

# MPM

a bulletin on the doings and undoings of  
Barbara Mertz/Elizabeth Peters/Barbara Michaels  
Issue 43  
Summer/Fall 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

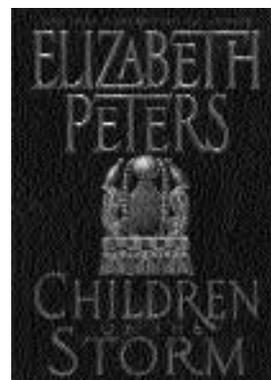
*also look for:*

mpmbooks.com

**MPM: Mertz ● Peters ● Michaels**

*The official Barbara Mertz/Elizabeth Peters/Barbara Michaels website*

by Margie Knauff & Lisa Speckhardt



### PUBLISHING

The (fairly) New Amelia Peabody Mystery from WilliamMorrow Publishers!

**Children of the Storm**

April 2003

hardcover

**The Golden One**

April 2003

paperback

Avon Suspense

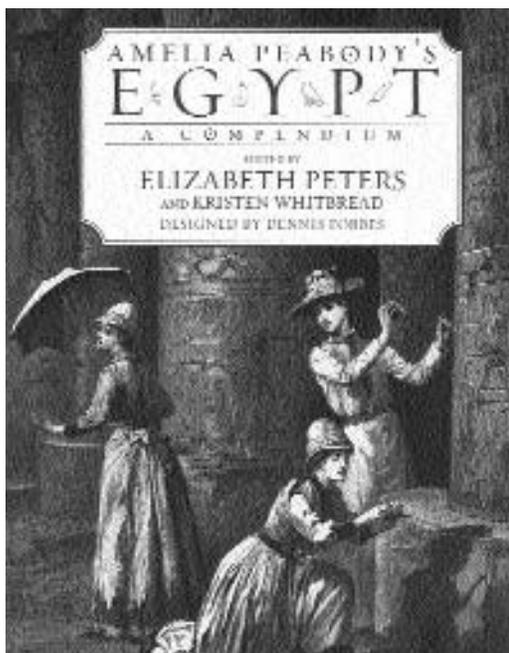
And...

It's ALMOST Here!

**Amelia Peabody's Egypt, A Compendium** October 2003

hardcover

WilliamMorrow



### APPEARANCES

The Smithsonian Tuesday, Oct. 28 6pm

Tickets: Resident Members \$12

Senior Members \$11

General Admission \$15

Contact Melody Curtis at 202-786-9027 for more information

Boston Museum of Fine Arts Friday, Oct. 24 6:30pm

lecture then signing

Call 617-369-3587 for more information

Call 617-369-3306 to charge tickets

## One cannot have too large a party.

Jane Austen *Emma*

MPM

I hope I may be permitted to preen myself a bit about the magnificent party given by my publishers to mark the publication of **Children of the Storm**. Well, my dears, you should have been there. The Plaza is one of New York's most glamorous hotels. When we approached the stairs leading to the ballroom we found them sprinkled with rose petals, and at the head of the stairs a gigantic reproduction of the book cover.



### *The Entrance:*

Once inside we were greeted by a trio of Egyptian musicians in costume, playing traditional music. The guests included members of the media, my buddies from Harper-Collins-Avon-Morrow, and a number of Egyptology friends, some of whom wore their pith helmets. However, I believe all would agree that the tour de force was the cake (for this was also an acknowledgment of my recent birthday), in the form of a four-foot long sphinx--a masterpiece of the pastry chef's art, with sandy-gold frosting sculpted like the original. The cake itself--need I say?--was chocolate.



### *The Musicians*

With great tact, my hosts provided only one candle to be blown out. I hated to leave that cake. But I did manage to make off with one of the paws. Carefully encased in foil, it survived the three days I spent doing signings and interviews in the New York area, and was greatly appreciated by my grandchildren, and Tim and Kristen.

Thanks to all of you who helped put another of my books on the best-seller lists. Quite frankly, those lists don't matter to me as much as the loyalty and support of my dear readers, but they do make publishers happy. And, I must add, my publishers made me happy with that splendid blow-out. Thank you, Jane and Michael, Trish and Sharyn and all the others who worked so hard.

It has been a busy summer. Wet, too. The rain was a mixed blessing, rotting the blossoms of peonies and roses, but after last year's horrible drought we welcomed it; and the peonies were spectacular in spite of sogginess. I can't stop buying peonies. I don't know how many varieties I have, but including tree peonies, the number must be well over fifty.\* The months of April and May and early June are pure heaven, beginning with the first daffodils and ending when the last roses fade. The old roses, the only kind I grow, bloom only once, but what a tapestry they make. Now, in the dog days of summer the annu-

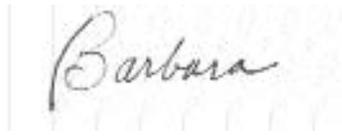


*The Cake!* presented by Jane Friedman, President and CEO, to a clearly astonished (though not necessarily speechless) MPM.

als continue to bloom, lilies make a brave show, and the water lilies and lotuses are doing their best. And already I can hardly wait till the lilacs bloom next spring.

Work? We have not been idle. **Amelia Peabody's Egypt** is ready for the printer, after much travail--it's an awfully complicated book, but worth the effort. I think you'll agree that it is gorgeous, informative and entertaining. (If you don't agree, kindly keep your opinion to yourself.) I am working on the next Amelia, **Guardian of the Horizon**; and for those of you who feared she was coming to the end of her adventures, I am happy to announce that I've just signed a contract for two more.

Please keep the cards and letters coming. I do enjoy hearing from you. I have a few appearances scheduled this fall, in connection with the publication of the Amelia compendium--see the dates above, if Kristen can figure out what I did with the letter from my publicist. I must add that although she is co-editor of the book she has flatly refused to tour. I am deeply wounded but resigned.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

\*Given that one order alone exceeded that number, I would imagine so! KDW

**I do love secondhand books that open to the page some previous owner read oftenest.**

**Helene Hanff *84, Charing Cross Road***

Jan Pitt writes: Apropos of finding bizarre objects used as bookmarkers... wandering round our village fete at the weekend (I don't suppose you have fetes in America: they're probably a peculiar form of English masochism) I spent ages riffling through piles of most unappealing paperbacks to find, hidden beneath a pile of Catharine Cooksons et al, a tiny jewel of a book which has given me enormous pleasure. It is written by a compatriot of yours, Anne Fadiman, and comprises a series of essays for bibliophiles. She divides us into categories, "courtly lovers" (people who would probably rather die than deface a book with a slice of bread or a rasher of bacon!) and "carnal lovers", people who literally love their books to pieces, joyously dog-earing pages, scribbling in the margins, leaving them lying face down and using them for deviant purposes such as building blocks or door stops. Which category do you and Kristen fall into? I am definitely a courtly lover (my senses insist that they were brought up to believe that the eleventh commandment was "Pulverize each other if you really must but never, ever, ill-treat a book") and I will never change, but I must confess that after reading Anne Fadiman, a carnal lover par excellence, I can't help wondering if I've been missing something and that it might actually be rather fun to be a carnal lover, just as all those respectable and impeccably virtuous Victorian ladies we hear about might secretly have envied their more abandoned sisters, whatever their protests to the contrary!

MPM My father once accused me of sending him a book with a ham sandwich in it. (I always read the

books before I sent them, of course.) That was just one of his little jokes, but I admit there were sometimes crumbs. However, I am more inclined toward the courtly side, though it does depend on the book. I have to force myself to dogear a page, even if I don't intend to keep the book.

KDW What an intriguing contemplation; especially since I now perceive that my behavior has evolved. I can recall when certain books brought out the lust in me, and I would scribble notes in their margins, dribble crumbs into their spines (since I couldn't possibly put them down while I ate), and then let them fall onto the pillow beside me as I drifted off to sleep (awaking with a lovely indentation where the corner had stuck into my temple throughout the night). While I find that I enjoy reading as much as I ever have, I no longer treat books so cavalierly; I do NOT break spines, nor do I dribble food into them, I am careful to use a bookmark (NEVER would I turn down a page corner), and the book always goes onto my night stand before I go to sleep. I think, in my case, it may be a question of ownership. Before I had children there was no question but that each book I read was MINE ALL MINE - with the exception of library books, of course - and therefore I branded them with wild abandon so there could be no mistaking my possession. Now, every book I read will potentially be read by my daughter, my son, or my husband so I no longer consider them my personal property. It is as if I have a public library in my own house; and as with any library book I am careful not to damage them in any way, or for that matter, leave any evidence of my presence. I wonder whether the eventual absence of my children will summon my past intemperance, or if I am forever-after reformed?



Erika Wilson writes: I have been reading your wonderful Amelia Peabody series and I think that you may enjoy the enclosed. I only wish that I could remember where I found them. Probably either *Harper's Weekly* or *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*.

KDW Not only did MPM enjoy the etchings Erika sent, but we both agreed that one in particular was too wonderful to selfishly hoard!

MPM Do not try this at home!  
(or in the veldt.)

Alice Goepfert asks: Where

can I send contributions for excavations as you mentioned in your last newsletter? I would love to help in new discoveries and in the preservation of ancient Egypt!

Please send an inquiry prior to sending money to any of the organizations listed below and ask for the details of their ongoing projects (they usually fund more than one project, and you may wish to earmark your funds).

Friends of the Colossi of Memnon  
Etude de Maitre Nicolas Gagnebin  
2 Rue Saint Laurent  
1207 Geneva  
SWITZERLAND

The Amarna Research Foundation  
16082 East Loyala Place  
Aurora CO 80013

Dr. Salima Ikram  
(Director of The Animal Mummy Project)  
Please send your queries to her c/o MPM's PO box, and we will forward them to her.

MPM Manor, Inc.  
PO Box 180  
Libertytown, MD 21762-0180

Carol Brown writes: I have found your website and enjoy reading the comments you make there. I must confess that until then I did not realise that there were so many subtleties that I was missing out on. I guess I was so busy enjoying the literal story that I didn't read between the lines. I didn't realise about Ramses and Enid Fraser until I was slapped in the face with it. Which has left me uncertain as to a part of the current book. I am hoping that you are going to tell me that it was an honest editing error, rather than that again I am missing a hidden meaning. At the start of the book on page 49 you state that the twins were staying in Luxor while the family went to Cairo to greet the Walter Emersons and family as they arrived in Egypt, but on page 88 you mention that Amelia lost Davy (not Dolly) in a sarcophagus at the museum. When they arrive back in Luxor, Evelyn asks, "Where are the twins?" I keep telling myself there can't be anything to this, but since I have missed so many other things along the way I am having self-doubts. Especially since I have never seen any of your books have this type of error before.

MPM Well. Er. Hmph. I caught that little error but not until after the book was in print - what can I say? My only satisfaction is that two editors missed it too.

KDW NO, NO, NO, NO, NO! Good Gad MPM - Have those thousands of hours working on the Compendium taught you absolutely NOTHING? Let us start again if we may. Ahem.

While it is kind of Elizabeth Peters to take responsibility for Amelia's oversight, the truth is that as the editor of her journals Peters is exceedingly careful not to change every idiosyncrasy. In fact, we should be appreciative that she hasn't scrubbed Amelia clean, or we would never have known the Victorian archaeologist and adventurer so intimately, eccentricities and all. Amelia frequently demonstrated that while she enjoyed young children... at a distance, she had some difficulty keeping track of any but her own (and even that's a questionable assertion at times!) She could never keep the number, names, or ages of Evelyn and Walter's brood straight, and I was not surprised in the least to see her confuse the next generation as well.

( It is good to keep in mind Frank Lloyd Wright's counsel, "The physician can bury his mistakes, while the architect can only advise his client to plant vines." For more vines see **The Life and Times of Amelia Peabody**)

And speaking of vines...or more exactly, of plant material in general, Kathy Schmid writes of the commentary on camel's feet and Larousse Gastronomique in the letters section of MPM 40: With regard to the article on the Larousse Gastronomique, which is indeed advertised as having 9 recipes for camel -- you may be interested to hear that *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii* is an alga rather than a bacterium. Your cream would therefore be rather green.

KDW Pickled camel's feet, Kalahari Aye Aye, and piquant green cream to drizzle over it all. A meal fit for a...for a...well, I guess for a relative you despise. I think that's two for two in a mere three sentences, as errors go on my part.

**When I make a mistake it's a beaut!**

**Fiorello Henry La Guardia (mayor of NY City 1929-1945)**