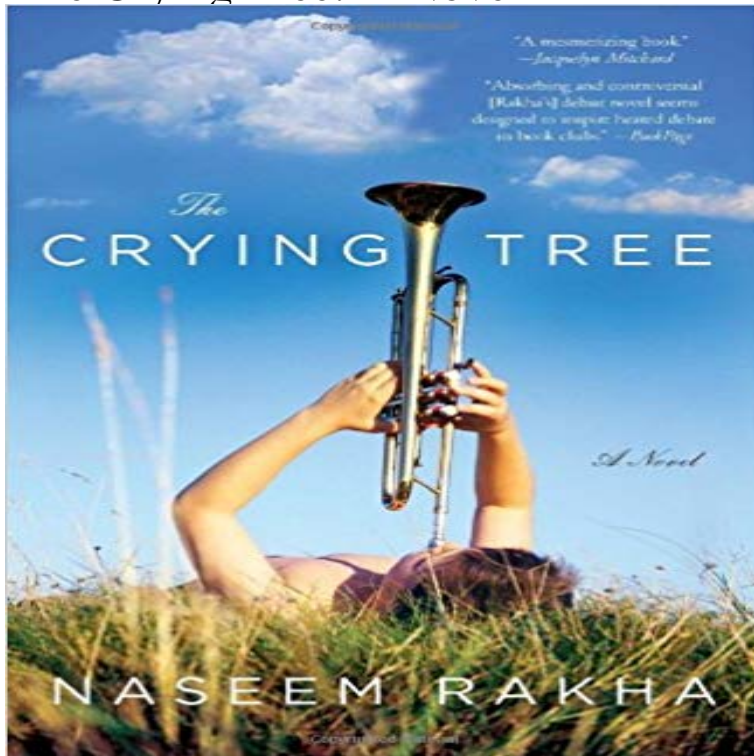


The Crying Tree: A Novel



Irene and Nate Stanley are living a quiet and contented life with their two children, Bliss and Shep, on their family farm in southern Illinois when Nate suddenly announces he has been offered a job as a deputy sheriff in Oregon. Irene fights her husband. She does not want to uproot her family and has deep misgivings about the move. Nevertheless, the family leaves, and they are just settling into their life in Oregon's high desert when the unthinkable happens. Fifteen-year-old Shep is shot and killed during an apparent robbery in their home. The murderer, a young mechanic with a history of assault, robbery, and drug-related offenses, is caught and sentenced to death. Shep's murder sends the Stanley family into a tailspin, with each member attempting to cope with the tragedy in his or her own way. Irene's approach is to live, week after week, waiting for Daniel Robbins' execution and the justice she feels she and her family deserve. Those weeks turn into months and then years. Ultimately, faced with a growing sense that Robbins' death will not stop her pain, Irene takes the extraordinary and clandestine step of reaching out to her son's killer. The two forge an unlikely connection that remains a secret from her family and friends. Years later, Irene receives the notice that she had craved for so long: Daniel Robbins has stopped his appeals and will be executed within a month. This announcement shakes the very core of the Stanley family. Irene, it turns out, isn't the only one with a shocking secret to hide. As the execution date nears, the Stanleys must face difficult truths and find a way to come to terms with the past. Dramatic, wrenching, and ultimately uplifting, *The Crying Tree* is an unforgettable story of love and redemption, the unbreakable bonds of family, and the transformative power of forgiveness.

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