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Mieville, China. Embassytown

In a future so distant that Earth itself is barely remembered, the universe has been colonized by humans, or Terre. They have encountered multiple strange alien species, and made peace with most of them. Perhaps no species they have found, however, have been as strange as the Ariekei. The Ariekei, called the ?Hosts? by those humans who live on their world in an enclave called Embassytown, have two mouths. Their language, called Language with the capital L, is contingent upon the use of both mouths, and therefore both portions of their minds, at once. They are literally unable to comprehend any language spoken by only one mouth and one mind. The Ambassadors of Embassytown are specially-bred identical clones, called doppels, who are trained from birth to be so empathically linked that they are able to speak Language with the Hosts and be understood as two minds speaking one thought together.

Avice Benner Cho, a young woman raised in Embassytown who became an immerser, or space traveler, never thought she?d return to her childhood home. But when her husband, a linguist, becomes obsessed with the Ariekei and Language, she finds herself back in Embassytown, traveling in the Ambassadors? social circles. But trouble is brewing. One faction of the Ariekei have become obsessed with learning to lie?Language is incapable of encompassing anything other than strict, literal truth. Even abstracts like similes must be performed by actors so that the Ariekei can refer to them. But learning to lie would change the Ariekei and their culture, and not everyone is happy with that idea. In addition, Bremen, the home nation of the colony Embassytown, has its own plan for wresting political influence away from the doppel Ambassadors. When the plans of the liar Ariekei and Bremen?s agents collide, only Avice and a small contingent of rebellious Ambassadors and Ariekei can save the colony?and the Ariekei species?from total destruction.

A very slow-starting book, the plot neverthless picks up pace dramatically in the second half. This title will reward those willing to invest the time to immerse fully in the detailed universe Mieville has created.

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