

MPM

a bulletin on the doings and undoings of
Barbara Mertz/Elizabeth Peters/Barbara Michaels
Issue 51
Winter 2007/2008
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
Guardian of the Horizon
Serpent on the Crown
Tomb of the Golden Bird

also look for:

www.mpmbooks.com

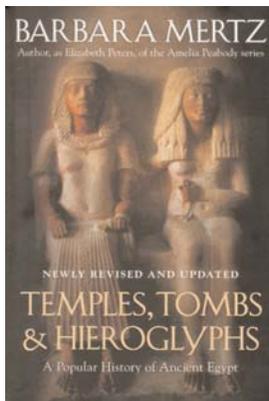
MPM: Mertz ● Peters ● Michaels

The official Barbara Mertz/Elizabeth Peters/Barbara Michaels website

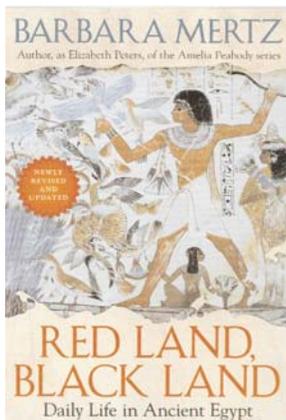
by Margie Knauff & Lisa Speckhardt

PUBLISHING

Newly revised, and updated!

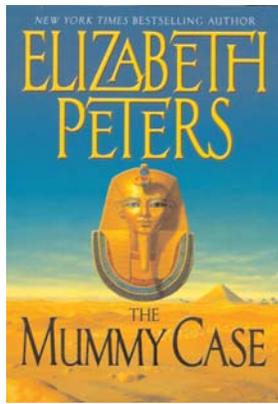


TEMPLES, TOMBS & HIEROGLYPHS
November 2007 Hardcover WilliamMorrow



RED LAND, BLACK LAND
March 2008 Hardcover WilliamMorrow

Once again in Hardcover!



THE MUMMY CASE
November 2007 Hardcover WilliamMorrow

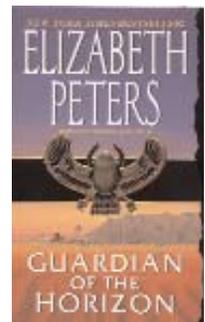
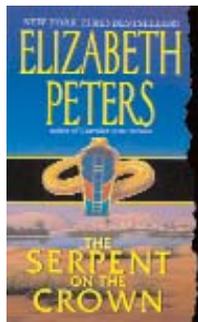
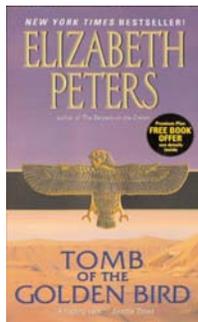
The New Vicky Bliss!

THE LAUGHTER OF DEAD KINGS

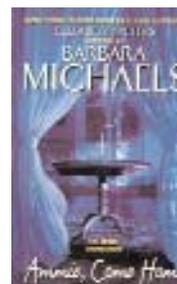
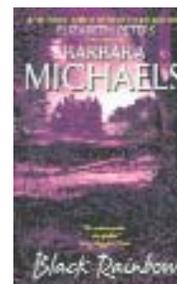
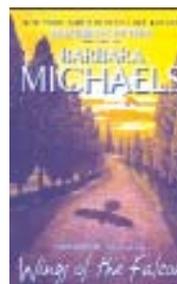
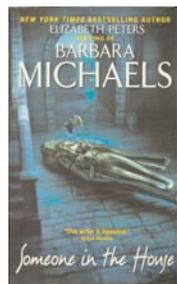
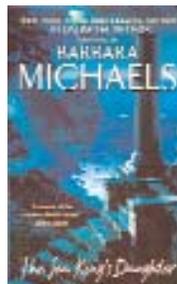
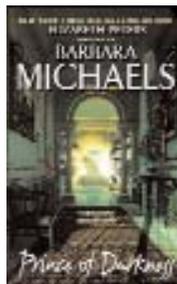
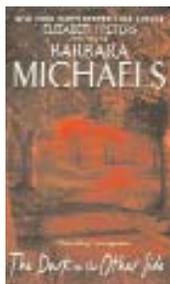
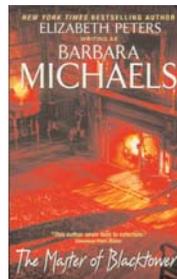
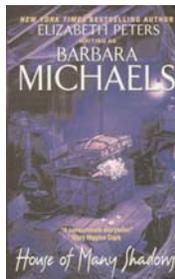
September 2008 Hardcover WilliamMorrow
(on sale in August)

The Tomb of the Golden Bird
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March 2007 paperback Harper Suspense
 March 2006 paperback Avon Suspense
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And look for all your favorite Barbara Michaels in print once again by AvonSuspense:



Life comes in clusters; clusters of solitude, then a cluster when there is hardly time to breathe.

May Sarton *Journal of a Solitude*

MPM

This has been a wildly busy year. I'm not sure why I am so far behind--natural disorganization, perhaps. But of course I have an excuse--three of them, in fact: revisions of *Temples, Tombs and Hieroglyphs* and *Red Land, Black Land*, and a new *Vicky, The Laughter of Dead Kings*. TT and H will be available toward the end of November, and *Red Land* is due out in March of 2008.

Let it not be supposed that I am actually finished with any of the three. Those innocents among you who assume that the book is finished when the manuscript is turned in need to know that the process goes on and on--and on. The second stage for any book is that of editing. I get the manuscript back with several pages of editorial comment, plus queries and comments written on the manuscript itself. My editor knows I want her to note anything that strikes her as inaccurate, overdone, underdone (not enough explanation) or just plain silly. By the time I get her comments I have usually thought of several potential problems myself. As a rule I agree with Jennifer's criticisms, and make the necessary change. Sometimes I disagree, and ignore them, which is fine with her.

Then I send the manuscript back to her and she passes it on to the copyeditor, who checks grammar and spelling and errors of fact. Then I get the darned thing back again and go over those changes. By the time I return this version the book is already in galleys. The galleys then come to me, so that I can make any last minute revisions. I am a fanatical reviser, and keep nitpicking until the book is actually in press.

In the meantime I have consulted with my editor about the catalogue copy, the flap copy, and ideas for the cover painting.

The two non-fiction books involved even more work. In addition to reading all (well, almost all) the books and articles that had appeared since the first edition, I had to check and recheck both old and new versions for accuracy. I had to do this myself (with considerable help from friends who took the trouble to read the manuscript) since no editor can be expected to know what the *hades* is going on in Egyptology. I also had to get photographs and drawings, and permission to use them. Some people and museums are very cooperative; others don't bother answering letters, or else they charge exorbitant prices. One is thus forced to cast about for alternatives. I'm lucky to have friends who could supply me with the illustrations I needed, so that shortened the process to some extent. Copyediting on those two books was a nightmarish process. There were so many strange names and unusual terms, most of which are not to be found in the standard copyeditor's reference books. To put it mildly, the copy editor and I were not on the same wavelength. I am still in the process of getting quotes for those books; I had to harass all my Egyptological friends, most of whom, let me say, came through nobly.

I hope you all feel sorry for me. Thank you.

The truth is, I really wanted to revise the two non-fiction books, and although I can't say I enjoyed the process, I greatly enjoy having accomplished it. I was writing the new *Vicky* at the same time. I can't say I enjoyed that either; my work habits are so bad that I kept postponing the inevitable from day to day and week to week until it suddenly hit me that I had a convoluted plot and no idea how to finish it. However, I am told by those who know that I always work this way--from crisis to crisis--and sure enough, it all came together in the end.

On a more personal note, I made two grandmother trips this summer, one to Colorado and one to Chicago. I had a wonderful time while I was grandmothing, but I needn't tell those of you who have flown lately what a nightmare plane travel has become. Out of six flights, three were cancelled or so delayed that I missed the necessary connection. Never one to learn from experience, I am about to leave for Egypt. The usual suspects (my daughter refers to them as mom's gang) will accompany me, so if my aged knees give out there will be several healthy persons to drag me up ladders and out of tombs.

It's hard to believe the holidays are upon us. Summer was miserable--too hot and too dry. Some of the larger trees are showing signs of stress and a blue heron ate all my fish. He (or she) is so beautiful that when I first beheld him (or her) perched on the gazebo I let out a cry of admiration and then a shriek of agony, as I realized what had probably happened. It had. We are now trying to decide whether to provide the beautiful bird with more fifty dollar snacks next year, or to stick with dime-store goldfish.

Once again we wish you, from the heart, a holiday that lives up to your highest expectations. And once again we pray for peace. Salaam. Shalom. Pax.



Sometimes it feels like God has reached down and touched me, blessed me a thousand times over, and sometimes it all feels like a mean joke, like God's advisers are Muammar Qaddafi and Phyllis Schlafly.

Anne Lamott *Operating Instructions*

Carol Ann Zanoni: Is Emerson an atheist? Agnostic? Or something else? Did you have any particular reason for making him so hateful of organized religion?

MPM Emerson is critical - not hateful - of practically everything, and he has no compunctions about expressing his views. Like many of my characters he walked onto the stage with certain well-defined characteristics and he has developed along those lines.

Marilyn Klein: I am trying to do something special for my granddaughter...who will be bat mitzvah in 2008....I fear for her growing up in these troubled times. I never want her to be disillusioned or discouraged as she grows into an adult. What I wanted was to have a few words of encouragement on how to deal with life after 9/11....

MPM I have six grandchildren. I understand, none better, your desire to protect your beloved child from disappointment and disillusion. I'm afraid you can't; nor would you necessarily be doing her a favor by trying. The post 9/11 world is no different from the one that preceded it. Sorrow and failure, heartbreak and grief are inevitable parts of the human condition, though they take different forms in different times: genocide, disease, war, natural disaster.

I would remind her, and myself, of how lucky she is to have been born in a country and into a family that can give her the loving support she deserves. I would also remind her that millions of children, equally deserving and equally loved, do not have these advantages. I would point out that life holds joy as well as sorrow, happiness as well as grief; I would encourage her to focus on the good and to face personal setbacks with courage, and to reach out to those who, through no fault of their own, have not her good fortune. A mensch, male or female, is not someone who has never experienced adversity, but one who has overcome it and learned from it. I would try to teach her not only with words but by example.

HOLIDAY RECIPE

KDW

Last year MPM and I poured over cake recipes, trying to find one that lit our fancy for a holiday party she was hosting. I had already decided to make my favorite moist ginger cake (it takes about one cup of grated fresh ginger) not to mention including lemon curd and whipped cream on the side for those who wanted to gild the lily (most did) but we needed something else as well. The obvious choice may have been chocolate, however, having just finished baking and tasting over twenty different variations of cookies on the theme of chocolate, blasphemy or not, we were surfeited with chocolate. When we lighted on the following cake MPM noted the black walnuts in the recipe and she was sold. However, I wasn't certain it would be festive enough. I had in mind some sort of piece de resistance which would incorporate layers and air whipped peaks and perhaps a Grande Meringue Enchantee atop...so I kept flipping through possibilities. MPM held fast to this recipe while I perused Grand Marnier Hazelnut Truffle Torte and Lemon Bombe Flambe and The Cranberry Sorbet Nested Tower. She pointed out that this seemed much simpler than those recipes while I toyed with the idea of Genoise with Bavarian Cream and Brandied Apricots, the Twelve Day Italian Amareno Cherry Torte and the Coffee Meringue Basket filled with an assortment of homemade ice creams and fresh fruit. She said she *really* loved black walnuts. So I considered Black Walnut Torte with three day Creme Fraiche, Petite Charlottes with Black Walnut Marquise, and Black Walnut and Apple Strudel (with homemade strudel dough, of course). Finally she said: I want THIS cake. So this cake it was. It was perfect. After a season of too sweet, too rich and too chocolate it was dense and orange but not heavy. It was simple, but not simplistic. We're making it again this year. She also wants us to make the Maryland Christmas Cake - this may come as a surprise but it also has black walnuts...well, okay, but I'm going on record here that I'm drawing the line at incorporating red and green candied cherries in the batter...she can stick a few slivers on top "for pretty" but that's as far as it goes.

ENGLISH ORANGE CAKE

Preheat oven to 350.

Cream until fluffy with beater:

1 cup sugar

1/2 cup butter

Add and mix until all is incorporated:

2 cups flour

1 tsp baking soda

1 tsp baking powder

1/4 tsp salt

2/3 cup sour milk or buttermilk

2 eggs lightly beaten

Then add:

one whole orange with rind from which you have removed imperfections, quartered, deseeded and then pureed in blender or food processor (yes, you leave the rind on and you end up with a mush)

Finally stir into the batter:

1 cup seedless raisins (optional)

1/2 to 3/4 cup finely chopped black walnuts (this cake is not as good with any other kind of nut!)

Pour into greased cake mold which has a center hole to insure a well cooked center of the cake. Bake for 50-60 minutes until knife inserted comes out with moist crumb. Let cool to warm before turning onto a plate. While cake is still warm mix until sugar dissolves (you may have to heat slightly):

juice of one orange

1/2 cup sugar

and slowly pour by spoonfuls all over the cake. This cake is extremely moist but can be kept in the refrigerator for several days. It freezes well too.

It was typical of him that he lacked the taste to make a final exit. He spent too long at his farewells, chatting in the doorway, letting in the cold.

Anne Tyler *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*

In order to avoid “letting in the cold”, I will make this short and sweet:

This is the final copy of the MPM bulletin. After this bulletin we will simply update the website on occasion with a letter from MPM, any new publishing information and perhaps an occasional reader’s query. However, there are a few of you who simply cannot access the world wide web even through a friend or family member, or at your local the library. If you notify us prior to June 2008 we will keep you on our list, and then print and send the updates for your convenience two times a year. Otherwise, we look forward to continuing to hear from you via the post office box and will “see” you online.

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