



The Tomb of Zeus

Barbara Cleverly

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With the same flawless storytelling that earned her the CWA Historical Dagger Award, Barbara Cleverly delivers a dazzling new novel. Sweeping us to the exotic island of Crete in 1928, Cleverly introduces a marvelous new heroine: whip-smart and spirited Laetitia Talbot, an aspiring archaeologist with a passion for adventure—and for the mysteries that only the keenest eyes can see.

Born into a background of British privilege, Laetitia Talbot has been raised to believe there is no field in which she may not excel. She has chosen a career in the male-dominated world of archaeology, but she approaches her first assignment in Crete the only way she knows how—with dash and enthusiasm. Until she enters the Villa Europa, where something is clearly utterly amiss...

Her host, a charismatic archaeologist, is racing to dig up the fabled island's next great treasure—even, perhaps, the tomb of the King of the Gods, himself. But then a beautiful young woman is found hanged and a golden youth drives his Bugatti over a cliff. From out of the shadows come whispers of past loves, past jealousies, and ancient myths that sound an eerie discord with present events. Letty will need all her determination and knowledge to unravel the secrets beneath the Villa Europa's roof—and they will lead her into the darkest, most terrifying place of all....

The Tomb of Zeus Details

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Gail Chall says

Yep, finished.....finally. Funny thing, Goodreads is having a problem saving my rating...barely 1 star. At first I thought I'd like this story because I really enjoy archeology coupled with my favorite genre--mystery. Eagerly, I looked forward to reading about the quest for the tomb. Instead, this book turned into a badly written Victorian love story which became stupid, no, not even stupid, just silly, and I found myself giggling about the various events. Wouldn't have finished it at all, but I was reading it for a mystery book club. They have not been choosing good books lately, not even books with any redeeming features. A few more like this, and I will not bother any longer. There are so many great mystery writers to read, and this was definitely not one of them.

Elissa says

The writing was pretty good, but I have to say I was a bit turned off by the main character. Also, I didn't feel like it was completely historically accurate- especially the dialog. But not a bad mystery novel.

Michael says

I'd give this 2.5 stars. I liked the setting (Crete) and Letty is a strong female character. But I felt there was too much on the archaeology and not enough worrying about the death of Phoebe and catching her murderer. I also felt the ending was rushed, and I guessed the identity of the child in the prologue well before the end (well at least that made me feel clever.)

Christine says

This book really wanted to be good, worked super hard on it, put it lots of different things to try to keep your attention and then....not so much. It started off really slowly, but picked up and was honestly interesting for most of the middle part, but completely fell apart at the end. There were just too many threads to pull together, and too many coincidences required to make those threads come together coherently. Worse yet, the archeology in the book felt completely extraneous, even though, presumably, it's the whole reason for the story's existence. Cleverly should probably read some more Elizabeth Peterson to see how it's done. A quick read, but not really worth it.

Jazz says

This is only the second Barbara Cleverly mystery I've read, but I am hooked. I'm considering her my "find" of 2017. The sense of place and of its culture, in this case Crete, is so strong in her novels, that it can easily be said the setting becomes a living entity. Her characters are written strongly as well and make vivid impressions when the reader meets them within the pages of her books. Much of this may have gone over my head, as I'm not well-versed in Greek mythology or ancient poetry, but it didn't affect my enjoyment of the

book whatsoever, despite slowing down the action at times. The questionable circumstances surrounding one death sometimes seemed forgotten in all the archaeological talk, but it was always there fermenting under the surface. The ending was strong and brought it all to a very satisfying conclusion. I look forward to reading all of her other mystery novels.

Janice Liedl says

An excellent historical mystery with a touch of romance. Laetitia Talbot arrives in Cyprus ready to work as an archaeologist, aiming to join into the thriving exploration of Minoan culture carried out by the likes of Arthur Evans and her somewhat less illustrious host, former British naval officer, Theodore Russell. Unfortunately for Laetitia, there are roadblocks to her ambitions, not the least of which is an unexpected death.

The archaeology storyline is intriguing but under-developed. I'm left hanging with regards to some really interesting discoveries (and I had a pet theory that I would have liked to see proved or disproved). With regards to the romance, the story picks up in the middle of matters - the reader's left wondering whether this was book #2 (hint: it isn't). Nonetheless, I heartily recommend the book and I'm ready to pick up the second in the series: Bright Hair About the Bone.

Ruth says

c2008. It was a good enough story to keep me reading but it really was more fluff than flavour. I thought the characters were fairly one dimensional and the best parts had to do with the myths. I will not rush out to obtain any more in the series. Can you believe that the horrid phrase "living rock" appeared in the story as well. Does Ms Cleverley write fantasy under another name? (Not a real question)

Jeanne says

1928. The Island of Crete. Dilettante Laetitia Talbot has arrived for an archaeological dig. Surrounded by men, she is determined to prove her prowess.

But before any digging may commence, her host's wife hangs herself. Or did she? Following her death, her host's son drives off a cliff. What's going on? And how long will it take Letty to figure it all out?

Well, I thought that Letty would be a plucky Amelia Peabody sort of heroine. She's not. And I couldn't really understand the appeal of our sleuth or the mystery.

The story itself focuses on archaeology and the history of Crete. Yawn. The murder is definitely secondary.

Not impressed and certainly not interested in the second book in the series.

Tina says

Blech. Book 2 of the mystery book club. Finally quit reading at page 160 because I just didn't care, no matter how hard I tried. Presumably this is an award winning writer, but I can't imagine how or why.

Phair says

While I liked the archaeological content I found the story somewhat plodding. Though #1 in the series there were several references to the past relationship between Lettie and William that made me feel I had missed a previous book. I'm sure all will come clear in future entries but I still hate being teased like that. From this first taste I would not place the Laetitia Talbot series among my favorites of Cleverly's series.

Marfita says

Two things I love: period mysteries and archaeology. For some reason, I kept wishing for more archaeology during the mystery parts and more mystery during the archaeology parts.

And less romance.

I found the book slow and meaty - there is so much going on. It starts with an episode in the violent history of Crete, which leads one to believe that there's some vengeance to come. Merry mix-ups in the romance between Lettie (oh, dear - and the lengths I've gone through to make sure I am never called "Mattie") and Gunning are more amusing in retrospect.

But so much did not quite make sense. I don't see someone developing leprosy so quickly, even if they had contact with lepers. And if you skulk around to commit murder and see one committed*, soup to nuts, why you don't tell the authorities or anyone sooner (since vengeance is an honor killing that would have been and is in fact shown to be acceptable) doesn't make a whole lot of sense. Or maybe it's just having the whole scene described by a hidden observer seem silly. Also, why would suicide be absolutely necessary, even with 1) leprosy, 2) a useless lover, 3) an adulterous pregnancy, 4) and a rat-bastard for a husband when you have all the money?

Oh, and they're just too quick to dig up finds. I know it's Crete in the 1920s, but it still seems unlikely.

And I did identify the lover rather quickly and then thought, "Oh, don't tell me it's leprosy!"

None of that would keep me from reading another in the series, believe it or not. Absolutely loved the local police captain and the ending, while contrived, was a surprise.

Heather says

Eh. Not up to the Sandilands books, I think this one tried to do too much. Romance, archaeology, mystery, bright-young-thing historical - and everything suffered in the end. I was particularly disappointed with the archaeology. The finds were lovingly described and clearly meant to drive the plot and add layers of depth and foreshadowing to the "modern" stories, but the author didn't give us enough to work with. The finds ended up being ancillary at best.

Parts of it reminded me of watching a toddler pick up and discard toys. Each item may be worthy, but, in the end, the playroom is a mess.

Deon Stonehouse says

The Tomb of Zeus by Barbara Cleverly reminds me of the luscious MM Kaye books set in exotic locations. Cleverly's latest book takes place on Crete in 1928. Letty arrives to begin her career in archeology under the eye of Theodore Russell, an arrogant retired naval officer turned archeologist. Theodore is rude to his guests and nasty to his lovely wife Phoebe. Finding William firmly ensconced in the Russell household surprises Letty, the last time she saw William he was running away from her planned seduction. Lovely Phoebe delights Letty, she is sure they could be lifelong friends. Phoebe's life turns out to be very short; she is found hanging in her bedroom. Letty refuses to believe it is suicide and is determined to do justice by her dead friend. Letty is a headstrong, likable heroine. Cleverly intertwines the story with ancient mythology, Letty is trying to uncover the tomb of Zeus, King of the Gods. Marvelous fun!

Angela says

As I've often posted about before, I'm a big fan of Elizabeth Peters' Amelia Peabody series. And as y'all might guess with my recent post about finishing up *Queen of Souls*, I dig me some Greek mythology. So when I happened across *The Tomb of Zeus* on the new releases shelf in the Mystery section at Barnes & Noble the other night, I couldn't help but be interested: a period novel set in the 1920's, a woman doing archaeology, and moreover, doing it on the isle of Crete. Bitchin'. Sign me up.

Overall this was a fun read, and I must give Ms. Cleverly points for some quite unconventional decisions about her heroine's backstory in a period mystery novel. First and foremost: she's actually met her love interest before, with all sorts of references to prior occurrences that sounded quite interesting and which I'm a little sorry we didn't actually get to see on camera. Second: she's actually not a virgin, which rather raised my eyebrows when I read it, but which also made perfect sense as soon as young Laetitia defended herself to William, the aforementioned love interest, about how entirely unfair it was that his sex was perfectly willing to overlook one of their own having affairs while holding the same behavior against hers. Plot-wise, we get quite the knotted little mess surrounding the death of the wife of Laetitia's host--which in turn leads to the discovery of all sorts of tasty family intrigue going on. There's plenty of lush descriptions of Crete and the people Letty meets, as well as references galore to the gods.

The only beefs I had with it, really, were that I found the pacing and arrangement of scenes occasionally strange and clunky... and that for a novel that was supposed to be about a young woman trying to launch a career as an archaeologist, the story actually took forever to get her doing some actual archaeological work. But those were minor beefs indeed and I may well have to keep an eye out for the next one in this series. Three and a half stars.

Bee says

It's unfortunate (for me) that this was compared to the Amelia Peabody series, as I went in with higher expectations -- not necessarily of literary genius, but of witty characters and an enjoyable mystery.

Honestly, I tried to muddle through this and eventually gave up. The characters were unlikeable and not interesting and the writing was on the dry side. Also, and this could absolutely just be a twitchy pet peeve of

mine, but I've never seen so many exclamation marks in sentences before, to the point where it was intensely grating. Or, should I say, to the point where it was intensely grating! Really!

Moving on.
