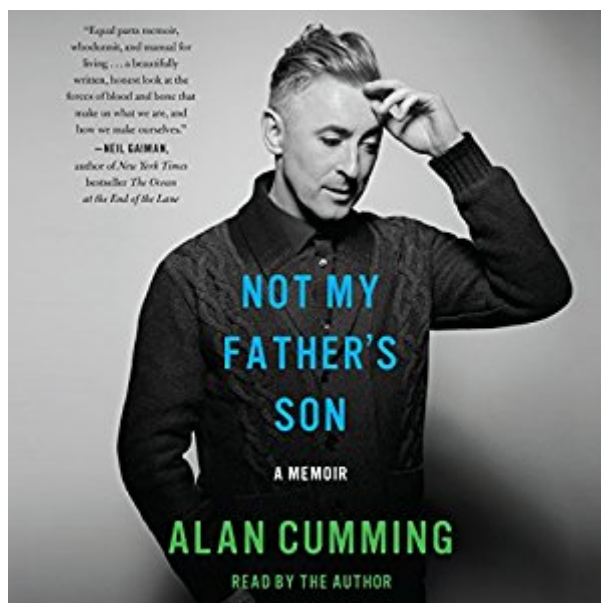


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# Not My Father's Son: A Memoir



## Synopsis

Audie Award, Autobiography/Memoir, 2015 Dark, painful memories can be like a cage. Or, in the case of Alan Cumming, they can be packed away in a box, stuck in the attic to be forgotten. Until one day the box explodes and all the memories flood back in horrible detail. Alan Cumming grew up in the grip of a man who held his family hostage, someone who meted out violence with a frightening ease, who waged a silent war with himself that sometimes spilled over onto everyone around him. That man was Alex Cumming, Alan's father. When television producers approached Alan to appear on a popular celebrity genealogy show in 2010, he enthusiastically agreed. He hoped to solve a mystery that had long cast a shadow over his family. His maternal grandfather, Tommy Darling, had disappeared into the Far East after WWII. Alan's mother knew very little about him - he had been a courier, carrying information between battalions on his motorbike. The last time she saw her father, Alan's mother was eight years old. When she was 13, the family was informed that he had died by his own hand, an accidental shooting. But this was not the only mystery laid before Alan's feet. His father, whom Alan had not seen or spoken to for more than a decade, reconnected just before filming for *Who Do You Think You Are?* began. He had a secret he had to share, one that would shock his son to his very core and set into motion a journey that would change Alan's life forever. With ribald humor, wit, and incredible insight, Alan seamlessly moves back and forth in time, integrating stories from his childhood in Scotland and his experiences today as the celebrated actor of film, television, and stage. At times suspenseful, at times deeply moving, but always incredibly brave and honest, *Not My Father's Son* is a powerful story of embracing the best aspects of the past and triumphantly pushing the darkness aside.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have liked Alan Cummings since I saw him in Spy Kids years ago. He has a innocence and sweetness that can't be faked. His take on the scarecrow in Tin Man was funny and lovely and sad. I was interested to read more about what had made this extraordinary man. His memoir is every bit as wonderful as he is. It is innocent and still too wise. It is sad and lovely. Heartbreaking violence towards a child is slipped in next to celebrity memories. His wondering about where he could come from is written with longing and the same enthusiasm with which he distances himself from the father he knows is part of his past. But even as we explore the answers to his mysteries we see what Alan does not. He is his fathers son in absolute negative. Where his father looks over a small child to find fault, Cumming writes about his father with grace. Perhaps, he posits, there were good and happy times with his father that he and his brother were just too traumatized to remember. Where his father rages, Cummings is gentle and wry. Alan looks deeply and he sees. Cummings is a lovely writer. Each vignette hands the reader one small part of him. It is up to the reader to put them together. Along the way we are treated to thoughts on what Shakespeare would be doing if he were alive today, the Eurovision Song contest, and the story of his blue sweater vest. His fathers relentless cruelty never diminishes but Alan grows far beyond it. He makes it beautiful

Poignant and unashamed, a compelling read. I don't usually read memoirs and I didn't know what to expect, but I could not put it down and it was the first book I thought about during my workday in a long time. Loved the focus on Mary Darling, especially toward the end, maybe because I'm a mom, too. It showed the progression of life for all of the family. Also loved the insight into the life of a working actor.

Who doesn't love Alan Cummings? Whether as scheming Ira Gold on The Good Wife, or the suave host of Masterpiece Mystery or all the way back to the first time I saw him in Spy Kids or just a few weeks ago when he blew me away with his cabaret show on PBS, he is a man of many gifts. To think that he reached the pinnacle of his profession by overcoming great personal odds makes a good story even greater. The vivid memories he selected to illustrate his story were sometimes so violent, it was difficult for the reader to continue, but by the end of the memoir Cumming had done a good job of putting it all in the context of his family life. Using the British TV genealogy show on

which he was featured as a starting and ending point was a good technique, and although some parts of the book did lag a bit, he definitely had a good tale to tell. Many family photographs helped to bring it all to life. I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent with Mr. Cumming.

Very interesting as it covers most of Alan's life. Not just the good stuff but the sad and bad stuff too. Really makes you think. All if the crap Alan had to go through and he still is able to make great lemonade! I give it a five because I read this a while back and yet Alan and his life story keeps popping up in my mind. A really great actor too!

This is an unbelievable autobiography. How cruel an adult can be towards a child, even when that child becomes a man, is just beyond comprehension and yet it happens more times than we can begin to fathom. Mr. Cumming's story is so close to what my husband lived through in his childhood - same type of father, same types of inhumane punishments, same unconcerns for mental scars on a child. But, in my husband's case, when he was 12 he somehow stood up to his father and his father never lifted a finger to him again. His father eventually softened in his old age, but the damage had been done. So sad! In this book, without spoiling it for anyone, I don't think there ever is redemption but writing it was the best thing Mr. Cummings could do for himself, his brother and his mother. The book is very well written. I felt I was right there along with Mr. Cummings whether he was describing the countryside, the people he met, the countries he visited, the home atmosphere, whatever situation he experienced - they're all so well laid out that the reader is right there and feels every disturbing or happy sensation along with him. Kudos to you Mr. Cumming. Since I was first aware of your work in Cabaret I have been a fan. Had I not been, I would certainly be after reading your book. Thank you so much. I'm deeply thankful to you that I bought it. I even transferred the book to my husband so he could read it and realize he was not alone in receiving similar cruel punishment in his childhood. Thank you for sharing with your readers. Best of luck Mr. Cumming. May you continue to inspire your audiences for many, many more years in all the roles you play and and in your private life. In another 25 years, please write a sequel which I'm sure will be as interesting although totally different.

All I can say about this book is Wow! I read it straight through and could not put it down. While it could be considered sadly awful or awfully sad, it is compelling in its optimism and resilience. Cumming is an excellent writer and is very honest in his portrayal of his life and his thoughts. He is also honest with himself in the process that he went through as he lived the events in this book,

almost taking the reader along as an afterthought as he uses the writing process to clarify his experience for himself, which makes the whole story so very intimate that I sometimes felt like I was intruding on his pain, but in the end I felt more like a close friend encouraging him through a very painful process, proud and happy at his success in coming to terms with his childhood experiences. All in all, a very excellent book which will encourage readers to examine their own childhood relationships and experiences and use them to evaluate how or if we successfully moved into an independent adulthood.

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