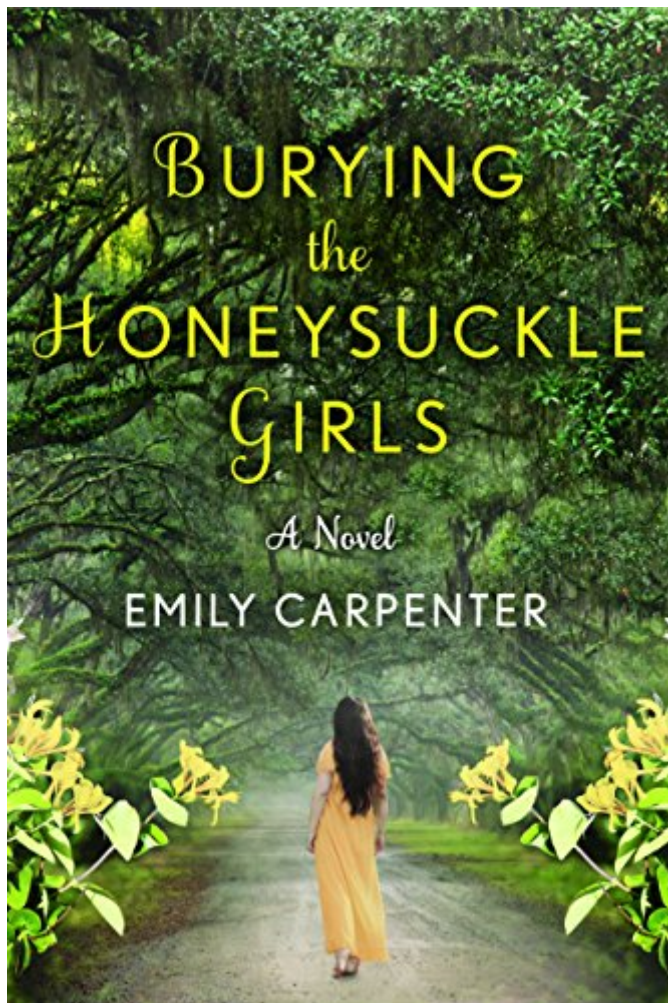


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Burying The Honeysuckle Girls



Synopsis

Althea Bell is still heartbroken by her mother's tragic, premature death and tormented by the last, frantic words she whispered into young Althea's ear: Wait for her. For the honeysuckle girl. She'll find you, I think, but if she doesn't, you find her. Adrift ever since, Althea is now fresh out of rehab and returning to her family home in Mobile, Alabama, determined to reconnect with her estranged, ailing father. While Althea doesn't expect him, or her politically ambitious brother, to welcome her with open arms, she's not prepared for the chilling revelation of a grim, long-buried family secret. Fragile and desperate, Althea escapes with an old flame to uncover the truth about her lineage. Drawn deeper into her ancestors' lives, Althea begins to unearth their disturbing history and the part she's meant to play in it. Gripping and visceral, this unforgettable debut delves straight into the heart of dark family secrets and into one woman's emotional journey to save herself from a sinister inheritance.

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Customer Reviews

The story kept me turning the pages and I enjoyed the 2 stories present and past. However, there are 5 generations of women and their husbands/kids/siblings/aunts and uncles to keep track of, and it did become somewhat confusing. I suggest creating a family tree type of outline for all the characters so that it will be easier to know who is who in what time period.

This novel started out so well. I actually stayed up late to read the last quarter of it, that's how much I got into it. I rarely read suspense, but the potential for magical realism drew me in. Unfortunately, that premise is also where the book went horribly wrong. Without giving too much away, the novel does a kind of reverse jump-the-shark at the end, as in that all of the magical and mysterious elements eluded to throughout, just merely crumble away into an even more bizarre, too-plain reality that is not only disappointing, but stupid. If you don't like books that tie themselves up too neatly (and too conveniently) at the end, don't read this. A good suspense novel will have an ending that makes it feel like the author wrote backwards from the end, meaning they knew the conclusion and all of the clues they were going to disperse along the way. In this one, the author clearly had plans for a big finish, an ending that was a mystery even to her, and then tied herself in a knot trying to wrap up all the loose ends. That being said, there were good elements to the piece. The suspense was well-maintained throughout the first portion of the book, and the parallels between the present and flashback sections were well-paced. The parts about Jinn, especially, were enjoyable to read (until their conclusion, of course). Another main issue with the writing, however, also is most apparent in Jinn's sections. The whole book, in retrospect, reads like a manifesto against men. The premise for the villainy in the book seems to just be that all men are backstabbing, misogynistic, and abusive. There is only one half-decent man in the book and even he makes some pretty infuriating mistakes. The women, on the other hand, alternate between valiant and incompetent. Although the relationship between a female abuse victim and her abuser can often be extremely complicated, the way that some of the women behave feels illogical, though this seems to be more because of bad dialogue and description than poor character development. For example, one female character faces off against a former abuser in a confined space, and awkwardly flip-flops between casual small talk and accusations, as if she has completely forgotten that he is bigger than her and, as shown by past experience, perfectly capable of manhandling and manipulating her; everything about the scene just felt stilted, and so did many more similar scenes to follow.

This book gripped me from the very first page and didn't let go until I devoured every last word. Althea's story was captivating, heartbreaking and full of mystery. She's turning 30 and knows that if

she doesn't uncover the clues to her family's secrets, she will suffer a similar fate as her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, each one suffering a mental breakdown and passing away by their 30th birthdays. With nothing but a cigar box of small mementos from her family's past given to her by her mother right before she passed, along with an urgent message, "Wait for her. For the honeysuckle girl. She'll find you, I think, but if she doesn't, you find her." Althea, fresh out of rehab, is determined to find answers before her birthday. Some of Althea's poor and very dangerous decisions were at times frustrating. She reminded me very much of someone close to me in a similar situation who has been in and out of rehab, battling drug addiction, depression and has lied and stolen from family countless times. Althea's character was well written and she felt very real. I wanted to see her succeed, discover the truth and overcome her demons. Althea's journey to uncovering the mysteries and dark secrets of her family's past kept me glued to the pages. I loved how the story alternated between her and her great-grandmother, Jinn. In the story, Jinn made and sold her own honeysuckle wine. I love a good book and a glass of wine so I needed to pair this beautiful book, just look at that stunning cover, with a honeysuckle wine. The problem is, no one makes anything close to Jinn's top secret recipe in my neck of the woods, so I had to improvise. Carpenter's writing kept me guessing through all the twists and turns right up until the incredibly satisfying ending. I would recommend this book to anyone in the mood for a good mystery and if you are a wine lover like me, pairing this book with a delicious Moscato or Riesling infused with aromas of honeysuckle may help transport you back in time to the 1930s in Alabama where Jinn's tragic story begins.

As a lifelong Alabamian, I loved the way Ms. Carpenter used our State and its history to tell this story. After Althea was released from rehab, she was determined to find out why the women in her family either died or disappeared when they turned 30. As she turned up information on her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, she began to understand the hidden shameful history of the men in her family. Pritchard Hospital was a key factor in the family's history. Pritchard was a pseudonym for our State's actual mental hospital in Tuscaloosa. Growing up, everyone associated mental illness with being sent to Since the author didn't say the name, I won't either. The KKK, Civil Rights Movement, the commonly believed reputations of mountain people, and "yellow dog Democrats" of the old South, were all used to tell Althea's story. Best of all, even using stereotypes, each character was intelligent and believable. This was one of those books that is hard to put down till the end.

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