

THE PYRAMID PRANK

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

HEMIUNU	A rebellious fraternity prankster
RASHAKEN	A dedicated student
HERALD	Single line, not on stage
KHUFU	An old Pharaoh, enthusiastically full of himself

SETTING

A study hall in ancient Egypt.

SCENE

(It is a generally empty room, but with hints of Egyptian culture. Rashaken is sitting at a table, studying a scroll. Hemiunu comes sauntering in, cocky.)

HEMIUNU

What's shakin', Rashaken?

RASHAKEN

Studying. You remember what that is, right?

HEMIUNU

I seem to recall someone saying something about it, but...

RASHAKEN

I can't believe you haven't already been expelled.

HEMIUNU

Eh, I know how to work people.

RASHAKEN

That, or maybe if you had a *real* major—

HEMIUNU

Art History's a real major—

RASHAKEN

Art History is you punishing your dad for not buying you your own pleasure barge. If you had a real major—

HEMIUNU

Like Architecture...

RASHAKEN

—like Architecture—

HEMIUNU

Architecture's *boring*. I don't know how you stay awake during those classes. I'd kill myself if I had to do that crap all day. It all basically comes down to "center of granularity" and stacking blocks so that—

RASHAKEN

Gravity. Center of gravity. And there's a lot more to it. Like aesthetics and—

(Hemiunu pretends to have fallen asleep, snoring loudly.)

You're such an ass.

HEMIUNU

The whole thing's a game, you know. You just have to know how to work the system.

RASHAKEN

Not to some of us. *Some* of us have to study.

HEMIUNU

All work and no play makes for a very dull Pharaoh, my friend.

RASHAKEN

Hemi, if you don't mind, I really need to...

HEMIUNU

Okay. You study. I'll go.

(Hemiunu very slowly starts to meander away, but clearly with no intention of leaving. Rashaken goes back to the scroll, but then a moment later looks back at Hemiunu, who looks back at him with a sly grin. Finally, Rashaken pushes the scroll away.)

RASHAKEN

Okay. What?

HEMIUNU

Nothing.

RASHAKEN

What have you done?

HEMIUNU

What do you mean?

RASHAKEN

I know that self-satisfied smirk. And the way you swaggered in here...

HEMIUNU

Me? Little old m— Yeah, okay. I was swaggering a bit.

RASHAKEN

Hemi—

(Hemiunu rushes over to Rashaken in excited conspiracy.)

HEMIUNU

You are not going to believe the prank I just pulled!

RASHAKEN

Hemi...

HEMIUNU

It was *awesome!!!*

RASHAKEN

What did you do?

HEMIUNU

Okay. Okay, now picture this. You know how Khufu's had Markata building this huge burial shrine for him, right?

RASHAKEN

Dude, don't screw with the Pharaoh's stuff. That's how people get dissected.

HEMIUNU

But you know the shrine, right?

RASHAKEN

Everyone in Egypt knows the shrine, Hemiunu.

HEMIUNU

Fine. If you don't want to know...

(He starts to meander away.)

RASHAKEN

(With a deep sigh...)

Alright, what? What'd you do?

HEMIUNU

(Right back to excited...)

So last night, me and the boys went—

RASHAKEN

What boys?

HEMIUNU

Basically the whole fraternity. We broke into the Hebrew slave camps and—

RASHAKEN

Oh Ra. You are going to get into *so* much trouble, Hemi.

HEMIUNU

Oh no no. That's nothing. So we broke into the camps and borrowed a few thousand slaves.

RASHAKEN

Borrowed.

HEMIUNU

(Indignant)

We gave 'em back! Anyway, we borrowed these slaves—

RASHAKEN

I don't want to know. I don't... want... to know.

HEMIUNU

You really do.

RASHAKEN

I really don't. Plausible deniability.

HEMIUNU

I mean, you're gonna find out about it anyway. Everyone's going to be talking about it for years to come. I'm telling you, this is the most awesome prank in the history of Egypt. But, if you really don't...

(Hemiunu starts to meander off again, but Rashaken's arm shoots out and pulls him back.)

RASHAKEN

What?

HEMIUNU

I knew you did. Okay, so we all cameled over to Giza. Now, you know they've got the whole Sphinx Restoration effort going on, where they want to fix the nose that Chi Alpha Zeta broke off last year...

RASHAKEN

I thought they built a huge wall around that to keep people out.

HEMIUNU

They were going to. They took so long getting the materials that they lost the work force to the Obelisks for Osiris project. All they have right now is a big pile of rocks. Or... (*whispers conspiratorially*) should I say, *had*.

RASHAKEN

Oh my Ra. What did you do?

HEMIUNU

Guess!

RASHAKEN

What?

HEMIUNU

Guess!

RASHAKEN

I can't guess. Just tell me!

HEMIUNU

Oh, man. This is so great. We took all the rocks and stuff, and... (*unable to contain himself...*) I'm telling you, Rashaken, this is so damn funny...

RASHAKEN

Hemi! Spit it out. I have to get back to studying before finals are over.

HEMIUNU

Okay, okay. So we took the rocks, and hauled them over to Khufu's burial shrine, and... You're gonna love this. We stacked the blocks so that... this is so great! We stacked 'em up and covered...

RASHAKEN

Hemi... Please tell me you didn't...

HEMIUNU

Oh yeah! We did.

RASHAKEN

Oh no.

HEMIUNU

Covered the whole damn thing! It's freaking fantastic!

RASHAKEN

You're dead, Hemi. The Pharaoh's gonna—

HEMIUNU

You can't see it at all. The gold statues, the stained glass windows, the whole open-air atrium... all covered up in this gaudy pyramid of—

(Horns blow a series of regal notes. The boys stare at each other, their attitudes suddenly sober with fear.)

HERALD (OFF)

Make way! Make way for the holiest of Pharaohs, the divine Khufu!

HEMIUNU AND RASHAKEN

Ohhh shit.

(Khufu enters.)

KHUFU

Which of you is the boy Hemiunu?

RASHAKEN

(Whispering)

You are *so* dissected...

KHUFU

Well?

(Hemiunu slowly raises a shaking hand.)

You are the boy who architected this design to cover my beautiful holy burial shrine in a pyramid of stone?

(Hemiunu looks over at Rashaken, who shrugs and shakes his head to say “I don’t know how you can get out of this”.)

KHUFU (CONT)

Well?

HEMIUNU

(In a shaking voice...)

Yes, mighty Pharaoh. I am the one responsible. *(And then in an adrenaline rush, the words start pouring out...)* But you need to understand that I meant noth—

KHUFU

Well, I love it!!

HEMIUNU

—ing disrespectful or in any way... What?

KHUFU

Brilliant. Absolutely brilliant! Protecting the shrine from the elements, big enough to be seen from space, for Ra’s sake. And the measurements! So precise, so ingenious.

HEMIUNU

What?

KHUFU

Why, it’s the most glorious shrine in the history of Egypt. In the history of the world!

HEMIUNU

It is? I mean, of course it is.

KHUFU

This is going to set a trend, I tell you!

HEMIUNU

It is?

KHUFU

Most definitely. Everyone’s going to want one. We’ve already had requests from three temples and a convenience store. This is going to big!

HEMIUNU

Great. Th-that’s... that’s great.

KHUFU

The Chinese are going shit their komonos when they see this!

(Beat...)

RASHAKEN

It's the Japanese who wear—

(Hemiunu makes a “shut up”, hand slicing across the throat motion just as Khufu turns on him.)

KHUFU

What?

RASHAKEN

Nothing. Th-the Japanese wear nothing.

KHUFU

Don't be a simpleton. The Japanese don't walk around *all* the time.

RASHAKEN

Of course, your—

KHUFU

Anyway, as I was saying, this magnificent structure is going to reshape the meaning of architecture around the world. And you, Hemiunu, you will be my lead architect.

HEMIUNU

What!?!

KHUFU

I want at least two more great pyramids like this one by the end of decade. Both in Giza. Make it kind of a plateau of pyramids, you know? Something proud, but cost-effective.

(Khufu puts his arm around Hemiunu, and starts to lead him out.)

HEMIUNU

B-but I hate archit—

KHUFU

I'm thinking maybe something with a celestial twist. Perhaps a nice puzzle for future anthropologists to scratch their heads over, you know what I mean?

*(Rashaken just watches, dumbfounded, as they exit.
Lights out.)*