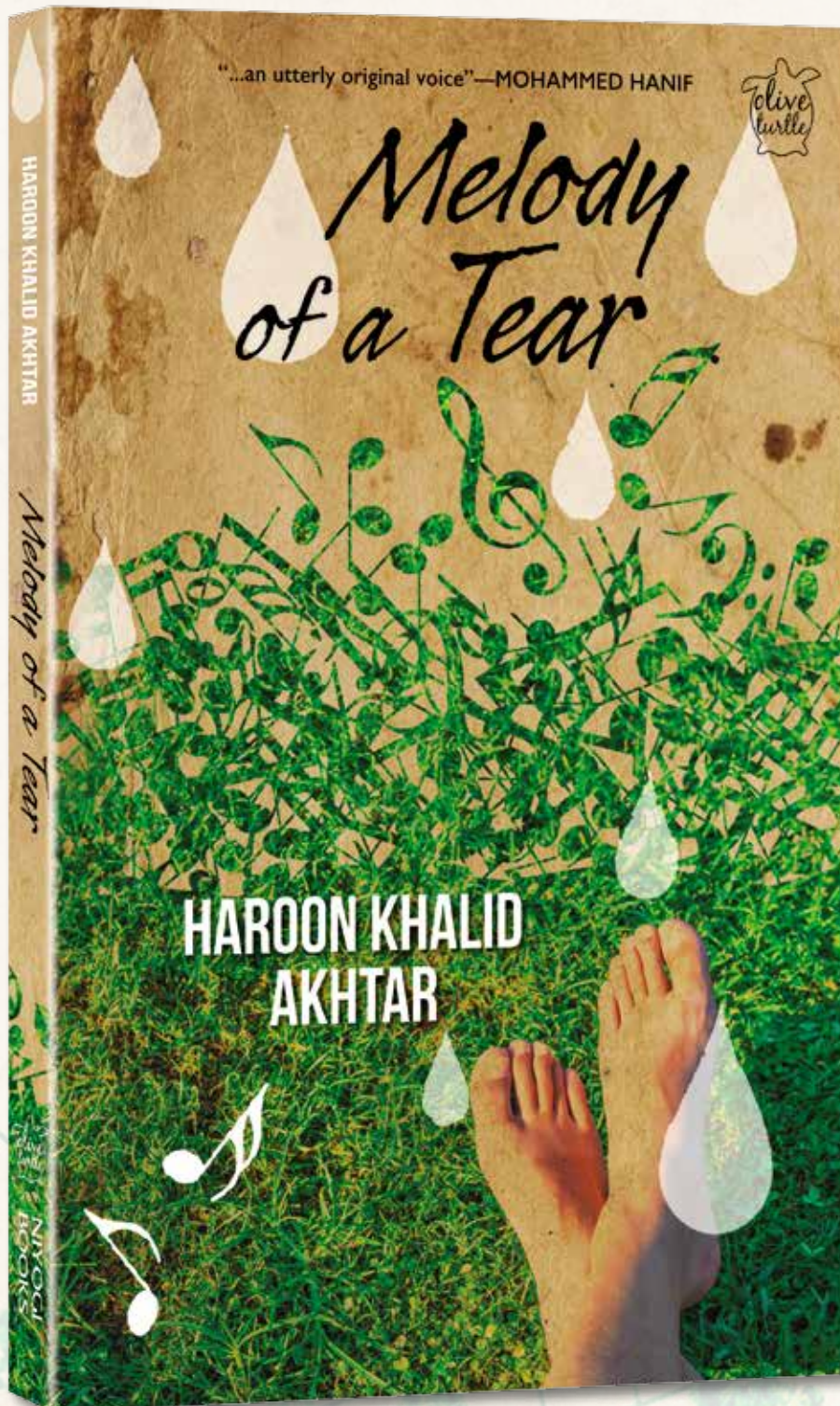


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“...an utterly original voice”—MOHAMMED HANIF

Melody of a Tear

by
Haroon Khalid Akhtar

FICTION

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M*elody of a Tear* takes imagination to the next level.

Zara, the suicide-prone protagonist of ambiguous gender, is raised as a son by her father. She has never been able to cry and so when she meets Zaid, a former college-mate, she is immediately curious because of the tear she sees streaming down his face. Thus begins a quest to understand this wondrous facility of easy tears. Her search for answers leads her to a crumbling mansion where she encounters Waris, an ailing repository of ideals and wisdom who moonlights as a children's mystery writer, and Sheila and her brood who live behind the mansion, treating poverty as their religion.

Here with Waris as her guide and mentor she unravels the spool of Zaid's humanity to resolve the befuddling mystery of his tears, and in the process reaches deep into the heart of her own dilemma as well.

The plot, with elements of magic realism, is never what it seems and springs stunning surprises at key moments of the tale. Who is the victor in this story? Who is the real narrator? Do some people die or merely change forms? Whose figment of imagination eventually makes love to Zara? The answers are as intriguing as the surreal questions themselves.



Born in Lahore and an MBA from LUMS, Haroon was raised amidst books that his father, a distinguished Urdu writer and avid reader, filled the house with. After writing over a hundred articles and short stories for Pakistan's top daily *Dawn* and gathering them in the form of a book called *Threadbare*, he turned inward to hear the diverse voices that have long been part of him, people he has identified with and people he has known laden with their laughter, tragedies and truths. These diverse threads finally yielded *Melody of a Tear* after ten long years. His stories seldom have villains as such. He believes in the eternal goodness of humanity and the certainty of transformative upheavals.

A successful banker with over twenty years of experience in Risk and Compliance, Haroon is settled in Karachi. This is his debut novel.

This novel follows Zara, the suicide-prone protagonist of ambiguous gender, raised as a son by her father. Her inability to cry sets her on a quest to understand the wondrous facility of easy tears.

The author infuses life into the city of Karachi, the Karachi Cantonment railway station, and a decrepit mansion known as Sufaid Haveli and turns them into memorable characters.

In this highly original tale, with elements of magic realism, the plot is never quite what it seems.

If you believe in the power of imagination then this novel is for you. Pitting passion against compassion, the novel chooses a winner in the end.