



The Crocodile Makes No Sound

N. L. Holmes

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The Crocodile Makes No Sound is a slow-burning historical mystery set in the beautiful, dangerous world of ancient Egypt.

N. L. Holmes blends historical figures with fictional intrigue in her mystery novel *The Crocodile Makes No Sound*.

Lord Hani is a diplomat whose standing in the eyes of the pharaoh has recently been tested. His position becomes even more precarious after two earth-shaking events: his rebellious brother-in-law's disappearance, and a scandalous secret confessed to him by the pharaoh's beloved wife. As Hani is dragged deeper into the quagmire of royal plotting and scheming, he struggles to toe the political line. If he fails, his family may fall prey to those who will stop at nothing to protect their own interests.

This book is part of a series, but it can be read as a standalone. Its action is set during a contentious time in Egyptian history, when changes in regime and state religion led to widespread unemployment, disrepair, and disaffection. Abandoned houses stand where important priests and vassals once lived, and angry people use the slightest provocation as an excuse to take out their frustrations on others. This is a perfect setting for a mystery series.

While in the course of the story, information is sometimes repeated unnecessarily, most of the story telling is smooth. The book's large cast includes ruthless royals, defiant priests, and irresponsible relatives, each with their own motivations and goals. Among the most interesting characters are Neferet, Hani's teenage daughter, whose earnest desire to be a physician is balanced by her impetuous enthusiasm; and Kha-em-sekhem, a talented sculptor whose eye for the ladies may destroy more than just his marriage. In moments of levity, Hani and his family bond in entertaining ways that show that people, no matter the time period they live in, are still people.

A strong sense of place is established as Hani's investigation exposes him to the full spectrum of Egyptian society, from the grandest private gardens to the homiest beer houses. Holiday celebrations and public discontent are integrated well into the atmosphere. Details, as of the foods that Hani buys from street vendors and the inexplicable neatness of his friend Ptah-mes's clothing, bring the ancient world to life.

Lord Hani's thought processes aren't always shared, and so some major revelations seem to come out of nowhere. Discoveries made along the way have huge implications for Egypt's future, suggesting that Hani might play a bigger role in that future than he ever imagined. His investigation and personal journey are fascinating.

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EILEEN GONZALEZ (September 9, 2020)

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