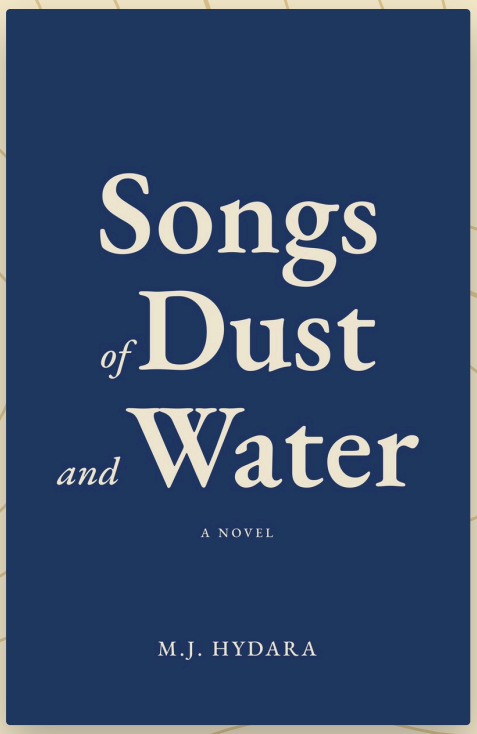

A NOVEL BY M.J. HYDARA

Songs of Dust and Water

Who holds the key,
who pays and who decides.

In Madina, a village in the Sahel, Talib would rather build machines than sit at his father's loom. When a foreign fund pays for a solar plant at the edge of the village, he takes a job there, even though the fund's engineer has designed the plant to run without anyone from Madina.

Ten years later, in Nafawol, a village far to the south, the fund offers a machine that draws water from the air, on condition that the village owns it. Before anyone signs, Kadiatou, who looks after the well, asks who will hold the key.

Her friend Fatou, a trader who keeps the accounts, trusts only what is written down. Isatou, who runs the women's savings, wants to know into whose hand the money goes.

"A thing you are not allowed to mend is not yours."

Malik, the smith in Madina, chapter 2

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