

MPM

a bulletin on the doings and undoings of
Barbara Mertz/Elizabeth Peters/Barbara Michaels
Issue 45
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Kristen Whitbread, Editor

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
Guardian of the Horizon
Serpent on the Crown

The Amelia Peabody Books

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**The official Barbara Mertz/Elizabeth Peters/Barbara Michaels
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by Margie Knauff & Lisa Speckhardt

PUBLISHING

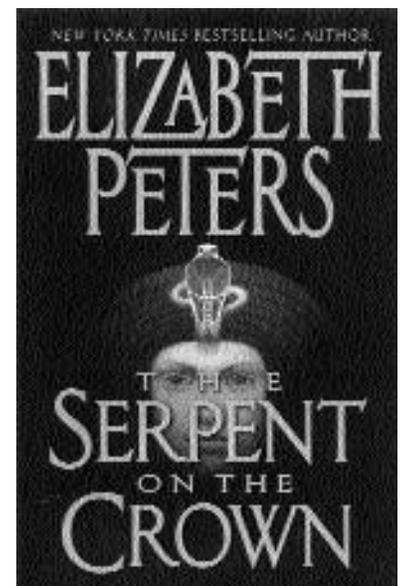
The Serpent on the Crown April 2005 hardcover WilliamMorrow

Guardian of the Horizon March 2005 paperback Avon Suspense

Children of the Storm April 2004 paperback Avon Suspense

The Golden One April 2003 paperback Avon Suspense

Amelia Peabody's Egypt, A Compendium
October 2003 hardcover WilliamMorrow



Gardening is an exercise in optimism. Sometimes, it is the triumph of hope over experience.

Marina Schinz *Visions of Paradise*

MPM

For the first time since I bought my camellia Winter Rose, it is blooming its head off. The flowers are smallish, only a couple of inches in diameter, but they are exquisite--shell pink shading to darker in the center. That's why I love gardening. One might say, if one were pompous (which I am sometimes inclined to be) that it is a metaphor for life: you win some, you lose some, and a good deal of the time you have no idea why. Tenderly nurtured plants keel over, bulbs and perennials you never expected to see again suddenly revive. We've become philosophical about lost plants-- "hey, there's an open space, what

can we put there?"--and there is nothing to compare with the thrill of seeing an unexpectedly resurrected flower. Last year we pitched many of our two-year old amaryllis bulbs into the compost heap. In August I spotted a blaze of scarlet and found one valiant plant in full bloom. There's another metaphor, I suppose.

And now for something completely different. In early November I returned the second and final set of revisions for the new Amelia Peabody, *The Serpent on the Crown*. We've already got a cover, which I think is smashing, and catalogue copy. Page proofs will be arriving in a few weeks. Pub date is late April. I hope you'll like it. I do, though by the time I had re-read the manuscript. for the tenth time I was getting a leetle bit tired of my own prose. Serpent takes place in the spring of 1922, and of course we all know what happened in the autumn of that year, don't we? Carter's great discovery will be featured in the next book, which I have, in theory, begun.

It's been a busy summer and fall, with trips to Chicago and Denver and my usual last minute rush to get the manuscript in on time. In June I attended BEA (the booksellers' convention) in Chicago, which gave me an excuse to spend time with my daughter and her two daughters. We met up with Chuck Roberts (owner of one of the world's best used book stores) and his family, and with Ray Johnson of the OI and his partner Jay. In September I gave a talk at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, and was delighted to see so many friends and readers attend. My son and daughter-in-law and four grandchildren also attended, so I was able to show them off and show off for them. The exhibition, *The Quest for Immortality*, is one of the best I've ever seen and the museum did a marvellous job of displaying it. My extremely intelligent and well behaved grandkids enjoyed it, though I think the biggest thrill for them was getting VIP badges. They were bitterly disappointed when they had to give them back as we left. Old friends and travel experts Bill and Nancy Petty arranged that for us, and presented two of the children with scraps of genuine mummy cloth. It pays to have friends in high places!

The next months will be spent working on revisions of *Red Land*, *Black Land* and *Temples, Tombs and Hieroglyphs*, starting another book, and of course preparations for the holidays. The solarium is full of plants which Tim and Kristen brought in before our first hard freeze. The house is full of eccentric cats, whose demands keep us busy opening and closing doors, putting food dishes in designated (by the cats) places, and refereeing spats over territory. I lost one dear old lady last year, but have three new ones. Tessa is an Abyssinian who considers the upstairs her personal turf and howls like a tiger if someone intrudes. Smoke, aka Squeaker, is a dark gray Maine Coon, who is also known as the Ghost Cat, since most people only get glimpses of her as she passes rapidly through various rooms. She's quite gorgeous and a blooming nuisance, since her long coat is in constant need of grooming. Tim is the only one who can catch her (she hasn't figured out that his arms are longer than mine or Kristen's) and it takes both Tim and Kristen, and sometimes me, to comb out her tangles. The third newcomer is Bad Boy Joe, who lives up to his name. He's a Maine Coon, black except for a tuxedo front of white and four white paws and long, dead white eyebrows and whiskers. He has the classic Maine Coon vocabulary, a very loud voice, and an attitude. Naturally I adore him, though he treats me with disdain and swears if his demands are not instantly complied with. I still have Emerson, who does not live up to his name; he is big and gorgeous, but very timid, with a high-pitched voice. There is also Nefret, the Siamese (the house bully) and Ellery, tailless, deaf and aging, and Sethos, shorthaired, all black except for a white locket, who considers the entire out of doors his turf. The unfortunate dog is at the mercy of all of them. Lucky is a good old boy though, a real homebody. I keep telling people he is a good watch-dog, but I have to admit he barks indiscriminately at family and strangers, and fawns on everyone.

Several readers have asked about the cat population, hence this rather long discourse. I must stop now. Tessa has ventured downstairs and is sitting on top of the computer, and I had better see what she wants before she lands on the keyboard. She's quite fat for an Abyssinian. I wish you all the happiest of holidays, and temporary amnesia from the many sorrows of the suffering world. May the new year bring better news.

Barbara

A bit of biographic information to clip and append to your copy of the compendium -- Jeff Gardner, whose aunt Esther taught in Miss Whiteside's Luxor boarding school for girls in Egypt during the early 1920's, shared with us the following excerpt from his aunt's unpublished autobiography. (Miss Ida Whiteside, a contemporary of Amelia's, has been mentioned in several of her most recent journals.)

Miss Whiteside, the principal, was a very fair little lady, graduate of Vassar College and professor of astronomy at Wellesley College, where she distinguished herself by discovering a star unknown until that time. The teachers and girls loved her dearly. She had a little rocking-chair, which had belonged to her grandmother, in her office. She would sit and rock and rock, and laugh and laugh as parents tried to beat her down on the price of school tuitions. They too liked her. Once a week she would go calling with one of the Egyptian teachers or us, on the families of pupils who lived in town. On Sundays she would take a teacher or two, and five or six of the older pupils, get a rickety carriage or two drawn by a couple of bony horses, and drive out to nearby villages and preach to the women and girls who would soon gather around her to hear her words of comfort and salvation and marvel at her very fair skin and golden hair. Whenever there was a "mourning" she and her teachers were always there to "cool their hot heart" with the Word of God. There are hundreds of girls today, leaders of the church, who learned to know and love her Lord and to follow Him.



Andrea Stryker-Rodda, the assistant music director of the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players, writes: In the second act of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, Captain Corcoran horrifies everyone by swearing. Sir Joseph's Cousin Hebe and the chorus have a number of bars of music in which they're exclaiming about it. In the NYGASP production, this is staged so that Cousin Hebe fends off the Captain, who is trying to get to Sir Joseph to explain his outbreak, and backs him across the stage, using her parasol. One night at rehearsal last December I referred to this stage business as "the Amelia Peabody bit," to the startled and delighted laughter of more than half the Company. The name has stuck and has entered Company lore.

What makes it a bit extra special is that...NYGASP is a professional company; while there is a core of people who work with us repeatedly season after season, there is also a constant inflow and outflow, especially of the younger chorus people, drawn from the large pool of professional talent in New York. ...In contexts like this, people don't necessarily have the time to get around to sharing things like favorite authors. We were all startled by how many of us are Amelia fans.... We've taken the show out with replacement personnel several times since

then--most recently as professional guest artists to the International G&S Festival in Buxton, England--and the name of "the Amelia Peabody bit" continues to unmask fellow devotees.

MPM As you must have guessed, I, like Amelia, am a G.S. fan...I still know all the words to the sentry's song in *Iolanthe*! And a few other equally obscure ditties. It's nice to know that "the A.P. bit" is so popular. I can't think of a better tribute either!

Terry Goodspeed commented on the following which he discovered in The Mammoth Book of Eyewitness Ancient Egypt:

Tetisheri. Tetisheri was the Queen of Senakhtenre Tao I, mother of Sekenenre Tao II, grandmother of Ahmose I. Her hidden tomb at Dra Abu el Naga on the west bank at Luxor was found by Radcliffe Emerson in 1900.

What, no mention of Amelia Peabody Emerson?!

KDW Our sentiments exactly - ah well, trust a male editor to overlook the woman behind the success. Talk about one's characters taking on a life of their own. (At least now we know what that infamous international art criminal "cousin" John has been up to in the interim. He not only stole the **entire** Tetisheri cache from the Cairo Museum - he also stole all the excavation reports, and all memory and knowledge of Tetisheri's tomb...he's good...he's *really* good.) Our copies of the book are on order.

In the New Year, may your hand ever be stretched out in friendship and never in want.

Irish Blessing

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Dust if you must, but there's not much time, with rivers to swim and mountains to climb, music to sing and books to read, friends to cherish and life to lead.

Anonymous

This perfect quote comes to us courtesy of Tricia White - if you happen to recognize its author, we'd love to hear from you.

From Charles Turnipseed: There has been much talk among fans of the books about the possibility of bringing the Emersons to the screen. Given the number of characters and the complexity of the stories, you can't edit a book down to the two hours allowed for a feature film. You already knew that. The second problem I see is the fact that unless the film appeals to a foreign market or to imbecilic teenagers, it has to have major stars. Your characters need to be played by lesser known actors so that they are seen not the actors (and no, I'm not going to make casting suggestions). In my opinion, there is only one way that this can be done. It would have to be done as a PBS MYSTERY series. Each book can be broken up into two or three 90 minute episodes with perhaps two books filmed each year. It could run for years.

From Kelsey Schwichtenberg: I was thinking if they can put the *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* on the big screen successfully...why couldn't they put Amelia and her clan on it?...or what if they were to make *The Crocodile on the Sandbank* into one of those BBC specials?

KDW: We've been getting quite a few of these suggestions of late, and we agree that done **properly** (ex. *Lord of the Rings*, and *Upstairs, Downstairs*) Amelia Peabody and family would be wonderful to experience on the big screen. For years the BBC owned an option on the Amelia Peabody series but they never did anything with it, and then they finally dropped it (we don't know why; they just did). However, MPM has no control over whether a director/producer/writer takes an interest and then purchases an option - so until that happens the books stay books!

From Charles Turnipseed: I would like to learn more about...the gardens of the ancients. I love gardens, I love dirt, and I'm much better with plant's names than with people's. As a fellow garden enthusiast, I thought you might be able to recommend books on the subject or a source that could do so.

KDW: [An Ancient Egyptian Herbal](#) by Lise Manniche, University of Texas Press, 1989.

[Pharaoh's Flowers: The Botanical Treasures of Tutankhamun](#) by F. Nigel Hepper, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew 1990.

Joan DeFato? -- surely you have some suggestions! (nothing quite like being directly addressed as a possible source of information in the newsletter, eh?)

I can understand people simply fleeing the mountainous effort Christmas has become.... But there are always a few saving graces and finally they make up for all the bother and distress.

May Sarton, *Journal of a Solitude*

KDW

You've made changes, you've simplified your life, and now you can relax and enjoy the holidays. But then, that little twist of irony that is life keys the world up a notch creating chaos and disorder all about you. Nonetheless, somewhere in this mess, you feel you must bake for the holidays. At our house we go into Holiday Baking Overdrive. Sometimes I wonder if it is worth it until I recall the day I was in our market and watched a little child plead excitedly as he passed the refrigerated logs of cookie dough, "Can we have real cookies for Christmas this year mom? Can we please?" To which she happily asserted, "Yes, this year we're making Homemade!" And they proceeded to select the varieties they would have for the holidays from the tubes of premade dough. Contemplating a holiday without my kids' hands mixing the dough (a time-honored tradition borrowed from my husband's family...and yes, when they were little you'd occasionally turn around and find an entire hand in a mouth) is not possible for me. (This probably shouldn't be showing up in print since several people anticipate their Christmas cookie gifts from our kitchen...and our hands...literally. But hey, the dog was never in on it, and the kids are now old enough they wait for the batter at the end...mostly.) Nonetheless, this year has been crazier than most, so while keeping certain family traditions alive (yes, we will still make sandtarts and Christmas Stolen and homemade eggnog...*especially* homemade eggnog), in addition I have come up with a package deal as it were. For those of you who love a fresh baked cookie but not the measuring of flour and the sifting and so on, and for those of you who, like myself, are running out of time, I offer you the cake mix cookie. I shared a cake mix cookie recipe in a newsletter several years ago - since then I have realized that the varieties you can make only stop at your imagination - go ahead and experiment!

Basic Cake Mix Cookie

one box any cake mix

2 eggs

1/2 cup butter or margarine melted (butter tastes better, margarine keeps them chewy longer)

1/4 c. brown or white sugar (optional)

1- 2 tsp extract of choice or 1 tablespoon of a juice of choice (ex. lemon or lime) ...do this to your taste

Mix everything together, drop onto cookie sheet (ungreased if insulated), bake about 12 to 15 minutes at 350 until cookie shrinks back down and cracks on the top. Makes 28 large cookies (1 heaping tab. of dough) or 60 small cookies (use 1 tsp. dough - these will bake a bit faster)