

THE DOOMED PRINCE

P. Harris 500, Verso

Though usually called *The Doomed Prince*, the tale is more accurately called "The prince who was threatened by three fates"; for most scholars have come to the conclusion that the now missing ending of the tale was a happy one. A happy ending would be in keeping with the fairy-tale character of the story. Moreover, the ancient Egyptian concept of fate was a fluid one. There was no rigid determinism, no firm belief in an inescapable fate. Rather a sense that righteousness would triumph and innocence would overcome adversity.

The tale occupies pages 4,1-8,14 on the *verso* of the papyrus.

Publication: E. A. W. Budge, *Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum, Second Series* (London, 1923), pls. 48-52. Möller, *Lesestücke*, II, 21-24. Gardiner, *LES*, pp. 1-9.

Translation: T. E. Peet, *JEA*, 11 (1925), 227-229. Lefebvre, *Romans*, pp. 114-124. Schott, *Liebeslieder*, pp. 188-192. Brunner-Traut, *Märchen*, pp. 24-28. E. F. Wente in Simpson, *Literature*, pp. 85-91.

Comments: W. Spiegelberg, *ZÄS*, 64 (1929), 86-87. M. Pieper, *ZÄS*, 70 (1934), 95-97. A. Hermann in *Mélanges Maspero*, I, 313-325. G. Posener, *JEA*, 39 (1953), 107.

(4,1) It is said, there once was a king to whom no son had been born. [After a time his majesty] begged a son for himself from the gods of his domain, and they decreed that one should be born to him. That night he slept with his wife and she [became] pregnant. When she had completed the months of childbearing, a son was born.

Then came the Hathors to determine a fate for him. They said: "He will die through the crocodile, or the snake, or the dog." When the people who were with the child heard (it), they reported it to his majesty. Then his majesty's heart became very very sad. His majesty had [a house] of stone built [for him] upon the desert, supplied with people and with every good thing of the palace, and the child was not to go outdoors.

Now when the boy had grown, he went up to his roof, and he saw a greyhound following a man¹ who was walking on the road. He said to his servant, who was beside him: "What is it that is walking behind the man who is coming along the road?" He told him: "It is a greyhound." The boy said to him: "Have one like it brought to me." Then the servant went and reported (4,10) it to his majesty. His majesty said: "Bring him a little puppy, [so that] his heart [will not] grieve." So they brought him a greyhound.

Now when many days had passed and the boy was fully grown in all his body, he sent to his father saying: "To what purpose is my sitting here? I am committed to Fate. Let me go, that I may act according to my heart, until the god does what is in his heart." Then a chariot was

harnessed for him, equipped [with] (5,1) all sorts of weapons, and [a servant was given him] as an attendant. He was ferried over to the eastern shore and was told: "Go wherever you wish," and his greyhound was with him. He went northward across the desert, following his heart and living on the best of all the desert game.

He reached the Prince of Nahrin.² Now the Prince of Nahrin had no children except one daughter. For her a house had been built whose window was seventy cubits away from the ground. He had sent for all the sons of all the princes of Khor³ and told them: "He who reaches the window of my daughter, his wife she shall be." Now when many days had passed and they were at their daily pursuit, the youth passed by them. Then they took the youth to their house. They washed him; they gave fodder to his team. They did everything for the youth. They anointed him; they bandaged his feet; they (5,10) gave food to his attendant. And they said to him by way of conversation: "Whence have you come, you good youth?" He said to them: "I am the son of an officer of the land of Egypt. My mother died; my father took another wife, a stepmother. She came to hate me, and I went away, fleeing from her." Then they embraced him and kissed him on [all his body].

[Now when many days had passed], he said to the sons: "What is this you are doing [here?]" They said: "For three [months] now we are here passing (6,1) the time [in leaping. For he] who reaches [the] window of the daughter of the Prince of Nahrin [will] get her as [wife]." [He] said to them: "If only my feet did [not] hurt, I would go leaping with you." They went leaping in their daily manner, while the youth stood at a distance watching, and the gaze of the daughter of the Prince of Nahrin was upon him.

Now when many days had passed, the youth came to leap with the sons of the princes. He leaped, he reached the window of the daughter of the Prince of Nahrin. She kissed him, she embraced him on all his body. One went to inform her father and told him: "One man has reached the window of your daughter." Then the Prince questioned him saying: "Which prince's son?" They said to him: "The son of an officer who came fleeing from Egypt, away from his stepmother." Thereupon (6,10) the Prince of Nahrin became exceedingly angry. He said: "Am I to give my daughter to this fugitive from Egypt? Make him go away!"

They went and told him: "Go back where you came from!" But the daughter held him, and she swore by the god saying: "As Pre-Harakhti lives, if he is taken from me, I shall not eat, I shall not drink, I shall die right away!" The messenger went and reported to her father every <word> that she had said. And her <father> sent men to

slay him on the spot. But the daughter said to (them) : "As Pre lives, if they slay him, when the sun sets I shall be dead. I will not live an hour longer than he!"

They [went] to tell it to her father. Then her (7,1) [father had] the [youth brought] before him [together with] his daughter. And when [the youth stood before him] his dignity impressed⁴ the Prince. He embraced him, he kissed him on all his body; he said to him: "Tell me about yourself, for now you are my son." He said to him: "I am the son of an officer of the land of Egypt. My mother died; my father took another wife. She came to hate me; I left fleeing from her." Then he gave him his daughter as wife. He gave him a house and fields as well as cattle and all sorts of good things.

Now when many days had passed, the youth said to his wife: "I am given over to three fates: the crocodile, the snake, the dog." Then she said to him: "Have the dog that follows you killed." He said to her: "What foolishness! I will not let my dog be killed, whom I raised when it was a puppy." So she began to watch her husband very much and did not let him go out alone.

Now on the day on which the youth had left Egypt in his wandering, the crocodile, (7,10) his fate [had followed him] ---. It came to be opposite him in the village in which the youth was, [and it dwelled in] the lake. But there was a demon in it. The demon did not let the crocodile come out; nor did the crocodile let the demon come out to stroll about. As soon as the sun rose [they] stood and fought each other every day for three months now.

And when more days had passed, the youth sat down to a feastday in his house. Then when night had come, the youth lay down on his bed, and sleep overwhelmed his body. Then (8,1) his wife filled a [bowl] with [wine] and another bowl with beer. Thereupon a [snake] came out [of its] hole to bite the youth. But his wife was sitting beside him, not sleeping. [She placed the bowls before] the snake. It drank, it became drunk, it lay down on its back. Then [the woman had] it hacked to pieces with her axe. They woke her husband ----- She said to him: "Look, your god has given one of your fates into your hand. He will protect [you] from the others also." [Then he] made an offering to Pre, praising him and extolling his might every day.

Now when many days had passed, the youth went out for a pleasure stroll on his estate. [His wife] did not go out [with him], but his dog was following him. Then his dog began to speak⁵ [saying: "I am your fate]. Thereupon he ran before it. He reached the lake. He descended into [the water in flight from the] dog. Then the crocodile [seized] him and carried him off to where the demon was. [But he was gone. The] crocodile said to the youth: "I am your fate that has come after you. But [for three months] now I have been fighting with the

demon. Now look, I shall release you. If my [enemy returns] to fight [you shall] help me to kill the demon. For if you see the ----- the crocodile." Now when it dawned and the next day had come, [the demon] returned -----.

NOTES

1. Literally, "a big man," i.e., an adult.
2. The kingdom of Mitanni on the upper Euphrates.
3. Syria.
4. Literally, "entered the prince."
5. E. F. Wente in Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 90 rendered *ḫ3i tp-r* as "take a bite" and referred to the meaning "bite" for *tp-r*, which occurs in the medical texts. The usual meaning of *tp-r*, however, is "speech," and this meaning seems preferable to me. See also the term *ḫ3i-r* in *Amenemope*, 4,7 and 15,13.

THE TWO BROTHERS

P. D'Orbiney = P. Brit. Mus. 10183

This is a complex and vivid tale, rich in motifs that have parallels in later literatures. The two protagonists have some connection with a myth of the two gods, Anubis and Bata, that was told as a tradition of the Seventeenth Nome of Upper Egypt. The myth is preserved in a late form in the Papyrus Jumilhac (see below). More important than the mythological connection is the depiction of *human* characters, relationships, and feelings in a narration of sustained force. The episode of Bata and his brother's wife has a remarkable similarity with the tale of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, a similarity that has often been commented on. References to the recurrence in other literatures of the tale's folkloristic motifs will be found in the works cited, especially in Lefebvre's and Brunner-Traut's comments to their translations.

Papyrus D'Orbiney is written in a beautiful hand by the scribe Ennana who lived at the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty.

Publication: *Select Papyri in the Hieratic Character from the Collections of the British Museum*, Part II (London, 1860), pls. 9-19. Möller, *Lese-stücke*, II, 1-20. Gardiner, *LES*, pp. 9-29.

Translation: Lefebvre, *Romans*, pp. 137-158. Schott, *Liebeslieder*, pp. 193-204. Brunner-Traut, *Märchen*, pp. 28-40. E. F. Wente in Simpson, *Literature*, pp. 92-107.

Comments: J. Yoyotte, *RdE*, 9 (1952), 157-159. J. Vandier, *Le Papyrus Jumilhac* (Paris [1962]), pp. 45-46, 105-106, and 114-115. F. Jesi, *Aegyptus*, 42 (1962), 276-296. E. Blumenthal, *ZÄS*, 99 (1973), 1-17. For additional references see Lefebvre, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-142, and Blumenthal, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

(1,1) It is said, there were two brothers, of the same mother and the same father. Anubis was the name of the elder, and Bata the name of the younger. As for Anubis, he had a house and a wife; and his young brother was with him as if he were a son. He was the one who made