

S is for Silence

Sue Grafton

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The latest repackaged in Sue Grafton's #1 *New York Times* bestselling series.

Cases don't get much colder than that of Violet Sullivan, who disappeared from her rural California town in 1953, leaving behind an abusive husband and a seven-year-old named Daisy. But P.I. Kinsey Millhone has promised Daisy she'll try her best to locate Violet, dead or alive. Kinsey tries to pick up a trail by speaking to those who remember her-and perhaps were more involved in her life than they let on.

But the trail could lead her somewhere very dangerous. Because the case may have gone cold, but some peoples' feelings about Violet Sullivan still run as hot as ever...

S is for Silence Details


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Author : Sue Grafton

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From Reader Review S is for Silence for online ebook

Dana says

This book is different. Grafton employs a couple of strategies that are often used in mysteries today, the concept of the protagonist taking on a "cold case" (which Kinsey has done before) and the use of flashbacks...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 the 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. After many dysfunctional years of trying to forget, Daisy hires Kinsey, who comes to her attention through a friend. The case has Kinsey leaving her native Santa Teresa and sometime lover Cheney Phillips behind. Typical Kinsey haunts and friends are mentioned only fleetingly in this book. It's hard to know who wants Kinsey involved less....her own conscience, which says she'll probably not find anything, or folks in the little town, who seem to feel she's stirring up trouble.

Kinsey pries up a rock or two, and actually stumbles across the fate of Violet Sullivan, after learning about most (but not all) of Violet's affairs. The reader actually gets to see the way Violet meanders through the town's men, but in uncovering the person who did her harm, there are a lot of dead ends, and I confess that I didn't know the identity of who and what. That's what kept me reading. And although, true to form, when Grafton reveals, she shuts down the novel with very little afterplay, well, this book still gave life to what was a dying series. Kudos to Grafton for reviving her heroine and giving us a great read!

Deb says

If Grafton had been on the next letter, she could have called it T is for Trashy. I wanted a lighter, familiar read, what I got was a trashy, predictable read. You'd think by this point in the alphabet Grafton would have gotten the hang of character development. Not one character shows growth or redemption. Around page 200 I was ready to quit, I should have.

Darinda says

Kinsey works the case of a missing woman. The woman has been missing for over 30 years, and her daughter hires to Kinsey to finally discover what happened to her mother. It's been many years, but Kinsey finds many people to question about the missing woman and the night she disappeared.

The 19th book in the Kinsey Millhone series. A missing person case about a woman who had a reputation around town, and nobody was surprised when she disappeared. It was never solved if she went on her own, or if she was killed. Enter Kinsey and her investigative skills. An intriguing and quick read.

LARRY says

As posted in [<http://www.amazon.com>]:

Ever since *A is for Alibi*, I've been hooked to the Kinsey Millhone series. Therefore, Sue Grafton became one of my favorite authors. Throughout the series, some were great and some were not so great. Nonetheless, I was extremely excited to get the paperback edition of *S is for Silence*. I read this book every opportunity I could take advantage of.

It's 1987. Kinsey has been hired by Daisy Sullivan to find out whatever happened to her mother, Violet, who disappeared on 4th of July 1953.

4th of July 1953, Violet is getting herself ready for the festive night. In walks Liza Mellincamp, who has been hired to babysit Violet's 7 year old daughter, Daisy. Liza is in awe of Violet. Violet is ready and takes off with her new Pomeranian puppy, Baby, in her brand-new Bel Aire. She was never seen after this day.

34 years later, Daisy wants closure. She wants to know why if her mother left on her own volition. Kinsey returns to the little town where Violet lived before she disappeared. Just about 90% of the people who were there in '53 are still living there. Piece of cake, eh? Not quite so. However, Kinsey has been able to piece together the last days of Violet before she disappeared.

It was no secret that Violet was a flirt. Married men didn't stop her. It was also not a secret that she won a \$50,000 lawsuit settlement. She wasn't afraid to brag about it.

The question is did she disappear on her own or was she killed? If she took off on her own, why? Was there a serious lover? If she was murdered, there are no shortage of suspects. Was it her abusive, now recovering alcoholic, husband? Was it the young salesman who sold her that car and was later fired? Was it one of the married men that she had an affair with and abruptly stopped the liaison? Was it one of the women, disgusted by Violet's absence of moral standards?

The book "toggles" between Kinsey's present time (1987), in one chapter, and the characters in 1953. *S* was an interesting change of routine. In the other series, she usually includes Henry, her landlord, Rosie, owner of a restaurant, and some lover. In *S*, they're barely mentioned. So, it was nice to see Kinsey interact more with her client and the people she interviewed.

Overall, a good book that I couldn't put down. Now, I'm just sad because I gotta wait forever before T comes out. Sue, hurry!

Jo Ann Sharkey says

I love Sue Grafton! I bought this book a few weeks ago and have been saving it as my plane read for my trip to Scotland. Grafton never disappoints. The style of this book was different from her typical writing in that Grafton uses flashback techniques to tell her story. While many writers might reveal too much or give us clues to enable the reader to figure out "who did it," Grafton keeps us hanging with just enough information.

I was in suspense until the very last chapter.

I will say that I missed my usual dose of Kinsey Millhone. While the flashbacks were intriguing, they didn't allow for much character development of Kinsey, which is one of my favorite elements of a Grafton mystery.

Skye Skye says

I always read Sue Grafton's novel for sheer enjoyment; Kinsey Millhone is a breezy, neat and avant-garde protagonist whose tactics make me smile. However, *S is for Silence*, is a departure from the norm, and my thoughts are ambivalent.

The plot surrounds a long-ago disappearance, and Kinsey is called in to investigate. At the onset of the novel, flashbacks to the early '50s are employed, and for the most part, Grafton does this easily using grace and accuracy. However, in many cases, too much time is devoted to past, needless and often wordy/boring details.

In short, this is a real 'who dun it,' and draws the reader into the midst of various past/present situations revolving around obsessive love, lust, marriage, deceit, greed, mother-daughter relationships, and the perils of alcoholism and anger. I enjoyed it, but many areas were a bit boring and over written.

Mindy Tysinger says

I kind of see saw on this series. I definitely like some more than others. I think though this might be my favorite so far. It was different in style than her other books. Kinsey is hired by the daughter of a woman who disappeared on July 4th, 1953. The story jumps back and forth between the days before her disappearance and present day where Kinsey is interviewing all those involved. It really made for an interesting read.

Mindy says

This was exactly what I was in the mood for! I have always enjoyed this series and it's so great that Grafton is still keeping me so entertained. This one really checked all my boxes. I loved all the flashbacks and that the mystery involved the town tramp. It was also great that I thought for sure I had it figured out and then I was wrong. What!?! HeeHee! I just loved this one and after 19 books, that's really saying something.

Randee Baty says

Fans of Sue Grafton will say that she never writes the same book twice and I agree with this but in *S is Silence* she definitely harkens back to a couple of her previous stories. The story immediately reminded me of *Q is for Quarry* and *N is for Noose*. That is not to say that I didn't enjoy the book. I did. But for the first time I felt she was recycling ideas.

Kinsey is hired to find out what happened to Violet Sullivan 30-some years ago. She disappeared without a trace leaving a 7 year old daughter who, as an adult, needs to know what happened to her.

All the major players are still in the area and it's a matter of getting them all to talk. All the old feelings come bubbling to the surface as Kinsey investigates and she stirs up some secrets that some people don't want stirred up.

The thing that is quite different about this book is the technique Sue Grafton uses to write it. It flashes back and forth between the year of the murder and the present day. I think it works well for the story. I've read other authors who tried this and didn't do it nearly as well. It's an effective technique when done well and this is. While the story may be reminiscent of some earlier books, it's still a very enjoyable read.

Zoey says

In this the 19th in the Kinsey Millhone Alphabet Series by Sue Grafton, Kinsey is asked to investigate a cold case. What happened to Wife, Mother & town floozy Violet Sullivan, who disappeared 35 years ago? Most people still around from then, believe one of two scenarios. She left town with one of her many male "friends" or she was murdered by her abusive drunk husband Foley.

Not as much Kinsey in this book, as instead of being completely from her point of view, S jumps back & forth between Kinsey in the present & those involved with Violet in some way in the time leading up to her disappearance. So as the reader, you actually know a lot more about the victim & the suspects than Kinsey does for a change. I enjoyed the flashbacks (although there were a lot of characters & I did get them confused at times) but did miss what was happening in Kinsey's life. Where was Henry? And what is going on with her & Cheney?

Overall, not one of my favourites in the series especially the ending which didn't really give you the answers you wanted. We know the how & the who, but WHY?? But still an enjoyable read. I don't think I can go wrong with Kinsey Millhone :)

Hallie says

By far and away my least favourite of the Kinsey Millhone books. (All right, to be honest, I have only the vaguest of memories of all except the last. Still, I can't believe that I'd have read all those other books if they'd been like this one.) This had problems in several ways, and probably just one of them would have been enough to make me dislike the book, but combined it was pretty terrible. Digital audio loan from the library, thankfully, and at first I kept reading because I thought the problem was just with the flashbacks.

Extensive, lengthy flashbacks, and that meant that we got little of Kinsey in her present (1987), and only one very brief scene with Henry. (Not enough Henry!)

The flashbacks concerned the missing woman, Violet, whose daughter Daisy hires Kinsey to look into her mother's disappearance in 1953. We got them from the point of view of Violet's babysitter, Liza (Lisa?), Liza's best friend Kathy, and then many (so very many) of the guys in the small town with whom Violet was involved in one way or another. Honestly, I know the 50s probably wasn't a great time for a lot of things - salesmen being a possible exception - but everyone was *horrible*. With the sole exception of Violet, the women were judgmental, snobbish and interfering, while the men were unfaithful and spent a lot of time comparing their sexually uninteresting wives to -- oh, Violet, of course. Even worse than this was the fact that Violet was the victim of domestic abuse (her husband Foley), everyone knew about it and the men despised Foley while the women typically blamed her for not trying to cover up the bruises. But - while I *refuse* to say that a victim of abuse "asked for it", the book almost seemed to be hellbent on pushing me in that direction, as Violet was a) selfish, b) played the victim card when it suited her, c) actually had plenty of money so she had a way TO GET OUT, about which she boasted all the time, to everyone, d) didn't care at all about leaving her daughter behind when she planned to leave, e) though she would never leave her *dog*, f) used sex as a means to get whatever she wanted, and, most awfully (I'll put this behind a spoiler because it is a bit, but seriously, I don't recommend any friends read this book) (view spoiler)

There's a rather cheap bit of authorial withholding, which means that the eventual reveal of the killer is a surprise, but doesn't make much sense. Why make us listen to all those horrible people's doings in the past if only to trick us and that not very cleverly? Aside from that, Kinsey seems to lose **all** her smarts, although part of her characterization is that she's not great with the emotional stuff. Still and all, Liza, who was 14 at the time of Violet's disappearance, and her biggest fan, had a boyfriend, Ty, who'd been shipped out to stay with his aunt in this very small town, because he got a 13 year old girl pregnant back home. And he's not changed his ways, nor has he learned/figured out/decided he gives a crap about the fact that he doesn't bother to use some kind of protection and the girl gets pregnant, it's going to have a ton more consequences for the girl. He's - well, I put him in the category with all the other no-good males in the area - deliberately getting Liza drunk so he can overcome her resistance to his "going all the way", and putting a lot of pressure on her to just let him etc., etc. At one point she even thinks, muzzily because of the alcohol, that his pushing is kind of like Kathy's bullying, but hey, he says he loves her, so... This is only a mild, and really irrelevant spoiler, really, but if you don't want to get any, skip the rest of this paragraph. When Kinsey tracks him down, he's actually made a success of himself (!), and his wife has recently left him (!!), and he wonders how Liza's doing (!?), so Kinsey tells him that she's gorgeous (give me a break!), AND that he should get in contact with her, because Liza had called him "the love of her life", and gives him Liza's married name. (view spoiler)

Finally, I'd just got a small bit of sympathy for the judgmental and self-centred Kathy in the flashback where it showed her feeling that she was losing Liza to both Ty and Violet and everyone was on her for needing to lose weight, and then there was back to the present time, where it proved conclusively that she was still a complete and utter wagon. In the middle of this was the nastiest little bit of fat-hatred, with a comparison between Liza who was "naturally slim" and Kathy, who'd worked like hell to lose the weight but had the body type that showed she was inevitably going to gain it back, no matter how hard she worked. Wow, and her hair frizzed in the humidity too, unlike Liza's, so how could she possibly be anything but nasty?

No, wait! The other thing I couldn't believe was that Kinsey was talking/thinking about the guy whose wife was dying of cancer, and said that as it was "female problems" (a second time she said it was uterine cancer) his sex life had probably been pretty lousy for a long time. Because yeah, if you're dying of cancer and it's NOT of your lady parts, well that should allow you to stay sexually (attr-)active enough to keep your husband from straying, but a "female" cancer...

It's obvious I'm pretty disgusted with this one, I'd say, but it did seem to come out of nowhere, so I'll read the next at some point. If there's anything like the rubbish in this one though, that's it.

James says

Book Review

4 out of 5 stars to S is for Silence, the 19th book in the "Kinsey Millhone" mystery series, written in 2005 by Sue Grafton. This is a top-notch installment in the series, proving why Grafton is so good at inventing characters who stick with you and never get boring. Kinsey takes on another case that she believes will be simple, against her better judgment. She hates delving into crimes that are over 30 years old, but she needs the money. And as she slowly weeds her way thru the drama, she finds the victim was indeed murdered, and there are quite a number of suspects. The mystery is strong. The ability to research history and find people who may know something is great. Relying on the mind of someone who wasn't very old at the time her mother disappeared makes this even harder, but also better. Grafton's style often seems effortless. Not quite as funny as Evanovich, not quite as hardcore as Paretsky, not as simple as other cozy mysteries, this is a balance of all the series with popular female lead / detective types. I'm almost caught up on reviews and looking forward to picking up V is for Vengeance this summer.

About Me

For those new to me or my reviews... here's the scoop: I read A LOT. I write A LOT. And now I blog A LOT. First the book review goes on Goodreads, and then I send it on over to my WordPress blog at <https://thisismytruthnow.com>, where you'll also find TV & Film reviews, the revealing and introspective 365 Daily Challenge and lots of blogging about places I've visited all over the world. And you can find all my social media profiles to get the details on the who/what/when/where and my pictures. Leave a comment and let me know what you think. Vote in the poll and ratings. Thanks for stopping by.

Anne says

What a hoot...when the murderer was revealedgeesh...I had to think about who that person was!!! Perhaps a bit too much wine!! LOL Another good read!!

E.M. Lynley says

2.5 but I'll round up to three stars.

It's been a few years since I read one of Grafton's books. I read R is for Ricochet when it came out, then nothing till last week.

I liked all the flashbacks, even though it felt a bit like whiplash moving between POV characters. But once I got used to it, I decided it was nicely done. I think Grafton managed to capture a lot of interesting characters and keep them fairly well defined. My favorite was Kathy, who starts off as a rich, selfish meddling teen and seems to get worse as she ages, even though she's married to her big crush.

What I didn't much care for was the lack of explanation for some characters' behavior. For example, Kathy's crush who ends up marrying her though he seemed to have no reason. She was the boss's daughter, but in the flashback, we don't see that the boss forces the young man into anything that would make him feel obligated to marry Kathy.

I also felt let down when the killer's identity was revealed. We don't get that scene to wrap up the why. Nearly every character had a reason to kill Violet Sullivan and I was expecting a Murder on the Orient Express conclusion where they all did it, because she was such an awful person. Because the victim was loved by no one, or not much. I didn't much care for her, but I did like the little glimpses of how each character was in the past (30 years earlier) and how they turned out in the present.

So, as far as a satisfying mystery: this didn't do it for me. But as a fun character study and a step back in time, it worked well.

Quenya says

I both liked and didn't like this story. I like the cold case aspect and I really liked watching how the disappearance of Violet affected each character over time. Sue Grafton did an excellent job of telling the past through the eyes of so many characters that it gave the reader a great deal of suspects who each had their own reasons for being glad Violet disappeared. What I didn't like was that Violet was not a likable person and I found myself wondering why her daughter cared so much. Also this was a repeat of other cases where a small town warns Kinsey off the case and then someone does something to try to deter her. It seemed almost like I had read the story before. Kinsey also seems to be getting closer to the people involved in the case to point of it almost impairing her judgement on certain items.
