SUE GRAFTON

Sue Grafton is an international bestseller with a readership in the millions. "The mystery novel offers a world in which justice is served. Maybe not in a court of law," she has said, "but people do get their just desserts." And like Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald, Robert Parker and John D. MacDonald—best of her breed—she has earned new respect for that form. Her readers appreciate her buoyant style, her eye for detail, her deft hand with character, her acute social observances, and her abundant storytelling talents.

But who is the real Sue Grafton? Many of her readers think she is simply a version of her character and alter ego Kinsey Millhone. Here are Kinsey's own words in the early pages of *N Is for Noose: "So there I was barreling down the highway in search of employment and not at all fussy about what kind of work I'd take. I wanted distraction. I wanted some money, escape, anything to keep my mind off the subject of Robert Deitz. I'm not good at good-byes. I've suffered way too many in my day and I don't like the sensation. On the other hand, I'm not that good at relationships. Get close to someone and the next thing you know, you've given them the power to betray, irritate, abandon you, or bore you senseless. My general policy is to keep my distance, thus avoiding a lot of unruly emotion. In psychiatric circles, there are names for people like me."*

Those are sentiments that hit home for Grafton's readers. And she has said that Kinsey is herself, only younger, smarter, and thinner. But are they an apt description of Kinsey's creator? Well, she's been married to Steve Humphrey for more than twenty years. She has three kids and two grandkids. She loves cats, gardens, and good cuisine—not quite the nature-hating, fast-food loving Millhone. So: readers and reviews beware. Never assume the author is the character in the book. Sue, who has a home in Montecito, California ("Santa Theresa") and another in Louisville, the city in which she was born and raised, is only in her imagination Kinsey Millhone—but what a splendid imagination it is.