

PLATO'S RETREAT

a play by

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Characters

Glaucou

Adeimantus

Sophia

Libida

Phaedrus

(and a Voice)

Setting

A cave.

[GLAUCON, in the cave, stares fixedly at the wall and masturbates.]

ADEIMANTUS: Glaucon?

[GLAUCON quickly covers up. ADEIMANTUS enters.]

ADEIMANTUS: Glaucon? *[seeing him]* Glaucon! What are you still doing here? Everyone else has left the cave and gone up to see the sun. Oh, Glaucon, you wouldn't believe how beautiful it is!

GLAUCON: Yeah, yeah. I'm right behind you. I was just...

ADEIMANTUS: *[understanding]* Oh, Glaucon, you're not still staring at those figures on the wall. Did you not hear Socrates? These are not real. They are but shadows which, because you have never seen the sun, you mistake for— Whoa.

[He stares open-mouthed at the wall.]

ADEIMANTUS: Is that even possible?

GLAUCON: Who cares?

ADEIMANTUS: I'm sure it's not legal.

[Half-consciously, he reaches under his cloak and starts masturbating. Soon they both are, as they stare avidly at the wall.]

A FEMALE VOICE: Boys? What are you up to?

[They both abruptly cover up.]

GLAUCON and ADEIMANTUS: Mom?

[A beautiful woman in a classic Greek gown enters the cave.]

WOMAN: So this is the famous cave! Whew! It's a steep and rugged descent!

ADEIMANTUS: Try going up.

WOMAN: I think I broke a sandal strap.

GLAUCON: Who are you?

ADEIMANTUS: Glaucon, this is— this is—

[Mortified, he realizes he can no longer remember her name.]

WOMAN: Sophia.

ADEIMANTUS: Sophia!

GLAUCON: Sophia? Your name is Wisdom? [*suspiciously; to ADEIMANTUS*] Is this an allegory?

SOPHIA: Adeimantus and I were having the nicest time up above. In the sunlight. [*moving seductively closer to ADEIMANTUS*] Remember, Adeimantus? We were talking about Justice. And the Highest Good. And Divine Light.

[*She is now pressed up against him.*]

ADEIMANTUS: Yeah, it was pretty cool. I mean, I want to go back up and, you know, follow up on that bit about Ideal Forms. We're just...

SOPHIA: [*tenderly; mockingly*] You're just little boys, distracted by the shadows on the wall.

GLAUCON: Excuse me, but you're standing in between me and some pretty ideal forms.

ADEIMANTUS: I think Sophia is right, Glaucon. These shadows may be alluring, but— [*distracted again*] Ooh!

SOPHIA: But they are illusions. You think you see, but you are blind.

GLAUCON: I can't see at all if you keep standing in front of me.

[*Now they're both trying to see past her.*]

SOPHIA: Truth is up above. Truth is revealed only by the sun. What truth is there in those insubstantial flickers? Go up! Go up! The sun will scatter these shadows like the fragments of a dream! Do you not hunger for the real?

[*But they are both completely mesmerized. They can't even hear her. She rips open the top of her dress.*]

SOPHIA: These are real!

[*For a moment, she's got their attention. They stare in hungry fascination at her breasts. Then:*]

GLAUCON: Oh my God! Did you see that?

ADEIMANTUS: What happened to her gag reflex?

SOPHIA: [*frantically*] But I'm real! They're real! You can touch them!

GLAUCON: Does the Guinness Book have a category for that?

SOPHIA: Look at ME!

[*Another WOMAN enters.*]

LIBIDA: You're wasting your time, Sophia.

SOPHIA: *[hastily covering up]* Libida! What are you doing here?

LIBIDA: I live here.

SOPHIA: Figures. Always drawn to the depths.

LIBIDA: Are you getting enough sun, Sophia? Are those crow's feet? How are we doing, boys? *[Putting her arms around their shoulders.]* What are we watching? Wanna shove aside, Sophia? You're blocking the view.

[SOPHIA weaves back and forth with outstretched arms, trying to block the screen.]

SOPHIA: How can you prefer these shadows to Truth? To Reality?

LIBIDA: What's reality got to do with it? You see these shadows on the wall, boys?

ADEIMANTUS: Yeah.

GLAUCON: Oh, yeah...

LIBIDA: No you don't. There are no shadows on the wall. The shadows are in here.

[She knocks them each on the head.]

GLAUCON: Ow!

SOPHIA: You and Socrates, Libida. Total agreement. The shadows are illusions. Once the light of truth—

LIBIDA: Don't you get it, Sophia? Their heads are the cave. The light isn't going to penetrate them. The problem isn't lack of sunshine. The problem is they're men. Evolution has hard-wired them to be stupid about sex. How are you going to cure evolution? They're programmed to respond to visual cues. They're programmed to see something sexy and go chasing it all over the savannah. Doesn't matter if it's a real woman or Princess Jasmine in a Disney cartoon. The reason they can't tell the difference between you and a shadow on the wall is because for them there *is* no difference.

GLAUCON: Wait. Are you saying I'm stupid?

SOPHIA: Yes! That's exactly what she's saying, Glaucon! Are you just going to sit there and take that?

GLAUCON: *[starting to get up]* Fuck no! I'm going to— *[LIBIDA puts her hand on his crotch. His eyes go blank.]* Ahhh...

SOPHIA: Adeimantus!

ADEIMANTUS: Yes, Libida. I'd like to put in a word for— *[same]* Oooh...

SOPHIA: *[scornfully]* Aren't you forgetting something, Libida? Something very important? *Someone* very important?

LIBIDA: Who would that be, Sophia?

SOPHIA: Psyche.

LIBIDA: Psyche?

SOPHIA: Psyche! The Soul!

[She waits expectantly.]

SOPHIA: *[louder, as if trying to cue a late-arriving actor]* Psyche! The Soul!

[An awkward pause.]

LIBIDA: I don't think Psyche's going to show.

SOPHIA: Not going to show? Why not?

GLAUCON: Um... scheduling conflicts?

SOPHIA: Scheduling conflicts! There are no scheduling conflicts with the Soul! The Soul is all around us.

LIBIDA: Sounds tiring. Maybe she needed a break.

SOPHIA: But we have to have the Soul. We are nothing without the Soul.

GLAUCON: Was that a footstep? Maybe that's her now.

[She runs back towards the entrance of the cave.]

SOPHIA: Psyche! Psyche!

[LIBIDA puts her hands on the boys' crotches again.]

LIBIDA: I don't know about you, boys, but I wasn't really missing the Soul.

[They settle in to watch the wall. Suddenly:]

GLAUCON: HEY!

ADEIMANTUS: What happened? It went blank.

[They get up and search around to try to see what went wrong.]

GLAUCON: Fucking Time Warner.

ADEIMANTUS: What do we do now?

SOPHIA: *[returning]* Adeimantus! Glaucon! This is your chance! Cast off your chains while the shadows hold no power over you! Come with me up that steep and rugged ascent and let Socrates teach you about the One Eternal Truth!

ADEIMANTUS: Yes! Come, Glaucon! Now that the shadows have fallen from my brain, I remember how beautiful it was. We saw the sun, and Socrates kept asking a lot of questions that no one knew the answers to. Come with us!

GLAUCON: All right. *[with a thought]* Libida?

SOPHIA: *[generously]* Yes, Libida. Even you, if you left the darkness of your cave, might discover a Truth you never dreamed of.

LIBIDA: Better not. Nothing kills Libida like direct sunlight.

SOPHIA: All right then! Upwards to the sun! Let us learn to love the Beautiful and the Good!

GLAUCON: *[to ADEIMANTUS]* I'll take the Beautiful if you'll take the Good.

[They start to go, but PHAEDRUS enters, deeply distressed.]

SOPHIA: Phaedrus! What is it?

PHAEDRUS: Oh, Sophia! Socrates— *[He breaks down.]* Socrates is dead!

SOPHIA: But— what happened!

PHAEDRUS: He went into the agora and pleaded with everyone to turn their eyes from the shadows and learn to love Truth, but no one would listen. In desperation, he climbed to the top of Apollo's Column—

GLAUCON: That's a big column.

PHAEDRUS: And smashed the Wi-Fi tower. The internet went out for miles around.

LIBIDA: I expect there were real tears at Starbucks.

PHAEDRUS: The crowd fell on him. They forced him to drink— *[breaking down again]* —to drink 32 Red Bulls. His brain exploded all over the peristyle.

SOPHIA: That beautiful brain...

PHAEDRUS: *[solemnly]* Part now of the eternal stone.

SOPHIA: It's as if the sun has gone out—forever. What do we do now?

PHAEDRUS: I can't bring myself to go back up there. Maybe never again.

SOPHIA: But we must. We can't live here.

GLAUCON: Not without internet.

PHAEDRUS: But I feel so lost. So lost.

SOPHIA: Maybe if we held each other.

PHAEDRUS: Yes, Sophia. Hold me like a sister.

[They embrace.]

ADEIMANTUS: *[sorrowfully]* Me, too. Please.

[He joins them.]

GLAUCON: Group hug.

LIBIDA: Can anyone play?

[Now they're all in a big group hug, but soon hands start to wander. Muttered comments: "Um, is that your—ooh." Moans of pleasure. We're heading towards orgy, when a crash is heard and a shaft of light falls on them from above. Everyone pulls apart. They look up.]

LIBIDA: Who are you?

VOICE: *[embarrassed, but struggling for authority]* I am— I am— the author of you all!

ADEIMANTUS: God?

VOICE: *[with annoyance]* Plato.

LIBIDA: How long have you been watching us?

VOICE: That needn't concern you.

SOPHIA: But what— what did you see?

VOICE: I'm the author. I see everything. That's my job.

LIBIDA: I'm sorry, but that's a little creepy.

VOICE: Silence! Now, please, go back to what you were doing.

SOPHIA: But we don't want to, author of us all! We want to go up there! To the sunlight!

VOICE: You're not ready for the sun yet.

SOPHIA: But Socrates said—

VOICE: Sorry. My cave. My rules. Now if you'll just—

[SOPHIA's hand, as if by a will of its own—or the VOICE's—swings over and grabs GLAUCON's ass.]

VOICE: Very good. Now if you'll— Yes, exactly— And if you'll take your— and put it— Very good.

[As he speaks, they get increasingly tangled up with each other, as if in an erotic game of Twister. The orgy recommences.]

VOICE: *[more and more excited]* Yes. Yes. That's it. Yes! Yes! Yes! Stay in the light! Stay in the light!