



Tolerant

C. J. Sparrow

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In C. J. Sparrow's stunning fantasy novel *Tolerant*, a servant subverts her culture's oppressive values, going to great lengths to protect those she loves.

Obedying her late older sister's command to defect rather than fail her servitude test, Tovey, who has been blindfolded since infancy to signify humility and subjugation, escapes her collective. A near capture and a hasty lie land her a servant position at the king's residence. Circulating rumors of a prophecy involving a girl with purple eyes who will overturn the social hierarchy come to a head when Tovey reveals her glowing amethyst eyes to the prince, preventing the precautionary slaughter of others who fit the prophecy's bill. With the stubborn Prince Cullus at her side, Tovey runs off to stop a war before it starts in defiance of the prophecy. But as she sees more of her world, she also learns the importance of sacrifice, the meaning of friendship and family, and the dangers of loyalty.

Despite her oppressive upbringing, Tovey values fealty and nonviolence. She has internalized a bias against servant defectors. Her sister's ghost is her moral compass, demanding obedience to the crown even as her small rebellions—sneaking bites of her masters' discarded pastries, telling lies to protect fellow servants from punishment—show her understanding of the unjust inequalities that pervade her world.

Tovey and Cullus are principled, fallible heroes. Their aligned objective of preventing war deepens their kinship and sparks a romance, and their disparate life experiences and shifting views of their society's malfeasance generate explosive tension. As the pair explores both friendly and enemy territory, Tovey's innate magic emerges. The suspense escalates through to the perception-altering conclusion that begs for a sequel.

In the fantasy novel *Tolerant*, an unlikely duo is propelled toward an enlightened rebellion.

AIMEE JODOIN (March / April 2023)

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