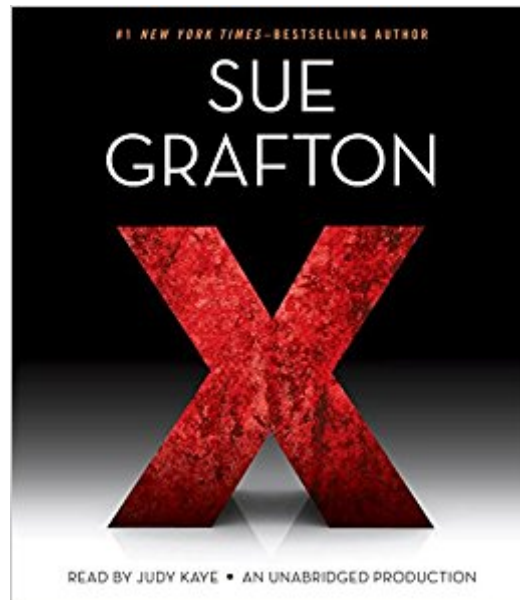


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X (A Kinsey Millhone Novel)



Synopsis

Of #1 New York Times bestselling author Sue Grafton, NPR's Maureen Corrigan said, "Makes me wish there were more than 26 letters. With only two letters left, Grafton's many devoted readers will share that sentiment. X: The number ten. An unknown quantity. A mistake. A cross. A kiss. X: The shortest entry in Webster's Unabridged. Derived from Greek and Latin and commonly found in science, medicine, and religion. The most graphically dramatic letter. Notoriously tricky to pronounce: think xylophone. X: The twenty-fourth letter in the English alphabet. Sue Grafton's X: Perhaps her darkest and most chilling novel, it features a remorseless serial killer who leaves no trace of his crimes. Once again breaking the rules and establishing new paths, Grafton wastes little time identifying this sociopath. The test is whether Kinsey can prove her case against him before she becomes his next victim.

Book Information

Series: A Kinsey Millhone Novel (Book 24)

Audio CD

Publisher: Random House Audio; Unabridged edition (August 25, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385393938

ISBN-13: 978-0385393935

Product Dimensions: 5 x 1.1 x 5.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 4,197 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #132,598 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #3 in Books > Books on CD >

Authors, A-Z > (G) > Grafton, Sue #40 in Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction >

Unabridged #80 in Books > Books on CD > Mystery & Thrillers

Customer Reviews

Praise for X "Grafton's endless resourcefulness in varying her pitches in this landmark series, graced by her trademark self-deprecating humor, is one of the seven wonders of the genre." Kirkus Reviews (starred review) "An inventive plot and incisive character studies elevate MWA Grand Master Grafton's 24th Kinsey Millhone novel.... This superior outing will remind readers why this much-loved series will be missed as the end of the alphabet approaches." Publishers Weekly (starred review) "Ratcheting up the heat as she heads toward the finish line of her alphabetically-framed series, Grafton has

turned in a corker of a novel with X, upping her already high-level game. —•— •The Boston Globe—•— “Lesser authors churn out books. Grafton continues to knock them out of the park. —•— •Scott Coffman, Louisville Courier-Journal —•— “Just beneath the extroverted mask she presents at bookstore appearances is the deeply contemplative writer still determined to stretch her chops and chart territory that removes any semblance of a comfort zone. —•— •Sarah Weinman, Los Angeles Times --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Sue Grafton—•— first introduced Kinsey Millhone in the Alphabet Series in 1982 and since then, both writer and heroine have become icons and international best sellers. Ms. Grafton is a writer who consistently breaks the bonds of genre while never writing the same book twice. Her awards include the Cartier Diamond Dagger and the Edgar Grand Master Award. She has also won three Shamus Awards, three Anthony Awards, a Lifetime Achievement Award from Bouchercon, and the Ross Macdonald Literary Award. She lives in Montecito, California, and Louisville, Kentucky.

Private Investigator Kinsey Millhone keeps a set of blank index cards handy to make notes about people and places pertinent to the case. Readers of X may want to do something similar because there is a cast of thousands. As a longtime Sue Grafton reader, I enjoyed X very much. I think I read my first Kinsey Millhone book around 1989. X is long at over 400 pages (her earliest mysteries were about 250 pages in hardcover), and shows evidence of padding, such as step-by-step descriptions of Kinsey making coffee or making a sandwich. But I enjoyed catching up with Kinsey and the gang -- her landlord Henry, local pub owners Rosie and William, and occasional romantic interests Cheney and Dietz. There are two full fledged mysteries in X and Kinsey is racing time to solve both. Meanwhile, there's a minor subplot going on with the strange couple that has moved in next to Kinsey and Henry. Since Grafton left time behind and has kept her novels in the 1980s (and sometimes the 1960s), I have enjoyed playing Spot the Anachronism while reading her books. But she has defeated me in X. I could not find a single slip up. Power windows in her 1983 Honda? Yes, in some models. Smoking in bars in California in 1989? Yes, the no-smoking law didn't go into effect until 1994. Pan Am from LAX to Heathrow in 1989? Yes, Pan Am was in business until 1991. While I might not recommend this one to a first time Sue Grafton reader, it's a lot of fun for those of us who've been along for the ride since the actual 1980s. (Thanks to NetGalley and Penguin Books for a digital review copy.)

I have also read all of the Kinsey books. I am sorry to say that I don't think this one is nearly as good as the others. I found myself checking the dustjacket several times to make sure that it wasn't some Chinese knockoff. The writing doesn't sound like Sue Grafton's and Kinsey doesn't sound like Kinsey. Sue Grafton has always been a little overly descriptive when it comes to driving. I don't think I've ever enjoyed reading about the streets she takes to get wherever she's going. Until this book, however, it didn't seem like padding to make the book fit a certain number of pages. And, do I really need to know what a mailman wears? Sure, maybe it's odd that he's wearing shorts when it's chilly, but to read he is wearing a blue shirt is kind of ridiculous because mailmen have been wearing blue shirts for as long as I can remember and that's a long time. And, I don't really think anyone with Kinsey's lack of fashion sense would know the names of luxury fabrics or styles--especially when it comes to clothes for men. The pace of X is very slow and I am sorry to say I just didn't care about the main plot until the last 25 pages. This is a 403 page book and I would say that 25% of it could have been edited out. Another disappointment is that Kinsey seems to have become as boring as her Honda. Don't take offense Honda fans. I drive a Honda and it's just fine, but there's nothing exciting about a Honda unless it's red. Just kidding. What happened to her spunky, opinionated self? Being secure financially shouldn't have turned her into a drone. The good news is that Henry, William, and Rosie are still kicking. One of the subplots involves Henry and even though it is reminiscent of another Kinsey book it is still good to have him included even though he is obsessed with plumbing. I have not given up on Kinsey, but I probably will not buy the next book hot off the press. I will wait until I can get it used for \$5 or less--including shipping.

I am maybe giving this the fifth star out of pure joy that I didn't hate it. I found the last few almost painful to read and a few before that mundane. I was powering on purely because I have been reading these since I was a kid maybe starting around the time F or G came out. This book though has all the stuff that made the early alphabet awesome. I read it in one sitting. Hooray for Kinsey being back. Pete is once again at the center of this account. His widow being audited so Kinsey goes through the old files she retained in W or whatever boring book he died in. She finds a mysterious package and a strange coded list of names. Meanwhile, Kinsey has been hoodwinked by a client who passed her marked bills to find a long lost son/ex con. Kinsey tries to get to the bottom of that problem feeling she might have ensnared the young man in some criminal enterprise unknowingly. Kinsey even has some personal growth about her feelings toward Pete and we finally learn the oft mentioned rift at Byrd Shine's source as well.

Sue Grafton continues the investigator-life journey of Kinsey Millhone in "X", Grafton's latest, number 24, in this epic alphabetic series of detective novels. "X" is not for anything special in Grafton's eyes, but perhaps X it could stand for two "exs" who reunite in this tale of art theft and, possibly, murder. We're never sure anyone died in this story, but they could have and that's part of the mystery. Grafton also invests considerable time exploring the ramifications of California's water shortage, but she folds it neatly into the plot so it never reads like preaching. If you're already a Grafton fan, you will probably enjoy this story because you've lived with these characters since 1982 and they're old friends. And it's comforting to learn they're still well and happy. Its also impressive to see Ms. Grafton still able to weave a compelling tale with Ms. Millhone after so many attempts. I did miss Kinsey's VW bug (which she dumped a few years ago) but she hasn't graduated to a Prius yet, despite her frugality. Two more stories to go, and I'm sort of hoping Kinsey wins the California Lottery by the time Grafton reaches "Z", so she can buy a Morgan and retire to the south of France. But I guess we'll have wait and see if she survives "Y" (but I expect she will).

This took real effort to get through. The plot was thin and not particularly interesting, and there were too many characters to keep track of. The ending was abrupt probably because Ms. Grafton was as bored with it as I was.

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