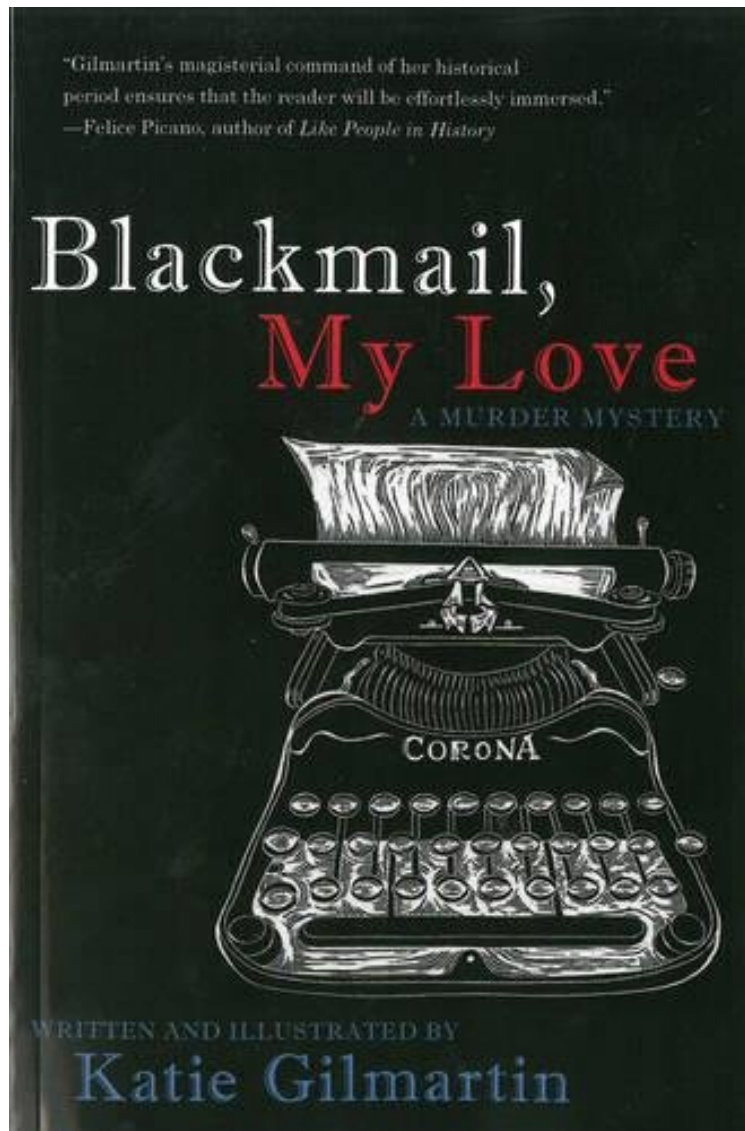


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Blackmail, My Love: A Murder Mystery

Katie Gilmartin

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Katie Gilmartin : Blackmail, My Love: A Murder Mystery before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blackmail, My Love: A Murder Mystery:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A literate, beautifully written mysteryBy Annie MontanaA fantastic, utterly riveting book! One of the very best in the genre I've ever read. Ms. Gilmartin paints such a detailed, incredible picture of San Francisco in the early 1950s. She really captures the era when it could not only destroy lives to be outed as gay, it was also illegal. Hence, the susceptibility to being blackmailed. She makes it painfully clear how this

conundrum led to police corruption, blackmail, bankruptcy, murder and certainly suicide. At the same time, she shows the strength in community, and the priceless personalities and characters that inhabited the gay underground. It's almost unbelievable that this was reality in San Francisco only 60+ years ago. Ms. Gilmartin is a beautiful writer -- this is probably the most literate and thoughtful murder mystery I have ever read. Recommend it enthusiastically! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Where can I even begin to describe my love for this book? No, seriously. This book was incredible. I've always been the type of reader who gets overly invested in my books, and this one was written in such a way to heighten that investment. Josie (or Joe), our detective and narrator, introduces us to her story with no preamble, throwing the reader into her investigation headfirst and waiting until later to explain. She describes her surroundings with just enough detail to give the reader a perfect view of each place, but manages to not bore you with tedious descriptions. Everything Josie takes note of is somehow important, even if she hasn't realized it yet. And you're right there with her, trying to figure out who's guilty and who's innocent, who can be trusted and who can't. There's no all-seeing third-person perspective in this book. You know what Josie knows, and that's it. Learning about Josie through her investigation was a beautiful touch. It would have been easy to start the book off with Josie saying, "Hi, I'm Josie, and let me give you six chapters of backstory before I actually do anything!" But instead, Josie reveals herself by answering other characters' questions and telling other characters stories. Some stories are about herself and some are about her brother, but her way of remembering her brother and speaking about her brother reveals who Josie is, too. Though the true mystery was what happened to her brother, why, and by whom, the secondary mystery of who Josie is managed to keep my interest as well. Not only did I want Josie to be reunited with Jimmy, but I also wanted her to figure out who she is, who she wants to be, and who she can be. The distinction between those three personas is an important one, as for Josie, they are three different people she longs to become one. As if it could get any better than that, the novel is also steeped in queer history. Gilmartin's research was extensive, and it gave the book a feeling of authenticity that only enhanced the story. Sometimes it's nice to read a book as a complete escape and to think, "I'm glad this could never happen." But this book's power comes from its realism. Everything that happened to Josie and to those around her has probably happened to someone in real life. And everything that happened to those people was probably a hell of a lot worse, because they weren't obligated to narrate a story and therefore stay alive for 300 pages. Parts of this book are disturbing and hard to read for those exact reasons, but again, that just makes it all the more powerful. Gilmartin even included historical notes at the end of the novel, explaining which historical figures inspired certain characters and giving suggestions for further reading if the reader desires to learn more about a certain aspect of queer history. I'm counting this as a must-read for anyone who wants a clear picture of what queer life was like in the 1950s, anyone who loves a good mystery, anyone who loves an empathetic narrator whose mystery is just as great as that surrounding her case, anyone who wants to be completely immersed in the world they're reading about, and anyone who finds any aspect of this book interesting. It truly is a masterpiece, and not one that should be forgotten. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Deepen Your Appreciation for Now As You Step into the Past By sweet p What a journey this riveting novel takes us on - exhilarating, horrifying, touching, poignant and eye opening. Katie Gilmartin brings us deep into the dangerous and hidden LGBT world of 1951 San Francisco, long before the acronym existed. This mystery is an illustrated page turner, with Katie Gilmartin's own linocuts reflecting the power of the story line and the characters who vividly live it. The author has laced her story with wise comments. Here's one: "Over time you'll figure out whether the trousers allow you to become someone else for a while, or whether they reveal you." Her 1951 references are still clear today as in, "I felt like Roy Rogers and looked like Tinker Bell." And there's a sweet nod to Daphne du Maurier as well. As you already know, I loved reading this novel and think you will too.

Lambda Award 2015 for Best Gay Mystery! Josie O'Conner travels to San Francisco in 1951 to locate her gay brother, a private eye investigating a blackmail ring targeting lesbians and gay men. Jimmy's friends claim that just before he disappeared he became a rat, informing the cops on the bar community. Josie adopts Jimmy's trousers and wingtips, to clear his name, halt the blackmailers, and exact justice for too many queer corpses. Along the way she rubs shoulders with a sultry chanteuse running a dyke tavern called Pandora's Box, gets intimate with a red-headed madam operating a brothel from the Police Personnel Department, and conspires with the star of Finocchio's, a dive so disreputable it's off limits to servicemen so every man in uniform pays a visit. Blackmail, My Love is an illustrated murder mystery deeply steeped in San Francisco's queer history, as established academic and first-time novelist Katie Gilmartin's diverse set of characters negotiate the risks of same-sex desire in a dangerous era. Set in such legendary locations as the Black Cat Cafe, the Fillmore, the Beat movement's North Beach, and the Tenderloin, Blackmail, My Love is a singular, stunning introduction to a new author and to gay noir.

Lambda Award 2015 for Best Gay Mystery! "Blackmail, My Love is a cross-genre softcover: murder mystery, pulp fiction, historical fiction, romance, picture book. In her protagonist, author and illustrator Katie Gilmartin has cut a fearless, peerless figure who is realistic but not fatalistic, sharp as a fedora, and grittier than the underworld. Joes delight in transposing genders invites readers into the gay areas shadowing and overshadowing San Francisco's black-

and-white heat. The nuanced nonchalance of the narration is juxtaposed with the desperation and determination experienced by our hero, whose straits will Mildred Pierce your soul. Fast-paced, this story puts the out in out of the past, a past that, according to the author, inhabits the future. If you like your gumshoes with gumption, this novel is right up your alley. Just keep an eye out for suspicious characters who may be lurking?and smirking?in the shadows."Curve Magazine"

"I loved this book because of its writing and the cinematic vividness with which Gilmartin creates a believable, authentic historical setting. Beyond that, I think that every LGBTQ person under 40 ought to read *Blackmail, My Love*, because this well-crafted novel is also a healthy, if painful, history lesson."Prism Book Alliance

This is the Katie Gilmartin's first work of fiction, and she clearly drew on her academic work: interviews she conducted with lesbians about their lives in the 1940s and 1950s. That work paid off. Her future in fiction is bright.New York Journal of Books

"Katie Gilmartin's auspicious debut offers keen and diverse pleasures. A gripping tale of murder, corruption and bittersweet revenge, hauntingly punctuated by the author's evocative illustrations, *Blackmail, My Love* is at the same time a compelling look at a moment in queer history when an oppressed and fearful minority began to discover its secret wellsprings of courage and resolve. I cherish this novel as much for its recovery of our neglected history as for its sharply drawn characters and deftly orchestrated plot."Paul Russell, author of *Immaculate Blue* and *The Unreal Life of Sergey Nabokov*Foreword s' 2014 INDIEFAB Book of the Year Award Winner

"This intriguing noir novel captures a cultural moment, set in 1950s San Francisco at a time when gays and lesbians established a strong sense of community, despite being harassed and often arrested by law enforcement simply for congregating. *Blackmail, My Love* will entertain fans of the noir genre, but its social themes and messages about love and redemption will also appeal to a wider audience."ForeWord s"

Historian and practicing artist Katie Gilmartin has outdone herself with *Blackmail, My Love*. This gripping and beautifully-written detective novel is actually a well-researched piece of historical fiction, illuminating San Francisco's post-World War II era, when bars were the primary mode of queer socializing and police raids really did ruin people's lives. Gilmartin has an eye for detail as detectives and historians must and she sets her story at a time in San Francisco's history when queer communities, often segregated by race and class, matured into new modes of political consolidation and resistance. Taking seriously the idea that queer social movements emerged out of bars rather than formal homophile organizations, Gilmartin's novel charts the lives of a cast of characters (some right out of history) who work together to trap the entrappers. As a bonus, Gilmartin supplements the text with illustrative prints that enliven her already vivid prose. *Blackmail, My Love* is a must-read for anyone who enjoys queer history!"Nan Alamilla Boyd, author of *Wide Open-Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* and Professor of Women and Gender Studies at SFSU

"Although it is a dark tale of a harrowing time the queer world in San Francisco in the early 1950's the narrative voice in *Blackmail, My Love* is fresh, keenly observant and even charming. I highly recommend Katie Gilmartin's wonderful debut novel and I am eager to see what she does next."Michael Nava, author of the Henry Rios mysteries

"Gilmartin's magisterial command of her historical period ensures that the reader will be effortlessly immersed in the instant paranoia, mistrust and betrayal so typical of that pre-liberated gay era. A darkly entertaining mystery, *Blackmail, My Love* also grounds us in why the Stonewall Revolution would shortly afterward happen as well as why it had to happen."Felice Picano, editor of *Best Gay Romance 2015*"Katie dives so deep (and convincingly) into the still-somehow-familiar details of the city's hidden past that you'll feel like you've time-traveled. That's how you know you've had a history lesson that's tough and precious as a '50s femme."Carol Queen, author of *The Leather Daddy* and *The Femme*"A hardboiled homage and detailed, nostalgic romp through post-WWII San Francisco, *Blackmail, My Love* reveals and revels in the City of 1951 through a GLBT lens, and the history is spot-on."Kelli Stanley, award-winning author of *City of Dragons*"What else do I love about this book? I love that Gilmartin writes with a smooth, tough-girl smokiness she sets the noir tone she establishes in the opening lines and never falters throughout. I love that Gilmartin gets it right the mise-en-scene, the history, the lesbians and gay men and drag queens and bisexuals and, of course, the villain the people who put us in those closets and hidden bars and speak-easy-style clubs and forced us into the underground demimonde most LGBT people inhabited until well past Stonewall. So yes I loved this book. I loved it as a writer and a professor, as an historian and a lesbian activist. You will love it, too."Victoria Brownworth, *Lambda Literary*"Set in North Beach and the Tenderloin in 1951, the noir-influenced story is an inspired cocktail of fiction and historical fact, juxtaposing real places such as the Black Cat with fictional ones, like the lesbian bar Pandoras Box. The potent mix includes dollops of blackmail, butch/femme identities, McCarthyism, bar raids and police extortion."Jim Van Buskirk, *The San Francisco Examiner*