

'I have taken much care in packing,' said Trefusis as he pushed shut the boot of the Wolseley. 'A tin of barley-sugar for you, Castrol GTX for the car, figgy oatcakes for me.'

'Figgy oatcakes?'

'Oatcakes are very healthy. Hotels, restaurants, cafés, they all take their toll. Salzburg is not kind to the figure. At my age travel broadens the behind. A stearopygous Trefusis is an unhappy Trefusis. The buns and tortes of Austria are whoreson binders of your whoreson stool. But a figgy oatcake laughs at constipation and favours rectal carcinoma with a haughty stare. In the grammar of health, while cream may hasten the full stop, porridge will ease the colon.'

'Oh, ah,' said Adrian. 'And curry creates the dash, I suppose.'

'Oh, I like that. Very good. "Curry creates the dash." Yes, indeed. Most . . . most . . . er, what is the word?'

'Amusing?'

'No . . . it'll come to me.'

The interior of the car smelt of Merton Park thrillers, Bakelite headsets and the Clothes Ration. It only needed the profile of Edgar Wallace or the voice of Edgar Lustgarten to sweep Adrian and Trefusis, with bells ringing, into a raincoat and Horlicks Britain of glistening pavements, trilbied police inspectors and poplin shirts. So familiar was the odour, so complete the vision it evoked as they swung with a whine of gears out of the college gates and onto the Trumpington Road, that Adrian could almost believe in reincarnation. He had never smelt that precise smell before, yet it was as known to him as the smell of his own socks.

Trefusis would not be drawn on the purpose of their mission to Salzburg.

'You knew that man who was killed then?'

'Knew him? No.'

'But Bob said...'

'I do hope the Bendix doesn't give out. The Wolseley 15/50 is a marvellous saloon, but the Bendix is most terribly susceptible to trouble.'

'Well if you didn't know him, how come you know his name?'

'I suppose one could call such an affliction bendicitis.'

'When I first arrived in Cambridge there was a rumour that you recruited for MI5. Either that or for the KGB.'

'My dear fellow, there is not a don over the age of sixty who is not said to be the fourth, fifth, sixth or seventh man in some improbable circle of spies, double agents and ruthless traitors.'

'You should pay no attention.'

'You worked at Bletchley during the war though, didn't you? On the Enigma code.'

'So did Beryl Ayliffe the college librarian. Are we to believe that she is an MI5 . . . what's the word . . . operative?'

Adrian pictured the chain-smoking chatelaine of the St Matthew's library.

'Well no, of course not,' he conceded. 'But . . .'

'Ha, ha. More fool you, because she *is*!'

'What?'

'Or is she?' mused Trefusis. 'So damned difficult to tell in this damned deadly game we play. Anyway, what does it matter? Isn't it all the bloody same? Left, right? Right, wrong? The old distinctions don't matter any a damned damn any more, damn it.'

'All right, all right,' said Adrian, stung by the mockery. 'I grant you it all sounds a bit stupid. But we did see a man killed last year. You can't get away from that.'

'Assuredly.'

'And that's why we're going back to Salzburg?'

'I don't think we'll eat until we get to France. There's a surprisingly good restaurant at the railway station at Arras. See if you can find it on your map, there's a dear.'

Stephen Fry, *The Liar* (1993)