

MPM

a bulletin on the doings and undoings of
Barbara Mertz/Elizabeth Peters/Barbara Michaels
Issue 41
Winter 2002/2003
Kristen Whitbread, Editor

The Amelia Peabody Books

By Elizabeth Peters

In chronological order:
Crocodile on the Sandbank
Curse of the Pharaohs
The Mummy Case
Lion in the Valley
Deeds of the Disturber
The Last Camel Died at Noon
The Snake, the Crocodile, and the Dog
The Hippopotamus Pool
Seeing a Large Cat
The Ape Who Guards the Balance
The Falcon at the Portal
He Shall Thunder in the Sky
Lord of the Silent
The Golden One
Children of the Storm

also look for:

mpmbooks.com

MPM: Mertz ● Peters ● Michaels

The official Barbara Mertz/Elizabeth Peters/Barbara Michaels website

by Margie Knauff & Lisa Speckhardt

PUBLISHING

CHILDREN OF THE STORM	April 2003	Hardcover	Avon Mystery
The Golden One	April 2003	paperback	Avon Mystery
other Elizabeth Peters paperbacks recently (or soon to be) released by Avon Mystery:			
He Shall Thunder in the Sky	April 2002		
Legend in Green Velvet	September 2002		
The Jackal's Head	June 2002		
The Night of Four Hundred Rabbits	March 2002		
Die for Love	January 2002		

Barbara Michaels paperback released by Harper Torch:
Smoke and Mirrors February 2002

I'm a universal patriot, if you could understand me rightly: my country is the world.
Charlotte Bronte, *The Professor*

MPM

Once again we offer holiday greetings to all people of good will, whatever their beliefs. May they prevail against the forces of violence, war and injustice, here and throughout the world.

When you read this, I will be in Egypt again, accompanied by several friends and meeting many others. I celebrated a rather substantial birthday this year, so I figure I have no time to lose.

The birthday party was spectacular, if I do say so, and I can, because I didn't have to do anything except show up. It was held in my garden, and for once the weather cooperated--rain the day before, to freshen the grass and flowers, and a beautiful sunny day on the day itself. I refuse to admit how many bottles of gin I received or how much I ate. My daughter and granddaughter came all the way from

Chicago, my son and his wife and four kids were a vivacious presence, and friends came from near and far. I am so grateful to all who made it a truly memorable memory, including Tim, who fished grandchildren out of the lily pond, and Kristen, who managed the entire affair and produced a magnificent birthday cake at the last minute, and Dominick and Kathleen Abel, the instigators and sponsors. It was above and beyond the call of duty for all of them, and they made me feel very special.

On a more mundane level, I can report that *Children of the Storm* has received its final edit and is on its way to the printer. April 1, 2003, is the pub date; the paperback of *The Golden One* will appear at the same time. The *Amelia Peabody Compendium*--official title, *Amelia Peabody's Egypt*--is in its antepenultimate stage. It is gorgeous, entertaining, and informative. I speak without prejudice. Morrow will publish it next fall, in time for Christmas. (Hint.)

Until next time--

We have to face the fact that either all of us are going to die together or we are going to learn to live together, and if we are to live together we have to talk.

Eleanor Roosevelt, , in *New York Times*

LETTERS

The internet pays a visit again in the form of Kathy Hedges (on behalf of her Yahoo group discussion pals) who plied MPM with enough questions for several issues:

Kathy Hedges: When you introduced Margaret Minton in "Deeds," was it with the idea in mind that she would eventually become a love interest for Sethos? The book immediately before "Deeds" was "Lion," in which we found out that Sethos had conceived a passion for Amelia. You knew, at the time, that Sethos was Amelia's brother-in-law, although we did not. [Did] you build yourself a way out of this complication by bringing Margaret onstage, so she could be handy as a love interest for Sethos once his relationship to the family was known? Or were you simply casting around for a love interest after the end of *Thunder* and lighted on Margaret as a possibility?

MPM No. No. I didn't "cast around for a love interest;" Margaret was there, and I thought inevitable. She's a lot like Amelia, physically and otherwise.

Kathy Hedges: What was going on when Ramses kissed Mrs. Fortescue, the spy in "Thunder"? He kissed her and thought of Nefret, and next thing you know, Mrs. F. was inviting him up to her room. I said in the online group that Ramses was probably having a physical reaction to his thoughts of Nefret, Mrs. Fortescue noticed, and she thought it was all about her, so she invited him to her bedroom. A number of people disagreed with this interpretation, so I don't know whether I've just got a dirtier mind than the books actually warrant.

MPM Well, really. Mrs. Fortescue intended to distract Ramses all along - for several reasons.

Kathy Hedges: We group members have had a great deal of innocent (?) fun speculating on which of your characters we would marry, and which we would have an affair with. Poor old Sethos! Absolutely no one wanted to marry him! He'll have to content himself with the long list

of readers who would line up to have affairs with him.
The silliest poll...the Most Romantic Kiss poll [follows]

And the winner by a landslide (31% of the voting Yahoo-Amelia-List public):

Ramses and Nefret, He Shall Thunder in the Sky

"One arm held her pressed to his side, her body arched like a bow in his hard grasp. Putting his hand under her chin, he tilted her head back and brought his mouth down on hers."

MPM Thanks for the poll - what a hoot!

And in response to a previous letter from Kathy Hedges, Jan Pitt writes: It absolutely astonishes me that anyone could read the whole of the Peabody Emerson canon and not be constantly aware of the depth of their feelings for each other. Whatever else happens in their chequered lives, that seems to me to be a constant, often unspoken but always implicit. Yes, I think Amelia is fond of Sethos, but isn't it possible that that is because of his resemblance to the man she adores? To compare the affection she feels for Sethos with the love she has for Emerson is like - oh, like comparing candlelight with starlight! And to interpret the scene at the end of The Golden One between Sethos and Amelia as a sort of cross between confession and renunciation - can you really imagine MPM writing something along those lines? She's great at spoofing as we know but she really cares for Amelia and certainly wouldn't let common sense desert her! Incidentally, Amelia makes absolutely no secret of her love for Abdullah. I'd say that he was very much more important to her than Sethos....

MPM I'm with you, Jan. Love is (pay attention) a very complicated emotion. One kind of love does not exclude others. (Shall I write a "how-to" book?)

Kathy Hedges: I just want to assure you that I never thought Amelia stuck with Emerson only through loyalty. One of the things I have enjoyed most about the books is that they feature a happily married couple. Usually couples in fiction are either dysfunctional, or else the story ends with "they lived happily ever after." This series shows us what "happily ever after" looks like, which is rather uncommon. I guess, to paraphrase Tolstoy, happy couples must be very hard to write about.

Joan DeFato: Could you give a summary of your preface about the games you play with your readers? I always knew that you do play games, but I think there is more to it than I realize.

KDW The only preface we could find which particularly addresses this is MPM's introduction to the specially bound 1990 reprint of Curse of the Pharaoh's by The Armchair Detective Library:

...Let me add one final note to the development of the Amelia-Emerson saga which took place in Curse of the Pharaohs. As I mentioned in the introduction to Crocodile on the

Sandbank, I took pleasure in borrowing a number of devices from nineteenth century sensational fiction. In "Curse" I stole, shamelessly and directly. Readers will of course recognize the derivation of the name of the unfortunate Lord Baskerville (of the Norfolk, not the Devonshire branch of the family); they may not have realized that the names of almost all the other characters are also derived from Doyle, Collins, and other masters of the genre. I found myself doing this more and more as the saga proceeded; not only is it an interesting game, in which well-versed readers can participate, but it is my humble tribute to those who preceded me and inspired me.

KDW The compendium, Amelia Peabody's Egypt (which will be published in November 2003) includes a "Literary Quiz" composed by MPM, which will test your knowledge of a number of the references found in the novels. In addition to the literary connections, MPM alludes in a number of places to particular knowledge from the field of Egyptology - from Amelia's prescient comments to and about Howard Carter and Tut's tomb, to her suggestions that Ramses discovered KV55 first, to MPM's gentle (usually) satire of archaeologists (and politicians) of the era.

Jennifer Campbell and Sangeeta Sheney: Will you be addressing the time gaps between Amelia novels at some point? We thought it would be awesome to find out what happens in the gap between The Ape Who Guards the Balance and The Falcon at the Portal, among others. Will there ever be a return to the Nubian Oasis? Where is Kevin O'Connell? Will we ever see Percy's sister, Violet, again?

MPM The right questions at the right time. But you'll have to wait until 2004 to find out some of the answers. "Children of the Storm" takes us up to 1919. After that...watch this space.

If the whole human race lay in one grave, the epitaph on its headstone might well be: "It seemed a good idea at the time."

Rebecca West, in *New York Times*

COOKIECOOKIECOOKIECOOKIECOOKIECOOKIECOOKIECOOKIE KDW
Okay folks, we're running out of recipes to share. As many of you who have been receiving the newsletter for a while know, in our "holiday" issue we have always included a cookie recipe. However, after ten years we have rather depleted our supply of favorite recipes. That is the ONLY reason that I seriously considered including our Christmas Stolen recipe (to which MPM replied, "You really hate some of those folks out there, huh?") Okay, so perhaps the Stolen recipe is more complicated than most of us have time to indulge in these days, but I have always felt it was a worthwhile endeavor in any case. It is a recipe that builds character, as it were. However, so that there are no grumbles about burdensome assignments, for this year I am including a great recipe from MPM's cousin, Marilyn Hyde. But I'm putting you folks on notice: for next year's homework you can plan on receiving the Stolen recipe. With one year's notification, and all that extra time to properly schedule your holiday vacation, I will not expect to hear any complaints about time constraints.

Vanilla Chip Maple Cookies

Yield: 7 dozen cookies.

Preheat oven to 350. Cream the following together:

1 c shortening

1/2 c butter softened

2 c packed brown sugar

Then add one at a time and mix thoroughly:

2 eggs

Beat in:

1 tsp vanilla extract

1 tsp maple flavoring

Combine the following dry ingredients and add to the above creamed mixture:

3 c flour (if you like thicker cookies make the dough stiffer with about 1/2 c more flour)

2 tsp baking soda

Finally, stir in:

2 c white chips

1/2 c chopped pecans

Drop dough by rounded teaspoonfuls onto ungreased baking sheets. Bake for 8-10 min. until golden brown.

Frosting (absolutely necessary!)

Beat together until of spreading consistency:

1/4 c butter softened

4 c confectioners' sugar

1 tsp maple flavoring

4-6 tab milk (adjust for proper consistency)

Ice cooled cookies and place a pecan half atop each (it takes about 3 1/2 c pecan halves to a batch).

There's no difference between one's killing and making decisions that will send others to kill. It's exactly the same thing, or even worse.

Golda Meir, in *L'Europeo*

IN RESPONSE TO YOUR REQUEST FOR A BRIEF FOWL FOLLOW-UP* KDW

There is often in people to whom "the worst" has happened an almost transcendent freedom, for they have faced "the worst" and survived it.

Carol Pearson, *The Hero Within*

I don't wish to offend anyone by making light of the above quote, but truly, if a duck can feel a transcendent freedom then ours were floating on air when they left our house. They endured an arduous existence at our house. Actually, when all was said and done, horrific might be a better descriptive. I may not have mentioned it previously, but our neighbors have beagles, and they occasionally escape their enclosure. Beagles are, by and large, hunting dogs. They're not particular about what they hunt; ducks will serve as well as anything else. For a while our duck herd looked like the Walking Wounded. (Trust me, it was a herd - when thirteen ducks graze and tromple grass, ferns, flowers and bushes to the ground more effectively than thirteen goats, then its a herd.) We had two whose broken legs were patched together with clothespin stints, gauze and first aid tape; one who completely lost one eye as well as her sight in the other, one with a broken wing, one whose chest bore puncture wounds and who wheezed for quite some time until the the holes healed, one male with two strained wings (from beating off his attackers) which dragged alongside him like the trailing hem of a ball gown at the conclusion of a riotous waltz. One didn't make it. Out of kindness to them, when everyone had more or less healed, I sent a number of them to live on various people's ponds. Against my better judgement, we kept the large wheezy male - Bobo Crappit; one of the undamaged few to whom my son had formed an attachment - Miss Dottiebottom; and Blind Io (guess who?). Blind Io lives with the chickens; Bobo and Miss Dottie live with the horses. Let's hope the spirit of ducks is now watching over them; speaking on behalf of the ducks, it certainly did a miserable job of it before this.

*Yes, I could have made a pun out of this “headline” - something should be reckoned me for sparing you.

Peace is not a passive but an active condition, not a negation but an affirmation. It is a gesture as strong as war.

Mary Roberts Rinehart, in *Women of the World: The Great Foreign Correspondents*

MPM

From time to time some of you send me nice little presents. While I greatly appreciate your thoughtfulness, I would much rather you instead send a contribution to a charity of your choice. A few that I have supported for some time are Oxfam, the Revolutionary Afghan Women’s Association (RAWA), Amnesty International, and ANERA.

I dream of giving birth to a child who will ask, “Mother, what was war?”

Eve Merriam, in *Peacemaking: Day by Day*