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Discussion Questions on “Tale of Two Brothers”

Q1: What issues/themes from this story resonate with a modern audience?

A1: A few themes that can be applicable to a modern audience would be the themes of brotherly bonds, and the truth in the face of false accusations. The first theme can be seen throughout the story, with Bata, the younger brother, and Anubis, the older brother. Anubis welcomed Bata into his home and helped one another in fieldwork. This bond between them is further tested when Anubis’ wife tries to seduce Bata, only for Bata to reject her, stating that Anubis, his brother, took him in and raised him, and he was not going to betray that trust. This leads to the next theme, in which Anubis chases Bata with the intent to kill after his wife accuses Bata of harming her. It was only when both brothers calmed down, albeit with divine intervention from Pre-Harakhty, that Bata is able to state his case and even commit to his innocence by slicing off his phallus and letting a fish eat it. Both themes can be easily applicable not only to modern literature but also to modern society as well.

Q2: What is your interpretation of the final act of the story involving Bata reincarnating as the son of the Pharaoh?

A2: Bata’s reincarnation as the son of the Pharaoh can have many different meanings. One interpretation suggests that Bata did so as a form of revenge against the Pharaoh and his wife. As the son of both of them, Bata would outlive them both, and then Egypt will be his. Hence, Bata will take Egypt, the legacy of the Pharaoh, away from the man who took both his wife and his

life. Alternatively, it could be a sign of divine favor, as the title of Pharaoh, while often analogous to the title of king, is also considered to be divine in his own right. Bata has repeatedly shown that the gods favor him, from being saved from murder by Pre-Harakhty, to being given a wife by the creator god Khnum. By incarnating as what is essentially the crown prince to a pharaoh, this confirms that Bata is favored by the Egyptian gods, if not divine himself. This latter theory can be supported by the fact that he should have died, such as when he sliced off his genitalia, or when he actually died, when his heart was destroyed by the Pharaoh's men, and came out resurrected or unscathed.