

## Para Salvar el Mundo / Saving the World

Julia Álvarez



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Álvarez's celebrated new novel takes us into the worlds of two women swept up in campaigns against the scourges of their day: Alma, a Latin American novelist relocated to the United States, who is having writer's block while writing her new bestselling family sagas, and Isabel's story many years before. A brilliant novel-within-a-novel, Para salvar al mundo pits ambition against altruism and, in the process, tells the radiant stories of two courageous women. While writing her novel, Alma is sidetracked by the story of a much earlier idealist, Francisco Xavier Balmis, who in 1803 undertook to vaccinate the populations of Spain's American colonies against smallpox. To do this, he needed living "carriers" of the vaccine; otherwise, the vaccine would not survive the travel time across the ocean. Enter Isabel Sendales y Gómez, director of La Casa de Expositós. Isabel selects twenty-two orphan boys to be the carriers and joins them on the voyage to the colonies. Her bravery inspires a very different novel from Alma.

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