



Mysteries of the Renaissance

drama in five acts

by Christian Lanciai (1995)

The characters :

Andrea del Verrocchio
Leonardo da Vinci
two morality guards
a judge
two clerks
Doctor Johann Faust
Salaí
Giuliano de'Medici
Federigo de Montefeltro, duke of Urbino
Monna Lisa Gherardini del Giocondo
a page
Francesco Melzi
King Francis I of France
Two physicians of Montpellier
Michel de Nostradamus

his father and mother
his wife
Julius Caesar Scaliger
Wagner
a servant
cardinals
monks
inquisitors
priests
an abbot
Filippo Giordano Bruno
King Henry III of France
Michel de Castelnau, his ambassador in England
Queen Elizabeth I of England
Sir Philip Sidney
Christopher Marlowe
Sir Fulke Greville
Thomas Harriot, astronomer
Sir Walter Raleigh
Lord Francis Bacon
Cardinal Saluzzo
Cardinal Bellarmine
Giovanni Mocenigo, senator of Venice
King Rudolf II of Bohemia
Rabbi Löb
Galileo Galilei, professor in Padua
Giovanni Battista Ciotto, publisher
Paolo Sarpi, writer
Herman Besler, Bruno's German collaborator
A captain with soldiers
Sir Thomas Walsingham
Robert Poley, agent
Ferdinando Stanley, 5th earl of Derby

members of the people of Rome

The action is in Italy and France with interplays in England and Prague
from 1476 to 1600.

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The drama shows the introduction of purely objective scientific thinking, how doctor Faust drew extreme consequences out of that, how Michel de Nostradamus tried introducing it into medical science, and how finally Giordano Bruno brought it to challenge the world dominance of the Church.

Leonardo da Vinci died in 1519, doctor Faust in 1539, Nostradamus 1566 and Giordano Bruno in 1600. The theory that they could have had dealings with each other is not impossible. All characters of the play have existed in reality.

It is of interest to observe how the denunciations of Giovanni Mocenigo against Giordano Bruno in 1592 and of Richard Baines against Christopher Marlowe in 1593 in several aspects are almost identical with each other both in character and in their literal wordings.

The main problem in every effort to reconstruct the interesting case of Giordano Bruno is that the Vatican destroyed every document of the case. That's why we know absolutely nothing about the process against him in Rome, and no matter how well documented the process against him in Venice was, which is the main source of most of what we know about his life, its judges and present witnesses were sworn to hold their silence. The most dominating feature of the entire case is the very compact silence which was observed by every prompter of the case from beginning to end. The more important it becomes that such an epoch-making extraordinary case of judicial murder for the sake of the freedom of thought and expression is reconstructed, actualised and constantly brought to new attention.

Italy, 17-27.9.1995
and in Gothenburg, December 2004.

Mysteries of the Renaissance

Act I scene 1. Florence, a workshop.

Verrocchio Leonardo, you are my best apprentice. Nothing evil must befall you. You are the apple of my eye.

Leonardo Maestro, all I know I learned from you. I would be nothing without you. You saved my life. I owe you everything.

Verrocchio We can trust each other. That is why it is vitally important that you tell me the truth. Is there any substance in the accusations?

Leonardo No, none at all.

Verrocchio (pushes him) You are lying!

Leonardo No, maestro. I am not lying. And don't touch me!

Verrocchio I loved you like a son! Who could have brought such allegations against you? Who could have wished you such harm?

Leonardo I don't know, maestro. The accusation was anonymous.

Verrocchio Even worse! I have experienced this before, the dishonour, the lies, the slander, the loss of all trust! You are marked for life, Leonardo! Such accusations turn you into a liar and deceiver, so that no one can trust you any more! Did you do it?

Leonardo No, maestro.

Verrocchio (pushes him) You are lying! I have slept with you myself but never with any intention! Did I turn you thus? Did you have any such intentions with anyone else?

Leonardo No, maestro.

Verrocchio (embraces him) My divine apprentice, this trial will be difficult for you, but there is nothing I can do. Just deny everything and hold your stand! They can prove nothing!

Leonardo No, maestro.

Verrocchio Go, my son, and live with the unendurable, but never deny yourself! Do you understand!

Leonardo Yes, maestro. *(A knock on the door.)*

Verrocchio Here they come. They can't harm you, Leonardo. Don't let them get at you.

Leonardo No, maestro. *(Verrocchio opens the door.)*

Verrocchio What can I do for you, gentlemen?

Guard 1 It's the morality guard. Is the young Leonardo da Vinci here?

Verrocchio Yes, he is here.

guard 2 He has been anonymously denounced for sedition together with the model Jacopo Saltarelli and three other young Florentines.

Verrocchio There is no basis for such slander.

guard 1 He has to come with us anyway for questioning.

Leonardo (comes forth) Will I be sent to prison?

guard 2 Only for questioning.

Verrocchio Go, my son. Nothing can harm you.

guard 1 If he is innocent.

Verrocchio He *is* innocent

Guard 1 That remains to be established.

Leonardo You see, maestro. I am already judged in public just for being accused.

Verrocchio That's how the world goes. Learn from it and control it.

guard 1 Come along now! *(The guards take away Leonardo.)*

Verrocchio Thus my best apprentice was ravished by reality. I just hope he may make it and survive as himself. *(sighs and returns to his work)*

Scene 2. The court of morals.

judge Leonardo, after careful investigations we are satisfied with the results, but we would still like to ask some questions. *(looks into his papers)* The origin of this controversy appears to be your and your friends' inclination to jokes and merry pranks. These appear to have been misunderstood. Can you explain it?

Leonardo We indulged in parties, masquerades, playacting and dancing, and we amused ourselves with jokes.

judge What kind of jokes?

Leonardo Your excellency, is it wrong to laugh? Is it wrong to bathe naked when you are young? Is it a sin to joke and laugh? If that is the case, I am guilty, since I have dared to be young.

judge Leonardo, after two months' careful investigation, the morality court has found you blameless. You are free and publicly exonerated.

Leonardo Am I? After two months in prison?

judge You are released. No ground for the charges have been found.

Leonardo And will I get no indemnity?

judge Indemnity?

Leonardo For two months I have been detained for the sake of an anonymous denouncement while the world has assumed that I was guilty. An anonymous accusation was already taken for granted as a conviction.

judge I am sorry, Leonardo, but you are exonerated.

Leonardo I have been publicly scandalized for two months. Of what good is then an exoneration?

Judge It's better than the contrary.

Leonardo You believe an excuse is enough when you have broken a man's heart? What kind of people are you? How could I ever trust another human being again? You are all insidious intriguers, and I would rather never have anything to do with humanity any more for its disgusting baseness. (*leaves*)

Judge (turning to the others) What do you think?

clerk We can't do anything further.

Another clerk He will probably manage and survive. He is able and handsome and has a perfect health. He is also really talented.

Judge I just hope he will not turn with his services to the devil.

Clerk 1 Is there any risk?

judge An angel who has been wounded by people could convert to any blackness to be revenged on humanity. And with our acquittal he has legitimacy for ruthlessness.

Scene 3. Milan many years later.
(*Salaí doing his service as the doctor enters.*)

Doctor They say maestro Leonardo is available here.

Salaí That's correct! Who gives him the honour?

Doctor A colleague from Prague.

Salaí That sounds mysterious.

Doctor Isn't your master a mystic?

Salaí At least he is mysterious enough.

Doctor (takes a seat) What is he working with now?

Salaí Don't ask me. I must never know what he is doing.

Doctor Is he still performing autopsies?

Salaí Only in the dark after midnight in locked cellars.

Doctor There is our king of mystics.

Salaí And who are you?

Doctor Actually a physician. And you?
Salaí Salaí.
Doctor Salaí. Isn't that a devil's name?
Salaí Only a small devil.
Doctor You are a carefree young man. You are not afraid that your master might be in league with the devil?
Salaí Not as long as I get my salary and can snoop from his wallet now and then.
Doctor You are an impertinent opportunist.
Salaí Master Leonardo thinks so too.
Doctor And still he keeps you in his service?
Salaí He is tolerant.
Doctor So it seems. May I meet him?
Salaí Perhaps.
Doctor Is he very busy?
Salaí Yes, always.
Doctor About what?
Salaí If not about thinking, then about studying nature.
Doctor You mean philosophising?
Salaí No, exploring nature.
Doctor Yes, he might be best at that in the world. I have seen some of his anatomical studies. He knows more about the skeleton than any physician in the world.
Salaí Is it as a doctor you wish to see him?
Doctor Yes, you could say that, but also as a patient.
Salaí Are you ill?
Doctor Only in my soul.
Salaí Are there illnesses of the soul?
Doctor I suspect so.
 (enter Leonardo, stately, with long hair and beard, dressed majestically.)
Leonardo (notices the doctor) Do I have a visitor?
Salaí An educated doctor from abroad.
Doctor (rises) Doctor Faust from Prague.
Leonardo (cautious) I have heard about you. What do you want?
Faust Counselling.
Salaí He says his soul is sick.
Leonardo I have long suspected that we have something in common. Have a seat, by all means.
Faust (sits down) I didn't wish to take up your valuable time.
Leonardo I have all the time in the world but only for essentials. This gentleman, Salaí, has a reputation for being in league with the devil. Do you believe the devil exists, doctor Faust?
Faust No.
Leonardo There is our common ground. I think we have some topics to discuss. Salaí, get us some wine. Our wayward traveller could need some refreshment.

Faust I just happened to pass Milan on the way.

Leonardo That pleases me. I take it as a compliment that you came here.

Faust (*lowers his voice, leaning forward*) Isn't it risky, to keep someone like little Salai, I mean, think of your reputation. People believe you to be homosexual.

Leonardo I was publicly declared innocent many years ago.

Faust And consequently you think you can allow yourself anything.

Leonardo Doctor Faust, I advise you not to speculate in my sexuality. No one else could ever get any wiser from it – only mad.

Faust Pardon me if I got too close. I just wished to express a friendly warning.

Leonardo Your own reputation is worse then. What did you do to become known as someone in league with the devil?

Faust Like your own acquittal from the court of decency, that reputation of mine is also something of a licence. I don't have to have anything to do with the church.

Leonardo So you mean you could do anything outside it?

Faust Unfortunately I committed a few mistakes.

Leonardo I know about them. You aquired a guilt complex by seducing ladies under age.

Faust It was not my fault that they went mad.

Leonardo But you seduced them intentionally. You brought them down to perdition.

Faust That's how the world goes.

Leonardo I know. That's why I detached myself from it.

Faust Still you keep working for it.

Leonardo In secret.

Faust You are indeed a mystic. But how could you avoid the damnations of the church?

Leonardo I don't call the superstition and childishness of the church a damnation. I am more diplomatic.

Faust I know you are on good standing with the Medicis. Lorenzo the Magnificent managed to get his son on the way to popedom.

Leonardo That if anything could redeem the world.

Faust The licentiousness of Lorenzo's Florence, spread around the world like rings on the water?

Leonardo No, doctor Faust, the humanistic and scientific Florence of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

Faust So you dare embrace the dangerous theories of Copernicus the Pole?

Leonardo That the earth orbits the sun instead of the opposite is as self-evident as the world being round and not flat, which Toscanelli taught me already as a child, and which Anaxagoras of Athens proved already 1900 years ago.

Faust It can't be proved.

Leonardo It will be proved, but I let others do it. I am satisfied with just knowing it. Whoever is stupid enough to risk his life by proving it may do it on his own responsibility.

Faust Sooner or later it will be proved.

Leonardo Exactly. Until that day the church may continue undermining its position by burning innocent heretics on its own responsibility without me interfering with its downfall by trying to stop it. (*enter Salaí with some wine.*)

The wine, at last! Cheers, my good doctor Faustus!

(*They toast each other.*)

Faust But if the world is round you could get to India by going west.

Leonardo That's exactly what Ser Cristoforo Colombo of Genoa is about to accomplish by using Toscanelli's maps.

Faust That would ruin Venice and Florence and all Italy.

Leonardo Not immediately but at length.

Faust That doesn't bother you.

Leonardo I am only human.

Faust Are you? With all your knowledge, don't you sometimes think you are God?

Leonardo Do you?

Faust No, but I can understand that people sometimes believe me to be in league with the devil. I don't feel divine, but sometimes I do feel demonic. You see, my dear colleague, I can't help despising all these people who out of sheer stupidity and superstition keep fawning on the absurd church. I have had some interesting discussions with a young Augustine monk Martin Luther about it. He surprised me by going even further.

Leonardo Does a monk wish to dismantle the church?

Faust Not the church, but the power monopoly of the pope.

Leonardo Then he is just orthodox.

Faust No, he is fanatic. He wants all common people to read and learn the Bible.

Leonardo Then he will first have to translate it into the popular language.

Faust That's what he intends to do. And the pope will never accept it, not even a Medici pope.

Leonardo Aren't the reforms of the good Erasmus enough?

Faust The fanatics don't think so. And they turn me into an atheist.

Leonardo So you don't even believe in God?

Faust Not such a God which popes and fanatics use to oppress the world with.

Leonardo (*offers his hand*) Your hand, my friend. We are on the same side.

Faust Do you also wish to abolish God?

Leonardo No, but replace superstition with science.

Faust That's the same thing.

Leonardo Not quite. Science doesn't have to abolish God. It's enough to disregard him.

Faust Your diplomacy is out of this world.

Leonardo That's exactly what it is. That's what the world needs. I am not enforcing it. That's why I always leave my projects without having fulfilled them. It's enough for me to know how to accomplish them. It is safer to stay ahead of the goal than to attract the attention and envy of the world by reaching it.

Faust Then you will be considered a fool.

Leonardo (muses) I fool the world by making them believe I am.

Faust I have much to learn from your sagacity.

Leonardo For example to make gold?

Faust Still I have neither failed nor succeeded.

Leonardo (raises his glass) Carry on like that. We will probably agree well with each other. Drink, Salaí! Have a drink with us!

Faust Drink with your homosexual master.

Leonardo Stop it! No blows under the belt!

Faust Pardon me – a sign of my illness.

Leonardo Your illness?

Faust I hate all humanity. I only wish its destruction. I watch it multiply like rats and ruin the entire world. Sometimes I wish I was God so that I could kill all humanity or at least nine tenths. And the worst thing is that there are grounds for my inhumanity.

Leonardo You are only frustrated. You have been unlucky in love. You suffer from sexual inhibitions.

Faust I thought you could perhaps help me or at least advise me.

Leonardo My friend, you know too much. That's the whole thing. If you are too deeply initiated in the uncompromising truth of knowledge you turn a hater and despiser of man. You can't any longer bear with superficial vulgar people enjoying irresponsible futility and frivolity. It's no illness. It is only natural.

Faust So you suggest it is incurable?

Leonardo It's to your advantage. You belong to the happy few of some sobriety in this world. All the others are lost.

Faust But we are not happy.

Leonardo Still we are envied by the others.

Faust Your comfort is poor.

Leonardo Learn to live with your destiny. That's the only solution. Personally I can never forgive the world or humanity the process against me for alleged homosexuality.

Faust You will never get rid of that brand.

Leonardo I know. It is my curse, and it is unfair, and for that I curse this world.

Faust Still you are serving it.

Leonardo Against my will.

Faust (drinks) My dear colleague, more and more I fear that you are in an even more troublesome situation than I.

Leonardo No, my friend, we are in the same boat. One is just a bit deeper down than the other.

Faust And all we can do is to help each other.

Leonardo No, my friend. My situation is more tricky. I can help everyone, but no one can help me. Cheers! (*toasts him. Faust answers.*)

Faust Why haven't you married?

Leonardo Who can trust a woman? Besides I am poor. No woman wants a man who cannot support her. In that aspect I am done for. Cheers!

Faust But you could have mistresses?

Leonardo Didn't I advise you already not to speculate in my private life?

Faust I beg your pardon.

Leonardo My ladies are my own problem. I promise not to use them like you do.

Faust Point taken, and I think I had better leave. I have vexed you.

Leonardo We shall meet again, colleague. (*Faust bows and leaves.*)
 Yet another genius that I established and scared off. Well, if he dares to return some day he might have something to teach me.

Salaí Was that really doctor Faust of Prague?

Leonardo Yes, it was he and no one less.

Salaí Has he really made a contract with the devil?

Leonardo That's his mythomania and vanity, Salaí. That fable is his only mystery. For the rest he is just a failed alchemist who could have made a good doctor, like I could have become a good painter but preferred to end up a failed universal genius. Thanks for the wine, Salaí.

Salaí You are welcome, master.

Scene 4. Urbino, July 1503.

Giuliano The years grow longer for each year, but even longer is each passed month, which still is nothing to each new week that has passed, of which each day is quite unbearable in tedious length; but longer still is every hour of it, while the longest time of all is every cruel minute, which must be endured here in this exile. I was not born to imprisonment and inactivity, but I was younger than my brother, which became my lifetime curse. How could you, father, trust Savonarola and give Florence over to a man of such a sinister and monstrous disposition? And my brother Piero, this most unreliable and inconsistent wind deflector of no character, how was it possible for my wise father to give him the government of Florence, the crown jewel of the world, its midpoint and most flourishing cultural fountain? My brother Giovanni might become a pope, which will not make him any better as a self-indulgent good-for-nothing, that fat and flaccid carcass of an amateur, who plays the lute as expertly as any gay castrated eunuch but who never loved nor acted wisely. In this miserable circle of failed brothers I stand quite alone, excluded and imprisoned in Urbino with no future and no state, bereft of any hope of ever getting access to my father's heritage, since brother Piero managed to get our entire family expelled in exile and failing miserably with their restoration. My poor brothers! And poor Florence! All I have is sweetest memories and dreams of something in this world that was sincere and true: my only love. We did have time for loving and for consummation, and we saved her honour just in time by finding her a suitable and honest man before it was too late, and that was all – the next day we were banished.

All since then I have been living in a desert, and my only life in this desertion is my lovely memory of the Florence and my love which once was there so long ago.

Federigo av Montefeltro (an old man) Good morning, my dear boy.

Giuliano Noblest benefactor, you did everything for me, gave me a safe haven, saved our Florence from great many wars and was a better friend to Florence than we deserved. You do look good today.

Federigo We have a new and prominent guest here today.

Giuliano Another exile like myself?

Federigo Perhaps you could say so. He is a Florentine.

Giuliano Who is it?

Federigo Have a guess. He went voluntarily into exile at an early stage and has been mostly active at Ludovico Sforza's court in Milan.

Giuliano It could only be Leonardo, born in Vinci.

Federigo That's the one.

Giuliano What is he doing here?

Federigo He is on his way to Florence. He had to leave Lombardy when Charles the eighth came along bringing the war, which since then has blessed the entire world with the French disease.

Giuliano Is he escaping then from the French disease?

Federigo To some extent. He hasn't set his foot in Florence now for eighteen years.

Giuliano And he is heading there now?

Federigo Yes.

Giuliano Then I must see him.

Federigo Of course.

Giuliano Is it possible at once?

Federigo He is standing outside waiting.

Giuliano Please let him in to me immediately.

(Federigo accomodates him courteously, goes to open the door to Leonardo.)

Federigo You are expected.

Leonardo Thank you, your excellency. *(enters)* Giuliano de'Medici, if I am not mistaken. *(goes to meet him.)*

Giuliano Our noblest and most accomplished artisan of Florence, if I am not mistaken! *((moves cordially to meet him and embraces him))* We are brothers in exile!

Leonardo You have aged, Ser Giuliano.

Giuliano The grief for not being home any more in my father's empire and to manage it has turned me into a sick and wasted old man.

Leonardo You are still the ablest man of the Medici family.

Giuliano I hope so, for I have never given up. We have to come back. Or else our Florence is finished.

Leonardo At least the Savonarola chapter is over.

Giuliano That fanatic ruined everything by his uncompromising hatred, his inferiority complex and his cruelty.

Leonardo He was like another Mahomet.

Giuliano And even ugly at that. How could Florence tolerate him at all?

Leonardo That's what Florence couldn't for far too long.

Giuliano Well, the worst is over, and I hear there are still Florentines who dare to return to the old city and among them such a divine painter as you.

Leonardo I haven't been there for eighteen years.

Giuliano But if such a one now returns there is still hope, and I wish to foment it. Tell me, would you like to accept an intimate and delicate mission?

Leonardo Ser Giuliano, you know me. You know that I am notorious for never being able to fulfil anything. You could employ me at your own risk.

Giuliano I think this special matter might appeal to you. I know you are a misanthrope and loathe people, but this person you couldn't hate nor even disdain. She if anyone I think could cause even your cold heart to melt.

Leonardo Is it about a portrait?

Giuliano Yes, a young lady of twenty-four.

Leonardo Who is she?

Giuliano (*retires somewhat, avoids meeting his eye*) She was the one I loved. She was my only life in those days when we all still could live. It was true love, and I made her pregnant. (*rises again*) We did everything for her, and I found a right and true husband: an experienced widower, mild and gentle, who never would be able to do her any harm. They were married, he never knew her, but she gave birth to the child that was mine. It was a daughter. When we were banished it was time for her to give birth, but it was a miscarriage: the daughter died. But she, my beloved, is still safe and well in a secure marriage with one of the oldest faithful servants of Florence.

Leonardo And you wish me to paint her for sentimental reasons?

Giuliano My good friend, it would be of extreme significance to me and Florence. I will pay whatever you may charge. Just tell me any fantasy price you please. But the most important thing is, that that portrait would be the symbol for this love to still be sustained and the proof of our union still remaining intact and alive.

Leonardo So I would be a sort of procurer.

Giuliano Have you then grown into such a cynic? Well, I stand for the truth, call my mission for you a procurer's if you want, but consider it a spiritual mission and that the lady is a mother who has lost all her love and her only child.

Leonardo Ser Giuliano, what you ask of me is nothing less than a sacred mission, and I will fulfil it even if it will be the only painting I will ever complete.

Giuliano So I have then succeeded in moving you?

Leonardo Giuliano, I am moved by you and Florence, and I feel blessed by the fact that you and Florence still seem to need me.

Giuliano I need that portrait in order to live. Father was slowly and gradually murdered by the unblestness and egoism of the world we are living in, but I want to survive it and get through with it with my love intact. Only you can help me. All priesthood and church sanctity is worthless to this single service that you could do for me.

Leonardo Who is she?

Giuliano Monna Lisa Gherardini del Giocondo.
Leonardo She?
Giuliano Yes.
Leonardo One of the purest and most honourable ladies of Florence?
Giuliano Yes.
Leonardo And her husband agreed to marry her although she was pregnant?
Giuliano Quite voluntarily and without persuasion. He was already a widower and for the second time and tried to forget that he was getting old.
Leonardo Yes, I remember the old man, a hard working civil servant of Florence. Giuliano, by this mission you have perhaps saved me and made me human.
Giuliano Leonardo, I don't understand what you mean.
Leonardo We shall see. But don't judge me until you have seen the portrait.
Giuliano I could always trust an artist, Leonardo.
Leonardo Yes, you Medicis always did. But I was perhaps among all your adored artists the least one you could trust.
Giuliano This is a mission of confidence. Consider that I, your employer, is a tragic case of exile.
Leonardo Giuliano, that exile will not last much longer. (*bows and leaves*)
Giuliano A remarkable man and artist. I can only hope he will take me and my mission seriously, so that I may see my love again at least by an image.

Scene 5. Florence.

Lisa Why did I allow myself to be persuaded by my husband? Who could it possibly serve to rip up my past to open up my grief to drive me mad again? But he is my cousin, and even if our love was impossible and forbidden I couldn't turn him down. Giuliano, you are my destiny and will remain so. – Show in the painter to me. (*Leonardo is entered.*)

You don't look like a painter.

Leonardo My gracious lady, don't let appearances deceive you. I am just a common painter who on commission by your most gracious cousin Giuliano de'Medici has come to Florence explicitly to eternalize you and your soul by the humble means and arts of a painter. (*makes a deep bow*)

Lisa There is something feigned about you, master Leonardo. You are pretending. You dress up like a prince and still make pretenses to be a humble painter, while all your grandiose projects so far have failed.

Leonardo You despise me.

Lisa No, I just can't figure you out.

Leonardo No one does.

Lisa That makes you interesting.

Leonardo You flatter me.

Lisa No, I try to be honest, and I ask you to make the same effort. What did Giuliano really mean?

Leonardo I am old enough to know what happened in Florence in those days, Monna Lisa. Giuliano loved you sincerely, and you were his only love. He has never forgotten you. I know that your love was true and mutual, and therefore it went too easily out of bounds. To give you in marriage to Ser Gherardini del Giocondo as soon as you knew you were pregnant was the only, the last thing and the best thing he could do for you since you were cousins. I can gather that your marriage has not been unhappy.

Lisa My husband always treated me well and has never known me.

Leonardo At your own request?

Lisa From respect of me and my wishes after I lost my child.

Leonardo You are only 24 and still young and beautiful.

Lisa Many suggest that I should have a lover. I couldn't do that to my husband. I always had but one lover.

Leonardo Your portrait with Giuliano and your knowledge that he has it could make your love everlasting.

Lisa Is that what Giuliano intended?

Leonardo You asked me to be honest. The answer is yes.

Lisa Then he must not see me as I am, on the portrait. *(removes calmly all his jewellery and hair adornments, so that her hair falls out.)*

Do you think I will do like this to Giuliano?

Leonardo It's quite enough, Monna Lisa. Don't disclose anything more to a painter. You are already ten years younger.

Lisa Like this Giuliano will at least be able to recognize me. Don't you feel like a pimp?

Leonardo My lady, I have never known a more honourable lady than you.

Lisa But I have heard much about you. They say you are too tolerant.

Leonardo I am a Florentine. It's in the nature of Florence. I am also just a bastard.

Lisa It was in the nature of Florence, you should have said. The happy Florence died with Giuliano's father, whose ideal Florence was ravished by Savonarola.

Leonardo That is my view as well.

Lisa Were you banished from Florence, or did you leave voluntarily?

Leonardo You could say both.

Lisa Weren't you reported to the morality court?

Leonardo Twice. The second time it was not taken seriously. There was only envy behind it. Lorenzo the Magnificent made sure it was forgotten. To him all artists were sacred, especially Botticelli and I.

Lisa Botticelli succumbed to Savonarola.

Leonardo And after the anonymous accusation against me it became impossible for me to carry on in Florence. I left since I never learned who my enemy was. And Verrocchio, my master, left for Venice.

Lisa These morality guards are the most boring people in the world. If you are not naturally moral you should at least be allowed to be naturally immoral.

Leonardo You are morality itself.

Lisa And you are immorality.

Leonardo Within strict measures. No one must ever again be allowed to probe into my sexual life. I made that decision after two months of being investigated as a 24 year old. I never slept with anyone again after that, and I became a vegetarian.

Lisa But you have loved?

Leonardo Only impeccably.

Lisa How dry you must be. You can't believe that from the aspect of you. You did at least have a mother, didn't you?

Leonardo My family was a disaster. My father only committed mistakes, and I was one of them. My mother, a simple woman, he almost immediately forgot. I loved my foster mother Albiera, but she died when I was twelve. My father promptly got himself new women and new children, by which fact I was overrun. An unwanted bastard without a family – how could someone like that ever trust a woman?

Lisa Still you have known many of them, all the ladies of Ludovico, for example, in Milan.

Leonardo A great man with no grounds for his greatness. I explored his women but never knew them.

Lisa Therefore you know Woman.

Leonardo Therefore I want to paint you.

Lisa And complete the portrait?

Leonardo Yes, for one time's sake.

Lisa And give it over to Giuliano?

Leonardo It was his before being painted.

Lisa I almost wish you could keep it, for you have much to learn from me.

Leonardo About woman?

Lisa About the female soul.

Leonardo I always suspected she did have a soul.

Lisa You sound jealous. Don't you think man has a soul?

Leonardo An interesting subject. Man usually does have a soul and tries to bury it under vice and brutality, but he never succeeds at length. Woman's highest aspiration is always to cultivate her soul, which is so difficult for her since she is always violated by man's vices and brutality. Both lose their souls in a happy intercourse but find therein a new soul by the begotten child, by which they both save their souls. That's why it is so important that an intercourse is mutually voluntary and not brutal or unesthetic.

Lisa Could an intercourse be esthetic?

Leonardo There's the rub. Of all man's unesthetic activities that's the very ugliest, if you look at it objectively in broad daylight how it is being performed. But after dark under the sheets you can disregard the unesthetic aspect and only view it and experience it emotionally. Only then an intercourse can become beautiful.

Lisa Master Leonardo, you are the right man to paint my portrait.
Leonardo I am obliged to you for that honour.

Scene 6.

(Giuliano de' Medici at home in his palace in Florence, dressed up as a prince, fully reinstated, facing his portrait of Monna Lisa.)

Giuliano We lost it all, and we got it all back. Still the exile of eighteen years has cost us more than what the entire world can offer us. My brother lost his life, if though my second brother ended up a pope. Now I am at the helm of Florence in my father's place, burdened by the formidable weight and responsibility of power and wasted by it, like my father *Il Magnifico*, brought to a mortal disease. *(coughs)* But hardest of all is the necessity to depart from my love. You were my only love, Monna Lisa, and I was faithful to you all the way until today. Now politics demand that I marry Filiberta of Savoy, and I can't bring you with me into my marriage – that would offend my consort. *(enter a page)*

pagen The master is here, your grace.

Giuliano Ask him to enter.

Somehow our Leonardo embodies all this age with its absurd upheavals. He grew up in our midst, and the Medicis have never let him down. Ludovico in Milan with his exaggerated pompous court was not serious and just a fool compared to us.

(enter Leonardo.)

Leonardo You have summoned me, your grace. Here I am.

Giuliano Dear Leonardo, I have the most painful obligation in my life to face.

Leonardo Am I discarded?

Giuliano O no, it's much worse than that. I am going to be married.

Leonardo I know. But in your mature age after all your trials, that should be something agreeable?

Giuliano The hard thing is that I can't bring with me into my marriage your exquisite portrait of Monna Lisa.

Leonardo Why not? It is after all just a portrait?

Giuliano She was my beloved, and it is not just a portrait. She is the one I loved just as she looked when I loved her most. My friend, you succeeded with the incredible feat of picturing her as a virgin, although she was married and had had a difficult childbirth.

Leonardo That's how she wanted it herself.

Giuliano And that makes this painting into far more than just a portrait. I can't take the risk of having my wife driven to jealousy by the portrait.

Leonardo I understand.

Giuliano And therefore it is rightly restored to its creator.

Leonardo You entrust me with Monna Lisa?

Giuliano She is safest in her father's hands. You can best preserve the picture and give her all the care she deserves. Leonardo, you are the most unreliable of all the artists in the world, but in this case you are the only one I can trust. I confide in you her and my secret.

Leonardo I never failed or betrayed a Medici.

Giuliano And we have never let you down. My father was the one who redeemed you from the morality court, for he knew, that the only matter to justify the supreme power of the Medicis in Florence was our sacred alliance with beauty, which never must be put at risk. You more than anyone is a confirmation and reward for our unfailing fidelity to beauty and art. *(takes down the picture)* Please. May this be a gentlemen's agreement between us.

Leonardo Of course.

Giuliano (to the painting) Farewell, my love. But something tells me you are now in better hands than myself. *(coughs)*

Leonardo Ser Giuliano, are you not well?

Giuliano A melancholy and cruel exile for eighteen years has left its mark. I am a lost man, maestro Leonardo, but I still have time to marry. But when I am gone the Medici will no longer be able to protect you. Then my wife will take care of you, and she will probably go back to France, her home country. Her king Francis the First could develop into something like a real prince. Apply for service with him, but he will probably offer you that himself.

Leonardo You have carefully thought out the entire brevity of my future.

Giuliano You are not young any more but still not old. Are you already 60?

Leonardo Sixty-three.

Giuliano Then you will surely have at least another twenty years. Remember me, Leonardo, mainly for the sake of Monna Lisa.

Leonardo Your secret will always remain intact in my heart.

Giuliano Thank you. That's the most important and the only thing I ask for. Farewell, my friend.

(Leonardo makes a deep bow and leaves with the portrait.)

There my life passed out of me. Come soon, o death, and deliver me from a part of life I never wanted to play. *(coughs and walks out.)*

Act II scene 1. Amboise.

Francesco Melzi The master is ill and wasting away, but it happens slowly, for he is naturally strong. He never was sick until the first time in his life when he was more than sixty, but the first stroke was followed by a number of others, and now he is completely paralysed on his right side. I can't understand why the king wants to visit him now.

(Francis comes sailing in, a dashing dandy of great vitality.)

Francis How is our dear master?

Melzi He would rather not show himself.

Francis This is something that could make a difference. I have discovered an incredible human phenomenon, that could be of interest to him, Come in, Michel.

(enter Michel timidly, a cautious young man.)

This is a student who has come for a visit to Amboise just for an advice from the master. I pray you, good Melzi, yes, Francesco, I command you to disturb him.

Melzi I already hear him come tottering.

(Leonardo in his old style, partly paralysed, enters with difficulty.)

Leonardo I heard the king's voice.

Francis My friend, *(embraces him cordially,)* pardon me for disturbing you in your old age, but this is a thoroughly unique case.

Leonardo What do you want with this boy?

Francis He only came here to see you and would not budge until I gave him leave.

Leonardo Who is he?

Francis A student in doubt as to what profession he should choose for his life.

Leonardo His eyes shine from intelligence and clarity. Leave us alone.

Francis Come, Francesco. Let the geniuses have their own secret conversation.
(leaves with Francesco)

Leonardo Tell me your name.

Michel Nostradamus.

Leonardo And your first name is Michel. What can I do for you?

Michel Show me a way in life.

Leonardo What is your inclination?

Michel I fear my own fearful talent. I am a Jew, astrologer, free-thinker and could easily be burned at the stake if it became known that I embrace the astronomy of Copernicus.

Leonardo (puts his arm around him) Then you are one of us. Be not afraid. Just keep quiet. Safeguard what you know, and let it naturally grow into a science. Cultivate your erudition, nothing is sacred except certain knowledge, and be careful not to let controversial knowledge reach irresponsible hands. Most irresponsible of all in this world is everyone who believes himself to hold power.

Michel So that's why you write everything in reverse?

Leonardo How do you know? Have you seen my papers?

Michel No.

Leonardo How then could you know about it?

Michel I just knew it. *(puts his hand to his mouth in sheer dismay)* I am so sorry, great master! That's just my liability! I know too much without having learned it! I just know it! I see things that no one else can see. To me it's natural and obvious, but no one can understand how I can do it.

Leonardo My friend, be careful. Don't take any risks. You mentioned that you are also an astrologer. Could you then look into the future?

Michel That's most of all what I am afraid of.

Leonardo Then you have the most dangerous of all talents. My friend, never tell the truth bluntly. That's the best advice I can give you. Let your endowment mature quietly and easily during indefatigable studies of assembling knowledge. No fortress in the world is as secure as certainty of knowledge. But in knowledge there is also a mortally dangerous trap. You can grow conceited and learn to despise humanity. That was my life's greatest mistake. I set science above humanity, and that aborted thousandfold. As a man you can never break out of the frame of humanity with all its fallibility. If you do and try that hubris God will inevitably strike you back with an inevitable destiny which you can never control yourself, if you leave the human factor behind.

Michel What is then the human factor?

Leonardo Charity. Empathy. Compassion.

Michel Then I shall be a physician.

Leonardo That sounds wise. The greater the talent, the more difficult it will be to keep the balance in life, which becomes the more vitally important.

Michel Balancing between what?

Leonardo Between the demands of intelligence on one hand and human considerations on the other.

Michel It sounds difficult.

Leonardo It *is* difficult.

Michel But you have already helped me. (*more intimately*) Do you think I could sneak out without the king noticing? I would rather not see him any more.

Leonardo Try the back door over there. Be quiet and careful and take no risks.

Michel Thank you, most excellent master! (*sneaks out*)

Francis (breaking in) What is keeping you so long? I can't wait any longer! (*notices that Nostradamus is gone*) Where is the young genius?

Leonardo I sent him home. I advised him to a simple medical education, and that will be his course.

Frans Only a physician! But he has enormous talents as an astrologer!

Leonardo Astrology is only superstition and self deceit. Forget about that racket, your majesty. It has no scientific foundation.

Francis You always know best, master, and I hope you did right in this case as well, but I am not so sure. (*leaves*)

Leonardo Francesco, bring me to my bed. It's time for me to die now, for I am a weary evening grown late, and I have seen a safe dawn for tomorrow.

Melzi Nostradamus?

Leonardo Yes, but leave that between ourselves. No one must ever know that I had anything to do with Nostradamus.

(*Melzi supports the aged tottering Leonardo on his way out.*)

Scene 2. The assembly of cardinals in Rome.

cardinal 1 Gentlemen, we have a problem.
cardinal 2 Don't speak of it.
cardinal 3 That is no news, monsignore. We always have problems.
cardinal 1 Yes, but this time it's worse than usual, for it is a totally different kind of problem.
cardinal 2 Could it be worse than what it is as usual?
cardinal 3 The usual thing is that things always get worse.
cardinal 1 This is serious, gentlemen, and nothing to joke about.
cardinal 3 Who is joking? Can you see anyone of us smiling?
cardinal 1 No, but you try to whisk away the problem as a trifle without even having heard what it is all about.
cardinal 2 You haven't told us.
cardinal 4 Cardinal Scorsese, you never come to the point.
cardinal 1 No, since you are all the time keeping it off by talking.
cardinal 2 We are not keeping anything off by talking. It's you who don't tell us anything.
cardinal 3 Now tell us finally what your problem is all about.
cardinal 1 Gentlemen, Nicholas Copernicus is dead.
cardinal 2 (*questioning the others*) Who is Nicholas Copernicus?
cardinal 3 Has anyone heard of him?
cardinal 4 Is he a cardinal?
cardinal 1 No, gentlemen, he was an astronomer.
cardinal 2 Then there could hardly be anyone missing him?
cardinal 3 What's an astronomer? Is it some kind of astrologer?
cardinal 4 Just don't tell us you have allowed an astrologer to get away without getting him burned at the stake.
cardinal 1 That's the very disaster. But it is only half the disaster.
cardinal 3 Is it then so terrible that some heretic was not burned at the stake? There are so many others to burn.
cardinal 1 This one if anyone should have been burned. But we discovered it too late.
cardinal 2 What has he done?
cardinal 1 He has written a book.
cardinal 2 O horror! (*All are horrified.*)
cardinal 4 Many are writing books. Why was this one worse than the others?
cardinal 1 Nicholas Copernicus appears to shortly before his death have published a book advocating the dangerous thought that the sun doesn't orbit the earth but instead the earth orbiting the sun.
cardinal 3 But that is madness!
cardinal 4 You are not a heretic for being mad. Insanity is an illness, not a heresy.
cardinal 1 The dangerous thing is that this mad man succeeded in convincing his fellows that he wasn't mad.

cardinal 3 Where did he work? I hope it was far away from here.

cardinal 1 In Poland. That's why we could not reach him.

cardinal 2 I understand. He had time to publish a heresy just before he died, so he got away with it.

cardinal 1 Yes.

cardinal 4 Is there any risk for this heresy to spread about?

cardinal 1 We don't know yet. But we should be alert on this case and of the possible consequences. The greatest worry of all is that this astronomer intentionally appears to have published his work just before he died to be certain of getting away with his heresy.

cardinal 3 Premeditated and systematical heresy by other words.

cardinal 1 Exactly.

cardinal 2 The most dangerous of all.

cardinal 4 Was it the heretic's intention to undermine the church?

cardinal 1 We don't know yet. Fortunately the book is written in a cryptic and ambiguous way, so its heresies are well disguised and can only be understood by those who read between the lines.

cardinal 3 In other words, a well prepared ambush, a subversive attack on the church masked in codes and riddles.

cardinal 1 Exactly, the very thing we have reason to fear most of all.

cardinal 5 Since all real heretics use that method.

cardinal 3 What can we do about it?

cardinal 1 Nothing. We can only wait and see what happens. If we are lucky there will be no more fuss about it. If we are unlucky, other heretics will catch on to the dangerous ideas of Copernicus.

cardinal 4 We are warned and on our guard. No heretics could surprise our vigilance.

cardinal 1 You are warned. Beware of astronomers.

cardinal 2 Are they more dangerous than heretics?

cardinal 1 Yes, if they grow too many. One is more than enough.

cardinal 3 And he is dead.

cardinal 1 But not the damage he made, since he had time to write a book. A book could be more dangerous than a man.

cardinal 4 We can burn books like we can burn people.

cardinal 1 Yes, gentlemen, that's the essence of my warning. We have to be prepared to burn more people and books above all.

cardinal 3 An easy matter. They burn well.

cardinal 1 Yes, but they can't be discarded that easily. Well, that's all, gentlemen.

(The cardinals break it up.)

Scene 3. Montpellier.

Doctor 1 The infestations of the plague are terrible.
2 Yes, we have never before been obliged to bleed so many people.
1 And it's a shame to have to admit there is no other cure.
2 That's the problem. God kills, and we just have to submit and comply.
But one day we will find a cure.
1 You think so?
2 Definitely.
1 Yes, later perhaps when all putrid human blood in the world has poured out in the drain.
Faust (turning up) Good morning, gentlemen. Is the hospital filled up?
2 Quite filled up.
Faust I am a doctor from abroad. I just wonder how widely spread the plague is.
1 It is still spreading. We are out of control of the situation. Where do you come from?
Faust From Germany.
2 I don't think the plague will spread as far as Germany. It usually makes a halt south of the Alps.
Faust But 150 years ago it ravaged all Europe.
1 That was long ago. Since then much has happened in medicine.
Faust So you believe in defending life against death?
2 Why else would you be a doctor?
Faust I am older than you, and I have seen several plague epidemics. There is a back side to the medical profession. You get in touch with man, you get too close in contact and get to know him too well. By that you grow into a realist and cynic.
1 You can balance that out by humanism.
Faust What is humanism?
2 Being human.
Faust Is man worth being shown humanity?
1 What do you mean?
Faust Behold all these wars, all these political maniacs destroying the world of humanity, this inherently universal egoism and ruthlessness in man, her incredible baseness and egoistic greed. Naturally you must cure a patient if you can, but I am a realist enough to welcome all deadly world epidemics, especially the plague.
2 Then you are inhuman.
Faust Am I? Look how man ruins nature. Look how insanely he uses her knowledge to wage wars and apply any means of torture against the individual by inquisitors and the persecution of heretics. I love the free individual, but in order to ensure her survival I would sacrifice 90% of humanity, for that's the rate of all rotten eggs in the world.
1 (to 2) This doctor would be something for Michel to enter a discussion with.
2 Call on him. (1 leaves.)

So you would like to sacrifice almost all humanity for the sake of the happy few exceptions?

Faust In the lack of greater plague epidemics, the best thing that has happened to the world lately is the French disease.

2 But that's a horrible illness.

Faust I view it as a reasonable retribution for man's lack of morals. It generally strikes against promiscuity.

1 (*enters with Nostradamus*) Honoured colleague, I bring you an interesting young candidate for you to continue expounding your views with.

Faust (introducing himself) Doctor Faust from Prague.

Michel Michel de Nostradamus.

Faust You are still just a candidate?

2 No, but he works harder than any candidate.

Faust (mockingly) For the survival of humanity?

Michel For alleviating their sufferings.

1 This doctor Faust means that the greater part of humanity should be extirpated to make it easier for the proper people to survive.

Michel And how do you make the distinction?

Faust I agree that it has to be rather arbitrary.

Michel The problem with your suggestion is that it is impossible to arbitrarily sacrifice the greater part of humanity without many of the proper ones getting mixed up in the wash while many undesirables will manage to get included in the proper minority. You can't assort humanity except individually.

Faust You can't spare the rotten eggs for the sake of the proper part. Consider Abraham and Lot's family in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Michel You are not realistic. It's the evil ones who would gladly sacrifice the greater part of humanity. When people die in wars and epidemics the majority of victims are innocents, while the responsible ones, like kings, princes and generals, usually manage to keep out of the slaughter. This is the problem: the evil sacrifices, and the good ones are sacrificed. That's how it always is when a few decide the destruction of many.

Faust So we consequently have to comfort ourselves with the arbitrariness of the Almighty by epidemics like the plague and the French disease.

Michel As a consequence of such arbitrariness, God created the physician.

Faust (laughs) Ha-ha-ha! Yes, go on struggling with the plague by bleeding and cupping and drain all your patients of blood! You will get far that way! The epidemic will make a perfectly arbitrary harvest anyway!

Michel (to 1 and 2) My doctors, I have found the solution.

1 Michel has got an idea.

Michel God has sent us this inhuman physician just to show us the way. Stop all bleeding and cupping at once. It's not the blood that is infected, for the soul is in the blood. By bleeding patients and letting them of their blood we only hasten their deaths.

2 Michel, this is against the general practice.
Michel You shall see that I am right. The patient has better chances of survival if you spare her incursions.
 1 You will have the entire medical corps against you.
Michel It doesn't matter. It will prove me correct in time.
 2 You are just a candidate.
Michel Give this method a try anyway! Find out if it would not give results! Bleeding is just for people who are healthy and well and have too much blood in their veins, but those afflicted by the plague never suffer from any welfare disease. They are afflicted by something else.
Faust Try your young doctor's idea and let more patients die.
Michel You phoney physician, you know nothing about man. You are an old cynical egoist who only can corrupt humanity.
Faust It is corrupt enough already.
Michel Gentlemen, in my practice I shall never bleed anyone again and least of all an ailing patient, and you shall witness the results! (*leaves*)
 1 I must say that I believe more in Michel de Nostradamus than in you, doctor Faust.
 2 I think you had better return to Prague.
Faust Perhaps I might be more at home on gloomier latitudes. But mark it well, my honesty is always straight and never evil minded.
 1 Go home to your protestants, who along with you want to turn the world upside down.
Faust Then I shall not trouble you any more. (*leaves*)
 1 Let's try Michel's idea. If it works we have nothing to lose. Patients will die anyway. If we can save them it is worth turning against the whole medical corps.
 2 The matter is settled. (*they leave.*)

Scene 4.

father My son, is it really wise to challenge the establishment?
Michel I know that I am right, and I am successful.
mother He has taken his exam, dear, and he is successful at the hospital.
father All this is just fine, but just because it is so fine we can't afford to challenge destiny and risk losing everything! We can never forget or ignore that we are Jews! Although father converted to the Catholic faith, we can never get rid of that stamp! Just look at what happens to converted Jews in Spain who are found out for having been Jews! They are decapitated, strangled or burned at the stake and without any fair trial!
Michel Father, how could I put the family at risk??

father You might be right. You might be proven right. You might gain recognition. You might grow famous. You might raise envy and get secret enemies. Nothing is more dangerous for a Jew than to get recognition and get famous.

Michel And how does that in that case affect you? Am I not waging just my own life?

father You have your next of kin to consider. You are engaged and will probably have children. Can you risk their future by risking your own?

Michel I am not risking it.

father You don't know that!

mother Take it easy, dearest. I am sure Michel knows what he is doing.

father (calms down) I only ask you to tread carefully. Take no risks. Be aware that you could have unknown enemies behind you everywhere wherever you go. A Jew is never safe to non-Jews.

mother You are scaring him off.

father No. I try to teach him some realism.

Michel I will be careful, father.

father That's all I ask for.

Michel All I ask for is to save lives as a doctor. No one could have any objection against that.

father Everyone has plenty against anything that is too good to be true. That's the risk you are taking.

Michel I am not afraid.

father That is maybe your greatest fault.

mother Forget that we are Jews, Michel, and forget that we ever were, and things will go well with you.

Michel I never forget anything, mummy, and least of all anything that anyone tries to make me forget. (*leaves*)

mother Whatever will become of this child?

father He is too good a Jew for his own good. That's the problem. We can only survive as Jews in careful disguise. Let's just hope that he is wise enough to assume a fake character in order for his right one to come to his rights.

Scene 5. At the deathbed of his wife.

wife My love, it is not your fault.

Michel I know, but it is not fair!

wife You can benefit from everything evil that happens. All experience is good.

Michel No, my sweet dove, don't draw the curtain to reality by false illusions! You have not deserved to lose your children! I have not deserved to lose my family!

wife The eternal protest of Job. It's actually a manifestation of life.

Michel You must not die, my love, the only sun of my world!

wife It's only the plague that's taking us. It has taken many more besides us. We are just a jot in the statistics.

Michel My love, you must not die away from me!

wife Our children have already died. I follow them. You were the best doctor against the plague in France. But you are only human. You could only cure others, not your own.

Michel O God, why did you send me this catastrophe!

wife Don't grieve for us. Everything has a meaning. Don't cry, Michel, and don't curse God. He is innocent. Only man is accountable.

Michel If you die away from me, when I have saved so many, how could I ever again believe in life or trust God?

wife He is innocent. Only humanity itself is guilty of all the sufferings of humanity. (*dies*)

Michel No! No, my wife, no! Don't leave me! Cursed be God! Cursed be humanity! I am cursed to still be alive and to have to go on living! All life is damned!

Leonardo (*appears vaguely as a ghost*) No, Michel de Nostradamus, that's not the way. You have only found yourself, even if it is the most painful of all discoveries to make.

Michel Who are you?

Leonardo You looked me up once for a piece of advice. But the plague is not God's or man's fault. God is just asleep. At times he tires of humanity, and then he goes to sleep and lets humanity mind its own business and perish by its own brutality, but it will pass. God always returns.

Michel But why my family, you phantom, why my entire family!??

Leonardo Don't ask me. Even God lets the wicked perish, there are always some casualties with them among the good. He can't dispose of the wicked without causing some good to go down also by mistake. But it will pass.

Michel When?

Leonardo When you are dead and have followed me.

Michel Go to hell, maestro Leonardo! You were just a great loser and superficial dilettante!

Leonardo But I never gave up but always carried on. You are ready to give up. That's the only unpardonable thing you can do in life.

Michel What else could I possibly do?

Leonardo Follow yourself. Be consistent. Accept your loneliness. Be true. And avenge yourself on the humanity that bereft you of your wife and children.

Michel You inhuman dilettante, would I take my revenge on humanity for God having bereft me of my wife and children?

Leonardo Who else would you take your revenge on? It's better to give vent to your bitterness than to repress it.

Michel Then I wish all life and all humanity to go to hell.

Leonardo Then give them the hell they deserve.

Michel But I could never turn evil.

Leonardo Be true then instead. Nothing is more cruel and evil than the truth. (*leaves*)

Michel A fever hallucination or just fantasies? But the apparition was true. I can't suppress my bitterness. It must be let out to poison the whole world and history. Everything else in life has become meaningless to me. (*collapses by his wife's dead body.*)

Scene 6.

Julius Caesar Scaliger I am sorry, Michel.

Michel It is as if my heart had been torn out of my body.

Scaliger What do you intend to do now?

Michel Go on working.

Scaliger That would be difficult.

Michel How come?

Scaliger You will have many patients.

Michel What do you mean?

Scaliger Do you know what people are calling you? "The doctor who could save all humanity but couldn't do anything for his wife and children."

Michel What is your point?

Scaliger We had better separate, Michel.

Michel After all these years? I thought you were my friend.

Scaliger I still am.

Michel I see. No one wants to have anything to do with someone struck by misfortune, not even his closest friend. I am like a leper in my soul, and I should be walking around with a chiming bell, so that everyone should be warned to keep away where I walk.

Scaliger Don't take me for a cynic, Michel, but you are not alone with your misfortune. You have been summoned to Toulouse. (*hands over a letter.*)

Michel As a physician?

Scaliger No, as a heretic.

Michel (opens and reads) "Michel de Nostradamus, physician, is hereby called to the holy inquisition of Toulouse to answer certain questions concerning his position in certain dangerous issues." It says nothing. Here is not even any allegation.

Scaliger Still it can only mean one thing. Someone has denounced you anonymously. That's enough for the inquisition to bring you to confession of anything under torture to then burn you at the stake.

Michel I will never go to Toulouse.

Scaliger I know. But you can't stay here. You have to go into hiding. In addition to this you also have to stand trial. (*gives him another document*)

Michel More anonymous allegations?

Scaliger No, trouble with your wife's family. They want her dowry back. But the worst thing is that they spread the word around that you as a doctor could have saved the lives of her and your children. Since you didn't they suggest you are a

murderer. But a doctor whose patients die can never be accused of having murdered them. So they are pleased enough with just getting her dowry back.

Michel Check mate, in other words?

Scaliger It doesn't look any better.

Michel I was happy here, Jules. I thought I had brought home happiness for good.

Scaliger Maybe you were too happy.

Michel Where is that fool who isn't happy when he has reasons to be? I enjoyed my happiness. Is happiness then so risky an enjoyment?

Scaliger You raised everyone's envy, especially that of your colleagues.

Michel They thought there was no reason for development to move out of conventional methods that don't work. Their stupidity condemns them to incompetence.

Scaliger You annoyed them. Not even stupidity can stand being annoyed.

Michel You don't have to worry, Jules. I will pack my things and go tomorrow.

Scaliger Go to where?

Michel Who knows? Venice perhaps, or Sicily, or Prague, where I once had a likeminded colleague.

Scaliger The great and famous doctor Faust, who was in league with the devil?

Michel The devil does not exist. Only prejudice and superstition exist.

Scaliger Such words would make the inquisition tear out your liver with red-hot pliers.

Michel Such absurd heights are reached by the inquisition when they convert holy Christians into methodic mass murderers.

Scaliger Go to Prague and confer with doctor Faust. You go well together, if he is still alive.

Michel We shall see. But we shall hardly see each other again, Jules.

Scaliger You never know.

Michel We had better depart forever, as long as there is an inquisition.

Scaliger Thank you, Michel. (*Michel leaves.*)

There the best doctor in the world left us, driven away from his practice by human pettiness and the prejudice of the world. The patients have lost their best friend while mortal stupidity has resumed its world dominance.

Scene 7. Prague.

Wagner It's some sort of doctor from France.

Faust (dying on his bed) What does he want from me?

Wagner He says you have met before.

Faust He wouldn't go here if he didn't know me. What does he look like?

Wagner Like a rich and young French dandy.

Faust Did he tell you his name?

Wagner Michel de Nostradamus.

Faust Could it be the man? The secretive astrologer who could foresee the future? I am dying, but such a chance you must not miss. Let him in to me.

Wagner (opens the door to Michel) He says you may come in.

Michel Thank you.

Faust (recognizes him) Where have I seen you before?

Michel The medical institute in Montpellier some years ago. We had an argument about medical ethics.

Faust Now I remember. You made the doctors drive me out.

Michel No, they did it quite voluntarily.

Faust You defended the humanistic values against my more radical realism. Well, Michel de Nostradamus, after all your bad experiences, who was right?

Michel I was right on principle, but you were not all wrong in practical life.

Faust We are getting closer.

Michel Are you still intolerably inhuman?

Faust It is not a matter of inhumanity. It is a matter of guilt. I am afraid I have to plead guilty.

Michel Of what?

Faust I have committed one unforgivable crime. I have been complicit in letting loose Protestantism across Europe.

Michel That at least is better than the inquisition.

Faust Is it now? Martin Luther is a monstrous hater of Jews who claims a personal monopoly on the correct knowledge of Jesus. That makes him worse than any pope.

Michel And did you turn him thus?

Faust I advised him to dare all that which Erasmus wouldn't dare: to crush the papal church by populist means.

Michel Some bad advice, which must lead to universal self-destruction within Protestantism, as if that malaise wasn't bad enough already in Catholicism.

Faust You mean that?

Michel I know it.

Faust And still you suggest that Lutheranism is better than the inquisition?

Michel Also the inquisition is self-destructive and perhaps the most self-destructive movement in the world. As long as it denies scientific facts it will only undermine Christianity as a religion.

Faust So you actually suggest the earth orbiting the sun and not the other way around?

Michel All scientists who know anything about the matter are of the same mind.

Faust Who was your tutor?

Michel I never had any.

Faust You didn't know the Pole Copernicus?

Michel No.

Faust Or Leonardo da Vinci?

Michel I did visit him once.

Faust So there is the connection. I also knew him. A very weird person.

Wagner He has obviously marked both of you.

Faust Shut up, Wagner! Stick to your alchemy!

Wagner It's never working.

Faust No, it didn't work for Leonardo either. Still it's worth trying. It is at least a demonstration against the predominance of eternity. Anything is better than to accept being powerless.

Michel Then you have succeeded after all, doctor Faust.

Faust With what?

Michel To make your life reach a meaning.

Faust And in that case, what would that meaning be?

Michel An eternal protest against impotence.

Faust So you forgive me my inhumanity?

Michel All can be forgiven and even that, for that is only an ordinary human weakness.

Faust You are kind towards an old quack.

Michel Do you believe in alchemy?

Faust No, but I believe in the power of the spirit over matter. That power, however, is of a kind that it never can be abused. And it's the highest power in the world.

Michel But it only leads to misery and loneliness to anyone who understands it.

Faust Already Leonardo knew that. Still he never let go of it.

Michel The knowledge of that power is the highest responsibility. If you reach that knowledge, it implies a lifelong obligation.

Faust Therefore it is a comfort to know that I am dying.

Michel Farewell, doctor Faust. Your moral is not very edifying.

Faust Why did you come here?

Michel To behold the death of your inhumanity. (*leaves*)

Wagner Who was that man?

Faust A Jewish physician. I was hoping he could bring me some reconciliation with life, but it didn't work at all.

Wagner God could still save your soul. Just renounce the devil.

Faust The devil does not exist, Wagner. Even God as a personality is a lie. Everything is just knowledge and awareness and sensitivity.

Wagner Do you deny God?

Faust Yes, I deny God, for I am a realist, and there are better things. God has always lost against man's ideals.

Wagner But human idealism is always tragic.

Faust Still it's better than the God whom nobody can do anything about.

Wagner So God is the impotence of man, which you refute?

Faust To the highest degree.

Wagner Rest in peace, doctor Faust, but you will never find any rest in your grave.

Faust Rather that than to remain a dull pious dunce. (*dies*)

Wagner (closes his eyes) Doctor Faust is dead, but Protestantism is alive. May it live on, and may also doctor Faust's protest against the inhumanity resound forever. May man live on if only just to go on complaining.

Scene 8.

Michel (aged) The years pass on, and life runs out of you in a constant downhill resignation without end. Somehow life has passed me by. Although I am free and impeccable I have somehow given up anyway. I got stuck in mystic routines and never managed to break out of my mystery. Just as well. I still have my freedom in spite of all. I cheated humanity by ceasing to be of any use for it, and my supremacy depends on that no one can understand me, but that made my solitude total. – What is it, Alexander?

A servant Master Nostradamus, you have a visitor.

Michel Who is it?

servant A young man coming for a piece of advice.

Michel Very well, I will have to mystify him like everyone else by my cryptic oracular art. Show in the poor fellow. (*Filippo Bruno is shown in.*)

Young man, what can I do for you?

Bruno I have a problem.

Michel My advice could perhaps add to the problem.

Bruno When I heard you were here in Turin the thought entered me directly: that man could help me if anyone.

Michel You must first explain yourself.

Bruno (takes a seat, eagerly) I am a young scientist and researcher. I have studied Aristotle and Copernicus and know them to be right and the church wrong.

Michel My friend, then you are at risk. The church intends to smash all such tendencies, and the inquisition is a terrible instrument of power.

Bruno That's the problem. How could I overcome this meaningless cruelty of the church?

Michel So you intend to vanquish it on your own?

Bruno I regard it as my duty.

Michel My friend, you can't find any more difficult task, and I must dissuade you from even trying.

Bruno By that advice you just spur me on. (*closer and more earnest*) Master Nostradamus, you have the best knowledge today of man and the world. I know you have the gift to see into the future with a natural ability to foresee events, destinies and people's future actions with some exactitude. You alone can see light through the windows of time while everyone else only can see darkness. You could advise me. What should I do? Tell me anything, but just don't dare to dissuade me from my responsibility.

Michel Young man, my special gift is an unendurably painful suffering and nothing else. It is my curse, for I find almost nothing good in humanity, this cruel superficial vulgarity which is only good for causing disasters. You obviously belong to those unhappy few who are born to object and denounce the intentional perdition of man. It's the course of Golgotha directly. There will be no reward but death. Still I envy you.

Bruno Why?

Michel You are a young and open-minded man of honesty and initiative, and you have the heroic power of irresistibility. Your tragedy could turn into a vital triumph. My life is but a decadent despicable tragedy.

Bruno But you are rich and respected, impeccable, feared and admired.

Michel I gave up too easily. My mission was to be a physician, my possibility was to do great things for humanity as a doctor, but when my two children and my wife died from me without my being able to save them I lost my faith in life and in humanity. I became a misanthropist and took my revenge on life by dressing my visions in enigmatical inexplicabilities, to both be able to show humanity its fatal face and slyly getting away with it. No stupid inquisition could nail me down, since my crypted verse could be interpreted into anything. But that was also my resignation. I can't do anything practical for humanity.

Your case is different. You wish to realize your scientific findings and force them upon this stupid humanity. It could lead to your death but also to the end of all church stupidity and superstition, at least at length.

Bruno That's exactly what I want.

Michel Join the church then. Become a monk and work on the church from the inside. That way you could accomplish most. The reactionary violence of the church could persecute Jews, heretics and laymen, but if a Dominican, like Thomas Aquinas baptized Aristotle, would prove the unassailability of modern science, the church could maybe be brought to reconsider and to start thinking reasonably. Perhaps you are the right person to dare such a bold venture.

Bruno You show the way, master. I will become a Dominican.

Michel Just be aware of the risks. The main evasion of dangers lies in never ignoring them.

Bruno I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Nostradamus. (*bows deep and leaves.*)

Michel No hurry! (*Bruno has already left.*)

He is in too much of a hurry. Alas, what have I done? Such a fresh bravery could never end up well.

Scene 9

monk 1 Is he dangerous, or is he just stupid?

monk 2 He asks stupid questions.

monk 3 Yes, but they are not just stupid. Sometimes he causes quite a stir.

monk 1 That's the danger of it.

monk 4 There is no harm in just asking questions, is there? If you have doubts you have to be able to discuss it.

monk 3 Only in the confessional.

monk 2 The problem is he questions everything.

monk 1 What is he doing here then?

monk 2 That's what we all are wondering. The only thing that keeps him in the order is apparently that God is the only thing he cannot doubt.

monk 1 At least something.

monk 3 Look out, here he comes.

monk 2 Let's ask him what he really means.

monk 3 Then we will never get finished with him. He means too much.

monk 1 Yes, he is tiresome. (*enter Bruno.*)

monk 4 Filippo Bruno, the brothers are worried about you.

Bruno What is the reason?

monk 4 You question and doubt too much.

Bruno If you cannot doubt, neither can you believe. My confessor always said that.

monk 1 What do you believe in then?

Bruno A great deal. You think I am disturbed, but nothing can disturb my faith.

monk 2 Tell us about your faith. We wish to help you.

Bruno My faith needs no help. It's rather the world that needs some help from me concerning its delusions.

monk 3 What delusions?

Bruno My brothers, I believe in reason. I don't believe in superstition. I believe in experience. I don't believe in fancies. I believe in observations. I don't believe in prejudiced conclusions. I believe in God. I don't believe in the devil.

monk 4 (to the others) What more do we need to know? He is at least sensible enough to believe in God. That's enough for me and should be enough for all of you.

monk 3 Do you believe in the church?

Bruno The church is there. It is a fact. So you don't have to believe in it. You practise your faith in the church, not on it.

monk 3 But do you accept the church dogma?

Bruno My friends, are you trying to ensnare me? You know that I am doubtful concerning much of what is practised in church. You know I have doubts concerning the value of relics from the holy cross of more wood than an entire forest is able to produce. You know I am not taking certain legends of saints too seriously. You know how much I am questioning and doubting. At the same time you know I remain a believer at heart. Let me then doubt in peace what I can't believe in anyway. It's what you can believe in that is of importance, not what you can't believe in.

monk 4 For my part your reason convinces me quite enough of your natural soundness, Bruno. For my part you may doubt whatever you wish, as long as you don't question the church.

Bruno I don't question the church. What I call into question is certain hypotheses which the church regards as infallible dogma, which I must regard as unreasonable.

monk 1 Like for instance?

Bruno That the sun orbits the earth when the opposite is proved by Copernicus.

monk 3 Heresy!

Bruno Prove it.

monk 1 Bruno, this is the very matter that makes us worried. You dare assault Aristotle.

Bruno So does every sensible scientist.

monk 2 But you are a monk, not a scientist.

Bruno Even a monk has the right to prefer reason to delusion.

monk 1 Copernicus and his theories are dangerous, Bruno. His ideas will sooner or later be branded by the church as evident heresies.

Bruno (calmly) In that case the church is wrong.

monk 3 Bruno, you can't remain within the church with such premature conclusions, which are in direct conflict with the doctrines of the church, as the church is infallible.

Bruno No man is infallible, and the church consists only of humans.

monk 3 Bruno, I warn you. We have to take up your digressing views with the assembly.

Bruno (calmly) If they are incompatible with the church I will have to leave the church. I am sorry, brothers, but reason is more sacred to me than any blind faith.

monk 1 Do you call the faith of the church blind?

Bruno I call all established superstitions blind, and there is no greater danger to humanity, since any blind faith will only lead humanity into blind alleys.

monk 4 Bruno, at least keep what you are thinking to yourself when you know it is controversial.

Bruno If I did I would be a coward. My friend, it is unfortunately not in my nature to be a coward. (*leaves*)

monk 1 He will not remain among us for long.

monk 3 No, we have already lost him.

monk 2 Pity about such a talent, but he is impossible.

monk 4 Brothers, let's not judge him in advance. He has the right to follow his nature, even if it misleads him out of church.

monk 3 The risk is that the church will not tolerate it.

monk 4 That will be the problem of the church in that case and no problem of ours. Let us just leave him alone.

monk 2 Yes, let us leave him alone with his doubts and heresies and not have anything to do with them.

monk 1 Come, let's go. (*They break it up.*)

Scene 10. Rome 1576.
Bruno facing the inquisition tribunal.

abbot We are very disappointed with you, brother Giordano. Why did you really join the order?

Bruno To help the church by the church,

abbot So you rather wished to "help" the church than to serve her?

Bruno I wished to serve her in the best way possible.

abbot What do you mean by "best way possible"?

Bruno According to my possibilities.

abbot It's these so called "possibilities" that are the problem. According to witnesses you already had very heretic views even before you became a monk.

Bruno The theories of Copernicus were at that time not yet under the Index.

abbot But you knew they were heretic, and you embraced them.

Bruno I studied Copernicus' writings. Is it a sin to read the books of others?

abbot Yes, if you are a Dominican monk and the books are under the Index.

Bruno I already explained to you that I read them before I became a monk and before they were put under the Index.

abbot That's why they could corrupt you. But you have never distanced yourself from their corruption although you as a Dominican monk have been urged to do so.

Another inquisitor Get to the point, please, brother chairman.

abbot Well then, to the point. Already in Naples when you studied at San Domenico Maggiore you were faced with 130 accusations against you for wants in your embracing the true faith. These accusations became doubly serious by your withholding two works by Saint Hieronymus and John Chrysostomus with forbidden footnotes by Erasmus of Rotterdam.

Bruno You sound as if this is the height of heresy.

abbot Isn't it?

Bruno My good father, the holy Hieronymus was the first and greatest of the church fathers of the catholic church, and he gave us the Vulgata, the only reliable translation of the Bible in Latin. John Chrysostomus was the greatest church father of the orthodox church and an unsurpassed theologian. Both these were unparalleled saints. Erasmus has expalined certain incongruities in them. Is it a crime to have a closer examination of our holiest church fathers?

inquisitor Erasmus' footnotes are heretic!

Bruno Then brand Erasmus and his writings including his excellent translation of the Bible but not me!

inquisitor Erasmus' liberal translation of the Bible turned into a cradle for protestantism!

Bruno That's not my fault!

abbot Brother Giordano Bruno, it is best for all that you resign from our order. Or else the inquisition has to investigate your intentions more closely.

Bruno So the catholic church expels me?

abbot No, it asks you to retract your statements for the sake of the church. If don't retract them the church will not be able to ensure your continued blessedness.

Bruno I cannot retract what I have read and that I have written what I have written.

Inquisitor Therefore you are urged to immediately resign from your order before it is further contaminated by your heresy.

Bruno Or else I will be burned at the sake as a heretic?

inquisitor Or else you give us no other choice.

abbot The greatest stumbling-block is your objection against the holy trinity.

Bruno I have no objections against the holy trinity.

inquisitor But you did have!

Bruno As an immature youth, yes.

abbot And how do we know that you still don't have any? You have not been willing to retract anything of what you have read or written. How do we know that you are not carrying the devil in your heart?

inquisitor We cannot trust you, brother Giordano Bruno. You are a potential risk to the church.

Bruno I am sorry, gentlemen, that you have such an intolerant attitude.

abbot And we regret your stubborn impertinence. Good day, Giordano Bruno.

Bruno Farewell, gentlemen. (*bows and leaves.*)

abbot What do you make of him?

inquisitor A hopeless case. He will never come back to the church.

abbot Except by the holy inquisition.

inquisitor Yes, possibly by the inquisition.

monk 4 (aside) So he would do wisest in leaving Italy.

abbot What did you say?

monk 4 That Giordano Bruno would be wise in leaving Italy for good, so he would leave the church in peace from his dangerous heresies.

inquisitor But as long as he keeps them we cannot leave him in peace wherever he goes.

abbot You mean we should get to the bottom of his case?

inquisitor We must keep him under constant observation and surveillance. If he continues like he has started he will sooner or later have to stand trial for it.

monk 4 (aside) Poor Bruno!

abbot I am afraid you are right, monsignore. We have to protect the church against such as Giordano Bruno.

monk 4 (aside) Yes, nothing is more dangerous to the church than when reason and free thought has been let out of its prison and cage. I have to warn Bruno and immediately urge him to go as far away from the church as possible. (*leaves*)

Act III scene 1. Paris. The court.

Henry III Who is this philosopher Bruno really?

Castelnau A unique professor of truth who isn't afraid of anything.

Henry Then he never had a real mother like mine.

Castelnau He comes from poor conditions, Sire, and has worked himself up from nothing to perhaps the leading humanist of Europe since Erasmus and Luther.

Henry Luther was just a fanatic demagogue who talked a lot of rubbish.

Castelnau Only about the church.

Henry Does this fellow also talk rubbish about the church?

Castelnau No, my liege, he speaks of the church but only what is reasonable.

Henry That sounds like something. Do we dare listen to him?

Castelnau That's why he is here. He is worth being heard.

Henry Let him in then and let's hear what he is good for.

(Bruno is shown in. He bows courteously to king Henry.)

We have heard you are a man capable of debating and that you dare stand up to the church.

Bruno Someone has to, since the church is afflicted by ancient paganism.

Henry All the world knows that. But not everyone dares to stand up to the church. They fear its authority and stakes.

Bruno If you know you are right, the superstition of the church will have no power over you even when when it tries to scare you with the stake.

Henry You are a brave man. But you would never dare to stand up to my mother.

Bruno (smiles) Is she so scary?

Henry (smiles) You can't guess. She is the most catholic person in the world.

Bruno A dangerous combination. May France fear the worst, if its king is ruled by a catholic mother.

Henry We know her. I don't think we therefore have to fear her, since we keep her at a safe distance. She has done far too much damage to the country for anyone to would let her in any more.

Bruno My king, let's consequently leave your mother alone.

Henry You are wise. What do you have against the church?

Bruno Its greatest superstition is astronomic.

Henry You mean that bother about Copernicus?

Bruno Exactly. Copernicus knew he was dying and therefore dared to publish his findings in time for them to reach out to the world when he was out of reach from the witch hunts of the inquisition.

Henry You mean Copernicus was right and the church wrong?

Bruno Of course.

Henry What do you mean by 'of course'? What evidence do you have? How could you see that the earth is revolving around the sun and not the sun around the earth?

Bruno You only need to use your eyesight. We have astronomical observations since the beginning of time. They all indicate the same thing, and only idiots would disregard their evidence.

Henry Which is?

Bruno Your majesty, you are of course familiar with the phenomenon that the planets seem to move backwards?

Henry I know about this phenomenon. Periodically the planets seem to go backwards at least once a year. Such a period could last for a few weeks or several months.

Bruno Isn't the world agreed today that the earth is round, no matter how strongly and long the church objected against this? Hasn't even the church given up on this point?

Henry Yes, even the church has been obliged to accept that the earth is round.

Bruno So the earth is a planet like the other planets?

Henrik Yes. It is generally agreed.

Bruno How could then a planet, an enormous heavenly round body like the earth, then suddenly make a halt in the sky and change direction to go backwards, unless it is organic and leads a life of its own?

Henry That's the very problem. No one can explain this. All are agreed that the planets are enormous massive globes like the earth, wherefore they impossibly could arrest themselves in the sky and move backwards. Still this is what they are doing.

Bruno Copernicus has explained the problem, and every scientist agrees with him.

Henry Tell me.

Bruno It's impossible to explain if you assume the sun and planets are orbiting the earth. But if the earth and planets are orbiting the sun it is quite explainable.

Henry Is it?

Bruno The planets are always at their largest and clearest when they retrograde, that is seem to move backwards. That's because they are then at their closest to the earth. A planet like Venus is then between the earth and the sun, why it seems to retrograde in relation to the sun, like this. (*demonstrates on a slate or something*) The earth and Venus move in the same direction, but against the sun Venus then seems to move backwards while the sun stands still. That's the only explanation. Also the other planets are at their greatest and clearest when they are closest to the earth, which then is between them and the sun. Therefore they always retrograde when they pass their opposition to the sun, like this. (*demonstrates*) It couldn't be simpler, could it? It's the only reasonable and logical explanation. The planets cannot as heavy massive globes change their direction by themselves. We know they are moving, so they cannot stop. So they must constantly be moving forward, and only if the earth also orbits the sun the movements of the other planets can be explained.

Henry What about the moon then?

Bruno Quite right. It never retrogrades, so it must be revolving around the earth. It is the only planet that actually orbits the earth and that at a much shorter

distance than the other planets move around the sun. Therefore it appears as large as the sun although the sun probably is much larger than any planet and the moon much smaller than any planet.

Henry (to Castelnau, amazed) I actually think we at last have an astronomical expert here that we could believe in.

Castelnau That's what I mean.

Henry So the church has been wrong for fifteen hundred years?

Bruno Completely.

Henry And only Copernicus and master Bruno are right, who are anything but banished and excommunicated as heretics but risk becoming so. Do you know, master Bruno, that they are discussing in the Vatican to ban Copernicus' writings?

Bruno Unfortunately the Vatican has the bad habit to burn books and people although there is hardly anything more senseless in man.

Henry And you are not afraid?

Bruno Sooner or later the Vatican has to come to its senses and accept it has been wrong.

Henry And if it doesn't as long as we live?

Bruno Then it must do so after our deaths if not sooner.

Henrik And if it burns us for that matter?

Bruno (smiles) Your majesty, you hardly run that danger, and I am not afraid of it.

Henry No, since you left Italy and the church tentacles behind and are relatively safe north of the Alps, just like Luther, who for that very reason refused to ever go south of the Alps. But the catholic church is still potent here in France.

Bruno But you stand above it.

Henry But I am a catholic.

Bruno But there is no inquisition here.

Henry No, and there never will be. I suspect that your predecessor as a free-thinker Leonardo da Vinci had tendencies in the same direction and that he therefore left Italy to find a safe haven in the more liberal court of France. But he was wise, for he did not publish his discoveries. He documented and preserved them but only in a code that no one could understand, and it might take perhaps two hundred years before anyone does. He was cautious. You are not.

Bruno I consider it cowardly to be cautious.

Henry But he could carry it through.

Bruno So could I so far.

Henry Of course, master Bruno, it is to the interest of the whole learned world that you continue to manage. I would like to know more, though, about your criticism of the church, so that I could correctly evaluate how dangerous you really are to it. They tell me you have rejected the holy trinity. Is that correct?

Bruno Your majesty, you must agree that this issue is about what is obvious. The Bible expressly tell us that God is only one. How could God then become three? Does he separate into three? The second divine being is supposed to be God's Son. Has God then committed adultery with virgin Mary to beget a son? Has there ever

been a mother who was a virgin? And how could the virgin Mary in that way remain a virgin? You have to admit that it is rather absurd.

Henry Yes, my friend, I admit it is absurd, and everyone must admit it who can think at all. That's our danger. We think for ourselves. We must not do that according to the church, which demands of humanity that everyone must think like the church want us to think no matter how absurd it is. Yes, I admit it is absurd. So you wish to scrap the entire church. What will you set up instead? The God of the Jews? Erasmus had some ideas in that direction. Or the God of the muslims? They claim to have the same god as the Jews but a more sacred one standing above the Hebrew God of a more actual date and since Mahomet was a more sacred prophet than Jesus. Or no god at all? Explain your alternative, if you have any.

Bruno Your majesty, if you give allowance for my boldness, I would in the name of reason reject all ideas of a personal and allpowerful God. In its stead I would introduce an all encompassing divinity inherent in all life comprising all the universe, all heavenly bodies and everything that exists. I would like to equal God with the universe.

Henry Then you are at least no atheist. Do you mean then, if God is life and consistent with the whole universe, that all the universe is something organic?

Bruno Yes, that is what I mean.

Henry It's a completely new and unique thought

Bruno Not at all. Plato was of the same idea.

Henry Yes, but you have developed it in a sharper direction. Plato admitted divinities in various forms, but you reject all other forms of divinity than the wholeness, comprising everything. That is rather radical.

Bruno Yes.

Henry No wonder the church regards you as its greatest threat since Martin Luther. Is then the entire church just a human superstition and absurdity?

Bruno Of course there is much sense and soul in the Church. I was a Dominican myself and a part of me still is. I never renounced my faith or order – they did expel me themselves and without proper reason. Like Erasmus I wished to reform the church from the inside, but the church forbade me to associate with the books of Erasmus, the wisest in the world. I also read the books of Nicholas Copernicus and found that he was right and the church wrong, which I have maintained to the church since then, since that is actually the case. That does not make me an enemy of the church. It just has to be taken out of its delusions.

Henry What other illusions?

Bruno The idea of original sin, which is just a means for the church to confirm its power and control of every single individual from the moment of baptism and on. The doctrine of hell, which is just a way for the church to confirm its power by means of terror. The idea of the devil, which is just humbug, since Satan originally was just an ordinary idol. There are many such ridiculous notions of the church which could be discarded directly as mere superstition and lies.

Henry What is right then in the church, since you are also ready to defend it?

Bruno Its knowledge and traditions, its compassion above all. Christianity is the religion of love and the only religion that ever advocated love as the highest commandment. I will remain faithful until death to the religion of love. Unfortunately the religion of love derailed when the church was turned into a political power and it altered its destination from the dissemination of love to the practice of political power.

Henry I can agree that this is the main problem of the church. I will always remain as faithful to her as you. You mentioned the soul. So you accept that man by his soul has eternal life?

Bruno To the highest degree.

Henry But you refute the doctrine that man will rise again on doomsday in his physical form?

Bruno Yes, this doctrine is an absurdity and misunderstanding. The first Christians believed in the immortality of the soul in the same way as the Asians do, that the soul lives and carries on wandering from body to body. Even Pythagoras and his followers regarded the transmigration of souls as something self-evident.

Henry That we do not die with our body but are reborn in another body?

Bruno Yes.

Henry This is a difficult and complicated issue which offers many unsolvable technical problems.

Bruno Life after death offers very different dimensions of life than those we know by our physical senses.

Henry Yes, all this is difficult and can never be fully explained in terms of intelligible language. Let's leave death aside. All that you have said so far does not put you in any doubtful position from my or any reasonable man's point of view, and neither can I understand that the church could in any way brand you as any dangerous enemy. But what about prayers? Why do you discard prayers?

Bruno Your majesty, if we once have accepted being only petty particles in the all comprising divine unity of the universe, of what consequence could then the personal vain thoughts of a lonesome individual possibly be? You pray for having your problems solved, you pray for the death of your enemies, you pray for the end of war and famine and the plague, but how could you by the power of your thought affect the universe? I suggest, that prayers presume an allpowerful God. If we reject the idea of an allpowerful God and replace him with an all comprising impersonal universal divinity, then the most sacred and sincere prayers in the world could no longer be relevant or be regarded as rational.

Henry Here our views differ, Bruno, and on this issue the church will never be able to accept you. What would life be without the personal initiative and the divine importance of the human thought? It would be worthless, Bruno, completely without any meaning, and everything would be just dead matter. It doesn't work, Bruno. Not even the most liberal church in the world could accept this.

Bruno It's an inevitable consequence of the pantheistic view of life and the world.

Henry Only on this point, Bruno, I cannot answer for your life, and with such an attitude on your side I can't protect you against the catholic church even here in France, since it will bring even all protestants and huguenots against you. My advice to you is to find security in England. Only there I think you could find listeners even to such a total bankruptcy of faith. Master Castelnau, I ask you to follow master Bruno here to England and to keep him there as long as possible at the very safest possible distance from the church that he could find anywhere in the world.

Castelnau You will find many friends in England, master Bruno.

Bruno But I don't know the language.

Castelnau They know Latin, at least some of them.

Henry That's the best thing I can do for you, Bruno. Make yourself safe in England. Not even I can ensure your safety here. That's all. You may go.

Bruno (bows) I hope to see your majesty again before I leave.

Henry Of course, as long as you just leave. (*whisks him away. Bruno gets the hint and leaves.*)

Castelnau Did you take offence by his free thinking, your majesty?

Henry Not in the least, but he knows no limits. He is not afraid of anything. He will never realize what dangers he actually exposes himself to. He will say anything and ignore any consequences as long as he knows he is right. Luther did that too, but the world laughed at Luther and his vanity. No one will ever be able to laugh at Bruno, for he is serious and consistent. He is dangerous, Castelnau, since he knows no fear and is an incurable lecturer who has authority and is prepared to bring the entire church to its collapse by his talk.

Castelnau Are you afraid yourself or just for his sake?

Henry Only for his sake, but I am as scared to death for his sake as he himself isn't afraid at all. I can only see any safety for him in England or Germany. You are responsible for his security in England, Castelnau. I entrust him to your care.

Castelnau I will take care of him, your majesty.

Henry Do so, and never let him out of your sight. (*Castelnau bows and departs.*)

Poor Bruno. I fear a worse destiny for you than what has happened to anyone after Jesus Christ.

Scene 2. London 1584.

The court of Queen Elizabeth.

Castelnau Your most gracious majesty, I have the great honour to present to you the great philosopher from Naples, Giordano Bruno. (*bows deeply*)

Elizabeth You are welcome to England, good philosopher, although you refuse to learn English.

Bruno On that day when as many speak English as they today master Italian, Spanish and Latin, your majesty, even I will learn English.

Elizabeth That day will come, good philosopher.

Castelnau We have the great honour to be able to enjoy master Bruno's good education in Italian, which many Englishmen enthusiastically are sharing.

Elizabeth Master Bruno, expound your philosophy. Why have you made the catholic church your enemy?

Bruno I have not made my church my enemy. Frightened priests in Rome have made themselves my enemy, and I don't regard them as the church.

Elizabeth What is it the church can't accept in your teachings?

Bruno That I defend Copernicus.

Elizabeth Is Copernicus right then in claiming that the earth circulates the sun and not the contrary?

Bruno Definitely.

Elizabeth So you suggest that neither the planets nor the stars are circulating the earth?

Bruno We sometimes observe how the planets seem to move backwards. This proves they are circulating the sun and not the earth.

Elizabeth But the stars never move backwards.

Bruno No, because they are just other suns like the sun.

Elizabeth So the universe is full of suns? The sun is not the only sun in the universe?

Bruno Each star is a sun by itself and much greater than our sun but much farther away.

Elizabeth And still you maintain that cosmos is one single universal soul governed by the divine order of reason?

Bruno Yes. Everything is connected. Destiny, matter, the world soul, all is one, governed by the divine order of reason.

Elizabeth Why can't the church accept that?

Bruno Because the church is not reasonable.

Elizabeth Sir Philip Sidney, do you mean that master Giordano Bruno here is a philosopher or a poet?

Sidney A poet is a philosopher, your majesty.

Elizabeth Yes, but master Bruno calls himself a scientist and a philosopher. Can a scientist then be a poet?

Sidney Yes, if he by his words intends to turn the church upside down.

Elizabeth You should remain in England, master Bruno. You are not safe on the continent.

Bruno Sir Thomas More was not safe even in England.

Elizabeth You will then be his like and become a martyr?

Bruno Your majesty, I only live for my love. For her I would sacrifice anything and even my life. Her name is Truth. If the church is stupid enough to claim that Copernicus is wrong without evidence, the church is to be pitied and not I.

Elizabeth You are a poet.

Sidney (to young Marlowe) Kit, learn from the example of this man.

Marlowe Only if he is dramatic enough.

Bruno (kneels) If I were a poet, your majesty, I would remain here in England and learn English just to please you. Unfortunately my common sense and science force me back to the continent, where I in Paris will try to reconcile myself with the church. For being born an Italian I belong to my church and feel responsibility for her. Therefore I regard it as my duty to try to redeem her to common sense.

Elizabeth You are naïve.

Bruno No, an idealist.

Elizabeth That's the same thing.

Bruno No, a realistic idealist is never naïve.

Elizabeth Come back to Westminster when you are finished with the church and Paris. I fear that the continent with all its church quarrels is a hopeless case. But here you will always find listeners.

Bruno Your paragon is the highest in the world, your majesty.

Elizabeth Don't flatter me. I am just a woman.

Bruno Your very humility honours England more than the church does the continent.

Elizabeth We shall never forget you, master Bruno.

Bruno That is mutual. (*bows one last time and leaves.*)

Elizabeth (to Castelnau) Will he be well taken care of in Paris?

Castelnau By the French certainly but hardly by the church.

Elizabeth Then we will just have to hope that he will return alive.

Castelnau Yes, your majesty.

Scene 3.

Sir Fulke My friends, we are gathered here today because of our sincere concern for our learned guest master Giordano Bruno's decision to return to the continent, where all perils expect him that are completely missing here. Is it really an irrevocable decision of yours, master Bruno?

Bruno My friends, it is no exaggeration when I confess, that I found better, more honest and sincere friends here in this wild and alien country than anywhere else in the world. You are the first people I ever knew who honestly wished me well. You cannot guess how grateful I am for this. The life of an exile is a constant melancholy tragedy that never ceases to grow worse, since he can never find any comfort for what he has lost for which he has no hope of ever retrieving. He keeps dreaming every day and night of reconciliation and a return home with all conflicts buried, to enable him to enjoy a human and decent life again. Therefore it is my life's most vital concern to reconcile myself with the church. Somehow I must placate her and make her accept me as a Dominican friar again. Here in your free England there is not this catholic church that banished me for no good reason. Therefore I must leave you to regain contact with my mother, my church and its home country, where I was born and belong.

Sidney You are risking your life, Giordano.

Bruno Sir Philip, don't you think I know? But would you yourself ever flinch for a life danger if it was your duty and destiny to face it?

Sidney No, never.

Bruno We understand each other.

Harriot As we now evidently have the chance to speak with master Bruno one last time, I find it urgent that we somehow confirm this historical moment and take care of it by establishing some sort of covenant for safeguarding the right of free individuals to think freely by themselves, like we have learned to do under the fantastic inspiration and tutorship of master Bruno.

Raleigh Right, master Harriot. Master Bruno, you owe us a legacy and testament in the form of directions for your doctrine, so that we could maintain it, develop it and carry it further.

Bruno You all know the views I advocate.

Harriot We all accepted the world view of Copernicus. We refute all the superstitions and distracted dogma of the catholic church. What else?

Bruno I must make it clear that I in no way wish to become a symbol for any kind of atheism.

Sidney Master Bruno, above all you are a paragon to all the world for common sense.

Bruno But don't forget that in my heart and soul I am the most religious of all. That I reject all the dogma of Christianity does not mean that I reject the church and its love. I only wish to replace its dogma with common sense and pantheism.

Sir Fulke Please explain your pantheism once more, master Bruno.

Bruno I will be glad to. I consider all life divine. God is in all living things, and by all living things I also mean all that seems to be dead in the universe. Everything is life and even all things dead, for everything is in perpetual movement. Therefore it is the first and greatest duty to respect life in all its forms, for respect of life is respect of God. Therefore all violence and killing must be condemnable and forbidden for every living being.

Sidney May we then not go to war?

Bruno If you carry some responsibility in your state, it is your duty to go to war if the defence of the country demands it. Even the stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius, one of the greatest pacifists and philosophers ever, went to war for the defence of Rome when he had to.

Marlowe You mean that God and religion is love. Is anything then forbidden in love?

Bruno Young master Marlowe, you are the youngest of my students here and the most promising. What do you mean? They say that, in war and love everything is permitted. What could then possibly be forbidden in love, even if you have to have scruples in war?

Marlowe The Greek love is forbidden in our country. Is that right or wrong?

Bruno You mean platonic love in physical form.

Marlowe It has occurred mainly in Italy that homosexuality has been prosecuted, for which above all master Leonardo da Vinci had to suffer much unpleasantness.

Bruno Yes, he was prosecuted, but the prosecution was cancelled. He was free in his love as long as he lived, and nothing could infringe on it whatever the outlets of it. It is vital to point out though, that he was discreet.

Marlowe So you mean that homosexuality is allowable if it is practised discreetly?

Bruno Like all forms of love. The necessity of discretion belongs to the very essence of love, if its vitally important intimacy could exist and be maintained at all.

Sidney Therefore no one has ever known if our glorious Queen ever had a lover or not, since she always managed that part of her life with perfect secrecy.

Sir Fulke Then we come to another issue, namely the very discretion. You could almost say that you among us, master Bruno, has created a new religion consisting of freedom of conscience, thought and the unlimited right of common sense to be able to prevail. But like you mentioned even the greatest master of all Leonardo da Vinci, had to observe strict secrecy to protect his historic findings, so vitally important to all humanity. You were yourself brought up in the hermetic school, which like the Pythagorean was hermetically closed. I find it paramount that we safeguard what we have to protect in the form of freedom of thought and conscience and the common sense of pantheism by strict secrecy concerning everything we hold sacred. But you, dear friend master Bruno, are about to throw the secret existence of your safety and spiritual freedom over, by plunging yourself into the lion's gap of Europe again and even look up the snakepit of the catholic church yourself, as you say, to reconcile yourself with it. I find this worrying, since you can hardly ever expect any reconciliation with poisonous snakes.

Bruno The church consists only of people, Sir Fulke.

Sir Fulke People with power are always a deadly menace to people without power.

Raleigh That's why we are here today, since we all share Sir Fulke's concerns.

Bacon Gentlemen, master Bruno has made his decision to return to the continent, and there is nothing we can do to keep him away from that intention. If it is his duty and destiny to reconcile himself with the impossible papist church by any means, no one has any right to even question the matter. What we can do, though, as Sir Fulke says, is to ensure our own freedom of conscience, thought and the common sense of science by safeguarding it. Even here in England there are inquisitors, who in the name of protestantism persecute witches and execute innocent preachers for alleged heresy. This must not happen to anyone of us who found it worth to follow the pantheism and common sense of Giordano Bruno. Let us therefore form a sacred brotherhood and protect ourselves chiefly by swearing never to divulge our secrets to any outsider.

Raleigh You mean that only those who initiated in our brotherhood have the right to know our values?

Bacon It's the only way to protect ourselves against envious persecutors.

Sir Fulke Francis Bacon is right.

Sidney Let us then immediately proceed and swear the oath never to divulge to outsiders what we here now have agreed on, namely to confess ourselves to master Giordano Bruno's new doctrine, which sanctions freedom of conscience and thought and the unlimited freedom of the common sense to further its own right of imposition by scientific objectivity above all.

Bruno If you keep God and religion out of it, nothing can harm you. Only by absolute tolerance and freedom from dogma can any religion last at all.

Sidney Our master has spoken.

Sir Fulke I beseech you once more not to return to the continent.

Bruno Thanks for your kindness, Sir Fulke. I shall never forget you.

Harriot This has been a historical moment.

Raleigh It's only a beginning. From now on nothing can stop us.

Bruno Quite right, Sir Walter Raleigh. Nothing can ever put a stop to common sense, if only it keeps itself safe by relevant discipline.

Bacon It will be our prime concern to maintain this discipline.

Sir Fulke So be our covenant established. We all share the same responsibility. May we never fail in it.

Harriot We must all swear to this.

Raleigh We swear.

Sir Fulke By the eternal holiness of our most venerated Dominican friar.

Marlowe You are more sacred than the entire church, master Bruno.

Bruno My young friend, to the degree that anyone ever was holy in the church, the entire church is equally holy whether it is catholic or protestant or whatever. Holiness is only something human, and all the church consists only of humans.

Sidney Why does it then have to deteriorate into abuse of power and tyranny?

Bruno A most relevant issue, my dear friend. I consider all power and abuse of power as something of a mental disorder which demands an eternal crusade to cure the world from.

Bacon That will perhaps be the mission of our covenant.

Raleigh We could at least start trying.

Harriot It will be difficult if we have to stay isolated at the same time.

Marlowe This covenant seems rather like immuring ourselves to safeguard our freedom.

Bacon That's why it's also called freemasonry.

Sir Fulke Everything in life is a paradox. I think though that we unfortunately, considering all the power abuse and evil of the world that we have no other choice than to actually immerse ourselves to at all be able to carry on our freedom. Perhaps one day in the future it will be embraced and a possibility for everyone.

Bruno Unfortunately I don't think it will ever reach more than a happy few chosen and enlightened ones. The greater is their responsibility for the whole world.

Sidney You keep returning to the question of responsibility.

Bruno There is no higher responsibility than that of knowledge. The greater the knowledge, the greater the responsibility.

Sidney Sometimes you sound exactly like old John Dee.

Bruno He is maybe the wisest man of your country. Stick to him and keep him well for your own sake.

Bacon At least there is no abuse of power with him, since he seems to have ensured his own poverty for the rest of his life.

Bruno Poverty is perhaps the best protection against corruption and the mundane temptations to abuse of power.

Sir Fulke You are so wise, master Bruno, that we almost refuse to let you go, since separating from you appears constantly more difficult and impossible the more we get to know you.

Bruno And would I then remain here and accept your seclusion? My friends, with all respect for your wise policy of immuring yourselves in your freedom, but it is cowardly. You have to stand for what you are and what you are good for. I regard your choice of carefully acting in concealment as a manifestation of your foggy and rainy England and the dark and frightened mentality your hard weather must bring with the most gruesome winter depressions in the world, but for me as an Italian it is impossible to accept such a fear of shadows. You may be certain, that wherever I appear on the continent I will never hold back anything of my conviction or retract any word. Here we have Jesus himself as a paragon example, who preached openly and put himself at everyone's disposal with his wisdom in Jerusalem. That they crucified him for that, have those responsible ever since then had to pay for: the historical denunciation of history for that injustice must be uniform forever. If anyone wishes to condemn me for the same thing it's on his responsibility, and he shall answer for it to eternity. It scares me off as little as it scared off Jesus.

Marlowe Thus speaks the bravest man in the world.

Raleigh You will be our leading paragon example, master Bruno.

Bacon England is still not the continent and least of all Italy, and we have the right to keep on our guard against all eventualities.

Bruno Be as cautious as you like. I am just making my own position clear.

Sir Fulke We respect you for that now and for always, master Bruno. If you ever find yourself in a moment of trial, then consider, that we will always stand on your side against the ignorant part of the world.

Bruno My friends, I am touched by your faithfulness. You will always be with me in my prayers. But these serious conversations on even Ash Wednesday have been quite a strain for my soul. I am tired, and considering my difficult departure and my impending journey, I must ask your allowance for me to retire. I beg your forgiveness, but my energy is not enough for any more emotional efforts at the moment. *(rises)*

Sir Fulke Of course you have our complete understanding. It is perhaps convenient for all of us now to conclude this remarkable conference at this moment. I suggest that we all retire for proper reflection and afterthought.

Harriot We shall never forget this historical moment, master Bruno.

(They all break it up, but before leaving everyone shakes hands with each other, as if to confirm the communion.)

Act IV scene 1. The Cardinal assembly in Rome.

cardinal 1 Gentlemen, this will not do.

cardinal 2 (to another) He has a bad stomach again.

cardinal 1 Not at all. I am serious.

cardinal 3 What is it now? Business is running smoothly, and all inquisitors are happy as they may execute whoever they fancy.

cardinal 1 But a few are still on the loose and preaching at random.

cardinal 4 Don't remind us again of the miserable lutherans.

cardinal 2 Or the clavinists. Who are worse?

cardinal 4 The huguenots.

cardinal 1 Gentlemen, to the point! Our problem is a certain previously Dominican by the name of Giordano Bruno, who is the only one in the world today who dares to spread the Copernican heresy of a heliocentric view of the universe!

The cardinals (all are terrified) O horror!

cardinal 4 The worst nightmare of all!

cardinal 3 Can no one just dispose of him? What do we have Jesuits for?

cardinal 2 All Europe is swarming with assassins. Could none of them manage a simple unprotected Dominican?

cardinal 1 It's not so easy, as he is protected by every wayward princely court north of the Alps, who would do anything to rebel against the Vatican.

cardinal 5 I think we are all here perfectly agreed on that the least waiver of our absolute monopoly of power concerning the welfare of all humanity is not acceptable under any circumstances.

cardinals (all, mumbling) Of course. That's obvious.

cardinal 1 That's what I mean. We have to lock up that Dominican's mouth. The problem is that we can reach him as little as we could reach Luther, since such infernal heretics refuse to present themselves in Rome.

cardinal Saluzzo Gentlemen, I think we have found a solution to the problem.

cardinal 2 (to another) Cardinal Saluzzo can resolve anything. He is a Venetian.

cardinal 4 No one can solve the problem with the heliocentric world view of Copernicus.

cardinal 2 This is just about one fallen Dominican.

cardinal 1 What is then your solution to the problem, cardinal Saluzzo?

Saluzzo I have a young nobleman waiting outside who eventually could provide a solution.

cardinal 1 What are you waiting for? Show him in!

Saluzzo (to an usher) Would you please be so kind as to enter the nobleman waiting outside.

(The door is opened, and Giovanni Mocenigo is shown in.)

Gentlemen, allow me to introduce the well born Giovanni Mocenigo.

Mocenigo At your service and that of the church, gentlemen. *(bows and courtseys with his plumed hat.)*

cardinal 1 What can you do for us?

Saluzzo Our servant here is anxious to have Giordano Bruno as his teacher and lecturer to Venice and at the university of Padua.

Mocenigo His advanced knowledge and new theories are of great interest to the students of Venice and Padua. I have sent him an invitation.

cardinal 3 Has he replied?

Mocenigo He has not declined. He would like to get home to Italy, since he is cold north of the Alps.

cardinal 1 So he is interested?

Mocenigo Yes, between the lines I discern a certain interest of his to get home to Italy.

Saluzzo Do you realize what this means, gentlemen? As a teacher in Venice Giordano Bruno would feel free to lecture about whatever he would choose as we at the same time could keep an eye on him. We could get him within our grasp without any effort.

cardinal 3 Does he suspect no entrapment then?

cardinal 1 He must not suspect anything. He must be made to feel completely safe. Or else we will never get any hold of him again.

Saluzzo Exactly, cardinal Bellarmine. He must not suspect anything. He is invited as a guest and friend with our respected noble here and will be under his unreserved protection. He will carefully examine Bruno and investigate his doctrine and determine if it is really dangerous and heretic enough to be prosecuted. Only if and when that becomes inevitable we shall strike.

Mocenigo I assure you, gentlemen, that I will only give you Bruno if I really find him a potential danger to the church and humanity. If he only lectures objectively on science you will never get any power over him.

cardinal 3 It's worth trying.

cardinal 1 If he just comes to Italy I am sure we will get him, the way he so boldly preaches his hopeless heresies.

Mocenigo It is not so certain he will air the same heresies here, as we have no free-thinking protestants.

cardinal 1 We shall see.

Saluzzo With your gracious permissison, gentlemen, we will continue working on our prodigal son Bruno for his return home to the abandoned house of his church.

cardinal 1 Good luck, cardinal Saluzzo. If we just get him here we might accomplish a permanent solution to the problem of Copernicus.

cardinal 3 You have to succeed!

Saluzzo I am aware of the urgency of the operation. It is my conviction, though, that we cannot fail. *(the cardinals mumble some acclamation)*

Come, my noble Mocenigo. Let's proceed on our quest. (*takes him around his shoulder and walks out with him.*)

cardinal 1 I think we at last are on our way to solve the most difficult problem of our age.

cardinal 2 Copernicus or Bruno?

cardinal 1 Both. If we could just silence Bruno, the sun of Copernicus will go out forever, since Bruno is the only one who ever dared to take Copernicus seriously.

Scene 2. The Prague court, 1588.

Rudolf II Master Bruno, no guest in the world could honour us more than you, since we heard so much about you and perhaps understand you better than all the bellicose Europe.

Bruno I always felt well received in protestant cities.

Rudolf But Prague is also catholic and Jewish. Here if anywhere there is perfect tolerance. We tolerate the church, we tolerate the protestants, we tolerate the Jews, and we allow those three to have their own quarrels in peace without interfering.

Bruno Your policy is sympathetic but vulnerable.

Rudolf Now you sound like Rabbi Löb. He is also of the idea that good will easily could get stabbed in the back. Well, if Europe wants to stab us in the back, may the consequences strike Europe. I believe more in providence.

Rabbi Löb Herr Bruno, it is told that you expressed yourself in Wittenberg very controversially and called Jesus of Nazareth a magician and impostor. Is this true?

Bruno Rabbi, I respect your Jewish religion as much as I respect Jesus and my own church. But I could not possibly regard Jesus the Jew as anything more than just a man.

Löb That's exactly what I wished to know. You are brave, herr Bruno. The entire church is eager to have you crucified.

Bruno If I will be crucified by the church it will hardly benefit the church. If I will be crucified for the truth, though, it will only benefit the truth.

Rudolf Master Bruno, we don't want to have you crucified. Please remain here.

Bruno Unfortunately I have a promising invitation to Venice as a professor in Venice and Padua. I can't turn such an offer down.

Rudolf You will never be safe in Italy.

Bruno Venice is a free republic which can't be reached by the church autocracy.

Löb But you could be betrayed, like Jesus by Judas.

Bruno I know no traitor, and no traitor knows me.

Rudolf Who invited you?

Bruno The noble Giovanni Mocenigo on recommendation by Tommaso Campanella.

Rudolf Your colleague in Frankfurt?

Bruno And my countryman.

Rudolf And you believe you could trust your countrymen?
Bruno Yes, if they like me are in the service of knowledge and erudition.
Rudolf They say you have a prominent sharer of your views in Pisa called Galileo Galilei.
Bruno Never heard of him.
Rudolf Like us he believes more in Copernicus than in the church.
Bruno Then I am not alone.
Rudolf We only ask you, master Bruno, to take well care of yourself. The world cannot afford losing men like you.
Bruno Still it must lose all of us. But Prague will remain.
Rudolf Thank you, master Bruno.
(Bruno bows to the court, Rabbi Löb at the king's side, and takes his leave.)

Scene 3. Venice 1592.

Galilei But Giodano, how do you dare take such risks?
Bruno Italy is my home country. I longed for home. What Italian could at length stand the cold, the darkness and the spiritual poverty north of the Alps? Not I anyway.
Galilei But you have enemies in all Italy and wherever in the world where there is a catholic church!
Bruno I trust the free republic of Venice and my luck. No one has been able to touch me so far, not even the infected royal house of the catholic intrigues of Paris.
Galilei I just wish you could be aware of the risks.
Bruno (puts his hand on his shoulder) Galileo, I have my friends, and I trust them. The world is better today than fifty years ago. The inquisition was at it its worst thirty years ago, and since then hope and freedom have gained strength. The Vatican may never rule over Venice.
Galilei Still I advise you to be careful.
Bruno Thanks for your warning. I do take care. That is why I am here. I take no risks. I am here by the invitation of senator Mocenigo and stand directly under his protection, and he has every interest himself in my protection since he is eager for my knowledge.
Galilei He is not trying to ensnare you by trying to make you express heretic views on the church?
Bruno I am careful about avoiding that. It's my memorizing science that interests him. Here he is now.
Mocenigo (enters) Gentlemen, it gives me pleasure to see you together, the most prominent of our contemporary scientists. You show us the way into the future.
Galilei Lord senator, we are grateful for your support. I have understood that it is chiefly master Bruno's science of memorizing that is of interest to you.

Mocenigo It could be of vital importance to the entire world. Who does not wish to improve mentally? Who doesn't wish to do without dark broodings, weighing depressions, unvoluntary thoughts that just keeps going round and around all the time, memory losses and lacks of concentration? Don't we all wish to be quick of thought and brilliant like master Bruno? Who would not yearn for his intelligence and clearsightedness who has experienced him?

Bruno I teach what I can, senator Mocenigo, but there are certain things in the human mind that even I cannot control.

Mocenigo Your humility is false, Giordano, and I can't understand your declining to come and live with me. You would get it much better there, much warmer and more comfortable, better meals and a larger apartment with service and hot water. What are you really suspecting of me?

Bruno Lord senator, with all respect, but I am here to mind my duties as a teacher, which I can do best as a free and independent man. I don't want to be a load to your household or get bound in obligations to you or any other individual. I belong to the world, not to you.

Mocenigo Consider though the major advantages you would enjoy with me. No expenses, only comfort, my friendship, private tutorship in intimate conversation and absolute security.

Galilei (cautiously, aside to Bruno) Don't trust him.

Bruno Galileo, I will trust anyone until he betrays me. So far no one has betrayed me.

Galilei (aside back) The brothers are expecting you tonight.

Bruno I will join you. (*Galilei leaves.*)

Mocenigo Professor Galilei is far too suspicious.

Bruno He has lived in the country longer than I and knows the rules of the game better than I. He can handle the game. I don't know enough of it yet.

Mocenigo There is nothing to know. It's just to follow and enjoy, for life is first of all a joy where all worries are unnecessary. The evil of life is created by yourself. Life in itself is only good.

Bruno So far I can agree with you.

Mocenigo Come and live with me. I long for your private tutorage.

Bruno I will consider it.

Mocenigo Your salary will be generous.

Bruno It could only be possible if it would gain my entire teaching activity.

Mocenigo I will make sure it does. (*puts his arm around him. They walk out together.*)

Scene 4. Accademia degli Uranici.

Ciotto I don't like it. He takes too great risks.

Paolo Sarpi He knows what he is doing, and he is right. His policy is wise. As long as he sticks to exclusively scientific subjects in his teachings, no fanatic can get at him.

Ciotto But he has moved home to senator Mocenigo, who is an instrument of the Vatican!

Sarpi Is he? We don't know that. Mocenigo has never compromised himself no matter how doubtful he is in his vacillations. To stand under the protection of a senator is besides an ideal position for Bruno, who thereby can work without restrictions as a teacher.

Herman Besler Master Bruno always keeps one way of escape open if need be and could at any moment find his escape back to Frankfurt, if it would get too hot here.

Ciotto I suggest that we can't be at ease until he does.

Sarpi Here he is now.

Besler Welcome, maestro!

Bruno Thank you.

Besler We were only waiting for you.

Ciotto Giordano, I shall be completely frank with you. None of us like that you have become a resident at senator Mocenigo's, an invidious and unreliable opportunist who is connected with the Vatican. Many regard him as the instrument of the Vatican in Venice.

Bruno He is the object of much slander but nothing of it can be proved. You must not trust rumours.

Ciotto I have heard myself that he only keeps you in his protection as long as he can get anything out of you. When he no longer gets anything for what he spends on you, he will hand you over to the inquisition.

Bruno He naturally told this to the helpers of the inquisition to keep them calm. He knows I can't lecture on occult subjects, and I told him so. Still he hasn't dropped me. His protection remains my best possible protection in Venice.

Sarpi That's good, Bruno. Carry on like that. As long as you don't tutor a traitor in forbidden subjects, he can never betray you.

Ciotto My apprehension is that Mocenigo just waits for you to give him forbidden teachings in order to be able to betray you.

Bruno You don't know him, Giovanni Battista. It's only out of personal interest he wants to get at our secret knowledge. If I would initiate him in it he would be overwhelmingly grateful. He would then never betray me. Only if I no longer would tempt him with any bait he might do it, but before that I would disappear.

Sarpi How would you sum up your secret knowledge, Bruno? You have been experimenting with alchemy and know more about the secret doctrine than anyone else, but what is actually the secret doctrine?

Bruno The secret about the secret doctrine is that it is not secret. It can't be avoided that it will become public and then will overcome the entire world and shatter the church. It's quite simply the evidence of a new physical world order based on facts instead of superstition, which the church has been irrational enough to use for its base.

Sarpi Was Jesus then just a fake, a magician, an ordinary man, not God's Son at all and the carnal son of Joseph of the house of David who had seduced the virgin Mary before she was properly married, or was she known by another so that Joseph married her to preserve her honour?

Bruno Now you enter purely human issues, Paolo, of which we will never obtain full clarity. Both James and Judas and Thomas Didymus, who really could have been Jesus' twin, are mentioned as actual brothers of Jesus. We know that the church scrapped much of the gospel texts when it was made a state church 1300 years ago and then adjusted the four canonical gospels to the onesided uniformity of the church. We shall never know what really was written in the gospels from the beginning, but perhaps some day alternative original texts will be discovered. The church has for certain based its position on the falsification of history and the adjustment of original texts. Its power is just humbug. The disclosure of this will become inevitable when science breaks through with a new explanation of the world based on facts and Nicholas Copernicus' heliocentric solar system. And that is not all. Every star we find in the sky is just another sun like our own and probably has other planets circling around it like our own sun, which means there should be life also on other planets. We are not at all unique. Man is not divine in any way. All her sanctity and divinity consist only of her life, and all life is as sacred as man, wherever in the universe you can find any life in any form. Our world is just a fleck of dust in our solar system, which just is a fleck of dust among other groups of stars in our universe, yes, less than a speck of dust, less than a drop of water in the sea, less than a vague moment of a thought in a dream. We are nothing in the universe. Life is all, and we are just a fleeting mote and vanishing refuse of it.

Sarpi And the church feels threatened by this.

Bruno The church fears this only because it doesn't understand what it is fearing in its ignorance.

Ciotto Are you lecturing on this in Padua?

Bruno Yes, and professor Galilei as well but secretly beside the curriculum. It's not included in the university courses, but we give other private lessons that are better frequented.

Ciotto Could you recognize spies of the church?

Bruno The church does not enter universities and thus does not know what happens outside the university. Only the students and those teachers who teach them know about it.

Besler I think we can take it easy about you, master Bruno.

Ciotto You should be aware, though, Giordano, that if you are arrested we will not be able to testify for you. You will be on your own in that case, and we will have to prioritize our own protection.

Bruno I have always been standing alone and managed well for that reason. That you must think of your own security in case of danger is a natural priority. In England they have developed a system of principles to safeguard individual freedom against violations.

Sarpi Is that what is called freemasonry?

Bruno Yes, it is a kind of immurement to secure freedom of thought, conscience and expression.

Ciotto Freedom of expression has always been impossible in Italy, and freedom of thought and conscience has only been able to exist under cover.

Bruno The church will one day be obliged to apologise for millennia of abuse of power, and then there will be freedom of expression even in Italy.

Besler The prophet has spoken.

Ciotto Are we satisfied? Can we feel safe although our master lives with a potential adder manipulated by the Vatican?

Sarpi It is best for maestro Bruno to himself consider his own security and what he is doing.

Ciotto Can we then rely on maestro Bruno's judgement?

Sarpi The only part we cannot trust is the Vatican.

Bruno Don't say so. One of the reasons for daring to come back was that we had a new pope in Clemens VIII. The previous cardinal Aldobrandini was famous for his humanity and tolerance, and now he is the pope. I intend to dedicate my major work to him and thereby through him try to bring the church to reason. If the church will accept the progress of science it will no longer have anything to fear from science.

Sarpi May you succeed, Bruno.

Bruno I intend to succeed. It is only a question of time.

Ciotto Five years or five centuries? That is the question. Time works for you, Bruno, and you will always have your faithful publishers.

Bruno Thank you, Giovanni Battista.

(They carry on.)

Scene 5. In the Mocenigo palace.

(Mocenigo with some priests.)

Mocenigo Bruno is on his way. I ask you, gentlemen, to hide here and listen to our conversation, so you will understand the situation.

priest 1 Shall we then eavesdrop like spies?

priest 2 Do we have any choice? We must get at him! We have no witnesses apart from ourselves!

priest 1 Very well then. Let's hide.

Mocenigo (Bruno's arrival is heard) Hurry! (hides them in a closet. The audience sees them huddling and exchanging comments in there.)

(enter Bruno)

Mocenigo You are late today, my friend.

Bruno Much ado today. The students need their teacher.

Mocenigo You are doing everything for your students but neglecting me, your friend and mentor.

Bruno I am sorry, Mocenigo, but I do what I can for you.

Mocenigo But you don't give me the education I want.

Bruno You are asking of me the impossible. I can't lecture on subjects that I don't master.

Mocenigo But I mean that you do master them. Everyone knows you are experimenting with alchemi and necromancy.

Bruno Not more than as a curious amateur. You know that such studies are forbidden even in Venice.

Mocenigo Still everyone is engaged with them.

Bruno Not I.

Mocenigo Everyone knows that you have been and know much about it.

Bruno No one knows anything about it. The philosophers' stone has been searched for through millennia, but no one has found it. There is some legend behind it which no one has been able to interpret and which probably has been misinterpreted for centuries. I don't think you can make gold by artificial means, and if it is possible, that science is so far beyond our reach. Concerning remote viewing and necromancy, that has always involved mortal danger and even greater perils.

Mocenigo What more can you risk than life?

Bruno You can also risk your mind and even your soul, which is even worse.

Mocenigo So you believe man has a soul?

Bruno Why shouldn't he? Man has life, and the soul is life itself.

Mocenigo There you are. There are many spiritual things you could lecture me on which you haven't.

Bruno I don't give courses on such matters. I only lecture on pure philosophy and science, and you know it.

Mocenigo You deny me the knowledge I paid you for obtaining.

Bruno I told you from the start that I could not go beyond the fields of philosophy and science.

Mocenigo But my condition was that you would also include me in the forbidden knowledge.

Bruno My worthy senator, you stated no conditions. You invited me. You offered me salary, food and lodging. I accepted this since I treibly could be of use to my home country as a teacher for students of philosophy and science. Your demands were introduced later. If you are not content with me I am sorry for this and will be obliged to return to Germany.

Mocenigo You must not leave me now.

Bruno If you think I haven't fulfilled your contract I have no other choice than to be on my way. A man is free to choose his own demission.

Mocenigo You have to stay a bit longer. You must give me a chance.

Bruno Lord senator, if you ask more of me than what I have served you with, I cannot be of any more service to you. That's how simple it is. I will immediately make preparations for my departure. (*leaves*)

Mocenigo He actually intends to leave me. He must not. (*The priests come out.*)

Well, what do you say?

priest 1 You must not let him go. We shall never have a better chance than now.

Mocenigo But do you have anything to charge him with?

priest 2 We can always arrest him. We can bring the accusations later.

priest 1 Make sure he doesn't leave the house. He simply must not go without having been questioned by the inquisition.

Mocenigo He has not committed any crime. Will you bring him to trial?

priest 1 We have to. Or else Rome would never forgive us.

Mocenigo Venice can't judge him for anything.

priest 2 For a catholic court nothing is impossible.

priest 1 There are many witnesses to his dangerous views.

Mocenigo Just loose table talk. No witnesses.

priest 1 Enough to motivate a hearing, and a hearing is enough to have him arrested.

Mocenigo As you wish, gentlemen. I will make sure he is detained until he can be arrested.

priest 1 That's all we ask for. Come, brother, Let's inform the inquisition. (*They leave.*)

Mocenigo Shall I then play the part of Judas in another Golgotha scenery? It doesn't look any better. The church forces me. (*leaves*)

Scene 6. Accademia degli Uranici.

Ciotto It's the wisest decision you could make. We will all give a sigh of relief as soon as you have left Venice.

Bruno I know you wish me well. Or else your words could be taken as an unkindness.

Ciotto We all know what is at stake and which mortal danger we all run because you do. Your mortal danger is ours.

Bruno You exaggerate the danger. None of you is in the least danger, for you all have each other and are rather unknown. My danger is greater just because I am well known and have published books. Nothing is more dangerous than that in these times.

Sarpi What is your latest book about?

Bruno It's a sort of summary of my life's work.

Ciotto Is that what you are going to publish in Frankfurt?

Bruno Yes, it is only possible in Germany.

Sarpi How would you sum up your life's work?

Bruno In a few words? You are asking the impossible, Paolo Sarpi.

Besler But as you now are leaving us anyway, how would you formulate an eventual spiritual testament?

Bruno I don't need to sum up my world view to you. You all know all about it. You embrace the Copernican world view yourselves, and my view of the universe from a pantheistic perspective with life as the most sacred and only important essence and divinity, an impersonal phenomenon with no power but the greater possibilities, like capacity for expression, multiplication, sense of perception and creative imagination above all. Life is basically entirely constructive. It lives to renew itself and constantly grow greater by perpetual expansion. Its only enemy is its own impermanence. Life can only exist under disciplined forms, which involves the pains of birth and death. Death is natural and just a metamorphosis, a transcendence from one condition to another, as already Pythagoras realized, but everything that hastens and helps death and uses death for a means is unreasonable and evil, and unfortunately life is burdened with such trials in the shape of powers and authorities, superstition and established stupidity, which maintains itself by the sickness of bad habits, like the way in which the church rules the world to the harm of it. Trials and crises are there, but they are there to be overcome, they can always be overcome and must always be overcome for the sake of life. Lutherans suggest that suicide sometimes under certain circumstances is excusable, but suicide is in fact the most shameful possible escape from life and its responsibility. An escape is always coward, and nothing is more coward than suicide. Nothing is more coward than to give up, and that you simply never must do. It's unnatural to give up. The victor is he who never gives up, and the ideal human life is that of the ninety years old, like so many Venetians, for example your duke Dandolo and your painter Tizian. It's natural to live to an advanced age, after which you can turn in with an entirely good and satisfied conscience. If you survive all your friends, they don't have to bury and cry for you. When the apostle John was very old and close to a hundred he went away to be buried anonymously somewhere up in the mountains. Moses passed away in the same way 120 years old. Then life has prevailed and triumphed, and such people should be happy with their lives. Then you have proved yourself worthy and honoured it. Thus you might perhaps sum up my view of life, the only sacred and divine thing there is.

Sarpi Thanks, Giordano.

Besler I think we had better let our master retire to prepare for his departure. He has a lot of packing to do.

Ciotto The sooner you leave, the better.

Bruno You are quite right, Giovanni Battista. If there are no further questions, let's go, Hermann.

(The society breaks up.)

Scene 7. Bruno's chamber.

Besler The risk is you already stayed here one day too long.
Bruno I still believe you exaggerate the risks. I don't think Mocenigo wishes me any harm even if I am hardly leaving this place too soon.
Besler Let us hurry. We have not a minute to lose.
Bruno Do we have everything?
Besler I think so.
Bruno And the road is open to Padua?
Besler Yes.
Bruno If we only reach Padua we are on the safe side. There are Germans who can help us get to Frankfurt.
Besler I just hope your plans of escape haven't become known.
Bruno Do you view it as an escape, Hermann? No, it is just another stretch of my life long exile. It's just another move of far too many. It's just another abandoning of false masters. It's just a healthy change of environment. It's just another chapter, Hermann. There is no escape from life.
Mocenigo (enters suddenly) What is this? Do you plan to go anyway, master Bruno?
Bruno We didn't expect you home today, senator.
Mocenigo And so you intended to leave without my permission?
Bruno We discussed this before, senator Mocenigo. I am finished here and have nothing more to do.
Mocenigo And what do you have to do in Frankfurt?
Besler How did he know...
Bruno Quiet, Hermann. – I can only publish my books in Frankfurt.
Mocenigo So you intend to just go on a business trip and then come back?
Bruno I didn't say so. Where I will go next my destiny will show me. It's in God's hands.
Mocenigo No, it's in my hands, and you don't leave this house until have revenue for what I paid you for your withheld services!
Bruno Lord senator, we discussed this before. If you are dissatisfied with my services, the greater the reason for me to leave this house.
Mocenigo You were paid!
Bruno Unfortunately I cannot pay you back. The greater the reason for refraining from any further expense for my sake.
Mocenigo Stay at least until tomorrow. Or else I must detain you by force.
Bruno My lord senator, you need to calm down. You criminalize me for nothing. I haven't done you any harm, and I ask you not to do me any.
Mocenigo You have abused my hospitality!
Bruno Hermann, wait for me outside. (*Hermann leaves.*)

Lord senator, we have nothing more to say to each other. Hoping you will be in a better mood tomorrow, I will stay one last night, but you must realize it is best for both of us that I part from your house.

Mocenigo We shall see tomorrow. Let us sleep on the matter.
Bruno Now you sound more sensible.
Mocenigo We both need to calm down. Good night, master Bruno.
Bruno Good night, senator.

(Mocenigo leaves. Bruno sits down on the bed and gives a sigh of relief.)

That senator could actually become dangerous. I can't stay here another day. I should leave right away. But can I get out without being discovered? Perhaps it is already too late? Hermann is waiting for me. It must not be postponed any longer. *(rises, takes his pack and moves towards the door. When he opens there is an armed guard outside.)*

Mocenigo (outside) So you tried to deceive me anyway and escape without honouring me for my money! Arrest him! Put him in the cellar until the guards arrive! *(The guards seize him.)*

Bruno Lord senator, this is a violation!

Mocenigo You are not immune just because you are knowledgeable. No, Bruno, this is not a violation. This is only justice and the action of the law.

Bruno What have I done?

Mocenigo That's for the inquisition to find out.

Bruno So it is no civil court you are bringing me to but the martial court of the church?

Mocenigo Call it what you like. I only obey orders.

Bruno Call it what you like, senator Mocenigo, but who obeys criminal orders is a criminal himself.

Mocenigo Get him away! *(The guards take out Bruno.)* He thinks he is above the entire world. But presumption rises only to fall. Not the world's most brilliant mind can defend your atheism to the inquisition, Giordano Bruno!

Galilei (enters) Have I arrived too late?

Mocenigo For what?

Galilei I heard a rumour that Giordano Bruno is to be arrested.

Mocenigo He is under arrest already.

Galilei Then I came too late. I intended to warn him one last time. What is his crime?

Mocenigo That's why he is arrested for the church tribunal to investigate his crimes.

Galilei The inquisition?

Mocenigo What else?

Galilei Who is responsible?

Mocenigo Himself.

Galilei Don't be silly. He would hardly denounce himself to the inquisition.

Mocenigo The inquisition ordered me to hand him over.

Galilei So you, senator Mocenigo, did it yourself?

Mocenigo Yes. And neither I nor you can do anything for Giordano Bruno any longer.

Galilei Tell me it's a mistake and that I am dreaming.

Mocenigo It's no mistake, and you are not dreaming.

Galilei But why? Don't you see that you have betrayed him?

Mocenigo On the contrary. I have perhaps saved his soul. I invited him here to tutor me. I paid him for it, but he would not initiate me in his mysteries. Then he decided suddenly to go to Frankfurt. I could not accept that. My only way to keep him was to turn to the authorities. And you, professor Galilei, would do wisest in returning to Pisa and stay put.

Galilei What will you do with him?

Mocenigo His teachings are too dangerous. He is too controversial. He annoys and challenges too high authorities. He is not just risking the salvation of his own soul but also that of many others. He must have correction. After a few weeks with the inquisition he will be free again.

Galilei So you intend to give him over to the inquisition?

Mocenigo Only for questioning, for his own good and for the best of everyone.

Galilei Who persuaded you to this? Some Jesuit?

Mocenigo My own confessor. He alerted me on my soul being in danger. Bruno's influence on me has been too strong, and that of the church is more important. Professor Galilei, we can only attain salvation by the church and its grace. We can never reach any blessedness by the obstinacy of solitary individuals like Bruno, who is only spreading uneasiness among all thinking people, which only can lead to unblestness. We must have peace. All that Giordano Bruno needs to do is to retract certain of his dogma.

Galilei He has no dogma! He alone is pure and free! Only the church has dogma to defend its overbearingness with, dogma that only are lies!

Mocenigo Beware, professor! Your soul is poisoned! You are in danger!

Galilei Judas! (*spits at him*)

Mocenigo (*dries it up, detached*) You are lost if you go on like this. Keep still, maestro Galilei. Your dangerous views could also become known to the inquisition, if they aren't already. (*leaves*)

Galilei This is the destruction of the world, Italy and the church – nothing else. They don't know what they are doing. And I can't pray to God to beg him forgive them for not knowing what they are doing, for such a church I cannot believe in. Giordano, the noblest universal genius of our age, why wouldn't you listen to me? Why did you come back to this damned world of only established superstition of the church of stupidity! Poor Italy!

(*rushes out in despair*)

Act V scene 1. The inquisition.

inquisitor 1 Master Bruno, you have nothing to fear from us. We only wish to help you along the right way and understand you better. No infringement on your freedom will be undertaken.

Bruno Why did you then put me into the worst leaden dungeons of Venice?

inquisitor 2 Master Bruno, we are as eager as you to get this over and done with. Everything will be all right if we only get to know what we wish to know.

Bruno What do you want to know of me that the whole world doesn't know already? My writings are available in all countries, and I have been available as a teacher here and in Padua all days. What more do you want of me that I haven't already given?

1 Master Bruno, do you embrace the heliocentric world view of Copernicus?

Bruno Yes, like all astronomers and scientists do, for it is mathematically proved that the earth orbits the sun and not the other way around.

1 And the fact that the only beatifying church contemns this does not worry you?

Bruno The only beatifying church is wrong on this issue and behind its time. I am convinced that it will change its position.

2 So you mean that our church could be wrong?

Bruno Gentlemen, don't make me smile. Could a church, who for its pope selects an Alessandro Borgia, who has any number of children, and whose vices and poisoning intrigues all Italy is well aware of, really be absolutely infallible? (*The inquisitors don't smile.*)

3 The most serious issue is your questioning the holy trinity and the divine nature of Christ.

4 According to Giovanni Mocenigo's report you have declared Christ to be an impostor and magician.

Bruno I protest that.

4 You deny that you have declared Christ an impostor and magician?

Bruno Yes, I deny that.

4 At last a step in the right direction!

3 Could you explain more closely your idea of the holy trinity?

Bruno It is quite simple. No mathematician can accept the church formula that one equals three.

2 So you prefer mathematics to religion and faith?

1 Which of the three in the trinity do you deny? The Father, the Son or the Holy Ghost?

Bruno All three. My idea is that the entire trinity concept is a distortion of the true aspect of God.

2 What is then the true aspect of God?

Bruno That God is one.

5 Are you then a Jewish fundamentalist?

Bruno My only basis is common sense. That God is one could never result in God being three.

4 So you believe in God?

Bruno Yes.

4 Another step in the right direction!

Bruno But not in a personal God.

1 Explain yourself.

Bruno God is everything and all the universe and the reason that controls the entire universe. Such an all embracing reason can never be restricted to something personal with feelings and inclinations, like a being that man would be an image of.

2 So you don't believe God created man after his image?

Bruno I don't deny that God created man, but I don't believe there could be an image of God.

4 Thus you believe in God as an abstract idea?

Bruno Yes.

4 At least he believes in God.

3 The issue remains however that you have denied the divine nature of Christ. This is what the church cannot accept, since the church is the body of Christ.

2 Do you deny the divine nature of Christ?

Bruno I suggest that he was no less and no more divine than other human beings.

3 If you deny the sanctity of Christ you deny the sanctity of the church.

Bruno I deny the sanctity of no one.

2 But you deny the divine nature of Christ.

Bruno No, I only deny that he was the only begotten son of God.

1 Ha, there we are.

2 Master Bruno, the church cannot accept this.

Bruno So you mean for serious that God like some other corny whoremonger would have impregnated a certain virgin Mary with his seed by his carnal penis and thus given life to a begotten son, as a unique world historic event? My good sirs, that is just nonsense. That Zeus could beget a Hercules you could perhaps accept as a myth and fairy tale, but that the only God of eternity would have fertilized a Mary, who even already had a husband, you must concede to be a rather extreme absurdity?

3 He mocks us!

1 Take him out!

Bruno Gentlemen, only common sense can save your holy church! (*is brusquely taken out*)

1 What do you think, brothers?

2 We have no choice.

3 He has to be chastized.

1 I agree. We have no choice. He must retract his heresies.

4 Are you really going to torture him?

2 It's for his own good. It is our duty to save his soul.

1 So be it. May the inquisition follow its course until he cancels his scorn of the divinity of Christ and the church.

Scene 2.

Mocenigo You were too proud, Giordano Bruno, too self-assured and too vainglorious. You made everyone else feel small. Your audacity disturbed everyone's circles, and in the blindness of your presumption you didn't observe how your enemies gathered around you. At the same time your credulity was quite touching, when you let yourself be enticed back to Italy, the only country that was dangerous to you. I had your destiny in my hands, and I enjoyed the power it gave me. But your arrogance and presumption were weights to your disadvantage. You never trusted me and never gave me your full confidence. You only thought of your career. That's why I had to betray you, to save my own face and preserve my self respect. You didn't want to become my brother and sleep with me, although I loved you. For a man who loves can as little as a woman forgive anyone who turns his true love down.

Galilei (appears suddenly) Traitor!

Mocenigo Galileo Galilei, what are you doing in Venice? Didn't I ask you to save yourself? Do you want to report yourself to the inquisition?

Galilei Why did you betray him?

Mocenigo It was my human duty. He seduced the students by his heretic ideas, and I was responsible for him. The church gave me no choice. It was one or everyone.

Galilei You don't know what you have done. The inquisition will never release him.

Mocenigo Yes, if he repents.

Galilei A scientist can never declare scientific facts to be wrong with any conviction. If he does he is no scientist any more but a lost son to science.

Mocenigo Wait until you are faced with the inquisition yourself.

Galilei Don't you realize the horror of your responsibility? You have betrayed the world's leading thinker to a flock of greedy vultures without thinking of anything else than your own imagined security according to the established lies and illusions of the church. The whole world will take revenge on Italy, led by his friends Queen Elizabeth of England, the king of France and king Rudolf of Bohemia besides all the world's protestants!

Mocenigo Maestro Galilei, go home to Pisa and go to bed. The inquisition will let him go if he just is loyal to the church.

Galilei And if he doesn't want to?

Mocenigo Then he will only have himself to blame. He has to concede. He has no choice.

Galilei As a scientist he will probably value his honour and integrity higher than the base extortions of the church. You will then be a Judas with his blood on your

hands. If anything evil happens to him you would then do best to like a Judas go and hang yourself in the nearest tree.

Mocenigo Ser Galilei, I will never do that. Don't you know that a suicide has to end up in hell? (*leaves arrogantly*)

Galilei In that case the whole church is condemned, for if it condemns Giordano Bruno it is nothing but the church committing moral suicide, which at length is much more difficult than to just quickly take your own life. (*leaves*)

Scene 3. A torture chamber, July 1592.

(Giordano Bruno is hanged by his wrists, and weights are hung on his feet.

On stage these will of course have no weight at all.)

monk 1 Stop! Ser Giordano Bruno, do you confess?

Bruno (*says nothing*)

monk 2 He maintains stubborn silence.

1 Carry on with the procedure! (*They hang greater weights by his ankles.*)

Stop! Ser Giordano Bruno, do you confess?

Bruno You imbecile living carcasses and eunuchs, all I have to confess is the truth, which is that you are all damned, because you don't know what you are doing, since you are all brainwashed by the church and soulless automats in its service, and your pains will be far greater than mine!

1 Carry on with the treatment at once! (*greater weights are applied.*)

Bruno (*groans*)

1 Giordano Bruno, do you confess?

Bruno (*groans but keeps silent*)

2 He is stubborn still although he groans.

1 Continue the treatment! (*greater weights are applied.*)

Bruno (*cries out in heart-rending agony*)

1 Stop! Giordano Bruno, do you confess Jesus Christ as God's only begotten son in all eternity?

Bruno For God's sake, I confess whatever you want, if you only liberate me from life!

1 Are you ready to retract all your heresies? Are you ready for a written confession?

Bruno I will sign anything!

1 By conviction?

Bruno By conviction!

1 Do you repent?

Bruno I repent everything!

1 Do you confess that Jesus Christ is God's Son, and do you cancel your statement of the contrary?

Bruno I retract everything and confess everything!

1 Take him down. At last he is repentant. (*starts writing a protocol. Bruno is taken down.*) That means a referral to the inquisition. We will not be responsible for him any more.

(Bruno is taken down and taken care of, but his pains are unendurable.)

Scene 4. The court of the inquisition (like in scene 1)

1 Giordano Bruno has repented and retracted everything.

2 Another victory for the holy inquisition!

4 Does that mean he will regain his freedom?

1 No, he is too dangerous. We must examine if he is serious or not.

3 We can't take the risk that he relapses into his old heresies.

1 No. Nor that he leaves Italy.

5 What will be our next step then?

1 We have to send him to Rome.

5 For a new examination?

1 Yes. That way we are free from any responsibility, and in the holy inquisition of Rome there are better experts with greater resources than we have.

4 So we can wash our hands?

1 Yes, brothers. Let's wash our hands.

Scene 5. England, Chislehurst, May 1593.

Sir Thomas Walsingham Take it easy, Kit. Somehow we will manage it.

Marlowe But the end comes nearer every minute.

Walsingham We have to know more. We have too little to work on. We have to know exactly what position the Queen's Privy Council takes to the report. How could you provoke him to such enormous accusations? What did you do to him?

Marlowe He just is like that. He takes offence for nothing. I used his idea for a play. That was all.

Walsingham What idea?

Marlowe His idea to poison all the nuns in a nunnery by poisoning the water.

Walsingham So you realized his idea on stage while he failed in reality?

Marlowe That's about it.

Walsingham And then he turns it into the worst performance in the world by executing our first playwright.

Marlowe I am sorry.

Walsingham I hear somebody coming.

Poley It is lord Strange, Sir.

Walsingham Bring him in here at once.

(Sir Ferdinando Stanley enters.)

What does the Queen say, Ferdinando?

Ferdinando Our Kit has to get lost. The grossness of the allegations makes it impossible for him to ever be seen alive again.

Walsingham So we must despatch him out of the country?

Ferdinando He must disappear to begin with. I am really sorry about this, Kit, but that idiot Richard Baines must not get away with this.

Marlowe He was not alone. It started with Thomas Kyd.

Walsingham Yes, that poor devil has ruined his own career.

Ferdinando You were too good, Kit. You took the drama from Kyd and created a new art form out of it, the most splendid England has seen, an English verse drama excelling all the Greek ones.

Marlowe That was the intention.

Walsingham Honours are out of place now, Ferdinando. The irony will be too morbid.

Ferdinando So our most brilliant poet has to forfeit his life, his career and his honour for the sake of a base wretch denouncing him for the most horrid crimes in the world.

Marlowe Which are too absurd for me to be guilty of any of them.

Walsingham We have probably never seen such a list of felonies in England. Homosexuality, atheism, coining, lese-majesty and blasphemies against everything sacred in the whole Bible.

Marlowe All I did was to apply my language.

Walsingham You did it too well.

Marlowe Do I then have to part with the theatre that I created?

Ferdinando No, never, Kit. We'll never allow it, and we are many who will carry it on. The only thing we actually need is another name. Yours must be erased from the stage since it is damaged and corrupted beyond repair – no one will buy it any more.

Walsingham What was the Queen's mood like?

Ferdinando She was very angry and could hardly control herself.

Walsingham Yes, she can't bear with stupidity, and this denouncement is probably the most stupid document that ever was presented to her Privy Council.

Ferdinando My father was of the same mind.

Marlowe But how should I get away? How could I get rid of myself and at the same time live on?

Walsingham That's the nut we have to crack. Is Bacon coming?

Ferdinando Yes, he is coming. He always figures things out.

Poley (enters) Lord Francis Bacon, Sir.

Walsingham Show him in at once. (*Francis Bacon is shown in.*)

So we are almost complete. Only Sir Walter Raleigh is missing.

Ferdinando And Sir Fulke Greville.

Walsingham He will also join us. Well, Sir Francis, do you have any solution to offer?

Bacon There is only one solution. As long as Marlowe remains alive his life will remain in constant mortal danger. Whitgift and his inquisition will never call the

witch hunt on such free-thinkers off. Marlowe has to disappear, and we must arrange his death in an efficient way, to make it credible and generally accepted.

Walsingham Exactly my view as well.

Ferdinando The Queen hinted at something in that direction.

Bacon Do you accept the solution, Christopher?

Marlowe Do I have any choice? Am I not obliged to obey the Queen?

Walsingham You can still continue writing, Kit. In this way your back will be free and you may dedicate yourself entirely to writing poetry. You can devote the rest of your life to constantly surpass yourself. As declared dead no one can threaten you any more. And you can count on that Richard Baines will be out of the way. The Queen shall never forgive him.

Marlowe Can I remain in England?

Bacon Rather not. It would be best for you to vanish into Italy right away. Later perhaps you could come back but preferably not to London.

Ferdinando You will always feel safe with us up in Lancashire among the catholics.

Marlowe Lancashire and Chislehurst are maybe quite enough.

Walsingham Chislehurst will always remain your safest hide-out. No one can probe within our moats, not even the Queen.

Bacon We regret the inconvenience, Marlowe, but on no conditions must you ever again appear in England as yourself. Christopher Marlowe must cease to exist for his own sake and for the sake of the theatre. Instead you will have the honour to be the Osiris of the new age or why not Jesus himself, who probably went through a seeming death process to be able to rise from the dead, just like Osiris.

Marlowe But when may I be resurrected?

Bacon That's the crux. Perhaps never until we all are dead. Perhaps not until someone uncovers the truth of our conspiracy in perhaps three hundred years.

Ferdinando And all this only because some scoundrel compiled as false a report as possible.

Bacon That can't be helped. We have to stand up for Marlowe, and we have to stick to the rules of the society: total secrecy. That's our only protection.

Walsingham Sir Francis is unfortunately all too right, Kit. Even your colleague and student brother John Penry has been arrested and will be executed.

Marlowe By what right? What did he do? He was not the one who wrote the Martin Marprelate pamphlets against the bishops.

Bacon We all know who Martin Marprelate was and hold our silence about it, Marlowe, and all know that John Penry was innocent. But he wrote other stuff and acted for the presbyterians. That's what he is being hanged for by Whitgift. If he can be hanged for his opinions, anyone of us could be hanged with him. That's why we must eliminate any kind of taking risks. Our own safety and freedom must be ensured and also yours, Marlowe, wherefore we have to make the world believe that you are dead, at any price. Only that can save the theatre from the aggression of puritanic bigotry.

Sir Fulke Greville (enters) Gentlemen, pardon my late arrival, but I think I have solved all our problems.

Bacon In what way?

Sir Fulke I have found a new name for our Marlowe. A man from my homelands is willing to be at our service with his name, an honest business man from Stratford.

Ferdinando Is it that theatre agent who started by keeping watch on our horses?

Bacon It couldn't be William Shakspere?

Sir Fulke The very man, a friendly factotum, who will undertake anything if he only gets paid.

Bacon We could actually trust him.

Marlowe Would my new name then be William Shakspere?

Walsingham Only your pen name. You can continue as our agent under any name.

Sir Fulke William Shakspere is his own name which he gladly lends to writers who need concealment, for example the Earl of Oxford.

Ferdinando He is very useful.

Bacon What news about our friend Giordano Bruno in Italy, Sir Fulke?

Sir Fulke No news, I am afraid. He is buried alive in the dungeons of the Italian inquisition. The risk is that we shall never more hear anything about him. It's to the interest of Rome to have him silenced forever, and the best way for them to keep him quiet is to keep him buried alive and unreachable for the world in a cellar, and that's what they are doing.

Walsingham Who betrayed him?

Sir Fulke His benefactor in Venice.

Walsingham You are not alone, Kit.

Marlowe Why should the retributions of destiny only strike the best ones? Sir Philip Sidney was the first one, fallen in battle completely unnecessarily for having saved the lives of his fellow soldiers, Robert Greene is also dead, Edmund Spenser lives in poverty in Ireland, my friend and colleague Thomas Kyd has dug his own grave, Giordano Bruno is buried alive in the catacombs of Rome, my friend Thomas Watson is deceased, why all my friends and the very ones I admired and loved the most?

Walsingham It's not just your destiny, Kit. That's what happens to the noblest. Whom the gods love die young.

Marlowe But it isn't fair!

Bacon That's another issue. Justice does not rule over destiny.

Sir Fulke Remember, gentlemen, that not one word of these our arrangements to save Kit and his poetic art must ever come to the attention of any other living being. The secret lives and dies with us.

Walsingham It's only to protect you, Kit, and to make it possible for you to carry on your work.

Marlowe I am on.

Ferdinando No problems then. Only the practical arrangement remains then.

Walsingham Every detail of it must be perfect. We will have to make sure it is done within the Queen's verge, so that her own coroner may handle the case to compile a report to exclude any doubt.

Bacon William Danby is splendid in compiling pedantic nonsense protocols.

Walsingham All pieces are being joined. This will be your best show, Kit. Pity that no one may see it, since it never will happen in reality.

Marlowe It will be my best play but not written by me but by you and necessity.

Bacon We will make sure that it won't get lost, just like you yourself, Kit.

Marlowe Make whatever arrangements you like. I am only good for theatre acting.

Bacon You did that well enough so far, but you will do even better henceforth. May I just ask you to choose less controversial subjects in the future, above all no theology.

Marlowe It's my love that brought me into this situation, my love that I gave the theatre, the love in which I gave everything and which offers me this death for a reward. I will stand for it and adapt accordingly.

Walsingham Good, Kit. All we need to be able to continue is your cooperation. So we should proceed as follows...

(The gentlemen conspire together.)

Scene 6. Castell Sant'Angelo in Rome. A prison cell, 1599.

Bruno (in grey hairs) Thus the years pass by in constant expectation of some decision of my destiny, but there never was so cruel a torture in the most horrific dungeon of any tyrant ever as to have to wait eternally for a bureaucracy to make a definite decision. My process has been carrying on now for seven interminable years of unending futile interrogations only about petty things and ignominious matters, that never seem to be enough for these ecclesiastical authorities, while I perpetually languish seeing how my life is running out in a delirium of despair of feverish hallucinations, fading into darkness in a hopeless ever darker night of being wasted down the drain by careless and indifferent authorities. But now again I see some light in all this darkness and perchance a new illusion of some vain hope that was lost.

Leonardo (appearing as a ghost) Don't give up, Giordano. You are right.

Giordano What does that help when the world makes me wrong?

Leonardo The world is not the church. The world will make the church wrong, and the church will descend into its dishonour of stupidity to end up a debile institution of inanity for children and for aged people for the cultivation of their gaga.

Giordano Still I loved the church, as it was always beautiful.

Leonardo Yes, that might be its only true salvation. *(disappears)*

Giordano The visions vanish after having offered just a ray of hope and light, as if they were stars or comets given the allowance to exist for only once to twinkle. But that is actually the main condition of all life.

Nostradamus (appears) Brother Bruno, don't betray our idealism. All the world believes in you, for you are the very key to our future.

Giordano How could I be when I am going soon to die?

Nostradamus You are not dead yet, and you are still able to fight.

Giordano Here in the darkness against my powerlessness buried alive, clinically isolated in a black hole of nothingness, and against my illnesses, my despair, my nightmare visions and my damned phantom visitors of weird hallucinations? I am tired of it all. It leads me nowhere, and all struggle is but vanity, for every struggle imports violence, and violence is the most stupid vanity of all.

Nostradamus And therefore you will overcome the violence of the church.

Giordano Not until I am dead.

Nostradamus Your moment here is an eternity, for everything is relative, and the measure of time is not minutes or centuries but truth only. Your life is a moment of truth more unforgettable than an eternity.

Giordano But do you think I would have strength to live up to this blinding brilliance?

Faust (appearing) You have to, for there is no one else, master Bruno. Only you have the power to extinguish all superstition and stupidity, for no one but you have been brave enough to dare to look through Christ.

Giordano Don't let me be a martyr. I never wanted to be a new Messiah.

Faust And that's why you have become just that. You are the first after Christ who can measure up to Christ. All the others fell to the temptation to humble themselves to the mythical screens of the false security of the church of misinterpretations of the man Jesus' miserably pathetic and most unvoluntary fate.

Giordano Do I then have to sacrifice myself like him?

Faust Only that way you could prove right against the church and overcome its violence and tyrannic deceit, like Christ crushed the Roman imperialism.

Giordano Hold it for a moment, you phantoms of my dreams, most deceitful of all guests! I don't even know if you are real! Perhaps I am just fallen to wishful thinking or allow myself to be tortured by the hallucinations of my madness and fever! There is something here that doesn't make sense. The monks always insisted on that they wished me no harm.

Faust That's why they have tortured you so cruelly all these years.

Bruno But perhaps they want to release me. They maybe just wanted to put me to the test. I did retract everything in Venice. All since then I have never been allowed to see the sun while they always promised me my freedom.

Faust Are you so naïve, you poor catholic? Why do you think the monks have kept you buried alive for so long? You are famous in all Europe! That's why they don't dare to kill you, for that would raise an international outrage! They are satisfied then by keeping you quiet on the cruellest and lowest heat, just to make sure to keep you quiet and all the thinking part of Europe with you. For as long as you remain alive, no one dares to even whisper your name from fear that the Vatican then will increase your pains.

Giordano So they dare not kill me but even less release me, as long as just nothing is heard about me...

Faust You are only convenient to the church which you once swore a lifetime allegiance, as kept quiet and buried alive.

Giordano So cowardice is all they have left?

Faust Only cowardice maintains the church of superstition and keeps it abominably alive.

Giordano You have opened my eyes then, my teacher, and led me deep into temptation.

Faust It's my pleasure to do so. (*Nostradamus and Faust disappear.*)

Bruno So be it. It's the only way out, to be consistent and to carry out the role given me by providence. May I perish to enable my free world of creative thought to live. God, in your hands I surrender my soul. Glory, you are of eternity, and less glorious are only petty futilities to be forgotten and dispersed. The unforgettable is one and eternal, and my joy is my knowledge and share in it, and it cannot perish. May the church tremble and fear, wither and shatter with all its superstition and stupidity, but reason will remain forever and even save what can be saved of the church, which was the first love of my life and the last.

Scene 7.

inquisitor 1 Master Bruno, aren't you tired of these constant interrogations?

Bruno Yes, extremely.

1 Why don't you never give up then?

Bruno Because I can't, since I am right.

1 You have been tortured, placed on the rack, retracted your statements under duress but still endured seven more years of reckonings and interminable hearings without a result. What is your point? What do you think you could achieve?

Bruno I am the one to ask you that question.

1 No, we are asking you that question.

Bruno Only you keep pursuing the process.

1 No, only you are pursuing the process.

Bruno You are questioning me, and not the contrary!

1 But you will not answer!

Bruno You are mistaken. I have given you answers all the time.

1 But your answers are not satisfying!

Bruno So it's only your dissatisfaction that maintains this process.

1 Our dissatisfaction is justified!

Bruno What is your point?

2 Brother Bruno, with all respect for your learning and famous versatility, which all Europe still praises, and with special respect for your background as a

Dominican monk and priest, but in Venice you retracted all your blasphemous statements against the church. Why will you then not do this in Rome?

Bruno Because I want to do what is right.

1 But you are not doing what is right! You are not retracting your blasphemies!

Bruno I have no blasphemies to retract.

1 What do you call then naming Jesus a magician and impostor?

Bruno I never did.

1 Well, you retracted that, but you never confessed the divine nature of Christ.

Bruno I ever denied the divine nature of Jesus.

3 But you never confessed him alone to be God!

Bruno No, I never did. (*The inquisitors fall silent.*)

1 Say that again.

Bruno I never confessed Jesus to be God's Son and I never will.

(*The inquisitors are stunned by the blasphemy.*)

2 Why?

Bruno My good sirs, Jesus was a simple carpenter's son who associated with tawdry people like prostitutes, fishermen and tax collectors besides all kinds of beggars, lepers, mentally ill and stinking invalids. He ate and drank and defecated and peed and bled and died like we all do. My suggestion is that God is something higher than such a swinish mortal way of living.

1 Brother Bruno, such statements, by which you made yourself notorious for wishing to separate God from Christ you did retract in Venice in July 1592.

Bruno Under torture and by force. I was forced thereto.

3 And now you retract that you ever retracted such statements?

Bruno (*loud and clear with conviction*) Yes, I do!

3 He is lost.

1 Brothers, do we need to hear anything more?

2 No, he has condemned himself!

3 He is lost!

1 Brother Bruno, do you have anything further to add?

Bruno No.

1 You persist in denying the divine nature of Christ as the only begotten Son of God?

Bruno Yes, you imbecile dunces, I do.

1 Giordano Bruno, then there is nothing more to do than to sentence you to burning at the stake as a convicted heretic.

Bruno Do so if you dare. Rome will quake in front of all Europe.

2 He is threatening us!

1 Giordano Bruno, you are hereby sentenced to suffer death at the stake as a heretic. May the law take its course. May God have mercy on your lost and hardened soul.

Bruno My brothers, you are more fearful of expressing and executing this sentence than I am of meeting death. I pity you.

1 Take him away! At once!

(Giordano Bruno is taken away.)

What will become of this world if there will be more of the same kind?

2 We will have much to do.

3 Brothers, consider that we can't execute all humanity.

1 Sometimes I wonder if that is the very thing we ought to do.

2 We could perhaps judge humanity but not the individuals.

1 What do you mean?

2 We did all this once before fifteen hundred years ago. Then we served Caesar as procurators. Now we serve the church and are monks, but we are doing the same thing over again. We are making martyrs.

3 May God forgive you your heretic views, brother.

1 Just keep quiet, and we might make it. *(breaks it up)*

3 Something tells me that such as Giordano Bruno at length will make it better. *(leaves as the last one.)*

Scene 8.

The heretic is brought pinioned through the streets of Rome
to Campo dei Fiori to be burned.

Members of the people turn the procession into running the gauntlet for him.

1 There goes the blasphemer!

2 He looks innocent enough.

1 Just wait. At the stake they usually burst out with sulphurous curses.

3 Down with the blasphemer!

(Others join the affected crowd and throw dung and rubbish on Bruno as he is led by.)

Bruno (to the guards) Aren't you supposed to protect your victims against unnecessary violence?

guard 1 Shut up, you cursed sinner!

1 Where is your eloquence and learning now, Giordano Bruno?

3 Who can you now correct in the pulpit?

4 Do you still dare to abuse your order and church?

Bruno (back) I never abused my order or my church.

1 He is acting innocent as well.

3 What do you think you are burned for, you satanist?

Bruno For your sins, my brothers, for yours and those of the church. Nothing else.

2 Leave him in peace.

1 Never in my life. He is condemned and will be burned.

2 Justice will murder anyone in these days.

1 Dare you defend a condemned blasphemer?

2 Yes, if he is innocent.

5 In the Vatican no one is innocent, and he has been a Dominican himself.
So he cannot be innocent,

4 That's what he is guilty of, betraying his order and the church.

Bruno I have not betrayed anyone. I was myself betrayed.

2 What is really your crime, Giordano Bruno?

Bruno That I believed in common sense and dared to preach it to the world.

a priest It's not good that he speaks to the people.

priest 2 Let him be. He is to be burned anyway.

2 Is that a crime?

Bruno Yes, according to the church, when it does not believe in common sense.

2 But if he is judged and executed for the sake of common sense, it means
the church takes its leave of all common sense.

3 Tell it to the church, and you will be executed yourself.

5 It will gladly burn anyone at the stake. That's what it is good for,
according to itself.

6 You talk like a priest.

5 I have been but prefer to keep silent about it.

2 Do you mean, Giordano Bruno, that you are perfectly innocent?

Bruno Yes, of all crimes except to have spoken for common sense.

2 That's no crime. There is no law against that.

Bruno Yes, in the church, if reason goes against the doctrine of the church.

5 You must know, Giordano Bruno, that it is useless to preach reason
against the church.

Bruno I learned that the hard way.

priest 1 He must not go on like that. We must stop it.

priest 2 How? How do you stop the people from talking?

2 I find this heretic innocent! The church executes people for nothing!

1 Shut up, you heretic, or do you wish to take his place at the stake or be
burned with him?

3 Drive him away, so that he doesn't spoil our entertainment! (*2 is driven off*)

Bruno I tell you, that for each heretic you burn, you execute the credibility of
your own church.

1 Listen to the heretic! He scorns the church!

Bruno No, my brothers, you yourselves are wrecking your church by making
yourselves complicit in its murder of innocents!

5 Aren't you a free-thinker?

Bruno Yes, and proud of it.

5 So you have no say.

priest 1 There is a growing unrest among the people. They must not question the
execution.

Bruno They will do it the more, the more you forbid it.

priest 2 You are right. This won't do. We have to lock his mouth up.

Bruno He who destroys books must also always murder people. The church has been doing so since it became statal and excluded all the gospels except the adjusted ones. As long as the church has been established it has been a terror organization which no one has feared more than its own victims to its own stupidity in its own ranks. You can never enlighten the church by lighting heretic fires. That will only shut it down.

priest 1 That's enough! He must not speak like that!

Bruno My protest against the evil intolerance of the church can never fall silent as long as there is a church.

priest 2 Hold your tongue, you damned howling heretic! Close his mouth! Cross his bloody snout!

Bruno No gag will ever silence the voice of conscience, its accusations against the church crying down eternity!

A brutal guard I am sorry, master, but we have to nail your mouth. (*drives a long spike through his cheeks and another through his lips*) Now he is shut down.

1 Where is your eloquence now, accursed heretic!

3 Try to spite the priests now, if you dare!

5 Don't torture him any more. He is defenceless.

(*The guards tie Bruno to the stake and light the fire. The smoke grows thick.*)

1 Thus burns a heretic forever in hell!

priest 1 Why are all these heretics so damned hardened in their heresy that they don't even fear death?

priest 2 I don't know if it is Satan or the original sin that has taken charge of them.

priest 1 It's probably both.

priest 2 Yes, there is no other explanation.

1 How does it feel to get fried, you subversive heathen?

4 His meat is fizzing. Let him die in peace, He can't answer you anyway.

5 What was that he was saying? That we who light heretic fires actually put fire to the church?

2 It doesn't matter. He is dead now. The Vatican has silenced a man who dared to think for himself.

5 (*crosses himself*) How many more will the church murder before it turns gentle?

priest 1 That's it, good people! Circulate! The show is over! (*The priests disperse the crowd.*)

(*The smoke of the fire has completely hidden Bruno, who is gone when the smoke settles over the burned remnants of the fire. People disperse. Curtain.*)

The End.

(*Gothenburg around midwinter 2004,
and Rome 27.9.1995,
translated in July 2022*)

Post script:

The strange case of Giordano Bruno (1548-1600)

He was without doubt the bravest of the 16th century pioneers of astronomy and the only real martyr to empiric science. Still he started as a Dominican friar and was even ordained as a priest. His home was Nola close to Naples, and already there in his youth he started doubting the dogma of Christianity and was even accused of heresy. As a consequence he left the church and embarked on his very remarkable life as a an ambulant philosopher all over Europe. He came to Paris and associated with Henry III and his royal court, he came to England and became good friends with Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86) and probably also associated with Queen Elizabeth at her court. He liked it in England, published his most important writings there and applied for a propfessorship at Oxford, which he unfortunately did not obtain. He spent two years at the university of Wittenberg (Martin Luther's seat of learning) and enjoyed perhaps his best appreciation there, but also the court of Prague under Rudolf II appraised him greatly. He also spent considerable time at Geneva to examine and possibly convert to Calvinism but found himself also there in conflict with the dogmatists.

As an astronomer he was the first to claim that the stars were other suns like the sun, and he was also the first one to point out that the earth was flattened at the poles. He embraced the Copernican theories at an early stage, which naturally brought him into lifelong conflict with the church. Copernicus himself got away easily. He published his revolutionary theories and had time to die before the church had had time to mobilise accusations of heresy and demands of cancellation of the theories. Also Leonardo da Vinci studied astronomy but got away with it by never publishing anything and only make his research in secret. Giordano Bruno on the other hand took a clear stand for the new astronomy, published everything he thought, never held his tongue and never showed signs of fear or cowardice. The only thing he is to be blamed for is that he never took care.

In Prague he received an invitation to Venice by a nobleman, which implied that he would be able to freely teach and lecture in Venice and Padua. He accepted in the belief that Venice could not be reached by the tentacles of the Vatican. For several years he lectured freely, but his host, the nobleman Giovanni Mocenigo, was not happy with Bruno's activities and denounced him to the inquisition. This treason is perhaps the most abominable and tremendous in the history of the academic world. Mocenigo did not just denounce Bruno but even acted as his prosecutor and even added to his accusations after Bruno was arrested.

This happened in May 1592, and the hearings with Bruno commenced immediately. In July two months later Bruno repented and retracted everything he had been teaching, possibly under torture. Still he was not released but sent to Rome instead for closer examination.

The process in Rome against Giordano Bruno continued for seven years behind barred doors, during which time he was held a prisoner in Castell Sant'Angelo, originally the mausoleum of the liberal and tolerant emperor Hadrian, which the pope converted into a prison. We know nothing about this process. It seems however to have resulted in that Giordano Bruno towards the end of 1599 retracted that he ever retracted anything of his theses. Thus he repaired his breakdown in Venice in July 1592. For this he was sentenced to be publicly burned at the stake. The execution took place on February 17th 1600.

Giordano Bruno has unfairly landed in the shadow of the other astronomers of his age, first of all Galilei, who at Bruno's death was 35 years and active in Pisa. Also Kepler and Tycho Brahe, who met in Prague three days before Bruno's execution, have gone down in history as greater astronomers, because they got away. Today it seems absurd that Bruno was executed for having embraced the Copernican views. That's not why he was executed though. His greatest achievement was something much bolder.

Giordano Bruno presented an entirely new theology, which made a cleansweep of all superstition and blind faith. For Giordano Bruno God was as impersonal as for buddhism and hinduism and as all comprising and ubiquitous in all life in all the universe. This would seem rather innocent. The consequence of this however was for Bruno that Christ was not God's son. This is what irritated and scared the church and the inquisition stiff. Professing this thesis was about the most challenging any thinker of the 16th century could do. By Giordano Bruno's incredibly universal knowledge and education and his formidable reputation in all the learned world, his obstinate insistence on this thesis made the church quake in its foundations. It was worse than the entire reformation.

The Vatican made its utmost to silence him and succeeded to a certain degree. By neither executing him nor releasing him during a process of seven years he was kept buried alive and silenced while the world was kept unknowing and hardly dared to speak about him. The one who found a way out of this dilemma was Giordano Bruno himself, who by standing for his views, annoying his judges and continuing to drive the church into a rage tempted the church to complete the digging of the grave of its own credibility by committing the worst judicial murder of that age. Bruno was not guilty of anything but freedom of conscience and expression.

Bruno was unique in standing completely alone. No one before him or after him advocated the same view. To many his world of thoughts became tremendously important, especially to the astronomers Galilei, Kepler and Brahe but also to philosophers like Spinoza, Goethe, Schopenhauer and Rudolf Steiner, but none of his followers demonstrated the same consistency and courage in their life's work. Galilei retracted anything at the mere sight of the instruments of torture, Spinoza kept within the innocent frames of theoretical philosophy, Goethe was terrified by the mere thought of any challenge against the world order, Schopenhauer protected himself by hiding behind the pessimistic veil of resignation, while Rudolf Steiner followed Goethe's policy and made an effort to be only constructive. Giordano

Bruno's boldness is unsurpassed still today, and he is waiting forever for his attorney of defence against the Roman inquisition.



“Unless you make yourself equal to God, you cannot understand God: for the like is not intelligible save to the like. Make yourself grow to a greatness beyond measure, by a bound free yourself from the body; raise yourself above all time, become Eternity; then you will understand God. Believe that nothing is impossible for you, think yourself immortal and capable of understanding all, all arts, all sciences, the nature of every living being. Mount higher than the highest height; descend lower than the lowest depth. Draw into yourself all sensations of everything created, fire and water, dry and moist, imagining that you are everywhere, on earth, in the sea, in the sky, that you are not yet born, in the maternal womb, adolescent, old, dead, beyond death. If you embrace in your thought all things at once, times, places, substances, qualities, quantities, you may understand God.”

– *Giordano Bruno*