



November 7, 2023

Dear friends,

Celina Baljeet Basra's debut novel is a daring, death-defying feat of modern fiction—a tightrope act of astonishing skill and audacity, the likes of which you've never seen. I have read this novel just about one hundred million times, and I still cannot figure out how Celina does it; what she achieves here is nothing short of the impossible. *Happy* transgresses national borders and professional boundaries. It contains multitudes and thought-provoking contradictions. It's an English-language story about an Indian boy who immigrates to Italy, published by an American imprint; a workplace novel set, not in stilted office spaces, but in thrumming restaurant kitchens and radish farms overseas; a delicately balanced dish incorporating elements of both East and West, tragedy and comedy, optimism and cynicism, all while probing the porousness of our inner and outer worlds.

I'm getting goosebumps as I write this. To remain awestruck and mystified by *Happy* after more than a year's worth of work on it—I think that is the highest compliment I can pay as an editor. There are no strings to be seen, as far as I can tell; this novel is pure magic. I am so happy to be publishing *Happy*, which to me, sets a new standard for what fiction can do. Good fiction tears down walls and prejudices, allowing us to care for other people in other places. And *really* good fiction shows how their conditions are always our own.

So with that, please allow me to welcome to the stage: Happy Singh Soni, a.k.a. the Punjabi Sami Frey; movie buff and multi-hyphenate extraordinaire; Screenwriter/Aspiring actor; professional Googler; lover of sugar roti and all things delicious; beloved son and little brother, descended from a proud line of cabbage farmers; dancer, poet, hard worker; comrade to Beetal goats and black sheep alike; a Hypersensitive Introverted Extrovert (Love Language: Words of Affirmation); polyglot, world traveler, illegal alien; at the School of Hard Knocks, an incorrigible daydreamer—and the most alive, winsome, complex protagonist I have ever encountered in fiction. Long live Happy, and may we all walk a mile in his shoes.

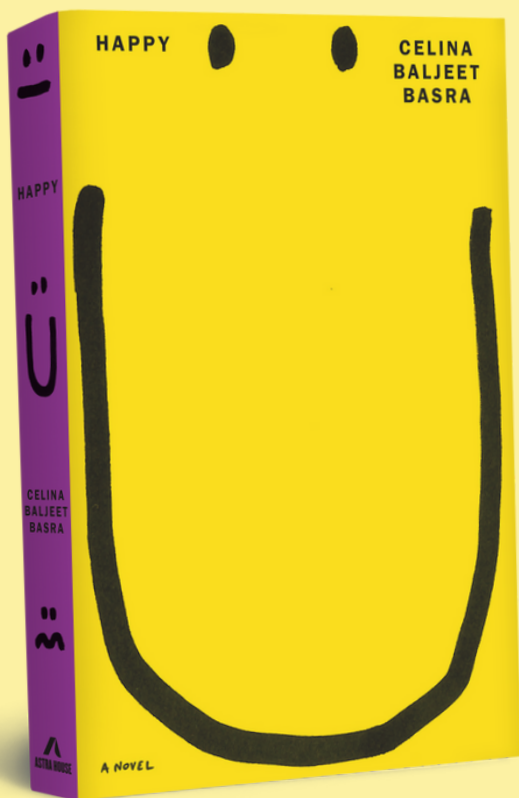
Happy reading!

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"Leaping, chattering, dancing
atop this conundrum comes the hero. . .

Happy Singh Soni, his head bursting with ideas, his heart set
on gargantuan dreams."

—Kathryn Ma, *The New York Times Book Review*



"Happy's stubborn optimism exalts and
affirms the inner lives of his fellow
workers."

—*The Washington Post*

★ "Singular. . . striking."

—*Publishers Weekly (Starred Review)*

★ "Will speak to anyone with a heart
and a dream."

Bookpage (Starred Review)

★ "A damning indictment of capitalism."

Booklist (Starred Review)



*I would love HAPPY to be read as a universal story on what we
need to survive, what constitutes a home—and on humankind's
eternal search for paradise. —Celina Baljeet Basra*

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