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I am going away. I may not come back. Our house has been infested by what look like tiny mobile grains of demerara sugar; jiggling around the lintels and mantelpieces; hopping along the edge of the washbasin as you brush your teeth; dropping from the ceiling onto your book as you lie in bed. This last bit makes sense because they are - according to Tom who talks of little else - Cosmopolitan Book Lice. They have travelled all the way from Turkey to join us and our books, and have been breeding (if not reading) merrily away in our newly thatched roof. The roof was made, unbeknown to us, from unfumigated reed from that far-distant land. It's a nightmare, and one that will only end when some cold weather snuffs them out.

The Truffler has sprung into his worst Captain Mainwaring mode - bossing me around, telling me to pack all my clothes, shoes, even Tampaxes into sealed bags, in case the book lice try and hide inside them. He's taped up all the doors and windows to stop them - or any air - getting in. He stomps around with a brace of hand-held hoovers which he blasts as if they are AK47's.

Secretly, he's rather pleased, because a) it distracts me and everyone else from the fact that he can't find any more truffles (it doesn't), and b) it's a good excuse to chuck out my old newspapers (I can take two weeks to read the Sunday Times). "You'll make the children ill with all this mess," he says stuffing them into the bin with relish.

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