

Notes &
out-takes.

Second draft

16 February 1989

ALLEGIANCE

by Ken Follett

360,000 words

- ✓ Illustrations by Petra etc, assisted by John Wormald
- ✗ Tom's dream: Shafts and alternating piers as at Peterborough
- ✓ Tom's drawing: he draws four bays, not one
- ✓ p673 (in 1st draft): Scaffolding of the piers reaches the ground. Scaffolding of the walls is perched like birds' nests. Also, one arch is built, the rest just falsework.
- ✓ p716 (in 2nd draft) only four opposed pairs of piers
- ✓ Check that Tom's elevation corresponds to Banister Fletcher's drawing of Peterborough choir.

List of pages revised since the 'partial rewrite' was sent out -

72
 508
 531
 743 (to 745)
 693 (to 694)
 959 (to 959A)
 1173 (to 1173A)

Letter to Petr.

- ✓ Felicity :
 Alfred leaves knowledge after the ceiling falls. Emphasize

✓ Fall hiry.

✓ Books by KF

✓ blurb.

✓ Title page

Ken Follett

Ken Follett was only 27 when he wrote Eye of the Needle, the award-winning novel of the Second World War which became an international bestseller and a distinguished film. Before that he had been a newspaper reporter and a publishing executive after studying Philosophy at University College, London.

He has since written four equally successful novels plus the nonfiction bestseller On Wings of Eagles, about the rescue of two Texan businessmen from Iran during the 1979 revolution.

Allegiance took him three years to write, but he had been thinking about it for fifteen years. Published shortly after his fortieth birthday, it is the culmination of a lifelong fascination with the raw, crude world of the middle ages and the mystery and grandeur of the Gothic cathedrals built in that turbulent epoch. He describes the book as 'by far the most thrilling and challenging story I have ever worked on'.

Ken Follett lives in a 200-year-old house overlooking the River Thames in Chelsea, London, with his wife Barbara. He has two children by his first marriage and three stepchildren by his second. His main interest apart from his children is music, and he plays bass guitar in a blues band.

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Illustrated by Petra Röhr-Rouendaal

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huge. Tom had seen beasts like it before, but perhaps Alfred had not. It was a warhorse, as high at the wither as the top of a man's head, and broad in proportion. Warhorses were not bred in England, but came from overseas, and were enormously costly.

Tom dropped the remains of his bread in the pocket of his apron, then narrowed his eyes against the sun and gazed across the field. The horse had its ears back and nostrils flared, but it seemed to Tom that its head was well up, a sign that it was not completely out of control. Sure enough, as it came closer the rider leaned back, hauling on the reins, and the huge animal seemed to slow a little. Now Tom could feel the drumming of its hooves in the ground beneath his feet. He looked around for Martha, thinking to pick her up and put her out of harm's way. Agnes had the same thought. But Martha was nowhere to be seen.

'In the corn,' Agnes said, but Tom had already figured that out and was striding across the site to the edge of the field. He scanned the waving wheat with fear in his heart but he could not see the child.

The only thing he could think of was to try to slow the horse. He stepped into the path and began to walk toward the charging beast, holding his arms wide. The horse saw him, raised its head for a better look, and slowed perceptibly. Then, to Tom's horror, the rider spurred it on.

'You damned fool!' Tom roared, although the rider could not hear.

That was when Martha stepped out of the field and into the pathway a few yards in front of Tom.

For an instant Tom stood still in a sick panic. Then he

shade, if we're gentle.' She stood up, and Tom realised that she was quite small, at least a foot shorter than he. He bent down and picked Martha up carefully. Her childish body was almost weightless in his arms. He carried her a few yards along the road and put her down on a patch of grass in the shadow of an old oak. She was still quite limp.

Alfred was picking up the tools that had been scattered on the road during the fracas. The strange woman's boy was watching, his eyes wide and his mouth open, not speaking. He was about three years younger than Alfred, and a peculiar-looking child, Tom observed, with none of his mother's sensual beauty. He had very pale skin, orange-red hair, and ~~green~~^{blue} eyes that bulged slightly. He had the alertly stupid look of a dullard, Tom thought; the kind of child that either dies young or grows up to be the village idiot. Alfred was visibly uncomfortable under his stare.

As Tom watched, the child snatched the saw from Alfred's hand, without saying anything, and examined it as if it were something amazing. Alfred, offended by the discourtesy, snatched it back, and the child let it go with indifference. The mother said: 'Jack! Behave yourself.' She seemed embarrassed.

Tom looked at her. The boy did not resemble her at all. 'Are you his mother?' Tom asked.

'Yes. My name is Ellen.'

'Where's your husband?'

'Dead.'

Tom was surprised. 'You're travelling alone?' he said incredulously. The forest was dangerous enough for a man such as he: a woman alone could hardly hope to survive.

anyone else in the world -

Tom did not believe that the boy Jack could read and write. Tom could write his name, and a handful of words such as pence and yards and bushels; and Agnes, being the daughter of a priest, could do more, although she wrote slowly and laboriously with her tongue poking out of the corner of her mouth; but Alfred could not write a word, and could barely recognise his own name; and Martha could not even do that. Was it possible that this halfwitted child was more literate than Tom's whole family?

Ellen told Jack to write something, and he smoothed a patch of earth and scratched letters in it. Tom recognised the first word, Alfred, but not the others, and he felt a fool; then Ellen saved his embarrassment by reading the whole thing aloud: 'Alfred is bigger than Jack.' The boy quickly drew two figures, one bigger than the other, and although they were crude, one had broad shoulders and a rather bovine expression and the other was small and grinning. Tom, who himself had a talent for sketching, was astonished at the simplicity and strength of the picture scratched in the dust.

But the child seemed an idiot.

Ellen had lately begun to realise this, she confessed, guessing Tom's thoughts. Jack had never had the company of other children, or indeed of other human beings except for his mother, and the result was that he was growing up like a wild animal. For all his education he did not know how to behave with people. That was why he was silent, and stared, and snatched.

As she said this she looked vulnerable for the first time. Her air of impregnable self-sufficiency vanished, and Tom saw her

Agnes, Martha and Alfred came back. Tom gazed anxiously at Martha, but she looked as if the worst thing that had ever happened to her was having her face scrubbed. For a while Tom had been absorbed in Ellen's problems, but now he remembered his own plight: he was out of work and his pig had been stolen. The afternoon was wearing on. He began to pick up their remaining possessions.

Ellen said: 'Where are you headed?'

'Winchester,' Tom told her. Winchester was the capital of England, and had a castle, a palace, several monasteries, and - most important of all - a cathedral.

'Salisbury is closer,' Ellen said. 'And last time I was there, they were rebuilding the cathedral - making it bigger.'

Tom's heart leaped. This was what he was looking for. If only he could get a job on a cathedral building project he believed he had the ability to become master builder eventually. 'Which way is Salisbury?' he said eagerly.

'Back the way you came, for three or four miles. Do you remember a fork in the road, where you went left?'

'Yes - by a pond of foul water.'

'That's it. The right fork leads to Salisbury.'

They took their leave. Agnes had not liked Ellen, but managed nevertheless to say graciously: 'Thank you for helping me take care of Martha.'

Ellen smiled and looked wistful as they left.

When they had walked along the road for a few minutes Tom looked back. Ellen was still watching them, standing in the road with her legs apart, shading her eyes with her hand, the peculiar boy standing beside her. Tom waved, and she waved back.

rising out of the flat plain like a boat on a lake, they saw the fortified hill town of Salisbury. Its details were veiled by the rain, but Tom could make out several towers, four or five, soaring high above the city walls. His spirits lifted at the sight of so much stonework.

A cold wind whipped across the plain, freezing their faces and hands as they followed the road toward the east gate. Four roads met at the foot of the hill, amid a scatter of houses spilled over from the town, and there they were joined by other travellers, walking with hunched shoulders and lowered heads, butting through the weather to the shelter of the walls.

On the slope leading to the gate they came up with an ox-cart bearing a load of stone - a very hopeful sign for Tom. The carter was bent down behind the crude wooden vehicle, pushing with his shoulder, adding his strength to that of the two oxen as they inched uphill. Tom saw a chance to make a friend. He beckoned to Alfred, and they both put their shoulders to the back of the cart and helped push.

The huge wooden wheels rumbled on to a timber bridge that spanned an enormous dry moat. The earthworks were formidable: digging that moat, and throwing up the soil to form the town wall, must have taken hundreds of men, Tom thought; a much bigger job even than digging the foundations for a cathedral. The bridge that crossed the moat was not so impressive: no doubt it was intended to be flimsy, so that it could be destroyed quickly if the city came under attack. It rattled and creaked under the weight of the stones in the cart and the two mighty beasts that were pulling it, and Tom was relieved when he felt solid ground beneath his feet

again.

The slope levelled and the cart moved more easily as they approached the gateway. The carter straightened up, and Tom and Alfred did likewise. 'I thank you kindly,' the carter said.

Tom asked: 'What's the stone for?'

'The new cathedral.'

'New? I heard they were just enlarging the old one.'

The carter nodded. 'That's what they said, ten years ago. But there's more new than old, now.'

This was further good news. 'Who's the master builder?'

'John of Shaftesbury, though Bishop Roger has a lot to do with the designs.'

That was normal. Bishops rarely left builders alone to do the job. One of the master builder's problems was often to calm the fevered imaginations of the clerics and set practical limits to their soaring fantasies. But it would be John of Shaftesbury who hired men.

The carter nodded at Tom's satchel of tools. 'Mason?'

'Yes. Looking for work.'

'You may find it,' the carter said neutrally. 'If not on the cathedral, perhaps on the castle.'

'And who governs the castle?'

'The same Roger is both bishop and castellan.'

A powerful man, this Roger, thought Tom.

They passed through the gateway into the town. The place was crammed so full of buildings, people and animals that it seemed in danger of bursting its circular ramparts and spilling out into the moat. The wooden houses were jammed together shoulder to shoulder,

sills, pinnacles and parapets. In the middle of the close, well away from other buildings, stood the smithy, the glow of its fire visible through the open doorway; and the clang of hammer on anvil carried across the close as the smith made new tools to replace the ones the masons were wearing down. To most people it was a scene of chaos, but Tom saw a large and complex mechanism which he itched to control.

He knew what each man was doing and he could see instantly how far the work had progressed. They were building the east facade. There was a run of scaffolding across the east end at a height of twenty-five or thirty feet, and he could see no fewer than six masons on it, cloaked and hooded against the driving rain. Their labourers were running up and down the ladders with stones on their shoulders or mortar in baskets. Higher up, on the timber framework of the roof, were the plumbers, like spiders creeping across a giant wooden web, nailing sheets of lead to the struts and installing the drainpipes and gutters.

Tom realised regretfully that the building was almost finished. If he did get hired here the work would not last more than a couple of years - hardly enough time for him to rise to the position of master mason, let alone master builder. Nevertheless he would take the job, if he were offered it, for winter was coming. He and his family could have survived a winter without work if they had still had the pig, but without it Tom had to get a job.

They followed the cart across the close to where the stones were stacked. The oxen gratefully dipped their heads to the water-trough. The carter called to a passing mason: 'Where's the master

thief had gone in the opposite direction, to sell the pig in Salisbury. But the outlaw woman, Ellen, had told Tom that Salisbury cathedral was being rebuilt, and he had changed his plans, and inadvertently caught up with the thief. However, the man thought he would never see Tom again, which gave Tom a chance to catch him unawares.

Tom walked slowly along the muddy street, trying to seem casual as he glanced in at open doorways. He wanted to remain as unobtrusive as possible, for this episode could end in violence, and he did not want everyone to remember a tall mason searching the town. Most of the houses were ordinary hovels of wood, mud and thatch, with straw on the floor, a fireplace in the middle, and a few bits of home-made furniture. A barrel and some benches made an alehouse; a bed in the corner with a curtain to screen it meant a whore; a noisy crowd around a single table signified a game of dice.

A woman with red-stained lips bared her breasts to him, and he shook his head and hurried past. He was secretly intrigued by the idea of doing it with a total stranger, in daylight, and paying for it, but in all his life he had never tried it.

He thought again of Ellen, the outlaw woman. There was something intriguing about her, too. She was powerfully attractive, but those deep-set, intense eyes were intimidating. An invitation from a whore made Tom feel discontented for a few moments, but the spell cast by Ellen had not yet worn off, and he had a foolish desire to run back into the forest and find her and fall on her.

babies to die, and sometimes the priest turned a blind eye; but Tom did not belong to that kind of people. He should have carried it in his arms until he died, and then buried it. There was no purpose to that, of course, but all the same it would have been the right thing to do.

He realised that it was daylight.

He stopped suddenly.

The children stood still and stared at him, waiting. They were ready for anything; nothing was normal any more.

'I shouldn't have left the baby,' Tom said.

Alfred said: 'But we can't feed him. He's bound to die.'

'Still I shouldn't have left him,' Tom said.

Martha said: 'Let's go back.'

Still Tom hesitated. To go back now would be to admit he had done wrong to abandon the baby.

But it was true. He had done wrong.

He turned around. 'All right,' he said. 'We'll go back.'

Now all the dangers which he had earlier tried to discount suddenly seemed more probable. For sure a fox had smelled the baby by now, and dragged him off to its lair. Or even a wolf. The wild boars were dangerous, even though they did not eat meat. And what about owls? An owl could not carry off a baby, but it might peck out its eyes -

He walked faster, feeling light-headed with exhaustion and starvation. Martha had to run to keep up with him, but she did not complain.

He dreaded what he might see when he returned to the grave. Predators were merciless, and they could tell when a living creature was helpless.

had thought she fell short of being beautiful, because of her strange eyes. Now he could not understand how he had ever felt that. He now saw those astonishing eyes as the perfect expression of her unique self. Now she seemed absolutely perfect to him, and the only puzzle was why she was with him.

They walked for three or four miles. Tom was still tired but the pottage had given him strength; and although he trusted Ellen completely he was still anxious to see the baby with his own eyes.

When they could see the monastery through the trees, Ellen said: 'Let's not reveal ourselves to the monks at first.'

Tom was mystified. 'Why?'

'You abandoned a baby. It counts as murder. Let's spy on the place from the woods and see what kind of people they are.'

Tom did not think he was going to be in trouble, given the circumstances, but there was no harm in being cautious, so he nodded assent and followed Ellen into the undergrowth. A few moments later they were lying at the edge of the clearing.

It was a very small monastery. Tom had built monasteries, and he guessed this one must be what they called a cell, a branch of outpost of a large priory or abbey. There were only two stone buildings, the chapel and the dormitory. The rest were made of wood and wattle-and-daub: a kitchen, stables, a barn, and a range of smaller agricultural buildings. The place had a clean, well-kept look, and gave the impression that the monks did as much farming as praying.

There were not many people about. 'Most of the monks have gone to work,' Ellen said. 'They're building a ~~windmill~~ ^{barn} at the top of the hill.' She glanced up at the sky. 'They'll be back around

because they lived in the monastery and had been educated more intensively. At this stage they did not realise they were exceptional. Even when they began to do much of the teaching in the little school, and take their own lessons from the abbot himself instead of the pedantic old novice master, they thought they were ahead only because they had got such an early start.

When he looked back on his youth, it seemed to Philip that there had been a brief Golden Age, a year or perhaps less, between the end of his rebellion and the onslaught of fleshly lust. Then came the agonising ~~er~~^{era} of impure thoughts, nocturnal emissions, dreadfully embarrassing sessions with his confessor (who was the abbot), endless penances and mortification of the flesh with scourges.

Lust never completely ceased to afflict him, but it did eventually become less important, so that it bothered him only now and again, on the rare occasions when his mind and body were idle; like an old injury that still hurts in wet weather.

Francis had fought this battle a little later, and although he had not confided to Philip on the subject, Philip had the impression that Francis had struggled less bravely against evil desires, and had taken his defeats rather too cheerfully. However, the main thing was that they had both made their peace with the passions that were the greatest enemy of the monastic life.

As Philip worked with the cellarer, so Francis worked for the prior, Abbot Peter's deputy. When the cellarer died, Philip was twenty-one, and despite his youth he took over the job. And when Francis reached the age of twenty-one the abbot proposed to create a new post for him, that of sub-prior. But this proposal

told himself. Be cautious. Take your time.

He paused for a moment in the little porch of the chapel, calming himself, then he softly pushed the big oak door and went silently in.

A dozen or so monks and a few novices stood with their backs to him in ragged rows. Facing them was the sacrist, reading from an open book. He spoke the service rapidly and the monks muttered the responses perfunctorily. Three candles of uneven length sputtered on a dirty altarcloth.

At the back, two young monks were holding a conversation, ignoring the service and discussing something in an animated fashion. As Philip drew level, one said something funny, and the other laughed aloud, drowning the gabbled words of the sacrist. This was the last straw for Philip, and all thought of treading softly disappeared from his mind. He opened his mouth and shouted at the top of his voice: 'BE SILENT!'

The laughter was cut off. The sacrist stopped reading. The chapel fell silent, and the monks turned around and stared at Philip.

He reached out to the monk who had laughed and grabbed him by the ear. He was about Philip's age, and taller, but he was too surprised to resist as Philip pulled his head down. 'On your knees!' Philip yelled. For a moment it looked as if the monk might try to struggle free; but he knew he was in the wrong, and, as Philip had anticipated, his resistance was sapped by his guilty conscience; and when Philip tugged harder on his ear the young man

he may be, will treat the Church better. So before he would guarantee support, Henry made Stephen swear a solemn oath to preserve the rights and privileges of the Church.'

Philip was impressed. Stephen's relationship with the Church had been defined, right at the start of his reign, on the Church's terms. But perhaps even more important was the precedent. The Church had to crown kings but until now it had ~~never~~^{not} had the right to lay down conditions. The time might come when no king could come to power without first striking a deal with the Church. 'This could mean a lot to us,' Philip said.

'Stephen may break his promises, of course,' Francis said. 'But all the same you're right. He will never be able to be quite as ruthless with the Church as Henry was. But there's another danger. Two of the barons were bitterly aggrieved by what Stephen did. One was Bartholomew, the Earl of Shiring.'

'I know of him. Shiring is only a day's journey from here. Bartholomew is said to be a devout man.'

'Perhaps he is. All I know is that he is a self-righteous and stiff-necked baron who will not renege on his loyalty oath to Maud, despite the promise of a pardon.'

'And the other discontented baron?'

'My own Robert of Gloucester. I told you he was ambitious. His soul is tormented by the thought that if only he were legitimate, he would be king. He wants to put his half-sister on the throne, believing that she will rely so heavily on her brother for guidance and advice that he will be king in everything but name.'

'Is he going to do anything about it?'

Francis went on: 'I can't betray the rebellion, but you can.'

Philip said: 'Jesus Christ and all the saints, preserve me.'

'If the plot is uncovered here, in the south, no suspicion will fall on the Gloucester household. Nobody knows I'm here; nobody even knows you're my brother. You could think of some plausible explanation of how you came by the information: you might have seen men-at-arms assembling, or it might be that someone in Earl Bartholomew's household revealed the plot while confessing his sins to a priest you know.'

Philip pulled his cloak closer around him, shivering. It seemed to have turned colder suddenly. This was dangerous, very dangerous. They were talking about meddling in power politics, which regularly killed experienced practitioners. Amateurs such as Philip were foolish to get involved.

But there was so much at stake. Philip could not stand by and see a rebellion against a king chosen by the Church, not when he had a chance to prevent it. And dangerous though it would be for Philip, it would be suicidal for Francis to expose the plot.

Philip said: 'What's the rebels' plan?'

'Earl Bartholomew is on his way back to Shiring right now. From there he will send out messages to his followers all over the south of England. Earl Robert will arrive in Gloucester a day or two later and muster his forces in the West Country. Finally Brian Fitz Count, who holds Wallingford Castle, will close its gates; and the whole of south-west England will belong to the rebels without a fight.'

'Then it's almost too late!' Philip said.

'Not really. We've got about a week. But you'll have to act

in - for there was no glass in the windows - a faint smell of rotting vestments tainted the atmosphere. From the other end of the church came the sound of the service of high mass, the Latin phrases spoken in a sing-song voice, and the chanted responses. Philip walked down the nave. The floor had never been paved, so moss grew on the bare earth in the corners where peasant clogs and monkish sandals rarely trod. The carved spirals and flutes of the massive columns, and the incised chevrons which decorated the **arches** between them, had once been painted and gilded; but now all that remained were a few flakes of papery gold-leaf and a patchwork of stains where the paint had been. The mortar between the stones was crumbling and falling out, and gathering in little heaps by the walls. Philip felt the familiar anger rise in him again. When people came here they were supposed to be awestruck by the majesty of the Almighty God. But peasants were simple people who judged by appearances, and coming here they would think that God was a careless, indifferent deity unlikely to appreciate their worship or take note of their sins. In the end the peasants paid for the church with the sweat of their brows, and it was outrageous that they were rewarded with this crumbling mausoleum.

Philip knelt before the altar and stayed there a moment, conscious that righteous indignation was not the appropriate state of mind for a worshipper. When he had simmered down a little he rose and passed on.

The eastern arm of the church, the chancel, was divided into two. Nearest the crossing was the quire, with wooden stalls where the monks sat and stood during the services. Beyond the quire was the sanctuary that housed the tomb of the saint. Philip moved

'Most people your age do backbreaking work in the fields from sunrise to sunset in order to get their breakfast and their dinner - and still they give some of their bread to you! Do you know why they do this?'

'Yes,' said William, shuffling his feet and looking at the ground.

'Go on.'

'They do it because they want the monks to sing the services for them.'

'Correct. Hardworking peasants give you bread and meat and a stone-built dormitory with with a fire in winter - and you are so wearry that you will not sit still through high mass for them!'

'I'm sorry, brother.'

Philip looked at William a moment longer. There was no great harm in him. The real fault lay with his superiors, who were lax enough to permit horseplay in the church. Philip said gently: 'If services weary you, why did you become a monk?'

'I'm my father's fifth son.'

Philip nodded. 'And no doubt he gave the priory some land on condition we took you?'

'Yes - a farm.'

It was a common story: a man who had a superfluity of sons gave one to God, ensuring that God would not reject the gift by also giving a piece of property sufficient to support the son in monastic poverty. In that way many men who did not have a vocation became disobedient monks.

Philip said: 'If you were moved - to a grange, say, or to my little cell of St-John-in-the-Forest, where there is a good deal of

Kingsbridge. I want you to make me bishop.'

So that was it!

Philip stared in silence at Waleran. It was very simple. The archdeacon wanted to make a deal.

Philip was shocked. It was not quite the same as buying and selling a clerical office, which was known as the sin of simony; but it had an unpleasantly commercial feeling about it.

He tried to think objectively about the proposal. It would mean that Philip would become prior. His heart beat faster at the thought. He was reluctant to quibble with anything that would give him the priory.

It would mean that Waleran would probably become bishop at some point. Would he be a good bishop? He would certainly be competent. He appeared to have no serious vices. He had a rather worldly, practical approach to the service of God, but then so did Philip. Philip sensed that Waleran had a ruthless edge that he himself lacked, but he also sensed that it was based on a genuine determination to protect and nurture the interests of the Church.

Who else might be a candidate, when the bishop eventually died? Probably Osbert. It was not uncommon for religious offices to be passed from father to son, despite the official requirement of clerical celibacy. Osbert, of course, would be even more of a liability to the Church as bishop than he would be as prior. It would ~~might~~ be worth supporting a much worse candidate than Waleran just to keep Osbert out.

Would anyone else be in the running? It was impossible to guess. It might be years yet before the bishop died.

Cuthbert said to Waleran: 'We couldn't guarantee to get you

'But how shall we go about finding evidence of the plot?'
said Father with an anxious look.

'We'll have to find a way to look around Bartholomew's
castle,' ~~Regan~~ ^{Mother} said with a frown. 'It won't be easy. Nobody would
credit us making a social call - everyone knows we hate
Bartholomew.'

William was struck by a thought. 'I could go,' he said.

His parents were both a little startled. Mother said: 'You'd
arouse less suspicion than your father, I suppose. But what
pretext would you have?'

William had thought of that. 'I could go to see Aliena,' he
said, and his pulse raced at the thought. 'I could beg her to
reconsider her decision. After all, she doesn't really know me.
She misjudged me when we met. I could make her a good husband.
Perhaps she just needs to be wooed a little harder.' He gave what
he hoped was a cynical smile, so that they would not know that he
meant every word.

'A perfectly credible excuse,' said Mother. She looked hard
at William. 'By Christ, I wonder whether the boy might have some
of his mother's brains after all.'

*

her even more desirable. He suddenly felt ashamed that this child had been able to cause him so much distress, and he yearned for some way of showing her that he could master her. It was a feeling almost like lust.

She was playing with a boy three years or so younger than she. He had a restless, impatient look: he did not like the game. William could see a family resemblance between the two players. Indeed, the boy looked like Aliena as William remembered her from childhood, with a snub nose and short hair. This must be her younger brother Richard, the heir to the earldom.

William went closer. Richard glanced up at him then returned his attention to the board. Aliena was concentrating. Their painted wooden board was shaped like a cross and divided into squares of different colours. The counters appeared to be made of ivory, white and black. The game was obviously a variant of merrels, or nine-men's-morris, and probably a gift brought back from Normandy by Aliena's father. William was more interested Aliena. When she leaned forward over the board, the neck of her tunic bowed out, and he could see the tops of her breasts. They were as large as he had imagined. His mouth went dry.

Richard moved a counter on the board, and Aliena said: 'No, you can't do that.'

The boy was put out. 'Why not?'

'Because it's against the rules, stupid.'

'I don't like the rules,' Richard said petulantly.

Aliena flared up. 'You have to obey the rules!'

'Why do I?'

'You just do, that's why!'

years older than William. William had picked them himself: his father had given him complete control. Father himself would lead the main assault.

William watched Raymond and Rannulf walk briskly across the frozen fields. Before they reached the castle, he looked at Walter, then kicked his horse, and he and Walter set off across the fields at a trot. The sentries on the battlements would see two separate pairs of people, one on foot and one on horseback, approaching the castle first thing in the morning: it looked perfectly innocent.

William's timing was good. He and Walter passed Raymond and Rannulf about a hundred yards from the castle. At the bridge they dismounted. William's heart was in his mouth. If he messed up this ~~bit~~^{part} the whole attack would be ruined.

There were two sentries at the gate. William had a nightmarish suspicion that there would be an ambush, and a dozen men-at-arms would spring out of concealment and hack him to pieces. The sentries looked alert but not anxious. They were not wearing armour. William and Walter had chain-mail under their cloaks.

William's guts seemed to have turned to water. He could not swallow. One of the sentries recognised him. 'Hello, Lord William,' he said jovially. 'Come courting again, have you?'

William said 'Oh, my God,' in a weak voice, then plunged a dagger into the sentry's belly, jabbing it up under the rib cage to the heart.

The man gasped, sagged, and opened his mouth as if to scream. A noise could spoil everything. Panicking, not knowing what to do, William pulled out the dagger and stuck it into the man's open

The earl was thinking about the fire. 'Attacked? Who by?'

'Listen!' Tom yelled. 'A hundred horses!'

The earl cocked his head. Tom watched as realisation dawned on the pale, aristocratic face. 'You're right - by the cross!' He suddenly looked afraid. 'Have you seen them?'

'Yes.'

'Who - Never mind who! A hundred horses?'

'Yes - '

'Peter! Ralph!' The earl turned from Tom and summoned his lieutenants. 'It's a raid - this fire is a diversion - we're under attack!' Like the earl, they were at first incomprehending, then they listened, and finally they showed fear. The earl yelled: 'Tell the men to get their swords - hurry, hurry!' He turned back to Tom. 'Come with me, stonemason - you're strong, we can close the gates.' He ran off across the compound and Tom followed him. If they could close the gates and raise the drawbridge in time, they could hold off a hundred men.

They reached the gatehouse. They could see the army through the arch. It was less than a mile away now, and spreading out, Tom observed, the faster horses in front and the stragglers behind. 'Look at the gates!' the earl yelled.

Tom looked. The two great iron-banded oak gates lay flat on the ground. Their hinges had been chiselled out of wall, he could see. Some of the enemy ~~must be in the castle already.~~ **had been here earlier.**

Tom looked back into the compound, still searching for Ellen. He could not see her. What had become of her? Anything could happen now. He needed to be with her and protect her.

'The drawbridge!' said the earl.

The best way to protect Ellen was to keep the attackers out, Tom realised. The earl ran up the spiral staircase that led to the winding-room, and with an effort Tom made himself follow. If they could lift the drawbridge, a few men could hold the gatehouse. But when he reached the winding-room his heart sank. The rope had been cut. There was no way to lift the drawbridge.

Earl Bartholomew cursed bitterly. 'Whoever planned this is as cunning as Lucifer,' he said.

It occurred to Tom that whoever had wrecked the gates, cut the drawbridge rope and started the fire must still be inside the castle somewhere, and he wondered where.

The earl glanced out of an arrow-slit window. 'Dear God, they're almost here.' He ran down the stairs.

Tom was close on his heels. In the gateway, several knights were hastily buckling their sword belts and putting on helmets. Earl Bartholomew started to give orders. 'Ralph and John - drive some loose horses across the bridge to get in the enemy's way. Richard - Peter - Robin - get some others and make a stand here.' The gateway was narrow, and a few men could hold off the attackers for a little while at least. 'You - stonemason - get the servants and children across the bridge to the upper compound.'

Tom was glad to have an excuse to look for Ellen. He ran to the chapel first. Alfred and Martha were where he had left them a few moments earlier, looking scared. 'Go to the keep,' he shouted to them. 'Any other children or women you pass, tell them to go with you - orders of the earl. Run!' They ran off immediately.

Tom looked around. He would follow them soon: he was determined not to get caught in the lower compound. But he had a

few moments to spare in which he could carry out the earl's order. He ran to the stable, where people were still throwing buckets of water over the flames. 'Forget the fire, the castle is being attacked,' he yelled. 'Take your children to the keep.'

Smoke got in his eyes and his vision blurred with tears. He rubbed his eyes and ran to a small crowd who were standing watching the fire consume the stables. He repeated his message to them, and to a group of stablehands who had rounded up some of the loose horses. Ellen was nowhere to be seen.

The smoke made him cough. Choking, he ran back across the compound to the bridge that led to the upper circle. He paused there, gasping for air, and looked back. People were streaming across the bridge. He was almost sure that Ellen and Jack must have gone to the keep already, but he was terrified that he might have missed them. He could see a tightly-packed knot of knights engaged in fierce hand-to-hand fighting at the lower gatehouse. Otherwise there was nothing to see but smoke. Suddenly Earl Bartholomew appeared at his side, with blood on his sword and tears on his face from the smoke. 'Save yourself!' the earl shouted at Tom. At that moment the attackers burst through the arch of the lower gatehouse, scattering the defending knights. Tom turned and ran across the bridge.

Fifteen or twenty of the earl's men stood at the second gatehouse, ready to defend the upper compound. They parted to let Tom and the earl through. As their ranks closed again, Tom heard hooves hammering on the wooden bridge behind him. The defenders had no chance, now. At the back his mind Tom realised that this had been a cleverly planned and perfectly executed raid. But his

main thought was fear for Ellen and the children. A hundred bloodthirsty armed men were about to burst in on them. He ran across the upper compound to the keep.

Half way up the wooden steps leading to the great hall he glanced back. The defenders of the second gatehouse were overcome almost immediately by the charging horsemen. Earl Bartholomew was on the steps behind Tom. There was just time for them both to get ~~inside~~ ^{into} the keep and lift the staircase inside. Tom ran the rest of the way up the steps and leaped into the hall - and then he saw that the attackers had been cleverer yet.

The attackers' advance party, who had wrecked the gates, and cut the rope of the drawbridge, and set fire to the stables, had had one more task to perform: they had come to the keep and ambushed all who took refuge there.

They were now standing just inside the great hall, four grim-faced men in chain mail. All around them were the bleeding bodies of dead and wounded knights of the earl's, who had been slaughtered as they stepped inside. And the leader of the advance party, to Tom's astonishment, was William Hamleigh.

Tom stared, stunned by surprise. William's eyes were wide with blood lust. Tom thought William was going to kill him, but before he had time to be scared one of William's henchmen seized Tom's arm, pulled him inside and shoved him out of the way.

So it was the Hamleighs who were attacking Earl Bartholomew's castle. But why?

All the servants and children were in a frightened huddle on the far side of the hall. Only the armed men were being killed, then. Tom scanned the faces in the hall, and, to his overwhelming

relief and gratitude, he saw Alfred, Martha, Ellen and Jack, all in a group, looking terrified but alive and apparently unhurt.

Before he could go to them a fight started in the doorway. Earl Bartholomew and two knights charged in and were ambushed by the waiting Hamleigh knights. One of the earl's men was struck down immediately, but the other protected the earl with his raised sword. Several more of Bartholomew's knights came in behind the earl, and suddenly there was a tremendous skirmish at close quarters, with knives and fists being used because there was no room to deploy a long sword. For a moment it looked as if the earl's men would overcome William's; then some of Bartholomew's men turned and began to defend themselves from behind: clearly the attacking army had penetrated the upper compound and was now mounting the steps and attacking the keep.

A powerful voice bellowed: 'HOLD!'

The men on both sides took defensive positions, and the fighting stopped.

The same voice called: 'Bartholomew of Shiring, will you surrender?'

Tom saw the earl turn and look out through the door. Knights stepped aside to get out of his line of vision. 'Hamleigh,' the earl murmured in a quietly incredulous tone. Then he raised his voice and said: 'Will you leave my family and servants unharmed?'

'Yes.'

'Will you swear it?'

'I swear it, by the cross, if you surrender.'

'I surrender,' said Earl Bartholomew.

There was a great cheer from outside.

Tom turned away. Martha ran across the room to him. He picked her up, then embraced Ellen.

'We're safe,' Ellen said with tears in her eyes. 'All of us - all safe.'

'Safe,' said Tom bitterly, 'but destitute again.'

*

stalls. More monks were sweeping and scrubbing the guest house, which was next to the stable, and a cartload of straw stood outside ready to be strewn on the clean floor.

However, no one was working on the fallen tower. Tom studied the pile of stones which was all that remained of it. The collapse had to have occurred some years ago, for the broken edges of the stones had been blunted by frost and rain, the crushed mortar had been washed away, and the pile of masonry had sunk an inch or two into the soft earth. It was remarkable that the repair had been left undone for so long, for cathedral churches were supposed to be prestigious. The old prior must have been idle or incompetent, or both. Tom had probably arrived just when the monks were planning the rebuilding. He was overdue for some luck.

'No one recognises me,' Ellen said.

'When were you here?' Tom asked her.

'Thirteen years ago.'

'No wonder they've forgotten you.'

As they passed the west front of the church Tom opened one of the big wooden doors and looked inside. The nave was dark and gloomy, with thick columns and an ancient wooden ceiling. However, several monks were whitewashing the walls with long-handled brushes, and others were sweeping the beaten-earth floor. The new prior was evidently getting the whole place smartened up. That was a hopeful sign. Tom closed the door.

Beyond the church, in the kitchen courtyard, a team of novices stood around a trough of filthy water, scraping the accumulated soot and grease off cooking-pots and kitchen utensils with sharp stones. Their knuckles were raw and red from constant immersion in the icy water. When they saw Ellen they giggled and

looked away.

Tom asked a blushing novice where the cellarer was to be found. Strictly speaking, it was the sacrist he should have asked for, because the fabric of the church was the sacrist's responsibility; but cellarers as a class were more approachable. In the end the prior would make the decision, anyway. The novice directed him to the undercroft of one of the buildings around the courtyard. Tom went in through an open doorway, and Ellen and the children followed. They all paused inside the door to peer into the gloom.

This building was newer and more soundly constructed than the church, Tom could tell at once. The air was dry and there was no smell of rot ~~tenness~~. Indeed, the mixed aromas of the stored food gave him painful stomach pangs, for he had not eaten in two days. As his eyes adjusted he saw that the undercroft had a good flagstone floor, short thick pillars, and a tunnel-vaulted ceiling. A moment later he noticed a tall, bald man with a fringe of white hair, spooning salt from a barrel into a pot. 'Are you the cellarer?' said Tom, but the man held up a hand for silence, and Tom saw that he was counting. They all waited in silence for him to finish. At last he said: 'Two score and nineteen, three score,' and put the spoon down.

Tom said: 'I'm Tom, master builder, and I'd like to rebuild your north-west tower.'

'I'm Cuthbert, called Whitehead, the cellarer, and I'd like to see it done,' the man replied. 'But we'll have to ask Prior Philip. You'll have heard that we have a new prior?'

'Yes.' Cuthbert was the friendly sort of monk, Tom decided;

Jack were drinking their second bowl of milk. Alfred tried to fill his arms with apples. Tom smacked them out of his hands and said in a low voice: 'Just take two or three.' He took three.

Tom ate his apples gratefully, and his belly felt a little better, but he could not help wondering how soon supper would be served. Monks generally ate before dark, to save candles, he recalled happily.

Cuthbert was looking hard at Ellen. 'Do I know you?' he said eventually.

She looked uneasy. 'I don't think so.'

'You ~~look~~ ^{SEEM} familiar,' he said uncertainly.

'I used to live near here as a child,' she said.

'That would be it,' he said. 'That's why I have this feeling that you look older than you should.'

'You must have a very good memory.'

He frowned at her. 'Not quite good enough,' he said. 'I'm sure there's something else.... No matter. Why did you leave Earlscastle?'

'It was attacked, yesterday at dawn, and taken,' Tom replied. 'Earl Bartholomew is accused of treason.'

Cuthbert was shocked. 'Saints preserve us!' he exclaimed, and suddenly he looked like an old maid frightened by a bull. 'Treason!'

There was a footstep outside. Tom turned and saw another monk walk in. Cuthbert said: 'This is our new prior.'

Philip recognised the prior. It was Philip, the monk they had met on their way to the bishop's palace, the one who had given them the delicious cheese. Now everything fell into place: the new

prior of Kingsbridge was the old prior of the little cell in the forest, and he had brought Jonathan with him when he came here. Philip's heart leaped with optimism. Philip was a kindly man, and he had seemed to like and trust Tom. Surely he would give him a job.

Philip recognised him. 'Hello, Master Builder,' he said. 'You didn't get much work at the bishop's palace, then?'

'No, father. The archdeacon wouldn't hire me, and the bishop wasn't there.'

'Indeed he wasn't - he was in heaven, though we didn't know it at the time.'

'The bishop is dead?'

'Yes.'

'That's old news,' Cuthbert butted in impatiently. 'Tom and his family have just come from Earls castle. Earl Bartholomew has been captured and his castle overrun!'

Philip was very still. 'Already!' he murmured.

'Already?' Cuthbert repeated. 'Why do you say "already"?' He seemed fond of Philip but wary of him, like a father whose son has been away to war and has come home with a sword in his belt and a slightly dangerous look in his eye. 'Did you know this was going to happen?'

Philip was slightly flustered. 'No, not exactly,' he said uncertainly. 'I had heard a rumour that Earl Bartholomew was opposed to King Stephen.' He recovered his composure. 'We can all be thankful for this,' he announced. 'Stephen has promised to protect the Church, whereas Maud might have oppressed us as much as her late father did. Yes, indeed. This is good news.' He looked

He emerged in a narrow gallery. On one side, a row of small arches looked out into the nave. The ~~ceiling~~^{ceiling} sloped from the tops of the arches down to the floor on the other side. The floor itself was not flat, but curved down at either side. It took Jack a moment to realise where he was. He was above the aisle on the south side of the nave. The tunnel-vaulted ceiling of the aisle was the curved floor on which Jack was standing. From the outside of the church the aisle could be seen to have a lean-to roof, and that was the sloping ceiling under which Jack was standing. The aisle was much lower than the nave, so he was still a long way from the main roof of the building.

He walked west along the gallery, exploring. It was quite thrilling, now that the monks had gone and he was no longer in fear of being spotted. It was as if he had climbed a tree and found that at the very top, hidden from view by the lower branches, all the trees were connected, and you could walk around in a secret world a few feet above the earth.

At the end of the gallery was another small door. He went through it and found himself on the inside of the south-west tower, the one that had not fallen down. The space he was in was obviously not meant to be seen, for it was rough and unfinished, and instead of a floor there were rafters with wide gaps between them. However, around the inside of the wall ran a flight of wooden steps, a staircase without a handrail. Jack went up.

Half way up one wall was a small arched opening. The staircase passed right by it. Jack put his head inside and held up his candle. He was in the roof space, above the timber ceiling and

(ii)

Philip had not yet got used to sleeping alone. He missed the stuffy air of the dormitory, the sound of other people shifting and snoring, the disturbance when one of the older monks got up to go to the latrine (followed, usually, by the other older ones, a regular procession which always amused the youngsters). Being alone did not bother Philip at nightfall, when he was always dead tired; but in the middle of the night, when he had been thoroughly roused by the service, he now found it difficult to go back to sleep. Instead of getting back into the big soft bed (it was a little embarrassing how quickly he had got used to that) he would build up the fire and read by candlelight, or kneel down and pray, or just sit thinking.

He had plenty to think about. The priory's finances were worse than he had anticipated. The main problem probably was that the whole organisation generated very little cash. It owned vast acreages, but many farms were let at low rents on long leases, and some of them paid rent in kind - so many sacks of flour, so many barrels of apples, so many cartloads of turnips. Those farms that were not rented out were run by monks, but they never seemed to be able to produce a surplus of food for sale. The priory's other main asset was the churches it owned, and from which it received the tithes. Unfortunately, most of these were under the control of the sacrist, and Philip was having trouble finding out exactly how much he received and how he spent it. There were no written accounts. However, it was clear that the sacrist's income was too small, or his management of it too bad, to maintain the cathedral church in good repair; although over the years the sacrist had

brothers to help you, and carry it...' He thought for a moment. The safest place was probably the prior's residence. 'Take it to my house.'

'To your house?' Andrew said argumentatively. 'The relics should be in my care, not yours.'

'Then you should have rescued them from the church!' Philip flared. 'Do as I say, without another word!'

The sacrist got ^{up}reluctantly, looking furious.

Philip said: 'Make haste, man, or I'll strip you of your office here and now!' He turned his back on Andrew and spoke to Milius. 'How many?'

'Forty-four, plus Cuthbert. Eleven novices. Five guests. Everyone is accounted for.'

'That's a mercy.' Philip looked at the raging fire. It seemed almost miraculous that they were all alive and no one had even been hurt. He realised he was exhausted, but he was too worried to sit down and rest. 'Is there anything else of value that we should rescue?' he said. 'We have the treasure and the relics....'

Alan, the young treasurer, spoke up. 'What about the books?'

Philip groaned. Of course - the books. They were kept in a locked cupboard in the east cloister, next to the door of the chapter house, where the monks could get them during study periods. It would take a dangerously long time to empty the cupboard book by book. Perhaps a few strong youngsters could pick up the whole cupboard and carry it to safety. Philip looked around. The sacrist had chosen half a dozen monks to deal with the coffin, and they were already making their way across the green. Now Philip

When everyone was busy again, Prior Philip walked away from the guest house, on his own, and headed for the church. Tom saw him and followed. This was his chance. If he could handle this right he could work here for years.

Philip stood staring at what had been the west end of the church, shaking his head sadly at the wreckage, looking as if it was his life that was in ruins. Tom stood beside him in silence. After a while Philip moved on, walking along the north side of the nave, through the graveyard. Tom walked with him, surveying the damage.

The north wall of the nave was still standing, but the north transept and part of the north wall of the chancel had fallen. The church still had an east end. They turned around the end and looked at the south side. Most of the south wall had come down and the south transept had collapsed into the cloisters. The chapter house was still standing.

They walked to the archway which led into the east walk of the cloisters. There they were halted by the pile of rubble. It looked a mess, but Tom's trained eye could see that the cloister walks themselves were not badly damaged, just buried under the fallen ruins. He climbed over the broken stones until he could see into the church. Just behind the altar there was a semi-concealed staircase that led down into the crypt. The crypt itself was beneath the quire. Tom peered in, studying the stone floor over the crypt for signs of cracking. He could see none. There was a good chance the crypt had survived intact. He would not tell Philip yet: he would save the news for a crucial moment.

Philip had walked on, around the back of the dormitory. Tom

raced along what had been the chancel, dodging around piles of rubble and jumping over fallen roof timbers. He could hear the heavy steps and grunting breath of Alfred right behind him, and fear lent him speed.

A moment later he realised he had run the wrong way. There was no way out of that end of the cathedral. He had made a mistake. He realised, with a sinking heart, that he was going to get hurt.

The upper half of the east end had fallen in, and the stones were piled up against what remained of the wall. Having nowhere else to go, Jack scrambled up the pile with Alfred hot on his heels. He reached the top and saw in front of him a sheer drop of about fifteen feet. He teetered fearfully on the edge. It was too far to jump without hurting himself. Alfred made a grab for his ankle. Jack lost his balance. For a moment he stood with one foot on the wall and the other in the air, windmilling his arms in an attempt to regain his footing. Alfred kept hold of his ankle. Jack felt himself falling inexorably the wrong way. Alfred held on a moment longer, unbalancing Jack further, then let go. Jack fell through the air, unable to right himself, and he heard himself scream. He landed on his left side. The impact was terrific. By an unlucky chance his face hit a stone.

Everything went black for a moment.

When he opened his eyes Alfred was standing over him - he must have clambered down the wall somehow - and beside him was one of the older monks. Jack recognised the monk: it was Remigius, the sub-prior. Remigius caught his eye and said: 'Get up, lad.'

Jack was not sure he could. He could not move his left arm.

from lice and boils. Never a day went by without some such little incident bringing her vividly to mind.

He knew he was lucky to have Ellen. There was no danger of his taking her for granted. She was unique: there was something abnormal about her, and it was that abnormal something that made her magnetic. He was grateful to her for consoling him in his grief, the morning after Agnes died; but sometimes he wished he had met her a few days - instead of a few hours - after he had buried his wife, just so that he would have had time to be heartbroken alone. He would not have observed a period of mourning - that was for lords and monks, nor ordinary folk - but he would have had time to become accustomed to the absence of Agnes before he started to get used to living with Ellen. Such thoughts had not occurred to him during the early days, when ~~the~~^{if} the threat of starvation had combined with the sexual excitement of Ellen to produce a kind of hysterical end-of-the-world elation. But since he had found work and security, he had begun to feel pangs of regret. And sometimes it seemed that, when he thought like this about Agnes, he was not only missing her, but mourning the passing of his own youth. Never again would he be as naive, as aggressive, as hungry or as strong as he had been when he had first fallen in love with Agnes.

He finished his bread and left the refectory ahead of the others. He went into the cloisters. He was pleased with his work here: it was now hard to imagine that the quadrangle had been buried under a mass of rubble three weeks earlier. The only remaining signs of the catastrophe were some cracked paving stones for which he had been unable to find replacements.

There was a lot of dust about, though. He would have the

said to himself. A master of every aspect of modern building. Just the man you'd cheerfully trust.

He stepped inside. There was only one room. At one end was a big bed with luxurious hangings; at the other a small altar with a crucifix and a candlestick. Prior Philip stood by a window, reading from a vellum sheet with a worried frown. He looked up and smiled at Tom. 'What's that you've got?'

'Drawings, father,' Tom said, make his voice deep and reassuring. 'For a new cathedral. May I show you?'

Philip looked surprised but intrigued. 'By all means.'

There was a large lectern in a corner. Tom brought it into the light by the window and put his plaster frame on its angled rest. Philip looked at the drawing. Tom watched Philip's face. He could tell that Philip had never seen an elevation drawing, a floor plan or a section through a building. The prior's face wore a puzzled frown.

Tom began to explain. He pointed to the elevation. 'This shows you one bay of the nave,' he said. 'Imagine you're standing in the centre of the nave, looking at the wall. At the sides of the drawing here are the pillars of the arcade. They're joined by this arch. Through the archway you can see the window in the aisle. Above the arch is the tribune gallery, and above that, the clerestory window.'

Philip's expression cleared as he understood. 'But why have you drawn only one bay?' he asked.

'Because all the others are the same, father.'

'Of course. How stupid of me.'

He looked at the floor plan, and Tom could see that he was

They arrived in Winchester at nightfall on the second day. They entered by the King's Gate, in the south wall of the city, and went directly into the cathedral close. There they parted company. Waleran went to the residence of the Bishop of Winchester, a palace in its own grounds adjacent to the cathedral close. Philip went to pay his respects to the prior and beg for a mattress in the monks' dormitory.

After three days on the road, Philip found the calm and quiet of the monastery as refreshing as a fountain on a hot day. The Winchester prior was a plump, easygoing man with pink skin and white hair. He invited Philip to have supper with him in his house. While they ate they talked about their respective bishops. The Winchester prior was clearly in awe of Bishop Henry and completely subservient to him. Philip surmised that when your bishop was as wealthy and powerful as Henry, there was nothing to be gained by quarrelling with him. All the same, Philip did not intend to be so much under the thumb of his bishop.

He slept like a top and got up at midnight for Matins.

When he went into Winchester Cathedral for the first time he began to feel intimidated.

The prior had told him that it was the biggest church in the world, and when he saw it he believed it was. It was an eighth of a mile long: Philip had seen villages that could fit inside it. It had two great towers, one over the crossing and the other at the west end. The central tower had collapsed, ~~twenty~~ ^{thirty} years earlier, on to the tomb of William Rufus, an ungodly king who probably should not have been buried in a church in the first place; but it had since been rebuilt. Standing directly beneath the new tower,

his meditations.

He went into the cathedral. He felt too grubby to kneel and pray, but just walking down the nave and out through the south door purified him somewhat. He passed through the priory and went to the bishop's palace.

The ground floor was a chapel. Philip went up the stairs to the hall and stepped inside. There was a small group of servants and young clergymen near the door, standing around or sitting on the bench up against the wall. At the far end of the room Waleran and Bishop Henry were sitting at a table. Philip was stopped by a steward who said: 'The bishops are at breakfast,' as if that meant Philip could not see them.

'I'll join them at table,' Philip said.

'You'd better wait,' the steward said.

Philip decided that the steward had taken him for an ordinary monk. 'I'm the prior of Kingsbridge,' he said.

The steward shrugged and stood aside.

Philip approached the table. Bishop Henry was at the head, with Waleran on his right. Henry was a short, broad-shouldered man with a pugnacious face. He was about the same age as Waleran, a year or two older than Philip; no more than thirty. However, by contrast with Waleran's dead-white skin and Philip's own bony frame, Henry had the florid complexion and rounded limbs of a hearty eater. His eyes were alert and intelligent, and his face seemed set in a determined expression. As the youngest of ~~three~~^{four} brothers, he had probably had to fight for everything all his life. Philip was surprised to see that Henry's head was shaved, a sign that he had at one time taken monastic vows and still considered

not. The king said: 'Commendably prompt. When will you begin to build?'

'As soon as I can find the money.'

Bishop Henry cut in: 'That's why I've brought Prior Philip and Bishop Waleran to see you. Neither the priory nor the diocese has the resources to finance a project this big.'

'Nor does the Crown, my dear brother,' said Stephen.

Philip was discouraged: that was not a promising beginning.

Henry said: 'I know. That's why I've looked for a way in which you could make it possible for them to rebuild Kingsbridge, but at no cost to yourself.'

Stephen looked sceptical. 'And did you succeed in devising such an ingenious, not to say magical, scheme?'

'Yes. My suggestion is that you should give the Earl of ~~Wiltshire's~~ ^{Shiring's} lands to the diocese to finance the building programme.'

Philip held his breath.

The king looked thoughtful.

Waleran opened his mouth to speak, but Henry silenced him with a gesture.

The king said: 'It's a clever idea. I'd like to do it.'

Philip's heart leaped.

The king said: 'Unfortunately, I've just virtually promised the earldom to Percy Hamleigh.'

A groan escaped Philip's lips. He had thought the king was going to say Yes. The disappointment was like a knife wound.

Henry and Waleran were dumstruck. No one had anticipated this.

(ii)

Aliena began to feel hopeful again as she walked through the West Gate to Winchester High Street at nightfall. In the forest she had felt that she might be murdered and no one would ever know what had happened, but now she was back in civilisation. Of course, the city was full of thieves and cut-throats, but they could not commit their crimes in broad daylight with impunity. In the city there were laws, and lawbreakers were banished, mutilated or hanged.

She remembered going down this street with her father only a year or so ago. They had been on horseback, naturally; he on a highly-strung chestnut courser and she on a beautiful grey palfrey. People made way for them as they rode through the broad streets. They owned a house in the south of the city, and when they arrived they were welcomed by eight or ten servants. The house had been cleaned, there was fresh straw on the floor, and all the fires were lit. During their stay Aliena had worn beautiful clothes every day: fine linen, silk, and soft wool, all dyed gorgeous colours, boots and belts of calf leather, and jewelled brooches and bracelets. It had been her job to make sure there was always a welcome for anyone who came to see the earl: meat and wine for the wealthy, bread and ale for the poorer sort, a smile and a place by the fire for either. Her father was punctilious about hospitality, but he was not good at doing it personally - people found him cool, remote, and even high-handed. Aliena supplied the lack.

Everyone respected her father, and the very highest had called on him: the bishop, the prior, the sheriff, the royal chancellor, and the ~~dukes and~~ barons at the court. She wondered how many of those people would recognise her now, walking barefoot

estate would enable her to take care of her father, when the king pleased to release him from jail. He was no longer a threat: he had no title, no followers and no money. She would remind the king that her father had faithfully served both the old king, Henry, who had been Stephen's uncle, and Stephen's grandfather, the first King William. She would not be forceful, just humbly firm, clear and simple.

After breakfast she asked a monk where she could wash her face. He looked startled: evidently it was an unusual request. However, monks were in favour of cleanliness, and he showed her an open conduit where clean cold water ran into the priory grounds, and warned her not to wash 'indecently', as he put it, in case one of the brothers should accidentally see her and thereby soil his soul. Monks did a lot of good but their attitudes could be irritating.

When she and Richard had washed the dirt of the road off their faces they left the priory and walked uphill along the High Street to the castle, which stood to one side of the West Gate. By coming early Aliena hoped to befriend or charm whoever was in charge of admitting petitioners, and ensure that she was not forgotten in the crowd of important people who would arrive later. However, the atmosphere within the castle walls was even quieter than she had hoped. Had King Stephen been here so long that few people needed to see him? She was not sure when he might have come. The king was normally at Winchester throughout Lent, she thought, but she was not sure when Lent had begun, for she had lost track of dates, living in the castle with Richard and Matthew and no priest.

to passing women, and there was some kind of betting game going on in the porch of one of the chapels. The atmosphere of laxity bothered Aliena. She was afraid it might mean her father was not looked after properly. She began to dread what she might find.

The jail was a semi-derelict stone building that looked as if it might once have been a house for a royal official, a chancellor or bailiff of some kind, before it fell into disrepair. The upper storey, which had once been the hall, was completely ruined, having lost most of its roof. Only the undercroft remained whole. Here there were no windows, just a big wooden door with iron studs. The door stood slightly ajar. As Aliena hesitated outside, a handsome middle-aged woman in a good-quality cloak passed her, opened the door and went in. Aliena and Richard followed her.

The gloomy interior smelled of old dirt and corruption. The undercroft had once been an open storeroom, but it had later been divided into small compartments by hastily-built rubble walls. Somewhere in the depths of the building a man was moaning monotonously, like a monk chanting services alone in a church. The area just inside the door formed a small lobby, with a chair, a table and a fire in the middle of the floor. A big, stupid-looking man with a sword at his belt was lackadaisically sweeping the floor. He looked up and greeted the handsome woman. 'Good morning, Meg.' She gave him a penny and disappeared into the gloom. He looked at Aliena and Richard. 'What do you want?'

'I'm here to see my father,' Aliena said. 'He is the earl of ~~Wiltshire~~ **Shiring.**'

'No, he's not,' said the jailer. 'He's just plain Bartholomew now.'

was help with laundry, or cooking, or sewing: she did not see how she could make anybody rich. 'What sort of work are you talking about?' she said.

Kate was behind her. She ran her hands down Aliena's sides, feeling her hips, and stood close so that Aliena could feel Kate's breasts pressing against her back. 'You've got a beautiful figure,' Kate said. 'And your skin is lovely. You're high-born, aren't you?'

'My father was the earl of ~~Wiltshire~~ **Shiring.**'

'Bartholomew! Well, well. I remember him - not that he was ever a customer of mine. A very virtuous man, your father. Well, I understand why you're destitute.'

So Kate had customers. 'What do you sell?' Aliena asked.

Kate did not answer directly. She came around in front of Aliena again, looking at her face. 'Are you a virgin, dear?'

Aliena flushed with shame.

'Don't be shy,' said Kate. 'I see you're not. Well, no matter. Virgins are worth a lot but they don't last, of course.' She put her hands on Aliena's hips, leaned forward, and kissed her forehead. 'You're so voluptuous, although you don't know it. By the saints, you're irresistible.' She slid her hand up from Aliena's hip to her bosom, and gently took one breast in her hand, weighing it and squeezing it slightly, then she leaned forward and kissed Aliena's lips.

Aleina understood everything in a flash: why the girl had smiled at Richard outside the mint, where Kate got her money, what Aliena would have to do if she worked for Kate, and what kind of woman Kate was. She felt foolish for not having understood

'Well, we can't all work it, can we?'

'Perhaps we can,' said Tom. 'I wouldn't want to deprive your men of employment. There's a whole hill of rock - enough for two cathedrals and more. We should be able to find a way to manage the quarry so that we can all cut stone here.'

'I can't agree to that,' said Harold. 'I'm employed by the earl.'

'Well, I'm employed by the prior of Kingsbridge, and my men start work here tomorrow morning, whether you like it or not.'

One of the men-at-arms spoke up then. 'You won't be working here tomorrow or any other day.'

Until this moment Tom had been clinging to the idea that although Percy was violating the spirit of the royal edict by mining the quarry himself, if he was pushed he would adhere to the letter of the agreement, and permit the priory to take stone. But this man-at-arms had obviously been instructed to turn the priory's quarrymen away. That was a different matter. Tom realised, with sinking spirits, that he was not going to get any stone without a fight.

The man-at-arms who had spoken was a short, stocky fellow of about twenty-five years, with a pugnacious expression. He looked stupid but stubborn - the hardest type to reason with. Tom gave him a challenging look and said: 'Who are you?'

'I'm a bailiff for the earl of ~~Wiltshire~~ ^{Shiring}. He's told me to guard this quarry, and that's what I'm going to do.'

'And how do you propose to do it?'

'With this sword.' He touched the hilt of the weapon at his belt.

Philip simmered with fury all through vespers. What Earl Percy had done was outrageous. There was no doubt about the rights and wrongs of the case, no ambiguity about the king's instructions: the earl had been there himself when the announcement was made, and the priory was given the right to mine the quarry. Philip's right foot tapped the stone floor of the crypt in an urgent, angry rhythm. He was being robbed. Percy might as well steal pennies from a church treasury. There was no shred of an excuse for it. Percy was flagrantly defying both God and the king. But the worst of it was that Philip could not build the new cathedral unless he got the stone for nothing from that quarry. He was already working with a bare-minimum budget, and if he had to pay the market price for his stone, and transport it from even farther away, he could not build at all. He would have to wait another year or more, and then it would be six or seven years before he could hold services in a cathedral again. The thought was too much to bear.

He held an emergency chapter immediately after vespers and told the monks the news.

~~Philip~~^{He} had developed a technique for handling chapter meetings. Remigius, the sub-prior, still bore a grudge against Philip for defeating him in the election, and he often let his resentment show when monastery business was discussed. He was a conservative, unimaginative, pedantic man, and his whole approach to the running of the priory conflicted with Philip's. The brothers who had supported Remigius in the election tended to back him in chapter: Andrew, the apoplectic sacrist; Pierre, the circuitor, who was responsible for discipline and had the narrow-minded attitudes that seemed to go with the job; and John Small,

the lazy treasurer. Similarly, Philip's closest colleagues were the men who had campaigned for him: Cuthbert Whitehead, the old cellarer; and young Milius, to whom Philip had given the newly-created post of bursar, controller of the priory's finances. Philip always let Milius argue with Remigius. Philip had normally discussed anything important with Milius before the meeting, and when he had not Milius could be relied on to present a point of view close to Philip's own. Then Philip could sum up like an impartial arbiter, and although Remigius rarely got his way, Philip would often accept some of his arguments, or adopt part of his proposal, to maintain the feeling of consensus government.

The monks were enraged by what Earl Percy had done. They had all rejoiced when King Stephen had given the priory unlimited free timber and stone, and now they were scandalised that Percy should defy the king's order.

When the protests died down, however, Remigius had another point to make. 'I remember saying this a year ago,' he began. 'The pact according to which the quarry is owned by the earl but we have quarrying rights was always unsatisfactory. We should have held out for total ownership.'

The fact that there was some justice in this remark did not make it any easier for Philip to swallow. Total ownership was what he had agreed with Lady Regan, but she had cheated him out of it at the last minute. He was tempted to say that he had got the best deal he could, and he would like to see Remigius do any better in the treacherous maze of the royal court; but he bit his tongue, for he was, after all, the prior, and he had to take responsibility when things went wrong.

Milius came to his rescue. 'It's all very well to wish the king had given us outright ownership of the quarry, but he didn't, and the main question is, what do we do now?'

'I should think that's fairly obvious,' Remigius said immediately. 'We can't expel the earl's men ourselves, so we'll have to get the king to do it. We must send a deputation to him and ask him to enforce his decree.'

There was a murmur of agreement. Andrew, the sacrist, said: 'We should send our wisest and most fluent speakers.'

Philip realised that Remigius and Andrew saw themselves as leading the delegation.

Remigius said: 'After the king hears what has happened, I don't think Percy Hamleigh will be earl of Shiring much longer.'

Philip was not so sure of that.

'Where is the king?' Andrew said as an afterthought. 'Does anybody know?'

Philip had recently been to Winchester, and had heard there of the king's movements. 'He's gone to Normandy,' he said.

Milius quickly said: 'It will take a long time to catch up with him.'

'The pursuit of justice always requires patience,' Remigius intoned pompously.

'But every day we spend pursuing justice, we're not building our new cathedral,' Milius replied. His tone of voice showed that he was exasperated by Remigius's ready acceptance of a delay to the building programme. Philip shared that feeling. Milius went on: 'And that's not our only problem. Once we've found the king, we have to persuade him to hear us. That can take weeks. Then he may

start building them for another five years, and if the monastery continues to prosper as it has done in the first year under Prior Philip, it may well be that by then we will be able to afford transepts.' He had praised Philip and answered the question at the same time, and he felt rather clever.

Henry nodded approval. 'Sensible to plan modestly and leave room for expansion. Show me the elevation.'

Tom got out the elevation. He made no comment on it, now that he knew Henry was able to understand what he was looking at. This was confirmed when Henry said: 'The proportions are pleasing.'

'Thank you,' Tom said. The bishop seemed pleased with everything. Tom added: 'It's a modest cathedral, but it will be lighter and more beautiful than the old one.'

'And how long will it take to complete?'

'Fifteen years, if the work is uninterrupted.'

'Which is never is. However. Can you show us what it will look like - I mean, to someone standing outside?'

Tom understood him. 'You want to see a sketch.'

'Yes.'

'Certainly.' Tom returned to his wall, with the bishop's party in tow. He knelt over his mortar board and spread the mortar in a uniform layer, smoothing the surface. Then, with the point of his trowel, he drew a sketch of the west end of the church in the mortar. He knew he was good at this. The bishop, his party, and all the monks and volunteer workers nearby watched in fascination. Drawing always seemed a miracle to people who could not do it. In a few moments Tom had created a line drawing of the west facade, with its three arched doorways, its big window, and its flanking

turrets. It was a simple trick, but it never failed to impress.

'Remarkable,' said Bishop Henry when the drawing was done. 'May God's blessing be added to your skill.'

Tom smiled. That amounted to a powerful endorsement of his appointment.

Prior Philip said: 'My lord bishop, will you take some refreshment before you conduct the service?'

'Gladly.'

Tom was relieved. His test was over and he had passed it.

'Perhaps you would step into the prior's house, just across here,' Philip said to the Bishop. The party began to move off. Philip squeezed Tom's arm and said in a murmur of restrained jubilation: 'We've done it!'

Tom breathed a sigh of relief as the dignitaries left him. He felt pleased and proud. Yes, he thought, we've done it. Bishop Henry was more than impressed: he was flabbergasted, despite his composure. Obviously Waleran had primed him to expect a scene of lethargy and inactivity, so the reality had been even more striking. In the end Waleran's malice had worked against him and heightened the triumph of Philip and Tom.

Just as he was basking in the glow of an honest victory, he heard a familiar voice. 'Hello, Tom Builder.'

He turned around and saw Ellen.

It was Tom's turn to be flabbergasted. The cathedral crisis had so filled his mind that he had not thought about her all day. He gazed at her happily. She looked just the same as the day she had walked away: slender, brown-skinned, with dark hair that moved like waves on a beach, and those deep-set luminous golden eyes.

lit upon a young priest who was one of the more knowledgeable of the king's clerics. He drew the priest to him and said quietly: 'What the devil did he mean about the "question" of the succession, Joseph?'

'There's another claimant to the earldom,' Joseph replied.

'Another claimant?' William repeated in astonishment. He had no half-brothers, illegitimate brothers, cousins.... 'Who is it?'

Joseph pointed to a figure standing with his back to them. He was with the retinue of the newly-arrived earl. He was wearing the clothing of a squire.

'But he's not even a knight!' William said loudly. 'My father was the earl of ~~Wiltshire~~ ^{Shiring}!'

The squire heard him, and turned around. 'My father was also the earl of ~~Wiltshire~~ ^{Shiring}.'

At first William did not recognise him. He saw a handsome, broad-shouldered young man of about eighteen years, well-dressed for a squire, and carrying a fine sword. There was confidence and even arrogance in the way he stood. Most striking of all, he gazed at William with a look of such pure hatred that William shrank back.

The face was very familiar, but changed. Still William could not place it. Then he saw that there was an angry scar on the squire's right ear, where the earlobe had been cut off. In a vivid flash of memory he saw a small piece of white flesh fall on to the heaving chest of a terrified virgin, and heard a boy scream in pain. This was Richard, the son of the traitor Bartholomew, the brother of Aliena. The little boy who had been forced to watch while two men raped his sister had grown into a formidable man with

the king should prosecute the war, the best tactics for each battle, the political situation in the north, and - especially this - the abilities and loyalty of other earls. Talk to one man about another. Tell the earl of ~~Surrey~~^{Huntingdon} that the count of Warenne is a great fighter; tell the bishop of Ely that you don't trust the sheriff of Lincoln. People will say to the king: "William of Shiring is in the count of Warenne's faction," or "William of Shiring and his followers are against the Sheriff of Lincoln." If you appear powerful, the king will feel comfortable about giving you more power.'

William had little faith in such subtlety. 'I think the size of my army will count for more,' he said. He turned to the reeve. 'How much is there in my treasury, Arthur?'

'Nothing, lord,' said Arthur.

'What the devil are you talking about?' said William harshly. 'There must be something. How much is it?'

Arthur had a slightly superior air, as if he had nothing to fear from William. 'Lord, there's no money at all in the treasury.'

William wanted to strangle him. 'This is the earldom of Shiring!' he said, loud enough to make the knights and castle officials farther down the table look up. 'There must be money!'

'Money comes in, all the time, lord, of course,' Arthur said smoothly. 'But it goes out again, especially in wartime.'

William studied the pale, clean-shaven face. Arthur was far too complacent. Was he honest? There was no way of telling. William wished for eyes that could see into a man's heart.

Mother knew what William was thinking. 'Arthur is honest,'

As well as Arthur, he took his groom, Walter, and the other four knights who had fought beside him for the past year: Ugly Gervase, Hugh Axe, Gilbert de Rennes and Miles Dice. They were all big, violent men, quick to anger and always ready to fight. They rode their best horses and went armed to the teeth, to scare the peasantry. William believed that a man was helpless unless people were afraid of him.

It was a hot day in late summer, and the wheat stood in fat sheaves in the fields. The abundance of visible wealth made William all the more angry that he had no money. Someone must be robbing him. They ought to be too frightened to dare. His family had won the earldom when Bartholomew was disgraced, and yet he was penniless while Bartholomew's son had plenty! The idea that people were stealing from him, and laughing at his unsuspecting ignorance, gnawed at him like a stomach ache, and he got angrier as he rode along.

He had decided to begin at Northbrook, a small village somewhat remote from the castle. The villagers were a mixture of serfs and free men. The serfs were William's property, and could not do anything without his permission. They paid no rent, but owed him so many days' work at certain times of year. The free men paid him rent, in cash or in kind. Five of them were in arrears. William had a notion they thought they could get away with it because they were far from the castle. It might be a good place to begin the shake-up.

It was a long ride, and the sun was high when they approached the village. There were twenty or thirty houses surrounded by three big fields, all of them now stubble. Near the houses, at the

There was a small congregation. This was probably none, a service conducted for the benefit of the monks, William thought: all work and marketing would stop for the main Michaelmas service, of course.

At the far side of the priory close the east end of the cathedral was being built. This was where Prior Philip was spending his rake-off from the market, William thought sourly. The walls were thirty or forty feet high, and it was already possible to see the outlines of the windows and the arches of the arcade. Intricate, flimsy-looking structures of wooden scaffolding hung precariously from the stonework like gulls' nests on a sheer cliff. Workers swarmed all over the site. William thought there was something odd about the way they looked, and realised after a moment that it was their colourful dress. They were not regular labourers, of course - the paid workforce would be on holiday today. These people were volunteers.

He had not expected that there would be so many of them. Hundreds of men and women were carrying stones and splitting timber and rolling barrels and heaving cartloads of sand up from the river, all working for nothing but forgiveness of their sins.

The sly prior had a crafty set-up, William observed enviously. The people who came to work on the cathedral would spend money at the market. People who came to the market would give a few hours to the cathedral, for their sins. Each hand washed the other.

He kicked his horse forward and rode across the graveyard to the building site, curious too see it more closely.

The twelve massive piers of the arcade marched down either

side of the ~~building~~ site in six opposed pairs. From a distance, William had thought he could see the round arches joining one pier with the next, but now he realised the arches were not built yet - what he had seen was the wooden falsework, made in the same shape, upon which the stones would rest while the arches were being constructed and the mortar was drying. The falsework did not rest on the ground, but was supported on the out-jutting mouldings of the capitals on top of the piers.

Parallel with the arcade, the outer walls of the aisles were going up, with regular spaces for the windows. Midway between each window opening, a buttress jutted out from the line of the wall. Looking at the open ends of the unfinished walls, William could see that they were not solid stone: they were in fact double walls with a space in between. The cavity appeared to be filled with rubble-and-mortar.

The scaffolding did not rest on the ground, but on heavy timbers inserted into purpose-built holes high up in the walls. These timbers jutted out six feet or so. Stout poles were laid across them and roped to them, and then trestles made of flexible saplings and woven reeds were laid on the poles. The scaffolding was reached by spiral stone staircases built into the walls at intervals.

A lot of money had been spent here, William noted.

He rode on around the outside of the chancel, followed by his knights. Against the walls were wooden lean-to huts, workshops and lodges for the craftsmen. Most of them were locked shut now, for there were no masons laying stones or carpenters making falsework today. However, the supervising craftsmen - the master masons and

superfluous. Above all, nothing generous.' But Waleran hated Philip, and had sworn to prevent him building his cathedral. That was motive enough.

William looked thoughtfully at Waleran. His career was in a stall. He had become bishop very young, but Kingsbridge was an insignificant and impoverished diocese and Waleran had surely intended it to be a stepping-stone to higher things. However, it was the prior, not the bishop, who was winning wealth and fame. Waleran was withering in Philip's shadow much as William was. They both had reason to want to destroy him.

William decided, yet again, to overcome his loathing of Waleran for the sake of his own long-term interests.

'All right,' he said. 'This could work. But suppose Philip then complains to the king?'

Waleran said: 'You'll say you did it as a reprisal for Philip's unlicensed market.'

William nodded. 'Any excuse will do, so long as I go back to the war with a big enough army.'

Waleran's eyes glinted with malice. 'I have a feeling Philip can't build that cathedral if he has to buy stone at a market price. And if he stops building, ~~Shiring~~ **Kingsbridge** could go into decline. This could solve all your problems, William.'

William was not going to show gratitude. 'You really hate Philip, don't you?'

'He's in my way,' Waleran said, but for a moment William had glimpsed the naked savagery beneath the bishop's cool, calculating manner.

William returned to practical matters. 'There must be thirty

Chapter 9

JUST AFTER DAWN, when most of the brothers were in the crypt for the service of prime, there were only two people in the dormitory: Johnny Eightpence, sweeping the floor at one end of the long room, and Jonathan, playing school at the other.

Prior Philip paused in the doorway and watched Jonathan. He was almost five years old, an alert, confident boy with a childish gravity that charmed everyone. Johnny still dressed him in a miniature monk's habit. Today Jonathan was pretending to be the novice-master, giving lessons to an imaginary row of pupils. 'That's wrong, Godfrey!' he said sternly to the empty bench. 'No dinner for you if you don't learn your berves!' He meant verbs. Philip smiled fondly. He could not have loved a ~~natural~~ son more deeply. Jonathan was the one thing in life that gave him sheer unadulterated joy.

The child ran around the priory like a puppy, petted and spoiled by all the monks. To most of them he was just like a pet, an amusing plaything; but to Philip and Johnny he was something more. Johnny loved him like a mother; and Philip, though he tried to conceal it, felt like the boy's father. Philip himself had been raised, from a young age, by a kindly abbot, and it seemed the most natural thing in the world for him to play the same role with Jonathan. He did not tickle or chase him the way the monks did, but he told him Bible stories, and played counting games with him, and kept an eye on Johnny.

He went into the room, smiled at Johnny, and sat on the bench with the imaginary schoolboys.

could grant Philip permission to hold a market. Only the king could now save the cathedral.

He finished his prayers and left the crypt. The sun was coming up, and there was a pink flush on the grey stone walls of the rising cathedral. The builders, who worked from sunrise to sunset, were just beginning, opening their lodges and sharpening their tools and mixing up the first batch of mortar. The loss of the quarry had not yet affected the building: they had always quarried stone faster than they could use it, from the beginning, and now they had a stockpile that would last many months.

It was time for Philip to leave. All the arrangements were made. The king was at Lincoln. The journey would take four weeks. However, Philip would have a travelling companion: Richard, the brother of Aliena. After fighting for a year as a squire, Richard had been knighted by the king. He had come home to re-equip himself and was now going to rejoin the royal army.

Aliena had done astonishingly well as a wool merchant. She no longer sold her wool to Philip, but dealt directly with the Flemish buyers herself. Indeed, this year she had wanted to buy the entire fleece production of the priory. She would have paid less than the Flemish, but Philip would have got the money earlier. He had turned her down. However, it was a measure of her success that she could even make the offer.

She was at the stable with her brother now, Philip saw as he walked across. A crowd had gathered to say goodbye to the travellers. Richard was sitting on a chestnut warhorse that must have cost Aliena twenty pounds. He had grown into a handsome, broad-shouldered young man, his regular features marred only by an

Philip did not speak to King Stephen on the following day, nor the day after, nor the day after that.

On the first night he stayed at an alehouse, but he felt oppressed by the constant smell of roasting meat and the laughter of loose women. Unfortunately there was no monastery in the town. Normally the bishop would have offered him accommodation, but the king was living in the bishop's palace and all the houses around the cathedral were crammed full with members of Stephen's entourage. On the second night Philip went right outside the town, beyond the suburb of Wigford, where there was a monastery that ran a home for lepers. There he got horsebread and weak beer for supper, a hard mattress on the floor, silence from sundown to midnight, services in the small hours of the morning, and a breakfast of thin porridge without salt; and he was happy.

He went to the cathedral early every morning, and stood in the outer circle of courtiers, but day after day the king failed to notice him. When the other petitioners talked among themselves, discussing who was in favour and who was out, Philip remained aloof.

He knew why he was being kept waiting. The entire Church was at odds with the king. Stephen had not kept the generous promises that had been extracted from him at the start of his reign. He had made an enemy of his brother, the wily Bishop Henry of Winchester, by supporting someone else for the job of archbishop of Canterbury; a move which had also disappointed Waleran Bigod, who wanted to rise on Henry's coat-tails. But Stephen's greatest sin, in the eyes of the Church, had been to arrest Bishop Roger of Salisbury and Roger's two nephews who were bishops of Lincoln and Ely, all on

cathedral and castle. To Philip's horror the king stopped there.

He turned to talk to Philip, positioning himself in such a way that he could scrutinise the castle over Philip's shoulder. Philip's vulnerable back, clad in ermine and purple, was ^{exposed} to the gatehouse which was bristling with sentries and archers. He went as stiff as a statue, expecting an arrow or a spear in his back at any moment. He began to perspire despite the freezing cold wind.

'I gave you that quarry years ago, didn't I?' said King Stephen.

'Not exactly,' Philip replied through gritted teeth. 'You gave us the right to take stone for the cathedral. But you gave the quarry to Percy Hamleigh. Now Percy's son William has thrown out my stonecutters, killing five people - including a woman and a child - and he refuses us access.'

'He shouldn't do things like that, especially if he wants me to make him earl of ~~Wiltshire~~ ^{Shiring},' Stephen said thoughtfully. Philip was encouraged. But a moment later the king said: 'I'm damned if I can see a way to get into this castle.'

'Please make William re-open the quarry,' Philip said. 'He is defying you and stealing from God.'

Stephen seemed not to hear. 'I don't think they've got many men in there,' he said in the same musing tone. 'I suspect nearly all of them are on the ramparts, to make a show of strength. What was that about a market?'

This was all part of the test, Philip decided; making him stand out in the open with his back to a host of archers. He wiped his brow with the fur cuff of the king's cloak. 'My lord king, every Sunday people come from all over the county to worship at

the battlefield,' Stephen said. 'For two years he's been avoiding me. Now that I have an opportunity to deal with the traitor once and for all, I'm not going to pull out just because we're evenly matched!'

A groom brought his horse, saddled ready. As Stephen was about to mount, there was a flurry of activity around the door at the west end of the cathedral, and a knight came running up the nave, muddy and bleeding. William had a doomy premonition that this would be bad news. As the man bowed to the king, William recognised him as one of Edward's men who had been sent to guard the ford. 'We were too late, lord,' the man said hoarsely, breathing hard. 'The enemy has crossed the river.'

It was another bad sign. William suddenly felt colder. Now there was nothing but open fields between the enemy and Lincoln.

Stephen too looked struck down for an instant, but he recovered his composure swiftly. 'No matter!' he said. 'We will meet them all the sooner!' He mounted his warhorse.

He had a battleaxe strapped to his saddle. The valet handed him a wooden lance with a bright iron point, completing his weaponry. Stephen clicked his tongue, and the horse obediently moved forward.

As he rode down the nave of the cathedral, the earls and knights mounted and fell in behind him, and they left ~~out of~~ the cathedral in procession. In the grounds the men-at-arms joined them. This was when men began to feel scared and look for a chance to slip away; but their dignified pace, and the almost ceremonial atmosphere, with the townspeople looking on, meant it would be very difficult for the faint-hearted to escape.

people, Philip assumed. Those remaining must be from distant towns, and were probably all knights who had been taken during the battle. This impression was confirmed when the constable of the castle came around the cages and asked the names of everyone remaining: most of them were knights from the south. Philip noticed that in one of the cages there was only one man, and he was confined in stocks, as if someone wanted to be doubly sure he could not escape. After staring at the special prisoner for a few minutes Philip realised who it was.

'Look!' he said to the three men in his own cage. 'That man on his own. Is it who I think it is?'

The others looked. 'By Christ, it's the king,' said one, and the others agreed.

Philip stared at the muddy, tawny-haired man with his hands and feet confined uncomfortably in the wooden vice of the stocks. He looked just like all the rest of them. Yesterday he had been king of England. Yesterday he had refused Kingsbridge a market licence. Today he could not stand up without someone else's leave. The king had got his just desserts, but all the same Philip felt sorry for him.

Early in the afternoon the prisoners were given food. It was lukewarm leftovers from the dinner provided for the fighting men, but they fell on it ravenously. Philip hung back and let the others have most of it, for he regarded hunger as a base weakness that ought to be resisted from time to time, and considered any enforced fast to be an opportunity to mortify the flesh.

While they were scraping the bowl there was a flurry of activity over at the keep, and a group of earls came out. As they

carving stone since before he was born, and none of them can match his work.' He gave a slightly embarrassed laugh. 'And he isn't even my own son!'

Tom's ~~natural~~^{real} son, Alfred, was a master mason and had his own gang of apprentices and labourers, but Philip knew that Alfred and his gang did not do the delicate work. Philip wondered how Tom felt about that in his heart.

Tom's mind had returned to the problem of paying for the market licence. 'Surely the market will bring in a lot of money,' he said.

'Yes, but not enough. It should raise about fifty pounds a year at the start.'

Tom nodded gloomily. 'That will just about pay for the stone.'

'We could manage if I didn't have to pay Maud a hundred pounds.'

'What about the wool?'

The wool that was piling up in Philip's barns would be sold at the Shiring Fleece Fair in a few weeks' time, and would fetch about a hundred pounds. 'That's what I'm going to use to pay Maud. But then I'll have nothing left for the craftsmen's wages for the next twelve months.'

'Can't you borrow?'

'I already have. The Jews won't lend me any more. I asked, while I was in Winchester. They won't lend you money if they don't think you can pay it back.'

'What about Aliena?'

Philip was startled. He had never thought of borrowing from

masonry should be so easily grasped by a mere boy.

Jack was too caught up in the splendid logic of it all to pay attention to Tom's sensitivities. 'The chancel is four poles long, then,' he said. 'And the whole church will be twelve poles when it's finished.' He was struck by another thought. 'How high will it be?'

'Six poles high. Three for the arcade, one for the gallery, and two for the clerestorey.'

'But what's the point of having everything measured by poles? Why not build it all higgledy-piggledy, like a house?'

'First, because it's cheaper this way. All the arches of the arcade are identical, so we can use one falsework arch for all of them, simply moving the falsework from one bay to the next. The fewer different sizes and shapes of stone we need, the fewer templates I have to make. And so on. Second, it simplifies every aspect of what we're doing, from the original laying-out - everything is based on a pole square - to painting the walls - it's easier to estimate how much whitewash we'll need. And when things are simple, fewer mistakes are made. The most expensive part of a building is the mistakes. Third, when everything is based on a pole measure, the church just looks right. Proportion is the heart of beauty.'

Jack nodded, enchanted. The struggle to control an operation as ambitious and intricate as building a cathedral was endlessly fascinating. The notion that the principles of regularity and repetition could both simplify the construction and result ⁱⁿ ~~an~~ a harmonious building was a seductive idea. But he was not sure whether proportion was the heart of beauty. He had a taste for

class that lived in the houses nearest to the priory wall; but Alfred always seemed so dull. After a moment he spoke. 'There ought to be a stone church,' he said abruptly.

Clearly the rest of them were supposed to figure out the context of this remark for themselves. Aliena thought for a moment then said: 'Are you talking about the parish church?'

'Yes,' he said as if it was obvious.

The parish church was a much older institution than the cathedral. However, it had been more or less redundant for many years, until the cathedral burned down. Now it was used a good deal again, for the cathedral crypt, which the monks were using, was cramped and airless, and the population of Kingsbridge had grown. Yet the parish church was an old wooden building with a thatched roof and a dirt floor.

'You're right,' Aliena said. 'We should have a stone church.'

Alfred was looking at her expectantly. She wondered what he wanted her to say.

Ellen, who was probably used to coaxing sense out of him, said: 'What's on your mind, Alfred?'

'How do churches get started, anyway?' he asked. 'I mean, if we want a stone church, what do we do?'

Ellen shrugged. 'No idea.'

Aliena frowned. 'You could form a parish guild,' she suggested. A parish guild was an association of people who held a banquet every now and again and collected money among themselves, usually to buy candles for their local church, or to help widows and orphans in the neighbourhood. Small villages never had guilds,

throne. After all, Stephen has actually been crowned, whereas Maud never was, not quite.'

'But it was Maud who licensed my market.'

'Yes. That could be a problem.'

'Is my licence invalid?'

'No. It was properly granted by a reigning monarch who had been approved by the Church. The fact that she wasn't crowned doesn't make any difference. But Stephen could withdraw it.'

'The market is paying for the stone,' Philip said anxiously. 'I can't build without it. This is bad news indeed.'

'I'm sorry.'

'What about my hundred pounds?'

Francis shrugged. 'Stephen will tell you to get it back from Maud.'

Philip felt sick. 'All that money,' he said. 'It was God's money, and I lost it.'

'You haven't lost it yet,' Francis said. 'Stephen may not revoke your licence. He's never shown much interest in markets one way or the other.'

'Earl William may pressure him.'

'William changed allegiance, remember? He threw his lot in with Maud. He won't have much influence with Stephen any more.'

'I hope you're right,' Philip said fervently. 'I hope to God you're right.'

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Jack got up at dawn and slipped out of the dormitory before the service of prime to make one last inspection tour of the building site. The morning air was cool and clear, like pure water from a spring. It would be a warm, sunny day, good for business, good for the priory.

He walked around the cathedral walls, making sure that all the tools and work-in-progress were safely locked inside the lodges. Tom had built light wooden fences around the stockpiles of timber and stone, to guard the raw materials against accidental damage by careless or drunken visitors. All the ladders were safely hidden away, and the stepped ends of the part-built walls were obstructed by wooden blocks, so no one would climb the structure. Some of the master craftsmen would be patrolling the site throughout the day to make sure there was no damage.

Jack managed to skip quite a lot of the services, one way or another. There was always something to be done on site. He did not have his mother's hatred of the Christian religion, but he was more or less indifferent to it. He had no enthusiasm for it, but he was willing to go through the motions if it suited his purpose. He made sure to go to one service every day, usually one that was attended either by Prior Philip or the novice master, who were the two senior monks most likely to notice his presence or absence. He could not have borne it if he had to attend them all. Being a monk was the strangest and most perverted way of life imaginable. Monks spent half their lives putting themselves through pain and discomfort that they could easily avoid, and the other half muttering meaningless mumbo-jumbo in empty churches at all hours of the day and night. They deliberately shunned anything good -

Tom quenched the terror rising like bile in his throat. He reached the walls. How had Jonathan climbed up? There were no ladders - Tom had seen to that, and Jack had double-checked. He must have climbed up the stepped end of the unfinished wall. The ends had been built up with wood, so that they no longer provided easy access; but Jonathan must have clambered over the blocks. The child was full of self-confidence - but all the same he fell over at least once a day.

Tom looked up fearfully. Jonathan was playing happily eighty feet above. Fear gripped Tom's heart with a cold hand. He shouted at the top of his voice: 'Jonathan!'

The people around him were startled, and looked up to see what he was shouting at. As they spotted the child on the scaffolding they pointed him out to their friends. A small crowd gathered.

Jonathan had not heard. Tom cupped his hands around his mouth and shouted again. 'Jonathan! Jonathan!'

This time the boy heard. He looked down, saw Tom, and waved.

Tom shouted: 'Come down!'

Jonathan seemed about to obey, then he looked at the wall along which he would have to walk, and the steep flight of steps he would have to descend, and he changed his mind. 'I can't!' he called back, and his high voice floated down to the people on the ground.

Tom realised he was going to have to go up and get him. 'Just stay where you are until I reach you!' he shouted. He pushed the blocks of wood off the lower steps and mounted the wall.

It was four feet wide at the foot, but it narrowed as it went

up. Tom climbed steadily. He was tempted to rush, but he forced himself to be calm. When he glanced up he saw Jonathan sitting on the edge of the scaffolding, dangling his short legs over the sheer drop.

At the very top the wall was only two feet thick. Even so, it was plenty wide enough to walk on, provided you had strong nerves, and Tom did. He made his way along the wall, jumped down on to the scaffolding, and took Jonathan in his arms. He was swamped with relief. 'You foolish boy,' he said, but his voice was full of love, and Jonathan hugged him.

After a moment Tom looked down again. He saw a sea of upturned faces: a hundred or more people were watching. They probably thought it was another show, like the bear-baiting. Tom said to Jonathan: 'All right, let's go down now.' He set the boy on the wall, and said: 'I'll be right behind you, so don't worry.'

Jonathan was not convinced. 'I'm scared,' he said. He held out his arms to be picked up, and when Tom hesitated he burst into tears.

'Never mind, I'll carry you,' Tom said. He was not very happy about it, but Jonathan was now too upset to be trusted at this height. Tom clambered on to the wall, knelt beside Jonathan, picked him up, and stood upright.

Jonathan held on tight.

Tom stepped forward. Because he had the child in his arms he could not see the stones immediately beneath his feet. That could not be helped. With his heart in his mouth, he walked gingerly along the wall, placing his feet cautiously. He had no fear for himself, but with the child in his arms he was terrified. At last

he came to the beginning of the steps. It was no wider here, at first, but somehow it seemed less precipitous, with the steps in front of him. He started down gratefully. With each step he felt calmer. When he reached the level of the gallery, and the wall widened to three feet, he paused to let his heartbeat slow down. From here he had no need to go down the stepped end of the wall: he could walk along the wide gallery, which was over the side aisle, and go down the spiral staircase in the turret at the east end of the chancel.

He looked out, past the priory close, over Kingsbridge, to the fields beyond, and there he saw something that puzzled him. There was a cloud of dust on the road leading to Kingsbridge, about half a mile away. After a moment he realised that he was looking at a large troop of men on horseback, approaching the town at a smart trot. He peered into the distance, trying to figure out who they were. At first he thought it must be a very wealthy merchant, or a group of merchants, with a large entourage, but there were too many of them, and somehow they did not look like commercial people. He tried to put his finger on what it was about them that made him think they were something other than merchants. As they came closer he saw that some of them were riding warhorses, most had helmets, and they were armed to the teeth.

Suddenly he felt scared.

'Jesus Christ, who are those people?' he said aloud.

'Don't say Christ,' Jonathan reprimanded him.

Whoever they were, they meant trouble.

Tom hurried down the steps, forgetting about the turret staircase. The crowd cheered as he jumped down to the ground. He

The pilgrim trails across France converged at Ostabat, in the foothills of the Pyrennees. There the group of twenty or so pilgrims with whom Aliena was travelling swelled to about seventy. They were a footsore but merry bunch: some prosperous citizens, some probably on the run from justice, a few drunks, and several monks and clergymen. The men of God were there for reasons of piety but most of the others seemed bent on having a good time. Several languages were spoken, including Flemish, a German tongue, and a southern French language called Oc which Aliena had never even heard of. ~~However~~ ^{Nevertheless} there was no lack of communication among them, and as they crossed the Pyrennees together they sang, played games, told stories, and - in several cases - had love affairs.

After Tours, unfortunately, Aliena did not find any more people who remembered Jack. However, there were not as many jongleurs along her route through France as she had imagined. One of the Flemish pilgrims, a man who had made the journey before, said there would be more of them on the Spanish side of the mountains.

He was right. At Pamplona, Aliena was thrilled to find a jongleur who recalled speaking to a young Englishman with red hair who had been asking about his father.

As the weary pilgrims moved slowly through northern Spain toward the coast, she met several more jongleurs, and most of them remembered Jack. She realised, with mounting excitement, that all of them said he had been going to Compostela: no one had encountered him coming back.

Which meant he was still there.

As her body became more sore her spirits lifted higher. She

usual web of mortar-and-rubble, this builder had put cut stones, as in a wall. Being stronger, the layer of stones could probably be thinner, and therefore lighter, Jack realised.

As he stared up, craning his neck until it ached, he understood a further remarkable feature of this combination. Two pointed arches of different widths could be made to reach the same height, merely by adjusting the curve of the arch. This gave the bay a more regular look. It could not be done with round arches, of course: the height of a semicircular arch was always half its width, so a wide one had to be higher than a narrow one. That meant that in a rectangular bay, the narrow arches had to spring from a point higher up the wall than the springing of the wide ones, so that their tops would be at the same level and the ceiling would be even. The result was always lopsided. This problem had now vanished.

Jack lowered his head and gave his neck a rest. He felt as jubilant as if he had just been crowned king. This, he thought, was how he would build his cathedral.

He looked into the main body of the church. The nave itself was clearly quite old, although relatively long and wide: it had been built many years ago, by someone other than the current master, and it was quite conventional. But then, at the crossing, there seemed to be steps down - no doubt leading to the crypt and the royal tombs - and steps up to the chancel. It looked as if the chancel were floating a little way above the ground. The structure was obscured, from this angle, by dazzling sunlight coming through the east windows, so much that Jack supposed the walls must be unfinished, and the sun shining through the gaps.

'Badly. He's given up building altogether. He seems to have lost all his energy. He does nothing, nowadays.'

Philip found it hard to imagine Philip in that state - he had always seemed so full of enthusiasm and determination. 'So what happened to the craftsmen?'

'They all drifted away.'

'Kingsbridge must be half empty.'

'It's turning back into a village, like it used to be.'

'I wonder what Alfred did wrong?' Jack said half to himself. 'That stone vault was never in Tom's original plans; but Alfred made the buttresses bigger to take the weight, so it should have been all right.'

He was sobered by the news, and they rode on in silence. A mile or so out of Saint Denis they tied up the horses in the shade of an elm tree and sat down in a corner of a field of green wheat, beside a little brook, to eat their dinner. Jack took a draught of the wine and smacked his lips. 'England has nothing to compare with French wine,' he said. He broke the loaf and gave Aliena some.

Aliena shyly undid the laced front of her dress and gave her nipple to the baby. She caught Jack looking at her and flushed. She cleared her throat and spoke to cover her embarrassment. 'Do you know what you'd like to call him?' she said awkwardly. 'Jack, perhaps?'

'I don't know.' He looked thoughtful. 'Jack was the father I never knew. It might be bad luck to give our son the same name. The nearest I ever had to a real father was Tom Builder.'

'Would you like to call him Tom?'

'I think I would.'

sent to him ⁱⁿ ~~by a clerical~~ error.

'Now, what did Job say, when he lost all his wealth, and his children died? Did he curse God? Did he worship Satan? No! He said: "I was born naked, and I'll die naked. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away - blessed be the name of the Lord." That's what Job said. And then God said to Satan: "What did I tell you?" And Satan said: "All right, but he's still got his health, hasn't he? A man can put up with anything while he's in good health." And God saw that he had to let Job suffer some more in order to prove his point, so he said: "Take away his health, then, and see what happens." So Satan made Job ill, and he had boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet.'

Sermons were becoming more common in churches. They had been rare when Philip was a boy. Abbot Peter had been against them, saying they tempted the priest to indulge himself. The old-fashioned view was that the congregation should be mere spectators, silently witnessing the mysterious holy rites, hearing the Latin words without understanding them, blindly trusting in the efficacy of the priest's intercession. But ideas had changed. Progressive thinkers nowadays no longer saw the congregation as mute observers of a mystical ceremony. The Church was supposed to be an integral part of their everyday existence. It marked the milestones in their lives, from christening, through marriage and the birth of children, to extreme unction and burial in consecrated ground. It might be their landlord, judge, employer or customer. Increasingly, people were expected to be Christians every day, not just on Sundays. They needed more than just rituals, according to the modern view: they wanted explanations, rulings, encouragement,

wife.'

Her eyes flashed anger. 'So you've left her?'

'Yes. Until she can get an annulment.'

Mother put the rabbit's skin to one side. With a sharp knife in her bloody hands she began to joint the carcass, dropping the pieces into the cooking-pot bubbling on the fire. 'Prior Philip did that to me, once, when I was with Tom.' she said, slicing the raw meat with swift strokes. 'I know why he gets so frantic about people making love. It's because he's not allowed to do it himself, and he resents other people's freedom to enjoy what is forbidden to him. Of course, there's nothing he can do about it when they're ~~properly~~ married by the Church. But if they're not, he gets the chance to spoil things for them, and that makes him feel better.' She cut off the rabbit's feet and threw them into a wooden bucket full of rubbish.

Jack nodded. He had accepted the inevitable, but every time he said goodnight to Aliena and walked away from her door he felt angry with Philip, and he understood his mother's persistent resentment. 'It's not forever, though,' he said.

'How does Aliena feel about it?'

Jack grimaced. 'Not good. But she thinks it's her fault, for marrying Alfred in the first place.'

'So it is. And it's your fault for being determined to build churches.'

He was sorry that she could not share his vision. 'Mother, it's not worth building anything else. Churches are bigger and higher and more beautiful and more difficult to build, and they have more decoration and sculpture than any other kind of

'Philip!'

'No, not Philip. This was before Philip's time. It was his predecessor, James.'

'But he's dead.'

'I told you it might not be possible to question them.'

Jack narrowed his eyes. 'Who were the others?'

'The knight was Percy Hamleigh, the earl of ~~Hiltshire~~ Shiring.'

'William's father!'

'Yes.'

'He's dead, too!'

'Yes.'

Jack had a terrible feeling that all three would turn out to be dead men, and the secret buried with their bones. 'Who was the priest?' he said urgently.

'His name was Waleran Bigod. He's now the bishop of Kingsbridge.'

Jack gave a sigh of profound satisfaction. 'And he's still alive,' he said.

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successful trip?'

'No,' he replied. 'Bishop Henry sent me there to attempt to resolve a four-year-old dispute over who is to be archbishop of York. I failed. The row goes on.'

The less said about that the better, William thought. He said: 'While you've been away, there have been a lot of changes here. Especially at Kingsbridge.'

'At Kingsbridge?' Waleran was surprised. 'I thought that problem had been solved once and for all.'

William shook his head. 'They've got the Weeping Madonna.'

Waleran looked irritated. 'What the devil are you talking about?'

William's mother answered. 'It's a wooden statue of the Virgin that they use in processions. At certain times, water comes from its eyes. The people think it's miraculous.'

'It is miraculous!' William said. 'A statue that weeps!'

Waleran gave him a scornful look.

Mother said: 'Miraculous or not, thousands of people have been to see it in the last few months. Meanwhile, Prior Philip has recommenced building. They're repairing the chancel and putting a new timber ceiling on it, and they've started on the rest of the church. The foundations for the crossing have been dug, and some new stonemasons have arrived from Paris.'

'Paris?' Waleran said.

Mother said: 'The church is now going to be built in the style of Saint-Denis, whatever that is.'

Waleran nodded. 'Pointed arches. I heard talk of it at York.'

William did not care what style Kingsbridge Cathedral would be. He said: 'The point is, young men off my farms are moving to Kingsbridge to work as labourers, the Kingsbridge market is open again every Sunday, taking business away from Shiring.... It's the same old story!' He glanced uneasily at the other two, wondering whether either of them suspected that he had an ulterior motive; but neither looked suspicious.

Waleran said: 'When I think that I actually helped Philip to become prior, I could kick myself.'

'They're going to have to learn that they just can't do this,' William said.

Waleran looked at him thoughtfully. 'What do you want to do?'

'I'm going to sack the town again.' And when I do, I'll kill Aliena and her lover, he thought; and he looked into the fire, so that his mother should not meet his eyes and read his thoughts.

'I'm not sure you can,' Waleran said.

'I've done it before - why shouldn't I do it again?'

'Last time you had a good reason: the fleece fair.'

'This time it's the market. They've never had King Stephen's permission for that either.'

'It's not quite the same. Philip was pushing his luck by holding a fleece fair, and you attacked it immediately. The Sunday market has been going on at Kingsbridge for six years now, and anyway it's twenty miles from Shiring so it ought to be licensed.'

William suppressed his anger. He wanted to tell Waleran to stop being such a feeble old woman; but that would never do.

While he was swallowing his protest a steward came into the

room and stood silently by the door. Waleran said: 'What is it?'

'There's a man here who insists on seeing you, my lord bishop. Name of Jack Jackson. A builder, from Kingsbridge. Shall I send him away?'

William's heart raced. It was Aliena's lover. How had the man happened to come here just when William was plotting his death? Perhaps he had supernatural powers. William was possessed by dread.

'From Kingsbridge?' Waleran said with interest.

Mother said: 'He's the new master builder there, the one who brought the Weeping Madonna from Spain.'

'Interesting,' said Waleran. 'Let's have a look at him.' He said to the steward: 'Send him in.'

William stared at the door with superstitious terror. He expected a tall, fearsome man in a black cloak to stride in and point directly at him with an accusing finger. But when Jack came through the door, William was shocked by his youth. Jack could not have been much past twenty. He had red hair and alert blue eyes which flickered over William, paused on Regan - whose frightful facial sores arrested the glance of anyone who was not used to them - and came to rest on Waleran. The builder was not much intimidated by finding himself in the presence of the two most powerful men in the county, but apart from that surprising nonchalance he did not seem very fearsome.

Like William, Waleran sensed the young builder's insubordinate attitude, and reacted with a coldly haughty voice. 'Well, lad, what's your business with me?'

'The truth,' Jack said. 'How many men have you seen hang?'

A flinty look came into Jack's blue eyes. 'He had done nothing of the kind.'

'I caught him myself, with the chalice on him.'

'You lied.'

There was a pause. When Waleran spoke again his tone was mild but his face was as hard as iron. 'I may have your tongue ripped out for that,' he said.

'I just want to know why you did it,' Jack said as if he had not heard the grisly threat. 'You can be candid here. William is no threat to you, and his mother seems to know all about it already.'

William looked at Mother. It was true, she did have a knowing air. William himself was now completely mystified. It seemed - he hardly dared to hope - that Jack's visit actually had nothing to do with William and his secret plans to kill Aliena's lover.

Mother said to Jack: 'You're accusing the bishop of perjury!'

'I shan't repeat the charge in public,' Jack said coolly. 'I've got no proof, and anyway I'm not interested in revenge. I would just like to understand why you hanged an innocent man.'

'Get out of here,' Waleran said icily.

Jack nodded as if he had expected no more. Although he had not got answers to his questions, there was a look of satisfaction on his face, as if his suspicions had somehow been confirmed.

William was still baffled by the whole exchange. On impulse, he said: 'Wait a moment.'

Jack turned at the door and looked at him with those mocking blue eyes.

'What....' William swallowed and got his voice under control. 'What's your interest in this? Why did you come here and ask these questions?'

'Because the man they hanged was my father,' Jack said, and he went out.

There was a silence in the room. So Aliena's lover, the master builder at Kingsbridge, was the son of a thief who had been hanged at Shiring, William thought: so what? But Mother seemed anxious, and Waleran actually looked shaken.

Eventually Waleran said bitterly: 'That woman has dogged me for twenty years.' He was normally so guarded that William was shocked to see him letting his feelings show.

'She disappeared after the cathedral fell down,' Regan said. 'I thought we'd seen the last of her.'

'Now her son has come to haunt us.' There was something like real fear in Waleran's voice.

William said: 'Why don't you slap him in irons for accusing you of perjury?'

Waleran threw him a look of scorn, then said: 'Your boy's a damn fool, Regan.'

William realised the charge of perjury must be true. And if he was able to figure that out, so could Jack. 'Does anyone else know?'

Mother said: 'Prior James confessed his perjury, before he died, to the sub-prior, Remigius. But Remigius has always been on our side against Philip, so he's no danger. Jack's mother knows some of it, but not all, otherwise she would have used the information by now. But Jack has travelled around - he may have

picked up something his mother didn't know.'

William saw that this strange story from the past could be used to his advantage. As if it had just occurred to him, he said: 'Then let's kill Jack Jackson.'

Waleran just shook his head contemptuously.

Mother said: 'That would serve to draw attention to him and his charges.'

William was disappointed. It had seemed almost providential. He thought about it, while the silence in the droom dragged out. Then a new thought came to him, and he said: 'Not necessarily.'

They both looked at him sceptically.

'Jack might be killed without drawing attention to him,' William said doggedly.

'All right, tell us how,' Waleran said.

'He could be killed in an attack on Kingsbridge,' William said, and he had the satisfaction of seeing the same look of startled respect on both their faces.

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idea that the man had not spoken to another human being for a while. At last he said: 'David.'

He still had his sanity, anyway, Philip thought. He said: 'What happened to you, David?'

'I lost my farm after the last harvest,'

'Who was your landlord?'

'The earl of ~~Wiltshire~~ **Shiring.**'

William Hamleigh. Philip was not surprised.

Thousands of tenant farmers had been unable to pay their rents after three bad harvests. When Philip's tenants defaulted he simply forgave the rent, since if he made people destitute they would simply come to the priory for charity anyway. Other landlords, notably Earl William, took advantage of the crisis to evict tenants and repossess their farms. The result was a huge increase in the number of outlaws living in the forest and preying on travellers. That was why Philip had to take Richard everywhere with him as bodyguard.

'What about your family?' Philip asked the robber.

'My wife took the baby and went back to her mother. But there was no room for me.'

It was a familiar story. Philip said: 'It's a sin to lay hands on a monk, David, and it's wrong to live by theft.'

'But how shall I live?' the man cried.

'If you're going to stay in the forest you'd better catch birds and fish.'

'I don't know how!'

'You're a failure as a robber,' Philip said. 'What chance of success did you have, with no weapon, up against three of us, and

blanket, a small bush, a wooden bowl, an empty barrel.

She turned back inside, frowning, and sat down. She was getting mildly worried. The house shook again. The central pole that held up the ridge of the roof was vibrating. This was one of the better-built houses in the village, she reflected: if this was unsteady, some of the poorer places must be in danger of collapse. She looked at the priest. 'If it gets any worse we may have to round up the villagers and all take shelter in the church,' she said.

'I'm not going out in that,' the priest said with a short laugh.

Aliena stared at him incredulously. 'They're your flock,' she said. 'You're their shepherd.'

The priest looked back at her insolently. 'I answer to the bishop of Kingsbridge, not you, and I'm not going to play the fool just because you tell me to.'

Aliena said: 'At least bring the plough team in to shelter.' The most precious possession of a village such as this was the team of eight oxen that pulled the plough. Without those beasts the peasants could not cultivate their land. No individual peasant could afford to own a plough team - it was communal property. The priest would surely value the team, for his prosperity depended on it too.

The priest said: 'We've no plough team.'

Aliena was mystified. 'How come?'

'We had to sell four of them to pay rent, then we killed the others for meat in the winter.'

That explained the half-sown fields, Aliena thought. They

frustration and disappointment. He said: 'Who have you got in mind?'

'You.'

It was the answer William had not dared to hope for. He wished he could believe in it. A clever and ruthless sheriff could be ^{almost} as important and influential as as an earl or a bishop. This could be his way back to wealth and power. He forced himself to consider the snags. 'Why would King Stephen appoint me?'

'You supported him against Duke Henry, and as a result you lost your earldom. I imagine he would like to recompense you.'

'Nobody ever does anything out of gratitude,' William said, repeating a saying of his mother's.

Waleran said: 'Stephen can't be happy that the earl of Shiring is a man who fought against him. He might want his sheriff to be a countervailing force against Richard.'

Now that made more sense. William felt excited against his will. He began to believe that he might actually get out of this hole in the ground called Hamleigh village. He would have a respectable force of knights and men-at-arms again, instead of the pitiful handful he now supported. He would preside over the county court at Shiring, and frustrate Richard's will. 'The sheriff lives at Shiring Castle,' he said longingly.

'You'd be rich again,' Waleran added.

'Yes.' Properly exploited, the sheriff's post could be hugely profitable. William would make almost as much money as he had when he was earl. But he wondered why Waleran had mentioned it.

A moment later Waleran answered the question. 'You would be

He leaped over the low wall that the masons were building. His pursuers jumped over it behind him, unmindful that they were entering a church. The craftsmen froze in position, trowels and hammers raised, as first Richard then his pursuers charged by. One of the younger and more quick-thinking apprentices stuck out a shovel and tripped a man-at-arms, who went flying; but no one else intervened. Richard reached the door that led to the cloisters. The man closest behind him raised his sword above his head. For a terrible moment Aliena thought the door was locked and Richard could not get in. The man-at-arms struck at Richard with his sword. Richard got the door open and slipped inside, and the sword bit into the wood as the door slammed.

Aliena breathed again.

The men-at-arms gathered around the cloister door, then began to look about uncertainly. They seemed to realise, all of a sudden, where they were. The craftsmen gave them hostile stares and hefted their hammers and axes. There were close to a hundred builders and only five men-at-arms.

Jack said angrily: 'Who the hell are those people?'

He was answered by a voice from behind. 'They are the sheriff's men.'

Aliena turned around, aghast. She knew that voice horribly well. There at the gate, on a nervous black stallion, armed and wearing chain-mail, was William Hamleigh. The sight of him sent a chill through her.

here,

Jack said: 'Get out of ~~her~~, you loathsome insect.'

William flushed at the insult, but he did not move. 'I've come to make an arrest.'

another. Philip said firmly: 'We will continue with the necrology.'

As the prayers for the dead began, he wondered what the second King Henry had to say to Kingsbridge Priory. It was not likely to be good news. Henry had been at loggerheads with the Church for six long years. The quarrel had started over the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts, but the wilfulness of the king and the zeal of the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, had prevented compromise, and a dispute had grown into a crisis. Becket had been forced into exile: Philip thought it was probably the first time since Christianity had come to England that an archbishop had been thrown out of the country.

Sadly, the English Church was not unanimous in supporting him. Bishops such as Waleran Bigod took the king's side in order to gain royal favour. However, the Pope was putting pressure on Henry to to make ~~his~~ peace with Beckett. Perhaps the worst consequence of the whole dispute was that Henry's need for support within the English Church gave power-hungry bishops such as Waleran greater influence at court. That was why a letter from the king was even more ominous than usual to Philip.

Jonathan returned and handed Philip a roll of vellum fastened with wax, the wax impressed with the mark of an enormous royal seal. All the monks were looking. Philip decided it was too much to ask them to concentrate on praying for dead people when he had such a letter in his hand. 'All right,' he said. 'We'll continue the prayers later.' He broke the seal and opened the letter. He glanced at the salutation then handed the letter to Jonathan, whose young eyes were better. 'Read it to us, please.'

bishop of Kingsbridge! Peter was exactly the same type as Waleran. Both men were genuinely pious and godfearing, but had no sense of their own fallibility, so they saw their own wishes as God's will, and pursued their aims with utter ruthlessness in consequence. With Peter as bishop, Jonathan would spend his life as prior battling for justice and decency in a county ruled with an iron fist by a man with no heart. And if Waleran became archbishop there would be no prospect of relief. Philip felt unbearably despondent at the thought. All he had fought for throughout his life might be ruined. The achievements about which he had been thinking rather complacently a few moments earlier could all be cancelled out. He saw a long dark age ahead, like the worst period of the civil war, when earls of William's type did as they pleased while arrogant priests neglected their people and the priory shrank once again to an impoverished and enfeebled shadow of its former self. He saw the undoing of his life's work.

He was not the only angry one. Steven the circuitor stood up, red faced, and shouted 'It shall not be!' at the top of his voice, despite Philip's rule that in Chapter everyone must speak calmly and quietly.

The monks cheered, but Jonathan proved his wisdom by asking the crucial question: 'What can we do?'

Bernard Kitchener, fat as ever, said: 'We must refuse the king's request!'

Several monks voiced their agreement.

Steven said: 'We should write to the king saying we will elect whom we please!' After a moment he added sheepishly: 'With God's guidance, of course.'

Jonathan said: 'I don't agree that we should refuse point-blank. The quicker we are to defy the king, the sooner we will bring his wrath down on our heads.'

Philip said: 'Jonathan is right. A man who loses a battle with his king may be forgiven, but a man who wins such a battle is doomed.'

Steven burst out: 'But you're just giving in!'

Philip was as worried and fearful as all the others, but he had to appear calm. 'Steven, be temperate, please,' he said. 'We must fight against this awful appointment, of course. But we will do it carefully and cleverly, always avoiding open confrontation.'

Steven said: 'But what are you going to do?'

'I'm not sure,' Philip said. He had been despondent at first, but now he was beginning to feel aggressive. He had fought this battle over and over again, all his life. He had fought it here in the priory, when he defeated Remigius and became prior; he had fought it in the county, against William Hamleigh and Waleran Bigod; and now he was going to fight it nationally. He was going to take on the king.

'I think I'll have to go to France,' he said. 'To see Archbishop Thomas Beckett.'

*

place as the first, and sliced off the top of Thomas's skull. It was such a forceful swing that the sword struck the pavement and snapped in two. The knight dropped the stump.

A third knight committed an act which would burn in Philip's memory for the rest of his life: he stuck the point of his sword into the opened head of the archbishop and spilled the brains out on to the floor.

Philip's legs felt weak and he sank to his knees, overcome with horror.

The knight said: 'He won't get up again - let's be off!'

They all turned and ran.

Philip watched them go down the nave, laying about them with their swords to scatter the townspeople.

When the killers had gone there was a moment of frozen silence. The corpse of the archbishop lay face down on the floor, and the severed skull, with its hair, lay beside the head like the lid of a pot. Philip buried his face in his hands. This was the end of all hope. The savages have won, he kept thinking; the savages have won. He had a giddy, weightless sensation, as if he were sinking slowly in an deep lake, drowning in despair. There was nothing to hold on to any more; everything that had seemed fixed was suddenly unstable.

He had spent his life fighting the power of kings and earls, and now, in the ultimate contest, he had been defeated. He remembered when William Hamleigh had come to set fire to Kingsbridge the second time, and the townspeople had built a wall in a day. What a victory that had been! The peaceful strength of hundreds of ordinary people had defeated the naked cruelty of Earl

said. Jack saw no reason to let Waleran live in the priory. However, that was the way of monks. 'Why did you want me to see him?'

'He wants to tell you why they hanged your father.'

Jack suddenly felt cold.

Waleran was sitting as still as a stone, gazing into space. He was barefoot. The fragile white ankles of an old man were visible below the hem of his homespun habit. Jack realised that Waleran was no longer frightening. He was feeble, defeated and sad.

Jack walked slowly forward and sat down on the bench a yard away from Waleran.

'The old King Henry was too strong,' Waleran said without preamble. 'The barons didn't like it - they were too restricted. They wanted a weaker king next time. But Henry had a son, William.'

All this was ancient history. 'That was before I was born,' Jack said.

'Your father died before you were born,' Waleran said, with just a hint of his old superciliousness.

Jack nodded. 'Go on, then.'

'The barons decided to kill Henry's son, William. Their thinking was that if the succession were in doubt, they would have more influence over the choice of the new king.'

Jack studied Waleran's pale, thin face, searching for evidence of guile. The old man just looked weary, beaten and remorseful. If he was up to something, Jack could see no sign of it. 'But William died in the wreck of the White Ship,' Jack said.

fighting, and some of their sons did too. And the little lies we had told in this part of the country, to get your father killed, eventually came back to haunt us. Your mother cursed us, after the hanging, and she cursed us well. Prior James was destroyed by the knowledge of what he had done, as Remigius said at the nepotism trial. Percy Hamleigh died before the truth came out, but his son was hanged. And look at me: my act of perjury was thrown back at me almost fifty years later, and it ended my career.' Waleran was looking grey-faced and exhausted, as if his rigid self-control was a terrible strain. 'We were all scared of your mother, because we weren't sure what she knew. In the end it wasn't much at all, but it was enough.'

Jack felt as drained as Waleran appeared. At last he had learned the truth about his father, something he had wanted all his life. Now he could not feel angry or vengeful. He had never known his real father, but he had had Tom, who had given him the love of buildings which had been the second greatest passion of his life.

Jack stood up. The events were all too far in the past to make him weep. So much had happened since then, and most of it had been good.

He looked down at the old, sorry man sitting on the bench. Ironically, it was Waleran who was now suffering the bitterness of regret. Jack pitied him. How terrible, Jack thought, to be old and know that your life has been wasted. Waleran looked up, and their eyes met for the first time. Waleran flinched and turned away, as if his face had been slapped. For a moment Jack could read the other man's mind, and he realised that Waleran had seen the pity in his eyes.