

you to interrogate me. Your son is a dead traitor and you are suspect.'

'Indeed,' I say swiftly. 'It is for you to interrogate me, so skilful as you are. They all pleaded guiltless and you found no evidence against them. I am guiltless and you will find no evidence against me. God help you, William Fitzwilliam, for you are in the wrong. Interrogate me as you wish, though I am old enough to be your mother. You will find that I have done nothing wrong, as my own dear son Montague had done nothing wrong.'

It is a mistake to say his name. I can hear that my voice has grown thin and I am not sure that I can speak again. William swells in his pride at my weakness.

'Be very sure that I will interrogate you again,' he says.

Out of sight, behind my back, I pinch the skin of my palms. 'Be very sure that you will find nothing,' I say bitterly. 'And at the end, this house will fall down around you, and this river will rise against you, and you will regret the day that you came against me in your pomp and stupidity and taunted me with the death of a better man, my son Montague.'

'Do you curse me?' he pants, all white and sweating, shaking with the knowledge that his house is already cursed for the putting down of Cowdray Priory, cursed by fire and water.

I shake my head. 'Of course not. I don't believe in such nonsense. You make your own destiny. But when you bear false witness against a good man like my son, when you put me to the question, when you know that I have done no wrong, you are on the side of the evil in the world and your friend and ally will draw you close.'



Mabel comes to taunt me with the full list of deaths. George Croftes, John Collins and Hugh Holland have been hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn, their heads set on London Bridge. My son Montague, my precious son and heir, was beheaded on Tower Hill, his cousins Henry Courtenay and Edward Neville followed him to the scaffold and the axe.

'Dead like traitors,' she says.

'Death instead of evidence,' I reply.