



## Dear Mr. You

*Mary-Louise Parker*

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## Dear Mr. You Mary-Louise Parker

A wonderfully unconventional literary debut from the award-winning actress Mary-Louise Parker.

An extraordinary literary work, *Dear Mr. You* renders the singular arc of a woman's life through letters Mary-Louise Parker composes to the men, real and hypothetical, who have informed the person she is today. Beginning with the grandfather she never knew, the letters range from a missive to the beloved priest from her childhood to remembrances of former lovers to an homage to a firefighter she encountered to a heartfelt communication with the uncle of the infant daughter she adopted. Readers will be amazed by the depth and style of these letters, which reveal the complexity and power to be found in relationships both loving and fraught.

## Dear Mr. You Details

Date : Published November 10th 2015 by Scribner  
ISBN : 9781501107832  
Author : Mary-Louise Parker  
Format : Hardcover 228 pages  
Genre : Autobiography, Memoir, Nonfiction, Writing, Essays

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## From Reader Review Dear Mr. You for online ebook

### Karen says

I watched Mary Louise Parker on all the seasons of Weeds, and really liked her. These letters brought on smiles, laughter, tears to me. This girl can write! I wish I knew a few of these men as there were some extraordinary ones. My favorites were Father Bob, Lifeline, and Uncle...

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### Bianca says

This was one tremendous book!

An unexpected delight.

Raw, passionate, intimate, quirky - oh so quirky!, interesting, surprising, realistic and yet dream-like, Dear Mr You has got to be one of the most spellbinding books I've read.

While it feels deeply personal to Mary-Louise Parker, it's not a memoir/biography per se, as I see it classified by some. So just for the sake of labelling, I'll call it literary pseudo-memoir. Because, sure, it's got some biographical details, more like memories, interpretations of things past, but all those are conveyed through beautiful, lyrical prose.

I can't remember the last time (if ever) I read a book that was written in the second person. So that alone was original.

The letters are quite diverse, both in length and addressees. Some of the letters felt very personal and were so touching, I even shed a few tears.

If you are after a book that will tell when, what and who with, then this is not the right book for you. If you want to know personal details about Mary Louise's relationships, both personal and professional, this is definitely not the book for you, as no names are given and her profession is barely mentioned.

If you don't care about all the above, but would like to read something touching, original and beautifully written, then I highly recommend this incredible book.

For me, this is one of the best books of the year. I hope Mary-Louise Parker will keep writing and that she'll get published because she's got a gift.

Thanks to Esil for her wonderful review and recommendation.

*I've received this book via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review. Many, many thanks to Scribner for the opportunity to read and review Dear Mr. You.*

**Cover:** 4.5 stars

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## Debbie says

### Favorite Book of 2015

OMG OMG OMG OMG! This book was perfection: the writing, the realness, the originality. The way the author chose to tell her story in letters, the males she chose to write letters to. Her emotion, her vulnerability, her poetry. All of it—perfect.

When I read a book this good, I want to hop—hop across the continents on a pogo stick. I just feel so jazzed. The docs would probably call it mania, but I am a maniac when it comes to this book. I don't feel like I'm done listing the things I loved, so I will continue. The book is poetic, quirky, self-effacing, heartfelt, deep, reflective, funny, sad, humble, wise, cynical, hopeful—she paints her story with the whole palette of emotions, and her self-awareness earns her tons of extra points.

There are letters about big events, like a breakup, a birth, a death. And letters to people who typically go unnoticed, the kind of people (like a 9/11 ashy firefighter she saw) who make impressions but remain buried in memory. She plucks these people from oblivion and brings them to the light. There are even some letters to men who don't exist. A couple of letters I especially loved (along with their fun titles): “Dear Future Man Who Loves My Daughter” and “Dear Emergency Contact.”

Another standout is “Dear Orderly,” a letter to a hospital worker who is in her room after she gives birth. I loved this:

**“I'd pushed a person out. Out of an orifice that I challenge having been designated as the exit ramp for humankind.”**

In “Dear Mr. Cabdriver,” where her pain and rage is palpable, she manages to find funny many eons later:

**“I caused your turban to pop loose from its foundation and that was extreme.”**

There's some real serious stuff (letters to her grandfather and father) and some totally funny stuff (a letter to one of her goats). The last and longest, and perhaps all-time best letter is to an oyster picker, and that's all I'll say. The story is so poignant and brilliant, I need to go reread it right now. I also need to find some oysters.

Like a lot of people, I was wary about reading yet another book by an actor. Yes, a great actor, but still. Going into this, I had assumed that writing was Parker's “other” (second) artistic talent. The second talent usually plays second fiddle to the first. How good could the book be? Can we really expect an actor to be an excellent writer too? Can her drug of choice be both acting and writing? I now say: Absolutely! There is nothing tentative or sophomoric or pedestrian about her writing. Even though I really love her acting, I have to say I love her writing even more. She's a natural-born storyteller with some wickedly good poetry in her veins.

A book of letters to men raises some eyebrows. I heard one person say she wasn't about to read a book that idolizes men. I heard another say she didn't want to read a book that bashes men. I think it's a riot that the title can be interpreted as either too pro-male or too anti-male. Both people can relax, because neither is true. The letters are about people (and in one case, a goat) who happen to be male.

I said this was book was perfect, but I lied. There is a small problem with voice now and then—hardly worth mentioning, it's so infrequent. She writes the book in second person, of course (the “you” is the letter

recipient), but every now and then she talks to the reader (calling us readers “you”) instead of talking to the letter getter. I can see how it happens, though—in the middle of a letter, she wants to stop and tell us something, which makes the letter even more cozy and personal. But the two kinds of “you” confused me a bit.

This woman has heart. This woman has smarts. This woman has poetry. Being an actor was a strike against her, but my prejudice was so unfounded. And amazingly, she never mentions her day job—that’s just so cool. Not one name is dropped, not one self-congratulatory or conceited line is uttered. Here, she wants to be appreciated for being a serious and accomplished writer, and she succeeds royally. Plus she is so damn endearing—we see that she’s humble and we see that she’s struggling, despite her successful career as an actor.

And now that she has bared her soul, watching her act will be ten times more intense and rich. A part of me wants her to quit acting so she has more time to write, and another part of me is just thrilled that I get to see this brilliant writer perform on screen.

I want Parker to write a zillion more letters for us. God would it be cool if there were a “Dear Ms. You” in the works. Or maybe she could write letters to kids or furry animals. I’ll read anything she writes. More, more, more, Mary Louise! I loved every minute of this incredibly clever memoir. Her poetic writing just slays me. I’m grabbing my pogo stick and heading out.

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## Elyse Walters says

I read Esil's review of "Dear Mr. You", yesterday, and knew I 'had' to read this this book!! Thank you soooo much Esil for your outstanding review - and to Scriber Publishing for the opportunity to read it myself. ( the book arrive today -and I read it today). It was an indoor luxurious-wonderful-heartfelt rainy day reading experience ( Yes, it rains in California).

I enjoyed all the letters - and Mary Louise Parker can write like nobody's business. I can't imagine the courage it took for her to not only write the letters she did, but hand them over to a publisher...then see her manuscript come to life in a hard copy... (Gorgeous Book Cover, by the way), and know that soon people all over the world were going to read about \*her\*... ( events, experiences, thoughts, feelings). I'd be so nervous! Yet.. she has no reason to be!!! It's wonderful!

I loved the sense of freedom that Mary Louise Parker seems to allow herself in her writing. I like it a lot!! There were times when she was in the middle of sharing a story - but then another thought entered her mind and she went with it! I personally found it refreshing and inspiring. For example... Louise was writing a letter to her friend... but suddenly found herself thinking about the origin of language. ( I was fascinated and read this section twice). She talked about scientists haven't been able to prove the secret of communication ...and that she hopes they never do ... at the same time she shared it was a subject she could pull apart all day long and not get bored. ( I was interested ..ready to join her).

I don't think I can begin to share how great each story was ---every one of them touched me in different ways.

I was very moved by her friendship with Abraham. -- with her father, a firefighter, a letter to NASA, and the story about the cabdriver is hilarious. ( maybe it wasn't at the time, but I still want

to keep laughing over a 'useful' map of the United States)!

Others: a neighbor, a former boyfriend, Risk Taker, an orderly in the hospital, uncle, Poetry Man, Cerberus ( the 3 guys she dated, and grew from crappy times), etc.

Parker is Keenly aware! .....extraordinary unique memoir ....( hard to even call it a memoir)..

I would love to read this again. Possibly get the audiobook if Parker is the narrator.

I like this book --THAT MUCH-- that I'd like to own a physical copy. These stories would be great to share with a friend.

It would make a great gift book to the right friend -- that offbeat friend who appreciates a colorful textured human being..

Mary Louise Parker shares parts of her life with us with great appreciation for her own life and compassion for others.

Thank You (very much), to Scriber Publishing (last minute and all), Netgalley, and Mary Louise Parker. ( a fan of your acting & writing)!

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## **Kelli says**

Dear Ms. Author,

If I had to describe your book in a single word, what comes to mind is smart. A fresh approach to what though? I can't say I would categorize this as a memoir. It is a story of sorts but it isn't linear and it isn't fiction and at times it isn't even accessible, but the writing is moving and personal and surprisingly good. Reading it from start to finish didn't work so well for me. What started out as unique and interesting devolved into something that became difficult to stay engaged with...my mind started to wander, I started to skim a bit.

I thought about this for a while after finishing your book. My waning attention and excitement disappointed me. Your writing is so visceral and beautiful, so palpable and real. I revisited the stories...one here, two there. Not in order, though I am certain your ordered these meaningfully. I enjoyed them more that way.

Here is what I have decided. I wish we could be friends. I am highly sensitive, overly empathic, I study faces, I remember *every little detail* and I, too, carry so much with me. Most of me is invisible to others except for a handful, who are my oxygen. I should write them letters like these. I think I will. I'm probably not all that unique but I see my friends' eyes glaze over when I light on with seemingly insignificant details in my seemingly ordinary stories day after day. The thing is this: nothing is insignificant, but I don't have to tell you that, do I?

It's a tall order in day to day life to expect those who love us deeply to follow along, so to write a collection of personal, specific letters (often with minimal backstory) and to have that resonate with some or many, that is a gift. You probably aren't interested in which stories were my favorites but some of my friends might be: Dear Grandpa, Dear Daddy, Dear Firefighter, Dear Big Feet, but especially Dear Oyster Picker. What I loved most was how you opened yourself up and described what many people cannot. You made your feelings, and therefore yourself, relatable. I wish I loved and could find meaning in every one of your stories. Some I skipped, some I didn't understand or enjoy but know this, Ms. Author, those I loved, I loved deeply.

Oh, and I would have kept those oyster shells, too.

## Erika says

There should be a word for the exact feeling you get when everyone around you loves a book, and you think it's only OK. It's a specific mixture of surprise, confusion, disappointment, and self-doubt. For me, that's Dear Mr. You in a nutshell.

The structure of this book is brilliant—it's a series of letters from Parker to men who have affected her in various ways, from a cab driver she once mistreated, to a younger lover, to a relative of her adopted daughter. It's part memoir, part rant, part meditation on life, and part pouring out of gratitude to the people who formed her, whether they knew it or not.

When the idea works, it's fantastic. My favorites were Parker's beautiful letters to her grandfather and father. Her dad, in particular, was depicted so vividly and with so much love that I mourned his death as if I knew him. Yet the letters to a drag queen and to a friend who helps child soldiers from Africa were painfully clichéd. In other sections Parker's writing veers toward stream of consciousness and the effect is of journal entries that are at least one draft away from being publication-ready. And while Parker seems honest, insightful, and brave, I also thought some of her writing was a little self indulgent.

That said, a lot of people I respect and trust loved this book. So it could just be me.

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## Jennifer says

I know nothing about actress Mary-Louise Parker, but that didn't stop me from thoroughly enjoying her beautifully written memoir. Dear Mr. You is made up of thirty-four fairly short letters from her to various men she has encountered through her life. Really, this collection can be enjoyed by anyone, whether they are familiar with the author or not. Dear Mr. You is intelligent, philosophical, and funny. The audiobook is good quality and is narrated by Ms. Parker herself. Check it out!

### **My favorite quote:**

*"It's so transparent, how willing we are to dismiss the intelligence of someone who rejects us, as though that renders them incapable of sound judgment."*

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## Iris P says

Dear Mr. You

### **Mary Louise Parker-The Author.**

When I first heard of Mary-Louise Parker's new book, the first thought that came to mind was, oh great just what we need another memoir from a celebrity that has probably nothing remotely interesting to say, wonderful... But oh how very mistaken I was!

If like me, you had similar thoughts, this review is my attempt to convince you Dear Fellow Reader, that Dear Mr. You is probably the furthest thing from a conventional celebrity memoir you can imagine, and that reading it might be indeed at least worth considering.

I followed Mary Louise Parker's acting career from afar. I saw her on *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *Angels In America* and watched a few seasons of *Weeds*. I always thought of her as a talented actress, a beautiful woman, if a little peculiar, with a sort of mysterious aura around her, really what was not to like? But beyond that I never had the slightest inclination to learn anything about her career, much less her personal life.

My second reaction to Parker's memoir was that, in these times when we are experiencing what feels like an interesting new wave of feminism, writing a book about men (only) sounded to me a little bit out of step with the current zeitgeist.

Ultimately thought, I couldn't help but found it refreshing to read a book that so gracefully, and unabashedly pays homage to men in general, and specifically to those that have been most important in Parker's life.

All that preamble is to say that reading Dear Mr. You was a revelation, although perhaps not in the way you might expect from a memoir written by a celebrity: Parker doesn't indulge in any name-dropping, shocking gossip or exposés of any kind.

In fact, if you didn't know the author was a famous actress before you read her memoir, you could go throw the whole thing without realizing that this profound and lyrical memoir was written by a Golden Globe, Emmy's & Tony award winner.

As economic as Parker is in her writing, as these letters are very short, they provide a glimpse not only into a most interesting life, but also into a intellectually curious mind and someone with a great sense of humor to boot!

The thirty four letters contained on Dear Mr. You, are profound, evocative, funny, shocking, erotic and thought-provoking. There are love letters, letters of apology, letters celebrating life and mourning the loss of it, letters of gratitude and joy and a few of despair and resentment.

Most of them are addressed to family members, friends and mentors, but a few are addressed to total strangers.

There's something I thought, humbling and powerful about acknowledging how a perfect stranger might manifest into our lives and intentionally or not, have a profound effect on us.

There's is a letter to Father Bob, Parker's childhood priest, upon learning he has decided to marry his partner, she jokingly chastises him:

*"When I spoke to you recently you told me that you were getting married. Not to be inelegant, but what are you, late seventies? That gives me hope for all humanity. I haven't met your partner, Richard. but I can say he is a lucky man. It's because of you that I can go to any church and take whatever the service has to offer, all of it up for interpretation except kindness."*

*Dear Uncle*, is a extremely moving letter written to the uncle of the baby she adopted from an Ethiopian orphanage.

*Dear Future Man Who Loves My Daughter*, gives advise to her daughter's future husband, and even in her imagination she's not always kind to him:

*"Yes, you may have had a difficult childhood, she says, "but please allow me to introduce myself: Hello, I am the woman who doesn't give a shit."*

*Dear Abraham* tells the touching story of her first meeting with her longtime accountant. In an recent interview, talking about a conversation she recently had with him, Parker recalls telling him:

*"Abe, people read your letter. They really like it. Someone told me they cried." And he went, "Ah, shut up." And he hung up on me. He texted me later and was like, "I love you." It's so great.*

But ultimately, the center character of Parker's book is her father and the recurring theme throughout the memoir is the deep sense of loss she experienced after he passed away in 2010. John Parker was an honorable man who served in three wars, battled PTSD and loved his wife and children unconditionally.

*Dear Oyster Picker*, addressed to the imaginary man that could have picked the oysters her father ate the night he died, is probably the most beautiful and saddest eulogy I've ever read.

On *Dear Daddy*, Parker describing his loss says:

*"To convey in any existing language how I miss you isn't possible. It would be like blue trying to describe the ocean..."*

Perhaps because at the moment, I am facing the possibility of losing my own father and like Parker, I too consider my dad to be the most important and influential man in my life, the letters addressed to her dad had a particular deep emotional impact on me.

On *The Art of Memoir*, renown memoirist Mary Karr describing what makes a great memoir writes:

*"However many intellectual pleasures a book may offer up, it's usually your emotional connection to the memoir's narrator that hooks you in. And how does she do that? A good writer can conjure a landscape and its peoples to live inside you, and the best writers make you feel they've disclosed their soft underbellies. Seeing someone naked thrills us a little."*

Writing a memoir has always strike me as a brave and audacious act. It takes guts to expose yourself so intimately, especially when you are a public figure.

On *Dear Mr. You*, Parker doesn't shy away from revealing herself throughout the whole gamut of human emotions: from experiencing poverty, insecurity, personal loss and illness to the joys of romance, friendship, mother-hood and daughter-hood.

There's much to like on this powerful and beautiful memoir and Dear Fellow Reader, I can almost guarantee you'll be amazed at the range of emotions many of these letters will elicit on you.

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On a final note, thank you to my GR friend Esil for recommending this wonderful book and for a writing such a beautiful review.. You can read Esil's review [here](#).

## Carol says

Oh dear, I'm sorry to say Mary-Louise Parker's memoir was just ok for me.

I enjoyed reading several of her letters to the memorable men in her life.....**Dear Big Feet** and **Dear Firefighter** in particular, as well as the ones to her father and grandfather; and I really liked the format, but while some were great, often touching or laced with a bit of humor, others kind of rambled on or were a bit too risque causing me to lose interest and start skimming.

Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe is one of my very favorite movies, and I'll always remember Ms. Parker's role as Ruth..... and do wish her well with her book.

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## Cheri says

I began reading "Dear Mr. You" with some trepidation, I'd put it on my TBR list the day I first read about it, but ... I adore Mary-Louise Parker as an actress, and I just wanted it to be at least close to as good as she is on stage / on screen. I hadn't read any GR reviews on it, but I overheard someone talking about how surprised they were over what a great writer she is, picked up a copy to read the first page and went home and read it.

"Dear Mr. You" is raw and funny, sad, emotional... it will run you through moments in her life which she must have had to summon all the courage she could find, borrow, buy to share with anyone, everyone. Oh, you'll laugh, too, even if you never yelled at a cab driver you'll recognize those frustrations, the situations life has presented to her, and you'll think, you'll cry.

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## Debbie "DJ" says

I'm blown away by how much talent this woman has! Seriously? Not only can she act, but her writing blew me away. This is not a tell all Hollywood memoir. Parker chooses different people in her life that have held special meaning for her. With titles like like, Dear NASA, Dear Lifeline, and Dear Emergency Contact, I found myself not only laughing but deeply touched.

No names are named, just incredible writing. Parker often uses these essays to express what she has learned from life challenges, to show me that we are all human and make mistakes. This is a woman who has used her life to grow, and has the ability to find gratitude in some of life's tougher moments. Holy crap, I think this might be one of my favorites of the year!

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## Esil says

Dear Mary-Louise,

Wow! Your little book Dear Mr. You was quite the surprise. I know you're a good actor, and your wit, quirkiness and strong character come through in your acting. But who knew that you're such a powerful writer too? The concept sounded good. A series of letters written to men who have had an impact on your life. I thought it would be clever, but light and probably guarded. But – again – wow! It was kind of dark, risky, a bit twisted, very personal, often moving, sometimes funny, sometimes sad and occasionally a bit surreal – all in a good way. Just so we're clear, you stirred me up -- you made me teary, you made me smile, you made me frown and you even made me gasp a couple of times. Favourites included the letters to your grandfather, your father, the three headed dog (the famous unnamed abusive ex – so dark, so well done, so surreal and so recognizable – great metaphor by the way), the taxi driver, the orderly in the hospital (that one really got me teary – I have a son too), and the one to your best friend's husband. And – boy – can you ever write! I wanted to pull so many of your paragraphs and sentences right out of the text and savour them – especially that last paragraph in the letter to your father. Sometimes your prose got really close to poetry, and I felt a beat running through my mind as I read your words. Now, you shouldn't expect everyone to like your book. It is a bit on the weird side, but it sounds like you're used to not always being in the mainstream and that you get a bit of a kick out of being an outlier – like, really, the story about your younger lover... And there is some pretty explicit sexual content – again, that might not be for everyone. And your readers better understand that you've not set out to criticize men – quite the contrary – many of your letters are true loving odes, although you're not afraid to call an ass when you see one. And finally there's the issue of the 2nd person narrative in letter form – now, don't get me wrong, I loved that but it might throw a few people off. Anyways, apologies if I'm being a bit forward but after reading all those letters I feel like I know you pretty well. Best of luck with the book, and thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for giving me a chance to read an advance copy.

Cheers,

Esil

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## Jen says

I am stupefied. What talent! I'm dazzled and stunned by the brilliance of not only your divine writing, but of the way in which you have exposed your authentic self through these letters to the men who have touched your life in various ways. Some briefer than others but all have left a lasting impression and likely defined who you are today.

I have to be honest, I wasn't a fan. I hesitated picking this up but the timing was right. It is a book one can read in small sittings.

Thank you Mary Louise Parker for sharing your life stories. You've certainly added another dimension to the woman we see onscreen.

For all the men in her life, how poignant she dedicated this book to her mom. This was a worthy of 5★  
Now I need to find me some weed(s).

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## Andrew Smith says

I was aware of Mary Louise Parker, as an actress. I knew she'd appeared on television and in films, though I can't say I've ever knowingly seen anything she's appeared in. I didn't know she'd also wrote and in fact had been published in various magazines. So I approached this, her first book, with an open mind, egged on by a couple of strong recommendations from Goodreads friends.

And what a delight it's been to work my way through this powerful, funny, shocking and tear inducing memoir. It takes the form of imagined letters to men (well, that's applied fairly loosely in at least one case) who have impacted her life in some way. Some have inspired her, a few have pissed her off and others have influenced her and helped make her who she is. There's all of life here: religion, love, sex, birth and death. The letters vary in style, tone and length. One is a short, sad reflections on a man she met and quickly lost and another (one of my favourites) is long, ranting, angry denunciation of partner she's left behind.

Parker is, I believe, ruthlessly honest in her self portrayal here. She is, at times, self critical and apologetic. We see her growing up, developing and making misjudgements. We are invited to spectate during key moments in her life: sometimes we see her explode with reckless joy and abandon and other times we witness her meltdown. There is no barrier, no filter to hide or disguise the good the bad and the ugly in her life.

A few of the letters didn't do it for me, I just didn't pick up where they were coming from and they didn't elicit an emotion in me. But by the far the majority I found hugely impactful. There are two letters to and about her dad: one early on where she tells him how much she misses him and one at the end when she addresses a nameless man who picked oysters for a meal her father had requested. They are both heartbreakingly sad but so beautifully written. Then there's Dear Cerberus, which she addressed to a former partner she describes as having had three heads, like the monstrous multi-headed dog from Greek mythology – so clever and so damning! And the letter to the man who will love her daughter is just so funny and spot on. I could go on but best you just buy the book and read 'em for yourself. There are too many gems here to do justice to.

The finest accolade I can give the author is that her words stirred my own thoughts; they made me think about things I hadn't thought about before. The feelings her words created are not all comfortable but they are in my head now and I'm glad they are. I'll work through them and they will help me address and maybe resolve things that have been long buried. Powerful stuff.

Thank you so much to Esil and Elyse for prompting me to seek out this book and to Scribner Publishing and Netgalley for providing a free copy in exchange for an honest review.

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## Diane says

I liked this unusual memoir, but I didn't love it. Mary-Louise Parker composed letters to various men in her life, including her grandfather, neighbor, priest, accountant, former lovers, and even a firefighter and cab driver.

The letters are basically vignettes, dramatic scenes from Parker's life. There are incidents of sorrow, rage, love and joy. Some of the letters were very moving, and others rambled and were a bit boring. My favorite letters were the ones to her grandfather and father.

Parker has had a successful acting career (I've liked her ever since she was in the movie "Fried Green

Tomatoes") but this isn't a Hollywood memoir. There are some good stories about different acting teachers and mentors she had, but few details about her projects. Instead, the letters focus on her children, family, lovers, friends and meaningful encounters with strangers.

I listened to this on audio, which was, of course, performed well by Parker. She is a skilled writer and describes scenes well, but this book could have been improved with better editing. If I had read it in print, I think I would have done a fair amount of skimming.

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