



The Cat Who Smelled a Rat

Lilian Jackson Braun

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Moose County journalist and philanthropist James Qwilleran, better known to fans of Lilian Jackson Braun's evergreen series of feline-inspired thrillers as the owner of a couple of remarkably prescient Siamese cats named Koko and Yum Yum, is comfortably ensconced in his winter residence in Pickax at the beginning of *The Cat Who Smelled a Rat*. But he and the other citizens start hoping for snow when a series of arson fires threaten their safety as well as the historically significant shafthouses that sit atop the long-closed mine sites scattered throughout the county.

Qwilleran and his pets take quite a while to connect the fires with the death of a local builder in a seemingly unrelated accident. But his leisurely jaunt to the conclusion of this lightly plotted adventure leaves plenty of room for the author to do what she does best, which is sketching the picaresque characters who people Pickax and dwelling on the small-town charms of a place where everybody knows everything about everybody. The cats are quicker to solve a crime than the local constabulary. Only Koko could find the clues hidden in an antique pitcher and an old-fashioned glove box, and only a cat lover could consider this a mystery or even a romance. There's no suspense, very little drama, hardly any blood, and not even a hint of sex between Qwilleran and his lady. But Braun's fans are legion, so we know she must be doing something right. --Jane Adams

The Cat Who Smelled a Rat Details

Date : Published (first published January 29th 2001)

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From Reader Review The Cat Who Smelled a Rat for online ebook

Vivian says

I see here that my very first foray into the "Cat Who" books is number 23! A very quick murder mystery read with no blood or guts set in a small northern town (Maine? Vermont?) engagingly narrated by a character who owns a few uncanny siamese cats.

NebraskaIcebergs says

My interest in The Cat Who mysteries by Lillian Jackson Braun books comes from my mother-in-law having a dozen of them on her shelves. The series contains thirty titles and features journalist James Qwilleran and his two Siamese cats Yum Yum and Koko. In The Cat Who Smelled a Rat, the 23rd book, the residents of the small town of Pickax located in Moose County "400 miles north of everywhere" have two concerns. The first concern is how late the arrival of the Big One is; residents are becoming increasingly anxious about wildfires, which the first snow storm of the season would help obliterate. The second concern naturally involves murder. I enjoyed Braun's fast-paced style, her focus on one main character through whom I meet residents and hear community gossip, her creation of a town which bubbles with personality and of course the cats. Although the cats are often in the background, they're still prevalent in the story. They air their opinions of James' redecorating efforts, predict changes in weather and newsworthy occurrences and, just as important, provide clues to James as to the murderer's identity. In reading about Braun, I discovered to my pleasure that she refused to cave to publisher demands to use more colorful language

Lorraine says

This book was slower paced than others in the Cat Who series. I still found journalist, James Qwilleran, an enjoyable detective, along with his prescient Siamese cat, Koko, and Koko's pal, Yum Yum. The small far north town of Pickax is filled with all sorts of quaint characters that add to the plot of this series. A smidgen of romance between James and Polly rounds out the plot.

Definitely a good read for fans of clean cozies.

Jacqueline O. says

I used to read a lot of the *Cat Who* books, then I got bored and stopped. This one, *The Cat Who Smelled a Rat* has been sitting on the "to be read" shelf for at least ten years.

But returning to PickAx and meeting up with Qwilleran and company again is kinda' like going home to a small town - a very small town, where everyone knows everyone else - for better or worse. This particular novel is set at the end of the Summer and everyone is worried about wild and forest fires. The fires seem to be occurring near ten historic mind shafts - entrances to old, abandoned mines. Some townspeople suspect fires in the mines are somehow climbing the dry shafts and causing the fires - but since the shafts themselves aren't harmed it seems unlikely. Others in town suspect vandals or even carelessness. Before long there are three murders, all in some way linked to the fires.

This leads to former investigative reporter, James Qwilleran to investigate. Although set in PickAx City,

Moose County, 400 miles North of Everywhere, the Cat Who books always feel more like an "English Cozy" mystery - as Qwilleran asks questions and pokes around before finally solving the case and having his friends in the Sheriff's Department catch the killer.

Still, a fun book.

Oh - for those who seem to confuse these with the Mrs. Murphy books (which **are** from the cat's point of view), the Cat Who books are never from Koko's point of view. The story is from James Qwilleran's pov, but not in first person. Qwilleran just happens to have two Siamese cats - Koko and Yum Yum. Qwill tends to interpret Koko's behavior strangely, though in this one, even Qwill wonders if there's anything unusual about his cat, after all.

Courtenay says

Not as captivating as the others in the series, but this one was still entertaining. Koko helps Qwill solve the mysteries in town, as usual, but more than the mysteries, I enjoyed the Moose County stories, the romantic episodes between Polly & Qwill, and the explanation of curling (on ice). The author adds so many personal & realistic touches to Pickax & Moose County that I believe it exists and I want to live there.

Salymar says

A cozy mystery solved by the witty cats' meows :3 nyaha!

This is my first "The Cat Who" series and it won't definitely be the last! I would really really love to read more of Lilian Jackson Braun's The Cat who novels!

The characters are endearing and the story is very relaxing ♥

I imagined my favorite character --the extraordinary Siamese cat Koko as this (the adorable cat on the photo) :3

Click see review to view the photo

Amy Miller says

I LOVED this series! I've read them all and rate them all a 5. If you like quirky mysteries this is one you should cover. Jim Qwilleran is my kind of detective ... add in a couple of clever cats & what you have is involved, funny and interesting.

it'chy says

the haiku selection are quaint, but the folk songs just rock

this temporarily concludes my cat who adventures since i don't have the next book yet
i guess the bon mot is a bientot

Kandice says

Let me begin by saying this is not something I would normally pick up. I recently discovered you can search Overdrive for particular readers. George Guidall reads Stephen King's Dark Tower series beautifully so I thought listening to something a bit different read by him was worth a try. I think I would have imagined these characters, especially Qwill and Polly, very differently if I had read this on the page.

I really liked Qwill, his cats and this little town. Enough so that I will probably read more, but I think I will try to get my hands on the first in the series to at least get some background, instead of being plopped into the middle of a well established setting.

Donna says

I've read two or three of *The Cat Who* books, and for the life of me, I don't know what keeps me reading to the end. The characters are flat, the plots busy and erratic, the mood lazy and relaxed. In the surreal, sentimental world of Pickax, Moose County, nobody even seems to mind much about murder--nobody, that is, except the protagonist's obnoxious Siamese, "the cat who" yowls when someone in town meets on untimely end.

And yet, with over thirty books to her credit, Lillian Jackson Braun clearly has an audience. *The Cat Who* books fill a niche. And while I for one am not likely to read the whole series, I can see the appeal. Like other "cozies," Ms. Braun's books may be just the thing when real life offers suspense enough and you're simply not in the mood for blood, sex, and grim reality.

Marti says

Though this was written in 2002, I only recently came upon a copy at a used book sale, and realized that it was one of this series that I hadn't read before. Some readers might find this rather simplistic, but there are some interesting facts sprinkled in the plot. Jim Qwilleran is a good main character, but I STILL question his choice of Polly Duncan as the woman in his life. He isn't interested in marrying again--his first attempt did not work out well. Not all the characters are what they seem, and naturally the rat referred to is a human. I have collected these books as I find them, knowing there won't be any others to come.

Sally says

A little too cozy a mystery series, but it is very well read by George Guidall. In this one the town of Pickax is worried about dry conditions, and hoping that the first snowstorm will come soon. There is a murder of a fire watcher, an explosion in a bookstore, and a suspicious death in a curling arena. The mystery is episodic, with Qwilleran finding out bits and pieces, usually while eating or drinking with someone. There is also corrupt politics, shady developments, and a blast from the past that connects to the crimes.

James says

3 of 5 stars to Lillian Jackson Braun's novel, *The Cat Who Smelled a Rat*, the 23rd entry in the "Cat Who" mystery series. Koko and Yum Yum are at it again in this cute cozy about arson, explosions and murder.

When this was published in 2001, the writer was almost 90 years old. She'd written a marvelous set of books all about a cozy little town up in the mountains of Moose County, 400 miles north of everywhere... basically on the Canadian border near the Great Lakes, but on the US side. And she continued to write another 7 books in the last decade of her life before she passed away just before her 97th birthday. She was a bit of a recluse in the last 15 years, probably a bit sick from time to time. Many suspect a team of writers finished the books for her in the later years, but that's only what I've read on the interwebs. I get all my news from there.

This book is your normal cozy... some good parts, some bad parts... the charm is in the characters and the town, less about the mystery with her books. You really get to know everyone, the history and all the core families, so it's more like reading about a good friend. You can forgive a less than stellar story when you're happy to be around people you like.

That said, the mystery has some fun with the "rats" and the "cats" this time. Always good antics.... but the best is the main character, Qwill. I wish I could meet him in real life. But if you must know, it really is the cats that solve the crime. Every time.

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. *Note:* All written content is my original creation and copyrighted to me, but the graphics and images were linked from other sites and belong to them. Many thanks to their original creators.

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Carol says

Second Read: I have thoroughly enjoyed this read. First time was in 2012. Time and writing styles can make a most interesting read. Braun is a great writer, and though she had taken a dip in quality, this one is sharp and very fun. My interest in *The Cat Who* mysteries by Lillian Jackson Braun books comes from my mother having read dozens of library picks and sharing them. Jim Qwilleran and his two Siamese cats Yum Yum and Koko. In *The Cat Who Smelled a Rat*, the 23rd book, the residents of the small town of Pickax located in Moose County "400 miles north of everywhere" have two concerns. The first concern is how late the arrival of the Big One (a very large snow storm) is; residents are becoming increasingly anxious about wildfires,

which the first snow storm of the season would help obliterate. The second concern naturally involves murder. I enjoyed Braun's fast-paced style, her focus on one main character through whom I meet residents and hear community gossip, her creation of a town which bubbles with personality and of course the cats. Although the cats are often in the background, they're still prevalent in the story. They air their opinions of James' redecorating efforts, predict changes in weather and newsworthy occurrences and, just as important, provide clues to James as to the murderer's identity. In reading about Braun, I discovered to my pleasure that she refused to cave to publisher demands to use more colorful language - wish more authors would do that!!!! Highly Recommend.

First Read:I thoroughly enjoyed this book. Several of Braun's haven't been as good lately, but I enjoyed this one very much and it seemed to have more of her flair in it. Qwill was in good form, and the characters seemed to be in an interesting story, and the Cat's of course were as cute as ever. If this is one of a series you like, I don't think you will be disappointed.

Caroline Shewmaker says

These books are so comfy and cozy- a perfect treat for when you're feeling under the weather. This installment had a more compelling mystery than its predecessor, but, man, did I ever have a hard time keeping all the townsfolk straight. I think LJB included just about every character in Moose County. At times the literary and art references felt a bit forced, but I suppose there's nothing wrong with a slight excess of erudition.
