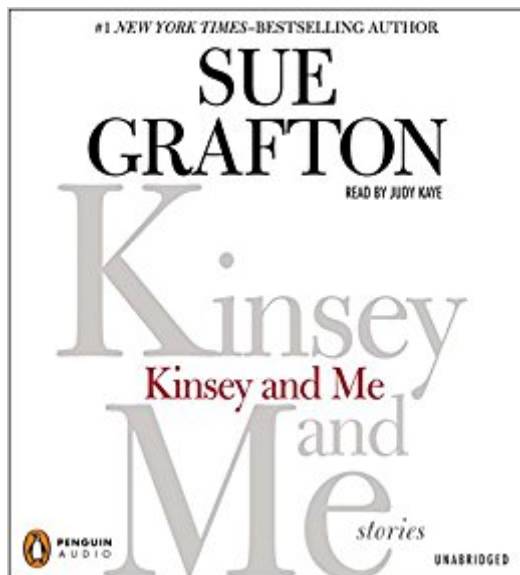


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# Kinsey And Me: Stories



## Synopsis

In 1982, Sue Grafton introduced us to Kinsey Millhone. Thirty years later, Kinsey is an established international icon and Sue, a number-one bestselling author. To mark this anniversary year, Sue has given us stories that reveal Kinsey's origins and Sue's past. "I've come to believe that Grafton is not only the most talented woman writing crime fiction today but also that, regardless of gender, her Millhone books are among the five or six best series any American has ever written." •Patrick Anderson, *The Washington Post*

Kinsey and Me has two parts: The nine Kinsey stories (1986-93), each a gem of detection; and the And Me stories, written in the decade after Grafton's mother died. Together, they show just how much of Kinsey is a distillation of her creator's past even as they reveal a child who, free of parental interventions, read everything and roamed everywhere. But the dark side of such freedom was that very parental distance. The same feisty voice and witty aperçus readers fell in love with in *A Is for Alibi* permeate the Kinsey stories. Those in the And Me section trace a remarkable voyage, from anger to understanding, from pain to forgiveness. They take us into a troubled family, dysfunctional as most families are, each in their own way, but Grafton's telling is sensitive, delicate, and ultimately, loving. Enriching the way we see Kinsey and know Sue, these stories are deeply affecting.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**\*Starred Review\*** What could be better, while waiting for the twenty-third mystery in

Grafton's alphabet series, than this revelatory collection of stories featuring both

Grafton's alter ego, PI Kinsey Millhone, and the author herself? The volume includes 9 stories with Kinsey as protagonist (8 were published in 1991 in a very limited edition for family and friends); 13 short-short stories about Kit Blue, a younger version of Grafton; an introduction; and an essay, which bridges the two sections of the book, about the development of the private-eye mystery. In the Kit Blue stories, Grafton lays bare the pain of growing up with an alcoholic mother who died too young of cancer yet also credits her mystery writer and lawyer father (also alcoholic) and mystery-reading mother for making her the writer she became. Readers are likely to revel most in the wonderfully concise Kinsey stories, 2 of which, *The Parker Shotgun* and *A Poison That Leaves No Trace*, are award winners. Also especially intriguing are *The Lying Game*, written for *Land's End's* fortieth anniversary catalog in 2003, and *Falling off the Roof*, in which members of a mystery book club take their passion for murder beyond the printed page.

**HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** To whet fans' appetites for *W Is for . . .*, the Kinsey Millhone mystery coming in 2013, Grafton offers a selection of Millhone and Kit Blue short stories. Kinsey fanatics, sensing the coming end of the landmark series, will be thrilled to read this nonalphabetical extra. --Michele Leber --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Praise for *KINSEY AND ME* "Brutally honest, emotionally powerful, Kinsey and Me is a revelatory triumph, a dance often macabre, but also a dance of celebration choreographed by a writer whose contemplations on justice never fail to offer rich rewards for legions of readers." *Richmond Times-Dispatch* "[An] alternately hilarious and pitch-dark new collection . . . The Millhone pieces are sparkling little gems in which the more leisurely pace of the novels is compressed into a mere 20 pages or so; that Kinsey manages to introduce herself, establish the mystery and then solve it, credibly, in such a small span of time and space is nothing short of miraculous. The odd thing is that we don't feel slighted by the relative brevity of plot or even characterization; Grafton is a master of the quick, economical bit of detail, the phrase that tells (or, better, implies) everything. . . The Kit Blue stories are the book's dark heart, its bitter aftertaste, and may come as a grim surprise to many of the author's fans, whose impression of her is of a cheerful, indomitable woman more like the wisecracking Kinsey than the haunted Kit. Of course she is both, and she shares them with us here, bravely, in equal measure. Lucky us." *Chicago Tribune* "Sue Grafton's most insightful and revealing book to date is arguably *Kinsey and Me*. . . The catharsis of *Kinsey and Me* is Grafton's gift to her readers, who see that she is Kit Blue and Kinsey Millhone as well as a writer who, in creating both characters, has accepted and also

transcended herself. In identifying with Kit and Kinsey and Sue Grafton too, readers can better negotiate their own imperfect lives with humor and courage and strength. The Courier-Journal "Terrific . . . The Kinsey stories and the Kit stories together open a window into Grafton's soul." USA Today "What could be better, while waiting for the twenty-third mystery in Grafton's alphabet series, than this revelatory collection of stories featuring both Grafton's alter ego, PI Kinsey Millhone, and the author herself? . . . Kinsey fanatics, sensing the coming end of the landmark series, will be thrilled to read this nonalphabetic extra. Booklist (starred review) "Provides moving and surprising insights into the woman behind the bestsellers fans will admire Grafton's impressive output and feisty fictional detective all the more knowing the challenging beginnings from which both grew. Publishers Weekly "Piercingly sensitive. "Kinsey "Kirkus "It's a pleasure just to be in Kinsey's company as she refreshes the formula conventions with her snappy wit and candid opinions." Marilyn Stasio, The New York Times Book Review

For readers who have followed the Sue Grafton Alphabet Mystery series, Kinsey Millhone is a familiar character. Almost like someone from our own lives--albeit our lives in the eighties, the decade that has become the signature era for the character. A time before technology had advanced and when the Internet was still in the distant future. Kinsey's style was born from pages of gritty detectives searching for clues the old-fashioned way. Kinsey and Me: Stories is a closer look into the character and the author. In the first section, we enjoy several short stories featuring Kinsey with her trademark tough girl persona and her ability to "lie" and follow the clues with diligence. In the second half, Grafton takes us into her own life in the ten years following her mother's death. She writes: "At the remove of some fifty years, I still find myself reluctant to lift the veil on a period of my life that was chaotic and confused. Looking back, I can see that I was rudderless and floundering, that in attempting to save myself, I hurt others...." In the introduction to the final section, she says that "Kinsey Millhone is the person I might have been had I not married young and had children. She is more than that. She is a stripped-down version of my 'self'--my shadow, my projection--a celebration of my own freedom, independence, and courage." With Kinsey Millhone as her alter ego, Grafton describes Kit Blue, featured in the final stories, as a younger version of herself. In Kit Blue, we see the pain of the lost child whose parents dived into their bottles and abdicated their roles as parents. We also see how she comes to terms with her life and what remains. In Kit's voice, we read this description: "My parents were lost people, refugees, and not from

any country that I've seen, not the victims of the known wars on this earth, but refugees in subtle battles fought somewhere inside and won and lost and borders crossed and flags laid down. My parents were the displaced...not of this world but from their lives, separated from themselves somehow when all those inner wars came to an end."I believe that most writers create their best versions of life in their fiction from the pain, angst, and interior journeys they have slogged through. And Grafton's latest creation takes us to the heart of that interior world and lets us see her very soul. Five stars.

I just finished this wonderful book. The Kinsey stories were fine, as always. To me Kinsey can do no wrong. But the stunning part of the book was the autobiographical short essays of Sue Grafton's life under the pen name of Kit Blue. Each essay was just a hair breath's away from poetry. The essays were written as prose, but the observations so finely drawn that if Sue Grafton had written them in line by line form, they would be recognized as really fine poems. -- It is very courageous writing for her to contribute. It also shines light on Kinsey's relationships to Henry, Rosie and the men that drift into her life. -- Dear Sue Grafton, If you read this review, please know that I thank you for your insightful essays. I hope you are thinking of writing a more complete autobiography. What a book that would be! Thanks for your wonderful talent. -- A good friend introduced me to the alphabet series years ago and I couldn't be more grateful. Well done!

Deep emotional wounds, inflicted by one's parents, leave life-long scars. I had no idea of Grafton's back story, it was so very sad. Her parents were alcoholics and her mother was deeply flawed & self-destructive. The second half of this book, while short story fiction, is based on Grafton's early life. It is tough to read, yet very moving. The first half consists of Kinsey Millhone short story mysteries that are a pleasure to read. I found them to be more complex than most short stories, with well-defined characters.

Tough call, this one. Sue Grafton is the best author I have never read. Let me clarify that by saying that I listened to "A is for Alibi" as an audio book and identified the character Kinsey Millhone with the reader of the series, Judy Kaye who does a great job. So, I have "read" every book in the series courtesy of Judy. This book consists of 9 short Kinsey Millhone stories which were great - well plotted, clever, believable, and well written. Maybe a touch hokey, but what do you want in a dozen pages? The second half deals with "Kit" who is reflective of Sue's life in 13 stories that deal with her alcoholic mother and father, the dysfunctional family, the mother's illnesses, surgeries, etc. I am not

a big fan of misery and wallowing in past issues of a rotten family life - probably why I tend to shy away from Oprah's book club picks. Despite the topic, the writing is excellent. So, how about a split? 5 stars for the Kinsey stories, 3 for the Kit stories, gives us a 4 rating. It was a pleasant way to pass the 700 miles I put on the car for business this week.

Love Sue Grafton -- and read everything she writes. This is a book of short stories that are in keeping with her mystery novels as they usually include a twist. Definitely recommend.

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