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Upstate: A Novel



Synopsis

"Baby, the first thing I need to know from you is do you believe I killed my father?" So begins *Upstate*, a powerful story told through letters between seventeen-year-old Antonio and his sixteen-year-old girlfriend, Natasha, set in the 1990's in New York. Antonio and Natasha's world is turned upside down, and their young love is put to the test, when Antonio finds himself in jail, accused of a shocking crime. Antonio fights to stay alive on the inside, while on the outside, Natasha faces choices that will change her life. Over the course of a decade, they share a desperate correspondence. Often, they have only each other to turn to as life takes them down separate paths and leaves them wondering if they will ever find their way back together. Startling, real, and filled with raw emotion, *Upstate* is an unforgettable coming-of-age story with a message of undeniable hope. Brilliant and profoundly felt, it is destined to speak to a new generation of readers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Poignant, compelling, luminous, this novel told in epistle form is a moving account of a young couple in love and their struggle to maintain a relationship while the young man, seventeen years old, is incarcerated for a horrendous crime. The first words Antonio writes to Natasha is "Baby, do you believe I killed my daddy?" Thus begins a correspondence that spans almost ten years. In their letters beginning in January 1990, Natasha and Antonio look back at their courtship against the landscape of their beloved Harlem. Their escapades on the subway, their favorite playing fields, and their indifference to their school assignments are now precious memories. Both of them, products of working-class families, have had less than favorable living conditions, Natasha is frustrated as she

witnesses her mother's diminishing self-image caused by her live-in boyfriend. There was a time before the death of Natasha's father that they were a nuclear family and had happy times. Antonio has a depressed father who hid his pain with alcohol, lashing out at his family. Natasha is part fly girl but with one foot in church as she struggles with the values of her religious grandmother. Over the next several months, the couple's love is tested time after time compounded by Antonio's trial, loneliness for the both of them and tragic family situations. Antonio fights to maintain his sanity as he is befriended by two hard-core cons that protect and school him in how to sustain prison life. Natasha, now more focused on school, is rewarded with opportunities that expand her view of a world beyond Harlem. Antonio is no longer ashamed of his thirst for knowledge and book learning, devouring every text he can get his hands on. As the months grow into years the questions remains, can love conquer all?

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