

Name _____

DEATH (AND AFTERLIFE) ON THE NILE: OR, THE LEGEND OF ISIS AND OSIRIS

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

This legend, one of ancient Egypt's most famous, tells how life after death came to be a part of Egyptian civilization.

Characters:	Narrator 1	Guest 1	Farmers (variable)	Narrator 5
	Osiris	Servant 1	Farmer 1	Re
	Isis	Servant 2	Farmer 2	Anubis
	Seth	Guest 2	Narrator 4	Narrator 6
	Narrator 2	Guest 3	Child 1	
	Crowd (variable)	Narrator 3	Child 2	

Props: Black-and-white lidded carton big enough to hold actor playing Osiris
Plain-colored carton, same size as above
Veil for Isis
Mask of black dog's head for Anubis
All-white outfit for Osiris
Cloth or paper to simulate reeds

ACT ONE

NARRATOR 1: A long, long time ago, it is said, Egypt was ruled by a powerful family of gods. One such god was King Osiris, whom the people loved dearly—

(Osiris steps forward.)

NARRATOR 1: —because he was wise and just and taught them many things, like how to farm along the banks of the Nile. Osiris, in turn, dearly loved his wife, Isis—

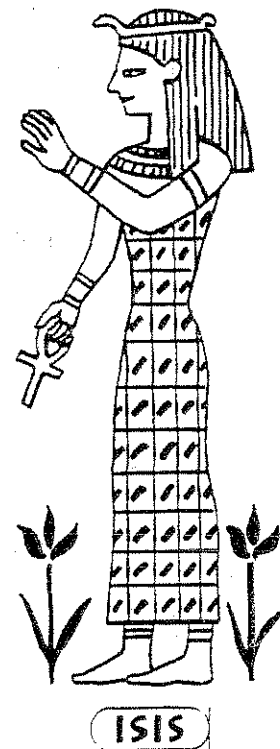
(Isis steps forward.)

NARRATOR 1: —who was also wise and kind and devoted to her husband.

(The two smile at each other and hold hands.)

NARRATOR 1: Now Osiris had a brother, Seth—

(Seth steps forward, smiles at the others, then looks away, disgusted.)



DEATH (AND AFTERLIFE) ON THE NILE

(continued)

NARRATOR 1: —who hated the fact that his brother had been made king rather than himself. Seth kept his jealousy to himself, though—meanwhile plotting the perfect way to get rid of his brother. Little did anyone know what Seth really had planned when he invited Osiris and a crowd of other guests to his mansion for a party one night.

NARRATOR 2: That night Seth's guests ate and drank, sang, and danced to their hearts' content.

(Crowd gathers and carries on in revelry.)

GUEST 1: You sure know how to put on a good party, Seth!

SETH: *(modestly)* Why, thank you.

NARRATOR 2: Then Seth announced the night's main entertainment.

(Servants 1 and 2 carry in a black-and-white chest.)

SETH: *(charmingly)* Tonight we're going to see who gets to take home this custom-made, hand-crafted ebony-and-ivory chest! *(Crowd oohs and ahhs.)* The only rule is: whoever gets to keep it must be able to sleep in it, perfectly! *(Crowd laughs.)*

GUEST 1: What a great gimmick, Seth!

NARRATOR 2: People pushed forward to see if they could fit.

GUEST 2: *(climbing into box)* I'll bet I can fit... Oops, too short. *(Gets out)*

GUEST 3: That looks like my size... ooh, I'm stuck. Can someone pull me out?

NARRATOR 2: Guest after guest climbed in and then out, but no one had just the right build for the beautiful box. Finally, only Osiris remained to try his fit...

CROWD: *(chanting and clapping)* King O-Si-Ris! King O-Si-Ris!

OSIRIS: *(shyly going to the box)* Well, I guess I should give it a try. Isis would love this....

NARRATOR 2: *(speaking while Osiris stretches out in the box)* Little did the king know that Seth had secretly taken his measurements and made the box—

OSIRIS: It fits!

NARRATOR 2: —just for him!

(As he speaks, Seth and his two servants slam down the lid on Osiris and nail it shut. Guards step forward menacingly. The crowd cries out, then falls fearfully silent.)

SETH: At last, the time has come for me to rule! Take that chest—or should I say coffin, heh heh—and throw it in the Nile!



OSIRIS

ACT TWO

NARRATOR 3: When Isis—who happened to be out of town on the night of the party—heard of the horrible thing that Seth had done, she poured all her grief into the task of finding her husband’s coffin. She had to move secretly, though, because “King Seth” had issued orders to have her arrested.

(As Narrator 3 speaks, a servant rushes to Isis and mouths the bad news. Isis hides her face, overcome, then after a moment strides offstage. Farmers immediately form a line, outlining the banks of the Nile, and hoe and plow.)

NARRATOR 3: She traveled up and down the Nile—

(Isis, face partly hidden with a veil, goes to the head of the line of farmers.)

NARRATOR 3: —asking everyone she met whether they had seen Osiris’s coffin.

ISIS: Excuse me, have you seen a black-and-white box float by in the last few days?

FARMER 1: No, ma’am, can’t say that I have—sorry.

ISIS: Pardon me, but have you seen a black-and-white box in the river recently?

FARMER 2: No, sorry...

NARRATOR 4: At last, some children gave her the tip she needed, and after a long search Isis found the coffin out in the Great Sea, along a distant shore.

(As the narrator says these words, Isis mouths a question to Child 1 and Child 2, they nod strongly yes and point far away. She exits in that direction.)

NARRATOR 4: The sorrowful queen had it carried back to Egypt—

(Two servants carry the box, followed by Isis. As Narrator 4 speaks the following lines, Isis doubles over and clutches her stomach.)

NARRATOR 4: —but no sooner had she arrived home than she went into labor to deliver her first child—a son whom she named Horus.

ISIS: *(gasping)* We’ve got to stop here. Quick, put these reeds over Osiris so no one can see him!

(Servants drape reeds over the coffin and help Isis offstage.)

NARRATOR 4: Isis hid Osiris’s coffin in the marshes of the Nile before leaving it. But as fate would have it, Seth just happened to go hunting in that very spot that night!

(Seth, examining the ground for tracks, stumbles up against the reeds and coffin.)

SETH: Aughh! What’s this? *(He carefully parts the reeds.)* You’ve got to be kidding! *(He whips out an imaginary sword and begins hacking at the coffin.)* **ISIS, YOU’RE GOING TO HAVE TO LOOK A LOT HARDER FOR YOUR BELOVED HUSBAND THIS TIME—FOURTEEN TIMES HARDER, IN FACT!!** *(He cackles horribly.)*

ACT THREE

NARRATOR 5: Once more a grief-stricken Isis combed the banks of the Nile, hardly resting until she recovered all the parts of her husband's body. Only after she completed this gruesome task did she let out all the tears she had bottled up inside her.

(As the narrator speaks, Isis sits in front of a plain coffin and begins sobbing.)

ISIS: O god in heaven, why has Osiris had to suffer like this? Will he never live or breathe again? Will he never get to see his son Horus?

NARRATOR 5: Re, the great god of creation, took pity on her.

RE: Poor Isis...I'll send Anubis down to comfort her.

NARRATOR 5: Anubis, who was given special powers, helped Isis piece Osiris's body back together.

(Anubis, who wears a black dog mask, kneels next to Isis and puts his hands in the coffin.)

NARRATOR 5: Before wrapping Osiris's body up in bandages, he treated it with special ingredients to preserve it forever. With that, Egypt's first mummy was born.

(As Narrator 5 speaks, Anubis makes motions of wrapping the inner contents of the coffin in bandages.)



ANUBIS

NARRATOR 6: With Re's help, Isis turned herself into a great bird—

(Isis stands up, goes to the head of the coffin, and begins flapping imaginary wings.)

NARRATOR 6: —and used her huge wings to flap the breath of life back into Osiris.

(After a moment, Osiris, dressed in white, begins to sit up in the coffin. As the narrator speaks the following words, he slowly gets out of the coffin and stands at its foot. He and Isis smile bravely at each other across the coffin. Anubis turns but remains crouched like a dog in front of the coffin's middle.)

NARRATOR 6: To Isis's sorrow, though, Osiris couldn't rejoin her in the land of the living. Instead, he was made king of the land where people go after they die—the afterlife. There, it is said, he continues to welcome everyone who has gotten Anubis's help in preparing properly to live after death. And what of Isis? To her great joy, the beloved queen of Egypt watched her son Horus defeat the evil Seth in battle and take his father's place on Egypt's throne. And while Horus ruled Egypt wisely and well, many Egyptians continued to count on Isis for protection against all of life's dangers.

THE END