



Borrower of the Night

Elizabeth Peters

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Meet art historian Vicky Bliss, She is as beautiful as she is brainy--with unassailable courage, insatiable curiosity, and an expertise in lost museum treasures that often leads her into the most dangerous of situations.

A missing masterwork in wood, the last creation of a master carver who died in the violent tumult of the sixteenth century, may be hidden in a medieval German castle in the town of Rothenburg. The prize has called to Vicky Bliss, drawing her and an arrogant male colleague into the forbidding citadel and its dark secrets. But the treasure hunt soon turns deadly. Here, where the blood of the long forgotten damned stains ancient stones, Vicky must face two equally perilous possibilities. Either a powerful supernatural evil inhabits this place. . .or someone frighteningly real is willing to kill for what Vicky is determined to find.

Borrower of the Night Details

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Author : Elizabeth Peters

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From Reader Review Borrower of the Night for online ebook

Hallie says

Well, that was a book. Really, I'm having a hard time finding enough in the way of feelings about it to say much more - it did pass the time*, and, I guess, allow me to read the other books knowing I haven't missed anything by starting mid-series. I was warned that this is neither necessary nor a good place to start, though, so the positive is outweighed by the negatives.

*(Though come to think of it, that isn't exactly a plus either, with a to-read shelf containing several years' worth of reading and growing! It's not this or the back of cereal boxes.)

It almost seemed to save all redeeming features (along with a few new annoyances) for the very end, which would be a stupid policy if it actually *were* a policy. The dinner party and conversation that sets Tony and Vicky on their merry way is ridiculous, and Vicky's part in it, and her "friendships" with these people say nothing good about her. She's only more interesting than, say, Tony or George in being unevenly sympathetic and not-at-all so. I suppose there's something to be said for having the female characters about as awful as the male ones. It would have been 2 stars for sure, had the ending not pulled out some narrative cleverness (I don't mean the mystery plot) and some actual humour.

Finally, I'm not an expert on witchcraft in Europe in the 16th century, but I really didn't like what was suggested in the book about it. (view spoiler)

Amy says

I loved the first chapter of this book. Vicky's introduction, Tony's proposal, the bet...it is good fun and left me chuckling. And I love the end. The conclusion to the bet I didn't see coming because series like this tend to follow a pattern and it didn't occur to me the pattern would deviate.

The mystery itself only gets about 3 stars from me. It was clever and plays off the reader's assumptions nicely, but it was mostly Vicky and Tony stumbling around and then presenting brilliant hypotheses that they pull from dust.

I enjoyed it enough that I definitely want more!

Felicia says

I enjoyed this series immensely.

Cyndi says

A tongue-in-cheek mystery. Lots of fun with a heroine who has an insatiable curiosity tucked into the body of an amazon beauty. She is slightly cynical, extremely smart and has a high self esteem. Unusual in a

heroine but Vicky Bliss is not your usual heroine.

Her kinda boyfriend makes a bet with her that if he can prove he is intellectually superior to her she will marry him. Pshaw!

The two set out to uncover a mystery and find an archeological artifact lost for centuries. Who will find it first?

Kristen Jones says

I loved the Amelia Peabody series, so I tried this one. I do not like Vicky Bliss! Aside from her constant "I'm not being vain, but I'm ridiculously hot" comments, I was SICK TO DEATH with her women's lib rhetoric. I know this was written in the 70's and that was more topical, but really, a women that fixated on what men are, can, or should be doing for her, is not liberated.

Nikki says

I hope this isn't representative of Elizabeth Peters' work, 'cause I was looking forward to reading her stuff, but I felt kinda like I was reading a novelised Scooby Doo episode. I suppose it's not that far from Mary Stewart's work, in a way, but the narration just made it feel cartoonish, more than anything else. And I don't think Mary Stewart ever set anything in a gothic sort of castle with ~mysteriously moving~ suits of armour.

Not to mention her protagonists are usually a lot more likeable and don't waffle on about how smart and beautiful they are so much. Some of the narration was fun -- her description of herself as a "bouncing Brunhild" was a pretty perfect way to say it -- but mostly... nah.

So, yeah, I'm not going to read anything more about Vicky Bliss, even if I might try Amelia Peabody.

Rachel Joy says

What a lovely little mystery book!!

I don't know if Peters was a feminist or not, but her character, Vicky Bliss, is definitely a woman who knows what she wants, isn't the slightest bit afraid to go out and get it, and doesn't let the men in her life tell her what to do or when to do it. I like Vicky!

I've already ordered the next book in the series, so my recommendation goes without saying ;).

Laura Floyd says

So many things about this book bugged me. In fact, I'm struggling to think of what I DID like about this

book. I guess the ambiance was nice. Set in an old castle in Germany, all the crawling about in the ruins and discussion of history. I liked that. But...

The characters were not engaging. Our heroine and narrator, Vicky, was a smart, independent woman of undelicate proportions (her self-description as being a "bouncing Brunhilda" was pretty funny) and competitive spirit. She has declared that she will never marry, but seems to be in some kind of baffling relationship with a fellow professor named Tony. Tony is a total asshat who treats Vicky with disrespect and has an out-of-control ego. Vicky's attitude and actions never make a lot of sense to me. One minute she's cursing Tony and trying to one-up him, the next she is simpering and trying to soothe his ego. The other characters are kind of like white noise - there, but not contributing much.

The mystery was also odd. They were searching for a lost work of art which they happened to read about in a book. Apparently everyone else in the world incidentally read the same book the exact same week because everyone was looking for this thing independently. The art had been lost for 500 years, but this week everyone remembered to look for it.

And the archaeologist in me sobbed at all of their techniques. Trained historians should know better. They're just snatching and grabbing and smashing antiquities right and left. Europeans obviously find the medieval period of little value (the Americans and volunteers were always assigned to the medieval levels on my digs in the Netherlands) but... gah!

And when the heck was this story set, anyway? Telegraphs and kerosene lamps suggest early in the century, but Vicky's wearing pants and working as a professor, so that seems less likely. Germany has zero apparent concern about war, either, which leaves me absolutely lost.

I guess I'll go back to Amelia Peabody.

Jacob Proffitt says

I had a *really* hard time with this novel. The story took *forever* to go anywhere and all of the characters were kind of jerks most of the time. Indeed, I very nearly quit about halfway through as I just didn't *care* about anything—not the characters, not the setting, certainly not the "mystery".

And I never did figure Vicky out, much. She's oddly detached most of the time, but with nearly constant hints that undermine that detachment. She vacillates between coldly logical and strangely sentimental and I kept wanting her to pick one and stick with it, finally. It doesn't help that she has a sense of herself as strictly unfeminine when it's clear that sentiment isn't shared by the men around her. And it *really* doesn't help that she treats sex so offhandedly that she sneaks it into assumptions and asides without actually confirming its presence in her relationship with Tony (except the once, and that rather obliquely).

And Tony is mostly contemptible—as are all the rest of the men in the novel, come to think of it. No wonder Vicky thinks she's unsuitable and doesn't want to ever marry. Looking at her candidates, I'd be refusing matrimony with real bricks delivered at speed, myself.

Which leaves the mystery for interest and *that* didn't actually get started (not really) until well past midway. Sure, we knew from the beginning *what* they were searching for, but there's no plan and no guide and no real clues as to where or how they might find it. They just go into the countryside and start thrashing around. And

they don't even do it *smartly*. Half the time, I wondered if they were seriously so gormless as to include strangers in their investigations or share information so easily with people they barely knew and whose motives were, at best, suspicious (and at worst, all too clearly malevolent).

So it was a frustrating read, for me, that fell most of the time at the two star range. The ending pulled it together, some, but that's still a mighty generous three stars up there. I'm not sure if I'll try the next in the series, but certainly not until I'm in a convivial mood for it...

Algernon says

[7/10]

After three Amelia Peabody Egyptian mysteries, I decided to branch out and try something else by the author. Enters Fraulein Bliss, a contemporary (cca. 1973) American art historian, feminist alter ego of Indiana Jones, hunting for lost treasures among the tombs of the past. **Borrower of the Night** takes her to Bavaria and a 16 Century castle turned into a hotel, where a priceless wood sculpture from the time of the Reformation may be hidden.

There are some parallels that can be drawn between Vicky Bliss and Amelia Peabody - both strong, opinionated women, impulsive and careless of the dangers inherent to their career paths. At the moment I prefer Amelia, probably because I spent more time in her company. Vicky Bliss is supposed to be of MidWestern (Ohio?) origins, but I found her voice generic and less convincing than her Brit counterpart. She's also supposed to be super-smart, but I found her sometimes inconsistent in her feminist/ rationalist attitudes, engaging from time to time in hysterics and whimpering. I loved though her self deprecating presentation as a 6 foot tall cross between a Playboy bunny and a Scandinavian Valkyrie, the very antithesis of what she considers the standard romance novel heroine:

The heroine of my adolescent daydreams had a heart-shaped face framed in clouds of smoky black hair. She was a tiny creature with an ivory complexion and a rosebud mouth. When she was enfolded in the hero's brawny arms, her head only reached as high as his heart.

I found the passage particularly hilarious as it is an almost perfect description of Skye O'Malley - the annoying perfect woman whose bodice gets frequently ripped in Bertrice Small series. To continue the feminist dismissal of these romantic cliches, Vicky likes men, but doesn't see the point of marrying them. Her views are very clear on the subject, and expressed forcibly when she refutes her boyfriend's Tony proposal:

Any man with a grain of sense knows that marriage is the only way, these days, to acquire a full-time maid who works twenty-five hours a day, with no time off and no pay except room and board.

After an introductory segment in the US, the chase moves to Rothenburg in Germany, a fitting background to a story that relies heavily on ruined castles, dark alleys, ancient cemeteries, secret passages through walls, moldy dungeons and even what appears to be ghosts and other supernatural manifestations. Here's how Vicky describes the city:

Rothenburg is the quintesence of Romance - not the watered down love stories that pass under the name today, but Romance in the old sense - masked desperadoes lurking in the shadow of a carved archway, to intercept the Duke before he can reach his lady love; conspirators gathered in a raftered tavern room,

plotting to restore the Rightful Heir; Cyrano and D'Artagnan, striding out with clanking swords to defend the Honour of the Queen.

The prize is a shrine sculpted by Riemenschneider (he's real, I checked, and his art is superb), and the key to unlocking the mystery requires the solution to a 600 years old murder. Murder is also afoot in the present times, with someone trying to stop the investigation by any means. I didn't find the plot particularly interesting, I believe it was more of an excuse for Vicky and her friends to go out every night in spooky locations and get into all sorts of mishaps and misunderstandings. The comedy is balanced with some good and informative passages about the Reformation period. One character quotes Montaigne in a discussion about Church abuses and persecutions ("It is setting a high value upon our opinions to roast men alive on account of them"). In another place, Vicky explains her interest in the past:

In recent years, students have done a lot of complaining about 'relevance'. No one can quarrel with the basic idea: that education should have something to do with real life and its problems. The trouble comes when you try to define the word. What is relevant? Not history, according to the more radical critics. Who cares what happened in ancient Babylon or medieval England? It's now that counts.

They couldn't be more wrong. Everything has happened before - not once, but over and over again. We may not be able to solve our problems through what are pompously called 'the lessons of history', but at least we should be able to recognize the issues and perhaps avoid some of the solutions that have failed in the past. We can take heart in our own dilemma by realizing that other people in other times have survived worse.

In conclusion, while the book has a general lightweight feel of a 1940's screwball comedy, it also has good research of the subject matter, and a likable protagonist that will probably tempt me to come back to the series.

C. says

I've enjoyed my first encounter with **Elizabeth Peters**. The funny thing is, I collected a great deal of it a long time ago. I sifted through my collection only recently, determining which series belonged together and other works. It is worth the wait and I am eager to delve into her works much more. It took thinking to decide whether or not I'd dole 4 stars. There are two matters that resulted in 3 stars, with high praise.

'Dr. Vicky Bliss' self-deprecates being tall and robust but is confident in her skin. Most attractive is high intellect and accomplished academia; while watching pennies the same as most of us. She is someone to admire. I associate especially with her as a linguist but she perches on no pedestal above the average person. Paired with adoring her protagonist, I shouldn't be surprised by how taken I am with **Elizabeth's** writing ability. This novel is about a quest for treasure in a medieval German town, Rothenburg but acquainting Vicky and 'Tony' is given time to simmer. I dislike *Tony*. I found it worthwhile to know *Vicky* intimately, along with sculptor '*Tilman Riemenschneider*' and castle '*Schloss Drachenstein*'. Readers must understand the impact of the work of art *Vicky* is investigating.

My most salient critique is the location of something important. After exhausting research and blind meandering, it was nonsense that the most utterly accessible location wasn't examined first. That made me exclaim "Come on"! There, I deducted a star. I additionally found getting to Rothenburg and initiating any searches, took too long to begin. I maintain my praise about being well coached in history but excess lag did result because treasure-hunting and major discoveries were far too staggered, even with *Vicky* in Rothenburg. There should have been more reverence about secret passageways too.

Susen liest says

Hierbei handelt es sich um den ersten Band der Vicky-Bliss-Reihe, die wahrscheinlich unbekannteste Reihe von Elizabeth Peters. Meine Lieblinge sind tatsächlich auch die Reihen um Amelia Peabody und Jacqueline Kirby, aber der Charme der Autorin ist auch bei Vicky zu finden.

Im ersten Band lernt man die amerikanische Historikerin Vicky Bliss und ihren etwas eigenwilligen Charakter kennen. Sie gerät mit ihrem Freund Tony in einen Streit um die Frage, wer von ihnen schlauer ist, denn er will sie heiraten und vermutet, dass sie nur nicht ja sagt, weil er ihr noch beweisen muss, dass er sie dominieren kann. Sie hält tatsächlich wenig von der Idee, weil sie vermutet, er möchte nur ein schlaues Hausmütterchen (60er-70er Jahre) und lässt sich daher auf den Wettstreit ein. Allerdings geht sie davon aus, dass sie ihn übertrumpfen wird. Als bald stoßen sie auf einige Briefe aus der Zeit der Bauernkriege und einen geheimnisvollen verschollenen Schrein von Tilman Riemenschneider und reisen nach Deutschland auf Burg Drachenstein. Die von und zu Drachensteins sollen den Schrein damals in Auftrag gegeben haben und so verbringen Vicky, Tony und einige andere dubiose Gestalten (zufällig alle zur selben Zeit) einige Tage auf der zum Hotel umgebauten Burg Drachenstein.

Wie in allen Romanen von Elizabeth Peters geht es um eine starke, eigenwillige Frau, die einen Kriminalfall löst. Hierbei sogar einen doppelten, denn sowohl damals, als auch in der Gegenwart fand ein Verbrechen statt. Da in dem Schrein drei wertvolle Edelsteine eingefasst sind, ist er nach wie vor von unabschätzbarem Wert und die Suche wird gefährlich.

Mir hat das Setting auch Burg Drachenstein sehr gut gefallen, denn ein altes Gemäuer, das zum Hotel umgebaut wird, birgt nicht wenig Romantik und die Suche in den finsternen Geheimgängen der Burg ist doch recht abenteuerlich. Daher habe ich den ersten Band sehr gern gelesen – zum zweiten Mal übrigens, wie auch die weiteren Bände der Reihe. Dennoch muss ich nach wie vor sagen, dass „Der geheimnisvolle Schrein“ nicht nur zu den etwas älteren Werken zählt und daher etwas antiquiert erscheint, sondern auch stilistisch Verbesserungswürdig ist. Auch die Charaktere sind definitiv ausbaufähig. Alles in allem für Liebhaber der Autorin ein Muss, allerdings keine Empfehlung als Einstiegsband. Da würde ich eher die Romane rund um Amalia Peabody empfehlen ;)

Erin ? *Proud Book Hoarder* says

Here it is, finally my first Vicki Bliss mystery. The story is a good one, even if not terribly interesting. Based on other works from Michaels and Peters, this is just an average effort. It could be because she was finding her grounding with new characters, but something about it didn't hook me as much as it should have. I can't help but feel that Peters couldn't think of enough story to write this one, not sure where she wanted to go, mainly drawn to characters she wished to invent. I'm sure that the follow-ups are better, and Vicki does seem a great character to follow the adventures of.

Being only 243 pages, it's short and sweet, starting with a challenge between Vicki and new boyfriend Tony, leading quickly afterward to an old castle itching for exploration. Vicki's goal is to find an old art piece before Tony and their accompanying 'friend' George, figuring it's snugly secured somewhere on the grounds because of an assumption from an old book. The chances of that, by the way, was a far-fetched idea to begin the story on.

The story would be a great mystery, yet turns out merely good simply because not enough detail filled out

243 pages. The story was a very simple one that was forced to slowly drag on because not enough substance was held. Of course there were minor revelations that turned thought processes around and inside out, but nothing staggering. Pacing was very slow, as is trademark Peters, but without the depth stories need to make slow pacing successful.

Characters were fun, especially Vicki and Tony. Her personality was a trademark type, a strong heroine with an intelligent mind, independent backbone, and curious disposition. The funniest thing about her were her hysterical observations regarding Tony, with him trying to look cocky or self-assured. She portrays him as so boyish I actually laughed out loud on more than one occasion. George was a fun one, too, with dialogue that ribbed Tony's ego. The cute triple IS addictive to read about, and would have really shone if given the right story.

One thing bugging me, though, is Vicki's lack of emotion with romance. It's hinted she may feel mere rejection because of Tony, George, and every other male drooling at another female character, but when she believes they may have no love for her anymore, she doesn't seem to mind. Who wouldn't? Writing in whatever pseudonym she chooses, Peters always seemed to have a weird way to write about love, relationships, and romances. Here that's almost taken overboard with the strange numbness Vicki shows. I know she's an independent woman who needs no one but herself, but she shouldn't be portrayed as robotic with love either. I was even surprised to find if anyone held romantic feelings and the same urges for marriage as before toward Vicki, as they showed so little of the usual relationship/crush antics over the course of the story.

Nothing is urgent until perhaps the end climax, but even that lacks a certain desperation usually found in intriguing stories. Rich with history, people into the castle setting will be in for a nice surprise as the couple wanders each night in search of an old legend that may not even be true. People who love mysteries but who are a virgin to Peters may be turned off by the lack of intensity, while cozy fans that are Elizabeth Peter regulars will likely feel right at home.

Ana T. says

I've heard so much about this Vicky Bliss series that when I finally had the chance to pick it up I was almost afraid that my expectations would be too high and I would be disappointed. I'm happy to say that I wasn't. It was a fun, cosy, gothic read, just the kind you pick up when you need a comfort read. The book has very funny quotes as it is written in the first person and Vicky has the kind of self deprecating humour that appeals to me.

Vicky Bliss is an Art Historian; when the story opens she and her boyfriend Tony discover the possible location of an important artistic piece - a shrine - and they become competitors, both setting off for Germany to find it. As soon as they arrive they find that they are not the only ones looking for it, that their chosen place of stay is a gothic castle complete with ghosts and some pretty disagreeable characters and that to find the shrine they have first to solve an old mystery dating back to the 16th century.

However interesting I think it lacked a bit more character development and a better expression of Vicky and Tony's relationship. A friend has already mentioned that this is more of a prequel to the series so that won't bother me in future books. Other than that I have no real complaints, it's the perfect light mystery to read on

a rainy afternoon and close with a satisfied sigh.

Grade: 4/5

Angie says

I've been hearing about Elizabeth Peters' Vicky Bliss and Amelia Peabody books for quite awhile now and for some reason just haven't found my way to reading any of them until now. I noticed these re-issues of the Vicky Bliss series and decided to pick up the first one and see.

Vicky is an art historian with a delightful sense of humor and a certain dry acceptance of her statuesque stature and tendency to intimidate those around her. When we first meet Vicky, she is teaching at a college in the Midwest and maintaining a sort of on-again off-again relationship with her colleague Tony Lawrence. Tony is a hapless, hopeless, skinny version of Vicky who, failing to get her to marry him, decides he'll settle for besting her professionally. Ha. The two soon find themselves racing each other to Germany in search of a medieval artifact presumed missing for centuries.

Here's the thing. I liked Vicky and Tony right off the bat. I liked the whole premise for the story. It seemed a recipe for mad medieval excitement. But once they got to Germany, things seemed to slow down for me. I'm not sure why. Blankenhagen was cool. Schmidt was intriguing. But Tony began to pall quickly and, after one too many of his petty outbursts, I just wanted Vicky to solve the dang mystery and leave these jokers in the dust. Which I'm assuming she does in the future. In fact, I'm kind of getting the feeling that I'll enjoy the rest of the books in the series more than this one. And I hear tell of someone named Smythe. He is someone I would enjoy meeting, no? So for all of you Vicky fans and aficionados out there, tell me what to do. Was my reaction to this one just a fluke? Should I get the next one and give it a try and see? I'm in need of your advice. Cause I really wanted to like this series.
