



## **Love in the Elephant Tent: How Running Away with the Circus Brought Me Home**

*Kathleen Cremonesi*

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**NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL WINNER, 2016 IPPY Awards for Memoir**

Imagine My Big Fat Greek Wedding crashing into Eat Pray Love on the set of Water for Elephants. This romantic, coming-of-age adventure is an intimate portrayal of young love, where Kathleen and Stefano learn to navigate their cultural differences, shed youthful concepts of romance, and form a life-long bond.

"Kathleen's journey toward self-discovery is enthralling ... the descriptions of life in the circus, the animals, and the spectacle put on every night vividly take readers into the experience."

*Publishers Weekly*

Kathleen Cremonesi knew early on she wanted to be different. Determined to avoid following in her mother's footsteps to an ill-fated marriage, Kathleen left Oregon in her early 20s to travel across Europe. On a whim, this former administrative assistant with wanderlust took a job as a dancer in an Italian circus and, working her way up, became an ostrich-riding, shark-taming showgirl.

Kathleen bonds with the exotic animals that could strike and kill at any moment, but instead bring her a peace she has never known. And when she stumbles into the arms of Stefano, the sexy elephant keeper, she finds a man who understands her wild spirit.

With thrilling prose and vivid descriptions, Kathleen takes the reader around the Mediterranean, where she discovers unexpected friends and learns how to cook, forgive, and love — across language barriers.

## **Love in the Elephant Tent: How Running Away with the Circus Brought Me Home Details**

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Author : Kathleen Cremonesi

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## **From Reader Review Love in the Elephant Tent: How Running Away with the Circus Brought Me Home for online ebook**

### **Mimi Fintel says**

As a young women, Kathleen Cremonesi, decided she did not want to end up like her mother, in a failed marriage and working very hard to make ends meet. So she left Oregon, and the wing of an old motel where her family lived, and head to California to go to college. That only lasted until she began following the band Grateful Dead and criss crossing the states. Eventually she worked for three months in a bank to earn enough money to buy an open ended ticket to Amsterdam. Once there she eventually found herself joining a circus to earn money. She worked as a dancer, a cook, swam in the shark tank and rode elephants. The very first day she was with the circus she met a young man named Stefano who took care of the circus elephants. The two immediately clicked! This wonderful book is a story of their romantic life and their times in the circus. It is also a book about the lives of elephants in the circus - unhappy lives. Kathleen has had a most interesting and adventuresome life!

I was very intrigued to read about the lives of people in circuses, especially overseas.

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### **Arja Salafranca says**

I simply loved Love in the Elephant Tent, Kathleen Cremonesi's story of running away to join a circus in her early twenties. There she encounters the frenetic and energetic elephant keeper, the Italian Stefano, worlds away from her own culture, and she learns to ride an ostrich, stick on the glitter and perform for all she's worth. This is an inside look at the world of the circus though, a glimpse behind the illusion, where animals are sometimes beaten and abused, and some of the most wrenching passages concern the abuse of Stefano's beloved elephants at the hands of others.

Life in the circus is often lived on the edge of poverty and survival. Early on Stefano tells Kathleen: "The circus gives her people just enough shelter for them to think is better than the outside world. Just enough food to keep the starvation away. Just enough money for drink that they forget they are caged like animals." But while showing a behind the scenes look at life in a circus, the story is balanced by plenty of wit and humour. It is also a poignant exploration of love, what it means to love a man who is married to the circus, and what it means to love, full stop: "Falling in love had been the easy part," she writes, "Although I understood that compromise could save a relationship, I did not yet comprehend that finding that shared existence can also save one's spirit." This is about how to go on, despite the differences, and how to save yourself through that love. You have to be strong and brave to love, in the end. Highly recommended.

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### **Liz says**

Love in the Elephant Tent is one woman's journey to find herself, search for a home, adventure, and love. Kathleen travels to Europe in order to find herself and adventure and ends up joining the circus. She very quickly fell in love with a man. I was intrigued to read more about Kathleen and her European circus adventure.

I thought Kathleen did a wonderful job describing the circus and all it entails. I did feel as though I could see everything and experience the circus, both the show and behind the scenes. However, I felt like she sometimes went on tangents about things that didn't really matter, such as 4 pages on Italian expressions with penis or bottom. She was in Europe, but I didn't read much about her seeing much other than the circus. I loved reading the parts when she went out and explored and her life consisted of more than just the circus. In addition, I disliked how she talked about how much she wanted to go home before her ticket expired, but when she finally did it was such a brief part of the book.

Kathleen was very quick to fall in love with Stefano. For someone who wanted freedom and to be independent by traveling to Europe on her own she seemed to be trapped by a man. As much as she loved Stefano and said he felt like home there were many times she seemed very unhappy in the circus talked about wanting to leave with Stefano but he didn't want to so they didn't. When I thought Kathleen and Stefano's relationship was coming to an end I was glad that she finally was acting like the independent woman I knew she was when she first came to Europe. I didn't like Stefano until the very end of the book, which made reading this difficult since it was full of their unhealthy relationship. I realize that they both were at fault and they loved each other and maybe being apart helped them work things out so I am happy they have a great life together now. However, she spent so much of the book describing how unhealthy their relationship it was hard to see the good in it except for the short bit at the end about how they are doing now.

In addition, as interesting as it was to read about the circus I couldn't help but think of the animals that were being mistreated. Stefano wanted to stay so he could help the elephants and Kathleen talked about how sorry she felt for the animals. However, she was quick to ride ostriches and elephants and swim with sharks. She loved the thrill of it and claimed to love the animals; however, she was a part of mistreating them. It is nice to see now that she is helping elephants who are in need.

I received a free advanced e-copy from ECW Press through NetGalley in exchange for a review.

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### **Linda Atwell says**

I'm a memoir fanatic—especially ones that include a true love story and show me a lifestyle I've never even dreamed for myself. In *Love in the Elephant Tent*, Kathleen does both of these. She leaves home to end up doing various circus jobs and falls in love with a handsome elephant trainer. What I liked most was her adventuresome spirit. When the circus offered her the opportunity to ride an ostrich or elephant or swim with sharks, she never said no. I've always felt I have gypsy blood in me and could go anywhere, anytime, but Kathleen actually lives out her dreams of seeing the world. I was intrigued with the circus lifestyle and the places she traveled. There were times I could not put the book down and turn out the lights to go to sleep. I'd tell myself, just one more chapter, just one more.

The scenes in the book were beautifully written and did a great job (for me) of letting me experience the circus from her perspective. If you like to travel vicariously through someone else's eyes, or want to know more about circus life, or if you enjoy reading about love, this book will definitely be for you.

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### **Stefani says**

need some time on this. Will definitely post a full review soon though :)

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### **Emilia says**

what a wonderful book!!! Wow. Truly great read, full of valuable lessons, thoughts, and wisdom that comes from living through all sorts of situations, in various conditions.  
Makes a reader re-think some of their priorities, as Kathleen was getting to understand what was the most important thing for her.  
Beautifully written, with everything that draws reader to it, holds him there and does not let go until... the book is finished :D  
absolutely loved it!!!

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### **Doranne Long says**

Fantastic; even better read than Eat, Pray, Love, and Water for Elephants. Kathleen keeps us intrigued with as she shares her life, running away to Europe and into the circus, while delightfully educating us in the cultural clashes between a young American vegetarian, and her Italian elephant keeper novio. But deeper than that, she skillfully shares her gained wisdom, which is worth sharing with the world! I love the cover, the contents; it would make a great movie as well.

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### **Felice says**

Such a great, fun romantic coming of age circus adventure! Even though you pretty much know how it's all going to work out just from looking at the pictures and reading about the author (and interviews with Kathleen) I still couldn't stop reading and couldn't wait to find out how it all works out. I loved the international journey, the immersion in Italian culture and circus culture and even cooking. Kathleen and Stefano's true love for the animals doesn't whitewash the realities of the harsh life for circus animals. I love knowing that some of the proceeds from this book go to help the animals.

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### **Karen Germain says**

Who hasn't dreamed of running away and joining the circus? Kathleen Cremonesi didn't just run away with the circus, but she did it in Europe. When I saw her memoir, Love in the Elephant Tent, on NetGalley, I just had to read it. Thank You to ECW Press for allowing me an advanced copy in exchange for an honest review.

**PLOT** - Set during the 1990's, Love in the Elephant Tent is the memoirs of Kathleen Cremonesi, an American, who spent her twenties traveling around Europe. Free-spirited Cremonesi found an opportunity to join a circus troupe in Italy, working as a dancing girl. While with the circus, she fell in love with Stefano, an elephant keeper. As her love for Stefano deepens, Cremonesi finds herself become immersed in circus life and Italian culture, causing her to lose herself in this temporary life-style.

**LIKE** - The best parts of Cremonesi's memoir are the ones that focus on her life in the circus. Beyond dancing, Cremonesi rode an ostrich, swam with sharks and befriended a shy giraffe. The animal lover in me, connected with the animal lovers in Cremonesi and Stefano. I felt for them in their dilemma of wanting to

stay to care for these animals, even though they felt having the animals perform in the circus was wrong. This story is strong with ethical vs emotional content. Having both the circus and Europe as backdrops, fills this memoir with many layers. Cremonesi struggles as an outsider in this strange world. I loved getting a backstage view of this unique lifestyle.

**DISLIKE** - More than an adventure story, this is a love story. Cremonesi struggles with her love for Stefano, as their cultures and communication styles often clash. Although the love story is important, I found that it took up too much weight in this book. I was far less interested in Stefano, than I was in the world of the circus. I couldn't understand her love for him, until late in the book. It was distancing.

**RECOMMEND** - Yes. Love in the Elephant Tent is for anyone with wanderlust. If you've dreamed of running away with the circus, Cremonesi's story will speak to you. On a side note, if you love animals, especially elephants, a percentage of the proceeds from this book are going to elephant rescue groups. That's just cool!

Check out the blog tour...I'm the first stop.

June 15, 2015: Review and Giveaway, Always Packed for Adventure (<http://www.alwayspackedforadventure.com/>).

June 17, 2015: Review and Excerpt, Book Bug (<http://bookbug2012.wordpress.com>).

June 18, 2015: Review and Q+A, The Book Binder's Daughter (<http://thebookbindersdaughter.com>).

June 19, 2015: Review, Excerpt and Giveaway, Caffeine and Books (<https://caffeineandbooks42.wordpress....>).

June 22, 2015: Review and Excerpt, Fictional Real World (<http://www.fictionalrealworld.blogspot.com>).

June 24, 2015: Review and Photos, We Peas Read (<https://wepeasread.wordpress.com/reviews/>).

June 26, 2015: Review and Q+A, Bibliotica (<http://bibliotica.com>).

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### **Mary Smith says**

I loved this book! I never dreamed of running off to be in the circus and neither did Kathleen, but that is where she found herself; performing in an Italian circus! As a young woman, she traveled the US, following the Grateful Dead. Then she went to Europe and traveled with a friend. They ended up working in a circus. Her friend didn't last long at all, but Kathleen stayed and found herself and "Love in the Elephant Tent"! It reads like a good fiction story, but it is all true!!!

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### **Danuta Pfeiffer says**

This book has it all--the rhythm of the European countryside and quaint towns, the colorful characters juggling their lives, busking in the street, the smell and sounds of big circus animals, the fascinating glimpse behind the glitter of the Big Top and the uniquely dreary lives of the acrobats and dancing girls. And the romance. Cremonesi, a fiercely independent young American woman who swims in the shark tank (among other hilarious duties) falls for the dashing Italian Stefano, the mercurial and magical elephant keeper. The story swirls as brightly as the circus lights around this love affair as their cultures collide as surely as their hearts entwine.

As a writer, I was intrigued by Cremonesi's skillful use of the Italian and Spanish circuses as vital characters in this captivating and well written memoir. Her pacing and wickedly wonderful sense of humor will keep you enthralled to the very last page.

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### **Ginger Taylor says**

Sure wish I could have read this book in my 20's. My 21 year old daughter will appreciate Kathleen's desire for adventure, truth, purpose & free-spirited sense of self all the while learning how to love deeply. Kathleen is an old soul. Fortunate to know herself well enough to live in her integrity as she navigates each day with an open endedness that would send most of us into crippling fear. Brave young lady.

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### **Shana M. Garrity says**

I havent enjoyed a book like i did this one in a very long time. This true story enveloped me into the circus world and these significant animals, the independence of a woman traveling the world, the romance of two very interesting people. I learned two awesome Italian recipes reading this book, I learned how to properly say Stefano (Steee-fano). I laughed and cried as I read this story of life, love and capturing everything your heart desires. Thank you, I will remember this story for a long time....

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### **Donna says**

This book lifted me up and left me totally inspired. I see true love exhibited in my family but this story truly made me cry with joy. The author followed her heart and never let herself be led away from what she knew was right for her and in the end it led her back to everything that mattered in the world. The fact that it involved elephants is just a bonus and really was why I sought out the book in the first place. What an accomplishment for a first book. True love. I am so jealous!

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### **Beth says**

This memoir was a natural for me to select to read after reading the following books:

1. "Elephant Company; the inspiring story of an unlikely hero and the animals who helped him save lives in World War II" by Vicki Croke.
2. Water for elephants by Sara Gruen
3. Circus Shoes by Noel Streatfield
4. The Italians by John Hooper

WHY? Because this book incorporates a story of circuses, Italian Culture, and a love of elephants into a true surprisingly believable biography of a twenty-something gal who left the US to try adventure and love while living in a circus. Kathleen kept a journal while there. I suspect that gave her the details to reconstruct her daily life with the young male Italian who cared for elephants. What is amazing is how she shows us her growing understanding of what it takes to enter the responsible world of an adult.

I relished almost every sentence in this book for I could feel the escape to a different world and the

challenges it gave. Read it and those I mentioned above too. They are a good mix of fiction and fact.

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