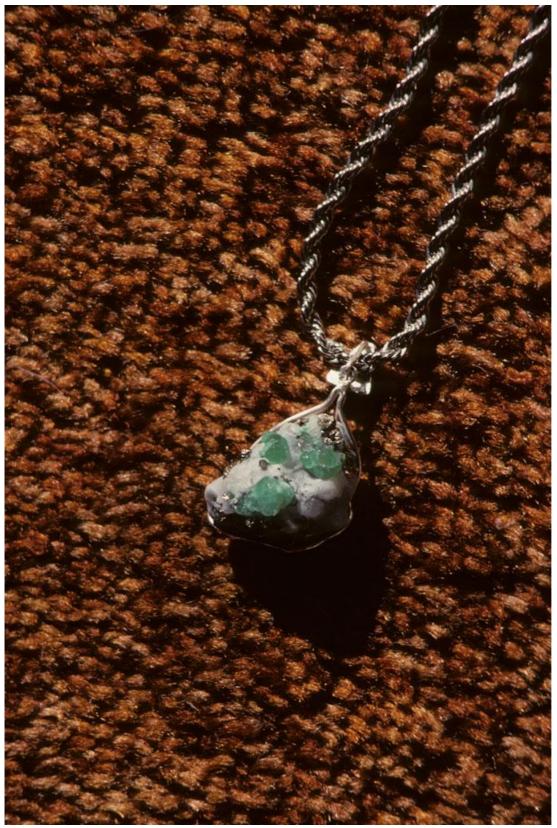
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A rough-cut emerald attached to a gold rope chain lays on brown fabric.Emeralds are mined in many South American countries. In the pre-colonial period, the Inca lords adorned their ceremonial garb with emeralds as a sign of status. In fact, the Spanish colonizers found so many people wearing emeralds in Ecuador that they named a northeastern province Esmeraldas.Today Ecuador is not a large producer of precious gems, but emeralds and other stones continue to be mined in the country.



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