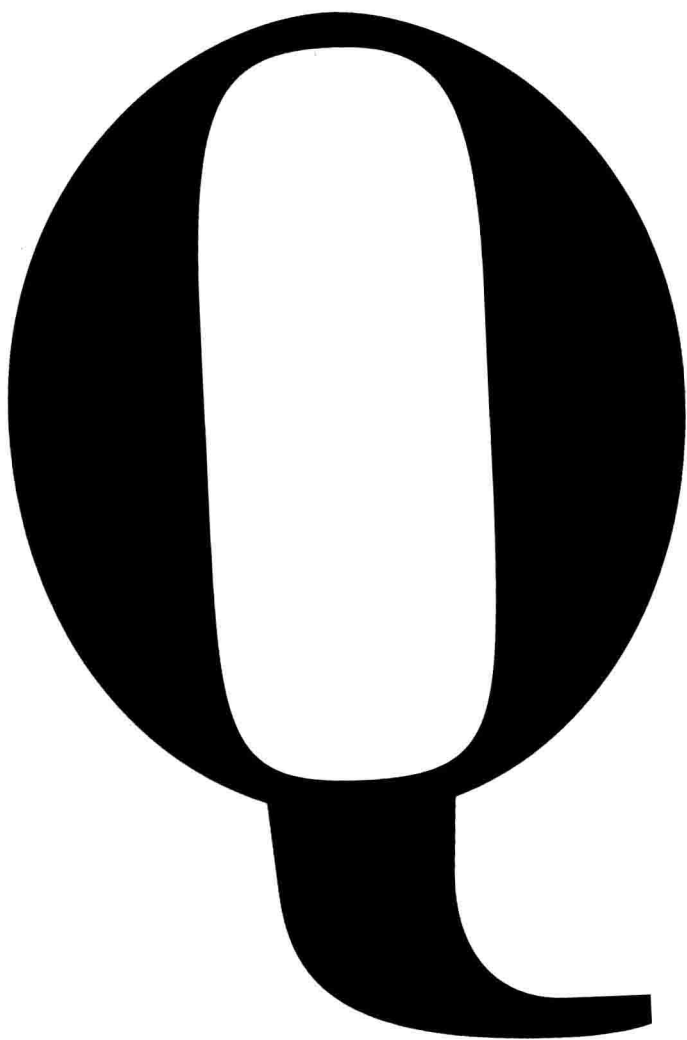


**SUE
GRAFTON**



is for
Quarry



While inspired by a real case, this is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously and any resemblance to actual persons, businesses, events, or locales is coincidental.

A Marian Wood Book
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Q

IS FOR QUARRY

ALSO 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

L is for Lawless

M is for Malice

N is for Noose

O is for Outlaw

P is for Peril

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a marian wood book

***Published by G. P. Putnam's Sons
a member of
Penguin Putnam Inc.
New York***

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO

Bill Turner and Deborah Linden

Bob and Nancy Failing

and

Susan and Gary Gulbransen.

Thank you for making this one possible.

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Q

IS FOR QUARRY

1

It was Wednesday, the second week in April, and Santa Teresa was making a wanton display of herself. The lush green of winter, with its surfeit of magenta and salmon bougainvillea, had erupted anew in a splashy show of crocuses, hyacinths, and flowering plum trees. The skies were a mild blue, the air balmy and fragrant. Violets dotted the grass. I was tired of spending my days closeted in the hall of records, searching out grant deeds and tax liens for clients who were, doubtless, happily pursuing tennis, golf, and other idle amusements.

I suppose I was suffering from a mutant, possibly incurable form of spring fever, which consisted of feeling bored, restless, and disconnected from humanity at large. My name is Kinsey Millhone. I'm a private detective in Santa Teresa, California, ninety-five miles north of Los Angeles. I'd be turning thirty-seven on May 5, which was coming up in four weeks, an event that was probably contributing to my gen-

eral malaise. I lead a stripped-down existence untroubled by bairn, pets, or living household plants.

On February 15, two months before, I'd moved into new offices, having separated myself from my association with the law firm of Kingman and Ives. Lonnie Kingman had purchased a building on lower State Street, and though he'd offered to take me with him, I felt it was time to be out on my own.

That was my first mistake.

My second was an unfortunate encounter with two landlords in a deal that went sour and left me out in the cold.

My third office-related error was the one I now faced. In desperation, I'd rented space in a nondescript cottage on Caballeria Lane, where a row of identical stucco bungalows were lined up at the curb like the Three Little Pigs. The block—short, narrow, and lined with cars—ran between Santa Teresa Street and Arbor, a block north of Via Madrina, in the heart of downtown. While the price was right and the location was excellent—in easy walking distance of the courthouse, the police station, and the public library—the office itself fell woefully short of ideal.

The interior consisted of two rooms. The larger I designated as my office proper; the smaller I was using as a combination library-and-reception area. In addition, there was a galley-style kitchen, where I kept a small refrigerator, my coffee pot, and my Sparkletts water dispenser. There was also a small fusty half-bath with a sorrowful-looking toilet and sink. The whole of it smelled like mildew, and I suspected at night wee creatures scuttled around the baseboards after all the lights were turned off. By way of compensation, the building's owner had offered unlimited cans of an off-brand paint, and I'd spent the better part of a week rolling coats of white latex over the former pulsating pink, a shade reminiscent of internal organs at work. He'd also agreed to have the rugs cleaned, not that anyone could tell. The beige high-low, wall-to-wall nylon carpeting was matted from long wear and seemed to be infused with despair. I'd arranged and rearranged my

desk, my swivel chair, my file cabinets, sofa, and assorted artificial plants. Nothing dispelled the general air of weariness that infected the place. I had plenty of money in savings (twenty-five thousand bucks if it's anybody's business) so, in theory, I could have held out for much classier digs. On the other hand, at three fifty a month, the space was affordable and satisfied one of my basic principles in life, which is: Never, never, never, to live beyond my means. I don't want to be compelled to take on work to meet my overhead. The office is meant to serve me, not the other way around.

Since the bungalows on either side of mine were vacant, I was feeling isolated, which may account for a newfound ambivalence about my single status in a world of married folk. Except for two brief failed marriages, I'd been unattached for most of my natural life. This had never bothered me. More often than not, I rejoiced in my freedom, my mobility, and my solitude. Lately, circumstances had conspired to unsettle my habitual content.

Earlier that week, I'd encountered my friend Vera with her husband, (Dr.) Neil Hess. I was sneaking in a late-afternoon jog on the bike path at the beach when I'd spotted them sauntering along ahead of me. Vera was a former employee of California Fidelity Insurance, for which I'd also worked. She'd met Neil, decided he was too short for her, and tried passing him off on me. I knew at a glance they were smitten with each other, and despite protests to the contrary, I'd persuaded her that he was her perfect match, which had turned out to be true. The two of them were accompanied that afternoon by their eighteen-month-old son in his stroller and a grinning golden retriever pup, frolicking and prancing, tugging at his leash. Vera—massive, lumbering, milky, and serene—was clearly expecting again, apparently in mere days, judging by her swollen state. We paused to chat and I realized that in the three and a half years since I'd last seen her, my life hadn't changed a whit. Same apartment, same car, same work, same boyfriend in absentia in a relationship that was going no place. The revelation generated a prolonged pang of regret.

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Meanwhile, Henry, my beloved landlord, was off cruising the Caribbean in the company of his siblings and his sister-in-law, Rosie, who owns the tavern half a block from my apartment. I'd been bringing in his mail, watering his houseplants once a week and his yard every couple of days. Rosie's restaurant would be closed for another five days, so until the three of them returned home, I couldn't even have supper in familiar surroundings. I know all of this sounds ever so faintly like whining, but I feel morally obliged to tell the truth.

That Wednesday morning, I'd decided my attitude would greatly improve if I quit feeling sorry for myself and got my office squared away. To that end, I'd gone to a thrift store and purchased two additional (used) file cabinets, an upright wooden cupboard with assorted pigeon holes, and a funky painted armoire to house my accumulation of office supplies. I was perched on a low stool surrounded by cartons I hadn't unpacked since I'd moved into Lonnie's office three and a half years before. This felt a little bit like Christmas in that I was discovering items I'd long forgotten I had.

I'd just reached the bottom of box number three (of a total of eight) when I heard a knock at the door. I yelled "I'm here!" When I turned, Lieutenant Dolan was standing on the threshold, his hands sunk in the pockets of his tan raincoat.

"Hey, what are you doing here? It's been months." I got up and dusted my hand on the seat of my jeans before extending it to him.

His grip was strong and warm, his smile almost sheepish, as pleased to see me as I was to see him. "I ran into Lonnie at the courthouse. He said you'd rented this place so I thought I'd pop in."

"That's great. I appreciate the visit."

"I see you're getting settled."

"About time. I moved in February fifteenth and haven't done a thing."

"I hear business is slow."

"It is—at least the kind of jobs I like."

I watched while Con Dolan made a circuit of the room. He seemed ill at ease and covered his discomfort by wading through a steady

stream of small talk. He chatted idly about Lonnie, the weather, and miscellaneous matters while I made what I hoped were the appropriate responses. I couldn't imagine what he wanted, but I assumed he'd get down to his purpose in due course. He'd never been the type to drop in unannounced. I'd known him for ten years, the greater portion of which he'd headed up the homicide unit of the Santa Teresa Police Department. He was currently out on a medical disability, sidelined by a series of heart attacks. I'd heard he was eager to return to work full-time. According to the scuttlebutt, his chances ran somewhere between slim and none.

He paused to check out the inner office, glanced into the half-bath, and then circled back in my direction. "Lonnie said you weren't crazy about the place and I can see your point. It's grim."

"Isn't it? I can't figure it out. I know it needs something, but I can't think what."

"You need art."

"You think so?" I let my gaze trace the bare white walls.

"Sure. Get yourself some big travel posters and some double-sided tape. It'd perk the place right up. Failing that, you might at least wipe the dust off the artificial plants."

He was in his early sixties and his cardiac problems had left his complexion looking sour. The usual bags under his eyes had turned a dark smokey shade, making his whole face seem sunken in circulatory gloom. He was apparently marking the time away from the department by shaving every other day, and this wasn't the one. His face had tended to be pouchy in the best of times, but now his mouth was pulled down in a permanent expression of malcontent. Just my kind of guy.

I could tell he was still smoking because his raincoat, when he moved, smelled of nicotine. The last time I remembered seeing him he was in a hospital bed. The visit had been awkward. Up to that point, I'd always been intimidated by the man, but then I'd never seen him in a cotton hospital nightie with his puckered butt on display through

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a slit down the back. I'd felt friendlier toward him since. I knew he liked me despite the fact his manner in the past had alternated between surly and abrupt.

I said, "So what's up? I can't believe you walked all the way over here to give me decorating tips."

"Actually, I'm on my way to lunch and thought you might join me—if you're free, that is."

I glanced at my watch. It was only 10:25. "Sure, I could do that. Let me get my bag and my jacket and I'll meet you out in front."

We took off on foot, walking to the corner, where we turned right and headed north on Santa Teresa Street. I thought we'd be going to the Del Mar or the Arcade, two restaurants where guys from the PD gravitated for lunch. Instead, we soldiered on for another three blocks and finally turned into a hole-in-the-wall known as "Sneaky Pete's," though the name on the entrance sign said something else. The place was largely empty: one couple at a table and a smattering of day drinkers sitting at the far end of the bar. Dolan took a seat at the near end and I settled myself on the stool to his left. The bartender laid her cigarette in an ashtray, reached for a bottle of Old Forrester, and poured him a drink before he opened his mouth. He paused to light a cigarette and then he caught my look. "What?"

"Well, gee, Lieutenant Dolan, I was just wondering if this was part of your cardiac rehabilitation."

He turned to the bartender. "She thinks I don't take very good care of myself."

She placed the glass in front of him. "Wonder where she got that?"

I pegged her in her forties. She had dark hair that she wore pulled away from her face and secured by tortoiseshell combs. I could see a few strands of gray. Not a lot of makeup, but she looked like someone you could trust in a bartenderly sort of way. "What can I do for you?"

"I'll have a Coke."

Dolan cocked his thumb at me. "Kinsey Millhone. She's a PI in town. We're having lunch."

"Tannie Ottweiler," she said, introducing herself. "Nice to meet you." We shook hands and then she reached down and came up with two sets of cutlery, encased in paper napkins, that she placed in front of us. "You sitting here?"

Dolan tilted his head. "We'll take that table by the window."

"I'll be there momentarily."

Dolan tucked his cigarette in his mouth, the smoke causing his right eye to squint as he picked up his whiskey and moved away from the bar. I followed, noting that he'd chosen a spot as far from the other drinkers as he could get. We sat down and I set my handbag on a nearby chair. "Is there a menu?"

He shed his raincoat and took a sip of whiskey. "The only thing worth ordering is the spicy salami on a kaiser roll with melted pepper jack. Damn thing'll knock your socks off. Tannie puts a fried egg on top."

"Sounds great."

Tannie appeared with my Coke. There was a brief time-out while Dolan ordered our sandwiches.

As we waited for lunch, I said, "So what's going on?"

He shifted in his seat, making a careful survey of the premises before his gaze returned to mine. "You remember Stacey Oliphant? He retired from the Sheriff's Department maybe eight years back. You must have met him."

"Don't think so. I know who he is—everybody talks about Stacey—but he'd left the department by the time I connected up with Shine and Byrd." Morley Shine had been a private investigator in partnership with another private eye named Benjamin Byrd. Both had been tight with the sheriff's office. They'd hired me in 1974 and trained me in the business while I acquired the hours I needed to apply for my license. "He must be in his eighties."

Dolan shook his head. "He's actually seventy-three. As it turns out, being idle drove him out of his mind. He couldn't handle the stress so

he went back to the SO part-time, working cold cases for the criminal investigations division.”

“Nice.”

“That part, yes. What’s not nice is he’s been diagnosed with cancer—non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. This is the second time around for him. He was in remission for years, but the symptoms showed up again about seven months ago. By the time he found out, it’d progressed to stage four—five being death, just so you get the drift. His long-term prognosis stinks; twenty percent survival rate if the treatment works, which it might not. He did six rounds of chemo and a passel of experimental drugs. Guy’s been sick as a dog.”

“It sounds awful.”

“It is. He was pulling out of it some and then recently he started feeling punk. They put him back in the hospital a couple of days ago. Blood tests showed severe anemia so they decided to transfuse him. Then they decided while he was in, they might as well run more tests so they can see where he stands. He’s a pessimist, of course, but to my way of thinking, there’s always hope.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Not as sorry as I am. I’ve known him close to forty years, longer than I knew my wife.” Dolan took a drag of his cigarette, reaching for a tin ashtray on the table next to us. He tapped off a fraction of an inch of ash.

“How’d the two of you hook up? I thought he worked north county. You were PD down here.”

“He was already with the SO when our paths first crossed. This was 1948. I was from a blue-collar background, nothing educated or intellectual. I’d come out of the army with an attitude. Cocky and brash. Two years I knocked around, not doing anything much. I finally got a job as a pump jockey at a gas station in Lompoc. Talk about a dead end.

“One night a guy came in and pulled a gun on the night manager. I was in the backroom cleaning up at the end of my shift when I figured out what was going on. I grabbed a wrench, ducked out the side door,