

## **Zodiac Dad**

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Category: Documentary

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Company: Prosper de Roos

Author, producer, director: Prosper de Roos

Sound engineer: Arno Peeters

Other key staff: Jair Stein (commissioning editor)

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## **SUMMARY**

While helping his aging and dementing father cleaning up his house, documentary maker Prosper de Roos accidentally finds several documents and a cassette tape with his name on it. The papers are astrological texts and a horoscope his father made of him. The astrological writings consist of hand-drawn diagrams and complicated calculations carefully jotted down with a ballpoint pen. The texts are an astrological deconstructing of Prosper's character and being, who was 11 years old at the time. On the cassette tape the voice of his father can be heard consulting an astrologer. Pops doesn't know what to do with his son. Young Prosper doesn't listen, is undisciplined and still wets his bed. The astrologer is not surprised all. The boy has a tricky horoscope. He does not tolerate his own soul, is a brawler and could easily become a terrorist. And all because the child has the same natal-sun as Hitler. It has something to do with karma. The finding of the astrological texts and curious cassette tape is the starting point for a personal quest. What role does the zodiac play in a father-son relationship? How do two worlds collide and find each other? And why did a curious predictions of the future came true? This documentary is an auditory journey that spans over ten years and takes an unexpected turn when the corona pandemic intervenes.

# **Zodiac Dad**

An audio documentary by Prosper de Roos

## **TRANSCRIPT**

DAD

Darkness and light. Boy, oh, boy, oh, boy. What a horoscope.

NARRATOR

This is my father Paul. About 10 years ago. He's sitting at his desk with his reading glasses on the tip of his nose....

DAD

Yes.

NARRATOR

...and studies a horoscope.

DAD

Leo and Scorpio. This is very impressive.

NARRATOR

My father is retired and lives alone. He was an urban planner. Now he is an artist, a gifted chess player and above all an astrologer.

DAD

Taurus, no wait, Capricorn, Cancer, yes.

NARRATOR

He works out the positions of the stars without a computer. Just with pen and paper.

DAD

28, 10....

NARRATOR

My dad's gaze is turned upwards. Because of this, everyday life, sometimes fades into the background.

**1:00 min**

SON

A mouse. I can see a mouse

DAD

Ooh.

SON

It's sitting on the organ.

DAD

That's nice.

SON

Just behind...

DAD

He does not squeak.

SON

Do they normally squeak?

DAD

Yes, yes, yes...

NARRATOR

But the mice don't only make noise. They also consume the inner workings of the organ, books, horoscopes and everything else.

DAD

Newspapers, all sorts of things. Snippets, snippets, look here on the floor. That's all shreadings.

NARRATOR

My father understands everything about the zodiac, but nothing about mice.

DAD

I have no idea how to get rid of my mice. Anyway. Do come again!

SON

Okay, in a few weeks?

DAD

Fine, there are always family secrets to be revealed.

1:53

NARRATOR

From that moment on, I have been helping my father to clean up at irregular intervals.

SON

(reading book titles)

Transcendental astrology. Lunar Astrology

NARRATOR

His desk gradually disappears behind piles of books and papers. His bookcase is full of astrological study books and mystical texts.

SON

(reading titles of books)

Prospect and level of the horoscope...

NARRATOR

For as long as I can remember, my dad has been looking at the stars.

SON

The clock of fate.

NARRATOR

Questions I had as a child were answered by pointing out that Venus has a difficult conjunction. Or that next year Mars will be in a much better position. As a child, I shrugged my shoulders. I wanted concrete answers.

SON

This one...

DAD

But this one is also very beautiful. Jupiter and Venus are like royalty. Kingly. Yeah, yeah.

SON

Jupiter and Venus mean nothing to me.

DAD

(sighs)

Everything royal, in a general sense, is Jupiter and Venus. But not everyone is a blessed with a fortunate Jupiter and Venus.

NARRATOR

The relationship with my father is sometimes difficult. We feel distant. In numerous conversations, my father always ends up at the starry sky. At a mystical undertow. Whereas I have nothing to do with the zodiac.

DAD

...this is about the Polaris.

NARRATOR

I see the stars as a part of my father. Nothing to do with me or anything to do with our relationship. But today I will make a discovery that will make me question this. And it's all because of a cardboard box that I'll discover at my father's place.

3:45 min

DAD

What is that?

SON

Cassette tapes.

DAD

Oh!

SON

Can I have those?

DAD

What are you going to do with it?

SON

I want to put a sound artwork on the cassette tapes.

DAD

oh! Joe Jackson. Ludwig von Beethoven. String Quartet No 4. This is quite remarkable...

SON

Yes. But I find the tape covers much more interesting. There are quite a few tapes.

DAD

Yes. There are many more.

4:15 min

NARRATOR

When I examine the tapes at home, I find among the music, a box with some cassettes that my father recorded himself.

SON

(reading cassette labels)

There are about 15 cassettes. *Astrology consultation 1983*. I cannot read this one.

NARRATOR

Like a radio reporter, my dad recorded several conversations.

SON

The relationship horoscope... Hey!

NARRATOR

There is a cassette with my name on it.

SON

(reading cassette label)

Prosper, 9 September, 1977. I was 11 at the time.

5:37 min

VOICES ON TAPE

Is it running? It's playing. Oh!

MAN ON TAPE

How much can that tape hold?

DAD ON TAPE

120 minutes

MAN ON TAPE

2 x 60

DAD ON TAPE

2 x 60 that's convenient....

NARRATOR

I can hear an unknown man talking to my father on the tape.

DAD ON TAPE

..but we don't need to fill the tape...



NARRATOR

This is my father's voice.

DAD ON TAPE

...there will be music on in due course.

NARRATOR

It turns out my father is consulting an astrologer. He doesn't know what to do with his son. With me, in other words.

DAD ON TAPE

The issue is that he is quite difficult to raise. Prosper lacks the inner discipline to do any work. He always wants to play.

NARRATOR

My dad has a difficult time dealing with me. I didn't listen and I peed in my bed.

DAD ON TAPE

He also has poor eating habits, he hardly eats anything, chips etc....

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

That's the trouble these days...

NARRATOR

To understand the difficulties, the astrologer looks at my astrological constellations.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

I have the horoscope in front of me. That should tell us what's going on. The new moon birth. That is not easy and actually the core of the whole problem. In everyday life this always results in psychological problems.

The born one loves controversy. But that can very quickly escalate into real fighting. The ascendant is somewhat in the first degree of Taurus. This results in extremely harsh people.

#### DAD ON TAPE

He is more of a bedroom-hero because he is so sensitive.

#### ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

Yes that's due to other things. But I'm just talking about the astrological degree. If this is opposed by other things then you get a mixture. Very difficult. But I'll stick to the degree for now.

It is the degree of Hitler's birth sun. Thus we get a very nice idea of what that degree is capable of. This is the explanation for the problems at the moment. For they come because Uranus....

#### NARRATOR (7:13)

Would I get mental problems? Become a fighter? Just because I have the same birth sun as Hitler? Did my father believe this?

I'm not quite sure what to do with the cassette. I'm left with a thousand questions. Is this how my Dad perceives me? As someone with a miserable constellation? As a bad person?

Why is it a huge problem that I want to play? I was 11 years old!!! What possessed my Dad and that astrologer?

#### INTRO UPDATE / DON'T KNOW HOW TO REQUEST CASSETTE (7:50 min)

#### DAD

Watch out, watch out, watch out. Everything may fall... You can't move or everything comes crashing down. I really need to...

#### NARRATOR

When I'm at my dad's to help him with the mice, one thing keeps going around in my head: how does this weird birth sun affect the way my father sees me?

#### DAD

Whatever you do, you disrupt things, first I need to carefully figure out what to do. And yes....

NARRATOR

I hesitate whether to mention the cassette tape. I am afraid where a conversation will lead to. To clarification, ridicule or worse: conflict. Maybe that's why I decide that at this point, my father would benefit more from someone helping him clean up, than someone asking awkward questions.

DAD

Let's see, I've lost it again, bah....

NARRATOR

My dad is flipping through a stack of letters.

DAD

1, 2...

NARRATOR

From astrologers, mediums and gurus.

DAD

..3, 4. That's, no, that's madame soleil.

NARRATOR

A lot of letters promise wealth and prosperity.

DAD

That's about instant happiness

NARRATOR

Provided you transfer money first, of course.

DAD

These events are related to your life. Aha!

NARRATOR

But this does not upset my dad.

DAD

They drive you absolutely... Or try to make you curious. But I'm totally enjoying it.

Evangelia Bougla, Castanic Medium and Seer. It's a combination... Blah, blah, blah....

NARRATOR

(9:30)

My father regards the junk mail as a cheap form of entertainment. Would he have laughed as much about the consultation with the astrologer on the tape? About my obscure character sketch?

DAD

Yes. Today I'm going to have a very bad day. Today. So you're here. I don't know what all this means. But today is going to be a very special day.

NARRATOR

My dad is playing a game. In which it is not clear if he is joking. I instead focus on the mice and try to clean up a bit.

I can move some stuff around.

Yes

Just tell me if I should put things there or there.

But then the chaos will be even worse.

Then you should make an appointment sometime.

I'll do some preliminary work. You see, the thing is...

That' s okay... Hello!

NARRATOR

On the phone is Gerrie, my father's girlfriend.

Oh yes. No. Prosper is already there darling

NARRATOR

Gerrie is also worried about the mice.

DAD

Prosper is already cleaning up. I try to restrain him a little, but he wants to throw everything in a plastic bag. Yeah, yeah. Hang in there, bye!

Well, nice... Yeah, no I'm drowsy, a little dizzy.

SON

Still.

DAD

Yes

NARRATOR

My dad is worried about his health. He sits on the couch and spins a fag.

DAD

Boy, oh boy am I giddy.

NARRATOR

In addition to dizziness, he is sometimes more absent-minded than usual. Something he notices himself.

DAD

I don't know if I have Alzheimer's or what. Because I do get more forgetful sometimes....

SON

You're getting older.

Is this old age?

NARRATOR

But my father remains worried

DAD

My neighbour used to run around in circles. He couldn't find his own house anymore.

NARRATOR

The neighbour had dementia and forgot where he lived. My Dad was often called to pick up the neighbour from the cafe, to take him home.

DAD

Yes, that's... I did experience that.... Very sad.

NARRATOR

What I don't know yet is that my father also has dementia. In retrospect there were signs. Like when I was cleaning up. When I want to throw away advertising material.

DAD

Can I just check what's in there?

SON

Yes, open it.

DAD

Let me see.

SON

It says here: You seek prosperity, I give you millions.

DAD

Yes, yes, there's a whole story there. Yes...

SON

My father wants to keep the advertising mail because it is addressed to him personally.

DAD

It's probably some kind of thank you letter.

SON

But look here: dearest girlfriend, I congratulate you on the uniquely great turnaround in your life.

DAD

And here it says: dear Mr. de Roos.

SON

That's just advertising.

DAD

I don't know. It's all written in my karma.

NARRATOR

The distinction between what is of value and nonsense seems to be blurring. Everything is important.

DAD

All those letters are exceptional. This is not just advertising mail.

SON

Yes

DAD

Yes, you told me...

SON

Sorry, that I told you...

DAD

Yes. But I am special selected advertising.

SON

Yes, yes, along with a few million other people you are selected.

NARRATOR

Slowly, dementia will change my father's life. Everyday things will turn into challenges.

DAD

Oh you're already busy. You're already busy...

NARRATOR

Especially when your son wants to throw away everything.

SON

Should I make some space?

DAD

No, what, yes

SON

You always claim that you want to organise things...

DAD

Yes

SON

I am here now. I can help you. To make some space to sort things out.

DAD

Oh, oh, well.... (talking to himself) What should I do now? What do I do now?



NARRATOR

Fortunately, my father is not on his own.

GERRIE GIRLFRIEND

I say: well that's fine, if Prosper comes...

NARRATOR

This is Gerrie, my father's girlfriend.

GERRIE GIRLFRIEND

Then you can take a nice walk, no he says. I say why not...

NARRATOR

She helps him more frequently with daily things.

GERRIE GIRLFRIEND

Yes, good, the tax. Fine.

DAD

Taxes.

GERRIE GIRLFRIEND

Yes we need to assemble the tax stuff...

NARRATOR

Like the post or the meter reading.

GERRIE GIRLFRIEND

Yes. It's quite a hassle because the sofa has to be moved. There's a hatch, which we taped shut because it's always draughty. And that has to be removed. And then we have to take a picture. And then everything has to be put back on. For the water meter. (laughter)

NARRATOR

I don't know how much time I have left to ask my father questions, to have a conversation about that extreme birth sun. And so I look for a suitable moment to start talking about the cassette tape. But there's one difficulty.

DAD

Is today Saturday? Oh!

NARRATOR

My dad remembers less and less because of his dementia.

DAD

Hehe.

NARRATOR

For example, he doesn't remember that six months ago he broke his arm playing chess.

DAD

No I have not broken anything. I have no fracture. (Girlfriend enters the room. Dad turns to girlfriend) I haven't broken anything with chess, have I? I haven't got a fracture, have I? Oh I have! Apparently. I don't remember.

GIRL GIRL

There you go.

NARRATOR

Luckily Gerrie remembers everything. My father tripped over a small doorstep at the chess club.

GERRIE GIRLFRIEND

Do we all have something to drink now?

DAD

Yes!

GIRL FRIEND

Do you want a...

SON

I'll stick to the tea for now.

DAD

Black tea?

NARRATOR

My dad never drinks tea

SON

Black tea.

DAD

Oh dear.

NARRATOR

As I sip my tea, I carefully try to turn the subject towards the stars...

SON

Did you know that today, for the first time in 800 years, Saturn and Jupiter are aligned?

DAD

Saturn and Jupiter

SON

Yes

DAD

Oh! Did you read that by chance or something?

SON

It is on the news.

DAD

It is on the news.

SON

Do you remember what it means?

DAD

Jupiter and Saturn are 2 planets.

SON

Yes

DAD

It tells me nothing that they are aligned.

NARRATOR

The starry sky seems to have receded into the background. Other things are more important now. Like coffee and cake.

GIRL GIRL

There you go!

DAD

Ah look at that.

GERRIE GIRLFRIEND

Are you comfortable?

NARRATOR

I doubt there's any point in talking about an old cassette tape when he can't remember what to do with two planets. I realise that I have to look for the answers elsewhere.

sound car starts 16:52 min

NARRATOR

And so I'm off to meet someone who can hopefully tell me more about the prediction on the tape and the context in which it took place.

CAR NAVIGATION

You're on the fastest route. You'll arrive at 14:40

NARRATOR

I have invited myself to Joyce Hoen.

DOOR BELL RINGING

JOYCE

Welcome!

SON

Hello, good morning!

NARRATOR

Joyce is an astrologer and has presented a radio programme for many years.

JOYCE

Well, it's been a while.

RADIO SHOW CLIP

Q-radio. Good morning everyone and welcome to Raja. I'm Joyce Hoen, the sun is up ...

JOYCE

I enjoyed myself. I've always said: in my next life I want to be a DJ or an astrologer again.

RADIO SHOW CLIP

We're going to talk about inner peace and world peace. Very appropriate at this time.

NARRATOR

Joyce has been involved with astrology since the 1970s. She was in her early twenties.

JOYCE

That's when it emerged. In the same period as the hippies rose. It was really a hippy movement more or less. That's where it originated.

SON

What interested you in astrology?

JOYCE

That you could figure out how people are put together. That was insane. And then, of course, you want to know about yourself, too. Yes, also about others. You want to go deeper and more and more. Why do we do what we do?

NARRATOR

Astrology in the 80s was not just for hippies. The French president Mitterrand, for example, regularly sought astrological advice. And so did the American president.

ARCHIVE NEWS CLIP

New reports on Ms. Reagan on the Reliance on an astrologer raise new questions. The astrologer was involved in everything. She picked the departure time for the Reykjavík summit. The optimal time to sign an arms control treaty. The best time for a trip to Moscow.....

JOYCE

After that, astrology was accepted by everyone. Those were really the heydays of astrology. After that came the decline.

NARRATOR 19:11 min

After the millennium solstice something changed. Astrology went out of fashion.

NARRATOR

I let Joyce listen to the cassette and am curious to know what she thinks of the consultation.

VOICES ON TAPE

How much is on that tape?

120 minutes

2 x 60

2 x 60 that's easy for me....

JOYCE

I recognise his voice. Your father's voice

SON

Yes, what kind of man was it?

JOYCE

I didn't know him that well. He was a bit flirtatious actually.

SON

Yes, he was. Yes, he was,

JOYCE

And I didn't like that (whispering)

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

What strikes me is that it is typically a modern birth. Children who are disharmonious. Disharmonious natural.

JOYCE

(Smack) Children who are disharmonious. (Laughing) Don't say that. What an arrogant figure.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

People are born with stressful horoscopes in these tense times.

JOYCE

Yes, I agree with him. People are born into the times that suit them.

NARRATOR

I wonder if it was customary in the 1970s to ask an astrologer for advice about your 11-yearold son.

JOYCE

Yes, you could do that. It was very fashionable at the time.

NARRATOR

Joyce also gave family advice herself. To all ages.

JOYCE

I also did a lot of baby horoscopes. That was done blind. And then you tell the parents... You give them a model of what would be ideal with regard to how to approach the child. But what I have done the most. That's career path questions. Children who were born in the seventies, they were all big doubters, who switched very often between different studies. I've seen a lot of that.

NARRATOR

(21:06 min)

Maybe this applies to me as well. I had a hard time at school and often got held back. Something that the astrologer sees in my horoscope, strangely enough.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

He must be intelligent somewhere. But that mercury saturn can make him pretty headstrong. Stubborn. A horse's brain so to speak. Which only comes into focus later.

NARRATOR

After my parents' divorce, I got hopelessly stuck and went to several schools. I am a dropout. It was only when I was older that I completed a study of philosophy. Also something that the astrologer sees in the stars.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

In the end I do see the career of a philosopher. Maybe something like what I'm doing here. I also have the sun in 9.



NARRATOR

Was it written in the stars in 1977 that I would study philosophy? One of the reasons the cassette tape intrigues me is not only the absurd comparison with Hitler, but also this miraculous prediction, which really came true.

NARRATOR

Does that happen often? I ask Joyce....

JOYCE

That doesn't happen often, you don't see that much.

NARRATOR

The predictions about my school career and studies are not the only things the astrologer got right. This became clear when I played the tape to my friend Magda...

MAGDA

I immediately recognise you in the polemic. That is directly spot on.

SON

Arguing.

MAGDA

Yes.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

The born one loves to debate...

SON

Do you find that annoying?

MAGDA

That's what I fell in love with in the first place. That crazy Prosper, who always manages to find another point of view, which makes people completely confused again. Or sometimes even curious. It was also intriguing that you always knew how to express a different point of view. And I always liked that. But over the years, also in discussions when we were with friends, when fierce discussions arose in which you were often the instigator. We just couldn't work it out and you kept going anyway. That would get irritating.

SON

Am I a hard person?

MAGDA

I don't recognize that. No. But with you, the polemic doesn't come from hardness. With you, the polemic comes from playfulness. But then again... Maybe it depends on which girlfriend you have next to you! (Laughing) Maybe I'll keep you... (Laughing)

NARRATOR

Those things that annoy my girlfriend sometimes, like getting too caught up in a discussion, I might have inherited from my father. He has that too.

SON

Do you believe in astrology?

MAGDA

Yes, I do. I do believe in it partially. That horoscope reading I look at is about processes you are in. So I don't read it to find some kind of truth. But more to give a kind of direction to my own...

SON

How do you think that works with my father?

MAGDA

Your father does seek the truth. I think so. Especially when you delve so deeply into it. Then you certainly attach a truth claim to it.

NARRATOR (24:40)

I wonder how the horoscope consultations and predictions on the cassette are meant? As an interpretation of processes or as a truth claim? There is only one person who can answer this: the astrologer himself. But I don't know who he is.

JOYCE

Should I press anything?

SON

Yes. You can press play

JOYCE

This one is, isn't it?

SON

Yes

NARRATOR

I wonder if Joyce recognises his voice.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

...he would be helped by women in...

NARRATOR

Then Joyce concentrates on the voice. Looks from over her glasses into the distance. Digs into her memory.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

Yes, that is a curious position...

JOYCE

I wonder if he has a bit of a Twents accent... (regional dialect)

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

...namely that he is primarily a materialist...

JOYCE

That dialect that's like... When you swallow words at the end. *Inslikk*... instead of *inslikken*.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

Surely man becomes a man through struggle? He becomes...

JOYCE

Yes, I do know astrologers from Twente, but it wasn't them. Because I do know them.

SON

My father. An astrologer of whom he sometimes spoke is Roland Hepp...

JOYCE

That's definitely not him... I know Roland Hepp very well, I had a relationship with him. So, yeah.

SOUND CASSETTE RECORDER OFF 26:01 min

NARROTOR

An unknown astrologer with a Twents accent. A miserable horoscope and a wonderful prediction of the future. My search has produced mostly question marks. I wonder if my father will ever be able to answer them.

DAD

Things that I consider important and unimportant. That goes one, two, three, that... I hardly remember what I don't like. I've forgotten it.

GERRIE

Are you comfortable?

DAD

What do you say?

GERRIE

You have to press the green button. Green button... Green... Over there green Paul!

DAD

The green button?

GERRIE

Yes, then you can turn, now you are stuck....

DAD

Alright!

NARRATOR

Gerrie takes care of my father now full-time.

GERRIE

Now you can get up.

NARRATOR

I help out now and then.

GERRIE

Suppose he has defecated or he says I have to poop. If he says I have to poop....

NARRATOR

For the first time in my life I change my dad's nappy.

DAD

Button loose...

GERRIE

Zip off... Can you do it Pros?

DAD

My goodness

GERRIE

Good, isn't it?

NARRATOR

I realise that the fragile man is miles away from the voice on the cassette tape.

DAD ON TAPE

I feel the urge to put an end to it now... Always tiptoeing around me. I've given myself away...

NARRATOR

My father seems to be at a turning point in his life in 1977.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE (27:30 min)

Don't you think it's worth coming back to this marriage?

DAD ON TAPE

Well I would like to. But only if the other side makes an effort.

NARRATOR

My father was getting a divorce from my mother Miriam. My parents had grown apart. My dad had plunged into the free seventies. Apparently it had something to do with his own constellations.

DAD ON TAPE

With this opposition of Saturn Venus, I will always be a swinger in certain respects, something I have to accept.

NARRATOR

My mother, however, had nothing to do with the drifting constellations. Another area of conflict between my parents was parenting. My father wanted a free education in the spirit of the seventies.

DAD ON TAPE

I always made him out to be a rebel. That was a difficult conflict between Miriam and me. Miriam also wanted to make him a bit more, um, tidy.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

Yes, she is right about that. For to encourage rebellion in this boy, is to turn him into a terrorist, that is very dangerous.

DAD ON TAPE

Eh...

NARRATOR

Again, that strange sun of birth comes into play. My father is not only told that his son has a dangerous constellation, but also that his parenting only makes it much worse.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

That is never acceptable. He must be disciplined.

DAD ON TAPE

He is the sort of revolutionary with ideals.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

Be very careful.

DAD ON TAPE

I mean, I didn't think he should let himself be told too much by the schoolmaster.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

He can... If the development is not quite as harmonious, he can be aggressive well into adulthood.

DAD ON TAPE

What are the best measures to prevent this?

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

Yes, yes, that's the point. I want to stop for a moment. My throat....

29:30 min

NARRATOR

It's incomprehensible. Why do you tell a concerned parent that his 11-year-old son is a terrorist in the making? Why on earth do you take that seriously?

NARRATOR

But then I remember that the tape dates from the turbulent 1970s. That was not only the time of the sexual revolution, freedom, ABBA and Saturday Night Fever. But also of the attacks by the IRA, the Rote Armee Fraktion and the Dutch Moluske train hijackings.

ARCHIVE DUTCH NEWS CLIP

Almost three weeks after the train hostage taking in Bovensmilde and near De Punt, the Dutch government decided to put an end to it by force of arms.

(sound fighter jets, shooting and explosion)

ARCHIVE MAN

Goddamn...

NARRATOR

The two men on the tape worry about where the world is heading.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

Look what's happening everywhere now, that's just... At a certain moment a dictator will rise and declare: this is how it will go. The world is no longer controllable.

DAD ON TAPE

Germany is now struggling with its criminality...

ARCHIVE GERMAN NEWS CLIP

... after his kidnapping by terrorists in Cologne...



NARRATOR

The world is on fire. Moving, pushing and pulling. In that respect, it seems that little has changed.

ARCHIVE U.S. NEWS CLIP

You've got something to say to me freak! Say it to my goddamn face motherfucker...

(sound protests crowd)

NARRATOR

We live in uncertain times again. The polar caps are melting. People are protesting, democracies are under threat and viruses are raging around the world. And strikingly, astrology is on the rise again.

COLLAGE ARCHIVE NEWS CLIPS

In the past 4 years, astrology has never been googled as frequently as this year.

...on November 19, there will be an aspect between the planets... ..as the Sun towards Leo, your artistic gifts...

NARRATOR

Around the world, young people consult their horoscope on Tiktok, Instagram or Spotify.

COLLAGE ARCHIVE NEWS CLIPS

...and it is striking that astrology is especially popular among highly educated young people. ...what is your mission on this terrestrial....  
...Venus is the planet of love...

NARRATOR

They're looking for a way to cope with the confusing chaos of life.

...the wonderful sense of harmony, buoyancy and fun to any gathering...

NARRATOR

Astrology seems to offer something to hold on to; the belief that the starry sky influences us may make life more manageable. After all, problems are not caused by how we treat each other. But to an unfavourable constellation. To a fluctuation of the cosmos. Something that my father is also told.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

That is Karma!

DAD ON TAPE

Hmm, hmmm

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

These are not the easiest of times. It would be surprising that people with impeccable karma would be born into these horribly threatening times. It is only fitting that people should have something to do here.

GERRIE

What a nice chair you have Paul!

DAD

Yes

GERRIE

That electric chair...

DAD

Nice idea, Gerrie.

NARRATOR

My father's dementia is erratic. He has quite a few good times as well as bad.

DAD

Oh look, there's Jan too. Gerrie!

GERRIE

Yes

NARRATOR

For a second time, I attempt to start a conversation about the tape, but it never really gets going.

SON

Do you remember when you started with astrology?

DAD

Yes, that is a totality, astrology is a part of your life.

SON

In what way?

DAD

Everything! Faith. Everything. Religion.

SON

What did astrology told you?

DAD

You can't ask what the gospel tells you!

SON

murmle

DAD

Then just tell me... No that's strange! Surely you also are from a strange family. My, my.

NARRATOR

My father is the son of a preacher, the stars seem to him to have something to do with a revelation, something intangible. Something that is difficult to put into words. Or maybe it's the dementia. I don't know. And I wonder if I will ever get a coherent answer from my father.

(33:44)

SON  
Hello!

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)  
Hello

SON  
Thank you for allowing me to come by so quickly.

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)  
Yes

NARRATOR  
I am visiting the Astrological Society. Maybe they know who the astrologer on the tape is. I've arranged to meet Menno Noordervliet, the chairman.

SON  
Can I move this a bit. Is that a microphone too?

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)  
Yes. I use it to record conversations...

SON  
(sound handling cassette) I will turn it on...

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)  
Oh yes

(sound starting tape)

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE  
How much can it hold? That tape...

DAD ON TAPE

120 minutes...

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)  
Is this your father interviewing him?

SON  
Yes

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)  
Ok

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE  
What strikes me is that it's typically modern birth...

NARRATOR  
Lost in thought Menno listens to the cassette. While he tries to figure out which system the astrologer uses.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE  
...Sun between two signs, just at the beginning of Capricorn...

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)  
But this is the minus 1 system of, what's that guy's name again...

NARRATOR  
Every astrologer apparently has his own method, something you can recognise them by.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE  
Here's the first degree, it's very militant...

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)  
Oh he is working with the degrees too. That's interesting...

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE  
...which causes problems with the parenting.

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)

It's not Jean, Jean Due, it could also be Koppejan. Because he works with the degrees.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

Ascendant as well, which can be found at....

NARRATOR

But Menno is not quite sure.

There is another option, but I'll have to look into that. That could also be the case... Yes.

NARRATOR

Then we arrive at that dangerous sun of birth.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

...very hesitantly in the first degree of Taurus

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)

Can you rewind a bit? Is that possible?

SON

Sure...

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)

Because he... Rewind a little bit

(sond rewinding tape)

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)

Because he was talking about the first degree of Taurus. But then his voice became unintelligible...

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

...the first degree of Taurus. Cosmically a very controversial degree, but more about that later on.

NARRATOR

For a moment the atmosphere seems to change, when Menno hears that the sun of birth, is part of my horoscope.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

It's the degree where Hitler's natal-sun was.

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)

That's your father's, isn't it?

SON

No, it's mine.

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)

Oh, it's you!

SON

Yes.

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY) Ohhh!

SON

Do you look at me differently now that you know I'm first degree Taurus?

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)

No, no...

Hitler has his Sun in first degree Taurus, but also Queen Elisabeth the 2nd. She has her sun there too.

NARRATOR

Somehow it puts me at ease to hear that there are more people with that strange natal-sun. But why did the astrologer give Hitler as an example and not the stiff Queen Elisabeth? That is a world of difference.

But perhaps the astrologer was wrong in his calculations. According to Menno, horoscope readings are very delicate.

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)

I am not at all convinced that this is the case. Because it depends on how exactly the time of your birth is noted.

SON

Does it make much difference?

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)

Birth time works out by the minute. You will get a completely different story about someone.

But that is the first degree, I am sure that this man is Koppejan. I know that for a fact. Because someone else would never put it forward like that, absolutely not, I think it's Koppejan.

SON

Koppejan.

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)

Yes.

SON

Is he still alive?

MENNO (ASTROLOGICAL SOCIETY)

No, no...

37:16 min

NARRATOR

Willem Koppejan seems to be the astrologer on the tape. Unfortunately I can't ask him any questions. I ask Joyce Hoen what she thinks.

JOYCE



That would have been very extraordinary if it had been Koppejan.

SON

How so?

JOYCE

Well, that was quite an astrologer by reputation.

SON

What was he famous for?

JOYCE

Notorious actually, more or less. I thought he was quite blunt in his statements. At times I thought: do you have to be so pessimistic. But....

NARRATOR

Joyce has her doubts. Koppejan is not from the Twente region but from the Randstad city region. And he moved to England during the 1970s.

JOYCE

He actually founded Glaston Bury. That's kind of fun though.

SON

What's that?

JOYCE

That's a community, at that time, a very vibrant hippie community with a lot of interest in culture and spiritual journeys and...

SON

What is it a kind of new-age pilgrimage site?

JOYCE

Yeah, it certainly was.

SON Yes.

NARRATOR

Would my dad have crossed the channel to ask for advice? Would he have gone to a hippie pilgrimage site?

(sound typing to keyboard, clicking mouse)

SON

Landscape zodiac.

NARRATOR

On the Internet, I learn that the landscape in Glaston Bury reflects, according to some, a giant astronomical map.

CLIP INTERNET

Although we're not at the centre of the zodiac here, we're in the northern part, we can look out, and we can see any of the signs around us....

NARRATOR

Buildings, roads and various points in the landscape reflect the constellations. This sounds like something that would appeal to my father.

(sound browsing through papers)

NARRATOR

When I find an old diary at my father's house while cleaning up, out of curiosity, I flip to the date on the cassette tape.

SON

May, July, August, September. It's completely empty!

NARRATOR

Surely a trip to England should be in there.

Flipping through the diary, I see an appointment with an astrologer a few months earlier.

SON

April. Morning walk, afternoon visit to Volkers. Discussing horoscope.

NARRATOR

Volkers. Would it be him? Instead of Koppejan

SON

Well, yes

(sound typing to keyboard, clicking mouse)

NARRATOR

When I search the Internet for his name, I read that Volkers originates from the Eastern part of the Netherlands.

JOYCE (WITH REVERB EFFECT)

I wonder if he has a Twents accent? (Twente is the Eastern part of the country)

NARRATOR

And besides being an astrologer, Volkers is also an artist, just like my father. Is he still be alive? No, he passed away in 2000.....

(sound typing om keyboard, clicking mouse)

40:06 min

SON

What is this? (sound picking up paper)

NARRARTOR

Among the papers I also discover my horoscope. It is a hand-made drawing that my father made himself. It contains random thoughts written next to it.

SON

In the evening, I am impressed by the moon horoscope and moon phase. A veil is drawn over Prosper's happiness, character and future. Doubts as to whether I am his father.

(sigh)

NARRATOR

He doubted it because he saw something in the stars. But maybe also because we were so different. Apparently I didn't live up to expectations... I was too playful, too undisciplined... Not quite his son... I too sometimes doubted whether he was my father. Looking up to the stars is definitely not my answer to everyday problems. But we also share common ground.

SON

Saturday I'm spending time with Prosper. We're going to see the latest James Bond film.

NARRATOR

I read about trips we've made.

SON

Afterwards we played chess. I'm happy to be with my son.

NARRATOR

I would like to ask my Dad about his doubts, feelings and the cassette tape. But I hesitate. The last time I asked him about the stars, he started talking about the gospel and thought my questions were weird. But I give it another try. I decide to first show him the horoscope he made himself.

SON

I came across this. I found it quite interesting. That's my horoscope.

DAD

Nice to see your horoscope again.

GERRIE

How beautifully you have done that, Paul.

DAD

Yes, I did it with great love.

GERRIE

It's beautiful!

NARRATOR

There are lines, calculations, dots and small drawings of the zodiac on the paper.

DAD

It's really interesting to study.

SON

Yes, what do those little spheres mean?

DAD

Yes those are just little balls, just, those are the zodiac signs.

42:31 min

NARRATOR

While my father studies the horoscope. I realise that his dementia has brought us closer together.

DAD

Yes... (reading horoscope)

NARRATOR

Even though a good conversation may not be possible.

DAD

Gee...(reading horoscope)

NARRATOR

And then I'll take my chances...

SON

I also found a tape, a cassette tape, do you want to hear it?

DAD

Yes, I'm very curious.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

So we have the horoscope over here. It should tell us what may be going on.

NARRATOR

My father listens carefully to the tape. Turns his head to the left and right, and when the awkward birth sun comes up, he looks at Gerrie.

ASTROLOGER ON TAPE

...then I'm just talking about the degree. It is the same degree where Hitler's birth sun was. Then we get a very good idea of what that degree is about.

(turning cassette deck off)

SON

So I have got Hitler's birth sun.

GERRIE

Depends on what you do with it! Yes, that's how it is...

DAD

Yes, it's weird. It's quite something...

NARRATOR

My father takes the horoscope and looks at it again.

SON

Do you see that birth sun of Hitler?

SON

No, that's a generalization. You are early Taurus. Favourable. That doesn't necessarily mean that you are a Nazi. On the contrary.

NARRATOR

It seems the constellations put my Dad in a dilemma. Because do you tell everything you read in a horoscope? Even if it is less positive? Gerrie recalls how Paul dealt with this with others.

GERRIE

You didn't have the guts to say it, did you...

DAD

Yes

GERRIE

If you read a horoscope of someone, and you saw something that could cause problems, you didn't dare say so.

GERRIE

No

GERRIE

No. You avoided it.

DAD

Yes, yes, yes

SON

Yes, it seems to me it's also quite difficult. If you make a horoscope and you spot something, should you mention it or not?

DAD

That' s right...

GERRIE

Yes, how do you deal with that?

DAD

Yeah.

NARRATOR

I hold my tongue and think that it is a dilemma that my father creates himself. You build an astrological house of cards and mistake it for reality. You don't see the person sitting opposite you, but someone who is first degree Taurus, Capricorn, Pisces, Ram. A certain position in the starry sky. An astrological drawing. But a map of life is not life itself. But this is what I come to realise later on. Not something I tell my father.

45:41 min

DAD

It's nice that you're interested in astrology like that... in that way.

SON

I don't have much interest in astrology myself...

DAD

Well

SON

I don't know if I've ever told you that. I don't care too much about it. But I'm curious... because... That tape I showed you.

GERRIE

Yes, yes...

SON

It also says that I'm going to study philosophy when I'm older.



GERRIE

That's quite odd, isn't it, Prosper!

DAD

Is that a fact?

GERRIE

Yes

SON

Yes, I...

GERRIE

But I mean, how is that possible...

DAD

Okay... And is that true.

SON

Yes.

DAD

Oh!

NARRATOR

For a moment it seems as if my Dad is surprised that something is right in my horoscope, but it must be the dementia.

DAD

Oh, I didn't know that at all.

GERRIE

Yes, you did. We went there, you know, but you didn't want to make anything of it, you remember Prosper. Yes, well...

DAD

Yes.

NARRATOR

My father doesn't know what to say about the remarkable prediction. Gerrie does.

Well, that's so typical. I think there's more, but we just don't have the senses to see or to perceive it. Right? How things are connected.

NARRATOR

I agree on that with Gerrie.

Many things elude us. Whether it's a spiritual quest or a father-son relationship. Like the expectations we have of each other. How life turns out differently than we expect. Or that we may be more alike than we care to admit.

GERRIE

Are you OK?

DAD

Yes

NARRATOR

And then all of a sudden, my father starts talking about the past, about how he was as a father.

47:30 min

DAD

I haven't always been a role model.

SON

How do you mean?

DAD

Well in any area of life, philosophy for example....

SON

But would you have wanted to be a role model?

DAD

No, why?

SON

I don't know, because you yourself are raising that question now....

DAD

There may be an accusation behind that, but....

SON

No, no, it's an open question.

DAD

Therefore, no... Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy.... But all right!

SON

Well, you may have been an example to me in the sense that, eh, in the search for knowledge....

GERRIE

Always curious. Investigating everything.

SON

And I share that with you. I don't really seek it in astrology.

DAD

Well, philosophy.... (yawning) Yes, that's how it goes.

SON

Oddly enough, the awkward conversation feels like a relief, a hatchet being buried. We recognise each other in what we do. Who we are. Then my dad points to the microphone.

48:35 min

There you are with your little thing... (laughing)

How do you like it that I record you with the microphone?

Yes, that's nice, you pick something up, nice. And when you know how to condense it, or whatever, we'll find out, when the time comes...

49:00

(music)

GERRIE

What would you like to drink?

WOMAN

Shall we just sit down? Shall we put the chairs...

NARRATOR

While I'm making these recordings, the corona pandemic is raging.

GERRIE

Nice Ester, 58!

NARRATOR

We're celebrating my sister's birthday at 1.5 metres.

SISTER ESTER

You look great Dad.

DAD

Yes, Gerrie said so too

NARRATOR

According to his own horoscope, my dad will be 102!

DAD  
I feel fit...

SISTER ESTER  
Keep it up...

DAD  
And eh...

NARRATOR  
The conversation soon turns to vaccinations.

GERRIE  
Well you don't know, you don't know. You get....

SISTER ESTER  
That letter says what vaccination you're getting.

GERRIE  
No, not with Paul.

SISTER ESTER  
Yes, it does...

GERRIE  
No

SISTER ESTER  
Oh, I do!

GERRIE  
No with Paul... Well, we'll see.

NARRATOR  
A few months later my Pa also gets a vaccination. Two in total.

(49:51 min sound walking outside)

WOMAN

Hey, hello.

SON

Hello.

WOMAN

Hey Paul! How nice of you to step outside.

NARROTOR

The first vaccination is without any problems. But the second shot doesn't go down well.

(Phone ringing)

GERRIE ON PHONE

Ha Prosper

SON

Hey Gerrie

GERRIE ON PHONE

Well, first his heartbeat dropped to 140, now it's 160. His fever dropped. But has now risen again. This is no good, Prosper. It's not going well.

SON

What have they done?

GERRIE ON PHONE

Well his heart was racing.

SON

Oke, And did this happen suddenly or....

GERRIE ON PHONE

Yes, all of a sudden. The doctor has been 4 times already. He's skilled. He says he'll do everything, but he can't promise he'll save his life.

SON

Ooh

GERRIE ON PHONE

Yes, I noticed it yesterday.

SON

And is he... Can he still talk?

GERRIE ON PHONE

No. No. (sigh)

NARRATOR

My dad has been admitted to hospital. It's not clear what has happened. Because of the corona measures only one person is allowed with him, that's Gerrie. I have contact via telephone and video chat.

(phone ringtone)

51:19 min

NARRATOR

After two days he is doing a little better.

SON

Yes, hello, it's me.

GERRIE ON PHONE

Hi there, I'm back. I said to Paul that you had called. He said yes, yes. So he wants you to say something to him. I have the phone here.

SON

Hi, Dad. How are you doing?

DAD ON PHONE

Yes, fine

NARRATOR

On the tiny screen of my phone I can see my father. He has a tube in his mouth and is connected by wires to a device.

It's good to hear you

Yes, yes...

Are you in pain?

DAD ON PHONE

(Unintelligible)

GERRIE ON PHONE

Can you show me where you have pain?

DAD ON PHONE

Oh yes

GERRIE ON PHONE

Do you have pain here?

DAD ON PHONE

Oh yes.

GERRIE ON PHONE

Are you in pain here?

DAD ON PHONE

Yes, yes, yes



GERRIE ON PHONE

And do you have pain here?

DAD ON PHONE

Yes, yes.

GERRIE ON PHONE

And here... Are you in pain here too?

DAD ON PHONE

Yes...

GERRIE ON PHONE

Yes, everything hurts.

DAD ON PHONE

Yes

SON

Yes.

DAD ON PHONE

(Groan)

SON

Poor devil. I think I... I believe you are in good hands

GERRIE ON PHONE

Yes, you are...

NARRATOR

This is the last time I will see my father. Not much later he passes away. According to the doctors as a rare reaction to his corona vaccination. My dad lived to be 82.

52:55 min

NARRATOR

I ask Gerrie how my father's last moments were. She was with him at his bedside.

GERRIE

Then all of a sudden he collapsed. He said: what about that woman over there? I said, I don't see anybody. Who are standing there. Standing over there.

SON

And what did you see?

GERRIE

I saw nothing and heard nothing.

SON

He saw a bunch of people standing at his bedside.

GERRIE

Yes, yes.

SON

All right!

GERRIE

And then he said: it is my mother, it is my mother. And then he said: look, there are two men coming. They are standing over there. Do you see them? An old and a young man. They don't say a word, they' re just standing there looking. I thought: they are coming to get him. They must be his father and his dead brother.

SON

Are you religious?

GERRIE

No, no...

SON

Do you believe in anything after death?

GERRIE

Well, yes, I don't know...

GERRIE

I thought, well, he's not alone, they're carrying him off. Something like that, I had that feeling.

(outdoor sounds)

GERRIE

Yes, there was a lot of dead flowers there. I chopped them off. Let's see if it holds. Right?

NARRATOR

Together with Gerrie I'm at my father's grave.

SON

What are you doing?

GERRIE

Well here is something on the ground. I don't know to whom it belongs.

SON

There's a piece of tombstone there.

GERRIE

Yes. Forever in our thoughts. Where could it belong? I do not know.

SON

But those berries look nice.

GERRIE

Yeah, right! I think that will stay for a long time. I'll go again before Christmas. But I won't go again in a week with this weather. You understand.

GERRIE

Yes, it's awful!

54:56 min

(Music )