# Wolf Hall

## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF HILARY MANTEL

Hilary Mantel was born in England to parents of Irish descent. Her family was religious, and though Mantel lost her faith when she was 12, she has said that she never quite lost the sense of guilt and introspection that religious teachings left her with. She studied law at university and then went on to work as a social worker in a geriatric hospital, and then as a sales assistant at a department store. She married Gerald McEwen, a geologist, in 1972, and traveled with him to Botswana, where they lived for five years, and Saudi Arabia, where they spent another four years. After they returned to England, Mantel worked as a film critic for *The Spectator*, and she also published her first novel in 1985, which was titled *Every Day is Mother's Day*. She published several other novels, many of which won prizes, such as *Fludd*, which won the Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize, and *A Place of Greater Safety*, which won the Sunday Express Book of the Year award. *Wolf Hall* was published in 2009 and won the Man Booker Prize. Its sequel, *Bring Up the Bodies*, was published in 2012, and it also won that year's Man Booker Prize, making Mantel the first British writer and the first woman to win the prize twice. *Bring Up the Bodies* was also the first sequel to win the Booker Prize. In 2014, Mantel was given the title of Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire for her contribution to literature. The final book of Mantel's Thomas Cromwell trilogy, *The Mirror and the Light*, was published in March of 2020.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*Wolf Hall* closely follows the documented historical events of the Tudor court. The Tudors ascended the English throne with Henry VII, who believed he should guard the power of the Tudor family by securing powerful allies. This was why he married his eldest son, Arthur, to the Spanish princess Katherine of Aragon. Arthur died four months after the marriage, and his younger brother, Henry VIII, became the next heir apparent. Henry VIII was determined to marry Katherine, and to do this, he had to secure a special papal dispensation that would allow him to marry his brother's wife. However, Katherine failed to give him the son he was so desperate for—her only surviving child was a daughter, Mary Tudor. Later in their marriage, Henry also became tired of his aging wife and he fell in love with Anne Boleyn, who was Queen Katherine's lady-in-waiting. In order to marry Anne Boleyn, Henry wanted to annul his marriage to Katherine. The Catholic Church in Rome was hesitant to rescind the papal dispensation it had given Henry to marry Katherine, and the Pope was under pressure from Katherine's nephew, Emperor Charles V, to not give in to Henry's demands. Under the direction of Thomas Cromwell, one of Henry's lawyers and ministers, the English parliament passed laws that would break ties with the Catholic Church and name Henry the head of the church in England. This paved the path to Henry getting the annulment he wanted, as he no longer had to wait for the Pope's approval, and it also made future English monarchs the heads of the state *and* the church. After Henry and Anne Boleyn were married, she had a daughter, Elizabeth, but no sons. Three years into the marriage, she was tried for treason and executed (her execution is the concluding event of *Bring Up the Bodies*, the sequel to *Wolf Hall*). Henry then married Jane Seymour, who bore him his first son, who would become King Edward VI. Jane Seymour died in childbirth. Henry then married a German Protestant called Anne of Cleves, in order to secure the support of the German Protestant states. However, he found her so unattractive that he had the marriage annulled, and since he blamed Thomas Cromwell for arranging the match, he had him executed. His next marriage was to young Catherine Howard, who confessed her infidelity to the king and was executed. Finally, he married Catherine Parr, a peaceful woman who survived her marriage to the king and also encouraged amity between Henry and his three children. When Henry died, he was succeeded by his nine-year-old son, Edward VI, who struggled to establish Protestantism in England. When Edward died of tuberculosis six years later, he was succeeded by Mary Tudor, Katherine of Aragon's daughter, who tried to reestablish Catholicism in England. She married Prince Philip of Spain but was never able to have a child. In her frenzy to establish Catholicism, she had hundreds of Protestants burnt at the stake, which made her unpopular and earned her the nickname "Bloody Mary." After Mary Tudor's death at the age of 48, Elizabeth I, Anne Boleyn's daughter, ascended the throne of England to much celebration and ruled for 44 years.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

*Wolf Hall* is the first installment in a trilogy that chronicles the rise and fall of Thomas Cromwell. The second installment, *Bring Up the Bodies*, begins where the story of *Wolf Hall* left off. It shows that Henry is unhappy in his marriage with Queen Anne, and that he seeks Cromwell's help to divorce her and marry his next wife, Jane Seymour. The third book in the trilogy, *The Mirror and the Light*, focuses on Cromwell's fall from grace and was published in March of 2020. In Mantel's portrayals of Cromwell, he comes across as an intelligent and admirable person, but Cromwell is usually much maligned in literary portrayals. For instance, in Shakespeare's play Henry VIII, Cromwell is the assistant to the corrupt Cardinal Wolsey, who

tricks Henry by telling him he supports his divorce while also making a deal with the Pope to support Katherine. In Robert Bolt's popular play, *A Man for All Seasons*, which was made into a film in 1966, Thomas More is depicted as a man of conscience while Cromwell is portrayed as a conniving and greedy minister. The Tudor Court is a popular setting for historical fiction because of its power plays and sexual scandals, and another trilogy that tackles the politics and intrigues of the time is Ford Maddox Ford's *The Fifth Queen*, which focuses on the life of Katherine Howard, Henry VIII's fifth wife. Margaret George's *The Autobiography of Henry VIII: With Notes by His Fool, Will Sommers* tells Henry's story through his (fictional) journal entries.

## KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Wolf Hall*
- **When Written:** Early 2000s
- **Where Written:** United Kingdom
- **When Published:** 2009
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Historical fiction
- **Setting:** England in the 16th century, especially the Tudor Court under King Henry VIII
- **Climax:** Cromwell manages to get Anne Boleyn crowned as Queen of England
- **Antagonist:** Thomas More
- **Point of View:** Limited third-person, following Cromwell

## EXTRA CREDIT

**Rabbit Hole of Research.** Mantel has said that she spent five years researching historical material for *Wolf Hall* since it was important to her that she get the political details right. She also made character cards that stated their names and locations so she could be sure that when she put a character in a certain place in the novel, history agreed that he or she was actually there at that time.

**Thomas Cromwell the Cipher.** While Thomas Cromwell's laws and public life are historically documented, his personal life is a mystery. This allowed Mantel the liberty to imagine him so richly and to make his personal life fascinatingly complex. Mantel has called Cromwell "a nightmare for biographers and a gift for novelists."

## PLOT SUMMARY

The novel opens in the year 1500 in the small town of Putney, England, where young Thomas Cromwell is being cruelly beaten up by his father, Walter, who is a drunk and the town's blacksmith. The beatings take place often, and this time, Walter almost kills him. Thomas decides leave home and be a soldier, and he goes off looking for a war to fight in.

Years later, in 1527, Thomas Cromwell is employed by Cardinal Wolsey, who is the Cardinal of York and advisor to King Henry VIII. Cromwell has been a soldier in France and then a banker in Florence, and he has now returned to England, where he practices law. Wolsey and Cromwell share a relationship of camaraderie and respect. The cardinal tells Cromwell that Henry wants to annul his marriage to Queen Katherine, who hasn't been able to give him a son, and Wolsey suspects that Katherine will put up a fight.

After his meeting with Wolsey, Cromwell heads home. His wife, Liz, is waiting up for him though it is late, and she chats with him about their children. She tells him that a mysterious package arrived for him from Germany, and Cromwell knows that it is one of the banned books he had ordered. While he keeps himself abreast of the ideas of the controversial theologist Luther and even has a copy of Tyndale's English Bible at home, others, like the king's Lord Chancellor Thomas More, declare that the authors and readers of these banned books are heretics and must be burned. Liz also tells him that she heard rumors that the king has ordered a beautiful emerald ring for a woman who isn't his wife.

The cardinal opens a court of inquiry into Henry's marriage. Henry claims that the marriage is incestuous because he married his brother's wife (Katherine was married to Henry's brother Arthur before Arthur's untimely death), and that it is therefore invalid. Katherine, however, claims that she and Arthur never consummated their marriage, so her marriage to Henry is valid. Wolsey warns Henry that even if this court does rule in Henry's favor, Katherine is sure to appeal to the Pope, who would overrule the court. Henry is furious that Wolsey cannot give him what he wants. At the time, the Pope has been taken prisoner by Emperor Charles, Katherine's nephew, so Wolsey has no hope that the Pope would consider an appeal from Henry. Wolsey tries to gather a delegation of cardinals in France to pass the resolution while the Pope is imprisoned, but he fails to do this, too. While the cardinal is away in France, the sweating sickness strikes in London, and Cromwell's wife Liz dies from it.

In January of 1529, Wolsey comes up with a new plan to prove in court that Katherine wasn't a virgin when she married Henry, and that the marriage is therefore not valid. The court's proceedings turn into bawdy entertainment, and Stephen Gardiner, the king's Master Secretary, tells Cromwell that if this court fails to annul the marriage, it will be the end for Wolsey. He is proven right. Soon after, Cardinal Wolsey is dismissed from his position. Wolsey is required to vacate his London house, and all of his fine possessions are taken away by the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, and it upsets Cromwell to witness his disgrace.

Cromwell succeeds in getting a seat in Parliament, and he plans to use this platform to help the cardinal's case. Thomas More, the Lord Chancellor, has added his name first in the bill against the cardinal. When Cromwell finally gets a chance to talk to King Henry, he makes a good impression on the king, and soon after, the king sends the cardinal's household some basic necessities like curtains and plates. Cromwell starts spending more time with Henry, but Norfolk and Suffolk dislike this because they think it might improve Wolsey's chances. They want Wolsey's household to move north to York, away from the king. The king gives Cromwell some money for this move and admits that he misses Wolsey, which makes Cromwell hopeful. On the eve of the cardinal's departure, Wolsey gives Cromwell his turquoise ring, and both men are in tears.

A year after the cardinal is ousted, there has been no progress in getting the king's marriage annulled. Cromwell has become something of a fixture at court and has even been able to make his way into meetings of the king's council. In November 1530, days before Wolsey's investiture ceremony at York, the cardinal is arrested by Harry Percy, the Earl of Northumberland. He dies on his way back to London, and Cromwell suspects that he poisoned himself. The king gradually comes to confide in Cromwell more and more, and he values Cromwell's loyalty to Wolsey, who used to be Henry's advisor and friend. Soon, Cromwell is sworn in as part of the king's council and becomes the only one of the king's councilors who isn't from nobility.

In 1531, the king sends Cromwell to see Katherine to tell her she is being moved to a different residence. The king also plans to separate his daughter Mary from Katherine. Lady Anne Boleyn is increasingly at the king's side. One of her attendants, a quiet girl named Jane Seymour, is frequently mocked by Anne because her father has been caught having an incestuous relationship with his daughter-in-law at his residence, Wolf Hall. Cromwell feels sorry for the pale, quiet girl, and he buys her a present.

Meanwhile, Thomas More is becoming increasingly active in rounding up "heretics," by which he means anyone who reads or says anything against the Catholic Church. He tortures them in the Tower of London and gets them to disclose the names of anyone else who helps them bring their books—usually books by Tyndale and Luther—into England, and then he burns them to death. Cromwell tries to use his influence with Anne and Henry to help some of these people, but the king tells him that the Lord Chancellor knows how to do his work and that he will not interfere.

When Parliament meets in 1532, the members want to pass a bill that will cut the revenue that England sends to the Pope and make Henry head of the church. They want to convince the English bishops to join their cause, and leading the opposition to the bill is Stephen Gardiner, who is now the Bishop of Winchester. Henry is furious, but Cromwell helps him see that he must not come across as a tyrant who kills anyone who opposes him, since this would result in him losing face in all of Europe. Thomas More threatens Cromwell for working against the Catholic Church, and Cromwell says that neither he nor the king are heretics. Despite More's and Gardiner's efforts, the bill passes in Parliament, which is a huge win for Cromwell. The king names him Keeper of the Jewel House, which will allow Cromwell to have control over the kingdom's revenues. Thomas More is stripped of his title of Lord Chancellor, and Audley, the Speaker of the House, is made the new Lord Chancellor on Cromwell's recommendation.

The king makes Anne the Marquess of Pembroke, and in the autumn, he and his court prepare to travel to France to win King Francois's support for Henry's marriage. On their way to France, they stop in Canterbury, where Henry runs into a prophetess named Eliza Barton who is becoming popular for her prophecies about Henry and Anne. She tells Henry that if he marries Anne, he will reign only for seven months and that lightning will strike him. Henry is upset by this, and it falls to Cromwell to calm him down. When they are in France, Cromwell hears that Henry and Anne said their vows in a small ceremony, and that Anne is finally sleeping with the king.

By 1533, Cromwell has become indispensable to the king, and he even mediates between him and Anne when they quarrel. Cromwell finds out that Anne is pregnant, and he begins drafting a bill that would make it illegal to go over Henry and appeal to the Pope, since he knows that Anne's coronation must take place soon. He also has his friend Thomas Cranmer in place to be the next Archbishop of Canterbury, so he knows he can get the English church's approval for Henry's divorce. Cromwell's bill is passed in Parliament, and Anne is crowned Queen soon after. Anne and Henry are hoping for a son, and she goes away to Greenwich to prepare to give birth.

To Henry's great disappointment, Anne has a daughter, whom they name Elizabeth. Cromwell and Cranmer tell Henry that he and Anne are still young and can have more children, which cheers him up. Soon after, Anne becomes pregnant again. On her request, Cromwell drafts a bill called the Act of Succession that says that Anne's daughter Elizabeth will inherit the throne if Henry doesn't have a lawful male heir, and Henry's subjects are supposed to swear an oath to uphold it.

Meanwhile, Cromwell has brought Eliza Barton to a house in London, where she is questioned by a delegation about her supposed prophetic powers. She breaks down and confesses that she was only pretending to have visions, and she names all the people who propped her up. When Cromwell is writing up the bill against Eliza Barton, Anne asks him to include More's name in it, too, since she knows he doesn't approve of her being queen and she wants to frighten him. Cromwell protests, since he knows More had nothing to do with Barton, but Henry insists on it, too. Later, the king's councilors beg Henry on their knees to remove More's name from the bill, and he gives in to

them. Barton is hanged for treason soon after.

When Thomas More is asked to swear an oath on the Act of Succession, he refuses to do so, claiming it would be against his conscience and that his soul would be damned if he did it. Cromwell, Cranmer, and Audley try to persuade him, but they cannot, and More is imprisoned for treason. Cromwell is irritated that they all worked so hard to get More off the Barton bill, since he is insisting on martyring himself right after. He says that this is a calculated move by More to go down as a hero in history. He points out to More that his convictions on the beneficence of the Church are misplaced, and that More himself has committed many murders to uphold these ideas.

The king gives Cromwell the title of Master Secretary, and then he also makes him Master of Rolls. He gives Cromwell a title nobody has held before—the Viceregent in Spirituals—which gives him the power to close down monasteries and divert that money to the kingdom. Cromwell feels satisfied with his success, and he is pleased that he has managed to settle the young people in his household in happy marriages with enough money for all of them. He himself remains lonely after Liz's death, and he finds himself developing tender feelings for Jane Seymour, though he discloses this to no one.

More refuses to take an oath on the Act of Succession or on the Act of Supremacy, which says that the king has always been head of the English church. Henry and Anne want More executed, and they demand that Cromwell find a legal way to do it. Cromwell and his delegation question More and write down a statement he makes that Parliament doesn't have jurisdiction over spiritual matters, which they say is proof that he still believes in papal law. They use this to convict him, and he is beheaded.

Anne has had a miscarriage, to Henry's disappointment. The court is preparing to travel west in the summer and Cromwell hopes Anne will be pregnant when she returns. Since Cromwell has a few days to himself, he decides to go visit the Seymours at Wolf Hall.

## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Thomas Cromwell** – Cromwell is the protagonist of *Wolf Hall*. The son of a blacksmith from Putney, England, Cromwell rises to become King Henry VIII's most trusted advisor. The novel traces his unlikely rise in court at a time when one's birth and family name held a lot of weight, especially in the royal court. Cromwell comes from a violent home where he is frequently beaten up by his alcoholic father. In order to escape the beatings, young Cromwell runs away and has a range of life experiences, from being a soldier in France to a banker in Florence. He displays quick intelligence and a talent for making people like him, both of which will later serve him well as a grown man in the Tudor Court. When Cromwell returns to England, he practices law and also serves as an assistant to Cardinal Wolsey. Initially a powerful man at court and Henry's confidante, Wolsey is eventually dismissed by Henry for failing to procure an annulment of his marriage with Queen Katherine. At that point, Cromwell makes his way to the Tudor court to fight for Wolsey, whom he loves like a father. But even after Wolsey is sent away, Cromwell slowly makes himself a fixture at court by being useful to influential courtiers like Norfolk and Suffolk, and then he goes on to win the king's favor. Initially, Henry cannot look past Cromwell's low birth and is concerned that Cromwell is breaking social hierarchies. However, by the end of the novel, Cromwell and Henry are quite close. Cromwell succeeds in procuring the annulment that Henry so desires and helps grants legitimacy to Henry's marriage to his second wife, Anne Boleyn. To get this done, Cromwell butts heads with other powerful courtiers like Thomas More and Stephen Gardiner, but Cromwell knows that his own power is dependent on Henry's favor, which is why he does all he can to please the king. While Cromwell is always ambitious and sometimes ruthless, his concern and respect for other people—especially for children and young people—makes him a sympathetic character. He also abhors violence and comes across as being admirably open-minded for his time.

**King Henry VIII** – Henry is the king of England. His desire to divorce his wife, Queen Katherine, and marry Anne Boleyn spurs the events of the novel. Henry is a study in contrasts. On the one hand, he can be a genial ruler who is generous and well-liked, but when thwarted, he becomes vicious and cruel, and he thinks nothing of hurting those he previously seemed to like. Over the course of the novel, he comes to value Thomas Cromwell and respect his guidance, and he seems to treat him like a cherished friend, even going to visit Cromwell at his house when he gets sick. However, when Henry senses that Cromwell does not agree with him or might not follow his orders—like when Cromwell tells him it might be challenging to prosecute Thomas More for treason—Henry makes it clear that he has overlooked Cromwell's inferior "breeding" and keeps him around only because he is "as cunning as a bag of **serpents**" and can get things done. Henry tells Cromwell, "You know my decision. Execute it." The implication is that it would be dangerous for Cromwell to refuse the monarch. Henry's willfulness makes the Tudor court a treacherous place, since anyone who falls out of favor with the king risks being imprisoned or executed. Henry's fear and rage seem to stem from a position of insecurity since he is hemmed in by the Catholic Church and is also threatened by various claimants to the throne. Henry thinks that having a male heir will guarantee that his child will rule England after him, but Queen Katherine has several miscarriages and isn't able to give him a son. Similarly, Henry is disappointed when Anne Boleyn first has a daughter and then has a miscarriage. At the end of the novel, Rafe Sadler tells Cromwell, "I wonder the king can stand the

hope each time. It would wear out a lesser man." Henry seems to get increasingly worn out by his cares, as a result of which he makes poorer decisions out of fear. At the end of the novel, Henry seems to have tired of Anne Boleyn—the woman for whom he overturned Christian laws—but seems tentatively hopeful that she still might bear him a son.

**Cardinal Wolsey** – At the beginning of the novel, Wolsey is the Archbishop of York and Lord Chancellor to King Henry. Cromwell works as Wolsey's lawyer and assistant. At first, Wolsey is an extremely powerful chief advisor to Henry. However, when Wolsey doesn't succeed in annulling King Henry's marriage with Queen Katherine, he is removed from his position as Lord Chancellor and thrown out of his London residence. After seeing Wolsey's fall from grace, Cromwell never forgets how costly it can be to lose King Henry's favor. Like Cromwell, Wolsey does not come from nobility—Wolsey's father was a butcher. Wolsey finds it easier to transcend his background than Cromwell does, however, because he is part of the clergy. Nonetheless, some courtiers do not let him forget his past, like Thomas Boleyn, who calls the cardinal "butcher boy." Perhaps because of their similar pasts, and also because they both have a tendency toward kindness and rationality, Cromwell and Wolsey share a relationship filled with affection and respect. Cromwell first makes his way into the Tudor court by fighting for Wolsey, and his loyalty to his former master makes a positive impression on Norfolk and King Henry. After Wolsey is removed from his position at court, he makes his way north to Yorkshire and takes up residence at Cawood. News of his popularity among the people and his extravagant lifestyle reaches Henry's court, and the courtiers who have resented him for years, like Norfolk and Suffolk, decide that it is time to have him arrested before he regains his power. Harry Percy, the Earl of Northumberland, is sent to arrest him for treason, and Wolsey dies on his way to London. Cromwell suspects that Wolsey poisoned himself rather than suffer through a trial and execution.

**Anne Boleyn** – Anne Boleyn is King Henry's second wife and mother to his daughter Elizabeth. Anne first comes to the English court as a lady-in-waiting to Queen Katherine. At the time, Anne is around 20 years old, and to Henry, she seems young and beautiful compared to Katherine. Henry hopes that if he marries Anne, he might finally have the son he wants so badly. Anne is ambitious and crafty, and she is determined to be the queen. She keeps Henry's interest in her by refusing to sleep with him until they are married, and in the meantime, she has him give her and her family royal titles and allowances. Cromwell recognizes that Anne is solely interested in advancing her career and he respects her for this—he even thinks that they are alike in this way. When the Catholic Church does not sanction an annulment of Henry's first marriage, the Parliament, led by Cromwell, tries to pass a law that declares Henry the head of the church in England so he won't have to obey the Pope's verdict. Before this law is passed, Henry and Anne get married in a small, secret ceremony. Anne becomes pregnant soon after, and after Parliament successfully passes the law, she is officially crowned as Queen of England in a grand ceremony. Her baby turns out to be a girl, whom they name Elizabeth, and Henry is hugely disappointed that he still doesn't have a son. This, coupled with Anne's unabashed ambition and constant anxiety, results in Henry and Anne's relationship becoming strained. Henry starts to make increasingly poor decisions under her influence, and Cromwell fears that Henry is tiring of Anne. At the conclusion of the novel, the court is riding west for the summer and Cromwell hopes that Anne will return to court pregnant with a son, which would resolve many tensions.

**Thomas More** – Thomas More is a lawyer and scholar in Henry's court who becomes Lord Chancellor after Wolsey. More is a contrasting character to Cromwell. While Cromwell comes from poverty, More is the son of a gentleman, and he served as a page in a cardinal's household. Cromwell sometimes worked as a kitchen boy in that same household and he recalls seeing More read books and sing beautifully with the other pages while Cromwell did kitchen work or played wild games. The gulf between them seemed immense in those days, but Cromwell is able to bridge it as an adult, which is proof of his ambition and intelligence. While Cromwell has traveled the world and worked various jobs, More has lived his entire life in the same milieu and he therefore seems very set in his ways and ideas. Cromwell is always open to new ideas—including religious ones—while More is an ideologue who vehemently supports Catholic doctrine. More takes great pleasure in arresting people for heresy and burning them, while Cromwell abhors the violence of this. At court, More and Cromwell dislike each other from the start, since More hated Wolsey and also took over as Lord Chancellor after he was dismissed. More suspects Cromwell of reading the work of "heretics" like Tyndale and Luther, and he imprisons and executes Cromwell's friends who are in possession of these books. Cromwell appeals to Henry to stop More's merciless treatment of so-called heretics, but Henry does not want to interfere in More's work. However, when More opposes Parliament's endeavor to make Henry the head of the church, he falls out of favor with Henry and Anne Boleyn and is stripped of his title of Lord Chancellor. More never reconciles himself with Henry's new role and maintains his faith to the Pope in Rome. For this, he is tried and executed for treason.

**Stephen Gardiner** – Gardiner is King Henry's Master Secretary and envoy to Rome and France. Henry also names him Bishop of Winchester, which is a high honor since it is one of the richest bishoprics in the nation. Like Cromwell, Gardiner begins his career by working for Wolsey. Cromwell and Gardiner dislike each other from the beginning because they compete for Wolsey's favor. Wolsey is a father figure and mentor to

them both, though he and Cromwell are closer, which Gardiner resents. Gardiner is an illegitimate child of a royal, which makes him a distant cousin of King Henry. While Gardiner is insecure about his own background, he enjoys mocking Cromwell for being the son of a blacksmith. Their mutual dislike continues through the years, even after Gardiner becomes Henry's Master Secretary and Cromwell begins to make his way into court. While Cromwell goes out of his way to help Wolsey after Wolsey is dismissed from his position as Henry's Lord Chancellor, Gardiner does nothing to help, and Cromwell holds this against him. Cromwell vows to get his revenge against Gardiner, and he achieves this years later when he takes over Gardiner's role as Master Secretary. While Cromwell and Gardiner are constantly butting heads, Gardiner nevertheless comes across as a conscientious and intelligent man. Wolsey and King Henry trust him and send him as a delegate to Rome and France. Unlike Cromwell, Gardiner is surly and cold, and he is also a little too principled for Henry's liking. Gardiner doesn't balk at questioning the king's orders or leading an opposition against him, as he does when he disapproves of Henry's attempt to declare himself the head of the church. This is why Gardiner's career stalls, while Cromwell, who unquestioningly carries out the king's orders, rises at court.

**Queen Katherine** – Queen Katherine is King Henry's first wife. Katherine, a princess from Spain, was initially married to Henry's older brother, Arthur. Four months into their marriage, Arthur got sick and died. At that time, Henry was determined to marry Katherine himself, but he needed a special papal dispensation from Rome in order to do this. This dispensation essentially said that the relationship was not incestuous or against the Catholic faith. At the time, Henry was very much in love with Katherine, but this gradually changed over the years. Katherine got pregnant seven times, but she has only one surviving daughter, Mary Tudor. Henry is disappointed that none of their other children lived, and that he doesn't have a son who will be the heir to the throne. Also, 20 years into their marriage, he is no longer attracted to Katherine, who is six years older than he is, and he doesn't believe she can bear more children since she is over 40. Henry falls in love with Anne Boleyn, who is one of Katherine's young ladies-in-waiting, and he decides to get an annulment to his first marriage so he can marry Anne. Henry claims that his marriage to Katherine is incestuous and sinful in God's eyes, and that this—combined with his lack of a male heir—is sufficient grounds for annulment. However, Katherine is a staunch Catholic and is aunt to Emperor Charles V, who has great influence over the Pope in Rome. She refuses to give in to pressure from Henry and acquiesce to the annulment, confident that the Pope will side with her, which he does. Katherine comes across as a strong woman and Cromwell respects her for continuing to fight the king's decision, even after she knows that her case is hopeless. She is heartbroken when the king separates her from her daughter, Mary, placing them in separate households. After Parliament declares Henry the head of the church in England, he marries Anne Boleyn, who is crowned as queen soon after. Katherine is forced to live out her days at another residence, and she is made to turn over all her jewels to Anne Boleyn.

**Walter Cromwell** – Walter Cromwell is Thomas Cromwell's blacksmith father. At the beginning of the novel, he gives his son a beating that almost kills him and prompts him to run away from home. Thomas Cromwell seems to have inherited some of his father's pugnaciousness—Cardinal Wolsey tells Cromwell that he reminds him of "one of those square-shaped fighting dogs that low men tow about on ropes." However, Cromwell's desire to be a different man than his father triumphs and he diverts his aggression into statecraft rather than giving in to irrational, violent rages. Walter was a harsh father to his children, and Thomas Cromwell desires to be the exact opposite. He ends up being a loving father to his children and a caring father figure to his many wards. Thomas Cromwell doesn't see his father for many years after he runs away from home. Finally, after his son Gregory is born, he returns to Putney to see Walter, and he finds him unchanged. Walter is hostile and rude, and he mocks Cromwell for being a lawyer. When Cromwell tells him he has a son, Walter says he already has other grandchildren, implying that there is nothing special about Cromwell's news. When the family gathers some years later, Cromwell is glad that Walter is dead because if he were alive, he would have certainly spoiled the occasion.

**Liz Wykys** – Liz is Cromwell's beloved wife, who dies of the sweating sickness. Cromwell worked for Liz's father, Henry Wykys, and helped him revitalize his broadcloth business. Henry Wykys was so impressed with Cromwell's business sense that he asked his daughter Liz, who was a widow, if she would like to marry him. Cromwell initially married her because she had some money and business connections, but their relationship turned into one filled with affection and humor. Cromwell is devastated by her death, and he continues to mourn her for years. He begins having an affair with her sister, Johane, after Liz dies, and he admits to himself that he does this only because she reminds him of Liz. While many people wonder why Cromwell doesn't remarry after Liz's death, since he is wealthy and reasonably young, he doesn't seem to even consider it for a long time. Eventually, he develops romantic feelings for young Jane Seymour, who with her quiet wit and kindness seems to remind him of Liz. However, he seems to always be troubled by memories of Liz when he thinks of a future relationship.

**Jane Seymour** – Jane Seymour is one of Anne Boleyn's ladies-in-waiting. Her quiet humor and kindness catch Thomas Cromwell's eye. She is a pale, quiet girl when he first sees her, and she seems immediately different to him from the other conniving people he usually encounters at court. He pities her when the story of her father, John Seymour, sleeping with his daughter-in-law makes the rounds, causing her great

embarrassment. Though Jane's family is surrounded in scandal and the court is filled with intrigue and deceit, Jane herself seems pure and untouched by it all—Cromwell is reminded of her when he sees white lilies. Anne seems to dislike Jane immensely and insults her frequently. Jane tells Cromwell that she prefers serving Queen Katherine, whom she served before she was brought to Anne, but Cromwell advises her to stay with Anne Boleyn since it will be better for her career. Jane seems to reciprocate Cromwell's interest in her, and at the novel's conclusion, Cromwell is making plans to go visit her at her home in Wolf Hall. Throughout the novel, Cromwell cautions other men against falling in love with the same women Henry is interested in. Ironically, this is exactly what he seems to be doing, since history shows that Henry's next wife will be this very same Jane Seymour.

**Thomas Wriothesley/"Call-Me-Risley"** – Wriothesley is a clerk who works for both Stephen Gardiner and Thomas Cromwell. Rafe and Richard mock Wriothesley for his complicated last name, which he says is pronounced "Risley," and also because he works for Gardiner, whose dislike of Cromwell is well known. They say that he must be a spy for Gardiner and ask Cromwell not to trust him. However, Cromwell understands Wriothesley's ambition because it is much like his own. Wriothesley serves two masters and his allegiance will lie with whoever triumphs over the other. At one point, Cromwell thinks of himself and Wriothesley being akin to **wolves** fighting over scraps, since they both hunger for power and will fight without scruples to get it.

**William Tyndale** – Tyndale translated the Bible into English, even though the Catholic Church believes that the Bible must only be written in Latin. This is why Thomas More brands him a heretic, causing Tyndale to flee from England for his safety. Cromwell secretly owns a copy of Tyndale's Bible and likes that he has made it accessible to so many people. He has met Tyndale and thinks he is "a principled man," and he later tries to initiate a reconciliation between Tyndale and Henry so Tyndale can return home to England. However, Tyndale stubbornly refuses to support Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn, which frustrates Cromwell. He decides that More and Tyndale are "mules that pass for men" and deserve each other. Cromwell loses patience with people like them who cling to their beliefs without paying any attention to the consequences of doing so. At the conclusion of the novel, Tyndale is captured by Emperor Charles, and More hints that he had a hand in it.

**Eliza Barton, "The Maid"** – Barton, who is popularly known as "The Maid," is a prophetess who becomes famous for claiming to speak to angels and the dead. She claims that King Henry will be struck by lightning and die young if he marries Anne Boleyn. Since her prophecies are being encouraged and popularized by Henry's enemies, like Bishop Fisher, Cromwell brings the Maid to London where she is questioned by a delegation. After initially resisting the idea that her work is a hoax, she ultimately breaks down before the delegation and admits that her prophecies were untrue and also names all the powerful people who backed her up. The delegation makes her issue public apologies and also executes her for treason. The Maid's case shows how people like her became pawns in the hands of powerful people who oppose the king, like Bishop Fisher and Exeter. While the Maid has to pay for her crimes with her life, the powerful people who backed her escape by simply issuing apologies. The Maid's example also highlights the level of corruption in the Church, since so-called religious revelations were used as a means to gain power and money.

**Harry Percy** – Harry Percy is the Earl of Northumberland. He fell in love with Anne Boleyn when she first appeared in court. The two even took vows in front of some witnesses, but at Cardinal Wolsey's prompting, Percy's father threatened to disown his son unless he broke off his alliance with Anne. Wolsey declared that the Boleyn family was not noble enough to marry into the Percy family, and Harry was instead married to Mary Talbot. Years later, after Wolsey is accused of treason, it is Harry Percy who is sent to arrest the cardinal from his palace at Cawood near York, so Cromwell suspects that this is Anne Boleyn's way of getting revenge on Wolsey for breaking up her relationship with Percy and insulting her family. After Harry Percy's father's death, he claims that he still loves Anne and that they were in fact married in front of witnesses, which makes his marriage to Mary Talbot invalid. Cromwell threatens him with financial ruin if he doesn't recant his words, since his claims will offend the king and ruin Anne's chance to be queen. Cromwell takes great pleasure in doing this because it is his way of taking revenge on Percy for arresting Wolsey. Percy swears on a Bible in front of the king and his council that all his earlier claims about Anne were untrue, and he is allowed to return home.

**Thomas Boleyn** – Thomas Boleyn is Anne Boleyn's father. He is an ambitious and unscrupulous man who has no qualms about using his daughters, Anne and Mary Boleyn, to make his way up in court. When Anne is pregnant and King Henry resumes sleeping with his former mistress, Anne's sister Mary, Thomas encourages this because it will keep the king's favor within the family. A shallow man, he takes great delight in his title of "Monseigneur," which he gets after Anne marries Henry.

**Mary Boleyn/Lady Carey** – Mary Boleyn is Anne Boleyn's older sister. She was King Henry's mistress before he began his relationship with Anne. Anne is jealous of Mary because Henry used to sleep with her, and Anne treats Mary poorly. While Anne comes across as being cruel and ambitious, Mary is softer and kinder—which is probably why she isn't quite as successful in court. The first time Mary meets Thomas Cromwell, she flirts with him and indicates that she would like to marry him. However, Cromwell finds out later that she was pregnant with Henry's bastard at the time and thinks that he narrowly escaped having to be a father to that child. Cromwell doesn't

hold this against her, and he and Mary remain friends. Mary is a widow and has illegitimate children with King Henry whom the king does not acknowledge as his own, claiming that they were fathered by her husband. She cares deeply about these children, and Cromwell understands her worries since he, too, is a responsible parent to his children. Mary is his primary source for court gossip. When Anne becomes pregnant with her first child, Henry once again turns to Mary for sex and she cannot refuse the king. She is stuck between her sister's jealousy and the king's demands, and Cromwell pities her lack of freedom and wishes he could help her. Mary represents the helpless position of many women in court who can't refuse the sexual advances of powerful men, and Cromwell's sympathy for her affirms his own kind nature. When Anne suffers a miscarriage toward the end of the novel, Mary is pregnant with a child she claims is William Stafford's, but Anne suspects it is Henry's child and throws Mary out of court. Some months later, Mary writes to Cromwell, saying she made her decision to marry Stafford in a hurry and asking Cromwell for money since she has no one else to ask. Cromwell thinks that he will arrange for Thomas Boleyn to send Mary money for all the unpleasantness he forced his daughter into these many years.

**Mary Tudor** – Mary Tudor is Queen Katherine's only surviving child. Her diminutive size—Norfolk calls her a "talking **shrimp**"—contrasts with her dignity and gravity. Katherine had assumed that Mary would inherit the throne, but Henry is fixated on having a male heir. Like her mother, Mary is a devout Catholic and detests Anne Boleyn for turning her father against them. Cromwell is always kind to Mary, and she is fond of him. Since Cromwell is always kind to children and young people, his solicitousness for Mary doesn't seem unusual. However, he tells his son Gregory that if Henry were to die, Mary would certainly be the next ruler, which shows that Cromwell's desire to be in her good books is not entirely unselfish. Mary suffers after Anne Boleyn becomes queen. Anne is insecure that Mary might gain power and supporters after Henry's death and ascend the throne, so she tries to suppress her and keep her out of the court. Anne declares Mary a bastard since her parents' marriage has been annulled, and she separates her from Katherine. Mary is even denied her own residence and is instead forced to stay in the same household as the baby Princess Elizabeth, Anne's daughter, and Mary is supposed to serve the child. Mary bears these trials with fortitude, even refusing to eat meals with the household because she will be forced to sit at a station "below" baby Elizabeth's. Instead, she chooses to waste away in her room, surviving on only the bread that is permitted to be brought to her room for breakfast. When Cromwell sees her, he says he will order a physician to prescribe that she needs a heartier breakfast sent up, and Mary is grateful. He advises Mary to pretend to be friendly to Anne Boleyn since that will bring her many comforts and a possible position back at court, but Mary refuses.

**Pope Clement** – Pope Clement is the pope of the Catholic Church in Rome when King Henry is trying to annul his marriage to Katherine. He rules against Henry's annulment, siding with Queen Katherine and her nephew, the Emperor Charles. He also excommunicates Henry from the Catholic Church after Henry marries Anne Boleyn but recants this when King Francois requests him to do so. Parliament declares Henry the head of the church in England and makes it illegal for anyone to approach the Pope over Henry's decisions, so in Clement's lifetime, papal authority in England is lost.

**Uncle John** – Uncle John was Cromwell's uncle and Cardinal Morton's cook. When Cromwell was a little boy, he visited his uncle sometimes and helped in the kitchens, and he got fed in return. During his visits, Cromwell would see Thomas More, who was a page to Cardinal Morton, and be acutely conscious of the great gulf between them since Cromwell was a kitchen boy and More was an educated boy from a good family. However, as an adult, Cromwell manages to cross these social barriers between them.

**Johane** – After Liz Wykys's death, her sister Johane comes to live in Cromwell's house to help him with running the household. She is very similar to Liz in the way she looks and speaks, and she and Cromwell have an affair, despite Johane already being married. However, they both decide to end it and realize they probably started sleeping with each other out of their grief at losing Liz. Cromwell is courteous and kind to Johane when he breaks off their relationship, which is proof not only of his compassionate nature but also shows his powers of persuasion, since Johane agrees with him completely and harbors no ill will toward him.

**Patch/Sexton** – Patch is Cardinal Wolsey's fool, whom he gives to King Henry as a goodwill gesture even though Patch protests this violently. After the cardinal's death, some courtiers put on a play that mocks Wolsey and shows him being carried off to Hell, and Cromwell sees that Patch plays the part of the cardinal. Patch symbolizes the necessity of transforming oneself in order to survive a difficult situation, even though the change might seem cruel or traitorous.

**Eustache Chapuys** – Chapuys is Emperor Charles's ambassador to London. Chapuys spies on the events at the English court and sends the information back to Charles. He is aligned with Queen Katherine's cause and initially seems antagonistic to Cromwell because Chapuys knows Cromwell is loyal to Wolsey, and Chapuys dislikes Wolsey for trying to displace Katherine. However, with time, Cromwell and Chapuys come to be something like friends. Though they disagree at court, they often have dinner together and enjoy each other's company. Chapuys is always trying to puzzle out Cromwell's past since he cannot seem to comprehend how a person with Cromwell's background can be so successful and capable in court. Cromwell thinks that despite most people assuming that kings and emperors rule countries, policy and

politics are often determined by people like himself and Chapuys, "two men in small rooms."

**Thomas Cranmer** – Thomas Cranmer is a Cambridge scholar who comes to court to work for Anne Boleyn since he, like her, is interested in the work of Tyndale and Luther. Anne believes that Cranmer's learning might help to legitimize Henry's struggle against the Catholic Church. A seemingly serious man, Cranmer seems to have a penchant for love and marriage even though he is a priest who is supposed to be celibate. He comes to consider Cromwell his special friend and asks for his help when he needs to hide his pregnant wife, Margarete, from Henry and the court. When Warham, the old Archbishop of Canterbury, passes away, Cromwell suggests that Cranmer be the new archbishop and Henry supports this idea. As the new archbishop, Cranmer has the power to annul Henry's marriage to Katherine and recognize Henry's marriage to Anne.

**Rafe Sadler** – Rafe Sadler is Cromwell's chief clerk, who came to the Cromwell household to train under Cromwell when he was just a boy of seven. His father, Henry Sadler, sends him to Cromwell because he wants his son to learn everything Cromwell knows. Cromwell is very attached to Rafe, and he loves him like his own son. When Cromwell's daughter, Anne Cromwell, tells her father that she would like to marry Rafe when she grows up, Cromwell is excited at the prospect and feels that his life could be happy again despite his wife Liz's death. Rafe grows into a sensible young man and a capable assistant. Even King Henry notices this and asks that Rafe stay with him to advise him when Cromwell has to be elsewhere. Cromwell relies heavily on Rafe's assistance, and at times, Rafe seems even more level-headed than Cromwell. Rafe ends up marrying Helen Barre, a poor woman with two children whose husband abandoned her, and Cromwell is unpleasantly shocked when he hears this because he fears that Henry Sadler will hold Cromwell responsible for this poor match. Still, since Cromwell has just been promoted to Master Secretary when he hears this news, he promises Rafe's father that he will use his own position to ensure the success of Rafe's career. He is pleased to be able to help Rafe in this way.

**Gregory Cromwell** – Gregory is Cromwell's son and his only child who survives the sweating sickness. After Gregory is born, Cromwell promises to be as "tender" to Gregory as Walter was cruel to Cromwell. Cromwell stays true to his word and is always supportive and loving to Gregory, who has inherited none of his father's intelligence and perceptiveness. Cromwell doesn't begrudge him this and recognizes that Gregory has a much kinder nature than Cromwell does. Cromwell is also happy that he is able to provide his son with a secure, comfortable childhood and youth. When Cromwell is concerned about what career Gregory might take up, Johane advises Cromwell that Gregory is unsuited to a being either a businessman or a lawyer, and that Cromwell should take care to marry him well so Gregory can lead a comfortable life as a gentleman. While Cromwell trusts his clerk Rafe and his nephew Richard with details of his work, he often leaves Gregory out since he knows he isn't capable of managing it. Still, Cromwell seems to trust Gregory the most with his secrets, confiding in him that Mary Tudor could become the next ruler if Henry happens to die, and asking him to keep this information a secret even from Rafe and Richard. Cromwell is also very protective of Gregory and ensures that he settles him comfortably by leaving him enough money and property in his will.

**Richard Williams/Richard Cromwell** – Richard is Cromwell's nephew, and the son of Kat and Morgan Williams. After his parents die, he moves into Cromwell's household at Austin Friars and Cromwell brings him up like one of his own children. Richard is sharper than Cromwell's own son, Gregory, which leads to Cromwell trusting Richard more readily with his affairs. Richard is very attached to Cromwell and asks to change his last name from Williams to Cromwell since Cromwell is like a father to him. Through his father's family, Richard is a distant relative of King Henry, which leads Anne Boleyn to suggest that he marry her sister Mary Boleyn since he has some royal blood. Cromwell thinks this would be a great opportunity for Richard and the whole family, but Richard is reluctant when Cromwell discusses it with him, asking him if he even has a choice in the matter. Cromwell tells him he certainly does, but he goes on to persuade him by telling him that the whole family would gain immensely from the alliance. However, it doesn't work out, to Richard's relief, and he ends up marrying a young woman named Frances. Years later, when Mary Boleyn writes Cromwell a letter asking him for money, Richard says he is glad he didn't marry her, and that he managed to find happiness and success without the Boleyns' interference.

**Jane Rochford** – Jane Rochford is one of Anne Boleyn's ladies-in-waiting and her sister-in-law, married to her brother George Boleyn. Jane and George share a loveless marriage that Jane is spiteful about. When Mary Boleyn is away from court, Jane volunteers to give Cromwell the court gossip that Mary used to provide him with. She tells him many shocking stories, like how Anne takes on lovers that George arranges for her and that Anne and George plan to poison their enemies. Cromwell thinks that Jane Rochford is lonely, and that her loneliness makes her vicious.

**Kat** – Kat is Thomas Cromwell's sister and she cares for him after their father beats him up. Since Cromwell's mother is dead and he has never known her, Kat is a mother figure to him. Later, her children Richard and Walter are orphaned after the deaths of both their parents, and Cromwell looks after his nephews as if they were his own children.

**Duke of Norfolk/Thomas Howard** – Norfolk is one of the members of Henry's council and uncle to Anne Boleyn. He hates Wolsey for wielding influence over the king and is happy to raid his house and get rid of him. He admires Thomas

Cromwell's loyalty to Wolsey and paves the way for Cromwell's entry into the king's council. Norfolk is a violent man who threatens "to tear [Wolsey] with his teeth" if he won't move up north after he is dismissed as Lord Chancellor. Despite Norfolk's bluster, Cromwell realizes that Norfolk is in fact nervous to be in King Henry's presence, which highlights for Cromwell that the king can be a dangerous man when displeased. Since Anne Boleyn is his niece, Norfolk is supportive of her rise in power since it would also guarantee his place in court.

**Duke of Suffolk/Charles Brandon** – Suffolk is Henry's brother-in-law and a member of the king's council. He is married to Henry's sister, who used to be the Queen of France. Like Norfolk, Suffolk dislikes Wolsey for wielding a huge influence over Henry, and he is very glad to announce to Wolsey that Henry has dismissed him as Lord Chancellor. However, he is unhappy at Anne Boleyn's rise to power because his wife, who used to be a queen, is now expected to wait on Anne. Because of this, Suffolk refuses to travel with the court to Calais. Cromwell tells him that Anne is inclined to hold grudges and advises him not to anger her. Cromwell says that Suffolk's wife might be excused from the trip if she pleads an illness, but that Suffolk himself should go, which shows that Cromwell doesn't think that even the king's sister and brother-in-law will be spared Anne Boleyn's revenge if they cross her.

**George Cavendish** – Cavendish is Cardinal Wolsey's usher, who serves him faithfully even after his fall from grace. He tries to arrange for the cardinal's every comfort even though the cardinal has no money left. After the cardinal's death, it is Cavendish who fills Cromwell in on all the details of how Wolsey was arrested by Harry Percy.

**Little Bilney** – Little Bilney is a priest who questions some aspects of the Catholic faith, like the belief in purgatory and keeping fasts and vigils. Cromwell warns him that these are dangerous ideas to voice, but Bilney insists on being very vocal about them. Thomas More arrests him for heresy and has him imprisoned in the Tower of London. Cromwell appeals to Wolsey to try and get Bilney released. Wolsey says he will do his best, but he doesn't succeed. Bilney is burned for heresy years after he is imprisoned. When Anne Boleyn gives Cromwell the news about this, she calls Bilney a fool for insisting on saying things that would get him killed. While people like Cromwell and Anne are careful to modulate their opinions to their audiences, Bilney represents the danger of sticking to one's opinions without compromise. Rather than being heroic, he seems foolish, and he doesn't accomplish his aim of changing anyone's mind. After Bilney's death, Thomas More floats a rumor around that Bilney recanted his heretical beliefs as he was burning, which Cromwell knows is untrue.

**Thomas Wyatt** – Thomas Wyatt is a poet and courtier. He is the son of Henry Wyatt. Thomas used to be in love with Anne Boleyn, but after Henry expressed an interest in her, he went to Italy on a diplomatic mission to get away from her. When Henry Wyatt retires from court, he asks Cromwell to look after Thomas Wyatt.

**Antonio Bonvisi** – Bonvisi is an Italian merchant who is friends with Thomas More. After Wolsey is dismissed from his position as Lord Chancellor, Bonvisi invites Cromwell to dinner to try and convince him to stay away from court. More realizes that Cromwell will be a formidable force if he takes up Anne Boleyn's cause, and he asks Bonvisi to arrange the dinner in an attempt to prevent this from happening. Bonvisi, of course, doesn't succeed in his mission.

**Mary Shelton** – Mary Shelton is Anne Boleyn's cousin and one of her ladies-in-waiting. When Anne is pregnant for the second time, Henry turns his attention to Mary Shelton since Mary Boleyn is not at court. Anne is furious that Henry is sleeping with Shelton, so she wants her thrown out of court. However, Anne's father, Thomas Boleyn, believes it is a good thing for Henry's dalliances to stay within the family.

**Mark Smeaton** – Mark Smeaton is a young lute player whom Cromwell dislikes deeply. Mark used to work for Cardinal Wolsey, and the cardinal sends him as a present to Anne Boleyn. Before the boy leaves Wolsey's residence, Cromwell overhears him telling another servant that he is glad to be going to Anne Boleyn's house since he is sure that Wolsey will be beheaded and that he certainly deserves to be. Mark also says that Cromwell will probably be executed, too, and that he looks like a murderer—which deeply offends Cromwell. Whenever Cromwell sees the boy at Anne Boleyn's residence, he feels very irritated.

**John Seymour** – John Seymour is the head of the household at **Wolf** Hall. His name is disgraced in court because he has an incestuous affair with his daughter-in-law. Old John's disgraceful behavior underlines the idea that people are not very different from wild, uncivilized beasts. He is father to Jane Seymour, who seems embarrassed and angry about her father's behavior.

**Bishop Fisher** – Fisher is Bishop of Rochester and legal adviser to Queen Katherine. He stays committed to Katherine's cause and therefore incurs the anger of Anne Boleyn and Henry. Fisher admits to supporting the Maid, and he issues a public apology for this after the Maid's prophecies are revealed to be a hoax. When Cromwell meets him, he warns Fisher that he is on the wrong side in a "war," and that he should take to his bed and claim to be sick in order to avoid the fallout from the scandal surrounding the Maid. Fisher seems to take his suggestion.

**The Loller** – When Cromwell was a young boy, he watched an old Loller woman being burned for heresy. (A "Loller" was someone who followed the anti-Catholic teachings of John Wycliffe.) The violence of the incident sticks with Cromwell through the years, making him disagree with Thomas More's

idea of punishing anyone who broke with the Catholic faith by deeming them heretics and burning them.

**John Frith** – Frith is a young scholar whom Cromwell respects deeply. Thomas More imprisons Frith for heresy because he translated Luther into English. Cromwell tells Frith that he can get him an interview with Henry and a possible pardon if Frith will only say the right things to the king. However, Frith refuses to compromise on his beliefs even to save his own life. Cromwell appeals to More to spare Frith, but More does not, and Frith is burned for heresy. This incident shows the extent of Cromwell's compassion, and also shows that it is frustrating for him to deal with people who stick to their principles at the cost of their lives. Cromwell doesn't ask Frith to actually change his beliefs—he only wants him to *say* he does. To Cromwell, this seems so logical, while some—like Frith and More—regard it as dishonorable conduct.

**Princess Elizabeth** – Princess Elizabeth is Anne Boleyn's infant daughter. Her parents are extremely disappointed that she isn't a boy, but Anne has some legislation passed that ensures that Elizabeth will inherit the throne if Henry doesn't have a legal male heir. Indeed, history shows that she grows up to become Queen Elizabeth I.

**Lady Shelton** – Lady Shelton is Anne Boleyn's aunt. She is put in charge of Mary Tudor after Mary is removed from her residence and placed in the same house as the Princess Elizabeth in order to serve her. Lady Shelton comes across as a woman of principles who disagrees with her niece's decision to deny Mary Tudor her own home. She tells Cromwell that she doesn't care if Mary is a bastard or not, and that Lady Shelton thinks Mary has been treated unfairly. She promises to look after her with sympathy, even if Anne Boleyn doesn't approve.

**Emperor Charles** – Emperor Charles is Queen Katherine's nephew. As the Holy Roman Emperor, he guards the Holy Roman Empire against the influence of Protestants. He has great influence with Pope Clement, which is one of the reasons why the pope refuses to grant King Henry the annulment to his marriage with Katherine. Charles receives news from the English court through his ambassador, Chapuys. Charles threatens to invade England to protect the honor of his aunt Katherine, but he never does, knowing that he would not have the support of the English people.

**Martin Luther** – While Martin Luther doesn't appear as a character in *Wolf Hall*, his books and ideas are often discussed. He was a German theologian who questioned some ideas of the Catholic Church and whose writings led to the division of Western Christianity into Catholicism and Protestantism. His books are considered heretical in England during Henry's reign and anyone who is caught reading them is arrested and executed by Thomas More. While Cromwell doesn't agree with all of Luther's ideas, he is interested in knowing what they are, which is why he smuggles the books into England and reads them. Cromwell even shares Luther's ideas with Wolsey.

**Cardinal Morton** – When Cromwell was a little boy, his uncle John was a cook at Cardinal Morton's residence, and Cromwell used to go there sometimes to help his uncle out in the kitchens and get some food to eat. Thomas More was a page in Cardinal Morton's household at the same time, and he was already well known for his intelligence. Young Cromwell watched More and felt that there was an unbridgeable chasm between them. However, as an adult, Cromwell ends up becoming even more powerful and successful than More.

**William Stafford** – William Stafford is a courtier. After Anne Boleyn has a miscarriage, she is distraught to find out that her sister Mary Boleyn is pregnant. Anne suspects that it is King Henry's child, but Mary claims that William Stafford is the father of her child. Mary also says that they are very much in love and are married. Anne is furious that her sister is pregnant while she is not, and she throws Mary and William Stafford out of court.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Morgan Williams** – Morgan Williams is Kat's husband. He comes from a well-to-do Welsh family and is a distant relation of King Henry. He is concerned for Thomas Cromwell when his father beats him up, but he is too afraid of Walter to stand up to him.

**Bet** – Bet is Thomas Cromwell's sister. Cromwell takes care of her children Christopher, Will, and Alice after Bet and her husband die of the sweating sickness.

**Thomas Winter** – Thomas Winter is Cardinal Wolsey's illegitimate son.

**Dorothea** – Dorothea is Cardinal Wolsey's illegitimate daughter.

**Henry Wykys** – Henry Wykys is Thomas Cromwell's father-in-law and a trader of broadcloth.

**William Gascoigne** – Gascoigne is Cardinal Wolsey's treasurer.

**King Francois/King Francis** – King Francois is the king of France. He promises to speak to Pope Clement about Henry's marriage to Katherine and also succeeds in convincing the Pope not to excommunicate Henry for his marriage to Anne Boleyn.

**Henry Norris** – Norris is King Henry's close friend and a gentleman of the privy chamber. Cromwell feels a deep dislike for him because Norris is "a subtle crook" who has the king's ear and exercises a huge influence over him.

**Prince Arthur** – Arthur was King Henry's older brother, who was married to Queen Katherine. He died four months after his wedding, and Henry had inherited the throne and married Katherine after Arthur's death.

**Henry Fitzroy/Duke of Richmond** – Henry Fitzroy is King

Henry's illegitimate son. Anne Boleyn is worried that he might marry a powerful princess and then ascend to the throne after Henry's death. To prevent this, she arranges his marriage to her cousin Mary Howard.

**Mary Talbot** – Mary Talbot is Harry Percy's wife.

**King Edward** – King Edward was King Henry VIII's grandfather.

**Anne Cromwell** – Anne Cromwell is Thomas Cromwell's favorite child. She is a tough and smart little girl who ends up dying in the sweating sickness.

**Grace Cromwell** – Grace Cromwell is Thomas Cromwell's youngest child. She is a beautiful little girl who succumbs to the sweating sickness.

**John Williamson** – John Williamson is Johane's husband.

**Jo** – Jo is Johane's daughter. Cromwell cares for her as if she were one of his own children.

**Alice Wellyfed** – Alice is Bet's daughter. Her parents die, after which Alice and her two brothers move into the Cromwell household.

**Henry Sadler** – Henry Sadler is Rafe Sadler's father. He sends Rafe to study under Thomas Cromwell so that Rafe can learn everything Cromwell knows.

**George Boleyn** – George is Anne Boleyn's brother, who gets the title Lord Rochford because of his sister's relationship with King Henry. He is married—unhappily—to Jane Rochford, who tells Cromwell all kinds of rumors about George's ruthless ways.

**Cardinal Campeggio** – Campeggio is the papal envoy who is sent to England to determine if Henry and Katherine's marriage should be annulled. He advises Katherine to accept Henry's claim, but Katherine refuses.

**Henry Carey** – Henry Carey is Mary Boleyn's illegitimate son who was fathered by King Henry.

**Thomas Lord Darcy** – Thomas Lord Darcy is a member of the king's council.

**Mercy** – Mercy is Liz Wykys's mother.

**Walter Williams** – Walter is the son of Kat and Morgan Williams. He lives in the Cromwell household after his parents die.

**Thurston** – Thurston is Cromwell's cook at Austin Friars.

**Christophe** – Christophe is a young boy whom Cromwell meets in Calais. He tells Cromwell he wants to leave Calais because he is in trouble with the law. The boy reminds Cromwell of himself when he was younger, so Cromwell takes him on as a servant.

**Meg Roper** – Meg Roper is Thomas More's favorite child.

**Will Roper** – Will Roper is Thomas More's son-in-law, and husband to his favorite child, Meg Roper.

**Henry Pattinson** – Henry Pattinson is Thomas More's fool.

**Anne Cresacre** – Anne Cresacre is Thomas More's wealthy ward who is married to his son, John. More takes pleasure in humiliating Anne before his dinner guests, which contrasts him with Cromwell, who is kind and solicitous to all the young people in his household.

**Alice More** – Alice More is Thomas More's wife. He mocks her cruelly in public, which contrasts with the care and concern that Cromwell has for Liz.

**Warham** – Warham is the old Archbishop of Canterbury who was faithful to the Pope in Rome. After Warham dies, Cranmer becomes the new archbishop, at Cromwell's suggestion.

**Joan** – Joan is Cranmer's first wife, who died in childbirth.

**Kingston** – Kingston is the Constable of the Tower of London who shows up to arrest Wolsey.

**William Brereton** – Brereton is one of King Henry's gentlemen of the privy chamber.

**Thomas Audley** – Audley is Speaker of the House and one of Cromwell's friends. After Thomas More is forced to resign his position as Lord Chancellor, Cromwell suggests that Audley be given the post, and King Henry agrees.

**Catherine Fillol** – Catherine Fillol is Edward Seymour's wife. She had an affair with her father-in-law, John Seymour.

**Edward Seymour** – Edward Seymour is Jane Seymour's brother and John Seymour's son. His wife, Catherine, had an affair with his father.

**Thomas Hitton** – Hitton is a priest who is accused of heresy by Bishop Fisher and is burned.

**Lucy Petyt** – Lucy Petyt is John Petyt's wife.

**John Petyt** – John Petyt is a merchant and Cromwell's friend. He is imprisoned by Thomas More on suspicion of heresy.

**Thomas Avery** – Avery is one of Cromwell's clerks.

**Stephen Vaughan** – Vaughan is Cromwell's contact in Antwerp who helps him communicate secretly with Tyndale, who is in exile.

**Henry Wyatt** – Henry Wyatt is an elderly courtier and Thomas Wyatt's father. He considers Cromwell to be a very capable and intelligent man and respects him for rising so quickly in court. He asks him to be a guardian to his son.

**Richard Plantagenet** – Richard Plantagenet was King Richard III, who was defeated by Henry Tudor.

**Francis Weston** – Weston is one of King Henry's gentleman attendants.

**Francis Bryan** – Bryan is one of King Henry's gentleman attendants.

**Hugh Latimer** – Latimer is a priest whom Anne Boleyn favors since he disagrees with the Pope.

**Father Bocking** – Bocking is a corrupt priest who is Eliza Barton's spiritual director.

**Lord Berners** – Berners is the Governor of Calais.

**Helen Barre** – Helen Barre is a young woman whom Cromwell employs after her husband abandons her. She ends up marrying Cromwell's clerk, Rafe Sadler.

**Lady Exeter** – Lady Exeter is Lord Exeter's wife.

**Lord Exeter, Henry Courtenay** – Lord Exeter is King Henry's cousin and boyhood friend, and he has a claim to the throne of England.

**Margarete** – Margarete is Cranmer's wife.

**Richard Riche** – Riche is a young lawyer who manages to find evidence to indict Thomas More for treason.

**Dr. Butts** – Dr. Butts is a physician who is Cromwell's friend.

**Thomas Rotherham** – Rotherham is Cromwell's ward who marries his niece, Alice Wellyfed.

**Mary Howard** – Mary Howard is the Duke of Norfolk's daughter. She marries Henry Fitzroy.

**Margaret Pole** – Margaret Pole is Mary Tudor's aunt. She appeals to Cromwell not to move her niece from her residence in order to make her serve Princess Elizabeth.

**Hans Holbein** – Holbein is a famous painter who makes portraits of Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell, and King Henry. In the portraits, these characters look like idealized versions of themselves that are quite different from their true selves.

**Rowland Lee** – Lee is a priest who is friends with Anne Boleyn.

**Lady Bryan** – Lady Bryan is in charge of the care of the baby Princess Elizabeth.

**Frances** – Frances is Richard Cromwell's wife.

**John ap Rice** – Rice is Jo's husband.

**John More** – John More is Thomas More's father. Like his son, John More is disrespectful toward women. Thomas More is heartbroken and weeps inconsolably after his father's death.

**Liz Seymour** – Liz Seymour is Jane Seymour's "bold" and "eloquent" older sister.

**Cardinal Farnese** – After Pope Clement's death, Cardinal Farnese is appointed the new pope. Since England no longer recognizes the authority of the pope by the time Farnese comes to power, he is called the "Bishop of Rome" in Henry's court.

## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

### POWER, AMBITION, AND DECEPTION

*Wolf Hall* is set in 16th-century England, at the time when King Henry VIII was trying to dissolve his marriage to Queen Katherine so he could marry Anne Boleyn. Since the Catholic Church believed that marriages were permanent, Henry couldn't get a divorce. Unable to sway the Catholic Church, Henry broke away from it and declared himself head of the church in England. He did this with the help of his ambitious and canny minister, Thomas Cromwell, who is the central character of this historical novel. *Wolf Hall* traces Cromwell's rise from his lowly origins as the son of a blacksmith and shows how his success hinged on his ability to stay a step ahead of the intrigues and deceit of the Tudor court. As Cromwell rises in power, his sharp mind combined with his knack for exploiting legal loopholes and human insecurities serves him well. He observes early in the novel that a person can achieve success in public life only "by being a subtle crook," and he uses this knowledge to elbow his way into the upper echelons of power. Through Cromwell's rise, and through the actions of other characters like King Henry and Cardinal Wolsey, the novel makes the case that deception and hypocrisy are the essential foundations of power.

The novel shows that the people in the Tudor court are very ambitious and are unrelenting in their attempts to grab more power—often through deception and corruption. For instance, when King Henry knows that the Church won't grant him a divorce, he seeks an annulment on the grounds that Katherine was married to his brother Arthur before she married Henry, which makes her Henry's "dear sister." Of course, the reality is that he has grown tired of his wife, who hasn't borne him a son, and he wants to marry Anne Boleyn. Additionally, Henry yearns for more power and dislikes the Catholic Church's hold over the English court, and he sees this situation as a way to rebel against the Church and assert his own authority. He disguises his true motives with claims of conscience and religion. Other courtiers, too, are shown to deceive and finagle their way into power, like Anne Boleyn, who carries on "coy negotiations" with the king, procuring titles for her brother and father, and insisting that the king marry her so she can be queen before they consummate their relationship.

Cromwell is introduced to the workings of the court through his mentor, Cardinal Wolsey, who teaches him that he must never place his faith in appearances and must always question people's stated intentions. Wolsey tells Cromwell he must always "find out what people wear under their **clothes**" because most people cloak their true selves and disguise their vulnerabilities and desires. Wolsey teaches Cromwell how to use this deeper understanding in order to exploit people and move up in court—a lesson that Cromwell takes to heart. For

instance, when Cromwell is initially building his relationship with King Henry, he sees that Henry has no friends in court whom he can talk to and laugh with. Cromwell fills this gap in Henry's life not because he genuinely wants to be Henry's friend, but because he knows that it will result in his own personal success, and he ends up becoming indispensable to Henry.

Cromwell also learns that it is essential to hide his own thoughts, as power lies in deception. After he is sworn into the king's council, he "put[s] on a mask" every morning. He understands that a "man's power is in the half-light, in the half-seen movements of his hand and the unguessed-at expression of his face." His real self and ideas remain cloaked from the world since he knows that these would make him vulnerable. In the same way, he keeps a keen watch for moments when others betray their true emotions—he looks for the "doubt, reservation, rebellion" that are exposed before their faces "settle into the suave lineaments of the courtier, the facilitator, the yes-man."

In order to hold onto his position of power and of camaraderie with the king, Cromwell is willing to ignore the dictates of his own conscience and instead fulfill the king's desires. Cromwell observed that the cardinal was only powerful for as long as the king was pleased with him, and that Wolsey's fall was swift when he could no longer serve the monarch by procuring an annulment for his marriage. He saw how Wolsey behaved when the king shouted at him—he was "half-smiling, civil, regretful." Wolsey's power and dignity vanished at the king's displeasure, which taught Cromwell that he must have the king's favor to rise in court. Accordingly, Cromwell is willing to always oblige the monarch, even when he is morally opposed to what the king asks for, like when Henry asks him to indict Thomas More for a crime he didn't commit. Cromwell's ambition coupled with his skill as a suave trickster help him climb the ranks, demonstrating that these were necessary skills in Henry's court and that, more broadly, such deception lies beneath all power of the kind that Cromwell gains.

## POOR LEADERSHIP AND VIOLENCE

Thomas Cromwell, the protagonist of the historical novel *Wolf Hall*, lives most of his life with the threat of danger and violence, from his early childhood with his alcoholic and abusive father, to his time as minister in Henry VIII's court. While the violence in these two settings seems very different on the surface—the intrigues of the Tudor court are subtler than the crude beatings that Cromwell was subject to at his father's hands—they are equally dangerous and deadly. Since Cromwell has already been exposed to a violent environment early on and has learned how to navigate and survive it, he seems especially suited to maneuver his way around court. As the novel unfolds, Mantel implies that danger and violence result when an ineffective and self-indulgent leader is at the helm of affairs, and in this way likens the violence and danger of Cromwell's early life to the situation at the Tudor court.

The novel makes the case that violence stems from ineffective, illogical leadership. The opening scene of the novel is a brutal one, in which the young Thomas Cromwell's father beats him nearly to death with a plank of wood. Later, Cromwell's brother-in-law Morgan Williams asks what spurred the beating, and Cromwell says it was because he'd been fighting with some boys down by the river. Williams is incredulous at Cromwell's father's lack of logic—that he'd disapproved of Cromwell fighting, had "wait[ed] a day, then [hit] him with a bottle. Then he knock[ed] him down in the yard [...] [and] beat up and down his length with a plank of wood." To Williams, the punishment makes no sense for several reasons: for one thing, it seems much like the crime itself, which means that it isn't so much a punishment as a perpetuation of the crime. Secondly, the punishment is extremely disconnected from the crime in terms of time and consequence—strangely, it comes a day after Cromwell was caught fighting, and it's also a disproportionately severe punishment for a young boy roughhousing.

Cromwell experiences another instance of danger caused by ineffective leadership when he is serving as a soldier in France. The "mad capitaine" in charge is "not very good at the basic business of thinking" and often puts his troops in unsafe situations like having them camp out "somewhere with a rising water level" or moving them to an "indefensible position." Cromwell experiences "seething anxiety" and emotional turmoil because of the perilous position his troop is put in, and it's all due to an incompetent leader.

In King Henry VIII's court, too, no one is quite safe from imprisonment in the Tower of London or a sudden beheading ordered on the whims of the monarch. The king comes across as a coddled tyrant who will not stand for opposition and is quickly offended. While Cardinal Wolsey was once the king's most trusted advisor, he suddenly finds himself branded as a traitor because he doesn't succeed in procuring an annulment for the king's marriage, despite his best efforts. One of the charges leveled against him is that of violating the statutes of praemunire, or "the upholding of a foreign jurisdiction with the king's realm." This is a law that no one quite understands and that "seems to mean what the king says it means." This tyrannical and blatantly illogical atmosphere allows violence to flourish, with people's lives at the mercy of the king's fickle favor.

In contrast, Cromwell's interactions with his mentor Cardinal Wolsey are devoid of this air of fearfulness. Through this, Mantel suggests that when logical leaders are in charge, there is no cause for constant fear and anxiety. Cromwell and the cardinal share a relationship of mutual respect and affection, with each of them admiring the other's mental acuity and kindness. Cromwell believes the cardinal "is a man beyond

price." As a result, even when he disagrees with the cardinal, he never fears him.

Additionally, the Cromwell household is a place of warmth and security, since Thomas Cromwell runs his home with sense and fairness and treats his wife and children with respect. It is a complete contrast to his childhood home. in which he experienced unpredictable violence. When Cromwell asks his wife, Liz, if he's ever made her cry, she tells him she has "only [cried] with laughter," showing that his sensible attitude as head of the household results in happiness and harmony for everyone there.

To Cromwell, who comes across as a sensible, practical character, peace and safety seems like the logical choice. He opposes violence whenever possible, whether by speaking out in Parliament against Henry's plan to march on France or by opposing Thomas More's violent treatment of those he brands heretics. Cromwell doesn't think of his actions as being born out of kindness. To him, it is just good sense not to waste money and human resources on a war fought for honor. He also cannot comprehend why More feels the need to severely punish those who don't agree with his religious beliefs—Cromwell sees that More's actions do nothing to propagate Catholicism and only succeed in spreading fear.

However, the novel repeatedly points out that the world—and especially the Tudor court—often does not operate out of logic and good sense. The very name of the novel, *Wolf Hall*, suggests violence and irrational behavior. In an interview, Mantel has said, "**Wolf** Hall, besides being the home of the Seymour family, seemed an apt name for wherever Henry's court resided." At one point in the novel, Cromwell thinks of the Latin saying, *homo homini lupus*, or "man is wolf to man," as being an accurate description of the interactions at court, suggesting that many of Henry's courtiers put aside their human rationality and behave with animalistic violence. So while Mantel indicates that calm, competent leadership is the only way to avoid violence, she also suggests that such leadership is rare in an inherently violent, irrational society.

## CHILDREN AND HUMAN CONNECTION

In *Wolf Hall*, one of the main reasons that King Henry VIII wants to annul his marriage to Queen Katherine is because she hasn't borne him a son—she has had multiple miscarriages and just one surviving daughter, and the king wants a wife who will give him an heir. The matter of the king's heir drives the political tensions of the novel, and from this springboard, the novel delves into the relationships between fathers and their children. Thomas Cromwell's relationships with children—his own and even other people's—are filled with warmth and respect, and this is a striking way in which he is different from his contemporaries. For others in the novel, children simply represent the continuation of their family line or are a secret to be hidden when they are born out of wedlock. However, Cromwell values children, which points to his affection for humankind as a whole. In Mantel's telling, an important way in which Cromwell establishes himself as being morally superior to his contemporaries (despite his devious machinations at court) is through his treatment of children and the broader human connections they represent. This aspect of Cromwell's character hints at the broader idea that whether an individual treats other people (especially vulnerable ones like children) kindly can be a key indicator of that person's underlying morality.

At the time of the novel's events, children's worth is usually closely tied to property and succession. While this principle drives most of the characters in the novel, Cromwell's attitude towards children is an affectionate one and is removed from matters of money and property. Much of the story focuses on the fact that King Henry wants to separate from Queen Katherine because she hasn't been able to give him a male heir. For the king, a child is simply a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Mantel shows no scenes of affection between the king and his children. Henry has some children born out of wedlock, like Mary Boleyn's children, whom he doesn't acknowledge. While most of the characters in the novel, like Henry, don't acknowledge their illegitimate children and are unconcerned about them, Cromwell feels a sense of guilt about even imagining any children he might have fathered while he was a teenage soldier wandering around France, even though he doesn't know of any. He thinks that this would be terrible because "the only honest thing to be done" is to "look after your children."

Cromwell also takes care to be a kind father to his children, which makes his household a warm and safe haven. As a boy, Cromwell runs away from home after his father beats him and he runs into some Lowlanders, who are shocked at his bruises and comment that "the English are cruel to their children." When young Cromwell hears this, he "is surprised" to think that "there [are] people in the world who are not cruel to their children," and "the weight in his chest shifts" as he thinks that there must be better places in the world. When he has his own children, he tries to give them every happiness and encourages their individuality. His favorite is his daughter Anne, "a tough little girl" who "could eat a princess for breakfast," and he treats his youngest, Grace, with great tenderness. When his son Gregory is born, Cromwell kisses the baby and tells him, "I shall be as tender to you as my father was not to me. For what's the point of breeding children, if each generation does not improve on what went before?" To Cromwell, treating children well is a kind of shorthand for an overall better and more moral way of being.

Cromwell's affection for his family is not limited to those who are related to him by blood, which shows that his idea about

children's worth are related to his fondness for humanity more generally. He treats his assistant, Rafe Sadler, and his nephews and nieces just as well as he treats his own children. They, too, love him like a father, with his nephew Richard even asking to take on his last name despite Cromwell being embroiled in a sticky political situation at the time. Cromwell jokingly tells him that anyone called "Cromwell" would soon want to change their name to something else, but Richard promises him that he will "never disown it," showing the level of affection that he has for Cromwell.

After Cromwell rises in court and becomes Henry's most trusted advisor, many gentlemen send their sons to his household so he can train them. Cromwell "takes it seriously, this trust placed in him," and "talks to [the young men]" respectfully about their capabilities and beliefs. They are "astonished" and open up to Cromwell because "no one has talked to them before. Certainly not their fathers." Cromwell seems very different from his contemporaries because he understands that human beings cannot be taught anything "by snubbing them and crushing their pride." His respect for young people shows his generous and perceptive nature.

Cromwell's attitude toward children and his loyalty to family in *Wolf Hall* elevate him beyond his peers. The value he places in human beings makes him a likable and sympathetic character despite his canny maneuverings at court. Through Cromwell, Mantel seems to be making the case that the way a person treats and views young people is a keen reflection of his or her broader moral character.

## DOGMATISM VS. OPEN-MINDEDNESS

While Thomas Cromwell has to face many who oppose him, the character whom he crosses paths—and ideas—with most frequently is Thomas More, King Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor. More's uncompromising certainty in Catholic doctrine comes across as violent and deranged fanaticism. Cromwell, on the other hand, has a pragmatic and open attitude to ideas that are different from his own. In contrasting these two men, Mantel elevates open-mindedness over dogmatism and suggests that Cromwell's receptive attitude is what helps him adapt to new situations and empathize with people who are different from him.

Cromwell's open-mindedness is one of the attributes that sets him apart from More, who is very set in his ways. The first time in the novel that Cromwell thinks of More, he brings up this basic difference in their natures. Cromwell wonders why "everything [More] know[s], and everything [he's] learned, [seems to] confirm" his old beliefs, while, in Cromwell's case, his beliefs are "chipped away a little and a little, a fragment then a piece then a piece more." In other words, the more that Cromwell learns and experiences, the more he finds himself questioning his previously held ideas. For Cromwell, with the passing of time, "the corners are knocked off the certainties of this world: and the next world too." Cromwell acknowledges that he is no longer sure about the validity of religious teachings, which turns into the biggest point of contention between these two characters. More is passionate about guarding traditional Catholic doctrine from any changes, while Cromwell questions its merit and is unopposed to declaring King Henry the head of a new church if that will be a solution to the problem at hand.

Empathy for people different from himself is also a key part of Cromwell's rise. For instance, Cromwell's wife Liz tells him one evening that if King Henry discards Queen Katherine to marry a younger woman, "all women everywhere in England" will be against it, especially women "who have a daughter but no son." Later, Cromwell thinks about why Liz would bother thinking about these women, since she herself has a son. He thinks that it's possibly "something women do: spend time imagining what it's like to be each other," and he decides that "One can learn from that." Cromwell values Liz's empathy and is shown to display similar empathy for people very unlike him. For instance, even when he hears of King Henry's desire for Anne Boleyn, he doesn't focus on the monarch's willfulness or his demands that holy law be rewritten for him. Cromwell's first thought is that it must be frustrating for the king to "[find] himself at every turn impeded," since Henry is unable to do what he wants to do. Cromwell's empathy makes him a good listener when people confide in him—even when those people are behaving in seemingly unreasonable ways.

In contrast to More who has spent his entire life among people like himself, Cromwell has traveled and experienced many life situations and careers. This broad experience comes across as a virtue, portraying him as a man of modern sensibility with an open outlook rather than a person who is convinced his way is the best. Cromwell begins life as a blacksmith's son in Putney, England, but he ends up traveling around Europe after he runs away. He has a range of life experiences, from being a soldier fighting in abysmal conditions in France, to working among cloth traders in Antwerp, to working as a banker in Florence. As a result of his diverse experiences, Cromwell "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." A man of many talents, he remains open to the idea that he always has more to learn.

More, on the other hand, sounds one note—that of religious fundamentalism. His limited life experience is reflected in his limited imagination. He is furious when Catholic laws are broken, but he doesn't seem to consider why or even *if* they might be worthy of his fury. For instance, More detests Tyndale, who has translated the New Testament into English, since the Catholic Church believes that the Bible was supposed to be written only in Latin. While Cromwell has a copy of Tyndale's Bible and enjoys reading it in secret, which demonstrates his

ability to think clearly for himself, More brands Tyndale a heretic and wants to imprison him—without even reading the book.

Mantel shows that fanaticism and unquestioning certainty like More's can be dangerous since it can lead to death and violence. In order to maintain the doctrines of Catholicism, More has no qualms about outing people as heretics and burning them. In contrast, Cromwell has a deep antipathy to violence in the name of religion. As a boy, he witnessed an old Loller woman being burned for opposing Catholicism, and the gruesome image has stuck with him through the years. He remembers the two monks who led the woman to the stake, "parading like fat gray rats, crosses in their pink paws." Another woman in the crowd is pleased that the Loller will pay and she screams in triumph, "in a shrill voice like a demon." The hypocrisy and cruelty of that moment stick with Cromwell and he recalls that as a child, his "fear [was] too great" to oppose what had transpired. However, as an adult, he is no longer voiceless, and he often tries to talk More out of violence in the name of religion.

Cromwell's open-mindedness makes him come across as a much more humane character than More, whose dogmatism makes him seem unthinking and cruel. Through this contrast, Mantel champions Cromwell's empathy and open-mindedness and suggests that such qualities are the only way for humanity to avoid senseless violence.

## MYTH AND STORYTELLING

*Wolf Hall* is a historical novel in which the author has fleshed out historical facts and characters with her imagination—she has imagined their loves and fears, their motivations and conversations. The novel is an imagined history, and Mantel consciously draws attention to this fact by frequently alluding to storytelling, mythology, and the theater in the novel. By pointing out repeatedly that the characters are just that—characters—Mantel reminds readers that *Wolf Hall* is just one version of events, and that ultimately, any record of history is just one version among many—that is, every history is also a kind of myth.

In several sections in the novel, Thomas Cromwell thinks of various people around him as being like characters in a play. This is one way in which Mantel reminds readers that the characters in the novel are playing parts. For instance, when Cardinal Wolsey is thrown out of his house after falling out of favor with the king, Cromwell thinks of them all as being "figures in an allegory of Fortune. Decayed Magnificence sits in the center. Cavendish, leaning at his right like a Virtuous Councillor, mutters words of superfluous and belated advice[.]" Even at moments in the story in which Cromwell is emotionally invested—like this one in which he witnesses the disgrace experienced by the cardinal—he is able to distance himself and view the scene with wit by describing it theatrically. Here, when he thinks of it as an allegory, he seems to see the situation with humor and clarity.

Mantel also suggests that viewing history as a kind of story can offer valuable new perspectives on the facts. When Cavendish, the cardinal's usher, explains to Cromwell how Anne Boleyn and a young nobleman named Harry Percy had wanted to marry and the cardinal refused to allow it, Cavendish insists that he and Cromwell act out the scene like a play, with one of them playing the part of "quaking Harry Percy" and the other the cardinal. Again, the scene is a humorous one and it also serves as a reminder that stories—and histories—are versions of events that change in the telling. In comparison to Cavendish's lively and melodramatic version of the same events, Cromwell had previously heard only "the cardinal's chilly and dismissive rendition." After hearing Cavendish's version, Cromwell comes to believe that Anne detests the cardinal for breaking up her romance with Percy and is out to get revenge on him, but he hadn't thought of this when he'd heard the cardinal's version.

Additionally, histories and events are narrated as stories within the novel, which suggests that much goes into a history that is not strictly factual. However, Mantel implies that this does not make them less important since facts are always filtered through people's sensibilities. For example, the novel contains a short history of England, which is a fascinating mixture of myth, magic, and fact. It begins with the 33 Greek princesses who arrived on England's shores hundreds of years ago and "mated with demons and gave birth to a race of giants." It continues in this same mythic tone to describe Anne Boleyn, who "appeared at court at the Christmas of 1521, dancing in a yellow dress." Especially when read by readers hundreds of years after these events took place, Anne Boleyn in her yellow dress holds as much mythic power as the Greek princesses, and she takes her place among the various people who defined the history of England.

In another instance, Cromwell watches a play by some law students in which they satirize Cardinal Wolsey after he has been ousted by the king. While Cromwell views the cardinal with affection and respect, the law students portray him as corrupt and undignified, using bawdy humor that Cromwell finds distasteful and infuriating. However, after walking out of the play in anger, Cromwell calms down and admits to his family that the play was entertaining. Even though the ideas in the play were opposed to his own, he allows that others might hold them and that, in their own way, they are valuable too. Mantel paints this as one of Cromwell's strengths, which highlights the broader importance of considering alternate versions and histories.

Mantel's subject and style of narration also emphasize the possibility of various retellings of history. In many accounts of Henry VIII's court (like in Robert Bolt's famous play *A Man for All Seasons*), Thomas More is held up as a man of principles

while Thomas Cromwell is vilified for his corruption. Similarly, in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, Cardinal Wolsey is the chief villain while he is a sympathetic character in *Wolf Hall*. By reversing these popular viewpoints and turning Cromwell into a sympathetic character that readers will root for and understand, Mantel seems to argue that there are always alternate histories and that it's important to consider them.

Even though the events in the novel took place hundreds of years ago, Mantel chooses the present tense to tell their story, which makes the entire novel feel as if the events are still fluidly unfolding, rather than seeming like established facts that will remain unchanged. Through this stylistic choice, Mantel again emphasizes that there is always more to history than just what is on the page, as history depends on who is telling it.

## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

### CLOTHES

In *Wolf Hall*, people's clothes are a reflection of their motivations and desires—particularly the ones that they want the world to see. For instance, Cardinal Wolsey has a great fondness for fine silks and velvets. His luxurious tastes contradict his position as a man of God, but he delights in expensive garments and flaunts them because he knows he is too powerful for anyone to object, and he wants everyone to notice that power. Queen Katherine's gowns are "bristling with gemstones" and seem "as if they are designed less for beauty than to withstand blows from a sword." Like her clothes, Katherine has no use for beauty and shows strength and resolve as she fights against the king's decision to divorce her. Throughout, clothing is a way for people to control what they show the world and hide away their flaws and vulnerabilities. This is why Wolsey tells Cromwell that he must learn to "find out what people wear under their clothes." In some cases, people's hidden selves match their outward appearances—most notably, the religious fanatic Thomas More wears a hair shirt under his clothes, which highlights the masochistic pleasure he takes in suffering and martyrdom. But in other cases, clothing masks underlying weakness; for instance, Wolsey ultimately loses his power and influence, despite his confident appearance. Overall, clothes symbolize aspects of characters' selves that they want to reveal while also helping them conceal the things they want hidden.

### HANDS

Many of the characters in *Wolf Hall* try to conceal their true selves and their true desires, but their hands tend to reveal some essential part of themselves and often symbolize who they are under the surface. While most of them don't realize that their hands give them away, Cromwell does. He notices hands—other people's, and his own, too—and uses his observations to deepen his understanding of people. For instance, he notices that Cardinal Wolsey's hands are "large, white, beringed," and that "his reach is long, his hand is like the hand of God." Wolsey's hands show that he is extremely powerful and wealthy, and they hold no evidence of his lowly origins as a son of a butcher, which highlights how completely he embodies his role as cardinal. In contrast, Cromwell has a scar on the palm of his hand, "an old burn mark, like the twist of a rope," which he got while helping his blacksmith father in his work. This indicates that, unlike Wolsey, he isn't able to shake off his own past. However, later in the novel, when Cromwell has established himself as an important man in the king's court, he notices that "his own hand is white, a gentleman's hand, […] though he once thought the burn marks […] would never fade." Hands also give Cromwell a clue to people's true situations, as when Queen Katherine tries to act like she still is powerful but Cromwell notices that her "little, stubby, puffy hands" are empty, representing the fact that her words are all bluster.

### ANIMALS

Many of the characters in the novel are likened to animals, and these comparisons represent the notion that civilization and morality are a veneer that barely disguises people's animalistic natures. Hilary Mantel has said that the idea of naming the novel *Wolf Hall* appealed to her because "it seemed an apt name for wherever Henry's court resided." The literal Wolf Hall is the home of the Seymour family, and it gains infamy for being a seat of incest and immorality. In the novel, wolves symbolize the violence and roughness of human nature, which make people indistinguishable from wild animals. When Cromwell thinks of how he and his colleagues fight for power, he imagines them as "[w]olves snapping over a carcass" and recalls the Latin saying *homo homini lupus*, which means "man is wolf to man." While wolves and wolf-like behavior are a particularly striking symbol in the novel, characters are also compared to other animals to highlight their cruel behavior or brutal natures. For instance, Wolsey compares Cromwell to a "fighting dog" because of his pugnaciousness, and the self-satisfied priests who burn the Loller woman are compared to "fat gray rats."

## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Picador edition of *Wolf Hall* published in 2010.

## Part 1: Chapter 1 Quotes

"So now get up!" Walter is roaring down at him, working out where to kick him next. […] "What are you, an eel?" his parent asks. He trots backward, gathers pace and aims another kick.

It knocks the last breath out of him; he thinks it may be his last. His forehead returns to the ground; he lies waiting, for Walter to jump on him. The dog, Bella, is barking, shut away in an outhouse. "I'll miss my dog," he thinks. […]

Inch by inch. Inch by inch forward. Never mind if he calls you an eel or a worm or a snake. Head down, don't provoke him.

**Related Characters:** Walter Cromwell (speaker), Thomas Cromwell

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 3-4

### Explanation and Analysis

The novel opens with Thomas Cromwell completely powerless, face down on the ground, and it then traces his slow but sure rise to power. Thomas Cromwell—literally and metaphorically—starts at the bottom and makes his way to the top.

Walter is staggeringly cruel to his son. He "trots backward, gathers pace and aims another kick" at Thomas, which shows that Walter is putting real effort and strength into kicking his son—he intends to hurt him badly. At the same time, Walter seems disgusted by the sight of Thomas struggling in pain, and he calls him names like "an eel." He completely lacks empathy for his own son, which highlights his starkly brutal nature. In this novel, people are often cruel and violent to one another, and Walter is immediate evidence of how people can behave like beasts.

Walter's violence is even more terrifying because it is irrational. Thomas Cromwell will later say that Walter beat him up because Thomas was fighting with some other boys the previous day. Walter's idea of punishment seems to perpetuate the same crime that Thomas committed. Additionally, Walter constantly demands that Thomas should "Get up!" even as he keeps knocking him to the ground, which makes no sense. Through this, Mantel sets up the idea that having an irrational person like Walter in power can be dangerous because his actions are unpredictable.

Despite Thomas Cromwell's personal misery, he thinks lovingly of his dog, Bella, which demonstrates the affectionate side of his nature—Thomas is always able to empathize with other people and creatures, which not only makes him well-liked among the characters in the novel but also makes him a sympathetic character to readers.

Even as Thomas Cromwell thinks he may be a few breaths from death, he manages to think clearly and doesn't stop trying to escape Walter's blows. He gives himself instructions to escape, and since he is in too much pain, he moves "Inch by inch forward." This shows his determination, which helps him escape not only Walter's blows but also, later, his life as a blacksmith's son from Putney. Even when there are many challenges in his path, Thomas Cromwell still advances "inch by inch forward," until he slowly fashions himself into a powerful courtier. From the squirming "eel" his father sees him as, Thomas Cromwell gradually becomes the leader of a pack of wolves at court.

## Part 1: Chapter 2 Quotes

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 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 recognized—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 reenvisaged and redrawn, with helpful emendations, by the cardinal.

**Related Characters:** Thomas Cromwell, Emperor Charles, Queen Katherine, King Henry VIII, Cardinal Wolsey

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 25-26

### Explanation and Analysis

Thomas Cromwell is thinking of the role that Cardinal Wolsey plays in controlling England's diplomatic relationships. According to Cromwell, Wolsey is always thinking ahead to possible consequences of King Henry's actions. Wolsey is constantly planning how he could turn any of these situations into being diplomatically sound for England. The long sentence that describes Wolsey's actions

mirrors the complexity of his task, since he is juggling many possible scenarios and making a plan for each one.

Cromwell thinks of Wolsey existing in a mesh—the image is of a fabric made of several strands—and what complicates this even further for Wolsey is that it is a "shadow" mesh, which means that the many strands that make up this complex web do not really exist, at least not yet. Rather, these shadows of "diplomatic possibilities" *might* come to exist, depending on Henry's actions and how Wolsey manages them. Notably, as Wolsey considers the consequences to the king's actions, Henry himself is unconcerned about the larger implications of his actions. He comes across as being self-involved and an irresponsible leader who has left all the work of ruling to his Lord Chancellor, Wolsey.

Cromwell makes the tongue-in-cheek observation that "everything that comes to pass will pass by God's design," because it is clear that God will have nothing to do with what happens. Henry is conveniently using the excuse that God thinks his marriage is sinful in order to end it, when in reality, he is tired of his aging wife and wants to marry someone young who can give him a son. Wolsey, too, invokes "prayer" when he talks about the outcomes of these events, given his ecclesiastical position as a cardinal and archbishop, but Cromwell implies that the "pressure" that Wolsey will exert as he "massages" outcomes will be much more effective than prayer. For both Henry and Wolsey, "God" seems to be an idea they invoke in order to assert their own authority.

❝ Thomas Cromwell is now a little over forty years old. [...] Various expressions are available to his face, and one is readable: an expression of stifled amusement. [...] It is said he knows 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.

**Related Characters:** Thomas Cromwell

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 28-29

**Explanation and Analysis**

After his meeting with Wolsey, Cromwell heads home, and the narrator describes him to readers. The only "readable" expression that Cromwell has is one of "stifled amusement," which suggests that he finds people's follies generally amusing—perhaps because he is more rational and sensible than most. Also, while Cromwell has "various" other expressions "available to his face," they are unreadable, which shows that he is adept at hiding his feelings and thoughts. The novel makes the case that it is necessary for one to hide one's true self and one's vulnerabilities in order to advance in the world, and Cromwell seems to know that lesson well.

By beginning the next sentence with the words "It is said," the narrator makes the point that people speak of Cromwell's capabilities with awe and respect. As the cardinal's servant, he is well-known around town and is reputed to be a learned man. He is "ready with a text if abbots flounder," which shows that Cromwell's familiarity with the Bible exceeds even that of holy men. Considering Cromwell's background as the son of a blacksmith who never went to school, this seems truly remarkable and is a testament to his determination and sharpness.

Cromwell is also shown to be a multifaceted man who excels at many things and is comfortable in various environments. After Cromwell ran away from home as a boy, he spent many years wandering around Europe as a soldier, trader, and banker, among other things. This range of life experiences has made him resilient and flexible. He has numerous talents and interests, he is stunningly self-assured among various people, and he can be counted on at all times. By combining the fact that he can capably "draft a contract" in the same line as his talent for stopping street fights and furnishing houses, the narrator makes the case that Cromwell is up for any challenge. In this way, he is different from most of the other courtiers who have had a narrow range of experiences and are unfamiliar with lives unlike their own privileged ones.

## Part 1: Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ What he says about Gregory is, at least he isn't like I was, when I was his age; and when people say, what were you like? he says, oh, I used to stick knives in people. Gregory would never do that; so he doesn't mind—or minds less than people think—if he doesn't really get to grips with declensions and conjugations. When people tell him what Gregory has failed to do, he says, "He's busy growing." He understands his need to sleep; he never got much sleep himself, with Walter stamping around, and after he ran away he was always on the ship or on the road, and then he found himself in an army.

**Related Characters:** Thomas Cromwell (speaker), Walter

Cromwell, Gregory Cromwell

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 33-34

**Explanation and Analysis**

When people keep telling Thomas Cromwell about his 13-year-old son Gregory's failings, Cromwell defends his son. Cromwell focuses on Gregory's gentleness, which is very different from how Cromwell was as a young boy, when he used to "stick knives in people." He lived in a house filled with fear and danger since his father, Walter, was often drunk and always violent. In order to adapt to his surroundings, Cromwell was forced to become violent himself. In contrast, Cromwell has provided Gregory a secure home filled with love, and, as a result, Gregory has grown into a calm and friendly child. This goes to show that Cromwell has successfully made his home into one of the "better places" he dreamed up as a boy—a place where children aren't treated cruelly.

Gregory is at school at Cambridge, where he struggles with his Latin "declensions and conjugations." Since Cromwell has a quick and analytical mind, Gregory's academic slowness must be a disappointment to him—and yet, he minds it "less than people think." Cromwell is generous and understanding when he thinks that Gregory is "busy growing" and is happy that he is able to provide Gregory a childhood in which the boy can sleep and lead a life without stressors, unlike Cromwell's own childhood.

## Part 2: Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ This is an indecent spectacle: the man who has ruled England, reduced. They have brought out [...] the scarlet silk in which he braves the summer heat of London, the crimson brocades that keep his blood warm when snow falls on Westminster and whisks in sleety eddies over the Thames. [...] There have been days when, swaggering out, he would say, "Right, Master Cromwell, price me by the yard!"

[...] So day by day, at his request and to amuse him, he would put a value on his master. Now the king has sent an army of clerks to do it. But he would like to take away their pens by force and write across their inventories: Thomas Wolsey is a man beyond price.

**Related Characters:** Cardinal Wolsey (speaker), Duke of Suffolk/Charles Brandon, Duke of Norfolk/Thomas Howard, King Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 46

**Explanation and Analysis**

Norfolk and Suffolk arrive at Wolsey's residence to tell him that he has been dismissed from his position as Lord Chancellor, and they proceed to raid his belongings with some clerks. While watching these dramatic proceedings, Cromwell feels offended on behalf of Wolsey and also grieves that Wolsey has fallen so far. Wolsey was, essentially, "the man who ruled England" since he made all the important policies for the country. And now, on the king's whim, he has been "reduced" in this ignominious manner, with boors like Norfolk and Suffolk gloating over his disgrace and strange men rifling through his things.

Mantel uses poetic language to describe Wolsey's clothes—like the alliterative line "the scarlet silks in which he braves the summer heat," and the rich images of "the crimson brocades that keep his blood warm when snow falls on Westminster"—to highlight their luxuriousness and the care that Wolsey has taken to procure them. Since Cromwell had worked for a while in the cloth business at Antwerp, he knows about quality fabrics, which is why Wolsey used to ask him to "price [him] by the yard"—he knew that Cromwell would recognize and appreciate his fine, expensive clothes. To Cromwell, and to Wolsey himself, Wolsey's clothes symbolize his power. His position at court has granted him the wealth and opportunity to own these fine things.

This is why it pains Cromwell to see the king's clerks throwing Wolsey's clothes out of his trunks and attempting to put a price on them. As an employee of the crown, all of Wolsey's belongings essentially belong to the king, and the clerks are taking possession of his valuables. Cromwell is angry and wants to tell them that Wolsey is priceless, which shows that Cromwell regards Wolsey very highly. To Cromwell, Wolsey is worth much more than the price of his clothes and the other belonging that the clerks are tallying up, which is why the indignity of these proceedings hurts him.

"Is it something to do with the English?" Cavendish asks earnestly. He's still thinking of the uproar back there when they embarked; and even now, people are running along the banks, making obscene signs and whistling. "Tell us, Master Cromwell, you've been abroad. Are they particularly an ungrateful nation? […]"

"I don't think it's the English. I think it's just people. They always hope there may be something better."

"But what do they get by the change?" Cavendish persists. "One dog sated with meat is replaced by a hungrier dog who bites nearer the bone. […]"

He closes his eyes. The river shifts beneath them, dim figures in an allegory of Fortune. Decayed Magnificence sits in the center. Cavendish, leaning at his right like a Virtuous Councillor, mutters words of superfluous and belated advice […]; he, like a Tempter, is seated on the left […].

**Related Characters:** Thomas Cromwell, George Cavendish (speaker), Cardinal Wolsey

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 50-51

**Explanation and Analysis**

After Wolsey is dismissed from his position as Lord Chancellor and forced out of his London residence, the people of London jeer him as he heads to his house in Esher on his barge, and this makes Wolsey weep. Cromwell says that people behave in this way because they always hope for a better change. He does not mention that there is much that Wolsey has done which has made him unpopular with the people, like closing monasteries and channeling that money toward his colleges. When he was in power, Wolsey didn't mind his unpopularity or let it trouble him, but it hurts him now.

Wolsey's usher, Cavendish, doesn't seem to hold any illusions about the nature of power. He compares people in power to dogs, saying that a "sated" dog—by which he probably means Wolsey, since he seems to think that Wolsey is benign compared to most powerful people—will only be replaced by a hungrier one that will cause the people more harm by being more greedy and biting "nearer the bone." Despite his loyalty to Wolsey, Cavendish doesn't defend Wolsey's actions when he was in power. This, and the reaction of the Londoners to Wolsey's fall, gives another dimension to this event. While Cromwell believed it was highly unjust to treat a great man in this manner, he witnesses other people's reactions to Wolsey's fall, which shows him that there are opinions about Wolsey that differ from his own. Mantel draws attention to different narratives and opinions in this historical novel in order to highlight the idea that there are many ways to view a particular situation and, therefore, many versions of history.

Another way in which she highlights this idea is by alluding to the theater and thus emphasizing that the characters in the novel are just that—characters. In this scene, Cromwell thinks of the characters in the novel as characters in a play—in this case, an allegory, which suggests that there is a lesson to be learned from the proceedings. Cromwell's takeaway seems to be the lesson that power earned can also quickly become power lost—something he never forgets as a courtier.

How simple it would be, if he were allowed to reach down and shake some straight answers out of Norris. But it's not simple; this is what the world and the cardinal conspire to teach him. Christ, he thinks, by my age I ought to know. You don't get on by being original. You don't get on by being bright. You don't get on by being strong. You get on by being a subtle crook; somehow he thinks that's what Norris is, and he feels an irrational dislike taking root, and he tries to dismiss it, because he prefers his dislikes rational, but after all, these circumstances are extreme, […] [and] Wolsey's unraveling, in a great unweaving of scarlet thread that might lead you back into a secret labyrinth, with a dying monster at its heart.

**Related Characters:** Thomas Cromwell (speaker), King Henry VIII, Cardinal Wolsey , Henry Norris

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 54-55

**Explanation and Analysis**

When Wolsey is on his way to Esher, Henry Norris arrives with the message that King Henry did not want Wolsey gone but was forced to succumb to Wolsey's enemies, and Norris says that that the king will replace all that Wolsey lost. When Cromwell asks Norris if they can have this in writing, Norris refuses, and also subtly hints that the cardinal could soon even lose his house in Esher. This mixed messaging leaves Cromwell confused and frustrated since Norris seems so genial even while threatening the cardinal. In his youth, Cromwell was prone to fight anyone who

angered him, and his first reaction is to physically "shake some straight answers out of Norris," since Norris is being purposely vague, leaving Cromwell unsure of where exactly Wolsey stands with the king. However, Cromwell's experience with observing the cardinal these many years has taught him that loud aggression achieves nothing, and neither does direct intelligence. The path to power and advancement lies in being a "subtle crook" like Norris. This is one of the most important ideas in the novel, and it is one that Cromwell faithfully adopts from this point forward. In the novel, deception and hypocrisy are shown to be the means to power in the Tudor court. As Cromwell rises in his position as a courtier, he learns to put on a mask to hide his vulnerabilities and thoughts as he joins the ranks of "subtle crooks" who are out to get more power.

Cromwell observes that Wolsey is "unraveling, in a great unweaving of scarlet thread," which symbolizes Wolsey's loss of power and dignity since his scarlet cardinal's clothes are falling apart. This also suggests that while Wolsey was once the subtlest of crooks at court, he has been broken by the assault of bad news he has had that day, and his mask has slipped. He is weeping and desperate for the king's friendship, which is a huge contrast with his usual equanimity. Cromwell thinks of the scarlet thread from Wolsey's unraveling clothes leading "into a secret labyrinth, with a dying monster at its heart," which is a reference to the Greek myth of the Minotaur—a monster that is half-man and half-bull that the hero Theseus slays in its labyrinth. The Minotaur also makes an appearance in Dante's *Inferno*, where it inhabits the seventh layer of hell, which is reserved for the most violent of people. By associating Wolsey with the Minotaur, Mantel reinforces the idea that he once ruled the Tudor court, which is the realm of violence, but that he is now falling apart.

## Part 2: Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ "All along, we were misled, […] because when the king said, Mistress Anne is not to marry into Northumberland, I think, I think, the king had cast his eye on her, all that long time ago."

[…]

"I wonder," he says, "how it can be that, though all these people think they know the king's pleasure, the king finds himself at every turn impeded." At every turn, thwarted: maddened and baffled. The Lady Anne, whom he has chosen to amuse him, while the old wife is cast off and the new wife brought in, refuses to accommodate him at all. How can she refuse? Nobody knows.

[…] "How has my lord cardinal…" Missed a trick, he wants to say. But that is not a respectful way to speak of a cardinal.

**Related Characters:** Thomas Cromwell, George Cavendish (speaker), Harry Percy, Cardinal Wolsey , Anne Boleyn , King Henry VIII

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 73

### Explanation and Analysis

After Wolsey has been dismissed from his position as Lord Chancellor, Cavendish explains to Cromwell how he thinks that King Henry has had his eye on Anne Boleyn for years, which is why Henry insisted that she not be married to Harry Percy. Cromwell is astounded that none of Henry's many attendants and courtiers seem to understand Henry's needs and desires. Even Wolsey, Cromwell thinks, has "Missed a trick"—Wolsey had no idea what was going on when he should have been paying attention to court gossip and the king's reactions.

Cromwell feels a sense of sympathy for Henry, who seems to be in a hopeless situation where he is "impeded," "thwarted," "maddened," and "baffled." The close repetition of words suggesting powerlessness and confusion in this sentence emphasizes Cromwell's notion that Henry is helplessly stuck, which is an unlikely and uncomfortable place for a powerful monarch to be in. Since Cromwell recognizes that Henry isn't understood by those around him, he sees that there is a career opportunity for a perceptive person like himself to serve the king. Later, in the king's service, Cromwell works hard to pay close attention to and fulfill Henry's every desire, knowing that this is the way to more power at court.

At this point, Cromwell hasn't yet met Anne Boleyn and cannot understand how she has been successfully resisting the king's advances for so long. It is only after he meets Anne that he will properly comprehend the extent of her ambition, which will mirror his own. Like Cromwell, Anne perceived a lack in the king's life (of a young wife who might bear him a son) and rushed to fill it.

> There never was a lady who knew better her husband's needs.

She knows them; for the first time, she doesn't want to comply with them.

Is a woman bound to wifely obedience, when the result will be to turn her out of the estate of wife? He, Cromwell, admires Katherine: he likes to see her moving about the royal palaces, as wide as she is high, stitched into gowns so bristling with gemstones that they look as if they are designed less for beauty than to withstand blows from a sword. Her auburn hair is faded and streaked with gray, tucked back under her gable hood like the modest wings of a city sparrow. Under her gowns she wears the habit of a Franciscan nun. Try always, Wolsey says, to find out what people wear under their clothes. At an earlier stage in life this would have surprised him; he had thought that under their clothes people wore their skin.

**Related Characters:** Cardinal Wolsey , Thomas Cromwell (speaker), King Henry VIII, Queen Katherine

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 77

**Explanation and Analysis**

Queen Katherine is upset with Wolsey for convening a secret hearing in an attempt to annul her marriage with King Henry. Cromwell understands her resentment and her desire to publicly take a stance opposing Henry, even though she has previously been an obedient wife to him. Cromwell "admires" her regal demeanor and her strength. Katherine is clearly no longer a young beauty—Cromwell mentions that she is "as wide as she is high," and that her "hair is faded and streaked with gray"—and yet, her age seems to add to the force of her personality. Her graying hair reminds Cromwell of the "modest wings of a city sparrow," a bird that isn't known for its appearance but is certainly very resilient.

Cromwell notices that Katherine's gowns are "so bristling with gemstones that they look as if they are designed less for beauty than to withstand blows from a sword." Gemstones, which usually have no function other than to look beautiful, seem to lose their aesthetic purpose on Katherine's clothes. Instead, they become utilitarian, as though they serve as her armor. Like her clothes, Katherine herself seems to have no interest in frivolous beauty. Her many gemstones are evidence of her position and connections as Queen of England, and of her connections to her powerful Spanish Imperial family. She uses these connections in her fight against the annulment, and they seem to serve as her armor against Henry's many assaults.

What's more, Cromwell notes that Katherine wears "the habit of a Franciscan nun" under her gowns, which symbolizes her staunch Catholicism and her austere nature. Wolsey has trained Cromwell "to find out what people wear under their clothes," or, in other words, to look beyond appearances to discover people's flaws and vulnerabilities. Katherine's vulnerability seems to be her attachment to her religion.

> "I wonder," Wolsey says, "would you have patience with our sovereign lord? When it is midnight and he is up drinking and giggling with Brandon, or singing, and the day's papers not yet signed, and when you press him he says, I'm for my bed now, we're hunting tomorrow…If your chance comes to serve, you will have to take him as he is, a pleasure-loving prince. And he will have to take you as you are, which is rather like one of those square-shaped fighting dogs that low men tow about on ropes. Not that you are without a fitful charm, Tom."

**Related Characters:** Cardinal Wolsey (speaker), Duke of Suffolk/Charles Brandon, Thomas Cromwell, King Henry VIII

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 79

**Explanation and Analysis**

Wolsey tells Cromwell that he might have a chance to serve King Henry after Wolsey's death, and he talks about the difficult tasks Cromwell will face if he works for Henry. Wolsey tolerates Henry's irresponsible behavior with a smile, but the way he describes it to Cromwell suggests that the "sovereign lord's" complete disinterest in court matters is a challenge to Wolsey—especially since Wolsey doesn't have the authority to insist that Henry must take care of the tasks that he needs to. Henry comes across as being completely indifferent to governance, and he seems to have entirely left this task to his Lord Chancellor, Wolsey. Henry spends his days in the pursuit of pleasure, and Wolsey's description of Henry's activities—"drinking and giggling" when he should be signing important papers—suggests that the king is immature and determined to do exactly as he wishes to without a thought to the consequences. This

aspect of Henry's nature is what leads him to attempt to get an annulment from Katherine. Unlike Wolsey, Henry doesn't think through to the huge political consequences to the annulment.

When Cromwell does eventually serve the king as his courtier, he keeps Wolsey's advice in mind and never questions Henry, "the pleasure-loving prince," about his numerous hunting expeditions or his dalliances with the ladies at court. At their very first encounter, for instance, Henry is pleased that Cromwell doesn't judge him for going hunting, and this opens a path to a closer relationship between the two.

According to Wolsey, Cromwell looks not just like any "fighting dog" but specifically like one that "low men tow about on ropes." Wolsey seems to mean that Cromwell's background will be something that Henry will have to contend with, since Cromwell is a blacksmith's son who lived his youth among the "low men" that Wolsey mentions. Cromwell also seems to have an expression of barely concealed violence that makes him look like a "fighting dog." Wolsey thinks that Cromwell is too combative and quick to take offense—a characteristic left over from his days as a pugnacious youth in Putney—and he tries to smooth out Cromwell's rough edges and train him to play the game for the king's favor at court.

❝ Thomas More says that the imperial troops, for their enjoyment, are roasting live babies on spits. Oh, he would! Says Thomas Cromwell. Listen, soldiers don't do that. They're too busy carrying away everything they can turn into ready money.

Under his clothes, it is well known, More wears a jerkin of horsehair. He beats himself with a scourge, of the type used by some religious orders. What lodges in his mind, Thomas Cromwell's, is that somebody makes these instruments of daily torture. […]

We don't have to invite pain in, he thinks. It's waiting for us: sooner rather than later. Ask the virgins of Rome.

He thinks, also, that people ought to be found better jobs.

**Related Characters:** Thomas Cromwell (speaker), Thomas More

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 80

**Explanation and Analysis**

Emperor Charles's Roman troops haven't been paid for a while, so they go on a rampage in the city, destroying artifacts and raping women. Thomas More, who has a tendency to be dramatic and to spread sensational rumors, tells people in England that the soldiers in Rome are also roasting babies. Thomas Cromwell is disdainful when he hears of this, and he thinks that it is just like More to say something like this—this shows that Cromwell already thinks very little of More's ideas. After Cromwell ran away from home as a boy, he was a soldier in France and fought in abysmal, desperate conditions. From personal experience, he knows that soldiers have no interest in roasting babies since they are "too busy carrying away everything they can turn into ready money." Cromwell's ideas seem very practical as opposed to More's melodramatic ones—Cromwell knows people are motivated by personal gain rather than More's notion of some senseless, dark evil which serves no purpose. More has spent his entire life in England, being trained in theology under cardinals and monks, and this seems to have narrowed his thinking. Cromwell, on the other hand, has a range of life experiences so he is able to see the human side of people who are unlike him—he views even the Emperor's soldiers in Rome as people, rather than a force of mindless evil, which is how More perceives them.

Cromwell then thinks of More's "jerkin of horsehair," which More wears under his clothes. The horsehair will irritate his skin and cause it to bleed, which was a way in which some religious people committed penance and mortified their flesh to remind themselves not to be ruled by their physical desires. More also "beats himself with a scourge" for this reason. Cromwell cannot understand people who do these things, because he knows that there is pain in everyone's life, and very practically he thinks that it is unnecessary to "invite pain in."

When Cromwell thinks of pain in people's lives, he thinks of the virgins in Rome who are being raped by the soldiers. This shows that he is able to empathize with the suffering of others, which seems kinder than More's self-flagellation, which achieves nothing. The line describing More's instruments of self-torture begins with the words "it is well known," which suggests that More's martyrdom is a performance through which he seeks validation and respect—he has made sure that everyone knows about it, which backs up the idea that his priority is his own reputation rather than any moral desire to help others.

"Why do people marry?"

[…]

"Most people," he says, "feel it increases their happiness."

"Oh, yes, that," Anne says. "May I choose my husband?"

"Of course," he says; meaning, up to a point.

"Then I choose Rafe."

For a minute, for two minutes together, he feels his life might mend. Then he thinks, how could I ask Rafe to wait? He needs to set up his own household. Even five years from now, Anne would be a very young bride.

"I know," she says. "And time goes by so slowly."

It's true; one always seems to be waiting for something.

**Related Characters:** Thomas Cromwell, Anne Cromwell (speaker), Liz Wykys, Rafe Sadler

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 118

**Explanation and Analysis**

After his wife Liz Wykys's death, Cromwell is heartbroken and ends up spending a lot of time with his daughter, Anne Cromwell. Anne, with her intelligence and toughness, is his favorite out of his children. Rafe Sadler, Cromwell's clerk, came to live in the Cromwell household when he was a little boy of seven, and Cromwell loves him like a son. The idea of his favorite child Anne marrying Rafe, which would make Rafe an official part of Cromwell's family, fills Cromwell with the sense that there still could be happy things in life even though his present is so dismal. And yet, Cromwell stops to consider things from Rafe's point of view and realizes that this idea might not be fair to Rafe, since Anne is still so young. Even in the midst of his own personal misery, Cromwell thinks of others, which is evidence of his kindness and consideration.

This conversation between Cromwell and Anne also demonstrates the loving relationship he has with his children, which is very unlike his contemporaries, most of whom speak very little to their sons and even less to their daughters. He respects his tough little girl and carefully considers her opinions. The fact that Anne feels comfortable enough with Cromwell to talk about whom she would like to marry when she is older shows that they are very close. Cromwell's loving relationship with his children humanizes him and makes him a sympathetic character for readers.

## Part 3: Chapter 1 Quotes

"Cromwell, I am content you are a burgess in the Parliament."

He bows his head. "My lord."

"I spoke to the king for you and he is also content. You will take his instructions in the Commons. And mine."

"Will they be the same, my lord?"

The duke scowls. […] "Damn it all, Cromwell, why are you such a…person? It isn't as if you could afford to be."

He waits, smiling. He knows what the duke means. He is a person, he is a presence. He knows how to edge blackly into a room so that you don't see him; but perhaps those days are over.

**Related Characters:** Thomas Cromwell, Duke of Norfolk/ Thomas Howard (speaker), Cardinal Wolsey , King Henry VIII

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 150-151

**Explanation and Analysis**

Cromwell goes to meet the Duke of Norfolk after the duke and the king have helped Cromwell secure a seat in the Commons. Cromwell wants the seat in order to speak for Wolsey in Parliament. Norfolk and Cromwell both know that Cromwell would never have gotten the seat if not for the king's and Norfolk's help, so the duke probably expects Cromwell's overwhelming gratitude when he meets him. Cromwell is deferential and polite, but he doesn't gush. He knows that there will be the expectation of some quid pro quo, and he is right—Norfolk clarifies that Cromwell is to take the king's "instructions in the Commons," and Norfolk's, too. This shows the corruption in court, since the king and his men place their own people in the Commons to ensure that their policies will be approved by Parliament.

Cromwell wants to know if the king's orders will be the same or different from Norfolk, which shows that he understands that Norfolk doesn't always agree with the king. While this might be the truth, Norfolk feels it is impudent of Cromwell to point this out, especially since Cromwell can't "afford to be"—Norfolk doesn't let Cromwell forget that he doesn't come from nobility. In irritation, Norfolk calls Cromwell a "person," using the word like an insult to mean that Cromwell is being unnecessarily difficult. Cromwell interprets this as a compliment, since it means

that he is now "a presence" that can't be ignored. Previously, when he was Wolsey's assistant, Wolsey negotiated the deals while Cromwell stayed in the shadows. But now, with Wolsey gone, Cromwell realizes that he will now be in the spotlight.

In the novel, people are often compared to animals to show how civility is a veneer that barely covers most people's brutal natures. With this, it seems a high compliment indeed that Cromwell is called a "person." He is no longer the powerless "eel" who crawled in pain after being beaten by Walter, nor Wolsey's "dog" who skulked in the shadows while Wolsey controlled the court. Now, Cromwell has come into his own.

❝ [H]e hears a boy's voice, speaking behind a half-open door: it is Mark, the lute-player. "…so for my skill he says he will prefer me to Lady Anne. And I shall be glad, because what is the use of being here when any day the king may behead the old fellow? I think he ought, for the cardinal is so proud. […] Yes, for sure the lawyer will come down with him. I say 'lawyer,' but who is he? Nobody knows. They say he has killed men with his own hands and never told it in confession. […] So when I am with Lady Anne she is sure to notice me, and give me presents." A giggle. […] Then Mark: "She is no maid. Not she." […]

One can do nothing with this. Except bear it in mind.

**Related Characters:** Mark Smeaton (speaker), Walter Cromwell, Anne Boleyn , Cardinal Wolsey , Thomas Cromwell

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 155-156

**Explanation and Analysis**

Cromwell visits Wolsey at his residence often to bring him news from the court and updates about his case, and at one such time, he overhears a conversation between Mark Smeaton, the cardinal's lute-player, and another servant. Cromwell believes that the cardinal discounted Anne Boleyn's importance to the king because Wolsey didn't pay close attention to court gossip, and that this is what precipitated Wolsey's fall. This is why Cromwell is interested in all news and gossip, and he stops to hear the lute-player's perspective on Wolsey.

Cromwell is especially interested in Mark's proclamation that Anne Boleyn is "no maid," which seems to be a rumor doing the rounds among the common people. Anne herself insists on her virginity and virtue, and she refuses to sleep with King Henry until they are married. There is power in gossip, however, and when Anne is tried for treason years later, she will also be accused of adultery—with Mark Smeaton, among others. Cromwell is the one who overhears Mark's claims, and he also dislikes the boy, so he might have something to do with this accusation.

The main reason that Cromwell will repeatedly think of this night later in the novel is because of the pronouncements that Mark makes about Cromwell himself. In his past, Cromwell murdered one man in order to save his own life, and he carries a lot of guilt about this. He has told no one but the cardinal about it, and it bothers him immensely to hear that people think he looks like a murderer. Cromwell prides himself on his rationality and equanimity—characteristics that he values in others, like Wolsey, as well—while he detests the kind of violent anger that he witnessed as a child growing up with Walter. Cromwell does not want to be that kind of person, and it angers him to be perceived as one. While Cromwell is usually kind to young people, he feels a constant, deep resentment toward Mark, which shows that he does not forget his grudges.

❝ He stops to have a word with some of the benchers: how was this allowed to go forward? The Cardinal of York is a sick man, he may die, how will you and your students stand then before God? What sort of young men are you breeding here, who are so brave as to assail a great man who has fallen on evil times—whose favor, a few short weeks ago, they would have begged for?

The benchers follow him, apologizing; but their voices are lost in the roars of laughter that billow out from the hall. His young household are lingering, casting glances back. […]

Rafe touches his shoulder. Richard walks on his left, sticking close. "You don't have to hold me up," he says mildly. "I'm not like the cardinal." He stops. He laughs. He says, "I suppose it was…"

"Yes, it was quite entertaining," Richard says.

**Related Characters:** Richard Williams/Richard Cromwell, Thomas Cromwell (speaker), Rafe Sadler, Cardinal Wolsey

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 162

**Explanation and Analysis**

Cromwell and the young men from his household go to

watch a play put on by the young law students at Gray's Inn, and Cromwell is upset to see that the play is a mockery of Cardinal Wolsey. In the novel, Mantel uses the theater as a way to show that there can be different perspectives to people and events, and to point out that there are multiple versions of any story. In this instance, readers see another perspective to Wolsey rather than Cromwell's reverent thoughts about him. Cromwell seems especially angry that the same students who courted Wolsey's favor not so long ago are now mocking him and portraying him as a pathetic, corrupt character in the bawdy play. This change reflects the transitory nature of power—as soon as Wolsey loses his position and power, he also loses all respect and becomes a comic figure.

While Cromwell is at first very upset by this, he comes to admit the humor of the play after he has a moment to process it. As he is leaving with Rafe and Richard, they know that Cromwell is upset and they stand close on either side of him to support him, showing that they care about him even though they themselves seemed to have been enjoying the play and were reluctant to leave. Cromwell tells them he doesn't need to be supported because he isn't like the cardinal—he means the character of the cardinal in the play, who kept falling down in an attempt at humor. By referring to the play and ending up laughing about it with his young wards, Cromwell shows that he can accommodate viewpoints that are different from his own, even when they are offensive to him. Cromwell's open-mindedness is one of his most striking traits.

❝ There's no point backing off; do that and Henry will chase you down. Advance, and he may just falter. He says, "No ruler in the history of the world has ever been able to afford a war. They're not affordable things. […] You enter into one and it uses up all the money you've got, and then it breaks you and bankrupts you."

[…]

"You said I was not to lead my troops. You said if I was taken, the country couldn't put up the ransom. So what do you want? You want a king who doesn't fight? You want me to huddle indoors like a sick girl?"

"That would be ideal, for fiscal purposes."

The king takes a deep ragged breath. He's been shouting. Now—and it's a narrow thing—he decides to laugh.

**Related Characters:** King Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell (speaker), Cardinal Wolsey

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 168

**Explanation and Analysis**

When Cromwell meets King Henry for the first time, Cromwell wants to discuss Wolsey's plight—but the king almost immediately brings up an argument that Cromwell had made in Parliament seven years ago, in which he'd spoken against going to war with France. Cromwell would prefer to move past this old subject, which is irrelevant now, but he understands that he has to lay this subject to rest in order to move forward with Henry.

Though Cromwell has just met Henry, he seems to immediately know how to impress him without offending him. Cromwell is a good observer and has the knack of puzzling out "tricks." He seems to apply these same principles as he attempts to understand people and figure out what makes them tick. With Henry, Cromwell senses that it would be disastrous to back away from an argument because Henry's instinct is to chase people down if they retreat, since that would convince Henry of his own correctness. This is why Cromwell pushes back against him, making practical arguments about the disastrous fiscal implications of war.

Henry's anger at this incident from seven years ago and his clear memory of the claims that Cromwell made in Parliament show that the king would be a formidable enemy who has a penchant for holding on to grudges. He doesn't like to be opposed, which is a lesson that Cromwell has already learned. However, Cromwell resorts to his sense of humor to disrupt the king's anger, and once Cromwell successfully gets the king to stop shouting and laugh instead, he seems to have succeeded in winning the king over. Cromwell understands that Henry is controlling and can be dangerous if crossed, but he is also aware that the king is the key to power at court.

## Part 3: Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ He sees her speed, intelligence and rigor. He didn't think she would help the cardinal, but what do you lose by asking? He thinks, it is the first proposition I have put to her; probably not the last.

[…] There is a world of the possible. A world where Anne can be queen is a world where Cromwell can be Cromwell. He sees it; then he doesn't. The moment is fleeting. But insight cannot be taken back. You cannot return to the moment you were in before.

**Related Characters:** Anne Boleyn , Thomas Cromwell

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 189

**Explanation and Analysis**

After Cromwell meets Anne Boleyn for the first time, he is impressed by her quick mind and realizes that she will ascend to more power at court. While Cromwell was previously known in court as being Wolsey's man, he seems to slowly be building an identity that is independent of Wolsey.

Cromwell believes that if Anne becomes queen, it would open up a world of possibility to Cromwell, too. The Boleyns do not descend from dignified, wealthy nobility—they were recently traders and certainly none of them are monarchs. Wolsey found the Boleyns to be so low on the ladder of nobility that he didn't approve of Anne marrying an earl—so she would be shattering social hierarchies if she succeeds in becoming queen. Cromwell himself is the son of a blacksmith, but he has high ambitions about procuring an influential role at court. He believes that his own rise to power will parallel Anne's since they are both upstarts with big ambitions. They have both already established themselves in court against all odds, but they still have many challenges to face. Cromwell believes that Anne's success will pave the path to his, which is why he decides to align himself with her cause and overturn all barriers to get her crowned queen. He recognizes that this task is almost impossible—"He sees it; then he doesn't."—but once he recognizes the possibility of it, he is determined to achieve it.

"A thousand pounds?" Henry whispers.

It is on the tip of his tongue to say, that will be a start on the ten thousand which, to the best of my knowledge and belief, you have owed the Cardinal of York for a decade now.

He doesn't say it, of course. At such moments, Henry expects you to fall to your knees—duke, earl, commoner, light and heavy, old and young. He does it; scar tissue pulls; few of us, by our forties, are not carrying injuries.

The king signals, you can get up. He adds, his tone curious, "The Duke of Norfolk shows you many marks of friendship and favor."

The hand on the shoulder, he means: the minute and unexpected vibration of ducal palm against plebeian muscle and bone. "The duke is careful to preserve all distinctions of rank." Henry seems relieved.

**Related Characters:** King Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell (speaker), Duke of Norfolk/Thomas Howard, Cardinal Wolsey

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 195

**Explanation and Analysis**

Cromwell appeals to Henry to give Wolsey some money so Wolsey can move north, to York, with his servants and staff. Henry doesn't want his other courtiers to know that he is helping Wolsey, since Wolsey is so unpopular with them, which is why he "whispers" the amount to Cromwell. Cromwell understands Henry's need to be appreciated, and he knows that he must seem grateful in order to hold onto the king's favor. Cromwell's attempt to fall on his knees in gratitude is described in a humorous manner, which highlights the rather ridiculous nature of Henry's inflated sense of self and the flattery he expects.

This passage also highlights Henry's insistence on social hierarchies. Cromwell understands that Henry is worried that Cromwell is breaking social barriers by getting too friendly with Norfolk. Again, the ridiculousness of this concern is highlighted by the inflated language in which Cromwell thinks of it, describing Norfolk's hand on Cromwell's shoulder as the "ducal palm against plebeian muscle and bone." This description makes light of the barriers facing Cromwell and foreshadows how he will transcend them, despite Henry's rigid point of view.

## Part 4: Chapter 1 Quotes

From the day he was sworn into the king's council, he has had his face arranged. He has spent the early months of the year watching the faces of other people, to see when they register doubt, reservation, rebellion—to catch that fractional moment before they settle into the suave lineaments of the courtier, the facilitator, the yes-man.

**Related Characters:** King Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 296

**Explanation and Analysis**

Cromwell has succeeded in winning the king's favor and securing a position in the king's council, after which he has suddenly become so popular that his house is filled with people asking him for things. With this surge in popularity

and after achieving the first step in his quest to power at court, Cromwell is even more careful to ensure that he has "his face arranged" at all times. Even if Cromwell thinks that Henry is being irrational or that he is showing faulty judgment—and Cromwell often thinks this about Henry—he knows that his true feelings must never show. Also, Cromwell has enemies at court, like Thomas More and Stephen Gardiner, who would be eager to exploit any of Cromwell's exposed vulnerabilities, so it is necessary for him to cover them up. Cromwell's attitude here emphasizes that deception and secrecy are necessary to acquire and hold on to power.

Cromwell also pays attention to the faces of the people who surround him, studying them for moments when they reveal their weaknesses or their true feelings, so that he will be able to use this information when necessary. At court, everyone seems to be pretending and deceiving one another, so it is necessary to observe people carefully and constantly in order to have any idea of where one stands. Early in the novel, Thomas Cromwell carefully observes a card-game and figures out the trick behind it, and he then sets up the game himself and earns money out of tricking others. Here, he shows that he's essentially doing the same thing at court.

## Part 4: Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ When the Loller was led out between the officers the people jeered and shouted. He saw that she was a grandmother, perhaps the oldest person he had ever seen. The officers were nearly carrying her. She had no cap or veil. Her hair seemed to be torn out of her head in patches. People behind him said, no doubt she did that herself, in desperation at her sin. Behind the Loller came two monks, parading like fat gray rats, crosses in their pink paws. The woman in the clean cap […] balled her two hands into fists and punched them in the air, and from the depth of her belly she let loose a scream, a halloo, in a shrill voice like a demon. The press of people took up the cry.

**Related Characters:** William Tyndale, The Loller, Thomas Cromwell

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 326

**Explanation and Analysis**

After Thomas More threatens Cromwell, saying that he knows that Cromwell is in touch with Tyndale in Antwerp, Cromwell thinks back to the time when he was a little boy and saw a heretic being burned for her sins. The woman was a "Loller," a term used for someone who followed the teachings of John Wycliffe and rejected idolatry and the Catholic tradition of the eucharist, among other things. Young Cromwell seems to have immediately sympathized with the woman who looked like "a grandmother" and was so frail that she had to be supported by the officers. In contrast to this feeble, distressed woman were the monks who brought her in—while she could barely walk, they came "parading" in, as though they were performing happily to their audience. They looked like "fat gray rats," which is once again a contrast to the frail, old Loller woman. Through the comparison to rats, the narrator suggests that they are thieving and conniving scoundrels.

Young Cromwell's sympathies lay with the Loller woman and he seemed to dislike the senseless violence of her public punishment. However, the other people who were watching seemed furious at her for disagreeing with their Catholic beliefs, and they wholeheartedly believed that she was getting what she deserved. Mantel seems to be implying that people who are fanatical about their beliefs are can easily turn violent and dangerous—in this case, it is ironic that this woman watching, who is passionate about the way she worships God, is likened to a demon when she thinks her belief system is being questioned. The hypocrisy and cruelty of that moment have stuck with Cromwell through the years, and they underlie his deep dislike of More's bullying dogmatism.

❝ "Look," she says. She holds up her sleeves. The bright blue with which she has edged them, that kingfisher flash, is cut from the silk in which he wrapped her present of needlework patterns. How do matters stand now at Wolf Hall, he asks, as tactfully as he can: how do you ask after a family, in the wake of incest? She says in her clear little voice, "Sir John is very well. But then Sir John is always very well. […] Why don't you make some business in Wiltshire and ride down to inspect us? Oh, and if the king gets a new wife, she will need matrons to attend her, and my sister Liz is coming to court. […] I would rather go up-country to the queen, myself. […]"

"If I were your father…no…" he rephrases it, "if I were to advise you, it would be to serve Lady Anne."

**Related Characters:** Thomas Cromwell, Jane Seymour (speaker), Queen Katherine, King Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn , Liz Seymour, John Seymour

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 359

**Explanation and Analysis**

The king gives Anne Boleyn the title of Marquess of Pembroke, and at the celebration afterward, Cromwell spots Jane Seymour, who had left the court for a while after the scandal surrounding her father's incestuous relationship with his daughter-in-law. Cromwell has a soft spot for pale, quiet Jane Seymour, and he seems happy that she has returned. She, too, seems to like him—he had sent her a present wrapped in blue silk, and she has used the same material to line her sleeves, suggesting that she values his gift. While Jane comes from Wolf Hall, which sounds like a place of wildness and violence, she herself reminds Cromwell of a kingfisher—a quick, bright bird. Jane seems to stand out in court, too, in the same way. While the other courtiers are deceptive and acquisitive, she is kind and sweet, and this passage is one of the only places where the novel compares a person to an animal in a positive way rather than a negative one. Later on, it will become clear that the kind of vulnerability that Jane displays can also be an asset at court, since it's part of what makes Henry choose her as his third wife.

## Part 5: Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ He finds himself praying: this child, his half-formed heart now beating against the stone floor, let him be sanctified by this moment, and let him be like his father's father, like his Tudor uncles; let him be hard, alert, watchful of opportunity, wringing use from the smallest turn of fortune. If Henry lives twenty years, Henry who is Wolsey's creation, and then leaves this child to succeed him, I can build my own prince: to the glorification of God and the commonwealth of England. Because I will not be too old. […] And I shall not be like Henry Wyatt and say, now I am retiring from affairs. Because what is there, but affairs?

**Related Characters:** Thomas Cromwell (speaker), Gregory Cromwell, Henry Wyatt, Cardinal Wolsey , King Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 432-433

**Explanation and Analysis**

At Anne Boleyn's coronation, Cromwell watches as she bows in prayer at the altar, and he, too, prays for the child she carries. Cromwell is sure that she will have a son, and he thinks of the child as a boy who will come to rule England capably with Cromwell as his advisor—in this way, Cromwell sees his own fate tied to the child's. Cromwell thinks that he would never retire from "affairs" like Henry Wyatt did, and that he would be involved in court politics even as an old man. Cromwell enjoys the thrill and intrigue of court politics and he is good at it—so he never wants to leave.

In his prayers for the boy, Cromwell wishes him to be like his "father's father, and his Tudor uncles"—tough men—rather than like Henry, who Cromwell sees as self-indulgent rather than being a canny leader. Cromwell prays for the boy to be "hard, alert, watchful of opportunity," all of which sound a lot like Cromwell himself. While his own son Gregory is none of these things, Cromwell longs for a child who will have his qualities, and whom he can encourage to be a more just leader than Henry has been.

## Part 5: Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ It is magnificent. At the moment of impact, the king's eyes are open, his body braced for the *atteint;* he takes the blow perfectly, its force absorbed by a body securely armored, moving in the right direction, moving at the right speed. His color does not alter. His voice does not shake.

"Healthy?" he says. "Then I thank God for his favor to us. As I thank you, my lords, for this comfortable intelligence."

He thinks, Henry has been rehearsing. I suppose we all have.

[…]

The urge arises to put a hand on his shoulder, as one does for any inconsolable being. He resists it; simply folds his fingers, protectively, into the fist which holds the king's heart. "One day we will make a great marriage for her."

**Related Characters:** Thomas Cromwell, King Henry VIII (speaker), Princess Elizabeth, Anne Boleyn

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 449-450

**Explanation and Analysis**

When King Henry is told that Anne Boleyn has had a daughter and not a son like Henry was hoping, the news is described as though it were a blow in a jousting match.

Cromwell thinks that Henry has been rehearsing for this moment, which is why he is able to hide his immense disappointment with something like grace. Henry has probably considered this to be a likely outcome and planned for how he will react, which is why his body is "securely armored" and he is braced for the "*atteint*," which is the term used for a hit in a jousting match. This image shows how much of a disappointment the news is to Henry—it seems to almost physically beat him down.

The news is disappointing to Cromwell, too, who has been hoping that Anne Boleyn's son would cement his own position at court since Henry would finally have what he wanted, and Cromwell would have been instrumental in bringing it about. However, he, too, has been rehearsing for this moment and says the line that he has prepared for it, that they will "make a great marriage for her." Yet, his own disappointment is overshadowed by his worry for Henry. Cromwell makes a fist with his hands, which he imagines "holds the king's heart"—a tender image of concern and a desire to protect him. At the same time, he doesn't express anything like sympathy, since it might offend the king. Cromwell's behavior shows his kindness and thoughtfulness, while the focus on his hands symbolizes his desire to continue exercising control over the situation.

## Part 6: Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ There is a feral stink that rises from the hide of a dog about to fight. It rises now into the room, and he sees Anne turn aside, fastidious, and Stephen puts a hand to his chest, as if to ruffle up his fur, to warn of his size before he bares his teeth. "I shall be back with Your Majesty within a week," he says. His dulcet sentiment comes out as a snarl from the depth of his guts.

[…]

Henry says, "Stephen is a resolute ambassador, no doubt, but I cannot keep him near me. […] I hate ingratitude. I hate disloyalty. That is why I value a man like you. You were good to your old master in his trouble. […]" He speaks as if he, personally, hadn't caused the trouble; as if Wolsey's fall were caused by a thunderbolt.

**Related Characters:** King Henry VIII, Stephen Gardiner (speaker), Cardinal Wolsey , Anne Boleyn , Thomas Cromwell

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 501-502

**Explanation and Analysis**

The king intends to bring a bill to Parliament that would guarantee the succession of Anne Boleyn's children to the throne, and Gardiner objects to it. Unlike Cromwell, Gardiner doesn't "arrange his face" very well, and he lets his displeasure show blatantly, even in the presence of the king. His anger is like a "feral stink" and causes discomfort in the room, with Anne even turning away from Gardiner's display of rage. Gardiner is often described as a dog about to fight, and in this scene, too, every action of his is described like that of an angry dog. While Cromwell, too, thinks of himself as a wolf fighting for scraps at court, he never lets others glimpse his anger and desperation like Gardiner does.

With Henry, anyone who opposes the king will not last very long at court, and Cromwell guesses that this will be Gardiner's fate, too. In the Tudor court under Henry, there is no room for objections, no matter how valid. This is why Cromwell not only agrees to the bill but also insists that they have courtiers seal it with an oath—he knows that the way to please Henry is to agree with his ideas without reservation.

Henry says that he values Cromwell because he was "good to [his] old master in his trouble," which he takes as evidence of Cromwell's loyal nature. Cromwell, however, is amazed that the king has distanced himself from Wolsey's fate when, in fact, he was the one who caused it. While Henry claims to hate "ingratitude" and "disloyalty," his own behavior toward Wolsey was ungrateful and disloyal. Cromwell is constantly reminded that Henry is hypocritical and irrational—and hence someone Cromwell should always be wary of.

❝ "The queen will be coming to visit her daughter soon. If you would simply greet her respectfully in the way you should greet your father's wife—"

"—except she is his concubine—"

"—then your father would take you back to court, you would have everything you lack now, and the warmth and comfort of society. Listen to me, I intend this for your good. The queen does not expect your friendship, only an outward show. Bite your tongue and bob her a curtsy. It will be done in a heartbeat, and it will change everything. Make terms with her before her new child is born. If she has a son, she will have no reason afterward to conciliate you."

"She is frightened of me," Mary says, "and she will still be frightened, even if she has a son."

**Related Characters:** Mary Tudor, Thomas Cromwell (speaker), Princess Elizabeth, King Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 516

**Explanation and Analysis**

Cromwell goes to visit Mary Tudor at the house where Anne Boleyn has ordered she must live and serve the baby Princess Elizabeth, and he finds Mary living in harsh conditions. He tries to persuade Mary to show Anne Boleyn respect when she visits so Mary can have an easier life. Cromwell believes that one's behavior doesn't need to align with one's principles, and he tries to explain this to Mary, asking her to make just "an outward show" of friendship to Anne. Cromwell knows that power at court is often won through deception and hypocrisy, and Mary's insistence on showing her true feelings toward Anne is causing her difficulties that Cromwell finds to be unnecessary. In his opinion, Mary's suffering isn't proof of her superiority or her sense of honor—he sees her attitude toward Anne as being naive rather than shrewd.

Cromwell believes in always wearing a mask that hides his true sentiments—he believes that his private self is his own, while his public self is a performance. He behaves in whatever way is expected of him, knowing that this will gain him power, favor, and comforts. His attitude, too, is flexible—while he supports Anne's rise to the throne, he can at the same time sympathize with Mary's situation. In fact, Cromwell recognizes that Mary might be the monarch one day, if Henry should happen to die before Anne Boleyn's children come of age, so he takes care to be on good terms with her. While Cromwell's decisions are made with foresight and pragmatism, Mary's dogged insistence on her enmity with Anne Boleyn seems like shortsighted self-sabotage.

"Oh, for Christ's sake!" he says. "A lie is no less a lie because it is a thousand years old. Your undivided church has liked nothing better than persecuting its own members, burning them and hacking them apart when they stood by their own conscience, slashing their bellies open and feeding their guts to dogs. You call history to your aid, but what is history to you? It is a mirror that flatters Thomas More. But I have another mirror, I hold it up and it shows a vain and dangerous man, and when I turn it about it shows a killer, for you will drag down with you God knows how many, who will only have the suffering, and not your martyr's gratification."

**Related Characters:** Thomas Cromwell (speaker), Thomas More

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 525

**Explanation and Analysis**

Thomas More refuses to take an oath to the king's Act of Succession, saying it would be against his conscience and against the "undivided" church for him to do so. This claim causes Cromwell to lose his temper for the first and only time in the novel, and he lashes out at the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church, and therefore at More's self-satisfied claims of virtue. Throughout the novel, Cromwell has been against More's violent torture and execution of heretics, and he now points out that the Catholic Church exists on a foundation of violence and intolerance. Cromwell uses striking images as he speaks of the Church's crimes—this is not the benevolent institution of "angels and saints" that More speaks of. In Cromwell's opinion, the Catholic Church, like More himself, is characterized by uncompromising, violent dogmatism.

Cromwell points out that More cites only those aspects of history that flatter his ideology, but that Cromwell can hold up another version of history that shows him to be a "vain and dangerous man" and a "killer." This point of Cromwell's shows that there is not one static version of history—there are many versions, and many stories, depending on who is asked and where one looks. Cromwell argues that More's refusal of the king's orders is selfish since he "will drag down" others with him who will be inclined to follow his lead but who will end up with all the suffering and none of the glory. Cromwell is proven to be right since there are others who oppose Henry, like the four monks later in the novel who are disemboweled in public for refusing to take the oath to uphold the Act of Succession. Their punishment and suffering are very severe, but history does not remember them—while More ends up being canonized as a saint.

## Part 6: Chapter 2 Quotes

Henry stirs into life. "Do I retain you for what is easy? Jesus pity my simplicity, I have promoted you to a place in this kingdom that no one, no one of your breeding has ever held in the whole of the history of this realm." He drops his voice. "Do you think it is for your personal beauty? The charm of your presence? I keep you, Master Cromwell, because you are as cunning as a bag of serpents. But do not be a viper in my bosom. You know my decision. Execute it."

**Related Characters:** King Henry VIII (speaker), Anne Boleyn , Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 585

**Explanation and Analysis**

Anne Boleyn is upset that Thomas More doesn't want to acknowledge her as the queen, and she wants him tried for treason. Cromwell explains to her and King Henry that since More hasn't done or said anything treasonous, it will not be easy to try him. At this, Henry angrily lashes out at Cromwell, reminding him that his only role is to find a way to do Henry's bidding—and now, Henry wants More gone. Henry is insulting and mean-spirited as he speaks to Cromwell, reminding him of his low "breeding" and even saying he doesn't keep him around for his "personal beauty," of which Cromwell is acutely aware he has none. While Henry is often gracious to Cromwell and sometimes even treats him like a friend, here he turns on him with a vehemence that shocks even the usually unflappable Cromwell.

Henry completely dehumanizes Cromwell, saying he is "as cunning as a bag of serpents," which is the only reason Henry keeps him around. He continues the snake metaphor by warning him not to be "a viper in [his] bosom"—as Henry has said often, he cannot stand ungratefulness or disloyalty, and Cromwell's mild objection to the king's order is construed to be disloyalty.

The novel often shows Henry's leadership to be poor, and his unpredictable rages are proof of this. There is an air of uncertainty and anxiousness among his courtiers because, at any moment, anyone could be removed from their post or even beheaded. Henry isn't willing to listen to even valid concerns that might go against his wishes, like Cromwell's concern about the legality of trying Thomas More for treason. Henry's attitude throughout the book is embodied by his words here: "You know my decision. Execute it."

## Part 6: Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ He knows different now. It's the living that turn and chase the dead. The long bones and skulls are tumbled from their shrouds, and words like stones thrust into their rattling mouths: we edit their writings, we rewrite their lives. Thomas More had spread the rumor that Little Bilney, chained to the stake, had recanted as the fire was set. It wasn't enough for him to take Bilney's life away; he had to take his death too.

**Related Characters:** Little Bilney, Thomas More, Thomas Cromwell

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 602

**Explanation and Analysis**

Before More is executed, Cromwell thinks back to the time when he was a child and was told that the dead had to be nailed into their coffins so they wouldn't come back to haunt the living. However, he now realizes that it is the living who don't let the dead rest. He thinks of how More proclaimed that Bilney had recanted his anti-Catholic beliefs right before More burned him for heresy. Cromwell knows that this isn't true, but Bilney cannot return from the dead to defend himself against More's words. Cromwell thinks that More not only killed Bilney, but that he also "[took] his death" by creating a narrative about it that Bilney can't contest.

Similarly, Cromwell thinks, "words like stones [are] thrust into the rattling mouths" of the dead by the living. The medieval practice of burying corpses with stones in their mouths was done with the belief that this would stop them from reanimating—Cromwell reverses this image to suggest that the stones "rattle" words that the dead are forced to speak. In Cromwell's version, the dead are powerless against the will of the living since it is the living who remember them and tell stories about them. In this passage, Mantel seems to be articulating her thoughts on the endeavor of writing a historical novel like *Wolf Hall*, or indeed of writing any kind of history—she, too, is thrusting words into the mouths of the dead, who aren't around to contest her interpretations and characterizations. She draws her readers in as her collaborators, saying "we edit their writings, we rewrite their lives," since readers, too, will form their own opinions of the events in the book based on their own ideas and personalities. Ultimately, the original people who shared their names with these characters are lost, and all that readers are left with are various interpretations and histories.

## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

### PART 1: CHAPTER 1: ACROSS THE NARROW SEA, PUTNEY, 1500

Thomas Cromwell has fallen on the cobbles in the courtyard and his father, the blacksmith Walter, kicks him brutally. Walter yells for him to get up, but Thomas is badly hurt and can't. He has a deep gash on his head, his nose is bleeding, and one eye is swollen shut. The twine on his father's **boot** has come loose, and Walter blames Thomas for it, saying that by kicking him, he has managed to ruin his boots. When Walter kicks Thomas again, a hard knot in the loose twine opens another cut on Thomas's brow.

*Wolf Hall opens with an incident of senseless and brutal violence, which foreshadows that this is a theme that will run through the novel. Notably, the perpetrator is Thomas Cromwell's father, Walter, who has more power in this relationship than his son, who is still a boy. This shows that when the powerful abuse their power, it can be extremely dangerous for their victims—an idea that the novel repeatedly brings up. Walter's tough leather boot reflects his own hard personality. While Walter has no concern at all for his hurt son, he is concerned about his ruined boot, which highlights Walter's extreme cruelty.*

Thomas is in so much pain that he feels no pain at all. He tries to crawl away from Walter, who mockingly calls him "**an eel**." Cromwell hears a dog barking and thinks he will miss his dog, Bella, when he is dead. He thinks he must crawl away from Walter's foot, "Never mind if he calls [Thomas] an eel or a worm or a snake. Head down, don't provoke him." Thomas vomits and then feels the ground shift under him, and he hears someone saying to Walter, "You've done it this time." He exhales and thinks he has breathed his last.

*Despite being in extreme pain and terrified that his father will beat him to death, Thomas Cromwell is remarkably clearheaded and repeatedly tries to escape Walter. This is early evidence of the composed and sharp-thinking courtier that he will grow into. Also, despite his own misery, he spares a thought for his beloved dog, Bella. This highlights the compassionate side of his nature, which balances out his shrewd ambition and makes him a sympathetic character. When Thomas tries to crawl to safety, Walter taunts his helplessness by calling him an eel—the first of many animals that Thomas will be compared to over the course of his rise to power. At the novel's opening, he is a powerless "eel," but he is later as aggressive as a "fighting dog," and then he becomes as dangerous as a "bag of serpents."*

Around noon, Thomas finds himself sitting by the door of the inn run by his sister Kat, who is shocked to see how badly he has been beaten. Kat wishes that "the devil [would] rise up, right now, and take away Walter his servant." Cromwell tries to explain to her that he had gotten up from the yard and come here, and that he can't remember if he'd been lying there since the morning or if he'd been there a whole day. He realizes, "from deep experience of Walter's fists and boots," that it had probably just been this morning since the pain on the second day is always worse.

*In contrast to Thomas's relationship with his father, the relationship between the siblings is one of love and care. Clearly, Kat, too, dislikes Walter immensely, since she calls him "the devil's […] servant." This passage highlights the level of Thomas' injuries since he seems to have passed out from the pain and struggles to piece together the timeline of what happened when. The beatings are a frequent event in Thomas's life, suggesting that he lives an anxious and dangerous life in Walter's household.*

Kat begins to clean Thomas up gently with some water and a cloth. He wants to put his head in her clean apron but doesn't want to dirty it with his blood. Kat's husband, Morgan Williams, returns from town, and he asks Thomas why he didn't fight back since he could easily "cripple the brute." Kat notes that their father always attacks from behind—she's seen him do it to their mother and their sister Bet, and Kat, too, has been a victim of similar attacks. Thomas wonders if perhaps Walter killed their mother, but then he thinks that, despite Putney's lawlessness, one can't get away with murder here.

*Thomas Cromwell's age hasn't been mentioned yet, but he seems to be strong enough and skilled enough to best Walter in a fight, suggesting that he must be in his teens at least. All his childhood years seem to have been marred by violence. Since Walter attacks his victims from behind, he always manages to surprise them and dominate them in a fight. This shows that he uses deception and subterfuge to hold onto his position of power rather than fighting fairly. In the novel, many characters—including Thomas Cromwell himself—come to learn this lesson that power must be grasped through trickery. At court, Cromwell is often mocked for his origins in Putney, and from the way young Cromwell thinks of his town, readers can assume that it is a rough sort of place.*

Morgan Williams wants to know why Walter beat Thomas up, and Thomas says it was because he'd been fighting the previous evening. Williams says that it makes no sense that Walter would beat up Thomas because Thomas beat up someone else. Williams also cannot fathom how illogical Walter is to "wait a day, then [hit Thomas] with a bottle," and then "[beat] up and down his length with a plank of wood"—the townspeople have filled him in on how exactly Walter attacked Thomas. Kat asks Thomas to live with them, telling Williams that Thomas can "do the heavy work" and "the figures."

*Williams's account of Walter's attack highlights its brutality. Since Thomas was lying face down on the ground and was barely conscious from the pain, he had no idea that Walter was using a bottle and a plank of wood to hit him. Williams's questioning also emphasizes how illogical Walter is—his motivation seems to be pure violence rather than using violence to achieve something else, like changed behavior. Kat thinks that Thomas can live with them and earn his keep by doing the heavy work as well as the figures, showing that Thomas is strong and also has a sharp mind.*

After Kat cleans him up, Thomas rests inside for a couple hours, during which time he hears Walter come to the door and argue loudly with Kat and Williams. Thomas thinks that he can no longer stay in Putney now because of Walter. He thinks he will kill Walter if he ever sees him again, and he will then be hanged for it. He also remembers that there was a knife involved in the fight he'd been in the previous day—he has a vague notion that this might lead to more trouble, though he is still too dazed to remember exactly why.

*Interestingly, Thomas Cromwell feels like he must leave town not because he is afraid of Walter, but because he is afraid that* he *might kill Walter if he ever sees him again. This not only shows his confidence in his own capabilities but is also evidence of his clear and rational thinking. He knows that he will be hanged if he kills Walter, and he doesn't think he should waste his life on it. However, this detail, as well as the fact that was probably fighting with a knife the previous day, suggests young Thomas Cromwell's own potential for violence, which is different from the adult Cromwell's loathing for it. This suggests that Mantel believes that violence comes from immaturity; Cromwell embraces violence when he's younger but rejects it when he's older and wiser.*

Thomas overhears Kat and Williams talking downstairs. Kat is regretting making the offer to have Thomas live with them because Williams seems nervous that Walter will keep returning as long as Thomas is in their house. Thomas knows that, despite all his bluster, Williams is actually afraid of Walter. When Thomas goes downstairs, he casually tells them he's leaving. Kat insists that he at least stay the night, but Williams offers to give him some money so he can be on his way. Thomas understands that Kat will not speak against her husband because he treats her well and comes from a successful family.

*Though Thomas Cromwell is still quite young, he seems very perceptive in his understanding of people's unspoken insecurities and fears, suggesting that he already has the ability to discern what is not obvious. He understands that Kat can do only so much for him since she has to take her husband's wishes into account, and he also understands that Williams is afraid of Walter, though he doesn't admit it. Thomas doesn't hold this against them, and he very maturely manages these complex family dynamics by offering to leave.*

Thomas tells Williams he'll return the money to him after he becomes either a soldier or a ship's boy. He is also worried about leaving his dog, Bella, and wonders if he can take her with him onboard a ship. Williams tells him that he is too large to be a ship's boy, and since he is good at fighting, just like his father, he should be a soldier. Kat sarcastically wonders if this could really be the solution—Thomas was fighting, and his father beat him up for it, and now her husband is telling him to go be a soldier and beat up someone he doesn't know. Williams says he may as well make money from doing it rather than do it for free.

*Kat questions the mindless propagation of violence, but Williams's response suggests that this is a way to get ahead in the world. Mantel seems to imply—like Kat—that there must be other ways, since the continuation of violence is not a viable solution to violence. When Cromwell is older, he will try to work out nonviolent solutions to problems, though he isn't always successful in the uncertain environment of the Tudor court.*

When Thomas gets up to go, Kat says he looks like he is in no state to leave. But Thomas says he knows that Walter will be back soon to find him, as soon as he has a few drinks. Thomas thanks Williams for the money in Welsh, and Williams is astonished that he speaks it—Thomas has picked it up from being around Williams and his family. Williams, too, seems sorry to see Thomas go and promises to feed Bella whenever she comes around.

*Thomas's ability to speak Welsh just from hearing it being spoken around him is proof of his ability to learn quickly from his environment. The fact that Williams has no idea that Thomas speaks the language also suggests that Thomas is already good at keeping information about himself secret if he prefers to, and that he enjoys making an impression by disclosing this information at opportune moments.*

Thomas makes his way to Dover. He has decided that wars are fought in France, so he is headed there. He knows he has to make the little money he has last a while, so he helps load carts to get free rides. He converses easily with strangers and is gentle with horses—even the nervous ones relax in his presence. Thomas wonders at "how bad people are at loading carts," often trying to squeeze a bulky object through a narrow space when a "simple rotation of the object solves a great many problems."

*As Thomas makes his way to Dover, his people skills help him get there with no money. As an adult, too, Thomas Cromwell's charm and wit will succeed in ingratiating him with the king and other powerful courtiers. He seems to genuinely like people and empathize with them, which in turn makes him likeable. Thomas is also thoughtful and intelligent from the very beginning, which is shown in the way he easily finds solutions to problems that other people seem to struggle with.*

In Dover, Thomas ends up making some money by watching a man do a three-card trick and figuring out how to do it. People think he is just a boy, so they play it with him, and they all end up losing to him. He spends a little of it on a prostitute since he could never do this at home, where Williams's family was very influential and would gossip about him.

*The young Thomas Cromwell is clearly very perceptive because he figures out the trick behind the card game just by observing how it is played. As an adult, too, he has a talent for spotting deceptions, which is useful to him as a courtier making his way up in court. Young Thomas ends up making money by setting up the game himself, which shows his brave and enterprising nature. He isn't intimidated, even though he is just a boy all alone in a strange place.*

Thomas sees three elderly Lowlanders (a term for people of the Low Countries or the Netherlands) who are being troubled by a customs official because of the bags of wool they are carrying, and Thomas negotiates a bribe on their behalf. In return, they offer him a ride to Calais on their boat. They ask Thomas how old he is and when he says he is 18, they laugh at his answer. He then tries 15, and they accept it, though they know he must be younger.

*Again, Thomas Cromwell displays the ability to gauge a situation—like the fact that the customs official was looking for a bribe—while others, like the Lowlanders, seem clueless in comparison. This ability, combined with his natural friendliness, serves Thomas well here and throughout the novel.*

The Lowlanders ask Thomas how he got his many bruises, and he tells them the truth because he doesn't want them thinking he is a thief who got caught and beaten. The Lowlanders say that "the English are cruel to their children" and Thomas is astonished to think there must be people somewhere who are kind to their children and "the weight in his chest shifts a little; he thinks, there could be other places, better." When they reach Calais, the Lowlanders tell him he will always be welcome to visit them. Thomas bids them farewell and goes off to look for a war.

*Thomas weighs his answers before he gives them, never blurting out his words and always calculating the impression they will make. In this instance, he tells the truth about his bruises because he doesn't want to risk making a poor impression on the Lowlanders, and his notion that they might otherwise take him for a thief seems very well-reasoned. Since Thomas is shocked to think that there might be a place where parents aren't cruel to their children, the reader can deduce that not only has Walter been cruel to him, but also that Thomas hasn't seen any other examples of a caring relationship between parents and children. When he himself is a father to his children and a guardian to many young wards, Thomas Cromwell's household is filled with warmth and affection, and it is one of these better places in the world that he dreams about here.*

## PART 1: CHAPTER 2: PATERNITY, 1527

Despite the warmth of the April night, Stephen Gardiner is dressed in **black furs** that "look like oily and dense black feathers" that he gathers around him "like black angel's wings." He tells Thomas Cromwell that he is late. Cromwell says it is because the boatmen were drunk and Gardiner wonders why he didn't row himself over since he must have surely "done some river work" as a boy. Gardiner likes to always bring up Cromwell's low birth since he himself is "the king's unacknowledged cousin" who was discreetly brought up by some people in the wool trade. Gardiner resents his own upbringing, and he dislikes the fact that Cromwell knows many people in the wool trade and must therefore know everything about Gardiner's past. Gardiner is also annoyed that Cromwell will be having a private meeting with their boss, Cardinal Wolsey, to whom Gardiner is confidential secretary.

*Stephen Gardiner comes across as dark and dangerous the first time he appears in the novel—his furs makes him seem like a crow or a dark angel—which reflects how his dislike of Cromwell makes him a constant threat to Cromwell's career. Both Gardiner and Cromwell are very ambitious and intelligent proteges of Wolsey who have risen up from unremarkable backgrounds, though Gardiner's origins as an illegitimate child of a royal do give him an upper hand over Cromwell.*

Cardinal Wolsey warmly welcomes Cromwell with food and wine. Cromwell thinks that "If you had interrupted him every night for ten years, and sat sulking and scowling at him on each occasion, you would still be his honored guest." Wolsey "makes a great, deep, smiling sigh, like a **leopard** settling in a warm spot," and rests his "large, white, beringed **hand**" on his ample belly.

*Wolsey is a warm and welcoming presence, and Cromwell's description of him is loving and generous. Even though Wolsey is Cromwell's employer, Cromwell doesn't feel nervous or inferior in his presence, suggesting that Wolsey is a considerate leader. Still, Wolsey is described as a "leopard," suggesting that while he is contented like a satisfied cat, he is still very powerful and can be dangerous when crossed. Wolsey's hand is "large, white, beringed," which symbolizes his power, wealth, and high position in court. Later, Cromwell notices that his own hand is scarred and rough from blacksmithing work, but Wolsey's white hand does not give away his origin as the son of a butcher. He seems to have transcended his origins while Cromwell seems to be unable to shake off his own past.*

Wolsey is the king's Lord Chancellor and is also the Archbishop of York, though he has never been to Yorkshire. Cromwell has just returned from there and gives him his report of the place, saying it is "filthy" and filled with "heathens." He says that the cardinal's project of merging some small monasteries in York is greatly disliked, and as a result, Cromwell, who is Wolsey's lawyer and general "man of business," even received some death threats. Wolsey wishes to use the revenue from these monasteries to start two colleges, one at Oxford and one at Ipswich. He says that Cromwell will have to take armed guards with him when he travels there next, which troubles the cardinal because he has an "instinct for decorum and pleasure."

*While Wolsey is a cardinal and therefore is a man of the church, he seems more interested in furthering the cause of education, even at the cost of monasteries. While this makes him unpopular with the monks and priests, it also paints Wolsey as a forward-thinking individual who values education over traditional religious doctrine. Cromwell also notes that Wolsey dislikes conflict, which explains why Cromwell enjoys working for him. Wolsey's instinct for peace makes him a likeable employer and reinforces Cromwell's own distaste for violence.*

Next, the cardinal tells Cromwell that he would like more spies in Queen Katherine's court since she will soon be told that the king will marry another woman who can give him a son. Cromwell says his Spanish isn't very good, so he wouldn't be able to arrange for that.

*Wolsey has a firm grasp on the political intrigues at court and wants to stay aware of any anticipated shifts in power. He has no qualms about using underhanded means to achieve this, like placing a spy in Katherine's court.*

Wolsey admits that he, too, has a son—"[a] weakness of the flesh." His son, Thomas Winter, seems to have chosen a scholarly life, while his young daughter, Dorothea, has been placed in a convent. The cardinal says that he knows that Cromwell has one legitimate son but jokes that he might have others from the time when he ran away from home. Cromwell says he hopes not, since he was only 15 then.

*Wolsey is a cardinal and by Catholic law, he is supposed to lead a chaste life. However, he is on such good terms with Cromwell that he doesn't mind him knowing about the two illegitimate children he has. To Wolsey, it is a joke that Cromwell might have fathered many children while he was a teen in France, but Cromwell turns serious when he hopes this isn't true. Later in the novel, he will admit that he is anxious at this possibility—he worries that he might have fathered children who are not being well cared for.*


Cardinal Wolsey says that he and Cromwell and everyone else has sons, but the king doesn't—which is, no doubt, Wolsey's fault. He tells Cromwell that he tried to dissuade the king from getting an annulment, but he failed. Since Queen Katherine had once been married to King Henry's brother, Arthur, Henry claims that their marriage is invalid since it is incestuous—he says he has been sleeping with his "sister" the entire time. Henry wants to use this idea to get an annulment. Wolsey admits that he thinks Henry's idea is "preposterous," though he doesn't want his opinion to leave the room.

*Wolsey is sarcastic when he says that it must be his fault that the king can't have sons. Henry is so used to Wolsey fixing all his problems that he blames him even for something that is completely out of his control, which shows Henry's illogical desire for his demands to be instantly met. Wolsey also says that he doesn't quite believe that Henry is serious about his claim that his marriage with Katherine is invalid because it has been an incestuous one. Wolsey understands that Henry is desperate for a male heir and is grasping for a reason that will permit him to remarry.*



Wolsey plans to send Gardiner to Rome to talk to the Pope and other papal delegates about the king's wishes. Wolsey is aware that Cromwell and Gardiner are rivals—that, "dissatisfied with their original parentage, they are fighting to be his favorite son." He tells Cromwell that Gardiner is well-grounded in canon law and is also very persuasive, despite what Cromwell might think of him. Cromwell warns Wolsey to send Gardiner with a full purse as there will be many cardinals there whom he'll have to bribe. Wolsey jokes that he should probably send Cromwell instead, and that Cromwell would be able to arrange a loan for Pope Clement. Cromwell agrees, and thinks that it is very possible that he would actually be able to manage this.

*Wolsey understands that the root of Cromwell and Gardiner's enmity is that each of them desires to be Wolsey's "favorite son." Their dislike of each other is a form of sibling rivalry since each of them sees Wolsey as a father figure. However, later in the novel, it will be Cromwell who sticks by Wolsey even when times get hard for him, and this will be a testament to Cromwell's loyalty.*

Wolsey already has several alternatives for how the king's decision to leave his wife could play out. First, he plans to gather a delegation and confront Henry "in a shocked fashion," and tell him that his relationship with Katherine appears to be unlawful. Wolsey thinks it is possible that Henry, who doesn't like to be in the wrong, might shout at him and return to Katherine and her Spanish-Imperial family. If not, Wolsey thinks he might have Henry marry a French princess after his marriage to Katherine is annulled, which would then open up diplomatic relations with France. Cromwell knows that "everything that comes to pass will pass by God's design, a design reenvisaged and redrawn, with helpful emendations, by the cardinal."

*Wolsey's careful planning seems necessary because Henry's marriages have huge political consequences. Notably, it is Henry's behavior that is the unpredictable element in Wolsey's scenarios. Wolsey tries to account for completely opposite reactions that Henry might have to Wolsey's delegation, and then turns each of these alternatives into a political success for England. Cromwell admires Wolsey's forethought and planning. It seems like Wolsey is the brains behind the kingdom while the king is brash and self-centered.*

Cromwell wonders where Katherine will go after she is cast off, and Wolsey says she will probably end up in a convent. He recounts how Katherine had been a beauty of 16 when she arrived from Spain to marry Arthur, 27 years ago. Henry had been a boy of 10 then, and after Arthur's death, Henry married Katherine when he turned 18. He had been in love with her, but now that is all gone. Wolsey knows that King Henry wants his own way, but he suspects that Queen Katherine "will be hard to move."

*Despite being a hard-nosed "man of business," Cromwell's kindness and concern for children and people stuck in tough situations make him a sympathetic character. Here, he is concerned about Katherine's fate when she is no longer the queen, even though it's also clear that the king's desires are the most important thing.*

Cromwell gets set to leave Wolsey and go home with his clerk Rafe Sadler, who has lived in the Cromwell household ever since he was a little boy of seven and who is now 21 years old. Rafe Sadler has had a secure childhood with Cromwell and has a "tidy mind." Cromwell is now a little over 40 years old, and while his face is usually unreadable, the only expression that people can interpret on it is one of "stifled amusement." 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."

*Cromwell shares a relationship of respect and affection with his chief clerk, Rafe Sadler, whom he has known ever since Rafe was a little boy. Rafe's life in the Cromwell household has been a happy and secure one, and Cromwell is like a father to him rather than an employer. Cromwell has had a range of life experiences since he ran away from home as a teenager in Putney, and they have transformed him into a very capable man of many abilities.*

## PART 1: CHAPTER 3: AT AUSTIN FRIARS, 1527

Liz is awake when Cromwell gets home, even though it is very late. She hands him his little dog, Bella, and tells him a book arrived for him from Germany which had been packaged as something else. She had almost sent it back. She also hands him a short letter from his son Gregory, in which Gregory writes in poor Latin that he hopes his family is well and that he is too busy to write more. Cromwell tells Liz that he told Wolsey that he doesn't know Spanish, and she laughs, calling him a "**weasel**." Cromwell says that the cardinal doesn't have to know everything that he knows.

*Cromwell's warm household is a stark contrast to his childhood home. He hasn't forgotten his affection for the dog he had as a boy, since he has named the new dog Bella, too—again, this shows the softer side of Cromwell's nature since he has held onto his old attachment through all these years.*

Liz tells Cromwell that she heard some news from her friend, a master jeweler's wife, that an emerald ring with a big stone was commissioned—they suspect it must have been ordered by the king, since nobody else would order a stone of that size. Cromwell thinks that Wolsey will let him know if an emerald ring shows up with regard to the king and his concubine. He thinks that the king should sleep with the woman soon and tire of her by the autumn so he can be ready for the "fertile French princess" whom Wolsey plans to import. He doesn't tell Liz any of this.

*Rumors are swirling about Henry's relationship with his "concubine" Anne Boleyn, and he seems to be trying to woo her with expensive presents. Neither Wolsey nor Cromwell considers her important enough to be the next queen, though Cromwell's instinct that the king will get bored with her shows some of his insight into Henry's nature.*

Liz talks about Gregory, who is at Cambridge and will soon be 13. Cromwell has sent his nephews, his sister Bet's sons, to school with Gregory too. Liz says that Gregory doesn't seem very interested in school and prefers to be outdoors. Cromwell doesn't mind this, saying he is happy that Gregory is nothing like what he used to be at that age, back when he "used to stick knives in people." Cromwell says Gregory is just "busy growing," and he understands his need for sleep, which he never could do as a boy, first because he lived with Walter and then because he was constantly anxious as a soldier fighting under terrible conditions, weather, and leadership. This was why he got out of fighting after a few years and went "into supply."

*Cromwell is now wealthy and is happy to share the wealth with his extended family, even sending his nephews to school. His son, Gregory, seems to have none of Cromwell's ambition and mental acuity, but Cromwell is generous in his defense of Gregory, which reveals his unconditional affection for his son.*

Later, Liz surprises Cromwell by asking who the lady is, and he at first thinks she is accusing him of having an affair in Yorkshire. But Liz wants to know about the woman the king is buying the ring for, and she says that there are rumors he will do something very strange, which will be certainly opposed by "[a]ll women everywhere in England," especially those who are older than 40 and have only daughters.

*There seem to already be rumors that Henry will leave Katherine and remarry—probably that he will marry Anne Boleyn. While Wolsey is still preparing for the moment when Katherine will be told about this, many townspeople seem to already know, suggesting that court secrets are often leaked. Liz objects to Henry's remarrying because it is unethical and unjust to all women, which shows her to be fair and thoughtful in the same way that Cromwell is.*

Early the next morning, Cromwell begins reading his new German book before Liz can object to it. He has tried to convince her to read Tyndale's New Testament, which he keeps locked up in a chest, but she refuses to. Cromwell thinks that he is very unlike Thomas More, for whom every new thing he learns only seems to confirm what he knew before. For Cromwell, on the other hand, with "every month that passes, the corners are knocked off the certainties of this world."

*The German book that was delivered when Cromwell was away is one that has been banned in England for holding ideas opposed to Catholicism. Even Tyndale's Bible has been banned by people like Thomas More, who faithfully follow the Catholic Church's rule that the Bible must be only in Latin. Unlike More, who is rigid in his ways, Cromwell is forward-thinking and flexible, and so he reads these books in secret.*

While Cromwell doesn't love Martin Luther and often wishes he were more subtle, he is interested in reading what he says, which is why he procures his books through smugglers. The king and More have written a book against Luther, for which the Pope granted Henry the title of Defender of the Faith. Cromwell keeps Wolsey updated on Luther's ideas so he can calm More and his clerical friends down when they get enraged about them. Cromwell has even met Tyndale, a serious and principled man who translated the Bible into English, which is against the law. More calls him "the Beast."

*The book from Germany that Cromwell is reading is by the theologist Martin Luther, who wrote books and pamphlets that questioned Catholic doctrine. Interestingly, Cromwell doesn't admire Luther unreservedly—he sees many flaws in Luther's ideas and presentation, but he is interested in hearing them in any case. Cromwell has met Tyndale and has come to his own conclusions about his character rather than being influenced by the Catholic Church's verdict on his work as being against religious law. More, on the other hand, has co-authored a book with King Henry against Luther's ideas and calls Tyndale a "Beast," which shows More's rigid ideas on religion and his fanatical adherence to Catholic doctrine. Again, it's clear that Cromwell and More view ideas in opposing ways.*

Cromwell thinks he must get someone else to translate Luther's new book from German into Latin so it can be discreetly circulated—he doesn't have the time to work on the translation himself. He gets dressed and thinks of Henry Wykys, Liz's father, who was from Putney and employed Cromwell many years ago. Wykys had asked him how he had changed so much since he was a rough boy in Putney. Thomas didn't know how to explain why exactly he gave up fighting, and so he said, "I found an easier way to be."

*Cromwell not only reads banned books but seems to also be involved in circulating them illegally among others like him who might be interested in them, which shows that he works actively—and secretly—against More and others like him who seek to uphold Catholic ideas and punish those who oppose them. While thinking about how he's found an "easier way to be," Cromwell seems to imply that he used to be combative in his youth—somewhat like More—but has matured with time into an open-minded person. More, on the other hand, seems to be stuck in immature closed-mindedness.*

Henry Wykys's broadcloth business was failing, but Cromwell helped revitalize it with help from the three wool traders he had met all those years ago in Dover. Wykys was so impressed by the profits that Cromwell brought in that he asked his daughter Liz, a widow, if she would like to marry him. Gregory was born a year later, and Cromwell had kissed him and said, "I shall be as tender to you as my father was not to me. For what's the point of breeding children, if each generation does not improve on what went before?"

*To Cromwell, treating children kindly is a sign of a good way of life. He went looking for a better world after he ran away from home, and he creates his own oasis of harmony in his household by ensuring that everyone is happy there. Cromwell's tenderness towards his children establishes him as compassionate and sympathetic character.*

Cromwell thinks about what Liz said the night before about the women of England, and about how she was thinking about women who had no sons. He thinks he can learn from her womanly tendency to "spend time imagining what it's like to be each other."

*Cromwell appreciates Liz's empathy for women unlike her, since she has a son of her own and yet can understand the pain of a wife who might be cast away simply because she hasn't borne her husband a son. Cromwell, too, exhibits empathy when he is willing to listen to and consider viewpoints that are unlike his own.*

## PART 2: CHAPTER 1: VISITATION, 1529

The Duke of Norfolk and the Duke of Suffolk arrive at Cardinal Wolsey's house and tell him that he has been dismissed from his position as Lord Chancellor. They have been instructed by the king to ensure that Wolsey and his household are turned out so the house can be turned into Anne Boleyn's London residence. Many men come in and begin stripping the house, even taking Wolsey's **clothes** from his trunks and the important documents from his chests. Over his scarlet clothes, Wolsey is "wearing a traveling cloak that belongs to someone else; they are confiscating his wardrobe piece by piece, so he has to grab what he can."

*Wolsey's fortunes have undergone a complete reversal in this section, which shows that power and wealth in the Tudor court lie completely at the mercy of the king's whims—and right now, the king's favor rests with Anne Boleyn. Wolsey completely underestimated her, which seems, in hindsight, to be a mistake. Now, she will be replacing him as the resident of his house. Wolsey has a great fondness for expensive clothes that his servants care for painstakingly, but now, his clothes are being dragged out of his trunks with no regard to his privacy, symbolizing that his dignity is in tatters. Wolsey himself is forced to wear a borrowed cloak, which shows that he has lost his wealth and power along with his expensive clothes.*

Still, Wolsey doesn't lose his composure, and he wonders aloud if they have refreshments for their "visitors." Cromwell thinks it is an "indecent spectacle" to see "the man who has ruled England, reduced." As the men evaluate the worth of his **jewels** and fine clothes, Cromwell wants to tell them that "Thomas Wolsey is a man beyond price."

*Wolsey is admirably composed and genial even though he is being evicted in a disgraceful way. This is evidence of his calm temperament, which Cromwell values greatly. To Cromwell, Wolsey is worth much more than his expensive jewels and clothes, though the king's men see them as evidence of his greed and corruption.*

Sir William Gascoigne, Wolsey's treasurer, says that he has heard that the cardinal will be taken straight to the Tower of London. Cromwell denies this, saying that the cardinal will go to his residence in Esher. George Cavendish, the cardinal's usher, anxiously says that the house in Esher is unfurnished and he also doesn't know how they will get there. Cromwell says they will take the cardinal's barge, which hasn't been seized yet, and sail to Putney, having the cardinal's horses meet them there. Cromwell can't shake the feeling that the whole thing feels like a play—"the Cardinal and his Attendants"—and that "it is a tragedy."

*Cromwell takes charge of the situation when he sees that Wolsey is coming dangerously close to being imprisoned in the Tower. As he directs Wolsey's servants and pretends he knows what must be done next, Cromwell feels like a character in a play—the preposterousness of the situation makes it all seem unreal to him, and he senses that the play is a "tragedy" since it can't end well for the cardinal. Even in the midst of this worrying situation, Cromwell is able to distance himself from the chaotic events—by seeing them as a play—and perceive them with clarity.*

As they board the cardinal's barge, they notice groups of people lined up on the bank who are booing the cardinal. The cardinal begins to weep, wondering why the people hate him so much after all he has done for them, and also wondering how the king could throw him out so ignominiously after 20 years of loyal service. Cavendish wonders if it is just the English who are "particularly an ungrateful nation," but Cromwell says "it's just people. They always hope there may be something better." Cromwell once again feels like they are all in a play, this time in "an allegory of Fortune," with Wolsey representing "Decayed Magnificence" and Cavendish playing the part of the "Virtuous Councilor" who "mutters words of superfluous and belated advice."

*While Cromwell sees Wolsey as a gentle and competent person, Wolsey doesn't seem to be very popular with the people of London, which shows that there is always more than one angle to a person or situation. This idea is emphasized when Cromwell once again feels like they are all in a play, which suggests that there is no single, objective truth but just characters and situations that are open to interpretation. This time, Cromwell feels like they are in an allegory, which means that he can learn a lesson from what has transpired. This seems to hold true for him because, as a courtier, he never forgets that power can be quickly lost when one falls out of favor with the king.*

The horses are ready for them at Putney, and Wolsey's horse is led by Patch, the cardinal's fool. Henry Norris rides to them, bringing a message and a ring to the cardinal from the king—he says Henry is only pretending to be upset with the cardinal in order to satisfy the cardinal's many enemies, but that he will compensate him with two times what he has lost. The cardinal begins to cry and gives Norris a chain from around his neck, asking him to speak well of him to the king. Wolsey also makes a present of Patch, who is so upset at this that he bites the men who take him away. The cardinal consoles Patch, saying that the king "is the kindest soul in Christendom."

*King Henry's message to Wolsey appears to confuse the situation even more, implying that the king himself is powerless against his courtiers. Wolsey, however, is happy to hear that the king is on his side and doesn't stop to question how the king's hand might be forced.*

Cromwell asks Norris if they can get all of what he promised in writing, and Norris refuses, saying his words were "a confidential message." Cromwell asks him about the compensation he mentioned, and Norris laughs and says it was figurative. He says that everything the cardinal owned belongs to the king anyway, so it isn't theft to take it back. Norris also says that Wolsey's house in Esher remains his because he still holds his position as the Bishop of Winchester, but that he might not for much longer. Cromwell longs to "shake some straight answers out of Norris" but realizes that things are "not simple," which is what the cardinal has tried to teach him all these years—that one gets along "by being a subtle crook," like Norris is.

*While Wolsey is desperate and is easily taken in by Henry Norris's message, Cromwell seems suspicious of these verbal consolations. He is right to be suspicious since Norris cannot provide any guarantees of the king's favor, and he even seems to hint that Wolsey might soon lose the bishopric of Winchester. Norris seems suave and genial, but Cromwell is irritated by his veiled threats as well as his refusal to give the cardinal any guarantees—in fact, Norris's slipperiness makes him an ideal courtier, and Cromwell recognizes this.*

At Esher, Cromwell sees that the kitchen is in disrepair and he tries to put it in order, telling the staff that Wolsey might stay there awhile. He and Cavendish stay up late, planning out what all they might need to make the house comfortable for the cardinal since it lacks basic necessities like beds and plates. They are also faced with the problem of the cardinal's 600 employees—they expect at least 300 to follow him around, but they don't have "ready money for wages."

*Wolsey's circumstances have undergone a complete change. He has been left without money or resources and must live in an unfurnished house which is in a state of disrepair. He is accustomed to a life of luxury—he has 600 employees who follow him from house to house to ensure he is comfortable. His lavish lifestyle might explain why the people of London dislike him so much, and it points to him being possibly corrupt and overly ambitious. Luckily for him, Cromwell and Cavendish are extremely loyal and work hard to improve Wolsey's situation.*

Cavendish wonders who will be the new Lord Chancellor, and Cromwell guesses it will be Thomas More. Cavendish wonders why the king had to defer to Wolsey's enemies, and he says that perhaps the king is scared of *"her"* since she is a witch. Cromwell asks him not to be childish. The next morning, Cromwell sends Cavendish to call in favors on the cardinal's behalf in order to get some money. Cromwell plans to get his clerks down from London so they can work out how much money the cardinal still has.

*Cavendish says that perhaps the king is scared of Anne Boleyn because she is a witch. Cromwell is quick to dismiss this as being "childish," but he doesn't seem to guess as yet that she does have great power over the king and might have played a big role in Wolsey's dismissal.*

## PART 2: CHAPTER 2: AN OCCULT HISTORY OF BRITAIN, 1521-1529

Long ago, a Greek king had 33 daughters and each one of them murdered her husband. Their father exiled them and set them adrift on a ship. They reached a land they named Albina, where they mated with the demon inhabitants and gave birth to a race of giants. Eight centuries later, Brutus and his band of men landed in Albina and defeated the giants. King Arthur descended from Brutus, and his namesake, Prince Arthur, married Katherine, but died at the age of 15. If he were alive, his brother, Henry, would most likely be Archbishop of Canterbury and wouldn't be pursuing "a woman of whom the cardinal hears nothing good."

*The ancient history of England is narrated in mythical form and ties in with the characters of the novel, which underscores the idea that they, too, are characters as much as people. While history is being narrated in the novel, Mantel suggests that all history is, in essence, a story—not objective truth, but a version of events.*

The lady first appears at court at Christmas of 1521. Soon, there is a rumor that she will marry Harry Percy, the Earl of Northumberland's heir. Cardinal Wolsey is upset at this news, and he calls in her father, Thomas Boleyn, to tell him that this can't proceed. Harry Percy is to marry the Earl of Shrewsbury's daughter, just like Wolsey and the king planned. The Boleyns—who were traders not so long ago, and therefore are not an important family—must be happy with the match the cardinal has arranged for their daughter with the Butlers of Ireland.

*When Wolsey was a powerful man in court, he even controlled the marriages between the courtiers to ensure that matches were made between equals. Ironically, he considered Anne Boleyn to be too inferior to marry even an earl, which explains why he never considered her a threat to his plans of marrying King Henry off to a princess.*

Thomas Boleyn says that his daughter Anne and Harry Percy have already "pledged themselves before witnesses," but Wolsey tells him this is irrelevant. He says that Boleyn should marry his daughter off to the Butlers before the court starts speaking of her as "spoiled goods." Thomas Boleyn is angry after this meeting, and he mutters under his breath that the cardinal is a "[b]utcher's boy." He says that Cromwell, who is also in the room, is the "[b]utcher's **dog**." Cromwell notices that in the firelight, Wolsey's arms look very long—"his reach is long, his **hand** is like the hand of God."

*Wolsey considered the Boleyns an inferior family because they were not long-established nobility, but Wolsey's own father was a butcher, a fact that Thomas Boleyn doesn't let him forget. Thomas Boleyn calls Cromwell a "butcher's dog," implying that Cromwell gets Wolsey's scraps while he himself has no real power. In contrast, Wolsey seems all-powerful, with an almost supernatural reach.*

After Thomas Boleyn leaves the room, Cromwell mentions to Wolsey that the king is rumored to be sleeping with Boleyn's older daughter, Mary Boleyn—not his younger daughter, Anne Boleyn, the one who is involved with Harry Percy. This does not worry Wolsey because Mary, "a kind little blonde," is already married, which would be useful if she got pregnant with the king's child—the king would have the option to not acknowledge the child as his own if he preferred not to.

*When confronted with the king's indiscretions, Wolsey is always in problem-solving mode and thinks a step ahead to how the indiscretion might cause a larger problem. Cromwell seems to be hinting that Wolsey should be a little kinder to Thomas Boleyn since he has such a close connection to the king, at this point through his daughter Mary.*

The king already has an illegitimate son, called Henry Fitzroy, whom he has made a duke. The cardinal asks Cromwell if Katherine knows about the king and Mary Boleyn, and Cromwell says she does. Wolsey says she is "a saint." He also tells Cromwell to let him know immediately if he hears any more London gossip.

*Katherine is aware that the king has mistresses and seems to have made her peace with this, confident in the knowledge that she is the queen and can't be replaced—all of which is about to change. Cromwell has a good handle on court gossip, which makes him a valuable resource to Wolsey as he conducts his business.*

In 1529, on the first night when the cardinal is at his Esher residence, Cromwell thinks back to that night all those years ago and asks Cavendish what happened next with Harry Percy and Anne Boleyn. Cavendish pretends he is Percy and asks Cromwell to take on the role of Wolsey, and they act out a scene in which Percy begs to be with Anne and the cardinal refuses, even getting Percy's father to threaten to disinherit him. Percy is then forced to marry Mary Talbot. Cromwell wonders how Anne could ever respect a man who would leave her because he feared his father, and Cavendish says she didn't, but that she "liked his title." When Anne heard what Wolsey had done, she vowed to have her revenge, but she was laughed at by the cardinal's men, who could not imagine "how she would rise and rise."

*When the cardinal is ousted from his position as Lord Chancellor, Cromwell seems to guess that Anne Boleyn had something to do with it, which is why he tries to better understand the consequences of Wolsey's decision to prevent her from marrying Harry Percy. Cavendish insists on performing the scene as a play, which lends the scene an air of comedy and also highlights the fact that all these historical events have several interpretations. In Cavendish's version, Anne promises to have her revenge on Wolsey for ruining her prospects, while this whole angle was missing in the cardinal's own narration of events. Cavendish also portrays Anne as a very ambitious young woman who wanted to marry Percy only for his title, which hints at the ruthless ambition she will also display in her relationship with King Henry.*


Cavendish says that their biggest mistake was that they didn't realize why the king had opposed Anne Boleyn's marriage to Percy—it was because he himself had his eye on her. Cromwell wonders if this was when he was already sleeping with her sister Mary Boleyn, and Cavendish says it was. Cromwell wonders how the king's every desire was thwarted by all these people who aimed to please him—Anne, too, refused him, and nobody knows how. He also cannot understand how the cardinal could have missed all these details.

*The reason for the cardinal's fall seems to be that he didn't pay enough attention to the power shifts that were taking place behind the scenes. Later, when Cromwell is a courtier, he ensures he stays informed on court gossip since he understands from this experience that it can be dangerous to ignore it.*

In a flashback, the novel narrates how the cardinal opens a court of inquiry in May 1527 to look into the validity of the king's marriage. It's supposed to be a secret court, without even Katherine knowing about it, but in reality, the whole of Europe knows. The king produces the documents that permitted him to marry his brother Arthur's widow, and he expects the court to find these documents defective. Wolsey is prepared to comply, but he tells Henry that even if the court agrees with him, Katherine will surely appeal to Rome.

*Henry is a willful king who expects all his demands to be met. Wolsey is desperate to help him find a way to end his marriage because he knows that his own career—and probably his life—depends on it. Still, Wolsey's verdict can be overturned by the church in Rome, so he is rather powerless in this matter.*


Henry and Katherine have had six children, but only one of these children lives—Mary Tudor, who is "small but vigorous." Henry is disappointed that he has no male heir, and he tells the cardinal that he is sure it is because he and Katherine have sinned by marrying each other. The cardinal admits to Cromwell that the king's claim doesn't seem "entirely sincere" since no rational man could believe in such a "vengeful" God. Henry sends his daughter Mary to Ludlow when she is 10 years old, so she can hold court as Princess of Wales. Katherine thought this meant that her husband was content with their one child, but she now realizes that she was wrong.

*Henry wants the cardinal to declare that his marriage to Katherine was invalid from the beginning, and Wolsey is forced to acquiesce even though he doesn't quite agree with him. While Henry claims that his children with Katherine die because their relationship is an incestuous—and therefore sinful—one, Wolsey admits to Cromwell that he doesn't believe the king is "entirely sincere" in this claim. Wolsey would never admit his doubts about the king to anyone else because he knows it is dangerous to contest the king's claims.*

Katherine blames Wolsey for the secret hearing, and she accuses him of conniving for years to push her out of power by placing his spies in her household and denying her meetings with the Spanish ambassador. Wolsey tells Cromwell that he expected her to see the whole business as Wolsey's fault while completely exonerating Henry. Wolsey insists that he favors neither the French nor the Emperor—he just wants peace. Cromwell admires Katherine's stateliness and her **gowns** that are stitched with so many gemstones "that they look as if they are designed less for beauty than to withstand blows from a sword."

*While attempting to procure the king's annulment, Wolsey seems to be falling out of favor with the king because he isn't succeeding in his project, and also ends up making an enemy of Katherine. Wolsey wants to avoid the political chaos that an annulment and remarriage might cause, which could weaken England's position. Cromwell perceives Katherine as being regal and strong, with her bejeweled gowns symbolizing her toughness and resilience under pressure.*

Cardinal Wolsey tells the king that even if the documents that permitted him to marry Katherine are found to be defective, Pope Clement might just suggest that it be fixed with new documents rather than agree to break up the marriage. The king loses his temper at this and shouts at Wolsey, which Wolsey bears with a "half-smiling, civil, regretful" expression.

*It is not Wolsey's fault that he can be overruled by the Pope, since the Pope is the religious head. Wolsey also gives King Henry good advice that the Pope will likely align with Katherine's desire that the marriage be saved, since the Pope is allied with Katherine's nephew, Emperor Charles. The king, however, is frustrated by his situation and takes out his anger on Wolsey. Even though this is unfair, Wolsey must bear it with equanimity. It seems like no matter how powerful someone gets in court, the king can—and will—tear him down in an instant.*

Cardinal Wolsey is most worried about the hold that Anne Boleyn has on the king—he wishes she would "drop her coy negotiations and please the king," which he thinks would calm the king down. When Cromwell tells Wolsey how much the king spent on an emerald ring for her, he is in disbelief. Wolsey hears rumors that she is bargaining with the king and wants to be his new wife. He finds this "laughable," but he is also aware that the king is completely infatuated with Anne.

*Wolsey seems to blame Anne Boleyn for the king's bad mood, chalking it up to Henry's frustration at not being able to have sex with her. Wolsey still doesn't consider that the king might want to marry her, though this is the rumor in court. Once again, Wolsey ignores court gossip to his own loss, a mistake that Cromwell is careful to avoid later on.*

Wolsey says that after his own death, Cromwell might get to be close to the king and that he should accept him for being the "pleasure-loving prince" he is. He says the king, too, would have to accept Cromwell for being like "one of those square-shaped **fighting dogs** that low men tow about on ropes." Cromwell thinks that it is unlikely that he would ever get to be close to the king because of his low birth, and also because he doesn't have an association with the church to cover up his past, like the cardinal does.

*When Cromwell serves the king, he doesn't forget Wolsey's advice and never questions or censures Henry's pursuit of pleasure, which is part of what makes Henry value him so much. At the time that Cromwell and Wolsey have this talk, Cromwell is still learning the ways of the court through watching Wolsey. Wolsey thinks him too combative, which is why he likens him to a "fighting dog." However, by the time Cromwell makes his way into court, he has smoothed all his rough edges and seems better at the game than even Wolsey.*

Just as the court of inquiry is about to be adjourned, news comes from Rome that Emperor Charles's Spanish and German troops, who have not been paid in months, are plundering the city's treasures and raping its women. They also take the Pope prisoner. Since Charles is Katherine's nephew, no one expects the Pope to favor any appeals from England while he is Charles's prisoner.

*This incident highlights the huge international implications that King Henry's domestic affairs will have. The Pope is now at the mercy of Katherine's nephew, which is unfortunate timing for Henry—and also for Wolsey, who knows that they will now certainly not be able to get the Pope to side with them against Katherine.*

Thomas More says that the emperor's soldiers are having great fun by "roasting live babies on spits," a claim that Cromwell finds ridiculous because he knows that the soldiers must be "busy carrying away everything they can turn into ready money." Cromwell thinks of how More wears a "**jerkin of horsehair**" under his clothes, and he cannot understand why people like More feel they have to "invite pain in" since it is "waiting for us: sooner rather than later. Ask the virgins of Rome."

*Thomas More's claim about the emperor's soldiers killing babies shows his flair for exaggeration, his lack of rationality, and his desire to inflame passions. More also seems ignorant of the soldiers' real motivations. Cromwell knows from his experience as a soldier that soldiers would be most interested in making money—not in the pointless task of murdering babies. Cromwell also considers how More wears a horsehair shirt that would irritate his skin and cause blisters and sores. The hair shirt symbolizes More's tendency towards martyrdom, which Cromwell finds pointless and unnecessary. Cromwell thinks that life is full of pain and sorrow, and that one need not seek it, like More does. Cromwell empathetically feels the pain of the virgins who are being raped by the soldiers in Rome, and Mantel implies that his ability to feel others' pain is more generous than More's self-inflicted, self-involved physical pain.*

Cardinal Wolsey plans to call a council of cardinals in Avignon so they can approve of King Henry's separation while the Pope is Charles's prisoner. In June 1527, when Henry tells Katherine that they should separate, she is furious and shouts so much that "the windows are rattled." Cromwell is impressed by the strength of her anger. She tells Henry that she will get better lawyers, and that he, too, should get better lawyers and better priests. After this, she cries, and Henry "doesn't like her crying." That evening, Cromwell asks Liz if he has ever made her cry, and she replies, "Only with laughter."

*Wolsey comes up with yet another innovative way to get Henry his annulment while the Pope is out of the way. While Wolsey is motivated by his desire to hold onto his power, he is also afraid to incite the king's wrath. In contrast with Henry's relationship with Katherine, Cromwell's relationship with Liz comes across as being warm and respectful.*

In July 1527, when the sweating sickness strikes in London and claims many lives, Wolsey is set to embark on his trip to France. He tells Cromwell to let him know immediately when the king has slept with Anne Boleyn. Cromwell asks Wolsey what he plans to do if the king does not tire of Anne, since she has neither property nor title. Wolsey sighs and talks for a long time about England's mythological past—about the many kings who have ruled it and the women they loved. His tale includes the story of King Edward, Henry's grandfather, marrying a woman who descended from the serpent woman Melusine, who had prophesied that "her children would found a dynasty that would reign forever." Cromwell wants to know if the Boleyns have "**serpent** fangs," and the cardinal accuses Cromwell of laughing at him.

*Most people, including Cromwell, seem to be entertaining the idea that Anne Boleyn might be a fixture in the king's life. Wolsey, however, seems to be in denial about this. He resorts to misdirection when Cromwell wants to know how he would bear it if Henry married Anne—because the truth is that he probably* cannot *bear it. If this comes to pass, it would mean the end of Wolsey's political choreography and would leave England without an ally. To Wolsey, this fate seems as bad for England as the mythical one of Edward marrying a snake-woman.*

Cromwell heads home and decides that the important thing to remember is that King Edward could not have achieved much without the money he got from the Medicis—"signs and wonders" seem irrelevant. There are rumors that Edward's mother had slept with an archer, who was his real father, so Edward wasn't really the son of the Duke of York. If Edward's wife was a serpent woman, then that makes Henry "unreliable," since his history is so vague. One thing Cromwell knows for certain about Henry is that he is in debt to the Italian banks.

*Cromwell is always practical when confronted with large problems and thinks that money and the lack of it are at the heart of power struggles. His talent for managing money is useful to him as he rises in power at court. Cromwell spends some time thinking about the various stories about Henry's past, and then comes to the conclusion that Henry is "unreliable" since his origins are vague. This also seems to be Mantel's comment on Cromwell as a character. The real Thomas Cromwell also had a vague history (just like Henry), and the character Thomas Cromwell who lives in the pages of* Wolf Hall *is just that—a character.*

Liz mutters sleepily as Cromwell gets into bed beside her. His dreams that night are filled with the cardinal's stories, and he dreams that under his **clothes**, Henry has "serpentine flesh." When he wakes up early the next morning, he notices Liz's damp sheets and warm forehead.

*Cromwell's dream of Henry being a serpent under his clothes seems to be a premonition that the king can be extremely dangerous when displeased—a truth that will become increasingly important as Cromwell grows closer to the king. This dream also seems to be a bad omen which alludes to Liz's illness.*

Cromwell heads to Gray's Inn, where he meets in secret with a priest called Little Bilney who is opposed to Catholic doctrine, and he then meets a man who teaches him Polish. When he returns home, his servants inform him that Liz has died. He wonders that she didn't fight her illness more vigorously, and he thinks that he would have beaten Death up if he'd known it was coming for her. When he sees her, he thinks that Liz already looks "like the dead." She had taken ill earlier that day with the sweating sickness and sent Rafe out to find him, but Cromwell couldn't be found.

*Liz's death is a huge shock to Cromwell, and he seems to momentarily revert to the rough ways of his boyhood in his desire to beat up Death.*

Liz has to be buried quickly to limit the spread of infection, and the family must stay inside their house for 40 days. Cromwell reads and plays chess with Rafe, who is always by his side. When he sleeps, he dreams of Liz, so he doesn't sleep. His daughter Anne Cromwell sits with him too and practices her Latin, which she is very good at. Meanwhile, he gets news of the cardinal's popularity in France. In England, the king has made Thomas Boleyn a viscount, and there are rumors that he intends to marry Anne Boleyn.

*After Liz's death, Cromwell struggles to cope, but he is surrounded by people he loves who give him companionship and support. Despite his grief, Cromwell keeps tabs on the news from France and from court, where Anne Boleyn and her family seem to be getting even more powerful.*

In September, there are no more cases of the sweating sickness, and the family gathers to pray for Liz. Cromwell's sisters Kat and Bet discuss who should move into Cromwell's household to help Liz's mother Mercy with the girls. Liz's sister, Johane, is there too, and Cromwell thinks that she looks just like Liz. Her husband, John Williamson, has a cough, and Johane jokes that if he dies of it, she will marry Cromwell as soon as she gets "the right piece of paper from Rome."

*Cromwell notices Johane not only because she looks just like Liz but also because she seems to share her wit. Her joke about Cromwell's political skill is also a subtle hint at the way his influence at court is becoming a bigger part of his life.*

Surrounded by his family, Cromwell thinks of Walter and is glad that he is dead. He thinks of the time when he went back to Putney to see Walter, after he'd been married a year and Gregory had already been born. Walter mockingly asked him if Cromwell was now a fancy lawyer who wouldn't admit to doing blacksmith work or helping his Uncle John, who was a cook in Cardinal Morton's kitchens at Lambeth. Cromwell used to go there sometimes to try to get some scraps to eat, and that was where he'd first seen Thomas More, who was a page already well-known for his intelligence and wit.

*Walter was physically abusive when Thomas Cromwell was a little boy, and all these years later, he seems to be emotionally abusive in the way he mocks his son's career. The adult Cromwell is glad that Walter is dead—Cromwell's household is warm and filled with love, and Walter would have certainly not fit in. Cromwell thinks back to the days when he worked at the kitchens at Lambeth, and he recalls that there was a huge social gulf between himself and Thomas More.*

At Lambeth, Cromwell taught himself to read from the orders for groceries that the stewards wrote. He followed them around, memorizing the numbers and weights they called out, and he became well-known for having an excellent memory. He could look at a sack of food and accurately gauge its weight, which helped his uncle know that he wasn't being cheated by the grocers. In the evenings, Cromwell and the other kitchen boys played and fought outside while the young gentlemen, including Thomas More, practiced their singing inside.

*Cromwell's past is startling because he seems to have had no formal education as a child, and yet is well-read and very intelligent. Cromwell was self-taught while More had all the advantages of education and wealth. Cromwell's background seems to have made him empathetic to those unlike himself—since he himself used to have nothing, Cromwell never judges anyone else based on their wealth or status.*

Back in the year 1527, Cardinal Wolsey returns from France. His mission has been a failure. The other cardinals refused to meet him in Avignon, making the excuse that it was too hot. So, Wolsey has promised to help finance a French army that can go fight Emperor Charles in Italy. Then, he thinks, the Pope will be grateful and indebted to Henry and hear out his demands. Cromwell, however, knows that the French can never be true allies of the English because of the English soldiers' brutal behavior outside their own land. He is also aware that Henry has sent his own delegation to Rome without informing the cardinal. Cromwell is stunned by the "double-dealing" taking place.

*Foreshadowing Wolsey's fall is the fact that he wasn't in the loop on major decisions. In the Tudor court, knowledge is power—one must always be aware of others' actions. Since Wolsey is being pointedly excluded, readers can guess that his days of power are behind him.*

In the spring of 1528, Thomas More, who is "always genial," asks Cromwell if the cardinal will be sending him to Frankfurt to buy more of Luther's books. More writes vitriolic pamphlets against Luther, and he wants to try to extradite Luther to England so he can be tried there. Cromwell tells him that he takes no interest in "heretics' books." More says that Tyndale has been seen in Hamburg, and he wonders if Cromwell knows anything about it. More is also critical of the cardinal's decision to close monasteries and use their endowments to finance his colleges. As Cromwell sees More walk away, he recalls that after More's first wife died, he took a new wife immediately, since "human flesh called to him with its inconvenient demands."

*Thomas More seems to have a grudge against Wolsey—and by extension Cromwell—because he knows that they read and might even be responsible for spreading the work of Luther and Tyndale. He is yet another person who dislikes Wolsey—the number of powerful enemies he has seems to be growing. More's immediate remarriage after his first wife's death seems to contradict his religious persona and is also very unlike Cromwell's deep attachment to Liz.*


Meanwhile, Wolsey writes a personal letter to the Pope in which he praises Anne Boleyn's virtues. He tells Cromwell that if he thought there were any chance of the king successfully getting an annulment, he would "go to the Vatican in person [...] and allow the documents to be written in [his] own blood." He doesn't believe this will ever happen, and he knows that Anne blames him for it. Meanwhile, the Pope is sending Cardinal Campeggio to England to determine whether the king's marriage to Katherine has valid grounds for annulment.

*Power has shifted—while Wolsey was previously disdainful of the Boleyns and considered Anne unworthy of marrying even Harry Percy, who was just an earl, Wolsey has now made peace with the fact that the king does intend to marry her. Wolsey tries to ingratiate himself with Anne, but she holds onto her grudge against him, despite his sincere efforts to get what she and Henry want.*

Johane moves into Cromwell's house at Austin Friars with her husband, John Williamson, and their daughter, Jo. She has heard the talk about the cardinal closing monasteries and disapproves of it, and she doesn't want her husband involved in this business. Cromwell knows there is no use in trying to explain to her that the cardinal is building colleges and furthering scholarship.

*The cardinal's actions seem to be disliked not only by courtiers like Thomas More, but also by the common people, many of whom are devoutly religious.*

Cromwell's older daughter, Anne Cromwell, has a sharp mind just like his, and she thinks her little sister Grace is "slow." Cromwell says Grace isn't slow, just young. Anne then tells him she would like to marry Rafe when she is older. As Cromwell considers this, he thinks "his life might mend" after the sadness of Liz's death, but then realizes that Anne is too young and that it would be unfair to ask Rafe to wait so long. Anne admits that this is true. Cromwell recalls how he brought Rafe into his household when he was a little boy of seven—his father, Henry Sadler, had told Cromwell to teach Rafe everything he knew. It was a cold, rainy evening when Cromwell brought Rafe to the house, and as he toweled the child's hair dry, Liz came in and laughingly asked if Cromwell had brought a "boy or **hedgehog**."

*As court politics get more complicated and dangerous, Cromwell seems comforted by his home life and his memories of Liz. He loves his clerk, Rafe Sadler, just like a son, and the idea of having Rafe and his daughter Anne marry sounds so ideal to him that he thinks he can finally put his grief behind him and move on. At the same time, he is careful not to impose his will on Rafe, which shows his considerate nature.*

In the summer of 1528, the sweating sickness returns, and Cromwell sends his daughters out of London. When they return, they are bigger, and Grace is shy around him because he has hardly spent any time with her. Gregory, too, does not speak openly around his father and shows no aptitude for or interest in learning. Cromwell wonders if he can train him to be a businessman instead of a scholar, but Johane says that Cromwell must "marry him well" because Gregory is a gentleman.

*Cromwell is never frustrated by his children for being different from him or for lacking his aptitude for learning. He respects their differences and tries to plan futures for them that will suit their personalities.*

Cromwell gets a letter informing him that two Oxford scholars whom the cardinal was sponsoring are dead. They were caught reading Lutheran books, and the cardinal said they should be locked up and reasoned with. They were thrown in a damp cellar where they succumbed to the sweating sickness, and they died alone. Cromwell is upset at this news, which shows the limits of the cardinal's powers even in his own colleges. Cromwell appeals to the cardinal to use his influence to release Little Bilney, who has been locked in the Tower for over a year for heresy. The cardinal says he will do his best.

*These incidents are evidence that the cardinal is not the powerful man he used to be. In contrast, Thomas More's prosecution of heresy seems to be getting stronger.*


In the autumn of 1528, Cromwell is in court on the cardinal's business. Mary Boleyn runs to him, "her skirts lifted, showing a fine pair of **green silk stockings**." She tells him that her uncle Norfolk and her brother George Boleyn were complaining about Cromwell that morning for being a man of low birth who helps the cardinal bring the noble houses to ruin. Mary's husband has died, and Cromwell thinks that "Mary alarms him" with her honesty. She says that the king discarded her in favor of Anne Boleyn, and now her entire family mistreats her. She has a son and a daughter from the king, but Anne has instructed the king not to acknowledge them as his own. Anne pinches and bruises Mary whenever she can. The king is firmly under Anne's influence and writes letters that he signs with a heart drawn around his and Anne's initials, and Mary believes that the two of them will do anything to get married.

*Mary Boleyn seeks Cromwell out to update him on court gossip and flirt with him, which shows that Cromwell has already become something of a personality in court for the courtiers to notice him and speak about him, even if they do so disdainfully. Unlike Anne, who seems very guarded when Cromwell meets her later, Mary is forthcoming and open. Cromwell notices her hitched up skirts and green silk stockings, which symbolically suggest that she reveals too much—which is why she isn't as successful as her sister at court. Secrecy and deception are the means to gain power in the Tudor court, and Mary Boleyn doesn't seem to be made for them.*

Cromwell is fascinated with all this information, and he even finds himself talking easily to Mary Boleyn about his own children. Mary says that she would like her next husband to be someone who "upsets" and "frightens" her family, but Cromwell says they would kill her for it. She laughs and acknowledges that they certainly would. She tells him that Anne Boleyn might want to see him soon to ask for his advice, and that he should avoid her for his own safety. She then "kisses the tip of her forefinger and touches it to his lips" and leaves. When Cromwell tells Rafe about all this later, Rafe is incredulous, saying that Cromwell certainly must have imagined the marriage proposal.

*Mary seems to enjoy the fact that her family dislikes Cromwell, since she, too, is mistreated by them. Since Mary seems to want Cromwell for herself, she tries to warn him off associating with Anne. However, Anne seems to be the new center of power at the Tudor court, and Cromwell will have to encounter her on his own rise to power.*

When Cardinal Campeggio arrives from Rome, the king wants him to focus only on dissolving his marriage with Katherine, so he sends Anne Boleyn out of London with Mary Boleyn. A rumor reaches Cromwell that Mary is pregnant, and he thinks he narrowly escaped having to acknowledge the king's bastard as his own child. But it turns out there is no baby, perhaps because she lost it or because the rumor was a false one, and Cromwell thinks "it is like one of the cardinal's strange fairy tales." Later, he hears that Anne has taken over wardship of Mary's son, Henry Carey, and he wonders if she will "poison him" or "eat him."

*Mary Boleyn might have had undisclosed reasons for flirting with Cromwell, though he never quite confirms this. The swirling gossip and deceptions of court begin to seem like a fairy tale to him, once again pointing out that histories are nothing but stories. Through all this, Cromwell is concerned for the well-being of Mary Boleyn's illegitimate son, which shows his tenderness for children. In his imagination, Anne seems transformed into an evil fairy tale character—perhaps a serpent woman—who might poison or eat her own nephew.*

In January of 1529, Stephen Gardiner travels to Rome to threaten Pope Clement on the king's behalf. The Pope falls seriously ill soon after, and Wolsey is sure that he will be the next pope if Clement dies. This would be an easy solution to the king's problem. However, Clement recovers, and Wolsey immediately thinks of another plan to dissolve the king's marriage. He arranges for witnesses who knew the king's brother, Arthur, to testify at court that Katherine wasn't a virgin when she married Henry. Cromwell thinks it should have never come to this "public and unseemly exposure," but Katherine has refused Cardinal Campeggio's requests to accept that her marriage is invalid.

*Katherine is holding out against all the pressure that the king and the cardinal are exerting on her to accept an annulment, which is evidence of her strength and resilience. However, as a result, the cardinal is forced to resort to convening a public court to discuss her virginity at the time of her marriage to Henry—an unseemly decision that Cromwell doesn't support, which again goes to show his own empathy and sense of dignity.*

The court is packed, and Cromwell and Rafe are on the far edges of the crowd. The king speaks in his "full, echoing voice," and Cromwell thinks it might be better for him if he seemed more humble—"[m]ost humility, in his view, is pretense; but the pretense can be winning." Katherine makes her statement, which is so moving that "a few men have been seen to cry." Rafe declares that he believes Katherine, but Cromwell tells him to "Believe nobody." They run into Gardiner, who tells them that if this court cannot grant Henry what he wants, the cardinal "will be finished."

*Cromwell's thoughts on humility and pretense reveal his ideas that deception and hypocrisy are the path to power—an idea that proves itself as he ascends the Tudor court. Cromwell knows even now that this is all a performance to hold onto position and power rather than any truth-telling, which is why he warns Rafe not to believe any of it.*

After Katherine finishes her statement, she leaves the court, leaving her counsel to represent her. Cromwell thinks that if he were her adviser, he would have suggested she stay in court so that the witnesses who follow would be too uncomfortable to say what they intend to. But without her present, "the trial becomes a bawdy entertainment." One witness recalls how Arthur had told him that he'd been "in Spain" on his wedding night, while others recall him saying "it is a good pastime to have a wife." Rafe says that no 15-year-old groom would ever admit that he didn't do anything on his wedding night. Cromwell understands that Rafe cannot imagine anyone wanting to have sex with the queen since it "would be like copulation with a statue," though, according to the cardinal, she used to be a great beauty.

*Cromwell is perceptive in his analysis that Katherine's counsel could have strengthened her case by having her remain in the room. This points to the fact that he would be a valuable advisor if given the opportunity.*

Cromwell recalls the cardinal telling him that Arthur would be around his age if he'd lived, and this thought fills him with sudden panic. He decides to go home and make his will. He worries that he might have unacknowledged children from the time he was a 15-year-old soldier in France, and he feels a sense of loss at this thought because "the only honest thing to be done" is to "look after your children."

*While other characters in the novel—like the king and Wolsey—are unconcerned about their illegitimate children, Cromwell worries about children that might not even exist. This shows his strong sense of responsibility toward his family.*

In the summer of 1529, the plague returns and Cardinal Wolsey wonders if he will succumb to it this time. Either way, he tells Cromwell, he thinks he "may die." Pope Clement and the Emperor have signed a treaty, and Wolsey's plan to align England with King Francois has failed since Henry is interested only in Anne Boleyn. Wolsey tells Cromwell that he doesn't know what to do next. The Duke of Suffolk "threatened him to his face," and Suffolk is joined by Norfolk, Thomas Boleyn, and Lord Darcy in a campaign against Wolsey, saying that Wolsey has failed with the court and has "reduced the nobility."

*Wolsey is coming to grips with the fact that his life—or at the very least his position in court—is in danger because he cannot comply with Henry's wishes—even though he's tried everything he can think of to do so. Adding to this threat from the frustrated monarch, Thomas Boleyn doesn't seem to have forgotten that Wolsey mocked him and threatened him when Anne Boleyn was involved Harry Percy, and he is out to get his revenge.*

Cromwell wonders if he should once again send his children out of London to protect them from the sweating sickness. Mercy tells him Liz wouldn't have approved of that, especially since Anne Cromwell cries when she is away from her father. Cromwell is astounded to hear that Anne cries. He lets Mercy make the decision to keep the girls in London, but Anne falls sick right after and dies. Grace soon follows.

*Tragically, Cromwell's affectionate relationship with his daughters leads indirectly to their deaths. This turn of events hints at how Cromwell's warm bonds with others can turn on him in an instant.*

In October 1529, the cardinal is charged with "asserting a foreign jurisdiction in the king's realm," or "exercising his role as papal legate," which means that he has become more powerful than the king. The Duke of Suffolk and the Duke of Norfolk take the Great Seal of the Lord Chancellor away from him. As they look among his papers, Norfolk seems to expect to find a wax figure of himself stuck through with pins, since he always believed the cardinal had made "a compact with the devil" in order to achieve his successes. Norfolk tells Cromwell to come see him after he has "mended [his] manners," and Cromwell has no idea why.

*The cardinal's ascent in court has been so striking—since he made his way up from being the son of a butcher to the king's Lord Chancellor—that Norfolk assumes he must have made a deal with the devil, even though he's a religious figure. Wolsey seems to have become so powerful that he made Norfolk and Suffolk and others nervous, which is why they delight in bringing him down to size. The cardinal's fall is a kind of warning to Cromwell that gaining power can also make one vulnerable to attack.*

## PART 2: CHAPTER 3: MAKE OR MAR, ALL HALLOWS 1529

On Halloween night, Cromwell thinks of Liz and wishes she were back, lying next to him in bed. Before her death, he and Liz would keep vigil with their parish for their dead family members, but now he keeps the vigil alone for her. He is with the cardinal at Esher, not at home at Austin Friars, but he thinks that Liz would nevertheless be able to find him. On All Hallows Day, Cromwell's grief "threatens to capsize him" as he thinks of Liz and his dead children. When Cavendish sees him crying, Cromwell says he is crying because his career will be ruined with the cardinal's. He says if he'd remained a lawyer in London, he'd be a rich man by now. Even as he says this, his memories overpower him and he cries again.

*Cromwell has been overwhelmed with his work for the cardinal ever since his daughters died, and when he finally gives in to his grief on All Hallows Day (traditionally a day when people remember their dead family members), he finds it very difficult to pull himself out of his deep sadness. However, Cromwell always keeps his private self distinct from his public self, which is why he doesn't tell Cavendish the real reason for his tears—he doesn't want to be seen as weak and reveal that his family is his vulnerability.*

Cromwell tells Cavendish that he's sent Rafe to Westminster to try and get a seat for him in Parliament, and that he should probably go after him. Cavendish asks him to stay until they sort out the problem of how to pay the cardinal's servants. Cromwell thinks that this is exactly what he needs—an accounting problem. He tells Cavendish he will sort it out and then go to Parliament, from where he will try to defend the cardinal—he says he will "make or mar" and claims that they will certainly kill Wolsey if he has no support. Later, Cavendish walks around telling people in the household that he's seen Cromwell crying and reading a prayer book, and that he only now "realize[s] how bad things are" for Wolsey.

*Cromwell seems to be glad that he is being kept busy with the cardinal's problems, which don't give him the time to consider his own. His loyalty to Wolsey will come to be legendary, but here Mantel shows that Cromwell's hard work is also somewhat self-interested.*

## PART 3: CHAPTER 1: THREE-CARD TRICK, WINTER 1529-SPRING 1530

Rafe succeeds in getting Cromwell a seat in the House of Commons from Taunton, which is "Wolsey terrain." He couldn't have gotten the seat without the approval of the king and the Duke of Norfolk. Cromwell wonders what Norfolk's intentions were in approving him for the seat, and Rafe tells him Norfolk thinks that the "lord cardinal has buried treasure" and that Cromwell knows its location. Rafe tells Cromwell that Norfolk will want Cromwell to work for him.

*Rafe seems to be a capable assistant to Cromwell, and he is also very perceptive and helpful when they discuss problems. He seems to have Cromwell's talent for looking beyond the obvious, which is what will make Rafe an able courtier, just like Cromwell. Meanwhile, Norfolk's ludicrous reason for wanting to ally himself with Cromwell shows just how irrational and chaotic the workings of the court often are.*

Norfolk rattles as he walks since "his **clothes conceal relics**: in tiny jeweled cases he has shavings of skin and snippets of hair, and set into medallions he wears splinters of martyrs' bones." He thinks that "book-reading" is "an affectation" and doesn't think the Bible needs to be read by laypeople. He tells Cromwell that he is happy to have him be a burgess in the Parliament, and that he is to take orders from Norfolk and the king. Cromwell wants to know if their orders will be the same, to which the Duke frustratedly asks why he has to be such a "**person**," since he can't exactly afford to be one. Cromwell smiles, acknowledging to himself that he has become "a presence" and that his days of merging into the shadows of a room are perhaps over.

*Norfolk seems to be a superstitious man (he suspected that Wolsey must have made a pact with the devil and stuck pins into a wax figure representing Norfolk), which is why he carries numerous holy relics around, probably believing that they will grant him protection from evil. However, these relics seem grisly—they are composed of the skin and bones of dead people, which points to Norfolk's rough and violent side. He accuses Cromwell of being a "person," using the word like an insult. Norfolk means that Cromwell is being unnecessarily difficult, but Cromwell takes it as proof that he has come into his own. He is no longer the "butcher's dog" who followed his master Wolsey around, or "an eel" who quaked at Walter's blows. Now, Cromwell has become a force in himself—a person rather than an animal.*

Norfolk tells Cromwell that the king hasn't forgotten that Cromwell argued against his war with France years ago, and that "he is preparing to quarrel" with Cromwell about this. The duke says that though they could never win over France, they must "fight as if [they] can." He says Wolsey and Cromwell wouldn't understand the glory of war since they are not royalty. Cromwell advises him to "negotiate" rather than fight, saying, "It's cheaper."

*One of Cromwell's tricks is that even though he conceals a lot about himself, he always seems to be forthright. Here, he doesn't defend his birth and doesn't even pretend to understand the "royal" argument about the glories of war. His advice is always practical, which ultimately makes him popular because he seems to be speaking his mind and grounding his guidance in reality.*

The king's advisers are preparing 44 charges against the cardinal, which include "buying beef for his household at the same price as the king" and violation of the statutes of praemunire, or "the upholding of a foreign jurisdiction with the king's realm," a law which no one quite understands and which "seems to mean what the king says it means."

*The charges against Wolsey are numerous, and some of them are transparently arbitrary. The courtiers seem set on getting rid of Wolsey, but without Wolsey himself to aid them, they seem to be floundering a little. However, the charge of praemunire shifts in meaning and scope, depending on Henry's whims, which emphasizes that essentially,* all *laws and punishments depend on the king's whims.*

The cardinal's biggest fear is that the king might shut down the colleges he started. He worries about all this at his house in Esher, and he waits anxiously for Cromwell to bring him news from London. One night, Cromwell arrives at Esher when a boy named Mark Smeaton is playing the lute for the cardinal. The cardinal wonders if he should send the boy to Anne Boleyn as a present. After Mark leaves the room, Cromwell discloses his plan to bribe everyone who can help the cardinal's case. The cardinal hopes that the king doesn't mean to charge him with treason.

*The cardinal is helpless to do any work to help his own case, and he is completely dependent on Cromwell, who proves to be a loyal friend and employee. Since the cardinal has no real power, he seems to be resorting to desperate gifts, like sending his lute-player to Anne Boleyn.*

Cromwell has tried several times—unsuccessfully—to see the king and talk to him about Wolsey. He tells Wolsey that the king looks like he does not sleep, and Wolsey laughs as he says that it is probably because it is so cold and he cannot hunt—"It is lack of fresh air [...]. It is not his conscience."

*Wolsey laughs at Cromwell's suggestion that Henry might be feeling guilty, which indicates that Wolsey's earlier defenses of Henry's character were not quite honest. He called Henry "the kindest soul in Christendom" in Henry Norris's earshot, but privately, Wolsey seems to know that the king is only concerned with his own pleasure.*

As Cromwell is leaving, he overhears Mark Smeaton chatting with another servant. Mark is saying he is glad that he will be given to Anne Boleyn since "any day the king may behead" the cardinal. He says that the cardinal deserves it because he is "so proud," and that Cromwell is sure to be executed, too, since he is probably a murderer and certainly looks like one. Mark says that Lady Anne might look on him "with favor" while "she is still refusing the king." He also says that she is "no maid" and that "everybody knows" that "Tom Wyatt has had her." Cromwell thinks this information is worth remembering.

*Mark Smeaton's conversation with the other servant gives Cromwell insight into how normal people feel about the goings on at court. Cromwell values all information, including gossip—he has seen that Wolsey's fall was caused by ignoring it. Meanwhile, Smeaton's assertion that Anne isn't a virgin reinforces the idea that she's just manipulating Henry to gain power for herself.*

At Christmas, the cardinal is very ill and takes to bed, and he sends Cromwell home. While the house at Austin Friars is decorated for the season and "the kitchen is busy, feeding the living," they are not putting on their usual songs and Christmas plays. "No year has brought such devastation," and they are in mourning. Kat and her husband, Morgan Williams, died this year too. Their children, Richard and Walter, come to live in the Cromwell household.

*While Cromwell's public life is flourishing, his private life is steeped in grief with the deaths of more family members. Even so, he takes in his nephews without hesitation, again displaying his commitment to caring for vulnerable young people.*

On New Year's Day, Cromwell is writing letters for the cardinal. In "return for a formal guilty plea to the praemunire charges, the king will allow the cardinal his life," but he will take away most of his income. Gregory comes in, bringing Cromwell some more lights. Gregory begins to neaten up documents on the table, and Cromwell realizes that he is using "a system of holy simplicity: big papers on the bottom, small ones on top." After Cromwell writes the letters, he and Gregory discuss the Christmases of the past when Liz, Anne Cromwell, and Grace were alive. When Gregory kisses him goodnight, "his son leans against him, as if he were a child." Cromwell then returns to work and has "the endorsement out, ready for filing."

*Cromwell seems to have successfully worked out a way for the cardinal to keep his life, even though it will mean pleading guilty to the vague crime of praemunire. As Cromwell deals with these complicated bureaucratic matters, he sees that his son, Gregory, is incapable of handling complexities like these. Still, Cromwell loves him without resentment and appreciates Gregory's simplistic approach to life, even calling it "holy."*

As 1530 begins, Cromwell does not hold an Epiphany feast since he is aware that many guests will refuse his invitation, because the cardinal is in disgrace. He takes the young men in the household to watch a play put on by law students at Gray's Inn, which turns out to be a satire that mocks the cardinal's fall from grace. Cromwell leaves in anger, and he asks the benchers how the law students are being allowed to mock "a great man who has fallen on evil times." However, while walking home with Rafe and Richard, Cromwell calms down and admits that the play was entertaining.

*While Cromwell is angry at first when he sees Wolsey being mocked in a play, he soon comes to see the humor in it. This highlights Cromwell's willingness to look at a thing from different angles and to accommodate viewpoints that are different from his own. The novel often uses plays and elements of theater to highlight the idea that there are many possible interpretations of any event, and that it is difficult—if not impossible—to excavate the total truth. With this play that mocks Wolsey, the novel admits another interpretation of Wolsey's character that contradicts Cromwell's version, which again points out the to reader that all histories are essentially fictions.*

Later, Cromwell works on the cardinal's letters again. Wolsey is appealing to the rulers of Europe to ask for their support. Cromwell wishes that he wouldn't, or that he'd at least phrase his appeal more subtly. He knows Henry would deem it treasonous that Wolsey is "asking them to withdraw their approval of a king who very much likes to be liked."

*Wolsey seems to be growing careless in his desperation. He's becoming a contrast with Cromwell, who never lets his emotions dictate his official actions.*

Cromwell's nephew Richard comes in and he asks if he and his brother Walter Williams can now take on Cromwell's name, since he is like a father to them. Cromwell says he is surprised that they want to since the Cromwell name is in disgrace, but Richard insists that he will "never disown it."

*This incident is proof of Cromwell's generosity and affection to his wards. Richard is very grateful for the care that Cromwell has given him and his brother after their parents' death. The name is "in disgrace" due to Cromwell's associations with Wolsey, but here Richard recognizes that Cromwell himself is still honorable and worthy of respect.*

Later, Cromwell goes to the Duke of Norfolk, "who is always ready to see him," to ask for his help in managing the cardinal's household. Norfolk immediately offers to take on the cardinal's servants as his own, and then he directs "a searching look at Cromwell," who "[k]nows himself coveted" and "[w]ears an expression like an heiress: sly, coy, cold." The Duke of Suffolk, too, is happy to take on some of the cardinal's men.

*Cromwell has slowly made his way into the orbits of Norfolk and Suffolk, and they seem ready to help the cardinal when Cromwell requests it, though they despise the cardinal himself. This is one of Cromwell's first successes at court. Cromwell knows that Norfolk is desperate to hire him to be his man of business, and Cromwell therefore has sway over Norfolk that he can use to get what he wants from him.*

Meanwhile, Thomas More, the Lord Chancellor, "has put his signature first on all the articles against Wolsey." Cromwell hears that an extra allegation has been added at More's request—the cardinal "is accused of whispering in the king's ear and breathing into his face." Since he has "the French pox," More says, he intended to infect the king. Cromwell tries to imagine what it might be like "living inside the Lord Chancellor's head," to imagine an accusation like that and "[put] it out there to where people will believe anything."

*Thomas More seems vindictive—and rather silly—in the charges he brings against Wolsey. Cromwell wonders what it's like to be More, which is exactly what makes him different from More; More never stops to consider perspectives other than his own.*

One cloudy morning, Cromwell finally gets the chance to speak with Henry as he is getting ready to leave on a hunt. Henry says there are 44 charges against the cardinal, and Cromwell says they will be able to defend against each charge if given a hearing. The king asks if Cromwell can defend them right now, and Cromwell says he could, if the king would take a seat. The king says he has heard that Cromwell is "a ready man," and Cromwell, almost without thinking, says he would not come here "unprepared." This amuses the king, who says he will listen to him another day since Suffolk is waiting for him now.

*When Cromwell finally gets his long-awaited appointment with Henry, Cromwell speaks to him without any anxiety. He has a ready answer for each of the king's questions, and it's this unfailing confidence—even when he's less certain under the surface—that will make Cromwell such a valued advisor to the king later on.*

Cromwell tells the king that he thinks the clouds will clear and that it will be "[a] good day to be chasing something." Henry is surprised that Cromwell doesn't think hunting is "barbaric," like Thomas More does. Cromwell says he likes "any sport that's cheaper than battle." Henry says that this brings them to "a sticky point," and reminds Cromwell that six years ago, he said in Parliament that the king "could not afford a war." Cromwell thinks that it was actually seven years ago, in 1523, and notes that they are already talking about this even though his conversation with the king has lasted for only seven minutes.

*While More objects to hunting on ethical grounds, Cromwell has no such worries; he's only concerned about the practical consequences of whatever the king does. Norfolk warned Cromwell that the king hasn't forgotten about his objections to the French war, and sure enough, Henry seems eager to discuss them. This shows Henry's dislike of being opposed, and it shows that he remembers slights for years—all of which make him a dangerous king.*

Cromwell understands that Henry will "chase [him] down" if he tries to back off, but that he "may just falter" if Cromwell pushes forward. So, he says that "[n]o ruler in the history of the world has ever been able to afford a war." Henry says he captured the town of Thérouanne in 1513, and he demands to know how Cromwell could have called it a "doghole." Cromwell says he's been there. The king is angry and says that a country must "support a prince in his enterprise." Cromwell says that he'd said the country didn't "have the gold to see [the king] through a year's campaign." The king is shouting now and asks if Cromwell would prefer a king who "doesn't fight" and "huddle[s] indoors like a sick girl." Cromwell replies that this "would be ideal, for fiscal purposes." Henry starts to laugh.

*Cromwell understands that he disagreed with the king years before, and as a result, he is in a difficult situation now. But he realizes that Henry will not let the matter go if Cromwell seems afraid or apologetic; rather, he might give up if Cromwell insists that he himself was right all along. This strategy will serve Cromwell well in his dealings with the king going forward.*

Henry says that Cromwell advocates prudence, but that princes have other virtues. Cromwell suggests that fortitude is one virtue, and Henry agrees, challenging Cromwell to put a cost on it. Cromwell tells him fortitude doesn't mean "courage in battle," but that it "means fixity of purpose. […] It means having the strength to live with what constrains you." The king wants to know what constrains him, and Cromwell says that France's distance, terrain, people, and weather are all constraints. He says that England only holds Calais and will not be able to support and provision an inland army. The king grows thoughtful at this and then says that the next time they fight France, they will need to take a seacoast. He says that Cromwell's ideas are "[w]ell reasoned."

*Again, Cromwell is unafraid of opposing Henry's ideas; in fact, he suspects that putting up a strong fight will actually make the king like him more. It seems to work: Henry sees that Cromwell's arguments against the war were not made haphazardly, and—like Norfolk—the king seems to be becoming aware of Cromwell's worth.*

Henry says that Cromwell said in his speech in Parliament that "there was one million pounds of gold in the realm," and Henry wants to know how he reached that figure. Cromwell says he trained in the Florentine banks and in Venice. The king is surprised and says that Suffolk said Cromwell was "a common soldier," and Cromwell admits that he was that, too. Henry asks him if he was anything else, and Cromwell asks him what he'd like him to be. Henry says that he has a bad reputation and asks him if he'd like to defend himself. Cromwell says, "Your Majesty is able to form his own opinion," and Henry says he will.

*Cromwell is often looked down upon by many courtiers because he doesn't come from nobility, but here, he portrays his hodgepodge background as a strength. The various jobs he's held and the numerous countries he has lived in have given him a range of ideas and experiences which make him a good planner and careful thinker. Even as a young boy, Cromwell was likeable and made friends easily, and he has spent years honing this quality into an art. As a result, he seems to know the right things to say to please Henry.*

Suffolk accosts Cromwell on his way out and asks him how his "fat priest" is. The king "flushes with displeasure" but Suffolk doesn't notice. Afterward, Cromwell runs into Stephen Gardiner, who is now the king's Master Secretary. Gardiner wants to know if Cromwell's meeting with the king was unpleasant, and Cromwell says it was the opposite. Cromwell feels a "dull bruise inside his chest" as he leaves Gardiner, and he asks Gardiner if they could "drop this." Gardiner refuses to. Cromwell walks on and thinks Gardiner might have to "wait a year or two," but that he will get him.

*Suffolk doesn't even seem to notice the king's annoyance when he mocks Wolsey—but Cromwell does, and he tucks this bit of information away so he can use it later to modulate his own behavior with the king. Cromwell and Gardiner began their careers together under Cardinal Wolsey, and despite their rivalry, Cromwell seems to retain a degree of attachment to him—perhaps because Cromwell, Gardiner, and Wolsey used to be like a family unit. Gardiner, however, doesn't reciprocate this lingering affection, and Cromwell never forgives him for it.*

Two days later, at Esher, Cavendish is amazed as he tells Cromwell that the king has sent them "four cartloads of furnishings." The quality of the items is below the cardinal's high standards, but he admits that they will make life more comfortable. Cavendish says they need to move to be truly comfortable, and he tells Cromwell to ask the "king's council" about it. Cromwell says he will ask the king himself, to which the cardinal "smiles [a] fat paternal beam."

*Cromwell says he's confident that he can once again get an audience with Henry, which again shows how he puts on a show of power as a means to actually gaining that power. Despite his own troubles, Wolsey is proud and happy to see his protégé rising up in the world, which highlights the warm relationship that Cromwell and Wolsey share.*

The cardinal then moves to a "little lodge at Richmond." Cromwell runs into Suffolk, who tells him that they "need no cardinals in this realm." When the cardinal hears about this, he is upset and says that when Suffolk married the king's widowed sister, the king would have beheaded him if the cardinal hadn't spoke on his behalf. Wolsey says he has known "**horses** with more wit" than Suffolk, and he asks Cromwell to go to court and bring him better news. Cromwell meets the cardinal at Richmond every day, and then he rides out to see the king. He "thinks of the king as a terrain into which he must advance, with no seacoast to supply him."

*After Wolsey's fall from grace, his old supporters have abandoned him. However, Cromwell sticks by his side, which shows his admirable loyalty. Cromwell now meets with Henry often, but he has feelings of trepidation about these meetings, not knowing when he might make a mistake and incur the king's wrath. His nervousness shows that he's not really as confident as he seems to be, but that the important thing is really that he* appear *to be confident.*

Since Cromwell meets the king so often, rumors have started circulating that the king will reinstate the cardinal in return for his wealth, and that he no longer likes the company of Norfolk and Suffolk. Norfolk tells Cromwell that the cardinal must go north, away from the king—if not, Norfolk will "tear him with [his] teeth." He repeatedly stabs his forefinger into Cromwell's shoulder, calling him a "person," and a "nobody from Hell." Cromwell's "flesh is firm, dense and impermeable. The ducal finger just bounces off."

*In order to reestablish the hierarchy and underline his own position of power, Norfolk once again calls Cromwell a "person," and this time, he means that Cromwell is* just *a person—he is not nobility. Cromwell, however, is still glad to be seen as a formidable presence, and Mantel hints that Norfolk, with his threat to bite Cromwell like an animal would, is just casting about in desperation.*

In the spring of 1530, a wealthy merchant named Antonio Bonvisi invites Cromwell for dinner. He is surprised to find that Thomas More is at the dinner, too. As they are eating, More proclaims that the cardinal "has a greed that will never be appeased, for ruling over men." Cromwell immediately feels "ready for this fight" and says that the cardinal has a public role just like More does. More answers that the cardinal should have a "little less evident appetite" and that he ignored his "real friends" who advised him to be humble. Cromwell says the cardinal will be glad to know that More thinks he is his friend, and that this thought will console him "as he sits in exile and wonders why [More has] slandered him to the king."

*More dislikes Wolsey's plan to close down monasteries and channel that money into colleges. When he publicly criticizes Wolsey's ambition, Cromwell doesn't hold back. This shows that Cromwell has grown into a powerful person at court who isn't afraid to take on the new Lord Chancellor in public, and who is no longer held back by his roots in poverty. Cromwell once again comes across as being very loyal to Wolsey to defend him so vocally.*

Bonvisi tries to end the argument, but Cromwell refuses to back down. He says that More likes to say that he "would have been a simple monk" if his father had not forced him to study the law, and that he is "indifferent to wealth" and the "world's esteem." So, Cromwell wonders, "how did he become Lord Chancellor?"

*Cromwell points out that More must be ambitious, too, since he now occupies the same position that Wolsey did. He means that it would be impossible to ascend into the role of Lord Chancellor if one were truly "a simple monk." Here, Cromwell makes it clear that ruthlessness truly is the only path to power—even for people like More who pretend to take virtuous routes.*

Just then, the Emperor's ambassador, Eustache Chapuys, walks in, and he provides a distraction from the argument. Cromwell later asks Chapuys if he can explain why his "master's troops plundered the Holy City." Cromwell says that More thinks the Mohammedans and the Jews in the Emperor's army "ran wild," and that before that, the German Lutherans had wreaked havoc. More thinks that "the Emperor must blame himself." Chapuys is shocked that More would speak about his master in such a manner.

*Chapuys adds another element to the aligning of interests at the court. As Emperor Charles's ambassador, Chapuys would have expected More to be his ally since More is a religious man who would likely align himself with the Pope, and Charles and the Pope have been reconciled. Cromwell understands this and aims to turn Chapuys against More, again showing his savvy understanding of subtle social and political dynamics.*

More gets up to leave, but before he does, he declares that Cromwell is indefensible since he is friends with "the most corrupt [priest] in Christendom." Chapuys seems disappointed by More, as if he expected him to be more of an ally. Cromwell notices that "[e]verything Chapuys does [...] is like something an actor does." He looks like "a man who has wandered inadvertently into a play, who has found it to be a comedy, and decided to stay and see it through."

*More's declaration sounds hollow and immature since he hasn't been able to contest any of Cromwell's claims but instead keeps repeating his initial position. Cromwell doesn't even pay much attention to More, focusing instead on Chapuys, whose exaggerated gestures make him seem like an actor. Despite the heated situation, Cromwell comes to see the whole dinner as being humorous since Chapuys looks like he has wandered into "a comedy." His ability to separate himself from his circumstances and view them as a story allows him to see the dynamics that remain hidden to others.*

After the dinner is over and the guests have left, Cromwell asks Bonvisi if he knows why Thomas Wyatt left "the English court in such haste" three years ago and went to Italy. Bonvisi says the story of "Wyatt and Lady Anne [Boleyn]" is an old one, which makes Cromwell wonder how the king hasn't heard it. Bonvisi says that "part of the art of ruling [...] is to know when to shut your ears."

*Thomas Cromwell hasn't forgotten the conversation between the lute-player, Mark, and the other servant, and has been holding on to the information about Anne Boleyn and Thomas Wyatt until he can verify it. Cromwell demonstrates how gaining power requires using* everything*—even overheard gossip from a simple musician becomes a tool he can use in his schemes.*

Bonvisi tells Cromwell that the cardinal "is finished," and that soon Cromwell will be "a man without a master." Cromwell says the king likes him, but Bonvisi warns that "the king is an inconstant lover." He tells Cromwell to be cautious and to never meet with the Boleyns. Cromwell "understands that the whole purpose of the evening has been to [...] warn him off."

*While Bonvisi seems to be concerned for Cromwell's welfare, Cromwell deduces that Bonvisi has been put up to this task by More. More is probably threatened by Cromwell's rise in court and wants to keep him away from the king and the Boleyns. More's sympathies probably lie with Katherine since he would never oppose Catholic doctrine. But rather than being intimidated by More and the message he conveys through Bonvisi, Cromwell seems pleased to note that the whole evening is proof of his new power.*

## PART 3: CHAPTER 2: ENTIRELY BELOVED CROMWELL, SPRING-DECEMBER 1530

Cromwell arrives at York Place. Some children by the river greet him by name, and "[f]or their civility, he gives them each a coin, and they stop to talk." They ask him if he is off to meet "the evil lady" who has "bewitched the king." Inside, he runs into Mark Smeaton and asks him if he doesn't miss the cardinal. Mark sulkily says he doesn't, and that he is happy here. As he walks away, Cromwell thinks that he cannot help disliking the boy for saying that he looks like a murderer. Cromwell has confessed only to Wolsey that he once killed a man while he was a soldier in France, and he is sure that no one else knows this.

*Cromwell is friendly and generous to the children he encounters by the river, and he also seems interested in their opinions of Anne Boleyn—Cromwell is always interested in information, no matter how inconsequential it might seem. His opinion of Mark Smeaton is in stark contrast to his warmth with the children. Cromwell doesn't let go of his grudges, and he hasn't forgotten Mark's declaration that he looks like a murderer. While Cromwell had a rough youth, he has a deep antipathy to violence as an adult and seems unhappy about the murder that he has on his conscience.*

In an interior room, "where the cardinal should be," Cromwell finds Anne Boleyn. He thinks she looks "sallow and sharp." Her fingers are "tugging and ripping at a sprig of rosemary," but as soon as she sees Cromwell, "her **hands** dip back into her trailing sleeves." In December, the king gave a banquet to celebrate Thomas Boleyn's elevation to Earl of Wiltshire. Katherine was not present, and Anne sat in her seat. But the king has gone back to his wife since it is the end of Lent, and Cromwell thinks that Anne is now bored enough to send for Cromwell. She has three little **dogs**—Cromwell thinks of them as "Bellas" in reference to his old dog—that lick his face and look at him with affection, which seems to please her. She says she could never love "those apes that Katherine keeps."

*York Place used to be the cardinal's London residence, and Cromwell resents that it is now Anne Boleyn's. Anne seems nervous as she tugs at the rosemary, and her action of "ripping" it also points to her inherent violence. When she realizes she is being noticed, she immediately stops and hides her hands in her long sleeves, which shows that she, like Cromwell, understands the need to conceal her insecurities and vulnerabilities. When Cromwell first met Mary Boleyn at court, he noticed that she revealed too much—she hitched up her skirts and showed him her green stockings. In contrast, Anne is closed and hidden. In the novel, power is won through deception and subterfuge, which explains Anne's rise to power—she is even taking Queen Katherine's place at banquets and has wrangled a title for her father—while Mary Boleyn never gets to the top.*

Cromwell thinks that Anne is so small that "two Annes make one Katherine." She is surrounded by women sitting on low stools who are pretending to sew, among whom is Mary Boleyn. There is also Mary Shelton, a Boleyn cousin who looks at Cromwell disapprovingly—he thinks she must be thinking that Mary Boleyn has low standards to set her sights on him. He also notices a quiet girl he does not know, "who has her face turned away, trying to hide."

*While most people might not pay much attention to ladies-in-waiting who are pretending to sew, Cromwell notices them all carefully. He gets much of his information from court gossip, and he knows that these women could be valuable sources of information if he can get them to trust him enough to tell him what they know.*

Anne Boleyn tells Cromwell that he has suddenly become popular with the king, who "does not cease to quote" him and also says that Cromwell makes him laugh. Cromwell admits the king does laugh, but he asks Anne if she ever does, since she is in a difficult situation. She admits she seldom does. Cromwell asks if she has seen an improvement in her situation after Wolsey "was reduced," and she says there has been no change. He tells her that Wolsey is an expert in "the workings of Christian countries" and is "intimate with kings." He says Wolsey will be very grateful to Anne if she helps to "restor[e] him to the king's grace."

*Anne Boleyn seems to have heard about Cromwell from the king, but she also wants to make up her own mind about him. Like Cromwell, she behaves as if she already has the power she craves—which is part of how she gets that power.*

Anne Boleyn listens carefully as Cromwell makes his case for the cardinal. Then, she says, "if the king wants it, and the cardinal wants it, […] it is all taking a marvelous long while to come to pass!" Mary Boleyn says under her breath that Anne, too, is "not getting any younger." Anne says that they asked "one simple thing" of the cardinal, and he would not deliver. Cromwell tells her that she knows it wasn't simple. Anne says that perhaps Cromwell thinks she is "a simple person," to which he replies that she might be, since he doesn't know her. His reply irritates her, and she dismisses him.

*Anne Boleyn might be slowly getting more powerful in court, but she doesn't yet have any real power since she isn't married to the king. At this point, Cromwell is in a similar position, since he is well-liked by the king but doesn't have an official position at court. At their first meeting, Anne and Cromwell seem to be taking stock of each other, and Cromwell's attitude toward her lacks the deference he might give the queen.*

After Cromwell leaves the room, Mary Boleyn follows him out. She tells Cromwell that she and Mary Shelton can't wait for him to come again because they thought Anne Boleyn might "run up and slap [him]." Cromwell says that she "can stand it," and Mary admits that Anne "likes a skirmish with someone on her own level." She shows Cromwell Anne's new coat of arms that she is having her ladies embroider onto all her **garments** since she is so pleased to have it.

*Mary Boleyn explicitly points out what Mantel has been hinting at: Anne Boleyn and Thomas Cromwell are on similar trajectories to power, and they use similar strategies to get there. Anne's wish to have all her clothing display her coat of arms is also a symbolic indication that she views herself as royalty, even though she's technically not the queen yet.*

Mary Boleyn tells Cromwell how the king quarreled with Katherine during Christmas and came to Anne Boleyn for comfort, but that Anne scolded him, saying that she'd told him not to pick an argument with Katherine since he always loses. Mary says "with relish" that if Henry wasn't the king, "one could pity him. For the **dog**'s life they lead him."

*Mary Boleyn provides Cromwell with inside information about how the king struggles between his queen and his mistress, both of whom seem to always be unhappy with him. By describing Henry as a dog, Mary implies another of Mantel's central points: in such a corrupt and scheming society, even (or perhaps especially) kings are no different from animals.*

Cromwell asks Mary Boleyn if the rumors that Anne Boleyn is pregnant are true, and she says that Anne "can't [be], because they don't. They haven't." When Anne and the king, "are alone, she lets him unlace her bodice" and "kiss her breasts," but they don't do anything more. Cromwell comments that he's impressed the king can even find Anne's breasts, which Mary laughs uproariously at. Right after, Anne sends "the small hiding girl" to bring Mary back inside. As Mary heads back inside in a huff, "the small pale girl" catches Cromwell's eye and "raises her own eyes to Heaven."

*Mary Boleyn gives Cromwell all the details about the exact nature of the king's sexual relationship with Anne Boleyn, and in the easy way Cromwell has, he knows what to say to make Mary laugh at the sister she dislikes. When the "small pale girl" comes to fetch Mary, she catches Cromwell's eye and raises her own eyes as if to say that the entire Boleyn clan is beyond hope—a gesture that Cromwell finds striking and memorable, perhaps because it is unexpectedly bold in a seemingly meek young girl. This moment will become important later on, as the shy girl turns out to be Jane Seymour, Henry's eventual third wife.*

As Cromwell walks out, he thinks of Anne Boleyn's "speed, intelligence, and rigor." He didn't think she would help the cardinal, but he thought there was nothing lost in asking. He thinks of Anne's "skewering dark glance" and finds it similar to how the king looks when he is focused on something, and he almost understands their attraction for each other. Cromwell thinks that this relationship opens up many possibilities, since a "world where Anne can be queen is a world where Cromwell can be Cromwell."

*Here, Cromwell explicitly recognizes that if Anne were to become queen, it would mean that he, too, could rise in court. The Boleyns occupy a low rung in the ladder of nobility. So, if Anne can become queen, it might mean that Cromwell's own background as a blacksmith's son might not matter. At this moment, Cromwell seems to decide to align himself with Anne's cause.*

In the kitchen at Austin Friars, Cromwell picks up a knife and asks his cook, Thurston, if he looks like a murderer. Thurston hesitates to admit it, so Cromwell asks him to picture him carrying "a folio of papers and an inkhorn" instead. Thurston says he would then look like a lawyer, but that he always looks "like a man who knows how to cut up a carcass."

*After seeing Mark Smeaton at York Place, Cromwell is still bothered by the idea that he looks like a murderer. Despite his loathing of violence, there seems to be an air of determination and danger about Cromwell that makes most people think he does look capable of killing; he has an inherent ruthlessness that never quite goes away, even though he's also kind and compassionate.*

The women in the household have heard that Cromwell has been to see Anne Boleyn and they are very curious about her. They ask him what she looks like and how she was dressed, which Cromwell answers the best he can. When Mercy asks him if she has good teeth, Cromwell says he'll let her know after "she sinks them into [him]."

*Cromwell is acutely aware that if he doesn't carefully handle the problem that is Anne Boleyn, it could be dangerous for him. The mention of her teeth makes her sound like an animal, which again emphasizes the brutal and uncivilized nature of the Tudor court.*

Norfolk threatens that he will go to Richmond "to tear [the cardinal] with his **teeth**," and when Wolsey hears this, he decides it's time for him to leave and go north. However, he needs funds for the move, and the king's council argue about whether they should give him the money. Cromwell hopes to meet with the king to discuss this, but instead he gets his Master Secretary, Stephen Gardiner. Gardiner has a menacing attitude as he tells Cromwell that he will "put [him] straight on a few matters." Cromwell notices Gardiner's "great hairy **hands**, and knuckles which crack when he folds his right fist into his left palm."

*Norfolk feels threatened because Wolsey is still geographically close to the king and he worries that the king and Wolsey might reconcile, especially since Cromwell is spending more time in the king's company. Norfolk threatens to "tear [Wolsey] with his teeth" if he doesn't move away, a phrase that makes him sound like an animal rather than a human being and again shows the violent, uncivilized nature of court politics. Similarly, when Cromwell meets Gardiner to appeal for money on the cardinal's behalf, he notices that Gardiner's threatening, hairy hands are reminiscent of an animal.*

Cromwell "takes away the menace conveyed, and the message" as he mildly tells Gardiner that his cousin Richard Williams "sends greetings." Gardiner's "eyebrows bristle, like a **dog**'s hackles," and he says that he doesn't believe the "old tale" and that he "will do nothing" for this "young person." He tells Cromwell that his family has no grasp of "propriety." Cromwell tells him nothing is expected as the boy has already changed his name to Richard Cromwell. Cromwell smiles as he talks to Gardiner, but "[i]nside, he is beside himself with rage, […] as if his blood were thin and full of dilute venom like the uncolored blood of a **snake**." When he gets home, he tells Rafe that he wants to "become perfectly calm."

*While Gardiner seems set to give Cromwell a piece of his mind and deny his claim for money, Cromwell completely baffles him by suddenly speaking about his nephew Richard, who is Gardiner's distant relative. Gardiner is irritated by this, and he refuses to help the boy in any way—but Cromwell has successfully diverted him from what he originally intended to say. Gardiner is compared to an angry dog that is ready for a fight—his hackles are visibly raised, and his emotions are transparent. Cromwell, on the other hand, is "beside himself with rage" when Gardiner insults his family, but he smiles on the outside. Cromwell is so angry that he feels like his blood has turned to snake venom, and yet, he doesn't show it. Cromwell's rage is stealthier and more dangerous, but both men are essentially animals. Still, Cromwell's ability to hide his true emotions helps him when he is a courtier, while Gardiner often ends up offending the king by expressing his anger and annoyance.*

Later, Cromwell returns to Norfolk and tells him that if he wants the cardinal gone, he must go with Cromwell to the king to ask for the funds. Norfolk agrees, and as they walk in the garden, Norfolk talks of the Duke of Buckingham, who was an avid gardener. Cromwell recalls that he was executed for treason less than 10 years ago. As they head to the interview with the king, Cromwell notices that Norfolk's **hand** is trembling. He understands that "it rattles the old duke to be in a room with Henry Tudor."

*Henry seems like a genial king when Cromwell is making him laugh, but he can be very dangerous when crossed. Norfolk seems to have this in mind when he thinks of the Duke of Buckingham, who was executed for treason. Cromwell realizes that despite his boastful and arrogant behavior, Norfolk is nervous around Henry and unable to hide it, as his shaking hands make clear. Cromwell, in contrast, is able to disguise his true feelings.*

Henry is in a cheerful mood and "will talk about anything except the cardinal." After Cromwell and Norfolk are dismissed, the king calls Cromwell back into the room to talk to him alone, which annoys Norfolk. Henry offers the cardinal 1,000 pounds, and Cromwell wants to say that it will be a good start to the 10,000 pounds that the king owes that cardinal. Instead, he falls to his knees in gratitude, knowing that this is what the king expects.

*Cromwell is actually disappointed at the meager sum the king offers the cardinal, but he is effusive in his gratitude because he knows it is important to please Henry. Unlike the many characters who insist on voicing their true feelings, Cromwell expresses only what he thinks will help him get what he wants.*

The king comments that the "Duke of Norfolk shows [Cromwell] many marks of friendship and favor." Cromwell knows that the king is surprised that the duke had his hand on Cromwell's shoulder, and he tells the king that "the duke is careful to preserve all distinctions of rank." Henry seems relieved at this. Cromwell wonders to himself: if Henry were to get sick and fall, would Cromwell "be allowed to pick [him] up," or would he have to "send for an earl to do it"?

*Even though Henry likes Cromwell, he seems insistent on upholding the "distinctions of rank." Henry was uncomfortable because Norfolk, a nobleman, was touching Cromwell, a commoner, in a friendly manner. Cromwell outwardly reassures Henry that he knows his place, but to himself, he thinks that Henry might soon find himself needing to rely on someone of a low rank.*

The king then admits in a whisper that he misses Wolsey. He tells Cromwell to take the money and not tell anyone about it. Cromwell leaves, "face composed, fighting the impulse to smile broadly." When Norfolk asks him what the king said, Cromwell tells him he had "some special hard words [...] to convey to the cardinal."

*Cromwell is very pleased to hear that Henry misses Wolsey, which he takes as a sign that Wolsey's troubles might soon come to an end. However, he makes sure that his face is composed as he leaves the king because he doesn't want Norfolk or Wolsey's other enemies to know about this.*

Soon, the cardinal's itinerary is drawn up, and his possessions are put on coastal barges, which he will take to Hull and then travel over land with his 160 servants. Cromwell tells his nephew Richard that "a thousand pounds isn't much when you have a cardinal to move," but he refuses to disclose how much of his own money he is putting into the enterprise—he says he owes the cardinal so much that the money he is spending on him is irrelevant.

*Out of affection and loyalty to the cardinal, who has long been Cromwell's employer and friend and gave him his start in court, Cromwell spends a large sum of his own money to move him and his attendants to York. This shows that Cromwell values his relationships more highly than his money—an attitude that will serve him well as he ascends through the court.*

On the night before his departure, the cardinal gives Cromwell a small package that seems to contain a ring, and he asks him to open it after he leaves. The cardinal asks him if he will come north, and Cromwell says he will come "to fetch [him], the minute the king summons [him] back." He kneels for a blessing and notices that the cardinal's turquoise ring is missing from his hand. Cromwell feels it is time for him to leave since "[s]o much has been said between them that it is useless to add a marginal note."

*Cromwell promises to come to York to fetch the cardinal as soon as Henry sends for him, but both Wolsey and Cromwell seem to understand that this will never happen, and that this might be the last time they are seeing each other. The emotional weight of this scene highlights how crucial Cromwell's kindness and interpersonal connections are to his character.*

The cardinal turns his chair towards the fire and covers his face with a hand as Cromwell leaves. On his way to the courtyard, Cromwell stops and leans against the wall in a dark recess and finds himself crying. He hopes that Cavendish will not come by and see him, and then "write it down and make it into a play." When Cromwell gets home, he dreams of Liz and wonders if she will recognize "the man he vows he soon will be: adamant, mild, keeper of the king's peace."

*As Cromwell leaves, the cardinal turns away and covers his face with his hands to hide his tears. Cromwell, too, is overcome by grief and dreads being spotted by Cavendish. The last time Cavendish caught Cromwell crying, Cromwell was mourning his dead family but lied that he was crying about the cardinal's troubles, and Cavendish broadcasted this news to everyone he saw. Cromwell doesn't want to be forced to make up another story this time around, but ironically, making "a play" out of his feelings is exactly what Mantel is doing throughout the novel. This scene suggests that even knowing that the world is made of stories, as Cromwell knows here, cannot help an individual avoid being caught up in them.*

When Cromwell wakes up on the morning of April 6, he wonders why he isn't with the cardinal and worries about the travel arrangements. Rafe says he will go to ensure that everything is perfect. Richard tells Cromwell that "it is time to let the cardinal go." During Holy Week, they get reports that a large number of people have gathered in Peterborough to "look at Wolsey" as he makes his way slowly to his first stop at Southwell, which he reaches on April 28.

*At this point, Cromwell is forced to transition out of his role as Wolsey's surrogate son and more closely embrace the young people of his household, whom he has always supported. Rafe and Richard's support here indicates that Cromwell's kindness to vulnerable people has had positive consequences over time.*

At court, the ambassador Chapuys tells Cromwell that he hears from Cromwell's "old master" every week, and that Wolsey has become "solicitous about [Katherine's] health." Wolsey asks Katherine to stay hopeful that she will soon "be restored to the king's bosom" and "bed." Chapuys says they know that "he turns back to the queen" since the "concubine will not help him." The queen, however, has vowed to never forgive the cardinal. Chapuys says there will be a "tangle of wreckage" if a divorce is "somehow extorted" from the Pope—the "Emperor, in defense of his aunt, may make war on England." Cromwell knows he is meant to convey this message to the cardinal to let him know "that he has come to the end of his credit with the Emperor." He sends Rafe to Wolsey with messages "too secret to put into letters."

*Wolsey seems to have made enemies of both Anne Boleyn and Katherine—Katherine will not forget that Wolsey tried to get an annulment, while Anne is displeased that he failed. Complicating matters further, Katherine's nephew and Chapuys's boss, Emperor Charles, has promised war if his aunt is divorced, even if the Pope approves the divorce. Interestingly, Wolsey genuinely did do his best to please the king, but he failed; sincere effort was not enough to save him. From Wolsey's downfall, Cromwell learns the lesson that deception and manipulation are better routes to power.*


One evening, Henry is melancholy that he cannot be married to Anne, and he indicates to Cromwell that he would like to own the land that produces income for the cardinal's college at Oxford and the school at Ipswich. The "wealth of twenty-nine monasteries has gone into those foundations," and by the Pope's orders, this money can only be used for the colleges. But Henry says he "is beginning to care very little about the Pope and his permissions."

*Henry is growing increasingly frustrated at the Catholic Church curbing his freedoms, and he seems to be in the mood to oppose it in whatever way he can. While he initially was seeking the Pope's permission to end his marriage, his goals have grown even loftier after being thwarted. This evolution proves Cromwell's instinct that Henry will stop at nothing to get what he wants.*

Henry wants to know if Cromwell comes from some landed people and says he will send "the heralds to look into it." Cromwell says they will not have any success, and Henry is upset that he "is failing to take advantage of what is on offer: a pedigree, however meager." Henry says the cardinal told him that Cromwell was an orphan who was brought up in a monastery, which is why he "had a loathing of those in the religious life." Cromwell says that this was "one of his little stories." Henry is surprised that the cardinal told him stories, and his face is a mixture of "annoyance, amusement, [and] a wish to call back times past."

*Since social hierarchies are very important to Henry, he tries to give Cromwell a pedigree, but Cromwell refuses the offer. He is transparent about his past, but Wolsey seems to have made Cromwell's past seem even more colorful than it is. Henry's sincere surprise that the cardinal could have told him "stories" reveals one of his weaknesses: while Cromwell understands that* everything *is a story that looks different from different perspectives, Henry is used to thinking (incorrectly) that his own perspective is absolute truth.*

Cromwell realizes that, with the cardinal gone, Henry has no one to really converse with—a conversation that has "nothing to do with love, or hunting, or war." He tells the king that in his experience, monks are very corrupt and lead lives of hypocrisy and idleness. He says monasteries are not houses of learning or invention, and that monks are writing the history of their country to make it "favorable to Rome." The king tells him that he, too, is interested in an accurate history of their country, and he asks Cromwell to consult with the "learned gentlemen" who are working on it, led by Dr. Cranmer.

*In his criticism of the monks, Cromwell accuses them of manipulating the history of England in a way that suits the Catholic Church. Henry wants an "accurate history" of their country, and he has some scholars working on it—but of course, since these scholars are hired by Henry, they will rewrite the history of England in a way that the king. Again, Mantel highlights how all so-called histories are shaped by the perspectives of the people who write them.*

Henry says that he would like to save the money he sends to Rome. He says that he is not as rich as King Francois, who has more subjects and "taxes them as he pleases," while Henry must answer to Parliament. Cromwell says that Francois "likes war too much, and trade too little," and that there is "more tax to be raised when trade is good." Henry agrees and asks Cromwell to sit with his lawyers and "[b]egin with the colleges." As Henry Norris escorts Cromwell out, he warns him against being Henry's tax collector since he had his father's best tax men killed.

*Henry Norris warns Cromwell that dealing with the kingdom's money can be a dangerous job, once again showing that the king's self-indulgent anger can be hazardous for those who work for him.*

That summer, Cromwell's son Gregory turns 15, and he is excellent at horse-riding and swordsmanship, though his Greek isn't very good. He has two black greyhounds at Cambridge but wants to get rid of them because people say only criminals who hunt illegally at night have black **dogs**. Cromwell says he will take the dogs, and when Gregory worries that people might laugh at him, too, Johane says that no one will "dare laugh" at Cromwell.

*Cromwell accepts Gregory lovingly despite his flaws, and as further proof of his kind heart, he even agrees to adopt the dogs his son wants to discard. Still, the rumor about the dogs is significant; it hints that for all Cromwell's kindness, some part of him really is an illicit criminal.*

Gregory likes reading about the lives of saints in *The Golden Legend*. He has the newest edition of *Le Morte d'Arthur*, and the family crowds around it to admire it. Gregory says that King Henry himself is descended from King Arthur, the book's main character. He says that, "[s]ome of these things are true and some of them lies," but "they are all good stories."

*Gregory's pronouncement on Le Morte d'Arthur seems to be Mantel's opinion of the historical novel she has written. While much of it might not be true, she hopes it will be a good story nonetheless. What's more, this reference to a real work of historical fiction makes it clear that telling stories about history is always something humans have done; even in Henry VIII's time, there were already popular works of fiction about the king's ancestors.*

The next time the king calls Cromwell to court, he wants him to ask the cardinal about a Breton merchant whose ship was seized eight years ago and who is now demanding compensation for it. The king says Wolsey handled it back then. Cromwell offers to take care of the matter, and Charles Brandon, the Duke of Suffolk, tells the king that Cromwell can surely handle it.

*Cromwell was thinking about making his way into court by dealing with the king's finances, and he is happy when an opportunity to do so presents itself. Outwardly, his actions simply seem helpful, but it's already clear to the reader that Cromwell wants to use his relationship with the king for his own gain.*

Earlier, Cromwell had been to Suffolk's kennels to admire his **hounds**, and he had given him a useful tip on how to cure his favorite dog, who was going blind. Following this, Suffolk had told Cromwell that he was "a useful sort of man." Then, he told Cromwell that he had no problem with Henry getting what he wanted, but that Suffolk's wife was Katherine's friend. Also, his wife couldn't bear the idea of "Norfolk's niece" having precedence over her, since she herself used to be Queen of France. Suffolk wondered if he should tell Henry that Thomas Wyatt would soon be back, and Cromwell advised him to "leave it alone."

*Cromwell has succeeded in winning Suffolk over, too, by giving him advice about his dogs. It's notable that Cromwell doesn't have to do anything extraordinary to gain the favor of an enemy; he just sees what Suffolk needs and draws on his wide range of practical skills to provide it. Again, Cromwell's diverse experiences and unusual background prove to be assets at the court. As Suffolk speaks to him openly about the issue of Henry marrying Anne Boleyn, Cromwell discovers that there are tensions between Suffolk and Norfolk, as well, and that Suffolk would prefer it if Henry and Anne's relationship were over.*


That summer, Henry hunts often, and he is sometimes accompanied by Katherine. Anne sometimes accompanies Henry when Katherine doesn't. Henry Norris tells Cromwell that it will soon be his turn to accompany Henry on hunts "if he continues to favor [Cromwell] as he does." Cromwell thinks that Norris was with the cardinal at Putney "when he fell on his knees in the dirt." He thinks that Norris is the one who must have told "the court, [...] the world, [and] the students of Gray's Inn" about this.

*Cromwell has a tendency to not let old grudges slide, and he hasn't forgotten the play by the law students at Gray's Inn that mocked the cardinal and showed him comically falling off his horse. He deduces that Henry Norris was the only one who was there when the cardinal fell off his horse at Putney, so he must have been the one who told other people about it. This confirms his initial opinion that Norris is a "subtle crook."*

At Austin Friars, there are so many people that it is impossible to be alone. A young man named Thomas Wriothesley is the newest addition to the household. Richard and Rafe laugh at him for his complicated last name and call him "Call-Me-Risley," because Wriothesley keeps explaining the pronunciation of his name. They also say Wriothesley is Gardiner's spy since he works with Gardiner, too. Cromwell would like to ask these young men if they think he looks like a murderer, since he knows a boy who says he does.

*Cromwell's willingness to employ Wriothesley demonstrates his ongoing esteem for Gardiner, even though they so often butt heads. On the other hand, Cromwell is increasingly bothered by Mark Smeaton's claim that he looks like a murderer. Since Cromwell is seeking to embark on a career as a courtier, he is aware that appearances matter a lot, and he's concerned that something about his essential nature will show through.*

That summer, there is no plague, and to celebrate this, Londoners hang garlands of white lilies outside their doors on St. John's Eve. The flowers remind Cromwell of the quiet girl who was with Anne Boleyn. He wants to write to Gregory and say, "I have seen such a sweet girl, […] and, if I steer our family adroitly in the next few years, perhaps you can marry her." However, he knows that she must be from some noble family while he is in a "precarious situation," and so he's in no position to be making promises.

*The quiet girl Cromwell remembers will later turn out to be Jane Seymour, who will eventually become Henry's third wife. Though Cromwell thinks here that there's a wide gap between her noble background and his own family, it will actually be Cromwell who helps arrange her marriage to Henry.*

Thomas More invites Cromwell to his house so they can discuss Wolsey's colleges and so he can show Cromwell his new carpet. Cromwell finds Stephen Gardiner there when he arrives at the house in Chelsea. Gardiner is trying to bait More in an argument about his son-in-law Will Roper, who has apparently changed his religion from Lutheranism to Catholicism. The men are followed by More's fool, Henry Pattinson, who Cromwell suspects isn't as simple as he seems because More "enjoys embarrassing people" and uses Pattinson to do so.

*Like Cromwell, Pattinson uses an outward performance to conceal his real motivations. Pattinson appears foolish while scheming to embarrass people, and Cromwell appears calm and friendly while always calculating to achieve his goals.*

Cromwell inspects the new Turkish carpet that More shows them and isn't impressed by its quality or weave. However, he tells More that it is beautiful, "not wanting to spoil his pleasure," and he thinks that the "flaw in the weave hardly matters" since a "carpet is not an oath." Cromwell thinks that "some people in this world […] like everything squared up" while others "will allow some drift at the margins." Cromwell "is both these kinds of person." He tells More to use the carpet to walk on—rather than hanging it up—and More laughs at his expensive tastes, as though "they were friends." Later, More tells Cromwell that Gardiner has spoken on behalf of the cardinal's colleges to the king, and that the king "may refound Cardinal College in his name," but that there is no hope for Ipswich.

*Cromwell is kind when he praises More's carpet, since he knows that More values his opinion because of Cromwell's background as a cloth trader in Antwerp. Even though Cromwell dislikes More, he still makes himself behave in a way that will please More, since he knows that doing so will make More more likely to be his ally. Cromwell also recognizes here that he isn't a rigid person, and that he doesn't mind letting some imperfections slide, depending on the context. Again, this contrasts him with people—like More, for one—who stick to their principles at all costs.*

When they go in for supper, they speak in Latin even though More's wife, Alice, does not understand it. More has his favorite daughter, Meg, read the scripture in Greek. When the food is brought in, More speaks in Latin, telling everyone to eat, "except Alice, who will burst out of her corset." He explains to his guests that her "expression of painful surprise" is caused by "scraping back her hair and driving in great ivory pins, to the peril of her skull." Cromwell feels awkward at his uncivility, and he thinks that he prefers the Thomas More in the family portrait that hangs on the wall because "you can see that he's thinking, but not what he's thinking, and that's the way it should be."

*More's harsh treatment of his wife is in stark contrast to Cromwell's warm, respectful relationship with Liz, and it shows More's lack of kindness and character. Cromwell is uncomfortable at his coarse rudeness and thinks that he prefers not to know Thomas More's thoughts since they are so mean-spirited. His comment is also a more general statement about the desirability of keeping one's thoughts hidden, the way Cromwell so often does.*

Then, Thomas More and his elderly father John More tell stories of "foolish women," while Alice scowls and Gardiner, "who has heard all these stories before, is grinding his teeth." More points to his daughter-in-law, Anne Cresacre, and says the girl wanted a pearl necklace, so he'd tricked her by giving her "a box that rattled," which he'd filled with dried peas.

*The entire dinner is a horribly uncomfortable affair, with Thomas More and his father mocking women in general and especially the women in their household. Again, More's cruelty contrasts with Cromwell's own kindness to the women in his household.*

After dinner, Thomas More talks about wicked King Richard III, about whom he has started writing books in both Latin and English. While some say that Norfolk's grandfather was involved in the deaths of two royal children in the Tower, More thinks Constable Brakenbury had given the keys to the killers. Cromwell realizes that he is trying to defend Norfolk's ancestor with this version of the story because Norfolk is his ally.

*Mantel once again points out that histories and stories are always told with agendas. Thomas More, who is considered to be a learned scholar, is nonetheless rewriting an event in England's past in order to defend his friend, Norfolk.*

When Gardiner gets a chance to talk to Cromwell alone, he asks him if he knows which one of them Wriothesley is working for. Cromwell says he thought he was working for Gardiner since he is Clerk of the Signet and is supposed to assist the Master Secretary. Gardiner wants to know why Wriothesley is always at Cromwell's house, and Cromwell says he's "not a bound apprentice," and he is free to come and go. Gardiner says the boy "has his eye on advantage," to which Cromwell answers that he hopes everyone has that.

*Like Rafe and Richard, Gardiner, too, seems wary of Wriothesley since he is working for both Cromwell and Gardiner. He warns Cromwell that Wriothesley wants to take advantage of them to further his own career. Gardiner suggests that this a bad thing, but Cromwell practically says that this is what everyone wants—or what they should want, anyway. While most people are wary of Wriothesley's bare ambition, Cromwell accepts it as a practical position much like his own.*

When Cromwell takes his leave of Alice More, she asks him why he isn't marrying again, since he is rich and she hears that he has "got everything in good working order," which makes Gardiner laugh. Cromwell and Gardiner then head to Gardiner's barge, and Cromwell says that More "daren't make himself plain." Gardiner replies that though he doesn't, everyone knows his opinions, "which are fixed and impervious to argument." He says More promised not to meddle with the divorce when he took office, but Gardiner wonders how long the king will accept that. Cromwell clarifies that he wasn't talking about More being honest with the king, but rather with Alice. Gardiner laughs and agrees, saying that she would "have him plucked and roasted" if she understood what he said.

*Gardiner agrees with Cromwell that More is a man of fixed opinions who won't change his mind. Even though he is Henry's Lord Chancellor, More clearly disapproves of the divorce since it is against the Church. Though More presents his single-mindedness as a virtue, his inability to change or even hide his opinions will get him in trouble with Henry later on.*

Cromwell then talks about Anne Cresacre, who was an orphan heiress whose neighbors had kidnapped and raped her in Yorkshire. The cardinal was furious when he'd heard of this, and he had her placed under More's care where he thought she'd be safe. Gardiner says she is safe, but Cromwell thinks she isn't safe "from humiliation." He tells Gardiner that after More's son married her, he lives off her money, and that it seems reasonable for her to have a string of pearls if she would like to. Gardiner says that More's son "shows no talent for affairs," and that he hears that Cromwell, too, has a son like that. Cromwell thinks that this is true, but that he and More can't be blamed for turning their sons into "idle young gentlemen" and for "wanting for them the ease [they] didn't have."

*Cromwell pities Anne Cresacre, More's daughter-in-law, whose money More's son lives off of. Cromwell makes it clear that he thinks that emotional abuse is a type of danger, too, which shows that he is generally more compassionate than his peers.*

Gardiner tells Cromwell he may still have other sons, since Alice is determined to find him a wife. Cromwell feels afraid, thinking that it is "like Mark, the lute player: people imagining what they cannot know," since he is sure that he and Johane have been very secretive. He asks Gardiner if he thinks of marrying, to which Gardiner coldly responds that he is "in holy orders." Cromwell presses him, insisting that he must have women, but Gardiner calls this a "Putney inquiry" and stops talking to him.

*Gardiner is amused that Alice seemed determined that Cromwell should marry and had even mentioned that she'd heard that Cromwell had everything "in good working order." Cromwell, however, is afraid that she might have somehow heard about the affair that he and Johane are apparently having. If people find out about this, it would ruin his happy household and possibly his career, because it would be considered incest. In order to divert Gardiner's attention from this subject, Cromwell irritates Gardiner by asking about the women in his life, though Gardiner is a priest sworn to celibacy. Gardiner finds this line of questioning undignified and calls it a "Putney inquiry," implying that Cromwell's low origins are the reason he speaks so coarsely.*

When Cromwell disembarks in Westminster, he tells Gardiner that the trip wasn't too bad since "neither of them has thrown the other in the river." Gardiner says he was only waiting for the water to be colder and to tie weights to Cromwell. He asks Cromwell what he is going to do in Westminster, and he is surprised when Cromwell says he has an appointment with Anne Boleyn.

*Cromwell now seems to be on familiar terms with Anne Boleyn, despite the fact that their first meeting didn't go too well. Even the reader doesn't see exactly how Cromwell achieved this, which subtly emphasizes how subtle and nuanced his rise in power is.*

Cromwell finds Anne Boleyn in a silk nightgown and slippers, and he thinks that "Anne lets him treat her fairly normally, except when she has a sudden, savage seizure of I-who-will-be-Queen, and slaps him down." She asks him if they spoke of her at dinner, and he tells her they do not mention her in More's house. Cromwell says he knows that Norfolk and her father are busy meeting ambassadors from France, Venice, and the Emperor—he suspects that they are plotting against the cardinal. Anne says she didn't think he could afford such information, and Cromwell says that "[s]ometimes people just tell [him] things." Anne says her father told her not to trust Cromwell because "one can never tell who he's working for," but to her "it is perfectly obvious" that he is working for himself. Cromwell thinks they are alike in this way.

*Anne Boleyn and Cromwell have settled into a relationship in which they each recognize and respect the other's ambition. Cromwell believes that if Anne Boleyn is crowned queen, it will disrupt the rigid hierarchy at court, which would mean that he, too, could land a position of power. He also recognizes that he and Anne are similar in the sense that they put their self-interest first. However, Cromwell has an advantage over her because he is likeable—as a result, he has a network of people, like Mary Boleyn, who "just tell him things."*

In August, the cardinal sends the king a letter in which he complains about his debts and his creditors hounding him, but rumors reach the court that he is leading a lavish, extravagant life. Wriothesley goes up to Southwell to get a petition signed by the cardinal, and he reports that the cardinal looks well and is popular with the people. The petition, one of Norfolk's ideas, has the bishops and peers put their signatures on a letter asking the Pope to "let the king have his freedom," and it "contains certain murky, unspecified threats."

*The cardinal seems to be behaving in an irrationally gaudy manner, which is the opposite of Cromwell's disciplined, discreet course of action. Meanwhile, Norfolk has taken to threatening the Pope after diplomatic channels have failed, which emphasizes just how chaotic and haphazard even high-stakes international affairs are.*

Cromwell is worried by the news of the cardinal's popularity, thinking that the king can "be offended again" and bring back the charges against him. He notices Norfolk and Gardiner whispering together. Wriothesley diligently helps Cromwell and is a better assistant than even Rafe. Johane's daughter sews an "awkward backstitch" that would be hard to imitate, and Cromwell has her sew up his letters to the north so no one would be able to read them and sew them back up in the same way.

*Cromwell immediately realizes that Wolsey is putting himself in danger once again by parading his popularity, and he sends him letters to warn against this. Wolsey seems to be at a bit of a loss without Cromwell, his "man of business," at his side to advise him. Cromwell, on the other hand, seems more than capable of managing his career without Wolsey, highlighting how successful he's been in rising above his past stations.*

In September 1530, the cardinal leaves Southwell and heads to York. People in the countryside flock to him, begging him to lay his "magical hands" on their children, and "he prays for them all." Gardiner tells Cromwell that the "council has the cardinal under observation," while Norfolk says he will "chew him up, bones, flesh, and gristle." On October 2, the cardinal reaches his palace at Cawood, and his enthronement at York is planned for November 7. The court hears that the cardinal has planned a "convocation of the northern church" on the day after his enthronement. He hasn't informed the king or Warham, the Archbishop of Canterbury, so it is viewed as a sign of revolt.

*Wolsey is using his popularity with the people in order to assert his power—he seems to have disregarded Cromwell's letters warning him that the courtiers are viewing his actions with displeasure. Wolsey seems to be challenging the king, in a way, since he must know that Henry will not take kindly to Wolsey throwing his weight around. Norfolk, who is prone to fits of anger, threatens to "chew him up," like an animal might do, which demonstrates that hardly anyone in this situation is behaving in a mature, humane way.*

Norfolk is furious when he meets Cromwell. He says that a "[c]ardinal's hat [is] not enough for [Wolsey], [and that] only a crown will do" for him. Cromwell thinks that Wolsey "would have made such an excellent king; so benign, so sure and suave in his dealings, so equitable, so swift and discerning." To his surprise, the duke says he understands that Cromwell has been left without a master, and that he, the king, and even Chapuys admire Cromwell's loyalty to a "disgraced and fallen" man.

*Norfolk is disgusted by Wolsey's ambition, but Cromwell cannot help thinking that Wolsey might have made a perfect king. Unlike Henry, who is moody, willful, and self-indulgent, Wolsey is fair-minded and "benign." While Cromwell worked for Wolsey, he was never afraid for his safety, even when he disagreed with the cardinal. In contrast, after spending time with Henry, Cromwell knows that having the wrong opinions or attitude can be dangerous for people in court.*

Norfolk says it's a pity that Cromwell works for Wolsey and not for Norfolk. Cromwell says that they do both want the same thing—for Anne Boleyn to be queen—and that they should work together. Norfolk doesn't like his usage of the word "together," and he asks him not to forget his place, which Cromwell says he is always mindful of. Norfolk says that Anne is "out for bloody murder" and "wants the cardinal's guts in a dish to feed her **spaniels**, and his limbs nailed over the city gates of York."

*Norfolk reminds Cromwell that they are not on the same social level—while Cromwell can work for Norfolk, they could not work "together" since that would imply that they are equals. Since Anne Boleyn seems to want Wolsey out of the way, the danger he is in seems to be even greater since Anne has the ear of the king, and the mention of her dogs reinforces the idea that she's behaving as much like an animal as anyone else.*

Cromwell goes to meet Anne Boleyn early one morning and finds that Cranmer is with her, just returned from Rome "with no good news." Cromwell knows Cranmer from when he used to work for the cardinal, and they "embrace cautiously" since Cranmer is a Cambridge scholar while Cromwell is a "person from Putney." Cromwell asks him why he didn't come to Cardinal College when he was invited, and Anne sneeringly says it was probably because he was seeking something more permanent. Cromwell tells her the king might soon take over the college at Oxford, and that it could perhaps be named after her. Anne has a habit of "tuck[ing] her **hands** back in her sleeves," so some people say "she has something to hide, a deformity; but [Cromwell] thinks she is a woman who doesn't like to show her hand."

*Cromwell is constantly reminded that he is a nobody from Putney, but he seems to rebel against this idea when he is in the company of uncouth courtiers like Norfolk, who probably seem no better to Cromwell than the pugnacious crowd he used to hang out with in Putney. However, in the presence of a learned scholar like Cranmer, Cromwell is very aware of the gulf between them. Cromwell once again notices Anne's habit of hiding her hands in her sleeves, which is a symbol of the way in which she hides her schemes from the world—just like Cromwell does.*

Anne Boleyn tells them that she hears that "Rome will issue a decree telling the king to separate" from her, and Cranmer says that doing so "would be a clear mistake on Rome's part." Anne agrees. She says she is reading Tyndale's *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, in which he argues that a "subject must obey his king as he would his God." She says she has shared passages from the book with the king. Cranmer looks at her as if she were a child "who dazzles [him] by sudden aptitude."

*Unlike More, Cranmer is a scholar who doesn't defer blindly to the teachings of the Catholic Church. In fact, he seems to lean the opposite way, which is why Anne Boleyn finds him useful in her struggle with the Church, which refuses to grant Henry the annulment he seeks. Cromwell was always interested in Tyndale's work, despite his books being banned as heresy, but it seems like they are slowly getting more popular, with even Anne Boleyn and the king reading them. This scene foreshadows the way that More's perspective will soon fall out of favor, as Henry gains the power over the church that he desires.*

Anne Boleyn shows them a drawing which was found in her bed by the "sickly milk-faced creeper" who "cries if you look at her sideways." The drawing shows three figures—the king with a crown on his head, Katherine on one side, and a headless Anne on the other. Cranmer offers to destroy it, but Anne says she can destroy it herself. She says that there "is a prophecy that a queen of England will be burned," and even if it is true, she "mean[s] to have him."

*The drawing that Jane Seymour finds in Anne Boleyn's bed seems to be a sign of things to come, since Henry will eventually have her beheaded for adultery after they are married. However, Anne is so ambitious and desperate to be the queen that she is willing to pay for it with her life. She knows she is unpopular and that some people wish to hurt her, but she is nonetheless fixated on her goals.*

As Cromwell and Cranmer are leaving, they see the pale girl heading toward them, and Cromwell asks her if she has been spying. She nods and says she is spying for her brothers, but that she isn't very good at it. Since she doesn't know French, she asks Cromwell not to speak in French at his next meeting with Anne Boleyn, and she introduces herself as John Seymour's daughter from Wolf Hall. Cromwell is surprised because he thought the Seymour girls were with Katherine. The girl says she goes where she's sent, but Cromwell says she is "not where [she is] appreciated." She says she is appreciated, in a way, since Anne would never refuse any of Katherine's ladies. As she leaves them, a "small suspicion enters [Cromwell's] mind, about the paper in the bed," but he ends up thinking it is impossible.

*Cromwell meets the pale girl he is so fond of, and he finally finds out who she is. This is the first time in the novel that Wolf Hall itself is mentioned, so readers can understand that Jane Seymour will be a main player at the Tudor court, even though she doesn't seem to be important yet. Years later, after Anne Boleyn is executed for treason, Jane Seymour will replace her as Henry's queen. When Cromwell asks her if she is spying, she freely admits that she has been spying for her brothers, which shows her naiveté. She used to be with Katherine's court, and she has now been sent to keep Anne company. As Cromwell is leaving, he suspects that this girl might have been the one who put the drawing in Anne's bed since she was the one who found it. He is also likely wondering whether she is a spy for Katherine. However, the girl seems so innocent and incapable of violent threats that he thinks he must be mistaken.*

Cromwell asks Cranmer if he is heading back to Cambridge, but Cranmer says that the Boleyns want him at hand. He tells Cromwell that Anne Boleyn "has formed a good opinion" of Cromwell, and that he owes more to her than he realizes, even though she has no interest in being his sister-in-law. He also tells Cromwell that the reason he didn't come to the cardinal's college years ago was because of the students who had died in the fish cellar. Cromwell says that the cardinal "was never a man to ride down another for his opinions," and that Cranmer would have been safe there. Cranmer says that the cardinal "would have found no heresy" in him.

*Since Cranmer is a scholar who seems ready to oppose the Pope, the Boleyns find it useful to have him around so they can consult with him. Cranmer insinuates that Anne Boleyn knows that her sister Mary Boleyn proposed marriage to Cromwell, and that while she isn't in favor of the match, Anne does like Cromwell and has done favors for him—though Cranmer doesn't mention what these might be. Cranmer also explains that the reason he stayed away from the cardinal's college was because of the deaths of the cardinal's two students who were caught reading Luther. Since Cranmer, too, reads books by Tyndale and Luther that are banned by Thomas More, he feared that he might not be safe to do this in the cardinal's college since Wolsey couldn't protect those two students from being severely punished.*

Later, Cromwell asks Wriothesley if Cranmer is as orthodox as he claims to be. Wriothesley says that Cranmer doesn't like monks, so he should get along with Cromwell. Cromwell says he seems like a solitary kind of person, and Wriothesley is surprised that Cromwell doesn't know about Cranmer and the barmaid.

*Cromwell finds Cranmer puzzling because he reads books banned by Thomas More while also claiming that there is "no heresy" in him. While Cranmer seems very sedate and serious, Wriothesley claims that Cranmer has some history with a barmaid, which puzzles Cromwell even further since Cranmer might be very unlike what he seems.*

Cromwell invites Cranmer to supper at his house. He discovers that he is the son of a gentleman who came from a tiny village called Aslockton. He suffered at school with a harsh schoolmaster and was glad to leave and go to Cambridge when he was 14. Cranmer says the cardinal told one of his acquaintances that Cromwell was "stolen by pirates." Cromwell "smiles in slow delight" and says he misses Wolsey because now "there is no one to invent [Cromwell]." Cranmer seems concerned that if this story were true, it would mean that Cromwell has not been baptized. Cromwell thinks that Cranmer will always believe that Cromwell is a bit of a heathen.

*Wolsey seems to have taken great delight in fabricating interesting stories about Cromwell's past. He once told Henry that Cromwell was an orphan who lived with monks, and now he's told Cranmer that Cromwell was kidnapped by pirates. Wolsey's stories are untrue in a literal sense, but they nonetheless express something of the essence of Cromwell's nature, which demonstrates how fiction can reveal underlying truth.*

Cranmer says that he, too, is a widower just like Cromwell. He married an orphan called Joan, and as a result, he lost his fellowship at Cambridge. He kept Joan, who was pregnant, at the Dolphin, an inn that some relatives ran. He says she was never a barmaid, as people like to say. Joan died in labor, along with the child, and Jesus College took Cranmer back. He took holy orders, but he thinks of Joan every day. Cromwell thinks that he has his whole family, and the cardinal, "if the cardinal still thinks well of him," but that Cranmer has nothing. Cromwell says he hopes he can bring the cardinal back, but Cranmer says that won't be possible. He suggests that Cromwell go visit him and explain the situation, but Cromwell says that the "snare has been set" for Wolsey, so Cromwell doesn't dare to move.

*Since Cranmer was studying theology at Cambridge College, he wasn't supposed to marry, which was why he lost his fellowship after his marriage. Despite the deaths in his own life, Cromwell thinks that he has so much, while Cranmer, in comparison, is all alone. Cromwell's ability to empathize with others' grief makes him come across as a kind and likeable person.*

Cromwell begins to go hunting with the king in autumn, and the king likes to talk to him as he takes aim with his arrows, saying that they can be alone here. Cromwell thinks that "the population of a small village […] is circulating around them," and he wonders if the king even knows what "alone" means. The king says that many tell him that he can "consider [his] marriage dissolved in the eyes of Christian Europe," but Cromwell disagrees. He hesitates to tell Henry that he and Katherine still share a roof and a court. Cromwell also thinks that Henry can admit any "weakness or failure" to Katherine, but he can't do the same to Anne Boleyn. The king tells him that Anne has threatened to leave him, saying "that there are other men and she is wasting her youth."

*Cromwell seems to be rising even higher in the king's favor since he is being invited along on hunts. But at this point, Cromwell is afraid to voice his opinions and incur the king's wrath; he does what he often wishes others would do and simply keeps his thoughts to himself. In the meanwhile, Anne Boleyn seems so confident in her power over Henry that she has resorted to threatening to leave him if he doesn't marry her soon.*

It is November again—a year since the cardinal was ousted—and Norfolk tells an audience of gentlemen that they will be in a difficult situation if Henry dies, since he doesn't have an heir. His bastard, Henry Fitzroy, seems like "a fine boy," and Anne Boleyn thinks Norfolk should get him married to Norfolk's daughter Mary Howard, so the king will be surrounded by Howards, but Norfolk doesn't think a bastard can reign.

*Anne Boleyn seems to think it important for Henry to always be surrounded by her family—in a sense, she is deviously trapping him so he cannot get away from her. Her planning is impressive and even extends to Henry's illegitimate son who has no right to the throne. Just in case the boy should ever reign, Anne wants him married to a member of her family so she can retain her power and wealth.*

Cromwell, "who is increasingly where he shouldn't be," says that Henry does have a child born in wedlock who can reign. Norfolk is incredulous that "[t]hat talking **shrimp**" Mary Tudor might ever rule, but Gardiner seems interested in the idea. Cromwell says it would "depend [on] who advises her," and "who she marries." Norfolk says they have to act soon to get the divorce since "Katherine has half the lawyers of Europe pushing paper for her."

*Norfolk is having this conversation with the gentleman at court, but Cromwell—who is neither a gentleman nor a courtier—has somehow made his way into the conversation, showing that he has become something of a fixture at court despite having no official position.*

On November 1, 1530, "a commission for the cardinal's arrest is given to Harry Percy, the young Earl of Northumberland." The earl arrests Wolsey at Cawood, two days before his planned investiture. As Wolsey is being transported south, he falls sick and dies. Cromwell thinks that before Wolsey, England was a "little offshore island, poor and cold." Cavendish brings news of how Harry Percy arrived to arrest the cardinal for high treason as he was eating his dinner. Cromwell suspects that Anne Boleyn orchestrated the whole thing—that it was "vengeance deferred" since "her old lover, once berated by the cardinal and sent packing from the court," was the one to arrest him. Cavendish says the cardinal spent some time alone in his room, and when he came out, he said, "I am not afraid of any man alive."

*Despite Cromwell being friendly with Henry, Anne Boleyn, and Norfolk, he had no knowledge of Wolsey's arrest until after it happened. Even though these people say they like him, they also know that he is still loyal to Wolsey and might warn him of what is to come, so they are careful to keep him in the dark. This incident goes to show that relationships at court are often superficial, and that most people are unwavering in their quests for more power.*

Cavendish describes how the townspeople "knelt in the road and wept" as the cardinal was taken away, and that they "asked God to send vengeance on Harry Percy." Cromwell thinks that God need not bother, as he himself will handle it. Cavendish says that the cardinal did not eat for a week as they traveled south, and that "[s]ome say he meant to destroy himself." Cavendish insisted he eat some pears, after which the cardinal put his hand to his chest, saying there was "something cold inside [him], like a whetstone." When Kingston, the Constable of the Tower, arrived, the cardinal was convinced he was being sent to his death. He became very ill, and Cromwell suspects that he might have poisoned himself since Wolsey was always good at finding his way out of difficulties.

*After spending 20 years as a powerful man who advised the king on his most important decisions, Wolsey's death—which Cromwell suspects is by suicide—seems like a tragic and inconsequential end. At the same time, Cromwell's suspicion suggests that in a way, the cardinal did retain power at the end of his life; he chose when to die rather than letting himself be tried and executed.*

Later, some courtiers perform an interlude named "The Cardinal's Descent into Hell," in which "a vast scarlet figure, supine, is dragged across the floor, howling, by actors dressed as devils." Anne Boleyn laughs uproariously at the performance, while Henry "sits frozen by her side." It reminds Cromwell of the performance last year at Gray's Inn. The devils tell the figure in red that Beelzebub is expecting him for supper, and when he asks, "What wines does he serve?" Cromwell "almost forgets himself and laughs." After the play, he goes behind the screens where he sees that the actors who played the devils include George Boleyn and Henry Norris. They are so preoccupied with themselves that they do not notice when a page who is trying to help them clean up "gets an elbow in the eye" and drops his bowl of water.

*The cardinal was unpopular in court when he was alive, and after his death, he has become a joke. Mantel is interested in exploring the different ways in which a person is perceived and how this affects the stories that are told about them. These stories, in turn, seem to affect how they are remembered. While Cromwell thinks of Wolsey with reverence and affection, most people regard him as a corrupt and greedy man, which is how he is portrayed in the play. Despite Cromwell's sadness at this portrayal of Wolsey, he isn't immune to the humor of the play and almost ends laughing at it, which shows his open-mindedness to all perspectives, as well as the power of storytelling to change one's perspective. After the play, Cromwell goes backstage and, despite being preoccupied with his thoughts about the play, he notices and sympathizes with a young page who gets elbowed in the eye. While George Boleyn and Henry Norris are the ones who hurt the page, they are too self-involved to notice what they did—but Cromwell does, which shows how his kindness sets him apart from these men.*

Cromwell wants to know who played the part of the cardinal, and he sees that it is Patch, the cardinal's old fool who had protested so violently when the cardinal sent him to the king as a present. Cromwell asks him how he could have agreed to play this part, and Patch answers that he "act[s] what part [he's] paid to act." Laughing, he says that Cromwell, "the retired mercenary," is in a bad temper because no one is paying him.

*Cromwell is shocked that Patch would play this role that humiliates his former master, but Patch very practically states that he does whatever he needs to in order to make money and survive. Patch's response shows that the need to behave ruthlessly in exchange for money, power, and security extends through all levels of the court.*

Cromwell hears a child crying nearby and wonders if it is the page who got elbowed; he thinks he was probably slapped for dropping the bowl, or for "just crying." He thinks that "[c]hildhood was like that; you are punished, then punished again for protesting. So, one learns not to complain; it is a hard lesson, but one never lost."

*Cromwell is always sympathetic to children, and these thoughts about the powerlessness and hardships of children are proof of this. However, they also seem to be a comment on others without power—like Patch, and even Cromwell, to an extent—who must make the best of the situations that come their way without complaint. Patch does not complain that he now belongs to Henry, and Cromwell does not complain about the mockery of Wolsey that he just witnessed.*

Patch is sticking out his tongue from behind the screen in the direction of the king sitting on the other side of it. He says, "The fool has said in his heart, there is no Pope," and he tells Cromwell that fools can say anything. Cromwell replies they cannot, "where [his] writ runs," and Patch says his power doesn't even extend to "the backyard where he was christened in a puddle." Cromwell says he could crack Patch's skull right then and that no one would miss him. Patch agrees, saying, they "would roll [him] out in the morning and lay [him] on a dunghill." He says that no one would miss one fool, because "England is full of them."

*In court tradition, fools were permitted to speak their mind without punishment, and Patch uses this freedom to comment on Henry's actions. He insinuates that Henry is a fool who refuses to acknowledge the Pope, but cleverly says it in a way that might mean he is talking about himself instead.*

## PART 3: CHAPTER 3: THE DEAD COMPLAIN OF THEIR BURIAL, CHRISTMASTIDE 1530

The household at Austin Friars is awakened late one night by someone knocking at the gate. Cromwell comes down to find Johane, Richard, and Rafe facing William Brereton of the privy chamber, who has come there with an armed escort. Cromwell's first thought is that they have come to arrest him. Alice and Jo appear, and Jo begins to cry. Gregory comes fully dressed, and he tells Cromwell he is there for him.

*This scene shows the precarious position Cromwell occupies under King Henry. Though Cromwell has committed no crime that he is aware of, he thinks it is entirely possible that he has angered the king in some way and will have the pay the price for it.*

Brereton tells Cromwell that the king is at Greenwich and wishes to see him. Cromwell tells his family to go to bed since the king wouldn't order him to Greenwich to arrest him, even though he isn't sure that this is true. Richard looks like he wants to hit Brereton, and Cromwell thinks he himself would have once been like that, but that now he is "as sweet as a May morning."

*Cromwell is concerned that his family is worried about him, and generously attempts to console them even though he is still nervous about his fate. Cromwell's thoughts about Richard emphasizes that he has now become very good at hiding what he truly feels; he, too, would like to hit Brereton, but he doesn't let it show at all.*

Cromwell, accompanied by Richard, Rafe, and Gregory, boards Brereton's barge, and they begin the journey down the Thames. Henry Norris is waiting for them with torches at the pier, and he takes Cromwell up to the king's chamber, where he also finds Cranmer.

*Richard, Rafe, and Gregory seem to still be worried about Cromwell, which is why they accompany him on this cold, late journey. Cromwell loves these young people, and they reciprocate his concern and affection.*

As soon as Cromwell walks in, the king tells him that his "dead brother came to [him] in a dream," and Cromwell stays quiet because he has no idea what a "sensible answer" to this might be. The king says that God permits the dead to walk in the 12 days between Christmas and Epiphany. Cromwell notices that Henry is wearing a "**russet velvet**, sable-lined." The "lining creeps down over his **hands**, as if he were a monster-king, growing his own fur."

*The king's outburst about seeing his dead brother in a dream catches Cromwell completely off-guard, but he manages to stay sensibly quiet. Henry in his velvet, fur-lined cloak looks like a "monster-king" to Cromwell—which hints that he is essentially an irrational creature who demands subservience from all who surround him. His hidden hands also symbolize the way that his intentions are mysterious to Cromwell at this point.*

Henry says that Arthur seemed sad that Henry had "taken [his] kingdom, and […] used [his] wife." Cranmer seems impatient as he tells the king that it was God's will that Arthur died before he could rule, and though they acknowledge there was a sin in Henry's marrying Katherine, "with God there is mercy enough." Henry disagrees, saying his brother will plead against him when he goes to judgment, and that he is coming back to shame him. When Cranmer seems about to speak again, Cromwell signals to him to stay quiet. He then asks Henry if Arthur spoke to him. When Henry says he didn't, Cromwell tells him that there is then no reason to think Arthur meant "anything but good," which he admits "is a mistake we make with the dead."

*Henry is filled with irrational fears after the dream. Cranmer seems impatient as he tries to console Henry based on his own study of theology, but his words have no effect on Henry. However, Cromwell seems to know how to calm the king down even though others have failed.*

Cromwell puts his hand on Henry's arm and tells him that power passes from the living to the dead at the very time of death, and Arthur visited Henry to tell him to "examine his kingship" and "exert it." Cromwell reminds Henry that the words written on Arthur's tomb say, "The former king is the future king." He says that if "[his] brother seems to say that [Henry has] taken his place, then he means for [Henry] to become the king that he would have been."

*Previously, Henry had been shocked when Norfolk, a duke, had his hand on Cromwell's shoulder because it implied too much familiarity with a commoner. However, Cromwell makes the bold move to reach out and touch the king now, and Henry seems fine with it, which shows that his esteem for Cromwell has grown enough that it trumps Henry's previous reservations concerning Cromwell's background.*

When Henry wonders why Arthur comes to him now with this message after he has been king for 20 years, Cromwell "bites back the temptation to say, because you are forty and he is telling you to grow up." Instead he tells Henry that it is now time for him to be the ruler he should be—"to be sole and supreme head" of the kingdom. He tells Henry that Anne Boleyn will say the same thing, and that if his father should appear to him in a dream, it is for the same reason. Henry is satisfied with this explanation and relaxes. He says he understands everything now, and that he was right about whom to call.

*Cromwell cleverly uses Henry's concern about his dream to further his own agenda. Cromwell interprets the dream as meaning that Henry must exert his kingly powers further. This would be the means to what Cromwell wants, which is for Anne Boleyn to be crowned the queen. While Cromwell thinks that the king's concerns are trivial and silly, he hides his feelings well, and that restraint is a big part of what makes Henry trust him.*

As Cromwell and Cranmer walk out of the king's chambers, Cranmer says, "Neat work," and Cromwell fights the urge to laugh. Cranmer says it was "a deft touch" to say that even if the king's father appears in his dreams, it would mean the same thing, and Cranmer guesses that Cromwell doesn't "like to be roused too often in the small hours." Cromwell says it worries his household. Cranmer says that Cromwell's words were "perfect in every way," and as if he had "thought of it in advance." He calls him "a man of vigorous invention," and recounting the way he gripped the king's arm, he says he is "a person of great force of will."

*Cranmer seems to share Cromwell's opinion that Henry's anxiety was a bit of a joke, but they don't openly admit it to each other. As courtiers, they never openly criticize the king's actions since they know it is dangerous to do so. Cranmer failed to console Henry with his religious consolations, and he is in awe of Cromwell's quick mind since he seemed to know exactly what to say to Henry.*

Rafe, Gregory, and Richard rush to Cromwell when he heads outside, asking what happened. Rafe is shocked that the king got them all out of bed for a bad dream, and Brereton says that "he gets one out of bed for less than that." The boys hug each other, "wild with relief," and Gregory says they thought that the king had thrown Cromwell in some dungeon. Cranmer is amused at this scene, and says to Cromwell, "Your children love you."

*Rafe, Richard, and Gregory clearly treasure Cromwell, which again demonstrates that his devotion to them leads to positive outcomes.*

Later that same day, Cromwell returns to Greenwich to be sworn in as one of Henry's councilors. The king "does not want to wait" to do this and seems to feel a sense of "personal triumph" at this decision. Warham, the Archbishop of Canterbury, wonders what the world has come to for Cromwell to join the king's council.

*Cromwell's words of consolation to Henry have been such a success with the king that he has decided to make Cromwell an official member of his council. Henry knows that he is breaking with tradition in doing this since Cromwell isn't from nobility, but Henry seems to enjoy asserting his power in this manner. Perhaps Cromwell's words to him earlier that morning—saying that his brother Arthur means for Henry to be "sole and supreme head" of the kingdom—have given Henry the courage to make this unorthodox move.*

Cromwell spots Thomas More and notices that "he is more disheveled than usual." More tells Cromwell that his father died, and he begins to cry as he talks of it. Cromwell starts to tell More about how he felt after his wife's death—and then thinks of "[his] daughters, [his] sister, [his] household decimated, [his] people never out of black, and now [his] lord cardinal lost" and decides not to admit "that sorrow has sapped his will."

*Despite Cromwell seeing sudden and big successes in his career, he thinks of how his personal tragedies have "sapped his will." He comes close to admitting this to More, but he decides not to at the last minute. Cromwell is always wary that if he exposes his true feelings, he will be taken advantage of.*

Instead, Cromwell tells More that "feeling will come back," and More says that he knows that Cromwell, too, has had his losses, and that they should put all that aside and move on to do this "necessary thing." He begins to read Cromwell the oath. Halfway through, he begins weeping again, and Warham says that he feels sorry for More, but that "death comes to us all." Cromwell thinks that he could do a better job than the Archbishop of Canterbury at comforting More. After Cromwell has been sworn in, he thinks back to the day when the cardinal's York Place was wrecked and about how he and Cavendish had stood by and watched as the cardinal's luxurious **clothes** were pulled out of his trunks.

*Even though Cromwell is making a huge leap in his career, this exciting moment is clouded by the specter of death. Cromwell's promotion to councilor came about because of the king's dream about his dead brother, and even the oath that Cromwell has to take is interrupted by Thomas More weeping over his dead father. Cromwell, too, is troubled my memories of Wolsey, who was the one who gave Cromwell his start in his career. The cardinal's crimson clothes were a symbol of his power, and when they were pulled out and discarded carelessly, they symbolized the end of Wolsey's supremacy. By thinking back on that moment, Cromwell seems to be reflecting that power and dignity can be taken away at a moment's notice. Even though Cromwell has successfully—and quite surprisingly—made his way into the council, he is aware that he is not truly safe and probably never will be.*

## PART 4: CHAPTER 1: ARRANGE YOUR FACE, 1531

Cromwell is speaking with Katherine in her chambers, and he notices that her daughter Mary Tudor seems to be in a lot of pain—"she is shrunken into herself, and her eyes are the color of ditch water." He tells Katherine to have her daughter sit, and he places a stool, "with a decisive thud," by Katherine's skirts. He overhears Mary telling Katherine in Castilian that "it is her woman's disorder." Cromwell notices that the girl's eyes are "unfocused," but Katherine orders her to stand straight, "like a princess of England." Katherine is "rigid inside her **boned bodice.**"

*Cromwell tries to ease Mary's pain by giving her a stool and asking her to sit, which shows his concern and kindness. Katherine, however, is afraid that her daughter's illness would convey weakness and refuses to let her sit. Katherine herself is upright and stiff in her "boned bodice," which symbolizes her own hardness and strength.*

Katherine tells Mary Tudor in English that Cromwell is the man who "now writes all the laws." Mary says that "[t]hese laws are written against the church." Katherine says that Cromwell and his friends have found all clergy guilty under the praemunire laws—the same law that Wolsey was accused under—and as a result, the clergy has "to pay a fine of more than one hundred thousand pounds." Cromwell says that it is not a fine—they call it "a benevolence." Katherine says she calls it "extortion."

*Katherine is very critical of Cromwell's role in having the clergy submit to the king. He seems to be slowly achieving his goal of making Henry the sole and uncontested bastion of power in England. Katherine, who is loyal to the Pope, opposes this. She realizes that if the Church loses its power in England, her case against the annulment will also be lost.*

Katherine says that Cromwell and Speaker Audley "induce the king to describe himself as head of the church in England," and Mary Tudor adds that "the Pope is head of the church everywhere." Cromwell once again asks Mary to sit down and "catches her just as she folds at the knees." After lowering her down onto the stool, he says it is the heat, "so she will not be ashamed." She looks at him with "simple gratitude" for a moment before resuming "an expression as stony as the wall of a town under siege."

*Cromwell kindly catches Mary when she comes close to fainting from her pain, and he blames the heat so she will not be embarrassed. Mary is grateful for his compassion, but immediately after, she assumes her "stony" expression. Even though they share a moment of connection, they hold opposite political viewpoints and so cannot remain allies. Even though Mary is young, she comes across as a strong political force in her own right.*

Katherine says that in order "to soothe the conscience of the bishops," Cromwell has introduced the clause "as far as the law of Christ allows" while describing Henry as the head of the church. Cromwell says that ancient precedents support the king's claim, but Katherine insists that they have only been "invented these last months." She says they are hoping that she will put herself "out of the estate of queen and wife," and that only Bishop Fisher speaks the truth that "the House of Commons is full of heathens." Cromwell notices her "little, stubby, puffy **hands**," which are empty. Katherine says the king has now "ridden off without a farewell," which he'd never done before, and Mary Tudor says he has gone with "[t]he person."

*Cromwell and the other "heathens" at the House of Commons seem to be writing laws that give Henry complete supremacy in England, and Katherine is aware that she is being left without support or power if the supremacy of the Pope is no longer recognized. Her empty hands symbolize her lack of power, which is reinforced by the king leaving Katherine "without a farewell" and going off with Anne Boleyn. Katherine is acutely aware that she has lost her hold over Henry—and so is Cromwell.*

Cromwell says in a soothing voice that he will return in a fortnight, and that in the meantime, Katherine is to head to the More, a residence in Hertfordshire. Mary Tudor says that, since it was the cardinal's house, it will be "lavish." Cromwell asks her to "cease to speak ill of a man who never did [her] harm," and Mary blushes and says she never meant to "fail in charity." Katherine says she won't go to Hertfordshire, and Cromwell tries to persuade her by saying that everything is ready for her. Katherine insists that she will write to Henry to say that her place is by his side. Cromwell advises her to "take this gently." Otherwise, Henry might separate Katherine and Mary. Cromwell notices that "the child is fighting down pain" and her "mother is fighting down grief and anger, and disgust and fear."

*This situation is a victory for Cromwell, since Henry seems to be closer to getting his marriage annulled and marrying Anne Boleyn. However, Cromwell doesn't enjoy this difficult task—he can't help noticing Katherine's and Mary's pain. He has tried to help Mary with her physical pain, but he knows there is essentially nothing he can do for Katherine, which foreshadows how his political ambitions will conflict with his empathetic nature.*

Outside, Wriothesely, Rafe, and Gregory are waiting for Cromwell. He tells them that he told Katherine that Henry might separate her from Mary, and Wriothesley is surprised that Cromwell doesn't know that it has already been decided that they are to be separated. He knows this from Stephen Gardiner. Rafe says it is harsh to "use the little girl against her mother," and Cromwell admits it is, but he says that after one chooses one's prince, it is one's job to "say yes to him—yes, that is possible, yes, that can be done." He says one can go abroad to find another king if one disagrees with Henry, but he is sure that "if this were Italy, Katherine would be cold in her tomb."

*Cromwell believes that it is not his place to question the king's desires; it is his job to get things done. Cromwell defends Henry by pointing out that other monarchs might have murdered their first wives in order to take on a second, and that Henry is not resorting to this. Like Wolsey, who often defended Henry's actions, Cromwell's defense of the king doesn't seem completely honest and instead seems to be a way for him to convince himself to keep doing the things he is asked to.*

Gregory asks whether Cromwell would work to bring about Katherine's death. Cromwell stops and "takes his son's arm" and asks him to "retrace [his] steps through this conversation." Gregory tries to pull away, but Cromwell persists. He says that Henry would never require him or anyone else to ever do such a thing since he isn't "a monster." He says Henry has "a heart full of feeling" and is "the most scrutinized soul in Christendom." Wriothesley tells him that Gregory is his son, "not an ambassador," and Cromwell lets go of him.

*Again, Cromwell defends Henry passionately—but he also seems to speak out of fear. If Gregory were overheard, statements like these might get him killed, which is why Cromwell asks him to think carefully about the things he says. Ironically, Cromwell claims that Henry would never require him to have someone killed—but history shows that Henry does eventually ask Cromwell to have Anne Boleyn executed for treason and adultery.*

For New Year's, Cromwell gets Anne Boleyn a present of Venetian forks, and he gets a book of needlework patterns for "the little girl who always cries." Anne tells him "Pasty-face" has gone from court since her family has been the subject of gossip and disgrace. Her father, John Seymour, was caught sleeping with his daughter-in-law Catherine Fillol, who is married to his son Edward Seymour. Anne says "Milksop" might end up in a nunnery since no one will marry her now after the tales about "those sinners at **Wolf** Hall" have gotten out.

*Cromwell is very fond Jane Seymour, probably because she is quiet and naïve, unlike the courtiers who surround her. He had previously thought of her as being as sweet and pure as a lily. Anne is critical of the girl's father's behavior, which seems uncivilized, like the behavior of wild animals, and matches the name of his residence, Wolf Hall. Ironically, though, King Henry himself will eventually marry Jane—after having Anne herself executed.*

In February, a priest named Thomas Hitton is accused by Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, of smuggling Tyndale's books, and he is burned as a heretic. More works on rounding up more heretics and he tortures them in the Tower until they disclose the names of everyone else involved in their operations to smuggle forbidden books into England. In March, Lucy Petyt, whose husband John Petyt, a grocer, has been arrested by More, comes to see Cromwell to ask him to appeal to either the king or Anne Boleyn on behalf of John. Johane tells Lucy that the Petyts were "the first to throw calumnies at the cardinal," and that they brought this situation on themselves. After Lucy leaves, Johane seems upset as she tells Cromwell not to help them and seems worried that John would name Cromwell if he is tortured.

*Even while the king is attempting to shrug off the power of the Catholic Church, Thomas More's campaigns against heresy are growing more powerful and violent. More single-mindedly pursues his goal of rounding up those who harbor anti-Catholic sentiments and sees no problem in torturing them for information. In contrast to More, Cromwell feels guilty whenever he causes anyone pain, even if he does so in the course of serving the king. Many of the so-called "heretics" are those who smuggle in banned books and read them—both of which Cromwell does. Johane knows this, and so she worries that he, too, might be imprisoned for heresy if he isn't careful.*

Cromwell asks Anne Boleyn to help John Petyt, saying that she knows "how to please the king." Anne makes a joke that she can't trade her "maidenhead for a grocer." Cromwell tries to talk to Henry about it, but the king "gives him a blank stare and says [More] the Lord Chancellor knows his business."

*While Anne Boleyn and Henry value Cromwell's ideas and suggestions when they need his help, they have no interest in helping him. Cromwell once again sees the difference between Henry and Wolsey. When Cromwell appealed to Wolsey to help Little Bilney when he was being held for heresy, Wolsey immediately promised Cromwell that he would do his best to help him out. Henry, on the other hand, is not being personally inconvenienced by More's actions yet, and therefore he is uninterested in getting involved.*

Cromwell met Tyndale in Antwerp that past spring, and Tyndale had wept, saying he was tired of being hunted and wanted to go home to England. Tyndale had only wanted the king to agree to "let the people of England hear the gospel" in their mother tongue. Henry hasn't said that he will never allow a translation, since he knows Anne Boleyn wants the translation and he wants to please her. However, by summer, Cromwell realizes that "Henry is too timid, [and] Tyndale too intransigent," and he abandons this project. He thinks that "More, Tyndale, they deserve each other, these **mules** that pass for men." Tyndale refuses to openly support Henry's divorce, as does Luther, and Cromwell cannot comprehend why they cannot "sacrifice a fine point of principle, to make a friend of the King of England."

*Cromwell understands that Henry is too "timid" to oppose More and his supporters. Henry enjoys being liked, and because of this, he likes to upset as few people as possible—unless their actions affect him directly, in which case he responds in a fury. But Henry lacks the courage and will to make trouble for a cause that doesn't directly affect him. Cromwell finds himself equally frustrated with More and Tyndale, since they both absolutely refuse to compromise on their beliefs even when it would be practical to. If Tyndale were to voice his support of Henry's marriage publicly, Henry would be happy to welcome him back home—and yet, Tyndale refuses to do. Cromwell cannot comprehend Tyndale's insistence on sticking to his principles in the face of danger to his life; for Cromwell, it's second nature to say things he doesn't really mean in order to get what he wants.*

Cromwell is teaching a boy called Thomas Avery his trade, and the boy spends time in Antwerp with Cromwell's connections there. He brings Cromwell a note from Tyndale which has been sewn into the lining of a **jacket**, in which Tyndale writes that he doesn't believe he can ever come back to England as long as More "is alive and in office," even if Anne Boleyn is queen and the king guarantees Tyndale's safety. Avery expresses concern for his own safety, and Cromwell "curls [his **hand**] loosely into a fist" and says that if More comes near "[his] people," he will "drag him out of his court at Westminster and beat his head on the cobbles" until he knocks into him "some sense of the love of God and what it means."

*Tyndale seems to have rightly guessed that Henry will do nothing to save him if More is determined to get him. Like Cromwell, Tyndale knows that the king is too "timid" and apathetic to concern himself with other people's problems. While Cromwell usually detests the notion of violence, the thought that More might arrest members of Cromwell's household fills him with rage. He is also irritated that More uses religion to justify his violent deeds. More views religion through a narrow lens and considers anyone who breaks with religious doctrine to be a heretic who deserves to be tortured and killed. Cromwell, in contrast, seems to have a more generous interpretation that God's love means kindness and generosity—the opposite of violence.*

Meanwhile, Cromwell knows that nothing good can come out of "the piece of folly" with Johane and thinks that it has to stop. While she used to make excuses to be where he was, she has now taken to avoiding him, so he thinks that she knows it, too. She tells him that their relationship "seems like part of the past," and that he should marry someone else if he wants to marry again. She admits that she would marry him "without question" if her husband died, but that "the church wouldn't allow it." Cromwell says she can't be sure of that. Johane says she has heard that he plans to "make the king head of the church" and "break the bishops" and "take away revenues from the Holy Father," after which the king can say "who can be married," and then Mary Tudor "will be a bastard."

*Interestingly, if Henry were to become head of the church and actually have a say about marriages, it would have a direct bearing on Cromwell's life. Since Johane is his sister-in-law, the Catholic Church would view their relationship as incestuous, but Henry might be able to change that. This incident highlights the fact that while the king's relationship is in the limelight, there are many other people whose lives would be drastically affected by the power shifts that are about to take place.*

Cromwell says that "if the Pope were to concede to the king's wishes," then they wouldn't take away his revenues. He says the only thing that Henry wants is "Anne [Boleyn] in his bed," and he's used to having his way. Johane is surprised that Henry will "take the money of Christian people," since he is rich. Cromwell says she is wrong—the "king is poor." While he wanted for nothing while Wolsey was alive, now, Henry Norris, who is "the bane of [Cromwell's] life," has too much control over the revenue. Johane says that if "Henry [the] pauper king" ever wants his supper, he can come to their house. Cromwell tells Johane that he would like to give her fine things—like mirrors, since she is "a woman worth looking at." He can tell she is pleased to hear this, and they part as friends.

*When Cromwell is faced with the challenge of breaking off his relationship with Johane, he does it with kindness and consideration. He also knows exactly what to say flatter her into happiness even as he makes it clear to her that their relationship is in the past. While the novel usually shows Cromwell's eloquence at court, here it shows that his talent for saying the right things is a great advantage to him in his personal relations, too.*

In the summer of 1531, there is a comet that people think is a sign of bad things to come. In August, Anne Boleyn tells Cromwell that Gardiner is to get Winchester, which was Wolsey's richest bishopric. She says she wishes Cromwell were Secretary instead of Gardiner, but he says it is still too early for that. Anne also gives him the news that Little Bilney was burned for heresy and says he was a fool. She says that "[p]eople must say whatever will keep them alive, till better times come."

*Anne Boleyn seems to take Cromwell's side in the ongoing rivalry he has with Gardiner. Cromwell knows he isn't yet in a place to take on Gardiner's role as Secretary, though he implies he might be, in the future. As Anne discusses Bilney, she seems to echo Cromwell's sentiments that people should put aside their principles and say what they need to in order to stay alive. Their hardnosed practicality is yet another way in which Cromwell and Anne and similar.*

During Michaelmas term, Cromwell is inundated with work and petitioners with appeals. Groups of Londoners begin to gather at the gates of Austin Friars, pointing at the famous people who walk in. Cromwell looks down on this crowd and "put[s] on a mask." Cromwell has "had his face arranged" ever since he was sworn into the king's council. He watches "the faces of other people, to see when they register doubt, reservation, rebellion—to catch that fractional moment before they settle into the suave lineaments of the courtier, the facilitator, the yes-man."

*Cromwell has become famous and powerful, and he is careful to always "put on a mask" so his true thoughts and feelings are hidden from the world. He knows that other people will try to use his vulnerabilities to manipulate him, which is why he is careful to hide them. He, too, looks for the signs of other people's true feelings before they "arrange their faces" to play the roles they are meant to. It's clear here that the game of power relies on constant deception.*

Rafe worries that Wriothesley can't be trusted, but Cromwell says that he understands "unprincipled men" like him. Wriothesley has seen both Gardiner and Cromwell rise in the world, and he can't decide whom he should support—Cromwell completely understands his confusion and his desire to stay on good terms with both of them. Instead, Cromwell worries about men like his friend from Antwerp, Stephen Vaughan, who promises Cromwell his devotion—this makes him "[l]ess calculable, [and] more dangerous."

*Cromwell freely admits that Wriothesley is "unprincipled," but this doesn't bother him like it troubles Rafe, who is a more honest man than Cromwell is. Perhaps Cromwell recognizes himself in Wriothesley since Cromwell, too, will always choose advancement over honor. While Wriothesley makes sense to Cromwell since he acts rationally, Cromwell doesn't know how to makes sense of people like Vaughan who act out of emotion. According to Cromwell, emotions make people unpredictable and therefore dangerous.*

In October, Chapuys comes to Austin Friars for dinner. With the household, he speaks "pleasantly of verse [and] portraiture," and he talks to Rafe about falconry. When he hears that Cromwell is interested in it, too, Chapuys says that Cromwell "plays kings' games now." After dinner, Chapuys wonders what Gardiner will achieve in his talks with King Francois, since Francois wouldn't be interested in supporting the match with Anne Boleyn unless he is offered something in return. He tells Cromwell not to let Anne Boleyn enchant him like she has enchanted the king. Chapuys says that his master, the Emperor, is "a most liberal prince."

*Chapuys seems to be trying to convince Cromwell that his efforts for Henry will certainly fail. He also appears to be trying to get Cromwell to work with the Emperor. Cromwell seems to have made a good impression on Chapuys, too, which is why he is trying to recruit him.*

In November, Sir Henry Wyatt visits Austin Friars. He entertains the household with stories of how he was tortured in the Tower by Richard Plantagenet until the Tudors took power. When he is alone with Cromwell, he asks him to talk to Anne Boleyn about becoming Keeper of the Jewel House. He says that when he had that post, he "had an overview of the revenue." Cromwell says that maybe his son Thomas Wyatt could ask Anne for him, and Wyatt laughs, acknowledging the joke. He tells Cromwell that he will be retiring from court, and he asks Cromwell to keep a fatherly eye on Thomas and to be the executor of his will, saying Cromwell is the "steadiest hand" he knows. He says admiringly that a year ago, the cardinal almost ruined Cromwell, but that he has bounced back and has his "affairs prospering."

*While many courtiers look down on Cromwell for his inconsequential background and for his association with Wolsey, Henry Wyatt respects Cromwell because he has managed to transcend both these challenges and achieve success in court. He gives Cromwell a valuable tip about which position he should ask for in order to control the kingdom's revenue, and he also indicates that Anne Boleyn is the channel through which to approach the king. She has certainly become very powerful since she even has a say in assigning courtiers their jobs.*

Anne Boleyn invites Cromwell for "a poor Advent supper" at the close of the legal term. Henry Norris is there, too, and despite his age, he seems to be in love with Anne. Cromwell notices that he trembles in her presence. As Cromwell is leaving, Norris catches him alone and asks if he doesn't see Anne's charm, and Cromwell says that he could only love a woman "in whom the king has no interest at all." Norris asks him to tell his friend Thomas Wyatt this, and Cromwell says Wyatt has already understood this and has learned to "make a verse" from his "deprivations." Norris says that Francis Weston is also in love with Anne and is jealous of anyone she looks at.

*Cromwell is careful to take every precaution for his safety and advancement, which is why he does not even consider Anne Boleyn's charm or beauty, in case doing so might anger Henry. This is ironic since he seems to have feelings for Jane Seymour—Anne's pale, quiet lady-in-waiting—and history shows that she will end up becoming Henry's third wife, after Anne is beheaded for high treason. He claims he could only love a woman in whom the king has no interest, but he seems to be headed in the opposite direction. By this, Mantel seems to be suggesting that danger is always around the corner, no matter how much one prepares for it.*

In December, Thomas More tries three more people for heresy. A barrister of the Middle Temple is tortured and "More himself questions him while the handle of the rack is turned." More asks him to "name other infected members." A former monk who has smuggled in banned books is burned, and so is a leather-seller who was found to be in possession of a book by Luther, even though he "was no doctor of theology." The year goes out with "a pall of human ash hanging over Smithfield."

*Thomas More is resorting to more cruelty while rounding up and torturing "heretics." He has expanded the scope of his operations to include even commoners who possess the banned books—like the leather-seller—while previously, he targeted officers of the church and wealthy people who were involved in dispersing heretical ideas and books.*

On New Year's Day, Gregory wakes Cromwell with the news that Thomas Wyatt has been arrested. Cromwell instantly thinks it is More's work, but Gregory says he has only been arrested for disorderly behavior and a message came for Cromwell to go bribe the turnkey and get him out. Cromwell reluctantly goes with Gregory and Richard, and after some haggling, he gets Wyatt, Francis Weston, and Francis Bryan out.

*Since More seems to be terrorizing all of London, there is an air of fear that anyone might be his next victim. Since Cromwell has promised Henry Wyatt that he will watch over his son, he keeps his promise and gets Thomas out of jail even though he is irritated at being woken up in the middle of the night to do so. This shows Cromwell to be a responsible person who values his promises.*

## PART 4: CHAPTER 2: "ALAS, WHAT SHALL I DO FOR LOVE?", SPRING 1532

Parliament meets in mid-January, and on the agenda is the business of "breaking the resistance of the bishops to Henry's new order" to cut revenues to Rome and make him the head of the church. Gardiner leads the opposition to the king, which angers Henry immensely, who demands to know if the clergy are his subjects at all since they seem to have taken an oath of loyalty to the Pope rather than to him. Cromwell tells Gardiner that if the king does lock him up, he will make sure he has some "small comforts" in prison. Gardiner is angry, and he tells Cromwell that he is "nothing," since he doesn't even hold an official position.

*Gardiner, who is now the Bishop of Winchester in addition to being Henry's Master Secretary, finds himself in an awkward position. As a bishop himself, he is loyal to the Catholic Church and sides with the other bishops who oppose Henry's new order to cut revenues to Rome and declare himself the head if the church. This rule, if passed, would give the Pope no control over religious and legal matters in England and would pave the path to Henry remarrying. Henry is furious that Gardiner is opposing this, and Gardiner is angry that Cromwell suddenly seems to have more power than he does. Cromwell also has the king's favor since he was instrumental in drafting this order.*

Cromwell understands that they have to "win the debate, not just knock [their] enemies down." It "suits him, for the moment," to have Gardiner in his post at Winchester in order to maintain "Henry's reputation in Europe," so he tells Henry to reconcile with Gardiner since it is a more pleasant course of action and there is "more honor" in it. Henry wants to always take the path of honor, and he also knows that Cromwell dislikes Gardiner. This is why he is inclined to take this piece of advice. At his house, Cromwell meets with parliamentarians and gentlemen to strengthen his case. Cranmer has gone to Germany to win international support for Henry's suit. In the city, many of Cromwell's friends, like John Petyt, are sick or dead after their time at the Tower on More's orders.

*Cromwell is glad of the opposition from Gardiner and the other bishops, which gives him the chance to win the fight fairly. He thinks this would preserve Henry's honor in Europe rather than painting him as a tyrant who steamrolls anyone who opposes him. Cromwell also believes that this bill, if passed, would reduce More's powers since it would distance England from the Catholic Church and therefore render claims of "heresy" meaningless.*

Cromwell visits Anne Boleyn often, and on one such visit, he asks her if she is grateful to the cardinal—if not for him, she might be married to Harry Percy. She "snaps" that she might then at least "occupy the estate of wife." Mary Shelton says she hears that Harry Percy "has gone mad" and is spending all his money, and Cromwell makes the ladies laugh by saying that Percy would have kept Anne in a high tower and brought her the heads of Scots enemies as presents. As he gets ready to depart, Cromwell says he will leave Anne to her "goggle-eyed lover," pointing at Mark the lute player. Anne admits that he does goggle.

*Anne Boleyn has gotten her revenge against the cardinal, and she seems on the brink of becoming the king's wife—and yet, she hasn't let go of her anger against Wolsey for ruining her chance to marry Harry Percy. Cromwell is similar in the sense that he hasn't let go of his own grudge against the lute-player Mark Smeaton, whom he overheard telling someone that Cromwell looks like a murderer. Years later, when Anne is beheaded for treason, she will be accompanied by Mark Smeaton, who will be charged with adultery for sleeping with Anne. Mantel seems to be foreshadowing these events through this remark of Cromwell's.*

Mary Boleyn accompanies Cromwell as he leaves, prompting Jane Rochford to say that she is "going to offer him her virtue again." Mary tells Cromwell that her brother George and his wife, Jane Rochford, don't get along, and that Anne Boleyn is looking for a house of her own in the city. Mary then says that Cromwell has made himself indispensable to Anne, and to Henry, too. Cromwell says he needs a job—just being a councilor isn't enough for him. He wants a post in the Jewel House or the Exchequer. Mary says Anne "made Tom Wyatt a poet" and "made Harry Percy a madman," and that she surely has a plan about what she can do with Cromwell.

*Earlier, Gardiner told Cromwell in anger that he was "nothing" since he didn't have an official position in court. This probably inspired Cromwell to think that it's about time that he had an official position, and he has decided on the title that Henry Wyatt advised him to get so he would be able to control the kingdom's revenues. Earlier, Cromwell said it was too early when Anne said that he should be the Secretary instead of Gardiner. Now, the timing seems right since Henry's bill is due to be passed. Cromwell has proved himself in court and knows he won't be refused.*

Thomas Wyatt comes to see Cromwell to apologize for his behavior that New Year's morning. He admits he is too old for such behavior, though he is too young for his hair to be thinning. Cromwell asks him if his father never advised him "to stay away from women in whom the king is interested," and Wyatt says he went to Italy, and then Calais, to do just that. He tells Cromwell that he did nothing more than kiss Anne when they were alone, though she did hint to him that she did more with other men. Wyatt wonders if Henry won't realize this when she does finally give in to him, and Cromwell asks him to give Anne credit. He thinks that Anne is not "carnal," she is "calculating." She tormented men for her sport while "arranging her career" in a way she liked.

*While there are many rumors circulating that Anne Boleyn and Thomas Wyatt slept together, Cromwell hears from Wyatt himself that this is not true. This confirms for Cromwell that Anne was ambitious and canny from the very beginning and was always determined to use marriage as a way of achieving a higher station in life.*

Thomas More comes to see Cromwell at Austin Friars and accuses him of making a "breach in the walls of Christendom." Cromwell says that neither he nor the king are infidels. More says perhaps Cromwell's "faith is for purchase," and that he might serve the Sultan of Turkey "if the price was right." He says he knows of Cromwell's correspondence with Stephen Vaughan, and that he has met with Tyndale. Cromwell asks him if he is threatening him, and More "sadly" admits that he is. Cromwell realizes that "the balance of power has shifted between them."

*More is aware that if this bill is passed, his own power will decline and he will no longer be able to rout out heretics. When he accuses Cromwell of anti-Christian behavior, Cromwell cleverly says that "he and the king" are not infidels—he knows that More cannot accuse the king of heresy since that would amount to treason. Even though More claims that he is threatening Cromwell, Cromwell understands that it is threat made in desperation since More knows that Cromwell is becoming more powerful than him.*

After More leaves, Cromwell thinks about the time when he ran off to London when he was around 10 years old and "saw an old woman suffer for her faith." He had never seen anyone being burned, so he'd gone along with the crowds because he was curious. People told him that her crime was that she was a "Loller" who said that "the God on the altar is a piece of bread" and that "the saints are […] wooden posts." A woman with "a broad smile" asked Cromwell to stand with her, saying that "[y]ou get a pardon for your sins just for watching it." He saw that the Loller was "a grandmother, perhaps the oldest person he had ever seen." She was followed by "two monks, parading like fat gray **rats**, crosses in their pink paws."

*A "Loller" was a person who followed the anti-Catholic teachings of John Wycliffe, which questioned Catholic beliefs like bread becoming the body of Christ after being consecrated by a priest, as well as practices like the worship of the images of saints, which the Lollers considered idolatry. The Loller inspires young Cromwell's sympathy because she is an old, frail woman. In contrast, Cromwell views the monks who follow her negatively—they seem "fat" and self-satisfied, like rodents instead of humans.*

The woman next to Cromwell punched the air and screamed "in a shrill voice like a demon." Other people screamed too, and they pressed forward for a better view. After the fire was lit, he could hear the Loller screaming. When the smoke cleared, he could see "the old woman was well ablaze." It seemed like a long time before the screaming stopped. After, Cromwell saw the Loller's skull and bones on the ground, and he could still smell the "stink of the woman." He prayed for her, thinking it could do no harm to do so. Later in the evening, the woman's friends came and gathered up her remains in earthen bowls. Cromwell had run off to London that morning to avoid Walter's anger, and he thinks that "there comes a point where the fear is too great and the human spirit just gives up."

*The people around Cromwell who are watching the Loller burn behave in a frighteningly violent manner and are completely insensitive to her suffering. Cromwell never forgets how people can lose their humanity when they are filled with a sense of self-righteousness—much like Thomas More. Cromwell also draws a parallel between his own fear of Walter that day and how the Loller woman must have felt, and he also seems to refer to More's present-day victims when he thinks of how fear causes people to give up hope.*

Cromwell hasn't told anyone about this incident, not wanting to "give away pieces of himself." Chapuys has taken to coming often to dinner to find out more about Cromwell's past in order to report it to the Emperor. Cromwell knows that Chapuys is feeding the Emperor the story that the English dislike Henry so much that they will "rise in revolt" against him if they have the support of the Spanish troops—Cromwell knows that this certainly not true of the "narrow-hearted, stubborn" English. Sometimes, Cromwell feels almost inclined to defend his past to Chapuys, but he doesn't, because he knows it is "wise to conceal the past even if there is nothing to conceal" since there is "power […] in the half-light." The "absence of facts frightens people."

*Cromwell is very secretive about his past, especially about memories like the Loller incident which have affected him so deeply. To people like Chapuys, who are trying to puzzle him out, Cromwell makes himself as mysterious as possible because he knows that power lies in being unpredictable.*

On April 14, 1532, the king appoints Cromwell Keeper of the Jewel House. Henry says there is no reason he cannot employ "the son of an honest blacksmith." Meanwhile, More has been rounding up more heretics, saying that it is fine to lie to them or trick them into confessing their crimes. More and his people "break their fingers, burn them with irons, hang them up by their wrists." A group from the House of Commons says that an angel attends Parliament to note who votes for the king's divorce, and they say that these people will be damned. While thinking of the people who speak their minds and get caught by More, Cromwell wants to tell them to "believe anything, […] swear to it and cross your fingers behind your back."

*Cromwell's message to Anne Boleyn via Mary Boleyn has worked, and Cromwell gets the position he was coveting. Thomas More seems to be aware that his time is running out—he's on a frantic final spree, rounding up as many heretics as he can, and spreading the word that the parliamentarians who vote for Henry's bill will be damned.*

On May 15, the bishops sign a document of submission in which they state that they will not make new church legislation or meet in Convocation without the king's approval. The next day, Cromwell and Anne Boleyn watch together in Whitehall as Thomas More is stripped of his title of Lord Chancellor. Anne asks Cromwell who should be the next Lord Chancellor, and Cromwell tells her it should be Audley, the speaker of the House.

*This is a huge victory for Cromwell. What's more, it's clear from Anne's request for his advice that his schemes have been working; he's now in a position of substantial power in the court.*

Cromwell goes to see Gardiner in Westminster and tells him that Anne Boleyn is looking for a country house, and Cromwell immediately thought that Gardiner's manor at Hanworth would be perfect for her. Cromwell suggests that Gardiner offer the lease of the house to Anne "before it becomes a royal command." Even though Gardiner is still Master Secretary, Cromwell sees the king almost every day and advises him on all matters. Cromwell knows how to make the king laugh when he is in a good mood, and how to be gentle with him when he is not. Chapuys notices that the king prefers to meet with Cromwell alone, rather than in his presence chamber, as a result of which the gentlemen of the privy chamber are jealous.

*Cromwell seems to very much enjoy taking Gardiner's country house away from him and giving it to Anne Boleyn—a result of their long rivalry. Cromwell also seems to have essentially replaced Gardiner as Secretary to Henry; Gardiner now seems to hold that title only in name.*

In late July, Cromwell gets a letter from Cranmer in Nuremberg. Usually, his letters ask for Cromwell's advice regarding various matters, but this letter has been dictated to a clerk and talks about "the workings of the holy spirit." Scrawled in a margin is a message in Cranmer's own handwriting in which he says he has a secret he cannot entrust to a letter, and that he has perhaps "been rash"—but he gives no other details.

*The overtly religious language of Cranmer's letter reveals that he's just using it as an excuse to hint to Cromwell about another secret. It's clear from this that because the situation at court is so delicate, even Cranmer has to resort to deception.*

One evening, Francis Bryan comes to Austin Friars to fetch Cromwell, saying that Anne Boleyn is throwing things in a rage after she heard that Harry Percy's wife, Mary Talbot, is planning to petition Parliament for a divorce. Talbot says that Percy told her their marriage was not valid since "he was married to Anne Boleyn." Cromwell finds Norfolk and the Boleyns gathered together, worried and upset. Anne says she denies everything, and Cromwell tells her that is good. Cromwell asks how the king took this piece of news, and Mary Boleyn says he "walked out of the room." George Boleyn says that Harry Percy "was persuaded once to forget his claims," and so he can be persuaded again. Anne says that "the cardinal fixed him," but now, the cardinal is dead. The silence that follows is "sweet as music" to Cromwell.

*Anne recalls that Wolsey had been the one who solved the problems with Percy before, and Cromwell enjoys the following silence because it implies that everyone is finally appreciating how valuable Wolsey was—even though it's too late to save him.*

Cromwell tells Anne Boleyn that "if the Pope cannot stop [her] becoming queen," then neither should Harry Percy. Norfolk asks Cromwell to "[b]eat his skull in," and Cromwell says he will do it "[f]iguratively."

*Cromwell is convinced that he can "fix" Harry Percy in Wolsey's absence. While he won't do it with violence, he does admit that the threats he will use will be a form of violence; in many ways, Cromwell's ongoing manipulations are more effective than overt violence could ever be.*

Cromwell leaves them, and Wriothesely brings him news that Percy is at an inn nearby. When Cromwell gets there, Percy "shout[s] and weep[s]" as he says that the king loudly declared to "all of Christendom" that the king doubted his own marriage to Katherine but has sent "the lowest man in his employ to sweet-talk [Percy]" when Percy doubts his marriage. He says the cardinal previously bullied Percy out of saying he was "pledged to Anne [Boleyn]," and Percy's father had threatened to disown him then—but now his father is dead, and he is no longer afraid to speak the truth.

*It seems like Percy wanted to make a bigger splash with his declaration since he is disappointed and insulted that only Cromwell is here. Foolishly, Percy seems to think that he is more important that he actually is, since he compares the declaration of his marriage's invalidity with King Henry's, without stopping to think how small Percy and his earldom are in comparison to the king.*

Cromwell tells Percy that he is a man "whose money is almost spent" and Cromwell knows his creditors. He says that he can imagine Percy "without money and title," in "a hovel," hunting a rabbit for dinner that Anne Boleyn will skin and cook. Harry Percy "slumps over the table" with tears in his eyes. Cromwell tells him that he and Anne "were never pre-contracted" and that their "silly promises" have no legal binding. He also tells him that if he makes any comments about Anne's "freedom," Norfolk will "bite [his] bollocks off." He then calmly tells Percy that Anne hates him, and that the only favor he can do for her, "short of dying," is to "unsay what [he] said to [his] poor wife" and "clear [Anne's] path to become Queen of England."

*While Cromwell has been persuasive and logical throughout the novel, this is the first scene in which readers get to see him flexing his power and threatening another into submission. Cromwell seems determined not only to silence Percy, but also to break his spirit, which he does by telling him that Anne Boleyn hates Percy. Since Cromwell has tied his own success in court with Anne becoming the queen, this situation with Percy is as frustrating for Cromwell as it is for Anne, and he is determined to quash it. Also, Cromwell remembers that Harry Percy was the one who arrested Wolsey at York. Cromwell was determined to have his revenge on Percy as soon as he had heard this.*

Early the next morning, the king's council meets and Warham attends as well. Cromwell asks Warham about Eliza Barton, the Maid, a prophetess in his diocese who has said that King Henry will only reign for a year if he marries Anne Boleyn. Cromwell wants to know who controls her, and Warham insists the girl is innocent. Just then, Harry Percy is brought in, and he is followed by Henry. Audley, who is standing in as Lord Chancellor, asks Percy if his relationship with Anne was pre-contracted, and whether there was "carnal knowledge of any kind." Percy denies all of it. He then swears on the Bible that he has spoken the truth, and Henry is pleased when it is done.

*When Warham denies that the Maid is working against Henry, it suggests that he, too, may be involved in the schem surrounding her prophecies. Meanwhile, Percy does exactly what Cromwell asked him to do, demonstrating again just how influential Cromwell has become—and how valuable he is to Henry.*

Back at Austin Friars, Cromwell feels sorry for Mary Talbot, whose "life will not be easier after this." He thinks of how Harry Percy had arrested the cardinal and set guards around his bed as he was dying.

*Mary Talbot appealed for a divorce, but she will now be stuck with Percy for a husband. Cromwell's sympathy for her when no one else even considered her existence shows his empathy for people who are voiceless and powerless. Cromwell seems satisfied with Harry Percy's fate and feels like he has gotten his revenge for Percy's rough treatment of Wolsey.*

Cromwell then reads up on all the information he has on Eliza Barton, the Maid, and he tells Rafe that the Maid has visions of the saints and can tell if someone's dead relatives ended up in Heaven or Hell by speaking in either a high- or low-pitched voice. Rafe says "[t]he effect could be comic," and Cromwell says he has brought up "irreverent children." Rafe says that More and Fisher have visited the girl, and Cromwell says the king is "disposed to believe in prophecies."

*Clearly, Cromwell and Rafe are convinced that the Maid is a hoax. The only reason Cromwell is concerned about her is because Henry is prone to believe in "prophecies" and fear them, and Cromwell does not want him to get nervous about marrying Anne Boleyn.*

In September, the king gives Anne Boleyn the title of Marquess of Pembroke. Cromwell has organized her income from 15 manors. Anne knows she is "almost there now, almost there," and she smiles often, showing teeth that are "white and sharp." Cromwell is master of the jewels, and he is in charge of procuring Katherine's jewels and redesigning them to Anne's specifications. He feels that the "wind is set fair and the tide is running for him." He thinks the king will soon name his friend Audley the Chancellor. Many of the old courtiers have resigned in protest, refusing to serve Anne, and Cromwell is filling the empty positions with friends from his Wolsey days.

*When Cromwell first met Anne, she confessed to him that she hardly ever laughed since her position in court was so insecure. But now, she is very close to becoming queen and smiles a lot, showing her white and sharp teeth that remind the reader of her fierceness and capacity for violence, like the wolves of the title. Cromwell has tied his fate to Anne's, and he, too, is pleased with her success since it cements his own position in court.*

At the celebration afterward, Cromwell spots John Seymour's daughter, the pale, quiet girl he is so taken with. She holds up her **hands** and shows him the "**kingfisher** flash" of the **blue silk** that she has edged her sleeves with—she has reused the fabric with which he'd wrapped her book of needlework patterns. Cromwell tactfully asks her how things are at Wolf Hall, and she says John Seymour is well, as always, while the rest of the family isn't. She says her sister Liz Seymour will come down to court to keep the new queen company if the king gets a new wife, but that she herself would prefer to serve Katherine up-country. Cromwell advises her to serve Anne Boleyn, saying she "will soften, when she has her heart's desire," but he doesn't quite believe it himself.

*Jane Seymour saved the blue silk Cromwell used to wrap her present and used to it line her sleeves—this implies that she, too, likes Cromwell and values his gift. While most of the other characters in the novel are described as wild and violent animals—like dogs, wolves, and snakes—Seymour's daughter reminds Cromwell of a colorful kingfisher. This shows that she is gentle and innocent compared to the other ambitious brutes at court, which is why he values her. Her gesture of holding up her hands emphasizes this point, showing symbolically that Jane has nothing to hide.*

In October, the king and his court prepare to travel to France to meet King Francois, who has promised to speak to the Pope in favor of Henry's marriage. Anne Boleyn asks Charles Brandon, the Duke of Suffolk, if his wife is ready to make the journey, and he is angry that his wife—who is a former Queen of France—is supposed to wait on "Boleyn's daughter." He storms out, and the king sends Cromwell after him to wrangle an apology.

*Henry and Anne seem to be making one final effort to win the Pope's approval for their marriage. Even though they are prepared to go ahead with their marriage without this, they probably think that having the Pope's approval will ensure that the people of England will support the marriage, too, since the English are largely faithful to the Catholic Church.*

Brandon tells Cromwell that Anne Boleyn has learned her tricks from her mother, who was a "great whore," and from her sister Mary Boleyn, who was "trained in a brothel." Cromwell calmly insists that no one "believe[s] that story now." He tells Brandon that even if his wife is too ill to make the journey to France, he would advise at least Brandon to go since "Anne is unforgiving."

*Despite Anne Boleyn's rise in court, many courtiers, including Suffolk, resent her new power over them since they haven't forgotten that the Boleyns are not old nobility. Cromwell emphasizes that nothing good can come of telling Anne the truth that Suffolk's wife does not want to wait on a Boleyn. Again, Cromwell prioritizes strategy over honesty.*

A problem that emerges as they prepare for the trip is that none of the French ladies want to host Anne Boleyn since they consider her to be Henry's mistress. Francois suggests that she can stay with his own mistress, the Duchess of Vendone, and Henry is furious. Finally, they decide that Anne will remain in Calais while Henry goes to meet Francois in Boulogne.

*Since Anne Boleyn is not yet officially Henry's queen, she lacks the status to visit with France's royal ladies, who assume she is Henry's mistress and therefore has no social status.*

When the entourage stops in Canterbury, Henry wants to show Anne Boleyn to the people. The crowds put out their hands to touch the king. A bunch of Franciscan monks come by and bring the Maid with them. Henry asks her to approach and she tells him that he must burn the heretics who surround him—she says that Anne is one of them. The Maid says that if Henry marries Anne, his reign will only last for seven months. She also claims to have seen Henry's mother in the afterlife. Anne demands that she get out of her way, and the Maid leaves after saying that lightning will strike Henry. Henry is upset by these prophesies and sends Anne away from him that evening.

*Cromwell seems to have been right about his fears that Henry would take the Maid's prophecies to heart. Henry's reaction is yet another piece of evidence that he's an emotional and volatile leader. Even though Cromwell finds the Maid's prophecies laughable, he still has to take them seriously in order to work effectively with Henry.*

The entourage reaches Calais, which has been an English outpost for 200 years. The king is greeted by the governor, Lord Berners, an "old soldier and scholar" who seems anxious about the cost he'll have to bear for this royal visit.

*King Henry seems to go where he pleases and do what he wants to, without any idea of the financial implications behind his decision to travel with a huge entourage and impose on his host. Of course, Berners has no choice but to bear the expense and claim to be honored by the king's visit.*

In Boulogne, King Francois asks to see Cromwell, and he wants to know if Cromwell is Welsh. Cromwell says he isn't, and Francis seems puzzled about how Cromwell entered the court if his family isn't connected to the Tudors. Francois says he has heard that Cromwell is in good standing with Anne Boleyn and says that he's had no experience with her since she was a young woman at the French court. He gives Cromwell a pair of leather gloves, saying Cromwell's "sudden fortunes" might not last and that they might never meet again. Inside the glove, Cromwell finds a dark ruby. He takes it straight to Henry, who is pleased and says he will have it set right away and wear it in front of Francois to show him "how [he is] served."

*Cromwell seems to be gaining international fame for rising from nothing and becoming an important courtier. Francois seems to admire this, but he doesn't trust that Cromwell's good fortune will last much longer. By taking the ruby straight to Henry, Cromwell proves to Henry that he is loyal to him and cannot be bribed.*

When Francois and Henry come to Calais, Anne Boleyn leads Francois to dance and Cromwell notices that he is very taken with her. The two of them laugh and talk in a way that makes Cromwell's "spine [...] stiff with [...] personal terror." He finally decides to end their flirtation by sending Norfolk to ask Anne to dance. Cromwell wonders if he really does love his king, which makes it difficult to see him jealous. That night, the king retires early. Mary Shelton asks Cromwell for a Bible since Anne wants to swear on something. Later, when Cromwell is in the gardens, he meets Mary Boleyn, who says that Anne is finally sleeping with Henry. Henry and Anne swore on the Bible before Norris and Mary Boleyn, and they are now "married in God's sight." Henry promised to marry Anne again in England and make her his queen.

*Cromwell is terrified to see Anne Boleyn flirt with King Francis, but this seems to have been a calculated move on Anne's part. Henry must have been jealous, which inspired him to marry her (informally) that very night. Again, Anne shows herself to be just as strategic and ruthless as Cromwell himself.*

## PART 4: CHAPTER 3: EARLY MASS, NOVEMBER 1532

Rafe wakes Cromwell from uneasy dreams, saying that the king has already gone to Mass but that they didn't want to wake Cromwell since he never sleeps late. Cromwell recalls that five years ago, Wolsey went France and told Cromwell to watch the king's face for signs that he had finally slept with Anne Boleyn. This morning, Cromwell reaches the church late, and he sees Anne walking out on Berners's arm—her face is a "careful blankness." Henry comes out with another lady on his arm and doesn't even look at Anne. When he sees Cromwell, he smiles and puts on his big, new **hat**, which has a feather in it.

*Five years ago, Wolsey hoped that Henry would finally sleep with Anne, after which he would begin to tire of her. Now Henry has slept with Anne, but rather than meaning what Wolsey hoped it would, this has cemented their status as husband and wife. Henry's new feathered hat symbolizes his triumph at finally sleeping with Anne. The idiom "a feather in one's cap" means to achieve or accomplish something, and Henry seems to be filled with a sense of accomplishment.*

## PART 5: CHAPTER 1: ANNA REGINA, 1533

At Austin Friars, a woman named Helen Barre has come to ask Cromwell for help since her husband has abandoned her. She says she did laundry at a nearby convent, but though the nuns liked her work, they said she could not bring her two children there—Cromwell thinks this is evidence of the church's limited charity. He tells her she can stay and work at Austin Friars. Her children watch a German painter painting Cromwell's new coat of arms on a wall, and as he translates between them, he thinks that he is "always translating," "if not language to language, then person to person." It has become his job to mediate between Henry and Anne Boleyn when they quarrel—he thinks he is like "a public poet."

*Cromwell seems to have gotten even more powerful—he has his own coat of arms, and he mediates the king's quarrels with Anne, which proves his close relationship with them both. He is also as kind as he always was to the powerless and disenfranchised, readily offering work and a home to Helen Barre and her children.*

Cromwell recalls how the entourage was stuck in Calais for 10 days due to storms. Henry refused to see Cromwell for business, sending him a message that he and Anne Boleyn were too busy "composing some music for the harp." On the day they were finally about to depart, Christophe, a boy Cromwell had met at an inn in Calais, showed up and said he would like to go with Cromwell since he was in trouble with the French law for sticking a knife in someone. He reminded Cromwell of himself, so Cromwell brought him to Austin Friars.

*Again, Cromwell is ready to welcome vulnerable people in need. He sees that even those who come from violent pasts—like this boy from Calais—have the potential for future greatness.*

On January 25, 1533, Anne Boleyn and Henry take their vows at a chapel in Whitehall in a small ceremony, with no celebration. Mary Boleyn signals to Cromwell that Anne is pregnant, and Cromwell guesses that the king doesn't know yet. Cromwell works all night drafting a law which would make it illegal to overrule the king and appeal to the Pope. In the morning, he goes to visit Cranmer, who is to be the next Archbishop of Canterbury since Warham has died. Pope Clement needs to approve of Cranmer's appointment so he can be confirmed. Cromwell tells him the news that Anne is pregnant, and Cranmer says that he officially isn't supposed to know about the secret marriage or the pregnancy. Cranmer still hasn't told him what the secret was that he mentioned in his letter from Germany, and Cromwell assumes it was unimportant and has been forgotten.

*Cromwell knows that Henry is desperate for an heir, and that if Anne can give him one, she would be unassailable—and so would Cromwell, which is why he is so quick to start drafting the law. In the meantime, Cromwell seems to be placing more of his friends in successful positions as Cranmer is poised to become the next Archbishop.*

Meanwhile, rumors float around of Anne Boleyn's pregnancy, and Chapuys immediately lets the rest of Europe know about it. Cromwell would have preferred it "if the old marriage were out, the new marriage in" before the news spread, but he thinks that "life is never perfect for the servant of a prince."

*Since the whole of Europe thinks that Anne isn't yet married to Henry, people would assume that her child isn't the legal heir to the throne.*

Cromwell goes to visit Anne Boleyn, who tells him she is tired of her sister Mary Boleyn and wants her gone. She suggests Cromwell's nephew Richard, who has some Tudor blood, as a potential husband for Mary, saying they can "make [their] own household arrangements" about who will father Mary's children. Cromwell asks Anne if she is happy, and she says she is—while she was "always desired," she is now "valued," and she likes it.

*Anne has begun her confinement and will not be sleeping with Henry until the baby is born, since it was believed at the time that having sex might harm the unborn child. She immediately seems insecure that Henry might return to Mary Boleyn's bed, which is why she wants her gone; Anne is jealous and never sure of Henry's faithfulness. Since she knows that Mary wanted to marry Cromwell, she implies that Cromwell could marry his nephew Richard to her while fathering her children himself, returning to the idea of incestuous and uncivilized sexual relations, like John Seymour's at Wolf Hall.*

Cromwell later visits a prisoner, John Frith, at the Tower. When Cromwell takes Frith's **hands**, "he finds them all bones, cold and dry and with telltale traces of ink." Cromwell thinks that "he cannot be so delicate, if he has lived so long." Frith was one of the scholars at Wolsey's college, and while Cromwell was in Calais, Thomas More arrested him for translating Luther into English.

*Frith is is almost otherworldly in his wisdom, and Cromwell seems to respect him immensely; Frith's hands indicate that he has a kind of hidden strength that Cromwell values. Cromwell also seems intent on saving his life because Frith was one of Wolsey's scholars, and Wolsey believed in intellectual freedom. More is no longer Lord Chancellor but he is still out catching heretics.*

Cromwell asks Frith if he can "soften his answers" if Cromwell is able to get him an audience with the king. Frith says that More "means to dine on [him]." He asks Cromwell not to "injure [his] credit by asking for mercy." He also refuses to "unbelieve what [he] believe[s]." Cromwell says he will try to organize Frith's escape, but Frith says it will be impossible for him to remain in hiding forever.

*Cromwell essentially asks Frith to lie about his beliefs so he can have him freed, but Frith refuses to. Cromwell cannot understand this inflexible notion of honor; he still offers to give him a chance to escape, but Frith refuses this, too.*

A French envoy comes to England, and he asks Cromwell if they would postpone Anne Boleyn's coronation. He says Francois didn't expect Henry "to be flaunting his supposed wife and her big belly." Cromwell says delaying is impossible—Henry is determined to have the coronation to prove that he has the support of all England. The next day, the papal nuncio arrives from Rome, and Henry "takes him by the hand" and tells him how "his ungodly councilors torment him" and that he longs for "perfect amity with Pope Clement." Cromwell is filled with admiration for how Henry shifts his behavior in different situations. He thinks that if he weren't a king, he might have been "a traveling player, and leader of his troupe."

*King Francois seems embarrassed to support Henry and Anne at the coronation, since Anne will be obviously pregnant. Henry is determined to hold the coronation in order to flaunt his own power and show that he will not bow to the Pope. However, when the papal envoy arrives, Henry is so genuine as he speaks of his affection for the Pope that even Cromwell—who constantly "arranges his face"—is impressed at Henry's ability to hide his true feelings.*

At Anne Boleyn's command, Cromwell presents Richard and Gregory at court, and Henry receives them graciously. That evening, Cromwell tells Richard that Anne has suggested he marry Mary Boleyn, but that they would have to get the king's approval. Richard asks if he has a choice, and Cromwell feels offended that he might think he'd be forced. Richard says that Cromwell is "practiced at persuading" and sometimes it is like "being knocked down in the street and stamped on." Cromwell tells him that Mary is very beautiful, "not as witless as everyone thinks," and has none of her "sister's malice." They would "all profit" from the marriage since Richard would be the king's brother-in-law. Richard's "voice is flat" as he acknowledges that the whole family would gain from it. Cromwell asks him to think about it, and to tell no one.

*Cromwell cares deeply about his family, and he's upset that Richard thinks he would ever manipulate him. But Richard's reaction is telling: he notes that Cromwell's skills of persuasion are themselves a kind of violence, and that Cromwell might unwittingly hurt the people he loves by using those very skills on them. Cromwell doesn't actually force Richard to marry Mary, but this scene nonetheless hints that Cromwell's skillful scheming might not be as harmless as he seems to believe.*

However, Richard tells Rafe about it right away, and Rafe looks disapproving as he walks into Cromwell's room. Cromwell asks Rafe not to tell Richard that Mary Boleyn had flirted with Cromwell once, since there's nothing between them. Their household won't become like **Wolf** Hall. Rafe wonders if the bride has different ideas about this. He tells Cromwell that Richard hesitates because "all [their] lives and fortunes depend now on [Anne Boleyn]," who is "mutable" and "mortal." Rafe reminds Cromwell that "the whole history of the king's marriage [shows that] a child in the womb is not an heir in the cradle."

*While Cromwell seems to have lost his balanced judgment somewhat, he is kept in check by the ever-sensible Rafe. Rafe and Richard both seem wiser than Cromwell is when they consider that they should not tie the household's "lives and fortunes" to Anne Boleyn, since it's not certain that her power will continue. Here, Cromwell's love for his family seems to prevent his descent into uncivilized, "wolf-like" behavior in his quest for power.*

Anne Boleyn is hoping for a son, and she tells her ladies-in-waiting that "it is a boy, and no one is to say or think otherwise." Cromwell tells her that in Italy, people believe that pregnant mothers have to stay warm to have sons. Jane Seymour, the pale, quiet girl, says she would like a baby too, and Jane Rochford tells her to be careful because they would have her "bricked up alive" if her belly shows. Anne says that the Seymour family in Wolf Hall would "give her a bouquet," causing Jane Seymour great embarrassment. Anne tells the other ladies to leave Jane Seymour alone, because teasing her is like "baiting a **field mouse**."

*Anne Boleyn—and Cromwell—know that she needs to have a son in order to give Henry the heir he so desperately wants, which is why they are both anxious about it. Jane Seymour naively speaks her mind, which causes the other ladies to pounce on her and tease her. Jane's innocence makes her seem like a colorful, beautiful bird to Cromwell, but Anne sees her as a tiny, helpless mouse. Neither, it seems, yet views her as entirely human, but it will later become clear that this is a mistake when Jane gains her own power.*

Anne Boleyn says she has heard that a book of the Maid's prophecies is being printed, and Cromwell says he will make sure that no one reads it. Anne is distraught thinking about all her enemies—the Emperor, Katherine, Katherine's daughter Mary Tudor, Henry's cousin Lord Exeter, who has a claim to the throne—and she wants Cromwell's bill that will "forbid appeals to Rome" to be passed quickly. She says that her enemies want her dead, but that after her son is born, he will unquestionably be the heir to Henry's throne.

*Increasingly, Anne has to rely on Cromwell to protect her from her enemies. In both their cases, gaining power also means becoming vulnerable, since so many people are upset about their rise.*

Cranmer has been named archbishop, at great expense to the king. Chapuys tells Henry he does not agree with the archbishop's claim that his marriage to Katherine is void, and Henry says the "Pope has no power to make incest licit." He says if that were the case, "God would not have punished [Henry] with the loss of [his] children." He asks Chapuys if he thinks he is going through all this trouble just because he's lustful. He adds that Chapuys should tell the Emperor that Henry took "a wife in a union blessed by God" in order to have an heir. Chapuys says there is "no guarantee" that he will have a son or "any living children," which drives Henry to tears of rage.

*While Henry usually hides his dislike for Chapuys behind a genial persona, this time, Henry cannot help his furious reaction when Chapuys says that Anne's child might not be a boy, or that it might be stillborn. Again, it's clear that Henry is an irrational ruler; it's completely true that Anne's pregnancy might not result in a son, but Henry can't stand to contemplate that very real possibility.*

A day after Cromwell's bill is passed in Parliament, Anne Boleyn appears with Henry at Mass and is prayed for as queen. As a reward, Henry makes Cromwell Chancellor of the Exchequer. Henry tells Cromwell to go see Katherine in order to make sure that she will spring no surprises at the court convened to dissolve the marriage. He also asks Cromwell to leave Rafe with him when he is gone, since Rafe can tell Henry what Cromwell might have said in a particular situation. Henry adds that he has thought it over and doesn't think that Mary Boleyn should marry Richard—"at least, not at this time." Cromwell understands him perfectly, and he thinks that Anne will "spit nails" when she finds out. Henry says "it is a solace […] not to have to talk and talk" since Cromwell understands him so well.

*Henry seems determined to have Mary Boleyn around so he can sleep with her since Anne is pregnant, which is why he doesn't want her to be married to Richard "at this time." Anne had expected this to happen, which is why she wanted Mary gone, but she won't get her wish—which hints at the way that Anne and Henry will have an increasingly adversarial relationship going forward.*

Cromwell goes to Katherine's manor and she seems to have been expecting him, though no one has been sent to inform her. She tells him she will not attend the court at Dunstable since she does not recognize it as legitimate, and that she will wait for the Pope to get back to her about her case. Cromwell advises her to agree to the king's terms so Mary Tudor might be "confirm[ed] as his heir" and Katherine will get "a great estate." He tells her that if she is "found out in treason the law will take its course with [her], as if [she] were any other subject." He says Chapuys "urges war" in every letter he sends to Emperor Charles, and Katherine says she knows nothing of this. Cromwell admires her astonishing lie. He tells her Cranmer will annul the marriage, whether she attends the court or not.

*Even though Katherine is aware that she is losing her battle against Henry and Anne Boleyn, she still hasn't given up hope that the Pope might be able to help her. While Cromwell is usually very cordial with Katherine, he is forced to resort to threats since she refuses to back down. At the same time, he admires her refusal; her ability to stick to her goals is, in some ways, similar to Cromwell's own.*

Cromwell visits Thomas More in Chelsea, who tells him that the day of Anne Boleyn's coronation will be "a day of shame for the women of England." Cromwell wants to know if the Maid has come to see More, and More says he sent her away since he thinks she is an impostor. The Maid is popular with Bishop Fisher and she has been received by Lady Exeter, who More says is "a foolish and ambitious woman." More says he wrote to the Maid to tell her "to cease to trouble the king with her prophecies," and Cromwell asks him for a copy of this letter.

*More makes it clear here that he doesn't think the Maid's prophecies are legitimate, even though he doesn't want the king's marriage annulled either. It's clear that there's some kind of scheme behind the Maid, but it's not yet clear who's involved in it.*

Cromwell tells More that he has been to see "[More's] queen," Katherine, and More, "unblinking," says that he isn't in touch with her. Cromwell says that he has been watching two friars carry her letters aboard, and he suspects that all Franciscan monks are working against the king. He says he might have to "hang them up by their wrists" in order to get a confession from them. While Cromwell's inclination is "to take them home, feed them and ply them with strong drink," he says he will look up to More to be "[his] master in these proceedings."

*Cromwell warns More that he is aware of More's association with the Franciscan friars who are smuggling Katherine's letters to the Emperor and to the Pope. Cromwell says that he might catch the monks and torture them to get information out of them, just like More used to torture the heretics. The tides seem to have really turned—Cromwell is now very powerful while More seems to be at his mercy.*

Cromwell then tells More to ask Henry to meet with Frith. He says More might think Frith is a heretic, but that More must see that he is "a pure soul, [and] a fine scholar." Cromwell wants More to tell Henry this. Cromwell says that even if Frith's "doctrine is false," More is "an eloquent man" and More can convince Frith of the error of his ways. But if Frith dies, More can never save his soul. Cromwell takes More's **hand** and holds "its shifting sinews in his own palm." Cromwell notices that "now his own hand is white, a gentleman's hand, flesh running easily over the joints, though once he thought the burn marks, the stripes that any smith picks up in the course of business, would never fade."

*Cromwell notices that his own hands are now white, like a gentleman's. With time, his past as a blacksmith's son seems to have become irrelevant. Now, his only identity is that of a powerful courtier. Cromwell has succeeded in successfully shrugging off his past, which he had thought would limit him forever.*

Anne Boleyn's coronation is to be a grand affair, with petals on the streets and wine flowing in the fountains. Cromwell goes home to Austin Friars on the evening before the coronation and calls on his neighbor Chapuys, who has closed his shutters to the celebrations. Chapuys says that Cromwell has succeeded where the cardinal had failed. Chapuys says that when the cardinal came to a closed door, "he would flatter it, […] [and then] try tricking it open." Cromwell is the same way, but "in the last resort, [Cromwell] just kick[s] it in."

*Even though Chapuys and Cromwell work for opposing sides, they share a friendship that transcends their politics. Chapuys accurately says that Cromwell has a layer of toughness that makes him an even more effective negotiator than Wolsey was, and his words again imply that Cromwell's skills at manipulation are their own kind of violence.*

At the coronation, Anne Boleyn is "mantled in **purple velvet, edged in ermine**," and "her face is entranced." Cromwell wills Anne not to stumble, and he finds himself praying that the child she is carrying should be "hard, alert, watchful of opportunity, wringing use from the smallest turn of fortune." Cromwell thinks that Henry is Wolsey's creation, but that his child can be Cromwell's "own prince." He thinks that he wouldn't be too old to be advisor to the child. He wouldn't be like Henry Wyatt and retire from affairs because "what is there, but affairs?" King Henry is very pleased after the coronation, and he tells Cromwell that Anne looked well and beautiful. Henry says this is his "best day." Later, he tells Cromwell that he is sending Gardiner to France, and that Cromwell can perhaps be the new Master Secretary.

*At her coronation, Anne Boleyn is dressed luxuriously and extravagantly, looking like the queen she now is. Henry is aware that Cromwell had a big role to play in getting Anne to be queen, and he plans to reward him with more responsibility at court.*

Christophe brings Cromwell the message that he is to go in secret to meet Cranmer at his old lodgings as soon as the feast is done. There is a young, pregnant German woman with Cranmer, reading a book by Luther. Cranmer introduces her as Margarete, his wife, and Cromwell is shocked. He says that if Henry finds out Cranmer is married, he will torture and burn him as a heretic. Cranmer says he could not help himself, and that this was the secret he mentioned in his letter. Cranmer holds out his **hands** to Cromwell—"fine hands, long fingers, the pale rectangles of his palms crossed and recrossed by news of sea voyages and alliances"—and tells him Cromwell is his "chief friend [...] in this world." Cromwell sees no other way than to help him keep his wife secret, and so he takes Helen Barre to attend to her.

*Cranmer is now the Archbishop of Canterbury and has a lot to lose if news gets out that he is married. While Henry seems fine with breaking any Catholic laws that don't personally work for him, he still seems very attached to other religious laws—especially the idea that priests must be celibate. This makes Cranmer's position even more dangerous. Cranmer's hands reflect his position as a learned and important man, and this, combined with the fact that Cranmer calls Cromwell his "chief friend," makes Cromwell agree to help him.*

When Frith is burned, Cromwell is away on a hunt with Henry. He later hears that Frith suffered greatly since the winds kept blowing the flames away from him. Cromwell thinks that "Death is a japester; call him and he will not come." Meanwhile, the Pope has declared Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn void and says he will excommunicate the king if he does not return to Katherine. The Pope says that when Henry dies, "his corpse will be dug with **animal** bones into a common pit." Rumors circulate in the city that Cromwell has a secret foreign woman who has borne him a daughter, and Cromwell does nothing to dispel these rumors. Anne retires to sealed rooms at Greenwich to give birth, and she looks "very pale, very grand" as she leaves.

*While Cromwell doesn't succeed in saving Frith, he himself seems to be becoming Henry's trusted friend and companion. Meanwhile, the Pope still sides with Katherine, and his words reinforce the idea that even though Henry is the king, he's defined by his animal desires and impulsess. However, the Pope's verdict is no longer relevant within England since Cromwell's bill limiting the Pope's powers there has already been passed.*

## PART 5: CHAPTER 2: DEVIL'S SPIT, AUTUMN AND WINTER 1533

The king's body is "braced for impact" when he hears that Anne Boleyn had a girl. He asks if she is healthy, and "thanks God for his favor." Cromwell thinks, "Henry has been rehearsing." As Henry leaves to go to his rooms, he says over his shoulder that the child should be called Elizabeth, and that the jousts must be canceled. He then pauses and asks Cranmer and Cromwell to join him in his closet.

*Henry is hugely disappointed that Anne Boleyn had a daughter, but he hides it well, which Cromwell notices and appreciates. Since it is a girl, there is nothing to celebrate, which is why Henry asks for the jousts to be canceled.*

The king slumps in a chair and Cromwell resists the urge to pat his shoulder, "as one does for any inconsolable being," and instead "folds his **fingers**, protectively, into the fist that holds the king's heart." He tells Henry that one day, they will "make a great marriage for her." Cranmer says that the king and Anne Boleyn are young and can have more children, and that perhaps "God intends some peculiar blessing by this princess." Henry is consoled by their words, and he walks around the palace repeating what they said.

*Cromwell must share Henry's disappointment, since he too had a lot invested in Anne Boleyn having a son. Still, he puts his disappointment aside to sympathize with Henry, revealing his capacity for kindness. His hands here also symbolize his devotion to the king (and perhaps his power over Henry as well), as he imagines his fingers carefully wrapped around the king's heart.*

Meanwhile, the prophetess nun called the Maid has been brought to London and is being looked after by the women in Cromwell's household. The Maid treats even Cranmer "with condescension," claiming to know more about the Bible than he does because "An angel told [her]." A delegation made up of Cromwell, Cranmer, Speaker Audley, and a legislator named Richard Riche questions her, and she unnerves them with her stories of visions, devils, and a plague that will kill them all. Afterward, Cranmer says he doesn't have enough evidence to try her for heresy, and Riche says they should burn her for treason. Cromwell says she has made "no overt action"—she has "only expressed intent" to bring harm to the king.

*While the delegation is convinced that the Maid is a hoax who is being used against Henry and Anne Boleyn, the delegates find it hard to get her to say or admit to anything that could be construed as a crime.*

Some of Cromwell's friends come to dinner at Austin Friars on Saturday night. They discuss Cranmer's wife, and Vaughan wonders if it is possible for "Henry [to] know and not know." Cromwell says it is possible because he is "a prince of very large capacities." Dr. Butts, an astrologer, says that the king's moon is in Aries, which will make his marriage unhappy. Cromwell says impatiently that it is "not the stars that make us, […] it is circumstance and *necessita*, the choices we make under pressure."

*News of Cranmer's marriage has gotten out, and Cromwell believes that Henry knows about it, too, but chooses not to acknowledge it in order to avoid any complications. Cromwell seems to admire this about the king, since it shows a level of maturity in his reaction rather than the fanatical fury that someone like Thomas More might have had in a similar situation. Cromwell also voices his philosophy of life in opposition to Butts's proclamation of the stars' influence on people's lives. According Cromwell, people's circumstances and choices define their paths; they're not bound by destiny.*

Later that night, Alice comes in to tell Cromwell that the Maid is close to her breaking point since she cries at night though she seems brave by day. He is happy to hear this because he is ready to wrap up the whole business. Alice then tells him that his ward, Thomas Rotherham, has asked her to marry him. Cromwell is delighted at the news, and he says Alice's parents would have been pleased if they were alive, which makes her cry.

*Cromwell takes great joy in his niece's happiness, as if she were his own daughter, which again demonstrates his deep compassion for his loved ones.*

After Alice leaves, Cromwell pulls out his wife Liz's old prayer book to write down details about the marriages of the young people in the household. He thinks that he may finally be over Liz, though he didn't think it would ever be possible for "that weight [to] shift from inside his chest." He realizes that he never thinks of Johane anymore—while her body once had "special meaning" for him, "that meaning is now unmade." He thinks he surely has gotten over Liz, and then strikes out the name of her first husband from the book, thinking that he'd wanted to do that for years. There is a racket outside the house and Christophe wonders if there are **wolves** in England. Cromwell tells him, "[t]hat howling […] is only the Londoners."

*Cromwell seems to be moving on from his heartbreak by filling Liz's old prayer book with details of the next generation's marriages; he feels their joy as if it is his own. And yet, interrupting this happy time for him are the loud sounds from outside that sound like wolves howling. This seems to be a reminder of the constant external danger that impinges on Cromwell's life, even though his home life is safe and warm. Many of the courtiers—Norfolk, Anne Boleyn, John Seymour, Gardiner—have been compared to wolves or violent beasts in the novel, and in the career path that Cromwell has chosen, it seems like he will never be safe from them.*

On Sunday, the Maid is tired and she "confesses that her visions are inventions." She says she hasn't spoken to heavenly persons, or raised the dead, or performed miracles. She asks if she can now go home to Kent, and Cromwell says he will see what he can arrange. Cranmer gently tells her that she will have to make a public confession before she can go anywhere. Cromwell tells the rest of the delegation that he will start bringing in her leaders and her followers, so they can be tried too. The Maid is taken away to the Tower.

*After the Maid confesses that she is a fraud, the next step is to bring in the people who fed and encouraged her lies—since these powerful people are the true traitors against the king. The Maid is, in fact, their victim, since she is a poor woman without money or power who simply did as she was asked.*

At court, Cromwell watches the Seymour sisters. The older one, Liz Seymour, is "bold and hazel and eloquent," while Jane Seymour is "indefinite and blurred" and "her eyes are the color of water." Jane Rochford tells him the sisters are so different that it seems like their mother took on lovers. She then says that she, too, keeps her eyes open, just like Cromwell does, and she offers to spy for him in places he can't go. Cromwell is surprised and he wonders what she could want in return. Jane Rochford says she would like his friendship. She says she will give him information, since Mary Boleyn has been sent away because "Anne [Boleyn] is back on duty in the bedchamber."

*Cromwell thinks of himself as being flexible in his ideas, and he values the ability to assess an idea from different viewpoints. He detests people like Thomas More and Tyndale who are rigid and impractical in their ideas. This is probably why he finds Jane Seymour's timidity and hesitation alluring, thinking of her as being "indefinite and blurred."*

Jane Rochford is childless after seven years of marriage, and Cromwell wonders that the woman is always called barren in a childless marriage while no one says the man's seed is bad. Jane Rochford says that her husband wishes her dead, and that if she were to die, Cromwell should have her body examined for poison since George Boleyn and Anne Boleyn discuss poisons often. She has heard Anne boast that she will poison Mary Tudor, the king's daughter. Cromwell thinks that Jane Rochford is "lonely, […] and breeding a savage heart."

*Cromwell listens to Jane Rochford's vicious gossip out of pity for her, sensing her loneliness and not quite believing her claims. However, when Anne Boleyn is tried and beheaded for treason less than three years later, many of Jane Rochford's claims will be used as accusations against her, including the story of how she planned to poison many people, including Mary Tudor and Henry Fitzroy. Jane Rochford's involvement in Anne's eventual death demonstrates that gossip can take on a life of its own, which further shows that stories can be dangerous.*


Jane Rochford says she knows that Cromwell is in love with Jane Seymour, and that her people are not rich and will happily marry off Jane to him. Cromwell says she is mistaken and that he is interested in the marriages of the "young gentlemen" in his household. Jane Rochford also tells him that for Anne Boleyn to get back in the king's favor, she has to become pregnant again. She says the passion between Anne and the king has cooled, and she hints that Anne seeks her pleasures elsewhere and that George Boleyn makes arrangements for Anne's lovers. Jane Rochford mentions that the "sneaking little boy Mark" is the go-between for the courtiers, bearing messages for them.

*While Jane Rochford has a large capacity for vicious gossip, she also seems to have a keen eye since she has caught onto Cromwell's feelings for Jane Seymour. Again, these stories do make it into the later accusations against Anne Boleyn before she is put to death. She will be accused of incest with George Boleyn and of sleeping with Mark Smeaton. While these accusations are most likely untrue, they are nevertheless what history remembers of Anne Boleyn.*


Cromwell has been working on rounding up the people who were close to the Maid. The king is hesitant to bring charges against Lord Exeter, Henry Courtenay, who was his boyhood friend. He tells Cromwell he is sure Lady Exeter is to blame since she is "fickle and weak like all her sex." Cromwell cannot understand how people like Henry ignore evidence and get sentimental over reminiscences.

*Again, Cromwell remains level-headed while Henry relies on irrational assumptions.*

Henry hears that King Francois has fallen at the Pope's feet and is furious. Cromwell, however, is happy to hear that Francois kept his bargain and convinced the Pope to suspend his excommunication of Henry. Henry tells Cromwell that he sometimes wishes that Pope Clement and Katherine were both dead. He then tells Cromwell that he may be a father again soon and he is so happy that he embraces Cromwell. For the rest of the day, Cromwell "cannot stop smiling."

*When Henry tells Cromwell that Anne Boleyn might be pregnant again, he hugs him like a friend. Cromwell has certainly come a long way from his initial days in court when Henry disapproved of Norfolk putting a hand on Cromwell's shoulder since Cromwell wasn't a nobleman.*

In November, the Maid and her principal supporters do public penance by standing "shackled and barefoot in a whipping wind." The Maid's confession is read out. Thomas More is in the crowd, and he comes up to Cromwell to tell him that he had nothing to do with her. Cromwell tells him it is important to remind the king of this, and that More can do this by writing Henry a letter congratulating him on the birth of Princess Elizabeth and accepting her rights and title. More says he can do so, and Cromwell says he could also write an open letter to say that he has "seen the light in the matter of the king's natural jurisdiction." As More leaves, Cromwell thinks they have to find a way for More to retreat from his previous position without losing face.

*Despite his deep dislike of More and his violent actions against heretics, Cromwell seems almost generous to him as he advises him on what to do. Cromwell even considers how he might be able to help More reverse his stance without embarrassing him, which demonstrates Cromwell's ability to see multiple perspectives and remain flexible in his alliances.*


The next day, the king's bastard son, Henry Fitzroy, the Duke of Richmond, marries Mary Howard, Norfolk's daughter. Anne Boleyn has arranged this marriage so Fitzroy can't be married off to some princess abroad and consolidate his power.

*Anne Boleyn was always a little insecure about Henry Fitzroy being a potential heir to the throne, which is why she wanted him married to her cousin so she could keep a close eye on him. Her insecurities seem to have grown since she doesn't yet have a son.*

In December, Margaret Pole, aunt to Katherine's daughter, Mary Tudor, comes to meet Cromwell to say he must not turn Mary out of her house in Essex. Cromwell says that George Boleyn, Lord Rochford needs that house, and that Mary will join her royal sister Elizabeth's household at Hatfield. When Margaret Pole refuses to budge from her position, Cromwell tells her that he has spies in her house and knows that her sons were plotting with Mary Tudor about how they might induce the Emperor to invade England. Cromwell does not mention that one of her sons is on his payroll, too.

*Cromwell seems to now be carrying out his orders with ruthlessness. He also seems to have spies in all the important households so that no one's actions will be a surprise to him.*

However, when the king asked Cromwell to take the house in Essex from Mary Tudor, Cromwell advised the king "not to diminish" her circumstances and give her cousin the Emperor a reason for war. Henry shouted at him then, saying that if he were to go argue with Anne Boleyn about this and if she were to get agitated and lose the baby, Henry would have no mercy on Cromwell. Cromwell tells Rafe that last week he was the king's "brother-in-arms," and this week Henry is threatening to kill him. Rafe says it is a good thing that Cromwell is not like Wolsey. While Wolsey expected the king's gratitude, Cromwell feels he is more fortunate since he "is no longer subject to vagaries of temperament."

*Henry seems to agree with Cromwell about what to do with Mary Tudor, but he is terrified of upsetting Anne Boleyn, who seems to have planned the whole thing. Anne Boleyn seems to be making her decisions out of bitterness rather than practicality, which sets her apart from Cromwell. They used to share their firmly level-headed sense of ambition, but Anne's control over her circumstances might be slipping, which might put Cromwell in danger as well since the king is unhappy.*

## PART 5: CHAPTER 3: A PAINTER'S EYE, 1534

The artist Hans Holbein completes his portrait of Cromwell, and Cromwell "feels shy of it." The painting shows him holding a book that is supposed to be a Bible. However, while painting him, Hans found Cromwell's Bible to be too plain. He found a fancy-looking book for him to pose with, which was a book about keeping financial accounts. Cromwell sees his painted **hand** and thinks that the "motion [Hans] has captured, that folding of the fingers, is as sure as that of a slaughterman's when he picks up the killing knife."

*While Cromwell is supposed to be holding a Bible in the portrait, he is, in actuality, holding a book about financial accounting, which suggests (correctly) that he is a man of practicality who is primarily concerned with achieving his goals rather than sticking to morals or principles. Cromwell loathes the idea that he looks like a murderer, but he cannot help seeing that this is true. His hands seem to be coiled with power and violence, which shows that he can be a dangerous man when he puts his mind to it.*

When the household sees the portrait, their reactions are varied. Alice says Hans has made Cromwell look "rather stout." Helen Barre says his "features are true enough," but that the expression on his face is unlike him. Rafe says Cromwell saves that expression for men. Chapuys comes in to look at it and says the painter has "missed the mark" because one always thinks of Cromwell "studying the faces of other people," never alone. However, he says Hans has succeeded in making him look formidable, which is apt. Cromwell says he thinks that a "silly little boy" called Mark who once said he looks like a murderer was right about that, and Gregory, surprised, asks him if he didn't know it until then.

*Everyone seems to have a different reaction to the portrait, thinking that it doesn't quite capture Cromwell's essence. This shows that Cromwell contains multitudes and that his personality cannot be reduced to a single image—he means different things to different people. However, Cromwell seems disappointed that he does, after all, look like a murderer, just like Mark Smeaton said, and Gregory confirms that he always looks like that. Cromwell doesn't think of himself as being a man capable of such violence, but as he gains power, he has becoming gradually more menacing—which was shown in the way he threatened Harry Percy that he would ruin him financially, and in how he threatened Katherine that she might be tried for treason. Cromwell does seem to have more of a violent streak than he likes to acknowledge, even though his violence is less obvious than the physical violence of his youth.*

## PART 6: CHAPTER 1: SUPREMACY, 1534

Cromwell is reading a book by Marsiglio of Padua who writes that "Christ did not give his followers the power to make laws or levy taxes, both of which churchmen have claimed as their right." Cromwell tells Henry that "all priests are subjects" and it is the prince's duty "to govern the bodies of his citizens," using the power that he gets through a legislative body. Cromwell says the legislative body should "provide for the maintenance of priests and bishops" and "use the church's wealth for the public good." Cromwell and Henry know that the church owns a third of England's wealth, and Henry would be rich if he could repossess it. At home, Cromwell has a vision of Wolsey, who asks him to be careful because Henry will take credit for all the good ideas and blame Cromwell for all the failures.

*Cromwell reads books that will help justify Henry's break from the Church, since that will also put some much-needed money into the nation's coffers. Cromwell is primarily a practical man who is concerned with money, and one of his primary aims is to increase England's wealth. However, he seems to know that any risks he takes will be his own since Henry will not support him if he fails, and his conversation with the imagined Wolsey foreshadows the blame that Henry will eventually place on Cromwell.*

The Cromwell household is now teeming with the sons of gentlemen who have been sent there to get an education. Cromwell takes this duty seriously and really "talks to them," asking them "what they value and would value under duress." He knows that one can "learn nothing about men by snubbing them and crushing their pride." He asks them what "they alone can do" in this world. The boys are "astonished by the question, [and] their souls pour out," since no one has really talked to them before, "[c]ertainly not their fathers."

*In addition to his ever-increasing responsibilities at court, Cromwell is also throwing himself into educating and mentoring young men who are embarking on their careers. Cromwell's respect and concern for them shows how much he values the potential in other people and displays the positive side of his perceptive, insightful nature.*

Wriothesley brings news that Gardiner is back from France, and that he is threatening to ruin Wriothesley for working to further Cromwell's interests when he was away. Cromwell says that if he is confirmed as Master Secretary, he will make Wriothesley chief clerk. He then tells him to hurry to Gardiner to see if he can make a better counteroffer. Wriothesley is "alarmed" at his directness and then rushes off. Cromwell thinks that people like himself and Wriothesley are "[i]nveterate scrappers," like "**wolves** snapping over a carcass."

*Cromwell has no grandiose notions about the nature of the power he holds. He is very aware that power is won through fighting over "scraps," in the manner of wolves. Cromwell knows that there is no dignity or honor in ambition, and that people like him and Wriothesley will try to make their way to the top even if it means they have to behave like animals to get there.*

Later, the king calls in Cromwell and Gardiner to look through the bill he wants to put to Parliament that will "secure the succession of Anne Boleyn's children." Anne is present at the meeting too, and she caresses Henry as she reads the bill, as if they were alone. Gardiner is shocked at the spectacle and can't help staring. Anne gets upset at the bill because Cromwell has stated that on the event of her death, the king can marry again. Henry consoles her that the clause is only "notional" and that he would never replace her. The bill says that if Henry doesn't have a lawful male heir, Anne's daughter will inherit the throne.

*Anne Boleyn seems to have complete control over Henry, and she is even having him draft legislation that would guarantee that her children will be his heirs. Henry is afraid of upsetting her in case she loses the child she is pregnant with, and so he is ready to do whatever she asks. This bill is historically important because it sets the path to Anne's daughter Elizabeth becoming the queen one day. Of course, it also clears the way for Henry to marry his future wives after Anne's eventual execution.*

Gardiner declares that this bill is too personal. Cromwell says he means "to seal this act with an oath," which Gardiner finds ridiculous since all the king's subjects cannot be made to swear it. Cromwell says he will swear "whoever is necessary to make the succession safe, and unite the country." Anne Boleyn says the bishops can take the oath, and that they need some new bishops. She names her friends Hugh Latimer and Rowland Lee as candidates. Gardiner disagrees, hinting that they are in "the religious life only for ambition." Henry dismisses Gardiner, asking him to go attend to his flock, and Cromwell feels there is "a feral stink" in the room, like "the hide of a **dog** about to fight."

*While Cromwell is willing to do whatever it takes to keep Henry and Anne Boleyn happy and consolidate his own position of power, Gardiner isn't. The objections Gardiner raises to the bill do seem conscientious and valid, but these are attributes that are not appreciated under Henry, who demands complete obedience. Cromwell thinks of the palpable tension in the room as being a "feral stink," and of Henry and Gardiner being akin to fighting dogs. Once again, Cromwell imagines court relationships as being wild and uncivilized under Henry, as if everyone involved is an untamed animal.*

After Gardiner leaves, the king says Gardiner might be "a resolute ambassador," but that he is disloyal, which the king hates. He says that this is why he values Cromwell, who proved his loyalty by sticking by Wolsey's side through his troubles. Cromwell thinks he "speaks as if [Henry], personally, hadn't caused the trouble; as if Wolsey's fall were caused by a thunderbolt." Henry says that another who has disappointed him is Thomas More, and Anne Boleyn asks Cromwell to include More's name next to Fisher's in the bill against Eliza Barton, the Maid. Cromwell protests, saying More is innocent of this, but Anne says she wants to scare him and that "[f]ear can unmake a man."

*It's ironic that Henry praises Cromwell's loyalty to Wolsey as proof of his character, since Henry is the one who caused Wolsey's trouble. Henry's behavior at that time indicated to Cromwell exactly what kind of master he'd be serving if he worked for the king, so now Cromwell knows to expect no loyalty from the king and to obey without question. And yet, even Cromwell draws the line at accusing Thomas More of supporting the Maid, since he knows this isn't true. However, Henry and Anne Boleyn have no moral qualms about punishing those whom they believe to be disloyal, even if they have to lie to do so.*

Bishop Fisher comes to see Cromwell that afternoon. Cromwell walks into the room demanding how Fisher could be so gullible and he asks Fisher to beg the king's pardon. Fisher says he didn't commit a crime and that he is not in his "second childhood." Cromwell says he certainly seems to be, since he believed that a "puppet show" was real. Fisher says many believed in the Maid, including Warham. Cromwell says that the Maid "threatened the king," but Fisher says that "[f]oreseeing is not the same as desiring, still less plotting it." He says that Cromwell is hounding him about the divorce rather than the prophetess. Cromwell asks him to recognize that "this is a war and [he is] in the enemy camp." Fisher calls him "a ruffian" and an "evil councilor." Cromwell advises him to "[f]all ill" and "[t]ake to [his] bed."

*Bishop Fisher doesn't seem to realize how serious his situation is, and that Henry and Anne Boleyn are looking for the slightest excuse to get rid of those who are disloyal to them. Cromwell gives Fisher excellent advice that he should pretend to get sick in order to avoid being tried with the Maid. Unlike Fisher, who gets carried away by his emotions and calls Cromwell "a ruffian" and "evil," Cromwell stays calm and gives the bishop practical advice.*

When the bill against the Maid and her allies is brought before the House of Lords in February, Fisher's name is on it, as is More's, at Henry's command. Parliament is "indignant over More's inclusion." Cromwell goes to see the Maid in the Tower, where she asks him if she will be burned. Cromwell says he "hope[s] [she] can be spared that," but that it is for the king to decide. As he leaves the Tower where "the king's **beasts**" are kept, he feels "slightly nauseous, he can smell stale blood and from the direction of their cages hear their truffling grunts and smothered roars."

*At the Tower, Cromwell thinks of the prisoners as "the king's beasts," revisiting the idea that London and the court are populated by animals rather than people. The prisoners in the Tower have been stripped of their dignity and humanity, and it makes Cromwell "nauseous" to smell their blood and hear their grunts and roars. Here, there seems to be no difference at all between beasts and people since the prisoners are completely dehumanized and are waiting hopelessly for their deaths.*

Next, Cromwell goes to meet Audley and Norfolk, who say they should all go down on their knees and beg the king to remove More's name from the bill against the Maid. Audley says that if the bill is not passed, the king plans to come before the houses and insist. Norfolk says that might result in public embarrassment for the king, and he asks Cromwell to prevent him from doing it. Norfolk says he is sure More and Fisher will be put to death since they will refuse to swear the oath to uphold the succession of Anne Boleyn's children. Audley says they will "use efficacious persuasions."

*It's telling that Henry's own courtiers have no choice but to beg him to be reasonable about Thomas More. This highlights how unapproachable and stubborn Henry must be.*

On the king's orders, Cromwell goes with Gregory to Hatfield to check on the baby Princess Elizabeth and Mary Tudor. When Cromwell was a boy, he used to help his uncle, who was a cook in the same estate, which then belonged to Cardinal Morton. Lady Bryan is in charge of the baby princess, and she is very talkative. She calls Gregory "a lovely tall young man" and says he must surely take after his mother. About the baby, she says that "you could show her at a fair as a pig-baby." Gregory says she "could be anybody's," meaning that all babies look alike, and Cromwell warns him that people have been sent to the Tower for saying similar things.

*Despite Margaret Pole's protests, Mary Tudor has lost her house on Anne Boleyn's orders and now lives in the same residence as Princess Elizabeth, where she is supposed to serve her. Gregory lacks Cromwell's cautiousness and says whatever pops into his head, which is why Cromwell does not let Gregory assist him in his official work.*

Lady Shelton is in charge of Mary Tudor, and she tells Cromwell that her niece Anne Boleyn has instructed her to "beat [Mary] and buffet her like the bastard she is." Cromwell says that he doesn't understand how Mary could be a bastard since her "parents were in good faith" when she was born. Lady Shelton asks him what Anne said when he voiced this opinion, and he says that "if she had an ax to hand, she would have essayed to cut off [his] head." Lady Shelton says that even if Mary were indeed a bastard, she would treat her gently because "she is a good young woman." She says Mary does not come down to eat with them since she doesn't want to sit below Princess Elizabeth, and that Anne has forbidden them to send any food up to her room other than some bread for breakfast.

*Despite being Anne Boleyn's aunt, Lady Shelton is furious at how badly Anne orders Mary Tudor to be treated. This shows that Anne is being unnecessarily harsh and, in the process, is losing the goodwill of the people, including her own family. At the moment, Mary is powerless since Anne is the queen, and yet she resolutely registers her protests against Anne's orders by refusing to sit "below" Princess Elizabeth at mealtimes, even if that means skipping her food altogether.*

Cromwell finds Mary Tudor huddled by a dying fire in a bare room, and her face brightens when she sees him. He thinks that she is "mak[ing] life as hard as possible" for herself. He says that to solve the "dinner difficulty," he will send her a physician who will say that for her health, she is to be sent a large breakfast in her room, which makes her happy. She asks Cromwell how it could be "lawful" that she is "put out of the succession," and Cromwell says that it is "lawful if Parliament says so." Mary says that she doesn't see how he could be her friend when he is also Anne Boleyn's friend. Cromwell says Anne doesn't need friends since she has enough servants.

*Cromwell is never in favor of unnecessary martyrdom and self-inflicted hardship in order to make a point, so he cannot understand why Mary Tudor chooses to suffer. Nonetheless, he sympathizes with her and figures out a way for her to get more food, which shows his skill at remaining in everyone's good graces and befriending even people who are one another's enemies.*

Cromwell tells Mary Tudor that Anne Boleyn will be coming to visit Princess Elizabeth soon, and that if Mary "greet[s] her respectfully," the king might take Mary back to court. He tells her that "the queen does not expect [her] friendship, only an outward show." He asks her to "bite [her] tongue and bob her a curtsy," because this could change everything for Mary. However, Mary says that Anne is frightened of her and always will be, since Mary might grow up to have her own sons. She seems determined to wait out her suffering.

*Again, Cromwell advises Mary Tudor to soften her stance toward Anne Boleyn in order to make her own life easier—he even tells her she can just pretend to honor Anne, and that this might get her reinstated in court. Mary, however, is stubborn in her dislike of Anne. Mary rightly believes that Anne is frightened of her since Mary might be able to take the throne away from Anne's children.*

As Cromwell leaves, Gregory tells him that Mary Tudor likes Cromwell, and that this is strange. He seems a little afraid of his father as he tells him that Rafe said Cromwell will be "the second man in the kingdom soon." Cromwell tells him not to talk about Mary to anyone, including Rafe. He tells Gregory that if the king were to die tomorrow, Mary would rule, since Anne Boleyn's unborn child and the baby Elizabeth cannot.

*Cromwell's kindness toward Mary Tudor doesn't seem out of the ordinary since he has a tendency to be caring toward young people and the dispossessed. However, based on what he tells Gregory, it seems like his kindness toward Mary is also calculated; he wants her to like him since he knows that she would ascend the throne if Henry were to die anytime soon.*

Soon after, Bishop Fisher asks the king to pardon him, asking him to consider that Fisher is "ill and infirm." The Maid is going to be hanged. The king's councilors beg him on their knees to remove More's name from the bill, and the king relents. That same month, the Pope finally gives his verdict on Queen Katherine's marriage, saying that "the marriage is sound." The Emperor's supporters "let off fireworks in the streets of Rome," while the king is "contemptuous." Anne Boleyn's belly has begun to show, and in the absence of Mary Boleyn, the king has started showering his attention on Mary Shelton.

*While Henry was making some attempts at reconciliation with the Pope through King Francois, he now seems to have given up since the Pope has publicly refused to support Henry's divorce.*

In the summer, Thomas More asks to see a copy of the Act of Succession, and after looking it over, he says he will not swear to it though he will not speak against it or try to dissuade anyone else from it. Audley says that will not be enough, and that More knows it. More acknowledges this and leaves. Audley says that it was for nothing that they all begged the king to spare More. Cromwell "wants to strangle somebody." He says that More is against the divorce and does not believe that the king can be head of the church, but that he will not openly say that. Cromwell says he "hate[s] to be part of this play, which is entirely devised by [More]." He says, "Master More sits in the audience and sniggers when [Cromwell] trip[s] over [his] lines, for he has written all the parts."

*While Cromwell, Audley, Norfolk, and some other courtiers begged Henry to remove More's name from the bill against the Maid and spare his life, More now seems to be courting punishment from the king. Cromwell is irritated at More because he knows that More is trying to fashion a narrative about his virtues. He has Cromwell and the others behaving in exactly the way he wants them to so that he can vilify them and go down in history as a hero, despite all that they did to give him a chance to save himself.*

They call More back into the room, and More explains that taking the oath would be against his conscience. He knows he will be damned to Hell if he does it. Cranmer reminds him that when he entered the king's council, he took an oath to obey the king. More replies that when Cranmer was made archbishop, he swore an oath to Rome though he had a paper in his hand that stated he took the oath under protest. More says that they say they have the majority in Parliament to support them, but he has the true majority behind him—"all the angels and saints," all of Christendom, and the undivided church.

*More brings up the matter of his conscience as a reason to not swear an oath to the Act of Succession, claiming that "the angels and saints" will support him. At this point, it becomes clear that More is willing to die rather than appear to compromise his morals—a choice that seems completely irrational to a pragmatic, open-minded person like Cromwell.*

Cromwell says that "[a] lie is no less a lie just because it is a thousand years old," and that the church has persecuted its members when they stood by their beliefs, "burning them and hacking them apart." He says that More calls on history because he sees history as a mirror that flatters himself. However, Cromwell holds up another mirror to More that shows "a vain and dangerous man, […] a killer [who] will drag down" many to their deaths. These people "will have only the suffering, and not [More's] martyr's gratification." Cromwell says he would rather see his own son beheaded than see More refuse this oath and "give comfort to every enemy of England." He says More will open the door to the Emperor invading England.

*Cromwell points out that the Church was rarely the benevolent sanctuary that More makes it out to be—More himself tortured and beheaded "heretics" who believed differently than him. Cromwell's biggest problem with More's current stance is that it has the potential to cause a war, and that those who suffer the most will be nameless, forgotten people who never had a choice about getting involved. While More will be remembered in history and therefore have his "martyr's gratification," his action will ultimately be a selfish one that causes much death and destruction.*

Cromwell says they can't let More go home, and he places him under the custody of the Abbot of Westminster. After he is taken away, Cromwell says that More will go write down all that just transpired and send it out into the kingdom to be printed. Cromwell is sure that in the eyes of Europe, he and his allies will be "the fools and the oppressors" while More will be seen as "the poor victim with the better turn of phrase."

*Cromwell rightly assumes that More will have their entire conversation printed and publicized, and that he will go down in history as a victim while he makes Cromwell and his allies look bad. Indeed, Thomas More is generally viewed as being a hero and a victim—through historical representations and through fiction like the play A Man for All Seasons—while Cromwell is often seen as a merciless crook. Mantel seems to be commenting on how narratives like these become popularized, and she adds her own dissonant portrayal to these existing stories, emphasizing that no history is ever objective.*

The next day, the king calls Cromwell to court and gives him the official title of Master Secretary. Cromwell heads home in the barge that now belongs to him and has been painted with his coat of arms. Rafe is with him, and he tells Cromwell he has some news. He says he has been married to Helen Barre for half a year, and that no one else knows. Cromwell is upset to hear it because Helen is "a lovely nobody," and he knows that Rafe's father will be outraged because he expects Rafe to marry an heiress. In order to appease him, Cromwell suggests they tell him that Cromwell's "promotion in the world will ensure [Rafe's]" as well, and that Rafe will attend on Henry whenever Cromwell cannot. That night, Cromwell dreams of his daughter Anne Cromwell, who once said she would marry Rafe.

*Cromwell wants to use his own promotion in order to appease Rafe's father, which shows his concern and affection for Rafe. He is also reminded of how his daughter Anne Cromwell had said that she would like to marry Rafe—in the midst of his joy for Rafe, Cromwell feels deep sorrow since he still isn't over the deaths in his family.*

At Austin Friars, Cromwell first goes to the kitchen to tell Thurston the news that he is now the Master Secretary. Thurston is happy to hear it, but he says that Cromwell is already doing the work anyway. He laughs to think that "Gardiner will be burning up inside." Cromwell says that he plans to host the council at Austin Friars sometimes, and that they can give them dinner. He tells Thurston that he doesn't need to get his hands dirty anymore since he has a big staff—he can "put on a gold chain, and strut about." Thurston says that he likes to keep working, "in case things take a downturn," and he asks Cromwell to remember the cardinal. Cromwell recalls how Norfolk had said he'd "tear" Wolsey with his teeth, and he thinks that "man is **wolf** to man."

*Cromwell seems happy to be able to share his good fortune. Yet, as Thurston reminds him, good fortune can be fickle, especially with an inconstant leader like Henry in charge. Cromwell seems to agree with Thurston, and he remembers Norfolk's uncivilized threats to Wolsey. Cromwell knows that the violence and raw ambition at court, which causes men to behave like beasts, is never far beneath the surface.*

In midsummer, Anne Boleyn has a miscarriage. That night, Henry tells Cromwell he blames Katherine for it since she wishes him ill. He says that when he lies with Anne, he can feel Katherine's cold presence between them.

*Henry is disappointed yet again in his eager wait for a male heir. He seems to be a broken man, searching desperately (and irrationally) for a reason why this would happen to him again, and he fixates on Katherine's malice as a reason because he has no one else to blame.*

## PART 6: CHAPTER 2: THE MAP OF CHRISTENDOM, 1534-1535

Pope Clement has died, and Cardinal Farnese is the new pope, just as Cromwell had predicted. In England, Cardinal Farnese is called the "Bishop of Rome" since under Henry, the country no longer recognizes the position of the Pope. Henry offers Cromwell the post of Lord Chancellor, but Cromwell says he doesn't want to disturb Audley, who currently fills the post. Henry asks him if he wants any other post, and Cromwell says he would like to be Master of Rolls.

*Henry has grown more powerful in England, and Cromwell's power grows with his. Cromwell is now able to pick and choose the posts he would like.*

Cromwell takes over the house that belongs to the Master of Rolls. He thinks that he will move his "clerks and papers" from Austin Friars to this house, and that Austin Friars can finally be a home again. However, he realizes that no one will be left there. Rafe and Helen are moving to a new house in Hackney, Richard is building another house in the same neighborhood and will move there with his wife Frances, and Alice is marrying his ward Thomas Rotherham. Alice's brother Christopher is ordained, and Jo is marrying the scholar John ap Rice. Cromwell thinks that he has done well for his family—"not one of them [is] poor, or unhappy, or uncertain of their place in this uncertain world."

*The warm house at Austin Friars seems to be breaking up, with the young people grown and marrying, scattering to their own homes. Cromwell is pleased that his successes at court have helped him provide for his extended family and settle all of them comfortably, but at the same time, there's a clear sense of loss as he realizes that his success has also subtly pulled apart the home he loves so much.*

Cromwell finds his situation satisfactory. He owns a lot of property, and he is putting some in a trust for Gregory. However, "his outgoings would frighten a lesser man" since he spends a lot when the king wants something done, but he knows this is a good way to secure his future. The word around town is that he is a helpful, useful, intelligent man to know—though many haven't forgotten that he came from nothing.

*Cromwell has reached a place of success and security. He seems to be at peace, unlike the scrambling ambition of his early years in court.*

Meanwhile, the king is growing worried about his health—mainly about his leg, which causes him a great deal of pain sometimes. He is also anxious that many of his subjects haven't accepted his divorce from Katherine. When he is out riding, they shout at him to take her back. He worries that "she will escape and raise an army" against him. He has come to distrust his own guards and carries a big iron lock around to put on his chamber door. He is afraid that he will be poisoned or murdered in his sleep.

*While Cromwell's life has settled down, the king, on the other hand, is growing increasingly anxious as he advances in years and still hasn't achieved the one thing he has yearned for all his life—a male heir. He seems to be growing paranoid and somewhat unstable, which doesn't bode well for people like Cromwell who rely on him.*

Thomas More is wasting away in prison, so Cromwell lets More's friend Antonio Bonvisi bring him food. When Bonvisi asks Cromwell not to hurt More, Cromwell says he has no intention of doing so, and he believes More's own family will convince him to swear the oath so he can be released. However, More tells his daughter Meg that he will never do so, and that if they hear that he has, they must assume that he has been tortured into it. More is supposed to swear to the Act of Supremacy, which declares that the king has always been head of the church. Cromwell is preparing a second enactment which will make it a treasonable offense to deny Henry's titles or call him a heretic. More insists he won't sign it, so he is no longer allowed to see his friends and family.

*More refuses to acknowledge Henry as the head of the church, and he sticks to this despite the threat of torture and death. Again, his single-minded choices contrast with Cromwell's much more practical ones.*

At court, Cromwell hears Anne Boleyn in the next room shouting at Henry, and the king indignantly saying that it wasn't him who did it. Cromwell asks the gathered Boleyns why Anne is upset, and Weston says that Mary Boleyn is pregnant. Mary claims the child is William Stafford's, and that she has married him. Cromwell dismisses Mark, who is hanging around, and goes into the room. Inside, Henry Norris and Jane Rochford are with the king and queen. Anne is livid and says that Mary wants to flaunt her belly because Anne lost her child. She says that Mary and Stafford are not to be admitted to court. Cromwell thinks she looks "haggard" and like one "wouldn't trust her near a knife."

*Anne Boleyn, too, seems to be slowly unraveling due to the stress of not yet having had a son. Her outbursts of anger against Henry seem to be getting more intense and more frequent—and since Henry is used to always having his way, this argument foreshadows the much more serious conflicts to come.*

Jane Rochford follows Cromwell as he heads to Mary Boleyn's rooms. Mary is packing up her things. Jane Seymour comes in, bringing in an armful of folded laundry, and Mark brings a chest. Cromwell tells Jane Seymour that he did not think she was friends with Mary, and the girl replies that "[n]o one else will help her." Jane Rochford tells Mary that she has "disgraced all [her] kin," and Mary says that she pities Jane Rochford because her husband doesn't love her, and she also pities Anne Boleyn, who is "afraid of every woman at court." Mary gives Jane Seymour a pair of sleeves and tells her she has "the only kind heart at court." As Cromwell watches Jane Seymour, he asks his dead wife Liz not to "grudge [him] this one little girl, so small, so thin, so plain."

*The Boleyns found it convenient to have Mary around so Henry could use her for his amusement whenever Anne Boleyn was indisposed, but they all ruthlessly turn against her now that Mary is pregnant and Anne is angry with her. Cromwell has noticed Jane Seymour's kind heart, and it's clear here that he's starting to give into his romantic feelings for her. But it will later become clear, when Henry's affections turn to Jane, that Cromwell is doing the one thing he's always warned others not to do: loving the same woman that the king does.*

Jane Rochford leaves the room, slamming the door on her way out, and Jane Seymour quietly tells Mary Boleyn to let her go and forget her. When Mary leaves the room to collect a book, Cromwell asks Jane Seymour if it is true that Anne Boleyn is always afraid and she tells him that Anne is now jealous of Mary Shelton because Henry has expressed an interest in her. She says that Anne wanted to send Mary Shelton away, but Thomas Boleyn wouldn't allow it since Mary Shelton is Anne's cousin and they wanted to keep Henry's dalliances in the family since "Incest is so popular these days." Cromwell notices that Jane Seymour's **hand** is like "a child's hand, with tiny gleaming nails." She tells him she will serve another season in court and then head home to **Wolf** Hall since Anne Boleyn dislikes her.

*Jane Seymour has a sweetness and innocence that Cromwell finds very attractive. These qualities are reflected in her hands, which seem like a child's to Cromwell. It's clear from what she tells Cromwell that all Anne Boleyn's schemes haven't gotten her the security she wants; since Henry is so impulsive and fickle, she still can't be sure of keeping his attention, despite all he did to marry her. Meanwhile, Jane's offhand mention of Wolf Hall—and the fact that Wolf Hall is the title of the book, once again foreshadows Jane Seymour's own eventual rise to become queen, and Anne's associated demise.*

At the end of the year, Cromwell gets a letter from Mary Boleyn asking for money. She says she was too hasty when she married and that "love overcame reason." She cannot ask her family for money since they are so cruel to her, and she has nowhere else to turn. Richard is present, and he says he hardly remembers how he almost married her. He seems pleased that they have found their happiness without the Boleyns' interference. Cromwell tells him that those were different times. He worries that "Henry is sated" and that Cromwell's struggle to "overturn Christendom" will be for nothing if the entire "enterprise [is] cursed."

*Cromwell recognizes that the days when Henry was obsessed with Anne Boleyn are now over; Richard was right all along that it was better not to ally too closely with the Boleyns. Despite all Cromwell's work to please Henry, this turn of events indicates that it's never entirely possible to satisfy someone so irrational and devoted to his own pleasure.*

On Christmas Eve, Alice More comes to see Cromwell at the Rolls. He takes her to a cozy room he has had redone, and she is impressed with it. She says Thomas More used to say that if Cromwell were "lock[ed] [...] in a deep dungeon in the morning, [...] when you come back in the night he'll be sitting on a plush cushion eating larks' tongues, and all the jailers will owe him money." She asks Cromwell if she can see Henry to appeal to him on her husband's behalf, but Cromwell says that won't be possible since Henry is busy with the French envoys. He knows that Alice will surely upset the king, who no longer thinks about More. Cromwell asks her to convince More to give up his position, but she says she has no power over him.

*It is interesting to know Thomas More's opinion on Cromwell, which readers find out through his wife Alice. More probably wouldn't want Cromwell to know that he thinks Cromwell is so persuasive and resilient, but here it becomes clear that even More admires Cromwell's skill. Meanwhile, Henry doesn't even think about More anymore, which shows how fickle his support can be.*

In the new year, Henry gives Cromwell a title that no one has ever held before: "Viceregent in Spirituals, his deputy in church affairs." Cromwell now has the power to reform monasteries and close them down if he chooses to. While Cromwell and Chapuys are officially enemies, they in fact visit each other often for dinner and discussions. Chapuys tells Cromwell that the Emperor will be pleased to take on Cromwell's services since there are rumors that Henry has a new woman at court. Cromwell tells Chapuys that Henry is so busy preparing for war with the Emperor that he has no time for love. Cromwell thinks that the "fate of peoples is made like this, [with] two men in small rooms."

*While Henry and the Emperor Charles appear to be rulers, Cromwell recognizes that they aren't truly the ones in charge of their respective people. It is people like himself and Chapuys—"two men in small rooms"—who determine policy and politics. These words again suggest that the way history is recorded doesn't generally provide an objective account of what really happened.*

In the beginning of spring, Cromwell falls very sick with a fever. Someone asks him if he wants to confess, and Cromwell thinks "[his] sins are [his] strength," since he has committed sins that "others have not even found the opportunity of committing." Dr. Butts comes in and gives him some medicine, after which Cromwell tries to add up his ledgers, but the numbers swim before his eyes. He feels "tired out from the effort of deciphering the world" and "the effort of smiling at the foe."

*When Cromwell thinks he is about to die, he has no guilt about anything he has done. In fact, he thinks that when he broke rules and committed a "sin," he managed to forge a new path. He has broken out of his station as a blacksmith's son and become the king's most trusted advisor, and in the process, he has flouted social conventions. He has also broken England's association with the Catholic Church in Rome, thus increasing Henry's powers.*

A week after Cromwell has fallen sick, he gets word that Henry will come to visit him. Cromwell calls Thurston in to give him instructions for the feast. The women of the household are dressed to the nines and are excited to see the king, who is kind and gallant with them. After the king leaves, Johane sits by Cromwell and says that "the whole household did well." She says she is glad to have seen the king, and that she understands now why Katherine doesn't want to let him go—Henry "is a man very apt to be loved." She also tells Cromwell that he might not believe her, but that "Henry is frightened of [Cromwell]."

*Henry's visit confirms Cromwell's importance in Henry's life—Henry seems to view him as a friend rather than just a courtier, and he wants to show Cromwell that he is valued and appreciated. When Henry is in good spirits, he is easy to love, as Johane observes, but of course, he has his dark and angry spells which can quickly make him dangerous. Johane points out that Henry seems "afraid" of Cromwell, and this is probably because he recognizes Cromwell's intellectual superiority and knows how much he depends on Cromwell.*

At the end of April, four monks who refuse to take the oath are put on trial. They belong to the Charterhouse of London, which is where More was before he joined public office. Cromwell has been there to try to cajole and then threaten them, but it has been of no use. It has been a year since the Maid was put to death, and the king no longer has any patience with those who oppose him. The law demands "a full traitor's penalty," which means they will be disemboweled in public. Henry wants his son Richmond to attend, but the boy doesn't want to. Cromwell tells him he has to go, and he says that if he falls off his horse or vomits, his father-in-law Norfolk will never let him forget it. However, after the executions, Norfolk himself is shaken by the violence of what he witnessed.

*More's stance to refuse to take the oath seems to be spreading, which is what Cromwell predicted would happen. And, just like Cromwell said, the other people who suffer for this cause will not be remembered in history or glorified like More will be—they will be nameless and forgotten, like these four monks who endure a severe punishment that shakes even Norfolk, a violent man himself.*

The king sends a commission to question More in the Tower. As soon as they enter, More says he has heard that Tyndale was arrested in Antwerp by the Emperor's men, and Cromwell realizes that More orchestrated that arrest. More refuses to say anything about why he refuses to swear an oath to the Act of Supremacy, but Audley tells him he must speak. Cromwell tells More that when he interrogated so-called heretics, he tortured them if they refused to speak, and now, he should speak, too.

*Even from his cell in the Tower, More is still busy rounding up and executing heretics. He has taunted Cromwell for years about Cromwell's association with Tyndale, and by flaunting his knowledge of Tyndale's arrest, More seems to be trying his best to irritate Cromwell with a final assertion of his power. However, More is also an intelligent man and refuses to speak to the commission because he doesn't want to say anything that will incriminate him. He knows that they do not have enough evidence to try him.*

More says that back then, he had the whole force of the law behind him, but that this commission only has one law to back them up. Cromwell says that the end result is the same, which is death, and Brandon says the king might not grant More a merciful death. Cromwell notes that this unnerves More. Riche says that at least Fisher dissents openly, while More stays silent since he knows he will be a traitor if he speaks. Audley says they have noted his obstinacy, though they will not use the same methods on him that he used on others. He says they will move to indictment and trial. More protests, saying he has done no harm, but Cromwell reminds him of the so-called heretics he has tortured and killed.

*More thinks he can trick the system by refusing to speak and therefore not giving the commission legal cause for a trial. He seems to be hopeful that he might be able to secure his release in this way, but he gets nervous when Brandon mentions that he could be executed as a traitor. While More resorted to torture in order to get information from people he accused of heresy, the commission doesn't employ these cruel means and decides to move to a trial.*


When Anne Boleyn hears of More's refusal to talk, she says that the root of the problem is that he doesn't want to "bend his knee to [her] queenship." She says she will have no peace until Fisher and More are dead. She circles the room agitatedly and pauses to touch Henry now and then, and Cromwell notices that he brushes her **hands** away. Cromwell says that Fisher's case is clear and gives him no anxiety. More's case, however, is morally clear but legally complex. Henry angrily tells him that the only reason he keeps Cromwell around—despite his low origins—is because he is "cunning as a bag of **serpents**." He demands that Cromwell execute his decision.

*Cromwell notices that Anne Boleyn is anxious and nervous, and that Henry seems to be irritated by her. Previously, she would caress him during meetings, but now, he brushes her hands away, which symbolizing the fraying connection between them. When Cromwell tries to explain that they do not yet have a legal cause to convict Thomas More of treason, Henry turns on him angrily, demonstrating his tendency to swing from affection to rage. When Henry went to Cromwell's house to see him when he was sick, Cromwell almost believed that they were friends, but now, he is once again reminded that his only role is to please the king by carrying out his orders without questions or objections. Cromwell is only valuable to Henry because he is "cunning as a bag of serpents," implying that Henry wants nothing to do with Cromwell the* person, *who might have opinions that differ from Henry's; it's his harsh animal nature that Henry really values.*

Richard Riche comes to see Cromwell, and he seems excited about being in possession of information that might be helpful in the case against More. He tells Cromwell that he and More were chatting after the commission questioned him, and Riche asked him if More would accept Riche as his king if Parliament passed a law declaring Riche the king. More had laughed and said he would. Riche had asked him why he wouldn't then accept Parliament's law that Henry is head of the church, and More had said that it was because Parliament doesn't have spiritual jurisdiction. Riche and Cromwell say that this is proof that More still upholds papal law.

*Riche and Cromwell have managed to trap More in admitting that he still believes the Pope's law to be superior the Parliament's when it comes to religious matters. Cromwell previously passed a bill that made it illegal to appeal to Rome since Henry is head of the church in England, so More's words here are treasonous.*

On the day of More's trial, Cromwell is at court in Westminster early, making sure that there are no last-minute hitches. When More is brought in, he looks haggard and old, and Cromwell comments that it is a good trick to win sympathy. Cromwell's staff seems prepared and confident.

*Cromwell has no sympathy at all for More, and he believes that his haggard appearance is trick to appeal to his audience's emotions.*

## PART 6: CHAPTER 3: TO WOLF HALL, JULY 1535

Five days after More's trial, he is executed. That evening, Cromwell walks in the garden with Richard and Rafe, discussing the trial. More had seemed very calm, so everyone, including the jury, was surprised when he had turned on Riche and attacked his character, calling him "a gamer and a dicer, of no commendable fame even in [his] own house." The jury took his "sudden animation" to be evidence of guilt. Norfolk asked More to leave Riche's character aside and to clarify whether he spoke the words Riche said he did. More said he did not say those words, or that if he did, he did not mean them with malice, which makes him "clear under the statute."

*More's biggest error at the trial was that he wasn't in control of his emotions. Riche's accusations angered him so much so the jury was inclined to believe they were true and that More was acting out of guilt and panic. More's death is the culmination of a theme that has come up throughout the novel: that controlling oneself and using that control to manipulate others is key to gaining and maintaining power.*

George Boleyn asked More to give his own account of that conversation with Riche, and More said he didn't recall it. It took the jury only 15 minutes to deliver their verdict. On the night before More is executed, Cromwell thinks of him. He knows that More will not be told until the morning that he will be executed that day, and that More must be asleep, "not knowing that it [is] his last night on earth." Cromwell remembers that after More was declared guilty, he had made a speech in which Cromwell had found nothing new. More had declared that the statute was faulty and the council's authority baseless. He had said his conscience was satisfied, and said he had the majority on his side, meaning Christendom and the church.

*More's tendency towards bombastic speeches continued even at the end of his trial, after he was declared guilty. Cromwell had heard him voice these opinions so often that he dismisses the speech as being "nothing new," which again emphasizes how fatally single-minded and inflexible More is.*

Audley asked Cromwell if he had made any promises to More regarding the manner of his execution. Cromwell said he hadn't, but that the king would surely show More mercy. Norfolk told Cromwell to try to convince the king to be merciful, and he said that if he didn't succeed in doing so, Norfolk himself would go beg the king on More's behalf. Adter More's death, Cromwell sends More's prayer book to More's daughter Meg, and he gives instructions to the bridge-master to not trouble Meg when she comes to collect her father's head so she can bury it.

*Unlike More, who was always rigid in his ideas and therefore angry at anyone who believed differently, Cromwell seems to take More's trial as just a part of his job rather than something to act on with an impassioned vendetta. This helps Cromwell to stay reasonable and sympathetic through it, and he even shows concern for More's family after the execution.*

Cromwell recalls that as a child, his father's apprentice had told him that if the dead weren't nailed in their coffins, they would rise and chase the living. Now, Cromwell knows that it is "the living that turn and chase the dead." He thinks that "words like stones [are] thrust into their rattling mouths: we edit their writings, we rewrite their lives." He thinks that More spread the rumor that Bilney had recanted as he was burning. It wasn't enough for More to take away Bilney's life—he "had to take his death too." Cromwell imagines More's death, and he can almost see how he was beheaded at the scaffold. He feels the "past move heavily inside him."

*Cromwell reflects on how the living can make any claims they want to about the dead since the dead can no longer speak for themselves or clarify their positions. More did this after Bilney's death, claiming that Bilney recanted his beliefs that were in opposition to the Catholic Church—which Cromwell doesn't believe ever happened. Through this idea, Mantel seems to be commenting on how she herself is reinventing all the dead people in this novel. She is "rewrit[ing] their lives" and giving them feelings and opinions that are completely invented, ones that they cannot oppose or confirm.*

The king and his court are riding west in the summer, and Cromwell hopes that Anne Boleyn will return pregnant. Rafe wonders at how "the king can stand the hope each time," adding that "[i]t would wear out a lesser man." Cromwell has five days free before he joins the king's court in their travels, and he tells Rafe that the two of them should go visit the Seymours in **Wolf** Hall.

*At the conclusion on the novel, Cromwell is still hopeful that Anne Boleyn will soon give birth to the long-awaited male heir. Cromwell knows this will cement his place by the king's side since Henry would be grateful to finally have the son he has dreamed of. As Rafe says, Henry does in fact seem to be getting worn by his cares, which will become increasingly important in the book's sequels Since Cromwell has a few days off, he thinks of Jane Seymour at Wolf Hall and plans to visit her. This novel is titled* Wolf Hall, *though no part of it is set there, because Mantel thought the place's name represented the wild, wolf-like quality of Henry's courtiers. Also, Jane Seymour will be Henry's next queen after Anne Boleyn's execution, so Wolf Hall will certainly gain importance as Cromwell's story continues.*

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