

Friends and Traitors by John Lawton

2 stars

An Inspector Troy novel about the life of Guy Burgess

Guy Burgess – hip before hipsters, Rolling before the Stones, acid-head before LSD. The decay and dissolution that gathered around him was the end of a class, of a way of life; something that would be written about with wonder but always tinged with sadness. The novel begins in 1935, just before the Second World War when Burgess attends a dinner at the Troy home and is introduced to Freddie. They become unlikely friends and acquaintances. They meet again in 1940 during the war. Burgess believes that war was made for procreation (can't use the words the author does) and finds the blackouts erotic. He propositions boys two or three times a week and hosts endless orgies at his flat. How does someone like this secure a post in the Foreign Office in Washington after the war? After his defection, his life is still linked to the Inspector by tenuous threads linking the two men together.

I found this book extremely difficult to read as I found it quite disjointed, jumping around from scene to scene, time period to time period without much linkage. I also found it quite vulgar at times and I am no prude! How does a Scotland Yard Inspector get involved with escorting Burgess back to London? I am afraid that this is one book that I really did not enjoy. It is not at all how I perceive the people in the diplomatic service to behave and I found the war to be trivialised.

Saphira

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.