Drēam Death

Philipp Geyer

1 - QUIES

A draught crept through the window, causing Eadric to shiver and pull his shoulders in a bit more as he looked once more over the accounts in front of him. The winters felt like they were getting longer. Or maybe he was just feeling them more now he wasn't so young any more.

"Come on now, you've set your bread down three times already and not taken but a single bite. Put that down and finish up before Hilda comes. You know she'll have that off you and you'll be hungry all day."

Eadric was roused out of his contemplation by Mildred's voice.

"Ah I know. I just cannot figure out what I'm going to tell Wealhmær about the sheep. Tata's said he's lost another four. Either the druncena has a wolf living on his doorstep, or he's been eating a little better these days than he's let on." With a sigh he reached out and grabbed the barely gnawed loaf and took a bite. "I'll go past the baker's later for some fresh bread. If there's any left of this lot, it's near ready for the swine."

"You needn't worry, Hilda said she'd bring some when she comes. As for old Tata, he's been down on his luck since his Wilburg died. He's not been the same since. I've heard he's been particularly unlucky with the dice of late."

"Aye, that's what I feared. Hilda tell you this, I take it?"

"She said she overheard-" the rest of the explanation was cut off as the door crashed open and Hilda stumbled in, both arms holding bread and a few vegetables.

"You just won't believe who I saw this morning, Mildred, with five lots of chicken eggs no less! Oh, good morning Eadric." She made the barest attempt at a formal acknowledgement of the reeve before she continued again. "Oh, and they've got some new colours in too. Maybe we should get some, I would like a new dress." Eadric took one last bite of his bread and quietly excused himself into the fresh cold air of the morning.

"Good morning, Eadric." Leofric pushed himself off the tree he was leaning on and fell in step beside Eadric. "I would have come in, but..."

"You know she likes you, right? She'd make a good wife."

"She likes a lot of things, including the sound of her voice. But aye, I agree. One of these days I'll put myself in her way and... well, I'll need a drink before then. Father won't like her, but mother will be over the moon. What's first today?"

"I'm off to talk to Tata about some missing sheep. Could you run this list of requests from Thegn Wealhmær over to the groom and tell him to prepare six horses-no, make it seven, for an hour past noon, then meet me at Tata's farm?"

"As you wish." Leofric's expression suggested otherwise. In his more frustrated moments, he had complained of being Eadric's errand boy. At twenty-five come midsummer, perhaps he had a point. But the jobs still needed doing.

Eadric breathed in deeply as he walked down the path to Tata's farm. The sun was now climbing high enough into the sky and the mist was lifting. He stepped out of the way of a large cart carrying more trade into the market, noting the driver's face, to check up on them later that day, as he wasn't someone that Eadric recognised. There were more and more strangers about these days. While trade clearly flourished, he still felt like he struggled to keep up with everything that was going on. He hopped over a puddle, rounded the hedge, and Tata's farm came into view.

"Brother Oswin, have you brought the deliveries in? It should be done before Terce." Father Cola's dark eyebrows knotting together as he frowned at the young monk.

"Forgive me father, I was distracted. I have near finished them. Just the last of the chickens to bring in. I shall not be late." Oswin sighed as he looked back out of the window, before carrying the last of the clucking crates to the kitchens. He wouldn't be late for prayers again. He needed to be finished with his chores this afternoon. He wanted time.

"I can't give the thegn any more of my sheep, Reeve, I've got precious few as it is" Tata tried, staring Eadric down but then dropped his gaze. "I never said I wouldn't supply them, I said I ain't got them right now."

"I understand, Tata, but you've got to give me something to work with here. Listen, Mildred's got some fresh vegetables in, I'll send word that you're coming over tonight, how about that?" Eadric absentmindedly scratched his shoulder against the door frame he was standing next to.

"That'd be nice. Tell Thegn Wealhmær that I've only got twenty sheep left, I'm going over to buy more in Wulfham in a couple days. He can have three now, and the others when I'm back?" he scratched his wiry beard while he thought.

"I think I can make four work."

"Aye, four it is then."

Eadric patted the old man's shoulder and turned to leave. "I'll send someone for the sheep later, and I'll have payment for them when you come over tonight." Just then he noticed Leofric's large shape leaning against the wall of the building. "Hāl Leofric, how did it go with the horses?"

Leofric made a grumbling noise. "I am sure that groom is hiding something. He always seems too nervous when I show up. The horses will be there. Wealhmær's favourite was being fed while I was there. Wonderful horse, that. So, the old man has lost the sheep?"

Now it was Eadric's turn to issue a grunt "It seems so. He's got enough to feed the estate for now. We will see. He's a good shepherd when he's sober, I wouldn't want to find someone else now."

Together the two made their way up to report to Thegn Wealhmær, the bright song of the birds offsetting the morning mud, still not cleared up underfoot.

"Excuse me Father Dunstan, could I assist with that?" Brother Oswin asked as he entered the food stores, seeing the elderly monk struggle with the heavy deliveries.

"Deus te servet. Many thanks Brother Oswin."

The two worked in almost silence, broken only by Father Dunstan's absent minded humming a phrase from the hymn they had just sung at Terce as he worked on sorting through the herbs, ensuring nothing rotten remained, while Oswin happily hoisted the heavier goods onto the shelves.

"Thegn Wealhmær, wes hāl. I trust this day finds you well." said Eadric as he approached his lord.

"Wes hāl Reeve. Things are well. We are ready for the hunt this afternoon. But, old friend..." Wealhmær looks slightly sheepishly at Eadric now "you'll have to go back to the groom and ask them to prepare another horse. I have had news that, that Harald has sent word that he's coming over."

"It is already done my thegn. Seven horses are being prepared for you as we speak."

"Ha! Good man!" The broad man slaps Eadric on the back. "How did you know? Who told you?"

"He always joins for a hunt, once the weather clears up after a few days of rain."

"Huh. Oh, ok. Anyway. We should be out only for a short while. Anything else?" Wealhmær asked.

"Um, I've had a report that the fencing in the south is worn out and needs replacing, I'll go and check on it and talk to Alfwine to go and get it fixed. I've had another request from the monastery for you to join in prayers this coming Sunday-"

"They ask that every week. You would think they'd get the idea."

"Yes my lord. I believe they are still ask as long as Oswin is there. Additionally, I've seen that the market is doing well, I'll go and check on that again later. Finally I'd like to send young Cedric down to pick up four sheep from Tata later today."

"Four? Didn't we agree on more before?"

"Eight, my lord. Tata's having a bit of trouble with his flock right now, but will be going to pick up some more in a few days and will send the rest then."

"If the old fool doesn't lose them to dice before then." Leofric mumbled from behind.

"What was that?" Wealhmær snapped to stare at Leofric who stood a little straighter in front of his Thegn.

"Nothing my lord." Replied Eadric quickly as he turned and glared at Leofric. "I've checked with Tata and everything is in order. The remaining sheep will be provided after he has replenished his flock with stock from Wulfham."

"See it so, Reeve." Wealhmær said as he turned. Eadric and Leofric now dismissed, they moved to leave the hall as well.

"You should not have said anything, Leofric"

"Oh? And when the old druncena tells you in another two days that he cannot provide more sheep because he's lost the money to buy them at dice?" Leofric shot back sharply.

"Hold your tongue, boy. Tata is a good shepherd. The best I've known. He just needs a bit of help remembering that again. And if he is no longer capable, I'll find someone else, although heavens knows how long it would take to get someone as reliable as Tata was before. Druncena though he may be, he's never let us down with the sheep before." Eadric let the silence sit for a bit as they walk back down from Wealhmær's hall. "Now, I've got another task for you to do, can you run ahead to the monastery and let them know that our thegn graciously declines their invitation, and-" he notices Leofric's face darken at being sent as a runner yet again "can you pick up some sweet bread and see what fruits they have available at the market, then meet me at Alfwine's for lunch." Eadric smiles a little at Leofric, knowing that his bad moods can often be softened by judicious application of food, or the promise thereof.

Oswin stood up and stretched. Sext was over, and he had finished his chores in the monastery, and there were things he needed to do in town. As he left the choir, he tried to make his way as carefully as the other monks to now show any untoward eagerness.

Walking across the courtyard to the main gate, he raised his hood over his head and almost walked into a large man who was coming through the gate.

"Sorry brother, I didn't see you there. Where can I find someone in charge?" Leofric asked Oswin. Oswin wordlessly points towards the church, where other monks are still coming out.

"Ah, of course. Many thanks."

Trudging up the hill, Eadric checked the fences he passed. Some of them showed signs of being repaired fairly recently. It wasn't long before he came across the section he was looking for. Here too some hasty repairs had been done, but in one section, the fence was entirely broken down. It looked like a large cart has smashed through it, leaving only the snapped stumps of the old wood remaining.

Turning back, the way back to town was downhill so went considerably quicker. By this time the fog had gone, the sky had cleared up and it was proving to be turning into a bright day. The cold of the morning still lingered, but it now didn't bite as much. His step quickened as he approached Alfwine's shop.

"Good day, Reeve." Alfwine said as he came out, brushing some wood chips off his tunic. "What brings you here?"

"Problem with the thegn's fences down south near the small copse. Looks like a cart went through. Could you take a look and see what can be done?"

"I can finish up here and try to get out there either later today, or on the morrow. Will that work?"

> TODO: Add more here - Leofric joins. Right now the scene seems superfluous.

Brother Wigstan sped up as he went through the monastery, checking all of the rooms. Father Dunstan had sent him in search of Brother Oswin after he

was not seen at either None, nor now at Vespers. Checking all the rooms he thought his fellow monk may be, either fallen asleep, or distracted by some manuscript perhaps.

Finally he approached the dormitory. Normally monks would only come here to sleep at night, so he did not think to search here. He slowed down when he saw Brother Oswin's form on his cot.

"Oswin! You missed Vespers! Father Cola will have your-" the young monk stopped short. Oswin didn't appear to be sleeping. Gingerly he touched Oswin's hand. Cold. He could not feel the beat of the monk's heart. At this, he turned and ran back out.

"FATHER! COME! BROTHER OSWIN IS DEAD!"

2 - PERTURBATIO

"Won't you come in, I'm sure Mildred and Hilda have made enough." Eadric asked Leofric as they approached his house again, the sun finally beginning its descent behind the hills.

"Are you sure? You did invite Tata also."

"I had forgotten, come let us go and check."

Hilda spooned another ladle of the stew for Leofric, while he kept talking about the goings on at the market. There was a quiet knock at the door and Mildred got up to open it.

"Good evening Tata, come in." the old man shuffled in and stood awkwardly until Mildred pulled out a chair for him. Hilda gave him a plate of stew.

"Here's the money for the sheep today." Eadric put a small bag on the table by Tata, which made a heavy metal sound as it went down.

"Many thanks Reeve. I have talked to my nephew's boy. He will look after the flock tomorrow, to give me time to buy the new sheep."

"What happened to the others?"

"I don't know, I don't know. I put the sheep away like I do every day, and then when I awoke, there were some missing. Someone must have stolen them. If it were a wolf, then there would be more mess..." Tata's voice trailed off.

"And you were worried that they might come back and take more, which is why you didn't want to sell too many more of your sheep, you'd maybe end up with nothing left." Eadric completed the thought.

"Aye. Someone told me that he knew where my sheep were, and he'd tell me if I beat him at dice." He went on to explain. Quite sheepishly he continued, "honestly, Reeve, I had already had a bit to drink at that point, or I would have never agreed. Well. I lost. I lost all the money I could have bought more sheep. It was a damned stupid thing. Apologies Reeve."

Everyone sat quietly eating for a few minutes.

"Let me know who it was, and I'll look into it." Eadric started "And, if any more go missing, let me know straight away. If need be, we can have

Leofric look over them some nights." Leofric started to open his mouth but Eadric's quick look shut him up before he said anything. Turning to Tata, he continued. "Is the money here," gesturing to the bag, still sitting on the table, "enough to replenish your stock?"

Tata gives a thin smile. "I can get some sheep cheap, so I should be able to get enough for now with that. They eat well here, so will be suitable for our Thegn in no time. Unfortunately I cannot give you a name at this point, I never asked for one, and they were from out of town."

They continued eating quietly for a short while, but slowly the conversation and gossip picked up again, the atmosphere getting a bit lighter.

The door slammed open. Over the enthusiastic talking, Eadric did not hear that it had begun raining outside. In the doorway, now almost fully black behind him and dripping from the rain, was Cedric, the Wealhmær's runner.

"Reeve, come quick, the Thegn's son is dead!" the boy panted.

"Ælfgar? What happened?" The oldest son, while entirely capable, always seemed to be getting himself into unfortunate situations.

"No, the monk. I know no more than that. Thegn Wealhmær wants you go to the monastery immediately to find out what happened."

"Leofric, get your things. Thank you for the food Mildred, I must go. Cedric, can you take my small cart and the donkey, and take Tata here back to his place, I fear in this weather, in the dark, his old legs might have him spending the night under a hedge."

"Nothing I haven't done before boy! But the help is appreciated." replied Tata, who also got up to prepare to leave.

"Oh, won't you stay and eat a bit more, and you too Cedric, that is, unless Wealhmær's expecting you..." Mildred offered. Oh that poor boy, he didn't know what the two ladies were up to, they were going to wring every piece of information out of the lad.

Father Dunstan gazed into the darkness, unable to see much in the falling rain. Visibly agitated, he drew his cowl's rain darkened-hood to try to keep himself warm.

"Wes hāl father." A voice from the dark came to Father Dunstan before the shadows solidified into the shape of Eadric striding through the rain, Leofric only a half step behind him.

"Salve Reeve. Many thanks for coming. I fear dark times are here."

"Aye, I hear that young Oswin is dead. What occurred to the boy?" Eadric started his questioning immediately.

"And can we get in from this awyrged rain." Leofric was clearly less comfortable with the current weather than his companion.

"Of course, of course. Come. I will take you to Brother Oswin." and with that he turned and headed into the dark monastery.

After walking through a corridor that Eadric could barely see, and which was lit only by some faint candlelight from the adjoining rooms, he pressed again "How did Brother Oswin die?"

"Poor Brother Oswin. Miserere mei. He just lay down and didn't wake."

Eadric was quiet for a little while, thinking. "But he died this afternoon. He couldn't have been sleeping at night, it wouldn't have given news enough time to get to me."

"Yes, yes." Father Dunstan was clearly getting upset with the question, not being used to being questioned "Brother Oswin was missing during None this afternoon, and then again at Vespers, so I sent Brother Wigstan to look for him, and he found him lying on his bed."

"How long had he been there? Had the boy been ill?"

"No, nothing like that. Brother Oswin was helping me stock the food just this morning. As fit as he had ever been. I am sorry though, I do not know when he retired. It must have been some time after Sext, as he was present at prayer then."

The group turned into a small room, with a number of beds spread out on the floor. Only one monk, very much still alive, sat in a corner.

"This is the sleeping room that Brother Oswin used." a pause "Brother Wigstan. Where is Brother Oswin?"

The young monk looked up from where he had been quietly praying. "They took him father. Father Cola came and they cleared up."

"Salve Reeve" Father Cola was sitting on what was the most comfortable chair that Eadric had yet seen in the monastery, although that wasn't a particularly difficult feat.

"Good evening, father." Eadric looked around the somewhat spartan room to see, if there was anywhere he might sit, and found nowhere so stood somewhat uncomfortably in front of Father Cola, scratching his shoulder as Leofric chose to lean against the door frame behind him.

"I assume you are here regarding young Brother Oswin. Such a shame. We were expecting his father tomorrow. You need not have bothered yourself tonight."

"Thegn Wealhmær sent me to check on his son's body tonight. I wish to see it."

"Ahh. Unfortunately his body is being washed and prepared for tomorrow. It is not right that you see him at this time. You may return for the funeral."

"Father Dunstan said the boy died in his sleep." Eadric decided to change tack.

"This is what we know, yes. He was found in his bed. Brother Oswin was not always the most diligent of us when it came to hard work. I believe the Lord may be demonstrating that the laziness of the young is a punishable sin."

"Did Brother Oswin have any other sins you're willing to share?"

Father Cola sat up a bit straighter, clearly thinking about what he should say. "No. I should not even have mentioned that. I just desire for us all to learn to better serve the Lord."

"Worry not father. I would not pass on idle gossip about his son to Thegn Wealhmær. I am just attempting to follow his request in finding what happened to his son. It is obviously of import to him."

"You have already learnt what happened to Brother Oswin. I cannot grant you access to him now. As I have already told you, he is being prepared. Only Abbot Gerard may grant this."

"Right, so what are we doing here then? Let's go and talk to the abbot." Leofric pushes himself off the door frame and makes to turn around.

"Quiet Leofric. Apologies father. The weather does not sit well with him. I'm sure you understand. However I do also agree with his sentiments that perhaps our time is best spent petitioning the abbot rather than discussing matters here. Good evening Father Cola. Father Dunstan, would you mind taking us to see the abbot?"

Father Dunstan led Eadric and Leofric across the courtyard from the main monastery building to a small building and knocked on the large oak door. After a short while, the door opened slightly and he slipped inside, returning a few moments later beckoning Eadric and Leofric to join him.

Inside was a relatively large room, with two benches along one wall, a small fire burned low, untended in the hearth, and a lamp lit a desk behind which a monk, maybe a few years older than Eadric sat, looking up from a collection of wax tablets and books. Leofric immediately stomped over to the fire and, without asking permission, took some of the wood stacked next to it, and stoked the fire.

"Please forgive him Father Abbot. I'm pretty sure the cold drives out any manners the boy has in him." Leofric turned to glare at Eadric, but Abbot Gerard looks somewhat bemused.

"Salve, salve. Do not worry about it. I was meaning to do that myself but I must have lost myself in these writings. I take it Thegn Wealhmær sent you about Brother Oswin?"

"You are correct, Father. We were told by Father Cola that you would let us see him."

At this Father Gerard let out a little laugh. "I'm sure that is not what Brother Cola actually said, but he was right to send you to me. We do not ordinarily admit lay visitors to see a brother before burial"

"I understand this, Father, however Thegn Wealhmær has sent me to put his mind to rest that everything is being done for his son. His respect for the church is absolute and he would not have asked me this if it were not important to him."

Father Gerard thought about this for a while. "Brother Oswin belongs here in church, however the concern of a parent is still understandable. I will allow Brother Dunstan here to take you to see him. Leofric may stay and keep warm by my fire until you return however."

"Many thanks Father. We shall endeavour to be respectful at all times."

"Brother Oswin was a good boy. He would always help me when his chores allowed." Father Dunstan said sadly as he took Eadric across the monastery again to a side entrance of the church and quietly let them both inside. He motioned for Eadric to wait briefly as he went through a doorway to check, but returned quickly and they both went in. The small church was lit by a few small candles around the body of Brother Oswin. Two monks stood beside the body, chanting quietly and rocking slowly back and forth, their faces in shadow under their hoods. Father Dunstan went up to them and whispers to each of them. They broke off their chanting only long enough to listen to Father Dunstan and give him an almost imperceptible nod. After this he motioned for Eadric to approach.

Eadric approached the body and, with a short whispered prayer, traced a cross on his forehead, then knelt down beside the body. Without touching the body he started looking it over closely. The freshly washed boy in front of him, and the clean cowl, made Oswin look younger than Eadric remembered. Before rising he put his face close to Oswin's, then stood up, nodded to Father Dunstan and the two left the church.

3 - MĀLUM

"What news of my son?" Wealhmær asked as soon as Eadric entered the room.

"Unfortunately, it is true my lord. Oswin is dead. By which means we know not."

"You learnt nothing from the monastery? Surely young boys do not regularly just die there." As Eadric was approaching closer now, he could smell the ale on Wealhmær's breath.

"Most certainly not. He was not visibly strangled, or restrained. From what I could see he had no marks of any kind on him. I could not inspect his whole body, of course, but I do not expect anything to be hidden, so it is unlikely that he died in a struggle."

"So that is it then? He died of no reason?"

"I did not say so lord. There is still something that I cannot quite put my finger on at this point. I detected a very vague scent on his breath. It did not appear to be from the cleaning of him, but I wasn't able to discern its cause. I must discuss this with the brothers that cleaned young Oswin's body, I think there may be something we are missing."

Wealhmær looked straight at Eadric, and appeared, for a moment, entirely focused. "Eadric, my friend. Please find out what happened. This was my son. If someone did this, I want to know. I need to know. I could not stand to let this family be attacked like this." With that, he almost collapsed backwards, caught by his chair.

"I will." Eadric said softly, then stood for a moment, but then shortly turned around. "Come Leofric. We must take our leave."

Eadric leaned against a tree, just outside. The light of the moon breaking through the clouds made him barely visible. He yawned and scratched his arm while thinking.

"I thought you said you didn't see all of Oswin's body." Leofric asked while trying to find somewhere else to lean that wasn't entirely sodden from the earlier downpour.

"I did not."

"Then how do you know he didn't have a struggle. Surely he could have got stabbed." A corner of the building seemed comfortable enough until some water dripped from the eaves.

"You are correct, he could have been stabbed. I could even believe that Father Cola might be capable. " Even in the moonlight, Eadric's smirk was visible. "If only with the words he was using with us. But no. There were no marks on his hands, wrists or face. If there had been any struggle, I would have expected to see something. If he had been stabbed in such a way that he didn't defend himself, then there's still the problem of the other monks."

"Okay, why the other monks. Did they all stab him?"

"No, but multiple monks have now seen the body, and cleaned him up. This would have required a conspiracy to conceal the wound. It is a possibility we cannot rule out without inspecting the body, and I do not think we would get the chance, however it still seems very unlikely."

"So, what do we do now?"

"Now, Leofric. We go to bed. There is little else we can do tonight I fear. At dawn we go back and take a look around. Maybe see if any of the other brothers, perhaps Brother Wigstan, might be able to tell us something new."

"Why must you leave so early husband?" By now Mildred was long used to Eadric being up and about with work at all hours, but being out of the door before dawn, after he had returned past the time she got to bed seemed unfair. Eadric knew she wanted to hear everything he had been up to as much as she wanted to put food in him.

"The monastery arises before dawn. I was thinking I might join, so I had best practice."

"You would never Reeve Eadric! They wouldn't take you anyway. They would throw you AND your odour out immediately." She laughed as she handed him two pieces of yesterday's bread. "Here, take these. Doubtless Leofric is already loitering outside waiting for you. Make sure you feed that lad too."

"That boy does not need encouragement to eat, you need not worry. I will make sure that Wealhmær sends Cedric to come and help around here. I know you do not need it, but he can act as runner if needed. If anyone comes with troubles, then he can reach me. Wealhmær is asking that one of Ælfgar's men oversees my regular work for the time being."

"Cedric is a good boy. Doesn't eat enough though."

"Now now Mildred. I need a runner. He's no use if he has to be rolled to find me." Eadric laughs as he makes his way through the door into the still dark morning.

Father Dunstan was again guiding the two around the monastery to find Brother Wigstan, whom they found brushing the corridors. After Father Dunstan found another junior monk to take over Wigstan's chores for the morning, he left them to talk. They sat together on a cold stone bench as the sun, still low in the sky, shone on them.

"How well did you know Brother Oswin?" Eadric asked the boy, who he now could see could be no older than sixteen.

"Relatively well. That is to say, I knew he was Thegn Wealhmær's son before he came here, and we talked sometimes."

"Was he ill recently?"

"No. Nothing like that."

"Was he acting differently?"

"Not really."

"This is getting us nowhere." Leofric interjected. "Everything was normal. Then he died."

Eadric noticed Wigstan's uncomfortable shuffling. "That's not true, is it Brother Wigstan. There was something?"

"No. Not really. I mean, nothing different." The boy was looking down at his feet, then finally after a long silence looked up at Eadric. "Brother Oswin often got chores to do in town. He went to town more often than most of our fathers. I did ask him, and he said that he was being sent to buy herbs for poultices and the like."

"Do you know who it was that set these chores for Brother Oswin?"

"No, sorry, he never told me. I didn't think to ask. It was just a chore to do."

"But this hadn't changed? He had been doing this for a while? Okay. If there's anything else you remember, please tell me."

Eadric stretched his legs out away from the bench as Brother Wigstan walked back to the monastery buildings. "I wonder who it was that was sending Oswin out on chores. It's probably nothing. I can imagine they might need all manner of things, and for some things it makes sense that they'd go and choose them, rather than hope that someone brings good quality herbs. Still, it's something to look into."

Eadric looked over at Leofric, who had fished an apple from somewhere, and took a bite out of it. "What are you laughing at Reeve?"

"Nothing Leofric, just something I told Mildred this morning."

"Wes hāl father. I hope this morning finds you well. Father Dunstan tells

me that you were the one that washed and prepared poor young Brother Oswin's body."

Father Catell was perhaps thirty years old and looked tired. They had found him in one of the rooms set aside for the copying of manuscripts and books. The smell of vellum and ink hung in the air.

"Ita. I cleaned him. It is a shame what happened to him. Domine, miserere. Such a young, strong boy."

"I take it there were not any marks on him."

"You saw him yourself last night while I stood vigil, Reeve. You know there were not."

"Then you saw that I was unable to inspect his entire body."

"The rest of him was unmarked as what you could see yourself."

"What do you clean him with?"

At this Father Catell blinked, surprised at the question. "Just soap and water Reeve. Nothing else."

"Did you notice an odour coming from Brother Oswin, something out of the ordinary? Perhaps something at his mouth?"

"You suspect poison, Reeve? Who would poison Brother Oswin."

"I suspect nothing right now, I'm just trying to learn what happens to let Thegn Wealhmær get some closure about his son."

"I noticed nothing out of the ordinary when cleaning him, but Oswin did often have a smell of herbs about him. Not all of them are pleasant, and some could be strong. It's possible, if he was poisoned, that could have covered any smell of poison. Sorry, Reeve."

"Set your mind at rest. It is unlikely to be poison, Father Catell. I was just pursuing all avenues." Eadric walked up to a shelf of books and looked over them, not touching. "Would you happen to know who set Brother Oswin's chores?"

"Most of them would have been set by Father Cola, and he would know of any that were set by anyone else. Why?"

"I feared you would say that. No reason." Eadric turned back around and faced Father Catell. "From what I saw last night, I should pass on Thegn Wealhmær's thanks for treating his son with such respect and attention. Thank you."

"Reeve, to what do I owe the pleasure." said Father Cola asks as Eadric and Leofric enter his room again.

"Salve Father, I was just wanting to talk about Brother Oswin's duties."

Father Cola raised his eyebrows at Eadric's usage of Latin. "What do you want to know?"

"What were his regular chores, who was in charge of them, that sort of thing." Eadric asked while picking at something on his tunic's shoulder.

"Is Thegn Wealhmær thinking of auditing the monastery?" Father Cola asked suspiciously.

"Oh not at all. Thegn Wealhmær is just a busy man, and is upset that he was unable to know much of his son in the last few years. He has asked me to build up a picture of what his life was like, so that he may remember him as he was now, and not as he was as a child before he joined."

"I am in charge of the distribution of tasks to the junior monks and Brother Oswin's chores were no different than anyone else's. If you would like a full list of them, I can have this prepared for you."

"That would be most kind Father Cola. Tell me, did Brother Oswin ever leave the monastery grounds?"

The movement was small, but Father Cola clearly was surprised by the question. "I did, occasionally, ask Brother Oswin, to go and buy herbs for use in medicines. That boy had a nose for it."

"You must tell me where he got them. My wife would be keen to know. She's always complaining the herbs we grow aren't good enough."

4 - REQUIEM

"Good morning my lord" Eadric said as Thegne Wealhmær was helped down from his horse, outside the monastery entrance. Ælfgar dismounted behind him and joined his father. Together they joined Eadric and Leofric and walked in silence to the church.

The church was still largely empty, with Abbot Gerard on the dais, and a small group of monks reciting psalms around the body of Oswin, who lay, unmoved from where Eadric had inspected him the night before.

Eadric and Leofric stayed behind, as Wealhmær approached the abbot and had a few quiet words. Slowly other monks entered the church and added their voices to the song, before Abbot Gerard traced a cross on Wealhmær's forehead, and the thegne turned and approached the body of his dead son.

The mass had concluded and Leofric and Eadric were outside, following a small group of monks across the monastery to their cemetery. The clouds split, allowing the cold spring morning light to illuminate their way brightly.

The small collection of grave markers show the passing of previous inhabitants of the monastery, and one freshly dug grave, waiting to be filled by the body of Brother Oswin.

The monks moved to surround the grave, and continue their soft singing, while Eadric and Leofric kept to a respectful distance. Brother Wigstan was standing close by and his voice could be heard, a little less sure than the older monks.

At the end of the procession of monks, the body of Brother Oswin was brought on a bier, carried by Father Cola and Father Dunstan. Abbot Gerard moved from the back to stand at the head of the grave and begun prayers for Oswin in Latin.

After the prayers had finished, Abbot Gerard gave a small nod to Wealhmær, who stepped forward with Ælfgar and, taking one corner each of a cloth wrapped around Oswin, along with Father Dunstan and Father Cola, lifted the body and laid it carefully to rest within the grave.

All stood in silence as two younger monks begin the heavy task of filling the grave. Wealhmær stood, Ælfgar's hand resting on his shoulder, looking on as his youngest son's body was buried.

"Domine, ne in furore tuo arguas me," one voice rang out, just as the work was finished. More voices joined in, and walking slowly, led by Abbot Gerard, the monks proceeded back to the church. Eadric walked over and stood beside his thegne, looking at the neat mound of freshly dug earth, which now marked the final resting place of Oswin.

"I will find what happened here, my lord."

"Do so." Wealhmær replied, and turned, then marched off. Ælfgar clasped first Eadric, then Leofric on the shoulder, then followed his father, with the monks' singing slowly receding into the church.

5 - INSCITIA

"Could we stop to grab something to eat?" Leofric raised his voice slightly so that Eadric could hear him clearly over the general noise of the busy market.

Eadric nodded his greeting to another vendor that wanted to sell him something. "Let us find this seller that Father Cola mentioned first. Doubtless we will have time afterwards before we begin to climb down another ferret hole of this investigation."

The pair rounded another trade cart and saw what must be their quarry, a cart with a Norse looking seller standing behind a stall. The stall seemed to have a large variety of different herbs on display. The majority of people gave the cart a wide berth, but one person was looking over the wares.

"Góðan morgin. I hear good things about your goods Norseman." Eadric said as he approached the cart. The big man turns in surprise, and then narrows his eyes at Eadric.

"Góðan morgin, vinr. Most people here do not speak my language. Hah. Most people here do not speak to me at all. Who is that sends you to Agnarr?" To Eadric's ears, the man's voice seemed both melodic and strangely harsh at the same time.

"My wife is looking for herbs, and I was just at the monastery. Father Cola mentioned that you had the finest around."

"Ahh, the good father. He knows his herbs well also. What herbs is your wife wanting?" What followed was an in depth run through every herb that Agnarr sold, including what to cook with each one, which illnesses they would prevent, which maladies they might cause, and which of the Norse gods favoured each of them.

"Many thanks Agnarr." Eadric said, as he handed over the coin for the herbs he had decided to buy. "Father Cola mentioned that the herbs were mostly for medicines and poultices. Are you the only person who supplied the monastery in this manner?"

Immediately Agnarr's jovial expression dropped. "I know what you want. That man is not here today."

"What do you make of it, Leofric?" Asked Eadric some time later, as they both leaned against the small wall over the bridge, chewing on the fresh bread they had just bought from the baker next door.

"What do you mean?" Leofric looked at the bread in his hand in confusion. "Looks normal to me."

"No, the herb seller, Agnarr. It could be there is someone around selling herbs that he disapproves of. Logically this is likely poison. It still doesn't feel right. Oswin was the one who bought the herbs, so even saying it was a poison, why would he have taken it himself. There's still something missing here and I don't yet know what it is."

"I hear a lot of poisons, in small amounts can actually be beneficial. Maybe the boy had pain, and took one to relieve himself of it, but took too much."

"Aye, that may be it. It doesn't feel right. Father Cola claimed that Oswin was familiar with herbs, so it seems unlikely he would not be careful with one he knew to be dangerous. You are right however. Given the information we know, that is the most plausible reason right now." Eadric tore the last piece of bread in two, placed one half into his mouth, and threw the remains into the stream below, to the few ducks that were swimming there.

"Where to now then? Back to the monastery?" asked Leofric.

"No. I will go and see if I can find anyone who knows about this second mysterious herb peddler. You..." Eadric stopped and grinned at Leofric. "You are going to take these herbs back to Mildred for me."

"Oh but-" Leofric started.

"I hear she was wanting to make pastries with Hilda today. If you are lucky, they'll still be warm." Eadric could see that Leofric was going to complain anyway. "If we are correct about poison, then we will have to be a little less direct to get information. One of us asking quietly, can learn more than the two of us asking loudly. Mildred's pastries seemed like a better option than you kicking your feet outside."

"I could have gone and asked someone else." Leofric suggested, but Eadric could see that this was just a token argument.

"Aye, but then who would bring me back a pastry?"

"Hāl Dudda" called out Eadric as he re-entered the baker's shop. The flour dusted man came out from where he had been preparing the next batch of loaves.

"Hāl Reeve. Back again?"

"I was just thinking. Have you seen a young monk around before? Especially talking to the Norse herb merchant?"

"Talking to Agnarr? I don't keep much of an eye on the goings on with his type. But I have seen a monk around before. Even came in here once or twice. Brother... Osweald perhaps?"

"Oswin. Did you see him go anywhere else?"

"No, sorry." The baker thought for a bit, and then shouted "BOY!" and a young boy, unlikely to be much more than ten years old, scurried from the back of the shop. "Did you see that monk walking around town before"

"Yes sir. I seen him."

"Well boy? Where did you see him? What was he doing?"

"Shopping sir. Normally at that Norse herb man's cart. Sometimes would go and get honey and wax from Æbbe." The as-yet unnamed boy smiled at Eadric. "She's nice. She lets me have a little honey."

"Thank you young sir." Eadric said to the boy, then turned his attention back to Dudda. "Have you heard of any other herb sellers other than Agnarr?"

"Other than Agnarr? No, I don't think so. Those that need herbs usually grow their own. Those that can't, or want something they don't have, buy from Agnarr."

"Thank you for your help. I think I'll take just another small roll please."

"Brother Oswin? Aye I know the lad. Nice boy. Very quiet." The market had got quieter as the day progressed, and Æbbe had very few customers, but she still clearly didn't really want to give much attention to the reeve's questions.

"Did you see him go anywhere?"

"Why? Did the monks lose the boy? Or did he run away?" Despite her earlier indifference, this seemed to catch her attention.

"Nothing like that unfortunately."

"Shame. If he did run away, he would make a very nice husband. Could help me with the bees. My brothers do precious little. Although, I was thinking he had eyes for another."

"Oswin had a secret lover?"

"I didn't say that. I said he had eyes. It wouldn't be right for me to say any more. Maybe you could go ask the Norseman's son." She nods over at Agnarr's cart. "I reckon he could tell you something if you ask."

Standing by Agnarr was a young man, perhaps nineteen years old. He seemed to be having a relatively heated discussion with Agnarr, but from Æbbe's cart, Eadric could not hear what they were saying.

Eadric took his leave of Æbbe and walked towards the two. Agnarr saw him coming and broke off the argument before Eadric got close.

"Heill once again. Back for more?"

"No thank you. I have sent the herbs up to my wife and I am sure she will be excited to get herbs of such fine quality. I was hoping to have a quick word with your son, if you don't mind."

"My son?" Agnarr looked generally surprised as he looked over at him. "Has he been misbehaving here?"

"No, I just want to ask him about a monk, Brother Oswin. I believe he might know him."

"Oswin?" Agnarr's son stepped forward. "What about him?"

"You knew him then? How so?"

"Oswin is my friend, has been since we were young. But we had an argument a few days back and I have not seen him since. I was hoping to find him today to apologise for my part in it but I have not seen him yet."

"I'm sorry to have to tell you this then, but Brother Oswin died yesterday." The colour drained from Agnarr's son's face and he dropped to his knees.

"Ketil?" Agnarr stepped to his son's side, perhaps afraid that he might fall. A hand on his son's shoulder, supporting him, Agnarr too lowered his head as if in silent prayer.

"You knew him too, Agnarr?" Eadric asked.

"Já, I knew the boy. Ketil here found him one day in the forest by our village. The boy had got separated from his father's hunting party."

"I remember that. Harald brought him back several days later." Eadric remembered. "Oswin was twelve then I believe."

"Hersir Harald wanted to take him earlier, but the boy was hurt. He's really dead?" Agnarr asked.

"The funeral was this morning. He has been laid to rest."

Ketil stood up. Eadric hadn't noticed before just how much taller Ketil was than himself. "Take me to the grave. I will pay my respects."

Leofric met up with Eadric again as he approached the monastery gates. It was clear that he had some news to share, but Eadric shook his head as he led Ketil to the small cemetery where he once again fell to his knees. Eadric stood back a short way, respectfully, giving Ketil his space and time to grieve. Eadric could hear Ketil speaking quietly, but his familiarity with the Norse language was not good enough to pick out what he was saying.

Some time later, the young man rose to his feet, but stayed facing the grave. "How did he die?" He quietly asked.

"We don't know that yet. He was found in his bed, as if he had died in his sleep."

"Bylne" he almost whispered.

"What did you say?" Eadric asked.

"Bylne - Henbane. Could it have been Henbane?"

"I would have to talk to one of the monks if they keep any that Oswin might have had access to. Why do you say that?"

"It's what we fought over."

6 - PRAETERITUM

"Come, we ride." Wealhmær called out while riding away already. The rest of the riders were in varying degrees of ready, with none of them ready to depart. "A stag has been seen in the woods. I am not coming back without it."

Ælfgar got seated and followed his father. One by one, other members of the party follow, surrounded by their hunting dogs. The last one to move was twelve year old Oswin, riding Dunn, the smallest horse that his father owned, but still looking far too small atop it.

"Where is it-" Oswin asked.

"Shush!" His brother admonished him, sitting beside him on Blanca. He pointed through the trees. Oswin could see nothing except more trees. Wealhmær had sent half of the party around to encircle the deer with the dogs, with the intention to drive them toward the thegn. Those that remained sat in uncomfortable silence, with only Wealhmær himself making any movement, slowly edging forward.

"That's it, that's it" he muttered, as if soothing a baby.

Suddenly, a barking started and everyone sat upright, ready for action. Wealhmær waited for just a few seconds, then kicked Fealu, his dusky stallion, into action. All at once, everyone was in motion, and Oswin was holding on following with the group, through whichever gaps they could find through the tightly packed forest, in chase of the deer.

Somewhere up ahead, judging by his father's shouts, Oswin could tell that they were closing in on the stag that they were there for, but where he was, he had just met up with the group that had gone around with the dogs to flush the deer out.

One of the dogs, perhaps confused by the excitement, nipped at Dunn's ankles. The horse near reared. Oswin managed to stay seated, but dropped the reins and struggled not to be thrown off the horse. By the time he'd regained his seating fully, the rest of the hunting party were nowhere to be seen. He could make out a vague direction from the sounds of barking that

were still echoing through the forest, but it took another couple of minutes to calm Dunn down enough to control where she was going.

Once Oswin had calmed the horse down, he looked around. There was nowhere obvious for him to go. All around was the thick forest, and even the baying of the dogs was no longer to be heard.

"FATHER! ÆLFGAR!" Oswin called out again and again, his voice getting more and more worried.

"Don't worry, Dunn. We can get out of this." Looking around he could make out the direction they had bundled through, with some broken branches having marked their passage. Slowly, they rode back through the forest, trying to pick their way, and staying on the lookout for something Oswin recalled.

"Hey!" Suddenly Oswin shouted. He had been riding for a few hours now, and getting more and more scared. The autumn sun was already dipping down and what little light got through the forest was getting dimmer. But there ahead was a break in the trees. Oswin kicked on Dunn, excited to finally make it out of the forest, and looking forward to getting his bearings and heading home.

Faster and faster towards the exit. The setting sun shining up ahead of him, and suddenly, he was out. There was no more forest.

Just outside of the forest, the ground dropped away a few meters down to the river. Oswin, tired from the day riding did not stay on his horse. Dunn turned sharply to avoid the drop and this time Dunn did rear. The last thing he saw was Dunn, above him on the ledge. Then there was blackness.

Oswin opened his eyes. The moon hung above him, its round face shining bright.

Oswin closed his eyes.

Oswin opened his eyes. His vision could barely hold still. He was lying on his bed. He was bruised. He couldn't get up. The smell. The smell was not one he recognised. Nor was the room. Where had his father put him?

Oswin closed his eyes.

Oswin did not open his eyes. He felt a wet cloth wiping across his brow. He could make out a boy's voice, but couldn't recognise the words.

"Freyr sé með þér."

Opening his eyes, in the firelight, he could see the face of a boy, about his age, with long wavy blonde hair. Seeing Oswin awake, his eyes went wide.

"Faðir! Hann vakir!" He shouted, and ran off. A few minutes later, he came back with a big man with his hair in a similar style to the boy's. Norse, thought Oswin. His father's lands lay close to the Norse settlements, but he had not seen many of the Norsemen himself. These must be some of them.

"Are you awake young sir?" The man asked in a heavy accent. Oswin didn't think he could answer, so just gave a small nod.

"It looks like you took a fall. Ketil found you this morning. Don't move, You're bruised worse than I've seen, and your arm may be broken. Rest."

Later that night, an elderly man came to look over Oswin, and carefully supported the arm on a piece of wood. Oswin barely acknowledged what was going on, and did not pay attention to the words being spoken quietly at the fireside.

"AAAAAAAARRGH!" Oswin screamed. The first sounds that left his lips since the fall. He had awoken with a start. His entire body was in pain, and his arm felt like it was on fire.

Very quickly, the man and boy were by his side, their strong hands holding Oswin's body down.

"Ketil, sœk lækninn!" The man growled at Ketil, as he tried to stop Oswin from thrashing around and causing more damage, while also trying to soothe him.

"Shush young sir. It's ok, it's ok. Ketil has gone to get the healer. He will have something for the pain." The man said in a soothing voice, once the boy had run off. Oswin ground his teeth together to stop himself screaming more, tears running down his face.

Not long after, the Ketil returned with the same elderly man that so carefully splinted Oswin's arm before. Together, the three of them helped Oswin to sit up, and take a drink of something bitter. Not long after, Oswin was asleep once more.

"My father is Thegn Wealhmær." said Oswin the next day as he was eating a little bread.

"The thegn? I will send word immediately." Agnarr said and gets up. "You will be fine now? Ketil will look after you."

Oswin looked up at the big man. "Yes. Thank you for your help. You are most kind." Agnarr grunted and nodded as he left the small house.

Ketil threw another piece of wood onto the fire, then looked at Oswin. "Bein?"

"Sorry, I don't understand." Oswin looked at Ketil apologetically. Ketil's face dropped, then brightened up again. He ran to the corner of the room and pulled out a small pouch, opened it, and poured out the contents next to Oswin. "Oh! Bones! You want to play knucklebones. Let's do it."

When Agnarr returned several hours later, he found the two boys still sitting on the floor, the fire burnt almost out, and arguing over which rules to use, despite not speaking each other's language.

Oswin sat on the back of Agnarr's cart, with Ketil by his side, as they rode back towards his father's home. Every bounce made him wince. His splinted arm rested across his lap, and his other hand held tight the pouch of knucklebones that Ketil had given him. About his waist was another small pouch, containing the herbs to make the pain relief draught that he had been given previously.

Ketil passed the journey by pointing out everything he could see, and telling Oswin the Norse name for it, then laughing at both Oswin's attempt at pronouncing them, and the translations that Oswin would give.

Once or twice, Oswin saw a man that he does not recognise riding with them. Another Norseman, Oswin thought, and one with more rank, if his attire is anything to go by.

As the autumn sun hit its highest point, Agnarr stopped the cart, and they heard the other man speaking from the back of his horse.

"Thegn Wealhmær. My name is Harald. I bring your son, Oswin."

"Yes, yes. Bring him inside. Would you take some lamb, and ale. We are about to eat."

7 - FIDES

"We saw each other often after that." Ketil went on to explain. "He would come to visit. His father rarely noticed. We enjoyed our time together. But then one day, we were climbing a tree in the forest, to try to get some eggs, and he fell. Nothing bad, but he landed on the arm that he broke. I took him to Aki, who gave him bylne - henbane - again for the pain. From then on he would ask me for it more often. Aki is old, but he is not stupid, so he wouldn't give it to Oswin himself. As Oswin's friend though, I could get hold of it for him. Until last week."

"Oswin was taking henbane even as a monk?" Eadric asked, surprised. The three of them were sitting on a stone bench, underneath a bare apple tree in the monastery, nearby the cemetery.

"Yes. He would meet me in town when I came in with my father. Last week I told him I would not get any more for him. He was not happy."

"If he couldn't get it from you, was there anywhere else he could have got it from?"

"Possibly. I don't know of anyone who would sell it to a monk though."

Eadric leaned back and watched Ketil walk down and out of the monastery gates. "You think he had anything to do with it?"

"What, he poisoned Brother Oswin? Why would he do that?"

"I don't know. The boy seemed genuinely upset, but he did know a lot, and had access to henbane. I also got the feeling that perhaps he wasn't telling us everything." Eadric took a bite out of the pastry that Leofric had handed to him. "If we find out that it was henbane I smelled, it might be related. I cannot figure out why he would do it though. Oh, Leofric?"

"Yes, Reeve?"

"Could you actually follow the boy? If he goes anywhere other than his father, or back home, I want to know."

Leofric grunted as he got up and made a move to walk after the Norse, then turned around. "I want another one of those pastries."

"Father Cola, so pleasant to see you again." Eadric beamed happily as he entered the monk's small room.

"Salve Reeve. What can I help you with this time?"

"I was just wondering if you kept any henbane in the monastery."

"Henbane? We probably have some along with the other medicinal herbs. We rarely use it, as we find the effects to not be worth it for healing." The monk leaned back in his chair, seemingly happy to talk about herbs. "Do you have a pain, Reeve? We could perhaps find something to help-"

"No thank you father. I was wondering if you could show me it. I would like to smell it."

"Smell? Well, alright. Follow me."

Eadric looked around the small herb store, as Father Cola dug around in the back. It seemed to him that every leaf, and every odour, was present in that room.

"Here it is." Father Cola opened an earthenware jar and proffered it to Eadric. Taking the jar, Eadric took a smell of the contents.

"Hmmm. Similar, but not quite the same. Do any of the monks have access to here?"

Father Cola closed the jar and places it back on the shelf, thinking. "We do not limit access to the stores, but I do keep a record of what is in here. The henbane I can tell you has not been touched. If you need information about anything else, I would have to do an inventory." He went over to a small table and opened a ledger, thumbing down the pages. "It looks as though all entries are correct, so if you need to know, I can investigate."

Eadric opened a small drawer and took a smell of the contents, then began coughing. "No, I think that would not be necessary right now. Could you tell me the effects of henbane?"

Father Cola pulled out another book from a shelf and opened it on top of the ledger. "Yes, here it is. Henbane. Pain relief, relaxation, hallucination, breathing problems and... death."

"Could it have been henbane that killed Brother Oswin?"

"No. Of that I am fairly certain. In most cases, before the death, the hallucinations would cause a large amount of mental and spiritual anguish. He would have been noticed if it had been henbane. He would not likely have gone quietly, nor calmly."

"I had not thought of that. His bed was not disturbed? When we arrived, his bed had already been cleared."

"Correct. From what we could see, Brother Oswin died peacefully in his sleep." Father Cola closed the books and replaced them where he had retrieved them from.

"Do you keep anything that might match Brother Oswin's manner of death?" Eadric asked, expecting Father Cola to pull the book out again. Instead he simply shook his head. "One last thing Father, I detect a change. Why are you helping?"

"I have had a..." he paused, clearly uncomfortable, "discussion with Abbot Gerard. He impressed upon me the importance of our church being on good terms with Thegn Wealhmær, and by extension, you. I am not happy with this investigation, as it puts the brotherhood in a poor light, but I will assist where I can." It almost sounded to Eadric that Father Cola was repeating the words of another, probably Abbot Gerard.

"Multas gratias, Pater Cola. I must go find Leofric."

"You don't trust him, do you?" Asked Leofric after Eadric had found him in the market.

"Not at all. There's still something he's not telling me. He also seemed far too quick to dismiss things. He doesn't want us looking into the monastery more." The two of them walked down a narrow alleyway away from the centre of town. In this are, the houses were a little more run down and the wood smelled of rot. "Where exactly are you taking me?"

"We're almost there Reeve" Leofric turned the next corner and the two came out into a small square. In front of them was a well, and what appeared to be a single town house, taking up one entire side of the square.

"Eadgar?" Eadric said, his eyebrows showing his surprise. Leofric shrugged slightly and nodded forward to the door. Together they walked up and Eadric rapped loudly on the large wooden door. After a short while, a heavy set man with a large black beard and a perfectly bald head answered the door, smiling widely.

"Reeve! To what do we owe the pleasure? We don't usually see you down these parts. Have any of my tenants been causing any trouble?" the landlord put one arm around each of his visitor's shoulders. "I was just about to sit down and have a little something to eat. I've got some mead from Wulfham in today too. Great stuff. You must join me."

Leofric managed to extract himself from Eadgar's arm as he was being led down the hallway. "Actually, we're here to see your daughter."

"My daughter?" Eadgar looked confused. "My daughter! Why didn't you say so? I will get her immediately." Letting go of the two men, he turned and headed to the staircase to the side of the entrance area he had just managed to get Eadric and Leofric out of. "Eadgifu! You have company!"

Eadric looked over at Leofric. "His daughter? You realise he thinks you want to court her now?"

Leofric winced. "I did notice that. Ketil came here and I saw them talking in the courtyard." Leofric looked around the wood panelled walls. "I wouldn't know why they would have been talking though. This isn't exactly the kind of place I'd expect Ketil or Oswin to be."

"Here she is. The lady of the house. My beautiful daughter Eadgifu. Now I am very sorry, but you must excuse me. I did say that food is ready, and it wouldn't do to let that get cold. Please feel free to come and have some once you're done with my daughter. She can show you where I will be, can't you precious?" And with that, without waiting for a reply, Eadgar strode off and disappeared into one of the adjoining rooms.

When Eadgar called his daughter beautiful, he wasn't exaggerating. The floor length pale dress was a stark contrast to her jet black hair, and the brown eyes, which were fixed on Leofric, a mixture of defiance and worry. Leofric looked back, a little lost for words at how to proceed.

Eadric laughed. "Your father set you up with many suitors?"

"One or two. Each and every fool who comes here just wants to get closer to my father, not to me." She snaps her eyes to Eadric, glaring now.

"Calm, calm child." Eadric said while laughing. "We don't want to get closer to you or your father. We just want to ask you some questions." The placating gesture that Eadric made seemed to not calm her at all.

"I know nothing of my father's business. Even if I did, I wouldn't tell you."

"Your father is a fine, upstanding member of this town, I'm sure." Eadric heard Leofric cough, clearly trying to cover his disbelief at that statement. "But we are here to ask you about two other young men you might know. Ketil and Oswin." Immediately, it looked like all the fight went out of her. "You knew Oswin then."

"Let us go for a walk outside."

They walked through what would be a very pleasant garden, once the spring would take hold, with quince bushes growing against the walls, and two large fruit trees in the centre. Eadgifu made her way to a bench on the far side and sat down.

"Yes I knew Oswin. He's really dead, isn't he?" Her voice was now much quieter than it had been inside.

"He is." Eadric said quietly as he took the seat on one side of the girl. "He was your friend?"

"Hah. Something like that. Or maybe not. It was never straightforward with Oswin."

"So, what then? Lovers?"

"You could say that."

"I find it surprising that he found the time to find a lover as a monk."

"I have known Oswin since we were younger, long before his father pushed him to join the monastery. He used to joke that we would ride away and build a little house in the woods together. I knew he would never do that."

"Did your father know about Oswin?"

"No. I mean, he did, when I was younger. He forbade me from seeing him. He is perfectly happy to sell me off as some trade deal to get influence, but the son of the thegn was too much attention, and he wouldn't like that. He hasn't known that I've kept seeing him. I don't think he even knew that Oswin became a monk."

"What do you know about henbane?" Eadric pressed.

"That stuff. I hated it. He said it helped him deal with the time he was apart from me, but I know that wasn't it. It made me feel like I wasn't enough for him."

"What about Ketil?"

"What about him? Oswin and him were..." she paused for a moment, "good friends."

"They had an argument. Could he have wished Oswin harm?"

"Never. Ketil would rather die. That boy is loyal... and dumb."

"Do you know anyone that would have wanted to hurt Oswin?"

"Hah. That depends. He wasn't always an easy person to like, especially recently. Frequently maudlin, sometimes irritable. If it were not for his robes, he would have managed to get in several fights. But you're asking if someone I know could have killed him. No. He was stubborn and difficult, but nobody hated him enough to do that." With that, she slumped forward, her black locks falling in front of her, covering her face. The soft movement made it clear that she had lost the battle with her feelings and was sobbing quietly to herself.

Eadric, wanting to give her more privacy, and knowing that now was not the time to ask any more questions, moved towards the exit. Before he was able to leave the garden, Eadgifu's voice, still unstable from the crying, reaches them. "Reeve, make sure you find who did it. Find who killed my Oswin. Please."

"I have already given my word to his father. I shall find who did it." Eadric said, turning back to her.

"Swear to me. Don't blame the first man you can find to keep your thegn happy. Swear you'll find him."

"I swear it." Eadric lowered his head, turned, and left, Leofric following close by.

"The girl seemed genuine." Leofric stated once they were back out of the alleyways, and near the market again, the buildings opening up to release the feeling of pressure on the two of them.

"Aye. And it seems like every thread we pull in this mystery, more suspects fall out. What are we up to now, four I think."

"How do you make that? I assume you're still keeping Father Cola on your list, and Ketil had access to henbane, and presumably more, and had a fight. You suspect the girl? Who else?" Leofric asked.

"No, not the girl, her father. If he did know about the relationship, then it's possible he killed Oswin to stop it. More likely though, is the boy himself."

"Oswin killed himself?"

"Aye, maybe. Either intentionally, or not. If Eadgifu was correct about his moods, and he didn't have access to henbane, maybe he found something else to do the trick, and it was more than he was used to. I don't want to believe it, but, while everyone else might have done it, it feels like there is something missing."

"So that is it?"

"No. I will not believe it until we have ruled out every other option. And now I have two oaths to fulfil."

"And which one is it that's driving you?"

Eadric smiled at Leofric. "Why does it have to be either?"

8 - FRIGUS

That night, Eadric lay awake in his bed, the wind softly blowing outside the window. Oswin's death bothered him. There were too many things that didn't make sense yet.

He got up and pulled a blanket around him, moving over to the table and sat down, then started to arrange some objects in the moonlight that shone through the window. The small salt jar was Father Cola, a bowl for Ketil, a carving of a horse that he had made for Mildred when they had first met became Oswin. Once they were all set out, with the monks standing around the bottle of oil of Abbot Gerard upon the upturned plate that was the monastery, he rested his finger on Oswin and slowly laid him down. "Who did it?" Eadric muttered.

He sat back on the chair and stared at his cast of characters. Everything told him that they each knew more than they were letting on. But which of them was hiding the secret to Oswin's death?

Eadric awoke to find his wife's arms around him. He was still sitting at the table and she had arisen, finding him not in the bed, come to find him.

"You're awake."

"I couldn't sleep. I came here to think about things."

"And play make-believe?" Mildred pulled back and gave him an impish grin. "I take it this is Oswin? Have you come to any conclusions?" She picked up the small horse, and stood it up on the side, then started clearing up the rest.

"Unfortunately not." Eadric sighed. "There are too many people who could have done it for one reason or another. Obviously none are admitting to it. It feels like they're all hiding something too."

"Everyone is hiding something. There are some things so secret that they wouldn't even tell their husband or wife." Mildred nudged her husband, smiling, as she went around clearing up and preparing some food. "You just need to figure out which of these are about young Oswin, and which are just because they actually ate the pastry that their husband was looking forward to."

"You didn't!" Eadric growled. Mildred giggled and scampered away.

"You know, I've been thinking last night." Leofric started as the two of them walked down into town with the cool morning breeze blowing the bottom of their cloaks up. "That Eadgifu, I think she was saying that Ketil and Oswin were lovers. If Ketil found out about Eadgifu, he could have got angry. He admitted to having access to henbane. I think this was just an angry lover's argument."

"That's definitely a possibility, and if he was a capable actor then it would be believable. I'm not convinced his reaction was not real however."

"So it was Eadgifu then? She was jealous of Oswin's relationship with Ketil."

"I don't think so. We have seen nothing to say that she would have been able to poison Oswin, and I would more expect a jealous lover to want to remove their competition, and not the object of their affection."

At this point, Leofric was getting more irritated. "So what? Father Cola? Or he took his own life? I don't see we have any proof of either."

"I don't see those as any more likely." Eadric admitted and Leofric threw his hands up in exasperation. "There is still too much that we do not know, and too many secrets to be kept. I think it is time that we uncover some of these secrets. I want to see if our good friend Agnarr has brought his son to market once more. There are some things we should really discuss."

"Góðan morgin, Agnarr. My wife passed on her thanks for the herbs. They were better than any others she had been able to find."

"Morgin, Reeve." Agnarr grunted in reply. "I still do not have the things you are looking for."

Eadric leaned against the Norseman's cart and scratched his shoulder. "You think I want henbane - bylne, or something similar? Well you are correct in part. I do desire to find one who sells it. Right now though, I would like to talk to your son." With that Eadric looked pointedly at the tall man.

"Ketil has no bylne. He is a good boy."

"We need to talk to him about the death of Brother Oswin - son of Thegn Wealhmær. We are not here to accuse him, but there are a lot of things we don't know, and we think that Ketil might be able to help." As Eadric spoke, he did something he rarely needed to do. He projected. He was reeve to the

local thegn. That might not open all doors, but when needed, that could make people listen.

Agnarr hung his head slightly. "Oswin was Ketil's best friend. He's doing pretty bad right now. He will probably be down by the bridge where he used to play with Oswin when they were younger. The man you wanted to see, you think he might have killed Oswin?"

"I just wanted to see where Oswin might have got henbane from, and ask whoever that might be some questions. Without talking to him, I don't know."

"I will look for the man and let you know."

"I don't see the boy." said Leofric, leaning on the wall. Eadric just simply nodded his head to the side and Leofric looked down the stream in confusion, then heard it. The two of them walked to the side of the stone bridge and looked down. Sat on a large flat rock, jutting out into the deepest part of the stream, with his feet in the cold water, was Ketil.

"Góðan morgin Young Sir. May we descend?"

Ketil looked up, red eyed, and just gave a small nod, then kicked his feet in the water while they descended onto the large rock next to him.

"We talked to Eadgifu. We know how close you were to Oswin." At the girl's name, Ketil started, shocked, then just shrugged and slumped back down again.

"You followed me. You don't trust me. You think I poisoned Oswin. I didn't. I don't know how to prove it, but I didn't. I would never do anything to hurt him. I couldn't. I couldn't." Eadric noticed Ketil's hand was clasped tight around something.

"We don't think that you killed him. You told us yourself, you'd stopped giving him henbane. We're going to need your help to find out what-"

There was a splash. Then a bigger splash. For a period of time which somehow seemed like only a matter of heartbeats, and hours on end, both at the same time, Eadric stood, alone, on the stone, until Leofric returned, dripping, with Ketil in one arm, over his shoulder, and the knife that Ketil had been holding in the other. Ketil's sobbing could be heard above the sloshing of Leofric walking along the bank.

"Wes hāl, Dudda. I am sorry, but may we please use the heat of your oven. I have two little fish to dry off." Eadric said as he shouldered quickly through the door, pulling the already chattering pair behind him.

"Oh my, what happened? Did they fall into the stream? Of course, come in, I'll bring some chairs and some bread."

"Could I also trouble you for a couple of blankets also please." Eadric called after the baker. Pushing Leofric in front of him, he took Ketil and pulled the boy towards the heat of the oven. "Here, take your wet clothes off. Dudda will bring you a blanket to keep warm." Ketil didn't respond, but let Eadric pull his tunic over his head. Leofric was already removing his own clothes and wringing them out. The knife lay on the table. Ketil's eyes were fixed on it.

Not long after, Dudda returned with a couple of blankets and some chairs, which he put in front of the ovens. Leofric wrapped himself up and sat quietly, still shivering slightly. Eadric sat Ketil down and put the blanket over him. Seeing where his eyes were, he then walked over to the table, picked up the knife, and put it into his belt.

"Leofric, keep an eye on him, I will go and get Agnarr." Leofric just grunted in response.

"Ketil! Ertu heill?" Agnarr almost bowled Ketil over as he rushed through the bakery door. Dudda had given them both bread. Leofric had eaten half of his already, Ketil had had only a couple of small nibbles, and was holding it gingerly in both hands.

Eadric walked up quietly behind him and put his hand on the big man's shoulder. "Once he's dry and warm, you should pack him up and take him home."

"What happened?" Demanded Agnarr. "Did you fight?" He almost growled at Leofric with the accusation.

"We didn't fight. Leofric saved his life." After a moment thinking what to say, Eadric continued. "Ketil wanted to take his own life. We found him by the bridge. He jumped into the water with a knife. He jumped. Leofric jumped in and rescued him." Eadric held out the knife to Agnarr, which he ignored.

Agnarr lowered his head to his son, and whispered something in his ear, while rocking him, still holding him tightly.

"I told him I would not get him bylne any more. So he got it somewhere else and it killed him. If I had just carried on, he would still be alive." Ketil managed through sobs, before bursting into tears fully.

Eadric returned the knife to his belt. "I have already made this promise twice, Ketil, I will make it a third time. I will find out what happened. There will be justice for Oswin's death." Turning to Leofric, "I will go, I have some more questions to ask at the monastery. When your clothes are dry, come find me."

Eadric then went over to Dudda, who was standing quietly in the corner of the room, and clasped his shoulder. "Dudda, frēond. Whatever these three eat, I will pay for when I return. You will look after them, right?" With Dudda's silent nod, Eadric turned and left the bakery.

9 - ARCANA

"Pater Abbot, Salve. Can we talk?" Father Dunstan stayed, hiding behind the door, as Eadric pushed into the abbot's rooms without an official invitation. Abbot Gerard looks up from the manuscript in front of him in slight bemusement.

"Come in and take a seat. I assume the cause of your abrupt entrance is some news in your investigation of Brother Oswin?" Eadric was unable to tell whether barging in rattled the old abbot, and this bothered him a little.

"The son of the thegn is dead, it seems by poison. I have a young man, shivering half to death, after the grief of losing his friend drove him to jump in the stream, and nobody is telling me anything."

Abbot Gerard sat calmly until Eadric's rant had blown himself out. "I am sorry to hear about the boy. If there is anything that we can do to help his recovery-"

"I do not think that seeing a monk would put young Ketil in the best of moods right now"

"Ahh, the young Norse man. As for your request for knowledge, we are willing to help your investigation in any way that we can." he continued.

Eadric slumped back, deflated. The abbot's calm talking enraged him, but also made it impossible to keep up the bluster. "The first thing I need is for one of your monks - not Father Cola please, maybe Father Dunstan - to go through that tome in your herb store, and find me descriptions of anything that could cause death in the way that Brother Oswin died."

"You may enter, Brother Dunstan, no point in you cowering by the door. Are you able to do what the reeve asks?"

"Yes father. I will do so immediately." Father Dunstan shuffled out of the room, closing the door behind him.

"Is there anything else we can do to help?" the Abbot asked.

"Yes. I would like to know why Brother Oswin was allowed out of the monastery in the first place."

Father Cola took a seat in front of Abbot Gerard's desk while Eadric stood leaning against the wall next to the fire.

"What can I help with, Lord Abbot?" he asked, keeping his eyes on the reeve.

"The reeve here has some more questions regarding Brother Oswin's death that we were hoping you might be able to help with." Gerard nodded at Eadric to continue.

"I was wondering why Brother Oswin was allowed to leave the monastery. That seems a bit uncommon for a monk of his seniority."

Father Cola seemed to visibly settle into the chair. "We needed someone to purchase the herbs we use, and Brother Oswin showed skill in identifying good specimens. He was the clear choice."

"It does seem peculiar for one so junior to be given so much freedom." Abbot Gerard pointed out. "I would have expected the duties to be spread across several of our members, certainly not to be done solely by one so junior."

"Forgive me father, but there was always so much work to be arranged, and Oswin was always so keen for the chore, it was just the easiest arrangement."

"I do not believe everything he says." Eadric stated, once Father Cola had left. "I can believe that Brother Oswin was keen on the chore, but I do not believe that Father Cola is one to allow that to be the primary reason for such leniency."

"No indeed. I too detected something hidden in Brother Cola's words. I do not know what it is, and it worries me, that it might reflect poorly upon us. I trust that you would be able to uncover this, and unless required, keep it discreet. I would not ask you to cover up something, but if there is rot within these walls, and it can stay here, allow us to deal with it." The abbot was fidgeting with a stylus, scraping a small cross over and over into a tablet.

"If Father Cola is involved with Brother Oswin's murder, my duty is to his father to report this." Eadric replied. "But if I find he has misplaced a bible, I will refer him to you and our Lord for punishment."

"Of course, of course. Is there anything else we can do to help in this matter?"

"I think first I would have to know all of Father Cola's responsibilities so I know where to start looking."

As Abbot Gerard was about to reply, there was a small knock on the door. "Op-"

Before he could finish giving permission to enter, the door swung open, Father Dunstan, still poised to knock on the door, looking like he was almost cowering under the looming shape of Leofric.

"I see you dried off" Laughed Eadric. "What news? How is the boy?"

"Agnarr and Ketil have returned home."

Eadric nodded "I take it you have an update? We will discuss this presently, I first want to hear what Father Dunstan has to say." He smiled at the monk.

"I haven't got an exhaustive list, reeve, but I have a list of names worth considering. I will continue my search through other books for more options afterwards, but thought that you may appreciate the most likely ones as soon as possible." He tried to stand a little straighter, as he reported.

"That is very thoughtful, please go ahead"

Father Dunstan glanced over at Abbot Gerard, who gave a small nod. "First, there is henbane, which you are aware of. If taken in sufficient quantities, it could result in death. Often this is a lot less peaceful, but I cannot say if this would exclude it. Secondly, we have the poppy. It is certainly capable of causing death, and possibly would do so while the one taking it is asleep, or relaxed. Third I believe you could consider hemlock. It is deadly and has a powerful smell. There was a reference to an old text which states a chill begins in the limbs, however no one saw whether Brother Oswin suffered in this way. Lastly, there is mandrake. This was listed as causing sleepiness, but can, in excessive quantities also lead to death."

"That is most helpful, Father Dunstan." Eadric's praise caused the old monk to smile. "If you come across anything else, please let me know. Thank you."

After Dunstan had excused himself, Eadric turned back to Leofric. "How is young Ketil doing?"

"Still shaken. I do not believe his father will let the boy out of his sight for several days. I believe he will recover. That is not why I rushed up here though. Ketil had seen a monk in town one week ago."

"We know that Brother Oswin was going into town, oh, another monk. Do we know who?"

"Ketil didn't see, he had his hood up. Ketil called out, but the monk did not respond. Something else however, the monk, went to Eadgar's place."

Eadric looked at Abbot Gerard. "Do you know of any other monks that visited the town?"

The Abbot looked uncomfortable. "I do not know of anyone, but... Father Cola would know. You don't think...?"

"I don't want to make any assumptions at this point, but its definitely something we should investigate. If there is something going on, I do not trust that Father Cola would tell us the truth unless forced, and I think we can expect less honesty out of Eadgar than even that."

"I agree, Brother Cola did not say that no other monks had left the monastery, but if he had known of it I would have expected him to have brought it up. If it were him, I would therefore find it unlikely he share his true reasons, if he would even admit to it himself." It seemed to physically

pain the abbot to consider this going on in his monastery. "I will do what I can to monitor Brother Cola's actions. Presumably you will pursue this from the other side."

Eadric scratched his shoulder and considered. "I don't think approaching Eadgar is likely to be fruitful, but aye. If you feel like you can obtain the truth more easily than I, I will leave this facet of the investigation to you and we will look elsewhere. May I suggest that we reconvene once more tomorrow morning?"

"I take it we trust the abbot." Leofric asked as they left the monastery and made their way back down the street into the town.

"At this point, I do not know who to trust, but we need to trust someone, and at this point, Abbot Gerard has given us least reason to doubt him out of anyone. Honestly though, we have more things to follow up on than we have time for. Even if the abbot were to be untrustworthy, the information he presents may be enlightening regardless and tell us more than if we attempted to investigate everything ourselves."

"I don't like this, reeve. Everyone is lying to us. Everyone has secrets. It's getting too hard to keep on top of it all." Leofric kicked at a stone, which bounced down the mud path in front of him.

"We can only hope that whoever it is that is behind this feels the same, and the complexity of compounding lies will mean they trip up, and provide us with more clues." Eadric patted Leofric on the shoulder. "Come, shall we go back and pay Dudda?"

10

"What is the plan now then?" Leofric asked as the two leaned once more near the bridge, with more fresh bread that Dudda refused to take payment for. "Ketil and Agnarr are gone, Abbot Gerard is investigating Father Cola for us, you already said that Eadgar is unlikely to tell us anything more. What more does this leave us to do?" Leofric punctuated this question by taking another bite.

"That gives us two things to do. For you, it means you watch Eadgar's house. I am not sure what I'm expecting, but I get the feeling that we should be paying a lot more attention to what he is doing. I will go report to Thegn Wealhmær. He will want to know of our progress."

Leofric grunted, clearly not happy with his task, but weighed it against the prospect of trudging to Thegn Wealhmær, just to tell him that we know little more than last time. "And then?"

"After I have met with Wealhmær, I will send Cedric."

"My lord, I am sorry to not be able to give you more information about your son's death. It appears that the web I have found myself in contains many secrets which I have to unpick to establish the cause." Eadric explained, attempting to calm Wealhmær's frustration from his initial report. "I can say that he most likely did die from poison, which was probably self administered as there did not seem to be any struggle, and I have not found anything suggesting that anyone fed it to him. I do not know whether it was intentionally consumed however. Given the secrets and conspiracies I feel we have uncovered, it would feel too coincidental for him to have done it to himself, so I do suspect murder here."

"Why would my son take his own life?" Wealhmær near shouted across at Eadric.

"From the accounts I have heard, he appeared to be unhappy with his life. He got some enjoyment from leaving the church, but this may not have been enough. I do not think this is what happened, but his henbane usage and the reports I have heard suggest a maudlin outlook."

"And we're taking the word of a Norseman on this?"

"I do not believe that either Ketil or his father are lying on this matter unfortunately. I cannot say if it factored into his death."

Wealhmær near fell back into the chair he had been pacing angrily around. "What else, tell me more."

"Oswin appears to have been maintaining a relationship with the daughter of a property owner in town, Eadgifu of Eadgar. Additionally he may have had a similar relationship with Ketil, the Norse boy that rescued him."

"Well, at least the boy was having some fun. Even as a monk he manages it. I give Ælfgar more freedom in that, and, much as he is family and loyal, he would call collecting rent fun. Oswin I send to church and he somehow has two relationships at the same time." Wealhmær relaxed a little, even though the pained expression didn't fully leave his face.

"This Eadgar. I know of him but have had no dealings with him directly. I have heard some stories that the man is a worm. Is this true?" Wealhmær asked.

"I could not say one way or another. Our interaction was short. He did seem particularly friendly when he thought Leofric as a potential suitor for Eadgifu. I will ask around. Leofric is watching his place right now."

"Good man, Leofric. Shame I never had a daughter. He would make a good son-in-law. Go now. It sounds like you still have much work to do."

"Yes my lord."

Eadric turned and walked to the door, then, before he left, turned back. "You should go to the church tomorrow. Make a show. Oswin isn't there, but the abbot I believe would appreciate knowing that the thegn still supports the monastery." Wealhmær grunted and nodded in reply. Eadric departed into the late afternoon drizzle.

Appendix A - Notes

There are several things in this story for which I have not provided explanation, or might seem contradictory. I have collected a number of these here to attempt to explain some of the choices made. I am making no claim to have read any sources in detail, but have read through enough, as time permitted, to hopefully give a little historical backing to the decisions I have made.

Tata

The size of Tata's flock is small, only twenty sheep. From some research[1] a farm could range from 20 sheep up to a few hundred sheep. I only did limited investigation, given the time pressure of writing this within a month, so I do not know if this would be a single shepherd, or split between multiple shepherds. I have therefore built this around the idea that Tata's flock is usually roughly 100 sheep. Due to the bad year, which left him so down, this might have dropped to around 50. The theft of a number of his sheep then put him on the final 20. This is why Tata was unwilling to part with such a significant portion of his remaining sheep, as he felt it all spiralling away from him. The compassion shown him by Eadric was enough to give him the motivation to go and buy some more sheep. I was unable to find any information as to when Tata might have "normally" purchased new sheep. However it seems that lambs were often killed 6-8 months after birth[2], so I have inferred that it might be more normal for trade of sheep to be made at this point, late autumn, long after the events of this story, and this is when Tata might normally be able to find replacements to restock. This, combined with the cost, and the feeling of "what's the point" is why he didn't do so before, and why he would not be looking to get more than a few sheep at the current time.

Additionally, the ownership of the flock and the land was something I considered. As Wealhmær was the thegn, I was working under the assumption that he owned the land, and Tata was paying rent on it. The rent would

[1] `https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/14029/1/Langdon1983PhD.pdf` - page 33

[2] `https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/76966/1/OC2013_QI_early_med.pdf` - page 3

have been probably monetary, as well as in produce, such as wool[3]. I have chosen that Wealhmær might have offered favourable terms to Tata here, in exchange for the expectation that he provide a certain amount of sheep for purchase to the thegn at a given time. I have not decided what he needs with eight sheep, as it seems like far too many to feed his household in one go, but the number was chosen to provide a strain on the diminished size of Tata's flock, while still being a normally reasonable request.

Monks titles

There are several monks for whom the titles switch between Father and Brother throughout the text. I did consider keeping this consistent, especially as it seems to be more common, especially in modern catholic religious communities, for father to refer to specifically an ordained monk, whereas brother was unordained. The Rule of Benedict[4] however states that the titles reflect seniority between the monks, so Dunstan might refer to Cola as "brother" but Oswin would call both of them "father".

The Rule of Benedict does not dictate what lay people should use to address monks, so I have made the decision for them to refer to young monks as "brother" and older monks, or ones with notably more seniority, as "father".

[3] `https://earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk/law/rspger` - clause 5

[4] `https://pressbooks.palni.org/ruleofbenedict/chapter/rb-63/`