I'm human



Pillars of the earth new book

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The Pillars of the Earth is a captivating historical novel by Ken Follett, set against the backdrop of twelfth-century England. Against the turbulent landscape of civil war, famine, and religious strife, two main characters emerge: Tom Builder, a mason driven by ambition, and Philip, prior of Kingsbridge, with a burning mission to build a magnificent cathedral. Kingsbridge Series by Ken Follett is a historical series of novels set in Kingsbridge during different centuries. The preface to the first book reveals that the author grew up in a Puritan family and was fascinated by medieval architecture, leading him to write a novel about cathedrals. He envisioned a long story spanning the lives of main characters, mirroring the time it took to build a real-life cathedral. Despite initial skepticism from publishers, the book became Follett's most popular work. The series explores themes of medieval history, intrigue, and conflict, including the Anarchy following King Henry I's death. Later on, Tom changes his mind and heads back home, only to discover that his infant is nowhere to be found. He links up with outlaw Ellen and her son Jack, whom they had met earlier, and together they uncover that the baby has been taken to a monastery cell at Kingsbridge Priory. With the fear of being charged with abandonment looming over him, Tom decides to leave the child in the care of the monks. After struggling to find work, he convinces Earl Bartholomew to hire him to repair the castle walls. Meanwhile, Philip, the leader of the cell, is visited by his brother Francis, a priest, who warns him of a plot by Earl Bartholomew and Gloucestershire against King Stephen. Philip shares this information with Waleran Bigod, the ambitious archdeacon, in exchange for Waleran's support in becoming bishop. Tom's infant, now named Jonathan, is sent to live with Philip at the priory. As tensions rise, Tom and Ellen, now lovers, become homeless once again after the Hamleighs take Bartholomew's castle and arrest the earl. They eventually settle in Kingsbridge, where Tom hopes to find work rebuilding the cathedral. Philip conspires with the Hamleighs against Waleran, but they betray him and instead get ownership of the quarry with Philip getting only rights to it. Waleran vows to never let Philip build his cathedral after being foiled. William attacks Aliena and her brother Richard, leaving Aliena traumatized. The siblings travel to Winchester in search of compensation from the king and visit Bartholomew, who demands they swear an oath to regain the earldom. Aliena supports Richard financially by becoming a wealthy wool merchant with Philip's help. The Hamleighs attempt to barricade the quarry but are foiled by Philip. They retaliate by trying to move the cathedral to Shiring, claiming Kingsbridge lacks resources. Philip calls for volunteers to work on the cathedral as penance, and they arrive in force. The bishop is convinced not to move the cathedral. William's father dies, and he learns he'll get the earldom unless Richard takes it. William destroys a mill and murders a miller to control the serfs and villagers. He attacks the quarry with an army, killing and expelling the priory's quarrymen. Philip travels to Lincoln but is interrupted by the Battle of Lincoln, where the king was captured. Empress Maud grants Waleran Bigod a license for a market at Kingsbridge, while William Hamleigh, who has switched allegiance from Stephen to Maud, gains sole rights to the disputed quarry. Despite this setback, Philip manages to fund his cathedral project using revenue from the market. Tom befriends Prior Philip and eventually persuades him to allow Ellen and Tom to marry. Meanwhile, Alfred proposes to Aliena but is rejected. She becomes close friends with Jack, who has started working as an apprentice mason at Tom's suggestion, but distances herself after Alfred catches them kissing. The two stepbrothers' rivalry escalates into a fight that damages construction materials and leads to Jack's expulsion from the cathedral project. However, Philip offers Jack a new position as construction overseer on the condition that he becomes a monk. Jack reluctantly agrees to stay in Kingsbridge. Later, Ellen reveals that Jack's father was wrongly accused of theft. William proves to be a cruel and incompetent lord who mismanages the earldom's finances and regularly abuses peasant women. In an attempt to restore his fortunes, William leads a devastating attack on Kingsbridge, killing many people including Tom Builder. Aliena loses her entire stock of wool in the fire and agrees to marry Alfred if he supports Richard. Jack, confined for his continued rule-breaking, escapes to talk to Aliena but is recaptured. The next morning, Ellen breaks into the monastery's obedience room, revealing that Jack's father was once imprisoned there after being framed by three men. Freed, Jack and Aliena make love on her wedding day, and he tries to convince her to leave with him, but she refuses to break her vow to support Richard. Jack discovers Alfred's plan to mistreat Aliena out of spite and Ellen curses the wedding, seemingly leaving Alfred impotent. The marriage remains unconsummated, and Jack leaves Kingsbridge to uncover the truth about his father. After years of hesitation following Earl Percy Hamleigh's death, Stephen finally grants the earldom to William. Alfred persuades Philip to replace the cathedral's wooden roof with a stone vault but fails to reinforce it properly, causing the structure to collapse during a service and killing many people. Aliena gives birth to a red-headed son, and Alfred abandons her upon realizing the child is Jack's. On Ellen's advice, Aliena leaves with her son to find Jack, following clues that may lead her to him. As Jack traveled through France and Spain, he found himself in Paris, where he reconciled and received the "Weeping Madonna" statue from a merchant. He used this to calm a riot at a nearby cathedral, which became a miracle that helped him get funds to rebuild it in Kingsbridge. On his way back, he met relatives who revealed his dad Jacques had supposedly died in the sinking of the White Ship, but Jack was mistaken for a ghost and got more questions. Returning home, Jack convinced Philip to let him be the new master-builder, creating a design based on his travels. He also found out that his love affair with Aliena was discovered by monks, causing Philip to separate them until her marriage to Alfred was annulled. Jack then learned about his dad's death being deliberate and the three men responsible were Percy Hamleigh, Waleran Bigod, and Prior James. After visiting Waleran, William convinced him to attack Kingsbridge again, trying to kill Jack discreetly. However, Richard overheard fighters discussing the attack and warned the villagers in time for them to build town walls and repel the attackers. Following a famine that worsened due to William's poor leadership, Alfred returned to Kingsbridge and begged for work from Jack. Later, William was guilt-stricken after forgetting to give his mom last rites, leading him to want to build a cathedral in Shiring for her soul. Waleran convinced William to do this, and they were aided by Alfred, who brought workers from Kingsbridge. Meanwhile, Richard organized starving peasants into a militia and went to war with William, robbing him multiple times. William discovered the location of Richard's forces from Remigius and was still planning revenge against Jack for his relationship with Aliena. Stephen plans to appoint a monk as head of Shiring's future chapter & launch a massive attack on rebels. However, Richard joins forces with Maud's son Henry II after learning that Stephen agreed to let him succeed him. As part of their deal, properties will revert back to owners before Stephen's reign, making Richard the official earl but delaying his takeover until Stephen's death. Aliena allows Richard to capture the earldom's castle before Henry and Stephen's treaty is finalized. Meanwhile, Waleran tries to sell William the position of sheriff so he can oppose Richard & fund the cathedral. Remigius is abandoned by Waleran & William, but Philip forgives him for his treachery & allows him to return to the priory. Richard refuses to grant the priory access to the quarry, citing it was once part of the earldom. After Aliena calls out Richard's ingratitude towards Philip, she is attacked by Alfred who is trying to get revenge on her after Shiring Cathedral is abandoned. Richard kills Alfred in a fight with Aliena's help. Seeing an opportunity to regain the earldom, William obtains a warrant to arrest Richard for murder on the king's behalf. However, realizing that Richard has no chance of a fair trial, Philip proposes he fights in the Crusades as penance for killing Alfred, allowing Aliena to look after her brother's lands & giving the earldom a competent ruler. After many years, Kingsbridge cathedral is completed, and Jack marries Aliena within the new cathedral. Waleran still seeks to ruin Philip by accusing him of fathering Jonathan, but Philip is cleared of charges thanks to Ellen's testimony. Prior Remigius reveals that Waleran and others were bribed to kill him, and he confirms his testimony by sharing what he heard from Prior James before his death. James's downfall was due to guilt over his role in the conspiracy and his misrule of the Priory, which Philip had tried to correct but ultimately believed Philip was better suited for the task. Waleran lost his position as bishop of Kingsbridge due to the scandal. William and Waleran joined forces with other conspirators to kill Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in an attempt to protect their power. William led the attack, and despite Philip's efforts, Becket was brutally murdered. This event inspired Philip to treat Becket's death as a martyrdom, urging people to spread the news across Christendom. King Henry refused to defend Becket's killers, leading to William's conviction of sacrilege and eventual hanging. At Kingsbridge, Jack met with his father's former bishop, Waleran, who revealed that a group of barons had conspired against them, including the sinking of the White Ship. This plot was meant to kill King Henry's son and heir, but Jacques Cherbourg survived and eventually exposed the truth. With this knowledge, Jack was able to put his father's death behind him. The Pope forced King Henry to publicly repent and subjugate himself to the church, which Philip participated in. In this final scene, Philip reflected on how the affair had shown the limitations of royal power, as even the king could not escape public humiliation. The novel describes various characters in medieval England, each with their own ambitions and motivations. Philip Bigod's brother Francis is portrayed as a corrupt cleric seeking power, while Aliena, daughter of Bartholomew, Earl of Shiring, is set to marry William Hamleigh but relies on her wool business for financial support along with her brother Richard, a skilled soldier. The Earlship of Shiring changes hands between the Hamleighs and Richard's family, as Percy and Regan Hamleigh use their influence to gain control. Francis of Gwynedd serves as a secular priest connected to royalty, while Bartholomew faces imprisonment for treason. Kingsbridge Priory's officials struggle with personal agendas, including Remigius' envy-driven pursuit of power and Cuthbert Whitehead's loyalty to Prior Philip. Individuals like Johnny Eightpence and Jack Shareburg live through tragic events, while Aliena and Jack's children grow up with talents that shape their destinies in the novel. A historical note highlights potential inaccuracies in depicting medieval life, including characters bearing the name Francis before its widespread use due to Saint Francis' fame. In Cherbourg's Norman pronunciation, the Cher- element has been pronounced as [tʃɪr- / tʃɪl-] or [tʃɛr-], with Anglo-Norman retaining [tʃ]. This is similar to Modern French's [ʃɛr-]. The Old and Middle English documents mention Cherbourg with different spellings from the 11th to the 15th century, such as Kiæresburh in 1091. The Parisian-French pronunciation of Shearburg was later adopted into English but not mentioned before 1663. This reflects the Norman influence on the English nobility during that period. However, Anglo-Saxon English remained pure without French intermixture until Middle English emerged. Many medieval English people were bilingual due to practical and mercantile reasons. A noblewoman named Aliena became a successful wool merchant communicating with locals who spoke Anglo-Saxon, further indicating this trend. Marriage laws were not as rigidly enforced during the medieval period. Unmarried couples were common, and having children outside of marriage carried little social stigma. In medieval Spain, Toledo was known for its extensive wheat fields, contradicting Follett's depiction of a wheat-less landscape. Agnes gave birth under a horse-chestnut tree, but this species was not native to England until the 16th century. Tom searched for a hibernating squirrel in dead leaves, though squirrels did not typically hibernate in such conditions. Floor scraps were collected to make broth. Unfortunately, he had an unlucky day. Squirrels in the UK don't truly hibernate, but they do get lethargic during harsh winter periods. In medieval times, these would have been red squirrels. Sugar is frequently mentioned throughout the book. However, sugar wasn't widely available in England back then, except for those in noble circles: Henry III's household reportedly used it as early as 1264, but widespread use didn't occur until 1319. The priory storeroom contained hops, which weren't used for food production in Britain until centuries later. Many characters in the book are described as having breakfast, though there's debate about whether people ate breakfast at all during those times.[7][8] A crate of glass wine bottles is mentioned, transported from France by boat. However, most wine was stored and transported in wooden barrels from ancient times to the early 20th century. Before that period, wine was carried in amphorae, wax-coated clay containers. Glass bottles first appeared in the 17th century, but their widespread use didn't occur until the 19th century after a machine was invented to manufacture identical bottles. The Heaven Tree: This novel by Edith Pargeter is set during King John's reign and tells the story of a stonemason building a church on the Welsh border. Cathedral of the Sea, another historical novel, was published in 2006 by Ildefonso Falcones and takes place in medieval Spain. The Pillars of the Earth, a bestseller written by Ken Follett, is set in the same time period as The Heaven Tree but focuses on building a cathedral in England. The book has been adapted into a mini-series and a video game, demonstrating its enduring popularity. The Pillars of the Earth is a tale that revolves around Philip, the devoted and resourceful prior of Kingsbridge, who's driven to construct the world's greatest Gothic cathedral. Tom, a skilled yet conflicted mason, becomes his architect, while Lady Aliena, an enigmatic figure haunted by a dark secret, navigates her own struggles. Meanwhile, a deep-seated conflict brews between good and evil, pitting church against state and brother against brother in 12th-century England. Ken Follett's historical epic weaves together ambition, chaos, and the pursuit of absolute power within this rich medieval backdrop.