

The Honeybee Emeralds

Amy Tector

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What young woman wouldn't want to discover a secret basement room filled with sequined gowns, feather boas, and wigs? In Amy Tector's novel *The Honeybee Emeralds*, Alice Ahmadi is that lucky woman. And then she puts her hands in the pocket of a velvet jacket and pulls out a fabulous diamond and emerald necklace.

Alice, an intern at a failing Parisian magazine, launches a full-tilt effort, with the magazine's limited staff, to discover the necklace's provenance. They're counting on the story capturing the imagination of their readers and ensuring the magazine's survival. They call themselves "The Fellowship of the Necklace," and their research uncovers startling information about Napoleon III, Mata Hari, and Josephine Baker. The stakes increase when a rival magazine, run by a ruthless competitor, also begins chasing the story.

Alice is distinctive from the very first page. She's Iranian and "used to racism and condescension," which keeps her from opening up to others with ease. The other members of the Fellowship are also treated in terms of their inner voices and secret desires: they are imminently human, and their foibles are humorous. As they trace the ownership of the necklace back in history, the tale of the previous owners, and of how they came to possess the jewelry, is revealed in a seamless, exciting manner.

The Honeybee Emeralds is a lighthearted novel peopled by diverse and interesting individuals, each of whom is determined, for their own reasons, to solve the mystery of a necklace's origins. In the grand scheme of things, however, unlocking that mystery proves less important than unlocking Alice's heart.

KAREN MULVAHILL (March / April 2022)

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