Mummy Dearest (Claire Malloy Mysteries, No. 17) by Joan Hess

What Fun!!

After a somewhat long and, at times, strange courtship, Claire Malloy -- a single, widowed mother of a teenage daughter and a bookseller in Farberville, Arkansas - has finally said I do to her swain, Lt. Peter Rosen of the Farberville Police Department. Now they are on their honeymoon in Luxor, Egypt. Well, Claire is on her honeymoon - accompanied by Caron, her teenaged daughter, and Inez, Caron's best friend and frequent partner in adventure. Peter is mostly away on various mysterious consultations with equally mysterious government agencies is his new, completely undiscussed, role in law enforcement.

Staying at the glamorous Winter Palace in Luxor, Claire is intent on a quiet, uneventful honeymoon involving shopping, tourist sites, and, when it can’t avoided, drinks with the local British expatriate contingent. But despite her determined efforts to avoid any involvement in criminous events, the tenor of the trip quickly switches from bucolic to creepy. First, Caron and Inez are chased through darkened deserted alleys by persons unknown. Then a blond college student of their recent acquaintance is kidnapped by two young men on horseback in a scene reminiscent of a Rudolf Valentino film. Something is clearly afoot in this tourist paradise, and now Claire will stop at nothing to find out what.

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My Personal Review:
This was so much fun, it almost makes up for no Amelia Peabody book (written by Elizabeth Peters) this year. I got to visit Luxor again.
I enjoy all of Joan Hess's books and was so excited to finally get this one that I just opened it and started reading. By the time I was on page 50 it felt so familiar that I had to stop and investigate. I turned back to the front of the book and found that it was dedicated to Barbara Mertz also known as the Elizabeth Peters mentioned above. And in the endnotes you find that Joan Hess actually went to Luxor with Barbara Mertz/Miss Peters -- what a dream trip!

I really enjoyed the book but I kept expecting Amelia and Emerson (from the Peters books) to suddenly appear at one of the cocktail get-togethers. They would have had to time-travel forward 80 years but it would have been great. (I think maybe a descendant was there.) The names and characters and settings were all so familiar and to have Claire, Peter, Caron and Inez there was twice as fun.

Peter and Claire are finally married, she gets involved with stuff she shouldn't, as usual. Bringing Inez and Caron along on the honeymoon was hilarious. I'm still not sure who two of the English women were (red herrings, I guess). But I did enjoy the book a lot.

It will be fun to see if Miss Hess stays with this storyline with Peter as CIA (or whatever) and lets Claire travel to solve more international mysteries or takes them back home to Arkansas and the bookstore.

-cba

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