

in the abbey orchard, safely away from the kitchener and free to practise being a knight.

A deep phlegm-filled hacking followed but, when he finally spoke, Brother Peter did not mince words. "Go and scrub the pots or Kitchener Payne will flog you."

"Yes, sir," mumbled Jack to the departing monk's tonsured head and narrow, hunched shoulders.

Brother Peter wouldn't have dared speak to a real knight like that, Jack thought furiously, as he kicked a dried cowpat from his path. Knights were rich and dignified. They were chivalrous and swore to be of service to women and children and the weak.

A wry inner voice suggested that knightly service probably didn't include cleaning pots.

Jack turned to skulk back through the orchard to the kitchen house with the borrowed kettle and skewer. But first he stopped to wash his soiled foot in the freezing waters of the spring that came from the conical tor brooding above the abbey. If only his real parents would come to claim him.

As he made his way through the kitchen garden, Jack was consumed by rebellious thoughts. He had been at Glastonbury Abbey for fifteen years, serving in the vast kitchen under Kitchener Payne for most of them. It wasn't even as if he was able to move up

the abbey career ranks by becoming an oblate, then a novice. There was no money for that.

The kitchener, Brother Payne, who was head cook, had told Jack that the monks had found him outside the abbey gates near the almonry, where the poor came to beg for alms. He had been a naked squalling brat, mired in his own filth and blue with cold, and so they had called him Jack No Name . . .

But Brother Payne *would* say that. For all Jack knew, he could have arrived in a carved gilt cradle with a gold seal and signet ring, and the greedy monk had swallowed them whole.

Jack imagined that he was given to Glastonbury Abbey for safekeeping by noble parents and that it was too dangerous for anybody to know his true name. One day, when he could muster the courage, he would ask saintly Abbot Cedric for the truth.

A sudden grey-white blur of movement in the grass roused Jack from his brooding. A rabbit. Immediately, Jack's thoughts turned to cooking. His mouth watered at the prospect of baked rabbit with a pudding in its belly.

He would take the rabbit and flay it, leaving on its ears, then make a stuffing of grated bread and suet with finely chopped thyme, parsley, spinach, grated beets and sweet marjoram. That would be

