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# ELIZABETH PETERS

AN AMELIA PEABODY MYSTERY

CROCODILE ON  
THE SANDBANK



WARNER BOOKS



# **GREAT ACCLAIM FOR ELIZABETH PETERS** **AND CROCODILE ON THE SANDBANK**

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The love of my beloved is on yonder side

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A width of water is between us

And a crocodile waiteth on the sandbank.

—*Ancient Egyptian Love Poem*

## *Author's Note*

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**A**LTHOUGH my major characters are wholly fictitious, certain historic personages make brief appearances in these pages. Maspero, Brugsch and Grebaut were associated with the Egyptian Department of Antiquities in the 1880's, and William Flinders Petrie was then beginning his great career in Egyptology. Petrie was the first professional archaeologist to excavate at Tell el Amarna and I have taken the liberty of attributing some of his discoveries—and his “advanced” ideas about methodology—to my fictitious archaeologists. The painted pavement found by Petrie was given the treatment I have described by Petrie himself. Except for discrepancies of this nature I have attempted to depict the Egypt of that era, and the state of archaeological research in the late nineteenth century, as accurately as possible, relying on contemporary travel books for details. In order to add verisimilitude to the narrative, I have used the contemporary spelling of names of places and pharaohs, as well as certain words like “dahabeeyah.” For example, the name of the heretic pharaoh was formerly read as “Khuenaten.” Modern scholars prefer the reading “Akhenaten.” Similarly, “Usertsen” is the modern “Semiseri.”

WHEN I first set eyes on Evelyn Barton-Forbes she was walking the streets of Rome—

(I am informed, by the self-appointed Critic who reads over my shoulder as I write, that I have already committed an error. If those seemingly simple English words do indeed imply that which I am told they imply to the vulgar, I must in justice to Evelyn find other phrasing.)

In justice to myself, however, I must insist that Evelyn was doing precisely what I have said she was doing, but with no ulterior purpose in mind. Indeed, the poor girl had no purpose and no means of carrying it out if she had. Our meeting was fortuitous, but fortunate. I had, as I have always had, purpose enough for two.

I had left my hotel that morning in considerable irritation of spirits. My plans had gone awry. I am not accustomed to having my plans go awry. Sensing my mood, my small Italian guide trailed behind me in silence. Piero was not silent when I first encountered him, in the lobby of the hotel, where, in common with others of his kind, he awaited the arrival of helpless foreign visitors in need of a translator and guide. I selected him from amid the throng because his appearance was a trifle less villainous than that of the others.

I was well aware of the propensity of these fellows to bully, cheat, and otherwise take advantage of the victims who employ them, but I had no intention of being victimized. It did not take me long to make this clear to Piero. My first act was to bargain ruthlessly with the shopkeeper to whom Piero took me to buy silk. The final price was so low that Piero's commission was reduced to a negligible sum. He expressed his chagrin to his compatriot in his native tongue, and included in his tirade several personal comments on my appearance and manner. I let him go on for some time and then interrupted with a comment on *his* manners. I speak Italian, and understand it, quite well. After that Piero and I got on admirably. I had not employed him because I required an interpreter, but because I wanted someone to carry parcels and run errands.

My knowledge of languages, and the means which enabled me to travel abroad, had been acquired from my late father, who was a scholar and antiquarian. There was little else to do but study, in the small country town where Papa preferred to live, and I have an aptitude for languages, dead and alive. Papa preferred his languages dead. He was a devoted student of the past, and emerged from it only occasionally, when he would blink at me and express surprise at how I had grown since he last noticed my existence. I found our life together quite congenial; I am the youngest of six, and my brothers, being considerably older, had left the nest some time before. My brothers were successful merchants and professional men; one and all they rejected Father's studies. I was left, then, to be the prop of my father's declining years. As I have said, the life suited me. It allowed me to develop my talents for scholarship. But let not the Gentle Reader suppose that I was ill equipped for the practical necessities of life. My father was disinclined toward practicalities. It was left to me to bully the baker and badge the butcher, which I did, if I may say so, quite effectively. After Mr. Hodgkins the butcher, Piero gave me no trouble.

My father died, eventually—if one may use so precise a word for the process that took place. One might say that he gradually shriveled up and ran down. The rumor, put about by a pert housemaid, that he had actually been dead for two days before anyone noticed, is a complete exaggeration. I must admit, however, that he might have passed away at any point during the five hours I spent with him in

his study on that particular afternoon. He was leaning back in his big leather chair, meditating, as I assumed; and when, warned by some premonition, I hurried to his side, his wide-open eyes held the same expression of mild inquiry with which they had always regarded me. It seemed to me quite a respectable and comfortable way in which to pass on.

It came as no surprise to anyone to discover that he had left his property to me, the aforesaid property and the only one of his children who had not an income of its own. My brothers accepted this tolerantly, as they had accepted my devoted service to Papa. They did not explode until they learned that the property was not a paltry sum, but a fortune of half a million pounds. They had made a common mistake in assuming that an absentminded scholar is necessarily a fool. My father's disinclination to argue with Mr. Hodgkins the butcher was due, not to lack of ability, but to disinterest. He was very much interested in investments, "change," and those other mysterious matters that produce wealth. He had conducted his business affairs with the same reticence that marked his habits in general; and he died, to the surprise of all, a wealthy man.

When this fact became known, the explosion occurred. My eldest brother James went so far as to threaten legal proceedings, on the basis of unsound mind and undue influence. This ill-considered burst of temper, which was characteristic of James, was easily stopped by Mr. Fletcher, Papa's excellent solicitor. Other attempts ensued. I was visited by streams of attentive nieces and nephews assuring me of their devotion—which had been demonstrated, over the past years, by their absence. Sisters-in-law invited me, in the most affectionate phrases, to share their homes. I was warned in the strongest terms against fortune hunters.

The warnings were not unselfish; they were, however, unnecessary. A middle-aged spinster—for I was at that time thirty-two years of age, and I scorned to disguise the fact—who has never received a proposal of marriage must be a simpleton if she fails to recognize the sudden acquisition of a fortune as a factor in her new popularity. I was not a simpleton. I had always known myself to be plain.

The transparent attempts of my kin, and of various unemployed gentlemen, to win my regard, aroused in me a grim amusement. I did not put them off; quite the contrary, I encouraged them to visit, and laughed up my sleeve at their clumsy efforts. Then it occurred to me that I was enjoying them too much. I was becoming cynical; and it was this character development that made me decide to leave England—not, as some malicious persons have intimated, a fear of being overborne. I had always wanted to travel. Now, I decided, I would see all the places Father had studied—the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome; Babylon and hundred-gated Thebes.

Once I had made this decision, it did not take me long to prepare for the journey. I made my arrangements with Mr. Fletcher, and received from him a proposal of marriage which I refused with the same good humor that had characterized the offer. At least he was honest.

"I thought it worth a try," he remarked calmly.

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained," I agreed.

Mr. Fletcher studied me thoughtfully for a moment.

"Miss Amelia, may I ask—in my professional capacity now—whether you have any inclinations toward matrimony?"

"None. I disapprove of matrimony as a matter of principle." Mr. Fletcher's pepper-and-salt eyebrows lifted. I added, "For myself, that is. I suppose it is well enough for some women; what else can the poor things do? But why should any independent, intelligent female choose to subject herself to the whims and tyrannies of a husband? I assure you, I have yet to meet a man as sensible as myself!"

"I can well believe that," said Mr. Fletcher. He hesitated for a moment; I fancied I could see him

struggle with the desire to make an unprofessional statement. He lost the struggle.

~~“Why do you wear such frightful clothes?” he burst out. “If it is to discourage suitors—”~~

“Really, Mr. Fletcher!” I exclaimed.

“I beg your pardon,” said the lawyer, wiping his brow. “I cannot think what came over me.”

“Nor can I. As for my clothes, they suit the life I lead. The current fashions are impractical for an active person. Skirts so tight one must toddle like an infant, bodices boned so firmly it is impossible to draw a deep breath...And bustles! Of all the idiotic contrivances foisted upon helpless womankind the bustle is certainly the worst. I wear them, since it is impossible to have a gown made without them, but at least I can insist on sensible dark fabrics and a minimum of ornament. What a fool I should look in puffs and frills and crimson satin—or a gown trimmed with dead birds, like one I saw

“And yet,” said Mr. Fletcher, smiling, “I have always thought you would look rather well in puffs and frills and crimson satin.”

The opportunity to lecture had restored my good humor. I returned his smile, but I shook my head.

“Give it up, Mr. Fletcher. You cannot flatter me; I know the catalogue of my faults too accurately. I am too tall, I am too lean in some regions and too amply endowed in others. My nose is too large, my mouth is too wide, and the shape of my chin is positively masculine. Sallow complexions and jet black hair are not in fashion this season; and I have been informed that eyes of so deep a gray, set under such forbidding black brows, strike terror into the beholder even when they are beaming with benevolence—which my eyes seldom do. Now, I think I have dealt with that subject. Shall we turn to business?”

At Fletcher’s suggestion I made my will. I had no intention of dying for a good many years, but I realized the hazards of travel in such unhealthy regions as I proposed to visit. I left my entire fortune to the British Museum, where Papa had spent so many happy hours. I felt rather sentimental about it; Papa might just as well have passed on in the Reading Room, and it would possibly have taken the attendants more than two days to realize he was no longer breathing.

My last act before departing was to engage a companion. I did not do this for the sake of propriety. Oppressed as my sex is in this supposedly enlightened decade of 1880, a woman of my age and station in life can travel abroad alone without offending any but the overly prudish. I engaged a companion because—in short, because I was lonely. All my life I had taken care of Papa. I needed someone, not to look after me, but the reverse. Miss Pritchett was a perfect companion. She was a few years my senior, but one never would have supposed it from her dress and manner. She affected dainty frilled gowns of thin muslin which hung awkwardly on her bony frame, and her voice was a preposterous high-pitched squeal. She was clumsy; her stupidity was so intense it verged on simplemindedness; she had a habit of fainting, or, at least, of collapsing into a chair with her hand pressed to her heart, whenever the slightest difficulty occurred. I looked forward to my association with Miss Pritchett. Prodding her through the malodorous streets of Cairo and the deserts of Palestine would provide my active mind with the distraction it needed.

After all, Miss Pritchett failed me. People of that sort seldom fall ill; they are too busy pretending to be ill. Yet no sooner had we reached Rome than Miss Pritchett succumbed to the typhoid, like the weak-minded female she was. Though she recovered, she delayed my departure for Egypt for two weeks, and it was manifest that she would not be able to keep up with my pace until after a long convalescence. I therefore dispatched her back to England in the care of a clergyman and his wife, who were leaving Rome. Naturally I felt obliged to pay her salary until she was able to secure another post. She left weeping, and trying, as the carriage left, to kiss my hand.

She left a vacuum in my carefully laid plans, and she was the cause of my ill humor when I left the

hotel that fateful day. I was already two weeks behind schedule, and all the accommodations had been arranged for two persons. Should I try to find another companion, or resign myself to solitary travel? I must make my decision soon, and I was musing about it as I went for a final visit to the desolate Cow Pasture which was the seat of the ancient Forum of Rome.

It was a brisk December afternoon; the sun was intermittently obscured by clouds. Piero looked like a cold dog, despite the warm jacket I had purchased for him. I do not feel the cold. The breezy day, with its alternating shadow and sunshine, was quite appropriate to the scene. Broken columns and fallen stones were obscured by tumbled masses of weeds, now brown and brittle. There were other visitors rambling about. I avoided them. After reading a few of the broken inscriptions, and identifying, to my satisfaction, the spots where Caesar fell and where the senators awaited the arrival of the Goths, I seated myself on a fallen column.

Piero huddled at my feet with his knees drawn up and his arms wrapped around the basket he had been carrying. I found the hard, cold seat comfortable enough; there is something to be said for a bustle, in fact. It was compassion for Piero that made me order him to open the basket the hotel kitchen had provided. However, he refused my offer of hot tea with a pitiful look. I presume he would have accepted brandy.

I was drinking my tea when I noticed that there was a cluster of people some distance away, who seemed to be gathered around an object that was concealed from me by their bodies. I sent Piero to see what it was, and went on drinking my tea.

After an interval he came bounding back with his black eyes gleaming. Nothing delights these gentry quite so much as misfortune; I was therefore not surprised when he reported that the “turisti” were gathered around a young English lady who had fallen down dead upon the ground.

“How do you know that she is English?” I inquired.

Piero did not reply in words; he went through an extraordinary series of grimaces to indicate a certainty so profound it requires no evidence. His eyes rolled, his hands flew about, his shoulders rose and fell. What else should the lady be but English.

English or not, I doubted that the lady was dead. That was only Piero’s Latin love of the dramatic. But so far as I could see, no one in the crowd was doing anything except stare. I rose to my feet, therefore, and after brushing off my bustle, I approached the group. My parasol proved useful in passing through it; I had to apply the ferrule quite sharply to the backs of several gentlemen before they would move. Eventually I penetrated to the center of the circle. As I had surmised, no one was behaving with sense or compassion. Indeed, several of the ladies were pulling their escorts away, with comments about infection and criticism of the fallen lady’s probable character.

She was so pitiful as she lay there on the cold, damp ground that only a heart of stone could have been unmoved. There are many hearts of that composition, however.

I sat down upon the ground and lifted the girl’s head onto my knee. I regretted very much that I had not worn a cloak or mantle. However, that was easily remedied.

“Your coat, sir,” I said to the nearest gentleman.

He was a stout, red-faced person whose extra layers of flesh should have been enough to keep him warm, without the fur-lined greatcoat he wore. He carried a handsome gold-headed stick, which he had been using to poke at the fallen girl as a lecturer in a waxworks indicates the exhibits. When I addressed him, he turned from his companion, to whom he had been speaking in an undertone, and stared at me.

“What—what?” he snorted.

“Your coat,” I said impatiently. “Give it to me at once.” Then, as he continued to stare, his face

getting redder and redder, I raised my voice. "Sir—your coat, at once!"

I put the coat over the girl. Having assured myself that she was only in a faint, I was at leisure to look at her more closely. I was not a whit distracted by the whalelike sputterings of the red-faced gentleman whose coat I had appropriated.

I have said that I am a plain woman. For this reason I have a quite disinterested love of beauty in all its forms. I could therefore disinterestedly admire the girl who lay unconscious before me.

She was English, surely; that flawless white skin and pale-golden hair could belong to no other nation. She was naturally fair of complexion; now, in her fainting state, her face was as pallid and pure as marble. The features might have been those of an antique Venus or young Diana. Her lashes were several shades darker than her hair, forming a pleasing contrast. She was dressed, quite inappropriately for the chilly weather, in a summer frock and thin blue cloak; both cloak and gown were sadly worn, but had once been expensive—they were of costly material and showed good workmanship. The gloves on her small hands had been neatly mended. The girl presented a picture of poverty and abandonment that excited my curiosity as much as it aroused my compassion; I wondered what had reduced a young woman of obvious refinement to this state. I surmised that she suffered chiefly from cold and hunger; the thin white face was pinched and sunken.

As I watched, her dark-gold lashes fluttered and lifted, disclosing eyes of an exquisite deep blue. They stared dreamily about for a time, and then fixed themselves on my face. The girl's expression changed; a touch of color came to her thin cheeks, and she struggled to sit up.

"Be still," I said, putting her down with one hand and beckoning Piero with the other. "You have fainted and are still weak. Partake of some nourishment, if you please, before we proceed to further measures to relieve you."

She tried to protest; her helpless state and the circle of staring, unfriendly eyes clearly distressed her. I was perfectly indifferent to the observers, but since she seemed embarrassed, I decided to rid myself of them. I told them to go. They did so, except for the indignant gentleman whose coat was over the girl.

"Your name and hotel, sir," I said, cutting short a loud protest. "Your coat will be returned later this evening. A person of your excessive bulk should not wear such heavy clothing in any case."

The lady by his side, who had the same rotund outlines and hard red face, exclaimed aloud.

"How dare you, madame! I have never heard of such a thing!"

"I daresay you have not," I agreed, giving her a look that made her step back. "I do not doubt that it is too late to awaken in you any faint sense of Christian compassion or normal human emotion, so I shan't try. Take yourself away, madame, and this—I can hardly say 'gentleman'—this male person with you."

As I spoke I was administering bits of food from my basket to the fallen girl. The fastidious manner in which she ate, despite her obvious hunger, confirmed my assumption that she was a lady. She seemed better when she had finished a piece of bread and the remainder of my tea; and since the crowd had retired to a distance I was able, with Piero's assistance, to raise her to her feet. We then proceeded, by carriage, to my hotel.

## II

The doctor I summoned assured me that my diagnosis had been correct. The young lady was suffering from starvation and cold only. There was no sign of infection, and she was recovering quickly.

A plan had taken shape in my mind, and I considered it, striding up and down the drawing room of my suite, as is my habit when engaged in thought. It did not take me long to reach a decision. Frail as the girl appeared, she must have a stout constitution in order to have resisted, in her weakened state, the putrid air and water of Rome. Clearly she had no friends or relatives to whom she could look for relief, or she would not have sunk to such a state. Equally clearly, she could not be left in that state.

Having made up my mind, I went to tell the young lady what was to be done.

She was sitting up in bed, taking soup from the hand of my maid, Travers. Neither of them appeared to be enjoying the process. Travers is a living contradiction to the theories of the physiognomists, for her face and shape do not at all reflect her personality. She is a round, cheery-faced little person with the soul of a dried-up old spinster. She did not approve of my taking in a “stray,” as she would have said, and her sour look expressed her feelings. To be fair, that was the only way in which Travers *could* express her feelings. I do not permit verbal complaints.

“That will do,” I said. “Too much food might be ill advised at present. Go away, Travers, and be sure you close the door tightly.”

When she had obeyed, I studied my patient and was pleased at what I saw. My flannel nightdress was considerably too large for the girl. She would need clothing—dainty, delicate things, to suit her fairness—garments of the sort I had never been able to wear. She would look charming in pale shades of blue and pink and lavender. There was color in her face now, a delicate rose flush that made her even prettier. How on earth, I wondered, had such a girl come to her present pass?

My stare must have been more intent than I realized. The girl’s eyes dropped. Then she raised her head and spoke, with a firmness I had not expected. Her voice settled any lingering doubts as to her class; it was that of a well-bred young lady.

“I am more indebted than I can say,” she began. “But be assured, ma’am, I shall not take advantage of your charity. I am quite recovered now; if you will direct your maid to return my clothing, I will rid you of my presence.”

“Your clothing has been thrown away,” I said absently. “It was not worth the trouble of laundering. You must remain in bed for the rest of the day in any case. I will order a seamstress to come tomorrow. There is a boat leaving for Alexandria on Friday next. A week should be sufficient. You will need to do some shopping, of course, but first I had better see what you have with you. If you will tell me where you have been staying, I will send a man around for your boxes.”

Her face was very expressive. It had registered a variety of emotions as I spoke; the blue eyes had flashed with indignation and then narrowed with suspicion. But the ultimate emotion was openmouthed bewilderment. I waited for her to speak, but she merely opened and closed her mouth, so I said impatiently, “I am taking you to Egypt with me, as my companion. Miss Pritchett failed me; she took the typhoid. I had agreed to pay her ten pounds a year. Naturally I will be responsible for equipping you for the journey. You can hardly travel in a flannel nightdress!”

“No,” the girl agreed, looking dazed. “But—but—”

“My name is Amelia Peabody. You will call me Amelia. I am a spinster of independent means, traveling for pleasure. Is there anything else you wish to know about me?”

“I know all I need to know,” the girl said quietly. “I was not entirely unconscious when you came to my rescue, and I hope I am able to recognize true kindness of heart. But my dear Miss Peabody—very well, Amelia—you know nothing about *me*!”

“Is there something I should know?”

“I might be a criminal! I might be vicious—unprincipled!”

“No, no,” I said calmly. “I have been accused of being somewhat abrupt in my actions and

decisions, but I never act without thought; it is simply that I think more quickly and more intelligently than most people. I am an excellent judge of character. I could not be deceived about yours.”—

A dimple appeared at the corner of the girl's mouth. It trembled, and was gone. The blue eyes fell. “You *are* deceived,” she said, so softly I could hardly hear. “I am not what you think. I owe it to you to tell you my story; and when you have heard it, then—then you will be justified in ordering me out of your sight.”

“Proceed,” I said. “I will be the judge of *that*.”

“I am sure you will!” The dimple reappeared, but did not linger. Her face pale, her eyes steady, the girl began to speak.

## THE GIRL'S STORY

My name is Evelyn Barton-Forbes. My parents having died when I was an infant, I was brought up by my grandfather, the Earl of Ellesmere. I see you recognize the name. It is an ancient name and an honorable one—although many of the holders of the title have not been men of honor. My grandfather... well, I cannot speak fairly of him. I know he is regarded by many as miserly and selfish; though he possesses one of the greatest fortunes in England, he has never been known as a philanthropist. But he was always good to me. I was his pet, his little lamb, as he called me. I think perhaps I was the only human being to whom he never spoke harshly. He even forgave me for being a girl and not the heir he so ardently desired.

I suspect you are a feminist, Miss—Amelia? Then you will be indignant, but not surprised, to know that although I am the only child of my grandfather's eldest son, I cannot inherit his title or estates. There are few exceptions to the rule that only male descendants may inherit. When my father died prematurely, the next male heir was my cousin, Lucas Hayes.

Poor Lucas! I have not seen a great deal of him, but I always liked him, and I cannot help but pity him because Grandfather was so cruelly unfair to him. Of course Grandfather would never admit to prejudice. He claims to dislike Lucas because of his extravagance and wild habits. But I feel sure such tales are only rumors. Grandfather really hates my unfortunate cousin for the sin of being his father's son. You see, his mother, Grandfather's eldest daughter, ran away with—with an Italian gentleman... (Excuse my emotion, Amelia, you will understand its cause presently. There; I am better now.)

My grandfather is British to the core. He despises all foreigners, but especially those of Latin descent. He considers them sly, slippery—oh, I cannot repeat all the terrible things he says! When my aunt eloped with the Conte d'Imbroglia d'Annunciata, Grandfather disowned her and struck her name from the family Bible. Even when she lay dying he sent no word of comfort or forgiveness. He said the Conte was no nobleman, but a fraud and a fortune hunter. I am sure that is untrue. The Conte had very little money, to be sure, but that does not mean his title was not genuine. However, Lucas, on reaching maturity, felt it wise to change his name, since his true one maddened Grandfather. He calls himself Lucas Elliot Hayes now, and he has abandoned his Italian title.

For a time it seemed that Lucas had succeeded in winning Grandfather by his assiduous attentions. I even wondered whether Grandfather was considering a marriage between us. It would have been a happy solution in a sense, for, the estate and title being entailed, Lucas would eventually inherit them. But without my grandfather's private fortune, which was his to dispose of, the earldom would be a burden rather than a privilege; and Grandfather made no secret of his intention of leaving that money to me.

Yet if there was such a scheme, it came to nothing. Hearing of some new misbehavior, Grandfather flew into a rage and sent Lucas away. I am ashamed to admit I was relieved. Fond as I was of Lucas, I did not love him; and being a foolish, sentimental girl, I fancied love must precede marriage. I see you frown, Amelia, to hear me use such terms of myself. They are too mild, as you will soon learn.

For love came, as I thought; and it proved my utter undoing.

While Lucas was with us I had become interested in drawing. Lucas said I had considerable natural skill, and before he left he taught me what he knew. Afterward, I was desirous of continuing, so Grandfather, who indulged me more than I deserved, advertised for a drawing master. Thus Alberto came into my life.

I cannot speak of him calmly. The handsome features and shining dark hair, which seemed to me angelic, now take on a diabolical aspect. His soft voice, with its tender broken accents—for he spoke English rather badly—come back to me, in retrospect, as the sly whispers of a fiend. He—he.... Let me be short and succinct. He seduced me, in short, and persuaded me into an elopement. At his instigation I fled my home; I abandoned the old man who had loved and sheltered me; I flung away every consideration of religion, moral training, and natural affection. I cannot speak of Alberto without loathing; but, believe me, dear Amelia, when I say that I blame myself even more. How true are the old sayings, that evil brings its own punishment! I deserve my wretched fate; I brought it on myself, and I cannot blame those who would shun me....

Forgive me. I will not give way again.

The end of the story is soon told. I had taken with me the few jewels, suitable for a young girl, which Grandfather's generosity had bestowed upon me. The money procured from the sale of these jewels did not last long as we made our way across Europe toward Rome. Alberto insisted that we live in a style that was worthy of me. The lodgings we took in Rome were *not* worthy of me, but by then my money had run out. When I asked Alberto what we were to do, he was evasive. He was also evasive about marriage. As a good Catholic he could not entertain the idea of a civil ceremony. But I was not a Catholic... Oh, his excuses were feeble, I see that now, but I was so naive...

The blow finally came a week ago. Alberto had been increasingly elusive; he was out a good part of the day, and when he returned he would be intoxicated and sullen. I awoke one morning, in the shabby freezing attic room to which our poverty had reduced us, to find myself alone. He had had the courtesan to leave me a gown and cloak and a pair of shoes. Every other object I possessed had gone with him, from my ivory brushes to my hair ornaments. He had also left a note.

The sight of this ill-spelled, badly written document was the final blow; its crudities stung me even more than the message it contained, though this was blunt enough. Alberto had selected me as his prey because I was a wealthy heiress. He had expected that my grandfather would react to our elopement by cutting me out of his will; and through communication with the British authorities in Rome he had learned that this had in fact happened. He had believed, however, that with time the old man, as he disrespectfully called him, would relent. His most recent visit to the consul—whom he had always refused to let me visit—had destroyed this hope. My poor grandfather had suffered a most violent stroke, as a result of my cruel abandonment. He had retained his senses only long enough to make a new will, cutting me off with a shilling, and had then fallen into a coma that was expected to end in death. Finding his expectations frustrated, Alberto saw no reason to waste any more time with me. There were, as he explained, more enticing prospects.

You may only faintly imagine my state of mind, Amelia. I was ill for several days, grudgingly nursed by the horrid old woman who owned the lodging house. She did not want a corpse on her hands, I suppose, for charity had no part in her actions. As soon as I was well enough to speak, she discovered

that I was penniless. This very day she evicted me from the last refuge I had, poor as it was. I went out, ~~fully determined to end a life which had become unbearable. What other option had I? I had no money and no means of procuring employment. For all I knew, my darling grandfather might already be dead. If some miracle had spared him, the dear old gentleman would rightfully refuse to take me back, even if I could communicate with him; and I would rather die than admit to anyone that I had been so cruelly betrayed. My wrongdoing was bad enough; my folly I would admit to no man. No, I had no choice, or so it seemed then; but you need not fear, your kindness has saved me from that ultimate crime. I will not take my own life. But I can no longer stay here. Your countenance is as benevolent as your mind; it betrays no sign of the loathing and disgust you must feel, but you need not spare me. Indeed, I would welcome words of contempt, for punishment relieves some of my feelings of guilt. Speak, Amelia—Miss Peabody—speak, I beg you. Chastise me, and I will welcome your reproaches in the spirit of Christian humility in which I hope to end my miserable existence.~~

### III

When she had finished, Evelyn's blue eyes were swimming with tears, and her voice was unsteady; but she had kept her promise to remain calm. She had spoken with vigor and decision throughout the last part of this shameful narrative.

I was silent, trying to decide which of many things I should say first. My silence was painful to the girl; she drew a long, shuddering breath. Her hands were clasped so tightly that the knuckles showed white; the slender shoulders under my flannel nightdress were braced as if for a blow. I was in a state of some mental confusion. The words that finally came from my lips were not at all those I had meant to say.

"Tell me, Evelyn—what is it like? Is it pleasant?"

Evelyn's astonishment was hardly greater than my own; but having once begun, I had to explain more fully. I hurried on.

"You will forgive me for probing into what must be a source of pain for you; but I have never had the opportunity of inquiring... One hears such conflicting stories. My sisters-in-law whisper and shake their heads and speak of the cross a wife must bear. But I have seen the village girls in the meadows with their sweethearts and they seem—they look—in short, they do not seem to find... Dear me! How strange, I seem to be at a loss for words. That does not often occur. Do you understand what I am trying to ask?"

For a moment longer Evelyn stared at me, her wide eyes brimming. Then an extraordinary grimace crossed her face. She covered it with her hands; her shoulders shook convulsively.

"I must apologize," I said resignedly. "Now I suppose I will never know. I did not intend—"

A choked sound from Evelyn interrupted me. She lowered her hands. Her face was flushed and tear-streaked. She was gasping—with laughter.

I took it for hysteria, of course, and moved alertly forward. She caught my lifted hand.

"No, no, you needn't slap me; I am not at all hysterical. But, Amelia, you are—you are so—Is that really all you can think of to ask me, after such a story as mine?"

I considered the matter.

"Why, I really do not think there is anything else to ask. The shameful behavior of your abominable old grandfather and your villain of a lover require no comment. I presume your other family connections are equally cold-hearted, or you would have appealed to them."

“And you are not repelled by my ruined character?”

“I do not consider that it is ruined. Indeed, the experience has probably strengthened your character.”

Evelyn shook her head. “I can’t believe you are real!”

“There is nothing extraordinary about me. However, I suppose—yes, I am sure that it would be wise for you to make certain I am what I claim to be before you accept the position I offer. My father had friends in academic circles; I can give you references to a clergyman here in Rome, and the consistorial knows of my—”

“No. I do not need to make such inquiries.” With a gesture, Evelyn indicated that I should take a seat on the bed beside her. I did so. She studied me earnestly for a few moments. Then she said,

“Before I answer your question, Amelia, perhaps you will answer one for me. Why did you say, ‘I will never know’? Referring, of course, to the question—”

“Well, it is unlikely that I shall ever have firsthand experience. I am fully acquainted with the use of the mirror and the calendar. The latter tells me that I am thirty-two years old; the former reproduces my plain features without flattery. Moreover, my nature does not lend itself to the meekness required of a wife in our society. I could not endure a man who would let himself be ruled by me, and I would not endure a man who tried to rule me. However, I am curious. I had thought... But no doubt I spoke out of place. My brothers assure me that I constantly do so.”

“If I have not answered your question,” Evelyn said, “it is not because I consider it unfair, but because I find it difficult to give a balanced answer. At this time, my recollection of the hours I spent—shall we say in Alberto’s arms?—makes a shudder of disgust pass through me. But at the time—at the time... “ She leaned forward. Her eyes were brilliant. “Oh, Amelia, under the right circumstances it is—in a word—perfectly splendid!”

“Ah. I suspected as much. Well, my dear Evelyn, I am indebted to you for the information. And now shall we consider a more pressing question? No doubt you will wish to inquire of those references I mentioned before making a decision as to—”

“No.” Evelyn shook her head vigorously. Her golden curls danced. “I need no references, and no time to consider. I would love to be your companion, Amelia. Indeed—I think we will get on very well together.”

With a quick, graceful movement she leaned forward and kissed me lightly on the cheek. The gesture took me quite by surprise. I mumbled something and left the room. I never had a sister. I began to think that perhaps a gesture that had begun as an act of charity might benefit me as much as it helped its object.

#### IV

I may say, without undue egotism, that when I make up my mind to do something, it is done quickly. The lethargic old city of the Popes fairly quaked under my ruthless hand during the following week.

The week brought several surprises to me. I had looked forward to adopting Evelyn and dressing her, rather as if she had been a pretty, living doll. I wanted to buy for her all the dainty, impractical garments I could not wear myself. But she was not a doll, and she soon made that fact apparent. I don’t know quite how she accomplished it, for she never openly conterminded an order or contradicted me; but she eventually acquired a wardrobe that was charming and simple and astonishingly inexpensive. And, in the process, I somehow acquired half a dozen new frocks of my

own, which I had had no intention of buying. They were not the kind of frocks I would have chosen for myself. ~~One evening dress, which I certainly did not need, was of the most astonishing shade of crimson, with a square neckline cut several inches lower than anything I had ever worn. The skirts were draped back over a bustle, displaying a sequined underskirt. Evelyn chose the fabric and bullied the dressmaker quite as effectively, and much more quietly, than I would have done. I thought the gown quite absurd; it squeezed my waist down to nothing and made my bosom look even more ample than it unfortunately is. But when Evelyn said, "Wear it"; I wore it. She was an amazing girl. She also discovered a weakness, so secret I was not aware of it myself, for embroidered batiste; the dozens of fine undergarments and nightgowns I had meant to get for her ended being made to my measurement~~

I was in something of a daze during that week. I felt as if I had picked up a pathetic, half-drowned kitten from a pond and then had seen it turn into a full-grown tiger. Enough of my natural instincts remained, however, to allow me to take certain practical steps.

I am not at all a man-hater, despite the innuendos of a certain person whose name has not yet entered into this narrative. I had found, however, that few persons of the male sex were to be trusted, and Evelyn's story had merely confirmed this theory. It was obvious that Alberto was an untruthful person. The story he had written to Evelyn about her grandfather was not to be believed without investigation. I therefore went to our consul in Rome and made inquiries.

I was disappointed for several reasons to learn that on this account, if no other, Alberto had spoken the truth. The Earl of Ellesmere was personally known to our consul; and of course the health of a peer of such rank was a matter of general concern. The elderly earl was not yet dead, but word of his demise was expected at any moment. He had been in a deep coma for days.

I proceeded to tell the consul about Evelyn. He had heard rumors of this affair; that was clear, from the way his face changed to its blank diplomatic mask. He had the temerity to remonstrate with me when I explained my intentions with regard to the girl. I cut him short, naturally. I had only two reasons for mentioning Evelyn at all. Firstly, to ascertain whether or not any of her kin had made inquiries about her. Secondly, to inform someone in authority of her future whereabouts in case such inquiries should be made in the future. The answer to the first question was negative. The diplomatic mask notwithstanding, I could see by the consul's expression that he did not expect any such inquiries; he knew the old Earl too well. I therefore gave him my address in Cairo and departed, leaving him shaking his head and mumbling to himself.

On the twenty-eighth of the month we boarded the ship at Brindisi and set sail for Alexandria.

I WILL spare the Gentle Reader descriptions of the journey and of the picturesque dirt of Alexandria. Every European traveler who can write his name feels obliged to publish his memoirs; the reader may refer to “Miss Smith’s Egyptian Journals” or “Mr. Jones’s Winter in Egypt” if he feels cheated of local color, for all the descriptions are the same. The sea voyage was abominable, but I was happy to see that Evelyn was a good traveler. We made our way to Cairo without incident and settled down at Shepherd’s Hotel.

Everyone stays at Shepherd’s. Among the travelers who meet daily in its magnificent dining room one may eventually, it is said, encounter all one’s acquaintances; and from the terrace before the hotel the indolent tourist may watch a panorama of eastern life pass before his eyes as he sips his lemonade. Stiff English travelers ride past, on donkeys so small that the riders’ feet trail in the dust; followed by Janis saries in their gorgeous gold-embroidered uniforms, armed to the teeth; by native women swathed to the eyebrows in dusty black, by stately Arabs in flowing blue-and-white robes, dervishes with matted hair and fantastic headdresses, sweetmeat vendors with trays of Turkish delight, water sellers with their goatskin containers bloated with liquid and looking horribly lifelike... But I see I am succumbing to the temptation of the traveler, and will stop; the procession is unending and fascinating.

There were not many English travelers in Cairo that winter. The fighting in the Sudan had apparently alarmed them. The mad Mahdi was still besieging the gallant Gordon at Khartoum. However, Sir Garnet Wolseley’s relief expedition had reached Wadi Halfa, and the gentlemen we met at Shepherd’s reassured us—or rather, reassured Evelyn—when she expressed doubts as to the wisdom of traveling south. The fighting was still hundreds of miles below Assuan, and by the time we arrived there the war would surely be over—the Mahdi taken and his barbaric army crushed, the gallant Gordon relieved.

I was not so sanguine as the gentlemen. The mad carpenter of the Sudan had proved himself an extremely potent general, as our losses in that area proved. However, I said nothing to Evelyn, for I had no intention of changing my plans to suit the Mahdi or anyone else. I planned to spend the winter sailing up the Nile, and sail I would.

Travel by water is the only comfortable method of seeing Egypt, and the narrow length of the country means that all the antiquities are within easy reach of the river. I had heard of the pleasure of travel by dahabeeyah, and was anxious to try it. To call these conveyances houseboats is to give a poor idea of their luxury. They can be fitted up with any convenience the traveler chooses to supply, and the services available depend solely on his ability to pay. I intended to go to Boulaq, where the boats are moored, and decide on one the day after our arrival. We could then inspect some of the sights of Cairo and be on our way in a few days.

When I expressed this intention to some of our fellow guests in the lounge of the hotel after dinner a burst of hilarity greeted my remarks. I was informed that my hopes were vain. Choosing a dahabeeyah was a frustrating, time-consuming process; the native Egyptian was a lazy fellow who could not be hurried.

I had my own opinions on that score, but I caught Evelyn’s eye and remained silent. She was having an astonishing effect on me, that girl; I thought that if I continued in her company much

longer, I might become mellow.

~~She was looking very pretty that night, in a frock of pale-blue silk, and she attracted considerable attention. We had agreed that her real name was not to be mentioned, since it was well known to many Englishmen; she was therefore introduced as Evelyn Forbes. Tiring, finally, of the clumsy efforts of some of the ladies in the group to discover her antecedents, I used fatigue as an excuse for early retirement.~~

I awoke early next morning. An ethereal, rose-tinted light filled the room, and I could see Evelyn kneeling by the window. I thought she was brooding over past events; there had been moments of depression, quickly overcome, but not unnoticed by me. I therefore tried to remain motionless, but an inadvertent rustle of the bedclothes caused her to turn, and I saw that her face was shining with pleasure.

“Come and look, Amelia. It is so beautiful!”

To obey was not as simple as it sounds. I had first to fight my way through the muffling folds of fine white mosquito netting that encircled the bed. When I joined Evelyn, I shared her pleasure. Our rooms overlooked the garden of the hotel; stately palms, dark silhouettes in the pale dawn, rose up against a sky filled with translucent azure and pink streaks. Birds fluttered singing from tree to tree; the lacy minarets of mosques shone like mother-of-pearl above the treetops. The air was cool and exquisitely clear.

It was as well that our day began with such beauty and peace, for the wharves of Boulaq, where we went after breakfast, were not at all peaceful. I began to understand what our fellow travelers had warned me about. There were over a hundred boats at their moorings; the confusion and noise were indescribable.

The boats are much alike, varying only in size. The cabins occupy the after part of the deck, and their roof forms an upper deck which, when furnished and canopied, provides a charming open-air drawing room for the passengers. The crew occupy the lower deck. Here is the kitchen, a shed containing a charcoal stove, and a collection of pots and pans. The dahabeeyahs are shallow, flat-bottomed boats with two masts; and when the huge sails are spread to catch the brisk northerly breeze they present a most attractive picture.

Our problem, then, was to decide which boat to hire. At first even I was bewildered by the variety. It did not take long, however, to realize that some of the boats were impossible. There are degrees of uncleanliness; I could tolerate, indeed, I expected, a state of sanitation inferior to that of England, but... ! Unfortunately, the bigger boats were usually the better kept. I did not mind the expense, but it seemed a trifle ridiculous for the two of us—and my maid—to rattle about in a boat that contained ten staterooms and two saloons.

At Evelyn's insistence we had hired a dragoman that morning at the hotel. I saw no reason why we should; I had learned some Arabic phrases during the voyage to Alexandria, and had every confidence in my ability to deal with an Egyptian boat captain. However, I yielded to Evelyn. Our dragoman was named Michael Bedawee; he was a Copt, or Egyptian Christian, a short, plump, coffee-colored man with a fierce black beard and a white turban—although I must confess that this description would fit half the male population of Egypt. What distinguished Michael was the friendliness of his smile and the candor of his soft brown eyes. We took to him at once, and he seemed to like us.

With Michael's help we selected a boat. The *Philae* was of middle size, and of unusual tidiness; Evelyn and I both liked the looks of the reis, or captain. His name was Hassan, and he was an Egyptian of Luxor. I approved of the firm set of his mouth and the steady gaze of his black eyes—and the glint of humor in them when I assayed my few words of Arabic. I suppose my accent was atrocious, but

Reis Hassan complimented me on my knowledge of his language, and the bargain was soon concluded.

With the pride of ownership Evelyn and I explored the quarters that would be our home for the next four months. The boat had four cabins, two on either side of a narrow passageway. There was also a bathroom, with water laid on. At the end of the passage a door opened into the saloon, which was semicircular, following the shape of the stern. It was well lighted by eight windows and had a long curved divan along the wall. Brussels' carpets covered the floor; the paneling was white with gold trim, giving a light, airy feeling. Window curtains of scarlet, a handsome dining table, and several mirrors in gold frames completed the furnishings.

With the ardor of ladies equipping a new house, we discussed what else we should need. There were cupboards and shelves in plenty, and we had books to fill the shelves; I had brought a large box of father's books on Egyptian antiquities, and I hoped to purchase more. But we should also need a piano. I am totally without musical ability, but I dearly love to hear music, and Evelyn played and sang beautifully.

I asked Reis Hassan when he would be ready to depart; and here I received my first check. The boat had just returned from a trip. The crew needed time to rest and visit their families; certain mysterious overhauls needed to be done on the vessel itself. We finally settled on a date a week hence, but there was something in Hassan's bland black eyes that made me wonder...

Nothing went as I had planned it. Finding a suitable piano took an unreasonable amount of time. I wanted new curtains for the saloon; their shade clashed horribly with my crimson evening frock. As Evelyn pointed out, we were in no hurry; yet I had a feeling that she was even more anxious than I to be on our way. Every evening when we entered the dining room I felt her shrink. Sooner or later it was more than probable that she should encounter an acquaintance, and I could understand why she shrank from that.

Our days were not wasted; there is a great deal to see and do in Cairo. The bazaars were a source of constant amusement; the procession of people passing through the narrow passages would have been entertainment enough, without the fascination of the wares on display. Each trade occupies a section of its own: saddlers, slipper makers, copper and bronze workers, carpet sellers, and vendors of tobacco and sweetmeats. There are no real shops, only tiny cupboards, open at the front, with a stone platform or mastaba, on which the merchants sit cross-legged, awaiting customers. I could not resist the rugs, and bought several for our drawing room on the *Philae*—soft, glowing beauties from Persia and Syria. I tried to buy some trinkets for Evelyn; she would only accept a pair of little velvet slippers.

We visited the bazaars and the mosques and the Citadel; and then planned excursions somewhat farther afield. Of course I was anxious to see the remains of the ancient civilization, but I little realized what was in store for me that day, when we paid our first visit to Gizeh.

Everyone goes to see the pyramids. Since the Nile bridge was built, they are within an easy hour-and-a-half drive from the hotel. We left early in the morning so that we should have time to explore fully.

I had seen engravings of the Great Pyramid and read extensively about it; I thought I was prepared for the sight. But I was not. It was so much grander than I had imagined! The massive bulk bursts suddenly on one's sight as one mounts the steep slope leading up to the rocky platform. It fills the sky. And the color! No black-and-white engraving can possibly prepare one for the color of Egyptian limestone, mellow gold in the sunlight against a heavenly-blue vault.

The vast plateau on which the three pyramids stand is honeycombed with tombs—pits, fallen mounds of masonry, crumbling smaller pyramids. From the midst of a sandy hollow projects the head of the Sphinx, its body buried in the ever-encroaching sand, but wearing more majesty on its imperfect

features than any other sculpture made by man.

~~We made our way to the greatest of the three pyramids, the tomb of Khufu. It loomed up like a mountain as we approached. The seeming irregularities of its sides were now seen to be huge blocks, each one higher than a man's head; and Evelyn wondered audibly how one was supposed to mount these giant stairs.~~

"And in long skirts," she mourned.

"Never mind," I said. "We shall manage."

And we did, with the help of six Arabs—three apiece. One on either side and one pushing from behind, we were lifted easily from block to block, and soon stood on the summit. Evelyn was a trifle pale, but I scarcely heeded her distress or gave her courage its due; I was too absorbed in the magnificent view. The platform atop the pyramid is about thirty feet square, with blocks of the stripped-off upper tiers remaining to make comfortable seats. I seated myself and stared till my eyes swam—with strain, I thought then; but perhaps there was another reason.

On the east, the undulating yellow Mokattam hills formed a frame for a picture whose nearer charms included the vivid green strip of cultivated land next to the river, and, in the distance, shining like the towers of fairyland, the domes and minarets of Cairo. To the west and south the desert stretched away in a haze of gold. Along the horizon were other man-made shapes—the tiny pyramid points of Abusir and Sakkarah and Dahshoor.

I gazed till I could gaze no more; and was aroused from a reverie that had lasted far too long by Evelyn plucking at my sleeve.

"May we not descend?" she begged. "I believe I am getting sunburned."

Her nose was certainly turning pink, despite the protection of her broad-brimmed hat.

Remorsefully I consented, and we were lowered down by our cheerful guides. Evelyn declined to enter the pyramid with me, having heard stories of its foul atmosphere. She knew better than to try to dissuade me. I left her with some ladies who had also refused the treat, and, hitching up my skirts, followed the gentlemen of the party into the depths.

It was a horrid place—stifling air, debris crunching underfoot, the dark barely disturbed by the flickering candles held by our guides. I reveled in every moment of it, from the long traverse of the passage to the Queen's chamber, which is so low that one must walk bent over at the waist, to the hazardous ascent of the Grand Gallery, that magnificent high-ceilinged slope up which one must crawl in semidarkness, relying on the sinewy arms of the Egyptians to prevent a tumble back down the stone-lined slope. There were bats as well. But in the end I stood in the King's Chamber, lined with somber black basalt, and containing only the massive black coffin into which Khufu was laid to rest some four thousand years ago; and with the perspiration rolling down my frame, and every breath an effort, I felt the most overpowering sense of satisfaction I had felt since childhood—when William, my brother, dared me to climb the apple tree in the garden, and I, perched on the highest bough, watched him tumble out of a lower one. He broke his arm.

When I finally joined her outside, Evelyn's face was a sight to behold. I raked my fingers through my disheveled hair and remarked, "It was perfectly splendid, Evelyn. If you would like to go, I would be happy to see it again...."

"No," Evelyn said. "Not under any circumstances."

We had been in Cairo for a week by then, and I really had hopes of getting underway within another fortnight. I had been to Boulaq several times, assisting Reis Hassan—bullying him, as Evelyn quaintly put it. In recent days I had not been able to find him on the boat, although once I saw a flutter of striped petticoat that looked like his disappear over the stern as I approached.

After Gizeh, Hassan was left in peace. I had a new interest—but to call it an interest is to understate my sentiments. I admired, I desired—I lusted after pyramids! We went back to Gizeh. I visited the Second and Third pyramids there. We went to Sakkarah to see the Step Pyramid. There are other pyramids at Sakkarah. Being built of rubble within a facing of stone, unlike the solid-stone pyramids of Gizeh, the smaller Sakkarah pyramids are only heaps of debris now that the outer facing stones have been taken away for building purposes; but I did not care. They were, or had been, pyramids, and pyramids were now my passion. I was determined to get into one of these smaller mounds, whose burial chamber is beautifully inscribed with hieroglyphic picture writing, and I would have done it, too, but for Evelyn. Her outcries, when she saw the funnel-shaped well into which I proposed to lower myself, were terrible to hear. I pointed out that with two men holding the rope I should do quite nicely; but she was adamant. I had to yield when she threatened to follow me down, for I saw that she was appalled at the idea.

Travers was no more sympathetic to my pyramid inquiries. She mourned aloud over the state of my clothes, some of which had to be given away as beyond repair, and she objected to the mementos of bats which I inadvertently carried away from the interiors of the pyramids. One morning, when I proposed a trip to Dahshoor, where there are several splendid pyramids, Evelyn flatly refused. She suggested that instead we visit the museum of Boulaq. I agreed. It was not far from the wharves; I could go and assist Hassan after the museum.

I was looking forward to meeting M. Maspero, the French director of antiquities. My father had been in correspondence with him, and I hoped my name would be familiar. It was; and we were fortunate to find Maspero at the museum. He was usually away, his assistant informed us, digging for the treasures which had made him known throughout the scholarly world.

This assistant, Herr Emil Brugsch, I knew by reputation, for it was he who had been the first European to gaze upon the famous cache of royal mummies that had been discovered a few years earlier. While we waited for M. Maspero, Brugsch told us of the robber family of Thebes who had discovered the hiding place of the mummies ten years before. The discoverer, a shifty character named Abd er-Rasool Ahmed, had been searching for a missing goat amid the rocky cliffs near his village of Gurnah. The goat had fallen into a crevice, or shaft, forty feet deep; upon descending, Ahmed made an incredible discovery—the mummies of the great pharaohs of Egypt, hidden in ancient times to keep their sacred bodies safe from the thieves who had looted their original tombs!

His eyes never leaving my face, Herr Brugsch explained, with affected modesty, that he was responsible for the detective work that had eventually discovered the mummies. Collectors had sent him photographs of objects bearing royal names, and he had realized that these must have come from a tomb. Since the known royal tombs were in Thebes, he had alerted the police to watch out for a peasant from that city who had more money than he could have come by honestly. Thus suspicion was focused on the Abd er-Rasool family; and, the thieves having fallen out in the meantime over the disposition of the loot, one of them betrayed the secret to Brugsch.

I did not care for this gentleman. His brother is a respectable and well-known scholar, and Mr. Emil has been employed by Maspero and his predecessor, M. Mariette, for many years; but his bold stare and hard face affected me unpleasantly, as did his calloused description of the interrogation of the unfortunate Abd er-Rasool brothers. Not a muscle in his tanned face moved as he described beatings with palm rods, and heated pots being placed on the heads of the suspects. Yet I could not help but be fascinated by an eyewitness account of the incredible discovery. Brugsch admitted that his sensations, as he was lowered into the pit, were not wholly comfortable. He was armed, of course, but his weapons would not have availed against treachery, and all the inhabitants of the area hated the

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