

here. Some of these other brothers will have guessed as well. So, stop pissing us about and straight with us about this tour you've got coming up."

Before he answered, Rupert opened his pill-box and tipped a handful of mixed colours into his palm. Following them down with a last gulp of Comfort, he knocked them all back. He looked round the low room, lit only by the flickering light of the fire. The plaster was chipped and missing in many places, exposing the broken slats. Graffiti smeared over the dirty walls, perpetuating the old jokes and the old myths. Many of them – the later ones – advocated activist politics for Wales, and they stressed the superiority of the natives against the English middle-classes that ravaged the land with their money and their second cottages.

At least one visitor from outside Wales had chosen to reply in verse. Not the usual ill-spelled poems that you find on walls, but a bitter summation of the troubles of the land, by a local priest and poet from Aberdaron – R. S. Thomas. Somehow, the bitter lines seemed the stronger, set among all the other trite scrawls.

"There is no present in Wales,
And no future;
There is only the past,
Brittle with relics"

Then, someone had managed to rip through the next couple of lines, obscuring the words with a stump of burned wood. But, the last four lines could still be read:

"Mouldering quarries and mines;
And an impotent people,
Sick with inbreeding,
Worrying the carcase of an old song."

Rupert looked back from the wall to the Angels ranged round the walls, many of them Welsh, and he wondered whether what he was going to ask was, after all, a good idea. These were not men of the nineteen-eighties, used to slick suits and the soft answer. There was a primitive violence and strength in the Angels. A strength that he needed to tap and try and channel for his own ends.