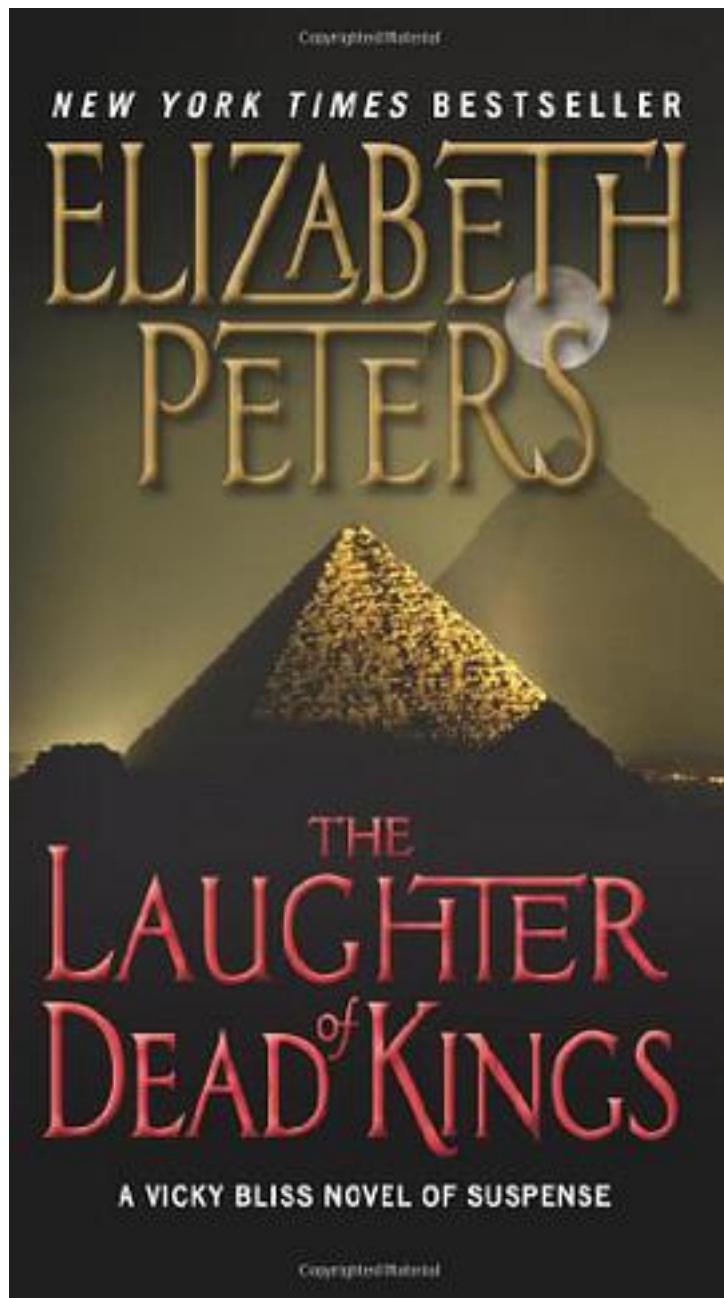


The Laughter of Dead Kings



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For the first time in more than a decade, "New York Times" bestselling Grand Master Elizabeth Peters brings beautiful, brainy Vicky Bliss back into the spotlight for one last investigation. But this time the peerless art historian and sleuth will be detecting in Amelia Peabody territory, searching for solutions to more than one heinous offense in the ever-shifting sands of Egypt's mysterious Valley of the Kings. Who stole one of Egypt's most priceless treasures? That is the question that haunts the authorities after a distinguished British gentleman with an upper-crust accent cons his way past a security guard and escapes into the desert carrying a world-famous, one-of-a-kind historic relic. But the Egyptian authorities and Interpol believe they know the identity of the culprit. The brazen crime bears all the earmarks of the work of one "Sir John Smythe," the suave and dangerously charming international art thief who is, in fact, John Tregarth, the longtime significant other of Vicky Bliss. But John swears he is retired--not to mention innocent--and he vows to clear his name by hunting down the true criminal. Vicky's faith in her man's integrity leaves her no choice but to take a hiatus from her position at a leading Munich museum and set out for the Middle East. Vicky's employer, the eminent Herr Doktor Anton Z. Schmidt, rotund gourmand and insatiable adventurer, decides to join the entourage. But dark days and myriad dangers await them in this land of intriguing antiquity. Each uncovered clue seems to raise even more questions for the intrepid Vicky--the most troubling being, Where is John going during his increasingly frequent and unexplained absences? And the stakes are elevated considerably when a ransom note arrives accompanied by a grisly memento intended to speed up negotiations--because now it appears that murder most foul has been added to the equation.

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