

SOCRATES

Based on the book “*The Last Days of Socrates*” by Plato

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Book: Daniel A. Wolf

Orchestration and additional music: Ed Etkins

Cast of Characters

Speaker

Socrates: Greek philosopher (470 – 399 BC)

Xanthippe: wife of Socrates

Students of Socrates:

- Plato
- Crito
- Phaedo
- Apollo

Euthyphro

Menexenus: son of Socrates (six or seven years old)

Meletus: Chief Prosecutor

Judge

Jailer

The Sophists

Three Merchants

Townspeople

Messenger

The Jury

Foreman

Two guards

PROLOGUE

Speaker: (*walks onto an empty stage*)

I am not an Athenian, nor a Greek, but a citizen of the world.

To find yourself think for yourself.

There is only one good – knowledge. There is only one evil – ignorance.

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is a habit.

Beware the barrenness of a busy life.

I am too honest to be a politician.

Enjoy yourself. It’s later than you think.

Eat to live, don’t live to eat.

See one mountain and you’ve seen them all.

Call no man unhappy until he is married.

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These are the words of Socrates.

Four grotesque looking men enter. They are the Sophists. Contemporaries of Socrates, they taught skepticism about morality and knowledge. They also taught how to be successful in politics, an area Socrates had little interest in. Finally, they took fees for their services while Socrates never accepted money. In short, the Sophists represent the antithesis of Socrates.

Meet the Sophists

Sophists: *(sing)*

To those who know us not,
We are what life forgot
To give us force for right
We thank that oversight.

We live from day to day
Should things go wrong we say
That life is just a dream
And doesn't mean a thing.

The world exists for us
And yet we're turned to dust
(mockingly)
Is this a just reward
For worshiping the Lord?

Socrates enters.

Now here's a man of faith
Who thinks that men shall wake
To see their lives inside
Inside? That's where we hide!

Sophists exit.

Socrates walks around a little. He is in deep thought trying to hear his "divine voice". He is seventy years old, bearded, but still vigorous. He remains barefooted throughout the play, testament to a simple, non-materialistic lifestyle. He notices the audience and kindly smiles.

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Monologue:

Good afternoon/evening. I would like to tell you a story. One day a friend of mine went to visit the oracle of Apollo at Delphi and asked whether there was anyone wiser than me. The priestess replied that there was no one. When I heard about this I said to myself: “What does the god mean that I am the wisest man in the world?”

After puzzling about it for some time I set about to check the truth of it. First, I went to interview a man with a high reputation for wisdom. However, in conversation with him I formed the impression that although he appeared to be wise he, in fact, was not. As I walked away it occurred to me that I am certainly wiser than this man. Whereas he *thinks* he knows something about which he does not, I am quite conscious of my own ignorance.

From that time on I interviewed one person after another - politicians, poets, skilled craftsmen, and by dog (!) my honest impression was this: that the people with the highest reputation were almost entirely deficient while others who were supposed to be their inferiors were much better qualified in practical intelligence.

So I concluded, true enough. I must indeed be the wisest man in the world since not only can I perceive my own ignorance but I can readily perceive the ignorance in others. And this ability, by the way, has caused me no small

ACT I

Scene 1. The Agora (marketplace)

Merchants gather to sell their wares such as linen, wool, jewelry, hats, mirrors, brushes, fruits, meats, and vegetables. It is a busy, bustling atmosphere as townspeople bargain to get the best price. A young man (Plato) enters. Merchants entice him with their wares.

First merchant: Can I interest you in some fine jewelry?
Second merchant: Perhaps a mirror. Here, how about a brush?
Third merchant: Look here, young man, wonderful fruits and vegetables. Just cut this morning.
Plato: To be honest, I'm not here to buy anything. I'm looking for a man called Socrates. Do you know where I can find him?
First merchant: Oh, you don't want to meet him; that is, if you want to keep your sanity.
Plato: What do you mean?

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First merchant: Let's just say I'd rather fight a lion blindfolded.
Second merchant: Two lions.
Third merchant: Three.

Plato appears puzzled.

First merchant: But he should be here soon. He comes almost everyday around this time. But I warn you...

After You Meet with Socrates

First merchant: (*sings*)

You won't be able to sleep
After you meet with Socrates

Second merchant: (*sings*)

Just prepare for quick retreat
After you meet with Socrates

Third merchant: (*sings*)

Go now before it's too late
Impending doom if you should wait

All three merchants: (*sing*)

You won't have a mind left to contemplate
After you meet, after you meet,
After you meet, after you meet,
After you meet, after you meet,
With Socrates.

Plato: (*speaks*) Oh, come on. Nobody's that bad.

First merchant: (*speaks*)

Ya wanna bet?

Second merchant: (*sings*)

Might as well concede defeat
Before you meet with Socrates

Third merchant: (*sings*)

Should you like to think or speak
Then never meet with Socrates

All three merchants: (*sing*)

Go now, you mustn't delay

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Quick man, he's coming this way
Are you sick man?
Then lie down and stay

Merchants push Plato to the ground and hold him there; virtually sitting on him. Plato struggles to get up but to no avail.

All in marketplace: *(sing)*

The terror of Greece with no surcease
With just a glance you're in a trance
Those piercing eyes to hypnotize
And by the way, did we not say?
Avoid the gaze throughout this play
Called SOCRATES.

Socrates enters. He is followed by his students Crito, Phaedo, and Apollo.

Socrates: Well, let's see who we can poke fun at today.

Plato gets up, dusts himself off, and walks over to Socrates.

Plato: Excuse me, sir, but would you be Socrates?

Socrates: I am. And who are you?

Plato: My name is Aristocles, but my friends call me Plato.

Socrates: What can I do for you, Plato?

Plato: I understand you are a teacher, a teacher of life.

Socrates: Life? No, young man, not life, but the *good* life. It's the good life that interests me.

Plato: How can I live the good life?

Socrates: It's easy. All you need to do is practice the "ities."

Plato: The "ities"?

Socrates: The "ities"! Gentlemen:

The Ities

Phaedo: *(sings)* Sincerity, veracity

Crito: *(sings)* Humility, tenacity

Apollo: *(sings)* Integrity, nobility

All: *(sings)* And that's how you reach immortality.

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Plato: (*speaks*) Oh I get it, the “ities”! All those words end in I-T-Y.
Socrates: (*speaks*) That’s right. But wait, there’s more. Phaedo?
Phaedo: (*sings*) Serenity, simplicity
Socrates: (*speaks*) Crito
Crito: (*sings*) Charity and purity
Socrates: (*speaks*) Apollo
Apollo: (*sings*) Fixity and equanimity
All: (*sings*) And that’s how you reach immortality.
Plato: (*speaks*) Hey, can I try? I have a few “ities” of my own somewhere.
Crito: (*speaks*) Sure, brother, let’s see what you got.
Plato: (*sings*) Don’t forget generosity
And his friend magnanimity
Always have a lack of vanity
All: (*sing*) And that’s how you reach immortality.

Four young women walk by. Plato, Crito, Phaedo, and Apollo approach them. Each takes a partner and engages in lively dancing. The women exit and the four men return to Socrates.

Socrates: (*sings*) So you see the simplicity
How to reach immortality
If you practice then you can’t lose

Socrates, Phaedo, Crito and Apollo sing to Plato.

Socrates: (*sings*) All you gotta to do is sim-pol-ly choose
Phaedo: (*sings*) All you gotta do is simply choose
Apollo: (*sings*) All you gotta do is
Crito: (*sings*) Si-
All: (*sing*) im-
Plato: (*speaks*) pul-
Socrates: ly-
I choose. I choose you. May I join? I am not a school, young man. My words are free to anyone who will listen. So, of course. You may join.
Plato: Thank you.
Socrates: Gentlemen. Meet Plato.

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Phaedo, Crito and Apollo receive Plato warmly.

Scene 2. Socrates' home.

Socrates and Plato walk towards Socrates' home from the marketplace.

Socrates: So tell me something about yourself. Are you married?
Plato: No, not yet, but there is a young lady I'm thinking of asking.
Socrates: Well, by all means you should marry. But just remember this: If you get a good wife you'll be happy. If you get a bad one...
Xanthippe: (*shouts*) Socrates!
Socrates: you'll be a philosopher.
Plato: Your wife?
Socrates: Xanthippe herself. You go now. I'll introduce you at a better time (*pause*) perhaps when she's sleeping.
Plato: See you tomorrow then?
Socrates: See you tomorrow.

Plato exits. Socrates summons the courage to face his wife. Xanthippe is outside in the garden area cutting some vegetables with a paring knife. Socrates enters.

Xanthippe: Well, if it isn't my dear husband, returning from a hard day of, what's that you do? Oh yes, giving everyone in the marketplace a splitting headache! And what, by the way, are this week's great words? Oh wait. Let's not forget last week's words. Correct me if I'm wrong.

Xanthippe clears her throat then acts as if she is giving an important speech.

“He who is not content with that he has will not be content with what he doesn't have” to which I replied, “Try me! Try me!” So what are this week's words?

Socrates (*under his breath*):

The unexamined life is not worth living.

Xanthippe: Excuse me?

Socrates (*louder*): The unexamined life is not worth living.

Xanthippe: Well, this must be my lucky day. Until now I thought my life was pretty worthless. But I was wrong because there's not a woman in

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Athens who has examined her life more than I have. Especially married life!

Socrates: Oh, no.

Oh What a Joy to be Married to You

Xanthippe: (*sings*)

Oh what a joy to be married to you
When neighbors come by and ask what you do
And I have to say I haven't a clue.
Oh what a joy to be married to you.

Oh what a pox should befall my poor life
To whisper to friends that I am your wife
When my only friend is this paring knife

Xanthippe displays knife.

Xanthippe: (*speaks*) It's either you or me, honey.

It's either you or me.

(*sings*) Oh what a pox should befall my poor life.

Oh what a terrible turn of events

I sit here alone. You're out with your friends

And talk about things that don't make no sense.

Socrates: (*speaks*) That don't make *any* sense. *Any*.

Xanthippe: (*brandishing knife, speaks*)

It's you or me, bud. It's either you or me.

Xanthippe: (*sings*) Oh what a terrible turn of events

Oh that I only had listened to mom

With one look at you she started to run

And now I just heard she's drowning in rum

Oh that I only had listened to mom.

Oh why? Why? Why?

Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?

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Stop the music!

Music stops.

(*speaks*) Not only do I have a lousy husband, but I can't even get a decent bridge to sing!

(*sings*) Oh that I only would catch a disease
And bring me relief from this Socrates
Unfortunately, I'm stronger than he
Oh, that I only would catch a disease.

What did I do to deserve such a fate
I worship the gods, I tell them they're great
Then they turn around and give me this clown
What did I do to deserve such a fate?

Oh what a shame I got married to you
You haven't a job, not even a shoe
My life is a mess, I wear the same dress
We haven't a dime.

Socrates: (*speaks*) What's a dime?

Xanthippe: (*speaks*) Never mind. (*brandishes knife*)

(*sings*) You call this a house, not fit for a mouse
You're starting to stink. What the neighbors must think!

(*speaks*) Forget it. They already thought.

She stares long and hard at Socrates.

(*sings*) Oh what a joy to be married to you.

Xanthippe: Now go say goodnight to your son. You remember we have a son, don't you?

Socrates: Yes, I remember.

Socrates enters his son's room. Menexenus is reading under a candle.

Menexenus: Papa!

Socrates: There's my boy!

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They hug.

Did you have a good day? How was school?
Menexenus: Not so good, Papa. I can't understand this math.
Socrates: Let me see that. (*looks at the book, appears puzzled*) Hmm, you know son, I'm sure your mother can help you with this first thing in the morning.

Xanthippe hears this from the next room and looks up exasperated.

Socrates: Now it's time for you to get to sleep. So get into bed.
Menexenus: Alright. (*gets into bed*) Papa?
Socrates: Yes?
Menexenus: Can you sing to me? I love when you sing to me.
Socrates: Sure. Just close your eyes

A Lullaby

Socrates: (*sings*)

Sleep, darling, go to sleep, dream away your cares
Let tonight hide from sight all your fears
Till the sun whispers time to reappear.

Dream, darling, may you dream, of worlds so rich and fine
May your dreams capture things gone away
May you see endlessly a bright new day.

Somebody needs a heart to share
Someone just like you
Somebody who needs someone like you

Socrates and Xanthippe sing together from different rooms:

Little boys and little girls, go to sleep all around the world
And awake investigating all they see
Till it's time to bed they climb and pray to thee

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That someday tomorrow across the land children will all join hands.

Menexenus is now asleep. Socrates blows out the candle and walks into the kitchen area. Xantippe serves him his meal. He holds out a hand to her. She takes it though with some reluctance.

Scene 3. An Open Field

Plato is walking home alone. He is singing and dancing to the Ities including the merchants' part a cappella.

Plato: (*sings*) Sincerity, veracity
Humility, tenacity
Integrity, nobility
And that's how you reach immortality

Serenity, simplicity
Charity and purity
Fixity and equanimity
And that's how you reach, yeah!
And that's how you reach, yeah!
And that's how you reach
Im-mor-tal-i-ty

Plato: (speaks)

Immortality. (*laughs*) Only one man there today will ever be immortal, and that's Socrates – the wisest and kindest man I have ever met. I'll be lucky to even get mentioned.
(*imagining a conversation*) "Plato, wasn't he Socrates' barber?" "No, I think he was a blacksmith." (*pause*) Oh, what I wouldn't give to be like him.

If I Could Be

Plato: (*sings*)

If I could be just like he,
And see the world philosophically
Then maybe then by small degree

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I'd understand humanity
If I could be like he

If I could be just like he
Through subtle wit and irony
I'd move a man to concede
The fallacy of his belief
Yet all the while remain as friends

Though egos bruise
They will soon mend
With certainty
If I were he

But then again is that the goal
To imitate another's soul?
Perhaps it's not to be like him
But to be more like me

If I could be just like me
I'd take the words of Socrates
And be so strong to withstand
The mighty blows of lesser men

Yet not too strong to ignore
The words of those who can teach me more
If I could be like me

Scene 4. A street in Athens

Socrates and Euthyphro walk from opposite ends of the stage. They meet in the middle as if by chance.

Socrates: Euthyphro!

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Euthyphro: Ah, my good friend Socrates. What a pleasure to see you again. How have you been?

Socrates: Getting a bit on in years, I'm afraid. Seventy now. Can you believe it?

Euthyphro: But you're still young mentally and that's what counts.

Socrates: You are much too kind. So what brings you to Athens?

Euthyphro: Not good. I'm here to bring a charge of manslaughter.

Socrates: Against who?

Euthyphro: Against someone by whom I am increasing my reputation for craziness.

Socrates: Why is that? Is he such a nimble opponent?

Euthyphro: Not at all. In fact, he's quite an old gentleman.

Socrates: So...who is it?

Euthyphro: My father.

Socrates: My good man, your own father?

Euthyphro: That's right. He accidentally killed one of our hired hands so I've come to Athens to prosecute. Needless to say, my entire family is against me on this.

Socrates: (*ironically*) Hard to imagine.

Euthyphro: Yes. They say it's an act of impiety for a son to prosecute his own father. But they simply don't understand the difference between piety and impiety.

Socrates: And you do?

Euthyphro: Perfectly

Socrates: Please then. Teach me.

Euthyphro: With pleasure.

Piety

Euthyphro: (*sings*) The difference my friend is surely not difficult
Piety is what pleases the gods.
And what pleases them most is to prosecute criminals
And what pleases them least is to let them go free.

Socrates: (*speaks*): That's it?

Euthyphro: That's it.

Socrates: Punishing wrongdoers?

Euthyphro: That's right.

Socrates: (*sings*): But don't you agree there are acts just as pious
Without which our lives would only seem violent?

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Give to the poor, protecting the young,
Care for the sick, or helping your mom?

- Euthyphro: (*speaks*) Hmm. Perhaps you're right. Well then...
(*sings*) Piety is what the gods find agreeable.
Impiety is what they must hate
- Socrates: (*speaks*) That's it?
- Euthyphro: That's it.
- Socrates: But didn't Zeus once put his own father in chains?
- Euthyphro: Yes he did. So?
- Socrates: (*sings*) So then it must hold that the gods often quarrel
They fight and they bicker and hold different opinions
About what is right and about what is wrong
About what is good and about what is bad.
(*speaks*) So could not the gods also disagree about what is pious and what is
impious?
- Euthyphro: (*getting annoyed*)
Hmm. Perhaps you're right. (*thinking*) Ah!
(*sings*) Then piety is to attend to the gods while impiety is not to do so.
- Socrates: (*speaks*) An excellent answer!
- Euthyphro: You really think so?
- Socrates: Absolutely. But may I ask just a few questions?
- Euthyphro: Certainly.
- Socrates: When you say "attend to" do you mean
(*sings*) As a horse trainer attends to a horse?
- Euthyphro: That's right.
- Socrates: (*sings*) As a dog trainer attends to a dog?
- Euthyphro: Exactly!
- Socrates: (*sings*) As cattle farmers attend to cattle?
- Euthyphro: Precisely!
- Socrates: (*sings*) Then when you attend, do you aim to benefit or harm the thing
that's attended (*speaks*) to?
- Euthyphro: (*laughing*) Socrates, you're funny. I aim to benefit it, of course. (*continues
laughing*)
- Socrates: (*sings*) So if piety is to attend to the gods, how do the gods benefit?
- Euthyphro: (*pause*) What?
- Socrates: (*speaks*) How do the gods benefit from our attending to them? Does it make
them better?
- Euthyphro: Of course not. They can't become better. They are gods.

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Socrates: Then what do the gods accomplish by using our services?
Euthyphro: They achieve many splendid results, Socrates.
Socrates: Such as?
Euthyphro: Well, they... Uh, they... They, uh...

Euthyphro goes through a long series of facial and bodily contortions designed to express a complete and total inability to answer Socrates' question. Socrates remains expressionless as he waits for an answer.

Socrates: Well, since you can't answer perhaps we need to start our inquiry all over again.
Euthyphro: I'm sorry Socrates, but I have an important engagement somewhere.
Socrates: Where?
Euthyphro: Anywhere! And it's time for me to be off.
Socrates: What a way to treat a friend. You going off like this and dashing me from my great hope of learning the difference between piety and impiety. After all, you must know all about piety (*suddenly stern*) or you would never think of prosecuting your own father.

Euthyphro falls into deep thought. He now realizes that Socrates has led him to an unpleasant realization about himself. He looks ashamed and embarrassed, but his final look is one of anger towards Socrates for making him look foolish.

Scene 5. The Agora

Socrates enters the marketplace. A merchant reluctantly goes up to him. He is goaded on by the other merchants.

Merchant: Socrates, we've been thinking.
Socrates: Really? I'm impressed.
Merchant: No, seriously.

Socrates almost says "But I am serious" but restrains himself for sake of conversation.

Why don't you take a vacation? You know, go somewhere. Go to the forest. Sit by a river. Take the family. Relax. It will do you good.

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Socrates: I appreciate your concern, but I don't think so. To be honest, if I ever left this city I wouldn't know what to do with myself. No, this is where I belong. And another thing, I have nothing to learn from trees.

This Great City

Socrates: *(sings)* In this city we call Athens, I'm quite an attraction
A gadfly they call me, No one can control me

All in market place stop what they're doing and move up to hear Socrates sing.

How the haughty enthrall me with logic so faulty
Were I to extol them, I'd really insult them.

All laugh.

In their wisdom, a schism.

Merchants: *(sing)* Hey, hey, hey.

Socrates: *(sings)* I cannot dismiss it
If I do so, I'm complicit in logic illicit.

All laugh.

But a good man will listen to my criticism
But they are the exception. Most keep their direction

Crito, Phaedo, Apollo, and Plato enter. They greet Socrates warmly. The atmosphere is highly festive. All join Socrates in dance. Despite his advanced age, Socrates is an adept dancer.

So I'll stay here and ponder the world soon upon us
If we're honest and noble I shall remain hopeful

Students: *(sing)* But the darkness around us seeks only to drown us
How tired the waiting for clouds to start breaking

The three merchants: *(sing)*
Still tomorrow's a good day

Students: *(sing)* Hey, hey, hey.

The three merchants: *(sing)*
To plant for the season

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The seeding inspires those who still wander.

Socrates: *(sings)* So you see now how silly to leave this great city
Relax with Xanthippe? It's simply not in me.

All laugh and cheer. Many hug Socrates.

First merchant: We still love ya, Socrates, even if you are a pain in the ass
sometimes.

Second merchant: This place just wouldn't be the same without you.

Third merchant: You're like an old slipper. Oh, I forgot, you don't like to wear
shoes.

Everyone laughs.

First merchant: Alright, alright. Let's get back to work.

Merchants return to their jobs. Townspeople continue shopping.

Phaedo: That was nice. Very nice.

Messenger enters. He carries a scroll.

Messenger: *(loud)* A message for Socrates from the Assembly!

Socrates: *(raises his hand)* Here.

He hands the scroll to Socrates. Socrates unrolls it and reads to himself.

Plato: Master, may I see that?

Socrates hands it to him. Plato reads aloud:

“Socrates is guilty of refusing to recognize the gods. He is also
guilty of corrupting the youth. The penalty is death.”

Plato: What is this? “Corrupting the youth”? You didn't corrupt us.

Socrates: Yes, I did. I taught you how to think.

Crito takes scroll from Plato and looks at it

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Crito: And this: “Guilty of refusing to recognize the gods.” Where is that from?

Socrates: *(pause)* Euthyphro.

Phaedo: Euthyphro? The man who prosecuted his own father?

Socrates: That’s the one.

Apollo: That poor old man languishing in prison like that. He must’ve died of a broken heart.

Plato: Anyway, it doesn’t matter. We will be there for you.

Crito: We’ll do anything you ask. Just tell us.

Socrates: *(half-heartedly)*
Thank you.

Apollo: Master, why do you say like that? You don’t believe us?

Socrates: We’ll see.

All students: Master!

The Soldiers of Truth

Students: *(sing)* We are the soldiers of truth.
We will fight for you
We will die for you too
Just tell us what we should do.

We’re an invincible chain
We’re unbreakable
Nothing can wear us down
Through life and in death we are bound.

Socrates: *(sings)* I’ve heard this so many times
All the things you are
All the things you will do
In time I’ll see if it’s true.

Students: *(sing)* You have no reason to doubt.
Socrates: *(sings)* I’ve heard this before
Students: *(sing)* We’ll be standing there
When the flames are about
You have no reason to doubt.

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Socrates: (*sings*) I've heard this so many times
Through the centuries
Man persistently lies
And all that he says he denies.

Students: (*sing*) We are the soldiers of truth.
Please believe in us
Can't you see we are new?
Just tell us what
Just tell us what
Just tell us what we should do.

The Sophists enter. They speak in unison.

Sophists: (*speak*) Use your head to wear a hat. That is what the head is for
If you think it's more than that, then prepare for what's in store.
(cacophony of horns and drums)

If you follow Socrates you will just be led astray
We will give you all you need, just do everything we say.
(cacophony of horns and drums)

Spoken gently, much like a mother soothing a child.

Wild thoughts you cannot eat, there is nothing to decide
You have only to repeat.

Suddenly stern.

I serve the state, it will provide.

I Serve the State (*instrumental*)

Sophists fan out around the marketplace repeating: I serve the state it will provide. Soon everyone in the marketplace is repeating it. The people who just minutes earlier were warm and friendly towards Socrates now look menacingly at him. Apollo, too, is seduced by the Sophists. He walks away from Socrates and fellow students also repeating "I serve the state, it will provide."

Phaedo: (*speaks*) Apollo! Apollo!

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The crowd now begins to walk toward Socrates in a threatening manner repeating the phrase with increasing volume and ferocity.

Crito: *(speaks)* Master, run! Run, Master, run!

Suddenly everyone is silent.

Socrates: *(sternly)* We walk. We will walk!

End of Act I

Act II

Scene 1. The Assembly

Scene opens in the assembly hall. Stage left stands Socrates talking with Crito, Phaedo, and Plato. The judge is seated in the center. Two guards stand on either side of him. Stage right sits Meletus, Socrates' chief accuser. Farther right sits the jury. Near the jury stand the three merchants. There is much commotion.

The Apology

First merchant: *(sings)* There stands Socrates with his band of thieves
Spinning more of their worn out hypocrisies

Second merchant: *(sings)* Must we have to wait
What will be his fate
Just reward for all that we have endured.

Third merchant: *(sings)* Just get on with it
There's no reason to acquit
Nothing further we must hear

The three merchants: *(sing)* The verdict is clear, is clear

Judge: *(speaks)* The trial against Socrates will now begin. Socrates is
accused of disrespecting the gods and corrupting the young.
The prosecution will speak first. Meletus, you may begin.

Meletus: *(sings)* In the marketplace, there is not a trace
Of respect or fealty before the gods

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And with clever tongue he corrupts the young
With his words all we've built will be undone.

Do not be deceived by his ingenuity
He is still the enemy, and enemies all lie, all lie.

Judge: *(speaks)* Socrates, you may now speak.

Socrates: *(sings)* All I am is a man who wants to be free
To say what I feel, to say what I need.
All I am is a man who says only this:
Accept not what is, continue to ask

Judge: *(speaks)* The jury will now decide.

Jury convenes. The foreman tallies the vote. There is much anticipation.

Foreman: *(sings)* No use, Socrates. We have all decreed
You to die, by poison you shall receive
And with no regret we sentence you do death
Better still your mem'ry we'll soon forget
So be gone with you and take your noble few
Atheni can now endure for centuries or more, or more.

Socrates: *(sings)* Do you think that with my passing
You'll be safer and free without me?
Do you think that with my passing
The youth will no longer pursue a life lived in truth?

The merchants, Meletus, foreman and jury laugh at Socrates who stands center stage alone.

Plato *(to Phaedo)*: Go! Talk to him.

As Phaedo approaches Socrates, the others go about their business, talking among themselves, completely ignoring the man they just condemned to death.

Phaedo: *(sings)*

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Oh poor Socrates, did you once believe
That your words would be so well received?
No, you could not win against such common men
They are blind and thus could never bend.

Socrates: *(sings directly to Phaedo)*

All I've said is for Man to look within himself
Cast aside the lies that hide and bind his soul, his soul

(with decreasing intensity and volume)

His soul, his soul, his soul.

Speaks: *(with renewed strength)*

The hour of departure has arrived...

All suddenly stop to listen.

and we go our ways, I to die and you to live. Which is better only
God knows.

Socrates bids farewell to Crito, Phaedo, and Plato. Two guards escort him to prison.

Scene 2. In prison

A room in the state prison at Athens. It is dawn. Socrates is sleeping on a bed against the back wall. Crito is sitting patiently on a stool at the foot of the bed. Socrates stirs, yawns, opens his eyes, and sees Crito. Socrates is wearing leg chains.

Socrates: Crito! Did you just come in?

Crito: No, I've been sitting here quite a while.

Socrates: Then why didn't you wake me?

Crito: I wouldn't dream of such a thing. You were sleeping so well and I didn't want to disturb you.

Socrates: I appreciate that. But tell me, why are you here?

Crito: I have bad news.

Socrates: Oh, the boat from Delos has arrived?

Crito: Not yet, but I'm told it will probably be here tomorrow. And according to the law you will then have to end your life.

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- Socrates: Well, Crito, I hope it may be for the best. If the gods will it, so be it.
- Crito: Now look here, Master, and listen carefully. It's still not too late for you to escape. I know quite a few people who are more than willing to get you out of the country. In fact, one man, perhaps you know him, Simmias of Thebes, brought money with him for this very purpose. So you don't need to worry about money. And another thing. Forget what you said that you wouldn't know what to do with yourself if you left this country. There are plenty of places that would welcome you. If you went to Thessaly, for example, I have friends there who would give you complete protection.
- Socrates: I see.
- Crito: Now, I'm sorry, Master, but I need to say a few things you may not like to hear.
- Socrates: Go ahead.
- Crito: Alright. (*pause*) I just don't feel it's right what you're doing – throwing your life away when you could save it. You're just treating yourself the same way your enemies did and, and it pains me to say this...
- Socrates: Go on.
- Crito: (*pause*) I'm ashamed of you.
- Socrates: Why is that?
- Crito: Well, first there was the way you came into court. Then there was the conduct of your defense. And now (*getting excited*) to complete the farce we get into this situation. There, I said it. Now, make up your mind. No, no, don't make up your mind. It's too late for that now. You should have made it up already. The whole thing must be carried out tonight or it's too late. So I beg you, please, take my advice (*becoming hysterical*) and don't be unreasonable!
- Socrates: My dear Crito.

Crito

- Socrates: (*sings*) So you think that if I escape then all is well.
But haven't we thought that *living* well
A greater belief than living long
In my life I always have tried to do what's right
Can't you see that if I escape I also leave my dignity?

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I always have tried to obey the law
Must this change? Though this be unfair
Have I a claim?

Crito: (*sings*) Socrates, I only want what is best for you
On my knees I beg you to leave
You've nothing to lose.

Socrates: (*sings*) Nothing to lose? Only my word, my sacred bond
How could I ever again teach right from wrong?
In Thessaly disorder and license reign supreme
Who would be so open to hear a man proclaim
That life should be of virtue and justice everyday.
They would see that I did not live with what I say
So let it be with God as my guide I am not afraid
Whatever you say will be in vain

Crito: (*sings*) I have nothing to say. I...

Socrates: (*speaks*) Please...

Together: (*sing*) understand.

Socrates: (*speaks*) Now tell the others to be here tomorrow around mid-day.

Crito: I will. Anything else?

Socrates: Yes, I owe a rooster to Asclepius. Will you remember to pay the debt?

Crito: I will.

Socrates: Good. You go now. I need my rest. Seems I have a busy day tomorrow.

Scene 3. In prison, the next day

Socrates is asleep. Jailer opens the cell door and enters. The noise wakes Socrates up.

Jailer: You won't be needing these anymore.

Jailer takes off the leg chains.

Socrates: The boat from Delos has arrived?

Jailer: That's right. Just this morning.

Socrates: My lucky day.

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Jailer: 'fraid so, Socrates. But I just want to say one thing. And please not a word of this to anyone. It's been a real pleasure having you here. Not once did you curse at me, or get angry at me like so many others do.

Socrates: Why should I? You're just doing your job.

Jailer: That's right, but anyway, it's been a real pleasure knowing you.

Jailer begins to leave. Turns around and speaks:

Oh, I almost forgot. Your wife is here. Should I send her in?

Socrates: My wife? *(suddenly nervous)* Let her in.

Jailer exits. Socrates quickly tries to look presentable, back of head to the cell door. Xanthippe enters quietly and watches as Socrates prepares himself. Socrates turns around and sees her. They stare at each other. Socrates goes through a series of emotions ranging from extreme embarrassment to anger. Finally, he breaks down and cries.

Socrates: I have a problem.

Xanthippe rushes over and embraces him.

Socrates: *(speaks)* I am so sorry. I was not a good husband for you. I never gave you those things a woman loves. Nice clothes, jewelry...

Xanthippe: *(crying too)*

My dear husband, don't you know me? I never needed those things. I was the richest woman in the world. I had you.

Socrates: You mean that?

Xanthippe: Yes.

You Were Still My Star

Xanthippe: *(sings)* When I made fun of you,
When I embarrassed you
When I laughed at you
Harassed and disparaged

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SOCRATES

You were still my star.
You were my star,
You were my star
Always, always

When I got mad at you
When I spat at you
When I berated you
When I said I hated

You were still my star
You were my star
You were my star
Always, always

And at night as I laid next to you
I felt a light so bright I knew
That this man I called my husband
Was really somethin'

Xanthippe: (*speaks*) Look at you, you are such a mess. Let me at least fix your hair.

Xanthippe combs Socrates' hair.

Xanthippe: (*speaks*) You have to look nice for the ferryman.
Socrates: (*speaks*) I know.

Xanthippe: (*sings*) When I threw sticks at you
When I threw bricks at you

Socrates holds his forehead, smiling.

When I played tricks on you
And even put a hex
Socrates: (*speaks*) You did?

Xanthippe shakes her head yes.

Xanthippe: (*sings*) You were still my star

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SOCRATES

You were my star
You were my star
Always, always

Xanthippe: (*speaks*) I brought our son. He doesn't know.
Socrates: (*nodding*) Alright.

Xanthippe exits and returns with Menexenus.

Menexenus: Papa!
Socrates: There's my boy!

They hug. Xanthippe tries not to cry.

Menexenus: Mama says you're going somewhere. Where you going?
Socrates: Oh, a little far I'm afraid.
Menexenus: When you coming back?
Socrates: I don't know, but can you promise me a few things?
Menexenus: Sure. What?
Socrates: First, listen to your mother. If she asks you to do something, you'll do it, right?
Menexenus: (*nods*) Right.
Socrates: And the second thing is: study hard. You should always study hard.
Menexenus: Even math?
Socrates: Even math. Now give your papa a big hug.

They hug.

Xanthippe: (*to Menexenus*)

Wait for me outside. I'll be right there.
Menexenus: (*as he exits*)
Bye, Papa.
Socrates: Bye, son.

Menexenus exits. Xanthippe and Socrates look deeply into each other's eyes. They embrace one last time.

Xanthippe: (*speaks*) My star.

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Xanthippe exits. Socrates tries to regain his composure. Plato opens the cell door and peeks in.

Plato: Master?
Socrates: Come in, come in.

Plato, Crito, and Phaedo enter.

Plato: How are you feeling?
Socrates: Fine. Almost cheerful.
Plato: This is certainly no day to be cheerful.
Socrates: And why not? Finally, at last, I can go to a place free of desire. Think, just think how much this body distracts us. Everyday we are filled with so many loves, hatreds, fears, yearnings that there's no time to think about anything else. What I mean is, there's never enough time to be philosophers.
Crito: That may be all well for you. But for us this is a great calamity. We are losing a father, and we will be orphans the rest of our lives.
Socrates: Please, please, do not feel that way. Look after yourselves and follow the line as I have laid it down and you will be fine.
Phaedo: We will do our best.
Socrates: Good. Well, let's get on with it. Call the jailer in.

Phaedo leaves to get jailer. Crito appears agitated. He remonstrates with Plato away from Socrates. Phaedo returns with jailer. Jailer carries a cup containing the poison.

Socrates: (to jailer) So, my good fellow. You understand these things. What do I do?
Jailer: Just drink it and walk around a bit. When you feel your legs getting heavy, lie down.
Crito: Master, wait! There's no need to hurry. The sun's still up. You have plenty of time. I know where people have dinner with family and friends well into the night.
Socrates: But what do I gain drinking the poison later? Really, Crito, why cling to life when it has no more to offer? It will only make me look ridiculous. So gentlemen, my final words (*holds up the cup as if to make a toast*): Be of good cheer and know this as a truth: that no evil can come to a good man either in life or after death. (*drinks from the cup*) Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to take a walk.

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Socrates begins to walk in a kind of circle. He soon falls to his knees.

Jailer: *(to students)*

Pick him up. Get him to the bed.

Plato, Crito, and Phaedo lead Socrates to the bed. They lay him down and stand over him. Socrates covers his face with his hands

Students: Master! Master!

Jailer: Move away. Move away!

Students stand to one side. Jailer hits Socrates' foot hard.

Jailer: Did you feel that?

Socrates: No.

Socrates begins to shake as the poison makes his body grow cold. He uncovers his face. His body trembles a little more. He closes his eyes and passes away.

Students: *(in profound grief)* Master! Master!

They place a sheet over him. Birds are heard singing overhead.

The Death of Socrates

Plato: *(sings):* Hear the birds flying high through the sky
And up above they mourn and hope to find
A sign of love
Let us look at this life
Realize that love exists
Persist to visualize to this man
Each one of us can rise.

As music is played each member of the cast, friend and foe, comes out and places a flower on Socrates' bed, pauses for a moment, then exits. Xanthippe is last. She remains on stage with Plato, Crito and Phaedo looking down at Socrates' body. As the music nears the end Plato turns to his left and receives assuring nods from Crito and Phaedo.

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He then turns to his right and receives the same from Xanthippe. Plato then steps forward signifying the passing of the teachings from Socrates to his most prized pupil.

END OF PLAY

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