

# Bile in the Afterlife

A One-Act Comedy  
by Dawson Moore

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## **Bile in the Afterlife**

### **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.

**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

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... "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

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.

No, you'll deal with me now. BILE

What? *(taken aback)* OSIRIS

You will deal with me now. BILE

Fool, I am Osiris, judge of— OSIRIS

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

Cease your insolence and obey me! OSIRIS

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

What? OSIRIS

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! BILE

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

Hold him! OSIRIS

Get off me! BILE

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

Cursed mortal, desist! OSIRIS

BILE

Come here, old man.

OSIRIS

When I return, you shall suffer for this transgression!

*(OSIRIS exits out the back wall at the top of the stairs.)*

BILE

You'll do, then.

AKHENATEN

Ahhh!

*(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?

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.

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.)*

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.)*

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.)*

BILE

Big O, I'm telling you, that hat just doesn't cut it. Multiculturalism's all well and good, but... Look, I let you keep your beard. The hat's got to go.

OSIRIS

Bile, I'd rather not discuss this in front of Akhenaten.



BILE

All right. Akhenaten, this place looks good. Let me explain your break schedule to you, and then you can go.

AKHENATEN

Break schedule?

OSIRIS

Go?

BILE

Is there some problem?

OSIRIS

He's a slave.

AKHENATEN

Yeah, I'm a slave.

OSIRIS

Slaves don't get breaks.

BILE

Listen and learn. He's a "worker," not a slave. Is that clear? Labels determine self-worth which controls productivity. Henceforth, he shall be referred to as an "agent of ash disposal." Acceptable?

AKHENATEN

Sure.

BILE

I don't want to overwork you –

OSIRIS

He never tires to collapse. He can work forever without rest.

BILE

O, don't interrupt me. Trust me. Akhenaten, whenever you need a break, tell Osiris. He'll tell me, and I'll tell him if it's all right. Then he'll tell you.

*(He goes under the stairs and pulls out a book and pen.)*

Sign here before you go, including the time you left. When you come back, enter the time you arrived and tell Osiris you're back.

AKHENATEN

The... time?

BILE

Yes, the time.

OSIRIS

We don't keep track of time here.

BILE

What?

OSIRIS

Pretty meaningless here in eternity.

BILE

Meaningless? Time? Time is very important. No wonder this place is a disaster.

*(BILE goes to the door he entered as the two watch him. He opens the door and shouts in.)*

Anybody bring a watch? Fork 'em over, God wants them!

*(The sounds of murmuring come forth as BILE exits. AKHENATEN and OSIRIS stare at each other.)*

AKHENATEN

I like the vacuum.

*(BILE reemerges carrying a handful of watches.)*

BILE

All right, one each and I'll set one up with the break book. Everyone synchronize your watches to 6:30 PM.

*(They do.)*

Now get out of here, Akhenaten. Big O and I have to talk. Take a day down on the Elysian fields. You'll probably be a celebrity there. Be back by 6:30 AM.

*(AKHENATEN looks at OSIRIS, who avoids his gaze. He then turns and hollers, skipping excitedly from the room.)*

OSIRIS

Are you sure it's wise to let him get away?

BILE

An employee's happiness is important. If you can trick them into thinking they have that, they work harder. Now, why is it so important for you to wear that hat?

OSIRIS

I told you how I was ripped apart, then sewn back together by Isis... well... the headdress is central to the whole magical surgery. If I were to remove it, my body would quickly disintegrate into a collection of dismembered pieces.

BILE

Well... okay then, it's not a note from your doctor, but I can be flexible and take your word for it. Keep the hat.

OSIRIS

I intend to. You understand that Akhenaten must never know of my weakness.

BILE

You also need a break from this place.

OSIRIS

No I don't. This is my realm, my kingdom!

BILE

Stop right there. Change is good, different is good. Staying here all the time without a break impedes your ability to clearly judge the dead.

OSIRIS

I've got a room in back that I relax in.

BILE

Not good enough. I want you to take the night off.

OSIRIS

Time never changes here in eternity. There is no night.

BILE

Work with me, O. In order to get this place up and running at an acceptable efficiency level, you're going to have to let me run things my way. You'll be glad you did. Now take off and come back at what time?

OSIRIS

*(pause)*

Six-thirty.

BILE

Perfect. Trust me, Big O. I'll have this place so you don't recognize it in no time.

OSIRIS

Do I want that?

*(OSIRIS turns and exits. BILE smiles confidently and goes to underneath the stairs. The Muzak stops. He pulls out a pile of papers and sits on the steps looking them over. SET appears from the shadows at the top of the stairs. She quietly slinks down the stairs until she is right behind BILE. She breathes on his ear. He notices it, but assumes it's just a breeze. He glances over his shoulder and jumps straight up in the air.)*

Aaahhh! BILE

Oooh, a little jumpy, aren't you? SET

I thought I was alone. BILE

You're never really alone. SET

Where'd you come from? Osiris' office? The waiting room? BILE

Just lurking in the shadows. SET

Who are you? BILE

Wouldn't you rather guess? SET

No, just tell me. Guessing is inefficient, particularly when it comes to women. BILE

And efficiency is your middle name. SET

I never actually legally changed it. BILE

*(She saunters up to him. He stands his ground as she slinks seductively around him.)*

So who am I? SET

BILE

I thought everyone abandoned this place but Akhenaten and Osiris, but you seem to belong here... you're not Isis, because she definitely sounds like she left him for good. You're not a friend, are you?

SET

I could be.

BILE

"Lurking in the shadows..." You're his enemy. Set.

SET

Good guess.

BILE

I didn't guess. I deduced.

SET

So smart.

BILE

Aren't you supposed to have a dog's head?

SET

Does it look like I have a dog's head?

BILE

No, it doesn't. Why are you here?

SET

Do we have to go right into business?

*(BILE lightly pushes her away from him.)*

BILE

That's why I'm here. Osiris says you ripped him into pieces and scattered him all over Egypt. Don't even think about trying anything like that with me.

SET

History always favors the winners. Did he tell you why I did it, or was it just my treacherous woman's nature?

BILE

Something like that.

SET

I was just minding my own business, but Osiris couldn't be content. He was sharing control of the afterlife with the night and day, with the earth and sky, and he's always hated sharing. So he began banishing them. I was the only one who stood up to him, so he began a smear campaign. I don't think I'm vain, but I'm certainly no dog. We fought, and I used that very Staff of Power you hold now to best him.

BILE

Did you also use it to rip him apart?

SET

That seems extreme to you?

BILE

It certainly does.

SET

But you'll notice that it wasn't extreme enough to keep him down.

BILE

That's... a good point, actually.

SET

I didn't count on Isis caring. She was already involved romantically with Orus.

BILE

Their son?

SET

Yes.

BILE

No offense intended, but all the incest...

SET

That's just the social mores of your world. You've never had an attraction to a relative?

BILE

No.

SET

You're missing out. Sex with a sibling's like going back to the womb for a visit.

BILE

I've never thought of it that way, but that doesn't make it any more attractive.

SET

Family bonds. That's what I hadn't taken into account. Her being willing to spend years gathering up the pieces.

BILE

She must have loved him more than you thought.

SET

Or just thought that I'd cut her out after I took over. Whatever. Then Orus snuck into my bed chamber, seduced me and stole the staff.

BILE

This is a very sad story, but I'll ask you again... why are you here?

SET

Oooh, to the point, commanding. No wonder Osiris chose you.

BILE

What? Excuse me, but Osiris did not choose me. I forced my way in.

SET

He probably didn't intend to have you end up with the staff, but he did plan on picking your brain. He does that with mortals, steals their ideas, their specialized knowledge, before he passes them on.

*(BILE contemplates this, then looks under the stairs.)*

BILE

Like the stereo.

SET

Precisely. The audio salesman thought he was going to be a permanent part of Osiris' plans, same as you do.

BILE

I... suspected something like this. I was on to him. It was all too easy.

SET

Now let's talk about how I can help you.

*(BILE looks admiringly at her.)*

BILE

That's the best thing anyone can say to me. Does this involve me giving you the staff?

SET

It could...

BILE  
Because I won't.

SET  
...but it doesn't have to.

BILE  
Good.

SET  
Have you figured out how to make it work?

BILE  
No. I managed to turn it off when it was affecting me, but ever since then it's been a complete wash-out. I tried to test it covertly on Akhenaten while he was working, but I couldn't make anything happen.

SET  
That's easily explainable. The power of the staff comes from the energy created when two adversaries lock eyes. It creates a friction that powers the staff.

BILE  
So it didn't work because I was trying to be sneaky.

SET  
Exactly. It feeds off direct confrontation.

BILE  
I think we will be able to work out a deal here. You help me master the staff, I depose Osiris when he comes back. Then you and I rule here. As equals. Sound fair?

*(She pulls close to him.)*

SET  
Shall we be lovers as well?

BILE  
I don't mix business and pleasure.

SET  
You should make an exception. Once you've had a goddess, you'll never go back.

*(He moves his face in close to hers, then tosses her aside, slapping her behind.)*



BILE

Let's just focus on the task at hand, and negotiate our relationship once the coup's over. Start by teaching me how to make my adversaries' weight unbearable.

SET

Very well...

*(The lights fade out. The Muzak starts up again, but now it has a more militant tone. SET's sensual voice is heard in the darkness.)*

Just grab it like you would any rod, get familiar with it... remember, eye contact is crucial... let your eyes create a river of energy to your target... then just point the staff and shoot. That's it...

*(The lights rise.)*

### SCENE 3

*(SET is at the top of the stairs. BILE is on the ground, swinging the staff around like a master. Smoke flows from its ends.)*

SET

...you've got it. This will be easy. I'll be close by.

BILE

You're not staying?

SET

No, that would give it all away. Surprise is to our advantage.

BILE

All right, then. I'll do it alone.

SET

Don't be worried.

BILE

I'm not afraid of anything. Hide yourself. This'll be over in five minutes.

*(SET smiles coolly at him, then slips offstage. BILE looks at his watch, then sets it forward and sits on the stairs. Moments later OSIRIS enters, carrying a racquetball racquet and in a good mood.)*

OSIRIS

Good morning!

BILE

Where have you been?

OSIRIS

I went down to the Elysian Fields and played racquetball. You're right, I'll be in great shape in no time if I just do that six days a week for eternity.

BILE

I meant why are you late?

OSIRIS

What?

BILE

According to my watch, you're twenty-five minutes late. If this was months from now, I'd overlook it, call it an aberration. But on your first day...

OSIRIS

Wait a minute, mine says I'm three minutes early!

BILE

You've already started changing your watch and blaming it for your tardiness! I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I'm going to have to let you go.

OSIRIS

But... oh, this is a joke. I haven't quite gotten used to having a mortal sense of humor around the place.

BILE

No joke. Clear out your altar.

OSIRIS

You can't "let me go!" I'm Osiris!

BILE

Everyone always thinks they're above the rules, but there will be no exceptions under my management. Rules are for everyone. I'd like to do this without unnecessary drama. Just think of it as retirement.

OSIRIS

And I suppose you'll be keeping Akhenaten!

BILE

No, he's even later than you. I think I'll just start over with some fresh faces.

OSIRIS

I'd hoped that we'd coexist here, but evidently your greed is proportional to your ego.

*(OSIRIS moves menacingly at BILE with his racquet. BILE levels the staff at him.)*

BILE

Don't make me use this.

OSIRIS

You don't even know how!

BILE

Try me.

SET

Yes, try him.

*(They look up and see SET at the top of the altar.)*

OSIRIS

Set. I should have seen your hand in this. Don't trust her, Bile. She only helps herself.

SET

I've warned him about you, Osiris.

OSIRIS

You're the devil here, not me!

SET

Liar!

BILE

Shut up!

*(He points the staff back and forth between them. AKHENATEN enters.)*

AKHENATEN

Whew, just made it. I'd forgotten how much I love sex! That's practically all they do in some parts of the Elysian fields. Especially the tall grass.

*(AKHENATEN notices the tension and follows OSIRIS' gaze up to SET.)*

SET

Hello, lover.

*(BILE is momentarily distracted, and OSIRIS backhands him with the racquet. The staff goes flying. The men scramble after it. BILE and OSIRIS get solid grips, with AKHENATEN holding the tip.)*

OSIRIS

Cursed mortal!

BILE

Stupid God!

*(OSIRIS and BILE struggle for control, then pause, look at AKHENATEN, and smash him in the chest with the head of the staff.)*

AKHENATEN

Ooofff!

*(He releases the staff and falls to his knees. The other two circle each other, vying for control of the staff.)*

OSIRIS

Stop this insanity! We can work this out!

BILE

Give it up, old man. Your time came and went three thousand years ago!

SET

Bile, be wary!

*(OSIRIS suddenly reverses his pressure on the staff and flips BILE over him. They both maintain control of the staff, but BILE is winded. They now lie with their heads next to each other, on their backs.)*

OSIRIS

Give me back my staff!

*(OSIRIS rolls over on top of BILE, whose arms are pinned, and presses the staff toward his throat.)*

BILE

Get off me!

OSIRIS

Upstart! Whelp! Challenge me? See how your machinations crumble, Set? I shall deal with you next!

*(SET looks like she may flee.)*

BILE

Akhenaten... get... his hat...

OSIRIS

*(applying more pressure)*

Shut up!

BILE

The... hat...

*(AKHENATEN looks terrified and cowers at first, but then suddenly springs forward and grabs the hat. He tries to pry it off, but it is welded in place tightly.)*

OSIRIS

Akhenaten, no!

*(OSIRIS grabs at his hat, which frees BILE up enough to knee him solidly in the groin. They both yell in pain, BILE clutching his knee.)*

BILE

Damn metal phallus!

*(AKHENATEN rips the hat off. OSIRIS stands up straight, paralytic and staring. He then falls back against the stairs. SET moves down the stairs, gloating.)*

SET

I have waited for this... the mighty Osiris, falling back into the separate pieces I ripped you into. Now Bile and I shall discard you to the trash heap and rule the Afterworld in your place!

BILE

Not so fast.

*(BILE slowly rises from the ground, still hacking from OSIRIS' assault.)*

I don't recall you doing anything to help me in this little takeover, woman.

SET

I was coming.

BILE

No, you weren't, not unless you thought I was already winning. And why would I need you, anyway?

*(brandishing the staff)*

I have the staff of power, and it is truly time for a change here.

*(All the Egyptians stare at him as he becomes more and more caught up in himself.)*

Because you're the past, and I, I am the future! No one believes in you anymore. I'm what people believe in now! I am the acid in the afterlife, dissolving away the old religion and creating something meaningful! Organization, money, power... People worship me and what I represent, and now when they die, they are going to get me!

*(to AKHENATEN)*

You can stay on as my assistant.

AKHENATEN

Oh. Wow. Thanks a lot.

*(There is a moment of silence, and then OSIRIS begins to snicker.)*

BILE

What are you laughing at?

*(All the Egyptians burst out in raucous laughter. BILE points his staff at OSIRIS.)*

Stop it!

*(There is a brief silence.)*

OSIRIS

*(mock fear)*

Oooohhhh.

*(The laughter recommences, doubled in intensity. BILE turns the staff and directs it at SET.)*

SET

Oh, you mortals are so cute when you're mad.

BILE

What the hell—

AKHENATEN

Can I really stick around and be part of your regime? Pretty please?

*(More ridiculing laughter.)*

BILE

*(to SET)*

But... he's your enemy... how can you take his side?

OSIRIS

So gullible. Can I have my stick back?

BILE

Keep back!

OSIRIS

Just stop.

*(OSIRIS waves his hand and BILE shoots away from him as if hit by a powerful force. He drops the staff, which AKHENATEN gets and hands to OSIRIS.)*

AKHENATEN

Here you are, Lord Osiris.

OSIRIS

Ludicrous mortals. Always so full of yourselves. How could you imagine that you'd just come in here and take over? Mortals... so devoted to whatever religious fad is in vogue, ridiculing the old ways as primitive. Especially this last century. Thinking that you have evolved to a higher state, all the while worshipping a stick puppet.

*(OSIRIS physically mocks the crucifixion. SET and AKHENATEN laugh.)*

Get this straight, man, son of man...

*(drops his arms)*

You're only an animal.

SET

Osiris...

OSIRIS

Yes, wife.

SET

All this action has got me a little... excited. Can we be finished with this petulant, ludicrous mortal?

BILE

You... you're not Set... you're Isis!

SET (ISIS)

How does it feel to finally understand something here?

AKHENATEN

Can we move him along now, Lord Osiris?

OSIRIS

Yes, it is time. Thank you, Martin Talon, for your insight into the structure and organization of your world. It strikes me as a little silly, but occasionally useful. Time for you to toddle along now.

BILE

But... why?

OSIRIS

Why what exactly? I'll give you one question, then it's off to a housing project on the south end of the Elysian fields.

BILE

One?

ISIS

Was that his question?

BILE

No!

OSIRIS

Well, hurry up then.

*(BILE thinks for a moment, then realizes the futility of any question he may ask.)*

BILE

All right. Where'd all the other gods that men worship come from? Jehovah, Zeus, Odin, Buddha... they just don't exist?

OSIRIS

No, they don't. It's just us. Some were the creations of charismatic but false prophets. Most, however, came from the fickle nature of human beings. They got bored with the true face of divinity, and their vanity convinced them that they could remake me in whatever image they wanted. I didn't correct them because I just don't care what they believe. Goodbye, Martin Talon.

*(OSIRIS waves his hand, and BILE walks off under mind control, very stiff.)*



AKHENATEN

We're keeping the vacuum, right?

OSIRIS

Yes, of course. But as for the breaks...

AKHENATEN

Slaves don't get breaks.

OSIRIS

Precisely so.

ISIS:

Osiris, am I getting old?

OSIRIS

Not any older than the rest of us, and much less so than Akhenaten. Remember, he ages in human years.

ISIS:

I suppose...

OSIRIS

My goddess, what troubles you?

ISIS

He turned me down. That's never happened before. I feel old.

OSIRIS

Mortals are gaining, my love. Replicating life without our help. Flying. Don't worry, though; they'll be humble again soon. Gaea's going to stop feeding them.

ISIS

*(sadly)*

He turned me down.

OSIRIS

He can't even comprehend what he's missing...

*(She smiles, then snarls at him playfully.)*

ISIS

I've got something to show you involving the staff of power...

*(The two of them look at each other mischievously, then head offstage. AKHENATEN smiles and turns the chanting back on, then grabs the vacuum and goes back to work as the lights fade out... end of play.)*