

CHARACTERS

BILE

A very confident, recently deceased businessman. Confused but unafraid, he is clothed in a somber funeral suit.

OSIRIS

The Egyptian god. Now appearing as a middle-aged man, it has been a long three thousand years since his hey-day. He wears a faded turquoise tunic with a large azure headdress. On the visible parts of his skin, metal stitches hold his body together. He has a scraggly goatee.

AKHENATEN

The janitor. He sweeps up the ashes of those who were cremated at death. He also wears a faded tunic.

SET

An attractive woman with a secret, she wears a long flowing robe and an ornate head piece.

SETTING

The play takes place in the courtroom of Osiris in the afterlife. A huge pyramid-shaped altar dominates the stage. It is a faded sandy color and covered in hieroglyphics. A set of stairs goes up the middle of the altar, leading to a large flat top where Osiris presides. To the right of the bottom of the stairs is an antique book, laid open.

There are ashes strewn about the ground.

TIME

Tomorrow.

This play premiered in July, 2001, produced by Kokopelli Theatre Company in Anchorage, Alaska. Kari Mote directed with the following cast: Rob Lecrone as Bile; Mark Robokoff as Osiris, Jason Martin as Akhenaten, and Sara Waisanen as Isis.

SCENE 1

The lights rise but remain dim. Ominous chanting. AKHENATEN pushes a broom across the stage. He does this throughout the play, ignoring everything else whenever possible. The music begins to skip. AKHENATEN scurries to the stairs and hits something beneath it. The chanting continues. OSIRIS appears at the top of the stairs, yawning.

OSIRIS

All right, Akhenaten, hit the lights and let's get started. It's time for Martin Talon.

AKHENATEN quickly goes back to under the stairs and hits a button. Lights shoot up at OSIRIS, making him look more impressive. AKHENATEN hurries offstage. Moments later, he reappears, pushing BILE in front of him.

BILE

Hey, don't push!

AKHENATEN leaves him and goes back to his sweeping. BILE looks around, not noticing OSIRIS at the top of his altar. OSIRIS' voice booms through the chamber.

OSIRIS

Martin Talon. (Pause) Martin Talon!

BILE

(Turning to him, noticing him for the first time) My name is Bile. Haven't let anyone use Martin since I was six. Who told you that name?

OSIRIS

Your name is Martin Talon.

BILE

It's Bile.

OSIRIS

Martin.

BILE

You can keep calling me that if you want to, I just won't be listening. *(To AKHENATEN)* Hey, you, janitor.

BILE attempts to stop AKHENATEN, who avoids him.

OSIRIS

Martin Talon, do you know where you are, what has transpired? Martin Talon, you have...

BILE is still ignoring him, and has started examining the pyramid.

Pay attention!

BILE

You can call me Bile or you can talk to yourself. I tested a ninety-seven on the Oswald Stubbornness Test. You think you can push me around? Keep calling me Martin and see where it gets you.

OSIRIS

You were born Martin Talon, August—

BILE grabs AKHENATEN.

BILE

Hey, tell this blowhard something for me.

AKHENATEN looks helplessly up at OSIRIS.

My mother, sweet but unoriginal, with no prescience of who I would become, named me Martin. While I am no longer bitter about being given that stupid name, my name is now Bile. I chose it, legally changed it, it is my name. I am Bile, and the sooner he gets over his God-complex and accepts it, the sooner I'll consider paying attention.

OSIRIS

(Menacingly) Akhenaten...

AKHENATEN breaks free, grabs his broom, and begins sweeping frantically.

Have you brought your servitors?

BILE

What?

OSIRIS

Servitors, have you brought any? I'm on a tight schedule.

BILE

Servitors? You mean lawyers?

BILE reaches in his inner coat pocket. A look of absolute horror comes over his face.

Where the hell is my phone? That's a Startac 7000, top of the line! Don't say you've lost it or we're looking at a lawsuit.

OSIRIS

I don't mean lawyers and you're not going to be suing me.

BILE

I'm noticing... this just isn't normal. Where the hell am I?

OSIRIS

You have no prepared confession?

BILE

Prepared... no, I guess not.

OSIRIS

There is a prepared confession you can read at the base of the stairs. Just read it aloud and make sure to articulate.

BILE

I'm dead.

OSIRIS

Yes, now please hurry, an informal confession would take too long.



Bile and Akhenaten from the production of *Bile In The Afterlife*; part of Teatro del Naville's play festival in Italy.

BILE

I remember... a sharp pain in my chest... wait a minute, I repented!

OSIRIS

I don't care.

BILE

I accepted Jesus as my savior, I did! It was the last thing I did as I went down, I'm telling you!

OSIRIS

I don't care about that. Read the prepared confession.

BILE

All right, all right, I'll read it. At the base of the... (*Reading*) "I have not killed anyone. I have not caused anyone to go hungry or weep. I have not taken food from the dead... I have not falsely weighed balances... falsely rustled cattle?" What the hell kind of confession is this?

OSIRIS

Just finish it.

BILE

Where am I? Who the hell are you?

OSIRIS raises his arms over his head and attempts to terrify BILE with his godliness.

OSIRIS

I am Osiris, lord of all life, master of the underworld, judge of the dead! You have been brought before me to be—

His microphone fails with an audible pop. He struggles on, but his voice is no longer augmented.

To be, ha-hum, JUDGED for the way you have conducted your time on the, in the world of mortal men. Do you swear—

The lights on OSIRIS give out. He is an unimpressive sight, rattled and embarrassed.

Damn it, Akhenaten, what's going on? You incompetent worm, you shall suffer for this!

AKHENATEN falls to his knees, prostrate.

BILE

(To OSIRIS) Excuse me.

OSIRIS

(Ignoring BILE) Tortures of the cremated, that's what's in store for you, Akhenaten, if you don't get everything up and running right now. You know we've got a full slate today!

BILE

Pardon me.

OSIRIS

I'll deal with you in a moment, mortal.

BILE

No, you'll deal with me now.

OSIRIS

(Taken aback) What?

BILE

You will deal with me now.

OSIRIS

Fool, I am Osiris, judge of—

BILE

Yeah, I heard the press release earlier. Osiris... that's not Jewish, is it? Egyptian?

OSIRIS

Cease your insolence and obey me!

BILE

Why don't you come down here and make me!

OSIRIS

What?

BILE

You heard me. I played racquetball six days a week for the last twenty years. Looks like it's been an all-Twinkie diet for you here in hell. I dare you, come on down and we'll see who does the obeying!

AKHENATEN suddenly dives onto BILE's back, holding on tightly as BILE thrashes around. OSIRIS begins descending the staircase.

OSIRIS

Hold him!

BILE

Get off me!

BILE hurls AKHENATEN in the direction of the stairs, causing OSIRIS to scramble. AKHENATEN groans at the base of the altar.

OSIRIS

Cursed mortal, desist!

BILE

Come here, old man.

OSIRIS

When I return, you shall suffer for this trans- gression!

OSIRIS exits out the back wall at the top of the stairs.

BILE

You'll do, then.

AKHENATEN

Aahhh!

AKHENATEN attempts to flee, but BILE grabs him by the tunic and pins him to the ground.

BILE

You ever touch me again, you'll regret it.

AKHENATEN

Fear, fear the power that is Osiris! He will strike you down!

BILE

Where's he going?

AKHENATEN

Tremble, tremble! He is getting the Staff of Power, the most mighty weapon ever!

BILE

What does it do? Shoot sun-rays, boil the blood in your veins?

AKHENATEN

What? No, I don't think it does.

BILE

What, then?

AKHENATEN

Well... I mean, I've never seen him have to use it before... could be anything.

BILE

And it could be nothing. Does he have any other cronies? I seem to remember the Egyptians having a lot of gods.

AKHENATEN

Gone!

BILE

Gone where?



Isis and Bile from the production of *Bile In The Afterlife*; part of Teatro del Naville's play festival in Italy.

AKHENATEN

(Pause) Gone!

BILE

Does that mean you don't know?

AKHENATEN nods sheepishly.

They were here before though, right?

AKHENATEN

Oh yes! The day once was when Ra's light flowed down upon us through the tresses of Nephthys, the lady of the sky, and my lord Osiris stood beside his sister and wife, the beautiful Isis.

BILE

Incestuous salad days here, huh?

AKHENATEN

His son Orus sat beside him, and Anubis was his second in the Underworld.

BILE

What happened? A war, some enemy?

AKHENATEN

Not really. They just... began to leave. Bored mostly. At first they'd just miss a shift, but missing days turned into missing years.

BILE

And then it was just Osiris here alone. Well, with you.

AKHENATEN

Yes.

BILE

Quite a workload, two guys processing all the world's dead.

AKHENATEN

Most of them are getting cremated nowadays. Showing up completely incapacitated. I've been sweeping since the plague hit Europe.

BILE

I know why he's here. How'd you get hooked into this?

AKHENATEN

(Pause) In antiquity, I was the man that men worshipped and called god... Pharaoh. And I declared that all Egypt must throw away the scattered worship of a million gods, and embrace the one God from whom all life springs. I declared it law, and tore down the images of my forefathers' gods.

BILE

Bet it was a shocker to get here and find out you were wrong.

AKHENATEN

(Snarling) I was not wrong! There is only one almighty God, and it's not Osiris. He's just—

The lights begin to flutter. AKHENATEN grabs his broom and cowers beside the stairs.

(Whispering) There is only one true God. He just doesn't care!

OSIRIS appears at the top of the stairs, bearing an ornate golden staff, the Staff of Power.

OSIRIS

Akhenaten, your offenses do not escape me. You shall suffer! (To BILE) And now, mortal, you shall see the horrible price of your impudence!

BILE

Bring your stick down here and we'll see about that!

BILE moves towards the stairs. OSIRIS raises the staff and aims it at BILE.

OSIRIS

Feel yourself weaken, feel yourself fail. Your muscles go limp, your heart trembles.

BILE begins to look a little woozy and drops to one knee.

BILE

Hell!

OSIRIS

Yes, Martin Talon, you feel it now, do you not? All-Twinkie diet? Hah! Your will is mine, Martin Talon.

BILE

My... name... is... Bile!

BILE makes it to his feet and starts slowly ascending the stairway.

OSIRIS

Your will is strong, but will it be able to carry your body at ten times the weight?

OSIRIS twists the staff and BILE collapses, his body suddenly bound by magically increased gravity.

BILE

Aargh!

OSIRIS

Akhenaten, bind Martin Talon.

AKHENATEN advances, pulling rope out from under his tunic. BILE begins to rise again. OSIRIS and AKHENATEN stare in disbelief as he crawls up the stairs.

BILE

I am Bile!

OSIRIS

Stay back!

He points the staff at BILE, who reaches out and grabs the end of it.

AKHENATEN

(Awestruck) Oh!

BILE

Going down?

BILE leans backward while holding the staff. His increased weight easily drags OSIRIS off the pedestal and hurls him down the stairs. AKHENATEN rushes to him and starts brushing him off.

OSIRIS

Get off me!

BILE

(Still weighed down) How do I turn this damn thing off?

OSIRIS

Oh, I'm just supposed to tell you? Hah!

BILE twists the staff and his body becomes lighter.

Damn it.

BILE

Now don't you think it's time we talked civilly about what I can do for you?

OSIRIS

Do for me? You?

BILE

I wouldn't act so almighty. Look at this place. It's a disaster. Just you and the janitor processing all the dead people for a planet of six billion. You're massively understaffed.

OSIRIS

Akhenaten and I can handle it.

BILE

I can tell it's wearing on you. You're just lucky they painted all your murals when you still had a young god's figure.

OSIRIS

Look—

BILE

Where'd the others go?

OSIRIS

The other gods?

BILE

Yes. There're supposed to be more of you here.

OSIRIS

You don't care.

BILE

I want to know.

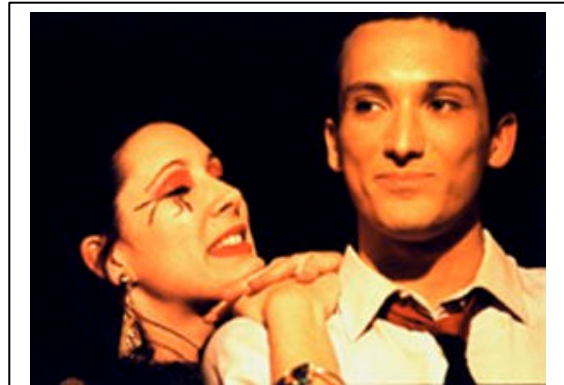
OSIRIS

Look, they left me, all right?

OSIRIS sits on the stairs. BILE descends to a couple stairs above him.

BILE

Tell me about it. I'm a good listener.



Isis and Bile from the production of *Bile In The Afterlife*; part of Teatro del Naville's play festival in Italy.

OSIRIS

(Pause) Not much to tell. My mom's an opium junkie, my father's a drunk.

BILE

Your father is...

OSIRIS

Ra.

BILE

The sun god?

OSIRIS

My father is the sun.

BILE

He still seems to be making the rounds pretty well for a lush.

OSIRIS

Sure, it looks that way to you. But he used to get up and jog round the earth every morning. Now he just spins the planet to make it look like he's moving. What, did you think it was always that way?

BILE

I guess that is a little strange, now that you mention it. And your mom...

OSIRIS

Nephthys, my mother the sky. Typical junkie, floating around in a daze, no rhyme or reason. No purpose.

BILE

Pretty dysfunctional family.

OSIRIS

You can't even conceive of it. My sister Isis and I fell in love in my mother's womb. She came out pregnant with my son, Orus. I just wasn't ready to be a father.

BILE

So you named him "Orus" to drive him away?

OSIRIS

She's left me and he never writes. He resents me. Maybe that's not his fault, but it's not my damn fault, either!

BILE

Of course it's not.

OSIRIS

Nobody ever worries about my needs, but I've been through a lot! Three thousand years ago, my enemy Set cut my body into fourteen pieces and scattered them across Egypt.

BILE

Sure you're not exaggerating?

OSIRIS pulls up his tunic to show BILE the extent of his metal stitches on his legs.

OSIRIS

Yes. Isis was kind enough to go around gathering up my pieces and helping me get it together. Unfortunately, she missed a part.

BILE

Which part?

OSIRIS

My manhood... my knob! She showed up just in time to see some kids throw it into the Nile...

BILE

I get the idea.

OSIRIS

...where it was devoured by a school of Oxyrynchus and Phagrus fish. They didn't leave as much as a testicle. That's where sharks come from, the fish who feasted on the sperm of divinity.

BILE

Now that's a truly disgusting myth.

OSIRIS

My sister did the best she could, forging me a golden phallus to take my knob's place. She even said she liked it better.

BILE

You really call it a knob?

OSIRIS

Want to see it?

OSIRIS stands and turns upstage to BILE, lifting his tunic.

BILE

No! Look...

BILE gets off the altar and begins orating.

The point is, this job is too big for just you and Akhenaten. It's unfair that everybody just left you holding the ball. They're taking advantage of your work ethic.

OSIRIS

Yeah... they are.

BILE

And I'm here to help you.

OSIRIS

(Pause) How?

BILE

I conquered the world because of my ability to organize, to discern problems in systems. This place is a disaster, but I can fix it.

OSIRIS

It's not that bad...

BILE

That waiting room's a mess. You're at least a fifty years behind, and the Seventies are going to go slow. You're lucky I cut in line... you need me. I'll get you caught up.

AKHENATEN throws his broom and grovels at OSIRIS' feet.

AKHENATEN

Please, master, please! I can bear no more! Take the mortal's offer of help, he is obviously a man of great wisdom.

OSIRIS

Silence!

OSIRIS stands and stares at BILE. Their eyes lock. OSIRIS slouches over.

Oh, all right, we'll try it.

AKHENATEN begins dancing.

BILE

Akhenaten! Calm down.

OSIRIS and AKHENATEN look incredulously at BILE.

The workplace is no place for excessive displays of emotion.

He looks them over and smirks.

All right, we've got work to do.

The stage goes to black. The chanting begins again. BILE's recorded voice is heard.

(From the darkness) First thing we've got to do is change this music.

The chanting stops abruptly and is replaced by quick-paced Muzak.

(From the darkness) There, that'll speed things up. And, Akhenaten, the sweeping...

There is a pause, then a vacuum comes on in the darkness. AKHENATEN is just barely visible pushing the vacuum.

(From the darkness) Good. Now let's talk about the way you all look...

The vacuum is turned off and the lights rise.

SCENE 2

BILE is standing on top of the altar, still carrying the Staff of Power. AKHENATEN and OSIRIS are at the bottom of the stairs. Both have exchanged their tunics for modern slacks, dress shirts and ties. OSIRIS still wears his ornate headdress. AKHENATEN clings to his new vacuum...