

*As our little mules strove up the last curve of the mountain, where the main path divided into three, producing two side paths, my master stopped for a while, to look around: at the sides of the road, at the road itself, and above the road, where, for a brief stretch, a series of evergreen pines formed a natural roof, white with snow.*

**“A rich abbey. The abbot likes a great display on public occasions.”**

*Accustomed as I was to hear him make the most unusual declarations, I did not question him. This was also because, after another bit of road, we heard some noises, and at the next turn an agitated band of monks and servants appeared. One of them, seeing us, came toward us with great cordiality.*

“Welcome, sir. And do not be surprised if I can guess who you are, because we have been advised of your visit. I am Remigio of Varagine, the cellarer of the monastery. And if you, as I believe, are Brother William of Baskerville, the abbot must be informed. You” [CELLALER GIVES COMMAND TO ANYONE IN THE GROUP]—“go up and tell them that our visitor is about to come inside the walls.”

**“I thank you, Brother Cellarer. And I appreciate your courtesy all the more since, in order to greet me, you have interrupted your search. But don’t worry. The horse came this way and took the path to the right. He will not get far, because he will have to stop when he reaches the dungheap. He is too intelligent to plunge down that precipitous slope. ...”**

“When did you see him?”

**“We haven’t seen him at all, have we, Adso?”** [TURN TOWARD ADSO WITH AMUSED LOOK] **“But if you are hunting for Brunellus, the horse can only be where I have said.”**

[CELLALER HESITATES, LOOKS AT WILLIAM, THEN AT THE PATH AND ASKS]

“Brunellus? How did you know?”

**“Come, come, it is obvious you are hunting for Brunellus, the abbot’s favorite horse, fifteen hands, the fastest in your stables, with a dark coat, a full tail, small round hoofs, but a very steady gait; small head, sharp ears, big eyes. He went to the right, as I said, but you should hurry, in any case.”**

*The cellarer hesitated for a moment longer, then gestured to his men and rushed off along the path to the right, while our mules resumed their climb. My curiosity aroused, I was about to question William, but he motioned me to wait: in fact, a few minutes later we heard cries of rejoicing, and at the turn of the path, monks and servants reappeared, leading the horse by its halter. They passed by us, all glancing at us with some amazement, then preceded us toward the abbey. I believe William also slowed the pace of his mount to give them time to tell what had happened. I had already realized that my master, in every respect a man of the highest virtue, succumbed to the vice of vanity when it was a matter of demonstrating his acumen; and having learned to appreciate his gifts as a subtle diplomatist, I understood that he wanted to reach his destination preceded by a firm reputation as a man of knowledge.*

[ADSO LOOK AT WILLIAM] “And now tell me how did you manage to know?”

**“My good Adso, during our whole journey I have been teaching you to recognize the evidence through which the world speaks to us like a great book. Alanus de Insulis said that**

**omnis mundi creatura  
quasi liber et pictura  
nobis est in speculum**

**and he was thinking of the endless array of symbols with which God, through His creatures, speaks to us of the eternal life. But the universe is even more talkative than Alanus thought, and it speaks not only of the ultimate things (which it does always in an obscure fashion) but also of closer things, and then it speaks quite clearly. I am almost embarrassed to repeat to you what you should know.**

**At the crossroads, on the still-fresh snow, a horse’s hoofprints stood out very neatly, heading for the path to our left. Neatly spaced, those marks said that the hoof was small and round, and the gallop quite regular—and so I deduced the nature of the horse, and the fact that it was not running wildly like a crazed animal. At the point where the pines formed a natural roof, some twigs had been freshly broken off at a height of five feet. One of the blackberry bushes where the animal must have turned to take the path to his right, proudly switching his handsome tail, still held some long black horsehairs in its brambles. ... You will not say, finally, that you do not know that path leads to the dungheap, because as we passed the lower curve we saw the spill of waste down the sheer cliff below the great east tower, staining the snow; and from the situation of the crossroads, the path could only lead in that direction.”**

*“Yes, but what about the small head, the sharp ears, the big eyes ...?”*

**“I am not sure he has those features, but no doubt the monks firmly believe he does. As Isidore of Seville said, the beauty of a horse requires ‘that the head be small, siccum prope pelle ossibus adhaerente, short and pointed ears, big eyes, flaring nostrils, erect neck, thick mane and tail, round and solid hoofs.’ If the horse whose passing I inferred had not really been the finest of the stables, stableboys would have been out chasing him, but instead, the cellarer in person had undertaken the search. And a monk who considers a horse excellent, whatever his natural forms, can only see him as the auctoritates have described him, especially if”—and here he smiled slyly in my direction—“the describer is a learned Benedictine.”**

*“All right but why Brunellus?”*

**“May the Holy Ghost sharpen your mind, son! What other name could he possibly have? Why, even the great Buridan, who is about to become rector in Paris, when he wants to use a horse in one of his logical examples, always calls it Brunellus.”**

*This was my master’s way.*

*He not only knew how to read the great book of nature, but also knew the way monks read the books of Scripture, and how they thought through them.*

*A gift that, as we shall see, was to prove useful to in the days to follow.*