

HILARY MANTEL  
WOLF HALL

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II  
Paternity  
1527

So: Stephen Gardiner. Going out, as he's coming in. It's wet, and for a night in April, unseasonably warm, but Gardiner wears furs, which look like oily and dense black feathers; he stands now, ruffling them, gathering his clothes about his tall straight person like black angel's wings.

'Late,' Master Stephen says unpleasantly.

He is bland. 'Me, or your good self?'

'You.' He waits.

'Drunks on the river. The boatmen say it's the eve of one of their patron saints.'

'Did you offer a prayer to her?'

'I'll pray to anyone, Stephen, till I'm on dry land.'

'I'm surprised you didn't take an oar yourself. You must have done some river work, when you were a boy.'

Stephen sings always on one note. Your reprobate father. Your low birth. Stephen is supposedly some sort of semi-royal by-blow: brought up for payment, discreetly, as their own, by discreet people in a small town. They are wool-trade people, whom Master Stephen resents and wishes to forget; and since he himself knows everybody in the wool trade, he knows too much about his past for Stephen's comfort. The poor orphan boy!

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Master Stephen resents everything about his own situation. He resents that he's the king's unacknowledged cousin. He resents that he was put into the church, though the church has done well by him. He resents the fact that someone else has late-night talks with the cardinal, to whom he is confidential secretary. He resents the fact that he's one of those tall men who are hollow-chested, not much weight behind him; he resents his knowledge that if they met on a dark night, Master Thos. Cromwell would be the one who walked away dusting off his hands and smiling.

'God bless you,' Gardiner says, passing into the night unseasonably warm.

Cromwell says, 'Thanks.'

The cardinal, writing, says without looking up, 'Thomas. Still raining? I expected you earlier.'

Boatman. River. Saint. He's been travelling since early morning and in the saddle for the best part of two weeks on the cardinal's business, and has now come down by stages – and not easy stages – from Yorkshire. He's been to his clerks at Gray's Inn and borrowed a change of linen. He's been east to the city, to hear what ships have come in and to check the whereabouts of an off-the-books consignment he is expecting. But he hasn't eaten, and hasn't been home yet.

The cardinal rises. He opens a door, speaks to his hovering servants. 'Cherries! What, no cherries? April, you say? Only April? We shall have sore work to placate my guest, then.' He sighs. 'Bring what you have. But it will never do, you know. Why am I so ill-served?'

Then the whole room is in motion: food, wine, fire built up. A man takes his wet outer garments with a solicitous murmur. All the cardinal's household servants are like this: comfortable, soft-footed, and kept permanently apologetic and teased. And all the cardinal's visitors are treated in the same way. If you had inter-

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rupted him every night for ten years, and sat sulking and scowling at him on each occasion, you would still be his honoured guest.

The servants efface themselves, melting away towards the door. 'What else would you like?' the cardinal says.

'The sun to come out?'

'So late? You tax my powers.'

'Dawn would do.'

The cardinal inclines his head to the servants. 'I shall see to this request myself,' he says gravely; and gravely they murmur, and withdraw.

The cardinal joins his hands. He makes a great, deep, smiling sigh, like a leopard settling in a warm spot. He regards his man of business; his man of business regards him. The cardinal, at fifty-five, is still as handsome as he was in his prime. Tonight he is dressed not in his everyday scarlet, but in blackish purple and fine white lace: like a humble bishop. His height impresses; his belly, which should in justice belong to a more sedentary man, is merely another princely aspect of his being, and on it, confidently, he often rests a large, white, beringed hand. A large head – surely designed by God to support the papal tiara – is carried superbly on broad shoulders: shoulders upon which rest (though not at this moment) the great chain of Lord Chancellor of England. The head inclines; the cardinal says, in those honeyed tones, famous from here to Vienna, 'So now, tell me how was Yorkshire.'

'Filthy.' He sits down. 'Weather. People. Manners. Morals.'

'Well, I suppose this is the place to complain. Though I am already speaking to God about the weather.'

'Oh, and the food. Five miles inland, and no fresh fish.'

'And scant hope of a lemon, I suppose. What do they eat?'

'Londoners, when they can get them. You have never seen such heathens. They're so high, low foreheads. Live in caves, yet they pass for gentry in those parts.' He ought to go and look for

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himself, the cardinal; he is Archbishop of York, but has never visited his see. 'And as for Your Grace's business –'

'I am listening,' the cardinal says. 'Indeed, I go further. I am captivated.'

As he listens, the cardinal's face creases into its affable, perpetually attentive folds. From time to time he notes down a figure that he is given. He sips from a glass of his very good wine and at length he says, 'Thomas ... what have you done, monstrous servant? An abbess is with child? Two, three abbesses? Or, let me see ... Have you set fire to Whitby, on a whim?'

In the case of his man Cromwell, the cardinal has two jokes, which sometimes unite to form one. The first is that he walks in demanding cherries in April and lettuce in December. The other is that he goes about the countryside committing outrages, and charging them to the cardinal's accounts. And the cardinal has other jokes, from time to time: as he requires them.

It is about ten o'clock. The flames of the wax candles bow civilly to the cardinal, and stand straight again. The rain – it has been raining since last September – splashes against the glass window. 'In Yorkshire,' he says, 'your project is disliked.'

The cardinal's project: having obtained the Pope's permission, he means to amalgamate some thirty small, ill-run monastic foundations with larger ones, and to divert the income of these foundations – decayed, but often very ancient – into revenue for the two colleges he is founding: Cardinal College, at Oxford, and a college in his home town of Ipswich, where he is well remembered as the scholar son of a prosperous and pious master butcher, a guild-man, a man who also kept a large and well-regulated inn, of the type used by the best travellers. The difficulty is ... No, in fact, there are several difficulties. The cardinal, a Bachelor of Arts at fifteen, a Bachelor of Theology by his mid-twenties, is learned in the law but does not like its delays; he cannot quite accept that real property cannot be changed into money, with the same speed and ease with which he changes a wafer into

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the body of Christ. When he once, as a test, explained to the cardinal just a minor point of the land law concerning – well, never mind, it was a minor point – he saw the cardinal break into a sweat and say, Thomas, what can I give you, to persuade you never to mention this to me again? Find a way, just do it, he would say when obstacles were raised; and when he heard of some small person obstructing his grand design, he would say, Thomas, give them some money to make them go away.

He has the leisure to think about this, because the cardinal is staring down at his desk, at the letter he has half-written. He looks up. ‘Tom ...’ And then, ‘No, never mind. Tell me why you are scowling in that way.’

‘The people up there say they are going to kill me.’

‘Really?’ the cardinal says. His face says, I am astonished and disappointed. ‘And will they kill you? Or what do you think?’

Behind the cardinal is a tapestry, hanging the length of the wall. King Solomon, his hands stretched into darkness, is greeting the Queen of Sheba.

‘I think, if you’re going to kill a man, do it. Don’t write him a letter about it. Don’t bluster and threaten and put him on his guard.’

‘If you ever plan to be off your guard, let me know. It is something I should like to see. Do you know who ... But I suppose they don’t sign their letters. I shall not give up my project. I have personally and carefully selected these institutions, and His Holiness has approved them under seal. Those who object misunderstand my intention. No one is proposing to put old monks out on the roads.’

This is true. There can be relocation; there can be pensions, compensation. It can be negotiated, with goodwill on both sides. Bow to the inevitable, he urges. Deference to the lord cardinal. Regard his watchful and fatherly care; believe his keen eye is fixed on the ultimate good of the church. These are the phrases with which to negotiate. Poverty, chastity and obedience: these

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are what you stress when you tell some senile prior what to do. ‘They don’t misunderstand,’ he says. ‘They just want the proceeds themselves.’

‘You will have to take an armed guard when next you go north.’

The cardinal, who thinks upon a Christian’s last end, has had his tomb designed already, by a sculptor from Florence. His corpse will lie beneath the outspread wings of angels, in a sarcophagus of porphyry. The veined stone will be his monument, when his own veins are drained by the embalmer; when his limbs are set like marble, an inscription of his virtues will be picked out in gold. But the colleges are to be his breathing monument, working and living long after he is gone: poor boys, poor scholars, carrying into the world the cardinal’s wit, his sense of wonder and of beauty, his instinct for decorum and pleasure, his finesse. No wonder he shakes his head. You don’t generally have to give an armed guard to a lawyer. The cardinal hates any show of force. He thinks it unsubtle. Sometimes one of his people – Stephen Gardiner, let’s say – will come to him denouncing some nest of heretics in the city. He will say earnestly, poor benighted souls. You pray for them, Stephen, and I’ll pray for them, and we’ll see if between us we can’t bring them to a better state of mind. And tell them, mend their manners, or Thomas More will get hold of them and shut them in his cellar. And all we will hear is the sound of screaming.

‘Now, Thomas.’ He looks up. ‘Do you have any Spanish?’

‘A little. Military, you know. Rough.’

‘You took service in the Spanish armies, I thought.’

‘French.’

‘Ah. Indeed. And no fraternising?’

‘Not past a point. I can insult people in Castilian.’

‘I shall bear that in mind,’ the cardinal says. ‘Your time may come. For now ... I was thinking that it would be good to have more friends in the queen’s household.’

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Spies, he means. To see how she will take the news. To see what Queen Catalina will say, in private and unleashed, when she has slipped the noose of the diplomatic Latin in which it will be broken to her that the king – after they have spent some twenty years together – would like to marry another lady. Any lady. Any well-connected princess whom he thinks might give him a son.

The cardinal's chin rests on his hand; with finger and thumb, he rubs his eyes. 'The king called me this morning,' he says, 'exceptionally early.'

'What did he want?'

'Pity. And at such an hour. I heard a dawn Mass with him, and he talked all through it. I love the king. God knows how I love him. But sometimes my faculty of commiseration is strained.' He raises his glass, looks over the rim. 'Picture to yourself, Tom. Imagine this. You are a man of some thirty-five years of age. You are in good health and of a hearty appetite, you have your bowels opened every day, your joints are supple, your bones support you, and in addition you are King of England. But.' He shakes his head. 'But! If only he wanted something simple. The Philosopher's Stone. The elixir of youth. One of those chests that occur in stories, full of gold pieces.'

'And when you take some out, it just fills up again?'

'Exactly. Now the chest of gold I have hopes of, and the elixir, all the rest. But where shall I begin looking for a son to rule his country after him?'

Behind the cardinal, moving a little in the draught, King Solomon bows, his face obscured. The Queen of Sheba – smiling, light-footed – reminds him of the young widow he lodged with when he lived in Antwerp. Since they had shared a bed, should he have married her? In honour, yes. But if he had married Anselma he couldn't have married Liz; and his children would be different children from the ones he has now.

'If you cannot find him a son,' he says, 'you must find him a piece of scripture. To ease his mind.'



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The cardinal appears to be looking for it, on his desk. ‘Well, Deuteronomy. Which positively recommends that a man should marry his deceased brother’s wife. As he did.’ The cardinal sighs. ‘But he doesn’t like Deuteronomy.’

Useless to say, why not? Useless to suggest that, if Deuteronomy orders you to marry your brother’s relict, and Leviticus says don’t, or you will not breed, you should try to live with the contradiction, and accept that the question of which takes priority was thrashed out in Rome, for a fat fee, by leading prelates, twenty years ago when the dispensations were issued, and delivered under papal seal.

‘I don’t see why he takes Leviticus to heart. He has a daughter living.’

‘But I think it is generally understood, in the Scriptures, that “children” means “sons”.’

The cardinal justifies the text, referring to the Hebrew; his voice is mild, lulling. He loves to instruct, where there is the will to be instructed. They have known each other some years now, and though the cardinal is very grand, formality has faded between them. ‘I have a son,’ he says. ‘You know that, of course. God forgive me. A weakness of the flesh.’

The cardinal’s son – Thomas Winter, they call him – seems inclined to scholarship and a quiet life; though his father may have other ideas. The cardinal has a daughter too, a young girl whom no one has seen. Rather pointedly, he has called her Dorothea, the gift of God; she is already placed in a convent, where she will pray for her parents.

‘And you have a son,’ the cardinal says. ‘Or should I say, you have one son you give your name to. But I suspect there are some you don’t know, running around on the banks of the Thames?’

‘I hope not. I wasn’t fifteen when I ran away.’

It amuses Wolsey, that he doesn’t know his age. The cardinal peers down through the layers of society, to a stratum well below his own, as the butcher’s beef-fed son; to a place where his

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servant is born, on a day unknown, in deep obscurity. His father was no doubt drunk at his birth; his mother, understandably, was preoccupied. Kat has assigned him a date; he is grateful for it.

‘Well, fifteen ...’ the cardinal says. ‘But at fifteen I suppose you could do it? I know I could. Now I have a son, your boatman on the river has a son, your beggar on the street has a son, your would-be murderers in Yorkshire no doubt have sons who will be sworn to pursue you in the next generation, and you yourself, as we have agreed, have spawned a whole tribe of riverine brawlers – but the king, alone, has no son. Whose fault is that?’

‘God’s?’

‘Nearer than God?’

‘The queen?’

‘More responsible for everything than the queen?’

He can’t help a broad smile. ‘Yourself, Your Grace.’

‘Myself, My Grace. What am I going to do about it? I tell you what I might do. I might send Master Stephen to Rome to sound out the Curia. But then I need him here ...’

Wolsey looks at his expression, and laughs. Squabbling underlings! He knows quite well that, dissatisfied with their original parentage, they are fighting to be his favourite son. ‘Whatever you think of Master Stephen, he is well grounded in canon law, and a very persuasive fellow, except when he tries to persuade you. I will tell you –’ He breaks off; he leans forward, he puts his great lion’s head in his hands, the head that would indeed have worn the papal tiara, if at the last election the right money had been paid out to the right people. ‘I have begged him,’ the cardinal says. ‘Thomas, I sank to my knees and from that humble posture I tried to dissuade him. Majesty, I said, be guided by me. Nothing will ensue, if you wish to be rid of your wife, but a great deal of trouble and expense.’

‘And he said ...?’

‘He held up a finger. In warning. “Never,” he said, “call that dear lady my wife, until you can show me why she is, and how it

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can be so. Till then, call her my sister, my dear sister. Since she was quite certainly my brother's wife, before going through a form of marriage with me."

You will never draw from Wolsey a word that is disloyal to the king. 'What it is,' he says, 'it's ...' he hesitates over the word, 'it's, in my opinion ... preposterous. Though my opinion, of course, does not go out of this room. Oh, don't doubt it, there were those at the time who raised their eyebrows over the dispensation. And year by year there were persons who would murmur in the king's ear; he didn't listen, though now I must believe that he heard. But you know the king was the most uxorious of men. Any doubts were quashed.' He places a hand, softly and firmly, down on his desk. 'They were quashed and quashed.'

But there is no doubt of what Henry wants now. An annulment. A declaration that his marriage never existed. 'For eighteen years,' the cardinal says, 'he has been under a mistake. He has told his confessor that he has eighteen years' worth of sin to expiate.'

He waits, for some gratifying small reaction. His servant simply looks back at him: taking it for granted that the seal of the confessional is broken at the cardinal's convenience.

'So if you send Master Stephen to Rome,' he says, 'it will give the king's whim, if I may -'

The cardinal nods: you may so term it.

'- an international airing?'

'Master Stephen may go discreetly. As it were, for a private papal blessing.'

'You don't understand Rome.'

Wolsey can't contradict him. He has never felt the chill at the nape of the neck that makes you look over your shoulder when, passing from the Tiber's golden light, you move into some great bloc of shadow. By some fallen column, by some chaste ruin, the thieves of integrity wait, some bishop's whore, some nephew-of-a-nephew, some monied seducer with furred breath; he feels,

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sometimes, fortunate to have escaped that city with his soul intact.

‘Put simply,’ he says, ‘the Pope’s spies will guess what Stephen’s about while he is still packing his vestments, and the cardinals and the secretaries will have time to fix their prices. If you must send him, give him a great deal of ready money. Those cardinals don’t take promises; what they really like is a bag of gold to placate their bankers, because they’re mostly run out of credit.’ He shrugs. ‘I know this.’

‘I should send you,’ the cardinal says, jolly. ‘You could offer Pope Clement a loan.’

Why not? He knows the money markets; it could probably be arranged. If he were Clement, he would borrow heavily this year to hire in troops to ring his territories. It’s probably too late; for the summer season’s fighting, you need to be recruiting by Candlemas. He says, ‘Will you not start the king’s suit within your own jurisdiction? Make him take the first steps, then he will see if he really wants what he says he wants.’

‘That is my intention. What I mean to do is to convene a small court here in London. We will approach him in a shocked fashion: King Harry, you appear to have lived all these years in an unlawful manner, with a woman not your wife. He hates – saving His Majesty – to appear in the wrong; which is where we must put him, very firmly. Possibly he will forget that the original scruples were his. Possibly he will shout at us, and hasten in a fit of indignation back to the queen. If not, then I must have the dispensation revoked, here or in Rome, and if I succeed in parting him from Katherine I shall marry him, smartly, to a French princess.’

No need to ask if the cardinal has any particular princess in mind. He has not one but two or three. He never lives in a single reality, but in a shifting, shadow-mesh of diplomatic possibilities. While he is doing his best to keep the king married to Queen Katherine and her Spanish-Imperial family, by begging Henry to

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forget his scruples, he will also plan for an alternative world, in which the king's scruples must be heeded, and the marriage to Katherine is void. Once that nullity is recognised – and the last eighteen years of sin and suffering wiped from the page – he will readjust the balance of Europe, allying England with France, forming a power bloc to oppose the young Emperor Charles, Katherine's nephew. And all outcomes are likely, all outcomes can be managed, even massaged into desirability: prayer and pressure, pressure and prayer, everything that comes to pass will pass by God's design, a design re-envisaged and redrawn, with helpful emendations, by the cardinal. He used to say, 'The king will do such-and-such.' Then he began to say, 'We will do such-and-such.' Now he says, 'This is what I will do.'

'But what will happen to the queen?' he asks. 'If he casts her off, where will she go?'

'Convents can be comfortable.'

'Perhaps she will go home to Spain.'

'No, I think not. It is another country now. It is – what? – twenty-seven years since she landed in England.' The cardinal sighs. 'I remember her, at her coming-in. Her ships, as you know, had been delayed by the weather, and she had been day upon day tossed in the Channel. The old king rode down the country, determined to meet her. She was then at Dogmersfield, at the Bishop of Bath's palace, and making slow progress towards London; it was November and, yes, it was raining. At his arriving, her household stood upon their Spanish manners: the princess must remain veiled, until her husband sees her on her wedding day. But you know the old king!'

He did not, of course; he was born on or about the date the old king, a renegade and a refugee all his life, fought his way to an unlikely throne. Wolsey talks as if he himself had witnessed everything, eye-witnessed it, and in a sense he has, for the recent past arranges itself only in the patterns acknowledged by his superior mind, and agreeable to his eye. He smiles. 'The old king,

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in his later years, the least thing could arouse his suspicion. He made some show of reining back to confer with his escort, and then he leapt – he was still a lean man – from the saddle, and told the Spanish to their faces, he would see her or else. My land and my laws, he said; we'll have no veils here. Why may I not see her, have I been cheated, is she deformed, is it that you are proposing to marry my son Arthur to a monster?’

Thomas thinks, he was being unnecessarily Welsh.

‘Meanwhile her women had put the little creature into bed; or said they had, for they thought that in bed she would be safe against him. Not a bit. King Henry strode through the rooms, looking as if he had in mind to tear back the bedclothes. The women bundled her into some decency. He burst into the chamber. At the sight of her, he forgot his Latin. He stammered and backed out like a tongue-tied boy.’ The cardinal chuckled. ‘And then when she first danced at court – our poor prince Arthur sat smiling on the dais, but the little girl could hardly sit still in her chair – no one knew the Spanish dances, so she took to the floor with one of her ladies. I will never forget that turn of her head, that moment when her beautiful red hair slid over one shoulder ... There was no man who saw it who didn't imagine – though the dance was in fact very sedate ... Ah dear. She was sixteen.’

The cardinal looks into space and Thomas says, ‘God forgive you?’

‘God forgive us all. The old king was constantly taking his lust to confession. Prince Arthur died, then soon after the queen died, and when the old king found himself a widower he thought he might marry Katherine himself. But then ...’ He lifts his princely shoulders. ‘They couldn't agree over the dowry, you know. The old fox, Ferdinand, her father. He would fox you out of any payment due. But our present Majesty was a boy of ten when he danced at his brother's wedding, and, in my belief, it was there and then that he set his heart on the bride.’

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They sit and think for a bit. It's sad, they both know it's sad. The old king freezing her out, keeping her in the kingdom and keeping her poor, unwilling to miss the part of the dowry he said was still owing, and equally unwilling to pay her widow's portion and let her go. But then it's interesting too, the extensive diplomatic contacts the little girl picked up during those years, the expertise in playing off one interest against another. When Henry married her he was eighteen, guileless. His father was no sooner dead than he claimed Katherine for his own. She was older than he was, and years of anxiety had sobered her and taken something from her looks. But the real woman was less vivid than the vision in his mind; he was greedy for what his older brother had owned. He felt again the little tremor of her hand, as she had rested it on his arm when he was a boy of ten. It was as if she had trusted him, as if – he told his intimates – she had recognised that she was never meant to be Arthur's wife, except in name; her body was reserved for him, the second son, upon whom she turned her beautiful blue-grey eyes, her compliant smile. She always loved me, the king would say. Seven years or so of diplomacy, if you can call it that, kept me from her side. But now I need fear no one. Rome has dispensed. The papers are in order. The alliances are set in place. I have married a virgin, since my poor brother did not touch her; I have married an alliance, her Spanish relatives; but, above all, I have married for love.

And now? Gone. Or as good as gone: half a lifetime waiting to be expunged, eased from the record.

'Ah, well,' the cardinal says. 'What will be the outcome? The king expects his own way, but she, she will be hard to move.'

There is another story about Katherine, a different story. Henry went to France to have a little war; he left Katherine as regent. Down came the Scots; they were well beaten, and at Flodden the head of their king cut off. It was Katherine, that pink-and-white angel, who proposed to send the head in a bag by the first crossing, to cheer up her husband in his camp. They

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dissuaded her; told her it was, as a gesture, un-English. She sent, instead, a letter. And with it, the surcoat in which the Scottish king had died, which was stiffened, black and crackling with his pumped-out blood.

The fire dies, an ashy log subsiding; the cardinal, wrapped in his dreams, rises from his chair and personally kicks it. He stands looking down, twisting the rings on his fingers, lost in thought. He shakes himself and says, 'Long day. Go home. Don't dream of Yorkshiremen.'

Thomas Cromwell is now a little over forty years old. He is a man of strong build, not tall. Various expressions are available to his face, and one is readable: an expression of stifled amusement. His hair is dark, heavy and waving, and his small eyes, which are of very strong sight, light up in conversation: so the Spanish ambassador will tell us, quite soon. It is said he knows by heart the entire New Testament in Latin, and so as a servant of the cardinal is apt – ready with a text if abbots flounder. His speech is low and rapid, his manner assured; he is at home in courtroom or waterfront, bishop's palace or inn yard. He can draft a contract, train a falcon, draw a map, stop a street fight, furnish a house and fix a jury. He will quote you a nice point in the old authors, from Plato to Plautus and back again. He knows new poetry, and can say it in Italian. He works all hours, first up and last to bed. He makes money and he spends it. He will take a bet on anything.

He rises to leave, says, 'If you did have a word with God and the sun came out, then the king could ride out with his gentlemen, and if he were not so fretted and confined then his spirits would rise, and he might not be thinking about Leviticus, and your life would be easier.'

'You only partly understand him. He enjoys theology, almost as much as he enjoys riding out.'

He is at the door. Wolsey says, 'By the way, the talk at court ... His Grace the Duke of Norfolk is complaining that I have raised



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an evil spirit, and directed it to follow him about. If anyone mentions it to you ... just deny it.'

He stands in the doorway, smiling slowly. The cardinal smiles too, as if to say, I have saved the good wine till last. Don't I know how to make you happy? Then the cardinal drops his head over his papers. He is a man who, in England's service, scarcely needs to sleep; four hours will refresh him, and he will be up when Westminster's bells have rung in another wet, smoky, lightless April day. 'Good night,' he says. 'God bless you, Tom.'

Outside his people are waiting with lights to take him home. He has a house in Stepney but tonight he is going to his town house. A hand on his arm: Rafe Sadler, a slight young man with pale eyes. 'How was Yorkshire?'

Rafe's smile flickers, the wind pulls the torch flame into a rainy blur.

'I haven't to speak of it; the cardinal fears it will give us bad dreams.'

Rafe frowns. In all his twenty-one years he has never had bad dreams; sleeping securely under the Cromwell roof since he was seven, first at Fenchurch Street and now at the Austin Friars, he has grown up with a tidy mind, and his night-time worries are all rational ones: thieves, loose dogs, sudden holes in the road.

'The Duke of Norfolk ...' he says, then, 'no, never mind. Who's been asking for me while I've been away?'

The damp streets are deserted; the mist is creeping from the river. The stars are stifled in damp and cloud. Over the city lies the sweet, rotting odour of yesterday's unreclected sins. Norfolk kneels, teeth chattering, beside his bed; the cardinal's late-night pen scratches, scratches, like a rat beneath his mattress. While Rafe, by his side, gives him a digest of the office news, he formulates his denial, for whom it may concern: 'His Grace the cardinal wholly rejects any imputation that he has sent an evil spirit to wait upon the Duke of Norfolk. He deprecates the suggestion in the strongest possible terms. No headless calf, no

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fallen angel in the shape of loll-tongued dog, no crawling pre-used winding sheet, no Lazarus nor animated cadaver has been sent by His Grace to pursue His Grace: nor is any such pursuit pending.'

Someone is screaming, down by the quays. The boatmen are singing. There is a faint, faraway splashing; perhaps they are drowning someone. 'My lord cardinal makes this statement without prejudice to his right to harass and distress my lord of Norfolk by means of any *fantasma* which he may in his wisdom elect: at any future date, and without notice given: subject only to the lord cardinal's views in the matter.'

This weather makes old scars ache. But he walks into his house as if it were midday: smiling, and imagining the trembling duke. It is one o'clock. Norfolk, in his mind, is still kneeling. A black-faced imp with a trident is pricking his calloused heels.