A loving, intimate memoir from a lifelong friend of Kurt Vonnegut, including photos and never-before-published correspondence

When Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. ducked into his classroom at the Iowa Writer's Workshop in September of 1965, his jokes drew only weak laughter and a few rolled eyes. But workshop student Loree Rackstraw was quietly impressed by this "great bear of a man" and his down-to-earth sensibilities about writing.

That fall, an impossible romance began between the then-unknown author and his student—a brief affair that matured into a joyful, lifelong friendship. Rackstraw distills four decades of memories and Vonnegut's letters to her into an affectionate memoir that crackles with the creative energy of one of America's most beloved writers.

Rackstraw's unique perspective on Vonnegut's life and how it shaped his famous works portrays a deeply humane man who looked for the humor and absurdity in life in order to survive. And then there are Vonnegut's own letters: Whether energetic about new projects or frustrated with the "game" of writing and selling "a gazoolian copies," Vonnegut writes with the playful imagination and generous, accessible brilliance that have always been his trademarks. -- Provided by publisher

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A loving, intimate memoir from a lifelong friend of Kurt Vonnegut, including photos and never-before-published correspondence. When Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. ducked into his classroom at the Iowa Writer's Workshop in September of 1965, his jokes drew only weak laughter and a few rolled eyes. But workshop student Loree Rackstraw was quietly impressed by this “great bear of a man” and his down-to-earth sensibilities about writing. That fall, an impossible romance began between the then-unknown author and his student—a brief affair that matured into a joyful, lifelong friendship. Rackstraw distills what none of us knew was that Kurt Vonnegut was as apprehensive as we were. He'd been trained in the sciences and had done graduate work in anthropology. And he'd never taken, never mind taught, a college course in fiction writing. I took a seat next to Andre Dubus—a dear friend who'd played second dad to my son the previous spring when he'd been roughed up by a third-grade bully. His message that day was not profound, but it was clear: He hadn't been educated in an English department, but he knew the most important thing a writer had to remember was the reader. He drew some murmurs when he said he didn't see any reason for working on a story unless you wanted to sell it. (Some of us still considered financial reward beneath one's dignity.)