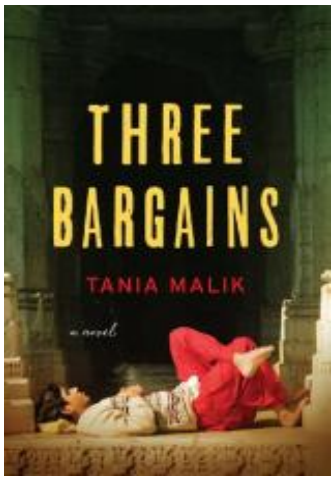
Three Bargains

by Tania Malik



About the Book

By the banks of the River Yamuna in northern India, where rice paddies of basmati merge into fields of sugarcane, 12-year-old Madan lives with his impoverished family in the town of Gorapur. Madan's father works for Avtaar Singh, a powerful and controlling man who owns the largest factory in town and much of the land around it. Madan's sharp mind and hardened determination catch Avtaar Singh's attention. When Madan?s father's misdeeds jeopardize his sister's life, Madan strikes his first bargain with Avtaar Singh to save her. Drawn into Avtaar Singh's violent world, Madan becomes his son in every way but by blood. Suddenly it looks as if everything will change for Madan and his family until a forbidden love affair has brutal consequences and he is forced to leave behind all that is dear to him. On his journey toward redemption, Madan will have to bargain, once, twice, three times for his life and for the lives of those he loves.

Discussion Guide

1. It could be argued that Madan exchanges one violent, dangerous father for another. What do Prabhu and Avtaar Singh?s violent tendencies have in common? How are they different? In the end, can it truly be said that Avtaar Singh is a better father to Madan than was Prabhu? Compare the ways in which each one is better and worse.

2. Madan is attracted to Neha?s idealism and rebelliousness. At the same time, he himself can?t afford to be idealistic or rebellious --- and, in the end, neither can she. How does their relationship affect each of their ideas about what?s possible, for themselves and for their world?

3. How would you characterize Madan?s relationship to violence as a young man? Do you think he deems it a necessary evil? An ordinary part of life? Why is he so willing to hurt people at the behest of his father figure?

4. Twice over the course of THREE BARGAINS Madan meets an older man who gives him an opportunity. What is it about him that so impresses Avtaar Singh and Ketan-bhai? How has Madan changed from when he firsts meets Avtaar

Singh to when he gets to know Ketan-bhai? In what important ways does he stay the same?

5. Over the course of the novel, Madan will have two father figures, two romantic relationships, and two children. How does he grow and change from one relationship to the next? What is the significance of second chances in THREE BARGAINS? Can we ever truly start over in life?

6. How do you understand Durga?s feelings toward her son when Madan returns to his family? Why is she angry? Are you sympathetic with her, or do you think her fury is unfounded? Why was it so easy for Jaggu and Swati to forgive Madan, and so difficult for Durga?

7. Do you think that Madan?s feelings of guilt and helplessness over his inability to protect his sister, Swati, affect his relationship years later with his son, Arnav? If so, how?

8. Describe the character of Preeti. What do you think causes her to forgive Madan in the end? Would you have been able to forgive him?

9. Madan?s childhood ambitions --- to learn English, to help his family and himself --- are purely motivated, whereas his adult ambitions --- to become wealthy, to build Jeet Megacity --- are perhaps more complex. How do you think the novel characterizes ambition in the end? Have you ever become so intent on a project --- as Madan does with Jeet Megacity --- that you lose track of your other values and priorities?

10. Does love ultimately conquer disparities in wealth and class? Why or why not?

Author Bio

Tania Malik was born in New Delhi, educated in boarding schools in the Himalayas, and raised in India, Africa and the Middle East. She received her degree from the University of Delhi and currently lives in northern California with her husband, daughter, and dog. THREE BARGAINS is her first novel.

Critical Praise

?Mesmerizing prose [and] heart-stopping action?both honest and astounding.?

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