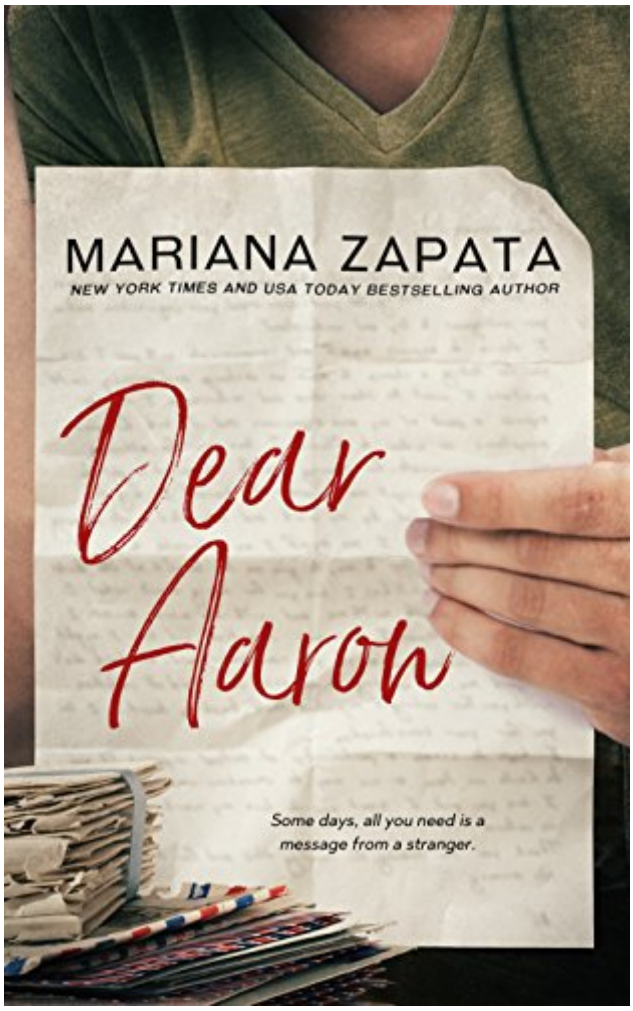
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Dear Aaron



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Synopsis

Ruby Santos knew exactly what she was getting herself into when she signed up to write a soldier overseas.The guidelines were simple: one letter or email a week for the length of his or her deployment. Care packages were optional.Been there, done that. She thought she knew what to expect.What she didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t count on was falling in love with the guy.

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Customer Reviews

I FLOVE Mariana Zapata but I had a hard time getting into this book. I love the slow burn but I am starting to hate that as soon as the characters become a couple then BOOM book over. It makes it hard for me to see them connect because I don’t feel the connection as a couple. I will always one click this author because she is amazing but this was not the book for me.

OK. I am a huge fan of Mariana Zapata. Her style is S-L-O-W B-U-R-N and I love it. Don’t get me wrong, I often enjoy a down and dirty insta-love but with Mariana, you need to kick your shoes off, get comfy, make sure there are frozen dinners available for the family and have dvd’s ready to

entertain the kids. There’s always a huge pay-off with her books, it’s just going to take a while to get there.In her latest book, Dear Aaron, she doesn’t deviate. Mariana gives readers the opportunity to know the main characters individually before they are romantically involved with each other. While you don’t know ’everything’ about the characters before they connect, you get to know them gradually, just as they get to know each other. Ruby writes to Aaron through a program that pairs soldiers and civilians as pen pals during deployment. Their friendship grows from their interactions, eventually leading to meeting face to face after Aaron returns home.Ruby is probably one of the least-confident female leads Mariana has written. That said, she can stand up and speak out when pushed far enough, but for the most part she lives to keep the peace and limit risks. Aaron is coming out of a breakup via "dear John" letter when Ruby begins writing to him and he is cautiously friendly. He actually doesn’t reply for weeks to her emails. Ruby is charmingly goofy, genuinely sweet, and refreshingly open. Aaron is able to relax and let down his guard within the structure of their relationship and they both begin to open up to each other about personal issues, and they begin to like each other within this safe space. The family life (strife) of both Aaron and Ruby color their views on relationships and both have to work to overcome the self-imposed restrictions to open their hearts to the possibility of a different, more fulfilling relationship possibility for themselves.Mariana is a wonderful author because she writes books that you read over and over, and each time you glean something new you never noticed before. She doesn’t give you EVERY thought the lead female thinks (all her books are written from the female protagonists’ perspective) so you do have to work for some of the details. This is what gives her work ’legs’...the ability to hang around in your thoughts for a long, long time after you finish a book.Here’s where my review will go sideways for some of you. This is not my favorite MZ book. And yes, I still gave it 5 stars. It deserves 5 stars because I enjoyed the book so very much and because she creates the types of books I really enjoy down to my bones. But, it does fall short for me in comparison to her other works. I didn’t feel the same connection to Ruby as I have to her other leading females. I think one reason is that Ruby doesn’t have a true confidant other than Aaron. Each of her other characters had someone they could lean on and talk to, which in turn gave the reader more depth regarding the story line. Sal had her dad, Iris had Sonny, Vanny had Diana and Zack - and Diana had Vanny and the boys, Gabby had Eli...they all had their ’person’. Another reason this falls short for me is that towards the end, we have an intense portion of the book before Aaron and Ruby acknowledge their feelings towards each other, and then BAM we’re given an epilogue that left me feeling unsatisfied. When loving slow-burn romances like I do, a really good epilogue is the ’reward’ for all the work I’ve done being patient! I was reading it and I kept looking at the progress indicator in my kindle and kept thinking "it

can’t really be at 99%...there’s SO MUCH MORE I WANT, NO NEED TO KNOW!".All that aside, if you love Mariana, you will love this book. Her humor and perspective are so unique and you feel the love she pours into every one of her novels. I mean even Mozart didn’t turn out a perfect musical composition every time he put pen to paper...wait...that’s not the best example...he kinda did. I’ll try again...even Charlie Hunnam has days where he may not look his best, but damn, it’s Charlie Hunnam and he is a 9.9 at his worst. Dear Aaron isn’t my favorite book of hers, but damn, it’s Mariana Zapata, and she’s still a 4.9 out of 5 on a bad day. Get this book and take your time to enjoy it. If this is your first MZ experience, I insist you read her other books as well. Then you’ll understand the genius that she really is.

Unfortunately, this is probably my least favorite book by this author. Ruby was just a hard character for me to like. She starts off as a very insecure, emotional young woman, and she didn’t seem to grow much from there. She cries so much in this book. It felt like at least once every chapter she was crying because of her life or someone else’s life or just from casual conversation. In fact, it was because she cried so often over such insignificant things that I couldn’t appreciate her upset feelings during the moments that were actually sad and unfortunate. Don’t get me wrong, I liked that she seemed to care deeply about others and their issues, but I kind of wanted to tell her to get a grip and toughen up. Again, maybe if she had grown as a character into someone with at least a hint of a backbone I would have liked her more, but she really didn’t change.My other big issue with this book was the humor. Now I love to laugh, and I love books that make me laugh, but I don’t like when one character is constantly laughing at the jokes of another when I myself don’t find the dialogue the slightest amusing. I did appreciate the silly "dad jokes" thrown in, but otherwise I couldn’t get why Aaron found Ruby to be basically the only human in the world to make him crack a smile. All the laughing and smiles just felt a little forced to me.The only thing I didn’t like about Aaron is the fact that to me he felt like an incomplete puzzle at the end of the book. I would have liked to have focused less on Ruby and the woes of her life and seen more of what made Aaron who he is. He seemed to have so many issues with his parents and even his friends, but I only got to understand the surface level of those problems. My lack of knowledge about him made the HEA feel less satisfying.Finally, I want to say that even though I was not a fan of Aaron and Ruby and I found the dialogue much weaker in this book than the previous ones (which is ironic considering that the first quarter of the book is pure dialogue), this book did still give me the feels. It still had the heart-twisting slow burn that made me speed-read through each page to reach the point that that two finally got together. Zapata is still one of my favorite writers, and honestly, I think I if just liked

the characters a bit more I would have greatly enjoyed this book.

This was a fun and well-written story that was very enjoyable. I would characterize it more in the NA category than a true romance with two young adults still figuring out who they were rather than mature full-grown adults. Mariana is known for the slow burn (as in the first kiss isn't until 90%, but as good as this book is I am starting to wonder if she hasn't pulled a Shyamalan and pigeonholed herself a little too tightly. I love really getting to know the two main characters, seeing them build a friendship and relationship built on trust, respect and true understanding. But I also feel ripped off that I don't get to see them enjoying that fun lovey dovey period of first being together. This book it was especially pronounced as they had to be parted at the end. I read the book for the happy ending, and not the ride off into the sunset ending, but the knowing they survive their first fight, learn to live around each other being in their space, and get to a steady part of their relationship. Still worth the price for an excellent quality, well-written book.

I am a super big fan of Mariana Zapata but this book fell a little flat for me. I can think of two reasons: (1) the email string back and forth between main characters for numerous chapters, and (2) I thought the two main characters came across as lacking maturity.The email back and forth got so monotonous that I actually started flipping pages without reading and I don't generally do that.

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