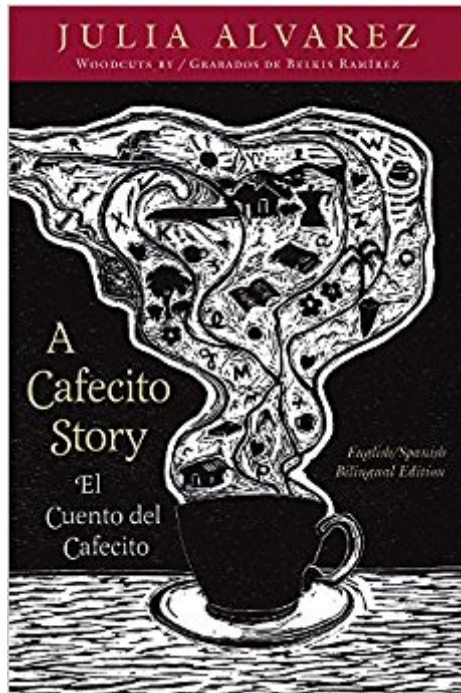




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# A Cafecito Story / El Cuento Del Cafecito



## Synopsis

A Cafecito Story is a story of love, coffee, birds and hope. It is a beautifully written eco-fable by best-selling author Julia Alvarez. Based on her and her husband's experiences trying to reclaim a small coffee farm in her native Dominican Republic, A Cafecito Story shows how the return to the traditional methods of shade-grown coffee can rehabilitate and rejuvenate the landscape and human culture, while at the same time preserving vital winter habitat for threatened songbirds. Not a political or environmental polemic, A Cafecito Story is instead a poetic, modern fable about human beings at their best. The challenge of producing coffee is a remarkable test of our ability to live more sustainably, caring for the land, growers, and consumers in an enlightened and just way. Written with Julia Alvarez's deft touch, this is a story that stimulates while it comforts, waking the mind and warming the soul like the first cup of morning coffee. Indeed, this story is best read with a strong cup of organic, shade-grown, fresh-brewed coffee.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Review: "A Better Cup of Coffee" HippoPress Manchester-When Joe stops at the roadside barra outside his Dominican vacation resort, he finds the local coffee comes in a single, perfect denomination, "a dollhouse-sized cup filled with delicious, dark brew that leaves stains on the cup." He takes a sip and tastes a coffee that will change his life forever. Joe is the main character in the adult fable/parable A Cafecito Story by award-winning Vermont novelist Julia Alvarez (How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents (1990), In the Time of Butterflies (1993), and In the Name of

SalomÃ© (2000)). Illustrated with wonderful, imaginative woodcuts by celebrated Dominican artist Belkis RamÃ­rez, the book comes in three parts: The "Cafecito Story" of the book's title; an afterward by Bill Eichner, Alvarez's spouse and co-owner of their organic coffee farm; and a surprisingly rich and sensible resource section. "The Cafecito Story" unfolds through the eyes of Joe, a Nebraska native with farming in his blood. Joel feels increasingly displaced from the natural world, so he takes a getaway vacation to the Dominican Republic. What's so special about the cafecito he finds there? The beans were grown in the traditional way, on a shaded farm in the Dominican's mountainous interior. When Joe visits a coffee farm in the hills, the farmer Miguel tells him that the old ways are fast disappearing as farmers rent their plots to "La compania" to grow coffee quickly in full sun, for better short-term yields. The result is the destruction of a sustainable way of life through deforested mountains, depleted soils, and pesticides and chemical fertilizers that wash into the rivers. And for the coffee drinker half a world away, notes Miguel, "The sprayed coffee tastes just as good if you are tasting only with your mouth. But it fills you with the poison swimming around in that dark cup of disappointment." I'm drinking a cup of certified organic coffee as I write this. How could I drink anything else? This book is meant to be more than light summer reading. It's meant to change your thinking, and it's likely that it will. Eichner and Alvarez's real-life story picks up where the fable leaves off. Eichner writes in the afterward about Alta Gracia, their organic coffee farm established with their campesino neighbors in the Dominican Republic. Where the fiction is simple and prose sometimes choppy, the afterward is much more lyrical. It clearly conveys the rewards of helping to renew a landscape scorched by agribusiness, the joys of seeing the songbirds return and the literacy rate rise, and the fulfillment in transforming the dream of sustainability into a reality. Like a young tree, the parable and the real-life story intertwine and take root in the reader. In part three, an extensive and imaginative list of resources will help coffee drinkers participate in fair trade, a set of marketplace practices that create a better future for half a million family coffee farmers around the world. In an age when we often want to make a difference but are uncertain of where to begin, drinking a better cup of coffee doesn't seem like much to ask. After all, writes Eichner, "Anyone can begin by planting a tree, or a hundred trees. The future does depend on each cup, on each small choice we make." Eichner and Alvarez manage to tell a complex story with global consequences without being preachy or heavy-handed. They intend to inspire, and they do. (Karen Marzloff)

Text: English, Spanish (translation) Original Language: English

The whole little book is good, as attested to by other reviewers - but this is my favourite part: Joe

discovers his new friend cannot read or write. Joe asks the man's kids to "scratch their names in the soil with a stick. They shake their heads shyly. The little one, Miguelina, takes the stick and draws a circle on the ground, then looks up smiling, as if her name is zero." If that doesn't touch your heart, you need to check your batteries because you might not be a human being. The whole of this book is written in this style of simple yet symbolic beauty. The authors say their coffees are named after the saint, the Madonna of the "Altagracia." When I was learning Latin, we were told the word Altus means something like the absolute height of a mountain - the height plus the depth of the valley. How appropriate for this little work. ESPECIALLY if you own a coffee house, get this book!

Julia Alvarez is fast becoming my favorite Caribbean author. Her work transcends the usual bloviated, pretentious, poorly written garbage that passes as Caribbean literature (note: adverbs ending in -ly, do not get hyphenated to adjectives when they serve together as a compound modifier for a noun). This well-written short story is sweet--even though it is clearly didactic. I enjoyed reading another of Alvarez's tales and look forward to more of her work. Oh, if you have not read *In the Name of Salome*, run, don't walk, and get that book too. It is wonderful.

A great background to understanding why there is coffee and great coffee.

As always Julia Alvarez tells a great story, and a story with a point. It is a short story that is very charming and depicts Dominican Republic in a very accurate way. The story is about a foreigner coming to Dominican Republic and how he slowly gets to know about what goes on "behind the scenes" in coffee making. The story could have been about any type of farming, carpentry etc and the point would have been the same: The environment and those who work with it DOES matter.

Delightful, charming story, based on a true, organic, working coffee farm in the Dominican Republic. Illustrations are delightful and enhance the story and the imagination!

I guess I really don't get this book. It was meant to be a "go green" story about how coffee is and should be produced. That part I get. But the writing seemed simplistic and offers no insight whatsoever into the characters. It is simply a Dick and Jane book. Now I have read another book by Alvarez and enjoyed it immensely and I realize this simple style is what the author intended. But the language is not creative in any way and just seems cobbled together to lead to info at the end about the plight of Dominican campesinos and merchandise info at the end that sell the organic brand of

coffee beans the cooperative owned by Alvarez and her husband. The story in and of itself is not literature in any way. Had Alvarez used her considerable literary skills to craft a 300 page novel on this topic with character depth and advanced plot, I would have loved it.

While perusing an independent bookstore in Pasadena, CA, I discovered *\*A Cafecito Story\** in between two giant tomes of little interest; but somehow, this slim volume caught my eye and then my interest as I read the back cover and flipped through the book to see the wonderful woodcuts by Belkis Ram rez. This is the simple story of Joe, the son of a farmer in Nebraska. Disaffected by the direction of farming as the corporations buy up family farms - including his family when his father is forced to sell a large part of the land to pay the bills - and the ruin this brings to the local economies, Joe decides farming is not for him. He moves to the city, marries a city girl, becomes a teacher, divorces the city girl, and at 40 finds himself near burnout and realizing that he can't even enjoy a cup of coffee. So, he decides to take a vacation. His travels and budget land him at a resort in the Dominican Republic; but, soon he is bored with sitting by the pool and the sterility of resort protected behind walls and guards from the population of the land. At the recommendation of one of the resort's employees, Joe visits the mountains and the coffee farm of the employee's relative. Here is where Joe's life changes forever. This semi-autobiographical novella by Julia Alvarez (writer-in-residence at Middlebury College and who was born in the Dominican Republic) is a metaphor for the discovery that the author and her husband made while visiting the place of her birth. It is also the story of how people can change the way things are done for the better and in the course of it all begin to change the world. If you are familiar with the concept of Fair Trade in the world of coffee and chocolate and the like, you will really enjoy this look at some of the movement's roots - if you aren't familiar, this book will open your eyes.>>>>>>

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