

# **The Pillars of the Earth Study Guide**

## **The Pillars of the Earth by Ken Follett**

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# Plot Summary

*The Pillars of the Earth* is a departure from author Ken Follett's typical suspense thriller. However, like his spy novels and fast-paced adventure tales, *The Pillars of the Earth* is meticulously researched and offers an insider's glimpse at the richly detailed world that his characters inhabit. The world he presents in this saga-length novel is England during the twelfth century. More specifically, the story takes place during the time now known to historians as *The Anarchy*. For much of the twelfth century, England's society, politics, and religion were in a continual state of upheaval resulting from King Stephen's tenuous grip on the throne. Prior to Stephen, King Henry I ruled England, but the sinking of the *White Ship* in the early 1120's left Henry without a rightful heir. Upon Henry's death in 1135, a battle for the crown ensues. The main contenders are King Stephen, who quickly grabs the throne and does his best to hold it for the next few decades, and Empress Maud, the late Henry's daughter. Not until Maud's son, Henry II, comes of age does England receive a ruler upon whom all the powerful nobles can agree.

Interwoven with the actual history of the times is Follett's epic tale of passion, deceit, hardship, and transcendence. The story begins with Tom Builder, a gifted, yet humble, mason whose dearest wish is to be granted the opportunity to build a cathedral. Cathedrals were the largest and most graceful buildings in existence in those days; building them required the efforts of hundreds of men, and thus a cathedral represented the ultimate challenge for an ambitious stonemason. In these early days, builders were only beginning to understand the mathematics of proportion. Most cathedrals were crudely built with exceedingly thick walls and tiny windows to avoid any threat to the stability of the building. Tom is one of the more enlightened breed who understands that straight, true walls will support larger windows and higher arches than previously thought possible. Tom is so set on pursuing his passion that he turns down secure, paying work to seek out any opportunity to work on a cathedral. As a result, his family's security is threatened, and when Tom's luck takes a bad turn, he, his wife, and their two children wind up starving in the forest.

Tom's third child is born on the frozen earth, and his starving wife, Agnes, dies in childbirth. With no milk to feed the baby, Tom must accept the harsh reality that baby Jonathon will die. He abandons the baby in the forest, but soon thereafter repents of his action and returns with his children to find the youngest member of the family. The baby is gone, but Tom meets his sudden love, Ellen, and from her and her son he learns that his baby has been rescued by a priest and taken to a nearby monastery. So begins the saga that ultimately intertwines the lives of Tom, Ellen, Ellen's son Jack, baby Jonathon, and the monk, Philip, who is prior of the monastery to which the baby is taken. Philip, unaware of Jonathon's heritage, decides to raise the baby at the monastery, and later, when he is promoted to prior of the larger monastery in Kingsbridge, he brings the baby along. When the old cathedral at Kingsbridge burns to the ground, Tom is given the opportunity he has so long desired. As master builder of the cathedral at Kingsbridge, Tom is able to achieve his dream, provide for his new family, and even develop a relationship with the baby he abandoned.



Yet darker forces are working in the land, personified by the evil Hamleigh family and the unscrupulous Bishop Waleran of Kingsbridge. Prior Philip holds his ground as a defender of truth and justice in Kingsbridge despite Waleran's many evil plots and schemes to steal the wealth and dignity of the people in Philip's charge. William Hamleigh provides a more physical threat. Rebuked by the beautiful Aliena, Hamleigh takes revenge on her father and succeeds in creating the downfall of Earl Bartholomew. Sworn to vengeance, Aliena raises herself from poverty and disgrace to a position of prominence unprecedented for a woman in this era. William makes her homeless, rapes her, destroys her wool business, and conspires with Bishop Waleran to prevent Aliena from marrying the love of her life, Jack Jackson. Yet despite all that William does, Aliena, like Philip, perseveres and somehow always manages to prosper. By the end of the novel she has restored her father's earldom to her ungrateful brother, Richard, and created a family with Jack. After William kills Tom Builder, the supremely talented Jack takes over as master builder and ultimately builds a cathedral that exceeds even the wildest imaginations of his late stepfather, Tom. The restoration of order to Kingsbridge Priory dovetails with the historical victory of the Church over King Henry II in the wake of the martyrdom of Thomas Beckett, the archbishop of Canterbury.



# Prologue: 1123

## Prologue: 1123 Summary

*November 25, 1120:* The White Ship, the latest achievement in ocean transport, sinks off the coast. King Henry of England's only legitimate son and heir sinks with the ship, along with two royal bastards, leaving the line of succession to the throne of England in dispute.

*Prologue 1123:* The young boys arrive first to watch the hanging. These children enjoy the hangings for their entertainment value; the youngsters are vicious and cruel and despise everything that their elders value. Soon the village men arrive and speak knowingly of hangings they have previously witnessed. Before long, the entire village turns out; the older women sell ale and food as an impromptu market springs up around the gallows. The townspeople get their first look at the condemned man as he is brought in by oxcart. Behind the cart ride his three accusers: a knight, a priest, and a monk. The condemned thief, a green-eyed, red-haired man between 20 and 30 years of age, has been convicted of stealing a jeweled chalice from the monastery. The townspeople are unusually somber. The theft of a jeweled cup seems unbelievable; a man cannot eat such a prize, nor can he sell something so easily identifiable for gain. Unsure of the veracity of the charges, the villagers watch in silence as the prisoner is led to the gallows. When the noose is placed around his neck, the man begins to sing in a haunting voice. The thief's eyes linger on a beautiful young woman in the crowd as he sings: "*At dusk the hunter took his prey, The lark his freedom never. All birds and men are sure to die, But songs may live forever.*" (pg. 15) The older women can tell the thief's lady is pregnant, although her pregnancy is not yet obvious. As the presumed father of her child dies on the gallows, the young woman screams out a curse upon the knight, the monk, and the priest. She seals her curse by spilling the blood of a live cockerel and then disappears before the authorities can stop her.

## Prologue: 1123 Analysis

With this vivid Prologue, author Ken Follett establishes the tone of his novel. Cruelty is introduced first, in the form of young boys who have already learned, in their brief young lives, to enjoy violence. They consider hangings to be entertainment, and their elders set this example by the festival atmosphere they create around the gallows. Yet even as this tone is established, the author softens it by explaining why the villagers have become so hard. Life in the twelfth century for the peasant class is unspeakably difficult. To the jeweled chalice that the condemned man supposedly stole, the villagers ascribe no value, for it cannot be eaten, or sold, so there would be absolutely no justification for a villager, peasant, or serf to own such an object; its mere possession would incur charges of thievery. Thus the author subtly allows the reader to imagine a life so brutal that objects of wealth are deemed utterly useless to the working class; this is survival at its basest. Yet once Follett establishes this base survival, he introduces a higher note of



hope and longing. The thief's unforgettable song moves the crowd and reminds the reader that the human soul can transcend even the cruelest of realities. This emotional scale, ranging from harshness to poignancy, sets up the emotional range of the story that is to follow.



# Part 1: 1135-1136

## Part 1: 1135-1136 Summary

*Chapter 1:* Tom Builder, assisted by a crew of stonemasons and his 14-year-old son, Alfred, lays the stone walls of a fine house he's been hired to build for the earl's daughter and her fiancy. Tom is pleased with this assignment that guarantees his family's security for the next year and a half. Tom is a master builder who originally learned his craft building the cathedral at Exeter. Unlike most masons, Tom is knowledgeable about proportions, materials, and all the other fine details that make up a strong and beautiful building. At Exeter, he had worked his way up from simple apprentice to the master builder's right-hand man. When the cathedral was complete, Tom had been offered a secure job and an excellent salary. Had he taken it, he, his wife Agnes, and their two children would now live in a fine stone house and command the respect of the town. However, Tom's passion for building had been ignited by the challenge of building the cathedral. Not only does such work require artistry and skill, but it requires the ability to organize and direct a massive operation and hundreds of men. Tom had turned down the secure, well-paying job in hopes of finding another cathedral to build.

That was 10 years ago. Tom's passion for cathedrals has not waned; in his mind he often designs an imaginary cathedral, and it is still his dearest hope to become master builder in charge of the construction of a new cathedral. Agnes, a practical woman, has not supported this dream, although in every other respect she is Tom's soulmate. Together, they have traveled many miles looking for Tom's opportunity. Tom has found work consistently on smaller buildings and takes pride in the fact that he's always been able to feed his family. He is less pleased with his son Alfred's lack of desire and skill as a builder, for Tom has always wanted a son to follow in his footsteps. Today, when Agnes and his young daughter, Martha, arrive with lunch, Agnes renews these hopes by informing Tom that she is with child. However, this good news is quickly followed by bad as Agnes tells Tom she is too old for childbirth, and this baby will be their last. Tom feels deeply disappointed when he realizes she means to end their physical relationship. He tries to reassure her with the hope that he will find a cathedral to work on that would allow him to hire a maid to help Agnes with the children. Agnes is skeptical.

Just then a squire rides up to announce the arrival of Tom's lord. Tom asks if he means Lord Percy Hamleigh, the powerful landowner who is paying for the construction of the house on behalf of his soon-to-be-married son. The squire clarifies that it is young William, Percy's son, who is en route to the construction site. The squire warns Tom that William Hamleigh is in a rage because his fiancy, the Lady Aliena, has rejected his marriage proposal. The news is a terrible blow for Tom. If the marriage has been called off, the house is no longer needed. Tom's secure job will be taken from him on the same day he's learned of his wife's pregnancy. Tom and Agnes voice the hope that Aliena will change her mind or that her father will force her into the union. The squire responds that Aliena's father, the earl, had once promised his daughter he would never force her into a



marriage she did not desire. "A foolish pledge!" Tom said angrily. How could a powerful man tie himself to the whim of a girl in that way? Her marriage could affect military alliances, baronial finances...even the building of this house." (pg. 26) The squire says, however, the earl is a man of his word and will stand behind the promise to his daughter.

Across the fields, Tom sees a powerful war-horse approach at a gallop. William rides up at top speed, heedless of any innocent pedestrians who might be in his way. Tom looks wildly around for young Martha; she is in the fields, directly in the speeding horse's path. Bravely, Tom stands in the oncoming horse's path. The horse sees him and slows down, but William spurs the horse back up to top speed. Tom holds his ground. The horse and rider barely miss running over and killing Martha. Tom snatches his daughter up, weak with relief. Lord William slows his horse at last and informs Tom that the house is no longer needed. He orders Tom to dismiss his men and then turns to leave. Tom holds the bridle of William's horse to delay his departure. In a mild voice, Tom tells William there is more to discuss. William threatens to cut off Tom's head if he doesn't let go of the horse. Tom knows men have been killed by Lords for less provocation than this, but angered by the near-death of his daughter, Tom insists William pay his men a week's severance, as is the custom for masons. Incredibly, William backs down, frightened by Tom's threat that William will go to hell if he kills Tom unjustly. William orders his squire to pay Tom and rides off in a hurry. Tom knows he is lucky to be alive.

Tom's family stays at the village through the summer, earning a penny a day in the fields. By the end of summer, they have accrued a sack full of pennies and a pig. This is enough to feed them through the long winter months, they believe; later they will learn their decision to stay through the summer was a deadly mistake. In autumn, the family sets out on foot, hoping to find work for Tom. Their first two nights of travel they take advantage of the hospitality offered by a church and a monastery, but on the third day they are alone in the forest. The weather is still nice. Agnes, a strong and capable woman despite her heavy, pregnant belly, carries their cooking pot and household supplies. Tom carries his mason's tools and daydreams happily about finding work at a cathedral. Alfred carries the tools they will need to build themselves a new home, and Martha's job is to drive the pig that the family intends to sell at market.

When her little legs get tired, Martha lags behind. Tom waits for her to catch up, but before she does, a man with a club lunges out of the bushes and whacks Martha over the head. Her small frame crumples to the ground, badly hurt, as the man makes off with the pig. Tom sees the mutilated face of the man before he makes off into the forest; the man's lips have been cut off, probably in punishment for a previous theft. Tom and Agnes feel Martha's heartbeat; it is steady, but her head bleeds, and she is unresponsive. Agnes tells Tom to go after the pig; without the money from the sale of the pig, the family will not have food to last them through the winter. Tom follows the outlaw through the forest; he comes within a few yards of the fleeing man when he is forced to go back and rescue his son. Alfred has instigated a fight with three men, the thief's accomplices. Alfred is thrilled when he and his father win the fight against the three men. Tom shakes his head at Alfred's foolish attitude. "Any fool can get into a





fight, but a wise man knows how to stay out of them.' Alfred gave him a blank look." (pg. 34)

Dejected, Tom returns with Alfred to the road where Martha still lies unmoving. He is surprised to see another woman and a young boy kneeling next to Agnes. The strange woman is young and beautiful with intense gold eyes that lend her a magical air. Tom is attracted to the woman, and Agnes notices. The outlaw woman's son has bright red hair and alert eyes, but behaves strangely, as if there is something wrong with his mind. The woman, Ellen, explains that her son's name is Jack and that Jack's father is dead. Ellen predicts that Martha will awaken, vomit, and then feel all right. This is exactly what happens, to Tom's immense relief. Intrigued by the mysterious Ellen, Tom asks what crime has driven her to live in the woods like an outlaw. Ellen explains that she cursed a priest.

Tom asks to hear more and Ellen begins her tale. She is the daughter of a knight. Having no sons, her father taught Ellen to use a knife and ride a horse. Ellen was raised in the company of men with no female influence, and she learned to hold her own with the toughest of the men. When she came of age and the men began to look at her lustfully, her father sent her to a convent. Enraged, Ellen escaped, but her father sent her back. She escaped again and was sent back again, but this time the nuns kept her in a locked cell until she accepted her fate. Life at the convent was not so different from her girlhood. It was a single-sex environment with its own internal rules, much like her father's house. Instead of learning the manly arts, however, Ellen learned to read, write, draw, and do math. She speaks Latin, French, and English. When Ellen begins to talk about the lesbian relations she instigated just to spite the abbess at the nunnery, Agnes decides to take the children to the river to wash up so they will not hear the salacious tale. Tom notices that Agnes cleverly manages to stay in earshot of Tom and leaves Tom with Ellen's son, Jack, as chaperone to ensure nothing untoward transpires between Tom and Ellen.

Ellen resumes her story. One day, the abbess sent her on an errand to Kingsbridge Priory. Here, Ellen met Jack's father. The young man had been abused and was frightened. Ellen spoke to him in French, and he was overjoyed to find someone who understood his native language. Ellen skips over the details of Jack's father, saying only that she never went back to the convent. From that day on, Ellen had lived off the land in the forest. She can hunt, trap, and shoot; clean and cook wild game; and knows where to find wild nuts and produce. Anything else she and her son need she is forced to steal. By the time Jack was born, Ellen's father was dead and she was all alone in the world. She stocked up her forest cave with all the necessities and built up the fire to keep the wolves at bay. She still had to face the fear and pain of childbirth alone in the forest cave. She and Jack live a simple yet happy life in the forest. Ellen believes if there were no kings, lords, bishops and sheriffs, all people could live freely and happily as she does. She and Jack never lack for food for the forest provides all that they need.

Tom asks Ellen how she keeps the many male outlaws in the forest from raping her. Ellen stares at him with her magical golden eyes and tells him the outlaws are scared of her because they believe she is a witch. Ellen tells Tom that she has taught her son all



the hunting arts, as well as the reading, writing, and math skills she learned from the nuns. Tom is shocked to think that her strange son is better educated than Tom or his own son, Alfred. The boy behaves like a half-wit. Ellen confesses with shame that Jack's strange manner is a result of his cloistered life in the forest; the 11-year-old boy has never spent time with anyone besides his mother. Ellen has begun to realize that she must find a way to rejoin society for Jack's sake. However, as a woman, her options are limited. A man might be able to convince one of the local lords to grant him land to farm; a man might be hired as a laborer or a craftsman. A woman with no identity, however, stands no chance of being hired by anyone regardless of her skills. "Beautiful, resourceful, and formidable though she was, she was doomed to spend the rest of her days hiding in the forest with her weird son." (pg. 41)

Agnes, Martha and Alfred return to the road. To Tom's relief, Martha looks perfectly healthy, yet Tom and his family have still suffered a great loss with the theft of the pig. Discouraged, he gathers his things and prepares to leave for Winchester, where there is a cathedral that Tom hopes may be in need of repair. Ellen renews his hope by informing him that the town of Salisbury is rebuilding its cathedral. Salisbury is closer than Winchester, and in the opposite direction. Agnes is pleased to be leaving Ellen behind, she but expresses gratitude for Ellen's help with Martha. Ellen stares after the family wistfully as they depart. Tom reflects on Ellen's plight. He realizes that the only women he knows who are allowed to make a living as craftswomen are the wives or widows of craftsmen. Thoughtfully, he tells Agnes that what Ellen needs is a husband. Briskly, Agnes replies, "Well, she can't have mine." (pg. 42)

The weather turns foul as winter arrives. Fortunately, Salisbury is nearby, and Tom is heartened by the thought of working on the cathedral. They arrive in town on market day, and the streets are crowded with people. Tom learns the name of the master builder who does all the hiring; he can be found at the castle owned by Bishop Roger. Tom knows how irritating clerics like Bishop Roger can be because they insist on helping the master builder draw the designs even though they are ignorant of the realities of building. A master builder must spend a lot of time calming the imaginations of clergymen who want their cathedrals to be built in physically impossible ways. Tom passes the busy work site at the cathedral and can tell at a glance that the work is nearly done; even if he gets hired there will be work only for a couple of years, which is not enough time for him to rise to position of master builder. Nonetheless, any opportunity to work on a cathedral is welcome. Tom enters the bishop's castle unchallenged by the guards; from long experience he knows to act as if he's expected. He finds the master builder in the vestry with the bishop, discussing a design that the bishop has drawn on the sandy floor. Knowing he has only moments to make a good impression with the master builder, Tom reviews the design and informs the bishop that the building will not stand with such large windows built into the undercroft. The master builder tells the bishop that Tom is right, but regretfully informs Tom that they have too many masons in their employ already.

Tom leaves and forces himself to look confident when he gives the bad news to Agnes. As the family walks back through the town, Tom sees a building in bad repair and offers his services. The man refuses his offer, saying the town is already full of masons, and



he has no need of a stranger's services. Dejected, they cross the market square toward the edge of town. As they pass a butcher's stall, Tom recognizes his pig. Martha squeals in excitement and tells the butcher the pig belongs to them. The butcher flushes with guilt, and Tom realizes the man must have known he bought a stolen pig. Tom describes the outlaw who stole the pig, but the butcher tells him to take it up with the sheriff. Tom has no proof, however, and can't afford to get into a fight with a local man in a strange town. Tom walks away from the butcher but tells Agnes the thief is surely spending their money here in town. He tells Agnes to take Martha and start searching at one end of town; Tom and Alfred will search at the other end, and they will meet in the middle. Bravely, Agnes agrees to the dangerous plan; she kisses Tom and he realizes how lucky he is to have such a fine wife. Nonetheless, Tom cannot get Ellen out of his mind.

Agnes locates the thief in a cookshop. Tom realizes he cannot attack the thief with so many witnesses. He decides to guard one of the town gates and sends Agnes to guard the other. If she sees the thief leave through her gate, she is to send Martha as a messenger to Tom, who will confront the thief outside the gates. Tom settles in to wait. Hours later, Martha arrives with no news of the thief, but she brings a meat pie that Agnes has thoughtfully sent for Tom. Again, he is grateful to have such a wife. At dusk, Tom sees the thief leave through his gate. Agnes and Martha trail just behind, to Tom's dismay. He confronts the thief and demands his money for the stolen pig. The man turns and runs straight into Agnes, who trips him. The thief throws the pregnant woman to the ground and puts a knee in her back just as some other townspeople exit the gate to witness the scene. Tom throws the thief into the ditch and Agnes tells the townspeople that the man stole their pig. The thief springs from the ditch with a knife in hand; Tom attacks with his mason's hammer. Agnes gives Tom the upper hand by throwing a stone at the thief; Tom slams his hammer over the thief's head, killing him. Tom searches the body for money, but the dead man's money bag is empty.

By Christmastime, Tom's family is starving. The winter weather is unusually harsh, and the wolves in the forest become desperate enough to steal into the villages at night to make off with livestock and luckless children. All masonry work comes to a halt in the wintertime, and now there is no possibility of finding work for Tom. Tom and his family walk the frozen roads among Salisbury, Shaftesbury, Sherborne, Wells, Bath, Briston, Gloucester, Oxford, Wallingford and Windsor, but he cannot find work of any kind in the towns. They take charity from monasteries whenever they can, but the monastic rule of hospitality allows travelers to sleep and eat at the monasteries for one night only, so most nights the family freezes in the woods. Their money and food supplies dwindle away to nothing, and the end of the year finds them completing a long circle back to the forest where they lost their pig. Finding work in Winchester is their last hope, but Winchester is still 3 days away, they have no food for the journey, and Agnes' time is near. Tom sells his last tool for a sack of turnips and Agnes lights a fire to make turnip soup.

Tom sits beside his wife as they discuss their string of bad luck. Tom remembers the first night he made love to Agnes. They had both been virgins, and she was the illegitimate child of a priest. She smiles at the memory. She and the children eat the paltry soup; Tom goes without since there is not enough, and Agnes,



uncharacteristically, does not try to give him her share. Agnes tells him the baby is coming; she went into labor earlier in the day but had not said anything until now. Tom is horrified to think his wife is about to give birth in the frozen forest, surrounded by wolves. Guilt torments him, but he remains strong for his children. He gives Alfred and Martha tasks to perform to take their minds off their fears, and he kneels beside his wife. As she labors through her contractions, he speaks of pleasant memories from the past. The baby comes, a healthy boy, and Tom cuts the umbilical cord. Agnes takes the baby to her breast; she tells Tom she loves him and that she does not regret a moment of their marriage. To his surprise, she tells him she hopes he builds his cathedral and asks him to do it for her. Tom holds his wife to keep her warm, but Agnes is bleeding internally and dies in his arms.

Horrified and numb, Tom realizes he cannot afford to grieve now while his children are starving in the dark forest. He and Alfred dig a grave. He kisses Agnes and gently places her in the earth. Unable to cover her face with dirt, Tom fills the hole beginning at her feet until the earth gradually settles over Agnes' face. He and the children bless her tearfully. Tom wraps the baby in Agnes' cloak and leaves it on top of the grave. Martha screams that the baby will die if they leave it, but Tom tells her the baby will die regardless. They have no milk for the infant. Tom leads his family away in a daze. Agnes' death is incomprehensible, and his mind is in shock. He recalls her final words and realizes she knew she was dying. The thought of the baby jolts his mind back to the reality of his situation. He desperately wants to turn back to reclaim his son, but there are "no villages where Tom could seek a wet-nurse, no sheep or goat or cow that could provide the nearest equivalent. All Tom had to give him were turnips, and they would kill him as surely as the fox." (pg. 74) Abandoning babies in such situations is not unusual for peasant families, but Tom realizes he should have carried the baby in his arms until it died; at least he could have buried it properly.

Tom stops in his tracks and informs his children they are going back for the baby. Alfred protests that they cannot feed it, but Martha pushes him to go back. Moving quickly now as thoughts of predators invade his mind, Tom rushes towards Agnes' final resting place. He finds the horse-chestnut tree and the remains of their fire, but the baby is gone. He sees no animal tracks to indicate the baby was taken by predators. Tom and the children wander in a confused circle, searching for the child. Martha searches without complaint, but Alfred asks for a rest. Grudgingly, Tom allows them a brief rest by a brook. Exhausted, the children fall asleep. Tom searches the area by the brook until his legs give out. Unable to move, he watches wonderingly as an angel approaches him. She looks familiar. As she reaches him and removes her cloak, Tom realizes it is Ellen, the outlaw. She covers him with her naked body and warms him with her kisses. Tom's mind gave up rational thought hours ago, and now he allows his body to take over. They make love and the sensation brings Tom back to life. When they finish, they dress themselves and Tom remembers his children and his dead wife. Ellen's son, Jack, approaches carrying the cloak in which the baby had been wrapped. Ellen tells Tom his baby is alive, and that she will take him to the child.

As Tom's children sleep on, Ellen explains that Jack had heard the baby cry. Jack had run to fetch his mother, but by the time they returned, the baby was gone. They saw a



priest riding through the forest with the baby; Ellen knows that the trail the priest followed leads to a small monastery in the forest. Her son, Jack, does not know about the monastery and Ellen suggests that, for the moment at least, they not tell Jack or Tom's children that the baby is there. Ellen assures Tom that the monks have goats to provide milk for the baby. Ellen promises to lead Tom to the monastery after they eat. They wake the children, and Tom tells them only that their baby brother is alive and was last seen with a priest. Ellen leads them to her home in the forest. The cave, which she shares with Jack, is more comfortable and clean than most peasant homes. Jack, however, displays his lack of social graces by beginning to eat before offering food to his starving guests. Embarrassed, Ellen corrects him and gives Tom and his children bowls of savory soup, or pottage, heated in a pot over the fire. Tom hasn't tasted meat in weeks and is impressed that young Jack knows how to hunt ducks with stones and a sling.

Their bellies full, Alfred and Martha fall asleep in the cave. Ellen and Tom sneak out to the monastery. They spy on the monks and see them feed the baby goat's milk by twisting the end of a rag and dipping it in the milk. Tom wants to claim his baby and ask the monks for three days' worth of milk so he can get the baby to the nearest town and hire a wet nurse. Ellen reminds him that there is no work available for Tom, he cannot afford to hire a wet nurse, and besides, he has committed a crime by abandoning the baby. She suggests he find work first and then come back to reclaim the baby. Tom realizes the baby will be better off with the monks for the moment and makes the difficult decision to leave the child in their custody for a while.

Tom is wracked by guilt over his sudden feelings for Ellen; Agnes is not even cold in her grave. Yet Tom cannot help but admire Ellen's beauty, independence, warmth, and wit. Ellen tells him not to be ashamed; she knows he will always love Agnes and tells him Agnes knew it, too. "Somehow, the fact that she appeared to know everything that was in his heart made him feel better, as if now he had nothing more to be ashamed of." (pg. 82) His desire for her overpowers his guilt. Overcome with love, Tom surprises himself by proposing marriage to Ellen.

*Chapter 2:* Peter of Wareham is Prior Philip's biggest problem. The Prior of Kingsbridge had sent Peter to this small monastery in the forest, and Philip now realizes that the prior simply wanted to get rid of Peter. Peter is the type of man who is so insecure that he searches for ways to appear better than others. When he first arrived at St-John-in-the-Forest monastery, Peter accused the other monks of laziness and set out to prove he was the hardest worker. However, the hard-working monks at St-John-in-the-Forest had no trouble keeping up with Peter, so Peter tried another tactic: he accused the monks of gluttony. Peter began eating only half of his meals. Prior Philip had explained to Peter his philosophy that monks who work hard every day must sustain themselves with adequate nourishment; those who do physical labor in the fields are even entitled to a little red meat and wine. Peter continues to test Prior Philip's authority and seeks to make himself look more important than the other monks. Peter's disrespectful attitude is a thorn in Philip's side, but Prior Philip prefers not to punish his monks. He hopes God will guide him in the proper way of dealing with Peter's trouble-making.





Philip considers himself lucky that Peter is his biggest problem. The surprising arrival of Philip's brother, Francis, takes his mind off Peter. Francis' visits are rare, and this one is made even more unusual because Francis has arrived with a baby whom he found in the forest. The monks are perplexed as to how to feed the baby, but Johnny Eightpence, a kind-hearted simpleton, figures out how to twist a cloth and dip it in goat's milk. Still, the monks don't imagine they can raise the baby and are at a loss for what to do with it. Philip smiles at his brother and tells his men that monks are very capable of raising babies; Philip and Francis were themselves orphaned at a young age and raised by monks.

When Philip was 6, his father rode home one day as usual. Philip was accustomed to seeing his all-powerful father riding proudly upon his steed; on this day, Da slumps over his horse. Philip's mother rushes her husband into the house and begins tending his wound. Da protests, telling Mam to take the children and seek sanctuary at the monastery, for an army of invaders is on its way to besiege the town. Aunt Gwen leaves the house to raise the alarm, but Mam stays behind to bandage Da and prevent him from bleeding to death. Two men-at-arms kick open the door and, in front of the children, brutally murder Da and Mam. The men see Philip and his younger brother Francis cowering on the floor and advance on them. Before they can kill the boys, Abbot Peter enters the house. The abbot carries no weapon save a large, wooden cross. He threatens the men-at-arms with the wrath of God if they dare to touch the boys. For years whenever Philip was plagued with the trauma of watching his parents die, he would remember Abbot Peter's powerful intervention and know that God is strong enough to conquer all evil.

Abbot Peter becomes a second father to the orphaned boys, who are raised as monks. Both boys turn out to be exceptionally brilliant at their studies. Philip has no trouble with the monk's vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty. The chastity vow causes him trouble for about a year when he is 18, but unlike many monks and priests who don't take this vow very seriously, Philip succeeds in overcoming his sexual desires. The vow of obedience is also easy for Philip. Although he displays leadership potential, he respects the church hierarchy. The poverty vow is the easiest of all because the monks are banned only from personally owning money or property. They live in monasteries and churches paid for by the people, and so monks actually have more financial security and worldly comfort than most peasants. Francis, too, made peace with these vows, although Philip feels that on the subject of chastity, "Francis had struggled less bravely against evil desires, and had taken his defeats rather too cheerfully." (pg. 97)

At the age of 21, Francis asked to be released from the monastery to be ordained as a priest and serve God in the outside world. Abbot Peter supports his decision and speaks to Philip about his own future. Abbot Peter suggests God has given him great intellect and leadership skills for a reason. He believes Philip's future lies outside of the small monastery where he was raised. Philip asks, "'If this monastery is so unimportant, why did God put *you* here?' Abbot Peter smiled. 'Perhaps to take care of you.'" (pg. 98) Shortly thereafter, Abbot Peter informs Philip that has given him to the Prior of Kingsbridge. Kingsbridge is the biggest and most important monastery in the area. The Prior of Kingsbridge has decided to make Philip prior of a small monastic cell in the



forest under the control of Kingsbridge Priory. Philip is astounded to have been given a leadership position, even if it is in a small monastery like St-John-in-the-Forest. Philip reports to Kingsbridge Priory to meet his new boss, Prior James, before taking over as prior of St. John's.

Philip is horrified at the ruin and disrepair he sees at Kingsbridge. It is obvious that Prior James has been neglecting his duties; the monks are lazy and ill-fed, and Philip is ashamed that the largest monastery in the land has fallen to such a low state. He tactfully expresses his concerns to the sub-prior at Kingsbridge, Remigius, but Remigius refuses to listen to Philip. Remigius explains to Philip that St-John-in-the-Forest was established 3 years ago and should be self-supporting by now, but it is being run poorly and needs to be whipped into shape. Philip can't wait to get started.

On the way to St. Francis-in-the-Forest, Philip decides he must tread lightly with the monks under his command. Normally, priors are elected, not appointed, and Philip believes he must win their loyalty before he can command them. However, the moment he arrives, he is incensed by the disobedience and gluttony of the monks. Without introducing himself, Philip enters the chapel during vespers. Philip is angered by the half-hearted service given by the sacrist and the inattentiveness of the worshippers. When the disrespectful service is interrupted by the giggling and laughter of the monks, Philip loudly commands them all to get on their knees. The sacrist, who holds a position of some authority within the monastery, asks Philip who he is to command them. Philip knows this is a deciding moment. If he announces that he is their new prior, they will be forced to obey him, but they may not respect him. Philip realizes he must win this confrontation with the sacrist using only the strength of his personality and belief in God. In a strong voice, Philip tells him it is God who commands the sacrist to kneel in His presence. The sacrist kneels reluctantly and only then does Philip announce that he is the new prior.

Philip eschews the comfortable bedroom allotted to the prior; he sleeps in the main room with the monks. He prefers this humility, he prefers the brotherhood and companionship, and he knows this is the most effective way of discouraging sins of impurity in the night. Immediately, Philip puts the monks to work. He also provides higher quality meals for every man willing to put in a good day's work. Soon, he has lifted the morale and productivity of the priory. Within 2 years, the monastery is self-sufficient, and within 3 years they have enough wealth to provide Kingsbridge Priory with meat, wild game, and goat's milk cheese, which quickly becomes a delicacy in Kingsbridge. His monks are happy, prosperous, and hard-working. Philip is still upset, however, by the sorry state of affairs at Kingsbridge Priory.

However, the arrival of the baby gladdens Philip's heart, and he determines to keep the baby and raise it regardless of what anyone thinks. After dinner, Francis finally tells Philip the purpose of his visit: King Henry has died. The death occurred a month ago, unbeknownst to the cloistered monks at St-John-in-the-Forest. "Henry had been king since before Philip was born. He had never lived through the death of a king, but he knew it meant trouble, and possibly war." (pg. 105) Francis explains the politics of the situation. Henry's only legitimate heir was killed in the wreck of the White Ship years



ago. Henry had several bastard children, including Francis' lord, Earl Robert of Gloucester. Henry's only other legitimate child is a girl, now a woman, named Maud. "A bastard can't inherit the throne, but a woman is almost as bad." (pg. 105) Francis explains that before his death, Henry nominated Maud as his heir because Maud has a son. The king's grandson, also named Henry, is only 3 years old, however, so although King Henry had made his barons swear loyalty to Maud, it is unlikely they will now agree to serve a woman.

Philip, who has seen very little of the world, marvels at what a worldly life his brother Francis must lead in court. Francis goes on to explain that King Henry has three grown nephews, Theobald; Henry, the bishop of Winchester; and Stephen. All three of them are contenders for the throne, but Stephen is the most ambitious. Stephen has already seized the castle and the royal treasury. His brother, Bishop Henry, agreed to convince the archbishop of the Church to officially crown Stephen, but in return, Stephen had to swear an oath of loyalty to 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 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." (pg. 107) This is welcome news for Philip, who desires the advancement of the Church above all else. Unfortunately, Francis advises him, there are still two powerful men who wish to dethrone King Stephen. One of these men is Bartholomew, the earl of Shiring, and the other is Francis' boss, Robert, Earl of Gloucester.

Robert and Bartholomew are plotting to put Maud on the throne. Francis tells Philip that if Robert of Gloucester had any idea Francis told anyone about his planned rebellion, he would have Francis beheaded. Philip is the only one Francis can trust with this seditious news; the rebellion must be stopped so that King Stephen, pledged to support the Church, can rule the country. Francis tells Philip he has only a week before the insurgence begins. Philip is terrified; he never thought to meddle in politics, but given what is at stake, he feels he must. He knows he risks his life by revealing the plot and must come up with some explanation for how he learned of the rebellion that will not implicate Francis. Philip cannot go to the Prior of Kingsbridge for help since Prior James would likely do nothing. Philip realizes he must entrust the news to the powerful Bishop of Kingsbridge, a man he has never even met. He knows the bishop could torture him to find out where Philip got the information. The next day, Philip tells the monks he must visit Kingsbridge Priory, although he doesn't reveal that he plans to visit the bishop on the way. To prevent Peter of Wareham from causing trouble in his absence, Philip assigns him the role of almoner, which is a hard job requiring a lot of travel. Peter of Wareham is livid.

On the way to the bishop's palace, Philip meets Tom Builder, Ellen, and their children. Philip assumes the couple is married, and he is surprised by Ellen's audacity in speaking before her husband and addressing him without the usual deference that peasants show monks. Tom seems an honest man down on his luck, so Philip offers to share his dinner with them. "We'll accept your charity, and thank you," says Tom. "Thank God, not me," Philip said automatically.





The woman said: 'Thank the peasants whose tithes provide the food.'" (pg. 113) Over dinner, Philip asks them whether they've come across a young woman on the road; he explains that a baby has been abandoned near his monastery and wondered if they might have seen the mother. Philip is surprised at the intensity of Tom's interest in the subject. Philip explains his plans to raise the boy in the monastery and tells them he's christened the child Jonathon, which means a gift from God. The story brings tears to Tom's eyes.

As they part, Tom asks Philip to put in a good word for him with the Bishop of Kingsbridge because Tom is on his way to the bishop's castle in search of work. On horseback, Philip arrives at the bishop's castle before Tom Builder. He works up his courage and enters. To his dismay, he is told by an arrogant priest that the bishop is not there. The priest demands to know Philip's business with the bishop; to the priest's surprise, Philip replies sharply that his business is God's business and divulges nothing further. Unaccustomed to being addressed so boldly, the priest takes new interest in Philip. The priest is the bishop's archdeacon, Waleran Bigod. Philip tells him he is the prior of St-John-in-the-Forest and is surprised when Waleran recognizes him as Philip of Gwynedd. Upon realizing Philip's rank, Waleran treats him courteously.

Waleran commends Philip for the excellent job he's done with his priory and wishes Kingsbridge Priory were so well led. Philip asks after Prior James of Kingsbridge and learns he is very ill. Philip is pleased that someone else feels as he does about the mismanagement of Kingsbridge Priory. It occurs to him that if he confides in Archdeacon Waleran instead of the Bishop, he is less likely to be tortured for the source of his information. The archdeacon does not have the authority and must be content with whatever story Philip tells him. Philip confides the news of the rebellion, telling Waleran that he learned of the plot from a soldier's deathbed confession. Waleran is intensely interested. He questions Philip closely and then tells Philip to leave the matter with him. Waleran dismisses Philip, leaving him to wonder what, if anything, Waleran will do. As Philip saddles up to leave, he and Waleran see Tom Builder arrive with Ellen and the children. Waleran stares at Ellen, stunned, and mutters that he thought she was dead.

Philip rides on to the Kingsbridge Priory to make the lie he told his monks about visiting the priory true. When he arrives, he is again infuriated by the lackadaisical state of affairs. Philip orders the kitchener to provide a hot stone daily for the elderly monk who keeps watch at the gate. The weather is harsh on the old monk yet the priory won't allow him to have a fire because the wood costs too much; Philip is infuriated by the prior's disregard for the human beings in his care. Philip also chides a young monk during church services for making cruel sport of an elderly monk. Ranking monks like Philip commonly assist with keeping order during services, so Philip is shocked and humiliated when Andrew Sacrist, a friend of Sub-Prior Remigius, reprimands him publicly for interfering. Philip is surprised and actually pleased to learn that Prior James has died; he believes a new prior will restore Kingsbridge to its former luster and prosperity.

Later, the kindly and wise cellarer, Brother Cuthbert, explains to Philip why Remigius' friend, the sacrist, humiliated him. Remigius hopes to be voted in as the new prior. This



thought alarms Philip for he knows that Remigius does not care about improving the Kingsbridge Priory. To Philip's surprise, Cuthbert explains that Remigius sees Philip as a rival for the position of prior. Philip's success as the prior of St-John-in-the-Forest makes him a good candidate. Remigius assumes that Philip's decisions to give the old monk a hot stone and to castigate the trouble-maker during church are an indication that Philip is throwing his weight around, hoping to be made prior. Philip assures Cuthbert he had no such intentions, but Cuthbert convinces him he would make an excellent prior. A young, energetic, and strong leader like Philip is exactly what Kingsbridge needs. Philip realizes he loves the idea and would relish the challenge. He tells himself not to give into his pride and seek the position, but Cuthbert sagely tells him: "excessive pride is a familiar sin, but a man may just as easily frustrate the will of God through excessive humility." (pg. 137)

Philip begins campaigning for the position right away. A monastic election is the only time when monks are given equal status; normally, the monks defer to their vows of obedience and many of them are so used to this that they prefer to be told for whom to vote. To complicate matters, if the monastery can't choose between Philip and Remigius, the Bishop of Kingsbridge has the right to appoint his own candidate, who might be someone of whom the monks disapprove. When Remigius realizes that Philip has gained a majority of votes, he starts a rumor that the Bishop plans to appoint Brother Osbert, his illegitimate son. Osbert is a lazy, greedy man, and the monks quail at the thought of him becoming their leader. The monks are cowed into supporting Remigius for they fear if they support the newcomer, Philip, the bishop will appoint Osbert instead. The election seems lost, but Philip prays about it and is inspired to send a message to Archdeacon Waleran. If Waleran can confirm that the Osbert rumor is false, Philip can still win the election. To everyone's surprise, Waleran arrives at the priory in person.

Waleran meets privately with Philip and his two allies, Cuthbert and Milius, the kitchener. Cuthbert and Milius are the highest ranking monks in the monastery aside from Remigius. Waleran proposes a deal; he will make Philip prior if the three men agree to support Waleran as the next Bishop when the time comes. That very night Philip is installed as the new prior and sleeps in the prior's comfortable bed. The next day, he asks Waleran what the archdeacon intends to do about the rebellion. Waleran plans to use an enemy of Earl Bartholomew's to expose the plot. Percy Hamleigh, his ugly wife, and his son, William, are still furious with Earl Bartholomew for allowing his daughter to break off her engagement to William Hamleigh; Waleran believes they'll take any opportunity for revenge against Bartholomew. Philip is satisfied. Archdeacon Waleran leads the services and announces Philip as the new prior. To Philip's surprise, Waleran also announces that the bishop is dead. Philip realizes the wily archdeacon knew this before he made his deal with Philip to become the next bishop.

*Chapter 3:* The Hamleigh family is in the congregation at Kingsbridge Priory when the archdeacon makes his announcements. Aliena, Earl Bartholomew's daughter, is also present. Mrs. Hamleigh, an ugly woman inside and out, tells her husband and son that she'd like to see Aliena flayed alive for embarrassing their family. Lord and Lady Hamleigh believe everyone is staring at them and making fun of them for Aliena's



rejection of young William Hamleigh. William agrees with his mother, but privately, he still longs for Aliena. William watches Aliena furtively during the church service. William's experience has taught him that women are impressed by fine clothes and money. Most of the women he has bedded have been willing, more or less, and he can't understand what went wrong with Aliena. As is customary, they met in person for the first time after their fathers arranged their engagement. William had found Aliena reading a book entitled *The Romance of Alexander*. She had tried to tell him about the romantic story of Alexander the Great, but William thought it foolish. He had spent their time together regaling her with stories of his bravery and telling her how to run his household to best please him. At the end of their meeting, she had told him they were not well-suited, but he had generously responded that she suited him just fine.

After the service, Archdeacon Waleran approaches the Hamleighs. He tells them that Earl Bartholomew plans to keep his vow to dead King Henry and support Maud as queen. The Hamleighs are shocked to hear that Bartholomew and Robert of Gloucester are planning a rebellion; Waleran could be hanged for such words if they are false. Waleran makes it plain that anyone who stops Earl Bartholomew will have the undying gratitude of the Church and of King Stephen. Waleran leaves; William and his father cannot understand why he would have said such things, but Mother explains the situation. Mrs. Hamleigh may be exceedingly ugly, but she is also incredibly smart about the ways of the world. She explains to her family that Waleran wants them to risk their necks to stop Bartholomew. If they fail to prove that a rebellion exists, however, the Hamleighs will certainly hang for treason. Mother convinces them to take this chance to revenge themselves against Bartholomew, but she insists they must obtain proof of the conspiracy first. William volunteers to go to Earl Bartholomew's castle to spy; he will pretend he is there to talk Aliena into marrying him. Secretly, he hopes to do just that.

William sets out for the earl's castle with his trusted groom, Walter. He is torn between lust for Aliena and a desire to revenge himself against her. William is afraid he may not be able to obtain proof of conspiracy, but when he arrives, he sees many men-at-arms and knights at the castle, and it seems obvious the earl is preparing for battle. William speaks to Aliena; he tells her she has misjudged him and asks for another chance. Aliena responds sincerely. She explains that her mother, a fun-loving woman, was miserable in her marriage. Although Aliena loves her father dearly, she and her father both believe that her mother died young because she was so unhappy being married to such a somber, war-like man. William does not pay attention to her words; he is busy watching the soldiers enter the great hall and leave, one by one, after visiting the earl's chambers. Aliena notices his lack of attention and calls him self-centered; the last time William visited her, she reminds him, he spoke incessantly of himself and never asked her a single question. She rejects him loudly in front of all the soldiers in the room; William, humiliated again, leaves quickly.

On the road outside the castle, William is determined to get his revenge. He realizes the men leaving the hall individually and in pairs are probably messengers. He tells Walter they must lie in wait on the road and capture one of the messengers to obtain evidence of the conspiracy. William has never attacked a man before, but his groom, Walter, is an experienced fighter. Together, they capture Gilbert Catface, a man-at-arms. William



tortures him with fire and Gilbert admits he is on his way to muster men to fight King Stephen at the behest of Earl Bartholomew. Gilbert agrees to repeat these words in front of the king, so William is forced to let him live. "Torturing a man without killing him was like stripping a girl naked without raping her," thinks William. "The more he thought about that, the more he felt the need of a woman." (pg. 181) Just then, William spots Tom Builder and his family walking down the road. He remembers how Tom forced him to pay his wages when the house Tom was building for William and Aliena was no longer needed. William is pleased to see that Tom is starving. He offers Tom a pound of silver for the beautiful Ellen. Tom refuses. William threatens to kill Tom and rape Ellen in front of the children. Tom reaches into his cloak, presumably to get a weapon. Walter convinces William to back off as they have more important business to attend.

Tom is amazed that William Hamleigh backed off. He had instinctively reached inside his cloak for his mason's hammer, forgetting that he had already sold the hammer for food. Tom has still not found work anywhere. He is headed for Earl Bartholomew's castle to ask the earl to hire him to work in the quarry at Shiring, owned by the earl. Tom is afraid Ellen will leave him. In the forest she and Jack had known where to find food, but now that they are back in civilization, they are starving, along with Tom and his children. They have been together only a week, but his joy in Ellen is tempered by his failure to provide for her. The family stops to rest and eat their meager supplies. Tom's son, Alfred, selfishly drains the bottle of ale and smiles when the younger children cry. Ellen admonishes Alfred but Tom tells her to leave him alone. Ellen is shocked that a kind man like Tom could be so blind to his own son's bullying. Jack and Martha get along, but Alfred clearly resents Jack, who is smarter than Alfred. Tom misses baby Jonathon but is glad the baby is not starving along with the rest of them. Martha finds an injured wren and cradles it in her arms; Alfred takes it from her and wrings its neck. He smiles when it dies. Tom defends Alfred, saying the injured bird would have died anyway.

They arrive at the earl's castle and Tom is directed to Matthew Steward, who is in charge of the hiring. The steward, an effeminate man, tells Tom there is no work for him; the earl nods his head in agreement. Tom is desperate enough to argue with the men. He tells the earl that his castle is in disrepair and will not stand up to an enemy attack. This captures the earl's attention, and the earl agrees to hire Tom. Joyfully, the family follows Matthew to the great hall where they are provided with food and ale. Alfred tries to steal the ale from Jack, but Jack turns his back, hiding the ale jug for a moment, and then hands the jug to Alfred with a smile. Alfred greedily drinks the whole thing, saving nothing for his father or the rest of the family. When he gets to the bottom of the jug, the dead wren falls out onto his face. Jack smiles but knows Alfred will find a way to get revenge.

Despite Alfred's constant bullying, Jack is having the time of his life. Having lived in isolation all his years, the experiences of the last two weeks have been fascinating. Ellen advises him on table manners as the earl enters the great hall, and everyone at the long table begins to eat. Jack is enthralled by the beautiful Aliena. His mother has taught him many songs and stories about castles and princesses, but Jack has never seen a real princess; Aliena is only an earl's daughter, but she is as beautiful as any



princess, thinks Jack. After dinner, Aliena retires upstairs to Jack's disappointment. Everyone else, including the earl, stays in the great hall to socialize and sleep. After the rushlights burn down, Tom and Ellen sleep together under Tom's big cloak, as usual. Jack is mystified by the movements and sounds they make, but he sees another couple doing the same thing and assumes it is a normal part of life.

The next morning he meets Aliena. She is 15, while Jack is only 11. Aliena asks about the family and learns that Tom is not Jack's father. Jack says he has no father; when Aliena and the other children laugh at his ignorance, he seeks solitude in the woods. Ellen finds him in the woods a while later and apologizes for not telling him about his father or how babies are made. She explains procreation in a general way and tells him his father was Jack Shareburg. Happily, Jack returns with her to the castle, ready to tell Aliena that he is Jack Jackson, son of Jack Shareburg, but when they arrive at the guardhouse, they find the sentry lying in a pool of blood.

William Hamleigh and his father, Percy, arrived at the castle during the night with a hundred soldiers on horseback. Their only hope of taking the castle was by surprise, so Mother devised a plan. William and his groom, Walter, sneaked into the castle at first light, killing the sentry while everyone was at breakfast, and then they cut the rope that raises the drawbridge and took the hinges off the great doors that protected the castle keep. They waited for everyone in the castle to enter the chapel for mass, and then William set fire to the stables as a diversion. William is thrilled to have killed his first man, and he is certain their plan will succeed. While everyone tends to the fire, Father's men approach the castle. Before the men can get inside, William sees Ellen in the guardhouse. He realizes she has seen the dead sentry, and he knows he must kill her before she can raise the alarm. Too late, Ellen screams and alerts the castle sentries to the attack.

Tom and the earl try to raise the drawbridge and shut the gates, but they realize the attackers have thwarted them. Everyone runs upstairs to hide in the castle, but the Hamleigh's men are already inside. The earl is forced to surrender to prevent his people from being murdered. William's mother makes the earl bow to her by threatening Aliena. Mother cries out that this is what happens to anyone who dares insult the Hamleighs. Once the earl is taken away, the attackers release the prisoners, including Tom Builder and his family. Tom is disconsolate to have lost the first job he's been hired to do in over a year, but he tells Ellen there's a new prior at Kingsbridge, and there may be work there. Ellen blanches at the mention of Kingsbridge, but seems reassured to learn that the prior is new. Jack wonders what grudge his mother has against the old prior.

*Chapter 4:* Tom eyes the cathedral at Kingsbridge critically. One of the towers has fallen down. The building style is out of date, constructed before builders realized the importance of proportion. Modern builders like Tom know that the thickness of the wall is not as important as its straightness, and they also know that buildings will stand even if one carves large windows into the walls. The old priory is dark and dank for lack of sizeable windows. Tom is hopeful but afraid that if he fails again to get work, Ellen must surely leave him. Ellen is edgy when they arrive, but she is relieved that no one recognizes her. She tells Tom she was last here 13 years ago.





Cuthbert, the cellarer, tells Tom that the prior is remodeling, but he is saving money by using the monks as laborers. Cuthbert gives the starving family some food. As they eat, Tom's baby, Jonathon, is brought into the room. The children do not realize that the baby is their brother, but Tom and Ellen know. Ellen asks to hold the child and then hands him to Tom. Tom gratefully holds his son while trying to mask his emotions. Cuthbert recognizes Ellen but is distracted by the news of Earl Bartholomew's arrest for treason. Prior Philip arrives and greets Tom; Tom is thrilled to recognize the new prior as the kind monk they previously met on the road. Philip tells Tom, however, that he can't afford to hire him and suggests Tom pray for help. Tom mutters to Ellen that he will pray for God to level the crumbling cathedral.

The family sleeps in the guesthouse at the monastery. Jack is overwhelmed by his constant hunger and misses his life in the forest. He doesn't understand why the prior won't hire Tom when the cathedral is in obvious need of repair. Ellen explains that since only one tower has fallen, the prior can afford to wait. If the whole church had fallen down, the prior would have been forced to rebuild regardless of the expense. Jack lies awake thinking about that. In the middle of the night, Jack gets up and breaks into the locked cathedral. He sets it on fire, nearly trapping himself inside in the process. The fire quickly spreads, waking up the monks. Jack manages to reach the guest house just as Tom and the others wake up; only his mother Ellen realizes that Jack was not there all along, but she promises her son to keep quiet.

Prior Philip is horrified by destruction of the church; he thinks his plans to save money and build a new cathedral in a few years have been thwarted. Desolate, he takes hope from Tom Builder, who takes charge and tells Philip he can clear out the rubble in a week. The crypt is undamaged, and since it is consecrated ground, Philip can resume church services in just a few weeks. Tom offers to delay his salary, and Philip has no choice but to hire him and agree to pay him for every day he works as soon as Philip is able. Tom is overjoyed; he has food, lodgings, and steady work. He convinces Philip to start planning a new cathedral. Philip, for his part, believes it is a miracle that God sent him a master builder on the very night the church caught fire. Philip holds a chapter meeting to discuss these events with the monks. Remigius objects on the grounds that Tom's wife is a witch; Remigius remembers her from years ago. Philip silences the objections by promising to question Ellen; meanwhile, Tom gets to work.

Philip is impressed by Tom's organizational abilities and obvious skill. Too intimidated by Ellen to question her directly, Philip instead talks to Tom; he asks Tom to make sure Ellen keeps her distance from the monks and keeps her face covered if she must walk the priory grounds. Tom promises to do this, but Philip can tell from Tom's worried look that Tom is not sure Ellen will go along with him. Philip notices a young monk preparing to depart on a horse; he learns that Remigius has written a letter to the bishop about the fire. Philip is surprised at Remigius' audacity; the letter should have been left for Philip to write. Not wanting to cause trouble, Philip allows the monk to take the message. Later, Philip will regret not reading the letter; he suspects that it makes mention of Tom Builder's wife. He recalls Bishop Waleran's reaction to seeing Ellen and believes Remigius knows something about the woman as well.



Alfred and Tom work on the building site. Jack and Ellen spend their days trapping and hunting in the forest; they sell the meat to the villagers for cash since Tom is not yet being paid. Nonetheless, Alfred resents that Jack does not have to work on the site and bullies him even more than before. One day, Alfred nearly kills Jack; in the wake of the fight, Remigius learns that they are not blood brothers. Remigius figures out that Tom and Ellen are not married and is gleeful at the news. Meanwhile, Ellen confronts Tom about Alfred's vicious attack on Jack, who is seriously wounded. Tom defends Alfred as usual and says Jack plays all day while Alfred works like a man. Ellen tells him to go to hell. Tom misses Agnes, who never argued with him. He realizes that despite his love for Ellen, he never got a chance to mourn Agnes. Bishop Waleran shows up to investigate the cause of the fire. Remigius and Waleran shoot hostile glances at Ellen. In front of Waleran, Remigius informs Philip that he is harboring a witch and a fornicator. The prim Philip is shocked to learn that Tom and Ellen are not married. Waleran dismisses Remigius and speaks to Philip privately.

"'Women always cause trouble,' he said. 'When there's a mare in heat in the stables, all the stallions start nipping the grooms, kicking their stalls and generally causing trouble. Even the geldings start to misbehave. Monks are like geldings: physical passion is denied them, but they can still smell cunt.'" (pg. 279) Philip is embarrassed by Waleran's crude words. Waleran then gives Philip some good news. Earl Bartholomew has been imprisoned by the king at the dungeon in Winchester. Earl Robert of Gloucester has pledged allegiance to King Stephen, and Stephen has forgiven his treachery, but Waleran tells Philip that King Stephen is grateful to the Church for their part in stopping the rebels. Waleran tells Philip they must see the king and ask him to pay for their new cathedral; it shall be their reward. Philip is thrilled.

Ellen, however, is furious. Prior Philip has informed Tom that Ellen has been accused of fornication. Her penance is to live apart from Tom for a year, after which they can get married if Ellen remains chaste during that year and if she agrees to confess her sin. Angrily, Ellen reminds Tom that it takes two to fornicate and asks why he is allowed to stay on at the priory as master builder while she is exiled and shamed. Before Tom can answer, Ellen stands up on the table and urinates on one of the holy books. The shocked monks and Tom are all impressed by her audacity; the monks actually applaud, but Tom knows this means even more trouble. Ellen doesn't care. She tells Tom she has no intention of confessing any sins to the hypocritical holy men at Kingsbridge Priory. What's more, Ellen points to Jack's face, still horribly bruised from Alfred's beating, and tells Tom she cannot be his wife. She tells Tom she loves him, but ever since she joined up with him, her son has been starved and abused. Ellen decides to return to the forest and leave Tom for good. Tom begs her to stay in the nearby village until everyone has cooled off, but he doesn't put up much of an argument. He knows Philip will not let Tom build the cathedral if Ellen remains.

As Ellen leaves, Tom makes her promise to come back and visit him some day. He knows she loves him and hopes one day she will change her mind. When she turns to exit the priory gate, her eyes meet Bishop Waleran's. Ellen stares at Waleran and sings: "*At dusk the hunter took his prey, The lark his freedom never. All birds and men are sure to die, But songs may live forever.*" (pg. 286) Ellen calls out to Waleran that she will



be with him in his dreams. Waleran looks terrified. Everyone watches silently as Ellen and Jack walk away.

## Part 1: 1135-1136 Analysis

Part 1 covers a 2-year period, beginning 12 years after the fateful sinking of the White Ship in the Prologue. The White Ship was an actual ship that sank in 1123, killing the only legitimate heir to the crown. This death, in reality, led to a period called the Anarchy in English history. The civil war and strife that followed King Stephen's uncertain ascent to the throne provides the dramatic backdrop for the daily struggles of Ken Follett's fictional characters in *The Pillars of the Earth*. This history is cleverly interwoven with the events of the plot. Prior Philip's character, together with his influential brother Francis, become integrally involved with historically documented events, thus smoothly meshing fact with fiction. In this first section, Philip provides the all-important Church viewpoint on the political events of the times, while Tom Builder and his family give the reader a window into the common man's plight as Tom is caught between the powerful forces of politics and survival.

The author gives a rather enlightened, tongue-in-cheek nod to the hypocrisy of sexual politics as well, both through the sex-deprived viewpoint of the monks and the startlingly powerful character of Ellen. Ellen, an intelligent and independent woman, has discovered that she is capable of living on her own and taking care of her family without help from either the greedy lords or the charitable monks. This discovery of her own power allows her to speak truthfully, if somewhat bitterly, about the tyranny of Church and State. Most of the rest of the population has bought into the supposed benevolence of their tyrannical rulers and believes, or at least pretends to believe, that survival depends on the largesse of Church and State. Thus, Ellen's knowledge is a threat to the greed-driven political leaders and the deluded clergymen who would have the local populace believe that they have no inherent right to food and shelter, and that their primary duty is to provide kickbacks to their spiritual and lay leaders.

Lord William Hamleigh and Archdeacon Waleran, the former representing the State, and the latter, the Church, both provide wryly humorous demonstrations of how the male-driven power hierarchy uses character assassination and selfish entitlement to keep feminine voices like Ellen's under wraps. William Hamleigh thinks himself a ladies' man because most of his sexual encounters have been voluntary. Of course, the factual translation of his absurd opinion of himself implies that he has raped several women. Yet even the working-class Tom Builder feels justified in condemning Aliena for refusing to marry this dull-witted serial rapist. After all, thinks Tom, marriages affect commerce; therefore, he believes that women should gladly sell themselves to the highest bidder, as was more or less common in those days.

Archdeacon Waleran's comments regarding women are equally disturbing in their implications, although the prudish Philip does not understand that Waleran's remarks imply cruelty. "'Women always cause trouble,' he said. 'When there's a mare in heat in the stables, all the stallions start nipping the grooms, kicking their stalls and generally





causing trouble. Even the geldings start to misbehave. Monks are like geldings: physical passion is denied them, but they can still smell cunt." (Chapter 4, pg. 279) This comment by Waleran slams women, yet more alarming is Waleran's obvious lack of understanding of his own prejudice. The males, both human and equine, are the ones who misbehave because they are unable to control themselves in the presence of a female; for this, Waleran blames the women. That is rather like blaming the diamond for attracting the jewel thief. Author Follett presents these darkly humorous remarks without benefit of explanation, relying on his enlightened readers to see through the character assassination.



## Part 2: 1136 - 1137

### Part 2: 1136 - 1137 Summary

*Chapter 5:* Work on the building site progresses in Ellen's absence; Tom spends his time visualizing his cathedral design in his head, although he has yet to convince Philip to let him be the master builder and designer for the cathedral. Two months after Ellen's departure, Tom prepares a design drawing for Philip using a tray of woven reeds lined with lime. Tom knows that money is an obstacle, and so he designs a small but dramatically beautiful church with a lofty nave, high archways, and larger windows than the previous cathedral possessed. Tom uses his fine sense of proportion to ensure that the building is both beautiful and sturdy. He is a talented artist and counts on his drawing to convey his complex ideas to Philip. Tom dedicates his cathedral to Agnes, hoping that by building a cathedral for God, he will ensure the salvation of her soul. With his heart in his mouth, Tom presents the drawings to Philip. Philip is impressed by the drawings and by Tom's detailed calculation of costs, time, and labor. The church will take 15 years and ?300 to build, but Tom can have the chapel at the east end completed in only 5 years, and Philip need pay only ?200 a year. This breakdown inspires Philip to believe that the building project will be manageable.

Shortly after this discussion, Waleran Bigod arranges to meet Philip in the ruins of Earl Bartholomew's castle. Philip is horrified by the poverty he sees throughout the earl's lands; the area, known as Shiring, once supported a thriving and prosperous population. Philip feels guilty for his part in Bartholomew's downfall and the effect it has had on the villagers and peasants living on the former earl's land. Inside the ruined castle, Philip is shocked to find Aliena, her brother Richard, and their effeminate manservant, Matthew Steward. Aliena tells Philip she is guarding the castle and waiting for her father's return. Philip shares a look with Matthew; both men know Aliena is living in a dream world, unable to accept that she is no longer the daughter of a powerful earl. Philip pities Aliena and feels guilty for causing her downfall, but he also admires her strength and determination. He promises to keep her presence a secret.

Philip sees Waleran ride up and exits the castle to greet him. Waleran takes Philip to the tower and shows him the earl's lands. Waleran says that Shiring contains forests with timber and a quarry with first-rate limestone. Waleran explains to Philip that they must ask for these lands from King Stephen as reward for their part in revealing the conspiracy; with the timber from the forests and the limestone from the quarry, Philip will be able to build his cathedral. The rest of the earl's land is valuable farmland, which can provide a steady source of income for Kingsbridge. Waleran tells Philip they already have an appointment with King Stephen and must leave immediately. From the woods, William Hamleigh watches the earl's castle. He knows that Aliena is secretly living there, and enjoys watching her from afar. Once, he saw her bathing naked. Today he is displeased to see Waleran and Philip at the castle; he decides to report this to his mother.



Philip and Waleran arrive at Winchester to see King Stephen. Waleran meets with his powerful friend and ally, Bishop Henry, who is also Stephen's brother. Through this alliance, Waleran hopes to obtain the earl's lands. Waleran and Henry both treat Philip like a servant. Philip feels humbled and embarrassed by his monk's robes; Waleran and Henry dress in rich fabrics and command respect. The three of them enter the king's chambers for their audience. When they ask for the earl's lands to build a cathedral at Kingsbridge, however, King Stephen tells them someone else has already asked for the land. Percy Hamleigh has requested the lands of Shiring and the title of earl in compensation for capturing the traitor, Bartholomew. The king tells them he must consider his decision and sends them away to wait for his summons.

Philip waits at Winchester for the king's decision. To his surprise, Regan Hamleigh, William's mother, comes to see him. She tells him Waleran is using him. Waleran wants to build a castle for himself and is using Philip's need for a cathedral to convince the king to award the quarry and forests of Shiring to the Church. She arranges for her son, William, to take Philip to the building site where Waleran has already begun to construct his castle. Philip "had been working on the assumption that the lands would belong to the priory and be under his control, rather than to the diocese, where they would be under Waleran's control, but he now recalled that when they had been with the king, Bishop Henry had specifically asked for the lands to be given to the diocese." (pg. 317) Philip realizes that Waleran is, indeed, using him, but he knows that Regan Hamleigh is not his friend; he figures out that she is telling him this so that Philip will quarrel with Waleran. If the king sees that the church men are divided, he will be more likely to award the lands to the Hamleigh family.

Philip solves his dilemma by proposing a secret compromise with the Hamleighs. He convinces the Hamleighs to petition the king for the earldom and farmlands of Shiring, while allowing Kingsbridge Priory the forests and quarry. Regan Hamleigh realizes that the king will look favorably on such a compromise; the king wants to keep both the Church and the Hamleigh family happy, especially because the Hamleighs can muster soldiers for the king whenever he needs them. Regan knows that getting half the land is more likely than getting all of it, and better than getting none; she agrees to this compromise with Philip. The Hamleighs will go behind Waleran and Bishop Henry's back to propose this deal to the king; the king will assume that Waleran, Philip, and Henry have all agreed and will probably award the lands as requested. Philip tells Regan it is critical that she ask the king to award the quarry and forests to the priory, not the diocese. Philip worries that Regan will double-cross him.

The next day, King Stephen summons the Hamleighs, Philip, and Waleran into his chambers to announce his decision. When the king announces that he has agreed to the compromise between the Hamleighs and the Church, Waleran is stunned. He realizes Philip has made a deal behind his back and is furious when the king announces that the quarry and forest will be under Prior Philip's control. Philip realizes he has made an enemy for life out of Waleran; however, the triumph is sweet. The Hamleighs do double-cross Philip to an extent. The priory will not own the quarry outright; it merely holds rights to mine the quarry, but the ownership is retained by the new Earl of Shiring,



Percy Hamleigh. Philip imagines trouble on the horizon, but for today, he is satisfied; the building of his cathedral can commence at full speed.

William Hamleigh wastes no time returning to the castle at Shiring to claim what is now rightfully his. William also decides to claim Aliena; he and his groom, Walter, surprise Aliena, Richard, and Matthew in the castle. William kills Matthew and then rips off Aliena's clothes; she struggles valiantly, and William cannot force her to submit. William beats up Richard, cuts off his ear, and threatens to kill him if Aliena will not submit to being raped. She submits to his cruel embrace as Walter holds her down; afterwards, William tells Walter to rape her, too. William is thrilled to have taken Aliena's virginity.

*Chapter 6:* After the men rape Aliena, they eat and drink her food. When they are good and drunk, Aliena and Richard sneak out of the castle into the stormy night. They take refuge in the chapel on the castle grounds during the storm. Aliena feels deep shame over being raped, and her brother Richard is ashamed of her, too. He refuses to speak to her and treats her like she's committed a despicable sin. Aliena forces herself to forget the incident; she nurses her pained body on the stone floor and turns her mind to the practical issue of their survival. William and Walter are likely sleeping off the wine now, but they will wake with the dawn. She and Richard must leave before daylight. Aliena opens her father's secret hiding place under the church altar and extracts a sword and a foot-long dagger. The dagger she hides under her sleeve, and the sword she gives to Richard. Aliena imagines sticking the dagger into William Hamleigh, but forces herself to push all thought of her rapist from her mind.

Aliena and Richard steal Walter and William's horses knowing they stand a better chance of survival if they are on horseback and their enemies on foot. Saddling the war-horses is no easy task, and the men hear the activity and nearly capture Aliena as she rides away. Free of the men, Aliena considers their next step. She realizes she has been living in a dream world in the ruined castle. The reality is that she and Richard are penniless outcasts. The only solution she can think of is to go to Winchester to see the king; they can find out where their father is being held, and perhaps the king will show them mercy because she and Richard were innocent to their father's planned revolt. Richard wants to report the rape to the king, but Aliena makes him swear not to tell anyone, ever. That night, the hungry fugitives meet one of the king's verderers on the road. Aliena thinks he looks untrustworthy, but verderers are supposed to maintain law and order. She and Richard accept the man's offer of hospitality and accompany him to his house where his sullen wife feeds them; Aliena is worried about the lustful looks the verderer gives her. The verderer double-crosses them and locks them in his prison cell. He makes off with their horses, but his wife shows compassion by freeing them and giving Aliena a dress to wear.

Back on the road, the young people are accosted by a thief who strikes Richard with a club, intending to steal Richard's sword. Enraged, Aliena throws herself at the robber and buries her dagger in his stomach. Furious that Richard has taken no action to defend them, Aliena orders him to give the killing blow. Aliena is repulsed by the violence they have committed, but Richard is upset only that they didn't steal the dead man's boots. When they arrive at Winchester, Aliena's hope returns. They pass the



townhouse that used to be their family's second home, but Aliena accepts that the house is no longer theirs. They stay at the monastery overnight; Aliena has nightmares about being pregnant with William's child. The next morning, they go to the castle and learn their father is being kept at the local jail. The jailer will not let them see their father unless they pay him a penny, which they do not have. They spend the rest of the day trying to obtain a penny. They try begging and they try to get hired as laborers. No one will hire them because their hands are soft and they are obviously unskilled. A madam offers Aliena a job as a prostitute, but she recoils in horror. A Jewish merchant gives Aliena some advice on earning money. He explains they must find something to sell in order to make a profit. Because they are penniless, he suggests they gather nuts in the forest and sell them to housewives who don't have time to gather their own nuts. Unfortunately, it's the wrong time of year to gather nuts; nonetheless, Aliena muses on his advice.

A richly dressed woman stops to help Aliena and Richard; the woman had noticed them in the jail earlier. Her name is Meg and her husband is a wool merchant, imprisoned for dishonesty. In his absence, Meg is running the business quite successfully. The next morning, she accompanies the children to the jail and gives them a penny to see their father. Former Earl Bartholomew is dying, but his spirits are lifted at the sight of his children. Calmly, Father takes charge and instructs Aliena and Richard to go live with their Aunt Edith, their mother's sister. Father had managed to smuggle a money belt to a local priest and tells the children to find him; he has 25 in silver in it for them. Aliena is thrilled at the prospect of the money and a home. Richard offers to break Father out of prison, but the old man tells them his time is over. He makes them promise not to waste their lives visiting him; they must swear not to come back to the jail. Aliena is horrified, but she knows her father will be stubborn to the end. Before they leave him for the final time, Father asks them both to make a solemn vow. He places their hands, one at a time, on the hilt of Richard's sword and they vow to revenge themselves on the Hamleights. With some trepidation, Aliena vows to protect and support her brother until Richard is restored as the rightful Earl of Shiring. Richard vows never to rest until he has regained the earldom.

They find the priest with the money belt at a poor parish in Winchester. The priest denies any knowledge of the money. Enraged, Aliena takes a log from the fire and threatens to burn down his house. The priest admits the money is hidden in the church. Richard and Aliena find the hiding place but there is only 21 in silver left. They set out on the road to Aunt Edith's house. Richard wants to spend all the money, but Aliena impatiently explains they must conserve it and find a way to turn it into more money. When they reach Aunt Edith's house, they find their uncle, Simon of Huntleigh. Simon informs them that Edith is dead, and Simon refuses to take them in. Dejected, they return to the road. Aliena sees a peasant shearing a sheep and has an inspiration. She learns the man gets a penny for each fleece in Winchester, but he loses a day's work in the fields traveling to town. She offers three-quarters of a penny per fleece, saving him the day of lost work. The man decides it's a bargain.

Aliena and Richard travel the countryside until they have a cartful of fleeces; after buying the fleeces, they have enough money left to buy a cart, an old horse, and some



food. They will also be able to pay the tax on the fleeces at the Winchester gate. Aliena intends to sell the fleeces to her friend Meg, the wool merchant, but, unfortunately, Meg and her husband were forced to leave town because of his disgrace. Aliena tries to sell the fleeces at the market, but the other wool merchants in town offer her half what they're worth.

Furious, Aliena speaks sharply to the man behind her in line who is staring at her. The man turns out to be Prior Philip. Philip includes Aliena's fleeces with the fleeces he has brought to market to sell and gets her a fair price. Aliena is grateful to her benefactor, but he insists he is glad for the chance to help her and Richard. Philip doesn't mention his role in her father's downfall, but he promises to keep buying her wool.

*Chapter 7:* Fifteen months after the old cathedral burned to the ground, Tom and his men set out for the quarry in Shiring. Philip has finally amassed the money to hire craftsmen, and Tom has employed a forester and a master quarryman named Otto Blackface. Otto arrives with his sons, also stonecutters, and several apprentices. Tom is thrilled to be able to mine the quarry at last and begin laying the stone walls at Kingsbridge. His life has improved dramatically since coming to Kingsbridge. He draws a good salary now as the official master builder for the cathedral, and his children are doing well. Alfred is 16 and old enough to begin earning full mason's wages for his work. Baby Jonathon is 15 months old, and although no one knows Tom is his father, Tom is able to spend a lot of time with his son, and they have developed a special bond. Seven-year-old Martha worries Tom the most, for she misses Jack greatly and needs a mother. Many of the women in the village would love to marry Tom; he has built himself a fine house in the village and has profitable, long-term employment building the cathedral. Tom has no interest in the village women, however; his heart still belongs to Ellen. He hopes she will keep her promise to return; he has more to offer her now and believes she may agree to marry him. Given Tom's new position, even Philip may accept the marriage.

Tom's optimism is dashed when they arrive at the quarry and discover that the Hamleighs are already mining it and have posted guards to keep Philip's men from obtaining the stone that the king granted them rights to mine. Tom is ready to fight, but Otto Blackface refuses to endanger his men. Back at the priory, Philip considers the progress he has made in his year and a half as prior. There had been problems during the first year. Philip demoted Remigius and promoted Cuthbert and Milius, his allies, but Remigius continues to cause unrest among the monks. The monks were unhappy with the austerity Philip was forced to impose to clean up the priory's finances and to pay for the cathedral. There were also rumors that baby Jonathon was really Philip's son. However, over time, Jonathon has won over the monks, and today he frolics in the miniature monk's habit that Johnny Eightpence made for him. The money Philip invested in sheep has begun to pay off since wool prices are rising, and the monks will soon be eating better than they ever had under the previous prior, James.

When Tom returns with the bad news about the quarry and the treacherous Hamleighs, Philip's hopes suffer a downturn. He calls an emergency chapter meeting to discuss the situation. The older, wiser monks tell Philip he cannot appeal to the king to enforce his





quarry rights. Maud's supporters continue to cause unrest, and the king is in constant need of fighting men to enforce his authority. Thus, the king is more likely to support the Hamleights since Earl Percy commands hundreds of knights and men-at-arms, whom the king needs. Their only hope is to take back the quarry themselves; King Stephen will not interfere if they manage this since the monks are technically in the right. Yet monks do not fight. What are they to do? Suddenly, Philip comes up with an idea.

Before dawn the next day, the monks sneak into the quarry and assemble on the scaffolding built by Hamleigh's quarrymen. They light candles and begin to sing holy songs as Otto's men start mining the quarry. When Hamleigh's men awake to the eerie scene, they are all afraid to touch the monks; to touch a man of God in violence is to endanger one's soul. The monks peacefully and bravely guard their quarried stones with their bodies, and eventually, the Hamleights' men give in; Harold of Shiring, Percy Hamleigh's master quarryman, agrees to work for Philip rather than lose his job altogether.

Bishop Waleran shows up at Earl Percy's castle. Waleran informs the Hamleights that Prior Philip has taken over the quarry. Although the Hamleights and Philip conspired to take the quarry rights away from Waleran, Waleran is ready to cut a deal with the Hamleights to thwart Philip. He suggests they convince the king that the cathedral should be built in Shiring and not at Kingsbridge. If the cathedral is moved to Shiring, the king will reallocate the quarry and forests to Shiring, meaning the Hamleights will get the entire earldom, and Waleran, instead of Philip, will get a prestigious cathedral. This also means Waleran would receive quarry rights and be able to build his castle, and a cathedral at Shiring would add prosperity to the Hamleights' earldom. To succeed, they must convince the king's brother, Bishop Henry, that Philip is incapable of getting the cathedral built. Waleran says he visited Kingsbridge at Easter time and the building site looked amateurish. "All they've got is a flat piece of ground with a few stakes banged into the soil and some ropes marking where they hope to build. They've started digging foundations, but they've only gone down a few feet. There's a mason working there with his apprentice, and the priory carpenter, and occasionally a monk or two doing some laboring. It's a very unimpressive sight, especially in the rain. I'd like Bishop Henry to see it." (pp. 421-422)

Regan Hamleigh gloats happily over this plan. They invite Bishop Henry to Kingsbridge for Whitsunday services, and Philip receives a letter informing him of the impending visit. Ten days before Whitsunday, Philip receives another letter, from the prior of Canterbury, warning Philip that Waleran has invited Bishop Henry to Kingsbridge in hopes of convincing him to move the diocese and the new cathedral to Shiring because Prior Philip has not accomplished any real work on the cathedral. Philip is stung by Waleran's continued treachery. "Philip had in fact achieved a great deal. He had cleared the ruins, approved the plans, laid out the new east end, made a start on the foundations, and begun felling trees and quarrying stone. But he did not have much to show a visitor. And he had overcome terrific obstacles to achieve this much - reforming the priory's finances, winning a major grant of lands from the king, and defeating Earl Percy over the quarry. It was not fair!" (pg. 424)



Again, Philip is inspired with a plan. With Cuthbert's guidance, he sends word to all the parish churches inviting people to come work on the cathedral on Whitsunday and any Sunday thereafter. Anyone who works will receive a full pardon for all their sins as well as food and drink. As Whitsunday approaches, Philip hopes that he will get at least a hundred men. If the building site does not look busy, Bishop Henry will surely give the cathedral away. As dawn lights the sky, Philip keeps an anxious eye out for workers and for Bishop Henry. Tom, whose livelihood is at stake, prepares the monks and shows them how best to organize the workers. By mid-morning when Henry is expected, only 80 people have arrived. Philip greets them gratefully but knows his plan is doomed. Aliena and Richard turn up to help; thanks to Philip, Aliena is now a prosperous wool merchant and owns a large home in Kingsbridge village. Suddenly, Milius shouts with joy; he calls Philip up to high ground to look: more than 1,000 volunteers are making their way up the hill to the priory. By the time Bishop Henry arrives, the building site is bustling with activity. Henry looks at the furious Waleran and smiles; Bishop Henry is impressed with Philip's ingenuity. The Kingsbridge cathedral is safe.

Bishop Henry asks to see Tom Builder's drawing of the cathedral. The bishop knows how to read building plans and is impressed with Tom's obvious knowledge and skill. Pleased to have impressed the bishop, Tom turns to find Ellen and Jack waiting for him. Jack is now a handsome young man and eagerly sets to work building; unlike Alfred, Jack is very interested in the art of masonry. Tom tells Ellen he does not intend to let her go again. He promises her he now has a secure livelihood, a nice home, and plenty of food to feed his family. He tells her Jack can become his apprentice, and the Masonic brotherhood will help keep Alfred and Jack from fighting. Ellen hesitates to accept his proposal. Finally, Tom tells Ellen he loves her with all his heart; that is what Ellen was waiting to hear. She throws her arms around him and accepts. Percy Hamleigh, bitter with his defeat, is horrified to see Ellen. He recognizes her and points her out to his wife. Meanwhile Jack, unhappy to be back with Alfred, spots Aliena in the crowd. Jack has never forgotten his beautiful princess and is now overjoyed at the idea of living in Kingsbridge for he will get to see Aliena every day.

## Part 2: 1136 - 1137 Analysis

This section of the novel continues the chronology with only a short skip ahead in time from Part 1. The fruition of desire begins to take place as Tom establishes himself as master builder of his long-hoped-for cathedral even as Philip begins to see positive progress resulting from his new post as Prior of Kingsbridge. Tom's 15-year projected time frame for the building of the cathedral is the author's way of foreshadowing the slow, but steady, pace at which the story will unfold. Meanwhile, the evil Hamleighs and the new bishop of Kingsbridge, Waleran, also continue their slow, but steady, ascent to power. Through this gradual development of protagonists and antagonists, the author prepares the reader for the major showdown, which must inevitably come, although at this point it seems far off in the future.

Meanwhile, to keep the novel's pacing from becoming bogged down by slowly developing events, the author treats the reader to a fast-paced, coming-of-age





adventure story involving Aliena. She is the central focus of Part 2, and as a member of former earl Bartholomew's family, she is inextricably linked to both William Hamleigh and Prior Philip. Ultimately, the author will also link her to Ellen and Jack's family, and thus to the fateful events following the sinking of the White Ship in the Prologue. Aliena is the keystone character who ties everyone together. This is a surprising choice by the author since her brother Richard would have made a more gender-appropriate protagonist in the twelfth century. By choosing Aliena, the author underscores his theme of gender politics even while using her character on a broader scale to show the fate of the people of Shiring, her father's former earldom.

William's rape of Aliena is a symbolic act foreshadowing what the Hamleigh family will do to the people and natural resources of Shiring if they can manage to take the earldom by force. Yet her resiliency, fortitude, and incredible ability to retain hope in the face of dark events equally foreshadow the response of the hearty villagers of Shiring. Both destruction and salvation are implicit in her storyline, which forecasts the mood of the overall novel. Aliena represents the bloodline of rulers who will rule Shiring well, as opposed to the evil usurpers, the Hamleighs, who will seek only to destroy the lands and people out of greed. Her alliance with her benefactor, Prior Philip, places Philip squarely on the side of good, and indeed he represents the best the Church has to offer in terms of honor and nobility. Had the author chosen Aliena's brother, rather than Aliena, as the lynchpin character, Philip's role would remain clearly defined by this simple definition of goodness. However, placing Aliena in the center of the conflict between Philip and William Hamleigh adds some subtle shades of darkness to Philip's motivations.

Philip is not only Aliena's benefactor, he was her destroyer as well; it was Philip's desire to advance Church power at all costs that led to Aliena's father's disgrace, leaving Shiring vulnerable to predators like the Hamleighs or predators like Philip. While Philip blindly believes his motives are good, he is every bit as greedy as the vulture-like Hamleighs when it comes to grabbing the wealth available in Shiring. Philip, Waleran, and the Hamleighs all fight bitterly over the valuable timber forests, limestone quarries, and rich farmlands. The Hamleighs and Waleran care only about personal advancement; Philip cares about enhancing the power of the Church and of his own priory at Kingsbridge. Only Aliena cares about the peasants and villagers of Shiring, who are all going hungry as the Church wars against the nobility to extract the maximum amount of profit from Shiring. Of course, Philip tells himself he desires only the advancement of God, yet he is blind to his own corruption. Philip can easily see the corruption so apparent in other members of the Church, but he does not notice or care that he and his monks live off the largesse of the peasants, who toil away at back-breaking labors each day to pay for the salvation of their immortal souls, which only Philip can provide.

It was Ellen in Part 1 who reminded Philip that the food he so charitably gives away was provided to him in the first place by the villagers. In Part 2, it is Aliena's turn to highlight Philip's shortcomings, although she herself is insensible to them. She considers him her friend because he is the only man who treats her fairly. Yet she does not know that his greed for Church power spurred the chain of events that left her homeless, penniless,



and vulnerable to being raped by William Hamleigh. In fact, Aliena has had to fight and even kill to survive, while Philip merely assuages his conscience by helping her get the same price for her hard-earned fleeces as any man or boy could fetch. It is fortunate for Aliena that she does not see through Philip's pious self-delusions, for in Part 1, when Ellen dared to stand up for herself and speak truth to Philip, Philip responded by banishing Ellen from Kingsbridge, labeling her a fallen woman, and ever after considering Ellen his enemy. It will be a final ironic testament to the nobility of women when Ellen, at the end of the novel, saves Philip's career and reputation. Meanwhile, Aliena's semi-dependency on Philip's good graces in this section will ultimately change, and she, too, will become Philip's financial savior as the novel progresses.



## Part 3: 1140 - 1142

### Part 3: 1140 - 1142 Summary

*Chapter 8:* The civil war between Stephen and Maud has dragged on for a year with no clear resolution, and William feels his men deserve a guaranteed conquest. William chooses a whore with a mass of dark, curly hair like Aliena's and purchases whores for his men as well. William is unable to perform until he starts beating his whore; the fear in her eyes arouses him. He calls for two of his knights to hold her down while he and Walter enjoy her simultaneously. Afterwards, when William asks her if it was all right, she spits Walter's semen in his face. William would have killed her, but to take her seriously with his men around would be to give her power, so he merely laughs it off. Just then, a page arrives with the news that William's father has died. Dazed, William allows his men to lead him to the king so William can formally ask permission to return home. The king grants William custody of the earldom of Shiring and all its revenues "*until the question of the succession is decided.*" (pg. 453) William cannot understand how there can possibly be any question, for his father was the earl of Shiring, but a handsome, arrogant young squire confronts William and says that his father also was the earl of Shiring. William notices the squire's missing earlobe and recognizes Richard, Aliena's brother.

At Earls castle in Shiring, William sits in his father's chair. His mother sits to his right. "He had often watched her, when his father was in this chair, and observed the way she played on Father's fears and weaknesses to get her own way. He was determined not to let her do the same to him." (pg. 454) They discuss Richard's bid for the earldom. Mother counsels him to act like an earl by dressing well and expressing decisive opinions. Most important, William must outshine Richard by providing the king even more men-at-arms and knights. Unfortunately, William learns there is no money in his treasury, partly because of his father's mismanagement and partly because the peasants are being lured somewhere besides Shiring to work. Some other town is collecting their rent money and benefiting from their labor. Angrily, William suggests they increase taxes at the Shiring market and fleece fair, which is the biggest marketplace in the land. His treasurer informs him they have already done so. The treasurer also explains that it is pointless to evict farmers who are behind on their rent because if they take away the farmers' livelihoods they will have no chance of making future payments. In the past, the treasurer informs William, the quarry provided the earl with great profit when rents were down as a result of bad harvests, but now Philip's church has control of the quarry.

Furious, William decides to take some soldiers and visit every village on his lands. He intends to rape and pillage and teach the villagers that they can't cheat the earl of Shiring. He arrives first at Northbrook and discovers that several young men have left Northbrook to work on the Kingsbridge Cathedral. William takes his anger out on the old man who gives him this news, beating him mercilessly. His anger still unslaked, William sees an illegal mill operation; peasants and serfs are required by law to bring their grain



to William's mills to be ground. William charges them to grind their grain, and thus, the illegal mill represents a loss to his income. He locks the miller inside and destroys the mill, killing the trapped miller. Finally, William notices a blushing young bride in the crowd. He exercises his right as lord to her sexual favors, even though this privilege is rarely exercised anymore. Most newly married men pay a fee to their lord instead of granting them a night with their new wives, but the husband has paid no fee and William rapes the wife. He allows his knights to rape her as well.

As William continues to pillage the towns under his control, he hears more peasants talk about Kingsbridge. He decides to visit Kingsbridge and is horrified to see how prosperous the priory and surrounding village have become. When he sees an unlicensed market doing business in the prosperous village, he realizes that this is why his own Shiring market has lost revenue. He is disgusted to see work on the cathedral progressing with the help of both paid and volunteer laborers. Worse yet, at the market he sees Aliena; she is beautiful as ever and now she is a prosperous wool merchant. When he tries to stare her down, she merely stares back, unafraid. William sees Prior Philip and tries to accuse him of running an unlicensed market, but Philip will not listen to William. He accuses William of being an arsonist, thief, rapist, and murderer, for tales of William's recent exploits have reached Kingsbridge. Philip orders William to his knees to do penance. Humiliated, William turns tail and leaves with his men.

In fear of his immortal soul, William confesses his sins to Bishop Waleran, who listens with obvious distaste. Despite his dislike for William, Waleran's career is also suffering from Philip's success, and he wishes to team up with William to destroy Philip. He convinces William to attack Philip's quarrymen and take back the quarry. William asks what the king will say if he does so, and Waleran assures him that he can say it was retribution for Philip's illegal market. Waleran offers to give William absolution for any murders he commits in the process. William and his men waste no time in attacking Otto Blackface and his crew at the quarry. Otto's men fight valiantly, but they are outnumbered; several men, women, and children are killed and William retakes the quarry.

*Chapter 9:* The loss of the quarry and the people who lived and worked there tears at Philip's heart. It also means the possible death of his dream to build a cathedral, for although the priory's finances are much improved, the loss of free quarry limestone and loss of income from the Kingsbridge market leaves Philip unable to pay his debts. The peasants, terrorized by William and his men, are now afraid to come to market at Kingsbridge. Philip knows he must see the king to get a license for his market and ask for his quarry rights to be enforced. He takes leave of 5-year-old Jonathon and heads for Winchester, accompanied by Aliena's brother, Richard. Philip is not fond of Richard, who lacks the integrity, intelligence, and kindness of his sister, but Philip needs a guard, and Richard is an admirable soldier.

Upon arriving at Winchester, King Stephen keeps Philip waiting for an audience. The king has not kept his promise to support the Church, which has caused friction between him and his brother, Bishop Henry. Stephen is not eager to speak to any churchmen, including Philip. Stephen is still besieged by Maud's soldiers, and in fact, her men have



taken over the castle in Winchester. The entire town of Winchester is leading an uneasy existence with the enemy encamped within the walls. After several days of waiting, Philip is finally summoned by Stephen. Stephen forces Philip to switch clothes with him and take a walk around the castle. Stephen wishes to scout out the enemy forces within the castle, but knows his king's robes make him an easy target for enemy arrows. Thus, Philip's life is at risk as he walks the castle grounds with Stephen, wearing the king's robes. However, Stephen is impressed by Philip's willingness to put his life at risk for the king. Stephen is on the verge of granting Philip a market license and returning the quarry to him when suddenly an earl rushes up and announces that Robert of Gloucester's men are attacking Winchester. William of Hamleigh arrives just then with 250 fighting men. Stephen is thrilled to see William and his army, and Philip knows he has lost his petition for the market and quarry.

Philip's only remaining hope to complete his cathedral is that King Stephen will be defeated in the impending battle. The fighting starts right away. William leads his men into the fray, but is upset to see that Richard is also there, fighting bravely for the king. The king's men are quickly overtaken by Maud's army. William wishes to retreat but he sees Richard still fighting beside the king; William is forced to stay or else lose face. From the roof of the Winchester cathedral, Philip watches the battle. He is overjoyed when he hears that King Stephen has been taken captive; it is God's punishment, he believes, for Stephen's broken promises to the church. As the conquering army overruns Winchester, Philip is taken captive. He is terrified that Queen Maud will learn of his capture and write him off as a supporter of King Stephen's. To Philip's surprise, Maud's secretary arrives to demand his freedom. Philip grins when he sees that the secretary is his brother, Francis. Francis still works for Robert, earl of Gloucester, who is one of Maud's most trusted allies. Francis arranges an audience with Maud, and Philip asks for the quarry and market rights. William, who has changed sides and given his soldiers to Maud, wins the quarry rights. Philip is granted the market license with the same rights as the market at Shiring. His heart sinks when Maud demands he pay her ? 100 for the license.

?107 for the rights to next year's fleeces, and Philip obtains a license for his market. They celebrate together, but Philip cannot help but worry what William Hamleigh may do next.

*Chapter 10:* On Saint Augustine's Day, Jack continues to work despite the holiday. Although still only an apprentice mason, Jack's skill is exceptional; in addition to understanding the finer details of stonemasonry, he is also an exceptional stone sculptor. Tom insists Jack take the day off and Jack heads to the woods, as usual, where he is most comfortable. He thinks of his love for Aliena; handsome Jack has refused the attentions of the village girls, preferring to daydream about his princess. Weeks ago, he discovered that Aliena also likes to sneak off to the forest; she spends time in a clearing where she likes to read. Aliena, too, has refused the attentions of countless suitors and has acquired a reputation for being impossible to woo. Today, Jack determines to find her and speak to her. He is in luck; Aliena is reading in the



clearing when he arrives. He learns she is reading *The Romance of Alexander*. Aliena is surprised to learn that Jack reads and also knows many songs and stories. She tells him about jongleurs, men who play music and recite stories for a living. They engage in a literary conversation, which pleases them both; no one else in the village, save Prior Philip, knows anything about literature. Jack enthralls Aliena by reciting "The Song of Roland" for her.

That night, the villagers gather for a holiday feast. They play games and socialize; Philip attends the feast though he is mildly disapproving of non-Christian feasting. Philip chooses this occasion to ask Tom to give Jack to the priory. Philip recognizes Jack's intelligence and wants him to become one of his monks. Tom agrees to discuss it with Ellen. Meanwhile, Aliena is considering her future. She is frustrated with her lazy brother who refuses to do any kind of work except fighting whenever the king calls him to war. She has spent years supporting him, and through her determination and skill she has prospered; he is now a knight thanks to her ability to pay for his training, weapons, and warhorses. Aliena's biggest fear is that she will be thrust back into poverty, and she knows that Richard will do nothing to prevent this. Aliena is inspired to start a small cloth-weaving business to make additional money from her wool business. Impressed with the stories Ellen has taught Jack, Aliena offers Jack's mother a job weaving clothes. Ellen, who dislikes being financially dependent on her husband, gladly agrees, but when Aliena asks Ellen where she learned the stories she passed onto her son, Ellen will say only that they came from Jack's father.

The feast day inspires many villagers to take stock of their wealth earned under Prior Philip's rule and how to increase it. Alfred, Tom's son, who is now a full-fledged mason, decides to build a stone church in the village to earn money and enhance the village's reputation. He seeks out Aliena, who, as the most prosperous merchant in town, holds a lot of sway with the other villagers. She agrees to his idea and together they form a parish guild. Each villager who joins the guild contributes money to the church building fund. Alfred will head up the crew of builders. Meanwhile, Jack asks his mother whether his real father was a jongleur; Ellen says he was. Ellen can tell that Jack is in love with Aliena and encourages him to pursue her. Tom tells Ellen and Jack about Philip's proposal to make Jack a monk. Jack refuses outright; his dream is to be the world's best stonemason. Just like Tom, Jack dreams of being master builder for a cathedral.

All summer, Jack carefully woos Aliena. He never speaks of love; he merely entertains her with his passion for storytelling. They become fast friends, and the whole town knows they meet clandestinely in the forest each Sunday. Jack regularly acts out the stories as he tells them, so one day when he kisses Aliena lightly on the lips while telling a story, she assumes he is just caught up in the passionate tale. She doesn't understand that he is in love with her. As the summer progresses, Aliena's cloth-weaving business prospers. Her only problem is that none of her employees want to undertake the arduous task of felting the wool. Aliena wishes there were an easier way to felt wool that did not require back-breaking labor; this issue prevents her business from prospering. Alfred's parish guild scheme, however, is a success. The money has been raised and the building plans are in place; Alfred has secured 2 years of work for himself as a master builder on the church. Although Aliena's relationship with Alfred has





been strictly professional, Alfred tries to make something more of it and proposes. Aliena dislikes Alfred and refuses his proposal. Angrily, he accuses her of having an affair with his half-brother, Jack.

At the church court, Prior Philip fines the poor villagers who grind their own grain instead of paying the priory-controlled mill to grind it. After court, he is surprised to learn that his brother, Francis, has arrived for a visit. Francis explains that because Robert of Gloucester was captured by men still loyal to former King Stephen, Queen Maud has lost the throne. Stephen is once again king. Francis warns Philip that Stephen may not uphold the market license that Maud granted him. Philip has paid ?100 for nothing. The only good news is that King Stephen is no friend to William Hamleigh since William switched sides and supported Maud.

Meanwhile, Jack contrives an ingenious solution to Aliena's cloth-felting problems. One Sunday he disappears, taking all the stonemason hammers with him. Aliena is terribly worried and searches for Jack. She finds him in the priory mill; Jack has rigged a clever contraption using the hammers and the mill wheel that felts large quantities of wool without any manual labor. Aliena is so overwhelmed with gratitude that she throws her arms around Jack and kisses him. For the first time in her life, Aliena is overcome with passion. Jack returns her kiss and they cling together in the millhouse until they are interrupted by Alfred. "She flushed with shame. Alfred was staring at her, his expression a mixture of lust and contempt that reminded her vividly of William Hamleigh. She was disgusted with herself for giving Alfred a reason to look down on her, and furious at Jack for his part in it." (pg. 568) Aliena runs home and is greeted by Richard with the news that King Stephen is on the march to put down Maud's army once and for all; Richard needs her to buy him a new warhorse.

For 3 months after the mill incident, Aliena refuses to speak to Jack. He cannot understand; the passionate kiss they shared convinced him that Aliena loves him as he loves her, but she refuses to admit it. Alfred, jealous about Jack and Aliena, takes to tormenting Jack more than ever. One day, he starts a fight by telling Jack some scandalous news Alfred heard in Shiring: Jack's father was hanged as a thief. Alfred smiles to see how this news upsets Jack. Jack angrily throws his beer in Alfred's face. Alfred is so angry he tries to kill Jack. Jack runs to escape the fight, but Alfred pursues him, forcing him to fight back. Jack runs up the 80-foot-high section of stone wall that still has wet mortar at the top. Alfred tries to throw Jack off the wall to his death; Jack escapes, but the wall is seriously damaged in the process. Alfred pursues Jack into the nearby mason's lodge. Cornered, Jack is ready to kill Alfred to save his own life. The two men accidentally set fire to the lodge in the fight. Tom directs the fire-fighting efforts and assures Philip the mason's lodge will deal with Alfred and Jack. Philip is furious and insists that either Jack or Alfred must leave.

The stonemasons support Alfred. Although they realize Alfred is a bully and was primarily responsible for the fight, Alfred is a full-fledged mason while Jack is only an apprentice. They fear that if they support Jack and kick Alfred out, it will set a precedent that could grant other apprentices too much power over their masters. Jack is furious with Tom for supporting Alfred over him and angrily reveals that Tom would not be



building a cathedral if Jack hadn't burned the old cathedral down. Tom is too stunned to respond to this news. After the masons tell Jack he's been banished, he goes to say goodbye to his mother. Ellen is overwrought. Jack forces her to talk about his father; Ellen admits she has never been able to talk about it before because she loved his father so much, and the memories are too painful. She admits Jack Shareburg was hung as a thief, but swears he was framed by the priory of Kingsbridge. Jack asks who framed his father, but she will say only that it happened before Prior Philip's time. Mother convinces Jack to go with her to see Prior Philip to appeal the masons' decision. Philip proposes an alternative for Jack. He can stay in Kingsbridge and continue working on the cathedral which he loves, but since the lodge has kicked him out, he must work directly for Prior Philip. The only way he can work for Philip is to become a monk. Ellen feels betrayed; Philip always gets what he wants.

ece fair will bring enough prosperity to Kingsbridge to ensure the success of the cathedral project and to make up for the ?100 Philip paid Maud. Jack, who has been a monk for 3 months now, rises early to check the market preparations. Like his mother, he has little trust in clergymen or Christianity, but he has been enjoying the education that the Church provides him. He has been given a position of responsibility on the cathedral project that makes him Tom Builder's equal. Tom treats him with respect and often even defers to his opinions. Jack is considering taking the monk's vows in 9 months' time, but he cannot get his mind off Aliena. Today, Aliena stocks her market stall with a year's worth of wool, which she knows will sell easily for a good profit. All her resources have been expended in buying the wool; consequently, she and the other merchants guard their stalls carefully, for their fortunes are all invested in their goods, and they cannot afford to have them stolen. Despite the prosperity, she expects to receive today, Aliena is miserable without Jack and regrets having spurned him.

Tom considers his own fortunes as market day dawns. It has been 4 years since Ellen returned to marry him. The 15 months he spent apart from Ellen in the early days allowed him to grieve for Agnes, and his marriage to Ellen has been wonderful. They have not been blessed with children, but Tom is grateful to have developed a wonderful relationship with his young son, Jonathon. No one knows that Tom is the father, but he and Jonathon have developed a special bond nonetheless. Tom had agonized over the revelation that Jack burnt down the cathedral, but he has come to peace with this because everyone in Kingsbridge has prospered from the building of the new cathedral. Today's market would not be possible were it not for the building project. Tom takes Jonathon to the market fair; somehow the little boy wanders away and Tom searches for him frantically. To his horror, he finds Jonathon atop the 80-foot wall of the cathedral, smiling down proudly at Tom. Tom bravely climbs the wall to rescue the boy. As he makes the perilous descent down the jagged stone side of the wall with the boy in his arms, Tom sees a terrible sight: a large group of armed men on horseback approaching the market.

Tom quickly gives the alarm and gets his family to safety just as William Hamleigh's men ride in and set fire to the village and marketplace. Aliena refuses to leave her stall as her





entire fortune is there. William sees her and grins as he sets fire to her entire inventory. He tries to kill her, but Jack intervenes and saves her life; they escape with burned hair and singed eyebrows, but no worse injury. Aliena, distraught at losing her fortune, pushes Jack away again. He reluctantly leaves her to seek out his family. Jack sees Tom's dead body lying on the ground. Jack speaks to the dead man, apologizing for his harsh words after the fight with Alfred, and thanking Tom for everything he's given Jack. Jack is grateful for the food and shelter Tom provided, for the love Tom gave to his mother, Ellen, and most of all, for teaching Jack his passion for building. "'You gave me the cathedral,' Jack whispered to the dead man. 'Thank you.'" (pg. 604)

### **Part 3: 1140 - 1142 Analysis**

Part 3 picks up the story chronologically after a 3-year gap; during this period, civil war has become the norm as Maud and Stephen continue to battle for the throne. The peasants feel this unrest most dramatically because without a strong king to command them, the corrupt and power-hungry members of the nobility have complete power over their subjects and use it cruelly. In Section Three, the anarchy inspired by the constant state of warfare leaves room for William Hamleigh to rape and pillage to his heart's content. As long as he provides horses and soldiers for use by the king of the moment, the king turns a blind eye to William's mistreatment of the peasant class. Even more than before, power rules. Those who have it or can provide it can literally get away with murder and often do. The powerless peasants are tyrannized by the powerful lords who seek to extract every penny they have.

Ironically, the author again draws parallels between good Prior Philip and evil William Hamleigh. As this section begins, William Hamleigh murders a milliner for the crime of running an illegal mill. The mill is illegal because William has a mill of his own and, as earl, his coffers are supposed to be filled by the grinding of all the peasants' grain. Later in this section, Philip is shown holding court at the priory, fining the impoverished peasants for milling their own grain. Philip fines them money as opposed to murdering them as William does, yet in some ways Philip is actually stricter than William, for Philip goes so far as to fine a poor old peasant woman who ground her tiny bit of grain in a bowl with an old-fashioned mortar and pestle. This shows that Philip, just like William, is determined to take away the independence of the people. Self-sufficiency is a threat to Philip's coffers, and he does not tolerate it. Just as the Church proclaimed itself to be a necessary conduit in mankind's relationship to God, it also proclaims itself to be a necessary conduit in mankind's relationship to food. The people are allowed nothing without the Church's say-so; thus Philip's character, and the Church he represents, are fundamentally as corrupt and greedy as the Hamleigh family and their ilk.



## Part 4: 1142 - 1145

### Part 4: 1142 - 1145 Summary

*Chapter 11:* More than 100 people burn to death in William's raid of Kingsbridge; the town lies in ruins. To William's shock, Bishop Waleran refuses to give him absolution. William's mother taught William to fear the fires of hell, and William is horrified that Waleran will not absolve his sins. Waleran explains that he and Bishop Henry are once again supporting King Stephen; he will grant William absolution only if William pledges his loyalty and his army to Stephen. Waleran further suggests that William take advantage of the ruination of Aliena's wool business. She had been the largest wool merchant in the area; with her out of the way, William can force his peasants to sell their fleeces directly to him and thus corner the fleece market. William readily agrees.

Back at Kingsbridge Priory, Philip is devastated. The prosperous town which grew up around the cathedral building project lies in ruins and the surviving villagers are too disheartened to rebuild. With Tom Builder dead, the cathedral seems lost, too. Was it all for nothing? Fortunately, Jack steps in and takes charge. He oversees the treatment of the wounded and the burial of the dead. "Jack pointed out that most of the citizens who had survived the fire had lost very little of material value - just a hovel and a few sticks of furniture, in most cases. The crops were still in the fields, the livestock were in the pastures, and people's savings were still where they had been buried, usually beneath the hearth of their homes, untouched by the above-ground blaze that had swept the town." (pg. 614) Jack encourages the villagers to rebuild and convinces Philip to allow the townspeople to take timber for free from the priory forests for their new houses. Jack convinces Philip to draw a plan for the new town and Philip's hope returns as he models the town plan on the orderly square pattern of the thriving city of Winchester. Within 3 weeks of the fire, the house-building is complete, and Kingsbridge is more beautiful than before thanks to Philip's excellent plan.

Half of the townspeople are dead, however, and several merchants like Aliena have been completely ruined. Philip still lacks a master builder. Alfred volunteers to take over his father's job and Philip agrees. Alfred proposes some improvements to his father's cathedral plan, including a fireproof stone roof instead of the wooden roof Tom had planned. Alfred convinces Philip the walls will still stand even if Alfred builds a heavy stone roof. On Lammas Day, Richard returns home from war to find his sister living in a small house in the poor section of town. Richard cannot believe she lost her entire fortune; he tells her to make more money, but Aliena is too discouraged to start again and furious with her lazy brother for always expecting her to bail him out. Richard tells Aliena that Alfred has spoken to him about marrying Aliena. If Aliena agrees to marry Alfred, he will buy Richard a new warhorse and support both Richard and Aliena. Aliena is disgusted that the two men have been discussing her like horse traders, but she sees no other way of fulfilling her vow to her father besides marrying Alfred.



Disconsolate, Aliena goes up to the tallest tower in the new cathedral and considers throwing herself over the side. Jack arrives in time to stop her. "Every fiber of her body told her to throw herself into his arms, but she knew what she had to do. She wanted to say *I love you like a thunderstorm, like a lion, like a helpless rage*; but instead she said: 'I think I'm going to marry Alfred.'" (pg. 625) Jack walks away from her forever. Unfortunately, the other monks see him meeting Aliena in the tower. As punishment for being seen alone with a woman, they confine Jack to the priory grounds. He throws himself into his studies hoping to forget Aliena. A few days later, a monk congratulates Jack on the fact that Alfred and Aliena are to be married the following day. Jack is galvanized into action. He does not wish to be a monk, he only agreed to this choice to work on the cathedral. Since Alfred took over as master builder, Jack has found no pleasure in the building work, anyway. Also, if Aliena marries Alfred, his life will have lost all meaning. Jack decides to escape his confinement and stop Aliena from marrying Alfred. Philip will not be so easily thwarted, however; he orders the monks to stop Jack from leaving and they place him in the obedience room, which is a windowless cell in the lower floor of one of the older monastic buildings.

Jack desperately seeks a way out, but the cell is completely sealed. If he cannot escape tonight, Aliena will be a married woman before he sees her again. Just before dawn, Jack wakes up and is shocked to find his mother in the cell. Ellen shows him a loose stone slab in the floor that leads to the river below. If he can hold his breath long enough to walk upstream he can escape the priory. Ellen knows this because she used to visit Jack's father in this very cell during the 10 months when Jack Shareburg was imprisoned here. Jack realizes he must have been conceived on this very stone floor. Together, they make their way to the riverbank, where Ellen has hidden some clothes for Jack. Jack casts off his monk's habit, never to wear it again. He thanks his mother and heads directly for Aliena's house, hoping Richard will not be there. Jack reminds Aliena of their passionate kiss in the mill and demands to know how she can pretend not to love him. Aliena tells him she is afraid of love. She hangs her head and confesses to being raped by William Hamleigh and his groom, Walter. She realizes now how much her coldness has hurt Jack, and she apologizes. She and Jack make love, and for the first time in her life, Aliena realizes how wonderful sex can be. Afterwards, Jack is shocked when Aliena still insists on marrying Alfred. They both know she will be miserable, but she insists on upholding her vow to her father to help Richard become the earl of Shiring. She believes she needs to marry Alfred to accomplish this. Jack cannot change her stubborn mind; she weeps as he leaves.

Jack seeks out Alfred and asks him to call off the wedding. Jack points out that Alfred does not truly love Aliena, though Jack does. Alfred smiles and says he is marrying her to thwart Jack. "The ultimate malignity of Alfred's purpose struck Jack like a blow. Alfred was not going to treat her well. That would be his final revenge on Jack. Alfred was going to marry Aliena and make her miserable." (pg. 646) Ellen steps between them before they can come to blows. Alfred goes off to prepare for his wedding. Jack tells Ellen he must leave town so that the monks do not recapture him; he will not return to the priory. Both the cathedral and Aliena are lost to him now. At Jack's request, Ellen tells him that jongleurs like Jack's father can be found on the pilgrim road to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Jack tells her he will go to Spain to try to find out more about his



father. She helps him escape. Ellen takes a live cockerel to the wedding that day and curses the marriage with barrenness, bitterness, hatred, bereavement, regret, and impotence. After the wedding, Ellen disappears.

Martha, who still lives with her brother Alfred, has prepared his bedroom with clean linens for the newlyweds. That night Alfred makes no attempt to treat Aliena kindly. He orders her to get undressed, reminding her that he's "entitled to see my wife's tits." Aliena knows this is the choice she has made and obediently, though reluctantly, undresses. Roughly, he plunges a finger inside her and mutters angrily because her body does not respond passionately. "He removed his hand, spat on it twice, and rubbed the spittle between her legs. It seemed a dreadfully contemptuous act. She bit her lip and looked away." (pg. 653) Alfred is unable to perform so Aliena dutifully touches him and tries to make his body respond. He remains impotent and angrily slaps her face. Alfred pushes her off the bed and makes her sleep on the floor. He ignores her as she cries herself to sleep.

*Chapter 12:* All winter, Alfred continues to make Aliena sleep on the floor at the foot of the bed like a dog. Their marriage is never consummated, yet Aliena finds she is pregnant. Joy and dread fill her at the thought of having Jack's child; she wants nothing more, but is afraid of what Alfred will do when he discovers her pregnancy. Thinking he will beat her and cause her to lose the child, she hides her growing belly under loose clothes. Alfred, thinking she has gained weight, is disgusted by her. Prior Philip is thrilled that Ellen is gone; he no longer doubts that she is a witch because of the way she cursed the wedding, and he regrets forgiving her and allowing her to live in Kingsbridge with her late husband, Tom. However, Philip can tell that Aliena is miserable with Alfred. He regrets his actions in preventing Jack from marrying Aliena. He feels "guilty that he had been so committed to his own plans for Jack that he had failed to realize what the boy really needed." (pg. 658) Now Jack's services are lost to the Kingsbridge cathedral.

In fact, realizes Philip, everything has gone wrong since William Hamleigh's attack on the fleece fair. The morale of the town has not recovered. Having lost half their population in the fire, commerce at the market has shrunk, and Philip has had to reduce his complement of builders by half. He believes Kingsbridge is in a downward spiral; unless some miracle comes along to inspire the town to move forward, Philip fears the town and cathedral will be lost. When Alfred tells Philip that, because of the mild winter, they can start building earlier in the year than usual, Philip thinks he's found the hope he was looking for. He asks Alfred to complete the chancel by Whitsunday, and Alfred agrees. The chancel is the most important part of the church; once the chancel has been roofed with Alfred's stone vault and dedicated, Kingsbridge will have a functioning cathedral. The rest of the building can then be completed at leisure, for church services will no longer be held either in the open air or in the underground crypt, as has been the case for several years.

Things are looking up for Bishop Waleran. Since partnering with William in the wool business, Waleran's fortunes have greatly improved and soon he will be able to recommence building on the castle he planned so long ago. William Hamleigh, however, is out of patience. Despite everything he's done for Waleran and for the crown, he is still



not the official earl of Shiring. Much of Waleran's influence with Bishop Henry and with both King Stephen and Queen Maud has resulted from Waleran's alliance with William. Every time Bishop Henry has changed allegiance from Stephen to Maud and back again, Waleran has followed suit and has convinced William to put his vast army in the service of whichever king Waleran and Henry are backing at the time. Now William threatens to change alliances again so that Waleran will no longer be able to deliver William's army to the monarch of his choosing. Waleran tells William that the chancel at Kingsbridge cathedral will be opened for the first time on Whitsunday. Waleran suggests it would be a fine insult to Philip if William were confirmed as earl on Whitsunday.

On Whitsunday, Aliena's time is near and her back aches terribly. Still hiding her pregnancy, she sends Martha off to the big church service so she can rest. After Martha leaves, Aliena's water breaks. Terrified of having to give birth alone, Aliena makes her way to the new cathedral since all of the townspeople are there for the consecration of the chancel. She enters the church, looking for Martha. A loud noise shakes the building as huge cracks appear in the walls. The stone ceiling tumbles down on top of the villagers of Kingsbridge, all gathered here today. Philip's quick thinking and leadership saves many of the people, but others are crushed in the wreckage. As the dust settles, Bishop Waleran smiles triumphantly at Philip. Just then, a baby is heard crying from the wreckage. The survivors busily dig through the wreckage, desperate to save the baby. At last they unearth the baby and its smiling mother, Aliena.

No one knows for sure why the church fell. Some blame Alfred's stone roof and others blame Philip for rushing the building of the chancel. Seventy-nine people died in the church on Whitsunday, and people are beginning to say that the cathedral is cursed. When Alfred learns of the baby, he sends Aliena away. Thrilled to have gotten away from him so easily, Aliena moves back into her old house with her brother, Richard, and dotes on her baby. The fact that William Hamleigh has been made Earl of Shiring shows Aliena that she married Alfred for nothing. She gives up all hope of fulfilling her vow to her father; she and Richard live meagerly off the rental of his warhorse. When even this income falls through, Richard must travel to Shiring to sell his armor. In his absence, Ellen arrives for a visit; she has been living in her old forest home since Aliena's wedding day, but she heard about the baby and wants to meet her grandson. Ellen tells Aliena she owes it to herself and to her baby to find Jack. Aliena realizes that since William has been made earl, and Alfred has kicked her out, she owes neither of them anything anymore. She is free to go after Jack. Ellen tells her that he went to Spain, to the town of Compostela. Aliena's heart sinks at this news, but she is determined to travel to the ends of the earth if need be to find him.

Unwilling to part with the baby, Aliena takes him with her. She refuses to name her son without Jack. She takes a ship to Barfleur and finds lodgings in Cherbourg. From there, she heads to Tours and finds evidence of Jack's distinctive stone-carving artistry in a cathedral. To her elation, an old mason remembers Jack well, although it has been a year since Jack passed through Cherbourg. Jack's skills had been so great that the master builder on the cathedral had become jealous and driven Jack away. The baby falls ill and Aliena, terrified, finds him medicine and holy water to drive off the infection. Mercifully, the baby survives and she resumes her journey, but it is a long while before





she finds further traces of Jack. At Christmastime in Compostela, Aliena learns that Jack was there but left months ago, traveling to the south of Spain. Disheartened, Aliena remains determined to find him.

Jack spends Christmas with his friend Raschid Alharoun in Toledo. Raschid is a wealthy and educated Arab who has converted to Christianity. Jack is in Toledo studying math, science, and discovering the amazing new European brand of cathedral architecture that allows slimmer walls and huge, open windows the likes of which have never been seen in England. Raschid takes a liking to the lively, intelligent Jack, and Jack spends a lot of time at Raschid's lovely home. Raschid has a young daughter who has her heart set on Jack. She is intelligent and beautiful, and for the first time since leaving Aliena, Jack is tempted to give his heart to another. One day Raschid sits him down for a serious talk. He explains that Jack's friendship with his daughter may continue only if Jack's intentions are honorable. He offers to set Jack up with many wealthy clients for whom Jack can build homes if he marries the daughter, Aysha. If Jack will not marry her, he must end his association with Raschid. Jack adores Raschid, his family, and the comfortable lifestyle they enjoy in Toledo. He imagines his future as a prominent builder and wife of Aysha; it is very tempting.

A month later, Aliena arrives on the doorstep of Raschid's house with Jack's baby in her arms. The women inform her that Jack left a month ago; they see the baby, which has Jack's red hair, and refuse to tell her where Jack went. After Aysha's hostile mother goes inside, Aysha runs out to speak to Aliena. In tears, Aysha explains that she had hoped to marry Jack, and although Jack seemed to like her, he had broken her heart by leaving. Now that she sees Aliena, she understands his heart already belonged to another. Aliena is elated when Aysha tells her that Jack has gone to Paris to work on a new cathedral being built there. Aliena goes directly to Paris and has no trouble finding the cathedral. She steps inside with the baby in her arms and as if in a dream she sees Jack, his hair lit by a ray of sunshine as he walks towards her. They fall into each other's arms. When Jack learns that Aliena has spent three-quarters of a year searching all over Europe for him, he realizes she truly loves him and forgives her for breaking his heart. She tells him of the curse Ellen put on her marriage to Alfred and Jack is overjoyed to learn the marriage was never consummated and that the baby is his child. They take food and wine into the fields to dine together. They name the baby Tom, and then make joyful love in the sunny field while the baby sleeps.

Jack and Aliena rent a house as man and wife, and Jack works on the cathedral. The cathedral at Saint-Denis is the most amazing sight Jack has ever seen. It employs an ingenious design that allows light to flood the cathedral. "As just about every important church leader in France was seeing this, it struck Jack that the new style was likely to be widely imitated; indeed, masons who could say they had actually worked on Saint-Denis would be in great demand. Coming here had been a clever move, cleverer than he had imagined: it had greatly improved his chances of designing and building a cathedral himself." (pg. 712) Aliena tells Jack about the sad state of affairs in Kingsbridge. Jack tells her of his travels. His only souvenir is a weeping lady statue of the Virgin Mary that Raschid gave him as a parting gift. The statue used to weep each day when it was in Spain; now it no longer does. Jack suspects the supposedly





miraculous statue actually weeps because its eyes are made of crystal and the rainy weather in Spain must somehow cause moisture to gather and leak from the eye area.

On the day the cathedral at Saint-Denis is consecrated, a huge crowd gathers. The church dignitaries fail to provide the entertainment that the crowd had hoped for, and in fact, they literally beat the peasants off with sticks to keep them from touching the walls. The dissatisfied crowd quickly becomes a mob. Jack and Aliena watch fearfully as violence erupts in the crowd. Jack, however, realizes that the crowd simply wants a show and is resorting to violence for entertainment. Jack holds up the weeping lady Madonna and loudly begins extolling its miraculous properties. The crowd stops fighting and begins to follow Jack and the Madonna as he walks jauntily towards the church. He places the statue in the shadow of the great cathedral and it begins to weep. The crowd is awed; Jack believes it weeps as a result of the combination of humidity from an earlier rain and the sudden temperature change when Jack placed the statue in the cool shade. However, peasants begin throwing money at the feet of the wooden Madonna, and Jack is inspired. He tells the crowd that it is his holy mission to take the Madonna home to Kingsbridge and to build her a cathedral there to enshrine her. He announces that he has been appointed the master builder of the Kingsbridge cathedral and tells them the Madonna will confer blessings on anyone who provides money towards the building of the cathedral.

Afterwards, the bishops and archbishops present for the consecration of Saint-Denis examine the statue and proclaim it to be genuinely miraculous. The Abbot of Saint-Denis tries to keep the Madonna for his own cathedral, but the archbishop of Canterbury is present at the ceremony and insists Jack be allowed to take it to Kingsbridge. The archbishop sends two priests to accompany Jack and Aliena on their journey to ensure that the proceeds actually go toward building the Kingsbridge cathedral. As this group travels across Europe, people everywhere flock to the statue, and the pile of money for the Kingsbridge cathedral continues to grow. Jack embellishes the story, explaining that the Madonna is ancient and has long languished in the land of the Saracens, but had been given to him by a Saracen turned Christian. Their trip home takes on the quality of a traveling sideshow, but faithful peasants along the way are uplifted by the miraculous Madonna. Only in Cherbourg is Jack greeted with anything less than enthusiasm. The people of Cherbourg react as if they've seen a ghost when they spot Jack. After some confusion, Jack realizes they think he is his father. Jack Shareburg was actually Jacques Cherbourg. Jack meets his grandmother who is thrilled to learn that the baby is her great-grandson. Jack also learns that his father had been a passenger on the ill-fated White Ship and was presumed to have gone down with the ship.

*Chapter 13:* Back in Kingsbridge, Philip preaches the story of Job to his congregation. Every face he sees staring back at him mirrors loss, hopelessness, and despair. Philip tries to encourage them with the story of Job's perseverance. He reminds them that after losing everything, Job retained his faith, and God rewarded him with more wealth and children than he had before losing it all in the first place. Philip closes his heavy book and sighs; the congregation appears unmoved. Suddenly, at the back of the church, a commotion ensues as Jack enters with the Weeping Madonna and his



entourage. Two dark-skinned Saracens accompany him, along with the two priests from Saint-Denis, Aliena, and the baby. Philip is irritated when Jack speaks without permission, telling the congregation of the miraculous Madonna. With a flourish, Jack presents Philip with a chest full of silver for the cathedral building fund. Jack tells everyone that Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury has helped secure the Madonna for the Kingsbridge cathedral; Philip realizes that whatever Jack is up to, he has powerful backers. The congregation is awed, impressed, and uplifted, but Philip is angry. Philip realizes the dark-skinned Saracens are local men in dark paint and he believes the Madonna is a hoax. However, when Meg, the widow of one of the men who died in the cathedral collapse, miraculously regains her power of speech after touching the Madonna, Philip is persuaded to accept Jack's gift.

After a chapter meeting with the monks in which Jack explains exactly how the cathedral cave-in was caused by Alfred's stone roof, Philip is persuaded to retain him as master builder. However, Remigius points out that Jack is an adulterer. Philip believes he has no choice but to force Jack and Aliena to live apart until Aliena's marriage to Alfred can be annulled; the annulment should take about a year. After securing his job, Jack rides out to the forest to see his mother. Ellen is thrilled to learn that Aliena found Jack and brought him home. Ellen is furious with Prior Philip, however, for forcing her son and Aliena to live apart; Jack explains that Aliena has grudgingly accepted the situation since she takes responsibility for marrying Alfred in the first place. Then Jack tells Ellen about finding his father's family. Ellen fills in some important details, telling Jack that after the White Ship went down, his father washed ashore near a castle in England. The powerful men at the castle were upset to learn that someone had survived the wreck; they had imprisoned Jacques Cherbourg at Kingsbridge Priory until they could arrange to frame him for thievery. Jack demands his mother tell him the name of the men who did this; she says she only learned their names long afterward: Prior James of Kingsbridge, Philip's predecessor who has since died; Percy Hamleigh, earl of Shiring, who is also dead; and the Bishop of Kingsbridge, Waleran Bigod. Jack promises his mother not to seek revenge, but he does want answers.

Jack travels to Bishop Waleran's newly built castle. William Hamleigh is already there. William burns with jealousy because the whole country is talking about Aliena's romantic love affair with Jack, and William wants revenge. William tells Waleran he wants to sack Kingsbridge again. Waleran is hesitant; before William used the excuse of Philip's illegal market, but now that the market is licensed, he doesn't believe the king will let them get away with pillaging the town again. Just then, Jack enters the room. William stares down the popular new master builder, his rival for Aliena. Jack reminds Waleran of the man he saw hung 22 years ago. William cannot understand why his mother, Regan, and Bishop Waleran both turn pale at these words. Waleran insists he personally caught the man with the priory's jeweled chalice in his possession. Jack accuses the bishop of perjury but insists he has no interest in revenge and will not repeat the charge publicly. He simply wants the truth. Waleran refuses to comment, but both Jack and William realize the perjury charge is true. After Jack leaves, William finds it easy to convince Waleran to approve of an attack on Kingsbridge; William promises to kill Jack during the attack.



Back at Kingsbridge, Jack has settled in well as master builder. He finds himself constantly furious with Philip, however. Jack is forced to visit Aliena every day but must leave before nightfall. They never kiss for fear that it will lead to something more and cause trouble with Philip. Today, Aliena tells him that the 12 pennies a week he is giving her is not enough. Jack protests that he makes only 24 pennies a week, but Aliena reminds him she feeds Jack every night, has the baby to care for, and also supports Richard. Jack is as frustrated as Aliena with Richard's inability to support himself. Yet Jack's frustration evaporates when Aliena tells him she is pregnant again; it must have happened just before Philip made them promise to live apart, for they have kept their word in that respect. Richard arrives hurriedly and warns them that William Hamleigh intends to sack Kingsbridge again; he heard rumors in Shiring and bravely approached William's men, pretending to be looking for work. The attack is to happen Sunday. Jack is horrified; Kingsbridge is only starting to recover from the last attack 3 years ago.

They all rush to the priory to inform Philip. Philip says even if the townspeople evacuate and escape William's men, no one will ever want to come to market at Kingsbridge again. Jack adds that it would certainly be the end of the cathedral. "In the last ten years the church has burned down once and fallen down once, and a lot of masons were killed when the town burned. Another disaster would be the last, I think. People would say it's bad luck." (pg. 753) Philip says he will not accept this. Richard agrees and suggests they fight; their townspeople outnumber the force William will likely bring. Aliena protests that their townspeople will be killed in such a scenario, and Philip vetoes it because monks do not fight. They lament the fact that they do not have a town wall; Kingsbridge is easy prey for anyone who wishes to attack. Jack is inspired; he suggests they erect a wall around the town between now and Sunday. It is already Friday evening, but Jack reminds them the town is full of builders and building materials and Richard adds that the entire wall does not need to be made of stone to be effective.

Philip agrees to the plan and they enlist the entire town's cooperation. Part of the wall is constructed of stone, others parts of wood, and some of the wall consists of deep trenches dug into the hillside. Jack doesn't sleep for two nights as the villagers and monks busily labor to complete the wall. The mortar doesn't even have time to dry but they hope William's men won't realize this. The attackers will be expecting an easy victory and will be unprepared for the town to fight back from behind the safety of their new wall. Boiling water is prepared to pour on the attackers; the townspeople uses bows and arrows and any other weapon they can put their hands on. When William's people arrive, they are shocked and disheartened to see the wall. The villagers fight effectively and succeed in driving the men away. William knows that the hastily erected wall will soon be replaced by a permanent structure; his days of raiding Kingsbridge are over.

Waleran takes this news complacently. He reminds William that they have both prospered and achieved most of the goals they set out to achieve. "It's becoming less necessary to fight with Prior Philip - at the very moment when it's becoming politically dangerous." (pg. 769) William concedes the point, but insists on revenging himself against Jack Jackson; William convinces Waleran to block the annulment of Aliena's marriage. In Kingsbridge, a very pregnant Aliena takes the news badly. Jack wants them



to run away together, but Aliena knows he will wind up resenting her if he gives up his dream of completing the cathedral for her sake. Instead, Jack tells Aliena they will continue on as before, but now they will meet in the woods every Sunday to break their promise to Philip by making love. Joyfully, she agrees. However, when they come together finally in the physical act, Jack weeps.

## Part 4: 1142 - 1145 Analysis

With Tom Builder's death at the end of Part 3, Jack Jackson takes over as the novel's main protagonist. In Part 1 through Part 3, Tom and Prior Philip share the role of dual-protagonist, but Jack's coming of age in Part 4 gives him the best qualities of both his predecessors and throughout this section and the next, he functions as the sole protagonist. Just as his lover, Aliena's, coming of age was given prominence in Part 2, Jack's coming of age tale is featured in Part 4. Aliena's story was set apart rather like a mini-novel within the larger storyline. Similarly, Jack's coming of age tale, is told in the style of a saga and is set apart from the continuing events in Kingsbridge, both spatially and stylistically.

Jack's story follows the mythic style of the hero's quest, and his character is given the archetypal role of hero. True to the author's penchant for reversing gender roles, the initial part of this quest is told through the eyes of Aliena. Rather than follow Jack on his long, arduous, and adventurous route through Europe, the author chooses to focus on Aliena's journey to catch up with Jack. As she finds his trail and evidence of his passing, his story reaches the reader as a secondhand tale. The author finally catches up with Jack in Toledo, and the pivotal moment in which he must decide whether to stay and marry Aysha is told from his point of view. The author quickly switches back to Aliena's point of view in the interests of maintaining suspense a little while longer, for when Aliena arrives at Aysha's house with Jack's baby in her arms, the reader only then learns of Jack's decision through Aliena's narrative viewpoint. Once the lovers have been reunited in Paris, the remainder of the mini-saga is told from Jack's point of view. Jack's quest to find his roots and discover his true self is fulfilled when he meets his father's family in Cherbourg and through the cutting-edge cathedral-building techniques he learns along the way. Once reunited with his love, he discovers that the gift he received from Raschid in Toledo will provide the means for him to return to Kingsbridge in triumph.

Jack's clever use of the Weeping Madonna brings him fame and fortune, all of which he lays at Prior Philip's feet upon his return to Kingsbridge. Jack has single-handedly saved the day by restoring hope and wealth to the priory and by offering his now much-improved skills as a master builder. Prior Philip's pious ingratitude lays the groundwork for yet another parallel between Church and state that the author will develop more fully in the next section. Once Jack's quest is complete, the narrative proceeds as before, with all events centering on the building of the Kingsbridge Cathedral. Jack, however, has become a fully realized individual and now takes over the role previously assigned to Prior Philip, which is a leadership role in providing inspiration and life-saving ideas for the benefit of Kingsbridge. Jack had already demonstrated some aptitude for this role

prior to leaving on his quest, but now, upon his return, he is no longer the hesitant boy who can be led by events; Jack has become a full-fledged leader and author of his own destiny.



## Part 5: 1152 - 1155

### Part 5: 1152 - 1155 Summary

*Chapter 14:* Jack has accomplished a great deal in his 7 years as master builder on the cathedral. Today, however, he stares in chagrin at the cracks in the clerestory. They are minor cracks, but Jack knows they will get larger if he cannot figure out why the walls have weakened; the cracks are in the same area where Alfred's stone roof broke down. In his workroom, he is surprised to find Alfred waiting for him. Jack has not spoken to Alfred for 10 years, though he has seen him from time to time at a distance in Shiring or Winchester. Alfred is still officially Aliena's husband, although she, too, has not spoken with him in years. Jack is shocked when Alfred has the nerve to ask him for a job. Jack reminds him of all the awful things he has done to Jack over the years, but Alfred says he is desperate and asks Jack to hire him for the late Tom Builder's sake. This argument sways Jack, and he hires Alfred. At home he breaks the news to Aliena. Their children, 9-year-old Tommy and 7-year-old Sally, eat at the table as Martha stirs a pot of lamb stew for Jack. When Aliena learns Jack has hired Alfred, she calls him a damned fool and spitefully says that sometimes she's glad she's not married to him.

Sixteen-year-old Jonathon is following in Philip's footsteps with his desire to be a monk. Even Richard has finally found his niche in life; after the town wall was built, Richard was hired to head up security in Kingsbridge. Even William of Hamleigh has found himself a bride, or rather, his mother has found a bride for him. She is the daughter of a wealthy knight; she is 14 years old and looks very much like Aliena did at that age. William is characteristically rough with her in bed because he cannot take pleasure from women unless they are cringing in fear. Before their wedding night is over, Elizabeth learns to hate her new husband. Shortly after the marriage, Regan Hamleigh dies. In fear for her immortal soul, William vows to build a church in her honor. Despite the bad harvest season, he squeezes his peasants for more money to raise funds for the church.

Meanwhile, Kingsbridge has continued to grow thanks to the cathedral, the market, and Philip's fine planning as prior. The rest of the country does not fare so well, however; a famine has swept the land, reducing many people to complete poverty. Aliena travels through Shiring, viewing the damage William and the famine have done to the lands formerly controlled by her father, the former earl. William's mismanagement is evident in the complete destitution of the peasants and destruction of most of the villages and farms. A storm springs up, and Aliena is forced to seek shelter in a church, along with the nearby townspeople and William's new wife, Elizabeth, who is traveling with two men-at-arms. The men-at-arms treat Elizabeth disrespectfully because of her age and inexperience. Aliena teaches her how to earn the respect of the servants and soldiers under her command. Aliena finds in Elizabeth a kindred soul; they share a hatred for William Hamleigh.





The effects of the famine are felt in Kingsbridge as well, although the population for the most part is able to maintain itself and survive. Philip is forced, however, to cut his building expenses in half. He tells Jack he must lay off half the workers, and what is worse, Philip cannot even afford to give them a week's notice and severance pay, as is customary in the masonic lodge. Jack, an inexperienced leader, delivers this bad news to his men in the same abrupt, uncaring manner that Philip uses when speaking to Jack. As a result, the masons decide to strike. Unable to sway them, Jack, as their leader, must support this decision. All work stops immediately on the cathedral to Jack and Philip's dismay. Jack has finally figured out that the chancel walls are cracking because of the wind shear at the higher elevation, but he has no solution in mind for the problem. Alfred sows discontent among the masons, ruining Jack's attempts to heal the rift between the masons and the prior. Unbeknownst to Jack, Alfred has made a secret deal with William Hamleigh and Bishop Waleran. Waleran loves William's idea of building a beautiful new church in Shiring, for it will enhance Waleran's prestige. It will not be as large as the Kingsbridge Cathedral, but he intends to have it built in the new Saint-Denis style. Alfred presents himself as knowledgeable of the Saint-Denis architecture as a result of his work experience on the Kingsbridge cathedral; Waleran and Hamleigh hire Alfred as their master builder, and Alfred steals Jack's men away from the Kingsbridge project.

*Chapter 15:* Jack and Aliena escape to the forest for their weekly Sunday rendezvous. There is much to escape these days as continued economic devastation plagues the land. Jack continues to earn wages on the cathedral along with a half-dozen masons, but Aliena's cloth-manufacturing business is at a near standstill. William Hamleigh's greed as earl of Shiring has ruined the local economy. To raise funds for the Shiring church, William has raised rents to ridiculous levels, resulting in the eviction of many of his tenants. With the peasants evicted from the lands, the farms are going uncultivated and grain prices nearly double. Everyone, including Jack and Aliena, must contend with lower incomes and higher prices. To make matters worse, William stockpiles grain, increasing the prices even more but allowing him to make a short-term profit. Aliena is furious; she knows his greed is destroying the lands and peasants who were so prosperous under her father's reign.

One day, starving outlaws attack the town walls of Kingsbridge, desperate to steal food; there are hundreds of outlaws consisting of the tenants, peasants, and serfs William has evicted from their homes. The attack is easily repulsed, for the outlaws are disorganized, but their sheer number gives Aliena an idea. They are an army in need of a leader. They live in the same forest where Ellen lives, and she knows where they hide out. Aliena realizes her brother Richard's military skills would make him an ideal leader for this ragtag army. With this many men, Richard could defeat William Hamleigh and take back Earls castle in Shiring. The outlaws prove eager to revenge themselves on William and begin humiliating him regularly by stealing from him and destroying his property with lightning-quick raids. William has no idea who is behind the outlaw band until he meets Richard of Kingsbridge face to face during a late night raid at the Shiring mill. The appearance of the raiders stops William from raping the miller's young wife, but Richard is unable to kill William. Barely escaping with his own life, Richard disappears



into the night with his band of outlaws. William is infuriated to hear Richard's men call Richard "the rightful earl." (pg. 847)

Shortly after these raids begin, Philip's brother Francis arrives at the priory with news that Maud's son, Henry, legitimate heir to the throne, is finally old enough to assume the kingship. Henry intends to take back the family crown from Stephen, and his prospects look excellent. Meanwhile, Philip's old nemesis at the priory, Remigius, betrays Richard of Kingsbridge. Remigius cuts a deal with William Hamleigh; William agrees to make Remigius prior of his new church at Shiring. In exchange, Remigius tells William that Richard's rebel forces are secretly headquartered at Sally's Quarry, an old, overgrown quarry site located in the forest. However, by the time William and his army arrive at Sally's Quarry, Richard has already left with his men to join Duke Henry's invasion against King Stephen. Ellen sneers as she gives William the news; she reminds him he once tried to buy her from Tom Builder for a pound and threatens to curse him. William retreats. News of the invasion quickly spreads and King Stephen realizes he is outnumbered; he is forced to make a deal to turn power over to Duke Henry and negotiations begin. The turnover of power is scheduled to be peaceful and protracted; Henry will take over the crown after Stephen's death.

Stephen is expected to live another decade, at least, so despite the fact that Richard and his ragtag army have won Duke Henry's respect, Henry cannot give him the earldom of Shiring back until he ascends to the throne. However, Aliena cleverly points out that since Stephen has agreed to turn the reigns over to Henry, if Richard were to forcibly take back Earlscastle, Stephen is unlikely to fight him for it. Stephen's military power is already taxed and he will not jeopardize it for a rivalry between William Hamleigh and Richard of Kingsbridge. Richard and Aliena come up with a plan to take back the castle. Aliena counts on the friendship she developed with William's young wife, Elizabeth. On the day of the raid, Richard and his warriors wait outside as Aliena rides in alone. While William remains in Winchester attending the peace negotiations between Henry and Stephen, Aliena slips into his castle and convinces his wife to trick the castle guards into surrendering. Elizabeth had learned from Aliena a few years before how to give orders to the guards, and now she draws on that ability to order them to assemble in the courtyard. Pretending she has received a message from William, Elizabeth stalls as Richard's men approach the castle. She convinces her guards that the incoming riders have been sent by William, and the guards let Richard's men enter. As soon as the enemy is within the walls, Elizabeth announces that Richard of Kingsbridge is now the rightful earl. She orders her men to surrender; confused, some of them do. Richard's army dispatches the rest of the guards and takes the castle.

*Chapter 16:* Remigius complains to William that Richard of Kingsbridge has repossessed the lands that William awarded to Remigius. William can do nothing to help Remigius; he tells him to go back to Kingsbridge, knowing full well that Remigius has burned his bridges there. William tells him there are no rewards for losing; it pleases William to see someone who has fallen harder than he has. William had learned the news of his displacement when he arrived at Earlscastle to find his home barred to him; Richard had grinned down at him from the battlements. Elizabeth's treachery is common knowledge as well, and William is humiliated as well as



impoverished. Richard had timed the attack perfectly; now that Stephen and Henry have signed the peace treaty, any further acts of war will be frowned upon. Thus, Richard gets away with it, but William cannot try to take the castle back lest he find himself in breach of the king's peace. As a result of his sudden poverty, William is forced to abandon the church building project at Shiring. He is tormented by visions of his mother burning in hell because of William's failure to complete the church. Bishop Waleran saves the day for William by arranging to have William appointed as sheriff by the still-reigning King Stephen. This means William will be rich and powerful as before, although he no longer carries noble rank; nonetheless, he can continue building the church, which is what Waleran desires.

Back at Kingsbridge Priory, Jack is examining the cracks in the cathedral walls. Philip bursts in, furious that Richard of Kingsbridge has betrayed him. Philip explains that after everything Philip has done to ensure the financial prosperity of Richard and Aliena, Richard is refusing to return the quarry rights at Shiring to the priory. Philip is stunned by this ingratitude. Jack, too, feels it is wrong of Richard, but Jack cannot help pointing out that it's no worse than Philip's ingratitude. After Jack brought Philip the miraculous Weeping Madonna and a huge chest of silver to rebuild the cathedral, inspiring the townspeople to regain their faith in the process, Philip nonetheless forced Jack to live apart from Aliena. That was 10 years ago, and Philip has continued to enforce that rule since Bishop Waleran continues to deny Aliena's petition for annulment. Philip protests that he has no control over God's laws. When Jack goes home, that night to eat with Aliena and the children, Aliena announces she can no longer put up with their situation. For 10 long years she has been forced to live apart from Jack while trying to maintain some semblance of normal family life for the children's sake. She will not do it anymore. She tells Jack she's leaving him.

Jack climbs the partially built cathedral tower, toying with the idea of suicide. While he is on the roof, inspiration strikes, and he realizes that if he builds flying buttresses along the church walls, it will stabilize them and prevent them from cracking. The wind nearly blows him off the roof, and as he saves himself, he realizes that he wants to live. Meanwhile, Philip takes Jonathon to Shiring to petition the sheriff for the return of the quarry. When he enters the court building and realizes William Hamleigh is the new sheriff, Philip backs out of the building without making his petition. Although the trip seems wasted, something happens that causes Philip to believe it was worthwhile. He meets Remigius on the streets. Remigius has sunk to begging for his food; he is an old and broken man. Philip takes pity on him and invites him back to Kingsbridge to live, without his former title or power of course. Instead of refusing scornfully as Philip expects, Remigius accepts gratefully. Jonathon cannot understand how Philip can forgive and offer sanctuary to an old enemy, but Philip reminds him that "Jesus said there's more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people." (pg. 890)

Aliena and Jack enjoy their final bittersweet moments together with the children. Richard returns to Kingsbridge and seeks out Aliena. Jack takes the children away as he senses a quarrel coming between brother and sister. Aliena repudiates Richard for his actions toward Prior Philip. Richard insists he needs the income the quarry



produces. Aliena tells him if he managed his lands and his people in such a way that they produced wealth, he would not need the quarry. Angrily, Aliena leaves him standing there and returns home to be by herself for a while. When she enters the house, she is horrified to find Alfred sitting at the table. Unable to find work since construction was halted on the Shiring church, Alfred has come to beg for money. Aliena tells him she hates him and would not give him a cent. He reminds her that she is his wife; grabbing her roughly by the hair, he assaults her sexually. Before he can complete the brutal rape act, Richard enters the house; the men fight, and Alfred is killed.

Alfred's sister, Martha, is the only one who cries at the funeral. As Richard starts to exit the priory gate after the funeral, Ellen senses something wrong and cries out for him to wait. Just then armed men rush into the priory and chase after Richard, who takes refuge inside the locked cathedral cloister. Philip demands to know who dares raise a hand in violence on hallowed ground. The men-at-arms announce that they have been sent by the sheriff of Shiring to arrest Richard for murder. William rides into the priory and insists Philip hand over the fugitive. Aliena protests that Alfred had been attempting to rape her when he was killed, but William insists Alfred had every right to have sex with his own wife. He accuses Aliena and Richard of plotting to murder Alfred so Aliena could marry Jack. Inside the cloister, Philip, Richard, and Aliena discuss the situation. Philip makes them realize that the court is stacked against Richard; even if he escapes today, he will eventually be caught, tried, and imprisoned. However, as usual, Philip has come up with an ingenious solution. Richard can satisfy the courts by doing penance for his crime in the form of a quest to the Holy Land. The thought of joining the Christian crusades appeals to Richard's warrior spirit. The second part of Philip's plan is for Aliena to take charge of the earldom in Richard's absence. Both Philip and Aliena believe she will do a better job running Shiring, and Richard is thrilled to go off to war.

Aliena is surprised when the whole town shows up for her wedding to Jack. "She realized that they had sympathized with her predicament all these years, even though they had tactfully refrained from mentioning it to her; and now they shared her joy in finally marrying the man she had loved for so long." (pg. 907) She and Jack decide to split their time between Kingsbridge and Earls castle while Aliena has a new castle built for them closer to Kingsbridge so that Jack can commute to work.

## **Part 5: 1152 - 1155 Analysis**

Part 5 resumes the story after a 7-year gap and provides the final resolution to the various ongoing storylines. The plot comes full circle as the question of King Stephen's claim to the throne is finally decided. Stephen's precarious yet persistent hold on the throne has provided the anarchic backdrop against which Ken Follett's plot has unfolded; thus, it is seemly that the plot threads are resolved concurrently with the resolution of kingly power. Richard, "the rightful earl," is restored to his proper place at Earls castle, fulfilling the vow that has kept Aliena in bondage to her dead father for many years. It was Philip's move to unseat Richard's father, Earl Bartholomew, however, that began the chain of events ultimately culminating in this restoration of power. Philip's meddling has also kept Jack and Aliena apart for 10 years, and before



them, Philip forced Jack's mother and Tom to live apart as well. The separation of the lovers ends as Alfred is finally killed, freeing Aliena to marry the father of her children at last. Alfred's death completes the cycle begun by Tom Builder; for in raising Alfred, Tom allowed the boy to bully and torment others, and this remains Alfred's *modus operandi* until the last. To complete the cycle fully that Tom Builder began, the cathedral will have to be completed. Nor will the story be complete until the evildoers, Waleran and Hamleigh, have paid for their crimes.



## Part 6: 1170 - 1174

### Part 6: 1170 - 1174 Summary

*Chapter 17:* Fifteen years later, the town of Kingsbridge has grown tremendously and continues to grow. It has long since outgrown its original wall, and a new wall has been built to contain the furious growth. Already, new homes are springing up outside the new wall as well. On Easter Sunday, William Hamleigh, the sheriff of Shiring, rides onto the paved streets of Kingsbridge. He burns with envy to see that Kingsbridge has become a greater city than Shiring ever was. He halts his horse to survey the breathtaking cathedral, now complete. "The immensely tall nave was supported by a row of graceful flying buttresses. The west end had three huge porticos, like giants' doorways, and rows of tall, slender, pointed windows above, flanked by slim towers. [...] There had never been a building like this anywhere in England." (pg. 915) The inside of the church, packed with worshippers for Easter Sunday, is even more impressive. William, now a gouty, bitter old man, spots Aliena inside the church with her family. He cannot believe how beautiful she still looks. Resentment eats away at William; he has not given up his desire for revenge. William is somewhat mollified to see Bishop Waleran staring around at the church with barely disguised hatred and envy.

All of the important clergymen are expected to there, so Waleran could not refuse. Only Thomas Beckett, the archbishop of Canterbury, fails to attend because he has been forced to flee the country as a result of a bitter quarrel with his old friend, King Henry. The rivalry between Church and state has come between the formerly fast friends, and Beckett has taken refuge in France to escape the king's retribution. Bishop Waleran's eye is drawn to a tall young man who reminds him a bit of old Tom Builder. He asks William who he is, and William informs him the new sub-prior, Jonathon, was the orphaned baby whom Philip raised in the monastery. Waleran glows triumphantly at this news. Waleran decides to charge Philip with fornication and nepotism; he suspects Jonathon is Philip's son, and even if he is wrong, Philip will not be able to disprove the allegation. Philip will be ruined by the scandal.

Philip's supporters say no one will take the charges seriously, but the Church does indeed take them very seriously. An archdeacon is sent from Canterbury to try the case. When Philip realizes that the archdeacon is his old enemy from St-John-in-the-Forest, Peter of Wareham, his hopes sink. Philip knows his only hope is to find out who Jonathon's real father is. Jonathon leaps at the idea, but Philip doesn't know where to start. Jonathon presses him with questions, hoping to elicit a lead. Finally, he asks Philip whether he saw any fellow travelers in the forest around the time Francis found baby Jonathon. Philip realizes that he had seen Tom Builder, Ellen, and their children on the road at the time. Jonathon decides to question Jack. At Jack's house, he finds Jack and Aliena's daughter, Sally, working busily on her talented stained glass designs. Sally is responsible for all the stained glass artistry in the cathedral. Jack is somewhat disappointed that it was his daughter, not his son, Tommy, who developed an interest in





building. Tommy's interest had led him to become a squire, and then a knight; he is now married and has children of his own, along with a small but prosperous estate in Shiring.

Jack is thinking of the work that remains to be done on the cathedral in the future as Jonathon arrives. Jack intends to knock down Tom Builder's old-fashioned chancel and replace it with modern architecture to match the rest of the cathedral. Jack's livelihood is ensured for years to come. Jonathon asks Jack whether he remembers seeing any sign of Jonathon's parents in the forest all those years ago. Jack is stunned to realize that Jonathon was found near St-John-in-the-Forest; he had never deduced that baby Jonathon was the same baby Jack found as a boy, the baby abandoned by Tom Builder. Jack explains the dire circumstances that forced Tom to abandon baby Jonathon. Jonathon weeps to learn that his family had loved him after all; he recalls his special bond with Tom Builder and how Tom saved Jonathon's life the day Tom was killed by William Hamleigh's market raid.

Jonathon is overjoyed to realize he can now help Philip prove that Jonathon is not his son. However, their only eye-witness is Ellen, and she is no friend of Philip's. "She held the key to Philip's trial: she could ensure that he was cleared. But she was a stubborn old woman. Jack was seriously afraid he would not be able to talk her into it." (pg. 931) Indeed, Ellen resists Jack and Jonathon's pleas that she help Philip. When Jonathon asks her to show him his mother's grave, however, Ellen softens. Together, they walk through the forest to the clearing where Agnes died. Jonathon prays over her unmarked grave and vows to build a monastery on this very spot once he is prior. That way no future traveler on this path will ever have to spend the night in the harsh winter cold. From Ellen's lips, Jonathon hears his mother's name for the first time.

The trial is held in the new Kingsbridge Cathedral. Bishop Waleran makes an impressive case against Philip. He accuses him of fornication and nepotism and the circumstantial evidence is powerful. When Philip is allowed to speak, he tells the story of baby Jonathon's rescue fondly. Philip also verbalizes his long-ago conflict with Peter Wareham so that the court will be aware that the judge is prejudiced against Philip. While Philip's brother Francis testifies to finding the baby in the woods, Philip wonders where Jonathon has gone. He knows only that Jonathon is seeking out Ellen's help to prove Philip's innocence. After Francis' testimony, Philip speaks again, but the hypocritical Peter Wareham refuses to be moved by the idea of Christian charity toward an orphaned child. Philip stops in mid-sentence as Ellen, Jack, and Jonathan make their entrance. Regally, Ellen informs the court that Jonathon is the son of Tom Builder and his first wife, Agnes. Philip gapes at Jonathon, belatedly realizing his resemblance to Tom.

Waleran, however, refuses to concede defeat. He accuses Ellen of perjury. Furious, Ellen tells the court that Waleran is the perjurer. Philip insists that Waleran be required to prove his innocence just as Philip has been. Ellen relates the sad tale of Jack Shareburg, imprisoned unfairly and ultimately given a jeweled cup and set free. Jack had left the cup behind at Kingsbridge, but when Waleran arrested Jack, the cup had mysteriously appeared again in Jack's possession. She accuses Waleran Bigod, Percy Hamleigh, and Prior James of Kingsbridge of giving false testimony that resulted in the



hanging death of Jack Shareburg. Ellen explains that she knows all of this because Jack Shareburg was the father of her child, Jack Jackson, the master builder of Kingsbridge Cathedral.

Peter Wareham demands to know what motive Waleran, Hamleigh, and Prior James might have had. Ellen explains that Waleran was given the title of archdeacon for his role in the conspiracy; Hamleigh received lands and a title for his trouble; she does not know what Prior James received. Remigius speaks up; he tells the court that Prior James received three villages and forest acreage in return for his part in the conspiracy. Remigius explains that Prior James felt he needed the lands because, as a result of his poor management, the priory of Kingsbridge had been penniless 40 years ago. Remigius explains that Prior James never forgave himself for his treachery, and he reminds everyone that Prior Philip has done a far better job of managing the priory than Prior James. "Philip was shocked, bemused and grateful. Two old enemies, Ellen and Remigius, had rescued him." (pg. 940) Jack, however, is not satisfied; he demands that Waleran explain why his father was killed, but Waleran exits the church without another word.

*Chapter 18:* The monastery at the Kingsbridge Priory now houses 150 monks, which makes it the largest monastery in all England. At 62, Philip has seen the realization of all his dreams through his personal efforts and by the grace of God. He knows it will soon be time to step down and let young Jonathon assume leadership; Jonathon's eagerness and openness to new ideas reminds Philip of himself at that age. Jack has built a new chapter house to house the increased numbers, and it is during one of the meetings in this chapter house that King Henry's letter arrives. Philip sends Jonathon out to receive the letter while Philip waits and wonders. The second King Henry has been quarreling with the Church for 6 years now, and Philip fears the letter will bear bad news. Henry's quarrel with the Church has been exacerbated by the uncompromising stance of Henry's old friend, Thomas Beckett, the archbishop of Canterbury. When Jonathon returns with the letter, Philip realizes the monks' curiosity and his own is too great to continue with services. He suspends the prayers and asks Jonathon to read the letter aloud.

King Henry announces in his letter that he has nominated Waleran Bigod to be the new Bishop of Lincoln. Philip shudders for this prestigious position leaves Waleran next in line for possible appointment as the next archbishop of Canterbury. Henry's feud with Thomas Beckett has left him in desperate need of support from anyone in the Church who will provide it; this means power-hungry men like Waleran have a chance to advance their fortunes. Furthermore, Henry's letter orders Kingsbridge Priory to elect a new Bishop of Kingsbridge to replace Waleran. The king nominates Peter of Wareham. The monks cry out against this idea; Peter is no better than Waleran. "Jonathon would spend his life as prior battling for justice and decency in a country ruled with an iron fist by a man with no heart." (pg. 943) Philip realizes that all of their gains will be lost, and the countryside will revert to the dark days of poverty and injustice when Waleran and Hamleigh ruled the land. Philip and Jonathon caution the other monks not to defy the king overtly. They must fight this battle with cleverness and care. Philip decides he must travel to France for an audience with Archbishop Thomas Beckett.



For the first time in his life, Philip finds himself with no idea how to proceed. In the past, he has always been inspired with a plan in times of adversity. He may not have been sure his plans would succeed, but at least he always knew what course of action would give him the best chance at success. He arrives at the city of Sens, southeast of Paris, France, still stymied for a solution. Philip is received by the archbishop of Sens and has a chance to view the spaciouly designed cathedral at Sens. Philip realizes how much Jack's travels had taught and inspired him about architecture now that he has had a chance to see the cathedral at Saint-Denis, as well as some other churches with flying buttresses and other modern innovations. Outside the north gate of Sens, Philip finds the abbey of Sainte-Colombe, where Archbishop Thomas has found sanctuary from the king of England.

Philip makes a good impression immediately on Thomas, and likewise, Philip finds Archbishop Thomas to be a remarkable man with a magnitude of charm. Thomas has heard about Philip's fine work and the beautiful new cathedral at Kingsbridge and is pleased to meet him. Philip tells the archbishop that everything he's accomplished in Kingsbridge is now in jeopardy thanks to King Henry. Thomas listens to the stories of Waleran and Wareham gravely. He agrees with Philip that these men should not receive powerful appointments, but insists he cannot stop it unless he is restored to his rightful place in Canterbury. Philip asks whether there is any hope of such a restoration, and Thomas informs him that the pope has prepared a peace agreement between Thomas and Henry, but they cannot come to terms on the kiss of peace. Philip sees the obstinacy in Thomas as he lectures Philip about Henry's refusal to give him the kiss of peace. Thomas suggests Philip return to Kingsbridge and petition the king on Thomas' behalf. Philip has no intention of opposing himself so openly to the king and doubts it would do any good. However, he is encouraged to learn that all that separates Thomas and Henry is the matter of a kiss.

Philip seeks out his brother Francis, who holds a powerful position in King Henry's court. Francis defends Henry while Philip defends Thomas. Philip is discouraged at the thought that the king's row with the archbishop is disruptive enough to come between him and his brother. Philip makes peace with Francis and asks for his brother's opinion about the pope's proposed peace treaty. Francis explains that Henry had once vowed never to give Thomas the kiss of peace. Henry has softened his view, but does not feel he can renege on a vow made publicly. The brothers realize the men are fighting over pride and neither is likely to back down. "'The irony of the whole thing is that Henry would gladly kiss Thomas *after* they're reconciled,' Francis said. 'He just won't accept it as a precondition.'" (pg. 949) Philip is thrilled to hear this. He realizes it is possible to arrange a peace treaty after all. He will go to Thomas with the news that Henry will gladly give him the kiss immediately after they reconcile, and Francis will suggest the same to Henry. Philip prevails upon Francis to be persuasive; if they can effect reconciliation between Henry and Thomas, Waleran Bigod's career will be finished.

The reconciliation takes place on the border of Normandy and the Kingdom of France. Philip watches nervously as the king and Thomas talk long into the afternoon. At last, Thomas dismounts from his horse and kneels at the king's feet. King Henry dismounts and embraces Thomas. Peace has been forged.



On Christmas Day, King Henry is in a rage. William Hamleigh finds King Henry to be almost as frightening as William's late mother. Waleran, however, watches the king's angry outburst with a satisfied smile. "Waleran had predicted that Henry would soon quarrel with Thomas again. Thomas had won too decisively, he said; the pope's peace plan forced the king to yield too much, and there would be further rows as Thomas tried to collect on the royal promises." (pg. 952) Indeed, Waleran had done everything in his power to turn the king against Thomas. With William's help, Waleran had fed rumors to Henry about Thomas' doings, coloring each action to make Thomas' behavior seem as rude and ungrateful as possible. Today, after the king has finished raging and left the table, Waleran convinces the other men present that Henry's angry words were tantamount to ordering the execution of Thomas Beckett. The men decide not to ask for the king's permission to execute Thomas. They realize that would be politically risky, but they believe the king will reward them after the fact if they eliminate his problem. William Hamleigh leaps at the idea of currying royal favor by killing Beckett, and Waleran offers him absolution if he does so.

William's group sets out at once. William's first stop is Saltwood Castle in Kent. The castle had once been Beckett's home, but during his exile it had been occupied by Ranulf de Broc, who had since refused to give it back. Ranulf encourages William's mission and provides him with detailed intelligence about the layout of the archbishop's palace at Canterbury. Despite William's desire to please the king and earn back his earldom, he is filled with dread at the idea of killing a man as holy as the archbishop. After a sleepless night, William sets out with his men to Saint Augustine's Abbey. The abbot is an enemy of Thomas Beckett's, but nonetheless William maintains the fiction that he and his men intend only to arrest, not kill, Beckett. At the abbey, William's men are joined by Ranulf and his men, and the final plans are laid. Success is crucial, for the king may reward Thomas' execution, but Henry would be forced to punish any failed attempt. When they arrive in Canterbury, William knows it is too late to turn back.

He ties up the porter at the gatehouse and seals the gate of the monastery. To maintain the facade that their visit is peaceful, William and his men dismount and remove their armaments as they enter the archbishop's palace. The steward of the hall, William Fitzneal, offers them food and drink. William Hamleigh tells him they have a message for Beckett from King Henry and must see him right away. They follow the steward upstairs to Beckett's chamber and are ushered inside. William is startled to see Prior Philip in the chamber with Beckett. Philip has been elected Bishop of Kingsbridge but has not yet been confirmed; gleefully, William realizes that Philip will never be confirmed once Beckett is dead. Beckett greets the men; he knows them all personally except for William. Thomas sends Philip out of the room but instructs him not to close the door. Once Philip leaves, William's man Reginald informs Beckett he is under arrest. Thomas pales, but calls for Philip and his monks to enter the room so that the charge may be aired publicly. The charge is treason. Thomas denies the charge and argues vehemently with the men. His arguments play right into William's plan, however, as now everyone present must realize that Beckett has refused a royal command.

William gives the order to clear the room and arrests the castle steward to keep him out of the way. Then he simply clears the monks from the room; William does not want them



to witness the murder, but he is not worried about the non-violent men raising arms to protect Beckett. William and his men prepare to re-enter the chamber and kill the archbishop, who is now alone save for Philip's company. The monks close the palace doors to delay the armed men. William and Reginald circle the building and find a ladder leading up to a back staircase. Meanwhile, inside the archbishop's chamber, Philip begs Thomas to flee. Thomas refuses to set aside his dignity and expects that William's men will be unable to harm a man of God. Philip knows better, and finally gets Thomas moving through a back doorway that leads to the cellarer's storeroom. From here, Philip sees that they are only a few feet from making good their escape. If they can reach the cathedral and bar the door, William's men will be unable to touch Thomas. Again, Thomas refuses to flee; he walks decorously toward the cathedral door, preceded by his entourage of monks as etiquette demands.

Nevertheless, they reach the cathedral safely before the men-at-arms catch up with them and Philip bars the door. To Philip's horror, Thomas Beckett insists he unlock the door and allow the armed men to enter. Philip warns him they will kill him, but Thomas insists he will not hide in his own church. Five men with drawn swords confront the archbishop. Reginald Fitzurse orders him to renounce his treachery. "I have nothing to renounce," Thomas replied. 'I have committed no treachery.' He was deadly calm, but his face was white, and Philip realized that Thomas, like everyone else, had realized that he was going to die." (pg. 965) The armed men yell at him to run, but Thomas stands his ground. At first, the men are afraid to touch a man of God, but Thomas' final words break the spell as he tells the men he is ready to die but orders them not to harm any of his people. Thomas commends himself to God just as the fatal blow is delivered. The killers desecrate the body and then flee like criminals. Philip feels the death as a blow to everything he stands for.

A crowd of priests and villagers carries the body away in a solemn processional; Philip follows. As the peasants touch the body reverently, it dawns on Philip that Thomas Beckett has become a martyr. He sees the similarity between this scene and the birth of Christianity. Philip raises the broken sword that killed Thomas Beckett and calls to the people to spread the word of Thomas' martyrdom throughout the land. The peasants voice their agreement and Philip realizes that some action is required to seal Thomas' legend. He asks the crowd to follow him on a pilgrimage across England, to tell the story of Thomas Beckett's death at the hands of King Henry. The crowd grows in size and strength almost immediately; candles are lit against the darkness. As the group sweeps past William Hamleigh, he realizes what is happening and commands them to disperse. Philip cries out to William that it is too late.

The small boys come early for the hanging. Aliena arrives on foot; she wears a cloak to conceal her identity. Since Richard died overseas, Aliena is no longer the acting earl. The title has passed to her son, Tommy. King Henry, enfeebled by the Beckett scandal, had rapidly confirmed Tommy as the new earl, and Aliena had quickly handed over the reigns. In her years as acting earl, she has achieved all of her goals; the land and people are again prosperous and thriving. Aliena and Jack now live in a large stone house near the Kingsbridge Priory, and Aliena has returned to her wool business. Normally, she hates to witness hangings, but today's is important. The condemned man





is William Hamleigh. After the huge public outcry about Beckett's death, Earl Tommy had arrested William for sacrilege, and he was found guilty by Bishop Philip's court. Today the crowd spits in William's face and taunts him mercilessly. Aliena sees the stain on his pants where he has wet himself. Aliena searches her heart but finds no pity, only relief that William's reign of terror is finally over. As William falls, his neck does not break. He suffers a slow, torturous death as his face turns purple and his tongue turns black. The look on his face reminds Aliena of the expression he wore when he climaxed while raping her. As Tommy finds Aliena in the crowd, she recalls how afraid she had been of bearing William's child. Some things turned out right after all, she realizes as she looks at the son she bore to her beloved Jack.

Jack eats dinner with Aliena and Sally as he shows them his sketch for the new chancel. Sally makes critical suggestions that demonstrate her talent and ambition. As they finish their meal, a young stone carver named Peter Chisel arrives to see Sally. Peter is shy and ungainly, but his work is beautiful, and Jack realizes with relief that Sally has finally found someone to love. Jack smiles at his wife. Aliena is as beautiful as ever; the changes that time has wrought on her body have only enhanced her appeal to Jack. Jonathon arrives to break up the romantic moment; he asks Jack to accompany him to the cloisters where a visitor awaits. The man is Waleran Bigod. Waleran is dressed in humble monk's robes and Jonathon explains to Jack that he is dying and wishes to make peace. Jonathon, as Philip would have done, has agreed to let Waleran live out his days in the priory in prayer. Waleran wishes to tell Jack why his father was hanged.

Waleran explains that the first King Henry wielded too much power for some of the barons to accept; the barons preferred to manage their affairs as they pleased without interference from their king. Thus, they conspired to do away with Henry's heir, his son William, to have greater influence about the choice of the next king. The White Ship had been intentionally sunk by the conspiratorial barons, and William had died on board along with everyone else. Everyone, that is, except for Jack Shareburg, the sole survivor. Shareburg had washed ashore near one of the conspirator's castles, and the baron had brought him to Kingsbridge where he was unjustly imprisoned. They trumped up charges of thievery and arranged to have him hung. Jack asks why they didn't simply kill his father outright. "They should have," Waleran said unemotionally. "But he was an innocent man, a jongleur, someone who gave everyone pleasure. They couldn't bring themselves to do it." He gave a mirthless smile. "Even the most ruthless people have some scruples, ultimately." (pg. 980)

Waleran explains that for a time, the barons got what they wished. Civil war and anarchy ruled when Henry I died without an obvious successor. However, most of the barons lost sons or died themselves in the ensuing battles, and the lies they told eventually came back to haunt most of them. Waleran explains how he, Percy Hamleigh, and old Prior James had all been afraid of Jack's mother, Ellen. They didn't know how much she knew. In the end they realized she hadn't known much, but it had been enough to avenge Jack Shareburg's death. Jack has come too far down the road of a happy life to hold vengeance in his heart. It is enough for him to see Waleran end up as a broken, pitiable old man. Waleran sees the pity in Jack's eyes and flinches.





At age 66, Philip carries a jeweled crozier and wears the gorgeously colorful regalia of a bishop of England. Today's ceremony in Canterbury is the crowning jewel in his life's work. Three-and-a-half years after the murder of Thomas Becket, Thomas' martyrdom has proven that the power of kings is not absolute; the will of the people is a powerful force. Philip watches as King Henry, hatless and bootless, walks humbly down the rainy, muddy road to the city gate. Philip leads the procession towards the cathedral; the penitent king follows with his head bowed. "People spoke in whispers, stunned by the sight of the proudest king in Christendom, soaking wet, walking into church like a beggar." (pg. 983) Henry kneels on the floor and confesses his sins publicly, and then removes his cloak to reveal a hair shirt. Henry is to be whipped by each of the holy men present; five strokes from each priest and three from each monk. The cane is handed to Philip, bishop of Kingsbridge, and he steps forward to whip the king.

## Part 6: 1170 - 1174 Analysis

This final section skips 15 years into the future to the completion of the Kingsbridge Cathedral. Here at last the curse of Ellen, uttered in the Prologue, reaches its complete fruition: "I curse you with sickness and sorrow, with hunger and pain; your house shall be consumed by fire, and your children shall die on the gallows; your enemies shall prosper, and you shall grow old in sadness and regret, and die in foulness and agony..." (Prologue, pp. 15-16) This rather colorful curse, aimed at the priest, the knight, and the monk who conspired to kill the innocent Jack Shareburg, fairly well foreshadows the arc of the plotline. The monk was Prior James, and his house, the original Kingsbridge Cathedral, is indeed consumed in flame early on in the novel. He grows old in sadness and regret, as does, presumably, Percy Hamleigh. The priest is Bishop Waleran, and his enemies, who are also the enemies of Percy Hamleigh, do indeed prosper. As the only non-member of the clergy, Hamleigh is the only one of the three conspirators to have a child, and William Hamleigh, as prophesied by Ellen, does die on the gallows in a most foul manner. Thus, ultimately, it is this young woman's curse that sets the tone for the entire novel.

Prior Philip, although an enemy of Hamleigh, Waleran, and James, is more like them than not in the final analysis. In this final section, Philip plays the role of the vengeful hand of God in which he so passionately believes. He is the judge who sentences William Hamleigh to death. Philip also accepts and encourages his former enemies, now broken, to come over to the right side, meaning, of course, his side. Philip has no kind word for anyone who crosses him unless they bow to his will, which he believes to the end to be God's will. Ironically, this egotism is the same crime of which he privately convicts Waleran and Prior James. He believes they confuse their wills with the will of God, and sees no parallel to his own behavior. The author chooses to end the novel with Philip ceremoniously beating the penitent King Henry, and Philip's glee in that moment is prideful, sanctimonious, and egotistically righteous. Philip misses completely the irony that he could never have triumphed had his enemies, Ellen and Remigius, not treated him more kindly than he would ever consider treating someone he calls enemy.



# Characters

## Tom Builder

Given the rather unenlightened standards of the times, Tom Builder is in most respects a very decent man. He is a hard-worker and prides himself on his ability to provide for his wife, Agnes, and their two children. Although he takes Agnes a bit for granted, he does love her dearly and seeks her input on all family decisions. Tom is also a dreamer, however, opposed to the practical Agnes, and he cannot make his wife understand his passionate desire to be the master builder for a cathedral project. Agnes' inability to understand is only amplified by the downturn in the family fortunes that leaves Tom out of work for over a year. Agnes dies giving birth to their third child in the frozen forest where the now-homeless family is forced to sleep. Tom, however, is heartened by his dying wife's final words of love and forgiveness in which she encourages him to follow his dream and build his cathedral.

Motivated by those words, Tom redoubles his efforts and finally secures a cathedral project. Along the way, his grief is assuaged by his sudden love for Ellen of the forest. Ellen, too, finds him a gentle man and pleasing lover, but Ellen is the first to see Tom's major flaw. When it comes to the bullying behavior of his son Alfred, Tom has a blind spot. Tom makes no attempt to reign in Alfred's greedy behavior or address the growing conflict between jealous Alfred and Ellen's son, Jack. Alfred's jealousy grows to homicidal proportions, and after he attempts to kill Jack, Tom supports the masons' decision to banish Jack, not Alfred. In many such ways, Tom lets his family down. Time and again, Ellen must find forgiveness in her heart for his inability to stand up for what is right. Nonetheless, Tom is not bad-hearted, merely ignorant and a product of the times. His love for building provides strength and truth to his character, and despite letting down Jack in many ways, Tom does manage to convey his passion for building to his stepson. Tom's courage also serves to awaken the latent bravery within Jack, and inspires his already courageous wife, Ellen, to remain strong at heart.

## Ellen

In today's world, Ellen would be called a feminist. In twelfth-century England, she was called a witch. Ellen's disrespect for the male-dominated Church and society of her day is acquired honestly. As a young woman, she watches her innocent lover hang for a crime he did not commit. The conspirators responsible for his death are two greedy, power-hungry churchmen and a corrupt man of noble rank. Ellen loses faith in the society run by such corrupt men and retires to the forest, where she lives alone and raises her child. Ellen is a capable hunter and rider, is educated in the classics, and even knows many romantic stories taught her by the father of her child, who was a jongleur. Ellen passes all of these skills along to her bright young son, but Ellen begins to realize, as her son Jack grows older, that she must find a way to reintegrate into society so that Jack can have a normal future.



When Ellen meets Tom Builder, she falls in love with him on the spot. He is the first man she has trusted since the death of her lover 12 years before. However, by loving Tom, Ellen finds herself again at the mercy of the churchmen she has grown to hate. Ellen's vivacious beauty makes her a liability in Prior Philip's eyes, for he blames her for tempting his monks although she does not behave at all inappropriately. Further, when Philip learns that Tom and Ellen are not yet legally married, he banishes her from the priory, labeling her a fallen woman and insisting she live chastely for a year and then come back and humbly beg his forgiveness. Ellen is incensed by the fact that Philip overlooks Tom's part in their fornication and chooses to place the blame squarely on Ellen. Philip's attitude betrays the unfair mores of the times, which generally blamed women for tempting men to misbehave. Even rapes were considered the woman's fault. Ellen's character is of note because such beliefs linger in today's presumably enlightened society, where rape victims are often blamed for having worn the wrong outfit or for putting themselves in the path of trouble. The Taliban's beliefs that women should wear burkas to cover their tempting faces and bodies are merely an extension of the beliefs held by democratic western societies.

Ellen is called a witch by the churchmen, and indeed a case could be made for this fact. Twice in the novel she uses folk magic in the form of animal sacrifice to lend power to her curses. Yet ironically even the term *witch* is another extension of the male-dominated Church which sought to keep women from experiencing a direct relationship with God. The Church labeled all women the source of original sin, finding them unclean and hilariously believing that women are inherently opposed to God and only in subjugation to men can they be considered acceptable to society. It never occurred to the narrow-minded holy men that God created women for a positive purpose, or that women might desire to call upon higher powers just as men do. It certainly never occurred to the churchmen that women might be possessed with spiritual wisdom, or that the practice of folk magic might be a legitimate means of seeking God's wisdom and help. Rebuked by the Church, women like Ellen had little recourse for calling upon God's justice other than to resort to non-Christian methods of spirituality such as witchcraft and folk magic. Neither of Ellen's curses is inherently evil. She cries out merely for justice against the men who unjustly killed her lover, and she cries out for a higher power to condemn the damnable marriage that Alfred makes with Aliena. Had Ellen been allowed to participate freely in the Church, she probably would not have needed to resort to folk magic and curses to seek justice from God. Marginalized, isolated, and abandoned by the men of God in her society, she sought relief from a higher power, and for this, she was labeled a witch.

## Agnes

Agnes is Tom Builder's first wife. A sturdy, stout-hearted, and loyal woman, she is sadly under-appreciated by her husband. Tom believes Agnes to be his soul mate, yet he takes many of the hard sacrifices she makes on his account for granted. Nonetheless, Tom really does love Agnes. After her death he keeps her memory alive by having private "conversations" in which he tells her of their children's progress and trying to imagine what advice she might offer him.



## Waleran Bigod

Waleran is first introduced to the reader as the ambitious and arrogant archdeacon of Kingsbridge. His arrogance initially lends some charm to his character, but over time this charm fades as he falls victim to his own ambition. Waleran's arrogance and ambition give way to bitter ruthlessness and a selfish desire for personal gain. The reader's first hint of his true character comes when Waleran manipulates his election to the rank of bishop after the old bishop dies. Even so, neither the reader nor Prior Philip can be sure that Waleran's motives are all bad at this point; after all, he is an intelligent and capable priest who may well make a terrific bishop. It doesn't take long, though, for his true colors to bleed through his pious exterior. Shortly after becoming bishop, Waleran tries to cheat his own priory out of timber and limestone for building the cathedral because Waleran wants to put these building materials to use to build himself the home and castle of his dreams.

The reader will ultimately learn that Waleran's ruthlessness was present from the start, for he became archdeacon in the first place by conspiring to kill the innocent Jack Shareburg. What makes Waleran an exciting character is his matchless skill at masterminding evil. His conniving mind is endlessly capable of evaluating his enemies' potential weaknesses. He sets armies, kings, bishops, and lords against each other like chessmen, with Waleran secretly manipulating the outcomes. Only Philip of Gwynned is able to beat Waleran at his own game, to Waleran's constant frustration. Philip's primary advantage in the match is that he, unlike Waleran, has nothing to hide. Philip is able, time and again, to expose Waleran's evil doings, and by the end of the novel, Waleran has lost the respect, power, and authority that he so craved.

## Philip of Gwynned

Prior Philip is a humble monk risen from humble means. A traumatic incident in his childhood led Philip to a deep and abiding faith in God's power to triumph over evil. Philip saw his mother and father brutally murdered by two soldiers overcome with bloodlust. When the soldiers turned to kill Philip and his younger brother, Francis, they were stopped in their tracks by a man of God. Old Abbot Peter fended off the fighting men with no other weapon besides his large, wooden cross. This incident fueled Philip's belief that God is more powerful than any man-made evil, a belief that has served him well throughout his life and career. Early on, Philip demonstrated remarkable intelligence and aptitude. Raised by Abbot Peter and his monks at a small priory, Philip wished for no other life than to remain with his monastic brethren in the shelter of the cloisters. Yet Abbot Peter convinces Philip that God has a greater purpose for his gifts, and Peter arranges for Philip to become prior of a small monastery in the woods.

Philip's success at St-John-in-the-Forest priory gives him the opportunity to lead the largest priory in the area, Kingsbridge Priory. Philip wars with his internal sense of vanity as his successes begin to pile up, frequently reminding himself that it is God, not Philip, who is responsible for the prosperity of Kingsbridge. Ironically, Philip settles this internal



conflict by convincing himself that his will is God's will, and therefore, there is no conflict. What makes this so heavily ironic is that Philip accuses his enemy, Bishop Waleran, of confusing his will with God's will. Apparently, when Philip does it, it is truly God's will, but when Waleran does it, he is being vain. Nonetheless, Philip is an excellent leader of men. Wherever he goes, his concern for the men under his command blends with his concern for the greater good of the group, and he is often inspired with winning ideas to ensure the safety and abundance of his charges. Yet Philip's fatal flaw is his inability to feel empathy for women. As a monk sworn to chastity, he sees women as the enemy, and treats them as such. What makes this so insidious is Philip's lack of self-awareness on this point. He truly does believe women are troublemakers and that the world would be a better place without them; when he allows women to enter the priory grounds, he does so with an air of martyrdom and a sense of having made a great personal sacrifice of tolerance.

## Jack Jackson

Tom Builder's first impression of Ellen's son, Jack, is that the boy is a simpleton. Contrary to this impression, Tom soon learns that Jack is actually an exceedingly bright young man. His initial awkwardness is the result of his sheltered upbringing; he was raised in the forest by his socially independent mother, and Jack must learn to integrate himself into society when Ellen falls in love with Tom and leaves the forest. Jack adapts quickly and is motivated by his love for Aliena, whom he first meets when he is 11 years old. Jack and Aliena share a romantic sensibility and a love for culture and learning; Jack's sensitive nature eventually wins over Aliena, who is known to be the most aloof woman in the village of Kingsbridge. Jack's love for Aliena and his passion for building become his two primary motivations in life. His main obstacle as a young man is the jealousy that his vicious step-brother, Alfred, feels toward Jack. Alfred does everything he can to ruin the things Jack loves most. Alfred takes over as master builder of the Kingsbridge cathedral upon Tom Builder's death, and he treats his talented stepbrother with utter contempt, thus ruining Jack's pleasure in the cathedral project. Furthermore, Alfred pressures Aliena's brother, Richard, into arranging a marriage between Alfred and Aliena. Aliena does not love Alfred, but he convinces her that she has no choice but to marry him.

Upon losing both the cathedral and Aliena, the dispirited Jack leaves Kingsbridge in search of his long-lost roots. He travels Europe searching for his father's family. Jack knows only that his father was a jongleur, and he travels the pilgrim road of Compostela seeking anyone who might have known Jack Shareburg. Along the way Jack is given the opportunity to study mathematics and proportion, further qualifying him to be a first-rate master builder. He is influenced by the new building style of the cathedral in Saint-Denis, France. Here he meets up with Aliena, who has traveled half the world to find her true love and beg his forgiveness. Together with their love-child, Jack and Aliena return to Kingsbridge, and Jack becomes master builder of the cathedral. Now that Jack has reclaimed his roots, his love, and his cathedral, his life would seem complete. Because of prudish Philip's interference, however, Jack and Aliena are forced to live apart for 10 years even while raising their family. Only after Alfred is killed while trying to rape Aliena



are Jack and Aliena finally free to marry. In the end, Jack's patience wins out and he fully achieves the life of his dreams.

## Alfred

Alfred's primary purpose in the novel is to serve as a foil for Jack's character. The two are stepbrothers, and Alfred is jealous of the fact that Jack, while younger and less muscular, is actually much more intelligent and better educated than Alfred. Alfred bullies and torments Jack throughout their childhood, and this behavior continues into adulthood. This makes Alfred's character rather one-dimensional, for his sole motivation throughout the novel is to gain the upper hand against Jack. To that end, Alfred marries Jack's true love, Aliena, with the intention of torturing Jack by intentionally making Aliena unhappy. Alfred's character is less developed than many of the other characters in the novel. The author tends to bring Alfred into the story whenever it is convenient to present the protagonists with another obstacle to overcome.

## Aliena

Aliena has all the fine qualities associated with femininity: beauty, grace, a caring heart, and a tendency towards romanticism. Unfortunately for her, she has also inherited many fine traits considered to be exclusively the domain of men in twelfth-century England. She is intelligent, well educated, and fiercely strong of spirit, and she has a great knack for business and making money. She single-handedly raises herself and her brother from poverty to prosperity and restores their family honor within the community. She manages these remarkable feats despite the general unwillingness of men to do business with a woman. Aliena has the ability to make friends wherever she goes, and thus finds enough male allies willing to overcome their distrust of women in order to do business with her.

Her primary motivation throughout the story is the vow she makes to her father, the disgraced Earl Bartholomew, that Aliena will not rest until her brother Richard has won back the earldom. To that end, Aliena comes up with a plan to get her brother accepted as a squire so he can work his way up to knight, putting him in a position to contend for the earldom. She pays for his expensive warhorses and suits of armor, and provides him complete financial support. It is also Aliena who comes up with the plan to give Richard an army by enlisting the band of outlaws in the forest to fight at his side. Ultimately, Aliena also comes up with the plan to take back Earls castle, and puts herself in mortal peril to execute the successful castle raid. The plan would not have worked save for Aliena's friendship with William Hamleigh's young wife, and thus Aliena is solely responsible for winning back the earldom. True to the mores of the times, however, she is not, as a woman, allowed to manage the family lands. Richard manages the restored earldom so poorly that eventually Prior Philip intervenes and comes up with a way for Aliena to do the day-to-day management activities as acting earl while Richard is shipped off to fight in the Holy Land.





## William Hamleigh

William Hamleigh is a classic narcissist. Born to a family of power, he is raised to believe that the world owes him an unending supply of entertainment, wealth, gratitude, admiration, and of course, willing women. His subservience to his domineering and frightfully ugly mother, Regan, is the underlying reason for his misogyny. Unable to accept or acknowledge his anger at his mother, who treats both him and his father like imbeciles and slaves, William instead takes his anger out upon any woman unfortunate enough to cross his path. Yet his inflated view of his personal charms leads him, time and again, to feel surprised and betrayed when the women he rapes and subjugates do not glowingly sing his praises.

William is driven primarily by the sins of the ego. He takes no personal responsibility for his own bad behavior, and whenever his bad behavior is brought to his attention in the form of public disfavor, William feels unjustly humiliated. His response to feeling humiliated is an unwavering desire to avenge himself on anyone he believes to have caused this humiliation. Thus, Aliena, Prior Philip, and Jack Jackson become his sworn enemies. He hates Aliena for the crime of repudiating his marriage proposal and later for refusing to change her mind and love him after he has raped her in front of her brother. William sees Prior Philip as the enemy because Philip's fine management of Kingsbridge has made Kingsbridge market an economic rival for William's poorly managed market at Shiring. Jack becomes William's enemy because Jack wins Aliena's love and, as a further insult to William, Jack becomes master builder at Philip's cathedral site. In the end, the reader is treated to William's gruesome death by hanging, and one imagines that even the most non-violent reader will take some pleasure from this just demise.

## Richard of Kingsbridge

Richard of Kingsbridge is Aliena's shiftless brother. A callous and self-interested man, Richard allows Aliena, and later Aliena's lover Jack, to support him financially. He desires to have the best that money can buy and is regrettably ungrateful for all that Aliena provides him. Richard's one saving grace is his remarkable courage in warfare. He is a strong and proud warrior who impresses King Stephen with his bravery in battle. His most noble act comes when he saves Aliena from being raped by Alfred. Eventually, Kingsbridge grows large enough to require a peace-keeping force and Richard is asked to head up this brigade; thus he finds his place in the world at last. Thanks to Aliena's never-ending efforts, Richard later becomes the earl of Shiring. However, Richard is a poor leader and makes a bad earl. The situation is resolved when Prior Philip offers Richard the chance to wage war in the Holy Land, leaving Aliena to become acting earl in his absence.



## Thomas Beckett

Blending fact with fiction, the author incorporates the historical Thomas Beckett into this politically driven novel. Beckett, archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered because of the stand he took against King Henry II of England. Henry wished to rule absolutely over his subjects, but Beckett believed the Church should be the final authority. Presented as a battle between Church and state, this historical conflict can also be viewed as a simple power struggle between Beckett and Henry.

## Earl Bartholomew

Bartholomew is Aliena and Richard's father. As earl of Shiring, he conspires with Robert of Gloucester to replace Stephen on the throne with Maud. Bartholomew's reasoning for committing this treason is actually noble. He is a man of his word, and he had sworn his allegiance to Maud at the behest of the late King Henry. Bartholomew refuses to go back on his word, and thus is disgraced when the conspiracy to overthrow Stephen is foiled. A stubborn man, Bartholomew will not accept this reversal of fortune even though he knows his days on earth are near their end. He forces his children to swear a solemn oath that they will not rest until their family has been restored to Earls castle at Shiring. This vow becomes the stone that Aliena must carry around her heart until the day her brother, "the rightful earl," is restored to Shiring.



# Objects/Places

## St-John-in-the-Forest

This is the name of the small monastery where Philip is sent when he is first given the rank of prior. He quickly improves the fortunes of the monastery and sets his monks to work making goat cheese, which becomes a delicacy in larger priories like Kingsbridge. This is the same monastery to which Francis brings baby Jonathon upon first discovering him in the forest.

## Aliena's Dagger

Aliena keeps the foot-long dagger, inherited from her father, strapped to her upper arm and hidden beneath her clothing. She has been forced to defend her life with this dagger several times in her youth and keeps it ever present on her person to remind her of her courage and strength.

## Priory of Kingsbridge

At the beginning of the novel, this priory is in a state of bad disrepair. Once Prior Philip takes over its management, however, Kingsbridge Priory becomes a jewel in the crown of the local diocese. The new cathedral, market, and town that grow up around the monastery make Kingsbridge the most prosperous area in the land.

## Earlscastle at Shiring

Aliena's childhood home once belonged to her father, Earl Bartholomew of Shiring. His fall from grace leaves the castle in the hands of the villainous Hamleights, but Aliena, true to the vow she made her father, does not rest until her brother, Richard, is restored as the rightful ruler of Earlscastle.

## Shiring Market

The Shiring Market is the most prosperous market in the land until Philip's market at Kingsbridge begins competing for its business. William Hamleigh burns down the Kingsbridge Market hoping to force people to do business only in Shiring.

## Kingsbridge Market

Originally, the Kingsbridge Market sprang up around the busy cathedral construction site. Prior Philip was forced to pay Queen Maud ?100 to license the market after William



Hamleigh raided Kingsbridge in retaliation for Philip's illegal market, which was siphoning profits from Hamleigh's market at Shiring.

## **The Weeping Lady**

This wooden statue of the Virgin Mary was given to Jack as a parting gift from his friend, Raschid, in Toledo. Known as the Weeping Lady because of the statue's apparently miraculous ability to cry; Jack attributes this miracle to the fact that the eyes are made of crystal and the contrast between crystal and wood, when combined with the proper weather, forms condensation, which causes the statue to weep. Because the people believe it to be miraculous, they treat the statue as a sacred object and gladly donate their money to building a cathedral in Kingsbridge to house the Lady.

## **The Cathedral at Saint-Denis**

Jack's work on the Saint-Denis Cathedral in France opens his eyes to some gorgeous innovations in building. The cathedral features large windows and airy open spaces once thought to be structurally impossible by professional stonemasons.

## **Kingsbridge Cathedral**

The Kingsbridge Cathedral is the centerpiece of the novel. All events center on its construction. When it is finally completed, 34 years after its inception, the stunning cathedral boasts the latest innovations in style, including flying buttresses and large, stained-glass windows.

## **The Kiss of Peace**

The kiss of peace is one of the rituals performed during mass. It is a symbol of trust often used to seal contracts of all types, including weddings and truces. King Henry's refusal to give Thomas Beckett the kiss of peace causes the stubborn archbishop to reject the peace treaty.



# Themes

## The Power and Corruption of Church and State

The United States of America is a relatively young nation, less than 250 years old. The Constitution of the U.S.A. is predicated on the separation of Church and state, and thus many younger Americans, unfamiliar with world history, are wholly unaware of the fact that Church and state have, historically, been linked together inextricably in the governing of humanity. European history is replete with power struggles between Church and state, yet both Church and state were, and in some cases remain, governing entities. In twelfth-century England, where the story is set, both Church and state had the power to create, enforce, and adjudicate laws.

Prior Philip holds court on the grounds of his priory, and as prior, he is entitled to punish law-breakers through hangings, mutilations, torture, or any other he means he deems appropriate. Fortunately, in the story, Philip is adverse to such cruel punishments and restrains himself to fining lawbreakers for their crimes. This is a wholly personal decision, for as the monk in charge of the priory, Philip has absolute power over his subjects. Many churchmen in those days did not share Philip's distaste for corporal punishment, and thieves were often punished with the Old Testament concept of "an eye for an eye." Such absolute power frequently led to the corruption of priests and other churchmen, as is shown in the novel through the character of Waleran Bigod.

The state also held absolute power over its subjects, leading to an equal level of corruption as the populace had no recourse for holding leaders accountable for their actions. When Tom Builder faces down William Hamleigh at the outset of the novel, asking William to pay Tom and his men the money they have rightfully earned, Tom is taking his life into his own hands. For regardless of the justice of his case, powerful lords like the Hamleighs had the right to kill, wound, or maim their subjects indiscriminately. Ruling families like the Hamleighs legally owned many of the human beings who lived and worked in their towns and lands. The local ruler was even granted the right of sexual conquest over every newly married woman in his employ. It was traditional for the bride to have two wedding nights, one with her husband, and another with her lord and ruler. Men like William Hamleigh prided themselves on the fact that many of the townspeople in their employ were actually their own bastard children, conceived through the lord's enforcement of his rights with respect to the women living on his lands.

## Gender Politics

Ken Follett takes a wry look at gender politics in the twelfth century in *The Pillars of the Earth*. Ellen of the forest is an independent woman in an era where this was unthinkable. Rather than be subjugated to the masculine power structure, she chooses to depend on no one but herself for many years. When her lover is unjustly hanged for a



crime he did not commit, the pregnant Ellen repairs to the forest. Here she bears her child, alone in the dark. Here she creates for herself and her son a comfortable home; she teaches her son to read and write, and she also teaches him the masculine arts of hunting and riding that she learned from her own father. She is more capable and educated than most men of the nobility, yet as a woman, Ellen finds herself stranded in the forest, unable to rejoin society. No man will hire an unmarried woman regardless of her qualifications. She is completely barred from society, and only marriage allows her to re-enter civilization. When she falls in love with Tom Builder, it seems her problems are solved. When the hypocritical Prior Philip learns that they have been living together as man and wife without benefit of legal marriage, Philip brands Ellen a fornicator and banishes her once again from society. Ellen refuses to accept this unfair treatment, for Philip makes no move to punish Tom, and in fact hires Tom to be the master builder on Philip's cathedral. Ellen is the only one who seems to notice that this double standard is unjust.

Aliena, daughter of Earl Bartholomew, finds herself in a similar predicament when her father is disgraced and the family loses their home and position at Earlscastle in Shiring. Aliena takes charge of ensuring the survival of herself and her useless brother, Richard. She searches in vain for any kind of paying work, but no one will hire a woman. The only job offer Aliena receives is from the town madam, who seeks to hire her as a prostitute. Aliena rejects that job and relies on her resourceful nature to embark on a wool-selling business. She finds an untapped market niche and quickly accumulates a full bag of high-quality wool to sell at market. When she arrives at the market, however, she learns that the male merchants will not pay her what her wool is worth for the sole reason that she is female. Without the cooperation of Prior Philip, who offers to sell the wool for her, Aliena would have been left in the same isolated position as Ellen. Ironically, despite the fact that it was Aliena, not Richard, who built a thriving wool enterprise and supported them both through the years, it is Richard, not Aliena, who by virtue of his gender is given the family title of Earl and made ruler of the castle.

## Passion

Passion is the central element that drives the main characters in *The Pillars of the Earth*. Not passion in the sense of romantic lust, although love and lust do play an integral part in the story, but the passion of a human being to achieve a dream. Tom Builder's dream of being master builder on a cathedral is introduced in Part 1 of the novel. Having apprenticed under a master builder at the Exeter Cathedral, Tom fell in love, early on in his life, with the challenging craft of stonemasonry. Tom is not content to build homes and churches, although with his skill set this would provide him with a lucrative living. Tom, however, has a particular gift for the finer points of masonry, such as proportion, line, and design, and he rises to the challenge of commanding the huge operation of men and materials necessary to build a cathedral. Cathedrals present the largest challenge for a mason, and therefore, Tom hungers for a cathedral.

To Prior Philip, a new cathedral in Kingsbridge represents something else entirely, but it drives him with the same passionate need. A beautiful cathedral on priory grounds





would ensure the prosperity and legitimacy of his reign as prior and would leave behind a lasting legacy of Philip's existence on the planet. The combined passion of these two men for the Kingsbridge Cathedral allows them to persevere in the face of obstacles so numerous that lesser men would have given up long before the final stones were laid. Their passion has to be sufficient to sustain them, for the building of a cathedral requires a lifetime of work, and in this case, even more than a lifetime. Tom's stepson Jack inherits his dream and his passion and is thus able to carry on in Tom's footsteps after Tom is killed by William Hamleigh's raid on Kingsbridge. By the end of the novel, the cathedral is complete, yet there remains a decade's worth of improvements and alterations to complete, and Philip knows the work will continue beyond his lifetime as well. Thus, he is grateful to have a protygy in Jonathon who will persevere in Philip's absence to ensure that the dream of the cathedral is completed as a testament to the passion of those who have come before.

# Style

## Point of View

The storyline of *The Pillars of the Earth* is conveyed through a third-person narrative style, yet the point of view is completely confined to the characters in the book. Despite the novel being a historical-fiction period piece, there is no historical narrator. The reader sees all events through the present-moment point of view of the major characters. This is an interesting choice by the author, and helps keep the reader personally involved with the characters as by necessity the characters' points of view cannot reach beyond their own immediate experience. The protagonists are defined by the author by the fact that only their points of view are seen first-hand. The story alternates between Tom Builder's, Prior Philip's, Jack Jackson's, and Aliena's points of view. Although Ellen is a major character, the story is never presented from her viewpoint; the reader is left to gauge her strictly by her actions.

William Hamleigh and Waleran Bigod share a dual role as antagonists, yet here the author chooses to present only William Hamleigh's viewpoint directly to the reader. Ken Follett's decision not to tell the story from Bishop Waleran's point of view is not a reflection on the importance of Waleran's character, however. Follett merely wishes to retain suspense by not allowing the reader to see into the craven, calculating mind of the bishop. William Hamleigh's mind is less calculating, and despite his evil nature, provides elements of comic relief. Hamleigh has an inflated view of himself and his ridiculous views on women are as amusing as they are cruel. For example, after beating and raping a prostitute with the help of his henchman, Walter, Hamleigh asks her if the sex was as good for her as it was for him. Hamleigh does not ask this question in a mocking manner, he truly believes he has impressed the poor woman with his sexual prowess and is startled and disappointed that she did not enjoy being beaten as much as he enjoyed beating her.

## Setting

The setting of *The Pillars of the Earth* is England of the twelfth century. This historical saga incorporates much of the true history of the times, on both a political and personal scale. The political history provides a dramatic backdrop for the events that unfold over the 51-year time span covered from 1123 to 1174 A.D. The sinking of the White Ship sets the stage for the period of anarchy that coincides with the tentative reign of King Stephen after the death of Henry I. This anarchic period is characterized by a chaotic power grab by the nation's political elite, as characterized in the story by the Hamleigh family's ongoing war with the descendants of Earl Bartholomew. Prior Philip, as prior of the fictional Kingsbridge, becomes enmeshed in these events as he tries desperately to preserve order and create prosperity for his beleaguered townspeople and the monks of Kingsbridge.



It is on the day-to-day human scale where the story best succeeds. The author fleshes out this period piece with working-class characters such as Tom Builder and Jack Jackson. Their exploits show the reader a world in which expensive jeweled chalices are worthless to the common man, yet the ownership of a good pig can make the difference between life and death. The men and women of the twelfth century inhabit a world of strict, unforgiving morality, tempered by the overriding practical needs of survival. Ellen of the forest and Aliena represent strong women living in a time when women are marginalized and held subservient to the male-driven social and political infrastructure. The gradual enlightenment of particularly the male characters in the book represents the holistic enlightenment of society. Dovetailing with this social improvement are the myriad technological improvements that are described minutely during the course of the novel. Advances in building technology and practices are seen across the span of generations from Tom Builder's forefathers to his stepson, Jack. Jack's innovative mind is open to technological inspiration as evidenced not only by the gorgeous cathedral he ultimately builds, but in smaller ways as well, like the wool-felting machinery he creates for Aliena. Despite the importance of the setting to the plot, however, the author proves along the way that humanity, at its core, contains the same heart, passion, and desire to transcend limitations in any era, from the twelfth century to the twenty-first.

## Language and Meaning

The language in *The Pillars of the Earth* is meticulously researched and written to reflect the vocabulary and speaking style of twelfth-century England. Thankfully, the spelling and grammar are modern; thus, the reader is not forced to plow through any text that is difficult to read or requires strong historical grounding. The author makes the vocabulary and style of the age quite accessible to the modern reader, and in most instances, explains unfamiliar words or concepts in an engaging manner. Much of the vocabulary is specialized to reflect the peculiar vagaries of the stonemason trade or the vocabulary of the church. Through Tom Builder's character, the reader learns such terms as "undercroft" and "buttress." Prior Philip makes frequent use of official monastic terms like "sacrist" and "cellarer." Since Tom is building a cathedral for Philip, much of the building terminology correlates to church vocabulary; the reader learns that a cathedral contains an arcade, gallery, clerestory, nave, transepts, bays, and offices for the sacristy and vestry. The daily life of the villagers and peasants of the working class also carries its own vocabulary. The villagers eat pottage and rough horsebread; their grain is ground by a milliner. In castles and peasant huts alike, rushes cover the floor and food is served on trestle tables.

One of the most interesting details of the vocabulary presented in the novel is the author's use of surnames. Surnames evolved historically in this particular time and place as descriptors, for convenience's sake. Tom is a builder, and so he is referred to as Tom "Builder." Andrew is a sacrist; to distinguish him from other Andrews, he can be called Andrew "Sacrist." Similarly, Matthew the steward is known as Mathew Steward. Other surnames stem from place names; e.g., Peter from the town of Wareham is referred to as Peter of Wareham, or simply, Peter Wareham. Jack's father is known as



Jack Shareburg, which Jack ultimately realizes stems from Jacques Cherbourg; a Frenchman, his father Jacques had come from the town of Cherbourg. Since Jack's father was also named Jack, Jack refers to himself as Jack Jackson. Thus at this point in time last names are not necessarily passed down through the generations, although they may be, as is the case with the powerful Hamleigh family. The derivation of Waleran Bigod's last name is never discussed, however it could be a veiled reference to his lack of knowledge of his parentage. Rather than being Waleran Jackson, or Waleran Tomson, he is simply Waleran Bigod, as if the only father he knows of is God himself.

## Structure

The author incorporates the lengthy process of erecting a cathedral in the twelfth century into the fabric of his story. The cathedral serves as a metaphor for the structural style chosen by Ken Follett for this epic tale. The story begins with one man's desire and desperate need. Tom Builder has dreamt of building a cathedral from the ground up since his youth, yet his pursuit of this unrealistic dream has led him and his family to starvation. Tom must lose everything, including his wife and his child, to win the chance to fulfill his dream. Similarly, Prior Philip loses everything when the old cathedral at Kingsbridge burns to the ground and priory finances do not allow him to even dream of rebuilding. Tom's seemingly impossible desire to erect the cathedral, shared now by Prior Philip, is begun in faith and optimism by the two men who have lost so much. Somehow, they must retain that faith and optimism as they embark on a building project that will span 34 years.

With the same patience, the author crafts the 900 plus pages that comprise his story. He begins laying the groundwork even as the foundations for the new cathedral are laid. The foundling child discovered in the woods whom Prior Philip decides to raise as his own is none other than the baby Tom Builder lost. In losing this child, Tom actually ensures the continuation of the cathedral project, for baby Jonathon, as Prior Jonathon, will one day carry on with the building after Prior Philip's death. It will be many years and many pages before Jonathon's true heritage is revealed. The sweeping scale of the saga is demonstrated by Tom's death at roughly the halfway point. His stepson, Jack Jackson, becomes the new protagonist and carries on with the dreams of the previous generation. Ultimately, Jack will build a cathedral more beautiful than even Tom could have envisioned, but if not for Tom's contribution, the project would have never begun and Jack would never have learned his stonemason's trade.



## Quotes

"Men have died for less than this,' William said. His cheeks reddened with anger. Out of the corner of his eye, Tom saw the squire drop his hand to the hilt of his sword. He knew he should give up now, and humble himself, but there was an obstinate knot of anger in his belly, and as scared as he was he could not bring himself to release the bridle. 'Pay us first, then kill me,' he said recklessly." Part 1, Chapter 1, pg. 28

"He could not bear to throw earth on her face, so he covered her feet, then her legs and body, and piled the earth high so that it formed a mound, and every shovelful slid downward, until at last there was earth on her neck, then over the mouth he had kissed, and finally her face disappeared, never to be seen again" Part 1, Chapter 1, pg. 73

"Philip called the monks into the little chapel and told them that the king had died. 'We must pray for a peaceful succession and a new king who will love the Church more than the late Henry,' he said. But he did not tell them that the key to a peaceful succession had somehow fallen into his own hands." Part 1, Chapter 2, pg. 109

"Suddenly William was inspired. 'Cut the boy's ear off, Walter,' he said. Aliena went still. 'No!' she said hoarsely. 'Leave him alone - don't hurt him anymore.' 'Open your legs, then,' William said. She stared at him, wide-eyed with horror at the dreadful choice forced upon her." Part 2, Chapter 5, pg. 337

"A king is a creature of the moment,' he went on. 'He's constantly under threat, from rebels within his own kingdom and from neighboring monarchs. He needs allies. Earl Percy is a powerful man with a lot of knights. If the king needs Percy at the moment when we present our petition, we will be refused, quite regardless of the justice of our case.'" Part 2, Chapter 7, pg. 409

"Stephen made Philip walk on his left, between him and the castle. The open space was there to give bowmen a clear shot at anyone who approached the walls, of course. Philip was not afraid to die but he was afraid of pain, and the thought uppermost in his mind was how much an arrow would *hurt*. 'Scared, Philip?' said Stephen. 'L Z ' ' ?'"She sighed. He was wounded, and she felt sorry for him; but in a moment he would be indignant, and act as if she had made an unfair accusation against him; then finally he would convince himself that she had gratuitously insulted him, and he would become offensive. Not all rejected suitors behaved like that, but a certain type did, and Alfred was that type." Part 3, Chapter 10, pg. 558

"She was ashamed of the way she had treated him. He had done nothing but kind things to her and she had ruined his life. He was entitled to an explanation. She steeled herself. 'Jack, something happened to me a long time ago, something truly awful, something I've made myself forget for years. I wanted never to think of it again, but when you kissed me like that it all came back to me, and I couldn't stand it.'" Part 4, Chapter 11, pg. 638



"When William stared at her, he had been imagining meeting her on a dark night and taking her by force in the back alleys of Winchester: marriage had not crossed his mind. However, Mother swiftly established that the father was agreeable, and the girl herself was an obedient child who would do what she was told." Part 5, Chapter 14, pg. 790

"Elizabeth looked at her wide-eyed. 'Is it true what they say about...what he did to you?' 'Yes, it's true. I was your age when it happened.' For a moment they looked into one another's eyes, brought close by a shared loathing. Suddenly Elizabeth did not look like a child anymore. Aliena said: 'You could get free of him, if you want. Today.'" Part 5, Chapter 15, pg. 866

"The sight of her brewed hatred like bile in William's belly. He had ruined her father, raped her, taken her castle, burned her wool and exiled her brother, but every time he thought he had crushed her she came back again, rising from defeat to new heights of power and wealth." Part 6, Chapter 17, pg. 917

"At last William fell, but the fall did not break his neck, and he dangled at the end of the rope, slowly suffocating. His eyes remained open. Aliena felt he was looking at her. The grimace on his face as he hung there writhing in agony was familiar to Aliena, and she realized that he had looked like that when he was raping her, just before he reached his climax. The memory stabbed her like a knife, but she would not let herself look away." Part 6, Chapter 18, pg. 975

"My son, she thought; my big son. Jack's son. She remembered how terrified she had been that she might have William's child. Well, some things had turned out right." Part 6, Chapter 18, pg. 975

"The power of a king was not absolute, after all: it could be restrained by the will of the people. This change had taken place within Philip's lifetime. He had not merely witnessed it, he had helped to bring it about." Part 6, Chapter 18, pg. 982





## Topics for Discussion

In what ways is Prior Philip like Waleran Bigod? Cite examples from the text.

What aspect of cathedral building did you find most interesting, and why?

Using examples from the story, indicate three things that Alfred and William Hamleigh have in common.

In what ways do Philip's views of women resemble William Hamleigh's? How do they differ?

To what extent do you think Tom Builder is to blame for his son's character flaws? Could they have been prevented, in your opinion?

Do you believe Philip's requirement that Jack and Aliena live apart while raising their children was just or unjust? In your opinion, what was his motivation for imposing this requirement?

What justification does Philip give for punishing Ellen for fornication while allowing Tom to go unpunished for the same deeds? Do you agree or disagree with Philip's reasoning, and why?