

DOC COMPARATO  
NOSTRADAMUS

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THEATRE

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THEATRE

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## Notes

- 'Nostradamus' was written in Friburgo, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in the summer of 1983.
- This play received the Italian Award for theatre 'Ana Magnani' / Stazione 2003/2004, Rome, Italy.
- This play is part of the author's 'Trilogy of Time' which includes 'Miguel Angelo' as the prisoner of the present and 'The Circle of Lights – Molière and Racine' as the prisoner of the Past. 'Nostradamus' is the first part of this trilogy and which represents the prisoner of the future. The other two plays are also available in English.

ALTHOUGH THIS PLAY IS BASED ON KNOWN HISTORIC FACTS  
AND EXTENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESEARCH IT IS,  
NEVERTHELESS, ENTIRELY A WORK OF FICTION.

## **LEGIS CAUTIO CONTRA INEPTOS CRITICOS**

**Qui legent hos versus, mature censunto;  
Prophanum vulgus & inscium ne attrectato.  
Omnesque Astrologi, Blenni, Barbari procul sunt,  
Qui aliter faxit, is rite sacer esto.**

## **INVOCATION OF THE LAW AGAINST INEPT CRITICS**

**“Those who read these verses, let them consider with mature mind.  
Let not the profane, vulgar and ignorant be attracted to their study.  
All Astrologers, Fools & Barbarians draw not near,  
He who acts otherwise, is cursed according to rite.”**

## **THE BOOK OF PROPHECIES VI / 100**

## Reading Doc Comparato's Plays

Publishers used to avoid certain types of books because they were considered bad sellers: plays, poetry, short stories, biographies... With the e-book everything has changed. All genres are welcome. And we decided to invest in drama, in the theatrical work of dramatist Doc Comparato. The author lived in many different countries and for so his work is very diversified. His book on scriptwriting has been translated into many different languages. What about his plays?

His work is divided into three trilogies: **Tomorrow's Trilogy**, composed by plays written in the 1980's and 1990's: *Plêiades*, *O Beijo da Louca*, for which he won the National Theatre Award, and *O Despertar dos Desatinados* (***The Rainforest***), not yet staged.

After that came the **Trilogy of Time**, with plays written until the year 2000: *Nostradamus*, *Michelangelo* and *O Círculo das Luzes* – all of which have been staged in Brazil and Italy. *Nostradamus* won the Anna Magnani Award.

And the last **Trilogy of Imagination** which is comprised of his most recent work, plays that had not been published up until now and still not staged.

And it is precisely with his new work that we are going to start. The plays are: *Sempre, Jamais* and *Eterno* (***The Secret Days of Orson Welles In Brazil***). With a very powerful imagetic capacity, he brings to life a writer of children's books, Calabar a traitor and the secret days of Orson Welles in Brazil, in texts apparently simple but full of hidden meanings.

It is worth reading and imagining the plays.

Apart from the trilogies, Doc also has other plays that we are going to include in the second wave of digital editions. The children's play *A Incrível Viagem, Lição N.º 18* and *A Misteriosa Morte do Supremo Imperador da China e Outras Histórias*.



Before we end, it is worth reminding that this material is only licensed for reading.

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*For my daughter Bianca, who was conceived after the  
play was written but born before it was staged.*

# LIST OF CHARACTERS

1. NOSTRADAMUS
2. SABINA
3. JULIUS
4. CARDINAL NARBONNE
5. MONSIGNOR FELICE
6. CAESAR
7. CATHERINE DE MEDICIS
8. DUC ANTOINE DE BOURBON
9. COMTE DE LEPAN
10. MADAME ANNE
11. MONKS, PAJE AND SHADOWS
12. ARABS, COURT NOBLES, PONTIFICAL SWISS GUARD AND ACROBATS

## SETS

NOSTRADAMUS' CONSULTING ROOM

NOSTRADAMUS' STUDY

THE DUNGEON OF CARDINAL NARBONNE'S PALACE

THE DISPENSARY AT AGEN

INSIDE A PYRAMID

VATICAN MAP ROOM

THE FRENCH COURT

NOSTRADAMUS' HOUSE (SALON)

THE ROYAL APARTMENTS

HALL OF MIRRORS

**Note:** The music references in the text are only a way to indicate the passing of time. It is up to the director the use of this rubric. We suggest the song TE DEUM by Z. KODALY as base soundtrack.

# NOSTRADAMUS

**BLACKOUT.  
THE CURTAIN RISES.**

## SCENE 1. NOSTRADAMUS STUDY

*Avignon 1525.*

*Night.*

*MICHEL DE NOSTREDAME (NOSTRADAMUS) and his colleague JULIUS are in conversation in a candlelit room.*

*Spread out on a huge table are cheese, fruit and wine.*

*Julius helps himself to a piece of fruit and bites into it. Pause.*

*Nostradamus, his back to us, watches the sun rise through a window.*

### JULIUS

No, really. Just think of it. Standing up and sitting down with that! ... Presiding over the council of ministers. They say the unfortunate man hasn't seen a saddle in six months. He doesn't dare leave the palace. They've tried everything! I heard a rumour that a monk was sent from Rome!

*Nostradamus turns around.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

A monk? ... A monk? Whatever for? ... Ah, doubtless to sprinkle the royal arsehole with holy water.

### JULIUS

Michel! ... (PAUSE) ... I trust no one can hear. God preserve His Majesty.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Tch! I've had it up to the ears with this business. It's nothing but the king's arse here and the king's arse there. (PAUSE) JULIUS, you must have fathomed things by now. Don't you understand? The king is quite content with his anal fistula otherwise he wouldn't surround himself with those incompetent quacks from Paris, raising his arse aloft all the time like it was some precious trophy. My God! How many years now have we been hearing about this blessed bum? It has been a constant topic of learned conversation since at least my first years at medicine school. And I graduated four years ago! ... Do you know what Doctor Camile, my tutor, whispered in my ear? ... He said, "We shall be looking at this fistula in ten years' time and still be scratching our heads." Well, I've had my certificate these last four years.

## JULIUS

Michel! ... The only reason you go on about this is because, as you well know, your own methods are not universally accepted. And certainly not accepted in Paris.

*Silence.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

All I'm saying is they should stop dunking the royal posterior in pails of oils and creams. That's all I said.

## JULIUS

Not said, Michel. Wrote.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

What's the difference Julius?

**JULIUS**

A great deal. Your thesis was denied.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Nonsense. If someone had two arseholes stich one up. It's plain common sense logic.

**JULIUS**

In reality, however, logic counts for little, Doctor de Nostredame.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

And not only in reality. The most learned convocation of medical practitioners of the esteemed Faculty of Avignon of which your most noble person is a dynamic member, (NOSTRADAMUS bows gracefully) ... also has its logic which, as far as I can see, is neither sound medicine nor sound biology.

**JULIUS**

Michel, don't be impertinent. I am your friend. I did not come here to listen to heresies.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

You are very... odd, Julius. You invariably agree with me in private yet withhold your endorsement ion these learned



meetings. You keep your mouth shut tight. (PAUSE) You disappoint me, Julius. You sadden me.

*Slow light change; dawn breaks.*

## JULIUS

You ignore the future consequences of what you say, Michel. (SERIOUS) You just say whatever comes into your head; it's as though thoughts came in lightning flashes. This is not good. You must think before you speak. (PAUSE) You have quite a brilliant mind as a doctor with a not impressive list of wealthy patients. You have a delightful family. Now, why do you persist in ... jeopardizing all this?

## NOSTRADAMUS

Because the liver is definitely not the site of the intellect, even less the tabernacle of the soul and I don't believe that a good bleeding is the universal cure for all man's illness.

## JULIUS

Ha! ... Ha! ... Ha! ... Well, you just prove it isn't!

*Silence.*

*Nostradamus places his hand over his heart.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

I feel it here. My heart beats faster. This must mean something. The heart speaks with rhythm – surely this must have significance?

The liver is totally dumb. Or, rather, the liver's mouth is nothing other than king's arse. (HE LAUGHS).

### JULIUS

The heart is... empty. (HE HOLDS OUT THE WINE BOTTLE) A hollow vessel. Or have you forgotten? But the liver! The liver is an eternal fountain of humours and bile and plasma and, consequently, of far greater importance. Your anatomy is wanting, my dear Michel.

### NOSTRADAMUS

I'm tired of all this, Julius. You are boring me. Besides, it's morning already and I've a full day of work ahead. I think we should no longer be friends.

*A beat.*

*A cock crows.*

### JULIUS

Well, I don't agree.

*Silence.*

*JULIUS takes a drink.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

No! ... Don't tell me after all this you've finally managed it?

### JULIUS

I have it here. With me.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Well, show it to me! Why on earth didn't you say so before? ...  
You could have told you had it hours ago.

## JULIUS

I have my own peculiar ways. (PAUSE) I don't know if I should,  
Michel.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Listen. I've already told you. I only want a loan, just to copy the  
most important chapters. You'll have it back in two days at the  
most. I shan't breathe a word to a living soul.

*Julius bends over a bag and withdraws a book wrapped in a cloth.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Julius, my dear friend Julius, by the grace of the king's three  
assholes, you did it! And, what's more unbelievable, you had the  
balls.

*Julius places the book on the table. The intensifying dawn light produces a strange  
luminosity.*

## JULIUS

It's so strange... when you asked me to get it I thought I'd have to  
be out of my mind. But ... I just walked in, asked the Council's  
permission to enter the Secret Library and ... It was the most  
mysterious place I've ever seen.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Incredible.

*Nostradamus strokes the cloth and slowly uncovers the book.*

## JULIUS

I've been there thousands of times. And never once have I experienced a similar dread. Never! At least, not after the first time ... As soon as I ...

## NOSTRADAMUS

Magnificent. The first time.

## JULIUS

Papyrus. Floor to ceiling. Ancient books. Every nook and cranny ... My finger were itching, I was sweating all over, my heart thumping...

## NOSTRADAMUS

With passion, Julius.

## JULIUS

Yes .... It was as if I was inside a woman... The same intoxication... And fear... and thrill.

*Nostradamus opens the book and reads the title page.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

De Mysteriis Egyptorum.

## JULIUS

It was no easy matter; let me tell you, Michel. No easy matter at all. First of all to find the book... and then to exit with it concealed under my gown. And against all those odds... I succeeded.

## NOSTRADAMUS

You took a great risk, Julius. A risk for both of us.

## JULIUS

No. I took the risk for you. (PAUSE) I have no wish to read this book. I don't even want you to mention anything about it to me. (PAUSE) No. A thousand times no, Michell. I'm quite certain that if the book has been forgotten – has deliberately languished – in the labyrinthine corridors of the library then it is for a good reason.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Ah! De Mysteriis Egyptorum! Let me tell you the reason why. It was my grandfather who reared me from an infant. All I have today – what I am today – I owe to this man. It was from his lips that I occult. The Veda. The Kabala. The writings of the Hebrews. (PAUSE) I tasted a little of every one. (PAUSE) My grandfather taught me about the planets and the stars and thus the world of astrology opened to me. (PAUSE) It was his breath which uttered the word “eternity” to me. (PAUSE) But even he had never heard

mention of *De Mysteriis Egyptorum*. However, his intuition told him the book had to exist somewhere in the universe. (PAUSE) Therefore, I set off to scour the world, travelling from St. Remy de Provence to Montpellier, from Paris to Toulouse, then on into Italy. My journey took me as far even as the frontiers of Spain. Ah! What an appetite I have for travel! But, one day, without warning, the appetite waned and vanished, and I settled here in Avignon. And I – like my grandfather before me – had the same intuition. Buried somewhere in the depths of the distinguished Council which shows me only contempt and a stone ear, there lay something in wait for me. (PAUSE) I approached Clavius. Through my probing he revealed the existence of the Secret Library. And, of course, where else should I expect to find the book than here, right under my very nose?

*Nostradamus moves closer to the book. A bell is rung.*

**JULIUS**

The bell for matins. It's getting light.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Light. The light. Why is there a secret library at all? The shadows. I want light, Julius. The sharp morning light.

**JULIUS**

Michel, I beg you, do not read this book.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

We went to such trouble. Why shouldn't I?

## JULIUS

I fear it might change you. You could be transformed by it. And I want my friend to continue himself; the man I know, have always known.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Ridiculous. Of course it shan't change me. How foolish you are to fear such a thing. It's nothing more than a book. It contains nothing more dangerous than words. Words and more words.

## JULIUS

And the Holy Inquisition at your heels for all your days.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Ah! Have no fear. (PAUSE) After all, the Inquisition's representative in Avignon is one of my best patients.

*The light dwindles.*

*Music.*

## SCENE 2

# NOSTRADAMUS'S CONSULTING ROOM

*Avignon, 1525.*

*Day.*

*A spotlight picks out a page. The page approaches the apron of the stage; he strikes the floor with his ceremonial stick.*

### PAGE

Representative of the Holy Inquisition! His Eminence Cardinal Narbonne!

*The Consulting room is lit gradually revealing, in a distant corner, an astrolabe. Nostradamus enters wrapped in a cape holding a small rod in one hand. Cardinal Narbonne is followed by two youthful monks and a Monsignor.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

Your Eminence!

*Nostradamus bows and crosses to kiss the Cardinal's ring.*

### CARDINAL

Doctor Michel!

*The Cardinal makes his way to a wood bench in the centre of the room. Nostradamus remains standing.*

### NOSTRADAMUS



Such a noble visitor bestows unwonted prestige on my humble practice. (PAUSE) I hope indeed that the ailment presently afflicting your Eminence is of a minor nature and that the light of the Holy Spirit will illuminate his servant and assist me in banishing it from your body. Eminence!

*Nostradamus bows one more time.*

**CARDINAL**

The Lord hears your prayer, Michel. The Lord hears.

*Silence.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Well, then? How may I help you?

*The Cardinal casts his eyes about the room.*

**CARDINAL**

Aha! I observe an astrolabe!

*He points to it.*

*Almost hidden behind yards, books and scroll we can now see the astrolabe.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Quite, Eminence. It is my duty to comb the heavens, the kingdoms of the sea and the plants, to burrow in the seams of the earth itself in search of anything to dispel the sufferings of the ill.

**CARDINAL**

Most eloquently presented, Michel. (PAUSE) But between us, what do you make of this fellow Copernicus and his theories?

### NOSTRADAMUS

Well, nothing has yet been proved, Eminence. And his hypothesis has already been dismissed by the Holy See.

### CARDINAL

Thank you. I am aware of that already. (PAUSE) What interest me is to hear from the lips of my most cherished physician his own opinion of this defeat for modern science.

### NOSTRADAMUS

If my memory doesn't fail me it is Copernicus's contention that our earth is not the centre of the universe. Rather, that – as he would have seemed to prove mathematically – the earth, on the contrary, circles the sun. (PAUSE) Eminence. Forgive me; I am unfortunately no expert in these matters, but... Consider my own situation, if you will: ask around and many will tell you I am not renowned for my orthodoxy in medical matters. Of course, this in no way suggests that I do not rigorously observe the stated views of the Holy See in so far as they hold jurisdiction over my field of practice. Of course.

### CARDINAL

Naturally.

### NOSTRADAMUS

Nevertheless, neither should this imply that I, personally, have no qualms whatsoever about the present accepted methods of medical science and some of their applications. (PAUSE) For I do in some number.

### CARDINAL

Michel. I advise you to measure your words carefully.

### NOSTRADAMUS

I have the greatest reservations regarding the medical efficacy of leeches, for example. Similarly with blood-letting. (PAUSE) But should your Eminence request such a treatment I shall oblige instantly and effect a swift bleeding and gladly daub your body with quantities of vampire beasts. It could well happen that your ailment be relieved by the action of blood suckers hacking at your flesh and gorging themselves on the banquet table of your veins.

*The cardinal goes pale with nausea, fear and horror.*

### CARDINAL

What. Bleed me. Never. The thought of it even makes me faint.

### NOSTRADAMUS

It is normal medical procedure, Eminence.

*A beat. The Cardinal wipes his brow and throat with a handkerchief.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

However, it is self-evident that such an august person as you clearly requires a more subtle medication. In my opinion. (PAUSE) Eminence, may I inquire as to the symptoms of your ailment?

*The cardinal regains his composure a little. With his hand he summons Nostradamus closer to him.*

**CARDINAL**

It's... Ahem... How can I describe it? Er. I feel tired.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Tired? Is that the major symptom?

**CARDINAL**

Ahem. A particular part of my body feels tired.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Eminence is suffering from a swelling in the feet?

**CARDINAL**

No, it's not my feet. It's higher up.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Eminence finds his knees stiff?

*The Cardinal motions with his hand.*

**CARDINAL**

A little higher.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Ah. Then it's stiffness in the arms, perhaps?

**CARDINAL**

No, Michel. Now you've gone up too high.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Eminence. I would ask you to be candid otherwise we shall spend all our time circumnavigating the entire human anatomy and I shall be so tired as to be of no use by the time we land on the offending organ.

**CARDINAL**

Very well, Michel. Let's not beat about the bush. (PAUSE) I can't get it up.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Ah. It doesn't. It won't stand up? You mean... It no longer soars like a proud bird of prey?

**CARDINAL**

No.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Ah. It doesn't even sing like a canary?

**CARDINAL**

Not a peep. And not for ages.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Eminence. Has the retired organ been at all wounded or cut in recent weeks?

**CARDINAL**

No.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Are there any strong-smelling emissions, burning sensations or other feelings of discomfort?

**CARDINAL**

No. He seems quite healthy otherwise, Michel.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Your complaint reminds me of an illness I once encountered in the orient, Eminence.

**CARDINAL**

Will I recover?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Eminence. Subsequent to making water are you ever aware of little ants in the region of your micturations?

**CARDINAL**

Never.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

In that case it cannot be sugar in the blood. We may pass into another possibility.

*Nostradamus moves in closer with his little stick.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Please concentrate on the point of this stick.

*Nostradamus manipulates the stick up, down and sideways.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Now look up towards heaven. Now towards hell. Now to the sunrise. And now sunset. (PAUSE) Now don't look at the stick.

**CARDINAL**

How am I to do that, Michel?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

By closing your eyes, Eminence.

**CARDINAL**

But of course.

*The cardinal closes his eyes.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Do you see little stars now?

**CARDINAL**

No.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Does your neck hurt?

**CARDINAL**

No.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Then there's no constriction of the blood. (PAUSE) But your eyelids are quivering.

**CARDINAL**

It must be nerves.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Ah. (PAUSE) Eminence, on awakening in the morning have you had the occasion to notice whether the resting organ is ever upright?



**CARDINAL**

I have.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Ah. But should some lascivious and perverted hand seize him or some foreign orifice officer to shelter him, nothing happens; is this correct?

**CARDINAL**

You have hit the nail on the head, Michel.

*Nostradamus runs over to a table and begins to write with a quill pen. The cardinal, meanwhile, still has his eyes shut.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

I think we have a positive diagnosis, Eminence. It is indeed tiredness, after all. But not serious in the least.

**CARDINAL**

What welcome news.

*Nostradamus writes. A beat.*

**CARDINAL**

Michel.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Just a moment, Eminence.

*A beat.*

**CARDINAL**

Michel.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Yes, Eminence?

**CARDINAL**

What are you writing that is taking so long?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Your prescription.

**CARDINAL**

What is it?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

A recipe for quince jam.

**CARDINAL**

And is this the recommended medication for my condition?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Highly recommended.

**CARDINAL**

What should I do with it?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

It's quite straightforward. First, apply the jam generously to the affected part. Next, rub it in gently. Then ask someone in whom you have complete and total trust – an intimate friend – to suck the ailing part but delicately, not like a leech for example. The ointment may be applied as frequently as the patient requires and the same procedure adopted. Recovery should be virtually instantaneous.

**CARDINAL**

A very sound remedy, if I may say so.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

I thought you would appreciate it, Eminence. I'm most grateful to you.

**CARDINAL**

Michel.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Yes, Eminence.

**CARDINAL**

Do you think I could open my eyes now?

## NOSTRADAMUS

Ah. Forgive my forgetfulness, Eminence. Please.

*A beat.*

## CARDINAL

I can't, Michel. They're stuck. They won't open.

*The two monks cross to the Cardinal.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

(Shouts) Open your eyes.

*Nostradamus beats his stick on the table. A bell is heard. Silence. The Cardinal opens his eyes.*

## CARDINAL

Blessed be Thy name. I was afraid I had lost my sight forever.  
What an awful shock. For a moment there I thought I was lost to  
the world of darkness.

*Nostradamus is pale. He begins to beat the table with the stick, but almost mechanically. He appears at once both alienated and aggressive.*

*A beat.*

*The cardinal stands up, troubled. The monks flank the Cardinal and the Monsignor takes a few steps back.*

## CARDINAL

What is going on, Michel? Michel. Michel. For the love of God,  
please tell me what is going on. I demand to know. What is all

this? (SHOUTS) Doctor Nostradame please take a grip of yourself.

*Nostradamus stops. A beat. He walks towards the Monsignor.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Monsignor! A light burns within you. (PAUSE) I have seen it.

*Everyone shifts uncomfortably.*

**CARDINAL**

Might it not be some ailment, Michel?

*The Monsignor is transfixed with fear.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

No.

*Silence.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Would you confirm, Monsignor, that your name is Felice Peretti?

**CARDINAL**

How did you know that?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

If you'd be so kind Monsignor.

## CARDINAL

He is not allowed to speak, Michel. He has journeyed here as a penitent. And what a penance!

*Nostradamus, with great emotion, kneels before the Monsignor.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Monsignor Felice Peretti, I beg you to forgive me my outburst, but I am not accustomed to receive truly holy men. Your Holiness will, I'm sure, pardon my impetuosity.

## CARDINAL

Michel, have you lost your reason? He is not the Pope, Michel. It is singularly inappropriate to address him as Holiness.

*Nostradamus draws closer to the Monsignor.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

But one day he shall be the Pope. Your Holiness will take his place on Peter's throne with the name Sixtus V and be renowned for justice and wisdom. (PAUSE) May the Lord protect you, Holiness.

*The Monsignor is petrified with fear. Nostradamus takes hold of his garment and kisses the hem.*

## CARDINAL

Blasphemy. In all my time as a servant of the Holy Inquisition I have never witnessed such an outrage. This is the work of the devil. Get thee behind me, Satan.

*The Cardinal shoves the Monsignor and marches out leaving Nostradamus on his knees.*

*The light fades.*

*Music.*

## SCENE 3

# NOSTRADAMUS' STUDY AND BEDROOM

*Avignon, 1525.*

*Night.*

*A transparent canopy descends and transforms part of the stage into a huge bed.*

*Nostradamus lies on the bed strewn with sheepskins and covers. His back is naked.*

*Meanwhile, **SABINA** moves about the stage lighting candles, humming a song. She is wrapped in a shawl.*

*A beat.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Sabina. (PAUSE) I can smell your perfume from here.

**SABINA**

It's musk. (PAUSE) The children are off to sleep.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Without tantrums or tears?

*A beat.*

**SABINA**

Like two cherubs.

**NOSTRADAMUS**



Ah. What a blessing our children are. The other day Jean came up to me and asked: Father, how was I born? (PAUSE) So I looked him straight in the eye and said: my dear Jean, you and your sister were born just like lilies are, between the morning dew and the morning mist, between day and night. One of nature's little miracles. (PAUSE) The fruit of passion.

*Sabina lifts the canopy and enters the bedroom.*

**SABINA**

And what happened then, Michel?

*Nostradamus lowers her shawl revealing her bust.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Lilies and musk. (PAUSE) Passion has both odour and form.

*Nostradamus touches her bust and nuzzles his head between her breasts.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Promise me something, Sabina. Promise to protect me with your warmth and with the frenzy of your heart. Help me to lift this cursed weight, which presses on my soul. Will you do this for me, Sabina?

**SABINA**

It's too late for regrets, Michel. What's done is done.

*Nostradamus pulls away from Sabina.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Why in the Lord's name did I do such a thing? Why? What demon stole my judgment, Sabina?

## SABINA

Perhaps it was yourself who summoned the demon. Or perhaps, there is demon at all.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Then what else could it be? (PAUSE) Oh my God. Right in front of the most powerful of them all! Cardinal Narbone. (PAUSE) He thirsts after my blood but faints if he sees a drop of his own. Oh, he going to want mine all right; cold or hot, weak or thick, he wants my blood. He'll have me hung, drawn and quartered.

*Sabina draws Nostradamus close to her breast.*

## SABINA

I want you to love me. To love only me. And not to hide anything from me (PAUSE) But because I love you I do not wish you to feel a prisoner. You may do whatever you like. You may have your little secrets. (PAUSE) You see? I can't even reach agreement with myself.

*A beat.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

What do you wish to know?

**SABINA**

You know. Where can we flee to?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

To the only place beyond the reach of the Inquisition. (PAUSE)  
Agen.

*Sabina shudders.*

**SABINA**

Agen. But...

**NOSTRADAMUS**

To the small and dull city of Agen. It's the lesser of two evils.

*A beat.*

**SABINA**

What if...

*Nostradamus interrupts.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

No. Don't even think that. (PAUSE) I am, or am I not, the best  
doctor in France?

**SABINA**

Yes, if you think you are.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Then I say to you: nothing. Nothing will happen to us. I promise.  
I know it, I can feel it.

*Sabina hums again the same tune as at the beginning of the scene.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Please, my love, don't let yourself become unhappy. They say the  
nights in Agen are long and clear. I shall have all the stars in the  
heavens to contemplate and much quince jam to enjoy.

*Sabina slowly, gently, abandons her humming as her head seeks and finds  
Nostradamus' genitals. After a few seconds, he begins to sigh deeply.*

*A beat.*

*The light above the couple diminishes gradually.*

*Nostradamus trembles and moans with pleasure.*

*In the meantime, another light illuminates the astrolabe and the book DE  
MYSTERIS EGYPTORUM.*

*It seems as though the objects are glowing. Nostradamus climaxes.*

*The light on the bed is lost.*

*Music.*

*Nostradamus, in a shawl, stands beside the astrolabe and the book.*

*He spreads his open hand across the book and then picks it up and begins to read.*

*(IN LATIN)*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Quo legent hoxe mature censunto. (PAUSE)

Profanum vulgus et inscium ne attretato.

*A light change.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Omnesq; astrology blenni, barbari. (HIS VOICE WAVERS) Que alter facit, is rite, sacer esto. (PAUSE) I need a table with three legs. Now where. Ah. The stool.

*Nostradamus places the candelabra on the stool.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Now a bowl of water and a stick.

*He chooses a tureen from among the various pots and splashes a little water into it from a pitcher.*

*Next, he sits on the floor with his collection.*

*Now, he sprinkles himself from head to toe with the water.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

A Deo. A Natura. (HE REPEATS THESE WORDS)

*Nostradamus fixes his gaze on the water and concentrates. The stick in his hand is absolutely still. The ritual begins.*

*The light diminishes.*

*A choir of voice is heard.*

*The stick in his hand begins to sway slowly.*

*A shadow is seen upstage. The stage fill with mist.*

*The stick sways from side to side.*

*The choir grows louder.*

*The shadow becomes clearly visible – it is a vision. It is an old man, bending over a three-legged table. There is a crystal bowl with water on the table plus a candle and a book.*

*The old man mirrors Nostradamus and two sticks begin to oscillate simultaneously.*

*Their motion accelerates. All the OLD MAN'S objects now begin to glow brightly.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

No. (SOFT) No. Enough, enough. No, no. (LOUD) Stop. Stop.

*The choir and the vision disappear together.*

*The light returns to normal.*

*On the bed we see Sabina sleeping, half-naked.*

*With a sudden movement Nostradamus empties the bowl. He is very tense. The water makes a pool on the floor.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Sabina. Sabina. I saw my own future. I saw myself, Sabina. I saw me. My God, my God. I saw myself in the future.

*Sabina stirs.*

## SABINA

Nostradamus. Nostradamus.

*Nostradamus pulls himself together.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Where did you hear that name? (PAUSE) Where? Sabina?

*Silence.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Only my grandfather used to call me by that name. Nostradamus.

*Music.*

*A choir of voices.*

*Blackout.*

## SCENE 4

### NOSTRADAMUS' STUDY

*1525. Day.*

*Sabina and the page are clearing out the study in preparation for their journey.*

*They clear the stage.*

*Julius takes a position stage centre and speaks.*

#### JULIUS

It's all happened so fast. I don't mind admitting I'm absolutely flabbergasted. There's only one topic of conversation in the whole of Avignon; everyone has been swept up in some sort of collective madness. They're accusing Michel of all kinds of things – necromancy, blasphemy, black magic, witchcraft and Satanism. (PAUSE) Madame Sabina. I should be profoundly grateful if Madame could favour me with just a little of her attention.

*Sabina carries on with her work.*

*A beat.*

#### SABINA

I'm rather busy at the moment, Dr. Julius.

#### JULIUS

This is rather more pressing than the housework, Madame.

#### SABINA

It is also rather more my business than your, doctor.

*A beat.*

### JULIUS

I don't see the need for tartness, Madame. (PAUSE) I am fully capable of appreciating your preoccupation. But you are not alone. I merely ask you for some acknowledgement of my position. I have exposed myself by coming here to lend my support to Michel. How could I do otherwise? My loyalty to my friends is renowned. And, in return, I am the object of discourtesy. I am risking my life. Death at the stake, Madame. And all because of your husband.

### SABINA

No. All because of you Monsieur. If the heavens have opened and threaten to swallow us all, it is because of you and that book you brought.

### JULIUS

Book. What book?

### SABINA

Ah. Not only is Monsieur spineless, he is also deceitful. Permit me to be blunt, Dr. Julius. I have never approved of your nocturnal visits. And I find your manner quite as affected as your dress. And, besides your arrogance I deplore your habit of sneering at everything. In short, I find you trying in the extreme. And what



an extreme. And you know why doctor? You are a charlatan. A fraud.

*Nostradamus enters. He seems crushed by the weight of some disaster. He carries a book wrapped in a cloth.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Sabina.

*A beat.*

## SABINA

It had to come out. It was now or never. I cannot stifle my feelings any longer. We are done for. All of us. (EMOTIONAL) Our children. Our marriage. Everything will end in ruin.

## NOSTRADAMUS

That's enough.

*Sabina and the page exit.*

*A beat.*

## JULIUS

I came to collect the...

## NOSTRADAMUS

I have it here as I promised.

*Julius looks around him. Nostradamus shows him the book.*

**JULIUS**

Leave it on the table. I'll slip it under my cloak as I leave.

*Nostradamus places the book on a table.*

**JULIUS**

I had no realized Sabina so disliked me.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

That's how woman are: temperamental. I wish to apologise for her behaviour.

**JULIUS**

I have a suggestion, Michel. I think it might be wise to ask the Council to let you sign an article of...

**NOSTRADAMUS**

No. I've already made my decision. We shall go to Agen.

**JULIUS**

Agen. Have you lost your mind?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Not at all. There comes a time in life when we must relinquish those certainties which are our ballast. Sometimes we must obey the summons of a mystery which beckons us. Either we shall be broken by it, or we shall be renewed by it.

*A beat.*

## JULIUS

I don't pretend to understand your words. This whole place confuses me. You've changed, Michel, too. And if I'm not mistaken there's something strange in your eyes.

*A beat.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Yesterday I saw myself. I was looking at me from outside my own body. Was this madness or was it real? I don't know. A discovery which fills me with terror.

*A beat.*

## JULIUS

The book. It's the entire book's fault. And here I have what accounts for Sabina's rude outburst against me. That book.

## NOSTRADAMUS

No. For the thousandth time. The book was simply the instrument which drew out this thing that already existed in my body. De Mysteriis Egyptorum is just an innocent tool.

*A beat.*

## JULIUS

What does the book say, Michel?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

I thought you didn't want to know.

**JULIUS**

Yes, well. After everything that's happened I've had a change of mind.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Indeed. Well, it talks about time. Time: days, months, years and hours. Seasons and calendars. Satisfied?

*Julius moves closer to the book.*

**JULIUS**

But no one would prohibit a book just for that.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

It speaks also of the firmament. Centaur, Lupus, Hydra, Scorpius and Serpentarius.

*Julius flicks through the book.*

**JULIUS**

Is that all?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Don't touch it. I think it would be better if you were just to return it immediately to the secret library. Don't waste anytime, Julius.

The Inquisition might also want to question you about it.

*Julius wavers.*

**JULIUS**

Yes. You're right. But I have every right to read this book. I am a member of the Council.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

It's written in really the most atrocious style. I really shouldn't bother if I were you.

**JULIUS**

Why? What makes you more able to understand it than me? I'm held in high esteem by my colleagues. My own behaviour and orthodoxy has never been questioned. I scrupulously observe the Catechism.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Quite. It is best not to disturb the still waters of your mediocrity.

*A beat.*

*Julius lifts off the cover shrouding the book and opens it.*

**JULIUS**

But this book is blank. There's nothing here. You've taken all the pages and just left the covers. Michel. You have betrayed me. This will mean the stake for me. Give me back the original this instant.

If someone notices the substitution I'm done for. Please, Michel. I beseech you. In God's name.

*A beat.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

Mediocrity is a very unstable element; the slightest shake unbalances it. You're getting worked up for nothing, Julius.

### JULIUS

I shall denounce you to the Council. You do not have one decent scruple. I shall tell them you made me take the book from...

### NOSTRADAMUS

You'll do nothing of the sort. You are going to sit tight in your little corner while I take my leave from Avignon.

### JULIUS

I'd sooner see you perish in Hell. And may the worms rot your insides and take the rest of your family with them.

### NOSTRADAMUS

Thank you, my friend.

*Julius exits with the book under his cape.*

*Voices can be heard: wailing and crying.*

*Blackout.*

*Music.*

## SCENE 5

# THE DUNGEON OF CARDINAL NARBONNE'S PALACE

*1525, Night.*

*Several men enter with lighted torches.*

*We see iron chains and rings.*

*Julius is being fastened to an iron wheel which now enters centre stage.*

*The atmosphere is sinister and dark.*

*Cardinal Narbonne appears at the top of a set of stone steps.*

*A beat.*

*The Cardinal brandishes his arm and makes a fist, highlighting his ring of office.*

### CARDINAL

Look at this ring. Do you understand its significance? It is the symbol of the authority vested in me as a Cardinal. But also of the duty I bear. I abhor these things. But I do as the Church demands.

*The Cardinal descends the steps.*

### CARDINAL

See my ring. What a splendid ornament. A present from the Lord. I am the guardian of the word of Christ. The Inquisition is the most powerful arm of Christianity.

*A beat.*

## CARDINAL

Turn the wheel.

*One of the men activates the gears and the wheels turns.*

*Julius is now upside down.*

*Julius yells.*

## JULIUS

I beg you, Cardinal. For the love of the saints, of Christ, of the Blessed Virgin. Release from this torment. Release me from this torture. I know nothing more. I have told you everything I know. Everything.

*A beat.*

## CARDINAL

I am very fond of the stone in my ring. A ruby. They say rubies are a token of patience. I am blessed with patience. I have all the time in the world to listen to you. And a turquoise is a token of happiness. I am curious to know where he has fled to.

## JULIUS

I have told you already. He went to Agen.

## CARDINAL

No one goes to Agen.

## JULIUS



But he did. Michel went.

**CARDINAL**

Turn the wheel.

*The wheel turns and Julius goes through another 180 degrees.*

*He cries out.*

**JULIUS**

Thank you, Eminence. Thank you.

**CARDINAL**

Tell me, Dr. Julius, how does the world look upside down?

**JULIUS**

No, never. It is a sign of Satanism to worship the inverted crucifix.

**CARDINAL**

And tell me how Dr. Michel managed that?

**JULIUS**

What?

**CARDINAL**

To see the world upside down, of course. To see time from behind and above. If that isn't Satanism, then I'm sure I don't know what is.

**JULIUS**

He. He. He. He. It was a book, Eminence.

*The Cardinal opens a book. Blank pages flutter to the ground.*

**CARDINAL**

A book written in invisible ink. As invisible as the cherub, the seraph, as invisible as an angel.

**JULIUS**

I don't know what become of the pages, Eminence.

**CARDINAL**

But you know what they contained.

**JULIUS**

No.

**CARDINAL**

Yes. You do know. If there's one thing which stimulates one of God's creatures more than pleasure it's pain. And with pain all that has been felt, touched, learned floods back into memory. And torture is the instrument of pain, and pain is the tool of the Holy Inquisition which has the power to bring to light those heretics who spread their heresies through the world and seek the destruction of the Holy Catholic Church.

**JULIUS**

No. I am not a heretic. I lack the courage to be other than a true believer.

**CARDINAL**

Very well, then. Talk. Tell me everything. I want to hear about the thousand devils who infest your soul. I want to hear all the details of Michel's covenant with the serpent in its pit and how he proposes to make Monsignor Felice a Pope. Tell me.

**JULIUS**

Oh. He's not going to make anybody a Pope, Eminence.

**CARDINAL**

An anti-Pope then. Whatever. Only tell me. Confess. And the ritual? How does he perform the ritual?

**JULIUS**

Well now. I was never present during the ceremony itself.

**CARDINAL**

But there's a ceremony, you say. Some macabre rite to invoke the anti-Christ?

**JULIUS**

I believe that is so, Eminence.

**CARDINAL**

I suspected as much. I could never get him to give me a straight answer when I questioned him on the articles of faith. Still, he was always a sly fox, always clever. He is a beast. His intuition. Is he a pervert?

**JULIUS**

No. I mean, he... Yes, he is.

**CARDINAL**

Ah. Superb. Then without the slightest doubt, he also traffics in goat's blood, rabid dogs and scorching sulphurs and magic potions.

**JULIUS**

Quite possible, yes.

**CARDINAL**

Now answer me this carefully: what are the constituents of his magic potions?

**JULIUS**

The constituents?

**CARDINAL**

Yes. The substance he is going to use to make Felice a Pope.

**JULIUS**

But, Eminence. Monsignor Felice has not been anointed as Pope by anyone.

*A beat.*

**CARDINAL**

Are you trying to play games with me, Julius?

**JULIUS**

No, Eminence. Certainly not. I swear in God's name.

**CARDINAL**

You are, aren't you? I suppose you think that I shall never be elected to the great office myself. You think that I am unworthy of shouldering the greatest task that befalls a man, the greatest power over man's kingdom. Isn't that so?

**JULIUS**

No, Eminence.

**CARDINAL**

Don't interrupt me. I am more deserving than anyone. I have suffered most by descending into these filthy dungeons correcting the perversions of faith. Perfecting men so that they still yet be called unto the Lord. (LONG PAUSE) I want this magic substance. I want to be Pope. I want Michel de Nostredame here. Now. Dead or alive.

*The man starts the gear and the wheel turns again, lifting Julius into the air.*

*Julius screams.*

*The Cardinal and the men leave.*

*A beat.*

*The wheel stops.*

*Silence.*

*Suddenly a trap door opens and Monsignor Felice appears with two monks at either side.*

### MONSIGNOR

Quickly. The chains. Oh, Our Saviour, in whose hands has your Church fallen.

*The monks unleash Julius from his chains.*

*He falls, crumpled, on the floor.*

*The Monsignor covers his half-naked body with a cape.*

### MONSIGNOR

Wine.

*One of the monks offers the wine. The Monsignor makes Julius drink from the glass. Julius coughs and chokes.*

### MONSIGNOR

We must be swift. We have only a little time. Come, Dr. Julius. Gather yourself. Just one last effort.

*Julius regains a semblance of consciousness and nears Felice.*

### JULIUS

Michel is a heretic. I am a heretic. We are both evil. Michel was conceived in a pact with evil, he told me. He was marked from birth.

## MONSIGNOR

Be quiet.

## JULIUS

I confess that I have witnessed what the common folk call the devil. I have seen the devil and he is the future. Only God knows the future. Therefore, the devil is God.

*The Monsignor shakes Julius forcefully. He slaps him across the face twice.*

## MONSIGNOR

Wake up, man. Rouse yourself. The torture is finished.

*Julius starts to cry.*

## JULIUS

Forgive me, my friend. Forgive me, Michel. I have betrayed you.

## MONSIGNOR

I am not Michel.

*A beat.*

## JULIUS

Monsignor...

**MONSIGNOR**

Go. Go down to the lower dungeon. A cart is waiting at the gate.

**JULIUS**

But if I go down this passage. I shall be a fugitive from the Holy Inquisition. I shall be excommunicated.

**MONSIGNOR**

Would you prefer to go back on the wheel then?

*Julius is in a total panic.*

**JULIUS**

No. I don't want to return to the wheel. But I am frightened to leave here. Ay. Oh Lord. Protect me, O Lord. Help me in my hour of need. Tell the Cardinal. Tell him it's all like a dream to me. Tell him life is a dream.

**MONSIGNOR**

Life is a nightmare.

**JULIUS**

But my life was a dream. I was happy.

**MONSIGNOR**

And who told you we are brought to the world to be happy, doctor? (LONG PAUSE) Now, leave.



*A beat. Julius makes his way over to the trap door.*

**JULIUS**

MONSIGNOR. You are speaking. You have broken your vow of silence.

*Felice smiles.*

**MONSIGNOR**

For something important.

*A beat.*

**JULIUS**

Why are you helping me?

**MONSIGNOR**

Because I believe you are innocent.

**JULIUS**

What about Michel? Do you believe in him? In his prophecies?

*A beat.*

**MONSIGNOR**

Tell Michel he must never set foot in France hereafter. And take this to him.

*Felice takes a small silver cross from under his garment and hands it to Julius.*

**JULIUS**

A crucifix? What for?

**MONSIGNOR**

Go now. Quickly. The Cardinal may return at any moment.

**JULIUS**

But. If the Monsignor believes in Michel then you also believe you will one day be Pope. Isn't that true?

**MONSIGNOR**

No. I don't believe in the prophecy. But neither do I believe you find the truth on a Catherine wheel. The light of true comes from another wheel.

**JULIUS**

What wheel?

**MONSIGNOR**

Ask Michel. Perhaps only he know. Go.

*Julius disappears down the trap door.*

*The Monsignor stands stage centre.*

*The cardinal appears at the top of the steps.*

**CARDINAL**

What are the monks waiting for? Follow Julius and see if he leads you to Michel. Go.

*The monks also disappear down the trap.*

**CARDINAL**

You were most eloquent, Monsignor.

**MONSIGNOR**

I try my best, Eminence.

**CARDINAL**

I shall remember this when I am Pope.

**MONSIGNOR**

I hope you do, Eminence. (PAUSE) With your permission.

*The MONSIGNOR turns to leave.*

**CARDINAL**

I beg your pardon.

**MONSIGNOR**

What is it, Eminence?

**CARDINAL**

Please repeat what you just said.

## MONSIGNOR

But.

## CARDINAL

It gives me a certain pleasure. Repeat your oath.

*A beat.*

## MONSIGNOR

I, Monsignor Felice Peretti, swear before God and the Holy Inquisition that if I should ever be elected Pope I will refuse that honour.

*The Monsignor lowers his head.*

## CARDINAL

Unforgettable. The Monsignor will not doubt reach high office in the Holy Church. (PAUSE) And simply because you have the gift of obliging your superiors. (PAUSE) Now come and kiss my ring.

*Loud music.*

*The lights dwindle to total blackout.*

## SCENE 6

### THE DISPENSARY AT AGEN

*1526, Day.*

*Coloured lights play across the stage. White cloths with washes of colour descend from the flies. They sweep to and fro.*

*The setting is disturbing, absurd, and vivid.*

*Four bandaged Valetudinarians enter. They behave like zombies, shrieking. Music.*

#### VALETUDINARIAN 1

Ay. Ay. The plague. The plague.

#### VALETUDINARIAN 2

Agen is stricken. Everyone is stricken. There is not one priest left to give extreme unction.

#### VALETUDINARIAN 3

There's no salvation. We are all doomed.

#### VALETUDINARIAN 2

Ay. Ay. Death is slow and merciless.

#### VALETUDINARIAN 1

I'm shivering. My mind is bursting with terrifying visions.

### VALETUDINARIAN 3

What kind of God is it that makes us suffer so.

### VALETUDINARIAN 2

Blood, fever and delirium. Ay Ay.

### ALL

Agen is stricken. Everyone is stricken. Ay. Ay. We are all doomed.

Agen. Agen.

*Each Valetudinarian takes up a position at each corner of the stage next to a cloth. Nostradamus enters and positions a three legged table and a bench in the middle of the dispensary. He sits down and begins to write with a goose quill.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

(AS HE WRITES) I have closely observed the manifestations of the plague these three months. I have developed in that time a certain treatment which appears to staunch the hitherto ineluctable spread of the plague. (PAUSE) the tincture is a compound of ground fungi with Herbas Azulis and Mageronis Compostus. (PAUSE) The wounds themselves should be cleaned each day with running water and Fibrus Talicus. (PAUSE) Ah. And as I have now evidence which leads me to believe that the plague is disseminated through the air I have given instruction to the citizens that a harness be fitted about the mouth. The harness should have about it a cushion filled with rose petals to cover the mouth. All dwellings should likewise be smoked thoroughly seven times per diem. It is of the absolute essence that all vermin and cats and dogs be incinerated as their odours and emissions are

sources of transmissions of the plague. (PAUSE) The afflicted are advised to bathe two times a week and consume raw liver. The liver of the following is highly recommended: chickens, geese, sheep and cows. Pig's liver should never be taken in any circumstances.

*One of the Valetudinarians approaches Nostradamus.  
Nostradamus raises a wadding of cloth to his mouth.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Are you feeling better?

**VALETUDINARIAN 1**

Pardon?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

I asked if you were feeling better.

**VALETUDINARIAN 1**

I am in the Lord's hands. I had a fever last night.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

With vomiting?

**VALETUDINARIAN 1**

Er. Yes, doctor. But only after I drunk my...

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Drank what?

**VALETUDINARIAN 1**

I can't hear you.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

I asked what made you vomit.

**VALETUDINARIAN 1**

I know you're not going to like this. I drank my urine.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Ah. People never listen. How many times have I told you not to drink your urine. And not to rub excrement on your wounds. (PAUSE) Now go and have a bath and eat four raw eggs. Go.

*Valetudinarian 1 withdraws with a bow.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(STARTS WRITING) The plague could ask for no two finer bulwarks than human stupidity and negligence.

*Julius enters – swathed from head to toe – in a cloak and hood.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Not another patient. What's your problem?

**JULIUS**



I... I... I can't stop quivering.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

What have you done? You haven't been rubbing faces on your sores, have you?

**JULIUS**

No. It's. This plague chills me with fear. I don't want to die, Michel.

*Julius lifts his hood.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Julius.

*Smiling, Nostradamus crosses to hold Julius in his arms.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

My old friend, come, I'm delighted to see you again.

*Julius suddenly lashes violently at Nostradamus and recoils from his embrace.*

**JULIUS**

Don't come near me. You're not a friend of mine. A pervert. That's what you are. A deviant. Your madness caused me to be taken prisoner and tortured. And now I'm banished from Avignon.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Then each has repaired the friendship of the other. We are quits.

## JULIUS

Quits?

## NOSTRADAMUS

Correct. I'm more than sure that your won prodigious mind found itself in utter agreement with the Cardinal's fantasies. For example, I have never been condemned for practicing unmentionably lewd and indecent rites involving a oneeyed man with six fingers on one hand and scales down to his navel and the breast of a maiden, the belly of an ass and the legs of an ox and the hump of a camel, who appears on the dead of night for the gross pleasure of sucking the blood of innocent children who, of course, have previously had their heads bitten off by myself while I decry the inadequacy of God and denounce the heinous extravagances of the Holy Church.

*A beat.*

## JULIUS

How did you know?

## NOSTRADAMUS

Oh, a wild guess. So just as I tricked you with the book you have repaid my by libelling me to the Inquisition. Are we even or not?

## JULIUS

Oh, I think so, yes. Your analysis is flawless.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Friendship. You know, Julius, whenever I contemplate friendship I come to the conclusion that you can't beat a dumb animal. Disillusion is rare and loyalty guaranteed.

## JULIUS

Are you saying you look upon me as a pet. A dog for instance?

## NOSTRADAMUS

Well, let's say an ass, rather. An ass is considerably more intelligent than a donkey, and undeniably more talented than a horse.

## JULIUS

Son of a bitch. Cynic. You insult and humiliate me because you know I am in an impossible position. Either I follow you around the world or I end up split from arse to elbow on that monstrous wheel.

*Nostradamus starts laughing.*

## JULIUS

I fail to find any humour in my dilemma.

*Nostradamus makes his way across to Julius with his arms outstretched.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Come, my friend. Let us embrace one another. Life here in Agen will be considerably more tolerable with a fellow outcast.

*Again Julius recoils.*

**JULIUS**

Go away. Don't come near me. I don't want to be contaminated.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Contaminated?

**JULIUS**

The plague, of course. It's an appalling death and I have not the least intention of catching it. I am going to olive like a recluse in a house on the other side of the river.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

I want you to be my associate, Julius. My associate. Oh, I've got thousands of ideas, I've carried out a couple of experiments and the two of us together. Who knows? Maybe.

**JULIUS**

Maybe you think you're God. Is that it? No one has ever found a way to cure the plague, Michel. And neither your impudence nor your pride is going to defeat the impossible.

*A beat.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Well. But if we worked together, I'm sure. We'd discover. Please, Julius, say you'll work with me.

## JULIUS

No. I can't. I can't.

*Julius exits.*

*A pause.*

*Crestfallen, Nostradamus returns to his desk.*

*Sabina enters and crosses to him. She, too, is downcast and dejected.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Sabina. (PAUSE) What are you doing here? I expressly forbid you ever to set foot in here.

## SABINA

Jean is weakening.

*A beat.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Weaker? Even after he had that bath?

*A beat.*

## SABINA

I don't understand you. How can someone with your ability, your gifts, be so blind? (PAUSE) Our children have the plague, Michel. They're contaminated.

## NOSTRADAMUS

No. I know my treatment is correct. I can see patients getting better. I will not allow my own family to succumb. I am the greatest authority on the plague. Do you hear? Do you hear me? (PAUSE) Why aren't you using your mask?

*A beat.*

**SABINA**

I shiver too, Michel. And I bleed. What good is smelling rose petals going to do to me?

*Sabina takes the face mask from the table and hands it to Nostradamus.*

**SABINA**

You'd better wear this when we speak with one another. When you come home. When you hold your children.

*Nostradamus holds his wife by her arm.*

**SABINA**

Let go, Michel.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

I cannot live without you and our children. I am like a wolf; there's only one love in my life. One passion (PAUSE) I am faithful with my body and my mind. (PAUSE) I have never strayed. There is no other temptation but you. (PAUSE) Don't leave me, Sabina. Don't leave.

**SABINA**

We followed your will.

*She shakes his hand free of her arm.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

No. Destiny brought us to Agen. My destiny told me that we would be safe here and that the Cardinal would forgive me and I would find recognition as a great doctor.

### SABINA

If Destiny spoke to you it must have had its tongue in its cheek. (PAUSE) Wake up. There is no destiny, Michel. All there is what each of us has inside. Nothing else. The only path is the one we cut ourselves. (PAUSE)

*Sabina holds her hand over her stomach.*

### SABINA

I'm bleeding. I can feel it. I'm bleeding. I'm bleeding.

*Sabina jerks and falls.*

*Nostradamus rushes across to her and holds her in his arms.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

Sabina. Sabina. Tell me is all a lie. I can't see any blood. Tell me is not happening.

*Julius enters with the silver crucifix in his hands.*

### JULIUS

I forgot to give you the crucifix.

*Sabina looks at Julius.*

**SABINA**

Ah. Doctor Julius.

**JULIUS**

Madame Sabina.

*Nostradamus helps Sabina to her feet. He points to Julius.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

He arrived today, Sabina. Julius is going to help me develop my new treatment. You understand? Everyone believes in me, Sabina.

*Sabina stands on her feet.*

**SABINA**

Ah. Now the plague is complete.

**JULIUS**

Your loathing is groundless, Madame.

**SABINA**

But it is deep, doctor. As deep as the effect those books of your have had on my husband.

**NOSTRADAMUS**



I beg you, Sabina. Don't become poisoned by hatred.

**SABINA**

Why not? Why not?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

It puts down roots, my love.

**SABINA**

Then now is the time to harvest the fruit.

*Sabina spits in Julius' face.*

*Julius cleans his face.*

**JULIUS**

You might care to remind yourself that I, too, Madame, am also a victim of your husband's cunning. As much as you and your children seem to be.

**SABINA**

No. You're the liar. Why have you come here?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Sabina. Be quiet. I've told you a thousand times Julius is not to blame. Why can't you heed what I tell you? Or do you only listen to the voices of your own obsession?

*A beat.*

**SABINA**

No. He also must know what it's like to be tossed about on the waters of despair.

*Sabina slides her hand under her clothes. When she pulls it out it is covered with blood. She holds it up for both to see.*

**SABINA**

Blood. Blood.

*Nostradamus recoils and begins weeping.*

*Julius is transfixed, stunned.*

*Sabina turns to Julius.*

**SABINA**

Now the doctor already has a little of my infected saliva, perhaps he'd like a little blood to go with it?

*Julius hysterically begins to wipe himself.*

**JULIUS**

Oh my God. Oh God. She's trying to kill me. She's got the plague. It's the plague. I can feel it already. Little creatures gnawing away at my flesh. Her saliva is contaminated with the plague.

*Julius wanders around the stage in frenzy.*

**SABINA**

Welcome to Agen, Doctor Julius.

*Sabina leaves.*

*Nostradamus is still weeping.*

*Julius pulls a bowl towards himself and tries to wash desperately.*

## JULIUS

Water. Water. Cleanse me. Please. What harm did I do that the Lord punishes me so? That vile book.

*A beat.*

*The Valetudinarians begin, quietly, to moan.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Help. Someone please help me.

*Nostradamus lifts his hands to his head.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Lord. I can't take anymore of this. Please take me away from this. Take me to another time.

*The light changes.*

*A violent wind whips across the stage.*

*The cloths are stirred and dance on the stage.*

*As suddenly as the wind began it ceases.*

*Silence.*

*Nostradamus stands.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Julius. Fetch me the bowl of water.

*Julius is stopped in his tracks.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

The water Julius. (SHOUTS) Give me the water.

*Julius races across to Nostradamus with the pitcher of water. One of the Valetudinarians arrives with the book DE MYSTERIIS EGYPTORUM while another hands Nostradamus his stick.*

*Another light change.*

*Nostradamus clenches his stick in one hand and with the other sprinkles himself with the water and begins his rite.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Oh Lord of Nature. (LOUDER) Oh Lord of Nature.

*We hear thunder and see lightning.*

*The Valetudinarians re-commence their wailing with more conviction.*

*Julius kneels, frozen in his awe.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Lamblichus. Dies Manibus. Triangulum Majus. Dies Manibus.  
Dies Manibus. Give me a sign that my family will be spared. Now.  
Immediately. This instant.

*The stick begins to oscillate.*

*At the rear of the stage Sabina appears, bloodstained, with the bodies of two children wrapped in bloody shrouds at her side. She holds a candelabrum.*

## SABINA

Nostradamus. My journey ends here. Your children and I will burn to death. It is what I wish. This is the end that I want. And I don't care if your destiny doesn't like it.

## NOSTRADAMUS

No. No. No. I don't want to see. Sabina, please, don't do it.

*Sabina lowers the candelabra and brings it close to the bodies of the children.*

*Sparks and thick reddish smoke devour them.*

*The smoke spreads across the stage.*

*It is like Dante's Inferno.*

*Sabina cries out – and disappears.*

*Nostradamus comes stage centre. He becomes increasingly distraught during his speech until – by the end – he is sobbing and gasping.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Everything has finished for me. They perish in the fire. (LONG PAUSE) No. They have yet to die. How much longer do I have to hold my children in my arms and hug them? (SOFTLY) They are going to die at the hands of my wife Sabina. But the truth is their death is inevitable, even though Sabina imagines she will be responsible. She's doing no more than what is set down, determined. (PAUSE) She will not be able to bear their suffering, nor yet her own. Through her own free will she will carry out what is written. Ah. So that is the way it happens. And I can do nothing to intervene; because this is my destiny. (PAUSE) So, destiny does indeed exist. Everything is written down already. (PAUSE) So who then directs events? God? Providence? (PAUSE) Then does it follow that a man's life, the history of a people, of humanity itself, is already determined in advance?

*Suddenly the stick flares and lights up. It begins to shake.*

*Nostradamus holds the book.*

*The Valetudinarians shriek for all they are worth.*

*Julius cries.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

I don't want to suffer any more surprises in my life. I don't want to feel anything anymore. (PAUSE) I want to subjugate time, Dies minibus. (PAUSE) Dies Manibus. Dies Manibus. I want to discover all there is to know about time to come. I want to know what destiny holds in store for me. I want to read the page written in God's hand where all is set out for time everlasting. (PAUSE) Dies minibus. Show me the book of life. I want to understand infinity, to know the course of every minute of time to come and see the divine plan that determines all existence.

*Nostradamus looks at the bowl. The water has taken on a strange luminosity. The stick is being violently agitated and glows brightly.*

*At the rear of the stage a giant wheel appears. It begins to spin and as it does it gives off extraordinary sparks and lights.*

*It is the wheel of time in all its opulent splendour.*

*A beat.*

*Another light change.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Oh, God Almighty. I can see the wheel of time in all its wonder. It's spinning and spinning. I can see the future. But why can't it stop turning? (WAILING) Ay. I am lost to the present. Present time has disintegrated. Oh God. Lord, please. Dies Manibus. Why do you want to make me a prisoner of the future? Why? (HE CRIES) I am captive. I am forever a victim of the future.

*The wheel glows – the cloth whirl – the stick pulsates – the water phosphoresces – smoke billows.*

*Nostradamus grips the book tightly. A choir sings.*

*Music.*

*The curtain falls.*

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT TWO

*“It seems that I am trying to tell you a dream – making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream’s sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment and a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredibly...”*

Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness



## **SCENE 7**

### **INSIDE A PYRAMID. CAIRO.**

*1536. Dawn.*

*Ten years have passed by.*

*Julius enters bearing a candlestick which illuminates just his face and torso.*

**JULIUS**

Nostradamus. Nostradamus.

*Julius continues across stage.*

**JULIUS**

Where have you got to? Nostradamus.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(OFFSTAGE) Here.

**JULIUS**

Where here in the Lord's name?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(OFFSTAGE) Up here. On the scaffolding, Julius.

**JULIUS**

Where? Not again. Nostradamus, I thought you'd learned your lesson the second time you fell off. You're no longer a youth, you know?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(OFFSTAGE) I'm a forty-five year old grown man. By now I ought to know what I want out of life.

**JULIUS**

Indeed. You probably want to fall from the top of the pyramid a third time and scream out that you've broken your leg and then laugh in my face as I make a fool of myself binding a splint.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(OFFSTAGE) Ah. I'll never forget it. Even the Arabs believed.

**JULIUS**

The Arabs believe anything. They're gullible. They have the strange idea the Nostradamus must be Royal Prince because he can recite the Koran by heart.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(OFFSTAGE) And wasn't that the very reason why they gave permission?

**JULIUS**

Indubitably. After all, who else would ask permission to live inside a pyramid?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(OFFSTAGE) Two fugitives from the Inquisition. Or had you forgotten?

**JULIUS**

Oh. I just felt a shiver run up my spine.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(OFFSTAGE) Summon the Arabs.

**JULIUS**

What for?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(OFFSTAGE) It's dawn. I want to come down and see the spectacle.

**JULIUS**

What spectacle?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

I just cleaned out the last opening in the stone wall. The sun will now pierce through the four walls of the pyramid to light the hieroglyphs. (A BEAT) Summon the Arabs.

**JULIUS**

Haven't you realised yet that I can't speak Arabic? (A BEAT) Such a peculiar language.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(OFFSTAGE) Just call out anything. I need to get down.

**JULIUS**

The usual?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(OFFSTAGE) I want to come down, Julius.

*A beat.*

*Julius readies himself.*

**JULIUS**

Allah. Allah. Now how does it go?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(OFFSTAGE) Praise to Allah. Praise to Allah. The Lord is the Lord.

**JULIUS**

That's it. The Lord is the Lord. (A BEAT) Praise to Allah. Praise to Allah. (LOUD) (REPEATS)

*After a few moments a line of Arabs enter carrying candlesticks.*

*A beat.*

## JULIUS

Ah. They've arrived. They really are very efficient. You just have to mention the name Allah and they shuffle into action like ants. This God of theirs must be very kind. (A BEAT) The scaffolding. The rope. His serene Highness Prince Nostradamus wishes to descend from the peak of the pyramid and rejoin the lowly mortals.

## NOSTRADAMUS

(OFFSTAGE) Hurry. It's dawning.

*Julius waves his hands wildly.*

## JULIUS

Hurry. Let's get on with it. The rope. On the other side of the wall. He's coming down, don't forget that small detail.

*The Arab exit.*

*After a few moments the makeshift wooden scaffold begins to come down on its ropes.*

*Nostradamus' clothes, hair and face are speckled with white dust from the masonry. He is on the scaffold.*

*At the same time, slants of light gradually crisscross the stage, becoming stronger all the time. All of a sudden, they fall across a rough stone wall covered in hieroglyphs carved onto the wall and paints blue and gold. The wall is massive. This is the first time we properly see the effect of the interior of the pyramid.*

*The scaffold lands on the stage.*

*It is dawn, daylight.*

*Nostradamus cleans off the stone dust.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Don't make a mountain of suspicion from a molehill of ignorance,  
Julius.

**JULIUS**

I beg your pardon. What are you talking about?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

There is but one God and He is the Lord of all. (A BEAT) In  
scorning Allah you are scorning your own God.

**JULIUS**

My God consists of a Holy Trinity and is altogether quite different  
from theirs.

*Nostradamus points to the wall covered in hieroglyphs and figures.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Look at the wall.

**JULIUS**

Yes. And?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

It is beautiful. Magnificent. Splendid. Those inscriptions are messages cast into time. They are the fruit of ancient omens preserved in stone.

**JULIUS**

So what?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

So the men who left us these messages also believe in God, they had dogmas and structures.

**JULIUS**

And. So what? The God they believed in is still not the same as my God.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Ah. I was forgetting. Forgive me. Your God was born later. Jesus was not around yet in ancient Egypt. Or, better still. He was still one of God's future projects.

**JULIUS**

I won't listen to blasphemy.

*A beat.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

I am trying to explain to you that God is eternal, infinite, and nevertheless always the same, unchanging. However, in different

times, in different places, people worship him in different ways. Besides, some of these forms of worship strike me as particular stupid, if I may say so.

## JULIUS

And what is topping you from worshipping Our Lord Jesus?

*A beat.*

*Nostradamus is silent.*

## JULIUS

What is stopping you from accepting this?

*Julius opens a small cloth bag and takes out the silver crucifix he was given by Monsignor Felice.*

## JULIUS

What prevents you from holding it in your hand? The Monsignor sent it for you.

*A beat.*

*Nostradamus crosses to the wall of hieroglyphs.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

I still have much work to do on the wall. This writing. I want to understand its hidden meaning.

## JULIUS

I asked you a question, Nostradamus.



*A beat.*

*Nostradamus looks anxious. Julius notices his discomfort.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

I shall wait until Monsignor Felice is able to offer his present in person. Then we shall have irrevocable proof that we have been pardoned.

*A beat.*

## JULIUS

You are hiding yet another secret from me, Nostradamus. What is it?

## NOSTRADAMUS

Nothing. It's probably just my state of confusion looking at the hieroglyphs that you're mistaking.

## JULIUS

The book. Where is the book?

## NOSTRADAMUS

I haven't laid eyes on it for years now. Ten years. And I will not have you doubting my word. The book is locked away in the trunk as always.

*A beat.*

*Julius points to the trunk in a corner.*

## JULIUS

And would you mind telling me how the trunk has found its way here? Shouldn't it still be in the hut out in the desert?

## NOSTRADAMUS

Aha. So that's where it is. Really. What a surprise. Don't they say these desert sands are treacherous? Nothing more than a little dust blowing in the wind – and it can move a pyramid. Astonishing.

*A beat.*

*Julius is carried away in a wave of anger and self-pity.*

## JULIUS

I'll never see France again. I shall never be pardoned. I shall never taste good wine again, or a good woman. And all due to your stubbornness, to your cursed ability to destroy dreams and create misfortune.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Don't lose your temper, Julius. I see no reason at all for you to carry on like this.

## JULIUS

You see no reason? Do you only see what you wish to? Don't you know that each time you summon this lamblichus or whatever, when you call for your Die Manibus or the devil in person, forgive us O Lord, forgive me, O Lord, you get us deeper in to shit?

*A beat.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

I haven't meddled with the book itself. I am involved in another kind of investigation.

**JULIUS**

Which?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

I think it must be these hieroglyphs which inspired me.

**JULIUS**

Go to hell. The book. I am finally going to put an end to it.

*Julius runs across the stage to the trunk.*

*Nostradamus chases after him and prevents him from reaching it.*

*They comfort one another across the trunk.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

No. For the Love of God. You will not be able to withstand it.

**JULIUS**

The book. I am going to put an end to it. Release us from this curse.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

The time is not right. I beg you.

## JULIUS

It was in Agen. You yourself sealed the trunk. But I have never seen what is inside. Why?

## NOSTRADAMUS

We promised never to interfere with such things.

## JULIUS

What things?

## NOSTRADAMUS

I cannot let you open the trunk.

*Julius picks up a stone and strikes Nostradamus heavily on the head.*

*Nostradamus collapses.*

*Julius, panting for breath, crosses to the trunk and tries to force it open.*

*Nostradamus stirs and crawls across toward Julius. His face is bleeding.*

*At last, Julius succeeds in opening the trunk. He steps backwards, astonished and aghast.*

*A spectral blue light spills from the opened trunk.*

*Julius, greatly agitated, retraces his steps.*

## JULIUS

No. No. Not this.

*Light change.*

*Julius spins across the stage clutching his head in his hands.*

## JULIUS

Not this. No. No.

*Julius, stage centre, stretches out his hands and weeps.*

## JULIUS

Allah. (LOUD) Allah spare me. Allah.

*The group of Arabs enter.*

*Pause.*

*The light diminishes.*

*The scaffold ascends. Music.*

## SCENE 8

### INSIDE A PYRAMID. CAIRO.

*1536. Sunset.*

*Another day.*

*The trunk is at the centre. It casts a spectral blue light.*

*Nostradamus stands besides the trunk.*

*The rays from the setting sun blaze on the carved wall.*

#### NOSTRADAMUS

The sun is about to set. A low mist completely covers the horizon. The desert appears deceptively peaceful in the strange red light. The desert. The desert is a sea of dense sand. But I've already told all of this. Ah. At last the sun managed to shine inside the pyramid. I unblocked the openings and removed the black wax covering the walls. The hot rays of sunlight flashed over the inscriptions like lash from a whip. But you saw didn't you? You saw what happened? It gives me a certain solace knowing I have brought light to eternity. You are like this pyramid, the both of you eternal. To me, eternity is an illusion; to you it is your reality. Come. Come. Come now and talk a while with me. Come and show me what eternity is like Sabina.

*Nostradamus lifts Sabina's skull from the trunk and speaks to it.*

#### NOSTRADAMUS

I beseech you, Sabina. For the last time. Come back from eternity and teach me about it. (LOUD)

*Moments.*

*Nostradamus grows calmer.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Then it's settled. I shall bury you. Bury your bones and the children's skeletons. In the desert. It was folly to hold on to your remains all these years. But I needed, I need, I want more than ever to understand eternity. Since I am already a prisoner of the future I want to tame my torturer. To change the thread of history and juggle with time. Yes. And only you, Sabina, can help me achieve this sublime ambition. Come, come to me.

*Moments.*

*Nostradamus holds the skull in both hands.*

*He draws it closer to his face and kisses it passionately.*

*He lays it on the ground and curls himself into a ball, covering his body with his cape.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

The humiliation. What have I done? An absurd quest has led me to the macabre. The humiliation. I threw myself headlong into the macabre in the name of knowledge. The shame of it.

*Nostradamus' head is now completely covered by the cape.*

*All of a sudden, the wall becomes transparent and a bright light shines behind it.*

*We see Sabina, standing behind the wall, in a fluttering tunic.*

*Pause.*

## SABINA

We were young and we knew very well we were young. But we failed to understand that youth is a gift. (A BEAT) It is a privilege to be a prisoner of the future, Nostradamus. If you do not acknowledge this, you are lost.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Sabina.

*Nostradamus raises himself to his feet, shocked. He flings himself against the wall trying to embrace Sabina. But he cannot pierce the transparent wall.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Sabina. I hunger for your body. I want to kiss you, to swim inside your body, drown myself in your breast. Sabina. I am dying from desire. From want, Sabina. Our hunger.

*Sabina laughs.*

*A beat.*

*Nostradamus grows quiet.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

You're laughing. Laughing at my desire, Sabina? Why? (A BEAT) Is there no desire in eternity? Do the physical senses find their peace?

## SABINA

Who mentioned that I have come from eternity? Perhaps I am no more than one of your visions.



## NOSTRADAMUS

One of my visions?

## SABINA

I was always so weak and yielded to your will which was so powerful. And now in your feverish imagination you have come to seek me out in eternity. (A BEAT) But eternity will not yield to your summons, Nostradamus.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Am I to be solely a prisoner of the future, then?

## SABINA

A prisoner of the future shackled by the present.

## NOSTRADAMUS

What does that mean?

## SABINA

The prophecies. Your prophecies will only be understood after the event foretold has come about. And even yet society will not listen to you.

## NOSTRADAMUS

This is a punishment.

## SABINA

No, Nostradamus. (A BEAT) This is the prophecy of the prophecies. (A BEAT) This is the way of eternity.

*The light behind the wall fades slowly.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

Sabina. Sabina. Don't go. Don't leave me. Sabina.

*A noise is heard – the creaking of wood.*

### SABINA

We are being observed by a third person, Nostradamus.

*Nostradamus quickly closes his eyes.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

I see. I can see. It is Julius. He is spying upon us from the scaffold.

*Further creaking, louder.*

### SABINA

And the scaffold? What happens to the scaffold?

### NOSTRADAMUS

The scaffold is going to collapse. It's falling now. Julius is going to tumble from the top and die. Julius is going to die. Julius.

*The light behind the wall fades completely.*

*Nostradamus opens his eyes.*

*The scaffold falls onto the stage with a deafening, overwhelming thump and shatters, raising a cloud of white dust which envelopes the stage.*

*After a few moments.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Julius is dead.

*A beat.*

*Julius enters, panting, followed by a group of Arabs.*

**JULIUS**

The scaffold. What happened?

*The Arabs rush over to the scaffold and retrieve the body of one of their fellows.*

*Julius examines the body.*

*A beat.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

But how? Why weren't you? You're not dead, my friend.

*Light change.*

*The Arabs gather around their dead companion.*

**JULIUS**

Me? Of course not. Hassan died. Not me. The poor man.

*A beat.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Impossible...

**JULIUS**

The impossible can happen, Nostradamus. (A BEAT) A merchant has recently arrived here from Sicily. He's waiting in the tent. He brought news that the Pope has died. And would you like to know who's going to be the new Pontiff? Monsignor Felice Peretti. Alias Cardinal Felice Peretti. That's the rumour on the streets and also in the Vatican, apparently.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Impossible...

## JULIUS

Impossible nothing. Didn't you say the same thing yourself? Now we shall be pardoned. We are saved, Nostradamus.

*Nostradamus crosses the stage.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

But I make mistakes. I've just realized I can make mistakes. Now I know I was wrong.

## JULIUS

Rubbish. Felice is going to become Pope. (A BEAT) Isn't he?

*Julius opens his cape and takes out the silver crucifix.*

*Nostradamus crosses over to the group of Arabs who withdraw a little.*

*Nostradamus bends down to examine the body.*

*Nostradamus holds the man's head in his arms and slowly unwinds his headdress.*

*The dead man is not an Arab but Cardinal Narbonne.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Narbonne. It's Cardinal Narbonne.

*Julius approaches cannily.*

**JULIUS**

What Cardinal? What are you talking about? Have you gone completely mad? It's Hassan, Abdullah's servant.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

It isn't. It's Narbonne.

**JULIUS**

You've lost your mind. The desert has finally got to you.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

No. It's Narbonne. I can see his face.

**JULIUS**

Then it's a hallucination. Nostradamus. This poor man is Hassan.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

No.

*A beat.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Cardinal Narbonne has just died. He was poisoned, Julius.

*The light dwindles.*

*Music.*

## SCENE 9

### VATICAN MAP ROOM

*1546. Day.*

*Ten years have passed.*

*Four Swiss guards, two on either side of the stage.*

*Hanging from the ceiling and walls are antique maps which have the effect of making the room look like a colourful baroque labyrinth.*

*The light creates areas of openness and shadow.*

*The play of light and shadow reinforces the sensation that the set is a maze. Julius enters, blesses himself, and kneels. He remains kneeling throughout the scene.*

#### JULIUS

Your Holiness, Pope Sixtus V.

*Monsignor Felice Peretti, now his Holiness Pope Sixtus V, steps from an area of shadow into full light.*

#### POPE

It's been twenty years. Twenty years since I have seen you, Doctor Julius. (A BEAT) Your face. Suffering shows in every line. The mask that now covers your face is genuine, Doctor. It is a mask of honesty. (A BEAT) You may stand now.

#### JULIUS

Holiness, you have rescued me now two times. The first from that dungeon, and now by pardoning me so that I may go home to

France.

**POPE**

Everything is in order. Here is the letter of my indulgence.

*The Pope hands Julius a rolled papyrus.*

**JULIUS**

May the Lord bless you, Holiness. As long as I live I shall pray everyday that your reign be remembered for the presence of Christ and enlightened by the Holy Spirit. (A BEAT) And Nostradamus assures me I shall live a long time.

*The Pope reacts.*

**POPE**

He told you this?

**JULIUS**

He did, your Holiness. He said. He's waiting outside. Isn't your Holiness going to let him be presented?

*A beat.*

**POPE**

The indulgence for Nostradamus is different from your own, Doctor.

**JULIUS**



In what way, your Holiness?

*Julius and the Pope find an area of darkness.*

*Nostradamus enters.*

*He is now 56 years old; he reads a papyrus.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

“In order to fulfil the conditions of this clemency Nostradamus must contract a marriage. A marriage. With Madame Anne Ponsart Grenelle, most prosperous and generous widow, whose close and firm links with Her Majesty Catherine de Medicis will enable the said doctor to exercise his profession without fear of hindrance and with the protection of the Court of France”

*A shrieking hysterical yelp of laughter.*

*Madame Anne Ponsart Grenelle enters. She is covered in veils from head to toe. She does not speak but replies with cackles of laughter. Her face remains covered.*

*Nostradamus bows.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Madame Anne Ponsart Grenelle, I take it.

*Another squeal of laughter.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

It. I am your betrothed, Madame. I shall assume I meet both your desire and approval.

*Another yelp.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Quite. The situation is not without a humorous element. I grant. However, I feel it incumbent to advise you, Madame that despite my fifty-six years I retain the virility of a stallion, am as curious as a butterfly, talkative as a magpie and exacting as a bird of prey. (A BEAT) I have a wholesome appetite and much prefer my food spicy and hot. I invariably sleep a part of the afternoon, snoring naturally, and I am adamant that I be spared interest in domestic matters. (A BEAT) Does Madame agree to accept me?

*More laughter.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

Ah. I bathe with fresh herbs at intervals of three days. It will be expressly forbidden to mention your family and I am permanently engaged on urgent matters whenever family occasions take place. I have a particular loathing for hot weather and holy feast days. Ah. My moods are instable as a house of cards, a tendency to fink a little too much and suffer from chilblains. (A BEAT) Does Madame take me thus?

*More laughter.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

Ah. See Madame is so delighted she is brought to cackle like a duck.

*More cackling.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

As you may note I can be as ironic as I can be sarcastic, and I can bring you to tears a hundred times over.

*Silence.*

*Madame Grenelle does not react.*

*A beat.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Does that mean to say that Madame does not accept?

*A beat.*

*Madame Anne bursts into a prolonged spate of laughter accepting Nostradamus.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Ah. She accepts. (A BEAT) Then let's to the altar, my gracious hyena.

*Nostradamus offers his arm to Madame Anne and the two of them take their leave into one of the dark areas of the stage behind a map.*

*The Pope and Julius re-emerge into a lighted area.*

*Julius points to a map.*

*The Pope holds a crucifix in his hand.*

## JULIUS

Then we made our path through this channel, Holiness, and crossed the plain with the utmost risk and difficulty until we at last reached the ranged of mountains. Here. We came eventually to.

## POPE

Why did you never accept the crucifix, Julius?

*A beat.*

## JULIUS

Why do you not ask him yourself, Holiness?

*The Pope, saddened, crosses the stage with the crucifix in his hands.*

## JULIUS

He said that he would only feel himself properly pardoned if Your Holiness were to give him the crucifix. In person.

*Madame Anne yelps once again. Julius leaves.*

*The Pope remains in the same place.*

*Madame Anne, giggling, runs in front and behind of the maps. She is playing hide and seek with Nostradamus.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Madame Anne, this map room is indeed a labyrinth. Madame Anne. Madame Anne.

*Nostradamus tries to locate her. He runs back and forth.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

My dear retarded fiancée, this game strikes me as very infantile and tiresome.

*Another squeal.*

*Madame Anne disappears behind a map.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Should some unwary soul catch me in this ridiculous and meaningless nonsense they will make me a laughing stock.  
Madame Anne.

*Nostradamus runs into the Pope.*

*They stare at one another.*

*A beat.*

*Nostradamus does not kneel.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Monsignor Felice.

*A beat.*

## POPE

Doctor Michel.

*A beat.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Monsignor. Are you aware I have received a papal clemency accompanied by a string of orders and recommendations?

*The Pope remains silent.*

*Nostradamus pulls out his papyrus from under his cape.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

To wit. I must marry, because Madame Anne will afford me protection from the wrath of the crown of France. Ah. I must not,

under any circumstances, return to the Vatican, nor write or pronounce any prophecy regarding the reign of His Holiness Pope Sixtus V.

**POPE**

And why do you think the Pope has taken such measures?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Because. Because he has a deep fear of his servant. Simple, isn't? (A BEAT) Your Holiness thinks I am infallible as the Church of which you are now the rock. But I do make mistakes.

*Nostradamus steps closer to the Pope.*

**POPE**

Don't come any closer. I am Pope now.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

But to me you are still a Monsignor.

**POPE**

I can finish you now, Nostradamus (A BEAT) Guards.

*The guards stand to rode but they do not move.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

The crucifix. You gave it to me. It's mine. It was a present from Monsignor Felice.

*A beat.*

*The Pope, hesitant and uncertain, offers Nostradamus the crucifix.*

*Nostradamus, in a rapid movement, embraces the Pope.*

## POPE

Let me go. Help. Guards.

*Nostradamus holds the Pope's arm tightly.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Swear. Swear. Swear on this cross and the blood of Christ that you took no part in the poisoning of Cardinal Narbonne.

*The Pope tries to free himself.*

## POPE

You're hurting me.

*A beat.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Swear to it. Tell me I am wrong. Promise me that it is not an assassin who sits on Peter's throne. Swear.

*A beat.*

## POPE

I swear it. I swear. I swear I had no part on this murder.

*Nostradamus lets the Pope free.*

*From here until the end of the scene Nostradamus kneels and kisses the Pope's ring.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

My Pope. My Holiness. My Holy Father.

*The Pope snatches his hand away as if bitten by a snake.*

*Nostradamus remains on his knees.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Your pontificate will be renowned for justice and conciliation.

## POPE

Guards.

*The guards run over to Nostradamus.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Your Holiness will be happy and live until the day comes when...

## POPE

Enough. Silence. I don't want to hear.

*The guards encircle Nostradamus.*

*Madame Anne and Julius return and bow to the Pope.*

## POPE

Guard. You will accompany Doctor Michel and his companions to the French border. The escort will instruct the authorities that Nostradamus has been expelled from Italy.

## NOSTRADAMUS



May the Lord bless you, Holiness.

*A beat.*

*The Pope leaves, holding the crucifix in his hands.*

*Music.*

*The light fades to complete blackout.*

## SCENE 10

### THE FRENCH COURT

*Paris. 1566. Night.*

*Twenty years later.*

*Music.*

*A crystal chandelier bearing lighted candles lowers over the stage.*

*Six couples dance to a medieval song. They hold masks to their faces.*

*Lacquered screens decorated with floral motifs mark out of the room.*

*The dance is interrupted by each of the couples in turn, moving to front stage and addressing either one another or the audience.*

*They dance a kind of minuet.*

*The first couple moves front stage. The music softens. The other dancers freeze.*

**WOMAN #1**

Monsieur.

**MAN #1**

Madame. (HE BOWS)

**WOMAN #1**

He's extraordinary. Even the priests are afraid of him. (A BEAT)  
He knows everything. The entire history of France from back to front.

**MAN #1**

He can predict the fortune and the fall of everyone. Kings, queens, generals, bishops, and peasants.

**WOMAN #1**

There future holds no pleasure for him. He's a witch.

**ALL**

Oh. Oh. Nostradamus. Oh. Oh. Nostradamus.

Oh. Oh. Nostradamus. Oh. Oh.

*They recommence the dance.*

*Moments.*

*The second couple steps forward.*

**WOMAN #2**

Monsieur.

**MAN #2**

Madame. (HE BOWS)

**WOMAN #2**

He's lived in Salon these twenty years. He lives in a tower. They say he never hoes out. They say he sleeps by day and works by night.

**MAN #2**

Like a bat.

**WOMAN #2**

Flying into the future.

**MAN #2**

People know his prophecies better than their Bible. The English Court is buzzing with his name. Why, only the other day the German ambassador was reading a verse when... (HIS VOICE FADES)

**ALL**

Oh. Oh. Nostradamus. Oh. Oh. Nostradamus.

Oh. Oh. Nostradamus. Oh. Oh.

*They recommence their dance. The third couples steps forward.*

**WOMAN #3**

Monsieur.

**MAN #3**

Madame. (HE BOWS)

**WOMAN #3**

He lives by destroying dreams and ambitions.

**ALL**

Oh. Oh. Nostradamus. Oh. Oh. Nostradamus.

Oh. Oh. Nostradamus. Oh. Oh.

*They recommence dancing.*

*The first couples steps forward again.*

**WOMAN #1**

Monsieur.

**MAN #1**

Madame. (HE BOWS)

**WOMAN #1**

He says that history never repeats itself and that time is neither circular nor elliptical and most emphatically not spiral.

**MAN #1**

Then what is it, pray? Then what is history, pray?

**WOMAN #1**

He is a charlatan. A trickster.

**MAN #1**

But he's the only person so far who has been able to control the plague. He is a genius.

**ALL**

Oh. Oh. Nostradamus. Oh. Oh. Nostradamus.

Oh. Oh. Nostradamus. Oh. Oh.

*The dance starts again.*

*The second couple steps forward.*

**WOMAN #2**

Monsieur.

**MAN #2**

Madame. (HE BOWS)

**WOMAN #2**

He says he has seen the twilight of the world and an eternal light.  
He's a dreamer.

**MAN #2**

He tells wonderful stories.

**WOMAN #2**

Once a certain Monsieur de Florinville undertook to test the skills  
of the said doctor.

**MAN #2**

He inquired about the destiny of two suckling pigs.

**WOMAN #2**

He hardly needed persuading. He made his prediction without a hesitation.

**MAN #2**

Monsieur. We shall eat the black pig and a wolf shall eat the white one.

**WOMAN #2**

Without wasting a second, Monsieur de Florinville ordered his cook to slaughter the white pig and have it roasted for supper.

**MAN #2**

Imagine. Supper time came and the doctor asked for the roast black pig.

**WOMAN #2**

Monsieur de Florinville smiled with satisfaction and summoned his cook.

**MAN #2**

Somewhat startled, the cook explained how he'd followed his master's instructions but unfortunately. Tragedy had struck. A wild stray dog.

**WOMAN #2**

Called a wolf slipped into the kitchen and made off with the meat.

*They all laugh.*

**MAN #2**

And then what happened? There was no meat for supper.

**WOMAN #2**

The cook slaughtered the black pig and served it to his master and the guests.

**MAN #2**

A true prophet.

**ALL**

Oh. Oh. Nostradamus. Oh. Oh. Nostradamus.

Oh. Oh. Nostradamus. Oh. Oh.

*Music.*

*The couples dance.*

*The dancers clear the screens to prepare a new set.*

*The chandelier rises and disappears. The light fades.*



## SCENE 11

### NOSTRADAMUS' HOUSE. 1566.

*Nostradamus appears old and weak. He stoops from the effects of arthritis which has particularly attacked his hands. He suffers from gout. He bends over a threelegged glass table on top of which are a stick, a candlestick and a crystal bowl with water.*

*Nostradamus mutters as he performs his rites.*

*Suddenly, he stands upright.*

#### NOSTRADAMUS

Caesar. (A BEAT) Caesar. Caesar. (LOUD) Where have you buggered off to now? (A BEAT) Damned child.

*Caesar, Nostradamus' son, arrives yawning.*

*He stretches himself.*

#### NOSTRADAMUS

Caesar.

#### CAESAR

What is it, Father?

#### NOSTRADAMUS

Get up here.

**CAESAR**

Look at the time.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

I need you now. Bring a blanket with you.

*Caesar picks up a blanket and mounts the podium to join Nostradamus.*

**CAESAR**

The same old routine. As soon as the first light comes his arthritis acts up and fingers stiffen and he carries on like the end of the world was nigh. Mind, he's seventy-five. And what an old moaner. (A BEAT) Why don't you work during the day like everyone else, Father?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Bugger the day. Stop interfering. (A BEAT) I've got my reasons.

**CAESAR**

But it's me that gets woken up.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

You're moaning just like an old man! I'm only asking what any father has a right to expect from his children. Besides, who brought you into this marvellous, fantastic and wonderful world?

**CAESAR**

My mother! And God rest the soul of Madame Anne Ponsart de Grenelle. Worn away bearing ten children.

### NOSTRADAMUS

God bless her! She died of sorrow after delivering one ruffian and nine children who, thanks be to God, have been scattered over the country. Each one following his own path and eating away my fortune.

*Caesar arrives on the podium*

### NOSTRADAMUS

Give me the blanket. Let's get started. Don't just stand there! My shoulders! On my shoulders, you bugger!

*Nostradamus walks with great pain.*

*Caesar wraps the blanket across his shoulders.*

### CAESAR

Why don't you sit down, Father. The arthritis has gone to your legs.

### NOSTRADAMUS

Because I've been sitting for hours and my lungs are crying out for fresh air, and my body for movement and my soul for relief.

### CAESAR

Relief! Then why not lie down? Why not try to sleep?

## NOSTRADAMUS

Shit! Shit! A thousand times shit! Why don't you just stop talking! Why don't you keep your suggestions to yourself? (A BEAT) My God, what was I thinking of marrying Madame Anne and burdening with an arsehole for a son?

## CAESAER

Of convenience and self-interest. She was a wealthy and stupid widow while you were a poor, intelligent widower expelled from France.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Enough! Don't talk about your mother like that! Or of our marriage! I won't have anyone judging my behaviour! (A BEAT) We were very happy together. We had a pack of adorable children.

## CAESAR

As agreed.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Exactly. As agreed. Because despite what our dreams tell us it is perfectly possible to find happiness without passion. Most people do, besides. (A BEAT) Happy now?

*Silence.*

*Caesar reacts.*

## CAESAR

No. I'm not happy. Not at all happy. The opposite. Because I was not the fruit of passion. (A BEAT) My conception was an accident of nature.

### NOSTRADAMUS

Ah! For God's sake! All fornication is an accident of nature. Marriage is one thing, Caesar, having children is another. (A BEAT) I love you, I worship you, and I adore you. Of course I do! (A BEAT) Have pity on your father. Look! I'm an old man. My hands can't write anymore. How am I going to finish my work? (A BEAT) I am nothing without you. I rely utterly and totally on you, Caesar. So how could I not love you? You're my passion... I live only for you, I work only for you. My prophecies are for you...

*A beat.*

*Nostradamus feigns deep feeling.*

*He immediately changes dispositions.*

### CAESAR

Cynic! You're nothing but a huge hypocrite!

### NOSTRADAMUS

Ah. What vileness. Get out of here at once. I never want to see you again or smell your stink. I don't want your idiotic face near me. Out. Out. (LOUD) I'll exclude you from my will and leave my works to the secret library. Bugger off.

*Julius, himself, now ancient, enters.*

*He is virtually blind.*

## JULIUS

What's he saying? What's this about a secret library, Caesar? (A BEAT) I don't see a damn thing but I can hear, Nostradamus.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Perfect. Now there's a matching pair of cretins. You could never see a hand in front of your face in any case. You started losing your sight along with your mind the day you were born.

## JULIUS

Shut up, you old boaster. Will you never learn to show courtesy and affection to the people who care for you?

## NOSTRADAMUS

Who cares for me? Who? (A BEAT) Nobody helps me. Nobody looks after me anymore. Now that Madame Anne is gone I don't even have immunity from the Court anymore. She was my shield, my peace, my comfort. Ah. How I miss her clucking.

*A loud knocking from the rear of the stage.*

*They all stand dead still.*

## CAESAR

Knocking on the door. At this time?

## NOSTRADAMUS

It's them, Caesar. The Royal Guard has come for me at last.

**JULIUS**

We warned you not to write those things.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

But they're all true. The king will die within four years. What else should I have written, Julius?

**CAESAR**

Lies. That he'd live forever.

*More knocking on the door.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Ah. Ah. It's them. Caesar, Julius. They're going to kill me.

**CAESAR**

Who's there?

**VOICE**

(OFFSTAGE) An urgent message from the palace. For Dr. Nostradamus.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

What did I say. I knew. I knew. (A BEAT) I won't go. I don't want to go. (A BEAT) I'll go. What a journey. A month being thrown around in a carriage.

**CAESAR**

I'm coming. (TO NOSTRADAMUS) What I'll say?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Tell them I'm levitating but I'll be down in a minute. (A BEAT)  
Let them in, imbecile.

**JULIUS**

Ah. Something I ate doesn't agree with me. Please excuse me.

*Caesar comes down from the podium.*

*More knocking. As Julius leaves Nostradamus addresses him.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Watch you don't dirty your pants, shit face.

**CAESAR**

I'm coming. I'm coming. What uproar.

*Nostradamus throws off the blanket and puts on his cape.*

*He is transformed.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

They're going to want explanations and I don't have any. (A BEAT) How am I going to persuade them that what I do is neither science nor art, or religion or logic or divining? (A BEAT) But it's some primitive drive that exists inside everyone which they've forgotten and has yet to reveal itself? (A BEAT) Will they



believe I don't know why I have it? I'm renowned for it but I don't know why I have it and they don't. (A BEAT) Your Majesty, I am not a prophet, not really, I'm just a spectator. (A BEAT) They won't believe a word.

*Nostradamus crushes the book DE MYSTERIIS to his chest.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Ah. De Mysteriis Egyptorum. Ah. The worst fate would be to survive. They'll mock me. (A BEAT) Ignoramuses. Ignoramuses. (A BEAT) Or discover my secret. Dies Manibus. Everything I want hidden they'll bring out in the daylight. Buggers.

*The light on the podium is extinguished.*

*Music.*

## SCENE 12

# THE COURT OF CATHERINE DE MEDICIS

*Paris. 1566.*

*Vibrant music.*

*The dancing couples from Scene 10 return as nobles at the Court of Catherine de Medicis. They rearrange the screens. A chandelier and a shield with the royal coat of arms of the House of Valois descend.*

*Two soldiers stand either side of a low throne mounted on a pedestal. Duc Antoine de Borbon (the Royal Historian) and the Comte de Lepar (the Royal Scientist) enter followed by a troupe of acrobats and entertainers who fill the stage with movement and energy. There's a man eating fire, leaping dwarves, a woman with a team of performing dogs, a pair of jugglers and a magician.*

*They pause a moment and bow towards the Queen.*

*The magician materializes a white dove from a bouquet of flowers to stirring applause and cries of approval.*

*Catherine de Medicis sits on the throne, her face completely covered by a veil. A crown sits on her head.*

**CATHERINE**

Duc Antoine de Bourbon, have the room cleared.

*The Duc claps his hands twice.*

*The music stops and the performers take their leave.*

**CATHERINE**

I bored with these entertainers. It never varies. I think it's given me a slight headache. That beastly droning.

*The Comte de Lepan steps forward.*

**LEPAN**

If Your Majesty pleases I shall have the Royal Cooks present their latest culinary creations.

**CATHERINE**

It would please us greatly, Comte Lepan.

*Two flunkeys carry on a table groaning with fancy dishes and place it in front of throne. Catherine stands up in order to better appreciate the sight. Everyone bows. The Queen approaches the table and points.*

**CATHERINE**

What's in this dish?

**LEPAN**

A roasted pork stuffed with seafood and potatoes in cognac, Majesty.

**CATHERINE**

And this?

**LEPAN**

Supreme of partridge with capers and honey, Majesty.

**CATHERINE**

No. Partridge always leaves me bloated. What about the one with the green feathers?

**LEPAN**

A chicken with almonds, Majesty.

**CATHERINE**

Humm. Chicken with almonds and green feathers. How very exotic. (A BEAT) Take it all away. Just bring me a quite straightforwardly roasted plain and simple chicken. That tastes like a chicken. I'm beginning to feel sick with all these rich sauces.

**LEPAN**

Of course, majesty.

*Catherine returns to her throne.*

**CATHERINE**

Well then. What are you all waiting for?

*The court rejoins in one voice.*

**ALL**

Bon appetite, Majesty.

*The light fades.*

## SCENE 13

### THE ROYAL APARTMENTS

*Paris. 1566.*

*Light.*

*The screens are rearranged to present the Queen's private salon.*

*The nobles withdraw.*

*On the ceiling a shield with the Valois coat of arms.*

*Catherine, on her throne, holds a tray on her lap and eats a chicken with her hands. This is done not without an element of farce since her Majesty continues to wear her veil.*

*The Queen is flanked by the Duc de Bourbon and Comte Lepar.*

#### CATHERINE

Please tell me why I must wear this veil? Either I eat or I wear the veil: but not both at the same time.

#### LEPAN

It is the custom, Majesty. The custom during Lent.

#### CATHERINE

Perhaps they must have devised a more practical custom, Lepar. (A BEAT) Sometimes I wonder. What if Nostradamus is correct and my husband is to die in the near future?

#### BOURBON

Your Majesty should not trouble herself over such an outrageous infamy.

### CATHERINE

And I shall be obliged to wear mourning for seven years, isn't that the custom for widows? The custom here in France? (A BEAT) Dark colours have never suited me. But what can one do?

### LEPAN

Majesty, it is my duty as Royal Scientist, an honour so generously bestowed upon me by Your Gracious Highness, to offer a word of counsel. (ABEAT) Do not read the works of Nostradamus, Your Majesty. The man is a charlatan; there is no basis whatsoever in the natural sciences for his method. His pronouncements can be neither witnessed nor tested nor proven: hence, they cannot be believed, majesty. (PAUSE) According to the Court Physician His Majesty has a constitution of iron.

*Catherine eats her chicken.*

### BOURBON

(READING FROM A BOOK) Please listen, Majesty. "In the East, near two cities, shall be two scourges I never saw the like. A giant mushroom. Famine within plague, people thrust out by the sword, shall cry for help to the great God immortal, the world shall be other." It is written here in the sixth verse of the second century. Ah, and furthermore he attests that this ridiculous giant mushroom, which is scientifically impossible and hitherto

unheard of, shall be as hot as the sun and have the capacity to cook fish as they swim in the sea.

**CATHERINE**

(EATING) And when does he say this shall take place?

**BOURBON**

Ah. There we have it, Your Majesty. Four centuries from now, he says.

**CATHERINE**

Just as well. I shan't be alive to see it.

*Bourbon and Lapan exchange glances.*

**LEPAN**

Majesty, do me the honour of listening to this little verse. Let me see. (WITH A BOOK IN HIS HAND) Here. "Wild beasts for hunger shall swim over the rivers, the largest part of the battlefield shall be against Hister. He shall be drawn into an iron cage when the child of Germany shall observe nothing." (PAUSE) Who is this Hister? I ask you, Majesty, when has one ever heard of a German King failing to fulfil his duty?

**CATHERINE**

(HESITATES) No. They are so correct, the Germans.

**LEPAN**

See, majesty.

### **BOURBON**

Queen Catherine de Medicis. I ask you to think profoundly. (PAUSE) As the historian of our reign I should warn you that, if Nostradamus is correct, history is nothing more than a puppet's theatre, where everything is previously established. (PAUSE) And where do we place the free will of men?

### **LEPAN**

Majesty, I also remember that the theologian of Christianity claims that each man is responsible for his eternal salvation. So, not even the Holy Spirit knows if one determined man goes to heaven or to hell.

### **CATHERINE**

The chicken was delicious. These Italian cooks are great. (LONG PAUSE) What were we talking about?

*Both come forward.*

### **BOTH**

Majesty.

### **CATHERINE**

Yes.

### **BOURBON**



Well Majesty, we came here to alert you...

*Lepan comes even forward.*

**LEPAN**

We came to the conclusion that Your Majesty should not receive Doctor Nostradamus in session.

*A beat.*

**CATHERINE**

Humm. (PAUSE) Do you know what I think the problem is, Monsieur le Comte?

**LEPAN**

No, Majesty.

**CATHERINE**

You gentlemen have a pendant between the legs while I have a hole. (PAUSE) I'm saying that this means we think differently, smell differently and see life in utterly different ways.

**BOURBON**

But Majesty.

**CATHERINE**

But, Majesty. Nothing. (PAUSE) Have Nostradamus brought to me.

*Lepan moves to the edge of the stage and announces.*

**LEPAN**

From the village of Salon to the court of Her Majesty Queen Catherine de Medicis. Doctor Nostradamus.

*Two screens part and Nostradamus, hobbling and bent, enters clutching his copy of De Mysteriis Egyptorum.*

*Nostradamus bows generously.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

My sovereign. With all my ills and complaints I was still unable to resist such a delightful invitation which does me untold honour.

**CATHERINE**

I do hope your journey was soothing.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Hardly, Majesty.

**CATHERINE**

I beg your pardon.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

It rained, Majesty. But rain is so feeble a word. It flooded. We had a month of bogs and marshes and quagmires.

*Bourbon and Lepan exchange glances.*

## BOURBON

Pay no attention, Majesty. It might have drizzled, but no more.

## LEPAN

There goes Nostradamus exaggerating as always. Or should I say fantasizing, his most well known attribute. No one else recalls it raining.

## BOURBON

It isn't even the time of year for rain, Majesty. On the contrary, our very own meteorological observations indicate we are in the middle of a drought. We have analysed the humidity of the soil, charted the altitude and density of clouds.

## NOSTRADAMUS

Majesty, this obsession of men of science nowadays to try to control even the elements will become one of the most idiotic adventures of men in centuries to come. (PAUSE) One day they discover an absolute law of nature, and the next a torrent undoes it all. (PAUSE) My question is this: who is right, man or nature? And, besides, is there only one truth?

## BOURBON

What effrontery.

## NOSTRADAMUS

And in any case the good gentlemen have all sorts of scientific, historical, religious and political explanations whose effect is to numb us to the world around us with boredom.

*The Queen smiles.*

**LEPAN**

Your Majesty must not allow...

**CATHERINE**

Please go on, Doctor Nostradamus. Continue.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Majesty, can it really be true that there is no room left for the unknown? (PAUSE) The educated man has his existence on earth formulated and categorized by too many sorts of systems and experiments and observations. Everything must be explained by a chain of causes and effects, sieved and weighed until it can be accepted. (PAUSE) But, suddenly, a few years have gone by and we have a new set of rules to replace the old ones and the lesson is that we cannot ever discount initiative. (PAUSE) It did rain. And the rain has only just begun, Messieurs.

*The Queen laughs.*

*A beat.*

**LEPAN**

Would you care to ask, Majesty, who it was who opened the doors of the unknown to Doctor Nostradamus.

*A beat.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

The inexplicable, Majesty.

**BOURBON**

The inexplicable? (PAUSE) In that case I should very much like to explain the inexplicable to Her Majesty. (PAUSE) This person is a descendant of the ancient tribe of Issachar, a tribe of prophets.

*Nostradamus recoils.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

But. My family.

**LEPAN**

His grandfather was judged at the stake, Majesty. He burned as a witch.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(EMOTIONAL) No. No.

*A beat.*

**BOURBON**

The man is a Jew, Majesty. A lying Jew who has come to sow discord, upset history and contradict science.

## LEPAN

Be done with him, Majesty.

## BOURBON

Have done with him, Majesty.

*A beat.*

*They leave. Nostradamus kneels.*

*The light fades. Music.*

## SCENE 14

# THE HALL OF MIRRORS / THE ROYAL APARTMENTS

*Paris. 1566.*

*Light falls on Nostradamus, kneeling.*

*As the screens turn they reveal a hall of mirrors.*

*Catherine stands in front of one of the mirrored panels.*

*She reads, her back to the audience.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

Jew. Jew. Jew. (PAUSE) lord. Have pity upon he persecuted, the mad, the crazed, and the poets. (PAUSE) Have pity upon the misfits, nonconformists and possessed. (PAUSE) The powerful may not like them but without them time is still, life is dull and the world stagnant.

*Light.*

### CATHERINE

The king has decided he will not receive you. (PAUSE) He says your book of prophecies is full of nonsense.

### NOSTRADAMUS

Everything is nonsense, Majesty. (PAUSE) Life is sheer nonsense when you contrast it with the enormity of time. (PAUSE) Besides,

science has made the same discovery if proof were needed. We are no more than motes of dust in time.

### CATHERINE

Tell me, Doctor Nostradamus, what is the meaning of this prophecy, for example: “Lost, found again, hidden so great a while, a Pasteur as Demi-God shall be honoured.”

### NOSTRADAMUS

You are aware, Majesty, that I forsook medicine to pursue the occult sciences. (PAUSE) But this does not imply that I deny the value of science and impugn the work of scientific minds. No, Your Majesty. On the contrary, I have the greatest admiration for their courage. (PAUSE) Pasteur shall be renowned for discovering the invisible.

### CATHERINE

The invisible. The occult. The future. Just where do you discover these things?

### NOSTRADAMUS

I have a nocturnal visitor.

### CATHERINE

A visitor? A supernatural being.

### NOSTRADAMUS



Quite natural to me, Majesty.

**CATHERINE**

And what has he to say about me? About my reign? Shall I leave my mark on history?

*A beat.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Well. He. I mean. Your Italian cooks will create exquisite recipes...which will be universally honoured as the finest French cuisine.

**CATHERINE**

(LOUD) I demand you tell me what he has to say concerning me.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Are you absolutely sure, Majesty?

**CATHERINE**

This instant.

*Nostradamus stands.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(HOARSE) Dies Manibus. Dies Manibus. (SHOUTS) Gaze into the mirror, Majesty.

*The mirror shimmers with light.*

*Catherine gazes into it.*

**CATHERINE**

I see nothing.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Look. You can see. Look carefully. (LOUD) Your husband dies and your reign as dowager shall be noted for its austerity.

**CATHERINE**

And which of my sons shall be king?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Everyone. (HE LAUGHS) They will all be king.

**CATHERINE**

How. That is impossible.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

One by one each son will accede to the throne of France for a short time. (PAUSE) And one by one each will be assassinated and be forgotten.

**CATHERINE**

No. No.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

The line of your family will cease. The House of Valois will expire with your reign, Majesty.

**CATHERINE**

Wait. I can see an image in the mirror.

*The Duc of Bourbon appears in the lit mirror.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

There is the future king of France, Majesty.

**CATHERINE**

Duc Antoine de Bourbon?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Not he, but his son, Henry of Navarre. (PAUSE) He shall be the author of a new dynasty, of the St. Bartholomew massacre and the disappearance of the House of Valois. His reign will see the beginning of a new reign of Bourbons, the kings of light, Majesty.

**CATHERINE**

The child will perish.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Do it. Have all the children in the country massacred. Castrate every male under twenty years. But remember: Herod also took that path.

*A beat.*

*The Duc of Bourbons disappears.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

It will make no difference, Your Majesty. It is man who makes his own history. (PAUSE) Therefore I can state, no, cry out, to the four corners of the world that nothing is determined in advance and yet all is fixed ahead in time.

*A beat.*

## CATHERINE

It's all lies. You hypnotized me. (PAUSE) That's it. That's why you asked to see me in this room.

*Nostradamus becomes agitated.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

No. I have never hypnotized anyone. I hypnotise myself, Majesty. The anguish is unbearable because the hours become minutes, days hours, years days and a century a year. (PAUSE) Is there anyone who can understand what this means? (A PAUSE) Look at my body; I journey within myself in search of the meaning of time. And I surmise Majesty...that time is a continuum. It is a river. We call its current past, present and future. Ah. Ah. (NOSTRADAMUS IS WRACKED BY AN INVOLUNTARY SPASM) My bones ache. Inside everything is tightening. (PAUSE) No one can imagine the suffering because they do not understand. They don't understand the past, present and future are

intertwined. They don't exist apart. What exists is an eternal present, Majesty. (HE WEEPS) The eternal present.

*A beat.*

### CATHERINE

Be off with you. Know that you are expelled to Salon forever.  
(PAUSE) It is my punishment that you rot in your own madness.

*A beat.*

### NOSTRADAMUS

I am not mad, Majesty. (PAUSE) Simply a visionary.

*Music.*

*Darkness.*

## SCENE 15

### AT NOSTRADAMUS' HOUSE

*Salon. 1566.*

*The screens are removed to reveal a wide and infinite space.*

*Nostradamus sits motionless on a bench.*

*Light shines from the floor as if it were made of glass.*

*Caesar places a crystal bowl filled with water on Nostradamus' right.*

*To his left, a glass table holding the book *De Mysteriis Egyptorum*.*

*Julius is present.*

*Everything glows and shimmers and reflects light.*

*Music.*

*The ambience is magical.*

*An extraordinary event is about to take place.*

**CAESAR**

Father. Father.

*A beat.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

What? Who? Is someone asking for me, Julius?

**JULIUS**

Nostradamus. There is nothing wrong, is there?

**NOSTRADAMUS**

The crystals. Everything is glowing.

**CAESAR**

The sun is coming up, father.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Where?

**CAESAR**

Here. In Salon. All over the world. It is dawn on the seventeenth of July, the year 1566.

*A beat.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

I am here no longer. (PAUSE) I am in the last century. It is 1986. (A BEAT) Caesar. I want you to turn my prophecies inside out and upside down. Create total confusion. Scatter them and shuffle them into a jumble.

**JULIUS**

But Nostradamus. The sequence will be lost.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

(SMILING) Dates and times are all relative. Only the strong and powerful have any use for them. Only the facts matter.

**CAESAR**

But father...

## NOSTRADAMUS

Now. (PAUSE) No. Not yet. Wait. Come over here.

*Trembling with emotion, Caesar crosses and holds his Father in his arms.*

## CAESAR

Father.

## NOSTRADAMUS

I intend to leave you with something unforgettable. A kiss on the heart.

*Nostradamus tears apart Caesar's tunic and bares the left side of his chest. He lays his lips on his flesh and kisses him gently in the area of his heart.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

May your heart grow strong and full of kindness and endure to experience each human emotion. (PAUSE) No go. You may leave.

*Caesar withdraws. Julius begins to sob. Nostradamus shakes.*

## JULIUS

You're dying, Nostradamus. I know it. I know you're dying.

## NOSTRADAMUS

It appears inevitable, my friend.



**JULIUS**

I'm frightened. I'm scared for both of us.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Don't be afraid. (PAUSE) It's no more than a peak of terror.

*His hand trembles.*

*He slips it inside his costume and pulls out a dazzling crucifix.*

**JULIUS**

What is that? What is it? I can't see properly. The light.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

A crucifix. It will be yours for the time being. You can return it to me when we meet again.

**JULIUS**

Ah. Then there is eternal life. That's it. We shall meet again in a new incarnation.

**NOSTRADAMUS**

Who can say? Perhaps. (PAUSE) Perhaps what lies under the peak of terror is the base of knowledge. Perhaps.

*Julius seizes the crucifix and kisses Nostradamus's hand.*

**NOSTRADAMUS**

The prophecies. Turn them all upside down. Shuffle them around.  
Now. Please. Sabina asked me this favour.

*Caesar hesitates.*

*Caesar and Julius leave together.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

I am in 1986. This year sees the appearance of the third anti-Christ. (PAUSE) He is a child of the country of Palestine and lives in the horn of Africa, he has seven teeth and the number six is marked on his forehead. (PAUSE) The Pope in Rome has been poisoned; it has been the year of three Popes: Paul VI, John Paul I and John Paul II. The end has begun. (PAUSE) In a cynical England the empire is in death throes; begun with one Elizabeth it will be undone with another Elizabeth. Elizabeth II. (PAUSE) Birds of metal will fly in the skies: metal fish will swim in the bottom of the sea; it is the beginning of the end. (PAUSE) Multitudes will perish in hunger, sickness and injustice while the white eagle of the New World, even with its dying gasps, clings to luxury and destruction. (PAUSE) The Arabs will invade Europe with their black oil and the world will change. Generals will make themselves kings and corrupt kings will sell their people for gold. (PAUSE) The people. The people will be forbidden to acclaim their own king. (PAUSE) The red men from the East, the Russians, imprisoned in inflexibility, will ally themselves with the Germans, Turks and Arabs. They will torment the Anti-Christ. In revenge, he will cast a giant mushroom across America. Oh. No. No. (PAUSE) The Chinese will rise up and Italy will loose its head and thrash madly in a sea of blood before a revolution erupts. (PAUSE) The anti-Christ captures Rome and the last Pope, Peter

II, escapes to the South. He will live in the city of the future where young people with masks cavort at a carnival and make the devil's sign. (PAUSE) Devil. Black angel. (PAUSE) Lucifer, charred by fire and shrouded in ashes appears inside the mushroom. (PAUSE) The red men destroy the new city. In America parliament is suspended; the military rule. Birds and fish with metal bodies, frenzied with excitement, tear holes in the world with their pointed steel. (PAUSE) In the battle of Armageddon the anti-Christ is brought to a delirious fever. (PAUSE) In the year 1999, in the seventh month, the Lord of terror will appear from the sky. He will bring back to life the great king of the Mongols. (PAUSE) The four horsemen of the Apocalypse gallop across the world. (PAUSE) The blood is drained from France, it withers. Paris is a ball of fire. (PAUSE) Fire. Fire. Fire. (NOSTRADAMUS WAVES HIS ARMS) Fire.

*Caesar enters and halts, perplexed.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Caesar. Caesar. Bring me the brazier. The brazier, Caesar. (PAUSE) I need one last favour... A final one; the brazier. (A BEAT) No. I don't need it anymore.

*Nostradamus points and a flame rises from the glass floor.*

*Nostradamus rubs his hand across the open book on the glass table.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

De Mysteriis Egyptorum.

*Nostradamus kisses the book.*

*Tottering on his feet, he approaches his son.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Go and call Father Vidal. Tell him I am ready to receive the Holy Sacrament. Before it's too late. Go to Father Vidal, Caesar. (PAUSE) But don't wake Julius. He dozed off poring over all those writings of mine. He fell asleep with the cross in his hands. Just as I wished.

*Caesar, still bewildered, leaves.*

*The stage darkens perceptibly.*

*Nostradamus looks at the flame, holding the book in his hand.*

*At the rear of the stage the other characters can be seen. They have the appearances of ghosts.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

The earth will be plunged into a bleak and cold night that will last for forty years. (PAUSE) Afterwards, a new breed of men will emerge from the ice who will be worthy to begin a new era. The world will start over again with a new race of men.

*Nostradamus throws the book onto the flame.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

No one deserves this book. (PAUSE) The world is afraid of your investigations. Return to darkness and die.

*The book catches alight and disappears in a flash of fire.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

I shall die with you. But my questing will not be halted.

*The other characters move closer to Nostradamus.*

*We see Sabina, cardinal Narbonne, the Monsignor, Bourbon, Madame Anne, etc.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

I see my whole life in a flick of an eyelid. You have been my life.  
(HE LAUGHS) (PAUSE) Sabina. Cardinal. Your Holiness. My friend. Madame Anne.

*They surround Nostradamus.*

*After a few seconds they suddenly step back and we see Nostradamus with another Nostradamus identical to him lying dead at his feet.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

Ah. I can see myself in death. This is how everyone shall see themselves when their time to pass away from this life comes. This is how eternity works.

*Light change.*

*Nostradamus begins to levitate above the dead Nostradamus.*

## NOSTRADAMUS

I still have to discover the essence of the absolute. (PAUSE) God.  
(PAUSE) The transcendence of God. (HE SHOUTS)

*Nostradamus stares at his own body.*

*Slowly he rises into the air.*

*He floats freely in space.*

*The lights fade slowly.*

*The flame is smothered.*

*Blackout.*

**THE END**

**DC.**

**2013.**

# Curriculum Vitae

## Doc Comparato

(Luiz Felipe Loureiro Comparato  
Rio de Janeiro, 1949)

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**I. BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY:** Luiz Felipe Loureiro Comparato - known as Doc Comparato - was born in Rio de Janeiro, November 3, 1949. A medical doctor with a specialty in cardiology at 22, Comparato won a fellowship from the British Council at the National Heart Hospital in London in the late 1970s. Returning to Brazil, he left medicine to dedicate himself fulltime to screen, stage and TV work. Since then, he has written over fifteen plays that have been published and produced in Brazil, Latin America and Europe (Spain, Italy, France, England, and Germany, in translation), several novels and children's books and a prizewinning collection of short stories. One of the founders of TV Globo's Creative Center (*Centro de Criação*) in 1986, Doc's prodigious accomplishments as a creator, author and collaborating author of innumerable series and miniseries since 1978 for Globo, Record and TV networks in Latin America and Europe have won him a number of international prizes. Among the series and miniseries for TV Globo that he has authored or co-authored: *A Justiceira* (1997/1998); *O Tempo E O Vento* (1985); and *Lampião E Maria Bonita* (1982, the first Latin American miniseries and the first Globo TV series).

A truly international figure, Comparato has lived for extended periods outside of Brazil, engaging in innovative media projects in England, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany, Cuba, Mexico and Argentina and has traveled often throughout Latin America and Europe working as a professor, script consultant, Creative Adviser, and Script Doctor. In 1987, he worked with Gabriel García Márquez on a miniseries, *Me Alquillo Para Soñar/Rent Dreams* in Cuba - produced on TV-E, in Madrid in 1990 - and with Russian script writer Alexander Chlepianov in Moscow. From 2002 to 2003 he lived in Barcelona where he worked as a scriptwriter, as well as creative director for Prodigius Audiovisuals (Producer of European TV-movies) and also director of DEA Planeta (De Agostini Planeta Corporation, with headquarters in London) for the development of miniseries and European audiovisual projects. He was also Consultant for the European Script Foundation - Pilot Project (with headquarters in Amsterdam). His Spanish/Catalan script credits include *Hospital* (Tv Antena 3/Madrid /1997) and *Arnau* (Miniseries/Barcelona/1994).

Comparato has also worked occasionally as an actor, but his thespian talents are most often applied in the courses and seminars he teaches on script writing. His two books on writing screenplays - *Roteiro, arte da televisão* (1983) and *Da Criação Ao Roteiro* (1995) - have gone through several editions and languages and remain important pedagogical references today. A frequent lecturer and professor in Latin America and Europe, he continues to give seminars, courses and lectures worldwide. Doc now lives in Rio de Janeiro.

- **Please see following complete CV for details on Comparato's extensive travels, publications and international work.**



# DOC COMPARATO COMPLETE CV

## II. MAJOR AWARDS, HONORS, DISTINCTIONS:

### National Awards (Brazil)

APCA/ Association of Art Critics of São Paulo. Best new author, TV, 1982.

SNT (Serviço Nacional de Teatro) honorable mention, *Estudo sobre portas e janelas (Beijo da louca)*, 1980.

SNT (Serviço Nacional de Teatro) honorable mention, *Novíssimo Testamento (Pléides)*, 1979.

Concurso de Contos do Paraná, Short story prize, 1978.

### International Awards

FyMTI. Buenos Aires. Festival y Mercado de TV-ficción Internacional. International Achievement Award for Contribution to TV Fiction. 2012.

LALIFF (11th Annual Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival) – Best Film Script, *Corazón de la tierra*. 2007.

Ana Magnani Award for best stage production, *Nostradamus* – Italy. 2003.

DAAD - Deutsch Academic Art Development - Teaching Fellowship, Munich Film School, 2002.

Academy of Catalan Literature - Best script, *Arnau* - Barcelona, Spain. 1995. (adapted as a novel in 1994 (Barcelona: Proa) by Doc Comparato and Xesc Barceló.

El Coral Negro - Cuba - Best miniseries, adapted from Erico Veríssimo's novel, *O Tempo e o Vento*. 1986.

Best original script, children and adolescent category - *Cangaceiro Trapalhão*, Tomar Film Festival - Portugal. 1985.

Prague Television Festival. *Malu Mulher*, Regina Duarte received the best actress award for episode, *Parada Obrigatória*, scripted by DC, 1984.

New York Film and Television Festival, gold award, best original script for TV miniseries. (TV Globo Production *Lampião e Maria Bonita*). 1982.

**III. PUBLICATIONS AND PRODUCTIONS: (For information on available sites for e-books, please see: [www.doccomparato.com.br](http://www.doccomparato.com.br))**

### **PLAYS, MOST RECENT EDITIONS:**

#### **Portuguese:**

*Plêiades (ou Pequenas Cirurgias para Aracnídeos)*

*O Beijo da Louca*

*O Despertar dos Desatinados*

*Nostradamus (O Prisioneiro do Futuro)*

*Miguelangelo (O Prisioneiro do Presente)*

*O Círculo das Luzes (O Prisioneiro do Passado)*

*Sempre (Ou, o Caso da Moça de Gargantilha ou na Intimidade das Coisas)*

*Jamais (Calabar, um elogio à Traição; ou, Na Posse das Coisas)*

*Eterno (Ou, Xanadu, no Limite da Criatividade; ou, No Inalcançável das Coisas)*

*A Incrível Viagem*. (children's theatre) Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Ebal, 1984.

*As Tias: Tragicomédia Em Dois Atos*, with Aguinaldo Silva. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Achiamé, 1981.

**In English:** (Pix Editora, E-Books)

*Rain Forest (O Despertar dos Desatinados*, from *Trilogia do Amanhã*)

*Nostradamus* (from *Trilogia do Tempo*)

*The Secret Days of Orson Welles in Brazil (Eterno* from *Trilogia da Imaginação*)

### **MAJOR PRODUCTIONS, PLAYS:**

*Nadistas e Tudistas* (Rio de Janeiro / 2014/ Teatro Ipanema)

*Lição Nº 18* (Rio de Janeiro / 2010 / Teatro Poeira)

*Nostradamus* (São Paulo / 1985/86/ Award: Best play,1986 São Paulo Producer's APETESC) (Rio de Janeiro / 1999 / Teatro Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil/CCBB / Italy, 2003 /Ana Magnani Award for best stage production) Roma / Italy, 2003 /Ana Magnani Award for best stage production.

*O Círculo das Luzes* (Rio de Janeiro / 2002 / Maison de France)

*Miguelangelo* (Rio de Janeiro / 2001/ Teatro Carlos Gomes)

*A Incrível Viagem* (First produced in São Paulo and Rio / 1984 / produced throughtout Brazil)

*O Beijo Da Louca* (Rio de Janeiro / 1981 / Teatro Vila Lobos)

### **OTHER PUBLICATIONS: Fiction and Didactic**

#### **Fiction:**

*A Guerra Das Imaginações*. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Rocco, 1997.

#### Translations/International editions:

*La Guerra Delle Immaginazioni*. Rome, Italy, 2002.

*Von Der Entdckun Des Paradieses.* Frankfurt, Germany: Ed. Eichborn, 2000.

*La Guerra De Las Imaginaciones.* Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ed. Planeta, 1998.

*La Guerra De Las Imaginaciones.* Mexico, D.F.: Ed. Planeta, 1998.

*A Guerra Das Imaginações.* Lisbon, Portugal: Ed. Pergaminho, 1998.

*La Guerra De Las Imaginaciones.* Madrid, Spain: Ed. Planeta, 1998.

*Padre Cícero*, with Aguinaldo Silva and Regina Braga. (Based on TV Globo miniseries). Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Record, 1984.

*O Calo, O mundo encantado de uma gorda, Esses alucinantes termos médicos, Verão tijucano, O homem que perdeu o humor, Hada e o 'H', A História da pestana.*

Crônicas/Short stories in *O Melhor da Crônica Brasileira 2.* Luis Calvalcante Proença. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1981.

*Sangue, Papéis e Lágrimas.* Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Codecri, 1979. (Short stories)

### **Didactic:**

*Roteiro, arte da televisão.* Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Nórdica, 1983.

#### Translations/International editions:

*El Guió: art i técnica d'escriure per al cinema i la telivisió.* Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya. Institut Català de Noves Professions ; [Bellaterra] : Universitat Autònoma de Bellaterra, 1989

*El Guión.* Barcelona, Spain: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1983.

*El Guion.* Madrid, Spain: Instituto Oficial de Radio y Televisión, 1983, 1999.

*El Guión.* Buenos Aires, Argentina: Garay Ediciones, 1983.

*El Guión.* Mexico, D.F.: Planeta (2nd edition), 2000.

*El Guión.* Buenos Aires: Oficial Publicación del Cbc, 1997.

*Da Criação Ao Roteiro.* Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Rocco, 1995.

*Da Criação ao Roteiro.* São Paulo: Summus Editorial, 2009.

Translations/International editions:

*Da Criação Ao Guião*. Lisbon, Portugal: Ed. Pergaminho, 1992.

*De La Creación Al Guión*. Madrid: Instituto Oficial Radiotelevisión, 1988, 2008.

*De La Creación Al Guión*. Buenos Aires : La Crujía Ediciones, 2005

Testimony/Depoimento, Doc Comparato and others. *Tv Ao Vivo Depoimentos*. São Paulo: Ed. Brasiliense, 1988.

**Published screen/miniseries scripts:**

*Me Alquilo Para Soñar*. Bogotá, Colombia : Editorial Voluntad, 1995.

*Me Alugo Para Sonhar*. Niterói, Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Casa Jorge Editorial, 1997.

*Me Alquilo Para Soñar* . Madrid,Spain: Ollero E Ramos Editores, Spain, 1997.

*Arnau, Els Dies Secrets*, with Xesc Barceló. Barcelona, Spain: Ed. Proa, Spain, 1994.

**Childrens' Books:**

*A Incrível Viagem*. (play) Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Ebal, 1984.

*Nadistas E Tudistas*. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Ebal, 1984. (Re-edited, Editora Leitura, 2013).

**E-Books**

In 2013/2014, are released in digital format [www.facebook.com/doccomparatodigital](http://www.facebook.com/doccomparatodigital) published by Simplíssimo the following e-books: *Pleiades*, *O Despertar dos Desatinados*, "O Beijo da Louca", *O Círculo das Luzes*, *Nostradamus*, *Michelangelo*, *Eterno*, *Jamais* and *Sempre* (theater plays in Portuguese). Follows: *De La Creación al Guión* (didactic book in spanish).

#### IV. CINEMA (Screenplays):

*El Corazon de la Tierra* (Spain/Madrid) 2007 - Antonio Cuadri, Director

*Piège* (Paris/France) 1993 - Jorge Marrecos, Director

*Encontros Imperfeitos* (Lisbon/Portugal)1991 - Jorge Marrecos, Director  
(unfinished film, Alexander script written with Chlepianov)

*O Trapalhão na Arca de Noé* (Brazil) 1985 - Daniel Filho, Director

*O Cangaceiro Trapalhão* (Brazil) 1985 - Daniel Filho, Director

*O Bom Burguês* (Brazil) 1979 - Oswaldo Caldeira, Director

*Bonitinha mas Ordinária* (Brazil) 1981 - Braz Chediak, Director

*O Beijo no Asfalto* (Brazil) 1981 - Bruno Barreto, Director

#### V. SUMMARY: WORK IN TELEVISION, TV GLOBO, AUTHOR OR CO-AUTHOR

##### A. SERIALS:

##### **Plantão de Polícia: (Creator and Author)**

22/06/1979 - *Crime do Vidigal*

06/07/1979 - *Vampiros Tropicais*

27/07/1979 - *A Voz do Além*

24/08/1979 - *Vermelho 23*

31/08/1979 - *O Enigma da Pensão do Reno*

28/09/1979 - *Balão Apagado*

19/10/1979 - *Despedida de Solteiro*

30/04/1980 - *O Cavaleiro do Apocalipse*

28/05/1980 - *Nos Porões da Liberdade*

25/06/1980 - *O Arqui-inimigo*

09/07/1980 - *O Acordo*  
16/07/1980 - *A Doceira de Bangu*  
01/10/1980 - *O Venerável Azul Turquesa*  
15/10/1980 - *Pega*  
10/12/1980 - *Caixa de Surpresas*  
17/12/1980 - *Camisa de Força*  
05/05/1981 - *Trem Noturno*  
04/06/1981 - *Sangue, Calçada e Milk-Shake*  
11/06/1981 - *O Caminho das Estrelas - I*  
18/06/1981 - *O Caminho das Estrelas - II*  
25/06/1981 - *O Caminho das Estrelas - III*  
03/07/1981 - *O Caminho das Estrelas - IV*  
13/08/1981 - *Olho da Morte*  
03/09/1981 - *O Herdeiro*

***Malu Mulher: (Author)***

11/08/1980 - *Parada Obrigatória*

***Retrato de Mulher: (Creator and Author)***

16/12/92 - *Era uma Vez... Leila*  
18/05/93 - *Era uma Vez... Madalena*

***A Justiceira: (Creator and Author)***

09/04/1997 - *Preço da Vida*  
16/04/1997 - *Cinzas no Planalto*  
17/04/1997 - *Bala no Trem de Prata*  
23/04/1997 - *O Filho da Madona*  
30/04/1997 - *O Navio Luminoso*  
07/05/1997 - *Viagem ao Inferno*  
14/05/1997 - *Eternos Diamantes*

21/05/1997 - *Mesmo que Seja Eu*  
28/05/1997 - *Filha Única*  
04/06/1997 - *Criador e Criatura*  
11/06/1997 - *Balas Perdidas*  
18/06/1997 - *Trem de Prata*  
02/07/1997 - *Viver por Viver*

***Mulher:* (Author)**

22/04/1998 - *Fator Humano*  
21/10/1998 - *De Braços Abertos*  
11/11/1998 - *O Néctar da Vida*  
13/04/1999 - *Vícios e Virtudes*  
01/06/1999 - *Perfume do Amor*  
27/07/1999 - *Lindo Maravilhoso*  
07/09/1999 - *A Bela Adormecida*  
14/09/1999 - *Sabotagem*  
09/11/1999 - *O Segredo*

**B. MINISERIES: (Author and Creator):**

26/04/1982 - *Lampião e Maria Bonita*  
10/01/1983 - *Bandidos da Falange*  
09/04/1984 - *Padre Cícero*  
22/04/1985 - *O Tempo e o Vento*  
24/06/1990 - *A,E,I,O... Urca*

**C. OTHER TV WORK, (Globo):**

***Caso Especial.* TV Movies: (Author)**

10/05/1978 - *E Agora, Marco?*  
02/01/1981 - *Os Amores de Castro Alves*



**Quarta Nobre. TV Movies: (Creator and Author)**

06/04/1983 - *A Dama das Camélias*

27/04/1983 - *O Inspetor Geral*

25/05/1983 - *A Pata do Macaco*

08/06/1983 - *Damas, Valete e Crime*

31/08/1983 - *Morte no Paraíso*

05/10/1983 - *A Vida Secreta de Berenice*

26/10/1983 - *Do Outro Lado do Túnel*

02/07/1998 - *Brasil 500 Anos* (Daily updates)

*Brasil 500 Anos*: (Author)

**D. ACTING CREDITS (Globo):**

**Miniseries:**

1984 - *Padre Cícero* - (Macedo)

1990 - *A, E, I, O... Urca* - (The Jew Jacob)

1998 - *Labarinto* - (Himself)

**Telenovela**

1985 - *A Gata Comeu* - (Himself)

**Quarta Nobre**

1983 - *A Dama das Camélias* - (guy with the clapperboard)

**VI. SUMMARY: OTHER TV WORK, BRAZIL, INTERNATIONAL**

**BRAZIL**

2008/2009: TV Record - *Os Mutantes*

2007: TV Record - *Caminhos do Coração*

2004: TV SBT - Creative Consultant

## **INTERNATIONAL**

- 1997: TV Antena 3/Spain - *Hospital* - Miniseries  
1996: T.V. R.T.P./Portugal - *Na Paz Dos Anjos* - Coordinator for the soap opera  
1996: Catalan TV/Spain - *Poble Nou* - Miniseries Script Adviser  
1995: TV R.T.P./Portugal - *Visita De Natal* - TV movie  
1994: Catalan TV/Spain - *Arnau* - Miniseries with Xesc Barceló  
1994: TV R.T.P./Portugal - *Véspera De Natal* - TV movie  
1993: TV R.T.P./Portugal *Procura-Se* - Miniseries - Script Adviser  
1990: TV R.T.P./Portugal - *Histórias Que O Diabo Gosta* - Serials  
1990: Catalan TV/Spain - *Locos Por La Tele* - Script Adviser  
1990: TV-E/Spain - *Me Alquillo Para Soñar*, in collaboration with Gabriel García Márquez

## **MAJOR CONSULTANTSHIPS**

- 2004: Creative Consultant for SBT Television channel (SBT – São Paulo – Brazil)  
2002-2003: Creative Director for Prodigius Audiovisuals (Producer of European TV- movies).  
2002-2003: Director of DEA Planeta (De Agostini Planeta Corporation, with headquarters in London) for the development of miniseries and European audiovisual projects.  
2002-2003: Consultant for the European Script Foundation - Pilot Project (with headquarters in Amsterdam).  
1994: Creative Adviser, TVI (Portugal).  
1992: Creative Adviser, SIC (Portugal).

## **VII. SELECTED TALKS AND SEMINARS:**

- 2014: Doctor script of eight international screenplay DreamAgo program, Switzerland, Europe.

2014: Opening Post-Graduation course, "Character, dramaturgy and screenwriting," International School of Film and Television (EICTV) of San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba.

2008: "From the creation to the screenplay," lecture, Brazilian Academy of Literature (Academia Brasileira de Letras), Rio de Janeiro.

2008: seminar, "Guión y Creatividad," Medellin for the XII International TV Encounter.

2002: Workshop seminars, RAI Television, Rome, Italy.

2001/2002: Professor, Screenplay. Berlin Film School, Berlin, Germany.

1994: Founding Coordinator and Professor, MFA Script writing . Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

1984: Professor, screenplay. Casa das Artes Laranjeiras (CAL), Rio de Janeiro.  
Comparato will administer a seminar

## Addenda:

Upcoming seminar series, Sponsored by the Festival y Mercado de TV - Ficción Internacional, Buenos Aires, August 26 - 31, 2013. (<https://eventioz.com.ar/events/script-doctoring-a-cargo-de-doc-comparato>)

An excerpt from the program publicity, taken from the Spanish newspaper *El País*, that describes Comparato's contribution to Television in the following manner:

*An expert in Television, with the extraordinary capacity to produce and theorize within the most difficult means of mass communication. He distinguished himself by putting into practice modern and original concepts that reverberated in immediate innovations in television culture. Doc Comparato's acute vision has earned him a place as one of the most respected men of Television, enhanced by the advantage of his knowledge of Latin-American spectators that few possess. The workshops, conferences and debates that he provides always leave the participants with a need of making better television the following day. He is one of the most important Latin-American dramatists alive.*

**Recommend, in Portuguese:** In the following interview site - Webwritersbrasil - Doc Comparato offers an informal but incisive overview of his work and ideas. Interviewed by Alexandre Gennari and Felipe Moreno: <http://webwritersbrasil.wordpress.com/a-arte-do-roteiro/entrevistas-2/doccomparato/>

**NOTE: All specified dates in this CV are listed as Date/Month/Year**