



## Scroll of Saqqara

*Pauline Gedge*

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## **Scroll of Saqqara** Pauline Gedge

Prince Khaemwaset is a powerful man. The son of Ramses II and a revered physician, his wisdom is respected throughout Egypt. But Khaemwaset harbours a strong and secret desire—to find the mysterious Scroll of Thoth and receive the power to raise the dead. When Khaemwaset hears of the discovery of a hidden tomb on the plain of Saqqara, he is quick to break its seal and take its secrets—secrets that he soon learns he should never have disturbed.

Richly detailed with the exotic realities of Ancient Egypt, *Scroll of Saqqara* is a compelling tale of power, lust, and obsession.

## **Scroll of Saqqara Details**

Date : Published 1991 by Penguin Books (first published 1990)

ISBN : 9780140143485

Author : Pauline Gedge

Format : Paperback 460 pages

Genre : Historical, Northern Africa, Egypt, Fiction, Literature, Ancient

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# From Reader Review Scroll of Saqqara for online ebook

## Rubab Mirza says

An amazing book. It makes the past come vividly to life. Pauline Gedge has outdone herself.

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## Dee Robb says

This is my least favorite Gedge novel. The first half of the book was fantastic, but I could hardly get through the second. I love her historical works, but this one was far too removed from her other works for me. I just didn't enjoy the 'magic' of the story.

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## Lisa says

My second attempt at reading one of Gedge's novels, and much more satisfactory. For starters, I love the premise of the novel, mingling folklore with the history. The characters, while flawed, are also more likeable - I particularly loved Gedge's Ramses II, however brief his appearance was.

I did dislike Khaemwaset, though, mainly because I spent the whole novel getting frustrated with him always making clearly the wrong decision, even in spite of his logic. But I suspect that was deliberate.

Additionally, I felt that the novel ended too soon. I would have loved to have seen the aftermath in more concrete terms - and more Ramses!

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## Lauren says

This is the book that made Pauline Gedge one of my favorite authors of all time. Not only did she take a twist on an ancient being who I've never seen in the spotlight, but the story was brilliant. Every plot twist had me biting my nails and trying to read as fast as humanly possible to get to the next page. The ending left me shell shocked, and I remember wondering if I was ready to cry or start the whole thing over again. Not every story ends the way you think it will, and this one is flawless.

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## Irene says

Emocionante historia que te sumerge en el antiguo Egipto, La autora consigue una novela histórica de misterio muy fácil de leer, que a mí me ha atrapado. Bien narrada, describe los usos y costumbres de la época, añadiendo connotaciones de vértigo que te hipnotizan como un hechizo. Es muy entretenida, y aunque al principio el arranque es algo costoso poco a poco coge velocidad y el final, con ciertos pasajes visibles me ha dejado pasmada. La solución es pura magia y prestidigitación.

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## Belinda says

4,75 stars - English hardcover - Thanks Amy for the read. Mystery, action and a man who wants all power. A Son of the farao and a doctor but still he wants that scroll. This was a book I did read in two days. Every night I did read until late. Simply loved it. What a writer. ???

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## Bill says

The novel is an effective retelling of an Egyptian fiction from the Ptolemaic period known as *The Book of Thoth*.

This story follows the fiction/myth/legend rather closely follows the original from what I can gather resulting in a fascinating painting of the times, religion and life of ancient Egypt in the age of Ramesses II. The characters are historical for the most part, actual big time personages from the 13th century BCE Egypt.

To a modern reader there is an element of horror to the story, but one based on religion. I see this as mythic as well as historical fiction, if we can agree that religion has been based on myth throughout human history.

Highly recommended for all interested in ancient historical or mythic fiction.

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## Joyce says

### 2 stars for the first ¾ of the book, 3 stars for the last quarter

I have a confession to make: **I didn't really know what this book was about before I started it.** All I knew was that it was set in Egypt, it seemed to promise action, and it had a high average rating (4.08 at the time of writing). Thus, I expected a **good book** which would **wow** me with its spectacular contents and make me applaud my decision to just spontaneously pick up a book and read it.

*Their loss had not brought them together, indeed without music, entertainments or the feasting of guests, the bare bones of their estrangement from one another began to show through, stark and cruel. Nubnofret had completely withdrawn from them all. Hori, too, had retreated into his private hell where even Sheritra, though they spent much time together, could not follow.*

This book is more **family drama** than anything. In one sentence, it is about how a man's **mid-life crisis** slowly destroys his family.

**But wait!** There's more! There's also a **predicable mystery involved!** And, and, and...**sex!** There's sex,

here, too! From **all the** members of the family! There's also a lot of **shouting** and **irrational actions** which makes you want to punch the main character in the face!

Now, if that's not the **definition of interesting**, I don't know what is.

Let me explain my points one by one.

### **Point #1: The Predictable Mystery**

Hmm...picture this. You have been searching for a **scroll with the power to raise the dead** all your life, so presumably you are **familiar with the scroll and all its properties**.

Suddenly, you find your first **heretofore unopened tomb**. It houses a husband-and-wife duo. What's more, you find an **ancient** scroll **sewn** into the hand of one of the mummies. You steal it (obviously), and after translating it from ancient Egyptian to modern Egyptian, you realise it is a **spell of some kind**.

*Falling silent, it occurred to him suddenly that the rhythm was familiar because the words were the building blocks of a spell, and as every magician knew, spells had a particular flow to them, when chanted, that poetry did not have. I have been singing a spell of some kind, he thought, sitting back with a shudder of apprehension. That was stupid of me, to voice and thus give power to something that I do not understand. I have no idea what just came out of my mouth.*

Then, a few days after you do so, your son comes to tell you **he found a secret room in the tomb the scroll came from**. What's more, although obviously designed to house mummies, **there are no mummies present**, and he also found a **turquoise earring** in the tunnel leading out of the tomb.

At the same time, **you begin to obsess over a woman of mysterious origins**. She lives with a man she claims is her brother. She also claims to be some kind of nobility from a backwater town, with **no ambitions whatsoever**.

At this point, **WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU THINK THAT SCROLL WAS??? WHO THE FUCK DO YOU THINK THE WOMAN IS???**

### **Point #2: The Sex**

Well...this one's kinda self-explanatory, isn't it? Basically, all the males in the family lust after the **same woman** (bonus points if you can guess which one), and the homely daughter falls at the feet of the woman's son, because he's (a) handsome and (b) the first one to show interest in her.

*Seventy days imprisoned here, away from Harmin, away from Tsubui, no desert sunsets feeding honeyed dates to the yellow dog, no board games played lazily under the palms, no Harmin in my bed.*

(Also, again maybe as a bonus, all the romance in this book is **insta-love**.)

### **Point #3: The Irrational Actions**

This one just makes me **mad**.

You know that frustration you feel when you're reading a book (usually YA), and the **main character is just consistently TSTL**? Yeah, that's what I'm feeling right now. Times 2.5. Because that's two of the characters throughout the **entire book** and one of the characters throughout **half the book**.

*His father had ceased to be a calm, kindly man, and had let the administration of the country slide towards a chaos that could well ruin them all. His mother was imprisoned in an icy unhappiness. Sheritra's response to his revelations about Tsubui had been instantly selfish and defensive of Harmin, and it was clear that her world had shrunk to the lineaments of his body.*

The only redeeming factor is the **ending**. I've always been a fan of plot twists which **explain everything**, and whilst most of the revealed 'twists' were predictable, **there were some surprises**. Hence, **2.5** stars instead of **2**.

In conclusion, let me say this: if you're looking for **family drama set in Egyptian times**, this is the book for you. If not, **skip it**. You can do **so much better**.

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### **Denise says**

Prince Khaemwaset is the middle-aged son of Pharaoh Ramses of Egypt. A well-renowned physician and scholar of ancient knowledge, he has made it his life's work to open and restore ancient tombs desecrated by tomb robbers. Broken furniture is mended, food offerings are replenished and crumbling paintings are restored. Such work is done with all due respect for the dead occupants. But Khaemwaset is also seeking for the legendary "Scroll of Thoth" purported to give its owner the power of life after death.

At a feast he is approached by an old and ailing man who hands him an ancient scroll but begs him to destroy it immediately. The man states that he is prevented from doing the task himself. Khaemwaset accepts the scroll but makes a fateful decision to study it first. On the way home the scroll disappears and a massive search for it turns up nothing. A few days later, Khaemwaset spies an unknown woman walking through the marketplace. He's aware of her sensuous walk, her trim body, her long dark hair. When he tries to discover her identity, she disappears into the crowd. Similar incidences happen over and over. His search for her begins as a curiosity and rapidly develops into an obsession. He must have her...at any cost.

A tale of horror and sacrilege, magic and dark secrets. Guaranteed to scare the daylights out of readers as it

builds to its climactic ending!

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### **Yvette says**

I enjoyed most of the book, particularly the fact that it was set in ancient Egypt and very well researched.

The supernatural aspect was just perfect, it gave an eerie touch to the story.

The characters however were not really likeable, but I suppose that was done on purpose.

The way they continue to make the wrong decisions time after time however, keeps the reader on the edge of his seat.

Why only three stars and not four: a bit slow and at times a bit predictable ; too much detail given on the daily life in ancient Egypt (what they ate and how they dressed ...).

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### **Teresa says**

Novela con una trama interesante y con mucha información sobre los egipcios pero ciertas partes me han resultado lentas y algunos detalles se me han hecho previsibles, aún así la recomiendo para amantes de la cultura egipcia.

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### **Iset says**

"Scroll of Saqqara", published under the alternative title *Mirage: A Novel* in the US, is an insidious mystery tale that will get under your skin, and the sheer turmoil wrought on the protagonists will keep you gripped until the very end. Pauline Gedge draws her inspiration for the plot both from the life of the real Khaemwaset but also in large part from a later work of Ptolemaic literature, written about a thousand years after the real man lived, called "Setna and the Mummies" which was a fusion of fairytale and Egyptian folk memory about this royal prince of the past. Pauline Gedge uses the Ptolemaic text as a basis, and draws upon her own imagination with stunning vision to create a tale that is altogether darker than the original.

Truly chilling, "Scroll of Saqqara" has a plot of dark and terrible fascination. The unravelling of the lives of Khaemwaset and his family is a bit of a slow-burner, but I found this wildly tantalising and a spur to continue reading. I found myself practically tearing through the pages to get to the climax and resolution of this riveting and compelling story, built so up subtly and plausibly that failure of the characters to notice what is going on until it's too late was entirely believable. Each page I tore through in my desire to see how the tale would spin out was also a page of delicious agony; I was deeply engaged with these characters and cared about what would happen to them, but as a reader on the outside looking in I was powerless to help the characters I'd come to root for. There were definitely moments where I was mentally yelling at the protagonists for one of them, any of them, to come to their senses, but the great thing is that Gedge never wavers from letting these characters take their own paths and the result is a powerfully riveting story. As the sting in the tale is played out, you get a deeply unsettling sense that things are very, very wrong, but the plot is so compelling that one cannot wrench one's eyes away from the unfolding disaster.

The characters are fleshed out real people with three-dimensional motivations, personalities and complexities. Each and every single one of them is sensible, plausible and most importantly thoroughly

believable. This ought to be something which readers expect and demand from every single book we read. Every scene has a purpose, every piece of dialogue fits the character speaking it and is well-constructed and well thought out. Pauline Gedge is a class act as an author, and once again her writing skill shines through here as in every novel she turns out, the sheer quality of her storycraft and knowledge of language is rarely matched. With both, she weaves together a whole package that transcends the nonsense that's so often put out these days (so often in fact that I was beginning to wonder if people had begun to just accept it and lower their expectations!) and is in a stratosphere which few books inhabit. I found only three reviews of this book on Amazon UK and one of those was a copy of a review on Amazon USA, which itself only had 8 reviews - astonishing given just how good this novel is, suggesting to me that this novel has been overlooked for far too long.

Pauline Gedge is a star of a writer, and "Scroll of Saqqara" is a hidden gem of a book whose complex characters and searing plot will stay with you long after you've turned the last page. Gedge's knowledge of the setting and environment in which her characters move, the culture and day to day life of Egypt is genuinely astounding. The worlds she creates are vibrant, vivid and colourful, and bring the ancient world to life as a real time and place where our flesh and blood ancestors really existed and made their lives. Her descriptions are sublime, springing to life in the reader's imagination with all the clarity of the original vision of the author.

"Scroll of Saqqara" is deliciously well-written, chillingly unsettling, and one hundred percent compelling. Enough said!

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### **Kris43 says**

This is a big fat book. I imagine I could kill rats with it:)

But don't let that intimidate you. It may be huge, but it has the the special kind of charm that only a huge tome can have.

It reads like a historical fiction, only later it twists into horror. First 1/4 of the book is spend in interesting day to day description of Princes family, life, land, culture.

And all that at first lulls you in, before I know it I just wanted to know what will happen next.

Very fast in the book, I had my first big surprise. From the summary, I expected a greedy, power hungry, mean grave robber. The kind that kicks kittens....

Instead I got a gentle, rational man who has a lot of respect for his culture, country, history. He is very proud of his ancestry and sure in the rightness of his doing. He is a Egyptian prince and treats his subordinates well, not at all power hungry. He actually restores the pyramids that have been violated and preforms rituals to appease the dead and the Gods.

So.....Where is the problem? How does a man like that offend the Gods and condemns him self in such a way? The Prince spend his life exploring Egypt past, opening tombs and restoring them and yearning for forbidden knowledge. He also disturbed the rest of many dead. All wrapped up in scientific pursuit, but really secretly hoping to find The legendary scroll of Thoth. It has two spells on it. One spell gives the power of bodily resurrection to the one who legitimately speaks it, and the other gives him the ability to understand the language of everything living under the sun. All this sounds like something the Gods would mind if you



mess with it, right?

The first signs of something sinister came slowly and gradually. One small deed at the time, until it all build a monstrous thing that came later. This book creates a masterful atmosphere of suspense. Every next small thing that happened gave me the feeling of dread. It all accumulated to the point of no return where i just couldn't believe what was happening and how it all got so wrong!

And in the end your greatest wish is granted, sweet Prince. The best curses are made out of parody of our own dreams!

P.S. Scrolls are evil, never touch them!!!

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### **Jane says**

I enjoyed this one very much. Mirage takes place in ancient Egypt; Gedge's writing is as excellent as usual. Horror builds slowly and crept up on me. The novel started slowly to set the background then gained momentum. The novel was a page-turner; I read till 3 a.m. last night, to finish the novel.

We are introduced to Khaemwaset, a prince of Egypt. He is also a physician, skilled magician, and a historian. He excavates tombs to renovate them; he is in hope of finding the Scroll of Thoth [the ibis-headed god of wisdom]. Through its use one can become immortal. In the course of his explorations of a certain tomb in the necropolis of Saqqara, he steals a mysterious old scroll. After deciphering some of the hieroglyphs, he chants the text that he's transcribed. He realizes immediately afterwards it's rhythmical, a possible curse, but it's too late to take back his words. Is it a curse? What has he unleashed?

We also meet his loving, close-knit family: wife [Nubnofret], son, [the young man, Hori], and daughter [the young woman, Sheritra]. All characters are well-rounded and have distinct personalities. In the town one day, Khaemwaset sees a mysterious woman and is immediately obsessed with her. She disappears. His men cannot find her after much searching. One day, a young man, Harmin, comes and asks him to treat his mother's possibly infected foot. Khaemwaset's family and her whole family: herself (the widowed Tbubui), brother [Sisenet], son [Harmin] do meet after he treats the woman; they are invited to his house for dinner one evening. Khaemwaset is consumed by lustful feelings for Tbubui. She and her family insinuate themselves into the lives of Khaemwaset and family. I had goosebumps all through the rest of the story once the two families met and became close. Tbubui begins pursuing her agenda with Khaemwaset and his family, who begin to be pulled apart; their idyllic life is destroyed slowly bit by bit. Hori takes it upon himself to visit Tbubui's hometown and to find out her true background and that of her family. He feels they are not what they seem--Tbubui is the *mirage* of the title.

Gedge maintained an eerie and horror-filled atmosphere all through the novel, no mean feat. I was suspicious of Tbubui's family from the first. I did feel the epilogue connected [but not quite] with an incident fairly early in the novel but was superfluous. I thought the last chapter would have made a perfect ending. As always, Gedge painted a realistic and evocative picture of ancient Egypt.

Highly recommended! This also has the alternate title: Scroll of Saqqara

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## **The Book Voucher says**

Folklore mingles with history in this fast-paced novel that seems to chronicle the life of Khaemswaset, a minor son of Ramses the Great, but instead reveals itself to be a chilling and goosebumps-ensuring, sometimes angsty, Egyptian Ghost Story.

Read the full review here on [The Book Voucher](#)

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