



Dark Fire: A Matthew Shardlake Tudor Mystery

By C. J. Sansom

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From the bestselling author of *Winter in Madrid* and *Dominion* comes a second riveting sixteenth-century thriller featuring hunchback lawyer Matthew Shardlake

In 1540, during the reign of Henry VIII, Shardlake is asked to help a young girl accused of murder. She refuses to speak in her defense even when threatened with torture. But just when the case seems lost, Thomas Cromwell, the king's feared vicar general, offers Shardlake two more weeks to prove his client's innocence. In exchange, Shardlake must find a lost cache of "Dark Fire," a legendary weapon of mass destruction. What ensues is a page-turning adventure, filled with period detail and history.

"Atmospheric and engaging" (Margaret George), this second book in Matthew Shardlake Tudor Mystery series delves again into the dark and superstitious world of Cromwell's England introduced in *Dissolution*.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Matthew Shardlake, the marvelous hunchbacked 16th-century attorney who first appeared in Sansom's *Dissolution*, returns in this spellbinding Tudor-era tale of murder, conspiracy and betrayal. Shardlake normally handles property cases and the occasional dangerous mission for Lord Thomas Cromwell, the king's high counselor. Now he is engaged to defend a young woman accused of a curious murder, and the case seems hopeless. The girl refuses to speak and, under English law, unless she offers a plea in court she will be slowly crushed to death. Cromwell offers Shardlake a two-week stay of execution if he will agree to undertake a secret mission. Desperate to save the girl's life, Shardlake agrees. Rumors abound of a new and terrifying weapon called Greek Fire, and Cromwell orders Shardlake to find it, along with its secret formula and the two alchemists who possess it. Before Shardlake can even speak to the alchemists, they are brutally murdered, the formula and Greek Fire go missing, and horror and death are unleashed. Fortunately, Shardlake is aided by Jack Barak, a capable rogue working for Cromwell, and his old friend, Guy Malton, a peculiar apothecary. Sansom's vivid portrayal of squalid, stinking, bustling London; the city's wealth and poverty; the brutality and righteousness of religious persecution; and the complexities of English law make this a suspenseful, colorful and compelling tale.

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From [Booklist](#)

Hunchback Matthew Shardlake may be one of the sharpest lawyers in sixteenth-century England, but his skills have failed him in the defense of a friend's niece accused of murder. When Henry VIII's vicar general, Thomas Cromwell, spares the convicted girl's life for 14 days, Shardlake knows the reprieve comes at a hefty price: in that time, the lawyer must find a lost cache of "dark fire," the liquid weapon of mass destruction Cromwell has promised to deliver to the increasingly ill-tempered king. With the help of one of Cromwell's impudent servants, Shardlake pursues clues leading him to alchemists, aristocrats, and barristers alike. But in a country bitterly split between Roman Catholics and the newly formed Church of England, it's difficult to distinguish friend from foe. The body count climbs ever higher as Shardlake inches closer to the truth--and toward the deadline for his client's execution. Like his gripping debut, *Dissolution* [BKL Ap 1 03], Sansom's second Shardlake thriller is suffused with rich period detail and an aura of foreboding. *Allison Block*

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Review

C. J. Sansom's highly atmospheric and well-crafted sixteenth-century thriller... vividly describes the turbidity of Tudor London. (Jasper Fforde)

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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