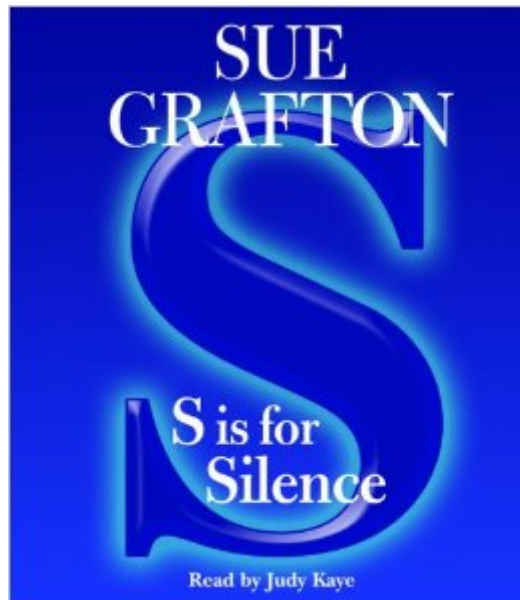


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S Is For Silence (Kinsey Millhone Mysteries)



Synopsis

S is for silence: the silence of the lost, the silence of the grave, the silence of oblivion. Thirty-four years ago, Violet Sullivan put on her party finery and left for the annual Fourth of July fireworks display. She was never seen again. In the small California town of Serena Station, tongues wagged. Some said she'd run off with a lover. Some said she was murdered by her husband. But for the not-quite-seven-year-old daughter Daisy that she left behind, her absence has never been explained or forgotten. Now, thirty-four years later, she wants the solace of closure. In *S IS FOR SILENCE*, Kinsey Millhone's nineteenth excursion into the world of suspense and misadventure, S is for surprises as Sue Grafton takes a whole new approach to telling the tale. And S is for superb: Kinsey and Grafton at their best.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's been too long since I was really excited about a Sue Grafton novel. Way too long since I was 2/3 of the way through and just had to finish it, no matter what other use I was supposed to be making of my time. Although I was a bigger fan of "O" and "P" than most of her readers, I didn't like "Q" at all, and didn't even take the time to review "R". That says a lot. I've felt that Grafton had her heroine, private detective Kinsey Millhone, stuck in a rut she would never break free of. I didn't think she'd let Kinsey grow, similar to what other authors HAVE done (notably Marcia Muller) for their female detectives. I'd have to say the last really good book the series produced was "I is for Innocent". That's a lot of alphabet that has been burned up without a breakthrough. Although Kinsey doesn't

move far away from center here, the book comes off in a way in which the older books in series did. This book is different. Grafton employs a couple of strategies that are oft used in mysteries today, the concept of the protagonist taking on a "cold case" (which Kinsey has done before) and the use of a flashback...and the type of flashback that has a new chapter simply taking place in the past, making the cold case characters come alive as Kinsey investigates them in "the future".

Grafton's future, the timeframe where she sets Kinsey, is 1987, and the disappearance she is tracking occurred in 1953. Violet Sullivan is a bad girl. Red haired and extremely attractive, Violet disappears in her new car from Serena Station, a small California backwater town. She's been a victim of domestic abuse, but she leaves her small daughter, Daisy, behind, and takes her new Pomeranian with her.

In 1953, on the fourth of July, Violet Sullivan disappeared, along with her little dog and her reputed stash of over fifty thousand dollars. Left behind were Violet's six-year-old daughter, Daisy, and Violet's abusive husband, Foley. Many people in the small town of Serena Station believe that Foley killed Violet in one of his many violent rages. Others maintain that she left with one of her lovers. After thirty-four years, Violet's daughter is still broken up about her mother's disappearance. Daisy has been divorced four times, and she feels that her perpetual misery stems from wondering if Violet could have been so cold-hearted as to leave of her own volition. The police have never been able to solve the mystery, so Daisy hires PI Kinsey Millhone to investigate this very cold case. Throughout most of "S is for Silence," Kinsey repeatedly interviews everyone with information about Violet Sullivan, including Foley, who is now a recovering alcoholic, Chet Cramer, an automobile dealer who sold Foley a beautiful Chevy Bel Air that disappeared along with Violet, Liza Clements, Daisy's former babysitter, Calvin Wilcox, Violet's only sibling, and Sergeant Timothy Schaefer, who was the investigating officer when Violet vanished. There are red herrings galore to confuse matters, and Kinsey begins to think that she is wasting her time going over the same ground over and over again. One day, however, Kinsey finds her Volkswagen's tires slashed, and she realizes that she has struck a nerve. Someone is obviously warning her to back off. Could Violet's killer still be at large, and will Kinsey be his next target? Grafton tells part of her story in first person, through Kinsey's eyes, and the rest of the chapters are flashbacks to 1953.

Yes, I've read Sue Grafton since the beginning of A IS FOR ALIBI. I lost enthusiasm around "J" and while I've read just about all of them (except "R"), S IS FOR SILENCE is a much better book than the previous eight or nine books in the series. A dark book, but that's OK. And LOTS of characters.

I won't give away the story (you'll find the resolution on here somewhere), but the antagonist is a bit surprising. Given the interactions Violet had with the perpetrator, it's a stretch to believe what happened. As someone asked in the forum, what was the motive? And when you decide it's the money, there's no way in the world Violet would have given the perpetrator the money (assuming she actually had it). There are some obvious red herrings, but one fact that Kinsey could have easily uncovered is whether or not Violet had that much money. If she got the money from a lawsuit or a settlement from a hospital or a doctor, surely there are records. Right? Or is that too logical? There are other instances that seem contrived for plotting purposes, but there are just too many coincidences that had to happen on Violet's last night in order to have a story. I didn't buy most of it. BUT, I think it's a good read. Personally, I didn't like the flashback technique because I knew more than Kinsey. True, it fleshes out the characters and establishes motivations and who was doing what the night of the murder, but I don't like the technique. However, it was necessary for this story. Otherwise, you don't have much of a book. My major complaint with her books, now, are their lengths. They seem to have gotten longer, but not better. The earlier books were shorter, tightly plotted, interesting, and fun.

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