

Chapter Two

TOWARDS the end of that summer term I received the last visit and Grand Remonstrance of my cousin Jasper. I was just free of the schools, having taken the last paper of History Previous on the afternoon before; Jasper's subfusc suit and white tie proclaimed him still in the thick of it; he had, too, the exhausted but resentful air of one who fears he has failed to do himself full justice on the subject of Pindar's Orphism. Duty alone had brought him to my rooms that afternoon at great inconvenience to himself and, as it happened, to me, who, when he caught me in the door, was

Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (1945)

on my way to make final arrangements about a dinner I was giving that evening. It was one of several parties designed to comfort Hardcastle – one of the tasks that had lately fallen to Sebastian and me since, by leaving his car out, we had got him into grave trouble with the proctors.

Jasper would not sit down; this was to be no cosy chat; he stood with his back to the fireplace and, in his own phrase, talked to me 'like an uncle'.

'... I've tried to get in touch with you several times in the last week or two. In fact, I have the impression you are avoiding me. If that is so, Charles, I can't say I'm surprised.

'You may think it none of my business, but I feel a sense of responsibility. You know as well as I do that since your – well, since the war, your father has not been really in touch with things – lives in his own world. I don't want to sit back and see you making mistakes which a word in season might save you from.

'I expected you to make mistakes your first year. We all do. I got in with some thoroughly objectionable O.S.C.U. men who ran a mission to hop-pickers during the long vac. But you, my dear Charles, whether you realize it or not, have gone straight, hook line and sinker, into the *very worst set in the University*. You may think that, living in digs, I don't know what goes on in college; but I hear things. In fact, I hear all too much. I find that I've become a figure of mockery on your account at the Dining Club. There's that chap Sebastian Flyte you seem inseparable from. He may be all right, I don't know. His brother Brideshead was a very sound fellow. But this friend of yours looks odd to me and he gets himself talked about. Of course, they're an odd family. The Marchmains have lived apart since the war, you know. An extraordinary thing; everyone thought they were a devoted couple. Then he went off to France with his Yeomanry and just never came back. It was as if he'd been killed. She's a Roman Catholic, so she can't get a divorce – or *won't*, I expect. You can do anything at Rome with money, and they're enormously rich. Flyte *may* be all right, but *Anthony Blanche* – now there's a man there's absolutely no excuse for.'