

EXT. ST. ALBANS ORCHARD - DAY

Beneath clear blue skies, the trees of an English apple orchard grow heavy with ripened fruit.

Matthew and Thomas sit low in the shade of a tree.

Matthew watches a squirrel. At the base of a trunk.

He sketches the little creature. Strokes of white chalk on a small black slate.

Thomas sees the eye and hand of his older brother work together. He sees the artist at work.

The squirrel scurries up the tree.

Matthew smiles. Glances away. Delights to behold...

Maid BEATRICE. A summery lass with a basket of apples. Sweet and freshly-picked. She strolls up to the two monks.

BEATRICE

Fine fruit this summer, brother  
Matthew.

MATTHEW

And fine cider this autumn!

BEATRICE

(to Thomas)  
Apple for you, brother?

THOMAS

Away, Jezebel! And be about your  
labours.

Thomas scowls like a brute. Beatrice saddens at once. She hurries away in silence with a face full of hurt.

Matthew pines to see her go. Turns to Thomas with concern.

MATTHEW

I hear you continue to call on  
Brother Hubert.

THOMAS

Joy it is to scourge my wicked  
flesh. And all its desires for  
sinful woman!

MATTHEW

You speak as one with authority.

THOMAS

I speak His Holy Word. It was woman  
whom the snake beguiled. By the sin  
of woman, man did fall.

MATTHEW

Yes. Sin began with Eve. But so did  
Salvation. If you think about it.

Not something Thomas has thought about.

MATTHEW

Without the Fall, there would be no Death, and if no Death, no need for Christ to bring eternal Life.

THOMAS

You reason most subtly. As did the serpent of the garden.

MATTHEW

Then consider another garden. Was it a woman who betrayed our Lord at Gethsemane? No, it was Judas.

Matthew sees Thomas listen well now.

MATTHEW

Who then denied Him thrice? A woman?

Thomas knows Simon Peter was no woman.

MATTHEW

Who then was first to see Him risen? A man?

Thomas knows Mary Magdalene was no man.

MATTHEW

And which of our saints is most blessed of all? Exalted higher than the angels?

THOMAS

The Virgin Mary.

MATTHEW

(kindly)

Give more time to her, Thomas. In your prayers, consider Our Lady the bearer of God. What the Greeks call *theodokos*. We have books in our library which you will find most helpful.

THOMAS

I shall read them well.

Well for Thomas. Well for Matthew.

MATTHEW

If you have time.

Matthew brings things back to earth.

MATTHEW

I have this day received word from  
Lady Arundel. She has commissioned  
an illuminated History of England.

(beat)

I wish you to inscribe the text.

THOMAS

(thrilled)

Oh, brother!

MATTHEW

I shall devote my efforts to the  
margins. And when we are done, I  
shall ask Alan Binder to...

Matthew halts sudden. He hears something.

THOMAS

Brother?

MATTHEW

Sssh.

A bird chirrup. Close by and above. Sounds familiar.

Matthew glances about the trees. The bird chirrup more. But  
from where? Matthew looks round again. Where is it?

There. There it is. He sees now.

A crossbill. On the branch of an tree.

Matthew thrills. Grabs a slate. Takes up his chalk. Keeps his  
eyes on the blush-red creature with its curiously mismatched  
beak.

He sketches the bird quickly. On the slate. Just so.

Thomas admires the artist again.

GEOFFREY

Brother Matthew!

Loud-mouthed brother GEOFFREY rushes through the trees.

GEOFFREY

Brother Matthew!

The crossbill flutters away in alarm.

GEOFFREY

You are wanted in the Abbot's  
quarters!

Matthew rises. Turns to Geoffrey. Face like thunder.

MATTHEW

Geoffrey!

Matthew casts down his slate. Smashes it to pieces.

Thomas looks surprised. Geoffrey looks confused.

GEOFFREY

I do not understand.

Thomas sees Matthew livid like never before.

THOMAS

I'm sure you'll see the creature again.

Matthew hears well. Thinks well. Closes his eyes.

MATTHEW

Lord, forgive my anger. Take from me the burden of my sin.

He breathes again. Opens his eyes. Calm restored.

MATTHEW

Brother Geoffrey. You say I am wanted in the abbot's quarters?

Thomas admires Matthew's anger management.

GEOFFREY

Prior Reginald is here.

MATTHEW

Reg? Ramsey Reg?

GEOFFREY

They have had a visitation.

Matthew's eyes open wide. That is news.

INT. ABBOT'S DINING CHAMBER - LATER

A monastery servant pours wine for Prior REGINALD -- a bald and grizzled old monk in a state of agitation.

Reginald drinks deep. Not for the first time. He has the ruddy face of a life-long drinker. Nose like beetroot.

MATTHEW

So what happened next?

Matthew sits with Prior Reginald and Abbot John in a spacious private chamber.

REGINALD  
He marched into the senior  
dormitory. Marched in like a  
captain of arms.

Thomas sits with the older monks. Listens well.

REGINALD  
Sir Robert and his Dominican guard.

THOMAS  
Sir Robert? You mean Bishop Robert?

REGINALD  
You've got a bright one there,  
Matthew.

Thomas doesn't get it. He looks like a boy amongst men.

Matthew gives him a look that says "don't worry."

ABBOT JOHN  
(to Reginald)  
About this visitation?

REGINALD  
Oh yes. Where was I?

MATTHEW  
The senior dormitory.

REGINALD  
That's right. The senior dormitory.  
Greathead stood there as if on the  
threshold of Sodom itself.

Matthew pictures the scene.

INT. MATTHEW VISION OF RAMSEY - DAY

Greathead stands in the middle of a vaulted room -- with  
lines of blanketed beds either side.

Around him are Dominican friars -- all in black, with faces  
as hard as the stone chamber walls.

Prior Reginald cowers close by.

Greathead sees bedside tables and cabinets. He sees  
ornaments. Vases with flowers. Personal trinkets.

GREATHEAD

"Chapter thirty-three. Verse two.  
No monk may presume to give,  
receive or retain anything as his  
own."

Greathead gives Reginald chapter and verse.

GREATHEAD

Not one item. That is the Rule of  
Benedict, is it not?

REGINALD

The Rule it is.

GREATHEAD

Then give thanks, master prior. For  
this day, in this house, the Rule  
does reign again!

Greathead gives his Dominicans the nod.

The friars set forth on a mission of destruction.

One throws over a cabinet.

Another picks up a side table. Smashes it on the ground.

Another hurls a pottery vase against a wall.

Greathead stands impassive as the destruction goes on.

REGINALD (V.O.)

They smashed everything. Things oft  
acquired at great cost in coin.

INT. ABBOT'S DINING CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

ABBOT JOHN

We have heard such tales from many  
a house. And yet...

Something troubles the Benedictine abbot.

ABBOT JOHN

And yet we cannot deny our Rule.

Thomas nods quietly to himself.

MATTHEW

(to Reginald, keenly)  
So Greathead destroyed things of  
expense? Things that cost money?  
You're sure about that?

REGINALD

I saw with my own eyes. Many a  
costly item destroyed forever.

Matthew looks curiously satisfied.

ABBOT JOHN

Why do you ask such a question,  
brother?

MATTHEW

No reason.

John suspects there is a reason. So does Thomas.