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# Mother Without a Mask

*Patricia Holton*

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**Patricia Holton : Mother Without a Mask** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mother Without a Mask:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. it was fineBy monica de moura e albuquerqueIt is rather more "used" than "in perfect conditions" but its fine! :) I will start reading it this week.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A window in time.By DubaiReaderI originally read this in 2001 and gave it just two stars. I found it boring, and only the details of the wedding really interested me. I recently re-read it, reluctantly, for a book group, and I was surprised to discover a fascinating account of a bye-gone era.Patricia Holton's husband had business with the United Arab Emirates in the 1970s. As a result of this, Patricia agrees to host the two younger sons of an Emirati Sheikh, while they do their university courses in the UK. She helps them to acclimatise to life in England and is curious about the country they have left. Over many breakfasts and suppers, they teach each other and compare cultural differences.Eventually Patricia, now known as Mrs Tea Cup by the boys, is invited to Al Ain, an oasis area of Abu Dhabi, as guest to the family. She begins her visits in a hotel, but as they all get to know each other better, she is invited to their homes, and finally absorbed into the family, particularly by the women.The book provides a wonderful cultural window into a time that is now largely passed. These women were the last of a generation that has since been swamped by oil wealth and tourism. Ms Holton is sad to see this era pass, but rather repetitive with her comments to this effect. However, her observations of family life do provide a rare insight into the traditions of the modern day Emiratis.I originally came to the Emirates in 1984 and I remember the old Buraimi part of Al Ain; now fenced off from the Emirates as it is actually part of Oman. Old houses can still be found from this time and it is fascinating to

imagine how the much simpler life of these people went on in those, now crumbling, houses. Apart from the frequent comments bemoaning the end of an era, my other criticism would be a feeling that this is a slightly sanitised version. I sense that the author is being very respectful to her hosts and only writing what they wish her to. Strangely, while many of the women are named, I can't think of a time when the two boys or their father, are actually called by their names, they are always known as The Second Son, The Youngest Son and The Sheikh. This is well worth reading if you are living in the UAE and has also been enjoyed by several of our visitors to the area. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An Incredible Read By Sandra Frei I just finished reading my copy of *Mother Without A Mask* not more than 10 minutes ago. I picked up the book for something to read at one of the hotels in Dubai and little did I know what an incredible treasure I had stumbled across. I was absolutely captivated by Patricia's descriptions of her life with her Arab family. Their homes, their meals, their weddings, their life style in general. And I am in awe of her ability to blend with her extended family and yet still keep her individuality. Mrs. Tea Cup had such an incredibly open mind and open heart as she experienced life in a world so foreign to us westerner's. I had the opportunity to spend 4 months working in the middle east this year. My only regret, with regard to this book, is that I did not find it and read it at the start of my work term in the Middle East. There were so many gems of knowledge in Patricia's writings that I could have benefitted from. And I have so many questions that I would love to discuss with my middle eastern co-workers who were always eager to share information about their way of life. I know I will read this book many many more times and it will be one of my most treasured pieces of literature. Thank you, Mrs. Tea Cup, for the dedication and determination that it took to write this book and for educating us on a world that is so tragically misunderstood.

A Western woman's account of her Arab family provides unique insights into the social and cultural life of the Gulf in the 1970s, and particularly of the dilemmas of westernization facing young people. When Patricia Holton welcomed the two sons of a Gulf Sheikh with whom her husband worked into her home, little did she know that she was building a bridge between two worlds. Over the following years Patricia travelled frequently to their homeland, enjoying their family's hospitality in the sophisticated townhouses and hotels brought by the oil rush to Abu Dhabi, as well as the traditional desert encampments. She became, to the Sheikha, Um Yusef (mother of Joseph) and, to the sons, Mrs. Tea Cup. She witnessed a world where ancient and modern were becoming entwined for the first time, where the waves are haunted by djinn spirits but camels have been replaced by Mercedes.