

head had his father's face. He galloped on, awash in the anticipation of victory.

There was a crash and he woke up. As he lay trembling and sweating after this dream, he saw that he had gone on Crusade to knock his father down a peg, and he despised himself.

He had taken months to gather those who had come with him from England, to persuade them to head home.

Something about the shape of the rocks he was staring at reminded Thomas that there was a pool nearby, a little upstream. He patted Daisy's neck and she lifted her head, turning her ears to his tired voice. "Let's go look for a swimming hole, old girl." They turned upstream and headed along the creek until they found the pool, deep and lovely as Thomas remembered it. Leaving Daisy to eat grass, he stripped and swam in the icy water.

He had gone to Father Gregory hoping for a stiff penance and absolution, hoping against reason to wipe the slate clean, to be able to start new. As he had answered the priest's questions, everything he could remember doing seemed done for the wrong purpose: to please his father, to vex his father, to escape. It would not be possible to go back far enough to start over. He should have known. The

‡ 30 ‡

priest had promised penance in a few days and sent him off with only a blessing.

Thomas rubbed down with cold gravel, took one last dive, and dried himself with his shirt. Then he dressed and cantered toward Thornham Manor, to face his father.

‡ 31 ‡