

THE ENEMY OF THE STATE

The fight for democracy begins

A play by
Simon Bowler Khan
(a work in progress)

6-30-23

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CHARACTERS

Character	Doubling
ANYTUS, (<i>ANA-tus</i>) a 'common citizen' now Chief of the Assembly (40s)	(1)
SOCRATES, (<i>SAA-kruh-teez</i>) stocky, plainly dressed (70)	(2)
MELETA, (<i>Mel-EH-ta</i>) a politician (40s)	(3)
THEMION, (<i>THEM-ion</i>) Anytus's son (20s)	(4)
ZAFEER, (<i>ZAF-eer</i>) Anytus's Persian female slave, (20s)	(5)
HELENE, (<i>HEL-een</i>), a female Macedonian farmer (30s)	(5)
ARCHON, (<i>ARK-on</i>) the Judge, female	(7)
2 CITIZENS, female and male.	(5,6)
SOLDIER	(6)
JAILER	(6)

11 characters - 6 male, 5 female. With doubling 7 actors, (4 male, 3 female) - any ethnicity

Run Time: 90 mins (This play runs more quickly than plays of similar length) (11,900 words)

Setting: Athens, Greece. The marketplace/court, gym, Anytus's study, jail cell, a street.

Time: 399 B.C.

Tagline: The fight for democracy begins.

Logline: An old man accused of heresy puts democracy on trial.

Synopsis: Four years after a brutal tyranny and a humiliating defeat to the Spartans, the restored democracy of Athens elects Anytus as their leader. The city teeters on the edge of collapse, while the Aristocrats hope to regain power. Desperate to gain support, Anytus asks Socrates to join the Democrats. When the old man refuses, he is indicated, but he turns the tables and puts democracy itself on trial.

Writer Bio: After graduating in Film and TV from the University of Westminster, London, Simon produced at BBC World Service Television, then produced documentaries for Channel 4 and The World Bank. He produced the mockumentary feature film 'Man of the Year' and worked as an entertainment radio journalist in Los Angeles. He returned to television and produced multiple shows for Channel 4, the BBC, ABC, PBS, Discovery, Oxygen, Bravo, and Friends of the Earth. He has written several award-winning plays.

Reviews:

"A sharply drawn and thematically potent exploration of the ways in which democracy can be corrupted by ignorance and manipulation. ... captures the wit and intelligence of Socrates and the writer creates a powerful critique of both venal and short-sighted politicians and the populace who support them." Script Pipeline.

"It seemed as if this was ripped from the headlines. Page after page it kept me intrigued. The dialogue was very strong. Each character has a distinct voice. Whomever plays Socrates will be getting a rich character with explosive lines. A very strong play." Coverfly

"A perfect script for many theaters as the setup doesn't require a lot, and would be a great challenge for a cast of talented actors. Excellent and straightforward writing." AFF

"Concise and compelling storytelling; from the first page it was apparent that I was delving into a fully-realized world., expertly balancing imagery with simplicity so as to paint pictures but not appear overly literary." Coverfly

"This entire scenario feels incredibly similar to what has happened in the last few years of the American government and it would be very surprising if the writer was not trying to achieve this effect. This is a fantastic script and the writer did a great job of creating a story that is both timeless and incredibly timely." Screencraft

"A compelling and structurally intelligent modernization of the Trial of Socrates narrative. A dramatic, well-paced tragedy that also incorporates elements of Greek Drama and Shakespearean history plays." Screencraft

Awards

World Series Contest Winner

The Writer Speaks Winner

Lighthouse Writers Winner

New Works of Merit Finalist

Sultan Padamsee Finalist

London Playwrights Award Shortlist

Seven Devils New Play Foundry Notice of Merit

Screencraft Stage Play Semifinalist

Risk Theater Tragedy Semifinalist

Write Movies Play Semifinalist

AACT New Play Fest Semifinalist

Coverfly Redlist: #1 Historical Stage Play

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ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

At rise the Agora marketplace in Athens, indicated by columns, and a broken statue of Athena at the back of the stage, her arm smashed off, her face cracked, dried blood on her white feet. Graffiti scrawled on the walls, "ATHENS FOR ATHENIANS" and "VOTE FOR ANYTUS". A podium center stage.

Enter CITIZENS, CHEERING, waving an Athenian flag, and carrying batons, and shouting.

CITIZEN 1

Long live Athens!

CITIZEN 2

Long live the democracy!

CITIZEN 1

The aristocrats will not rule again.

CITIZEN 2

We saved our government from their tyranny.

CITIZEN 1

Victory to the people!

CITIZENS

(chant) Anytus! Anytus! Anytus!

At side of stage, enter Meleta (30's), (*pronounced Mel-EH-ta*) simply, yet elegantly dressed with a silver necklace. She is with Anytus (40s), (*pronounced 'ANA-tus'*) a plain man, but smartly dressed, a slight limp from an old wound, hands rough from tanning. He wears a golden head band - the 'crown'.

They look at the crowd, jostling and waving
their batons.

MELETA

This is your moment, Anytus.

ANYTUS

Meleta, they cheer, but their anger's palpable.

MELETA

Then you must calm them.

ANYTUS

I need a moment to pray.

MELETA

Anytus, do not delay, they hunger for your presence.

ANYTUS

(looks up to the sky) Themis, *(pronounced 'THEE-mis')* Goddess of Justice, Creator of
the Oracle, Law of Nature...

MELETA

Oh for Gods sake!

She strides to the podium.

MELETA

Citizens, *(raises a clenched fist as salute)* thank you for your patience.

CITIZEN 1

Where's Anytus?

MELETA

He's here and ready to speak, but let me remind you that the aristocrats tried to steal the
election, with the help of the Spartans, our old enemy.

CITIZEN 1

Traitors!

MELETA

They have degraded our morality with their liberal philosophers. They tried to divide us with their promises of power, and they scorn our religious values with their heretical “inquiries”.

CITIZEN 2

Lock them up!

CITIZEN 1

Exile them!

CITIZEN 1

Hang them all!

MELETA

But like a Phoenix, democracy will rise from the ashes of tyranny.

Citizens CHEER.

MELETA

Long live the Democracy! Long live Athens! All hail, Anytus.

Meleta raises her fist in salute. The citizens CHEER and raise their fists. Anytus walks to the podium.

CITIZEN 2

Hail Anytus. He is wise.

CITIZEN 1

He’s a man of the people.

CITIZEN 2

He gives hope where there was despair.

CITIZEN 1

He’ll lead us to prosperity.

Anytus takes the podium and addresses the crowd and us.

ANYTUS

Citizens, freemen, and slaves, we struggled for four years to overcome the brutalities of the tyrants and with this much contested election, you have put your faith in us.

CITIZEN 1

Lead us, Anytus.

ANYTUS

Friends, we'll restore Athens to the city of Pericles, a democracy enshrined in law, but first we must contend with the Persian immigrants flooding our border to the east. And we must arm ourselves against the Spartans to the south. They tried to install their king, but we did not yield.

CITIZEN 1

Bastards!

CITIZEN 2

Death to our enemies!

ANYTUS

And now we will restore Athens to her former glory as the jewel of the Aegean.

CITIZEN 1

Athens for Athenians!

CITIZEN 2

Exile the foreigners.

ANYTUS

Friends, quieten your anger, we must not act harshly, but must encompass all.

CITIZEN 1

But they take our jobs.

CITIZEN 2

And they defile our women.

ANYTUS

I understand your rage, but we must rise above our emotions. No more the rhetoric of division. No more our internal fights that leave us weak to our enemies. Together we will rise.

CITIZEN 1

Anytus, how about repairing the broken statue of Athena?

ANYTUS

(barks) She will not be touched.

CITIZEN 2

But she's been in disrepair for years.

ANYTUS

(firm) No one will lay a hand on her.

CITIZEN 1

It's a sacrilege, her arms broken, her chest split, and the blood dried on her feet.

ANYTUS

She stands as a reminder of our history, lest we forget.

CITIZEN 2

He's right, we must remember the crimes of the tyrants.

CITIZEN 1

What about food? We've hardly eaten for months.

ANYTUS

Friends, we all suffer, high and low, rich and poor, but with our trade embargoed, we must all bear tight.

CITIZEN 1

We can't wait much longer.

CITIZEN 2

My children are hungry.

ANYTUS

Be patient, citizens, there'll be food for all.

CITIZEN 2

When?

ANYTUS

Soon.

Anytus exits.

CITIZENS

(chant) Anytus! Anytus! Anytus!

MELETA

Citizens, go to your homes, our business here is done for today.

She exits.

CITIZEN 1

What do you reckon?

CITIZEN 2

They will lead us to strength.

CITIZEN 1

Ah, but will they?

CITIZEN 2

They said so.

CITIZEN 1

Politicians say many things.

CITIZEN 2

Why do you doubt them? They speak the truth. Be glad, friend, the gods smile on us, for we are now a democracy.

They exit.

SCENE TWO

Anytus's office. Night. An imposing table, wooden chairs, goblets, and a jug of wine. Candles illuminate the room, shadows flickering. Anytus writes on scrolls at the table, the golden crown among them.

ANYTUS

Fifteen triremes, five hundred oarsmen, and a platoon of Hoplites, to be paid with the raising of taxes on trade. Signed, Chief Counselor. (calls out) Soldier.

A soldier enters.

SOLDIER

Sir?

ANYTUS

Take this to the council. *(hands over the scroll)*

SOLDIER

Yes, sir. *(turns to leave)*

ANYTUS

Stay a moment. What's your name?

SOLDIER

Leno, *(pronounced Lee-NO)* sir.

ANYTUS

Come closer.

SOLDIER

(nervous) Am I in trouble?

ANYTUS

No, not at all. I just want to talk to you.

SOLDIER

I don't have much to say, sir.

ANYTUS

I'm sure that's not true.

SOLDIER

Well, nothing compared to your experience. You fought tyrants, you led the election, and your tannery supplies all Athens.

ANYTUS

Thank you, Leno, but we're all equal now, and the democracy values each of our skills.

SOLDIER

(laughs) I dunno, sir, I just follow orders, I don't think about it too much.

ANYTUS

How old are you?

SOLDIER

Twenty-two, sir.

ANYTUS

The same age as my son.

SOLDIER

Themion's a good man, *(a beat)* from what I know.

ANYTUS

You hesitate?

SOLDIER

Well...

ANYTUS

Speak freely.

SOLDIER

Well, he, er...

ANYTUS

Go on.

SOLDIER

He befriends the aristocrats.

ANYTUS

(sighs) Yes, yes he does. Do you resent it?

SOLDIER

They're not my sort of people, sir, *(laughs awkwardly)* but we're free to choose our friends, right?

ANYTUS

Yes, of course. *(a beat)* So you believe in the democracy, Leno?

SOLDIER

Yes, sir.

ANYTUS

And you believe we can defend it?

SOLDIER

Yes, sir. I hope so, sir. I mean, we've never tried it, I mean, not properly.

ANYTUS

We learn as we go.

SOLDIER

I'm sure you'll lead us right, sir.

ANYTUS

Thank you, Leno. That's all.

The soldier goes back to the door and stands guard. Enter Zafeer (20s), *(pronounced 'ZAPH-
eer')* a Persian female slave.

ZAFEER

Excuse me, master.

ANYTUS

Yes, Zafeer?

ZAFEER

Councilwoman Meleta is here to see you.

ANYTUS

Show her in.

Zafeer exits. Enter Meleta.

ANYTUS

Meleta, thank you for coming.

MELETA

(looking around) Anytus, haven't you done well for yourself? Chief of the Assembly, Speaker of the House, guards, a mansion, most impressive.

ANYTUS

I did not seek it, but was chosen.

MELETA

Yes, of course, but if I knew the position came with all this *(laughs)* I'd have run for office myself.

ANYTUS

And I'm sure that if you were a man you'd be the winner. You have the 'common touch'.

MELETA

I hope that's a compliment?

ANYTUS

It is.

MELETA

Except that I am a woman and so I'll never wield real power.

ANYTUS

Things will change in time, Meleta.

MELETA

Yes, well, what did you want to discuss? Your messenger said it was urgent.

ANYTUS

Soldier, leave us.

SOLDIER

Yes, sir.

The soldier exits. Anytus pours two goblets of wine and gives one to Meleta.

ANYTUS

One of our spies has been caught.

MELETA

Oh Gods! Who?

ANYTUS

Cellaphus, (*pronounced 'SELLA-fuss'*) the blacksmith. He was tortured and killed.

MELETA

Poor man. He died a noble death for his city. We should make a sacrifice for him, and perhaps a pension for his family.

ANYTUS

I'll see to it.

MELETA

Did he get any information through?

ANYTUS

He confirmed that the Spartans collude with the aristocrats.

MELETA

Again?

ANYTUS

They plan to place pawns within our government and so usurp us from within, even though the Treaty of Eleusis (*pronounced 'El-OO-sis'*) bars them from interfering.

MELETA

They're as deceitful as snakes.

ANYTUS

Aye, and if they gain just a few seats, they'll control the courts, and then there's nothing to stop them taking the assembly, and full control of the city.

MELETA

Then we must nip this in the bud. Arrest all the aristocrats.

ANYTUS

(shocked) On what pretext?

MELETA

Does it matter?

ANYTUS

We are not above the law.

MELETA

So you'll fight fair while they fight foul?

ANYTUS

I won't stoop to the tyrants' tactics. We must maintain our integrity.

MELETA

And look what that's got us, ten years of dictators.

ANYTUS

We would never have won the election if we'd cheated. The people trust us.

MELETA

The people trust whoever feeds them.

ANYTUS

We will need the support of an aristocrat.

MELETA

That's never going to happen. They resent us on principle.

ANYTUS

If one crosses the aisle others will follow.

MELETA

I admire you're optimism, but we're too polarized, it'll never happen.

ANYTUS

Must you always be contrary?

MELETA

I'm being realistic.

ANYTUS

Our common love for the city will bring us together.

MELETA

When we shared a common vision for Athens, maybe, but not now.

ANYTUS

I believe we can bridge the gap.

MELETA

They want tariffs, we want free trade, they want oligarchs, we want democracy. Where's the middle ground?

ANYTUS

Indulge me.

MELETA

It sounds like you've already decided, so, who are you thinking will 'bridge the gap'?

ANYTUS

There is one they all respect.

MELETA

Who?

ANYTUS

Socrates.

MELETA

(laughs) The old man? He's a stone mason's son, hardly an aristocrat.

ANYTUS

He fought in the wars and is a hero.

MELETA

Forty years ago.

ANYTUS

People don't change.

MELETA

No they don't, he was an elitist then and he is now. What's the phrase, "catch a tiger by the tail?"

ANYTUS

I can handle him.

Zafeer enters.

ZAFEER

Chairman Anytus.

ANYTUS

Yes, Zafeer?

ZAFEER

He's arrived.

ANYTUS

Bring him.

Zafeer exits.

MELETA

He's here now?

ANYTUS

We cannot wait.

MELETA

Oh Gods! I need another drink.

She pours a goblet of wine.

At the side of the stage Zafeer and SOCRATES, (70), ruffled hair, loose fitting clothes, and bare footed, followed by the soldier, who stands guard at the door.

ZAFEER

They'll see you now, sir.

Socrates has a deep rasping voice, with a 'common' accent. He sounds perpetually angry.

SOCRATES

(slicks his hair) How do I look?

ZAFEER

(regards him) Your... er, tunic, sir.

SOCRATES

(straightens his belt) Do you know why I've been summoned?

ZAFEER

No, sir, but Anytus is eager to see you.

SOCRATES

He barely knows me.

ZAFEER

But everyone knows your reputation, sir.

Center stage, Anytus and Meleta waiting.

ANYTUS

(calls out) Well? Is he there?

Zafeer approaches.

ZAFEER

Socrates, son of Sophroniscus, to see you, sir.

ANYTUS

Come closer, old man.

Socrates walks further in to the light and looks around the chamber. He is stocky, his demeanor brusque.

ANYTUS

Socrates, thank you for attending.

SOCRATES

The last time I stood in this chamber was with Critias (*pronounced "Crit-EE-us"*) and the tyrants, after they'd massacred five hundred people in the Agora. The smell of blood still fouling the air.

MELETA

Thank the Gods those days of butchery are behind us.

ANYTUS

Let me introduce Councilwoman Meleta.

SOCRATES

What is my purpose here?

ANYTUS

We require your assistance.

SOCRATES

Ha!

MELETA

What's so funny?

SOCRATES

Powerful people like you asking me for help.

MELETA

False modesty.

SOCRATES

It's simply a statement of fact.

ANYTUS

Socrates, you carry great influence, your students hang on your every word.

MELETA

God knows why.

ANYTUS

(reprimands) Meleta, please!

SOCRATES

Councilwoman, it seems you have a negative idea of me.

MELETA

(disgusted) You're a Sophist. You distort the truth.

SOCRATES

A Sophist tries to see things as they are, not how you want to see them.

MELETA

But you cast doubt on our beliefs.

SOCRATES

I ask people to question their assumptions. So, Anytus, what 'assistance' do you require?

ANYTUS

Endorse our government.

SOCRATES

I'm sorry, Anytus, I cannot.

ANYTUS

Why?

SOCRATES

Because I have reservations and need to study the subject more.

ANYTUS

We obviously both want the best for Athens.

SOCRATES

Or is it the best for your government that you're seeking?

MELETA

(to Anytus) He's a prevaricator. He answers a question with a question.

ANYTUS

We work for the good of the people.

SOCRATES

Which people?

MELETA

Oh God, there he goes again.

SOCRATES

Meleta, you inherited wealth.

MELETA

Yes, after my husband was killed by Critias. (*pronounced "Crit-EE-us"*)

SOCRATES

I'm sorry for your loss. Anytus, you own the largest tannery and employ a hundred men.

ANYTUS

(*proud*) A hundred and six are under my protection.

SOCRATES

So, you're hardly the common people.

MELETA

That's not the point.

SOCRATES

Then what is the point?

MELETA

Yesterday in the market you said the people aren't fit to rule.

SOCRATES

That's right, we were discussing experience being more important than popularity.

MELETA

You don't deny it?

SOCRATES

No, and I think we got somewhere, or at least a few seemed engaged.

MELETA

(to Anytus) You see? He's unrepentant.

ANYTUS

(to Socrates) All you need to do is to speak on our behalf. Nothing more.

SOCRATES

And what would I say?

ANYTUS

That you support us.

SOCRATES

But I am neither for nor against.

MELETA

Yet you teach the rich that they're born to lead.

SOCRATES

In a sense they are.

MELETA

(to Anytus) There, he says it openly.

SOCRATES

In that they have they luxury of time to study.

MELETA

(to Anytus) Lock him in the dungeons for a few days, he'll come round.

ANYTUS

Meleta, quiet!

Socrates' attention drifts, he turns away and mumbles to the air.

SOCRATES

(aside) Not now.... Well, you might be right...

MELETA

(to Anytus) What in Hades' name is he doing?

SOCRATES

I must do the right thing.

MELETA

(to Anytus) He's talking to thin air!

SOCRATES

But at what cost?

MELETA

(to Anytus) This is a waste of time.

SOCRATES

You ask too much of me.

ANYTUS

(barks) Socrates?

SOCRATES

(turns back) Yes, Anytus.

ANYTUS

Who were you talking to?

SOCRATES

My daemon. *(pronounced 'DAY-mon')*

ANYTUS

You're what?

SOCRATES

A voice that guides me. You could call it my intuition.

MELETA

Good God, you're insufferable.

ANYTUS

(to Socrates) If you stand with us I'll ensure your family gets regular rations and your son will be guaranteed a place in the Hoplite platoon.

SOCRATES

(laughs) Now you try to bribe me.

ANYTUS

You are too prideful. Yield a little, for the Gods sake, do you not love Athens?

SOCRATES

As if she were my mother.

ANYTUS

Then save her and join us.

SOCRATES

I'm sorry, but I can only follow my conscience.

ANYTUS

(barks) You're as obstinate as the stone you once carved.

SOCRATES

I don't think we have anything else to discuss, and so, I bid you both good night.

Socrates tries to exit, but the soldier blocks him.

SOLDIER

Halt.

SOCRATES

(to Anytus) May I leave?

ANYTUS

Consider our request.

SOCRATES

Good night, Anytus.

ANYTUS

Let him go.

The soldier steps aside, Socrates exits.

MELETA

Now you've tipped your hand, can you just let him walk away?

ANYTUS
Soldier, you may leave.

SOLDIER
Yes, sir.

The soldier exits.

ANYTUS
He's no threat if he stays silent.

MELETA
That's a big if. All he does is talk.

ANYTUS
Yes, but I believe he's an honorable man.

MELETA
Perhaps, but we need to pressure him if your plan's to work. *(a beat)* What did he call it, that voice of his?

ANYTUS
His 'daemon'. *(pronounced 'DAY-mon')*

MELETA
It could get an indictment.

ANYTUS
For what?

MELETA
Heresy.

ANYTUS
That's a stretch.

MELETA
He's invented his own god.

ANYTUS
Can we prove it?

MELETA

We don't need to, he says it himself, and it will move the people to us, the religious ones at least, and you know how enthusiastic they are.

ANYTUS

Two weeks in power and you would bend the law to suit our cause?

MELETA

I would use the law to it's full extent.

ANYTUS

I don't like it.

MELETA

Nor I, but he's a contentious crab. His claws must be clipped.

Anytus paces, thinking.

ANYTUS

I wanted to persuade him, not compel him.

MELETA

Yes, well, that boat's sailed. And, you gave him a choice.

ANYTUS

I did. Several times.

MELETA

And he chose them over us. Now you see where his loyalty lies.

ANYTUS

I didn't want to believe.

MELETA

But you see it?

ANYTUS

If we have no regard for law, we will end up becoming tyrants ourselves.

MELETA

Your caution is warranted, Anytus, but these are just temporary measures.

ANYTUS

It bodes badly.

MELETA

Be assured, when he faces prison he'll change his mind.

ANYTUS

You think so?

MELETA

He's old and frail. The prospect of prison, once it becomes tangible, will persuade him. And the judge is a family friend, leave her to me.

ANYTUS

We'll have to be sure.

MELETA

There's another charge we can bring.

ANYTUS

Oh?

MELETA

The young aristocrats use his words to justify their power.

ANYTUS

It's not against the law to teach.

MELETA

He doesn't teach, he corrupts. You see the effect on your son.

ANYTUS

(bitter) It's true, he's besotted with the old man. He won't listen to me anymore.

MELETA

Because he's full of conceit. I say we put Socrates on trial and he will persuade the people to us by his own arrogance.

ANYTUS

You think it will work?

MELETA

You saw him? They will not take kindly to his provocations.

ANYTUS

I will sleep on it. Tomorrow's sun will cast a clearer light. Good night, Meleta.

Meleta exits. Anytus lowers his head and prays.

ANYTUS

Themis, (*pronounced 'THEE-mis'*) Goddess of Justice, give me strength to do right.

A door SLAMS off stage. Enter Themion (*pronounced 'THEM-ion'*) (20s), shaggy. He staggers and accidentally knocks over a chair.

THEMION

Ssssh! Don't wake him up. (*stoops unsteadily to pick it up*) (*to the chair*) I tol' you ta be quiet.

ANYTUS

Leave it!

THEMION

(*turns, embarrassed*) 'ello, father.

ANYTUS

Themion, you're drunk!

THEMION

(*slurs*) I'm... I'm goin' to bed.

ANYTUS

Where were you?

THEMION

Out.

ANYTUS

You befriend those people deliberately to gall me.

THEMION

Am I not free to make my own choices?

ANYTUS

Not when they're bad choices.

THEMION

I must be my own man.

ANYTUS

Your own man! You're still a boy and you turn your back on your family.

THEMION

(bitter) Like you turned your back when you fled the city.

ANYTUS

I had to. You know that. They were killing hundreds.

THEMION

But why do you leave us behind?

ANYTUS

I thought it best.

THEMION

And mother died because it.

ANYTUS

Every day I'm haunted by what could or should have been.

THEMION

Socrates says wrong actions come from wrong thoughts.

ANYTUS

Be careful, Themion, stay clear of him and his friends.

THEMION

He is a wise man.

ANYTUS

I thought so too, but when the elite became his students, Alcibiades (*pronounced "al-suh-BAI-uh-deez"*) and then Critias (*pronounced "Crit-EE-us"*), he changed.

THEMION

How?

ANYTUS

He became cynical. Themion, my only son, listen to me, they're riches are beguiling, their power intoxicates, they are not good people. Their only regard is for their own wealth.

THEMION

Socrates has no money.

ANYTUS

How do think he's able waste the days pontificating? Because of his rich friends. But you must be more than that.

THEMION

Anyway, that's the past. Good night, father.

Themion exits unsteadily. Anytus growls,
clenches his fists. Enter Zafeer.

ANYTUS

What in hell's wrong with him? The more I try to reach him, the worse he becomes.

ZAFEER

If I may speak boldly?

ANYTUS

What?

ZAFEER

You can't teach a dog by beating it.

ANYTUS

But a dog must be trained nonetheless.

ZAFEER

Yes, sir, but he's your son, perhaps you're too harsh.

ANYTUS

For good reason.

ZAFEER

Sir?

ANYTUS

Do you remember what was it like under the oligarchs?

ZAFEER

You bought me the year after the revolution.

ANYTUS

Yes, I suppose I did. Critias (*pronounced "Crit-EE-us"*) stole the election and ordained himself supreme leader. We fled and built an army in the hills. We had to be strong and disciplined, and for two years we fought while many were executed by the tyrants, my wife and friends among them.

ZAFEER

You have suffered much, sir.

ANYTUS

We all did, and to see Themion discard it as if it means nothing burns my heart.

ZAFEER

Yes, sir. There's much he doesn't understand.

ANYTUS

How do I teach him?

ZAFEER

I don't know, sir. Did you eat?

ANYTUS

There's too much to be done.

ZAFEER

But you're tired.

ANYTUS

I'm fine. Here. *(gives her a coin)* Request the oracle and ask if the gods are with us.

ZAFEER

Yes, sir.

ANYTUS

And ask for a sign to affirm it.

ZAFEER

A sign?

ANYTUS

Something I can show the people. Something compelling. And come straight back.

ZAFEER

Yes, sir.

She exits. Anytus goes back to his table and scrolls.

SCENE THREE

The Gymnasium, indicated by spears and shields on the walls. Themion with Socrates, facing each other in a wrestling stance.

SOCRATES

Someone comes at you, what do you do?

THEMION

(hesitant) Defend?

SOCRATES

Yes, but you must disarm them first. Attack me.

THEMION

(afraid) But...

SOCRATES

All that holds you back is fear. Come on.

Themion growls and RUSHES waving the knife.
Socrates sidesteps, grabs his arm, twists, and
THROWS Themion.

SOCRATES

You're too eager. Take your time, keep your weight low, and your eyes on mine.

Socrates reaches out to help Themion up, but
Themion brushes off Socrates' hand.

THEMION

I can stand on my own.

SOCRATES

Is that pride or courage speaking? Now I'll attack, you defend.

Themion gives Socrates the knife. Socrates
advances.

SOCRATES

Don't back away, stand your ground, and let me come to you.

Themion braces himself. Socrates advances.
Themion moves aside.

SOCRATES

Twist, boy! Use my weight against me, like I showed you.

Themion grabs Socrates' arm, twists, and takes
the knife.

SOCRATES

Excellent work. You'll be a hoplite soldier yet.

THEMION

Now you sound like my father.

Socrates clasps a brooch on Themion's tunic.

SOCRATES

There, much more handsome.

THEMION

It's gold, it must be worth a fortune.

SOCRATES

Probably. It was given to me by Plato. I have no need of it.

Enter Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 from one side of
the stage.

CITIZEN 1

The stalls are empty. There's nothing left.

CITIZEN 2

They promised us food.

CITIZEN 1

Anytus said he'll fill the granaries. But when?

CITIZEN 2

We'll starve. There's not enough to go round.

CITIZEN 1

Kick out the foreigners, that's what I say.

They see Socrates and Themion.

CITIZEN 2

Hey, look, it's Anytus' son.

CITIZEN 1

And that old bastard, Socrates. *(calls out)* Hey, old man.

THEMION

What have you against him?

CITIZEN 1

We ration and starve while he scorns us for being sheep.

THEMION

But he cares for all citizens.

CITIZEN 2

He cares for his rich friends, and those bastards colluded with the Spartans.

THEMION

It was that or we would've been overrun by the Persians.

CITIZEN 1

No matter what you say, he's a skank.

THEMION

(pulls out a knife) Take that back or I'll cut out your tongue.

SOCRATES

Themion, I do not need defending.

THEMION

They must be taught a lesson.

SOCRATES

Not this way.

CITIZEN 1

(to Citizen 2) You see how he provokes a fight?

CITIZEN 2

They want our blood. You can see it in their eyes.

CITIZEN 1

Aye, they hate the common people.

SOCRATES

If I offend you, I apologize. I only seek to...

CITIZEN 1

(interrupts) Seek somewhere else. We care not for your wrangling.

SOCRATES

Then we'll leave you to yourselves. Come, Themion. Let's talk elsewhere.

Socrates and Themion exit.

CITIZEN 1

(to Citizen 2) How fares you family?

CITIZEN 2

We're at our wits end.

CITIZEN 1

Us too.

CITIZEN 2

We must have faith that Anytus will succeed.

Enter soldier.

SOLDIER

Citizens, a ship has arrived from Crete. They say it has grain.

CITIZEN 2

Praise Zeus. *(to Citizen 1)* Perhaps our fortune shifts.

CITIZEN 1

Let's be quick, friend, or it will all be claimed.

SCENE FOUR

Anytus' study. Day. Anytus enters with Meleta, carrying a scroll. She throws it on the table.

MELETUS

The judge granted both counts of the indictment.

ANYTUS

With no conditions?

MELETA

None.

ANYTUS

So now we can make the arrest?

MELETA

We just need your signature.

ANYTUS

(about to sign the scroll) There'll be no going back.

MELETA

Would you rather the tyrants return?

The soldier enters.

SOLDIER

Sir, there's a mob forming at Colonus *(pronounced "Col-UN-us")*.

ANYTUS

What do they want?

SOLDIER

They're demanding food.

ANYTUS

Did the ship not provide?

SOLDIER

No, sir, it was empty.

ANYTUS

Why?

SOLDIER

Raided by pirates, sir, that's what they said.

ANYTUS

And the people?

SOLDIER

We pushed the mob back, but a fight broke out.

MELETA

We can't keep them with us for much longer. Anytus, give the order. Let me make the arrest.

Enter Zafeer looking dispirited.

ZAFEER

Master.

ANYTUS

Zafeer, did you see the priestess?

ZAFEER

Yes, sir.

ANYTUS

What did she say?

ZAFEER

When she looked into the entrails a raven flew over her temple.

MELETA

You saw it?

ZAFEER

Yes, ma'am.

ANYTUS

What did she say?

ZAFEER

"A black cloud will block the sun".

ANYTUS

A cloud will block the sun? Did she interpret?

ZAFEER

No, sir.

ANYTUS

That's all she said?

ZAFEER

Yes, sir, just that.

MELETA

It's a sign we'll be eclipsed if we don't show that we're in control.

ANYTUS

(to Zafeer) She said nothing else?

ZAFEER

No, sir.

MELETA

(to Anytus) Sign the warrant, Anytus. The meaning of your dream is clear.

ANYTUS

You're no priestess.

MELETA

Maybe not, but we must be decisive.

ANYTUS

Very well. *(he signs the scroll and hands it over)* Here.

MELETA

You made the right decision. We'll have the old man within the hour. *(to soldier)* You, come with me.

Meleta exits with the soldier.

Anytus goes to the window and looks out at the city.

The sound of shouting and screams in the distance.

SCENE FIVE

Gymnasium. Day. Enter Socrates and Themion,
wearing the golden brooch.

SOCRATES

I hear you are helping Plato with his new school.

THEMION

We found a land in the Academe that may be suitable.

SOCRATES

Are you ready for such a venture?

THEMION

You doubt my ability?

SOCRATES

You're still young.

THEMION

You're saying youth precludes intelligence?

SOCRATES

I'm suggesting maturity adds perspective. Will you teach all of the youth?

THEMION

Those who pay.

SOCRATES

But not ordinary citizens?

THEMION

It's not a charity. I won't be poor like you.

SOCRATES

I've everything I need.

THEMION

Why suffer when you can have luxury as well?

At the other side of the stage enter Anytus, wearing the golden head-band 'crown', and Meleta and the soldier.

SOLDIER

Councilmen Anytus and Meleta attend.

ANYTUS

Themion, come here.

THEMION

(irritated) I am busy, father.

ANYTUS

(barks) I said stand away from him.

THEMION

He does no harm.

ANYTUS

He spurs discontent.

THEMION

It's your failing government that spurs discontent.

ANYTUS

I forbid you to keep company with him and do not waste money on baubles.

He snatches for the brooch. Themion steps back.

THEMION

It was a gift.

ANYTUS

You look like a bought whore.

THEMION

I wear it with pride.

ANYTUS

Your mother would be ashamed.

THEMION

It's you who shames me.

Anytus SLAPS his son a stinging blow.

SOCRATES

Anytus, restrain yourself.

ANYTUS

Keep away from our family. Meleta, proceed.

MELETA

Socrates, you are under arrest.

SOCRATES

On what charge?

MELETA

For not worshipping the gods and for corrupting the youth of Athens.

SOCRATES

(laughs) Is that all you could come up with?

ANYTUS

Will you come peacefully?

Themion blocks his father.

THEMION

I'll not let you take him.

ANYTUS

Themion, move away. *(draws his sword)* Don't make me hurt you, boy.

SOCRATES

Stop! I'll not be the cause of violence.

THEMION

Then you walk into their trap?

SOCRATES

Not if I go willingly.

THEMION

But why?

SOCRATES

You will see.

Socrates puts his wrists out and lets Anytus
shackle him.

ANYTUS

Themion, there's work to be done at the tannery. I'll see you there.

THEMION

I do what I will, I'm not your puppet.

ANYTUS

So be it. You're no longer my son. I disown you.

MELETA

Anytus, think what you say.

ANYTUS

He humiliates my family name. *(to soldier)* Take him to the prison.

SOLDIER

(to Socrates) Come on, old man.

Anytus and the soldier lead Socrates off.

THEMION

He's a bastard. I hate him.

MELETA

He's your father.

THEMION

Not anymore, according to him.

MELETA

He still deserves your respect.

THEMION

He deserves what he gets.

MELETA

You're too hard on him.

THEMION

Why do you care?

MELETA

I've known you since you were a boy, your mother was my friend, of course I care. Themion, join us and become a useful citizen. You can do much good.

THEMION

What will happen to Socrates?

MELETA

That's entirely up to him. Think about it. We are your people.

She exits.

SCENE SIX

Anytus' house. Night. Anytus at his table, eating hungrily. The soldier enters with HELEEN (30s), (*pronounced 'HEL-eeen'*) dressed in rags.

SOLDIER

Sir, there's trouble at the jail.

ANYTUS

What trouble?

SOLDIER

A crowd wants to lynch Socrates.

ANYTUS

They wouldn't dare.

SOLDIER

They're getting feisty, sir.

ANYTUS

Keep them at bay, but don't hurt anyone.

SOLDIER

Yes, sir, but they're screaming for his blood. I don't know how much longer we can hold them back.

ANYTUS

Then double the guard.

SOLDIER

What if they push through?

ANYTUS

Don't let them.

SOLDIER

Yes, sir, but, er, regarding your son.

ANYTUS

Yes?

SOLDIER

He's close to the old man.

ANYTUS

What are you suggesting?

SOLDIER

He could get us information on the aristocrats, if we could win him over.

ANYTUS

I'll not use my son like a pawn.

SOLDIER

I was only suggesting..

ANYTUS

(barks) Do not suggest it again.

SOLDIER
Yes, sir.

ANYTUS
(re: Heleen) Who's this?

SOLDIER
She was found without papers.

ANYTUS
Come forward. *(she steps closer, eyes cast down)* Your name?

HELEEN
Heleen, sir.

ANYTUS
You're not Athenian?

HELEEN
No, sir, I came here to find sanctuary.

ANYTUS
We do not have enough for ourselves.

HELEEN
I'll work, sir, for food, anything, whatever needs doing.

ANYTUS
(to soldier) What did the council suggest?

SOLDIER
Deportation, sir.

HELEEN
Please, sir, there's nothing to go back to. They burned everything.

ANYTUS
I'm sorry, truly I am, but we have no choice.

HELEEN
What will happen to me?

ANYTUS

You'll be imprisoned, until you can be taken away.

HELEEN

Oizys (*pronounced "OW-uh-zis"*), Goddess of Misery and Misfortune, what have I done to offend you?

ANYTUS

(to soldier) Take her away.

The soldier grabs Heleen. She shurges him off.

HELEEN

I will go on my own accord.

Heleen exits. The soldier follows.

ANYTUS

Damn it!

Anytus KICKS the table over, scattering goblets.

Enter Zafeer.

ANYTUS

(turns, surprised) Oh, it's you.

ZAFEER

Are you all right, sir?

ANYTUS

People are rebelling. We're losing their faith.

ZAFEER

I'm sure it'll blow over.

ZAFEER

I could make hot tea. *(he is lost in thought, she moves closer)* Sir?

ANYTUS

(turns, surprised) Oh, it's you. I felt a shadow.

ZAFEER

Are you all right, sir?

ANYTUS

Last night I had a dream.

ZAFEER

A message from Lord Morpheus?

ANYTUS

Maybe. I was in Knossos at the Olympic Games, in the ring with a bull.

ZAFEER

The Minotaur?

ANYTUS

A woman danced to distract the beast, but it stood its ground and stared at me, while the crowd roared, lusting for its blood.

ZAFEER

What did you do?

ANYTUS

I sunk my sword in to its neck and killed the beast.

ZAFEER

Like Theseus did, and perhaps like him you'll unite Athens.

ANYTUS

You're well versed for a slave.

ZAFEER

I wasn't born a slave, sir. My father was a merchant from Susa.

ANYTUS

What happened?

ZAFEER

Our trading ship sank in a storm. We were captured and enslaved.

ANYTUS

The Gods can be cruel, but I will set you free, in time, I promise.

ZAFEER

I know you will, sir.

ANYTUS

You may leave.

ZAFEER

Yes, sir.

She starts to exit. Anytus looks out of the window at the city.

ZAFEER

(at the door, she turns back) Will it all be all right? I mean Athens.

ANYTUS

Yes, Zafeer, Athens will prevail.

SCENE SEVEN

A jail cell. A cot, a barred window, and a cell door. Enter Themion with a flambeau that lights up the room. He sees Socrates asleep on the cot.

SOCRATES

(mumbling in his sleep) Ah... no... no... it cannot be done. *(he turns, awake)* Themion, my friend.

THEMION

Why?

SOCRATES

Why what?

THEMION

Why refuse bail?

SOCRATES

Because I won't be indebted to you or anyone.

THEMION

It's not a loan, it's a gift.

SOCRATES

Nonetheless.

THEMION

And besides, Plato gave me the money to get you out. He can afford it.

SOCRATES

How is he?

THEMION

(embarrassed) He left the city. He's a coward. He should be here, they all should.

SOCRATES

You expect too much of people.

THEMION

They're supposed to be your friends.

SOCRATES

Now there's a notion, 'supposed to'. What does that actually mean?

THEMION

Why don't you just walk away?

SOCRATES

Because I must test my ideas.

THEMION

I don't understand.

SOCRATES

How can I know the validity of my ideas unless I'm forced to defend them?

THEMION

This is madness. Just leave, it's all arranged.

SOCRATES

To tell the truth, it is my daemon that forbids it.

THEMION

(frustrated) Your daemon! What of your Xanthippe, your wife?

SOCRATES

I told her to stay away lest they be associated with my crimes.

THEMION

But your family, you may never see them again.

SOCRATES

Plato said he will support them, and I realize now I have long neglected my wife, to my discredit, and I am sorry for it, but I cannot change the past. The best I can do now is shield her from any further harm.

THEMION

And your two sons? What of them?

SOCRATES

Sophoniscus (*pronounced "Saw-FRON-iss-kus"*) is a man now, and he is capable, but I worry for Lamprocles (*pronounced "LAM-pro-klees"*), he's still young, and well, foolish. Perhaps you would be so good as to guide him, if I don't...

THEMION

(interrupts) Don't say it. You can get out of this yet.

SOCRATES

Well, just in case.

THEMION

Yes, of course, I'll make sure he's fine.

SOCRATES

Thank you, my friend.

THEMION

If you must make a stand, events before the Treaty of Eucleides (*pronounced 'U-KLEE-dees'*), are barred from testimony, but they're sure to try and raise old gripes to turn the people against you.

SOCRATES

Thank you, Themion, I'll bear it in mind.

Enter Jailer.

JAILER

Time's up.

SOCRATES

(to Themion) Goodbye, my friend.

THEMION

I won't abandon you, like the others have.

SOCRATES

Live your life, Themion, do not worry for me.

JAILER

Come on. Move it.

Themion exits. Socrates goes to the barred window and sings.

SOCRATES

(sings) While you live, don't whine; for life is short and time, will claim its toll.
Live like the sun and shine, for the days are short and time, will claim it all.

The Jailer enters, dragging in Heleen.

JAILER

Get in there you slag.

SOCRATES

(moves towards them) Take your hands off her!

The jailer whips out a knife.

JAILER

Stay back or I'll gut you like a dog.

The Jailer swipes the knife, but Socrates grabs his arm, twists, takes the knife away.

SOCRATES

Do not mistreat women.

He gives the knife back. The jailer backs away.

JAILER

They're right about you. You're a danger to us all. The sooner you're gone, the better.

He exits and slams the door.

SOCRATES

(to Heleen) Can you stand? *(she tries to pick herself up)* Let me help you.
(reaches out, but she backs away, frightened) It's all right, don't be afraid. Take my hand.
(she cautiously takes it) There you are, you see. What's your name?

HELEEN

(tentative) Heleen.

SOCRATES

Heleen. It means "shining light", it's a beautiful name.

HELEEN

Thank you, sir.

SOCRATES

I hear an accent. Where are you from?

HELEEN

Nikaia. *(pronounced 'Nik-A-ee-ah')*

SOCRATES

A beautiful place. I used to hunt in the hills there as a boy. And what travesty brought you here?

HELEEN

After our farms were burned by the Spartans, we came to Athens, but there was no work, so we begged. Then they said because I'm from outside the city I have no rights.

SOCRATES

So we are both in a woeful state.

HELEEN

(regards him curiously) You're the one they're all talking about. Socrates, the philosopher.

SOCRATES

That is I.

HELEEN

Aren't you afraid?

SOCRATES

Of what?

HELEEN

Death.

SOCRATES

Well, honestly, I've no idea what it is.

HELEEN

It's the end.

SOCRATES

Are you sure?

HELEEN

Then we go on to the gods.

SOCRATES

Really?

HELEEN

What else can it be?

SOCRATES

Maybe we just decay, and become part of Gaia.

HELEEN

What of the soul?

SOCRATES

Maybe it's a transformation, like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly.

HELEEN

You're truly not afraid?

SOCRATES

Of course I am, but never let them see you cry, eh?

Lights to black.

End of Act One.

ACT TWO

SCENE EIGHT

A steady DRUM BEAT.

Lights rise on The Agora, which has been transformed into the Heliaea, (*pronounced 'Heli-I-ah'*) the great court of Athens. The broken statue of Athena at center back. Next to her a statue of Themis, the Greek god of Justice, blindfolded, with scales in one hand, a sword in the other.

At front of stage two voting urns. A podium center and benches on each side, where spectators are seated. Behind the podium, a raised throne where Archon, (*pronounced 'Ar-KON'*) the judge, sits. Anytus, wearing the gold 'crown', and Meleta on benches stage left.

MELETA

Citizens, the holy court of Athens is now in session. All rise for Archon the Judge.

All stand. Socrates enters. Whispers from the crowd. Socrates takes a seat on the right side, with Themion. Archon raises her fist in salute and addresses us - the audience.

ARCHON

We are summoned here, in the year of the 95th Olympiad, to try the case of the State verses Socrates, son of Sophroniscus, the stone mason. The prosecution will be presented by Chairman Anytus and Councilwoman Meleta. The defendant has chosen to represent himself.

CITIZEN 1

Hang him now.

CITIZEN 2

He's guilty.

ARCHON

(barks) Quiet I say. *(to Socrates)* Are you he, the accused?

SOCRATES

I am.

Themion stands.

THEMION

Archon, I have a contention.

ARCHON

Which is?

THEMION

The trial cannot be fair.

ARCHON

Why?

THEMION

Because of his fame.

ARCHON

(to the jury) If any here cannot be impartial you must recuse yourself.

THEMION

You ask them to forget what they've been told about him, which obviously they cannot.

ARCHON

Do you represent the defendant?

THEMION

No, ma'am.

ARCHON

Then sit down and be quiet.

Themion sits.

ARCHON

Meleta, do any recuse themselves?

MELETA

None, ma'am.

ARCHON

It's true that his so called 'teaching' is much talked about, but few know him personally, and so I believe we can have an equitable hearing. Both sides shall present their case and then you, the citizens, will determine guilt or innocence. If condemned, each side shall propose a penalty and then you'll determine which one applies.

On the benches on the left.

ANYTUS

(aside) The old man smiles as if it's amusing. How can he be so confident?

MELETA

It's mere pride and it will only sink him further.

Center court...

ARCHON

Socrates is indicted on two counts; one, of inventing a god of his own, and two; of corrupting the city's youth.

CITIZEN 1

Guilty!

CITIZEN 2

Exile him!

CITIZEN 1

Heretic!

CITIZEN 2

Traitor!

ARCHON

(barks) Quiet! Councilwoman Meleta, for the prosecution, will present the opening statements.

Meleta stands and takes the podium.

MELETA

Citizens, this democracy, founded by King Solon (*pronounced 'So-LUN'*) two hundred years ago, has been a beacon of light to the Hellenic world and beyond. It was us who led the Delian (*pronounced 'DEH-lee-uhn'*) League and brought peace between the states of Asia.

SOCRATES

Who is this 'we' you talk of? It was Alcibiades. (*pronounced 'al-suh-BAI-uh-deez'*)

ARCHON

Socrates, don't interrupt!

MELETA

We have won your approval for another term, but the aristocrats talk of tyranny and work to divide us against ourselves.

CITIZEN 2

Lock them up!

CITIZEN 1

Put them in the dungeons!

THEMION

Archon, you cannot allow these outbursts.

ARCHON

Be quiet or I'll have you removed.

MELETA

How is Socrates responsible? Consider that every day in the marketplace he poisons our values.

SOCRATES

You mean that reasoned thinking is against our values?

MELETA

I mean that you cause us to doubt everything, until everything becomes absurd. Citizens, he would persuade you that black is white, and he will try to persuade you that he is innocent, but he is guilty.

SOCRATES

You're rambling, Meleta. What of the charges?

ARCHON

Councilwoman, get to the point.

MELETA

Yes, your honor. The case against Socrates is twofold. His blatant attacks on our religion and...

SOCRATES

(interrupts) When have I attacked religion?

MELETA

You invented your own god.

SOCRATES

Nonsense.

MELETA

(to the jury) He calls it his demon.

SOCRATES

(corrects) Dae-mon. *(pronounced 'DAY-mon')*

MELETA

Whatever.

SOCRATES

There's a difference.

MELETA

He says this demon guides him to work against the interests of our city.

SOCRATES

I never said such nonsense.

ARCHON

Quiet.

MELETA

Who is this private god of yours, and where does it's 'wisdom' come from?

SOCRATES

Who knows? Perhaps it's just a sort of intuition of my own.

CITIZEN 1

Blasphemer!

CITIZEN 2

Heretic!

MELETA

(laughs) Next, he'll proclaim himself to be a god! Members of the jury, he says that only he is 'awake', while we sleep in ignorance, as if his 'awakened' notions are superior, and that our beliefs are a delusion. But he is the one living in a dream. He is unhinged from reality, obsessed with his elitist ideas he would impose on all of us.

SOCRATES

Be specific, Meleta.

ARCHON

Yes, give us particulars.

MELETA

His influence can be seen at the Theatre of Dionysus, *(pronounced 'dai-uh-NAI-suhs')* where Euripides' play, *The Bacchae* revels in lust and violence.

SOCRATES

It won first prize at the Dionysia Festival.

MELETA

You see, he encourages debauchery.

SOCRATES

It is a great play.

MELETA

But it is sordid. Or Sophocles' *Oedipus*, which exonerates incest and murder.

SOCRATES

One of our most substantial plays and certainly our best writer. Do you suggest we censor those great works?

ARCHON

Don't interrupt, Socrates, your turn will come.

MELETA

And it's not just the playwrights he's corrupted. The painters fill our civic halls with sordid pornography of men laying with men.

CITIZEN 1

Degenerate.

CITIZEN 2

Shameful.

MELETA

That alone would be worthy of our contempt, but the graver charge is his effect on the youth. He has dripped his cynicism into the minds of our young men, eroding their patriotism.

SOCRATES

What specifically is the charge?

MELETA

Your honor, I'm establishing his moral character.

ARCHON

Continue.

MELETA

He claims to be principled, but those 'symposiums' of his, were not forums of discussion, they were, in fact, nothing more than drunken orgies.

SOCRATES

Did you ever attend one?

MELETA

Of course not, I'm a decent person.

SOCRATES

Then it's merely rumor.

MELETA

We all know what goes on and who attends; Plato, Apollodorus (*pronounced 'uh-POL-uh-daw-ruhs'*), Crito (*pronounced 'KREE-tow'*), all aristocrats, and all there for one lascivious purpose. To ravish young boys.

SOCRATES

(to Archon) Meleta keeps harping back to sex. Perhaps she finds it disgusting?

ARCHON

Councilwoman, what's your point?

MELETA

Socrates, do you deny having sex with men?

SOCRATES

I've always done things my own way.

MELETA

Many of them far below your age?

SOCRATES

Perhaps you're right, perversely so.

MELETA

You admit you're perverted.

SOCRATES

Perverse means 'turned away' - and I have turned, turned from accepted dogma, but if by perverse you mean corrupt, I only see your corruption of the law.

MELETA

Do you deny you lay with men for pleasure?

SOCRATES

I wouldn't do it for pain.

MELETA

Archon, he ridicules this court.

SOCRATES

At my age I'm finally unshackled from sexual urges, which isn't to say I don't miss them, but my personal life has nothing to do with the indictment.

MELETA

Will you answer the question?

SOCRATES

I do not deny it, but homosexuality is legal.

ARCHON

Socrates is correct. Members of the jury, disregard these statements. Meleta, move on.

MELETA

Yes, your honor. His effect on the general public is intolerable, but his effect on the sons of the rich is perilous. These aristocrats are related by blood and belief to those who slaughtered thousands. You know them; Plato, Apollodorus, and the rest of their elitist club.

CITIZEN 1

Exile them!

CITIZEN 2

They don't belong here.

ARCHON

Citizens, be quiet.

MELETA

General Xenon (*pronounced 'ZEE-nan'*), supported the tyrants, and Plato's cousin is Critobulous (*pronounced 'Kree-TOB-u-lus'*), did nothing to help the revolution. In fact, the blood had not dried before they began plotting our fall.

Meleta returns to her seat.

ARCHON

Chairman Anytus, will take the floor.

Anytus ascends the podium.

ANYTUS

Athenians, neighbors, friends, Socrates is renowned as a stone mason. He carved the statues of the divine Graces at the Parthenon, he fought in the battle at Delium (*pronounced 'De-LEE-um'*) as a Hoplite soldier, and he has built a reputation as a Sophist, but all the good he has done has been eclipsed by his nefarious influence. His rhetoric spawns division and treachery. His graduates became tyrants and killed more Athenians than the Persians did in ten years of war.

SOCRATES

Archon, I've talked to hundreds in my life, not all of them became tyrants.

ANYTUS

Surely, even one is too many?

SOCRATES

This is casuistry, your reasoning is unsound.

ANYTUS

What of Critias? His idea of governance was to butcher two thousand. Do you take no responsibility?

SOCRATES

I do.

ANYTUS

So you admit you corrupted him?

SOCRATES

Quite the contrary, greed corrupted him.

ANYTUS

But you taught him.

SOCRATES

I cannot teach anything; I can only make people think.

ANYTUS

So, you're saying you had no influence?

SOCRATES

Not enough, obviously.

ANYTUS

You don't deny your student's crimes?

SOCRATES

A few, yes, but this is all speculation.

ANYTUS

No, Socrates, I don't speak hypothetically like you do, I speak of real suffering. Citizens, Autolykos (*pronounced 'Oar-TOL-ikus'*), the great Olympic wrestler, was killed on Critias' orders. My wife was murdered, I was tortured, and my property taken. Meleta's cousins were executed and many of you suffered their brutality, while Plato, Alcibiades, Critobulus and the rest stood by. (*to Socrates*) They were your students and became your friends, did they not?

SOCRATES

Yes, but Archon, events before the Treaty are not permissible evidence.

ARCHON

Anytus, confine your points.

ANYTUS

Citizens, he openly preaches contempt for our government.

SOCRATES

Because it is led by the mob.

CITIZEN 1

Boo!

SOCRATES

(*to citizens*) See? You bray like donkeys.

ANYTUS

Socrates, are you against voting for magistrates?

SOCRATES

(*laughs*) How can a crowd make a rational decision? It defies logic.

ANYTUS

You don't trust the citizens?

SOCRATES

Individuals, occasionally, but never a group.

CITIZEN 1

Hubris!

CITIZEN 2

Exile him!

SOCRATES

Anytus, if you're so skilled in governance, explain how this democracy is guided.

ANYTUS

We're led by a council.

SOCRATES

Who leads this council?

ANYTUS

The councilmen.

SOCRATES

And how are they chosen?

ANYTUS

They're drawn from the citizens.

SOCRATES

And who trains these citizens?

ANYTUS

We are not trained; we each bring our experience and we come to an agreement.

SOCRATES

That's very strange.

ANYTUS

Why?

SOCRATES

If you want to sail a boat to Crete, would you hire a farmer or a captain?

ARCHON

What does this have to do with the case?

SOCRATES

This is my turn to cross examine.

ARCHON

Very well. Continue.

SOCRATES

Answer the question, Anytus.

ANYTUS

The captain, of course.

SOCRATES

Quite right, you wouldn't want a ship captained by a farmer, you'd end up on the reefs, your goods scattered, and your men drowned. And so, I will not support a government ruled by the untrained, be they democrats or aristocrats.

ANYTUS

So you suggest we live in an oligarchy and be ruled by the few.

SOCRATES

It matters not if a few or many, my worry is that not one of you has studied government, yet you'd steer us through a troubled world.

ANYTUS

In his play, *The Clouds*, Aristophanes portrays Socrates as a man who teaches his students how to cheat.

ARCHON

I remember it well. (*chuckles*) It was quite funny.

SOCRATES

It was a slanderous.

ARCHON

Perhaps, but Aristophanes is not on trial.

ANYTUS

He thinks of himself as some kind of martyr, but if our great minds criticize him, and he encourages our enemies, how should we regard him? You are the stewards of our democracy. Consider your verdict carefully. I leave Athens' future in your hands.

Anytus returns to the benches.

ARCHON

Socrates, you may speak.

Socrates takes the podium.

SOCRATES

People of Athens, you've already made up your minds and decided I'm guilty. Why? Because you follow your emotions and not reason.

MELETA

(to Archon) He insults us again!

ANYTUS

(to Archon) Will he address the charges?

SOCRATES

Yes, the charges, laughable as they are. The first count states I don't worship our religion.

MELETA

You're a pagan and have admitted as much.

SOCRATES

I worship Nature above all else.

MELETA

So, you'd have us dancing naked in the woods and slaughtering goats to Bacchus?

SOCRATES

It'd be preferable to your false piety.

CITIZEN 1

Lock him up!

CITIZEN 2

Push him off the city wall!

Themion jumps up.

THEMION

Archon, this is an outrage and against all precedent.

ARCHON

(shouts) Quiet! Anytus, restrain your son.

THEMION

There's no need. I refuse to watch any more. It's all a sham.

ANYTUS

(barks) Get out, boy.

Themion exits.

ARCHON

Can we continue?

ANYTUS

Yes, I'm sorry, your honor.

ARCHON

Socrates, go on.

SOCRATES

Even if I were a pagan, which I'm not, you can't prove what I believe. How could you? Belief is a personal matter and no man can see into another's heart.

MELETA

Very well, I'll rephrase. You do not respect the gods of Athens.

SOCRATES

I respect all Gods.

MELETA

(to Archon) You see, he demeans the supremacy of our religion.

SOCRATES

Who says that our religion is supreme?

MELETA

Ours are the only true gods. That is a fact.

SOCRATES

Really?

MELETA

You dare say they are not?

SOCRATES

I respect the Egyptian Ra and Isis, and their notions of transmigration of the soul, and of a heaven and of hell. I respect the Phoenician gods who compel us to feed the poor. I respect the bull gods of Crete with their goddesses and fertility rites, there's great wisdom in a matriarch.

MELETA

So you'd have us ruled by animists, heathens, and Amazonians?

SOCRATES

Why not? We haven't done such a good job recently. What was the other part? I've invented a god of my own. Meleta, you call yourself a poet.

MELETA

(feigning disinterest) I've had a few volumes published.

SOCRATES

Like most artists, I assume you believe in the Muses?

MELETA

Yes, I do.

SOCRATES

Well, this daemon of mine is nothing more than a kind of muse, not dissimilar as you claim to have, but you don't condemn yourself a heretic? So, Archon, that part's a fallacy.

ARCHON

I can see your point.

SOCRATES

Thank you. The second charge is more interesting - I corrupt the minds of the young. What do you mean exactly? How do I corrupt them?

MELETA

The youth you taught lost their love for Athens, and they've despondent and effeminate.

SOCRATES

You contend that I have the greatest influence?

MELETA

Yes.

SOCRATES

But you'll find a youth's friends have more influence than his teacher. Is that reasonable?

MELETA

Archon!

ARCHON

Answer the question.

MELETA

I suppose so.

SOCRATES

Who else could these youth learn from? Their fathers perhaps?

MELETA

I suppose.

SOCRATES

Who else has a good influence?

MELETA

These ladies and gentlemen.

SOCRATES

You mean ordinary people?

MELETA

Yes.

SOCRATES

Does this apply to all or to a few?

MELETA

I object! What's your point?

SOCRATES

(barks) Answer the question. The Council, are they a good influence?

MELETA

Yes, they are.

SOCRATES

And the Assembly?

MELETA

And the Assembly.

SOCRATES

So, the entire population has a beneficial effect on the young, but I alone corrupt them?

MELETA

Yes.

SOCRATES

If I corrupted their sons, where are the angry parents? Nowhere, because they do not exist.

ANYTUS

Archon, this is all circumstantial.

SOCRATES

Anytus, your son's a fine lad.

ANYTUS

He was, until you corrupted him.

SOCRATES

I corrupted him? *(laughs)* You work by day at the Assembly and by night you manage your tannery in pursuit of ever greater wealth, but you're not interested in developing your son's mind or his character, and so naturally he comes to me.

ANYTUS

You condemn fathers who work?

SOCRATES

I condemn those who neglect or tyrannize their sons to live lives they're ill prepared for, just as you're ill-prepared to govern.

ANYTUS

(to Archon) This is a personal attack!

SOCRATES

(rising anger) And what is this charade, but an attack on me and my friends?

MELETA

Archon, end the proceeding and let us vote.

CITIZEN 1

Get on with it!

CITIZEN 2

String him to a tree!

CITIZEN 1

Lock him up!

ARCHON

Quiet! Socrates, your time's complete, you must conclude.

SOCRATES

It seems in this democracy any person may rise to power, however inept they be.

ANYTUS

You deride our entire system of government?

SOCRATES

Because you fill it with opinionated and inexperienced councilmen and ask me to approve.

ANYTUS

You criticize, yet you refuse to participate.

SOCRATES

How could I? My loyalty's not to you or your party or any group. No, sir, my loyalty is to Athens.

Citizens, you think being the majority justifies itself as some sort of good, and when you make mistakes, you blame anyone but yourselves, and rustle up scapegoats you can punish. You! You, at the front there.

CITIZEN 1

Me?

SOCRATES

Yes, you. What's your trade?

CITIZEN 1

I'm a blacksmith.

SOCRATES

Have you studied foreign trade?

CITIZEN 1

Of course not, but it can't get worse.

SOCRATES

How would you improve it? With what treaties and what tariffs?

CITIZEN 1

I don't know.

SOCRATES

You haven't even considered it? And you! You, next to the man with the bushy beard. Did you ever study diplomacy?

CITIZEN 2

No.

SOCRATES

Of course not. Have you read about political strategy?

CITIZEN 2

I don't read books.

SOCRATES

You don't read, but you vote. *(laughs)* And you, the woman with the big man there. Yes, you. Have you ever spent even ten minutes to consider an economy's taxation?

Well, have you? Of course not. And yet all of you want taxes reduced, with no thought to the effects. And you, Meleta, you've obviously read the business of government by Solon? (*pronounced 'So-LUN'*)

MELETA

Not as such.

SOCRATES

Really? Why am I not surprised? But you've read the strategies of Xeno? (*pronounced 'ZEN-o'*)

MELETA

I've heard of them.

SOCRATES

Well, I feel safer knowing you've heard of him at least. People of Athens, you think you are great, but I assure you, the Persians think they're greatest race on earth. The Macedonians hold themselves to be the best and the Egyptians regard us as mere peasants. Each culture believes it's the most evolved and the closest to the Gods, and all rewrite history to fit their mythology, as some of my students have warped my words to their own ends.

Socrates sits.

ARCHON

Jurists, you may now cast your votes.

A steady drum beat. Citizens drop pebbles into two urns.

At the side of stage...

ANYTUS

(aside) The people's lust for blood grows.

MELETA

Thank the gods it's not ours they seek.

ANYTUS

But will it gratify them?

MELETA

It's a start.

The drum beat stops. Archon looks in the urn.

ARCHON

Socrates, you have been voted... guilty.

CITIZEN 2

Justice prevails!

CITIZEN 1

Execute the bastard!

CITIZEN 2

String him up.

ARCHON

Quiet! Each side will now propose a penalty. Meleta.

Meleta takes the podium.

MELETA

Socrates is a traitor because he encourages the aristocrats against us. He corrupts our sons and daughters with his perverse ideas. He is a rot that spreads, and this disease must be cut out, and so the penalty should be death.

Citizens CHEER.

ARCHON

Socrates, you must now propose a penalty.

Socrates takes the podium.

SOCRATES

You see the injustice here today, but what will you do? Live with integrity or seek safety in the herd and continue to believe the stories you've been fed? My last words to you are this, if you want this democracy of yours to work, you must quell your emotions and inform yourselves of the facts, or you will be prey to manipulators and Athens will flounder like a ship lost at sea.

ARCHON

Socrates, the penalty!

SOCRATES

I need little, so I propose you give my family free meals at the temple for the rest of their days.

Socrates sits. The drum BEATS a slow steady pulse. Citizens walk up to the urn and drop pebbles in. Archon looks in the urn and raises her hand. The drum beat stops.

ARCHON

The votes are cast. When the sacrificial ship returns from Delos (*pronounced 'DEL-os'*), Socrates shall be put to death.

CITIZEN 1

Why wait?

ARCHON

We will follow the law.

CITIZEN 2

Do it now.

ARCHON

The case is closed.

CITIZEN 1

We want justice .

ARCHON

And you have had it, but you must...

CITIZEN 2

(interrupts) Grab him.

The citizens jump up and RUSH at Socrates.

CITIZEN 1

Death to the traitor.

Anytus draws his sword and steps between the citizens and Socrates.

ANYTUS

Back away.

CITIZEN 1

(draws a knife) Anytus, we mean you no harm.

ANYTUS

I said back off.

CITIZEN 1

You're not our enemy. He is.

ANYTUS

He's the property of the court.

CITIZEN 2

The court is the people and we will have him.

ANYTUS

(points his sword) Keep back I say. Meleta, station guards on the Plaka.

MELETA

Yes, sir.

Meleta exits.

ANYTUS

Citizens! He will not be harmed this day. Go back to your homes. Let justice take its course. When the ship returns the sentence will be carried out and the Gods will look on us favorably.

Anytus takes Socrates off.

CITIZEN 1

Friend, let's to the jail lest his friends try to get him out.

They exit.

SCENE NINE

Anytus's study. Night. The golden crown on the table among a pile of scrolls. Enter Meleta in armor.

MELETA

Anytus? *(looks around, calls out)* Zafeer?

Enter Zafeer.

MELETA

Where is he?

ZAFEER

Anytus is at prayer.

MELETA

Fetch him.

ZAFEER

But...

MELETA

Now.

ZAFEER

Yes, ma'am.

Zafeer exits. Meleta sees the crown on the table. She picks it up and toys with it. Enter Anytus.

ANYTUS

Meleta.

MELETA

It's heavier than I thought. *(she puts the crown down)* Anytus, there's a riot in the Plaka.

ANYTUS

How many?

MELETA
A hundred, maybe more.

ANYTUS
Arrests?

MELETA
A dozen agitators.

ANYTUS
Release them immediately.

MELETA
But they attacked our men.

ANYTUS
If we punish them, we'll divide the city further. We must be even-handed.

MELETA
Then what?

ANYTUS
Then we'll appeal to both sides to talk.

MELETA
This is madness. We're beyond talking. We must impose a curfew.

ANYTUS
You're too eager to repress.

MELETA
Then you must talk to them.

ANYTUS
(calls out) Zafeer.

Zafeer enters.

ZAFEER
Sir?

ANYTUS

Bring me my armor. And where's my son?

ZAFEER

He hasn't returned.

ANYTUS

(to Zafeer) Find him.

ZAFEER

Yes, sir.

ANYTUS

And bring him back.

She exits.

ANYTUS

Meleta, I'll meet you there.

MELETA

Where are you going?

ANYTUS

To try one last time.

MELETA

With the old man? You're wasting your time.

Anytus exits.

Meleta goes to the table and lifts the crown,
weighing it in her hands.

SCENE TEN

The jail cell. Socrates at the window, singing.

SOCRATES

*To the ocean to clear my mind, to the desert to be alone.
To the mountains myself to find, to the river to take me home.*

Enter Jailer.

JAILER

You got a visitor.

SOCRATES

Yes. Anytus.

JAILER

Your demon told you, did he?

SOCRATES

The wind is thick with smoke, which means he's going to ask me to recant.

Enter Anytus, dressed in armor.

SOCRATES

Anytus, there you are.

Anytus gestures. The jailer exits.

ANYTUS

The city burns from the port to the hills.

SOCRATES

I can smell it.

ANYTUS

While your friends have fled.

SOCRATES

Can you blame them?

ANYTUS

Whatever it was you hoped to achieve, your mission has failed. There's nothing to be gained. Join us, before it's too late.

SOCRATES

What can I do, sat here alone?

ANYTUS

A few words from you could quell them. Show contrition.

SOCRATES

They'll not be tamed by my voice, but perhaps by yours.

ANYTUS

You blame me for this?

SOCRATES

If there's blame, then we are all guilty for letting things slip. Truly, we have brought this on ourselves.

ANYTUS

The oracle foresaw that a cloud would block the sun.

SOCRATES

And in this vision of hers, who is the cloud and who's the sun?

ANYTUS

The meaning's clear. You are a curse.

SOCRATES

Did she say that?

ANYTUS

She didn't have to.

SOCRATES

Well, the oracle also said I'm the wisest man of all, so she's clearly not infallible.

ANYTUS

Still you persist with your heresy.

SOCRATES

To question is not heresy, Anytus. How else would we have grown from kingship to democracy?

ANYTUS

The ship from Delos has returned. Your execution is nigh. I ask you one last time.

SOCRATES

Do you remember Pericles' Oration Speech?

ANYTUS

What?

SOCRATES

You'd do well to remember it. "We throw open our city to the world, and never exclude foreigners from any opportunity of learning, although the eyes of an enemy may occasionally profit by our liberality."

ANYTUS

Tis ironic you quote a democrat.

SOCRATES

He was a leader, a man of vision and action. And once again Athens needs a leader, Anytus.

ANYTUS

So you wish to be a martyr?

SOCRATES

The idea is abhorrent.

ANYTUS

Then I am done with you and I bid you farewell.

SOCRATES

May the Goddess Tyche (*pronounced "TIE-key"*) grant you her favor.

Anytus exits. Socrates goes to the window.

SOCRATES

*(sings) While you live don't whine; for life is short and time, will claim its toll.
Live like the sun and shine, for the days are short and time, will claim it all.*

On the other side of the stage...

A Street. Themion enters from one side, Zafeer from the other.

THEMION

Zafeer! What you are you doing out?

ZAFEER

Your father sent me to bring you home.

THEMION

It's not safe. Go back.

ZAFEER

What shall I tell him?

Enter citizens SHOUTING.

CITIZEN 1

Athens for Athenians.

CITIZEN 2

Exile the aristocrats!

CITIZEN 1

Death to our enemies!

THEMION

(aside) Come, Zafeer, this way quickly.

ZAFEER

No, I must go back, your father needs me.

THEMION

Get out of the city while you can. Save yourself.

CITIZEN 1

(sees Themion and Zafeer) Look what we got here, one of the old man's followers.

CITIZEN 2

Slinking in the shadows with his foreign whore.

THEMION

She's my father's slave and under my protection.

CITIZEN 1

Your protection? You think you're some kind of royalty?

THEMION

Stand aside, we're leaving.

CITIZEN 2

You defend old man Socrates, don't you?

THEMION

He is my friend.

CITIZEN 2

You should know better than befriend a traitor.

THEMION

Out of my way.

He pushes past Citizen 2, but Citizen 1 CLUBS
him, and he falls.

ZAFEER

You're cowards. Leave him.

CITIZEN 1

Shut up, bitch!

Citizen 1 SLAPS her. She falls and crawls away.
Citizen 1 spits on her.

CITIZEN 1

Get out of our city.

ZAFEER

Madness has possessed you.

Citizen 1, the male, grabs her, and pushes her down.

ZAFEER

No, please don't.

THEMION

(tries to get up) Leave her alone.

Citizen 2 SMASHES him with her club.
Themion falls.

CITIZEN 2

Stay down.

On the other side of the stage...

The Jail Cell. The jailer enters with a chalice.

SOCRATES

Doctor!

JAILER

I'm no doctor, I'm your executioner.

SOCRATES

My ailment's life and you'll relieve me, so you are my doctor.

JAILER

Whatever. This is the hemlock, freshly brewed.

The jailer gives him the chalice.

SOCRATES

(smells it and recoils) Urgh, it reeks like rat piss.

JAILER

And tastes like it, I'm told. Drink it while it's warm, goes down easier.

SOCRATES

(grimaces as he sips) Urgh, I can barely drink it.

JAILER

Down it all in one go.

SOCRATES

(grimacing) Is it necessary?

JAILER

If you don't it'll be a long, painful death. Your muscles will spasm and you'll chew your tongue off, then it gets worse, trust me.

Socrates drinks the rest and gags.

JAILER

Don't spit it out. Get it all down.

Socrates finishes it and drops the chalice, hunches over, and groans.

On the other side of the stage...

The Street. Citizen 1 ravishes Zafeer, who struggles in vain.

ZAFEER

The gods will curse you.

THEMION

(on the ground, groggy) You bastards!

CITIZEN 2

Shut up!

The sound of a WHISTLE and people shouting close by.

CITIZEN 2

We must be gone. Soldiers approach.

Citizen 2 goes to the edge of stage. Nervous. Themion struggles to his feet.

CITIZEN 2

(to Citizen 1) Come on. Leave her.Themion PULLS Citizen 1 off of Zafeer.
Citizen turns, holding a knife.

CITIZEN 1

Die, traitor.

He STABS Themion in the gut. Themion looks
at him in shock.

THEMION

You... you... stabbed... me.

ZAFEER

Oh Gods, Themion.

CITIZEN 2

I'm not staying.

She runs off. Themion topples.

CITIZEN 1

(to Zafeer) Get out of our city.Citizen 1 runs off. Themion gurgles, a stream of
blood spilling from his mouth. Zafeer crawls to
him.

ZAFEER

You must stop the bleeding.

THEMION

It's too late.

ZAFEER

Put your hand on the wound.

THEMION

Zafeer, pay the ferryman that I may cross the Styx.

ZAFEER

No, no, don't die. (*puts her hand over his wound*) We'll, we'll get you home. Try to stand up.

She lifts him, but he's too weak.

THEMION

Tell my father...

ZAFEER

Come on, Themion, don't give up.

THEMION

... I love him.

He gasps and DIES.

On the other side of the stage...

The Jail Cell. Socrates walks unsteadily. The jailer helps him.

JAILER

Keep moving so the poison can spread.

SOCRATES

(*stumbles*) I can't feel my legs. I.. I can't stand.

JAILER

Lay down. The end's coming.

SOCRATES

(*sits down*) I feel... I feel, a, a burning.

Socrates starts to convulse. The jailer puts a piece of leather.

JAILER

Bite on that.

Socrates bites on the leather, his body shakes,
he's going into spasms.

JAILER

You're almost done.

Socrates twists and convulses, his eyes rolling
back. The jailer holds him down.

JAILER

Just a bit longer.

Socrates calms, exhausted.

JAILER

There, it's over.

SOCRATES

(whispers) We go our separate ways, I to die, you to live. God knows which is best.

He SHUDDERS, then lies still, staring up.

He GASPS a long dry wheeze and DIES.

The jailer puts coins over Socrates' eyes.

Lights to black.

SCENE ELEVEN

Lights up on The Agora. Firelight flickers and
smoke wafts across the stage. The statue of
Athena toppled, fresh blood splashed across
her. The walls have new graffiti, "Kill the
Oppressors", "Civil War", "Show No Mercy".

Anytus, wearing the gold 'crown', kneels at the
statue of blindfolded Themis with her scales in
one hand, sword in the other.

Enter Meleta carrying a red-soaked cloth.

MELETA

Anytus, steel your heart.

ANYTUS

What bloody thing is it you carry?

MELETA

The news I bring would break any man.

ANYTUS

What is it?

MELETA

Brace yourself, my friend.

ANYTUS

By God, tell me it.

MELETA

It is your son's tunic.

She gives him the wet cloth. He presses it to his face and wails.

ANYTUS

Where is he?

MELETA

In the street where he was stabbed.

ANYTUS

Say it is not so.

MELETA

He was left for dead.

ANYTUS

Oh, Themion, my son. Bring me his body.

MELETA

I'm sorry, my friend, we have no soldiers available.

ANYTUS

Who, who killed him?

MELETA

Some of the less desirable citizens have run amok.

ANYTUS

Oh Meleta, what have we done?

Anytus falls to his knees, pulls the bloody tunic
to his face.

MELETA

Anytus, we will mourn his death later and give him just tribute, but now we must act.

Enter Soldier, covered in blood.

SOLDIER

Sir, we're running out of men.

Anytus quietly sobs.

MELETA

Has the city been sealed?

SOLDIER

Yes, but the mob's gathering. There's going to be more bloodshed.

MELETA

Bring a platoon from Piraeus.

SOLDIER

They're pinned down.

MELETA

Damn it. Anytus, we must enforce martial law.

ANYTUS

The oracle warned of this. I have brought us to ruin.

MELETA
You must impose martial law.

ANYTUS
I will not turn on my own people.

SOLDIER
Sir, what should we do?

ANYTUS
(looks up) Athena, what is your will?

MELETA
Soldier, make the proclamation. The streets are to be cleared.

SOLDIER
(to Anytus) Sir?

Anytus prays.

MELETA
Do as I say.

SOLDIER
Yes, ma'am.

The soldier exits.

Citizens storm in, waving knives and clubs.

CITIZEN 1
Kill the aristocrats!

CITIZEN 2
String them up!

CITIZEN 1
Exterminate them like rats.

MELETA
Citizens, sheathe your weapons.

CITIZEN 1
We want their blood.

MELETA
There's no need for further violence.

CITIZEN 1
Anytus, what say you?

Anytus hugs the tunic, quietly sobbing.

CITIZEN 2
(aside) He's distracted. It's his son you killed.

CITIZEN 1
(aside) Because he got in our way.

CITIZEN 1
(aside) So who's going to lead?

MELETA
Citizens, we will fulfill our promises, there will be food for all.

CITIZEN 1
You said that before.

MELETA
This time we will deliver. A curfew starts now until we have control. And we will not broach traitors or usurpers, they will be crushed and we will be strong again.

CITIZEN 2
Hail Meleta!

CITIZEN 1
Long live Athens!

CITIZEN 2
Our savior!

CITIZEN 1
Meleta is wise!

The citizens exit, chanting...

CITIZENS

Long live Athens! Long live Meleta!

Meleta takes the crown from Anytus and exits.

The lights dim on Anytus sobbing beneath the statue of Themis, disappearing in the darkness.

Lights to black.

End of Play