

Unlike Jim Prideaux, Mr. George Smiley was not naturally equipped for hurrying in the rain, least of all at dead of night. Indeed, he might have been the final form for which Bill Roach was the prototype. Small, podgy, and at best middle-aged, he was by appearance one of London's meek who do not inherit the earth. His legs were short, his gait anything but agile, his dress costly, ill-fitting, and extremely wet. His overcoat, which had a hint of widowhood about it, was of that black loose weave which is designed to retain moisture. Either the sleeves were too long or his arms were too short, for, as with Roach, when he wore his mackintosh, the cuffs all but concealed the fingers. For reasons of vanity he wore no hat, believing rightly that hats made him ridiculous. "Like an egg-cosy," his beautiful wife had remarked not long before the last occasion on which she left him, and her criticism, as so often, had endured. Therefore the rain had formed in fat, unbanishable drops on the thick lenses of his spectacles, forcing him alternately to lower or throw back his head as he scuttled along the pavement that skirted the blackened arcades of Victoria Station. He was proceeding west, to the sanctuary of Chelsea, where he lived. His step, for whatever reason, was a fraction uncertain, and if Jim Prideaux had risen out of the shadows demanding to know whether he had any friends, he would probably have answered that he preferred to settle for a taxi.

"Roddy's such a windbag," he muttered to himself as a fresh deluge dashed itself against his ample cheeks, then trickled downward to his sodden shirt. "Why didn't I just get up and leave?"

Ruefully, Smiley once more rehearsed the reasons for his present misery, and concluded with a dispassion inseparable from the humble part of his nature that they were of his own making.

It had been from the start a day of travail. He had risen too late after working too late the night before, a practice that had crept up on him since retirement last year. Discovering he had run out of coffee, he queued at the grocer's till he ran out of patience also, then haughtily decided to attend to his personal administration. His bank statement, which had arrived with the morning's post, revealed that his wife had drawn the lion's share of his monthly pension: very well, he decreed, he would sell something. The response was irrational, for he was quite decently off and the obscure City bank responsible for his pension paid it with regularity. Wrapping up an early edition of Grimmelshausen, nevertheless, a modest treasure from his Oxford days, he solemnly set off for Heywood Hill's bookshop in Curzon Street, where he occasionally contracted friendly bargains with the proprietor. On the way he became even more irritable, and from a call-box sought an appointment with his solicitor for that afternoon.

"George, how can you be so vulgar? Nobody divorces Ann. Send her flowers and come to lunch."

John le Carré, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974)