

# **The Cries of Silent Men**

**by Andy Barrett**

## Cast

*This play needs a cast of between forty and sixty performers.*

### The 'Real' Characters:

William Hussey

Helen

### **The Monks:**

Prior Woodcock

Nicholas Dookmer

Richard Wakefield

John Langdale

Alexander Lowthe

Robert Gowton

Thomas Leyghton

Thomas Wallis

There are also hecklers and lookouts

### The Parts of the Players:

**The Opening (all of these players can take part in any of the scenes that follow):**

St. Bruno and his six companions

Players with swords and helmets

*Each of the following three sections can be done with around ten to fifteen performers:*

### **The Story of Brother Nicholas:**

Young Nicholas

Nicholas's Father

The Monks in the Cell (as many as we can have; between five and twelve)

Alice, an angel

**The Story of the Lay Brother:**

Assorted tradesmen (again as many as we can have)

Robert Lawrence

William Trafford

**The Story of The Kings Great Matter:**

Catherine of Aragon

Young Prince Arthur

Young Prince Henry

The Pope

Henry VIII

Anne Boleyn

Cardinal Wolsey

Leonardo daVinci

Thomas Cromwell

Additional players (two or three to play Maids, Scholars, Puppeteers).

**The Culmination:**

*For this we can use players from all of the previous scenes. Many of the parts are the same here – specifically those of Cromwell, Henry, Anne Boleyn, Catherine of Aragon, Robert Lawrence and Alice.*

*Additional parts:*

John Haughton

Prior Webster

Sir John Markham

Judge

Dr London

## The Opening

*The audience enter into the barn where they are a number of lookouts who give the audience a bead and tell them to keep hold of it inside their clenched fist. There is a sense of something dangerous happening, of a secret meeting. As this is happening there is the sound of plainsong coming from the courtyard, but this cannot be seen, nor the courtyard entered into.*

*Once the audience is in place one of the lookouts calls out into the courtyard:*

**Lookout:** We are ready to begin Father. All is clear.

**Woodcock:** Then call them through. And God help us if there be spies in our midst.

**Lookout:** You may ente

*As the audience now enter into the courtyard space they are stared at by the lookouts as though they are trying to ascertain whether or not each member of the audience is a friend or a foe. In the courtyard there is a wooden stage on which the former Prior Woodcock and William Hussey stand. The singing continues. There are players standing round the sides holding burning torches. It is 1543.*

**Woodcock:** Brothers and sisters, both young and old, brave and afeared welcome to this most holy place, surrendered to the King not five years past, a home of God no more in law but still a sacred space.

We know that your presence here this evening brings you danger, but we also know that each and every one of you has come to this place as seekers of the truth, that rare commodity in Henry's England. To have light shed upon matters that continue to be hidden as our increasingly wilful King takes wife after wife – his sixth only a week ago – and wades ever deeper in the blood and the guts of good and holy men.

Some of you may have entered within since our departure but for many this will be your first encounter with what was once our most beloved home. Women were not allowed within these confines, as our order demands. And whilst there may be amongst you those who did business with our lay brothers, bringing rents from our mines, iron from our forge, materials for our buildings and supplies for our land, few

will have come further than the Gatehouse. There are undoubtedly those amongst you who as children climbed over the walls to satisfy your innocent curiosity and to return to your friends to tell tales of the monks who infused the air with their prayer. And to these, and all of you, we say welcome.

As you know four years ago this Charterhouse was taken by the King, and the order of the Beauvale Carthusians destroyed. The brothers and lay brothers, confreres and conversi as we call ourselves, were scattered across the land, most to join the stream of monks who freshly evicted from the homes of their orders looked for employment as teachers, scribes, librarians, chantry priests and vicars in the churches that cascade across England with their new teachings being introduced day by day.

And you will all know that this Charterhouse and its lands were granted to Sir John Hussey, a man who supported the Pilgrimage of Grace, in which the poor and the powerful with one voice declared that Henry and his henchman Thomas Cromwell were destroying the very fabric of England with their savage attack on the church. Sir John Hussey, a man who, like so many others, was executed for speaking nothing but the truth. And that since then the possession of this place has passed on to his son, William. And it is because of William that we are all here tonight. In answer to his father's death he has sought us out, both confreres and conversi, to return and tell our tale. Set with this challenge we have crossed land and indeed sea to gather ourselves together once more. We have studied and questioned as we seek to understand the viciousness that was unleashed upon us. And in doing so we have delved deep into a most dreadful affair that was to reverberate across Europe and does so still.

**William:** I thank you all for your bravery in gathering here this evening. And hope that what will unfold will stir your souls and illuminate a world that is being plunged into darkness.

**Heckler:** You are a papist! How speak you of darkness when you deny the people the right to commune with God in their own tongue! You would burn all those who dare to question Rome!

*A group of players move towards the heckler.*

**William:** Wait! My friend 'tis true that I have no love for this new religion but I have no desire to plunge anyone into the flames. If you are here to declaim treason at us then pray tell us so. But I beseech you; listen to what is said and knowing which side our sympathies may sit try to understand our position.

**Heckler:** And if I cannot?

**William:** Be sure to understand that my men will follow you home and take good account of your family.

**Heckler:** And they call this a holy place!

**Woodcock:** Friends, please! 'Tis true that sanctity has been the victim of the events of these last years but I pray you bring forgiveness and meekness into this place. For these past weeks, my friends, we have worked here in secret, aided by those whom William has found for us, brothers and sisters who must meet in the shadows to declare their true faith. Brothers and sisters who though not sworn to the Carthusian order are as one with us in our endeavour. And now you join us too and hidden by the night sky and the woods that surround us together we venture into the heart of this most unexpected of stories, in which we will tell of how this most beautiful and peaceful place was thrust into the eye of one of the greatest storms that has ever blown through England.

*A group of Players enter the courtyard from the barn wheeling with them a Storm Machine – this is a contraption on wheels that is banged with sticks and through the rotating of cranks and handles creates a thunderous din. At the same time other Players go round the space throwing snow into the air over the audience's heads, and snow is thrown from the windows.*

**Woodcock:** It begins far from here, over four hundred and fifty years ago; in the midst of the Alps....

*And now we see seven players entering again from the barn, tied to each other with rope. They should look very weather beaten. They walk up onto a wooden stage.*

**Woodcock:** St. Bruno and his six companions who, desiring to abandon the world and embrace the religious life, have climbed into the midst of these precipitous rocks and snow covered mountains, to a place called Chartreuse.

*The Players are now on the stage.*

**St. Bruno:** This is where we shall pray for eternity my brothers. Does not the psalm say 'he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased and he built his sanctuary and he fed them according to the integrity of his heart'.

*The Players fall to their knees and pray. As they do so other Players run through the space with swords and wearing helmets.*

**Audience 1:** It's the Kings men! They've come to kill us all!

**Audience 2:** It's a trap! We've been lead here to the slaughter!

**Woodcock:** Friends no! Please! 'Tis only our play. And these are only our players! For Christ's poor men as our order became known was not to appear in our land until Henry II built the first Charterhouse as penance for a most infamous murder.

*A Player appears from behind the audience on a high platform, (or this could simply be done from amongst the audience), and calls out:*

**Player:** Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?

*And at that moment the Players with swords surround another Player. They shout 'Hack him down! Slash him open! Smash his skull in!' There is a cry and we see blood spurt up into the air, a lot of blood. As the soldiers turn to run off they too are covered in blood.*

*As they do so there is the sound of trumpets and fanfares. All of the remaining Players now enter, some of whom are dressed in robes. They pass through the courtyard and up to their positions by the Charterhouse.*

**Woodcock:** And a century later at Greasley Castle were to arrive Bishops, Earls, and the finest Knights of the realm as they witnessed the opening of the third Charterhouse to arrive in England. Beauvale. Built by Nicholas de Cantilupe, the owner of the castle in which they were gathered. Built so that prayers should be offered for the glory of God, the welfare of the King and Archbishop, the souls of his mother and father and for he and his wife. Stat crux, dum volvitar orbis.

*And now all begin to sing as the Charterhouse remains are lit up in the distance.*

**Woodcock:** And now the charterhouse is established so we are ready to begin. But we will not meet together again until we have shown to you first the different strands to our tale. As you arrived you were each given a bead and told to keep it firm in your clenched hand. Please now hold out your arms and unfurl your fingers. If what you see in the palm of your hand is a black bead then please attend to Brother Moore. If a red, Sister Wise. And if a white, Sister Roodes. Listen intently to their instructions, for now we must move on, to follow the paths that lead to our end.

## The Story of Brother Nicholas

*This story is for the space nearest the house. As the audience arrive we hear singing from the church. The space is set out as a cell, with a small desk and a simple bed. The guide for this group – for there is a guide that takes each group around the space – asks the audience to stand around: ‘please my friends, make the shape of a horseshoe in preparation for our performance’. Once the audience is in place the guide rings a small bell, (this will happen with all of the guides at all of the sites). A young novice monk in his early twenties, Nicholas Dookmer, enters the space and lights a candle which is sitting on the desk. He begins to address the audience:*

**Nicholas:** My name is Nicholas Dookmer. I was here at the Charterhouse when the commissioners came and we departed. I was the youngest here then and had a secret which I have since shared with my former brothers who have gathered again once more so that we can tell this story with the help of the people of the villages nearby. Brother Woodcock, who spoke to you in the courtyard, as our former prior instructed me to tell this tale. And that in the telling of it you may reach something of an understanding of the privations of this place, the struggle our souls go through, and of what we have lost.

*A boy of fifteen enters with his father from one side and a monk from the other side.*

**Nicholas:** That is me, at the age of fifteen, sent here by my father, my mother having died in childbirth, the baby dead too.

**Boy:** But you will be lonely without me father.

**Father:** Yes Nicholas but I have been told of this place by Sir John Chaworth, whose lands I tend and whom the monks here have dealings with. It is a holy place. Here you will gain a true understanding of the ways of God.

**Boy:** Will there be others of my age?

**Father:** No you are young, too young for this order. But Sir John himself has seen to it.

**Boy:** And will I see you again?

**Father:** The monks tramp through the fields once a week. I will maybe see you then to say hello. Goodbye Nicholas. 'Tis for the best.

*The father bids his son farewell and exits. The boy looks around the space before a monk enters and takes him to the desk. He opens a book and points to a passage. As he is doing this Nicholas continues:*

**Nicholas:** I studied and learnt the routine of this house, of the order of prayers and the ways in which they should be intoned, under the watchful eye of the Novice Master, Brother William...

*Nicholas now takes the place at the desk as the boy and the monk leave...*

**Nicholas:** ... as the months and then the years started to go by. Matins and Prime, Terse and Vespers. Work, sleep and prayer; work, sleep and prayer. But throughout I carried with me a terrible secret. For though I was bound to a life of solitude and silence I was not alone.

*And now we see eight monks arriving in the cell (it can be more) and carrying out a variety of tasks – Reading books / Transcribing manuscripts / Kneeling and praying / Illuminating texts / Weaving clothes / Lighting a fire – as Nicholas continues.*

**Nicholas:** I was kept company by my imagination. Through an act of will I could bring forward those to help me through my loneliness. Because I could not bear it. Almost twenty hours of the day were to be spent within these walls, or our small garden, alone. Even our food, saving our communal repasts in the refectory on a Sunday or feast days, in silence still, was passed, without sound, invisibly through the turn by the side of the cell door.

*A tray with a beaker of water, some bread, fish and vegetables appears, one of the monks takes it and puts it on the desk. All of the monks, bar Nicholas, gather round to eat it.*

**Nicholas:** So much silence, between the prayers, either chanting together in the church or alone on our knees in our cells. And I would thirst for that one moment when the silence was shattered, every morning at a quarter to six, the time for the brother whose duty it was to be the excitator to ring the bell to rouse us for our morning prayers.

*The sound of a loud bell being struck from outside the cell.*

**Nicholas:** And that noise in its clarity and clamour was as though a rebuke to the silence that was to follow. And though I shudder in shame to declare it these visions who came to live with me, turned from providing comfort and instead began to play with the torments of my mind.

*One of the monks pulls back their cowl – it is Nicholas's father.*

**Father:** Why do you not do as you are told Nicholas? Look at your mother. See how disappointed she is in you.

*Another monk pulls back their cowl – it is Nicholas's mother.*

**Mother:** Please Nicholas, you must help me.

*Another pulls back their cowl to show the face of an accuser.*

**Accuser:** She sits still in purgatory, unable to move into the glories of heaven for the lure of the gates of hell.

**Nicholas:** She has committed no sin.

**Accuser:** Her sin is to have brought you forth into the world.

**Mother:** You must save me Nicholas. You must be pure and obedient to the order and save me.

**Father:** I am lonely Nicholas! Each night I long for you and your mothers company.

**Nicholas:** Then why do you not meet me in the fields as you said you would?

**Father:** Because I cannot bear it! Please, you must believe in what you do!

**Nicholas:** I try! I try! But it is hard! Hard beyond compare! This endless silence. We eat so little. We see so little of our brothers. The cold, cold baths. The hair shirt that pricks and stabs and scrapes at my skin peeling off the tiniest strips of flesh and causing unending pain. They call this a cell and now I know why!

*The other monks now begin to join in:*

**Monk D:** We are here to pray. Whatever the privations we face they are as nothing compared to those of Christ. Through our prayer we bring salvation to mankind.

**Nicholas:** But why in such deep silence? What need is there to be plunged into this abyss of solitude?

**Monk E:** God's secrets were revealed to his servants not in the turbulence of the crowd but in the silence of solitude.

**Monk F:** It was when Jacob was alone, having dispatched his retinue ahead of him, that he saw God face to face.

**Monk G:** John the Baptist, schooled in sanctity, having fled the society of men and choosing the solitude of the desert, was alone of all men worthy to wash Christ.

**Monk H:** Our Lord and Saviour himself retired alone to the desert to conquer the devil and his temptations with spiritual arms.

**Mother:** You must listen to them Nicholas. Or I am damned!

**Nicholas:** Do not say that!

**Accuser:** Her feet are as toads for she stands in sin; a serpent searcheth about her entrails and is gnawing and biting without mercy. Her breast is open and gnawed with worms.

**Nicholas:** But what of endeavour? Surely it is through work that we show our love.

**Accuser:** It is through prayer that you show your love.

**Mother:** Save me Nicholas. I see the gates of hell and it is full of fire and burning sulphur.

**Monk E:** Do you think you are alone in your terror?

**Monk F:** This place shudders under the hidden weight of turmoil and guilt and suffering..

**Monk G:** But you must pass through this weight...

**Monk H:** For behind it lies a place of lightness ...

**Monk D:** ... in which your life can become one continual prayer.

**All:** The world needs your prayer!

**Mother:** You must pray for my soul.

**Nicholas:** I cannot do it! I cannot do it! I am weak! I do not have the strength to be a Carthusian! Leave me alone! Leave me alone!

*Nicholas collapses onto the bed as there is some kind of climactic ending to this scene that may involve music, sound, lights, smoke.*

*As Nicholas lies there on the bed there is the sound of a woman singing and a ray of light shines into the cell as a woman enters. Nicholas awakes.*

**Nicholas:** Who are you? How did you arrive here?

**Alice:** I am sorry. Please do not harm me. I was outside in your garden and heard a cry as though you needed help.

**Nicholas:** Why would I harm you?

**Alice:** Because I should not be here.

**Nicholas:** And I should not be talking to you. Please, I have spoken to no-one outside of these walls for some years now. Tell me who you are

**Alice:** My name is Alice. I live alone with my mother and work on a farm belonging to Sir John Willoughby. I am a simple cow girl father, nothing more.

**Nicholas:** And I am not a father, though one day I hope to be. I am a novice. Please, call me Nicholas. I used to live outside of these walls too.

**Alice:** And you have been blessed with good fortune to be taken into this place.

**Nicholas:** I wish that I could truly believe so.

**Alice:** This has always been a magical place to me. The chanting, when the wind is strong and the leaves have fallen so that it does not get captured in the branches of the trees, it would come to me in my sleep, even as a baby.

*And now we hear the ethereal sound of chanting; it should sound as from a dream.*

**Alice:** And the peace I felt from it. I cannot say it but I felt it. In my blood. And I would ask my mother what happened on the other side of the walls and she told me that there were men there who slept standing up and who spoke in a language that nobody understood. And that I should stop talking of it so. But I could not prevent my curiosity. One day I climbed over the walls and hid myself in the reeds by the fish pond and watched what happens here, and have done so ever since. Who is it that you argue with?

**Nicholas:** But I do not .... it is all in my mind .... the torment .... the struggle...

**Alice:** I have heard it.

**Nicholas:** But you cannot.

**Alice:** You are a good man Nicholas who struggles to learn how to be silent and what that means.

**Nicholas:** But I sin. Even now, talking to you I sin.

**Alice:** But if this is merely a dream is that a sin too?

**Nicholas:** I wish that I could go back with you. Over that wall.

**Alice:** Your presence here brings me joy. And to thank you I will send a gift. It will be hidden but you will know what to do when you see it. Do not worry Nicholas. It takes time for the seed to take root.

**Nicholas:** How can I thank you?

**Alice:** By promising me one thing. That when the time comes and all is breaking around you that you will truly understand your calling and will follow it wherever it takes you.

**Nicholas:** And when will I know when that is?

**Alice:** There is a tempest coming Nicholas. Believe me.

*The sound of singing again as Alice exits.*

**Nicholas:** And she vanished. And for the next days and nights I waited for a sign, to hear from her again, knowing not in what form it may appear. But nothing.

*The tray with his meal appears again. It is another fish.*

**Nicholas:** Cum uno pisce contentus. A Carthusian motto. Be satisfied with one fish.

*He opens it up ... inside there is a rose hip. He takes it out and examines it. He smiles.*

**Nicholas:** And then I found what she had sent me.

*Nicholas now opens the rose hip with a knife, takes out a seed and plants it. As he is doing this he continues to talk. And at the same time as this the monks re-enter carrying many, many rose bushes so that the space becomes full of flowers.*

**Nicholas:** When the first men arrived at Chartreuse there were those who wondered how they would survive in the harsh conditions but as time went by the stony wastes became a garden. And now they say of our order that wherever we settle we make the desert bloom as a rose. It was a rose hip that I found inside the fish. And inside the rose hip were rose seeds.

*Nicholas now walks round the rose bushes.*

**Nicholas:** After a while you hear through the silence into a deeper silence, a silence in which you are aware of the swoop and lull of bird flight, the secretion of the spiders silk, or the seed pushing through the earth.

*His father enters as the plainsong begins again. They smile at each other and Nicholas hands him a rose. As his father exits Nicholas continues:*

**Nicholas:** And in this silence you hear most clearly the call to prayer. And I was finally able to fall into that call, most thankful to the angel who had visited me, for angel she must have been. And waiting for the moment when the tempest would come and I would have to keep my promise to her.

*Nicholas falls to his knees as the sound of the singing fades. Alice appears in the church window, now clearly an angel.*

**Guide:** And now we must leave Brother Nicholas to his prayers. Please, follow me....

## The Story of the Lay Brother

*The Guide gathers the audience into the space by the apple trees. When they are ready they ring a small bell and six monks enter the space - John Langdale, Alexander Lowthe, Robert Gowton, Thomas Leyghton, Thomas Wallis and Richard Wakefield. Wakefield comes forward.*

**Wakefield:** Good evening my friends. We, as Brother Woodcock has said, have come together from near and far to stand once more in this former home of ours as we seek to uncover the truth of what happened here and why it was so. I am the only lay brother amongst us who has returned and yet the brothers who stand here alongside me have asked that I lead the telling of this tale. I will not introduce them by name but will tell you that mine is Richard Wakefield and that I was never solemnly professed during my time here at the Charterhouse and stayed throughout as one of the conversi rather than a confrere.

I know that you think of this place as a home for prayer, but it was more than that. For it was a place of endeavour too – of agriculture and medicine and study and business and toil. And I want you to imagine that, for it is important to me. So close your eyes, all of you, and try as I do now, to see it as it was.

*And now behind and around Wakefield we see a host of people carrying out a huge range of activities – bee keepers, men with ancient looking tools, people carrying bales of hay and chicken and herbs, people bringing trays of food, those with ledgers and wine and candles.*

*This runs for a few moments and then we see – in the distance – a group of monks walking through this flurry of activity carrying a body.*

**Wakefield:** And, of course, at times there were deaths amongst us and the brothers would be buried here, right here, where you stand, in the cloister; laid to rest as tradition has it in nothing more than their robes. But my domain was not death but the overseeing of more temporal matters. As you will see as I tell you now of a meeting in the chapter house, in which all of us here were called, as usual, to discuss matters of business. Only this was a meeting like no other.

*The monks now form a semi circle.*

**Wakefield:** We here were all present on that day, but together we are still short, for there were two others there also. Absent now, but for very different reasons. Brother Trafford ...

*A player enters.*

**Wakefield:** And our Prior. Brother Lawrence.

*The monks cross themselves as Wakefield indicates to a player from offstage that he is to enter. Which he does. The other monks look at each other and nod as they prepare themselves in the recreation of this event.*

**Wakefield:** And so we began.

**Lawrence:** A beautiful day brothers.

**Langdale:** I've never seen so many buttercups.

**Lowthe:** The spirit of our novice spills beyond his cell.

**Wakefield:** 'Twil be a bountiful year with the crops too father.

**Langdale:** The redwings are still with us. Normally they have left by now.

**Gowton:** They have become enchanted.

**Lawrence:** Or know how safe they are inside these walls.

**Leyghton:** What is it brother?

**Lawrence:** There is yet another oath to be said.

**Trafford:** I thought that England had finished with its thirst to declaim heresy.

**Wallis:** What is it now?

**Lawrence:** An Oath of Supremacy. Declaring that the King is the only supreme head on earth of the church in England.

**Wallis:** How can Henry be the supreme head of the Church? 'Tis the pope, the direct descendant of Peter who speaks to us.

**Trafford:** How can any man swear to such a thing with a clear conscience?

**Gowton:** Will the King not be happy until he has crept into the minds of every man and told them how to think?

**Lawrence:** It is a matter that I am confident can be resolved. So let us talk of other things.

*He takes a dead mole from his pocket.*

**Langdale:** The fields are being ravaged by the mouldwarps. I've never seen mounds like it.

**Wakefield:** I'll call for a wonger to deal with it. There's supposed to be a good one over in Watnall Chaworth. I'm sure we'll find a use for the hides.

*He takes the dead mole and puts it in his pocket.*

**Lawrence:** Can the King cause us as much problem as mouldwarps and rabbits?

**Trafford:** If the community has decided that it is forbidden to eat anything that stands on four legs we will always be at the mercy of mother nature.

**Lowthe:** You do not approve William?

**Trafford:** I merely observe.

**Gowton:** You said that you are confident that this matter with the King can be resolved. How?

**Lawrence:** I am to go to London to see Brother Haughton for guidance.

**Leyghton:** And be placed in the Tower for a month like he and the procurator for refusing to pledge his allegiance to the act of succession?

**Lawrence:** I understand how violently you feel about this. But they were not ill treated and the matter was resolved.

**Wallis:** I have no reason to doubt Brother Haughton. When he was Prior all found him to be of great prudence but surely....

**Lawrence:** So Brother Wakefield what do you have to report? Have we found enough parish priests to carry out our duties outside of these walls?

**Wakefield:** We have. And all of the churches have been provided with bread and wine and lights for the high altar.

**Lawrence:** If only we were so sure in our spiritual affairs as Richard is in his earthly ones.

**Langdale:** The tithes of lamb?

**Wakefield:** Have been recorded. And the rents received.

**Trafford:** How thankful we must be for those who bequeath us land so that we can chant their souls into eternal peace.

*There is some unease amongst the other monks over what Trafford has said.*

**Lawrence:** And the fabric of our charterhouse? The water tank is not working well.

**Wakefield:** That is due to the silt from the stream.

**Gowton:** And some of our weaker brothers have had problems opening the taps.

**Wakefield:** That is simply the weather. Now that spring is here they will be fine.

**Leyghton:** You spoke of the redwings brother. And said that they may know of safety here. Can I ask you if your soul is at ease?

**Lawrence:** Yes, it is only...

**Wallis:** Brother?

**Lawrence:** I only wonder how high we must climb to escape from the clutches of the world. We lock ourselves away in silence to pray for the souls of all and still are called upon to venture out of our desert.

**Trafford:** You have heard tell of the story of Prior Haughton's visit to Mount Grace?

*All look at each other.*

**Lawrence:** Well.

**Trafford:** He was travelling there in his role as Provincial Visitor...

**Lawrence:** And soon will be sent to La Grande Chartreuse, an honour above all others.

*The monks look at Trafford, as though telling him that he should not continue.  
There is a silence.*

**Lawrence:** Well?

**Trafford:** When he arrived at Mount Grace his clothes, muddied by the long ride from London, were washed and put out to dry, along with those of the other travellers.

**Lawrence:** And?

**Trafford:** And were set upon by crows who pecked them to pieces.

**Lawrence:** Then he would have been given some others.

**Trafford:** But what is strange Prior is that there was not a single mark left on any of the other vestments.

**Lawrence:** And you think that this is an omen?

**Trafford:** I do not know what it is, but some say...

**Lowthe:** Brother Trafford you seem to speak often of the world outside.

**Gowton:** And give voice to views that are not usually expressed,

**Trafford:** I am only aware...

**Lowthe:** You know that our order demands that we concern ourselves with such things only where it is absolutely necessary.

**Trafford:** But in a matter such as this surely ...

**Lowthe:** There are times when I question why you desire to dwell on these temporal matters so.

**Trafford:** I can see that the world is changing.

**Wallis:** That is not of our concern.

**Trafford:** But men who do not make it their concern will have no place in it.

**Leyghton:** How say you such a thing? We are Carthusians.

**Lawrence:** Brothers please.

**Lowthe:** Stat crux, dum volvitur orbis.

**Leyghton:** Which is why we question your need to leave this place.

**Lawrence:** I am Prior. I follow in a line of holy men who have struggled here in penury. We insist in keeping the temporal world from our affairs as far as we can but now I have no choice.

**Gowton:** And you are certain you will be safe?

**Lawrence:** How can we be certain of anything? Brother Houghton was a lawyer before he joined our order. He will know how we should discuss the matter in a way that they understand, just as he did with the act of succession. Three words, remember; that is all it took. Three words to allow all to be content. Quatenus licitum esset. As far as the law of God allows.

**Leyghton:** But words lie only on the surface of things.

**Lawrence:** The books Richard. Have they arrived?

**Wakefield:** They have.

**Langdale:** And we have plenty of St. John's Wort to keep the mice from eating the pages.

**Wallis:** Sometimes I wonder if we need a larger charterhouse to find space for all of the books we receive.

**Lawrence:** When the Count de Nevers who proclaimed much edification from the sanctity of our order sent a rich present of plate it was returned as being of no use. He then sent a quantity of parchment and leather for books which was accepted with gratitude.

**Gowton:** Why talk of books? You are hiding from us Brother Lawrence.

**Lawrence:** The King respects our order. It has always been treated well by the crown. These men who write the laws are only concerned with the way a sentence sounds. They need clarity in ink and statement. They are haggling over phrases. There are ways in which we can say these things in clear conscience. Our worlds have no reason to collide. They have their matters and we ours.

I will travel to London tomorrow to see Brother Houghton. Prior Webster of Axholme will be attending too. It has been suggested that we meet the Chief Secretary Thomas Cromwell. Between us all we should surely allow this safe passage. William you are to take my place whilst I am gone.

*There is some unease amongst the other monks at this news.*

**Trafford:** And if the commissioners arrive to take the oath whilst you are away?

**Lawrence:** Then you must say what is within your conscience. Now Brother Richard let us talk of more pressing matters. It appears my chimney is blocked. Would you be able to clear it whilst I am away?

*The monks all look at each other and nod. Wakefield comes forward to the audience. Trafford and Lawrence come to stand either side of him.*

**Wakefield:** And that was the final meeting that was held in the Chapterhouse before the lives of these two brothers – Brother Lawrence and Brother Trafford –

were to change so utterly. And who can know a man's conscience other than God and the man himself?

*Trafford and Lawrence exit in different directions as the other monks exit in a line in another direction still.*

**Wakefield:** And though tonight we tell a most terrible tale we must remember still of what this place was, of how amidst the silence there was such industry too.

*And now – as at the beginning of the scene – we begin to animate the space with a variety of people entering and carrying out jobs: a wunter with carrying a pole on which are hanging dead moles, someone carrying chickens, another with a basketful of apples, someone wearing protective clothing of the time for collecting honey from bees, someone carrying wool, someone carrying candles, someone carrying tools, someone bringing in freshly baked bread, someone with bottles of beer, someone working a horseshoe with a hammer and anvil .....*

**Wakefield:** That as well as a church and the cells of the brothers there was an apiary and a dovecote, and fishponds and a buttery and a brewery and a bakehouse. And an orchard too.

*Could we have some music to accompany this? Something that raises the mood of this section so that it ends on a more positive note.*

**Wakefield:** Yes, this was a most joyful place. Look, see, remember...

*Wakefield exits.*

## The Story of The Kings Great Matter

*As the audience approach this stage we see a group of players standing together in a line. One of them comes forward.*

**Helen:** As Father Woodcock has told you this night is one in which the story of the Charterhouse and the events that were to unfold here are to be finally shared with those for whom it has sat in their midst. I had no dealings with this place but feel I know it well. For I married one of the Brothers, a kind and gentle man, who, once the Charterhouse was no more became, like many, a vicar and embraced a new life, free of the rigour of the Carthusian statutes. My kind husband is now dead and in his honour, with the help of the men and womenfolk of Greasley, we are to present our play.

Though you may feel as we begin that what we tell must be too far removed from the happenings of this place we plead for your patience. For as the night draws in all will fall into place.

*A room of cloth is now created – this should look like the curtains that surround a large four poster bed.*

**Helen:** In the middle of this story sit two women, both yet to be born.

*The noise of a baby crying.*

**Helen:** The first to come into the world does so in Madrid, the youngest child of King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile.

*Two crude puppets representing King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella appear from over the curtains, faces on sticks which when rotated will later represent the parents of Anne Boleyn. As this is presented other players accompany this with some form of crude and basic music played on medieval looking instruments, (recorders, lutes, drums, bells etc).*

**Helen:** Her name is Catherine; Catherine of Aragon.

*A young Catherine now enters from behind the curtains carrying a book which she is reading intently.*

**Catherine:** How beautiful and pure is the faith in which I belong. And how I enjoy these long hours of religious study. Of the miracles of Saints, of how good works and charity open the way to heaven, and of the cleansing flames of purgatory.

*The curtains are dropped to reveal a violent and grotesque image, accompanied by violent music – maybe the thunder machine has made its way here.*

**Helen:** The fates of such children, born to the rich and mighty, are welded to the passage of power. And what they win by this power they lose by their obligations.

*Arthur now appears, a fifteen year old boy.*

**Player:** I am Arthur, the first son of King Henry VII. And I am to marry this royal daughter of Spain bringing stability and influence to the Tudor dynasty of which I belong.

*And now the players make a wedding procession, with Catherine being given a bridal bouquet.*

**Helen:** A young man and a young woman, both fifteen years of age, destined to become King and Queen of England.

*Arthur and Catherine retire into the bedchamber...*

**Helen:** Only this destiny is to remain unfulfilled.

*The sound of a tolling bell as the curtains fall again to show Arthur lying dead across the bed with his face covered in postules.*

**Catherine:** He is dead! My husband is dead of the sweating sickness! I have not been married for six whole months and yet here I stand a widow! What will become of me?

*And now we see another boy, younger than Arthur, the twelve year old Henry.*

**Young Henry:** I am Henry, brother of Arthur. And I will do my duty to ensure that this compact is kept.

*The Pope enters.*

**Pope:** And I am the pope!

*The other Players kneel and cross themselves.*

**Pope:** And I will only allow these two to be joined together if the marriage between Catherine of Spain and Arthur of England was a marriage that was not consummated.

*Two maids come out from behind the curtains and hold up a white sheet for the Pope to investigate as there is a drum roll and a sense of consternation from the players.*

**Pope:** The sheet is unsullied; she may marry again!

*And now confetti is thrown from behind the sheet as Catherine and Henry sit on makeshift thrones and crowned.*

**Helen:** And so, seven years later, at the death of King Henry, Catherine and this young Prince became not only husband and wife, but King and Queen of England.

*A player comes forward.*

**Player:** With such a wife and an heir to the throne imminent these are the most glorious days for England.

*Catherine now enters into the 'bedchamber'.*

**Henry:** Fetch me my lute, for I am a man blessed with a soul that vibrates with the most beautiful and heavenly music!

*As the Player runs off to fetch Henry a bow Catherine screams from behind the curtain and a tiny coffin is brought out.*

**Henry:** Fetch me my tennis racquet, for I am a man whose athleticism would be honoured by Apollo himself!

*Another scream and another tiny coffin is brought out.*

**Henry:** Fetch me my armour, for I am a lion amongst men, and am to France to fight as a warrior King!

*Another scream and another tiny coffin is brought out.*

**Henry:** Fetch me my quill, for I am a man whose works of scholarship are thirsted upon by all of Europe!

*Another scream and another tiny coffin is brought out.*

**Henry:** When will this end!

*Another scream. All wait to hear what it is. The sound of a baby crying. The baby is brought out. Henry opens the swaddling clothes and looks at it.*

**Henry:** A daughter. Wolsey! Where is my Cardinal? Where is the man to whom I have given power like no other to aid in the running of my kingdom?

*Cardinal Wolsey enters.*

**Wolsey:** My lord.

**Henry:** Something must be done!

**Wolsey:** There is still time. We must trust in God.

**Henry:** Leviticus, Chapter twenty, Verse sixteen. 'If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an impurity: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless'.

**Wolsey:** But if a wife has not lain with ...

**Henry:** No! It is there! The rule of the bible is clear! And I need a male heir! With every dead child the whispering of the claimants to the throne grows louder.

*Both exit*

**Helen:** Let us now move to another birth. Sixteen years later than the first. The daughter of Sir Thomas Boleyn and Lady Elizabeth Howard.

*A young Anne now enters from behind the curtains carrying a book which she is reading intently.*

**Helen:** Her name is Anne. Anne Boleyn.

**Anne:** How intoxicated I am with the education that I receive here in France where I serve in the young Queen's court, surrounded by the most modern artists and thinkers.

*The curtains are dropped to reveal the same violent and grotesque image as before.  
The Player in the flames calls out:*

**Player:** The Catholic church is corrupt! Why should the payment of money save the soul from purgatory! And where in the bible does such a thing as purgatory exist!

**Helen:** And so our two ladies now are born and stride through this world ready for the encounter which will shake all of Christendom. Let us call Anne back from France and send her to the English court to meet the English lion.

*And now we see the Players arriving as though entering a society pageant, all wearing masks and with suitable music. Henry and Catherine enter and the Players, one by one make their introductions to them before moving off to watch the following confrontation.*

**Henry:** And who is this?

**Anne:** I am the daughter of your most esteemed diplomat Sir Thomas Boleyn sir.

**Catherine:** And who have you come as madam?

**Anne:** I have come as 'Perseverance' my lady.

**Catherine:** Something that I know well.

**Anne:** Let us hope that one day soon you will bring forth a future King.

**Catherine:** I have a daughter who may be Queen. And whilst I will do what the King demands of me we all know how men's eyes do wander, especially when their wives are secluded in their bedchamber.

**Anne:** I do not know how a man with such a beautiful wife could ever be tempted by another.

*Anne curtseys and Catherine exits...*

**Helen:** How worlds can turn on the shape of a curtsey. And we all know where our story has lead us.

*Henry and Wolsey sweep in.*

**All:** The Kings Great Matter.

**Wolsey:** A divorce?

**Henry:** I am determined.

**Wolsey:** It will not be without its problems. The Pope will need to declare that you and the Queen were never legally married. That his original dispensation was a mistake.

**Henry:** Do what is necessary to persuade him! I will marry Anne and I will produce an heir for my kingdom! Now get me that divorce!

*Henry exits as Wolsey sits at a desk and ponders his options.*

**Wolsey:** I will argue the case on a theological front! That is bound to succeed.

*A player enters as a scholar.*

**Scholar:** He quotes Leviticus but in Deuteronomy it is quite clear that a man should marry his brothers widow if she was childless and have children on her brothers behalf.

**Wolsey:** Then we will pay all of our leading theologians to support Henry's case.

*A player comes forward with bags of money.*

**Wolsey:** Write! Write! Whatever the cost!

*A player brings forth a pile of books. Wolsey picks one up.*

**Wolsey:** But this one is in support of Catherine. And so is this!

**Player:** Never have so many books been written about one subject sir. The whole world has begun to talk of the matter.

*The Players come forward wearing different hats and speaking in different languages to each other, (France, Spain, Turkey, Scotland, Germany).*

**Wolsey:** I was hoping to deal with it quietly! Why is the Pope so persistent!

*Catherine enters.*

**Catherine:** Because there is no reason why a marriage that has remained unquestioned for nineteen years should now be disputed. The people are on my side.

**Wolsey:** Get thee to a nunnery. Leave the King free to wed again. For I fear for England if we cannot resolve this.

*Anne enters.*

**Anne:** Why is it taking so long?

**Wolsey:** Because of politics. It is not just about two people but alliances between countries.

**Catherine:** The Pope needs the support of the Spanish Emperor and will not offend my family.

**Anne:** One day England will be free of you and your infernal religion!

**Catherine:** And you will never be loved by this country, whatever may occur. The people believe that the only reason for the King's affections towards you are because you have bewitched him!

**Player:** She consorts with devils.

**Player:** She places potions in his port.

**Player:** She has ground the eyes of rats and danced naked round the corpses of children.

**Helen:** And so a year passed, and then another. And still there was no divorce. And still Henry was infatuated by Anne.

**Henry:** Is there no-one on this land who can grant me what I wish?

*Cromwell comes forward*

**Cromwell:** My Lord if I may. I have an idea.

**Henry:** Who are you?

**Cromwell:** Cromwell sir. Thomas Cromwell. I have been in the employ of the Cardinal.

**Henry:** Now in disgrace for his inability to resolve this matter. You're a blacksmiths son aren't you?

**Cromwell:** Yes sir. And I never came across any metal that couldn't be shaped. It's all about the tools you use.

**Henry:** Go on.

**Cromwell:** The Pope will never be prevailed upon to rule in your favour. You need to remove the power to make that decision from him and give it to someone else.

**Henry:** Who?

**Cromwell:** May I suggest parliament.

**Henry:** I never call upon parliament to stand. Unless I need taxes for wars.

**Cromwell:** Call them in again. Remind them of their powers. And with everyone under one roof it is easier to see where loyalties lie.

*The Players now assemble as though in parliament.*

**Cromwell:** I have drafted some new bills, just in case.

*He takes a rolled up parchment from out of his pocket and hands it to one of the Players who has become the Speaker.*

**Cromwell:** This would be the first.

**Speaker:** It is hereby decreed that all final authority in all legal matters, lay and clerical, reside with the monarchy and that it is therefore illegal to appeal to any authority outside the kingdom on such matters.

**Henry:** We are to take on Rome.

**Cromwell:** We are simply going to make sure that sovereign affairs are overseen by sovereign rulers. That England will be freed from the authority of any foreign potentates. What a thing that would be.

**Henry:** And you are convinced that the country will concur?

**Cromwell:** We shall do it by degrees; act by act, oath by oath. The religious houses will of course find it difficult but words can be slippery things and can contain a whole range of conscience.

**Henry:** And once we start with such an action where will it end?

**Cromwell:** That I cannot foresee.

*As Cromwell concludes his argument we see Catherine and the young Mary being banished and Anne made Queen. At the same time we see the Pope receiving an official dispatch which angers him.*

**Cromwell:** It is bold and you will need men around you who have nerve. But of this I am sure; that Anne will become your Queen; Catherine and the young Mary will be banished from court; and you will have power like never before.

**Helen:** And that, my friends, is where our story ends. A beginning you may say rather than a conclusion. But so be it. Pray remember our play well as the evening unfolds.

*They all bow.*

## The Culmination

*At the end of the third performance from each of the spaces around the grounds there is the sound of a horn. The guides for each of the three shows tell the audiences that 'Prior Woodcock has called us all to come together by the church'. The audience are lead to their positions where they see John Langdale, Alexander Lowthe, Robert Gowton, Thomas Leyghton, Thomas Wallis, Richard Wakefield and Nicholas Dookmer reciting Matins.*

*The church is now ablaze with candles.*

*Prior Woodcock enters the space.*

**Woodcock:** And so my friends we come together again, your minds perchance ablaze from all that we have shown you. And wondering now of our meaning in bringing you to our former house. How can such things make sense? How can such things be conjoined? How can stories of Kings and Queens, of angels and roses play a part in that of a silent order hidden here in this valley?

*The players from the three different areas now arrive carrying burning torches.*

**Woodcock:** Look, here they come, our part time players from the villages outside of these walls. Those who have helped us in the performance of what we have discovered. Those that are to share with us now our anguish as we move towards our conclusion. But first an admission. I was not here when these things occurred. At least not until later, as you shall see.

*Woodcock beckons three performers to join him. The first being the performer who played Prior Lawrence in the Chapterhouse scene. The other two characters – Haughton and Webster – have not been seen up to this point.*

**Woodcock:** Brother Lawrence journeyed to the charterhouse in London, to meet these two men, whom our tale has told of but we have yet to see - our former Prior Haughton and Prior Webster from the charterhouse at Axenholme. And together, we have discovered, they requested an audience with the King's Minister, Thomas Cromwell.

*And now two performers enter from opposite sides of the stage – one being the performer who played Cromwell in ‘The Story of The Kings Great Matter’. This performer hands over a part of the costume that signifies that the other performer is now to take on the role of Cromwell, the exchange being observed by Woodcock. This being done both Woodcock, and the original Cromwell performer, now exit. We are now in Cromwell’s residence.*

**Cromwell:** It bewilders me how little you understand of the way the world works.

**Haughton:** We mean no disrespect to the King. What have poor humble monks to do with the decrees of princes?

*Cromwell and Haughton face each other. There is a moment, neither man giving way before Cromwell picks up a piece of paper.*

**Cromwell:** Beauvale. I have never been there. Is it as it sounds?

**Lawrence:** Indeed sir.

**Cromwell:** And are you thriving? I was told you have little income.

**Lawrence:** We live in an austere fashion.

**Cromwell:** As I will shortly discover.

*Cromwell clicks his fingers and a boy runs over with a large book, opens it and holds it in front of Cromwell.*

**Cromwell:** The Valor Ecclesiasticus gentlemen. The taking of the value of the religious houses of England. Beauvale is due a visit; let’s see, within the next few days. I thought that we should discover exactly how much land these so called holy houses are in possession of. You can never be too prepared. Aren’t you impressed? With the sheer management of our endeavour?

**Webster:** With all due respect sir we have come to talk of the oath.

**Cromwell:** You came here to stamp your feet. To flaunt your reticence. As though you alone were wise and the rest fools.

**Haughton:** We seek only ...

**Cromwell:** .... a safe place in which to hold your conscience.

*Cromwell waits to see if Haughton will argue with this statement. When he does not Cromwell continues:*

**Cromwell:** Once a lawyer....

**Haughton:** Surely it is possible for you to understand how those who believe in what scripture tells us may find this oath impossible to utter.

**Cromwell:** That Jesus gave power to St Peter which has been handed to the Pope and thus it is he and not the King that is our supreme head?

**Webster:** You do understand then?

**Cromwell:** Where is this? Where is it? Did Jesus assign power? Did Jesus tell us who would control the future of Christianity? Listen. I will tell you this. I believe that you are good men, all of you. I have no quarrel with you and I wish my soul and my conscience were as clean as yours. But this is a world that can have no place for the nonsense that is paraded across our country in the name of religion. The gullible hordes gawping at the girdles of St Mary Magdalene, or hurrying to hear the bells of St. Guthlac to cure their diseases of the head.

**Webster:** You know our charterhouses do not hold artefacts of any nature.

**Lawrence:** We pray. That is all. In solitude.

**Haughton:** What do you demand of us?

**Cromwell:** You know nothing of the plots and machinations of those who seek Henry's crown. Who hope, more than anything in the world, that he will leave this earth without bequeathing a male heir. That such a thing would leave the door ajar for claims to be pressed; for more bloodshed to be unleashed. How can you place such chaos above your own conscience? My job is to steer the ship. To keep things moving ahead. I will not allow for cracks in the edifice. I will not allow monks from places that I have never heard of to come here and suggest that they are to be given special treatment.

**Haughton:** We mean no offence to the King, merely that we are not asked to damn our souls in his name.

**Cromwell:** You are to speak the oath as it is. As must all of England. This is a time when we are to move forward. Together. The Pope in his obstinacy has made a terrible mistake and will pay the price. Our nation is to free itself from the demands of Rome. We shall truly be a sovereign state. Do you not understand how high the stakes have become? Be aware brothers, please, that though you may live in worlds of silence or come from remote locations, that you are now more important than you ever realised you would be. Consider your position carefully.

**Woodcock:** 'You are now more important that you ever realised you would be'. Our Carthusian brothers, from Axholme and London..

**Wakefield:** ..from Beauvale...

**Nicholas:** ... from here.

**Woodcock:** They were summonsed again.

**Webster:** I refuse to take the oath as it currently stands.

**Cromwell:** Do you think you alone are holy and the others accursed!

**Woodcock:** They would not give way.

**Haughton:** I cannot, in conscience, speak the words you demand of me.

**Cromwell:** So what would you have us do to you?

**Woodcock:** Cromwell could not understand it.

**Lawrence:** Your words may be of great importance but we cannot forego the teachings of the church.

**Cromwell:** I care not for the Church! Will you consent or not?

**Woodcock:** How they would not bend to his will.

*And now all of the performers declare:*

**All:** We cannot consent to this oath.

**Woodcock:** Yet again they were sent away.

**Wakefield:** Yes again they were summonsed.

**Nicholas:** Yet again they responded.

**All:** We cannot consent to this oath.

**Woodcock:** Three men from the most holy order of the land standing in the path of Cromwell and his plans. The man who had promised Henry resolution.

*The monks now form a semi-circle with their candles which Henry and Cromwell enter.*

**Henry:** Have these Carthusians taken the oath yet?

**Cromwell:** No. They will not. They do not hear what I am telling them. They lock themselves up in prayer and abstinence and think they can remain unblemished.

**Henry:** And yet they better you.

**Cromwell:** Given time my Lord...

**Henry:** What is this time you talk of! Do you think that I should continue to wait until these monks decide that they can accept me? The king! The world Cromwell, as you well know, is not made through argument and counter argument. It is made through will. These are the holiest men in the land. If they assent then there will be no arguments left. If they do not they garner resistance around them.

**Cromwell:** That is not their intention.

**Henry:** But you know that it will occur. Send them to the Tower. We will break them yet.

*Singing by the whole cast as Lawrence, Webster and Haughton are put in chains.*

**Langdale:** But of course we were not aware of this at the time.

**Lowthe:** Of the meetings that our Brothers were having with the most feared minister in all of Europe.

**Gowton:** Of how the King demanded of Cromwell that these religious men be made to go against the callings of their conscience.

**Leyhton:** And in our ignorance we continued as we always did, through prayer and routine.

**Wallis:** A routine that was broken by the arrival of the Kings Commissioners.

*Wakefield and the player who represented Trafford from the charterhouse scene enter. The singing continues, but lower now.*

**Wakefield:** The commissioners are here Brother Trafford.

**Trafford:** Do they bring news from London?

**Wakefield:** No. They are to take the value.

**Trafford:** I see.

**Wakefield:** It appears that we are to become assets on the Kings balance sheet.

**Trafford:** You must be careful what you say.

*Sir John Markham enters.*

**Markham:** You are the Proctor?

**Trafford:** I am Sir John. And this is Brother Wakefield, one of our lay brethren.

**Markham:** I was told this is an austere order and so it appears. Even your church is unadorned. Though I have never seen so many beautiful roses.

**Wakefield:** Our novice Nicholas. He found a rose hip inside a fish. I have often wondered the meaning of such a thing.

**Markham:** And 'tis a time when meanings have to be made clear.

**Trafford:** You know of our order Sir John. You know we are simple men.

**Markham:** The badge of simple men seems to hide many treacheries.

**Trafford:** What do you imply?

**Markham:** You know as well as I that a monk's habit does not necessarily make a man holy.

**Trafford:** And you that a new law cannot overturn Christendom.

**Markham:** It appears that there are too many hot tempers and righteous men in the land.

**Trafford:** We say only what we have ever said.

**Markham:** When the time comes that is what you will say still?

**Trafford:** I believe firmly that the Pope of Rome is supreme head of the Church Catholic.

**Markham:** And will you abide by those words?

**Trafford:** Usque ad mortem.

**Markham:** Then I must ask you to commit your words to writing.

**Wakefield:** But you are only here to take the value.

**Markham:** Which is why your proctor would have done better to have kept his silence.

*Trafford and Markham leave.*

**Wakefield:** 'Twas a brave thing that Brother Trafford did. And for it he was taken and placed in the custody of the Sheriff before being sent to the Charterhouse at Sheen. What was to happen to him whilst he was there we do not know...

*Do we hear the sounds of screaming here? – if so they must be truly chilling.*

**Wakefield:** ... but many wondered of what must have been visited upon him for his path to diverge so much from that of Brother Lawrence. But again all this is yet to come.

*Cromwell marches in to the space where Webster, Lawrence and Haughton are.*

**Cromwell:** You have made your stand. It is an honourable one. You will suffer no shame for stating what must be stated.

**Haughton:** We cannot.

**Cromwell:** And what of your brothers? Here in this town, and in Axholme and Beauvale? Will they see the path of their priors as the one that they too must follow?

**Lawrence:** Let each mans conscience be his own prior.

**Cromwell:** Every time that word conscience arises blood is never far behind.

**Haughton:** How can our conscience be such a threat?

**Cromwell:** The arrogance of this! You are like Thomas More who sits in the Tower too. Claiming that until his thoughts are shaped into words that he cannot be shown to be treasonous. You more than anyone should understand the power of silence. And yet I ask you again. Will you not say these words? Can you not allow your conscience to bargain with itself? Can you not believe that your deaths would be a waste? And would achieve nothing? How is that serving God?

**Lawrence:** We are Carthusians. We do not serve God, we adhere to him. Through our life in the cell we have been tested like gold in the fire. Our struggle is for our existence to become a single and continual prayer, for the grace of the Holy Spirit to be in the very recesses of our heart. Of course you cannot understand this. Or what you demand of us.

**Cromwell:** Then you and I live in different worlds after all. And maybe your fellow Carthusians are as devout as you, and maybe they are not. Farewell. The next time we shall see each other 'twil be in court.

*Cromwell exits. Nicholas now walks up to Lawrence, Webster and Haughton and hands Lawrence a rose.*

**Nicholas:** Before he left this house for London Brother Lawrence had come to me and asked for a rose to take with him.

**Lawrence:** To remind me of the beauty of Beauvale, Nicholas. I have always thought the Charterhouse the most perfect of places; and the gardens to our cells the most perfect still. Enclosed, like the soul within our bodies. The Virgin herself is known Nicholas by some as the mystic rose. And this?

**Nicholas:** The apothecary's rose. There are those that believe that if you rub the petals on your skin that it will preserve your youth.

**Lawrence:** Only our souls can remain unravished by time Nicholas. Thank you for this.

**Nicholas:** He did not say it. But I could see it in his eyes.

**Lawrence:** I may never return here again.

**Nicholas:** And I imagine him holding it in that court room.

*Cromwell and a Judge enter.*

**Judge:** The charge before you is that by treacherously machinating to deprive the King of his title of supreme head of the Church of England, you did, on the 26<sup>th</sup> April at the Tower of London openly declare and say 'The King our sovereign lord is not supreme head in earth of the Church of England'. How do you plead?

**Haughton:** We admit to the charge though we intend no malice.

*Nicholas now takes the rose from Lawrence and smells it before handing it back to him.*

**Nicholas:** 'Tis the fragrance that embodies the true nature of the rose. An invisible body which has remained completely itself and which, in doing so, has become as a spirit. The jury spent a day deliberating. They could reach no verdict.

*Cromwell takes the Judge aside.*

**Cromwell:** Well?

**Judge:** They refuse to condemn them.

**Cromwell:** How can they?

**Judge:** The accused have reasoned well. And you know that treason must be proved to be malicious. If this is not so then guilt cannot be guaranteed.

**Cromwell:** We cannot have this! They cannot be excused! If they stand firm and are not punished in the eyes of the law, in the eyes of the world, than everything may unravel!

**Judge:** And you Thomas will feel the wrath of the King.

*Cromwell now calls out in desperation.*

**Cromwell:** You must make your decision as your consciences tell. But hear this. You yourselves will undergo the punishment of traitors if you do not decide to condemn the guilty.

**Woodcock:** In this way then our Brothers were condemned.

**Cromwell:** There are times when the world moves forward, when it lurches, and where those things that stand in its way must surely be destroyed.

*The Judge appears again. As he does so we also see Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn enter from opposite sides of the space. As the verdict is read out they both kneel down to pray.*

**Judge:** You are to be drawn to the gallows at Tyburn; there to be hanged by the neck and your bodies quartered.

**Wakefield:** The execution did not take place for five days.

**Helen:** Each was locked separately in the Tower.

**Woodcock:** Each was visited repeatedly offering them a pardon if they would recant.

**Nicholas:** They refused.

**Helen:** As they were taken from their cells on their way to execution Sir Thomas More was receiving a visit from his daughter, a timely occurrence...

**Cromwell:** Send them to their death when the daughter is with More so that they may see where such actions lead and that she may ply him with her anguish.

*From somewhere in the space we see Thomas More with his daughter Meg.*

**More:** Lo, dost thou not see Meg, that these blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their deaths as bridegrooms to their marriage.

**Nicholas:** I do not know if he carried that rose with him, as I still imagine it. As he was laid on a hurdle and dragged by horses over the wet and muddy cobbles to Tyburn.

**Woodcock:** Prior Haughton was the first to be brought forward onto the cart waiting by the scaffold.

**Wakefield:** A cauldron of boiling pitch over a fire to the side of it.

**Helen:** And other hideous instruments with which the sentence was to be carried out.

*An executioner places a thick rope round his neck.*

**Haughton:** I forgive you my brother.

**Nicholas:** A pardon was offered yet again if he would submit to the Kings will.

**Haughton:** I call upon the Lord in Heaven and earth and I beseech you all beloved, in the dread day of judgement to testify with me, that here, about to die, I publicly declare that I refuse to comply with the wishes of our Lord the King, not out of any pertinacity, malice or rebellious spirit, but solely through the fear of God, lest I should offend the glorious majesty of the highest King, God the eternal Judge, since the Church has determined and decreed otherwise than the King and his Parliament have ordained. Wherefore most beloved, in conscience I am bound and prepared, and am not dismayed, to suffer these and all possible torments, rather than oppose the teaching of the Church. Pray for me, and have pity on my brethren, of whom I am a most unworthy Prior.

**Woodcock:** Stop up your ears and avert your eyes, those who do not want to see or hear of what was to happen to the bodies of these men. These men of the Carthusian order. These men who once stood on this very spot. It was Prior Haughton who suffered first as Priors Webster and Lawrence were forced to observe what they would endure. But still they did not weaken. They did not weaken even in the face of the most extreme barbarity.

**Cromwell:** These are barbarous times! Births are always bloody!

**Woodcock:** A barbarity that shames us all.

*The following is accompanied by singing as the lines are divided amongst the cast:*

- The rope, which was especially stout and heavy in order to avoid the possibility of fatal strangling, was placed around their necks.

- The cart was sharply pulled from under them, leaving them hanging there on the gallows, suffering a slow strangulation.

- While they were alive, the rope was cut so they would fall to the ground.

- As they slowly came to their religious habits were ripped from their bodies.

- The executioner cut a large hole in their hair shirts and proceeded to pull out their entrails throwing them onto the fire.

**Haughton:** O most holy Jesus, have mercy upon me in this hour.

- Their hearts were torn out and rubbed into their mouths and faces.

**Haughton:** Good Jesu, what will ye do with my heart?

- And then the Quartering began.

- The bodies were cut into four pieces, with the heads being chopped off.

- They were boiled in brine so that their appearance would be preserved...

- As they were placed on stakes....

- With the four parts of the bodies being taken to different parts of the city.

- And one of Prior Haughton's arms being nailed over the gateway of the London Charterhouse.

*And now the thunder machine that we saw at the beginning of the show is wheeled into the space and the sound of a storm begins.*

**Wakefield:** On the day that this occurred, the 4<sup>th</sup> of May in the year of our lord 1535, we continued within these walls as before, with our prayers and our hopes. It was as we came out of the church following Vespers that the winds began to blow, so fierce that all were afeared that these very stones may fall. But as we turned our heads to the heavens the roar of the wind seemed to vanish....

*And now the sky is filled with petals*

**Nicholas:** And we saw that the sky was full of specks of blood. But it was not blood. It was the petals of the roses, torn from their flowers, torn from their stalks, as though they were to fly and meet our brothers. As though they were tiny souls themselves. It was a thing of beauty and a thing of terror. None of us knew what had caused such a thing. And yet inside our hearts...

*The rose petals cease to fall and singing begins.*

**Wakefield:** It was some days later that the news reached us.

*John Langdale, Alexander Lowthe, Robert Gowton, Thomas Leyghton, Thomas Wallis, Richard Wakefield and Nicholas Dookmer assemble in the same manner as the Chapterhouse scene.*

**Wakefield:** Brothers Lawrence, Haughton and Webster were most bloodily executed on the fourth day of this month at Tyburn. They met their fate with stoicism and grace. We have been assigned a new Prior.

**Wallis:** But that is for us to decide.

**Wakefield:** Cromwell has decided. The world is a different one now my friend, and the death of our brothers has heralded that change.

*Woodcock now enters.*

**Woodcock:** It was I; the new Prior. Chosen by Cromwell; sent to Beauvale. Who, with heavy heart, accepted the role and told the brothers that they should say the oath.

**Gowton:** But why? Our Priors stayed true to the end and we should also.

**Woodcock:** We cannot all be martyrs. And now that such violence has been unleashed I cannot, in all conscience, ask of you to submit to such a thing. We will say these words, the world will move on, and we will continue our work. Our prayer.

**Langdale:** And what about London? Who has Cromwell chosen to be his next Carthusian Prior?

**Woodcock:** Another from Beauvale.

**Lowthe:** But how can this be? There is no-one that can do what you speak of.

**Woodcock:** It is Brother Trafford. He has followed in Prior Haughton's path.

**Leyghton:** He said that he could see that the world was changing. Maybe through seeing such a thing his soul became willing to partake in it.

**Woodcock:** Only we know the voice with which our conscience speaks, and though each man may guess 'tis only us too that must bear the strain of its demands and pay the price when our spirit cannot answer its call.

**Wakefield:** Prior Trafford was not well received in London. He reduced the food rations and removed books, even the writings of St. Bruno. It was as though he was working for the King.

**Nicholas:** Whilst here we carried on as before. Though something was different. The silence. The silence had a new quality. A coldness at the very edge of it that was not there before.

*All of the cast stand looking out to the sky. There is a silence.*

**Nicholas:** Only I saw the star that night.

*We see a single flare in the distance. The angel appears.*

**Nicholas:** And only I saw her standing there, above us, looking down.

**Alice:** Remember your promise Nicholas. When the time comes and all is breaking around you that you will truly understand your calling and will follow it wherever it takes you.

**Nicholas:** But our Priors are dead and we have spoken the oath. How much more can break around us still?

*And now we see Dr London appear with two others. Prior Woodcock and Robert Gowton put on a short gown and velvet caps as the other monks walk out to meet them. (Note – the declaration of dissolution received the signatures of Thomas Woodcock prior, and of seven other monks, John Langdale, William Welles, Alexander Lowthe, Edmund Garner, Robert Gowton (proctor), Thomas Leyghton and Thomas Wallis. The surrender was delivered to Dr London, the King's Commissioner, in the chapter-house).*

**London:** We are here to dissolve the charterhouse.

**Gowton:** Was not the murder of our brothers enough?

**London:** The whole nation has agreed to renounce the Pope's supremacy, what need we for these houses full of those that creep with the old obedience? And Cromwell is being generous. You will all be granted pensions and are free now to re-enter the world.

*There is a silence as the monks look to each other, unsure of what to say or of how to react.*

**London:** There will be opportunity for you to continue your work in other ways. I know that Sir Willoughby is looking for men at Wollaton Hall and there are many parishes which need guidance. Men who took sacred vows are growing beards, marrying wives and becoming country clergymen.

*Again a silence.*

**London:** You are each to sign the surrender of the house.

*As the signing happens – and this should be done in a solemn and ceremonial manner – Nicholas comes forward again.*

**Nicholas:** There is a tempest coming, that is what she said. The angel who I saw that night just as I had seen her in my cell.

**Helen:** We know now of the terror that was unleashed in those years following the death of our brothers. Of how those within our order who would not consent were chained to the walls in their prison and forced to stand for days on end before they simply starved to death. Of others who were executed with the King himself watching from the edge of the crowd. The head of Sir Thomas More placed on London Bridge. The rebellion in the north, the so called Pilgrimage of Grace, two hundred and sixteen put to death, lords and knights, abbots and monks. England awash with blood. The gates of London heaving under the weight of quartered bodies. But once a world has been stripped of its conscience then all who have played their part will be bloodied by it too.

*And now we see Anne Boleyn and Cromwell being beheaded.*

*Dr London turns to Nicholas.*

**London:** You are young. You have committed yourselves to the greatest hardships for your beliefs. Now it is time for you to take some of the comforts of this world. Spend some time with your family. Seek your communion with God in less austere ways.

**Nicholas:** I cannot sir for I have made a promise. I am a Carthusian. And we have a motto.

**All:** Stat Crux Dum Volvitur Orbis.

**Nicholas:** The cross remains constant whilst the world turns.

**London:** But there is nowhere for you to go. The order is finished here.

**Nicholas:** Then I will leave this country. And go elsewhere.

**Wakefield:** We left that night, all of us, taking the few belongings we had.

*A procession off of the site from the monks and other players who carry candles and books and food and materials.*

**Woodcock:** Each to move forward in his own way before coming here again to tell of the story of these events.

*William Hussey now appears again.*

**Hussey:** Events which were heard of all across Europe, as we know from the reports of murmurations in Venice. So now you know those of you who have lived with this charterhouse in your midst. Who, like Alice, may have heard the sweet sound of psalmody floating from over the walls. You now know that though this was a place of silence and contemplation it was also the home to men who were called

upon to face our King and his Ministers and who, through the strength of their conscience and the certainty of their faith, rose above the blood and chaos of these last years to provide an example to us all.

What will happen now we do not know. Henry is still King. Abbeys and priories continue to be ransacked day after day. The church of the Charterhouse in London is now used to store his hunting tents. There are those amongst us who dream of a day when the young Mary takes the throne. But these are events we can only pray for.

I thank you for coming to this sacred place. Let us all, each and everyone of us, reach down into our conscience, a conscience which is buried deep inside all of us like a rose hip inside a fish inside a pond inside a charterhouse. And let us pray that it guides us well. For these are times, as are all times, when tyranny is waiting to pounce and but for the calls of conscience, will roam untrammelled.

**Fin**