



The Ballad of the Sad Cafe: The Novels and Stories of Carson McCullers

Carson McCullers

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The Ballad of the Sad Café, by Carson McCullers (1951), opens on the set of a small town in Georgia. The reader is introduced to Miss Amelia, an independent, lonely woman who owns a small store. On this particular day she meets Cousin Lymon. Cousin Lymon, despite being a hunchback with rude mannerisms, is a rather kind man. The beginning reveals that Amelia has the ability to be a kind and gentle soul. He helps her discover love-and he becomes her beloved. While Cousin Lymon never returns Amelia's feelings he instills a change in her. She opens a café, which serves as a meeting place for all of the townspeople. Through the café, the town develops a sense of community and pride. As per usual, though, all people have a troubling history. It turns out Amelia was once married to a man she did not love, albeit for 10 days. He comes back after his stint in the penitentiary to ruin Amelia's life just like she ruined his. He steals Cousin Lymon's devotion and, in turn, her ability to love. The novella ends just like it began, with a portrait of a sad town that has nothing to hope for.

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