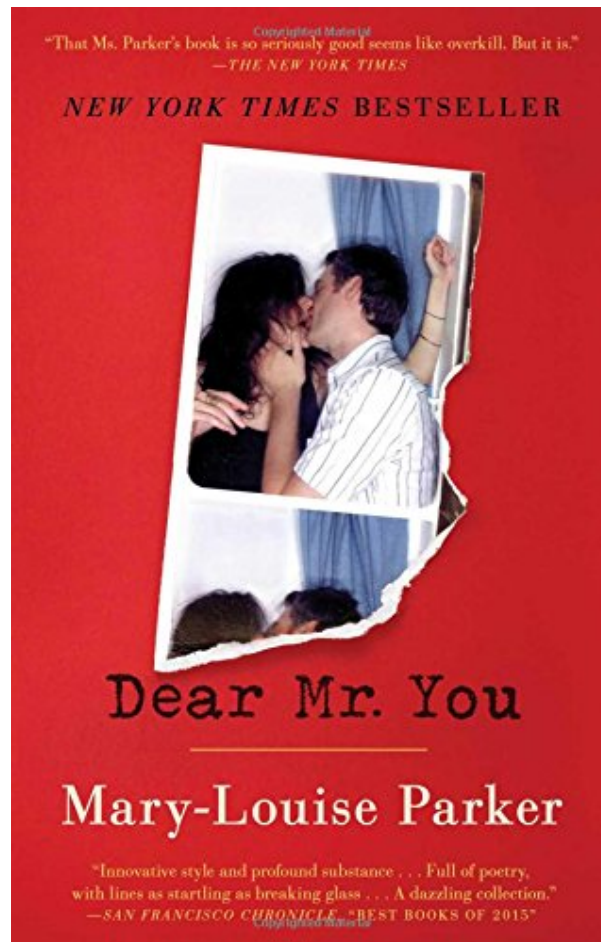


# DEAR MR. YOU BY MARY -LOUISE PARKER



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"That Ms. Parker's book is so seriously good seems like overkill. But it is."  
—THE NEW YORK TIMES

**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER**



**Dear Mr. You**

**Mary-Louise Parker**

"Innovative style and profound substance . . . Full of poetry,  
with lines as startling as breaking glass . . . A dazzling collection."  
—SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, "BEST BOOKS OF 2015"

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### Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of November 2015: More revealing than most memoirs, more satisfying than a diary, Mary-Louise Parker's *Dear Mr. You* is comprised of letters addressed to the men, both fictional and real, in her life. The letters, directed at the 'you' are unabated marvels of experience – at times gritty and unpolished, snappy and sad, romantic and heart pounding. There are the letters addressed to her daughter's future boyfriend that release the snarl of a mother's love; a raw apology to a cab driver who was the recipient of her rage; her mentor on the cusp of dying from AIDS with "that voice I could have poured on pancakes"; the beloved priest of her childhood answers the questions of her children; the lover who said "you would love me until you were ashes." These moments, congested by the form of a letter, take on a level of unapologetic and unfettered intimacy that is intoxicating to read. Mary-Louise Parker is not just an award winning actress. She is a gutsy, bewitching writer whose stories will make you swoon, induce bawdy laughter, and puncture your deepest emotions. – Al Woodworth

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Photograph by Annie Leibovitz

Photograph by Tina Turnbow

"Dear Mr. You" comes as a revelation – actually, one revelation after another. Mary-Louise Parker's book of memoiristic letters to some of the men in her life reads like a collection of first-rate short stories, varied in mood and tone but united by a perspective comprising gratitude, forgiveness, courage, and humor. Parker lives intensely and sees acutely; she has a warrior's determination and a poet's insight. I found myself reading this mesmerizing album of portraits like poetry, in fact: only a few letters at a sitting, the better to savor their resonances.

Parker recounts transforming episodes with some of her male heroes, among them a movement teacher, her acting mentor, the family priest ("who believed in God and still liked him"), the no-nonsense accountant who taught her how money works, the beekeeper next-door, and a former child soldier from Uganda. She depicts love affairs in all their ambivalence and fluctuating passions, and commemorates her most awful romantic relationships in an epistle to Cerberus, the mythical three-headed dog at the maw of Hell. She speculates about the hard-drinking Grandpa she never knew, and relives the relinquishment of her father's body after

his death. He was a three-war veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder who punched holes in the wall, and she misses him too profoundly to convey: "It would be like blue trying to describe the ocean."

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Parker's recollections evoke the very nature of memory, their potent images never too fully limned, never lingering over the emotions they incite. "Dear Mr. You" reminds us what a glorious business life can be even at its worst, if you can tug it into the right frame of view. It makes me hope that my young son might grow up to be the sort of fellow worthy of a letter from someone the caliber of Mary-Louise Parker. I cannot imagine anyone worth knowing who would not fall in love with the shimmering vision at the core of this masterful book.

## Review

"Mary-Louise Parker's *Dear Mr. You* is straight-up fantastic; a gripping and deeply humane and often hilarious book. It catches glimpses of life at all sorts of unexpected moments, electrifying them with its sharp-eyed astonishment at how absurd and joyous things can get. There's nothing cheaply-earned about its wonder; nothing sugarcoated in its gratitude. It's all grit, all messy particulars—full of surprise and full-throated in its song." (Leslie Jamison, author of *The Empathy Exams*)

"To have an artist accomplished in one genre triumph in another—seemingly out of the blue—is an extraordinary event. Mary-Louise Parker's *Dear Mr. You* is a pants-pissingly funny, gut-wrenching meditation on her loving and tormented encounters with the masculine. From grandfather to father to son to the wacky, pre-Burning Man hippie with a loincloth who haunts her at a co-op job to the lover who deserves the coda 'Sleep tight, little monster.' Whether honoring the ash-covered firefighter she sees on 9/11 or shouting as a crazy person at her malignantly lost cabdriver, Parker merges memoir with poetry in this haunting, sui generis work. I drank it down in one gulp, then started back at page one again. A magnificent, necessary surprise." (Mary Karr, author of *The Liars' Club* and *Lit*)

"This book will shake your soul out. Funny, surprising, angry, intimate, political, saucy, profound, and very very tender indeed, this is a book that will pass from mother to daughter to father to son and back to mother again. A wonderful literary achievement." (Colum McCann, New York Times bestselling author of *Let the Great World Spin*)

"In an industry that produces replicas, there is no one else quite like Mary-Louise Parker...Funny, heartbreaking, and profound." (Elle)

"Bruisingly honest." (Vogue)

"The book is written in a smart, beguiling voice that is inextricably entwined with qualities that Ms. Parker radiates as an actress. There's as much flintiness as reckless charm. Flirtation and mischief are big parts of her arsenal. So is the honest soul-searching that gives this slight-looking book much more heft than might be expected....Its tone is brave and warmly conspiratorial, neither of which has ever hurt an already well-known, professionally adorable person when it comes to attracting readers. That Ms. Parker's book is so seriously good seems like overkill." (Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*)

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"Intimate and polished." (Associated Press)

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"Yes, that Mary-Louise Parker (Weeds, Proof). Her debut memoir is couched as a series of letters--funny, heartbreaking, steamy, wise--to men who have touched her life: friends, family, lovers and total strangers...Parker doesn't name names or connect dots. What she does is provide a series of strobe-lit glimpses into an extraordinary life." (MORE)

"Parker's first book is unconventional, spirited, refreshingly honest, and painfully funny....Each letter proves Parker as a writer capable of inspiring depth and self-reflection. With Dear Mr. You, this accomplished actress can confidently add "slash writer" to her bio — and her fans should consider that addendum just as confidently." (Bustle)

"Parker stakes her claim as 'best literary writer' among contemporary celebrities with this fiction-memoir hybrid. The title refers to the book's epistolary approach: it features a series of real and fiction letters sent to the men in her life. It's often funny as hell." (Flavorwire)

"Parker's prose is infused with a perfect balance of sarcasm, humor and poetic language. Her letters shine with candid, self-aware depth--unabashed in revealing the truth of her own nature and experiences." (Shelf Awareness)

"Parker's missives move effortlessly among nostalgia, intensity, and playfulness, but in the end, they all work together to reveal both the small and large ways in which we impact each other. A unique, poised, and polished first book from a respected actress." (Kirkus)

"A bold, powerful, and decidedly non-Hollywood exercise... Each letter paints a fuller picture of its author. . . . [Parker's] poet's prose is lyrical, funny, sad, strange, and very often beautiful . . . Yes, she's a writer, too." (Booklist)

"Dear Mr. You boasts both innovative style and profound substance. . . . Parker's writing is full of poetry, too, with lines as startling as breaking glass. . . . Flashing backward and forward in time, and into and out of all these lives, Dear Mr. You is really about finding the beauty, the humor — and the sorrows — in our lives and the lives of others, and being glad and grateful for all of it. So here is my letter: Dear Ms. Parker, Thank you for this dazzling collection." (San Francisco Chronicle)

"By turns fiercely intelligent and downright goofy, Parker is above all relentlessly self-critical, and often self-deprecating. Among the many things we learn she cannot do are juggle, manage money, and say no. What she can do is write. Many actors produce books, but few of these leave a reader wanting more; Parker is a formidably talented exception." (Boston Globe)

"Deeply funny and entirely original." (Vanity Fair)

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"A colorful anthology of funny, lonely and poignant moments from one woman's life. Her biographical approach is extremely innovative. Parker takes a hard look at the men in her life in order to analyze their impact on the woman she is today. And that woman is complex, compassionate, loving and talented." (Associated Press)

"I am a memoir connoisseur. I teach the form. I read dozens upon dozens of 'true' stories every year, and only two or three stand out. Dear Mr. You stands out." (Chicago Tribune)

"Parker dives into complex topics that aren't always easy to put to paper with humor and rich, full writing. She draws the readers in and will have them hooked until the final page. Dear Mr. You is a thrilling and brilliant debut by an accomplished actor." (The Daily Iowan)

"Dear Ms. You...What could have been merely a trope or a trick becomes more than that by virtue of your sheer perspicacity, your willingness to wear your vulnerability on your sleeve, and some excellent, stylish writing. You can add to your resume, alongside outstanding actress, accomplished author." (NPR.org)

"Smart, funny, sad, entertaining, never boring. It is that rare thing in books written by bold-faced names: a very pleasant surprise. Put it another way: If no one knew who you were, this would still be a book worth reading." (The Daily Beast)

"That rarest of things: A celebrity actor's memoir that briefly elevates the form with a literary approach and some real style." (Phoenix New Times)

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"Mary-Louise Parker is a smart, smart woman who GETS LIFE. In Dear Mr. You, Parker puts together all the letters she's written to the men in her life. Her grandfather, a priest, boyfriends. It's all there. It's dynamite." (HelloGiggles)

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#### About the Author

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## DEAR MR. YOU BY MARY -LOUISE PARKER PDF

The bestselling, wonderfully unconventional, “warmly conspiratorial...seriously good” (The New York Times) literary memoir from the award-winning actress that has received fabulous and wide praise. “There is no one else quite like Mary-Louise Parker...Funny, heartbreaking and profound” (Elle).

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.

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#### About the Author

Mary-Louise Parker is a Tony, Emmy, and Golden Globe award-winning actress. Her writing has appeared in Esquire, The Riveter, Bust, and The Bullet. This is her first book.

#### Most helpful customer reviews

48 of 49 people found the following review helpful.

A beautiful and unique read even for people who don't know who Mary-Louise Parker is

By Matilda

This is not your typical celebrity memoir/essays--in the BEST possible way.

Mary-Louise Parker has written letters via her stream of consciousness to everyone from 3 men she dated that she refers to as Cerberus to NASA.

These are not the type of stories/essays you're used to where someone says I used to be a nerd and then tells you a story proving their nerd-status. Here MLP, in what feels like free flowing thought, takes one person, and speaks to them in a way that reveals so much more about herself and the human condition.

There were moments so beautiful and raw that they crawled under my skin and will forever live with me. Other times, out of the blue, I found myself laughing only to suddenly be surprised and find myself teary-eyed. The stories, content, and writing are surprisingly wonderful and before I'd even finished I knew this was a book I'd always want on my bookshelf.

\*This is not for celebrity gossip fans looking for MLP to "dish dirt" on anyone.

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Drop Everything and Read!

By H. Bok

I'm not one to read books written by celebrities, but I read a review of this memoir that intrigued me enough to give it a try. I was maybe ten pages in when I sat down and ordered five copies for gifts—my faith in its being a great book was that strong. As I continued to the finish, that view was momentarily tested here and there, but ultimately confirmed. Forget that this woman is a famous actress, forget that she's the sexiest being on the planet, this woman is \*deep.\*

In \*Dear Mr. You\* Parker has written a series of pseudo-letters to particular men, most of them generically designated ("Dear Emergency Contact," "Dear Yaqui Indian Boy," "Dear Grandpa," etc.), who have all been part of or influenced her life. The narrative is in the second person (the subjects are all addressed as "you"), which as it turns out is an elliptical but effective form of storytelling. This approach lends an offbeat perspective, in which the person addressed seems to know more about Parker than she does, while at the

same time each letter is equally revealing about both of them. I call the book a memoir, but it defies categorization—feels like fiction, structured like essay. Really it's just one soul speaking directly to others, with us peering over their shoulders.

The writing is simultaneously casual and sophisticated. Offhand sentences thrust you into the heart of life. Tiny telling moments echo with the particular and the universal. Few words are ever wasted. Parker has a fine ear for dialogue and a good grasp of idea, and all of this gets thrown at the page in a way that seems hasty but is really cunning. Parker is impatient with stylistic norms like quotation marks; she uses them from time to time, but often the words just can't be held within the fences of convention and pour onto the page for the reader to sort out. I'm a copy editor and ought to hate this but I don't.

As for the Parker who emerges from this gumbo, she is passionate and inward, loving and angry, vulnerable and strong, earthbound and spiritual, all of human experience right there for us to laugh and cry with. She embodies the old Whitman cliché (“You say that I contradict myself; very well then, I contradict myself: I am large, I contain multitudes”). But in the end, if we all had the courage to be as ruthlessly honest as she is, wouldn't the same be true of us?

A blow-my-eyes-off 5-star read for me.

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Couldn't put it down. Read it in one sitting!

By Kathy

I've always loved and admired Mary Louise Parker as an actress and to discover that she's an amazing writer was an absolute delight. She's honest, real and unafraid to be who she is. A quality I aspire to. I look forward to discovering more of her writings.

[See all 226 customer reviews...](#)

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Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of November 2015: More revealing than most memoirs, more satisfying than a diary, Mary-Louise Parker's *Dear Mr. You* is comprised of letters addressed to the men, both fictional and real, in her life. The letters, directed at the 'you' are unabated marvels of experience – at times gritty and unpolished, snappy and sad, romantic and heart pounding. There are the letters addressed to her daughter's future boyfriend that release the snarl of a mother's love; a raw apology to a cab driver who was the recipient of her rage; her mentor on the cusp of dying from AIDS with "that voice I could have poured on pancakes"; the beloved priest of her childhood answers the questions of her children; the lover who said "you would love me until you were ashes." These moments, congested by the form of a letter, take on a level of unapologetic and unfettered intimacy that is intoxicating to read. Mary-Louise Parker is not just an award winning actress. She is a gutsy, bewitching writer whose stories will make you swoon, induce bawdy laughter, and puncture your deepest emotions. – Al Woodworth

Guest Review by Andrew Solomon

Photograph by Annie Leibovitz

Photograph by Tina Turnbow

"Dear Mr. You" comes as a revelation – actually, one revelation after another. Mary-Louise Parker's book of memoiristic letters to some of the men in her life reads like a collection of first-rate short stories, varied in mood and tone but united by a perspective comprising gratitude, forgiveness, courage, and humor. Parker lives intensely and sees acutely; she has a warrior's determination and a poet's insight. I found myself reading this mesmerizing album of portraits like poetry, in fact: only a few letters at a sitting, the better to savor their resonances.

Parker recounts transforming episodes with some of her male heroes, among them a movement teacher, her acting mentor, the family priest ("who believed in God and still liked him"), the no-nonsense accountant who taught her how money works, the beekeeper next-door, and a former child soldier from Uganda. She depicts love affairs in all their ambivalence and fluctuating passions, and commemorates her most awful romantic relationships in an epistle to Cerberus, the mythical three-headed dog at the maw of Hell. She speculates about the hard-drinking Grandpa she never knew, and relives the relinquishment of her father's body after his death. He was a three-war veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder who punched holes in the wall, and she misses him too profoundly to convey: "It would be like blue trying to describe the ocean."

Here is the worst imaginable encounter between a pregnant woman and a New York City cabdriver with no idea where he's going, here, a wishful meditation for a newborn baby boy. Here, even a note of apology to NASA "for repeatedly stating that you were a massive misuse of tax dollars and basically an oversized playground for those who like to wear antigravity suits." She then admits (as men so rarely do), "I didn't know what I was talking about."

Parker's recollections evoke the very nature of memory, their potent images never too fully limned, never lingering over the emotions they incite. "Dear Mr. You" reminds us what a glorious business life can be even at its worst, if you can tug it into the right frame of view. It makes me hope that my young son might grow up to be the sort of fellow worthy of a letter from someone the caliber of Mary-Louise Parker. I cannot imagine anyone worth knowing who would not fall in love with the shimmering vision at the core of this masterful book.

#### Review

"Mary-Louise Parker's *Dear Mr. You* is straight-up fantastic; a gripping and deeply humane and often hilarious book. It catches glimpses of life at all sorts of unexpected moments, electrifying them with its sharp-eyed astonishment at how absurd and joyous things can get. There's nothing cheaply-earned about its wonder; nothing sugarcoated in its gratitude. It's all grit, all messy particulars—full of surprise and full-throated in its song." (Leslie Jamison, author of *The Empathy Exams*)

"To have an artist accomplished in one genre triumph in another—seemingly out of the blue—is an extraordinary event. Mary-Louise Parker's *Dear Mr. You* is a pants-pissingly funny, gut-wrenching meditation on her loving and tormented encounters with the masculine. From grandfather to father to son to the wacky, pre-Burning Man hippie with a loincloth who haunts her at a co-op job to the lover who deserves the coda 'Sleep tight, little monster.' Whether honoring the ash-covered firefighter she sees on 9/11 or shouting as a crazy person at her malignantly lost cabdriver, Parker merges memoir with poetry in this haunting, sui generis work. I drank it down in one gulp, then started back at page one again. A magnificent, necessary surprise." (Mary Karr, author of *The Liars' Club* and *Lit*)

"This book will shake your soul out. Funny, surprising, angry, intimate, political, saucy, profound, and very very tender indeed, this is a book that will pass from mother to daughter to father to son and back to mother again. A wonderful literary achievement." (Colum McCann, New York Times bestselling author of *Let the Great World Spin*)

"In an industry that produces replicas, there is no one else quite like Mary-Louise Parker...Funny, heartbreaking, and profound." (Elle)

"Bruisingly honest." (Vogue)

"The book is written in a smart, beguiling voice that is inextricably entwined with qualities that Ms. Parker radiates as an actress. There's as much flintiness as reckless charm. Flirtation and mischief are big parts of her arsenal. So is the honest soul-searching that gives this slight-looking book much more heft than might be expected....Its tone is brave and warmly conspiratorial, neither of which has ever hurt an already well-known, professionally adorable person when it comes to attracting readers. That Ms. Parker's book is so seriously good seems like overkill." (Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*)

"Poetic and often hilarious." (Cosmopolitan)

"The most provocative memoir hitting shelves in the coming months." (Hollywood Reporter)



"Intimate and polished." (Associated Press)

"Memoir readers, storytellers and lovers, starving artists, letter writers, and dreamers will enjoy." (Library Journal)

"The farthest thing imaginable from a celebrity memoir...a portrait of a human life apart from the cycles of fame: private, flawed, strange, funny, polished and reflective." (BookPage)

"Yes, that Mary-Louise Parker (Weeds, Proof). Her debut memoir is couched as a series of letters--funny, heartbreaking, steamy, wise--to men who have touched her life: friends, family, lovers and total strangers....Parker doesn't name names or connect dots. What she does is provide a series of strobe-lit glimpses into an extraordinary life." (MORE)

"Parker's first book is unconventional, spirited, refreshingly honest, and painfully funny....Each letter proves Parker as a writer capable of inspiring depth and self-reflection. With Dear Mr. You, this accomplished actress can confidently add "slash writer" to her bio — and her fans should consider that addendum just as confidently." (Bustle)

"Parker stakes her claim as 'best literary writer' among contemporary celebrities with this fiction-memoir hybrid. The title refers to the book's epistolary approach: it features a series of real and fiction letters sent to the men in her life. It's often funny as hell." (Flavorwire)

"Parker's prose is infused with a perfect balance of sarcasm, humor and poetic language. Her letters shine with candid, self-aware depth--unabashed in revealing the truth of her own nature and experiences." (Shelf Awareness)

"Parker's missives move effortlessly among nostalgia, intensity, and playfulness, but in the end, they all work together to reveal both the small and large ways in which we impact each other. A unique, poised, and polished first book from a respected actress." (Kirkus)

"A bold, powerful, and decidedly non-Hollywood exercise... Each letter paints a fuller picture of its author. . . . [Parker's] poet's prose is lyrical, funny, sad, strange, and very often beautiful . . . Yes, she's a writer, too." (Booklist)

"Dear Mr. You boasts both innovative style and profound substance. . . . Parker's writing is full of poetry, too, with lines as startling as breaking glass. . . . Flashing backward and forward in time, and into and out of all these lives, Dear Mr. You is really about finding the beauty, the humor — and the sorrows — in our lives and the lives of others, and being glad and grateful for all of it. So here is my letter: Dear Ms. Parker, Thank you for this dazzling collection." (San Francisco Chronicle)

"By turns fiercely intelligent and downright goofy, Parker is above all relentlessly self-critical, and often self-deprecating. Among the many things we learn she cannot do are juggle, manage money, and say no. What she can do is write. Many actors produce books, but few of these leave a reader wanting more; Parker is a formidably talented exception." (Boston Globe)

"Deeply funny and entirely original." (Vanity Fair)

"Lyrical, funny and passionate....she's a serious writer." (Newsday)

"The author's wit and passion shine through." (People)

"A colorful anthology of funny, lonely and poignant moments from one woman's life. Her biographical approach is extremely innovative. Parker takes a hard look at the men in her life in order to analyze their impact on the woman she is today. And that woman is complex, compassionate, loving and talented." (Associated Press)

"I am a memoir connoisseur. I teach the form. I read dozens upon dozens of 'true' stories every year, and only two or three stand out. Dear Mr. You stands out." (Chicago Tribune)

"Parker dives into complex topics that aren't always easy to put to paper with humor and rich, full writing. She draws the readers in and will have them hooked until the final page. Dear Mr. You is a thrilling and brilliant debut by an accomplished actor." (The Daily Iowan)

"Dear Ms. You...What could have been merely a trope or a trick becomes more than that by virtue of your sheer perspicacity, your willingness to wear your vulnerability on your sleeve, and some excellent, stylish writing. You can add to your resume, alongside outstanding actress, accomplished author." (NPR.org)

"Smart, funny, sad, entertaining, never boring. It is that rare thing in books written by bold-faced names: a very pleasant surprise. Put it another way: If no one knew who you were, this would still be a book worth reading." (The Daily Beast)

"That rarest of things: A celebrity actor's memoir that briefly elevates the form with a literary approach and some real style." (Phoenix New Times)

"Parker writes with a poetic urgency and flighty grace that you've seen before in the characters she's played. And the result is remarkably compelling." (Purewow.com)

"Mary-Louise Parker is a smart, smart woman who GETS LIFE. In Dear Mr. You, Parker puts together all the letters she's written to the men in her life. Her grandfather, a priest, boyfriends. It's all there. It's dynamite." (HelloGiggles)

"Here in these pages, Parker is a woman blessed with social intelligence and great sensitivity to detail, who treasures genuine emotion over empty posturing and lives according to instinct and intuition." (The New York Times Book Review)

"Quite stunning...At times poetic, at times deeply funny, these missives strike the right balance between sentiment and fact, storytelling and musing." (The Toronto Star)

"Leave it to Mary-Louise Parker to remind us why we care about celebrity memoirs in the first place." (USA Today)

"Unveils intimate details about her childhood and her relationships with a refreshing sincerity." (New Yorker)

#### About the Author

Mary-Louise Parker is a Tony, Emmy, and Golden Globe award-winning actress. Her writing has appeared in Esquire, The Riveter, Bust, and The Bullet. This is her first book.

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