

The Seven Veils  
Dialogue with the Baptist  
Salomé's Reward  
The Chop  
The Platter

*Young girl enters and moves to centre/front of stage.*

VESTAL VIRGIN: *[deadpan]* The story of Salomé and John the Baptist in five parts. See this mess of thorns.

## THE SEVEN VEILS

*Arabic wailing and bells.*

*All props, crown, throne etc must look like they were made by children. KING HEROD sits on throne centre-left oggling a despondent SALOMÉ who sulks and sighs and allows her heavenly body to pursue conquettishly the serpentine rhythms of music in a manner of cruel titillation. Her slips, shrugs and sudden spasms are a cruel test for the ancient but riggish King. Salomé is bored and finds small pleasure in the torment.*

KING HEROD: What ails thee, my precious Salomé? What is it that has put your pretty little nose so out of joint? You need some cheer. Dance for me, my peach, your King is old and finds small joy in his waning years. Dance for your King and brighten an old man's corner with your youthful fulgence. Come, my petal, dance and you shall be rewarded.

SALOMÉ *[with a pout]* A reward?

If it be your wish, my King.

Music! Let's have some life!

Your Majesty, 'The Dance of the Seven Veils'.

*The music pulses and snakes, but Salome remains stock-still, facing Herod.*

*She removes, one by one, the veils that are bound about her body. Her hair is as liquid gold. Her lips are blood-heavy and as clinquant as cut rubies. Her teeth are like pearls. Her breasts are hillocks of honey-coloured sand.*

*Her quim is shielded by a fine lace.*

KING HEROD: *[increasingly delirious]* One! . . . oh! see how it flutters from her hand. Two! . . . ohh! downward like a dying bird . . . THREE! . . . oh beautiful Salomé I love you . . . Oh! now, FOUR! . . . see how the veils cause the floor to storm, yet their absence reveals such still and silent flesh . . . FIVE! . . . oh my heart pounds out to you. What you create with your seven veils God, creaking at the hinges, could never approach with his seven days. Oh . . . SIX!! *[Herod clutches painfully at his heart]*

as he collapses.]

Enter John the Baptist in camel skins.

JOHN THE BAPTIST: What evil here?

SALOMÉ: *[calling to the wings]* Seize him guards! Seize the Baptist!

BLACKOUT

VESTAL VIRGIN enters and introduces the play thus:

VESTAL VIRGIN: *[deadpan]* Play number two is entitled 'Dialogue with the Baptist'. *[Moves to far back corner and watches.]*

## DIALOGUE WITH THE BAPTIST

*A clumsy wooden kennel with a wire-screen frontage incarcerates JOHN THE BAPTIST like an animal. SALOMÉ sits atop the box swinging one long bright naked leg in front of the cage. One hand slips beneath her robe, while the other holds a large apple which she eats. Her toenails are painted the colour of blood. Salomé fingers herself.*

JOHN THE BAPTIST: I, John the Baptist, even while caged like a dog, do not grovel so deep into the muck as you, Salomé. You are sin. Lucifer, the dark angel, watches over you knowing that one day he will claim you. You are the wicked and you have his mark upon you. Repent now or suffer horrors too vile to mention.

SALOMÉ: If I have my way, pompous turd, you won't have a brain for much longer! *[She laughs.]*

JOHN THE BAPTIST: I, John the Baptist, bound in affliction and iron, kept like a dog in a cage, will never know pain as you will one day know, Salomé. Spawn of incest, you are damned for eternity. Too vile for the grave, too vile for the grave. You are beyond redemption! Marked with devil blood, ruled by the moon! O hellish vixen! O cloven gender!

SALOMÉ: Cleanse me, Baptist. Take this yoke, the moon, under which ah slave, the terrible Emperess of mah body. Its climate, its seasons. I am woman. Cleanse me. Wash away all that's comely. Chasten me, Baptist, with your waters.

*The moon appears above them. It is a gold platter.*

JOHN THE BAPTIST: Get thee behind me, Satan!

A single strand of your hair would pollute the sacred Jordan river. Was it you who dipped her toe in what is now called the DEAD SEA? I would suffer an eternity in darkness, clothed in worms, rather than make a mockery of the blessed mystery of baptism.

SALOMÉ: Suit yourself, dick breath!



*The moon lowers itself, appears to hover just above and behind SALOMÉ's head.*

See, Baptist. The moon sanctifies me. It sits behind my crown of curls like a gloriole.

BLACKOUT

VESTAL VIRGIN: Play number three is entitled 'Salomé's Reward'.

### **SALOMÉ'S REWARD**

*Single spot-light illuminates SALOMÉ centre-stage.*

SALOMÉ: *[In an evil whisper]* My mouth asks for it. My heart weeps for it! My cunt yearns for it!! The moon, in turn, demands it. THE HEAD OF JOHN THE B.!!

BLACKOUT

VESTAL VIRGIN: The fourth play is entitled 'The Chop'. [*Stands back; fingers herself absent-mindedly as she looks on.*]

## THE CHOP

*As in the remarkable painting by Puvis de Chavannes the scene is thus: (left to right) NEGRO with axe; JOHN THE BAPTIST, hands roped and kneeling; SALOMÉ, hand working diligently between her sugar thighs.*

JOHN THE BAPTIST: All Heaven and Hell are watching, evil one! The angels puff up the clouds for me, the poker is in the furnace for you! He looks heavenward. I am ready, Lord!

SALOMÉ: [*in climactic ecstasy*] . . . And so am I! Let the axe drop, and silence this fucking do-gooder!

JOHN THE BAPTIST: I go to my God. Though narrow are the gates, he will show the way.

*The moon blinks on and blood runs down the insides of SALOMÉ's dress.*

*Blackout as axe falls.*

VESTAL VIRGIN: The last play is entitled 'The Platter'.

## THE PLATTER

*KING HEROD, recovered from his coronary, on throne with large piece of chicken in hand.*

*Enter NEGRO with head of JOHN THE BAPTIST, on a platter. The head must be infinitely bloody and so on. HEROD recoils in horror.*

KING HEROD: [*Clutching his problem heart*] Wha . . . what is that!?

NEGRO: This my most worthy master is the head of John the Baptist . . . minus the tongue, which Salomé demanded for herself. She said to inform you that you may eat the head but she's gunna teach her cunt to talk good.

*Pause*

*A pre-pubescent girl enters, naked but covered in bloody hand-prints.*

GIRL: [*Deadpan*] The end.

BLACKOUT