

1692. Corrag, a wild young girl living in Scotland has been accused of witchcraft. While awaiting her execution, she is visited by the Reverend Charles Leslie.

Reverend Charles Leslie. I feel I know your name. [...] I saw you flinch¹ at [the word] *witch*.

5 Oh it's a dark word, for certain. It has caused its damage across the months and years. Many good people have been undone by it – married and unmarried, beautiful, and strange. Women. Men. What did you have, in your head? With *witch*?

I know that all people have a certain creature in their head, when they hear it – a woman, mostly. Pitch-dark and cruel, crooked with age. Did you think *she will be mad, this witch*? I might be. It's been said. [...]

10 What townsfolk say we do and what we truly do are very different things. I have cast no spells. [...] I've never turned into a bird, skimmed a night-time loch², or settled on ships to make them drown. I've not kissed obscenely or eaten dead babes. [...] I've never seen the future in a rotten egg. I never laughed at murders, or called murders in. I've not summoned anything. I've only asked – prayed.

15 *Pray*. Yes. I use that word, too. I pray – not in church and with no Bible, but otherwise I reckon it's probably like how you pray, which is with the heart's voice talking, not the mouth's.

Devil child, they've called me. *Evil piece*.

20 But Mr Leslie, I will tell you this. When *witch* was first thrown at me, as I passed through a market, Cora [Corrag's mother] led me by the hand to an alleyway and sat me down, and wiped my wet eyes, and said *listen to me. The only evil in the world is the one that lies in people – in their pride, and greed, and duty. Remember that.*

And from what I have seen of this world, this life, I think she was right.

¹ reculer de peur • ² Scottish word for lake