



Cavedweller: A Novel

By Dorothy Allison

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When Delia Byrd packs up her old Datsun and her daughter Cissy and gets on the Santa Monica Freeway heading south and east, she is leaving everything she has known for ten years: the tinsel glitter of the rock 'n' roll world; her dreams of singing and songwriting; and a life lived on credit cards and whiskey with a man who made promises he couldn't keep. Delia Byrd is going back to Cayro, Georgia, to reclaim her life--and the two daughters she left behind...Told in the incantatory voice of one of America's most eloquent storytellers, **Cavedweller** is a sweeping novel of the human spirit, the lost and hidden recesses of the heart, and the place where violence and redemption intersect.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

"Death changes everything." So begins Dorothy Allison's sprawling, ambitious, and deeply satisfying second novel, *Cavedweller*. For Delia Byrd, Randall Pritchard's death in a motorcycle accident launches a journey of several thousand miles and almost two decades, a rebirth of sorts that's also a return to her roots. Years before, the handsome but untrustworthy rock star Randall helped Delia flee an abusive husband; Delia escapes physical danger but leaves her two small children behind. In California, her abandoned daughters haunt her dreams and preoccupy her waking hours, even as she sings in Randall's band and gives birth to another daughter, Cissy. But when Randall is killed in a motorcycle accident, Delia packs rebellious Cissy into a broken-down Datsun, bound for Cayro, Georgia, and the one thing that suddenly matters more than anything else: her abandoned children and the chance to be a mother to them once again.

Cayro's poverty is emotional as well as material; the town is a hard place, full of hard people. To them, Delia will always be "that bitch" who abandoned her babies, "that hippie" living a life of sin. Nonetheless, Delia forges a cruel bargain with her former husband: in exchange for Delia's agreeing to care for him as he dies, he gives her a chance to reclaim her daughters. Like *Bastard out of Carolina*, Allison's acclaimed debut novel, *Cavedweller* is a chronicle of rage, strength, and survival. Here, however, Allison is equally concerned with the redemptive power of love and forgiveness, and a novel that began with death ends on an unexpectedly sanguine note: "'Yes, it's time for some new songs.'" There are no victims in Dorothy Allison's work; Delia triumphs through sheer force of will, bringing her family together despite the contempt of almost everyone around her.

The novel has its flaws--including occasionally flat-footed prose--but it is in the end compulsively readable, and it's populated by some of the most memorable characters in recent fiction: tough, prickly, flawed, and deeply human, Delia and Cissy are literary creations of the first rank. In describing the complicated emotions that bind and divide them, Allison demonstrates a profoundly unsentimental understanding of the way the human heart works. *Cavedweller* is the work of a mature artist, her best fiction to date.

From Publishers Weekly

Four women endure pain, experience epiphanies and find imperfect but bearable methods to continue their lives in Allison's moving second novel, after the celebrated *Bastard Out of Carolina*. After Delia Byrd buries Randall Pritchard?father of her 10-year old daughter, Cissy, and guitarist of the rock band Mud Dogs, for which she was the soulful singer?she leaves L.A. and hits the road to backwoods Cayro, Ga., the town she left a decade ago, fleeing her violent husband, Clint Windsor, and abandoning her two baby daughters. In Cayro, she suffers the scorn of most of the community, who condemn her as a sinner and an unnatural mother. Eventually, she strikes a bargain with Clint, offering to tend him on his deathbed if he will allow her to reclaim her daughters Amanda, 15, and Dede, 12, from their stern, Bible-quoting grandmother. The narrative covers the next few years, during which Delia fights poverty, exhaustion, her household's emotional turbulence and the urge to drink. Sanctimonious Amanda pursues moral rectitude with evangelical fervor; sexpot Dede dreams of driving a big truck down the highway; and outwardly tough but vulnerable Cissy discovers peace of mind in spelunking and begins to suspect her sexual orientation. Allison widens her tale to include other members of the community, rendering some hard-faced, cold-blooded rednecks with unsparing honesty. She weaves into the story such themes as female bonding, the power of hate and the puzzle of love, the hard path to forgiveness and acceptance. There are some problems: the teenage girls often speak unconvincingly sophisticated dialogue, and the narrative tends to ramble. Nevertheless, the novel has a restless energy and consistently interesting characters that will keep readers caring about the flawed but

valiant women who manage to surmount their private griefs through stubborn determination. 100,000 first printing; BOMC and QPB featured alternates; author tour.

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From Library Journal

In 1981, Delia Byrd leaves behind the California life of fame and misery she found at the top of the record charts and the bottom of a bottle to return home to Cayro, GA. Cissy, her young daughter, who is grieving for her newly dead father, crazed rocker Randall Pritchard, wants no part of this new life. Now Delia is trying to put together a life and reacquaint herself with the two older daughters (one a hellion, the other a religious zealot) she abandoned ten years earlier when she fled her murderous husband, who stonewalled all of Delia's attempts to obtain legal custody. Shunned by family and community, Delia struggles mightily with sobriety and three unforgiving, hostile offspring. Her remarkable stoicism as she attempts to carve out a new low-key, rock-solid security for herself and her children is nothing short of heroic. Allison's (Bastard Out of Carolina, LJ 3/1/92) powerful elegance puts the lives of these four women right into the face of her readers as she charts their touching, flawed efforts to construct a workable if unconventional family unit. Highly recommended.

-?Beth E. Andersen, Ann Arbor Dist. Lib., MI

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Charles Lemaster:

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in this era.

Herbert Oakley:

A lot of people always spent their particular free time to vacation or go to the outside with them family or their friend. Are you aware? Many a lot of people spent they will free time just watching TV, or perhaps playing video games all day long. In order to try to find a new activity that is look different you can read any book. It is really fun to suit your needs. If you enjoy the book which you read you can spent the whole day to reading a publication. The book Cavedweller: A Novel it is quite good to read. There are a lot of people that recommended this book. These folks were enjoying reading this book. If you did not have enough space to develop this book you can buy the e-book. You can m0ore easily to read this book from the smart phone. The price is not to fund but this book has high quality.

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