

Don't Play with The Pyramid

The radiance had faded from the pyramid. For some thirty seconds Natalie stood staring open-mouthed at the 15cms high, jet-black object. The tuning fork lay on the carpet where it had fallen from her hand. Warily she reached out to touch the pyramid. Unexpectedly it was pleasantly warm at the tip where the glow had been. She half closed her eyes as, once again, her fingers caressed its surface — a surface polished to an almost supernaturally silky smoothness by the hands of an ancient craftsman. It had, in fact, been the sensuous feel rather than the look of the pyramid that had seduced her into stealing it two years before.

As a first-year archaeology student she had had the luck to be invited join the famous Professor Dartmann on a dig in southern Egypt. Dartmann had uncovered a complex burial site to the west of Karnak. Natalie, an attractive redhead, had been the one to stumble across the concealed entrance to the tomb of the legendary Queen Phatatiki. All alone, she had been the first to enter the great burial chamber — the first to see the beautifully-preserved hieroglyphics, the dazzling gold ornaments, the great marble sarcophagus of the queen — and the miniature black pyramid that stood at its head.

The team's excitement had been intense. And, in their eagerness to raise the lid of the sarcophagus, no-one had noticed the small clean square on its dust-laden surface.

With the heavy object in her rucksack, Natalie had passed through the Johannesburg customs without challenge.

For some two years she had kept the pyramid hidden in a cupboard — until, one day, she had noticed some paper clips clinging to its surface. Unable to contain her curiosity she had shown it to her fiancé, George, a third-year geology student.

"I think I know what it's made of," he'd said. "But let me take it up to the lab at varsity."

Next day he was back with the pyramid.

"Just as I thought, it's made of magnetite, a form of iron oxide. Where did you get it?"

Natalie had hesitated. "Remember my trip to Egypt?"

George had listened to the whole story.

"Look," he'd said, "let me do some research on the Internet for you. It's probably worth a fortune. So, not a word to a soul."

But, having broken the story, Natalie could not resist showing the pyramid to her friend, Alexia — a woman deeply immersed in the esoteric practices of the "New Age". She was a practitioner of the ancient art of Fenshui.

"My goodness, what a beauty," Alexia had exclaimed. "And its magnetic you say." Instinctively her fingers had touched the large blue crystal that she wore permanently at her throat to protect her from the negative vibrations emitted by her microwave, her TV and anyone she did not like.

"You do know, don't you, that pyramids have magical properties. Aubrey and I keep one under our bed. It has utterly transformed our sex life. He keeps his razor blades under another one in the bathroom. He swears it keeps them sharp for ages."

She paused for breath.

"But where on earth did you get it?"

Natalie had adroitly parried the question by asking one of her own.

"Will it make my roses grow?"

"Sure will," said Alexia. "But it must be aligned correctly. Which is where my Fenshui training can help you."

Natalie had led her out into the tiny garden that adjoined her granny flat. The roses did indeed look sorry for themselves.

From her handbag Alexia had produced a compass and a small silver-bobbed pendulum in a leather case. After much trial and error, she had sited the pyramid in the dry bowl of a bird bath. Shortly after Alexia left, the phone had rung. It was an excited George.

"Listen, Darling, I'm on to something. I've found an article called "The Legend of Queen Phatatiki and the Black Pyramid". The story goes back to the third millennium BC. The queen was given the pyramid by a famous necromancer in gratitude for saving his son from execution. The pyramid, it seems, had the remarkable property of being able to duplicate precious stones placed in its vicinity. The queen is said to have become fabulously wealthy. But her enjoyment was short lived. She was drowned a year later in a sudden Nile flood. The pyramid was buried with her."

That night Natalie had taken her engagement ring into the garden and placed it on the tip of the pyramid.

She was back in the garden at dawn. The ring was still there, but her solitaire diamond remained solitaire. There was no change in the roses either.

"Not much magic there," she had thought.

A few afternoons later, Johannesburg had been visited by a particularly violent version of its frequent electric storms. Natalie had sat in her storm-gloomed lounge counting the seconds between the flashes and the subsequent thunder. Three seconds, she knew, meant the strike was a kilometre away. The gaps got shorter and shorter until there arrived, simultaneously, a blinding flash and a thunder crack that set her ears ringing. She had rushed to the window to see that the bird bath had been split asunder and that the pyramid was lying in the smoking rubble. Just as she had gone out to retrieve it, a few mothball-sized hailstones precluded a hissing bombardment that had stripped every petal from her roses.

The pyramid was warm. She had placed it on top of her piano next to a slim mahogany case that contained a tuning fork. On an irrational impulse she had extracted the instrument, struck the tines sharply on the pyramid and then pressed the fork against its apex. The note that rang out seemed louder and purer than usual. But something much more remarkable had then occurred. The tip of the pyramid had begun to glow with a lovely violet light. In her astonishment Natalie had dropped the fork which clattered over the keyboard to the carpet. The glow had slowly faded.

Now, as her fingers caressed the pyramid's surface, she speculated, "Could it be some sort of electrical effect brought on by the lightning?"

The next afternoon, Friday, she opened the door to her sister who had brought her six-year-old son, Timothy, to stay the weekend with his aunt.

"Hi, Timmy," said Natalie. Then, noticing the large plastic bag clutched in his arms: "What have you got there?"

"It's my goldfish," said Timothy.

"I hope you don't mind," said his mother. "He wouldn't leave home without it."

"Not at all," said Natalie placing the fishbowl on the piano. "What a pretty little fish." The bowl was inches away from the pyramid.

Next morning there were two fishes in the bowl.

Natalie looked thoughtfully at the boy. "That was a clever trick to play on your Auntie. Now tell me how you did it."

But Timothy simply looked baffled. Later she phoned George, who was in Durban on business, and told him about the strange happenings. He suggested that perhaps the

lightning had indeed activated the pyramid's legendary powers.

"Let's put it to the test," he said. So Natalie placed the pyramid in the centre of the yellow wood dining table that she had inherited from her grandmother together with six handsome old Cape Riempe chairs. She 'energised' the pyramid with the tuning fork — again producing the violet glow. Then, following George's suggestion, she put an egg next to it and went to bed.

Next morning, the egg was still there. Alone. While she was staring at it in some disappointment she picked up something in her peripheral vision. Something very odd indeed. There were no longer six Riempe chairs round the table. There were seven!

She picked up the phone to call George. Then slowly put it down as she recalled her earlier conversation with Alexia. A mischievous smile lit up her face. Recently, and for the first time, she had invited George to sleep with her. And it was to be that very night. She took the pyramid through to the bedroom where she placed it carefully under the centre of the bed.

At 6pm the phone rang. It was George to say that he would have to miss the last plane out of Durban. "Sorry, Darling, I'm as disappointed as you are. Let's set it up for tomorrow."

That night Natalie slept fitfully. She had a vivid dream that she was walking around the flat in the dark. When she awoke at dawn, she saw that the bedclothes were badly rumped. Yawning, she walked through to the kitchenette.

Where she got a shock.

In front of the window, with her back to Natalie, stood a woman. She had red hair. She was wearing a blue negligee, identical to Natalie's. She turned round. Natalie gasped. She felt she was looking into a mirror. The woman held the pyramid in her hands. It glowed brightly. For perhaps five seconds they stared at each other. Then the woman raised the pyramid high above her head and brought it savagely down on Natalie's skull.

Queen Phatatiki relaxed back into the passenger seat of her red Lamborghini, her red hair fluttering in the slipstream. She was happy with her curvaceous new body. She was entranced with her green eyes and red locks. Her new brain held all the memories and skills she needed to slot into this dazzling world. She'd had little trouble getting rid of the corpse. After all who would look for it? George had been amusing for a few weeks. But, with her fast growing wealth, she had soon upgraded to the gorgeous hunk of a chauffeur sitting next to her. They were on their way to the gaming tables at Sun City. The pyramid was tucked away behind her seat. She turned languidly to the hunk.

"Andre, I didn't buy this machine to tootle along at a hundred and forty. Put your foot down. There's a good boy."

Andre obliged and soon they were flying along at nearly 200 kms per hour. The driver of the big articulated truck, en route to Johannesburg, had not slept for twenty-six hours. The last thing he saw before he nodded off was a fast-growing red dot on the road ahead.

Retrieving the bodies from the wreck was a gruesome task. The bloodied Lamborghini, flattened beyond recognition, was taken to a car wrecker in Johannesburg where it was dumped onto a pile of shattered vehicles.

A month later Sergeant van Wyk and Constable Parker were driving past the car dump on their daily patrol.

"Sergeant," said Parker, looking at the pile of wrecks, "is it my imagination or is that dump growing at a hell of a rate?"

Anonymous