

REVIEWS:

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The Crying Tree BYLINE: Lisa Rohrbaugh SECTION: REVIEWS; Fiction;
Pg. 92 LENGTH: 206 words Rakha, Naseem. The Crying Tree. Broadway.
Jul. 2009. c.304p. ISBN 978-0-7679-3140-3 . \$22.95. F

A more common name for the "crying tree" is the willow, and one grows near Steven (Shep) Stanley's grave in Blaine, OR. This 15-year-old was killed in his home, and his best friend, Daniel, has been found guilty of the crime and waits a lethal injection on death row. Gifted musician Shep was definitely the center of the world for his mother, Irene, and the intensity of her grief is exquisitely portrayed in this moving, unsentimental tale of loss. After years of severe depression, withdrawal from her family, and alcoholism, Irene comes to realize that if she does not forgive her son's killer she will be destroyed. She secretly writes to Daniel in prison, and they begin corresponding. Then Irene receives written notice of the execution date and knows she must act. **VERDICT** Gifted storyteller Rakha has crafted a beautiful and passionate novel that never becomes maudlin or unbelievable. All of the characters are genuinely human, and the author even manages to save a few surprising plot details to the end. Highly recommended, especially for readers interested in the subject of loss and coping.-**Lisa Rohrbaugh, New Middletown, OH**

Publishers Weekly - Monday May 11, 2009

The Crying Tree Naseem Rakha. Broadway, \$22.95 (304p) ISBN 978-0-7679-3140-3

This complex, layered story of a family's journey toward justice and forgiveness comes together through spellbinding storytelling. Deputy sheriff Nate Stanley calls home one day and announces he's accepted a deputy post in Oregon. His wife, Irene, resents having to uproot herself and their children, Shep and Bliss, from their small Illinois town, but Nate insists it's for the best. Once they've moved into their new home, Shep sets off to explore Oregon's outdoors, and things seem to be settling in nicely until one afternoon when Nate returns home to find his 15-year-old son beaten and shot in their kitchen. After Shep dies in Nate's arms, the family seeks vengeance against the young man, Daniel Joseph Robbin, accused of Shep's murder. In the 19 years between Shep's death and Daniel's legal execution, Bliss becomes all but a caretaker for her damaged parents, and a crisis pushes Irene toward the truth about what happened to Shep. Most of the big secret is fairly apparent early on, so it's a testament to Rakha's ability to create wonderfully realized characters that the narrative retains its tension to the end.