



The Drunken Spelunker's Guide to Plato

Kathy Giuffre

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Just because we're all prisoners in the cave doesn't mean we can't have fun.

The Drunken Spelunker's Guide to Plato is based on Plato's Allegory of the Cave from The Republic. In this novel, the Cave is a dank basement bar in the small Southern town of Waterville, overflowing with cheap beer, good blues, and local oddballs. There's Vera, the tough but tender owner; Pancho, the philosophical piano tuner; Billy Joe, the former rising star back home after a stop in Memphis; and Commie Tom, the exceedingly generous proprietor of the Hammer and Sickle Bookstore.

The newest bartender is whip-smart tomboy Josie, who hopped a bus from the Appalachian backwoods on a quest to discover who she is and where she belongs. What she finds is the Cave and the love of a charming regular named Danny. Armed with lessons from mythology and Plato's philosophy, Josie navigates the ups and downs of first love and begins to understand that something much greater is waiting for her just outside the Cave.

With Josie as our brave guide, we are submerged in a rarely explored subculture. Her journey into the Cave and back out is filled with trials and tragedy, but Josie is helped along by her newfound community of large-hearted hard drinkers. The Drunken Spelunker's Guide to Plato is a love letter to the families we build for ourselves and the unexpected ways life can answer the question, what if?

The Drunken Spelunker's Guide to Plato Details

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Author : Kathy Giuffre

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From Reader Review The Drunken Spelunker's Guide to Plato for online ebook

Bruce Reiter says

Each chapter starts with a bit of the Dialogues and then goes into a good yarn of a young woman growing up in the South. Not being a young woman, it is hard for me to identify with the protagonist but the author carries the story well. There are a few loose subplots at the end that could have been worked but a credible first try for an academic whose field is not in the Arts nor Fiction. I liked it and it was a two day read.

Camille Scarborough says

A random library choice. Liked the title and the interspersed mythology/philosophy but not enough character growth and a very slow plot

Richard says

I really enjoyed this book. In some respects it reminded me of a Southern version of 'The Mysteries of Pittsburgh'. I'm not saying it is in any way derivative of Chabon's book, it just evoked the same kind of reaction. It is a story that chronicles a specific period in a person's life, a specific place and a specific time in history. In doing so it manages to avoid being hokey and nostalgic and draw out reactions we can all relate to. For people who live in my neck of the woods, the locations will feel familiar. The characters are all fully formed and engaging. The authors use of Greek legend and Plato's writings throughout is a clever and well-used device. This book would be enjoyable for any reader.

Perri says

I don't know what to make of this story, part Cheers, Greek Mythology and Plato's cave allegory just for fun. While I wonder if I missed some some deep messages, I still enjoyed the ride.

Sonja Arlow says

The title caught my eye but the word Plato made me hesitate. I was in no mood for another Sophie's World, even if this story was set in a bar.

This is the second book this year that feels as if it was dug it out of the dustiest corner of a bookstore only to find a wonderful gem of a book. The other book was Amp'd and both were brought to my attention by a trusted Goodreads friend (I truly love this site)

A hodgepodge of quirky and endearing characters wrapped around a little bit of Plato, Socrates and Greek

Mythology made for very interesting and at times very funny reading experience.

On the surface, this is a coming of age story told from the viewpoint of Josie, who recently moved away from her tiny town to a slightly bigger tiny town. She gets a job at The Cave, a hole in the wall bar run by a no-nonsense owner, frequented by an oddball group of regulars.

I loved Josie's voice, she felt authentic, even if at times a bit of a hot mess. And the friends she makes to help her navigate life's knocks were just as well drawn.

This is a book that is easy to recommend because it was so hard to put down.

Diane S ? says

Funny how things happen sometimes. The unique title first drew me towards this book, I read the book jacket and wondered how the author was going to combine elements of Plato, mixed with Greek mythology, in a totally contemporary setting. I was intrigued. In my opinion she succeeded, brilliantly.

Josie, a young woman escapes her Appalachian hill town and by bus finds herself in Waterville, a southern college town. There she finds employment tending bar at a place called, "The Cave." she finds herself part of a hard drinking misfit group of regulars who inhabit the night. Yet, she finds so much more, friends who become her family, love and heartbreak and unconditional acceptance, tragedy and forgiveness.. The characters are so wonderful, from Commie Tom who runs the bookstore, "Hammer and Sickle", to Blossom who owns a small diner and is always there when needed with food and solace. So many more, all amazingly real.

This was the time before internet, cell phones so there are discussions of books, music, ideas, thoughts, politics, refreshingly nostalgic. Josie is our narrator and her words are always proceeded by a reference to a particular story in Greek mythology or an excerpt of "The Cave." it fit in with what was happening seamlessly. Made me see how many of these older ideas and thoughts can still fit in today's world, how they can be applied to personal situations.

These were people I could see myself being friends with, if they were real of course. I will miss everyone of them. And this little book has become one of my favorite reads of this year.

Bettina Peters says

I picked up this book on a whim as I have a fondness for all things cave related. What I discovered was a novel that beautifully applies Plato's Allegory of the Cave to the life of a young woman named Josie. As soon as she is able, Josie hops a bus to the first promising town as a way to escape her family and find her own way. She disembarks in Waterville, a small Southern town, and finds her way to a local underground bar called the Cave. She is quickly befriended and hired to be a bartender. Josie is introduced to all kinds of unusual characters who all make a big impact on her new world. As she learns about life, love, heartache, and loss, Josie grows into herself and starts to find her way. A beautiful exploration of human nature and life's journey, this is one book that kept me up until the wee hours of the night. It will make you think about your own journey and all that life has to offer.

Marathon County Public Library says

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Bettina P. / Marathon County Public Library
Find this book in our library catalog.

Dustin says

Great modern retake on the Allegory of the Cave by Plato which I recently listened to for the first time. Giuffre has wonderful pacing and tone to her story, and her characters are as quirky and true as any who might frequent a small town bar.

Teisha says

I chose to read this book simply based on its title. Thankfully, I was pleasantly surprised by its content. It took me less than a day (and only two sittings) to finish the book and for good reason. Josie's coming-of-age story was the most intriguing part for me. Her journey from a somewhat naive young woman to a more discerning adult is done beautifully and eloquently by Giuffre. The cast of characters included in the story are even better. Even with their flaws, it was difficult to pick just one character I liked, except for Stinky and Hank => Each one plays a role in how Josie's view of the world is altered as real life events unfold, however joyous or tragic. Giuffre's inclusion of Plato's Allegory of the Cave (complete with a bar called the Cave) made understanding Josie's journey and the people she meets along the way that much more intriguing and relatable. The ending of this book was not what I expected, but in a good way. I just like this book a lot...definitely one I will recommend to my patrons!

Sutter Lee says

Attracted by the title. A fun quick read. Nearly got a hangover just from reading it. Liked the characters; became very fond of them.
I've worked in taverns, college bars, cocktail lounges when I was in my 20s.

Some top-of-the head comments the morning after I finished reading:

Couldn't quite believe that she didn't go thru severe alcohol withdrawals when she was snowed it. Her alcohol consumption horrified me; I would think she'd permanently damage her liver or kidneys. She seemed well on the road to becoming a hard-core alcoholic.

Also disappointed with her final encounter with awful Christian woman. Very weak retort.

I've known some "Dannys" and none would have visited parents he didn't even like once a week; what was their hold on him?

Wasn't clear to me why her mother ignored her. Just because she wasn't "girlie," and a bit of a Tom Boy? Just a shallow mother I suppose.

Surprised one college night class would cost \$400 30-some years ago. Not saying inaccurate, just surprised.

Spoiler: Sorry that Jay just vanished.

Pete Wung says

Upon hearing that I was mourning the death of Robert Pirsig, the author of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, a friend recommended this book: *The Drunken Spelunker's Guide to Plato*, as a means to read something similar and somehow re-igniting my memories of a philosophical work that changed my life.

While this book is excellent in its own right, it isn't ZAMM.

I must say that I enjoyed this book more than I thought I would, mainly because Kathy Giuffre, while a very good writer, had a hard time setting the stage for herself. I struggled with the characters as they were introduced. I had a hard time staying interested since the characters did not grip me at the very beginning, and she introduced so many of them at once that I kept sneaking back to figure out which characters she was talking about. But. She more than made up for it as she found her groove about half way through the book. The characters became real to me and as the narrative moved along, I started to empathize with the quirkiness of all the characters,

The structure of the book is ambitious. The author interweaves the story of Josie, the narrator, and her life as a bartender at The Cave, a dark and subterranean watering hole; a contemplation of Plato's fable of prisoners in a cave; and finally a mixture of Greek mythological tales. At first the whole structure seemed to be a pseudo-intellectual exercise in pomposity. But the tapestry works, mainly because of the author's sense of humor and her easiness with the language and her way with the story. She easily weaves in and out of the three threads and is able to make the story illustrate the mythology and the philosophical ponderings. I found myself being drawn in to the book as the story became more interesting until I was completely captivated and charmed. In the wrong hands, the easy parallel drawn between Plato's cave and the bar named the Cave could have been a disaster. A lazy writer would have gone for the facile laughs and false profundity; this author never went for the cheap laugh or the fake gravitas. She worked pretty hard, in her research on philosophy and mythology to give us, the reader, a very happy and satisfying read.

The best compliment I can pay a work of fiction is that I was sad and forlorn when I reached the end of a book because I wanted the story to continue and I wanted to be led by the author through her thoughts. I was sad and forlorn when I reached the end of this book.

Jane says

The voice in this novel is lively and distinctive. It's a coming-of-age story that takes place mainly in an underground bar called "The Cave," and the narrative is interwoven with relevant bits of Greek mythology, including, of course, the governing metaphor of Plato's cave. The book celebrates community--one description of the book calls it "a love letter to the families we build for ourselves," which I think is a lovely

and apt description of the way the characters in this novel create bonds of mutual support. The writing is full of surprising descriptions and insights. A true pleasure to read. Highly recommended.

David Harris says

I was intrigued with the idea of mixing Greek philosophy and a fictional story. I think the author did a nice job of that. And she also created an interesting little world which I enjoyed inhabiting briefly.

Candace Datz says

A beautiful, thoughtful, funny read. Knowing the author, it's amazing how quickly the protagonist's voice became her own instead of Kathy's. Speaks of good writing to me!
