

Katz Cradle Synopsis

In Hollywood, the quick pitch would be: Homophobic police officer investigating his partner's murder is forced to team up with gay-rights activist.

But *Katz Cradle* aims for more than a mismatched-buddy detective procedural. This novel allows readers a glimpse into edgy territory – gay bars, celebrity outings, fur conventions – from the safety of a straight, sarcastic narrator.

ZERO KATZ, age 25, spends his days patrolling LAPD's Southeast division with veteran officer RAY WILSON. In his free time, Katz satisfies his adrenaline itch by secretly BASE-jumping from a remote bridge.

While off-duty, Wilson is killed in an apparent drive-by outside Katz's apartment. Katz's live-in girlfriend finds the body, ensuring a lifetime of therapy. The Robbery-Homicide detectives assigned to the case discover little evidence at the scene and the investigation quickly stalls.

Katz, frustrated by the lack of progress, begins interviewing potential suspects without department consent. After tracking down Wilson's ex-girlfriend, Katz is shocked to learn she was a 'beard' – a romantic stand-in to cover his partner's homosexuality. Not only was Wilson in the closet at work, he paradoxically had ties with a militant gay-rights organization called DOOR (Dragging Out Our Role-models).

During these early scenes, the novel is primarily told from Katz's first-person viewpoint. However, the narrative occasionally shifts into third-person limited, giving the reader an update on other characters – including Wilson's murderer. From these interludes, we meet a killer obsessed with transforming into STARGOD, a space werewolf popularized in old Marvel comic books.

Duality becomes a recurring theme; the killer's Stargod fur suit, Wilson's hidden sexuality, even Katz's girlfriend has a second identity as Disneyland's Snow White. The only character who apparently has nothing to hide is SAMUEL MILLER, the ex-Marine founder of DOOR.

Miller's out and proud. He's convinced HUNTER CALLOWAY – a rising Hollywood action star – was behind Wilson's murder. Katz and Miller reach an uneasy truce; the former seeking justice and the latter hoping to shock the world with solid proof the macho Calloway had male lovers.

After too many drunken episodes, too many half-truths, Katz finds himself alone. His girlfriend moves out and he's under increasing pressure from the homicide detectives and

Hunter's posse to lay off the case. By continuing his off-the-books investigation, Katz must ask himself: "How much trouble was I willing to get into to keep from getting into trouble?"

Events come to a head when Katz and Miller are ambushed by a sniper, leaving two civilians dead and the young officer with a sucking chest wound. Recovering in the hospital, Katz realizes that his ex-partner wasn't operating in lock-step with DOOR as Miller alluded – and never intended to out the popular actor.

Pissed at Miller and on administrative leave, Katz begins working for Calloway. The actor feels some responsibility for Wilson's death and is chafing under the pressure of his four-headed monster (agent, manager, publicist, and lawyer) to stay in the closet. Calloway's spiritual advisor, a Lakota Sioux shaman, is the only member of the actor's inner circle providing unconditional support.

Calloway allows Katz to work with his security chief to track down a blackmailer who likely ordered the hit on Wilson. Meanwhile, Stargod slowly loses his grip on reality. The sex doll he's created as his perfect werewolf mate begins to talk, demanding a human surrogate to start her own pack.

The plot lines converge in one explosive night, with Calloway outing himself at an Elton John benefit, Katz's girlfriend falling into Stargod's clutches, and the realization that someone from Calloway's inner circle has been pulling all the strings.

At the conclusion of the story, Katz is set to face a disciplinary Board of Rights hearing. Thus, the title "Katz Cradle" is not only a reflection of the main character's relative immaturity, but alludes to the birth of a continuing series, as he transitions into post-LAPD careers.