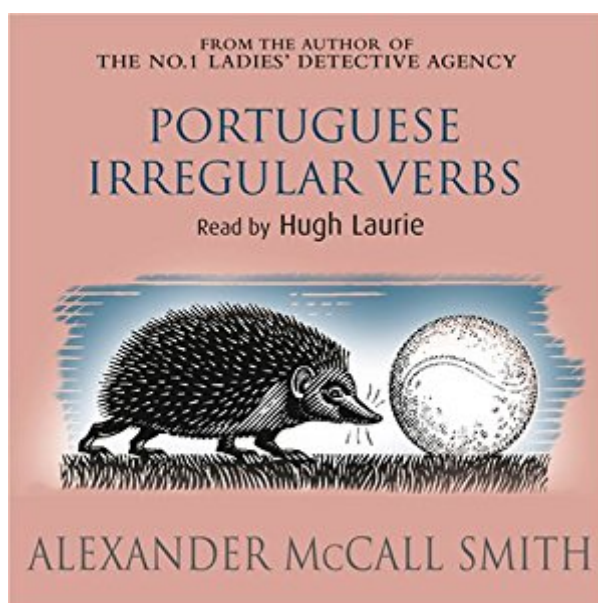


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# Portuguese Irregular Verbs



## Synopsis

Alexander McCall Smith, best-selling author of *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*, has turned his hand to humour. The delightful result is a creation of comic genius. For in the unnaturally tall form of Professor Doctor Moritz-Maria von Igelfeld, we are invited to meet a memorable character whose sublime insouciance is a blend of the cultivated pomposity of Frasier Crane and of Inspecteur Clouseau's hapless gaucherie. Von Igelfeld inhabits the rarefied world of the Institute of Romance Philology at Regensburg, a world he shares with his equally tall and equally ridiculous colleagues, Professors Florianus Prinzel and Detlev Amadeus Unterholzer. Their unlikely adventures are described in three deliciously funny instalments: *Portuguese Irregular Verbs*, *The Finer Points of Sausage Dogs*, and *At the Villa of Reduced Circumstances*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The first of three books in the Professor Dr von Igelfeld Series (same author as *#1 Ladies Detective...*). Comical episodes surrounding the mishaps of three extremely rigid (and hysterical) German professors who are experts (of course) in their field of language/linguistics (imagine a German version of *Fraiser*). Racked by guilt and self-certainty, waves of supreme confidence and landslides of self-doubt, their everyday incidents will have you laughing aloud. Fans of Basil Fawlty or P. G. Wodehouse and like British-humor will delight in the characters and their very digestible episodes. Each book is quite short (~120 pages) and you'll probably end up with all three.

Under 'Book Description' on this book's site, reference is made to the "rarified world" of Dr

Moritz-Maria von Igelfeld the great philologist (one who studies literary texts to determine their original form and meaning; an older word for 'linguistics'. Can one imagine anything more tedious? or bo-o-r-r-ing?). Rarified, indeed, it is...almost out of the stratosphere. Our dear doctor lives so completely in his head that he misses the point of almost all that goes on around him in the world of the mundane. He is also extraordinarily socially inept. In one instance, he is so concerned that he do things "properly" in approaching the lady he would like to make his wife that in the five weeks he waits to make his initial approach, a friend, on a little faster track, has pursued the lady and asked her to marry him. She has accepted. Portuguese Irregular Verbs is comprised of eight short stories about events in the lives of three philologists who are friends. Dr von Igelfeld is the primary character. His friends are fellow philologists, Professor Dr Detlev Amadeus Unterholzer and Professor Dr Dr Florianus Prinzel. Germans all. The stories of Dr Moritz-Maria von Igelfeld are nothing like those of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency. The humor is very dry and, for some, will be non-existent, or close to it. I think one needs to have lived a while and known a fair number of people to really appreciate this book. I believe that as a result of having read this first book in the series, I better understand a couple people I actually know, and have known for years! I also think I'll delay that trip to Venice I was thinking of taking. It is a tribute to Mr. Smith's ability to write that he can take such stuffy, one-dimensional people and show them in a humorous light. He is simply terrifico!! Carolyn Rowe Hill

Like many readers, I have come to this book as a result of reading Alexander McCall Smith's "Number One Ladies Detective Agency Series". Beware, there is very little in common between the two series. The Number One Ladies Detective Series is very accesable to the general reading public. The three novels of the Portuguese Irregular Verbs series are less accessable. The main reason is that McCall Smith's humor is very dry. The delivery is so subtle as to border on the sublime. This sort of absurdist humor about academic life is not for everyone. If you like your humor direct and to the point, this is not the series for you. If you like your humor really dry, this series is a delight. However, if you are not sure, start the series with "The Finer Points of Sausage Dogs", the best of the three novels.

Whether or not it is impossible to insult someone in the imperfect subjunctive tense in Hindi or not (for those of you familiar with Hindi, I defy you to think of an example!), this is a great book. In fact, this very point is debated fiercely by the protagonist, noted philologist Dr Moritz-Maria von Igelfeld (literally "Hedgehog Field" in German) and the noted Indian philologist and author of the classic

texts "Dravidian Verb Shifts" and "Terms of Ritual Abuse in the Creditor/Debtor Relationship in Village India," Professor J. G. K. L. Singh of Chandigarh. This is the first volume in a series following the adventures of Dr. von Igelfeld and his associates Professor Dr. Dr. (honoris causa) Florianus Prinzel and Professor Dr. Detlev Amadeus Unterholzer through the arcane riddles of linguistic obfuscation in languages including not only Portuguese, but also German, English, Hindi, and Urdu, just to name a few. Along the way they become involved with a cast of odd characters typical of academia, excessive dental pain (and ensuing romance), a sausage dog named Walter, a guru portending a train wreck, a contest ending in a rather unique dueling scar, and an encyclopedic collection of early Gaelic curse words. This is a brief, but enjoyable work, and is vastly preferable to the original 1,200 page namesake work by von Igelfeld himself: Alexander McCall Smith has written a winner. For anyone amused by linguistics, stuffy Prussians (hey, who isn't?), or exceedingly improbable situations, this is a great little volume. I am looking forward to the remaining books in the series.

Wow what a book, and what a writer. After i read the books about Mma Ramotswe and her friends i bought this book about the funny dr. von Igelfeld... And I enjoyed it from page one. The absurd problems dr. von Igelfeld is facing, is enjoyable to read and puts a smile on your face while you're reading this book. I bought this book on CD and that makes it even funnier, with Hugh Laurie reading makes it a funny experience :o)

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