

SCENE 5: Soothsayer Alley

There's a row of rundown storefronts manned by various psychics, fortune tellers, astrologers, etc.

ASTROLOGER

Hot cards! Palm readings! Amputees get half price!

PSYCHIC WOMAN

Lucky heather sir?

NICK

Thanks, but - I need more than luck.

NICK approaches a MAN WITH AN EYEPATCH, checks over his shoulder.

Post: Hey I'm looking for a soothsayer.

EYEPATCH MAN

(pointing)

Robert the Knowing. Supposed to be the best.

A second story window opens, NOSTRADAMUS pokes his head out.

NICK

(reading)

"Out of business due to unforeseen circumstances."

(then...)

So obviously not the very best.

NOSTRADAMUS

Did I hear a need for future seeing?

The window closes. We hear footsteps on stairs, then falling, pots and pans, a cat SCREECH, then a door opens and Nostradamus steps out.

If seeing is what you need, then I can help you. If help is what you need, then I can see you. If neither is what you need, then I can foresee you leaving very shortly. So - am I hired? Actually, I know I will be, I'm just being polite.

NICK

Who are you?

NOSTRADAMUS

I - am Nostradamus.

NICK

THE Nostradamus?

NOSTRADAMUS

No. I'm his nephew. Thomas.

NICK

Thomas Nostradamus?

NOSTRADAMUS

(raising his hand as if giving oath)

I promise. But I share the same gifts as my esteemed uncle. And for half a crown, I'll share those gifts with you. And I predict for you a new life... with no teeth! That was a freebie.

NICK

Uhhh... I'll keep looking if you don't mind.

NOSTRADAMUS

Suit yourself.

(getting a vision, then eerily)

But beware the sign of the black dog.

NICK

Right. Thank you. Good luck in the asylum.

NOSTRADAMUS goes one way, NICK goes the other. A PUB SIGN shifts and falls, stopping just before hitting Nick on the head. It says "THE BLACK DOG." (or - a MAN walks past carrying a sign, nearly hit Nick with it. When the man turns, we can see the sign says "BLACK DOG PUB")

Half a crown you said?

NOSTRADAMUS returns as NICK pays him.

NOSTRADAMUS

Excellent! Now - what is it you would like the future to tell?

NICK

Well, I'm a writer -

NOSTRADAMUS

I knew that.

NICK

...and I want you to look into the future and tell me...

(checks to make sure no one's listening)

What will the next big thing in theater be? - what audiences will be lining up to see.

NOSTRADAMUS

Right. Stand back. Give me some space.

HE shakes out and warms up like an athlete before an event, then more hacking and clearing his sinuses, then squints hard and puts his fingers to his temples. He squints – then gets the shivers.

Oh. Oh my. Wow. Ooooh, in the future, the theaters are very *niiiiice*. Cushy red seats. AND A ROOF! And wait!... whoa, what is this?? It's UNBELIEVABLE!

NICK

What? What?!

NOSTRADAMUS

That much?? For a glass of *wine*?!?!

NICK

How about what's on the stage?

NOSTRADAMUS

Right. Getting to that..

HE squints, then gets a vision that causes him to stumble backwards. NICK has to catch him.

Whoa! What spectacle! I have seen the future!

NICK

What, what is it??!

NOSTRADAMUS

The biggest, most fantastic thing in theater will be...

(painting it in the air)

MUSICALS.

NICK

What?

NOSTRADAMUS

(painting it again)

Musicals.

NICK

What the hell are "musicals?"

NOSTRADAMUS

(squinting into the distance)

It appears to be a play where the dialogue stops and the plot is conveyed through song.

NICK

Through song?

NOSTRADAMUS

Yes.

NICK

Wait, wait. So—an actor is saying his lines and then, out of nowhere, he just starts singing??

NOSTRADAMUS

Yes!

#5 — A Musical

NICK

WELL, THAT IS THE...
STUPIDEST THING THAT I HAVE EVER HEARD
YOU'RE DOING A PLAY, GOT SOMETHING TO SAY
SO YOU SING IT? IT'S ABSURD
WHO ON EARTH IS GOING TO SIT THERE
WHILE AN ACTOR BREAKS INTO SONG
WHAT POSSIBLE THOUGHT CAN THE AUDIENCE THINK
OTHER THAN THIS IS HORRIBLY — WRONG?

NOSTRADAMUS

Remarkably, they won't think that.

NICK

Seriously? And why not?

NOSTRADAMUS

Because.

IT'S... A...
MUSICAL, A MUSICAL
AND NOTHING'S AS AMAZING AS A MUSICAL
WITH SONG AND DANCE, AND SWEET ROMANCE
AND HAPPY ENDINGS HAPPENING BY HAPPENSTANCE
BRIGHT LIGHTS, STAGE FIGHTS AND A DAZZLING CHORUS
YOU WANNA BE GREAT THEN YOU GOTTA CREATE
A MUSICAL

NICK

I don't know, I find it hard to believe people would actually pay to see something like this.