

Schnell: A novel about the last summer of the British Empire.

heine: Put in a chase.

Play up Charlotte's sense of betrayal - a woman scorned.

Zuckerman: Lydia must find out that Charlotte is screwing Feliks.

THE RUSSIAN PRINCE

an Edwardian thriller

by Ken Follett

100,000 words

Title: The last Summer
The last of the Summers
The last English Summer
The last long Summer

2nd draft outline

31 May 1980

Chase: Orlanov goes off somewhere.

Feliks goes after him with the books.

~~Both~~ Charlotte learns she is pregnant and goes after Feliks.

Walter learns of the books, Lydia learns of the pregnancy, and they both go after Charlotte + Feliks.

maybe because he has learned there is a plot to assassinate him?

Prologue

Two young tourists from the US, Peter and Lizzie, are visiting Walden Wildlife Park in Surrey, England. The Park is in the grounds of Walden Hall, a stately home which is open to the public. What Peter and Lizzie like best is the fantastic landscaped garden, with its vistas, waterfalls, lakes, artificial hills, secret pathways, and - best of all - the follies, which are whimsical little buildings in a variety of crazy styles dotted about the garden for decoration. One of these is a funny little gazebo about half a mile from the house and partly hidden by shrubbery. Peter and Lizzie find their way inside. The place is clean, with marble seats and a working fountain. They smoke a joint, enjoying the ambience and imagining the lives of the incredibly rich people who used to live here. They make love, pretending to be Lord and Lady Walden. A little later they hear a voice: 'I heard heavy breathing so I waited outside.' In comes a woman who must be eighty years old. Peter realises they are a little out of line, and begins to apologise. The old lady has a twinkle in her eye. 'Don't worry, there was a time when I used to get laid in here.' Peter and Lizzie give each other a look which says: She's an original! It turns out she owns the place. As well as getting laid in here, I almost got killed here, she says. Her name is Lady Walden, and this is the story she tells:-

Part 1

1. In 1914 the gazebo is a den for two teenage sisters who live at Walden Hall. The girls are Charlotte and Belinda, aged 18 and 16 (although from their conversation they seem younger). Normally they are very closely supervised by their governess, but on her day off an easygoing maid takes over. The maid, Sarah, meets

her boyfriend while the girls go to the gazebo.

This year Charlotte will 'comeout' - that is, she will put her hair up, be presented at court, and go to the endless parties and balls of the London 'season' in order to be matched with a suitable husband. She is pretty, protected, innocent, cultured, wilful and idealistic. She speaks Russian and French, but otherwise her education has been narrow and impractical: heavy on music and art, light on geography and history, no mathematics, politics or science. She once asked her governess: 'What will I do after I get married?' The governess said: 'Why, my child, you will do nothing.' Charlotte is not happy at the prospect of spending her life doing nothing.

Today Charlotte and Belinda are talking about sex, a subject upon which they are by modern standards breathtakingly ignorant. They agree that babies grow inside women but cannot decide how they come out. Charlotte knows where eggs emerge from chickens, and once by accident Belinda saw a cow drop a calf, but they agree that their own bodies have no apertures big enough for a baby. They wonder whether they suffer from a congenital deformity. There is no one they can ask about this. They do not consider the question of how a baby gets started † they assume it happens spontaneously around the age of 21, which for them explains why girls are pressured to marry at 19 or 20.

2. The British Establishment is at its peak. They rule half the world, and of course they do not know that they will never have it this good again. The playboy king, Edward VII, died in 1910 but this is still the Edwardian era: the wealth, power and prestige amassed during the 63 solemn years of Victoria's reign are being spent with gusto. People eat and drink hugely. Houses are enormous,

clothes are gorgeous, entertainment is lavish. The rules of etiquette have attained unparalleled complexity: for example, brown boots may not be worn closer to London than Ascot. Small fortunes are made by the Bond Street and Savile Row outfitters who supply the many clothes essential for different social occasions and even different times of day. More than a million people, out of a working population of eighteen million, are employed as domestic servants. It is a time of hypocrisy. Charlotte and Belinda are extreme victims of the notorious conspiracy of silence about sex. Everyone pays lip-service to Victorian morality, and the homosexual intelligentsia have been driven abroad by the Oscar Wilde trial, but royalty patronise the Paris brothels and syphilis has reached epidemic proportions.

The Earl of Walden, the father of Charlotte and Belinda, is a typical but likeable product of this elite. Most of his wealth is in London property, so he has survived the collapse of agricultural prices which has reduced the fortunes of some of his friends. To look after himself, his Russian wife Lydia, and his two children he employs more than a hundred servants at his homes in Surrey, London, Monte Carlo and Scotland. He is fifty, and one of those men who are in their prime at that age. His big, beefy body has yet to collapse into sagging fat. His hearty manner conceals a sharp intelligence. But his full-blooded enjoyment of life is genuine. He likes hunting parties and society balls, the company of young men and mature women, going to the opera and the music-hall (vaudeville), drinking ale and port, playing pucker and chess. He has no real job, apart from a ceremonial post in the royal household, but he is a friend of several senior politicians, he is active in the House of Lords, and he often does confidential diplomatic work.

In the spring of 1914 the danger of war hangs over Europe. The Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary, are encircled by hostile nations: France, England, Belgium, Russia and the Balkans. England and France, enemies for a thousand years, have been thrown together by their shared fear of the growing wealth and power of Germany. On her side Germany is increasingly confident of defending her interests by force of arms. The problem facing German military planners is, as always, the danger of war on two fronts - against France in the west and Russia in the east. The aim of German diplomacy therefore is to neutralise Russia. Ipso facto, the French and the British are keen to extract from the Russians a firm commitment to attack Germany if Germany attacks France.

It is with this in mind that the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey - a weasel-faced birdwatcher - visits Walden. Grey explains that a young Russian general will be in London for the season (which is May, June and July). He is Prince Alexei Andreivitch Oblomov, aged 30, a nephew and favourite of the Czar, and a distant relation of Walden's wife Lydia. Ostensibly Oblomov will be here to find a bride, but he will also conduct secret talks about Anglo-Russian military co-operation. Walden, who speaks Russian, will negotiate on behalf of England. Frankly, says Grey, if you can make them commit themselves we will win the war. If you can't, Europe will be conquered by Germany.

3. The slums of Edwardian London are no better than they were in Dickens' time. They are characterised by dirt, disease, awful poverty, drunkenness and fierce exploitation. One in three babies dies before its first birthday. When school medical examinations are introduced one child in six is found to be too starved, verminous or sick to benefit from education. In many homes people eat standing up because there are no chairs. The official

overcrowding level is 214 inhabitants per acre, but in Whitechapel there are six thousand per acre.

In the East End the poorest of Englishmen mingle with even poorer immigrants from Eastern Europe, especially Russia. England is the only European country with no restrictions on immigration. Consequently London is a haven for refugee revolutionists. The anarchists are particularly strong, with their own clubs and their own (Yiddish) newspaper. England's open-door policy infuriates the Russian secret police - the notorious 'Ochrana' - but the Liberal government and British public opinion are out of sympathy with the cruel domestic policies of the Czar.

The Ochrana, using 'attaches' at the Russian Embassy in London, tries to keep an eye on these expatriate troublemakers, and does so more successfully than the cheerfully incompetent English secret police, Scotland Yard's 'Special Branch', who do not know a Menshevik from a mensch. But the Ochrana does more than watch. For years now it has been using agents provocateurs to incite outrages for the purpose of discrediting the revolutionaries. In other countries, especially back home in Russia, the outrages serve to justify ever-harsher security crackdowns on dissidents. In England the hope is that public opinion will turn against the revolutionists and they will all be sent home to be imprisoned, tortured and executed. This has not happened yet despite the Siege of Sidney Street, the Tottenham Outrage and the Houndsditch Shootings.

The Ochrana's senior plotter in London is Serge Ferfichkin, a cool but not perfectly sane manipulator with an obsession for files. The Ochrana is in charge of encoding and decoding all cable traffic at the Russian Embassy, so Ferfichkin hears of Oblomov's forthcoming visit to London, and he begins to think.

Oblomov is a respected young aristocrat who is continually pressing for reforms in Russia. The Czarist ruling class see him as an idealist whose heart is in the right place. The revolutionists scorn him publicly and secretly admit that the kind of democracy he wants is the greatest threat to the prospect of a real revolution. But the Ochrana, politically naive like all intelligence organisations, see him as a highly dangerous man - the more so since one of his reforms would be to curtail the powers of the Ochrana. In short, Ferfichkin believes the world would be well rid of Oblomov.

And suppose - Ferfichkin reasons - Oblomov were to be assassinated, while in England, by an expatriate Russian ~~xxxxix~~ revolutionist? Would this not force the British to reverse their open-door policy? Indeed, given that the British are desperate to squeeze a military commitment out of Russia, such an assassination might even prompt the Czar to demand extradition of the revolutionists as the price of the commitment.

The assassination of Oblomov would therefore serve the Ochrana doubly. (Is it not incredible that they should kill one of their own leaders? No. They have already killed the Grand Duke Sergius and the Minister of the Interior, both in the interests of provocation.)

Ferfichkin also knows from the cables that Oblomov will have talks with the Earl of Walden. The name Walden rings a bell, and Ferfichkin dives into his files. Walden is married to a Russian, Lydia. Lydia has a file: before she married Walden she associated with a young St Petersburg anarchist called Feliks Murontsiv. Feliks has a file ... and, yes, he is in London.

Ferfichkin calls in one of his agents.

4. At the age of 11 Feliks discovered that the St Petersburg shopkeepers who brought him up were not his natural parents. In fact he is the son of a now-dead peasant girl and an unidentified young aristocrat. When he was a student he had a brief but passionate affair with Lydia, the daughter of a count; but he broke it off (under parental pressure) and married an English earl. Later Feliks was tortured by the Ochrana, escaped from prison, and fled to England. His opposition to the ruling class is therefore deeply personal as well as political.

Now 40, he is a Rasputin-like character, intense, fiery, magnetic and domineering. He is tall, thin, hairy and none too clean, but there is in him a kind of animal energy which some women find irresistible. Most evenings he may be found at the Jubilee Street Anarchist Club in Stepney, drinking and arguing politics.

Tonight the group around Feliks is joined by Andre Barre, a sly, nervous Bolshevik with contacts at the Russian Embassy. Barre announces that he has heard that Prince Oblomov will come to London for secret talks with the Earl of Walden.

Here is an opportunity for propaganda-by-deed, and around the table there is much talk of assassination. Feliks however is quiet. If he is going to do something he will not plan it in public.

Barre, who is an agent provocateur, reports back. Ferfichkin says: 'Do you think he realises who Lady Walden is?' Barre says he showed no sign. 'Well,' says Ferfichkin, 'he'll soon find out.'

Part 2

5. The London season is a marriage market for the fuling class, and Prince Oblomov is widely regarded - by the debutantes' mothers - as this year's top prize. He makes his first appearance at Charlotte's coming-out ball at the Savoy Hotel. He turns out to be very handsome as well as high-born and incredibly rich. The ball is a glittering occasion, with the debs in fantastic gowns and the young men in white ties and tails. Charlotte talks to Oblomov and quickly discovers how he has managed to stay a bachelor for so long: he is chronically shy with women. But her naivety and straightforwardness touch a chord in him, and he comes out of his shell a little. He talks earnestly about the need for change in Russia: for land reform, mechanised agriculture, free speech, industry and parliamentary democracy. Charlotte is fascinated and has to be dragged away to dance with other guests.

A little later, in the ladies' powder room, she has a girl-to-girl chat with a cousin who tells her the sexual facts of life.

6. Feliks is also at the ball. He has got a job as a temporary waiter with the object of taking a close look at Oblomov. He does not plan to kill the prince tonight, if only because right now he does not have the money to buy a weapon. In a corridor he sees Lydia and hears her addressed as Lady Walden. He is thunderstruck. He catches her eye. She turns white and walks away. He goes after her and asks her to meet him. She refuses. But he gets the impression that he still has some power over her; and now he knows where to get the money to buy the weapon that will kill Oblomov.

7. On the way home from the ball at dawn, Charlotte is horrified to see a woman sleeping on the pavement. Her chaperone explains that thousands of men, women and children have nowhere to sleep but the streets of London. Charlotte simply did not know that people could be that poor. She insists on stopping the carriage and speaking to the woman. It turns out to be Sarah, the maid who used to deputise for the governess at Walden Hall. Sarah says she was fired because she got pregnant.

Charlotte is grossed out by the revelations of the last twelve hours. When she gets home she screams at her mother: 'Why did nobody tell me?' It seems that her education so far has been little better than a conspiracy to deceive her. She has her father's strong will as well as her mother's soft heart: from now on, she decides, she will find things out for herself.

8. Lydia, 39 and still beautiful, has problems of her own. Back in 1894 she married Walden after a whirlwind courtship in St Petersburg. She has always liked her husband, but she has nourished the memory of her ~~zhitishand~~ adolescent passion for Feliks, and she has never ceased to feel guilty because she was not a virgin when she married Walden. This guilt has clouded the marriage. Now Feliks has reappeared in her life, and she is distraught. Although she no longer feels any physical lust for him, the combination of guilt and remembered affection make her vulnerable to him. And in this turmoil she cannot look her husband in the eye, so she becomes cool with him and begins to shut him out of her life.

Part 3

9. Ferfichkin knows Oblomov's movements. Consequently he is able to give Barre information which makes Barre indispensable to Feliks; and in return Feliks is obliged to make Barre privy to

his plans, so Ferfichkin knows what Feliks is doing.

Now, instructed by Ferfichkin, Barre takes Feliks to see a crazy old Polish chemist in Clerkenwell who makes bombs. Feliks says he will need a large bomb with a timing device. The chemist names a price. I'll get the money, says Feliks.

Feliks calls on Lydia while Walden is out. (He gains admittance by giving a false name.) He tells Lydia how much money he needs and asks her to meet him in a week's time. Lydia, desperate to get him out of the house and terrified Walden will learn of her premarital affair, agrees.

10. Walden and Oblomov exchange information on mobilisation and military planning. They begin to draft an agreement whereby both will attack Germany if Germany attacks either France or Russia. Oblomov may be hopeless with women but he is a tough negotiator, and the first meeting gets stuck on the definition of 'attack'.

Afterwards Walden walks around for a while. He has noticed Lydia's new mood and vaguely resents it. He finds himself walking past a small house in Chelsea. It is the home of Bonita Carlos, real name Myrtle Jenkins. Bonnie was the greatest courtesan in London in the 1890s. The young Walden was crazy for her and in fact gave her this little house. What is she like now? he wonders. My God, she must be fifty. He walks on.

11. Now that Charlotte has begun to find out how things are in the real world, what can she do about it? She discovers that as a woman she cannot even vote! She forgets Oblomov and seeks out the London avant-garde in the company of her cousin Lucinda (who told her the facts of life). She meets some of the intellectual

subversives of the day: Thomas Hardy, Emmeline Pankhurst, Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, DH Lawrence. She scandalises her society friends by declaring an (entirely theoretical) belief in free love and horrifies her parents by announcing her intention of going on a suffragette demonstration.

12. Lydia's problem now is that she has no money. The household shopping is done by servants, and they do not use cash - the shopkeepers send bills to Walden who pays by cheque. Lydia's dressmakers, hatters etc all send the bill. If Lydia takes morning coffee at the Cafe Royal during a shopping expedition she signs for it. Her personal fortune consists of property and shares which she cannot sell without the knowledge of the family solicitor, a personal friend of Walden. She has no bank account of her own. So, highly embarrassed, she takes some jewellery to Hatton Garden and sells it.

Part 4

13. The King has refused to give an audience to Mrs Pankhurst, so the suffragettes march on Buckingham Palace (on Thursday 21 May 1914) and Charlotte goes along. The police are ordered to repel the suffragettes with a minimum of arrests (because they are more trouble in jail than out) and the consequence of this policy is that the women get beaten up. Idle male bystanders join in. The more militant woman wield Indian clubs and throw pepper, but Charlotte, naive as always, is unarmed. She is rescued from a beating by a tall, roughly-dressed Russian who introduces himself as Feliks.

14. Feliks takes Charlotte back to his dingy lodgings in Stepney and seduces her on the rickety bed. He plans to use her, but that doesn't spoil his pleasure: he has always longed to screw the aristocracy. Charlotte is mesmerised by him. She has never met anyone like this. And she discovers that sex is what she has been waiting for all her life.

15. Walden asks Lydia to wear one of the pieces of jewellery she has sold. She tells him she has sent it for repair. Next day he sees it for sale in a shop window. He storms in and accuses them of theft. The manager takes him into the office and explains that this happens not infrequently, a lady needs cash for a clandestine purpose and sells some jewellery unbeknown to her husband ... Humiliated, Walden buys the stuff back. Then he hires a private detective to follow Lydia.

16. Following Feliks' instructions, Lydia books a private room in a restaurant and meets him there for lunch. She gives him the money. Now he asks for something else: a job. She gives him a letter to the head groundsman at Walden Hall, telling him to take Feliks on as a gardener.

Part 5

17. Walden's detective reports that Lydia had lunch in a private room in a restaurant with a man of about her own age, and they spoke Russian together. The detective followed the man home and so has his address.

Walden instructs the detective to find out all about Feliks.

Then Walden goes to see Bonnie. She is now a comfortable, plump, horny woman of fifty, no longer a courtesan, living on her investments and a little lonely. She is thrilled to see Walden. They spend a wonderful afternoon in bed. Walden begins to consider ways in which he could spend less time with Lydia and more with Bonnie.

18. Charlotte gets it regularly in Stepney. Feliks tells her how the Ochrana tortured him. There are many Russians languishing in those infernal cells, he says. But we must do something! cries Charlotte. All right, says Feliks: let's kidnap Oblomov and hold him to ransom against the release of political prisoners. Wonderful! says Charlotte.

19. Charlotte sees Oblomov again and encourages his attentions. London hums with rumours of a romance. Charlotte persuades Lydia to give a weekend party for Oblomov at Walden Hall, hinting that Oblomov may take the opportunity to propose. Lydia agrees and the invitations are sent out.

20. On 28 June the Archduke Ferdinand is assassinated at Sarajevo. Sir Edward Grey tells Walden that he must sign an agreement with Oblomov within the next few days. (Of course the agreement will still have to be ratified by the governments.) Walden says he thinks Oblomov will sign next weekend, at Walden Hall.

Part 6

21. On the Thursday before the weekend party Feliks goes to Clerkenwell to collect the bomb. The chemist explains the

mechanism. Setting the timer is a delicate job: the bomb must first be armed, then the timer - an alarm clock - must be set. The alarm bell will ring two seconds before the explosion. The bomb will destroy everyone in the room, provided it is not muffled by something soft and heavy like a sandbag.

Feliks takes the bomb and leaves for Walden Hall.

22. On Friday morning the private detective reports to Walden. Feliks is an anarchist, he says, and yesterday visited a man known to the police as a bomb maker. He then caught a train to Surry.

Of course it occurs to Walden that Feliks may intend to assassinate Oblomov. He gets the Russian Embassy to provide bodyguards for the prince. He wonders what Lydia's role is in all this, and is afraid to ask her.

It occurs to him that if Oblomov is assassinated it could ruin the secret treaty and even keep Russia out of the war.

23. Feliks, now gardening at Walden Hall, hears about the bodyguards and contrives to stay well away from the house. (Nobody here knows he is Russian - he has given his name as Felix Morrow.)

On Friday evening he and Charlotte make love in the gazebo. Then he tells her to lure Oblomov to the gazebo at exactly four o'clock on Saturday afternoon.

24. On Saturday morning Lydia finds the jewellery she sold in Walden's wardrobe. She decides to confess.

The same morning Oblomov asks Charlotte to marry him. She promises to give him his answer in the gazebo at four o'clock.

Later she speaks to another house-guest, a distinguished

surgeon. Embarrassed, she asks: 'Is it at all serious if a woman stops, you know, bleeding?' The surgeon answers gruffly: 'It means she's pregnant.' Charlotte turns white.

25. After lunch Ferfichkin, who knows ~~that~~ Feliks' plans through Barre, calls off Oblomov's bodyguards, saying that Oblomov has refused to have them hanging around. (Ferfichkin figures that Oblomov will be dead before he can deny it.)

Lydia gets Walden alone and confesses all. Walden has no time to be glad that she still loves him, because of course her confession reveals that the assassin is right here at Walden Hall! Walden starts a search - but neither Feliks, Oblomov or Charlotte can be found.

26. Oblomov is walking in the woods alone, wondering whether Charlotte will say Yes.

Charlotte goes to the gazebo early to tell Feliks she is pregnant. She finds him arming the bomb. She realises this was to be a murder, not a kidnapping, and Feliks was prepared to kill her as well as Oblomov. Bitterly, she tells Feliks he would have been killing his own unborn child as well. In his distraction at this news Feliks mucks up the bomb, and suddenly the alarm goes off. Two seconds, and everyone in the room will die - unless the bomb is muffled by a soft heavy object, like a bag of sand ... or a human being. Feliks throws himself on the bomb and it goes off. Charlotte is uninjured. Dying, Feliks asks her not to have the baby adopted (as he was). She promises.

27. Everyone comes running. Nobody knows of Charlotte's involvement with Feliks and they all assume she surprised the

assassin and fortuitously saved Oblomov's life.

Charlotte agrees to marry Oblomov, who will never know that the baby is not his.

Walden and Lydia are reconciled and have a second honeymoon.

Walden and Oblomov sign the treaty.

The world goes to war.

Epilogue

The 85-year-old Charlotte has been talking to Peter and Lizzie all day. At lunchtime they shared sandwiches in the gazebo, and later they had dinner together in the Great Hall of the house after all the tourists had gone home. Now, at almost midnight, Charlotte winds up the loose ends. She did indeed marry Oblomov. He was made military liaison officer with the British and so stayed in London for the war. He lost all his fortune in the revolution, but Walden got him a directorship of a bank and to everyone's surprise he became a very successful international banker. Walden lived to a ripe age but lost his money in the Depression. Lydia's grandsons have revived the family fortunes by turning Walden Hall into a tourist attraction.

'It's a wonderful story,' says Peter. 'You should write a book.'

Charlotte laughs. 'Nobody would believe it.'

'Maybe not.' Peter thinks. 'Well,' he says after a while, 'you could make it a novel.'

The End.