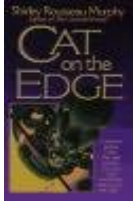


The Joe Grey mystery series

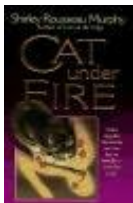
By Shirley Rousseau Murphy



Cat on the Edge [1996]

"It's me, your cat. I had to split. I witnessed a crime and someone is following me. Trust me. When I get this sorted out, I'll be home. I am

still your cat, and I guess I miss you .." Joe Grey jumped down to the floor without hanging up the phone. He was trapped in an unfolding nightmare. First he found he could understand human speech (who would have guessed they had so little to say?). Then he found he could talk (useful for scaring dogs) and even read. He got worried when he found himself feeling human emotions like guilt and sympathy. He even caught himself planning his day! All that, Joe Grey could have handled. If only he hadn't found himself in the alley behind Jolly's Deli the night Beckwhite was murdered...



Cat Under Fire [1996]

Joe Grey never regretted the mysterious accident that gave him the ability to talk and understand human speech. Especially now that he had company - for it had happened to his "girlfriend" Dulcie, too.

The problem was, Dulcie wasn't only listening to humans. She was believing them! She was convinced that the man in jail for killing a famous artist and burning her studio was innocent. And, leave it to Dulcie, she was determined to find the evidence that would convict the real murderer.

Even if she had to get Joe Grey killed doing it!

Cat Raise the Dead [1997]

Joe Grey was, well, peeved. His human housemate Clyde was trying to volunteer him as a once-a-week Animal Therapy cuddle kitty.



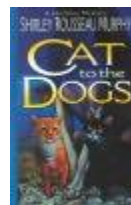
And just when Joe was about to nab the cat burglar who was terrifying the coast from Half Moon Bay to Molena Point! But it wasn't up to Joe or Clyde. The "pet-a-pet" scheme was Dulcie's idea, and she

was a cat who always got her way. Dulcie needed Joe's help to prove that the old folks' home was hiding more than just lonely seniors. There was a mysterious kidnapper, a severed finger and a very, very busy open grave!



Cat in the Dark [1999]

"I'm a cat," said Dulcie. "Of course I worry, Joe. What if the cops set up a stakeout? What if they witness a cat opening a skylight and masterminding a robbery? The tabloids will love it. Every nut in the country will read about the trained burglar-cat. Or, heaven forbid, the talking cat..." There's a bad new cat in sleepy little Molena Point: a renegade tom with a penchant for robbery, a scorn for his fellow felines, and a disdain for human laws. And he's masterminding a crime spree that's quickly escalating toward murder most foul. Dulcie and Joe Grey both know the score - they've seen Azrael in action. But how can they expose the criminal without letting ordinary, untrustworthy humans in on the secret that certain select cats can think and talk? Cats like them...



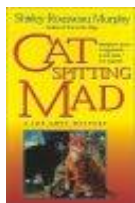
Cat to the Dogs [1999]

"For your information," said Joe Grey, "if that wreck turns out to be a murder, I'm the one who put the cops onto it. Me. The cat you are booting out into the cold for no reason!" Joe Grey kicked out of the house? Ever since the earthquake, things have been going from bad to worse in Molena Point.

There was the car "accident" on Hellhag Hill, which looked--well--fishy, to Joe's night-wise eyes. And there was the suspicious but not unwelcome death of the town philanderer, Shamas Greenlaw. Soon the little coastal California town was filled with greedy relatives and Shamas's brazen young mistress, all looking to share the widow's grief--and her rumored gold.

Every earthquake has its aftershocks, and now even Dulcie, the library cat, is getting weird. She's going to the dogs, literally. She's taken to mothering two orphaned pups discovered at the scene of the crash.

And worst of all, there's Clyde, Joe's erratic but lovable human. He thinks cats should stay out of police work (as if humans could handle it on their own!), and to make his point, he's locking Joe and Dulcie out of the house when Officer Harper come over to play poker. Clyde is afraid the two will give away their secret--that a few *select* cats can not only talk, but also read--and even use the telephone. (Where *does* Harper think those anonymous tips are coming from after all?) But Joe is not about to give up the chase. Not until the "ghost" of Hellhag Hill is tracked down and brought to justice.



Cat Spitting Mad [2000]

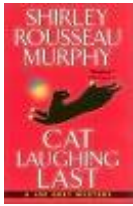
Joe Grey is mad enough to spit! No matter what Clyde, his irritating human "owner," says, he's not keeping his paws off this case, not when Max Harper's life and the future of law enforcement in the town of Molena Point are at stake. While Joe has certainly delighted in playing countless smug tricks on Max Harper, Molena Point's head lawman, he's never had anything but respect for the dedicated cop. In fact, Harper is the one human who makes Joe and Dulcie's sleuthing worth the trouble. Many of the culprits they've tracked down ended up behind bars thanks to Harper's tenacity and shrewdness.

Now Harper is in trouble. Big trouble. Two of his horseback-riding companions have been viciously murdered on the trail, and Dillon, the spunky young girl who accompanied them, is missing. All the evidence points to Harper, and he doesn't have a single witness -- at least not a human one! -- to vouch for his alibi. Joe knows Harper is innocent and is hissing to prove it -- and to rescue his young friend Dillon before it is too late. Finding answers, however, promises to be the biggest challenge Joe and Dulcie have ever faced. They've got to keep their night-eyes sharp and their soft paws moving to avoid both a vicious killer and a hungry cougar prowling around the town's hills. Then there's the tortoiseshell kitten that's been left in their care. Though she shares their wonderful abilities, the kit's fearless curiosity takes them all into dangerous territory.

But there is one silver lining to the terrible cloud hanging over pretty Molena Point. Kate Osborne, Clyde's old girlfriend and close family friend of Dallas Garza, the outside investigator brought in on the Harper case, is back in town. To Joe this means an inside track on the murder investigation and -- almost as good! -- someone to distract Clyde from his dead-set determination to prevent feline meddling. To Dulcie, wise in the ways of women's hearts, it means Charlie, Clyde's freckled, redheaded current girlfriend, is free to spend some quality time lifting Max Harper's spirits and helping out with a few things that even the most talented cats can't do on their own, like driving a getaway car!

**** Cat on the Money**

Downloadable web-only story, the first 8 chapters of which were serialized in the now-defunct *Cats* magazine. Available at the author's web site:



Cat Laughing Last [2001]

The body on Susan Brittain's breakfast room floor and all her treasured purchases flung about and broken are not a good start to Susan's day. However, the criminal involvement is wider than she imagines, and may disrupt the lives of many others as well. Joe Grey and Dulcie suspect as much. With their unique ability to break and enter where the cops can't, the two cats begin gathering evidence. Meanwhile the cats' human friends deal with a famous author and his ill-tempered wife as they try to produce his play without coming to blows. And several senior ladies seek an innovative solution to retirement security, using their revenue from eBay and yard sales. But as Joe Grey and Dulcie dig into California history, they discover that certain artifacts, appearing at those same sales, hold the key to the puzzle. The crudely carved antique casks -- the legacy of a Spanish bride two hundred years dead--are the link the cats have been searching for.

Yet it is the young tortoiseshell, Kit, fascinated by the delights of theater production, who nearly gives away the cats' greatest secret. Kit, with her own surprising venture, almost alerts the entire village that these cats can speak and are more perceptive and sharper of wit than most humans could ever imagine.



Cat Seeing Double [2003]

Always a loner, Charlie Getz never expected to fall in love with anyone, let alone the chief of police of Molena Point, California. So her wedding on a perfect, sunny day is all the more joyous -- especially when two of the honored guests are four-footed pals, feline detectives Joe Grey and Dulcie.

However, two unexpected visitors -- a young boy and an old man hidden in the shadows -- are preparing to bomb the soon-to-be-filled

church. The lone witness, a small tattercoat kit crouched beneath the oak branches, warns Joe's owner, Clyde; then, with claws and teeth, she stops the two would-be murderers. But the shock of the near disaster that might have killed half the village is only the beginning. The next morning Charlie's good friend, building contractor Ryan Flannery, awakens to find her estranged, philandering husband dead in her garage ... and her own gun is missing.

With suspicion falling squarely on Ryan's shoulders, Joe Grey, Dulcie, and Kit use their skills of break-and-enter to prove her innocence. But a stranger's sinister push into her life is as unexpected as the arrival, on the morning of the murder, of a handsome purebred hunting dog, a homeless stray who seems determined to move in with Ryan.

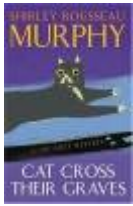
Whatever hateful force has descended on the small seaside village, the three cats are soon paw-deep in a tangle of jealousy, greed, and carefully planned retribution. So they work the case as only cats can, passing information anonymously to the cops, making a heroic feline effort to nail the killer and catch the wedding bomber, and hoping to see the silver hunting dog settled safely into his new home.



Cat Fear No Evil [2004]

Evil has crept into Molena Point, California, on stealthy cat feet. A rash of brazen burglaries, from antique jewelry to vintage cars, coincides with the unwelcome appearance of yellow-eyed Azrael, feline nemesis of crime-solving cats Joe Grey and Dulcie. But what follows soon after really has Joe's fur standing on edge. A young, healthy waiter drops dead at a reception for local artist Charlie Harper. And when the trail of big-time thefts leads up to San Francisco, the dark beast Azrael is on the scene. Does he have contact as well with a stalker and a handsome philanderer? If Joe and Dulcie don't get to the bottom of these misdeeds soon, they and all their human friends

will have ample reasons to be afraid ... to be very afraid.

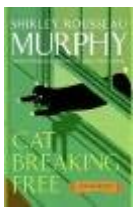


Cat Cross Their Graves [2005]

The appealing small village of Molena Point, California, offers a cozy refuge from the harsher realities of life and serves as a restful retreat for film star Patty Rose, who has retired among its oaks and cottages. Buying an inn where travelers' pets, too, are made welcome, Patty settles down to enjoy her golden years. But as the town gathers to honor her and to celebrate her old films, Patty is brutally murdered -- and only a tortoiseshell cat named Kit hears the three shots fired.

Leaping from the window of the penthouse suite that Kit shares with her adopted humans and scrambling down a flowering vine, Kit is the first to discover Patty's dead body sprawled on the inn's dark back stairs. Glimpsing the killer, she sets out to track him. But soon, as sirens scream and the police arrive, so do Kit's feline pals, Joe Grey and Dulcie.

Finding only Kit's scent and sure that she's headed for trouble, Joe and Dulcie follow her. But Dulcie must also put aside her own secret -- a runaway young girl she's been helping to hide in the local library. She won't learn until later that the child may be, in a grisly and convoluted scenario, connected to Patty's murder. This, along with the discovery of hidden graves, a kidnapping, and the secrets of a dying woman, deal the cats a full set of clues that soon have them clawing out the truth.

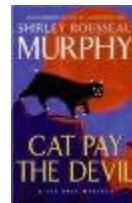


Cat Breaking Free [2005]

The fur starts flying -- the fur of Joe Grey, Feline P.I., that is -- when a gang from L.A. comes up to tranquil Molena Point, California, and begins breaking into the village's quaint shops. After all, Molena Point has been his home since he was a kitten eating scraps from the garbage behind the local delicatessen, and

he doesn't take well to marauding strangers. Joe even wonders whether the blonde who's moved in next door to his human companion Clyde could be a part of the gang -- she's been acting pretty suspicious lately.

But when the strangers start trapping and caging feral cats -- *speaking* cats, like Joe and his girlfriend Dulcie -- it proves too much for the intrepid four-footed detective. And when one of the gang is murdered, and a second mysterious death comes to light, he has no choice but to try to stop the crimes. Joe, Dulcie, and Kit, who used to be a stray herself, are deep into the investigation when they are able to release the three trapped felines. But as Kit leads them away to freedom, will she herself return to that wild life?



Cat Pay the Devil [2007]

In this twelfth intricate and enchanting novel, the crafty feline trio faces perhaps their most feared enemy: two of their closest human friends are kidnapped and may not live to see freedom.

Molena Point, California, nestled quietly on the Pacific coast miles below San Francisco, is not a place where most escaped federal prisoners would hole up. But Cage Jones has a reason. Facing another prison term, he escapes from jail hot for revenge against the Molena Point resident who turned state's witness against him and who, he's certain, has stolen his hidden cache—a fortune for which he has not served time, and does not intend to. When local headlines tell Dulcie that Cage has escaped, the tabby is cold with fear for her housemate, Wilma. Joe Grey, puzzling over two brutal local murders, doesn't pay attention until Wilma's house is vandalized and Dulcie finds Cage Jones on the premises, but not Wilma. While cops swarm on to the scene, Joe and his human housemate take off on a wild search for Wilma—and Dulcie and Kit foolishly go into Jones's hideout.

When the three indomitable felines, paw-in-hand with the unsuspecting cops—and with special powers known by only a few select humans—help untangle Jones's agenda and the brutal murders, the devil-tinged scenario leaves a lasting fear among the cats. In one of Shirley Rousseau Murphy's most suspenseful and unforgettable books to date—a whimsical and imaginative trip into the hidden lives of felines—the cats, and a band of feral friends, help bring peace to the small seaside village.



Cat Deck the Halls [2007]

The charming seaside village of Molena Point, California, leads one to expect a quiet traditional Christmas surrounded by family and friends—but not this holiday season. Instead of singing carols and climbing into Christmas trees, Joe Grey, feline P.I., is faced with his most difficult case yet—and that's saying a lot for a wily tomcat who for years has been solving crimes the police can't even crack.

At midnight in the deserted gardens of the shopping plaza, a stranger lies dead beneath the village Christmas tree; the only witness to the shooting is a little child. But when the police arrive, summoned by an anonymous phone call of feline origin, both the body and the child have disappeared. As police scramble for leads, the grey tomcat, his tabby lady, and their tortoiseshell pal, Kit, launch their own unique investigation.

Together Joe Grey, Dulcie, and Kit face their most heartbreaking case yet as they care for the child who may be the killer's next target. Trying to sort out perplexing clues amidst the happiness of the season, they shadow a cast of colorful characters. But neither the police nor their unknown feline assistants are aware that they might have stumbled over the murderer and never known it, until an electrifying final scene when the killer's identity is revealed.



Cat Playing Cupid [2009]

It took Joe Grey's human, Clyde, nearly forever to pop the question to Ryan Flannery, and what more romantic time to tie the knot than on Valentine's Day? But dark secrets from the past, uncovered by Joe and his feline pals, threaten to ruin the happy union.

First, a body discovered many miles away reopens a ten-year-old cold case involving a man who disappeared days before his own wedding. The jilted bride is back in town and eager to find the truth . . . or to hide evidence of her own wrongdoing. Trouble is, she's soon involved with Ryan's father, who is housesitting and preparing meals for Joe Grey while Clyde and Ryan are on their honeymoon.

Then another body is found closer to home on the grounds of a ruined estate, deserted save for a band of unusual feral cats. Around the wrist of the corpse is a bracelet bearing the image of a rearing cat, and the cats discover a rare literary volume hidden nearby that divulges their own secret: their special ability to speak.

But as the police investigate the two murders, located more than five hundred miles apart, only Joe Grey suspects that the crimes are related. It takes a chase from which the tomcat wonders if he'll emerge alive for anyone to hone in on the connection between the murders.



Cat Striking Back [2009]

On a lovely moonlit night, Joe Grey is minding his own business, carrying a gift of mice to a litter of kittens, when he stumbles upon a murder scene. Behind an empty house lies a swimming pool, its bottom covered with mud. There is also blood, the smell of human death, and drag marks. But there is no victim. Without a body, it's a crime that will be hard to prove.

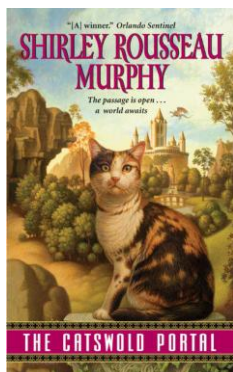
With stubborn feline curiosity, Joe Grey sets out to investigate. As he, Dulcie, and Kit follow

the killer's trail among four houses whose owners are on vacation, they discover that more murder has been planned for the small, close-knit neighborhood. They uncover evidence of conflict among the residents and multiple signs of breaking-and-entering, although nothing valuable seems to be missing.

With the help of two local ferals, the cats find the victim's hidden grave and learn of the violence that is yet to come. As they set out to alert the law, they discover the perfect way to thwart the killer - through that person's unnatural but powerful *fear of cats*.

Cat Coming Home [expected in October 2010]

Related Works



The Catswold Portal
[1992]

The Catswold Portal, also written by Murphy and originally published in 1992, is a sort of prequel to the Joe Grey series.

Although not part of the Joe Grey series, The Catswold Portal is similar in that it also involves talking magical cat-people. The story takes place in the same locale as the Joe Grey series, only earlier, and explains the origins of the talking cats and how they came to be.

Compiled by the staff of the
Lincoln City Libraries
For the Just Desserts Mystery Discussion Group
April 2010 / sdc