

POST-READING 1 CHANGES

SOCRATES SMITH'S CRUSADE FOR THE PLANET

An absurd tragicomedy

by

SAM LLOYD

Copyright 2021
Reading version/Print/Rev4

SCENE 1

'Mildura'

A banner or large sign reads: 'SOCRATES SMITH'S CRUSADE FOR THE PLANET'

There is a spot lit lectern, decorated with a portrait of Greta Thunberg, and an empty chair. A schoolbag lies on the stage.

Voice over:

RICK SOLOMON: Ladies and Gentlemen: direct from the Ballerina Ballroom in Lime Avenue, Mildura, will you please give a big welcome to:
MISTER SOCRATES SMITH!

Triumphant music

Socrates enters and greets the audience with a 'V for victory' sign. Audience members throw streamers previously handed out. Plants in the audience encourage the audience to cheer Socrates.

Socrates walks along the front of the stage, a spotlight following, engaging with the audience.

SOCRATES: Hey, Crusaders! Ho, Crusaders! Do you care about the PLANET?

AUDIENCE: *(prompted)* YES!

Picks out individual audience members

SOCRATES: Do you care about the PLANET?

If 'YES': 'Well piss off! I need that seat for a DENIER so I can give 'em an EARFULL!'

If 'NO': 'There's a special place in hell for you!'

If 'MAYBE': 'You're a DITHERER, my friend; and ditherers are doomed to extinction!'

Socrates stands at the lectern

Men and women of AUSTRALIA . . . and all the rest who can't make up your bloody MINDS . . . HOW DARE YOU! Sounded good; had to say it . . . How dare you! Come here tonight by UBER - spitting out clouds of CO2! Gorged on smashed avocados for brekkie - depleting the world's limited supply! Up mining doggy coins all night - using up our last remaining megawatts! HOW DARE YOU . . . say it's the BOOMERS who fucked things up!

(Socrates interacts with real boomers, if present)

Socrates leaves the lectern and moves to centre stage

We all know the problem . . . we've BUGGERED IT UP! Yes; there's no getting around it, the planet's STUFFED! Atmosphere warming! Epidemics spreading! Refugees fleeing! Human rights disappearing! Peter Dutton's head! It's all HORRIBLE, I tell you!

And what do we do? We run around, like headless CHOOKS, in a dither, crying: 'what are we going to do?' or we stick our heads in the SAND – which is not a bad idea if you're Peter Dutton – or, if we're more actively inclined, like GRETA, we doddle around the oceans in a SAILBOAT!

No, ladies and gentlemen, in a time of crisis we need ANSWERS . . . and that's why I'm here! Tonight, I will reveal to you the SOLUTION to the whole damn mess - because I, Socrates Smith, have beautiful, elegant, yet simple, PLAN!

Pauses for effect

I suppose I should introduce myself. My drama teacher, Miss Haig, reckons I'm not very good at explaining myself . . . actually, she puts it more bluntly than that: she says, 'Socrates, your exposition is CRAP! Talk in CIRCLES and leave the audience in the DARK!' So, tonight I've come prepared!

Reaches into his pocket and pulls out a crumpled piece of paper. Reads from paper

Ahem! My name is Socrates Smith . . . (well, that's not my REAL name; people call me that because I'm a bit of an EGG-HEAD!) and I'm a student in Year 12B at Mildura Agricultural High School. When I was about seventeen, I first heard about something called climate change. Apparently, human beings have been bugging up the place . . . it depressed me a bit; old Principal Stone, he diagnosed me with BND - Bloody Nuisance Disease - but I thought, no, no, there's something happening that I don't like. So, I've been taking off after class, delivering talks and lectures. Started at The Ballerina in Mildura, and now here I am talking to you lot!

Throws paper away dismissively

Anybody been to Mildura? Nice enough little place, up in the sunny regions. You have; and you . . . not been anyone? Not been? That's a shame.

(Socrates makes derogatory comparisons between the Mildura and the location of the performance)

Yes, that's what people do when they go to Mildura: hop on the old paddleboat. You arrive in Mildura, hop out of the car, and go for a cruise! (*mimes paddle wheels endlessly turning*) Boat takes you down the river . . . You turn around. Boat paddles you back up the river . . . (*mimes paddle wheels turning even more endlessly*) You get off the boat . . .

No, oodles to do in Mildura . . . You who've never been, they do say 'see Venice and die!'. Well, now that we can't go overseas, go to Mildura! Go to Mildura, and . . . yes, well.

Returns to lectern

Now: where was I? The planet's BROKEN, and I bet you're just ITCHING to hear my PLAN!

Leaves the lectern and sits on the chair

I've always been fascinated by broken things . . . when you were a little tacker, did you have a secret hiding place?

I had a special place! (*whispers*) I used to crawl under the floor of the house . . . my mum and dad didn't know . . . well, to be honest, they didn't give a SHIT! I used to crawl under there and find a cosy spot, like a cat; and under that floor, I used to find things: old things, broken things, buried things . . . things that were not WANTED . . .

It's there that I had my first intimation of MORTALITY . . . I found an old silver butter knife that had lost its lovely bone handle . . . for the first time I realised things don't last forever . . . I cried over that knife; I thought: 'this poor thing is broken, and nothing I can do will make it right again . . .'

Socrates ponders this statement, stands up and wanders the stage, talking to himself. He returns to the lectern to continue his speech.

Yes, well: where was I? Crusade . . . buggered up . . . paddle boat . . . oh, yes, THE PLAN! It's pretty extraordinary! In fact, my plan is total -

Sound of alarm clock going off.

SHIT!

Socrates searches the stage for his school bag; lots of other stuff spills from the bag: books, papers, pens, etc. He retrieves an alarm clock.

Bugger!

He shoves the clock back into the bag and hurriedly leaves the stage, leaving a trail of the fallen items on the stage. He wanders into the adjoining stage, set-up as a classroom.

SCENE 2

'Paris'

The banner/sign is changed to 'MILDURA AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL'

A schoolroom, with chairs and a blackboard. On the blackboard is written: 'FORM 6B', 'Today is 12th June, 1970' and 'Our classroom is a happy place'. Some French words are written below.

Dunno and another student are seated in the chairs. Miss Twigg is helping the other student.

Socrates saunters in and walks toward the rear empty chair.

MISS TWIGG: Socrates! So nice of you to join us!

SOCRATES: *(about to sit down)* Oh, is it? Thank you, Miss Twigg!

MISS TWIGG: Can you tell us where you've been?

SOCRATES: I've been on a national speaking tour, Miss Twigg!

MISS TWIGG: A speaking tour? Is this another of your fantasies, Socrates?

SOCRATES: No, Miss Twigg; it's true. I'm currently criss-crossing the nation with my 'Crusade for the Planet'!

Students giggle to each other, except Dunno.

MISS TWIGG: I suppose this follows on from last term's attempt to have the school closed by the United Nations for abuse of human rights?

Everyone giggles, except Dunno.

SOCRATES: But it's true, Miss Twigg! Mister Unstable's mathematics classes go way beyond 'cruel and unusual punishment'!

MISS TWIGG: Socrates, it's well known that you don't like the world the way it is and want to change everything. But the problem isn't the world, Socrates; it's you! When you moon about the playground all day, talking to yourself, and coming up with ridiculous ideas, you show yourself to be a misfit, and no-one likes misfits, Socrates. Do you have any friends?

Socrates looks at his shoes. Behind Miss Twigg, Dunno frantically waves his hand in the air. No-one notices him. Dunno gives up sadly.

MISS TWIGG: *(With a heavy sigh)* Socrates, have you anything to say before I send you to Principal Stone?

SOCRATES: I've already seen him, Miss.

MISS TWIGG: You have already seen him?

SOCRATES: Yes, Miss. He was in the corridor. I told him the school should purchase composting toilets and replace Mister Bogley's utility with a battery-operated car.

MISS TWIGG: And what did Mister Stone say to that?

SOCRATES: He said: 'Bugger off, Smith; you're a bloody nuisance.'

Laughter from students except Dunno.

MISS TWIGG: Well, Socrates, you can hardly blame him! You're always on and on about this thing you call 'global warming', as if in 1970 we don't have all the technology we need to solve any environmental problem! Imagine how silly you'll seem in fifty years' time, when all this obsession with 'climate change' will be 'temps perdue!'

Socrates sits down and starts working. Miss Twigg moves to the other student's desk.

C'est magnifique, Richard! Those inflections are 'parfait'!

She moves to Dunno's desk

Dunno Willingham! Have you finished those conjugations?

DUNNO: Yes, Miss.

MISS TWIGG: Let's see: *(reads his work)* 'Je suis AWESOME'; 'tu es AWESOME; 'nous somme AWESOME . . .' What is this, Dunno? You've written 'I am awesome, you are awesome, we are awesome . . .' You were asked to conjugate 'I have a pen'. Why did you not follow my instructions?

DUNNO: I don't have a pen, Miss.

MISS TWIGG: Sometimes I wonder why I bother . . .

RICK ACTOR: Why *did* you become a teacher, Miss Twigg?

MISS TWIGG: Well, Richard, it was on account of my love of France . . . the food, the wine, the films, the fashion . . . *printemps* in *Parie*. . .

DUNNO: Have you ever been to Paris, Miss Twigg?

MISS TWIGG: Well, not exactly, Dunno, although . . . I almost did . . . it was to be the first thing my boyfriend and I did after we were married.

She looks threateningly at the back of the room

I'll thank you to keep a clean mind, Vinnie Thompson!

Oh dear, but Mildura's so far from the Champs Elysees!

Spot-lit, Miss Twigg moves to the front of the stage.

Yes, that was the plan, wasn't it, Basil.

She glowers with rage and snaps her pencil dramatically.

Coffee in the Elysees; visits to the Louvre and the Jeu de Paume; a pilgrimage to Auteuil, the birthplace of Proust . . . oh yes, that was the plan.

Then I find Basil, under the monkey bars, in the clutches of Missus Readily! How could he do it? With the P.E. teacher! After we had spent hours dissecting Proust, he falls for someone with a bra size bigger than her IQ!

Turned out Basil cared more about pert nipples than high culture! If only I'd paid less attention to uplifting literature, and more attention to uplift bras . . .

Her melancholy soliloquy is abruptly interrupted.

DUNNO: Miss Twigg! Miss Twigg! Vinnie Thompson's giving the cars a 'brown eye'!

MISS TWIGG: *(addressing the back of the room)* Vinnie Thompson! Close that window! Pull up your pants immediately!

RICK ACTOR: He's getting out the window, miss!

MISS TWIGG: Vinnie Thompson! Come back inside this instant! You are not to leave the classroom! Come back in that window! You are not to leave the school grounds . . .

Oh dear, oh dear . . . why did they send me to this god-forsaken place, Mildura . . . *(starts to cry)*

SOCRATES: *(standing up with excitement, oblivious to the scene just occurred)*
Miss Twigg! Miss Twigg! I've developed a scheme for a hydrogen powered public address system!

MISS TWIGG: *(Screaming, at the end of her tether, and pointing to the door)*
SOCRATES SMITH!

Socrates leaves the room. The other students follow. Miss Twigg stands alone in the classroom; looking sadly down at her rather flat chest, she pulls out two points from her jumper with her fingers.

MISS TWIGG: Pert nipples . . .

SCENE 3

'Rick Solomon'

Banner/sign again reads 'SOCRATES SMITH'S CRUSADE FOR THE PLANET'. Apart from the lectern there is now an old-style slide projector and projection screen.

Socrates sneaks onto the stage and throws down his schoolbag.

SOCRATES:

Bugged if I'm going to see Principal Stone; you know, when I told him I was going to start a school strike, you know what he said? 'Do it, Smith; the less I see of you the better!'

Ah, Miss Twigg! I feel sorry for her really; I don't think she's even got a boyfriend; I've been looking for fifty years, and I haven't seen a RING . . .

He walks to the lectern.

Welcome back, Crusaders; now where was I? Let's see; men and women of Australia . . . bugged it up . . . planet dying . . . bit about Mildura . . . oh yes: it's getting toward the part where I reveal my PLAN, my beautiful, elegant . . .

Leaves the lectern and confides in audience

Now, there's a question that's NIGGLING your minds; I can see them ticking over! I saw that bloke nudging his girlfriend, saying: "That old COOT can't be in Form 6!"

It's like this: I started Year 12 in 1970; come November, around exam time, things began to go BLURRY – woo-woo – I started drinking and staying out late, listening to loud music . . . I missed the exams, I turned up late, I fell asleep in the middle. Result is I failed . . . just enough to have to repeat the year again. Next year: same thing happened! Been going on now for fifty years!

A few things HAVE changed: the school's called Chaffey Senior College now, and there's been a decrease in the number of trees and a corresponding increase in stainless steel cook topping and ROTARY LATHES!

Sits on the chair

It's funny, you know; the other day I ran into a bloke that I knew in Year 10. He left Mildura to attend some fancy school down in Melbourne. You know the first thing he said to me? 'Socrates, I knew it was you by your walk', he says; 'you always used to shuffle' . . .

Him and me used to muck around with Super-8 movie cameras and dream of being big Hollywood directors . . . only thing is, he went and did it! Had a career in the movies, comes back to town towing a gorgeous actress twenty years younger than him . . . while old Socrates . . . well, I just kept on shuffling along . . .

Other blokes had girlfriends; other blokes got married; other blokes finished uni. and ended up in interesting jobs . . . other blokes . . . got on with their lives . . .

As he remains seated, absorbed in his thoughts, Rick comes through the audience carrying his guitar.

RICK: Mister Socrates! Mister Socrates!

SOCRATES: What the hell! Who the blazes are you?

RICK: *(offering his hand, which Socrates accepts like it's a smelly fish)* Rick Solomon, Mister Socrates! A great admirer, and I might say, a potential collaborator!

SOCRATES: What do you want, Mister . . . Solomon?

RICK: Why, to join your crusade, Mister Socrates. I have an abundance of skills which can be of great benefit to your project!

SOCRATES: That's very nice, Mister . . . Rick, but I don't need any help, thank you.

RICK: Oh, but there's lots I can do! I . . . can sing!

SOCRATES: You're a . . . musician?

RICK: I'm a phenomenon, Mister Socrates sir! In 1970, I had a number one hit record!

SOCRATES: Oh really?

RICK: *(Addresses audience)* Yes, sir! My re-make of the little-known Japanese pop song 'Sukiyaki' was at the top of the Billboard chart for 52 weeks!

SOCRATES: I find that hard to believe . . .

RICK: It's true! The Billboard chart for 'Japanese pop songs sung in Japanese by a non-Japanese singer'.

SOCRATES: Don't suppose you had a lot of competition . . .

RICK: Oh, Mister Socrates sir, let me show you what I can do!

SOCRATES: All right; Rick, it so happens I was about to give a slide show about the year 1970. If you'd like to add some accompaniment . . .

RICK: Thank you, sir! Bless you!

Socrates goes to the slide projector and starts projecting images of the 1960s. Rick gets his guitar. Two actors appear in hippy dress as his backup singers.

Rick sings one verse of "Oh Yoko" by Lennon and Ono.

RICK:

*In the middle of a dream
In the middle of a dream, I call your name
Oh Yoko
Oh Yoko
My love will turn you on*

(Socrates projects images of Lennon and Ono's famous 1970 Montreal 'Bed-in')

The background singers croon as Rick talks:

RICK: In 1970, following the release of my hit record, I went on a world tour; one day, at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal, I received a phone call. It was from Yoko Ono. Yoko said to me:

YOKO: Could we have two bottles of champagne to room 1738?

RICK: Yes, I was doing room service at the time. And when I went up to room 1738, do you know what John Lennon said to me?

LENNON: Put 'em over there, thanks mate.

RICK:

People, 1970 was a year like no other; the culmination of a decade-long fight against war and oppression; the nations were connected by satellites! Man was on the MOON! Flowers were in the hair! Bangles were on the ankles! Anything was possible. The future stretched out before us like a . . . stretched out future . . .

In that glorious moment, as I stood on the podium at the Ballerina Ballroom to receive my aluminum record . . . I felt the LOVE, people . . . I FELT THE LOVE!

Rick sings final verse of 'Oh Yoko'

RICK:

*In the middle of a cloud
In the middle of a cloud, I call your name
Oh Yoko
Oh Yoko
My love will turn you on*

My love - will - turn - you - on

RICK: What do you think, Mister Socrates sir?

SOCRATES: Well, I suppose I could give you a GIG . . . but you'll have to clean up the stage after, OK?

RICK: Mister Socrates, this is the best decision you've ever made! (*kisses Socrates' hand*)

Rick leaves. Socrates remains on stage.

SOCRATES: With all these interruptions, I'll never get to tell you my PLAN, and its home-time already!!

Socrates picks up his schoolbag and wanders into the adjoining set.

SCENE 4

'Regrets'

The sign is changed to read: 'SOCRATES' BEDROOM'. There is a bed, a guitar, some books, and a large political poster. There is a 2-seater couch to the side of the front of the stage.

Socrates collapses on the bed; he picks up the guitar and strums a bit of 'Oh Yoko'.

Dunno appears beside the bed, holding a frame that represents a window. He taps the frame.

DUNNO: Knock knock!

SOCRATES: Dunno? What are you doing here?

DUNNO: A dust storm's coming, Socrates! Can I come in?

SOCRATES: Is this some kind of NATURAL DISASTER, Dunno?

Peers out the 'window'

I can't see anything . . .

DUNNO: It's coming, Socrates; I can smell it . . . and I just happened to be hanging about . . . I mean walking past . . . your place, so I thought . . . you might let me in?

Dunno puts aside the 'window' and enters, looking around Socrates' room in awe.

DUNNO: Wow! So: this is your place! I mean, everyone wonders what's in your big house, behind all the trees and the creepers. They say your mum's a ghost!

SOCRATES: She is a little INCOMPACITATED . . .

DUNNO: And your dad's the biggest man around town!

SOCRATES: Yes, well, he's BIG alright . . .

DUNNO: What's this? (*holds up a book*)

SOCRATES: That's Mao's 'Little Red Book'.

DUNNO: Oh. Did he lend it to you?

SOCRATES: Ha-ha! No, he gives them away, actually.

DUNNO: Jeez, he's generous! Hey Socrates! What's this? (*points at the banner/sign*)

SOCRATES: That's a political poster, Dunno, from Paris, May 1968.

DUNNO: Bit big for a calendar! How do you know so much, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Well, I . . .

DUNNO: I suppose it's because you spend Saturdays in the library, when everyone else is playing footy.

SOCRATES: Yes, something like that.

An awkward silence

Dunno, I'm not sure what you do when you have a . . . classmate over . . . do we play Monopoly or something?

DUNNO: Socrates?

SOCRATES: Yes, Dunno?

DUNNO: Do you have a girl friend?

SOCRATES: Oh, you know, just 'biding my time' . . . yourself?

DUNNO: Nah.

SOCRATES: That's a shame . . . suppose you wish you did?

DUNNO: Nup.

SOCRATES: Really? Not at all?

DUNNO: Nup.

SOCRATES: How can that be, Dunno?

DUNNO: Can't change nuthin', so I don't regret nuthin'.

SOCRATES: But Dunno, there are lots of things that can be changed! How about . . . I know! What did you have for breakfast this morning?

DUNNO: Corn Flakes like I always do.

SOCRATES: Ah hah! But you could have had porridge instead!

DUNNO: Nup. Could'na.

SOCRATES: What do you mean, Dunno?

DUNNO: Dad never buys porridge.

SOCRATES: I see . . . well how about something over which you have control. Which way did you walk to school this morning?

DUNNO: Down Deakin Avenue like I always do.

SOCRATES: Ah, but what if you walked down Walnut Avenue instead?

DUNNO: Nuh, always Deakin.

SOCRATES: Yes, I know that, but let's just pretend you decide to go down Walnut Avenue, and you meet Vinnie Thompson, and he beats you up! Won't you regret not having taken Deakin Avenue?

DUNNO: Nup, can't happen.

SOCRATES: What do you mean, 'it can't happen'?

DUNNO: That's the reason I never walk down Walnut Avenue.

SOCRATES: OK, Dunno, let's look at this another way. There must be things that you wish were different.

DUNNO: Nuh. Can't change nuthin'.

SOCRATES: Well, don't you wish you were . . . taller?

DUNNO: Nuh. Can't change nuthin'.

SOCRATES: Smarter?

DUNNO: Nuh. Can't change nuthin'.

Socrates thinks for a moment

I know! You wish you were my friend!

DUNNO: Yeah, but I already am, ain't I?

SOCRATES: Well, I, er . . . oh, bugger, I give up!

DUNNO: Socrates?

SOCRATES: Yes, Dunno?

DUNNO: You regret something, don't you?

SOCRATES: Well, actually . . .

DUNNO: Thought so! What is it?

SOCRATES: I've never told this to anyone . . .

DUNNO: You can trust me, Socrates; mates don't blab.

Socrates stands up and paces the floor

SOCRATES: You remember the school trip to Broken Hill?

DUNNO: Yeah! You won the school debate!

SOCRATES: That's right; well, that night my hosts who lived up Duff Street - don't worry, I heard that joke many times that night - took me to a party. It was pretty WILD!

DUNNO: Jeez!

SOCRATES: Anyway, I got a bit . . . tipsy . . .

Martine emerges from the back of the stage and Socrates joins her. Arms around each other, they stumble towards the couch at the front of the stage.

MARTINE: Oh Socky: you're really different when you're drunk!

SOCRATES: Am I Martine? You see, I've never been tipsy before . . . heh, heh

MARTINE: Fair dinkum? Suppose you never . . . kissed a girl, neither?

SOCRATES: Well, I did play 'spin the bottle' at Hughie Twaddington's Christmas Party . . . heh, heh

MARTINE: Well, I got a treat for you tonight, cutie!

Martine opens an imaginary car door, and they stumble onto the couch; Socrates looks around, less drunk

SOCRATES: But Martine! This is Mister Edwards Subaru!

MARTINE: Mmmmmm. *(trying to kiss Socrates)* Yes, Socky.

SOCRATES: Look! *(trying to escape her advances)* It's got genuine fake leather!

MARTINE: Mmmmmm. Yes.

SOCRATES: And a pull-out drink caddy!

As Martine tries ever harder to embrace Socrates, and he tries equally hard to escape her, they get into a series of ridiculous poses.

MARTINE: Ouch!

SOCRATES: Sorry Martine!

MARTINE: Ow!

SOCRATES: Sorry Martine!

They stop, frozen in an awkward pose

MARTINE: Socky?

SOCRATES: Yes, Martine?

MARTINE: Why do you keep saying 'sorry', and wriggling away from me?

Socrates pulls himself upright

SOCRATES: I suppose it's due to the repression of the erotic desire I feel for my mother, combined with castration anxiety towards my father and a failure to integrate the super-ego . . . but who knows . . .

MARTINE: Mmmmm, I love your brainy talk!

More attempted kissing by Martine and avoidance by Socrates

SOCRATES: Martine?

MARTINE: *(Looking expectantly up at Socrates)* Yes, Socrates?

SOCRATES: I want to tell you something . . .

MARTINE: *(Looking expectantly up at Socrates)* Yes, Socrates?

SOCRATES: About the way I feel . . .

MARTINE: *(Looking expectantly up at Socrates)* Yes, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Deep inside . . .

MARTINE: *(Looking expectantly up at Socrates)* Yes, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Deep inside . . . I feel that I am going to be violently ill . . .

Socrates leans out of the car and vomits; Martine pats him on the back.

MARTINE: Poor old Socky! It really is your first time, aint it! I'm going back to the party, dearie. See you later!

Martine exits the 'car' and walks backstage. Socrates gets out and addresses Dunno/the audience.

SOCRATES: That was it . . . some of Vinnie Thompson's mates gate-crashed the party, there was a fight, someone pulled a knife, and Martine . . . got in the way.

DUNNO: Jeez, Socrates.

SOCRATES: She died, Dunno, all because she went back to that party.

Socrates sits beside Dunno on the bed

SOCRATES: You see, if only I'd had the courage to tell her how I felt about her, she would never have left the car, and everything would have turned out differently . . .

They sit silently for a moment

DUNNO: Socrates . . .

SOCRATES: Yes, Dunno?

DUNNO: What's a crusade?

SOCRATES: That's where a whole lot of folks go off and fight for justice, and chivalry, that sort of thing.

DUNNO: Like fighting dragons and rescuing sheilas?

SOCRATES: Well, not exactly . . . oh look, Dunno! The storm's over!

DUNNO: *(climbing out the window)* I'd like to help you save some sheilas, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Yes, but that's not what this is about, Dunno! You've got it all wrong . . .

Dunno leaves

SOCRATES: Oh bugger, ANOTHER helper! That's just what I need!

SCENE 5

'Doubt'

Banner/sign again says, 'SOCRATES SMITH'S CRUSADE FOR THE PLANET'. Socrates emerges and stands at the lectern

SOCRATES:

HO, CRUSADERS! Past half-time, and you're still here! It's too late to get your money back now! Your census date is GONE!

I suppose by now you're thinking it's time for me to reveal my big PLAN! Well, you're RIGHT!

Leaves the lectern

Didn't grow up in Mildura, of course. No; moved here about five years ago. My dad was a big shot lawyer on the BAYSIDE SUBURBS; we had to move on account of a health SCARE . . . no, not a heart attack or anything like that! No, my dad was scared that people were starting to wonder why my mum kept on 'falling down the stairs' - especially when we lived in a single-storey house . . . My mum didn't want to move, of course; oh no! Middle of the blooming DESERT! No David Jones; no Myers . . .

He sits on the chair.

I see her cry, you know, my mother. Oh yes. Alone at night I see her, in her room, opening her memory box . . . I know what's in there . . . I've had a PEEK! Her brother Charlie's posthumous war medals, a photograph of her father who died of a broken heart; a little tapestry she sewed on the occasion of the coronation of the young Elizabeth; and a faded yellow rose that you might wear on a BALL GOWN . . . I asked her about that, once; she looked at me with that sad expression of hers and said: "Solly, that was BEFORE your father" (she calls me Solly) . . . before my father . . . there's a few acres in that prairie, ladies and gentlemen . . .

Gets up again and paces the stage.

Because that's it, isn't it, people? The things that happen and the things that might have been, and that big question: can we start over again? Can we make things . . . right?

You see, 1970 was like a fork in the road; go one way and stay on the flat country and it's pretty boring, nothing changes. What we COULD have done is taken the other road, which leads you up into the mountains . . . the views are magnificent . . .

Rick and Dunno appear, urging each other to approach Socrates. Finally, Rick does so.

RICK: Mister Socrates, sir; Dunno and I would like a word.

SOCRATES: What is it now, Rick?

RICK: Well, Mister Socrates, sir, it's like this: we feel, that is Dunno and I . . .

SOCRATES: Yes?

RICK: The thing is, we think the pace is a little . . .

SOCRATES: The pace?

RICK: We think you should get on with it . . . you know, your plan . . .

SOCRATES: Yes?

RICK: Well, we were wondering . . .

DUNNO: *(Exasperated, coming to the front of the stage)* What the fuck is your plan, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Oh! Do you really want to know?

RICK & DUNNO: Yes!

SOCRATES: No, you don't!

RICK & DUNNO: Yes, we do!

SOCRATES: *(To audience)* Do you want to know?

AUDIENCE: *(prompted)* YES!

SOCRATES: *(bashfully)* No, you don't!

AUDIENCE: *(prompted)* YES, WE DO!

SOCRATES: All right then. Will you help me, fellows?

Rick and Dunno reveal a new banner/sign. It is an incomprehensible jumble of shapes and arrows that looks like a crazy maths equation.

RICK: What the bejeesus is that?

Dunno, thinking it represents dance steps, tries to follow it with a comic dance. Rolling his eyes, Socrates indicates to Rick that the sign is upside down. Rick reverses the sign, so it reads: 'MAKE IT 1970 AGAIN'

DUNNO: That's it?

RICK: I don't get it, Socrates . . .

SOCRATES: Look, it's quite simple. In 1970, we knew the planet was in trouble, right?

RICK &
DUNNO: Yes . . .

SOCRATES: But we did nothing about it, right?

RICK &
DUNNO: Yes . . .

SOCRATES: But now we know what we SHOULD have done, right?

RICK &
DUNNO: Yes . . .

SOCRATES: So, if go back to 1970 - with our present state of knowledge - we can do all the things we should have done, and by 2020 the planet will be saved!

RICK: Excuse me Mister Socrates, I know I lack your brilliant mind, but how exactly do we start again at 1970?

SOCRATES: Well, I'm still working on that bit . . .

Meanwhile, Dunno is furiously fiddling with Socrates' alarm clock and counting to himself.

SOCRATES: Dunno! What are you doing?

DUNNO: One hour ten minutes . . . one hour twenty minutes . . .

SOCRATES: Are you winding back the clock, Dunno?

DUNNO: Yeah! I'm at last week already! Wednesday, 11 am . . . 10:30 . . .

SOCRATES: Dunno, do you know how many minutes there are in fifty years? Twenty-six million, two hundred and eighty thousand! How long do you suppose it will take to turn all the world's clocks back?

DUNNO: I reckon about . . . fifty years!

SOCRATES: So, you propose to manually turn all the world's clocks back fifty years, so that by the year 2070, we will have got to . . .

DUNNO: 2020, Socrates!

RICK: *(rushing in with a calendar)* Mister Socrates! I've got an idea!

SOCRATES: Yes . . .

RICK: Look! Here's this year's calendar. If we make this minor change *(shows '2020' struck out and replaced with '1970')* it's a lot quicker!

SOCRATES: Yes, but there's a problem, Rick. What day is today?

RICK: *(insert day of performance)*

SOCRATES: And do you know what day today is in 1970? It's *(choose a different day)*! It doesn't work. Every year's calendar is different! I've already tried; it's hopeless!

RICK: Not so, Mister Socrates: the calendar repeats every twenty-eight years. That means that in 1964, the days were exactly the same as 2020!

SOCRATES: 1964? What bloody use is that? What happened in 1964? Johnny Farnham's voice broke? No; it's 1970 or nothing!

DUNNO: Socrates, my old man doesn't know what day of the week it is; neither does my mum. Or the old geezer down the street, or . . .

SOCRATES: I think you're onto something, Dunno. Most people don't know what day of the week it is anyway!

Rick comes in carrying a huge pile of calendars. He and Dunno set to work altering them. Socrates leaves.

RICK: This is a proud moment for me, Dunno, helping realise Mister Socrates' great plan!

DUNNO: I just like scribbling on stuff!

They keep working.

RICK: *(Getting up)* Still, there's something I'm not sure of . . . hey, Mister Socrates sir!

Socrates returns

SOCRATES: What is it, Rick?

RICK: Well, there's something I didn't tell you . . . about my past.

Lights dim and Rick is spot lit; Socrates picks up a guitar and starts to play. Rick sings the first verse of 'Knocking on Heaven's Door' by Bob Dylan. Dunno does backup vocals, joined by the female actor.

RICK:

*Mama, take this badge from me
I can't use it anymore
It's getting dark too dark to see
Feels like I'm knockin' on heaven's door*

*Knock-knock-knockin' on heaven's door
Knock-knock-knockin' on heaven's door
Knock-knock-knockin' on heaven's door
Knock-knock-knockin' on heaven's door*

The background singers croon as Rick talks:

RICK:

'All that glitters', people, heed my tale: 1970 was not only the high point of my whirlwind success, but it was also the moment when the wind changed . . . all of that idealism I spoke about? Gone. The warmongers and the moneylenders and the arms-dealers - they trashed our summer of love. They say the 60's died . . . no, my friends: it was MURDERED in cold blood. The music? That changed too. Johnny B Goode became Johnny Rotten.

As the world changed around me, I struggled to come up with a follow up hit to 'Sukiyaki'; my career at the Ballerina Ballroom was over . . . my life descended into a hell of addiction, vice, and criminality. Yes, Tim Tam cravings have no mercy . . . but people, I turned my life around; yes, rehab saved me, my friends and after drying out for 49 years, I stumbled out those doors into the waiting arms of Socrates' crusade.

So, people, when the Mister Socrates says 'let's go back to 1970's, I'm not so sure . . . I'd like nothing better than to revisit my days of triumph, but you see, I fought my way out of the 70s; I'm not sure it's a place I want to go back to . . .

Rick sings Verse 2 of 'Knocking on Heaven's Door'.

RICK:

*Mama, put my guns in the ground
I can't shoot them anymore
That cold black cloud is comin' down
Feels like I'm knockin' on heaven's door*

*Knock-knock-knockin' on heaven's door
Knock-knock-knockin' on heaven's door
Knock-knock-knockin' on heaven's door
Knock-knock-knockin' on heaven's door*

Rick leaves the stage sadly.

RICK: Don't make me go back Socrates . . .

Dunno approaches Socrates.

DUNNO: Socrates?

SOCRATES: Yes, Dunno?

DUNNO: You know how you want us to do things differently now it's 1970 again?

SOCRATES: Yes . . .

DUNNO: Well, I don't know what to do!

SOCRATES: *(kindly)* OK, Dunno . . . let's take something . . . simple: recycling.

DUNNO: Uh huh.

SOCRATES: You know the bin that people put out on rubbish night?

DUNNO: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well now you have to get five bins.

DUNNO: Five bins!

SOCRATES: Yes, Dunno: the first one is where you put everything made of glass . . .

DUNNO: Like dad's beer bottles?

SOCRATES: Exactly, Dunno. The second one is for things made of metal.

DUNNO: Like dad's beer cans?

SOCRATES: Yes . . . there's a theme here . . . the third one is for paper . . .

DUNNO: Like the paper bags that dad carries his . . .

SOCRATES: Yes, Dunno. The fourth one is for everything plastic. (*Looks at Dunno expectantly, but he smiles blankly and says nothing*) and what's left goes into the rubbish bin.

DUNNO: Socrates?

SOCRATES: Yes, Dunno?

DUNNO: We don't have a bin.

SOCRATES: What do you mean you don't have a bin? Everybody has a bin. Where does your rubbish go?

DUNNO: My dad puts it in a big hole in the backyard.

SOCRATES: Dunno, why do you have a big hole in your backyard?

DUNNO: Well, mum wanted a swimming pool, so dad went and dug a big hole. Then the council said he didn't have a permit, and he had to fill it in. Then dad refused to pay his rates so now he puts our rubbish into the big hole . . .

SOCRATES: . . . in your backyard . . . yes, I see Dunno . . .

Socrates leaves Dunno and gestures to the audience in despair.

SOCRATES: It's becoming clear that although we've made it 1970 again, getting people to change their ways is going to be harder than I thought. People are going to need a bit of . . . RE-EDUCATION!

Two actors enter and sit amongst the audience, one in each half of the audience, which is divided by a central aisle. Socrates stands behind the lectern. A new banner/sign reads: 'THE GRETA THUNBERG SCHOOL FOR CLIMATE DENIERS'

SCENE 6

'Cooperation'

SOCRATES: Hello class!

AUDIENCE: *(prompted)* HELLO MISTER SOCRATES!

SOCRATES:

We have reached the final lecture of the course, so I have a couple of comments on the recent essay submissions.

Firstly, young Scottie. Scottie Morrison, where are you? Now Scottie: your essay entitled 'Gas: the way to a sustainable future' has been found to be a word-for-word copy of the essay you submitted last year, entitled: 'Coal: the way to a sustainable future'.

I'm sorry, but we don't tolerate plagiarism; you'll have to repeat the course.

Next: Tony; Tony Abbott, where are you? Your essay had some interesting points; it's true that budgie smugglers use less resources to produce than baggy board shorts. However, your final argument that killing all the old people would reduce energy demand by 20%, while true, shows that you haven't quite 'got it', eh Tony? You will write 1,000 times, 'I was Australia's worst Prime Minister'.

What's that? You reckon Scottie was worse?

(Addresses audience) What do you think, everybody?

OK; Scottie, you can write 1,000 times 'I was also Australia's worst Prime Minister'.

Right, well today I will be talking about COOPERATION. To combat climate change, united action is essential. Yet your average CLIMATE DENIER will say things like 'it's the fault of those people over there!'

The problem here is the human tendency to aggregate into TRIBES, separated by BORDERS, leading to a total lack of cooperation!

Firstly, though, I'd like to hear from you. What does 'cooperation' mean to you?

Socrates picks out Actor 1

RICK ACTOR: Well, I suppose it's the spirit in which we came here today. I mean, we all came here peacefully and took our seats in this hall to listen to you.

SOCRATES: Excellent, yes, I see. And someone from over here? Yes, you.

Socrates picks out Actor 2

MISS T ACTOR: I totally agree with the person over there. I mean, here we are, all here in a spirit of peace and harmony.

SOCRATES: Excellent.

MISS T ACTOR: Although . . .

SOCRATES: Yes?

MISS T ACTOR: Well, I must say that we – I mean the people on this side of the hall – entered in a spirit of cooperation but . . . well, someone on the other side pushed in front of me on the way in.

SOCRATES: Ah yes, oh well, never mind. Thank you. Now to get onto my first point: borders. Borders have a long history; however, prior to historical times, the areas over which our hunter-gather ancestors roamed had fluid boundaries. Tribes would regularly hunt on each other's territory based on long-standing custom . . .

In the next section, actors 1 and 2 break into Socrates' talk about halfway through each paragraph

RICK ACTOR: Excuse me! Excuse me! I'm sorry, Mister Socrates, but I must respond to that slur just now from my friend over there. We didn't 'push in' as she says, we were just eager to get to class and learn! We clearly care more about cooperation than they do!

MISS T ACTOR: Oh really! So: trampling on other people is enthusiasm, is it? Some might call it rudeness!

SOCRATES: Ah hem. Very good. Thank you. Now the first officially recognised border in the ancient world was promulgated by King Hammurabi of Babylon. Hammurabi ordered that the borders of the kingdom be marked by stone obelisks . . .

RICK ACTOR: Rude? Where do you get off, you . . . slack arses! You lot entered showing about as much interest as monks in a brothel! I think half of your lot are asleep!

MISS T ACTOR: So! It's 'slack arses', is it? Well, what about you 'elbow pushers' that shouldn't even be here, with your noise and your talking, and your mobile phones always going off!

SOCRATES: King Hammurabi's Code of Hammurabi is the first known example of borders being mathematically defined. Of course, Babylon was famous for its astronomical prowess, and the priests used the location of the stars to define the extent of the state . . .

RICK ACTOR: *(moving towards the middle aisle)* Listen, I've had just about enough of your taunts. We're meant to be learning about cooperation, and your lot are about the least cooperative people I've ever seen!

MISS T ACTOR: *(also moving towards the other)* Is that so? Well, what about coming over here and we'll see how cooperative YOU are!

SOCRATES: Now listen, really, could everyone please calm down! I'm just getting to Solon's Constitution of the 6th Century BC!

The actors sit down reluctantly

Now Solon of Athens is regarded as the first ruler to establish the principles of statecraft as we would recognise them. In his famous Constitution . . .

RICK ACTOR: Constitution! I'll tell you the constitution of that lot! Rich, lazy, and half asleep! Isn't that right? *(moves to the centre aisle and rouses his fellows to agree)*

MISS T ACTOR: *(also moving to the middle and rousing her side)* Do you hear that? From those tattooed white-trash thugs over there!

SOCRATES: Now listen everybody, this really won't do. I must ask you to sit down - cooperatively - so the conference can continue. What would Greta say? Now, returning to Solon . . .

RICK ACTOR: There's only one way we're going to get cooperation, and that's to distance ourselves from that rabble over there!

MISS T ACTOR: That's one thing we can agree on!

The two actors unroll a plastic worksite safety fence along the central aisle from a roll at the rear of the hall

SOCRATES: Oh dear! No! You can't do that! I haven't got to the Magna Carta! The Napoleonic Code! The UN Charter of Human Rights!

RICK ACTOR: Yeah, let the speaker get on with the talk, slacky!

MISS T ACTOR: How about you let him get on with it, pushy!

RICK ACTOR: Want to make me?

MISS T ACTOR: Oh yeah?

The two actors come to the front and begin to tussle with each other. Socrates tries to intervene but finds himself attacked on both sides. He retreats behind the lectern and hides.

The actors stop fighting.

RICK ACTOR: Hey, where's the speaker gone?

MISS T ACTOR: Don't know. Must have finished.

The actors put their arms around each other

RICK ACTOR: Feel like a drink?

MISS T ACTOR: Don't mind if I do.

As they walk offstage:

RICK ACTOR: Wasn't much of a talk, was it?

MISS T ACTOR: Nah. Could hardly hear a bloody thing he said.

Crestfallen, Socrates creeps forlornly from behind the lectern and exits.

SCENE 7

'Apocalypse'

SOUNDS AND IMAGES OF DISASTER AND WAR

Projected images of nuclear explosions (from 'Dr Strangelove')

Strobe lights go off behind sets

Sounds of explosions, missiles, guns etc.

Dry ice smoke drifts over the stage

SCENE 8

'We're all AWESOME'

During the sound and light show the set is destroyed, with upturned furniture and papers strewn over the floor. The lighting is dim. Socrates wanders through the debris holding a candle.

SOCRATES:

Oh dear . . . oh dear . . . oh dear . . .

Oh, dearie me! I'm sorry everybody, but it seems that the world has come to an end after all! But don't worry, I've got a . . . a . . . Oh, who am I kidding!

You see, it all went as I feared . . . environmental breakdown, droughts and floods, plagues; then the conflicts over water, food and energy; last of all, a nuclear winter after President Ivanka Trump accidentally plonked her BOOTY on the big red button!

And here we are! It's 2050! And guess what! Yes! I'm still in form 6B at Mildura Agricultural High School!

Of course, a few things have changed; no trees at all now: just blackened STUMPS! The latest model Miss Twigg has BIONIC EYES; can't get away with anything!

But the LATHES! Oh! Quantum Drives now; push 'em too hard and you go into orbit! Vinnie Thompson made a table leg out of one of Pluto's MOONS last week!

Socrates puts down the candle and wanders the stage in anguish

Oh, what's this? (*picks up something from the ground*) Oh, look, it's Scottie Morrison's lump of coal! The one he took into parliament back in 2017!

And oh! An old report from 1970, warning about the 'greenhouse effect'!

(*Picks up another document*) And this one, a report from the mid-seventies, warning about wars and pandemics!

(*picking up document after document*)

Stockholm, 1980 . . . 1985 . . . ah! the first IPCC report of 1990 - hah, the good old IPCC - fat lot of attention we paid to them! . . . the second IPCC report . . . the third IPCC . . . the fourth . . . oh my goodness! What's this?

(*Picks up a photograph*)

Why, it's a photo of me and Martine Mahoney!

(shows audience)

Well, I didn't actually have a photo of us together, so I cut a photo of Martine out of the school yearbook and stuck it next to one of me . . .

Socrates roams the stage in anguish

Martine, it's all my fault . . . I'm sorry . . .

Rick, I'm sorry I made those cruel remarks!

Dunno, I should have been a better friend!

Miss Twigg, I'm sorry I made fun of your boyfriend! I didn't mean any harm!

And all of you, watching this trash, I'm so sorry!

I'm sorry my father was a wife beating asshole!

I'm sorry my mother was an alcoholic!

Oh Martine, Martine, Martine, Martine . . .

Socrates collapses on his knees.

Rick and Dunno enter from backstage, sweeping up the mess. They do not notice Socrates.

RICK: I can't help but feel sorry for Mister Socrates.

DUNNO: Yup.

RICK: I mean, the Crusade may have failed, but at least he had a go.

DUNNO: Yup.

RICK: How many of us just go day to day, accepting what's around us, never questioning anything or trying to make things better?

DUNNO: I told him you can't change nuthin'.

RICK: Well, yes, and I warned him about going back to the past. But that doesn't change the fact that he had a go! I know he doesn't know how I feel, but to me, Mister Socrates is a HERO!

DUNNO: Rick?

RICK: Yes, Dunno.

DUNNO: You know how sometimes things are going great, and then they turn to shit?

RICK: I surely do, my friend!

DUNNO: It's like we're in a giant exam room, and we're all being given a great big test . . .

RICK: I know what you mean.

DUNNO: Well, I reckon that's the one test that no-one can fail.

RICK: What do you mean, Dunno, no-one can fail?

DUNNO: *(facing the audience, arms spread wide)* You know why? Because . . . we're all AWESOME, Rick; we're all fucking AWESOME! All of this; all THIS; it's fucking AWESOME!

Rick embraces Dunno. They walk off stage together. Socrates rises from the floor.

SOCRATES: Well! Who would have thought! It's nice to have such good ffff . . . acquaintances.

He takes out the photograph of himself and Martine.

Oh Martine, is it possible . . . that I've been . . . wrong?

Martine re-appears from backstage as before. They enact the 'car' scene exactly as before, except for the ending.

MARTINE: Oh Socky: you're really different when you're drunk!

SOCRATES: Am I Martine? You see, I've never been tipsy before . . . heh, heh

MARTINE: Fair dinkum? Suppose you never . . . kissed a girl, neither?

SOCRATES: Well, I did play 'spin the bottle' at Hughie Twaddington's Christmas Party . . . heh, heh

MARTINE: Well, I got a treat for you tonight, cutie!

Martine opens an imaginary car door, and they stumble onto the couch; Socrates looks around, less drunk

SOCRATES: But Martine! This is Mister Edwards Subaru!

MARTINE: Mmmmmm. *(trying to kiss Socrates)* Yes, Socky.

SOCRATES: Look! *(trying to escape her advances)* It's got genuine fake leather!

MARTINE: Mmmmmm. Yes.

SOCRATES: And a pull-out drink caddy!

As Martine tries ever harder to embrace Socrates, and he tries equally hard to escape her, they get into a series of ridiculous poses.

MARTINE: Ouch!

SOCRATES: Sorry Martine!

MARTINE: Ow!

SOCRATES: Sorry Martine!

They stop, frozen in an awkward pose

MARTINE: Socky?

SOCRATES: Yes, Martine?

MARTINE: Why do you keep saying 'sorry', and wriggling away from me?

Socrates pulls himself upright

SOCRATES: I suppose it's due to the repression of the erotic desire I feel for my mother, combined with castration anxiety towards my father and a failure to integrate the super-ego . . . but who knows . . .

MARTINE: Mmmmm, I love your brainy talk!

More attempted kissing by Martine and avoidance by Socrates

SOCRATES: Martine?

MARTINE: *(Looking expectantly up at Socrates)* Yes, Socrates?

SOCRATES: I want to tell you something . . .

MARTINE: *(Looking expectantly up at Socrates)* Yes, Socrates?

SOCRATES: About the way I feel . . .

MARTINE: *(Looking expectantly up at Socrates)* Yes, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Deep inside . . .

MARTINE: *(Looking expectantly up at Socrates)* Yes, Socrates?

Socrates extricates himself from Martine and kneels at her feet

SOCRATES: Deep inside, Martine . . . I love you; I want you to be my girl!

Martine pats him on the head

MARTINE: Poor old Socky! It really is your first time, ain't it! I'm going back to the party, dearie. See you later!

Martine exits the 'car' and walks backstage. She turns and looks back.

MARTINE: I'll tell you this, Socky: If you ain't hurting, you ain't alive! Didn't you know that?

Martine smiles at Socrates. They stand looking at each other for a moment. Martine exits. Socrates addresses the audience.

SOCRATES:

Hello, Crusaders! I'm afraid I've led you down the garden path; all that talk about saving the planet turns out to be nothing more than a failed attempt to rewrite my past! I mean, God, you couldn't write a piece of second-rate theatre with a sorrier script!

You see . . . this whole SCHEMOZZLE *(waves his hands around the stage)* was my drama teacher, Miss Haig's idea! All I wanted to do was go up and down the trot HARANGUING a lot of folks about the planet; but oh no, you've got to have a PLOT, she says; you need CHARACTERS! Construct a NARRATIVE ARC! Confuse them with a bit of Brechtian ESTRANGEMENT! Bloody confused me, I can tell you!

(Socrates moves closer to the audience)

Well, I'm throwing away the script! I'm going to share something with you - just between you and me . . . and it's this: *(dramatic pause)* YO-YOS! Yes! Yo-yos! Did you ever have one? Big thing when I was a kid . . .

Socrates pulls out a yo-yo and shows off his expertise

Thing is, yo-yos go up and down, right? One minute up, next minute down. The world is like that: in 1970, the yo-yo of global consciousness was UP (well, a few of us got pretty HIGH!);

then what happens? Bloody string breaks doesn't it, and old yo-yo goes rolling DOWN into the drain behind Mister Bogley's tool shed! Never mind; after fifty years up comes yo-yo again! Human consciousness is rising; I can feel it! You lot - you ZOOMERS and MILLENNIALS - YOU'RE going to save this planet; not us oldies - in 2050 I'll be 95! Yes, friends: for the first time in a long while, I am feeling the LOVE! (*calls out*) Dunno! Rick!

RICK &
DUNNO: (*returning to the stage*) Yes, Socrates?

SOCRATES: I feel a song coming on!

RICK: You can sing, Mister Socrates?

SOCRATES: Honestly, Rick, I don't have a bloody clue; but I reckon . . . anything's possible, if you have a go!

RICK: What will you sing, sir?

SOCRATES: Well, I don't actually know any songs . . .

RICK: Could I suggest this one, Mister Socrates?

Rick passes Socrates a sheet of paper

SOCRATES: What's this, Rick?

RICK: Well, Mister Socrates sir, it's my new song . . . yes, after fifty years I'm back in Reg Norris's 4-track studio in Pasadena Grove! I feel another hit coming on!

While Socrates reads the lyrics, Rick confides in the audience in a loud whisper:

RICK: Don't worry, it requires ZERO singing ability!

SOCRATES: What was that, Rick?

RICK: It requires a HEROE'S singing ability, Mister Socrates!

SOCRATES: Oh, I hope I'm up to it. Grab your guitar!

RICK: Yes, Mister Socrates SIR!

Socrates sings 'We are, we say' based on 'I am, I said' by Neil Diamond. Rick plays the guitar. Dunno changes the banner/sign to read: 'WE LOVE YOU, SOCRATES!'

SOCRATES:

*The climate's stuffed, and the government sucks,
And unemployment is "way up" -
While everybody's blaming everybody else,
but no-one wants to "pay up" -*

Not bad, Rick!

*But this world's my home, and I'm damned if I'm
going to watch it die -
The planet's in trouble, so who's going to save it?
We're going to save it and I'm going to tell you why -*

*"We are", we say
"We are", say we
We'll save this fucking planet for free*

*We'll set some goals
And stop burning coal
and when we're done, we'll dig some big holes . . .*

. . . to bury the blooming climate deniers in!

Oh, I like that bit, Rick!

*Did you ever hear about a schoolboy who dreamed of being a CRUSADER,
And then became one?
Well that story's about me! I wrote the bloody thing -
and sold it on Amazon!*

*But I learned my lesson, now I know
you can't live in the past -
We've got to act right now, because time is ticking
We've got to act right now, we've got to act bloody fast!*

Come on everyone!

ALL:

*"We are", we say
"We are", say we
We'll save this fucking planet for free*

*We'll plant some trees
and save the bees
And to show we're nice we'll rescue the fleas . . .*

. . . and chuck them in the hole with the climate deniers!

(Miss Twigg enters, and the four actors join arms and do a Can-Can for the last chorus of the song)

ALL:

*"We are", we say
"We are", say we
We'll save this fucking planet for free*

*We'll live on beans
and eat our greens
And when the crusade's won, we'll know what it means . . .*

DUNNO:

It means we're all fucking AWESOME!

SOCRATES: Why Miss Twigg! You're quite a mover!

MISS TWIGG: You're not so bad yourself, mon petit philosophe . . .

She moves closer and stokes his cheek endearingly

SOCRATES: Miss Twigg!

MISS TWIGG: Call me Euridice.

SOCRATES: Miss . . . MISS . . . what about Basil?

MISS TWIGG: Oh, Socrates! What century do you think we're in?

SOCRATES: Honestly, Miss Twigg? After this debacle I'm not sure anymore!

MISS TWIGG: Well, I'll tell you something, Socrates: if you think women should just mope around, agonising over their faults, while men treat them like SHIT, you're wrong! And another thing: you can stop fantasising about women you could have 'saved', who were quite capable of looking after themselves!

SOCRATES: Ha-ha, oh, that's totally my view, Miss Twigg, I-I couldn't agree more . . . heh, heh

Socrates gathers in Miss Twigg, Dunno and Rick.

Well, fellows - now that we've saved the planet, I've been thinking about what to do next. I've had a new idea!

RICK: Oh no, Mister Socrates, no more ideas!

SOCRATES: No, no, hear me out. I realise my notion of going back to the PAST was crazy!

They all nod in furious agreement

But I've had an entirely different idea . . . what if we bring the PAST forward to US?

ALL: Huh? What? etc

The actors begin to walk off the stage

SOCRATES: Yes! Just think about it: once each year is over, we just throw it away, right? All those past years, piling up like DEAD LEAVES! But what if we recycled them? Just pick a year and use it again!

DUNNO: Can we get Aunt Lizzie's watch back?

SOCRATES: What are you talking about, Dunno?

DUNNO: Well, in 1983 my dad accidentally threw Aunt Lizzies watch . . .

SOCRATES: . . . into the big hole in your backyard! Yes, Dunno, even Aunt Lizzie's watch.

They start to walk off stage together. On the way out, they change the banner/sign to read:

IN MEMORY OF ROSS 'DUNNO' BILLINGTON, 1956-1983

THE END

All actors re-appear to accept applause.

SOCRATES: Martine! Don't go back to the party! You're going to get hurt! You're going to die!

MARTINE: *(Takes Socrates' hand and faces audience)* Oh Socky! If you ain't hurting, you ain't alive! Didn't you know that? And if something does happen to me, the last thing I want to see when I'm looking down from heaven is old Socky losing any sleep over me! So back to the party I go, sweetie!

