

PILLARS SEQUEL

Prologue: 1327

In the forest outside Kingsbridge, a group of children are up to some mild mischief. They include Charis, the daughter of a leading wool trader; Merthin, destined to be a carpenter; and Ralph, a bully. They witness a strange scene.

A knight is hiding in a clearing. He digs a hole and buries his sword and his fine cloak. His companion returns from the town and reports: I have sold your horse—here is the money. I also made inquiries at the dockside. You can get a boat downstream from here and make your way to Melcombe, on the south coast. From there you can get a ship to France.

They say a fond farewell, kissing passionately like man and woman. While they are embracing, the knight draws a dagger and stabs his companion to death. Then he leaves, dressed now in an ordinary tunic.

The scene will haunt all three children for the rest of their lives. But they swear an oath never to speak of it (for fear they will be punished for being in the forest).

The knight does not take a boat downstream. Instead, he presents himself at the priory, giving his name as Thomas Langley, and begs sanctuary.

The prior is dining with the prioress. This is now a double convent, with monks and nuns, rigidly separated most of the time. The two leaders discuss national politics. We get the impression that Prior Anthony is careless and lazy, interested only in a quiet life; while the prioress, Mother Cecilia, cares only about the hospital she runs.

This has been a unique year in English politics. Edward II is an unpopular king, mainly on account of his “favourites”. When he came to the throne he gave power and privilege to his friend Peter Gaveston, popularly supposed to be his homosexual lover (even though both men were married with children). Peter was disgraced and executed, but other favourites took his place. Eventually Edward’s wife, Queen Isabella, and her lover, Roger Mortimer of Wigmore, earl of March, whipped up popular resentment against the king, and he was formally deposed by

parliament on 15 January 1327—the first time in English history that parliament overthrew a king. His son, Edward III, took the throne, although he was only 14.

In April 1327, Mortimer—now king in all but name—had Edward II moved from his palace at Kenilworth in Warwickshire and imprisoned him in Berkeley Castle, not far from Kingsbridge. Two attempts to rescue him failed.

In September it was announced that Edward II was dead at the age of 43. Too young to have died of old age, it was said that he had suffered a fall. His burial was overseen by Prior Anthony. Later, it was said that he had been murdered. The method of murder was particularly gruesome: a hollow horn was inserted into the anus, then a red-hot poker pushed through the horn into the entrails. This is said to leave no outward trace of violence, though the sexual symbolism is crudely obvious. (Three years later, three men would be convicted of his murder, and would escape punishment by fleeing to France.) Yet another rumour said that he had escaped from Berkeley and disappeared.

Prior Anthony is fresh back from interring the body in a tomb in Gloucester abbey. He is explaining all this to Mother Cecilia when Thomas Langley appears. Anthony pretends not to know Langley, but it is clear he has been expecting him. He is admitted to the monastery as a novice monk.

Part I: Fleece Fair Day, 1337

1. Eadmund Wooler is the wealthiest wool merchant in Kingsbridge and the brother of Prior Anthony. We see him through the eyes of his daughter Charis, now 18, beautiful and clever with numbers. She had been educated at home and taught to keep her father's financial records.

The business faces a crisis. There is an economic slump, and the wool trade is in decline. Bonaventura Dicarolo, a buyer from Florence, tells Eadmund that today will be the last time he comes to Kingsbridge's annual Fleece Fair to buy wool: there is no longer any real justification for the Italian traders coming. Charis realises that this would be the end of her father's prosperity. The townspeople would like to fight for the business, but they are restricted by the dead hand of Prior Anthony, who refuses to do anything to foster the fair.

We see an example of Anthony's obstinacy. Early on Fleece Fair Day he meets with Eadmund and Charis. They look at the old wooden bridge across the river. Already, market traders with their carts form a long queue, waiting to pay the penny

toll and cross the bridge into the town. Eadmund begs Anthony to build a second bridge to accommodate the traffic. Anthony refuses, pleading poverty.

Charis proposes an alternative. Let the parish guild build the bridge. (The merchants of Kingsbridge are technically serfs of the priory, so do not have a mayor and aldermen; but the parish guild, originally a religious group set up to raise money for cathedral ornaments, is the de facto town council.) Charis says the guild could get their money back from the penny tolls. Anthony refuses permission for this, thinking he will simply be giving up half his revenue from the tolls, not understanding that usage will increase when the traffic moves faster.

Eadmund and Charis are angry and frustrated. Charis is an intellectual rebel, scornful of illiterate priests, lascivious monks, hidebound merchants and spendthrift barons. She is fascinated by heretical theories about the origins of the universe, and is as near to an atheist as was possible in the middle ages. Her father has the patience of his years, but she as a youngster is maddened by the stubborn stupidity of Prior Anthony.

2. Ralph Porboy, 20, is a strong man and a bully. He is the son of a knight who got into debt and was forced to give his land to Kingsbridge Priory (so he hates the monks). He is now a squire—apprentice knight—in the household of the earl of Shiring. With him is Steven, a man of the same age but already a knight. Steven is lord of a single village, Knightsmead.

The earl is in town to speak to Prior Anthony and Eadmund Wooler. Edward III has declared war on France, and parliament has granted special taxes to finance the war. The earl has the job of collecting these taxes, and the prior is his local sub-agent. Eadmund has no formal role, but both the earl and the prior know that his cooperation will smooth the process.

Ralph and Steven stroll around the fair, looking for girls. Ralph tries to flirt with Lady Philippa, 30, voluptuous wife of Lord William of Caster, a minor baron. She rejects him with scornful laughter. Then he meets a pretty peasant girl called Annette.

Annette, 18, is the daughter of Perkin, a prosperous peasant from the village of Knightsmead, where Steven is lord. Perkin is sly, shrewd, and grasping. His daughter is manipulative. Perkin knows there is no future for Annette in a dalliance with a

squire; but he cannot chase Ralph away. Unfortunately, Annette is not as dismissive as she should be of Ralph's advances.

Then Wulfric comes on the scene. Wulfric, 16, also from Knightsmead, is the son of another well-to-do peasant, and is informally engaged to Annette. He is dogged, faithful, and strong, an uncomplicated young man. When he finds Ralph flirting with Annette there is a fight.

Ralph is shaken to find that this peasant is not easily defeated in a fight. But, before it comes to a conclusion, it is broken up. Ralph gets off scot-free, but Wulfric, as a peasant who has laid hands on a member of the earl's household, is punished by being put in the stocks for 24 hours.

While he is there, he is given drink by Glynis, a poor girl from Knightsmead—of whom more later.

3. Merthin is a young carpenter. Only 21, he is already acknowledged as the most skilled craftsman in Kingsbridge. As well as his facility at both carving and joinery, he has an intuitive understanding of building and architecture.

The central tower of the cathedral is showing worrying signs of deterioration. The monk in charge of the fabric of the building is Brother Thomas (Langley), who knows about architecture from his pre-monastic life (about which nobody knows very much). The master builder in charge of maintenance at the cathedral is Alwyn, an unimaginative yes-man. He has recommended rebuilding some of the arches.

Thomas and Alwyn summon Merthin to the cathedral and ask him to construct the formwork—the wooden supports that hold new stonework in place until it is finished and the mortar is dry. Alwyn dislikes Merthin, but Thomas knows that Merthin is the only carpenter in town who can be relied upon to do work like this with the necessary accuracy.

Merthin says that formwork is not necessary—the arches can be built without it. Alwyn says this is impossible. Merthin explains how it can be done. He also claims that the arches were originally built without formwork. Thomas is sceptical, but Merthin says there is a book in the library (which he read as a schoolboy at the monastery) that confirms this. Foolishly, he also says that any repairs to the tower will be short-lived, and it really must be rebuilt. He has now succeeded in thoroughly annoying the two men who are offering him work, but he is not mature enough to realise that there are times when it is smart to lose an argument.

Merthin is in love with Charis, and she with him.

4. Glynis, the girl who brought water to Wulfric, comes from the lowest stratum of English society. Her father is a landless labourer. They live in a hut on the edge of the village of Knightsmead. Her father gets plenty of work in the summer, but during the winter the family struggles to survive, living on the fringes of the law. Glynis is fiercely determined not to lead the life her mother has lived. She is a plain girl, dark in colouring, with eyes set closely on either side of a beaky nose. She is strong, with big hands and feet. Totally uneducated, she is shrewd and tough.

She loves Wulfric and wants to marry him. Her chances are close to zero. He loves Annette, who is pretty where Glynis is plain; and the fathers of both Annette and Wulfric have agreed in principle to their marriage.

Glynis and her father have come to the fair to sell squirrel furs he has trapped. To Glynis's shock, he also sells her, to a travelling trader.

(Slavery has pretty much died out in England, so there is no legal basis for the transaction. On the other hand, slavery is not illegal, and is sanctioned by the Bible. Many people would disapprove of the father's action, but would admit that he has a right to do as he wishes with a girl under 21. And certainly no one would argue that Glynis has rights.)

At first she refuses to go with her new owner, but she is forced to, and she realises she must be crafty to escape. Later, in the forest, she gets away from him; but he gives chase.

5. Brother Godfrey is just back from seven years at Kingsbridge College in Oxford, a cell of the priory where monks live while studying theology, law or medicine with the masters at the university. He is a zealous reformer, sincere but arrogant and high-handed. He subscribes to the currently dominant philosophy of anti-rationalism. (In 1277 the works of Aristotle and Aquinas were banned from the university of Paris and replaced by conservative "faith and revelation" texts.) He is a doctor of medicine, but is more interested in the theory than the practice, and looks down upon the barber-surgeons, apothecaries and nuns who do most of the caring for the sick.

Since he got back, Godfrey has been quietly talking to the younger monks about reforming the monastery. The place is bankrupt and slovenly. Prior Anthony has made a whole series of bad financial decisions, and his control is slack.

Godfrey now learns (from Merthin via Brother Thomas) of the Book of Timothy, a history of Kingsbridge Priory written in the time of Prior Philip, when the cathedral was built, an era now regarded as a golden age. In the book, Godfrey finds authority for the reforms he proposes. Excitedly, he takes the book to chapter and reads from it. He is mercilessly slapped down by Prior Anthony and some of the older monks.

6. Towards the end of the day, Merthin is watching tradesmen exit the town across the bridge when he realises that it is unsafe. There is a new river wall, built by Alwyn, which has speeded the flow of water around the piers of the bridge; and this faster current has undermined the foundations, leading to strain on the timbers.

He summons Alwyn and Thomas and explains. Alwyn hotly denies any danger. The central pillar did crack, he admits, but he has commissioned repairs, which seem to be holding. Thomas believes Alwyn, thinking that Merthin is merely lobbying for a new bridge in support of Eadmund.

As they argue:

- a) Prior Anthony is on the bridge
- b) Wulfric's family are departing (though he is still in the stocks)
- c) Glynis is approaching the bridge from the far side at a run, pursued by her captor
- d) The earl of Shiring, Ralph, and Steven are on the bridge.
- e) A heavily loaded cart rolls on to the bridge, causing a traffic jam.

Then the bridge collapses.

7. The rescue effort is led by Merthin. He organises teams of townspeople to removed the smashed timbers and retrieve the dead and living from the water. Charis organises the nuns to give first aid, stretcher the wounded to the priory hospital, and take the dead to the mortuary.

- a) Prior Anthony is dead.
- b) All Wulfric's family are dead.
- c) Glynis's captor is dead. She goes to the stocks and, in the confusion, releases Wulfric; who arrives on the scene of the disaster to find all his family dead.

d) Steven is dead but Ralph survives. Ralph walks over the bodies of women and children to get to the earl, whom he rescues.

Part II: 1337-1339

1. The death of Prior Anthony seems to many Kingsbridge people to be an opportunity to break with the past. Brother Godfrey puts himself forward as the replacement.

a) The new prior must be elected by a vote of the monks.

b) However, the king, or his local representative the earl of Shiring, has the right to nominate a candidate—and the power to put great pressure on the monks to vote for that candidate.

c) The bishop of Kingsbridge is technically the abbot of the priory, and as such must approve the monks' choice. A skilful politician may easily exercise this power in advance.

d) The Pope, and/or his English representative the archbishop of Canterbury, must ratify the appointment. This usually means an expensive trip to Rome, with gifts.

e) The people of Kingsbridge have no rights at all, but their support may be important, as no one wants the priory to be at odds with the town.

Godfrey proceeds to deal skilfully with each group:

a) His charisma and reforming zeal win him the support of most of the monks.

b) The new earl of Shiring nominates his secretary. Godfrey makes sure the bishop of Kingsbridge announces he will not approve such a choice.

c) The bishop himself nominates Thomas Langley, who is supported by the older monks. Godfrey discovers that when Thomas arrived ten years ago he brought with him a small estate. Examining the records, he finds that the previous owner of this estate was Queen Isabella (now living in opulent retirement as the mother of the king, Edward III). When Godfrey questions Thomas about this, Thomas refuses to answer, but abruptly withdraws his candidature.

d) Godfrey plays the archbishop off against the bishop.

e) Godfrey wins the support of Eadmund and Charis by promising to build a new stone bridge wide enough for two lanes of traffic.

Godfrey wins the election.

2. Wulfric is left alone. He sees his father's farm as the source of all security and status. He wants to take it over, but there are obstacles: a) He is only 16; b) The farm is large, and normally requires three men—his father, his brother and himself—to bring in the harvest; c) There is a hefty tax, called heriot, which must be paid to the landlord on inheritance.

Wulfric resolves to prove his ability to run the farm by getting this year's harvest in. He tries to hire help, but this is the high season, and everyone is already hired. Then Glynis shows up and offers to work. Wulfric knows she is doing this because she loves him, and he would rather not give her the least encouragement; but he is desperate, and he hires her.

Although Glynis is plain, she can be seductive, and during the long, hot summer they become lovers.

They get the harvest in, and Wulfric pays his dues. Then he asks the landlord to let hi inherit the farm.

The landlord used to be Steven, but he died in the bridge disaster. Unluckily for Wulfric, the earl of Shiring has given the manor of Knightsmead to Ralph as a reward for Ralph's having rescued him from the wreckage. Ralph hates Wulfric because of the fight, and is sure to refuse him. Glynis goes secretly to Ralph and offers him sex as a bribe. He falls to her wiles.

Wulfric now goes to Perkin and asks for a loan to pay the heriot. This is a reasonable request, as Wulfric is still engaged to Annette, so Perkin will be securing his daughter's future. However, Perkin goes behind Wulfric's back to Harold and offers double the heriot if Harold will assign the farm to him. Harold agrees.

Glynis has been cheated—but there is nothing she can do about it.

Perkin offers Wulfric a permanent job as a labourer on his father's old farm. At first Wulfric refuses. Then Glynis announces she is pregnant. Wulfric marries her and takes the job.

3. Both Merthin and Alwyn produce designs for the new bridge. Godfrey favours Alwyn, who is a suck-up, but Thomas points out that only Merthin can manage the complex engineering, including the water management, and Godfrey reluctantly gives him the job.

The earl of Shiring tries to prevent the building of the bridge, seeing that it will benefit the Kingsbridge fair at the expense of the Shiring fair. Charis is dismayed, but tells the king it will be impossible to collect the taxes from Kingsbridge if the fair falls into disuse.

Merthin starts work and asks for money. Charis counsels the parish guild not to hand over any money until they have in writing Godfrey's promise to let them keep the penny tolls. As she feared, Godfrey tries to renege. They settle on a fifty-fifty split.

4. Using the Book of Timothy as his authority, Godfrey begins to reimposes ancient restrictions and taxes on the townspeople. He forbids them to have their own mills, fishponds or warrens, forcing them to use the priory's—at a price—or pay a fine. This improves the priory's finances no end, but causes friction with the townspeople. The sorest point is the fulling mill, which is old, slow, and under capacity, especially now that the wool merchants are turning more and more to cloth manufacture.

Over the centuries, the nuns have been given much property by pious women. Godfrey now takes control of this, saying that the men will look after things on behalf of their weaker sisters. The ageing Mother Cecilia foolishly agrees.

Charis learns that the mill was in fact built by a townsman, Jack Thomson, architect of the cathedral, and that the townspeople have the right to use it free of charge. Eadmund appeals to the royal court to enforce this right. Godfrey argues that the townspeople, as serfs of the priory, have no right of appeal to the royal court; and he wins.

5. Harold still hankers after Annette. On a visit to Knightsmead, he rapes her. Perkin complains to the earl of Shiring. Harold escapes punishment by joining Edward III's army and going to France.

6. Charis now proposes to the guild that they petition the king for borough status, which would free them from priory control. Godfrey is furious. He accuses her of witchcraft. This is so serious that she fears death. There is only one way for her to escape: she joins the convent as a novice nun.

7. When Merthin has done the difficult work on the bridge, Godfrey fires him and hands over to Alwyn. Merthin leaves town in disgust.

Alwyn follows Merthin's design but omits one element. Merthin has specified a pile of jagged stones at the upstream end of each of the pontoons. Alwyn thinks these are merely decorative and leaves them out, pleasing Godfrey by saving money.

Part III: 1348

1. a) Eleven years later, Merthin is on his way back to Kingsbridge, having worked as carpenter and designer on buildings in Paris and Florence. Coming to a fork in the road, he observes that most traders and pilgrims head for Shiring. It would be different, he thinks, if somehow Kingsbridge could be glimpsed from here.

He finds the town in decline. Business continues stagnant under the dead hand of monastic rule. Eadmund has died and Alwyn is head of the parish guild. He is weak, and provides no opposition to Godfrey. Merthin rejoins the guild and starts a movement to depose Alwyn.

The stone bridge is showing dangerous cracks. Alwyn blames this on Merthin's design. Merthin demands to see his original drawings. Godfrey says they cannot be found. But Charis gives them to Merthin.

Merthin proves that Alwyn left out the riprap. Alwyn admits this, but scorns the idea that the omission of this decorative detail could have caused the structural weakness. Merthin sends a boy to dive the river and investigate the foundations. He predicts that, beneath the upstream end of the central pontoon, there will be a hole as big as a man. He is proved right. The riprap, he explains, would have prevented the fast current from scouring out the earth under the stonework.

The hole is filled, the cracks are repaired, and riprap is installed to prevent this happening again. Merthin becomes head of the parish guild.

b) The great central tower of the cathedral is leaning dangerously. As Merthin predicted, Alwyn's repair programme of 1337 was inadequate. Alwyn is still trying to patch things up. Merthin says the tower must be demolished, and Thomas Langley backs him. But Prior Godfrey is angry with Merthin for deposing Alwyn.

Merthin proposes a new tower high enough to be seen from the fork in the road. The townspeople are excited about this, and the parish guild agrees to pay half the cost. Alwyn says it is impossible to build a tower that high. Thomas confirms that it would be the highest building in England.

Godfrey says no.

c) Merthin revives the old petition for borough status and takes it to the king. Godfrey uses all his political skills to oppose this, and the king refuses.

2. a) Charis has become a power in the monastery. Her strength of character, business experience and facility with numbers make her an outstanding administrator, and she has become right-hand-woman to the ageing prioress, Mother Cecilia. She is still an intellectual sceptic, but she keeps that quiet.

Charis discovers that the nuns own vast assets, donated to them over the years by pious women. However, Godfrey controls and manages them, ostensibly in the interests of the nuns. In practice, all the income goes straight into Godfrey's coffers, and the nuns have to beg him for the resources to run the hospital, repair their buildings, and so on.

Charis starts a campaign to regain control of the nuns' property. She lobbies the bishop, pointing out that Godfrey, though parsimonious, is a poor manager in other respects, and promising the bishop increased income for himself. However, Godfrey responds by reviving the witchcraft charge, and Charis is defeated.

b) Charis begins a programme of assarting—clearing woodland to create new farms, a common way for medieval landlords to improve the value of their holdings. To attract tenants, such new lands are offered to tenants at low cash rents and with free status, which means that the lord has severely limited power to control the tenants' lives.

Most of the new tenants are landless labourers or younger sons from villages already held by the nunnery (and controlled by Godfrey). When Godfrey finds out what is going on he is furious, but there is nothing he can do.

3. Glynis learns about the assarts and persuades Wulfric to take one. Strictly speaking, they need permission to leave the village from their landlord, Harold Porboy; or, since he is in France fighting a way, from his man of business, or reeve. In practice, most people just run away, and if the new landlord colludes with the runaways it is very hard for anyone to track them down. This is what Wulfric and Glynis do.

On the new farm, Wulfric is happy at last. Glynis is pleased he is away from Annette.

4. Ralph returns from France wealthy and respected, though walking with a limp and missing three fingers. The king rewards him by marrying him to Lady Philippa, 41, voluptuous widow of Lord William of Caster, the woman who scornfully rejected young Ralph's advances on the day the bridge collapsed. Ralph gains a larger estate and becomes Lord Ralph of Caster. He mistreats Philippa.

5. a) Charis learns by accident of the estate Thomas Langley brought to the monastery. She recalls the murder she witnessed as a child. She becomes intrigued, and talks to the old prioress. She wonders whether Thomas was involved in the murder of Edward II, and the estate was his reward.

b) In August, a traveller from the south coast port of Melcombe falls ill in Kingsbridge and is admitted to the nuns' hospital. His symptoms are red skin blotches, swollen glands, fever, vomiting, coughing blood, and a maddening, unquenchable thirst. Charis has heard about the plague sweeping Europe and knows these are the symptoms. She proposes that everyone in the house where the traveller has been living should be quarantined. Godfrey scorns this idea.

A month later, the entire family in that house fall ill and die. The plague has arrived in Kingsbridge.

Godfrey and his doctors prescribe bleeding, which is useless. The nuns simply try to make the victims less uncomfortable while they die.

In October, hundreds die. A new burial ground is consecrated to cope with the bodies. Monks and nuns fall ill. The physician-monks are reluctant to deal with the victims for fear of catching the plague. Charis says the nuns have nothing to fear from death, which for them is a longed-for reunion with Christ. She does not believe this herself, but all the same she continues to run the hospital and risk infection. By December, a thousand people have died—one Kingsbridge resident in ten.

Mother Cecilia dies, and Charis is proposed as prioress. She expects fierce opposition from Godfrey.

On Christmas Day, Godfrey and a small group of his cronies flee, taking with them food, wine and all the monastery's cash. Charis later learns they have moved into a remote cell in the forest and locked themselves in, refusing admittance to anyone.

Part IV: 1349-1350

1. In January there are few deaths, and in February none. Charis starts to hope the plague may be over in Kingsbridge. But in March two people die, then a hundred in April, and it all begins again.

Over the summer, nine Kingsbridge people out of ten die. There is complete social breakdown. Groups of fanatics march from town to town, flagellating themselves in an attempt to expiate the sins they believe caused the disease. Others loot abandoned buildings, drinking stored wine and dressing in the finery of the wealthy dead. There is an outbreak of wild sexual promiscuity.

Charis gives in at last to her love for Merthin, and they live together as man and wife in the nunnery, waiting for death.

2. The earl of Shiring dies of the plague, and so do his sons. Ralph believes he could marry the widow and gain the title if only he were single—but Lady Philippa is among the tiny minority who recover from the plague. He murders her and becomes earl.

He sees the plague as an opportunity to grab abandoned lands for himself.

3. In the winter of 1349-1350, the plague in Kingsbridge dies out.

Charis gets a letter telling her that Godfrey and all his cronies have perished. As there are no monks left alive, she is given temporary control over all the affairs of the monastery.

She and Merthin set themselves the task of bringing normality back to Kingsbridge and the priory.

Half the population of England is dead. Houses are empty, fields lie uncultivated, and cattle are dying for want of care. Charis pays higher wages to attract the shrinking numbers of labourers, and offers free status and low cash rents to new tenants. Merthin begins work on the new tower, hiring masons and carpenters.

4. Ralph, earl of Shiring, comes into conflict with Charis. He, too, is attempting to get his lands cultivated, but using a different approach. He and other barons get parliament to pass legislation making it illegal for serfs to move from one village to another, and for labourers to demand wages higher than they were paid in 1347. Charis and others ignore this law. Ralph enforces it with characteristic brutality.

5. Wulfric is offered his father's farm. Glynis counsels him to drive a hard bargain, but he accepts it on the old terms, servile status and customary dues. Glynis is so angry that she comes close to leaving him.

He soon learns that she was right when he is forced to bring in Ralph's harvest before his own.

6. Merthin applies for borough status yet again, but this time he has the support of the monastery, and he wins.

Philomena shows up.

Part V: 1361

1. Eleven years later, the town is prosperous again, thanks to the efforts of Charis and Merthin, who nevertheless have to live apart.

The new prior attempts to claw back some the rights lost in the plague, but Merthin is able to fight him off, given the new powers of the town as a borough.

2. Wulfric does well. With his grown sons, he now cultivates madder, a valuable cash crop whose roots produce the purple dye so much in demand by Kingsbridge cloth manufacturers. But his efforts are continually frustrated by Earl Ralph, who

- a) Forces him to grow a different crop
- b) Commandeers his cart
- c) Forces the family to work on his own lands

When the second plague strikes, and the land is depopulated again, Ralph asks Wulfric to take over Perkin's farm. This time, Wulfric demands free status and cash rent, and he gets both. But later Harold continues to argue that Wulfric and his sons must work on the demesne lands at harvest time, albeit for cash.

3. The tower is built, all but the spire. No one can imagine how Merthin is going to build the formwork for this. He announces he will build it without formwork. Everyone thinks this is impossible—except Charis.

4. As part of another effort to bring people back to Kingsbridge, Charis produces a mystery play about St Katharine, complete with a sensationally realistic beheading. It attracts thousands of pilgrims.

Part VI: 1377-1381

1. Wulfric and Glynis, now old, negotiate a copyhold, which means a written lease, so that there can be no further arguments. They build up a reserve of cash. But this nest egg is threatened by the poll tax.
2. Charis tries to mitigate the poll tax by understating returns. However, when she hears talk of open rebellion, she urges caution.
3. Ralph brutally enforces the tax.
4. The townspeople rebel.
5. The spire is finished.
6. Thomas Langley is revealed to have been Edward II.

Ages of characters in 1337:

Charis 18

Ralph 20

Wulfric 16

Annette ~~28~~ 18

Glynis 17

Merthin 21

Godfrey 31

Philemon 22