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# SUE GRADTON

Author of "K" IS FOR KILLER

"**H** IS FOR  
HOMICIDE

"Intelligent, fast-paced and filled with memorable characters... Kinsey Millhone remains as engaging as ever."  
—The New York Times Book Review

“H”



**Sue Grafton**

FAWCETT CREST • NEW YORK

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## **“THE LADY CAN WRITE. . . .**

Any reader who needs a smart and sassy P.I. would do well to hire Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone. . . . 'H' IS FOR HOMICIDE continues to show the author in strong storytelling form. . . . [It] finds Kinsey Millhone working on a case involving the death of a claims adjuster for a California insurance company. The story takes her into the Los Angeles barrio in pursuit of a violent criminal, into jails and hospitals, and into a grungy bar named the Meat Locker. . . . Count on Millhone not only to corner the murderer but also to make a statement against the foibles of the insurance game.”

*The New York Times*

“The eighth novel in Grafton's best-selling series is perhaps the wildest ride yet. The story begins with the violent end of Parnell Perkins. . . . [Kinsey] is determined not to get involved in Perkins' homicide, even if they had been drinking buddies and he seemed like a truly nice guy. After all, his case is unrelated to Kinsey's current one, the suspicious claims filed by one Bibianna Diaz. If Kinsey can crack the Diaz case . . . maybe [she] can keep her job. . . . Grafton's skill with dialogue, her vivid characterizations and California scenery are priceless. . . . There are moments when the tension becomes so unbearable that you are tempted to skip paragraphs out of self-preservation.”

*USA Today*

**Please turn the page for more rave reviews. . . .**

## **“ONE OF THE BEST. . . .**

A vivid, funny portrait of life in an ethnic underworld, viewed without judgment. Suspense there is, plentifully, and a final suggestion that Kinsey will be exploring different mischiefs next time. Outstanding.”

*Los Angeles Times*

“A realistic . . . entertaining tour of some of society’s sleazier corners . . . The engaging Millhone’s wonderful first-person narration makes these books addictive. Full of idiosyncrasies and sharp simile, it’s a voice that might even draw an appreciative snort from Raymond Chandler.”

*The Wall Street Journal*

“Ever since she burst onto the crime-fiction scene several years ago in ‘A’ IS FOR ALIBI, Kinsey Millhone has survived by her wit and wits, not by muscle. . . . What makes the Grafton series so refreshing is the female perspective in a genre dominated by men. . . . ‘H’ IS FOR HOMICIDE is a fast, fun read, and I’m sure the growing legion of Grafton fans wouldn’t miss this latest book for the world.”

*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

“A web of intrigue lures the private eye into an investigation that doesn’t let up until the last page.”

*San Francisco Chronicle*

## **“A MASTER OF PACE . . .**

**The book moves with breakneck speed.”**

*Chicago Tribune*

**“Sue Grafton ranks high among today’s whodunit writers, deservedly so. Her alphabetical series, crisply conceived and deftly rendered, never fails to deliver top-flight entertainment.”**

*The San Diego Union*

**“If all detectives were as good as Kinsey Millhone, crime would dry up and they would be out of business. . . . The characters are richly drawn. Millhone, as usual, is tough and funny, a bright loner blessed with wit, a certain clumsiness in social graces, a terrific landlord and incredible survivor’s luck. . . . Half the fun in reading ‘H’ IS FOR HOMICIDE is Grafton’s writing. Millhone’s wry observations about the situations she finds herself in are worth the read by themselves.”**

*Milwaukee Sentinel*

**“Grafton tells a good story, but the real appeal of this series is Kinsey, who strikes a responsive chord in a lot of women who think this is the way they might have lived out their lives if it hadn’t been for kids and husbands.”**

*The Denver Post*

**Please turn the page for more rave reviews. . . .**

**“ONE OF THE BEST FEMALE  
DETECTIVES IN FICTION  
TODAY.”**

*Detroit Free Press*

“Millhone remains an unpredictable, more-than-just-engaging hero—gutsy enough to talk back to a psychopath, vulnerable enough to slide into a sharp, touching reminiscence of homesickness at summer camp. . . . Grafton keeps pulling out surprises—and pulling us in.”

*Entertainment Weekly*

“Suspenseful and humorous . . . There is not a dull page.”

*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

“Kinsey Millhone is her usual sarcastic, spunky self. . . . A lot of fun.”

*Kansas City Star*

“Grafton starts with a tension that builds steadily without a letup. . . . You won’t be able to put it down.”

*The Indianapolis Star*

“Stunning . . . One can’t wait for the next installment.”

*The Orlando Sentinel*



## **“[A] TOUR DE FORCE . . .**

**‘H’ IS FOR HOMICIDE** is very satisfying: fast-paced, witty, and loaded with snappy dialogue.”

*Mostly Murder*

“Kinsey Millhone [is] one of the best female detectives on the market. . . . A genuinely scared-out-of-her-wits detective pitted against an evil man with a loose grip on his sanity.”

*The Des Moines Register*

“This is Grafton’s wittiest, funniest book. Kinsey’s sharp tongue is a formidable weapon, though she’s not afraid to use something with a little more firepower. She is truly the gumshoe for our age.”

*Book Talk*

“‘H’ IS FOR HOMICIDE is probably the best yet, fun and tough and serious and witty—just like Kinsey Millhone.”

*The Dayton Daily News*

“Deft, unique, on target.”

*The Hartford Courant*



*By Sue Grafton:*

**Kinsey Millhone mysteries:**

**"A" IS FOR ALIBI**

**"B" IS FOR BURGLAR**

**"C" IS FOR CORPSE**

**"D" IS FOR DEADBEAT**

**"E" IS FOR EVIDENCE**

**"F" IS FOR FUGITIVE**

**"G" IS FOR GUMSHOE\***

**"H" IS FOR HOMICIDE\***

**"I" IS FOR INNOCENT\***

**"J" IS FOR JUDGMENT\***

**"K" IS FOR KILLER\***

**KEZIAH DANE**

**THE LOLLY MADONNA WAR**

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**For the Women's Group in all its incarnations:**

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Mary Lynn**

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**Susan Dyne  
Joyce Dobry**

**Margaret Warner  
Georgina Morin  
and Barbara Knox**

**sharing tears and triumphs, rage and laughter,  
for the last five years of Monday nights.**

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LOOKING BACK, IT'S hard to remember if the low morale at California Fidelity originated with the death of one of the claims adjusters or the transfer of Gordon Titus, an "efficiency expert" from the Palm Springs office, who was brought in to bolster profits. Both events contributed to the general unrest among the CF employees, and both ended up affecting me far more than I would have imagined, given the fact that my association with the company had been, up to that point, so loose. In checking back through my calendar, I find a brief penciled note of the appointment with Gordon Titus, whose arrival was imminent when Parnell was killed. After that first meeting with Titus, I'd jotted, "s.o.b. extraordinaire!" which summarized my entire relationship with him.

I'd been gone for three weeks, doing a consumer investigative report for a San Diego company concerned about a high-level executive whose background turned out to be

something other than he'd represented. The work had taken me all over the state, and I had a check in my pocket for beaucoup bucks by the time I wrapped up my inquiry on a Friday afternoon. I'd been given the option of remaining in San Diego that weekend at the company's expense, but I woke up inexplicably at 3:00 A.M. with a primal longing for home. A moon the size of a dinner plate was propped up on the balcony outside my window, and the light falling across my face was almost bright enough to read by. I lay there, staring at the swaying shadow of palm fronds on the wall, and I knew that what I wanted most was to be in my own bed. I was tired of hotel rooms and meals on the road. I was tired of spending time with people I didn't know well or expect to see again. I got out of bed, pulled my clothes on, and threw everything I had in my duffel bag. By 3:30 A.M. I'd checked out, and ten minutes later I was on the 405 northbound, heading for Santa Teresa in my new (used) VW bug, a 1974 sedan, pale blue, with only one wee small ding in the left rear fender. Classy stuff.

At that hour, the Los Angeles freeway system is just beginning to hum. Traffic was light, but every on ramp seemed to donate a vehicle or two, people pouring north to work. It was still dark, with a delicious chill in the air, a ground fog curling along the berm like puffs of smoke. To my right, the foothills rose up and away from the road, the tracts of houses tucked into the landscape showing no signs of life. The lights along the highway contributed a nearly ghostly illumination, and what was visible of the city in the distance seemed stately and serene. I always feel an affinity for others traveling at such an hour, as if we are all engaged in some form of clandestine activity. Many of the other drivers had oversize Styrofoam cups of coffee. Some were actually managing to wolf down fast food as they drove.

With the occasional car window rolled down, I was treated to bursts of booming music that faded away as the cars passed me, changing lanes. A glance in my rearview mirror showed a woman in the convertible behind me emoting with vigor, belting out a lip-sync solo as the wind whipped through her hair. I felt a jolt of pure joy. It was one of those occasions when I suddenly realized how happy I was. Life was good. I was female, single, with money in my pocket and enough gas to get home. I had nobody to answer to and no ties to speak of. I was healthy, physically fit, filled with energy. I flipped on the radio and chimed in on a chorus of "Amazing Grace," which didn't quite suit the occasion but was the only station I could find. An early morning evangelist began to make his pitch, and by the time I reached Ventura, I was nearly redeemed. As usual, I'd forgotten how often surges of goodwill merely presage bad news.

The usual five-hour drive from San Diego was condensed to four and a half, which put me back in Santa Teresa at a little after eight. I was still feeling wired. I decided to hit the office first, dropping off my typewriter and the briefcase full of notes before I headed home. I'd stop at a supermarket somewhere along the way and pick up just enough to get me through the next two days. Once I unloaded my duffel at home, I intended to grab a quick shower and then sleep for ten hours straight, getting up just in time for a bite of supper at Rosie's down the street from me. There's nothing quite as decadent as a day in the sack alone. I'd turn my phone off, let the machine pick up, and tape a note to the front door saying "Do Not Bother Me." I could hardly wait.

I expected the parking lot behind my office building to be deserted. It was Saturday morning and the stores downtown wouldn't open until ten. It was puzzling, therefore, to realize that the area was swarming with people, some of whom

were cops. My first thought was that maybe a movie was being shot, the area cordoned off so the cameras could roll without interruption. There was a smattering of onlookers standing out on the street and the same general air of orchestrated boredom that seems to accompany a shoot. Then I spotted the crime scene tape and my senses went on red alert. Since the lot was inaccessible, I found a parking place out at the curb. I removed my handgun from my purse and tucked it into my briefcase in the backseat, locked the car doors, and moved toward the uniformed officer who was standing near the parking kiosk. He turned a speculative eye on me as I approached, trying to decide if I had any business at the scene. He was a nice-looking man in his thirties with a long, narrow face, hazel eyes, closely trimmed auburn hair, and a small mustache. His smile was polite and exposed a chip in one of his front teeth. He'd either been in a fight or used his central incisors in a manner his mother had warned him about as a child. "May I help you?"

I stared up at the three-story stucco building, which was mostly retail shops on the ground floor, businesses above. I tried to look like an especially law-abiding citizen instead of a free-lance private investigator with a tendency to fib. "Hi. What's going on? I work in that building and I was hoping to get in."

"We'll be wrapping this up in another twenty minutes. You have an office up there?"

"I'm part of the second-floor insurance complex. What was it, a burglary?"

The hazel eyes did a full survey and I could see the caution kick in. He didn't intend to disseminate information without knowing who I was. "May I see some identification?"

"Sure. I'll just get my wallet," I said. I didn't want him



to think I was whipping out a weapon. Cops at a crime scene can be edgy little buggers and probably don't appreciate sudden moves. I handed him my billfold flipped open to my California driver's license with the photostat of my P.I. license visible in the slot below. "I've been out of town and I wanted to drop off some stuff before I headed home." I'd been a cop myself once, but I still tend to volunteer tidbits that are none of their business.

His scrutiny was brief. "Well, I doubt they'll let you in, but you can always ask," he said, gesturing toward a plain-clothes detective with a clipboard. "Check with Sergeant Hollingshead."

I still didn't have a clue what was going on, so I tried again. "Did someone break into the jewelry store?"

"Homicide."

"Really?" Scanning the parking lot, I could see the cluster of police personnel working in an area where the body probably lay. Nothing was actually visible at that remove, but most of the activity was concentrated in the vicinity. "Who's been assigned to the case, Lieutenant Dolan, by any chance?"

"That's right. You might try the mobile crime lab if you want to talk to him. I saw him head in that direction a few minutes ago."

"Thanks." I crossed the parking lot, my gaze flickering to the paramedics, who were just packing up. The police photographer and a guy with a notebook doing a crime scene sketch were measuring the distance from a small ornamental shrub to the victim, whom I could see now, lying facedown on the pavement. The shoes were man-size. Someone had covered the body with a tarp, but I could still see the soles of his Nikes, toes touching, heels angled out in the form of a V.

Lieutenant Dolan appeared, heading in my direction. When our paths intersected, we shook hands automatically, exchanging benign pleasantries. With him, there's no point in barging right in with all the obvious questions. Dolan would tell me as much or as little as suited him in his own sweet time. Curiosity only makes him stubborn, and persistence touches off an inbred crankiness. Lieutenant Dolan's in his late fifties, not that far from retirement from what I'd heard, balding, baggy-faced, wearing a rumpled gray suit. He's a man I admire, though our relationship has had its antagonistic moments over the years. He's not fond of private detectives. He considers us a useless, though tolerable, breed and then only as long as we keep off his turf. As a cop, he's smart, meticulous, tireless, and very shrewd. In the company of civilians, his manner is usually remote, but in a squad room with his fellow officers, I've caught glimpses of the warmth and generosity that elicit much loyalty in his subordinates, qualities he never felt much need to trot out for me. This morning he seemed reasonably friendly, which is always worrisome.

"Who's the guy?" I said finally.

"Don't know. We haven't ID'd him yet. You want to take a look?" He jerked his head, indicating that I was to follow as he crossed to the body. I could feel my heart start to pump in my throat, the blood rushing to my face. In one of those tingling intimations of truth, I suddenly knew who the victim was. Maybe it was the familiar tire-tread soles of the running shoes, the elasticized rim of bright pink sweat pants, a glimpse of bare ankle showing dark skin. I focused on the sight with a curious sense of *déjà vu*. "What happened to him?"

"He was shot at close range, probably sometime after midnight. A jogger spotted the body at six-fifteen and called