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Mrs. Kimble
ISBN13: 9780060858780

How did producing a full-length novel compare to writing short stories? Was it a challenge to create three distinct but intertwining narratives for *Mrs. Kimble*?

Short stories are to novels what dating is to a long marriage. A new story is very exciting; there's a wonderful sense of discovery that comes with inventing and exploring new characters. Because a novel takes so long to write, you're still plugging away at it long after the initial glow has faded. Novelists, like spouses, don't get to start from scratch when the novelty wears off. They're living with the choices they made days, months, years before.

Is there a part of you in any of Ken's wives, or in Ken himself?

I identify with all the characters in the book. More strongly with the wives, but with Kimble too. Some readers seem to disagree, but I never thought of him as a sociopath. He is in many ways a very ordinary person. He simply takes what is given to him.

The voice with which you narrate *Mrs. Kimble* is very distinctive; the sentence structure is honed without being sparse, while your dialogue sounds casual but almost always carries an emotionally charged subtext. Did this voice evolve while you were a student in Iowa, or has it always been your vehicle for storytelling?

The narrative voice of *Mrs. Kimble* is very much my voice; I think it comes through in all my work. I aim for precision in the sentences because that's the sort of writing I admire. I have a great respect for writers who are humble, whose language allows the reader to see the story but doesn't get in the way. Language is a window, and if the window is clean, you shouldn't be aware you're looking through glass.

Do you consider *Mrs. Kimble* to be a cautionary tale?

I didn't intend *Mrs. Kimble* as a cautionary tale, just a story about life. Then again, life is instructive; we draw lessons from our own experiences and other peoples'.

Any plans for your next novel?

I am now deep into my next novel. It's like *Mrs. Kimble* in that it involves a family and much of the story is set in the past. It's another intimate novel, showing the insides of people's lives. That's what interests me as a writer. Private stories, what people think and do and say when they think no one is watching.