



Spin the Plate

Donna Anastasi

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January 2013 - fully updated, expanded, and revised. Now a FREE amazon Kindle. E-book is also available free from iTunes, Barnes & Noble, and Smashwords.

Jo is a survivor of a bleak and abusive childhood. She channels her pain and rage into weight training and roams the city streets at night as a powerful vigilante. While she is more than capable of defending herself against physical danger, she is defenseless against the memories of the past that torment her.

Francis is a mysterious man she meets on the subway train. He doesn't have a regular job and is still living at home. But he is gentle, likeable, friendly, intelligent, sensitive, respectful, generous, patient, and understanding. Just what a brave, but damaged soul like Jo needs.

In this story, the average-guy hero battles to win the battered heart of the wary, edgy, less-than-perfect heroine.

“Spin the Plate is a fast-paced, edgy, darkly comic tale of resilience, romance, and redemption that breaks over you in waves. All you can do is gasp, stay afloat, and enjoy the ride.”

-- Holly Robinson, author of *The Wishing Hill* and *Sleeping Tigers*

Spin the Plate Details

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From Reader Review Spin the Plate for online ebook

Ambrosia Sullivan says

Spin the plate is not a book that is for the faint of heart. The content is of course emotional and gripping with the past the Jo has. However for every bit of darker emotional edge you also see a spirit that is a fighter one that despite everything she has been through wants to battle back and find sense of normalcy again. In Jo you find a character that you can really admire. She has been through so much and yet she is a fighter both in the thought of the word and literally with her vigilante justice she serves out.

The book is well written and a really good read. I like a book that gets me emotionally involved and this one does it. While I connected more with Jo I think Francis is also a good character and very relate able for readers which always makes for a great read. I would recommend this one for anyone who likes a story that not only has a romantic angle, because it does have that. Francis is a great guy trying to win the heart of his battered lady. But a story about fighter who take abuse that she has suffered and comes back in a very kick ass way. The writing is solid and the plot takes a nice progressive curve with the pacing. So as long as your not scared of a little bit of the dark side with some dark comedy wrapped around it, give Spin the plate a try, I promise you will not regret it.

Laura says

Wow, I absolutely loved this book; it is a very quick read and an awesome love story. Fans of romance should love this one. I was fortunate enough to win a copy thru Library Thing. This book reads more like a character study with the main character, Jo trying to overcome serious relationship issues that started when she was molested by her father. Luckily she meets a man named Francis who changes her for the better. This was a great first novel!

Lyndz says

Spin the Plate is a good little weekend read.

I was worried that I would be put off by the “Christian themes” that this book was going to present. I do greatly appreciate being forewarned that it included a religious aspect so that I did not feel blindsided. I thought that the Christian facet of this book was not overdone and could be appreciated and even enjoyed by someone from any or no religious denomination.

Despite Anastasi being a first time novelist, I thought this was a very well told story. Spin the Plate is an empowering tale of Jo, a overweight tattoo artist who after suffering numerous sexual abuses as a child has given up on the human race. Jo tries to drown her demons in her art and animal rescue to prevent them from overtaking her daily life. Until one day she is spotted on the subway by Francis who is immediately drawn to her regardless of her tough facade. This is the story of how Jo and Francis together form an albeit unconventional yet lasting bond, and work together to conquer her past and make the world a better place.

I thought the character of Jo was intriguing and even on some levels relatable. At first impression she was mean and hard, but her love for animals really showed that she had a soft side. Studying sumo and braving

the streets late at night in search of animals that needed her help, Jo truly was a warrior.

For some reason I did not really like or relate to the character of Francis. I couldn't ever quite put my finger on exactly why not. Part of it might have been that I find it hard to believe that a strong woman like Jo would be interested in a weaker personality like Francis. But, I guess the fact that opposites attract in this book has come into play. I did like how parts of Francis' personality complimented nicely the shortcomings in Jo's. But regardless it was still hard for me to picture them together.

I am going to paraphrase a line from the book because I don't have it sitting next to me to quote it word for word. But I found this amusing: 'If I was God, with all that power at my fingertips, there would be a lot more smiting.' That made me laugh out loud.

Anyway, all in all I thought this was a good read. I would recommend it to anyone who is looking for strength to deal with past abuse.

Thank you Donna Anastasi, and Goodreads for the free copy of this book. I received the book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

Eva Leger says

I don't know how to start this review. I'm left almost speechless. I had no idea what I was going to get when I cracked this open. I'd read the description, found it interesting, and did want to read the book, but honestly, it didn't jump up into the front for me right then. There have to be - at least - a hundred or more books where I've loved the description and I still haven't gotten to read them.

This jumped up to the front when I talked to Anastasi. My nervousness did too. My reviews are always honest. I can't fudge one "just a little" because I want to be able to come back years down the road to see what I thought about a book. (My memory is severely lacking.) At the same time, I hate telling an author I hated their book. So, the nervousness.

Anyway, I opened the book and was immediately engaged. Jo is me. I wasn't abused. I'm not a fighter although I suppose some would call me confrontational at times. I wouldn't have been as open to Francis as Jo was. I can count more differences but still, Jo is me. Right now, at this point in my life. If I had known the author before she wrote this book I would have swore she pulled Jo from me and added a few differences in for effect. I've never read a book like that.

Another reviewer mentions this and I agree - I don't recall ever reading a book with such unique characters. Ever.

This is Anastasi's first novel, besides writing a couple animal care guides, this is her first fiction. (That was something else that played into my nervousness. I didn't want to hate it so much I had to stop.) Oh, I was nervous for nothing.

There is a religion aspect to the book, a strong one that I want to touch on. Not sure if anyone else has because I didn't read the reviews all the way through. I shy away (that's putting it lightly) from "religious" books. And that's ALL books to even mention religion. I know what I believe, I'm comfortable in what I believe, and I don't like hearing about any religion (even my own) and I definitely don't like being preached to. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is another area where I was impressed.

The religion is a "side" story to Jo and Francis' and at the same time it's a strong one. There are even a few passages included. Passages that I read! Someway, somehow, *Donna Anastasi* managed to write this book and included those passages without making me feel preached to. Here is something I CAN remember - the only other book I got through, that could be said to have a religious tone to it, was a self-help book about

parenting, received through FirstReads. Two. Two books in alllllll of the books I've ever read. No small feat, believe me.

I'd ask anyone who finds out about the religion, that happens to be like me in that area, to not forget about the book because of it. Give it a chance.

Not everyone will love this book. There is no book everyone will love. There will be negative reviews, some detailing actual little "wrong" things. Give it a chance. If you have even a slight chance of feeling like I felt reading this, it's worth it.

I love the cover! Freaking awesome cover!

Also, I'm, such a crappy Googler. I wanted to see if Black Rose Writing is self-publish and I just can never make myself bring up Google. I have an idea that it is. If it IS I want to say that this is, by far, the most professional self-published book I've ever seen in my entire life. That's not to say there aren't a few editing mistakes. There are, but few. And the cover, the text, all very professional.

If it IS NOT self-published then they need to work on the editing but it's still better than the average self-pub or urban fiction out there.

Donna Anastasi, I can't message you, there is no tab on your page, you must have the feature turned off. I would suggest turning it on - I think you're going to have readers wanting to contact you if at all possible. I want to say that I sincerely hope you're still writing. Animal care guides (I'm the biggest animal lover in the world!) are important, but this is you. This is your thing. A sequel could come from this. I hate sequels. And series. And prequels. And usually companions too. Unless it works. It works here.

Thank you Donna, for a fantastic book.

John Hodge says

I finished Spin the Plate several days ago and as I was driving the Mass Pike today, I found myself scanning the side of the highway looking for Jo and her dogs....suffice it to say the novel stuck with me.

Definitely edgier than I originally expected and I enjoyed following the twists of plot along the way. Early on, I thought that perhaps Francis was a "heavenly" character here on Earth looking for the next Messiah.

Another thought I had as I finished this book is that the state of Massachusetts and city of Boston are, in fact, characters in the book. Much as Francis is the power behind Charles Davis, the sights and sounds of Boston and Mass drive the story and impact and influence the plot.

Sheila says

Jo's not like everyone else. She's big and wears baggy clothes, so strangers think she's lazy and fat. Then she stands up to them, sumo-wrestler strong and perfectly balanced, and strangers flee. It makes her feel good. It's what she wishes she'd done to her abuser when she was a child.

Francis is not like everyone else either. "Jesus love you, you know," are his first words to Jo, which probably confuse the both of them. But Francis' secrets are different, and he hides them very well.

An odd mix of shy determination, wounded sincerity, and genuine love brings these two characters together, and the reader learns slowly who both of them are, through separate chapters on their separate lives. The tattoos Jo designs for her customers beautifully symbolize their lives, but her own life is a black hole spinning off to infinity—nicely illustrated in the novel's cover image. Still, from another point of view, that spinning hole might be something beautiful.

Slowly Jo's viewpoint changes as she stands up to her past, recognizes her present, and moves toward the future. A heartwarming love story of woman denied the touch of human affection, a man of mystery and mission, and a faith that might spin plates even if it doesn't seem to move mountains, *Spin the Plate* is genuinely different and unconventionally pleasing.

Dark situations may turn some readers off and an ill-guided reference to chess might annoy chess-players. But the writing's smooth, the different points of view make sense and build the characters perfectly, and the Christian themes are well-blended into thoughtful conversation rather than altar calls.

Disclosure: I was given a free copy and asked for an honest review.

Michelle says

This was an interesting story. When I agreed to review it, I was told it was edgy. Not kidding there. My eyebrows raised about twenty times, and for me that's a lot of brow twitching. I wasn't expecting strong swear words, or detailed scenes of child abuse, though they did make the story more emotionally powerful. I did enjoy the story overall, though there was some head hopping and a few tangents that took away from the overall quality of the novel. If the point of view had been more solid and the swearing toned down, it would have been a stronger book. However, the story was still good and I could see the author's heart for the hurting people in this world--especially young, abused women--so I commend her for that. It's not an easy beach read, but it does have a powerful message. Hearts don't get much harder than Jo's, but sometimes God will send along the very person who can soften that heart and heal it from the overwhelming pain caused from being victimized by someone who was supposed to love you and protect you. That's what Francis did for Jo. He set aside his own wants and needs to minister to her. It was a beautiful love story in that regard. The ending was touching, too. I enjoyed it.

Jenny says

I really enjoyed Donna Anastasi's book! The book was very thought provoking and really made me self analyze how I approached things. Anastasi took an extreme character and turned that character's life completely around in 194 pages. She wrote the inner conflicts that Jo (the main female character) goes through in a way that was very believable and you ache for Jo. Francis (the main male character) was an odd character in different ways from Jo but they both helped save each other from a lonely, sad life. I liked the message that even the most unlikely, odd person can be loved and life does not have to be lived in the past. You can move forward from the scars of the past..and you deserve to move on with your life. I was impressed that Anastasi was able to write Francis' beliefs without making the book a "Bible Beater" book. It was a realistic way to express someone's beliefs without forcing them to believe they same way. I also enjoyed that Anastasi included current TV shows, people, events, etc. I know that it may date the book but it

was enjoyable to be able to relate the story to today's time.

Overall, I was incredibly surprised by this book. It was so much deeper than I expected and it really made me look at life. I found myself relating to both characters, Jo and Francis. I also loved the idea of the Spin the Plate story in this book. I have used that philosophy since reading this book. This will be a book I never forget because I will continue to remember the Spin the Plate story in this book!

Libby Hanna says

I can't think of another book that features characters as unique as Jo and Francis. Yet author Donna Anastasi places them so convincingly in the world we know that it makes you take a fresh look at the people you pass on the street and wonder about what back story they may be hiding. Every character in this book, including the minor ones, has a distinct personality and practically jumps off the page into your world.

It's also a story of an amazing personal transformation for a woman who seemed to have built the walls around herself so high that no one could ever bring them down, neither with violence nor with kindness. Yet deep inside Jo's hard exterior there is a caring soul, and it is this soul that eventually, inevitably, is touched by the one power that can overcome any obstacle: love. First the love of a man, Francis, and finally, God's love, breaches Jo's defenses and heals her. It is a beautiful story of love turning a person away from what seemed like a bad path.

It is both lucky and tragic that this book is only 200 pages long. Lucky, because once you begin, you will not be able to put it down; and tragic, because you will miss these characters when the book is done. I hope there will be a sequel!

S.L. Vail says

A thought-provoking modern allegory

Given its description, I expected **Spin the Plate** by Donna Anastasi to be a challenging book to read and it was, but not entirely for the reasons I anticipated. Simply put, it took me a while to put this story in context but once I did, I recognized the artistic foundations that underpin the narrative.

The main character, Jo, is a young woman who as a child was sexually and verbally abused by her father and essentially abandoned by her mother, a battered wife turned alcoholic. As an adult, Jo purposely fashions herself into an intimidating and powerful presence. She bulks up to almost 300 pounds, works out obsessively, and engages the world in full-bristle. An aggressive, abrasive and vengeful creature, she provokes conflict with any who dare interact with her.

But Anastasi is careful to give Jo a soft side as well: she is presented as a talented tattoo artist and animal lover, an overall-wearing paladin who prowls the streets rescuing other victims and exacting revenge on their behalf.

So far, I'm with you. Jo is not the kind of person I'd want to meet at a party (or in a dark alley), but I can certainly understand how her experiences have shaped the person she's become. I catch a scent of something

beyond the norm here, but it's just a trace in the cool night air.

Enter love interest Francis, a young man orphaned as a child who plays the role of emaciated, poverty-stricken boy scholar but is in reality a mysterious, wise-beyond-his-years billionaire. The glue that binds these two damaged souls together is religion.

This is where I began to flounder.

The too-good-to-be-true boyfriend and several subsequent plot points were too implausible for me to accept in a straight-ahead novel, and I really struggled with the story until I accepted its advice to "spin the plate" and in so doing, saw this work as an allegory. Doing that made all the cogs mesh. Francis, the chaste messianic billionaire, is unbelievable until you recognize him as a Christ figure. Jo is presented as someone who trusts no one other than herself, someone whose entire modus operandi is maintaining absolute control over her body, her environment, and her destiny. It's impossible to reconcile her unconditional acceptance of Francis until you view it as a metaphor for faith, and then it's easy to translate her relationship with him in terms of Christianity: the innocent Jo, a sinner through no fault of her own, finds salvation through the love of Christ. The instant-karma justice visited upon the wicked parents reads like Old Testament justice meted out by a wrathful God, and numerous other characters/plot points fall into place when viewed as archetypes.

In an age of self-help psychology and formulaic fiction, this book is an ambitious undertaking. I look forward to Anastasi's future efforts and heartily encourage others to join me in following her development as an artist.

Brenda says

Spin The Plate is Donna Anastasi's first attempt at writing fiction and I must say she hit a home run with this book!

The protagonist Juliana Orsiano, who goes by the name of Jo, puts up a very tough front, she dresses in baggy bib overalls and wears hiking books to her job as a tattoo artist. Every time she leaves the house she puts on her "fuck off" attitude to keep people from approaching her, men in particular. The reason she has this tough girl exterior is simple, she was hurt badly as a child, her father started molesting her at the age of 4 and didn't stop until she turned 14, when she was sent to juvie hall for some infraction that happened at school. Being tough, and keeping herself physically and emotionally exhausted, keeps her from remembering those episodes, because she remembers each, even has them numbered.

On the inside Jo has a caring heart, but she only lets her animals see it, sure she is good at her job as a tattoo artist, but she still holds herself aloof, not wanting to form any real relationships, but when she goes home she becomes the kind hearted person who lives with an assortment of animals that she has rescued, and often at night she takes her two massive dogs Rufus and Ben and walks the streets looking for abandoned animals she can rescue and re home. When she takes her dogs out at night she uses their street names Titan and Cain thinking this will further intimidate strangers.

When she meets Francis on morning on the subway she does her best to "scare him off" but he becomes intrigued with her, he had been unhappy in his work and had been having reoccurring dreams of a warrior woman who rescues him and he believes Jo is this woman. Can he convince her of that, and break down the protective wall that she has built up around her heart?

This book for me was something I couldn't put down, Jo is a very strong character, it was amazing to see her grow and develop thru the course of this story, the author does an amazing job of making Jo's character seem so real that her pain and loneliness jump off the page at you. Francis was a quirky character but honestly for all his little idiosyncrasies he truly turned out to be a knight in shining armour. The way that he approached Jo was perfect.

A profoundly touching story, that you wont be able to put down. On a scale from one to five I would give this book a six it is just that good!

Kathryn says

Spin the Plate is about Jo, an incest survivor, and Francis, the weird Christian stalker who decides to take Jo under his wing. Though positive, the ending felt off and incomplete. I've come to realize this is how I feel about the entire book overall.

This book is one of those borderline books, unlikely to fully please readers either solidly in generalized left or right wing camps, something which I am afraid will not help the author. Hardcore Christians will more than likely experience an array of problems with the book. Non Christians will at best be indifferent towards the preaching, at worst totally thrown off, especially since the religious dialogue was typical.

And now for a whole different animal, there will be people who either have firsthand knowledge of abuse or have provided support for someone who does. I am now approaching seriously touchy ground and the last thing I want to do is offend anyone but this book did not accurately portray most aspects of abuse in my opinion. I'm tempted to capitalize that last bit but I promised myself no yelling in this review.

While hugely sympathetic towards Jo, I was constantly puzzled by her actions. I understand that it is possible for families such as Jo's to hide abuse, to act as though it never happened, to expect the abused to partake in family functions with big plastic smiles plastered on their faces. This has never made sense to me and never will and I wish the author had addressed this more than a comment or two from Francis after the fact. Jo's instant acceptance of Francis and willingness to share her most private and concealed secrets I could only believe if the story were about two mentally healthy people who experience what they think might be love at first sight, something which I happen to believe in, but in this story, I found it impossible to believe that Jo would act as she did considering her history and mental and emotional state. I do not remember counseling being mentioned. I also feel the author provided an overly simplistic and erroneous account of what someone going through the court system in an abuse case will encounter. Many steps were missing and I can not imagine any client/attorney meeting taking place as it did here.

I want to mention that this book is daring for mainstream Christian fiction. The author attempted open-mindedness and I appreciate what I consider a sincere effort but much can be read between the lines. I remember a comment about a "heavily pierced" girl. The connotation of the description was not positive considering the character's purpose in the story. Why point it out? There were other off putting comments but I'm reigning in the rant before it starts.

I liked both of the characters more towards the beginning. Francis started out as a wonderfully icky stalker but once that creepy vibe disappeared, his character was ho-hum interesting, which is still interesting at least. I find it funny that the character of Jo would be likely to throw off most hardcore Christians near the

beginning. I did not care much for Jo at times but I can appreciate that she was a truly unique female character.

Some of my other issues include how Jo was suddenly so accepting and wanting to be a Christian though she did not seem to have an understanding of the concept, had not gone to church, not prayed once. Basically, for her to experience what she did, I found it difficult to swallow. Just my opinion. I did not like how everything suddenly kept happening with no explanation and time progression being awkward.

1 1/2 stars. The half star is for effort, since, in all honesty, I did not like this book, but I appreciate and respect the author's ideas and messages involving a subject that is difficult for anyone to approach. I greatly appreciate being given a copy of this book thanks to Goodreads first-reads and will try to pass the book along to someone who will enjoy it more than me.

Kathleen says

I have read four books so far this week, and this is by far the best! I was so happy to find that Jo was able to find a place for her hurt, anger, and hate. That she was able to find love in her heart was a miracle in and of itself. I have to say the Bible passage for the wedding scene was the same one used at my wedding. Great job, Donna!

Kayla says

This book is unlike anything else I have ever read before! From start to finish, the reader is shown Jo, a woman who strives to be strong in every way possible. By building up her body and her defenses against other people, particularly men, she seems to succeed most strongly in ostracizing other people. Yet I love how we can see the softer side in her, too, the part of her that allows her to feel for others and that would expand if only someone came into her life to show her a way to cope with what happened to her when she was a child.

Spin the Plate has an amazing cast of characters. Francis, the man that Jo meets on the train, isn't a perfect person, either, which is definitely made evident during their first meeting. Donna Anastasi takes her novel to an entirely new level by showing that Jo isn't the only one who needs to heal and help herself. She isn't portrayed as some helpless woman now, either. The background integrated into the narrative shows the important points of Jo's life that led to her becoming the woman that we see in that first scene, on the train.

I think that Spin the Plate holds an important message for anyone. Even if you cannot relate to Jo's personal experiences, you can still feel her emotions and the writing is so cleverly styled that you feel as though you really are getting to know her as a real person. I love this book and I know that people who pick it up will find great messages about strength, courage, and love.

Cindy Meilink says

This was a free book I recently received from the author. Although the synopsis had sounded interesting, I wasn't really certain what to expect from this author's first novel.

I must say I was pleasantly surprised.

Most first novels can be pretty elementary--the author may jump around; the characters may not be developed; and the sentence structure can read like a fifth grade primer. That was not the case in this book.

I immediately felt drawn to the central character, Jo. Although an incest survivor, Jo is a strong woman, and her career as a tattoo artist played out well in the book.

Her connection and growing relationship with Francis was well-paced, and I liked Francis' character as a privacy-seeking philanthropist.

One thing...I would have liked to see the part of the story where her father gets his due expanded upon a bit. This was the part of the story where she finally gets to fight back, and I felt it was covered too quickly.

In summary, though, I really enjoyed this book and finished it in an afternoon. It's a good book and a very quick read.

Suggestion to the author: I would probably change the cover of the book. The font doesn't work too well and the cover is too dark to grab attention. Make the image of the girl a bit bolder.
