

Uncorking a Lie: A Sommelier Mystery

Nadine Nettmann

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With the aura of a cozy mystery, this sommelier-led novel is enticing and engaging.

In Nadine Nettmann's *Uncorking a Lie*, a young sommelier turned detective becomes embroiled in a deadly game after discovering that an expensively auctioned burgundy wine is counterfeit.

Katie, having passed her certified sommelier examination, is busy studying for her advanced ranking. She still finds time to accept a dinner from one of her favorite restaurant patrons, though.

Prominent lawyer and wine connoisseur Paul Rafferty has promised to open a 1975 Chateau Clair Bleu, a bottle he purchased at auction for \$19,000. But the promising dinner is spoiled three times over: Katie's dinner companions are snobs; the bottle, once opened, proves to be a fraud; and Cooper Maxwell, Paul's assistant, is found dead in the wine cellar, after Katie quietly disclosed to him that his boss had been bilked. In his anger, Rafferty asks Katie to find out who counterfeited the wine.

There's never a boring moment here. Nearly every page sparkles with commentary about wine or insights about people. Sommelier expertise seeps in, with interesting details about how Katie was able to tell immediately that the expensive wine was a fake.

Katie's backstory also comes in, including a failed romance with Kurt, a fellow sommelier, and the possibilities of a deepening relationship with sheriff's detective Dean. All such moments are kept G-rated and accomplished with amiable introspection. The same level of insight is directed toward teasing out Katie's unsettled relationship with her father.

Character descriptions are generally perfect, though Rafferty lands on the page ambiguously—sometimes a demanding rich man, at other times weak and wobbling. The villain, who is thoroughly logical right down to his wimpy associates, is a tad less fully developed. Settings are distinctly rendered, especially as seen through Katie's eyes: she ponders grapes, their vines across the seasons, and the land that gives them life and purpose.

Not quite a cozy mystery, yet with a similar aura, *Uncorking a Lie* fills an appealing niche with its likable heroine and enticing, engaging world.

GARY PRESLEY (May/June 2017)

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