



## The Maw: A Novel

*Taylor Zajonc*

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## The Maw: A Novel Taylor Zajonc

For fans of Clive Cussler and Michael Crichton, a thrilling tale of an underground expedition to the deep . . . and the ultimate struggle for survival.

Milo Luttrell never expected to step inside the mouth of an ancient cave in rural Tanzania. After all, he's a historian--not an archaeologist. Summoned under the guise of a mysterious life-changing opportunity, Milo suddenly finds himself in the midst of an expedition into the largest underground system in Africa, helmed by a brash billionaire-turned-exploration guru and his elite team of cavers. It's a once-in-a-lifetime chance to finally solve a century-old disappearance of the famed explorer Lord Riley DeWar, an enigmatic figure who both made--and nearly ruined--Milo's fledgling career.

Determined to make the most of his second chance, Milo joins the team and begins a harrowing descent into one of Earth's last secrets: a dangerous, pitch-black realm of twisting passages and ancient fossils nearly two thousand feet underground. But when a storm hits the surface base camp, stranding the cavers and washing away supplies, all communication to the outside world is lost. As the remaining resources dwindle and members of the team begin to exhibit strange and terrifying abilities, Milo must brave the encroaching darkness to unearth the truth behind DeWar's fascination with the deep--and why he never left.

## The Maw: A Novel Details

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Author : Taylor Zajonc

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# **From Reader Review The Maw: A Novel for online ebook**

## **Heather Fineisen says**

The premise and the set up of a group of cavers in search of a lost expedition was interesting but the plot became too convoluted with a psychedelic turn that didn't really work with the rest of the story.

Copy provided by the Publisher and NetGalley

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## **Edwin Howard says**

A historian with a particular speciality, Milo Luttrell is recruited for a dangerous expedition into an underground cave system larger than any other in Africa in THE MAW by Taylor Zajonc. According to the information Milo has been provided, eight people (including Milo) are searching for an infamous lost explorer from the turn of the 20th century who Milo happens to be an expert on. As the cave exploration deepens and several clues are stumbled upon, it becomes clear that this mission is wrought with problems and false pretenses. The real question becomes, what are they really looking for and will they survive to tell the tale?

Part of me is yearning to go cave exploring while the other part of me wants to never go near a cave and tell everyone I love to avoid them. That's what make a good story, it excites and scares at the same time. Zajonc has crafted a story with eight very interesting and well thought out characters and placed them in a perilous, beautiful and certainly unique setting of a giant underground cave system. I was reminded of Preston & Child books while I was reading THE MAW, where ancient discoveries and true intentions are slowly doled out and the truths that are revealed are layered, surprising, and yet completely believable within the context of the book.

I really had a fun time reading THE MAW and I'll just leave this one last thought: the ending is monumental and profound and I didn't see it coming at all.

Thank you to Skyhorse Publishing, Taylor Zajonc, and Netgalley for a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review!

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## **Lori L (She Treads Softly) says**

The Maw by Taylor Zajonc is a highly recommended action/adventure story set in a supercave in Tanzania.

Milo Luttrell is a historian who is mysteriously invited to Tanzania under the pretense of a project that may help him keep his job. When he arrives he discovers he has been invited by Dale Brunsfield, a billionaire explorer, to join an expedition that will be exploring a new supercave. Milo has been invited because of his research into the life of famed explorer Lord Riley DeWar. Dale believes that DeWar's last, lost expedition may have been to this cave and he needs Milo along for his expertise. Milo, who has no spelunking experience, is joining the team of seven that just happens to include his ex-girlfriend and a reality TV show star.

This is a thrilling adventure story that is full of intrigue and suspense. There are enough complications and

emergencies in the narrative to leave you expecting a unanticipated catastrophe around every corner. The descriptive passages make you even more cognizant of the unknown discoveries awaiting along with the danger as the situation deteriorates for the expedition. Zajonc keeps the pace quick, moving the plot along, as the challenges mount. The Maw will hold your attention throughout.

Disclosure: My review copy was courtesy of Skyhorse Publishing.

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### **Marie says**

Oh, man. What a wild ride full of mystery, adventure and betrayal. Milo is a history professor at Georgetown University. He is told to go to Tanzania but hasn't a clue why. Georgetown University was given a large donation so he has no choice. Once he gets there, he learns that some research on a missing expedition that almost cost him his career is very important to someone leading a mission to find the first explorers. There's a super cave where they believe this expedition disappeared in 1901. The expedition that Milo is on has plenty of professionals, including an old love of his. So many things found, so much history seen. When you're going down 1500 feet and have never even been repelling like Milo, you wonder why you came. Everything starts out fine, then hell breaks loose a little at a time. Will anyone survive, will they find what they're looking for? This book is well written and told in great detail. I absolutely loved this book. I received this book from Net Galley for an honest review and no compensation.

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### **Susan says**

Nothing is scarier to me than the idea of being trapped in a cave. Spelunking and caving are activities that are not for me. Miles under ground squirming through tight passages, no thank you. The news recently is all about those poor boys in Thailand who went exploring and ended up trapped in a flooded cave system. I guess I have caves on my mind because when I heard about this book I immediately ordered it from my library. It was most definitely a fast, suspenseful read because I finished it in one day. I have to admit that I was kind of hoping there was some kind of monstrous creature in the cave (there is not) but it really didn't need anything supernatural to add to the terror of the cave itself. This is real life horror and it doesn't need any embellishments. Read it and be thankful for sun and fresh air.

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### **Sassyquatch says**

3.5

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### **Tim Grove says**

I enjoyed this book to the end... learned a lot about caving, learned I'd never want to do it! Descriptions really made the scenes come alive. Good suspense, with many twists along the way. I never expected the ending.

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### **Christina says**

I've said this before, you know it's a good book when you find yourself thinking about it long after you've stopped reading it. I stayed up way too late to read this, and woke up the next morning wondering what was going to happen next. Can't get higher praise than that! The descriptions of the expedition were so interesting, without going into tedious explanations of the gear needed or techniques for caving. I always love when an author is able to turn the setting into another character, and Zajonc didn't disappoint. The cave is a living, breathing entity that comes to dominate the characters lives and the story.

There was a great balance between suspense and horror here. Not a ton of character development, but Milo was fun to read about. Definitely would recommend this as an adventure novel to anyone! An interesting, fun read!

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### **Melissa says**

[Zajonc never quite reaches Lotz-esque heights of claustrophobia; the first or second time his vaguely stereotypical characters go through tight, "airless" passages and rappel down wet, cramped holes and swim through confined tunnels it's described to oppressive effect, but a lot of minutia of the harsh, muddy woes of caving die off as the story goes on and things get worse for our crew

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### **Wendy Wagner says**

There's nothing special about the prose or the character development, but the setting of this book is AMAZEBALLS. I 80% want this cave to be a real place, while 20% really hopes there's nothing remotely like it on the planet. Given the locale, you will be unsurprised to know I spent half the book cringing in claustrophobic suspense.

The ending is pure Indian Jones-level nonsense, but don't let that stop you!

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### **Dave says**

What lies in the depths of the earth? Jules Verne was fascinated by a journey to the Center of the Earth. Burroughs had Perry's prospector to dig five hundred miles through the surface to find the inner world of Pellucidar. The Maw takes us on an expedition deep into the earth, where the few intrepid explorers have to survive and struggle on their own. The story seems pretty routine till they get into the cave and then the adventures begin and the book really shines as interpersonal relationships are tested and physical endurance is tested. It somehow becomes a great survival story - with some fascinating mysteries too - that's really hard to put down. Well written, indeed.

Thanks to Skyhorse Publishing for a review copy.

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## Joseph says

The Maw by Taylor Zatonc is an adventure novel that takes place in modern-day Africa -- Tanzania to be exact. Milo Luttrell is a history professor who has a career downturn. He is likely to be out of a job because of his inability to publish outside of a personal blog. He risked his career on publishing a paper on Lord Riley DeWar that turned out to be incorrect. He has only a few friends left in academia and not much hope of a career. Milo's head of the department tells him of a project that may keep him on for another semester. The project is a mystery. Hesitantly, Milo accepts and finds himself with a Female black British lawyer as his chauffeur. He receives no new information until he signs the nondisclosure agreements. Dale Brunsfield, a billionaire, explorer, investor wants the historian for a mission into the only super cave in Africa. Milo's role, as a historian in the cave adventure, is to provide insight into the DeWar exposition's disappearance in 1901. Brunsfield believes DeWar's group was lost in the cave and Milo is there to document and provide historical insight to Dewar. Also included in the team, along with the chauffeur, is a television documentary team, and a medical doctor, who just happens to be Milo's former girlfriend.

As entertainment this The Maw delivers. The story moves at a good pace and manages to add to the realism of a cave adventure. Milo adds history and the medical doctor adds not only medical aid but also information on disease that may still be lingering in the cave. Needless, to say there are more complications and twists than originally expected. The writing is well done and the story keeps the reader's attention throughout. Well-done and entertaining.

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## Julie Parks says

Kind of intriguing at first. Descriptive and live writing style, not as lyrical as I would have hoped but maybe adventure books shouldn't even be poetic or lyrical in the first place.

I wasn't too keen on all the historic details and psychedelic aspects. Good adventure, though. I've read better, but I've also seen a lot worse.

A great read for crazy adventure lovers who don't get too claustrophobic - there are a lot of "tight spaces" in this story. (cover design is there for a reason)

Copy provided by NetGalley in exchange for my honest review.

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## Joyce says

4 stars

I read the Kindle edition.

Milo Luttrell is an adjunct professor of history at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. His university is given a huge donation with the proviso that Milo go to a so far unknown location on an expedition. Milo's

boss tells him that he has no choice for he hasn't published anything for quite a while. In the "publish or perish" world of university politics, this is a serious lapse.

When he finally arrives at the site, Milo learns that Dale Brunsfield is in charge of the site. He is both a rich guy and an enthusiastic hunter of fortunes. He is on the trail of the lost DeWar expedition of 1901. DeWar's expedition is the reason Milo has fallen from grace with his colleagues. He put forth a theory that was later disproven and Milo's reputation suffered greatly from this. The location of the hunt is in Tanzania where the largest prehistoric cave in Africa is located.

Apparently all that is really known about the lost expedition is that Lord Riley DeWar and twenty-two others disappeared after leaving Dar-es-Salaam, never leaving another trace of their existence. Brunsfield hopes to find the remains of the expedition in the cave.

Odd things are already happening at the camp. Milo finds that his backpack has been gone through and some things, such as his cell phone, are missing. As the group, including a reality television film crew enters the cave, Milo and the others are awestruck. There are cave paintings, animal bones and other wonders to behold.

When Dr. Bridget suspects that the Marburg virus is present in the cave, the group runs headlong back to near the entrance. An argument takes place about the truth of whether Marburg is present or not. They enter in another place and witness more spectacular sights. Milo finds an item that was from an earlier expedition. He also sees on the wall a carving from Lord Riley. He was really there!

During another cave crawl, disaster strikes. Rushing to safety is the only thing on the team's mind now. One tragedy after another befalls the group. They continue to explore the cave until they can go no further. The things they see and feel are horrific and wondrous. Milo and Bridget locate Sir Riley DeWar. And they discover what happened to him.

This is an adventure story. It is dramatic and action-packed. The writing is fairly good, but the plotting tends to skip here and there. I would call this speculative fiction. A "what if" story. It is good reading, if you like this sort of novel. I like going on these flights of fancy once in a while and I like action. So, all in all, it was a pretty good read. I went to Amazon to look for others of Taylor Zajonc's novels as I do believe I will try another of his books. I enjoyed this one.

I want to thank NetGalley and Skyhorse Publishing for forwarding to me a copy of this good book to read and enjoy.

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## **Zulfiya says**

I used to like reading adventure novels when I was a teen and a tween, and not so much as an adult. Some spark was lost for me, the novelty disappeared, the appeal was not there - a "you-name-it" reason.

I saw this book on the new fiction shelf in my library, and I ended up checking it out and reading it. The main pull was the title ( it promised intense narrative) and the cover. Well, many of us are suckers for good cover. Shame on us, I guess.

The book did not disappoint in the sense that it is a typical adventure book. I also think that the title and the book cover give book too much credit. It promises so much, and it delivers only half. The claustrophobic feeling is somewhat there in the book, but I did not feel walls moving on me.

The characters were so -so. I can not say that they were too formulaic, but there was never true depth in them. The novel moved with good pace, but it was never a roller-coaster.

Plus, there was a little bit of too many "ANDS". Let me explain what I mean - the expedition is in Africa and it is in one of the deepest caves and there was mystery associated with the lost expedition and it turned out that it is not the only expedition that was lost and there were dead bodies of animals and their excreta and it might be the natural reservoir for Marburg virus and the silly explanation of what Marburg virus is ( it could have been simplified saying that the Ebola virus and the Marburg virus are related, but oh, no, then the excitement is lost) and then the enhanced memory and the psychedelic experiences and the new language to cope with the pace of comprehension and the death of expedition members and starvation and misery and infection and etc etc etc.

I understand that it is an adventure novel, but one can only suspend the disbelief only for a certain amount of time or for a certain scope of improbabilities.

The writing was not too low brow, but a couple of times the author annoyingly told me that was going on instead of showing it.

Of course, I am uber sensitive to religious allusions because I am so anti religious. I do not know how religious metaphors were appropriate when the author often mentions how long ago certain evolutionary things happened and then alludes to the Bible and wishes characters godspeed. This one was quite annoying. Can authors do it subtly if they are also trying to reach the audience of spiritual readers? Overall, it was better than I expected and did not annoy me too much. I am sure it is not exactly a fair criterion, but I think this is what I honestly feel.

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