



In the Name of Salome

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In the Name of Salome is intricately structured. It interweaves two stories, one of revolutionary Dominican poet Salome Urena, one of her daughter, referred to as Camila. Camila was three when Salome died. The stories of these two women unfold in alternating chapters. Those numbered in Spanish recount Salome's story, those in English Camila's.

Salome's story develops from beginning to end, Camila's story from the end of her professional life and her retirement to Cuba. As the book progresses, Camila's story moves backward through her earlier years. Only in the final pages do the two story lines coalesce.

Julia Alvarez explores timely issues of lasting social concern: Latin American politics, being orphaned, blended families, family relationships, the status of women, martial infidelity, forgiveness, lesbianism, multiculturalism, duty to one's country, and adjustment problems facing immigrants. Salome, a revolutionary poet born in 1850, is a truly gifted writer. She marries Francisco Henriquez, nine years her junior, who, after her death, serves a four-month term as president of the troubled Dominican Republic.

Salome's children are forced by Dominican political instability to disperse. Pedro immigrates to Argentina, becoming an eminent scholar and eventually Norton lecturer at Harvard. Camila, after teaching in Cuba, becomes a Vassar professor. Her distinguished career ends in 1960 with her retirement and her return to Cuba, once her childhood sanctuary but now politically turbulent.

Alvarez, herself a Dominican, often focuses on the political unrest in the Dominican Republic. This book makes political statements in beguilingly personal and historically accurate ways.

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