



The Cat Who Ate Danish Modern

Lilian Jackson Braun

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ACE #1 - ACE #2

Jim Qwilleran is not exactly overwhelmed by his new assignment for the Daily Fluxion. Interior design has never been one of his specialties and now he's supposed to turn out an entire magazine on the subject every week! But the first issue of Gracious Abodes is barely off the presses when Qwilleran finds himself back on more familiar territory--the exclusive residence featured on the cover has been burglarized and the lady of the house found dead...now Qwilleran and Koko--the brilliant Siamese--have their respective moustache and whiskers twitching, and when Koko starts pawing clues in the dictionary and sniffing designer furniture, Qwilleran finds himself doing a feature on a very clever murder.

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The Cat Who Ate Danish Modern Details

Date : Published October 1st 1986 by Jove Books (first published 1967)

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Author : Lilian Jackson Braun

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From Reader Review The Cat Who Ate Danish Modern for online ebook

Sue says

This installment finds Jim Quilleran taking over the interior design beat at the Daily Fluxion. The paper wants to publish a weekly supplement with feature stories and lots of photos. Jim had done such a good job on the Art beat (previous book) that the Editor promotes Jim from Senior Writer to Junior Editor for this assignment. The trouble starts right after the release of the first edition. The house they had featured reports a burglary and the wife is dead. Jim smells something fishy but presses ahead with the next weekly installment, only to have that one also result in bad publicity for the paper. He starts digging around, and with the help of Koko, determines what really happened. The second Siamese cat, Yum-yum, is introduced in this volume.

A fun light read that I read cover to cover in one weekend.

Charlene Vickers says

The second of the Cat Who books is as satisfying as the first and third, with a real plot, a real mystery, and real heroics. Enjoy the first three books and then ask yourself: what happened with the rest of the series?

aPriL does feral sometimes says

'Gracious Abodes', the newspaper Daily Fluxion's new interior design magazine, opens up a new horizon and a new assignment for Jim Quilleran, and a new mystery for fans of Koko the psychic cat.

The dictionary is Koko's Ouija board and his claws are his planchette. Jim takes the hints from Koko's dictionary suggestions after the murder of a rich woman, whose house was featured in Jim's magazine, and he is soon following up clues. G. Verning Tait, besides the loss of his wife to an apparent heart attack, also has been robbed of his priceless jade collection. Surprisingly, Tait doesn't seem too upset about either. David Lyke, co-owner of a decorating studio, is very helpful to Jim, introducing him to suspects and inviting him to parties, but Lyke ends up paying a heavy price for his kindnesses.

Are the two cases linked? Koko knows, but he has issues of his own. He's taken a sudden liking to chair coverings and a dislike to Jim's new girlfriend, Alacoque 'Cokey' Wright.

Will Jim figure it out?

Kirsti says

Poor Koko's eating wool, and Qwill's at his wit's end. A Pyscatricist recommends a female companion, but first the pair have to solve a murder and a theft. In traditional Lilian Jackson Braun style, all the clues add up and the finger is pointed at the character you least suspect.

I enjoy this one because YumYum is first introduced, and she is in need of rescuing, in a way. I like that he's still writing for the Fluxion, and going to the press club. He hasn't inherited his millions yet, and Koko isn't living on his high diet. It's a very simple life, although he is staying in Harry Noyton's apartment and seeing how the other side really live for the first time.

Another enjoyable read, I read this one quickly. Very good indeed!

Scott says

probably a 3 1/2 star, but a comforting follow-up to the debut book in this series. unpretentious and doesn't try to stretch beyond it's limits, and I found it to be a little better written than I was expecting. some character development sacrificed for the sake of plot but so what, Christie built a legendary career using the same technique. a perfectly acceptable form of the cozy mystery.

S Dizzy says

Qwill is "promoted" to head of a new magazine focusing on interior decorating. After featuring the 1st mansion, there is a theft; after the 2nd feature of an upscale apartment, there is a murder. Qwill and Koko investigate. Also, Koko gets a female playmate named Yum Yum. It was entertaining and sometimes laugh out loud funny.

...you will enjoy meeting Natalie Noyton, She has all the gagging appeal of a marshmallow sundae."

...Koko arrived at the party...at his entrance, the noise swelled to a crescendo and then stopped altogether. Koko surveyed the scene with regal condescension, like a potentate honoring his subjects with his presence. He blinked not, neither did he move a whisker. His brown points were so artistically contrasted with his light body, his fur shaded so subtly, and his sapphire eyes had such unadorned elegance that he made David Lyke's guest look gaudily overdressed.

Carole says

There was one passage in this book where Qwilleran sees a couple decorative eggs in a shop and notes how expensive they are. Each one costs \$5. For some people, that may still be a great deal of money, but you couldn't buy a new copy of this book in paperback for \$5 now. In 1967, the average paperback was about 75 cents. I wasn't alive when the book was written, but it sure does remind me of just how much things have changed since I was little, and in some ways, it just really amuses me. It makes books like this that much more endearing.

Connie N. says

#2 in The Cat Who... mystery series

With this 2nd book in the series, it was much more enjoyable, probably because we can begin to see the

dynamic between Qwill and Koko (the cat) now that they're getting to know each other better. Now that Qwill's art beat has been completed, he has been asked to take over the paper's interior design supplement. Although this seems completely unsuited to him, he begins to like the subject and warms to the friendly and creative people involved. But when the supplement sparks some negative results, like a theft and even murder, Qwill's investigative instincts lead him to find the culprit. Koko, for his part, sends some strong messages to lead Qwill in the right direction. In this book we meet Yum Yum, but only for a very brief introduction.

Jessica says

Really enjoying this cute new mystery series! That's probably a good thing, seeing as there's about a hundred books in the series! :)

Monica says

Once again Koko, the amazing Siamese cat, helps newspaper reporter James Qwilleran solve a crime...not just one, but two murders. This time Qwilleran, having being stuck doing art features, is moved to the decorating department as the editor of "Gracious Abodes"...a supplement magazine in the Fluxion's Sunday paper intended to bring in more readers and to pull in some big advertising dollars. Koko knows just what clues to send to Qwilleran in order for all to be right once again in his world. Yum Yum makes her debut in this book...another Siamese taken in by Qwilleran...a friend for Koko in the hopes that he stops some of his destructive habits, such as eating holes in ties.

I like these mysteries by Lilian Jackson Braun. They are by no means complex. They are by no means long books. But they are precise and concise. And they have cats.

Mandaray says

Once again, I'd been on the hunt for a murder mystery that would be engaging, but lighthearted; as soon as I saw the title of the series, I thought *This has got to be it*. A retired detective who solves mysteries with his cat? My imagination was already whirling with the possibilities for whimsy and mischief. Does the cat talk? Maybe paw at crime-scene photos? Will the protagonist wander around with the cat trailing behind him, watching his flexible little tail for signs of vibration to indicate that someone's lying?

Then I noticed the copyright date. 1967. Everyone I'd talked to remembered the series from the early 90's, so you can imagine how far my eyebrow shot up into my forehead. I began wondering just what I was in for, a wonder which increased dramatically as the book starts off with a close-up view of how crappy 45-year-old Jim Qwilleran's life is: Moth-eaten ties, lumpy instant coffee, eviction notices, and--in his own gag-worthy words--"no woman to call my own". Being a dude, he of course does absolutely nothing to address any of these issues: He simply wishes fervently for things to change, then goes to work and hopes for the best.

Of course, since he's a dude and it's the 60's, Qwill's wishing comes true: His boss decides to give him, a man with zero experience in the field, run of a magazine all about interior decorating. There's a lengthy conversation about how a woman would be "naturally better suited to this" before Qwill finally decides hey,

maybe this is an interesting field and gosh-darnit if I don't want to show up Fran Unger (who was originally slated to be the editor, I think?) because she's just like my ex-wife and, quote, "I've had all the bossy females I want!" Because god forbid, I guess, that a woman be both an executive and want to have The Sex with someone. Horrifying!

We then experience an entire chapter where Qwill avoids his favorite dive-bar and bellyaches with his co-workers about how "clingy" Fran is since he made the mistake of kissing her once at a Christmas party. Why does he feel she's clingy? Because she's well connected in decorating circles and has the audacity to make a few phone calls trying to help him get the magazine started. You know, *his new job?*

In lieu of actually solving any mysteries or anyone getting murdered, we're treated to another chapter full of Qwill's adventures as a first-time magazine editor, which means he has to go talk to a bunch of people who are "in the business" so he can figure out how exactly it is he's supposed to do his job. His right-hand man on this assignment is one Odd Bunsen (yes, that's his actual name) who has six kids, is constantly broke, and in his own words wants the decorating magazine to fail because he feels like it's beneath him. Mind you, Qwill went on several internal rants about how much he hates impolite, pushy women--but Odd, a man who literally never stops complaining, who never stops being rude to both Qwill and his clients, and who literally never stops talking shit about his kids is apparently A-OK. Qwill is actually fond of the guy, and even a bit jealous! Ah, sexism.

And thus we meet David Lyke, an interior decorator dude who is described as handsome, charming, and charismatic--even though every time we see him, he's literally talking about how much he despises his clients. Continuing the earlier trend, David is especially hard on the women in his circles. Frequently words used are "frightful", "horrible", and "I apologize for her". Mind you, these are people we haven't even met yet. The shittiness reaches a crescendo, however, when we are introduced to Mrs. Tait, a disabled Danish woman who has the misfortune to be married to a rich jade collector and Qwill's first interview for the magazine. She gets exactly one scene, after which everyone (mostly Odd) talks about how awful she was. (She wanted her cat in one of the photographs. Clearly, she's pure evil.) Later on, she--spoiler warning, I guess?--dies from a heart attack after Mr. Tait's jade figurines are stolen. This news is met with, and I kid you not, actual happiness from a lot of the characters. Odd in particular seems pleased that she's kicked it, because in his words, she was a horrible, burdensome old woman and he'd have hated to have her as his wife.

Super.

The Taites are also our first rancid taste of the repeated threads of casual racism that are woven throughout this tiny tale. There's a lot of talk about Paolo, the "eager young servant" of the Taites, who is inevitably framed when the jade figures go missing, since he comes from one of those--and I quote: "poor, underdeveloped countries". As Qwill starts attending numerous parties to rub shoulders with more decorators and collectors for his magazine, we're also treated to caterers and wait staff being referred to solely as "an Oriental". No gender, no description, and certainly no names: Just "an Oriental". What few lines these characters are given are, of course, in broken English.

These, by the way, are just a few examples. There are too many to list without making this blog post into an essay.

At this point, you might want to say, "This book was written in the 60's! What did you expect!?" And indeed, I was tempted to leave the commentary about this book's racism and sexism out, because I suspected folks would say it's just a "product of its time". But you know what? Screw that. This is a book--and indeed, an entire series--that's touted as being fun and family friendly. But its content begs the question: *Whose families?* It sure as hell isn't black, Latino or Asian families. It sure isn't career women and their families. I'm not even sure if it's friendly to cats, since Qwill insists on feeding Koko things which would kill most animals. So who is this series really for?

You and I both know the answer to that question.

If you're one of those people who only cares about the plot--well, for one thing, I'm judging you. For another thing, this book doesn't have one. 90% of it is about Qwill's social life: Going to parties, meeting men he finds charismatic and attractive, then meeting women he finds dull or annoying. (Aside, of course, from Alacoque "Cokey" Wright, who has shapely legs and is significantly younger than him, therefore making her the obvious love interest) Occasionally he'll get a "quiver in his moustache" and try to connect a few dots, but his results are mediocre at best. In fact, Qwill makes little to no headway in solving the case until the very last few pages, and then we get everything laid out for us in the form of dry exposition as he brags to his co-workers about the experience. Mind you, I figured out Whodunnit on page 44 of a 224 page book. To make matters worse, one of the "culprits" is a woman who takes her own life after committing the crime, and this news is met with a sort of general *shrug* from the characters and a feeling of, "Well, what else did you expect from a woman?"

I'm not even sure why we bothered calling it a mystery, because there wasn't one.

I might, on a whim, try out one of the more recent The Cat Who... books in the hopes that the author eventually laid aside her legacy of racism and internalized hatred of women. But honestly? It's going to be pretty far down on my To Do list. And hey, if you're someone who has fond memories of The Cat Who... books, I totally understand. We all bond with things for different reasons, and liking a problematic thing doesn't make YOU inherently bad. For me, though, there just isn't enough here to justify a dedicated return to the series.

C. says

I treasure books featuring cats. I'm thrilled **Lilian Jackson Braun** exceeds by far, novels that depict but barely mention them. Better than that, her hero *Jim Qwilleran's* routine with them is presented the most realistically I've ever seen. You see the minute he arrives home, he checks for his young ones. He may exclaim at evidence of what they've done, which is truly the way it goes, sees to their needs, but a real animal person lives with them. You don't drop off food and forget they communicate and interact. I applaud **Lilian** for this accuracy alone.

What I discovered about these works next, which languished in my home too long, is supremely well-written mysteries. Come book two, "**The Cat Who Ate Danish Modern**", 1967, I noticed a different field being explored. We stroll a step from art, to interior design. As *Jim* amasses information about the trade, we do too. Fiction is often a teacher like that. I ponder the extent of research the author must have embarked upon, to present all of this flavour in her vast suite of books. It is amusing to observe, in the first four: *Jim* and the kitties have a different home every time! On television, we are anchored by a setting. Perhaps this is mute in literature. Kitties are territorial in some ways but remaining with those they love, is all that matters. Clever scenarios result in the availability of these homes.

Jim's boss proposes a colour spread on designer homes of the city. Their rival newspaper is pleased the launch is bumpy because each house featured, fell victim to a crime. Their reputation warrants private perusal of clues. 'Danish modern' refers to couches but this story is adventurous. We meet *Yum-Yum* and the special, melodic inspiration of this sweetheart being renamed.

Carol says

Lilian Jackson Braun's "Cat Who..." series is a perennial favorite of mine. I read my first ones at about age twenty five or thirty years ago, and have been hooked on them since. My Mom and I read them at the same time and thoroughly enjoyed them. She's gone now, but she was an amazing reader and it was fun to share things we both liked together. In fact, the day she died, she had been to the library that morning. Came home and she was gone. My poor dad. They're all fairly quick reads, nicely paced whodunnits featuring a mustachioed former crime reporter and his genius cat Koko. Clean enough that all but the most squeamish can handle the content. Clever and fun with a few twists and turns along the way. Great for summer reading.

This book he is having the fun of getting his second cat YumYum. a sweet and small Siamese. Being only the second book of the series, I really have enjoyed reading them again. The first time I read them, Qwill had not inherited his millions and was not rich yet. He is starting at the beginning and building his career, friendships, etc. I recommend this series if you haven't read them. They stand alone, however there are characters you will get to know if read in order.

Becky says

Another fun flashback read... now Qwilleran has a girlfriend (half his age) and both Koko and Yum Yum. Such clever cats - always catching the criminal. The stories are great and the characters are enjoyable, likable people. I love the little old-fashioned bits. When Qwill comes home to see the red light on the phone is lit up - he has to call the operator for a message! He also complains about how computers are ruining the newspaper profession, but then his big beef with the young journalists doing things "too modern" is when they use an electronic pencil sharpener or send in their articles on a dictating machine. I absolutely love it, though. I'm just going to keep (re)reading these for a few weeks... I can get into some more serious fare after I get settled into my new job.

James says

Background

The summer after I graduated from college, I started missing regular reading... during school, I had less personal choice and recreational reads, as all the college textbooks and novels were the priority. I was an English major and rarely had time for adding in my own particular interests. The last course I had taken was an independent study that one of my professors and I had built the curriculum on together: Murder Mysteries. I learned all about the genres and sub-genres, authors and styles. One in particular I grew fond of was the cozy mystery. I also had a thing about wanting a Siamese cat. And so... my love affair with Lilian Jackson Braun began. Finding myself without required reading, I selected a few books, including this cozy mystery series, and I read through a huge amount in the first few years.

Review

People either love or dislike the cozy mystery book. Sometimes it's too simple. I get that. But sometimes, it's exactly what you want to read before bed, when you need to relax, or because it's just fun and charming humor and easy story.

Braun started writing in 1960s and published a few of these books, then stopped writing for 25 years before re-igniting the series in the 1980s... producing another 25+ in the collection. This is book number two, and it is where Qwill, the main character, adopts his second Siamese cat when its owner... for reasons I cannot disclose... can no longer care for YumYum. And thus begins the life of these 3 primary characters in the entire series.

Qwill is a really likable character. He's about 60, a bit ornery, highly intelligent, very set in his ways, and the object of every woman over 60 in town. There are less male protagonists in cozy novels than female leads, which make this a bit of a unique series. It was one of the very first series that put the cozy sub-genre on the market. And the world that Braun creates in Moose County is just amazing.

In this book, Qwill hasn't yet moved to Moose County, so you're still learning background about him and his prior life before becoming sober and everything changing post divorce. And he's asked to write a story and column about home design, something he has very little knowledge of.

It's a very cute story with a cast of strong characters, a few of which move with him to Moose County along the path. This book establishes his relationship with the two cats, including their extra-strong senses when it comes to helping him solve crimes.

Yes, the cats come up a lot. Always funny. But the mystery is the focus, I promise. It's worth a shot to see if you're hooked on the series, but if you do... you have to read the first 3 or 4, so you can see his initial move to Moose Country where 90% of the books take place.

About Me

For those new to me or my reviews... here's the scoop: I read A LOT. I write A LOT. And now I blog A LOT. First the book review goes on Goodreads, and then I send it on over to my WordPress blog at <https://thisismytruthnow.com>, where you'll also find TV & Film reviews, the revealing and introspective 365 Daily Challenge and lots of blogging about places I've visited all over the world. And you can find all my social media profiles to get the details on the who/what/when/where and my pictures. Leave a comment and let me know what you think. Vote in the poll and ratings. Thanks for stopping by.

[poll daddy poll=9729544]

[poll daddy poll=9719251]

Sarah says

4 Stars

I just love this series so much! This was a cute book and I even though I knew whodunit, it was still very enjoyable.

Ken Heard says

The mystery "cozy" is a departure from my normal reading fare, but I found *The Cat Who...* good enough to hold my interest to the end. It's simple and the who-did-it is pretty easy to figure out (of course hindsight is 20-20). And, it's a cute story.

Simple innocence thrives. Lillian Jackson Braun doesn't have to rely on violence, gore and mayhem to tell a story. Instead, she writes well enough to convey her ideas at a nice pace. One reviewer here made a good point. This is a good series to read at bedtime because it won't foster any nightmares or troubled sleep.

The book was written in 1967, but I found myself re-checking the pub date just to be sure. There's a timelessness to this story. Qwill smokes a pipe, a sign of the times of ago, I guess, but this could play at any decade. Braun writes with timeless wit as well. Qwill works for "Gracious Abodes," a design tab put out by his newspaper. She pokes fun at the design world: Note the different types of styles her designers use throughout the book. They are quick, one-line knockoffs, but they add to the flavor and humor of the book.

This is a good series to delve into if you want to stray from your normal reading genres, or if you are into cozies overall. A fun read that I am sure I'll return to soon just to see what the cats are up to next.

Ange H says

In this second book, Qwilleran is back, now the official owner of the amazing Siamese cat named Koko, whose owner was murdered. This time Jim's beat is...interior design. Tasked with producing a weekly insert for *The Daily Fluxion* called, obnoxiously, "Gracious Abodes," Jim attacks the assignment with reluctance - he knows nothing about interior design. But he is soon immersed in design-world intrigue that includes, of course, murder. Again, the mystery here is almost beside the point.

This book is funnier than the first - I laughed out loud quite a few times. There is a running gag that designers refer to all colors as foods; a conceit which becomes more and more absurd: Parsley, Mushroom, Caramel Custard, Avocado, Poppy Seed, Dried Fig, Cream of Carrot.

Suddenly, Qwilleran saw the color scheme of the office with new eyes. It was Pea Soup Green, and the walls were painted Roquefort, and the vinyl floor was Pumpernickel...

Odd Bunsen is back; in this installment we learn that he has six children and a fondness for strong drink (probably related concepts). Also Qwill's age is pegged as "over 45" which is a bit younger than I imagine him. He acquires a pretty younger girlfriend named Alacoque Wright, or Cokey for short. (I don't trust her. At one point, Koko bites her in the head, so the relationship is surely doomed.) Another important development is the appearance of Yum Yum. At the very end of the book, she plays an important role, and becomes a permanent fixture in the Qwilleran household.

First Published: 1967

Body Count: 3 (view spoiler)

Preceded by: *The Cat Who Could Read Backwards*

Next up: *The Cat Who Turned on and Off*

Anna says

Half way thru the book I realized there was only Koko, and then I realized (after some googling) that this was the second book of The Cat Who series. Now I'll want to read the other two old ones too (already on the queue, and will probably read next). Three of the books were written in 1960s, (. could read backwards in '66, this one in '67, and ..who turned on and off in '68). Then they resumed in 1980s with a lot of new ones. (Lilian Jackson Brown was apparently born in 1913, still lives and probably writes, and uses a typewriter for writing...)

Qwill gets an assignment to do some interior architecture for Fluxion, which is something he isn't too interested in. But then some strange things start to happen: a house that was just published in the magazine gets burglarized from some expensive jade collection, and someone is found dead. And for the next houses that are presented in the magazine, also then something goes wrong... Qwill's moustache gets itches and Koko helps him get some clues, and after more articles, meeting a lot of interesting people, they find out what happened. That's too shortly put: I love the mystery as it's so 1960s, and makes you realize how everything has changed (green telephones.. typewrites, color/b&w photos... how important the magazines and newspapers were back then etc), and yet how similar the people still are. Of all The Cat... books I've read so far, I liked the characters in this book the most. The humor also seems a bit different compared to the later books. A happy, light type of mystery, and perfect of that kind.

<http://www.bookcrossing.com/journal/7...>

Lady Delacour says

The cat along with
Qwillerans moustache,
continue to solve crimes.
Found the second book
even better than the first.
Listened with text to speech app.
