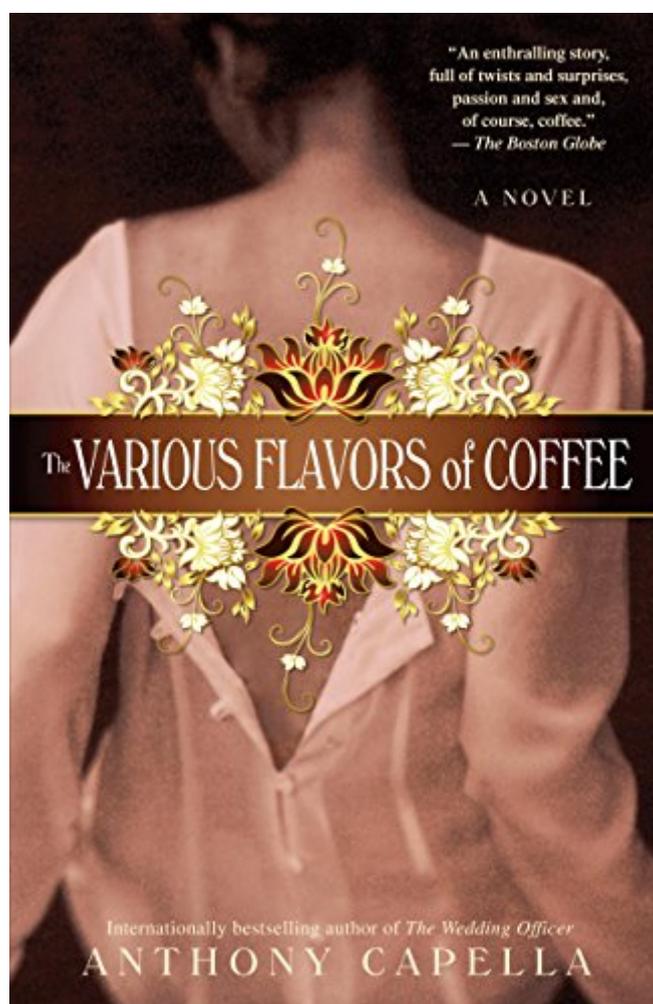


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The Various Flavors Of Coffee



Synopsis

From the internationally bestselling author of *The Wedding Officer* comes a novel whose stunning blend of exotic adventure and erotic passion will intoxicate every reader who tastes of its remarkable delights. When a woman gives a man coffee, it is a way of showing her desire. "Abyssinian proverb It was a cup of coffee that changed Robert Wallis's life" and a cup of very bad coffee at that. The impoverished poet is sitting in a London coffeehouse contemplating an uncertain future when he meets Samuel Pinker. The owner of Castle Coffee offers Wallace the very last thing a struggling young artist in fin de siècle England could possibly want: a job. But the job Wallis accepts "employing his palate and talent for words to compose a vocabulary of coffee" based on its many subtle and elusive flavors "is only the beginning of an extraordinary adventure in which Wallis will experience the dizzying heights of desire and the excruciating pain of loss. As Wallis finds himself falling hopelessly in love with his coworker, Pinker's spirited suffragette daughter Emily, both will discover that you cannot awaken one set of senses without affecting all the others. Their love is tested when Wallis is dispatched on a journey to North Africa in search of the legendary Arab mokka. As he travels to coffee's fabled birthplace and learns the fiercely guarded secrets of the trade "Wallis meets Fikre, the defiant, seductive slave of a powerful coffee merchant, who serves him in the traditional Abyssinian coffee ceremony. And when Fikre dares to slip Wallis a single coffee bean, the mysteries of coffee and forbidden passion intermingle and combine to change history and fate. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

I remember my first taste of coffee very well. I was five years old and reaching for another cup (probably filled with something with an unnatural color and amount of sugar) and got my moms coffee filled mug by mistake. I also remember spitting the coffee out. But in this age where a Starbuck's is literally found on every street corner it simply wasn't possible that this be my last encounter with the drink. Even before I liked to drink it I loved the smell of coffee. On shopping trips I would routinely (along with lying down in the beer cooler) sneak into the coffee aisle and just stand there and smell. It was that, the incredible smell of coffee that drew me to drink it. And because I love coffee, and history, why wouldn't I read a historical novel about coffee?"The Various Flavors of Coffee" is a wonderful, yet very odd book. I say odd because it wasn't until the very last pages of the book that I realized that there was a plot. Normally that would be an indication of a terrible novel (because what story doesn't have a plot? Some kind of crisis that our characters are straining towards?) but in this case the amount of description and incredible detail between the beginning and the end made up for it. As it turned out that the plot was the oldest story in the world, taking place at the end of the 19th century. Boy (Robert Wallis) meets girl (Emily Pinker) and this is the story of their lives from when they first met until they stopped meeting. Individually and together the novel tells how the two characters evolved and faced the challenges of their lives. Of course there's a back story.

"A well made cup of coffee is the proper beginning to an idle day. Its aroma is beguiling, its taste is sweet; yet it leaves behind only bitterness and regret. In that it resembles, surely, the pleasures of love.....Although in this case, it seems to taste of nothing much except mud. With, perhaps, a faint aftertaste of rotten apricots."With these words Robert Wallis seals his fate. Not that it didn't need to be sealed. After having been expelled from Oxford (too much partying, no studying) and cut off by his father, Robert is living in London on credit from various tradesmen. He is the very picture of a dandy, dressing in the most fashionable manner, writing marginal poetry by day and visiting local brothels by night. A dissolute young man who is nevertheless endearing from the very first page. While sitting in a cafe one morning his remark is overheard by coffee merchant Samuel Pinker. Mr. Pinker wants to develop a reference manual to describe the tastes & smells in the

various coffee beans that he imports. He needs someone with a discerning palate and the vocabulary necessary to complete the task. He offers Robert the very last thing that he wants, employment. But even Robert realizes that he will not be able to maintain his lifestyle with no income, so he reluctantly accepts. The dreadful dullness of employment is greatly reduced when Robert meets his assistant. Mr. Pinker's lovely daughter, Emily, serves as secretary and partner in the task. Robert, of course, is attracted to her (and her father's wealth). He feels that he is a wonderful catch, a view not shared by Mr. Pinker. In order to win her hand he is given a mission. A five year trek to Africa, to plant and grow a crop of the best kind of coffee available.

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