

THE RUSSIAN PRINCE

"... confidential correspondence between the Russian Embassy in London and its foreign office in St Petersburg was regularly communicated to the German government by an Embassy official..."
- Sir Robert Enver : England 1870-1914

Prologue

Two young tourists from the U.S., Peter and Hizzie, are visiting Walden Park in Surrey. Walden Park is England's answer to Disneyland: a stately house with a fabulous ornamental garden, an automobile museum, and a ^{safari} wildlife park. Peter and Hizzie tour the eighty-room house, explore the landscaped garden, then wander through the woods. Three miles from the main house, on a slight rise, they come across a "folly": a small building like a miniature medieval castle, obviously built at a rich man's whim. The place is overgrown, almost concealed, and locked up; but Peter finds an open window and they go in. Inside, the folly is fitted out like a full-size doll's house, with a tiny old-fashioned kitchen, a living-room and a bedroom. A staircase leads to the battlements, from where there is a beautiful view across the valley. Peter and Hizzie smoke a joint, enjoying the ambience and imagining the lives of the incredibly rich people who used to live at Walden Hall. Then they make love, pretending to be hard and hardy Walden and giggling a lot. A little later they hear a voice: "I heard heavy breathing so I waited outside." In comes a woman who must be at least eighty years old. Peter realises they are out of line and begins to apologise. The old lady has a wrinkle in her eye. "Don't worry, there was a time when I used to get laid in here." Peter and Hizzie give each other a look which says: "She's an original!" She tells them the miniature castle is called Lady Walden's folly, after her grandmother for whom it was built. "But I suppose I perpetuated the name. I nearly got killed in here." She is the current Lady Walden. She owns Walden ^{Park} Hall - house, grounds, the whole enchilada. This is the story she tells: -

One

(i) It is 1894, and the seventh Earl Walden is dying. He is a typical Victorian aristocrat of the huntin', shootin' and fishin' variety, and what he is dying of is sixty years of good living. Today he insists on getting up. Wearing a heavy coat and well

muffled up, he walks - attended by anxious servants - through the woods to Lady Walden's folly. His late wife had this built, ostensibly for her daughters; but she had two sons and no daughters, and she was less than perfectly sane, and she used to play here herself. The old Earl walks around, thinking of her, and finally rests on the battlements, exhausted and near to death, gazing at the view she loved so well. His younger son George arrives. The Earl asks for Stephen, his elder son. "He's in St Petersburg," George replies. The Earl gasps: "He won't get much murther there." Then he dies.

(ii) The belle of St Petersburg society this year is Lydia, the daughter of a count. Aged 19, she is beautiful in a frail, Charles sort of way, and terribly respectable: modestly dressed, obedient to her parents, respectful to her elders, a devout churchgoer, hypocritically impractical, and liable to faint at the slightest suggestion of impropriety. However all this is to some extent an act, for she is secretly conducting a mad passionate affair with an anonymous student named Feliks Murovstov.

At the age of eleven Feliks discovered that the old Muscovite keepers 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. He grew up thinking of himself as something special, a V.I.P. temporarily lodging with the petit-bourgeoisie. He developed a commanding manner and an intuitive grasp of the psychology of dominance. He learned to despise the aristocracy (to which he fancied he belonged) when they failed to pay their bills in his father-father's shop. He looks undomesticated: tall, thin as a reed, with a gaunt white face and large, staring eyes. He is fiery, passionate, idealistic, and mad as hell at the whole world. At the University he has become an anarchist. The intellectual rationale for his politics is reasonable enough, but his fervour comes from his personal confusions and hatreds.

This evening Lydia matches an hour with Feliks on her way to a reception at the British Embassy. At the end, she shouts "Help!" at the moment of climax.

She arrives at the Embassy looking happy and delectable, and she captures the heart of a visiting Englishman, Stephen Walden.

Young Walden is like his father the seventh Earl - so much so that they cannot live together. Stephen was born in 1864. He learned to ride before he could walk and to shoot before he could write his name. He went to Eton, where he misbehaved, and Oxford, where he surprised everyone by graduating (in History). In 1887 he made his first trip to Africa where he fell in love with big-game hunting.

On that first trip he picked up a manservant who was to be with him for the rest of his

life. Pritchard, then 16 (Walden was 23) was the intelligent, cynical son of a London shirtmaker. He had run away to sea then jumped ship in Zanzibar. A close bond was forged between the two men on Safari. Pritchard is intensely loyal to Walden while at the same time despising the British ruling class. In turn Walden, who is normally aloof with servants, often talks to Pritchard - when they are alone - the way a company president might talk to his chief executive.

When in London Walden pursues loose women. Last year (1893) he had a fairly notorious affair with a singer, Bonnie Carter (real name Maudie Jenkins). He even gave her a present of a small house in St John's Wood, the area of London which was at that time Midsomerhill. But Bonnie threw him over when the Prince of Wales took a fancy to her.

Even before that Walden found England suffocating and spent little time there. He is a restless young man who lives for kicks. He goes on safari all a year and travels the world in between. Being the heir to an earldom, he is entertained by England's ambassadors in the world's capital cities. The diplomats, having heard of his reputation as a hell-raiser, are surprised to find that he is intelligent and knowledgeable about international politics and has a flair for languages. In fact he is laying the foundation for what will later be a considerable expertise in foreign affairs.

Tonight at dinner he is placed next to Lydia. She is much too demure to be his usual type, but nevertheless he finds her enchanting. He thinks: If I wanted a wife... but I don't. She, secure in her passion for Feliks, flirts with him a little.

That night a cable comes from England informing him of the death of his father. The news has an odd effect on him. He does not shed a single tear, but he conceals a gambling debt and sits up all night, thinking.

(iii) Next morning Lydia's father, the Old Count, tells her he has found out about Feliks. He is wild with rage. Lydia dashes out of the house and goes to Feliks' lodgings, determined to run away with him. But Feliks is gone - arrested, says his landlady, for being an anarchist.

Meanwhile Stephen, now the eighth Earl Walden and addressed as my lord, calls on the Count and formally asks permission to pay court to Lydia. The Count says Yes, come back tomorrow.

Lydia returns and accuses her father of having Feliks arrested. The Count admits it. Furthermore, he says, Feliks is at this minute being tortured by the Obedience, the Count

secret police, in an attempt to make him reveal the names of other conspirators. Lydia is distraught. At first she screams at her father, then begins to plead with him to have Felix released. "I'll do anything," she says, "anything you want!" Her father says: "Will you marry Stephen Walden?"

Two

It is 1914. The British rule half the world, and of course they do not know (except perhaps subconsciously) that for them this is the beginning of the end. The playboy king, Edward VII died in 1910, but this is still the Edwardian era: the wealth, power and prestige amassed during the sixty-three solemn years of Victoria's reign are being spent with gusto. People eat and drink hugely. Houses are enormous, entertainments in lavish, clothes are gorgeous. Small fortunes are made by the Bond Street and Saint Paul outfitters who supply the many clothes necessary for different social occasions and even different times of day. The rules of etiquette have attained unparalleled complexity - for example, brown boots may not be worn near to London than Ascot. Fanny dress parties are all the rage. This is the time of Highgate's sexual ballet, subterfuges, raffine, scandals mixed bathing, the rump, and the shock of post-hypnotism.

There is, of course, another England. The slums of Edwardian London are worse than they were in Dickens' time. They are characterized 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 verminous, starved or sick to ~~benefit from~~ education learn anything. In many homes people eat standing up because there are no chairs. The official overcrowding level is 214 people per acre: Whitechapel has six thousand per acre.

This year the weather is glorious, sunny and warm. Almost no rain falls in April, May or June. The temperature in London on 1 July will be 94° F. It is the last long summer of the British Empire.

(i) After the death of his father, Stephen Walden married Lydia, brought her back to England, moved into Walden Hall, took his seat in the House of Lords, and settled down.

He found the family fortunes somewhat diminished because of the late-Victorian collapse of agricultural prices. While other country landowners clamoured for tariff protection, Walden switched money into London property and railways, and he is now richer than his

father ever was. To look after himself, Lydia, and their teenage daughter Charlotte he employs more than 100 servants at his four homes - Walden Hall, a town house on the edge of St James's Park in London, a shooting-box in Scotland and a villa in Monte Carlo. He is now fifty, and is one of those men who are in their prime at that age. His big, beefy body has yet to collapse into fat, although he has a gouty leg and walks with a cane. His jolly, hearty manner conceals a sharp intelligence. He thoroughly enjoys life. He likes hunt balls and fancy-dress parties, the opera and the music-hall, better he used vintage port, the company of young men and mature women, any game from chess to poker. He hunts fox in Surrey and shoots grouse in Scotland, but it is not the same as big game, and late at night he and Pritchard often sit in the gun-room over a glass of port, surrounded by the stuffed and mounted heads of lion, elephant and rhinoceros, and reminisce about the African days.

Walden has no real jobs apart from a ceremonial post in the royal household, but he is active in the House of Lords and friendly with several senior politicians - including the foreign secretary, Sir Selwyn Lloyd, with whom he was at Oxford. Because of his great knowledge of foreign - especially Russian - affairs, he is occasionally asked to do confidential diplomatic work.

Viewed from England, Europe is menaced by an increasingly wealthy and aggressive Europe. Germany's annual steel production, for example, has overtaken that of Britain and is still accelerating. England's navy, the guardian of the island's trading arteries, is supposed to be larger than the combined navies of the two next strongest powers - but Germany is catching up and refuses to negotiate an arms limitation treaty. In the past year her war preparations have become increasingly obvious. The government has imposed a one-off special tax to raise a million marks - the largest levy in European history - and the money is being used to step up conscription (so that it now includes all fit men without exception) with corresponding increases in military equipment. On the London money market German firms have been factoring credits, i.e. discounting bills for early payment, with the result that the rest of the world owes Germany nothing while Germany still owes the rest of the world. In short Germany is ready to fight.

The problem facing the German general staff is - as always - the danger of war on two fronts: against France in the west and Russia in the east. For this reason the aim of German diplomacy is to neutralise Russia. One attempt to do this almost succeeded, and Walden was personally involved in frustrating it. In 1906 the Kaiser persuaded the weak-willed Czar to sign the Treaty of Bjorko. It would have radically changed

the Balance of Power if it had ever been respected by its signatories; but in fact it was forgotten as quickly as it had appeared, and some of the credit for this is due to Walden, who was dispatched to St Petersburg to talk the Czar out of it. Walden looks back on this as the triumph of his life.

Just as Germany wants to neutralise Russia, so England and France want to extract from the Russians a firm commitment to join the Allied side when war breaks out. It is with this in mind that Sir Edmund Grey - a wessel-faced birdbraker - visits Walden in March 1914. Grey explains that a young Russian general is coming to London to conduct secret military talks. He is Prince Alexei Andronovich Oblomov, aged 30, a nephew and favourite of the Czar and a distant relation of Walden's wife Lydia. Oblomov will stay at Walden's London house and Walden, who speaks Russian, will represent Britain at the talks. To disguise the real purpose of the visit Oblomov, who is an eligible bachelor, will be introduced to London society, and it will be whispered about that he is looking for a wife.

Walden is no stranger to the world of international diplomacy, but even he is somewhat awestruck by the importance of his task, which is no less than to get the Russians on our team. Of course he has many personal reasons for wanting this: he loves Russia, his wife is Russian, and he has a lot of money invested in the Trans-Siberian railway. But more importantly, he is convinced that if Russia remains neutral, Germany will conquer Europe.

(ii) Lady Walden's belly is now a den for Charlotte, Viscountess Walden, the only child of Walden and Lydia. Charlotte is 18, though in some ways she seems younger. She is normally supervised by her strict-voiced governess Marya. But on Wednesdays Marya has an afternoon off and her place is taken by an easygoing maid called Annie. Annie meets her boyfriend in the woods while Charlotte goes to the belly.

Today Charlotte has a guest: her cousin and childhood playmate Belinda (the daughter of George) who is also 18. This year both girls will "come out" - that is, they will put their hair up, be presented at court, and go to the endless parties and balls of the London "season" in order to meet suitable prospective husbands.

Charlotte is an only child who has grown up among adoring family and servants. She is too good-natured to be actually spoiled, but she is at least well (like her father). Back in 1894 both her parents in their different ways

suppressed the libertarian sides of their personalities in favour of respectability; and the submerged desires have surfaced in the offspring. Whether they knew it or not, Warden and Lydia always noted when Charlotte escaped from her crib.

Nevertheless her life has been narrowly restricted. She has always been educated at home. Her only real friend is Belinda, who is not an only child but is in a similar position having three ^{pep}brothers all under six years old. (Charlotte has never seen poor people's homes - indeed she has never seen the servants' quarters of her own home - and she was never allowed to play with the children of servants or tenants. (Lydia remembers the terrible temptations to which she succumbed when she encountered the common people in the shape of Eliza; and she is terrified that her daughter will follow in the same way.) Charlotte's schooling has been heavily biased toward the impractical. She knows a lot about music and art, and she speaks Russian and French, but she knows little of history or geography and nothing of mathematics, science, finance or politics. She is therefore cultured and intelligent, but has a hopelessly one-eyed view of how the world works.

Willful, cultured, unprotected... She has one more crucial trait: idealism. She realises that only white European aristocrats are entitled to be wealthy, powerful and idle; but she knows of no reason why the whole world should not be fed, clothed and happy. And all the people she comes across are relatively fortunate, for her father is the archetypal paternal country squire who provides for his tenants in bad times (while collecting far rents from them) and takes care of his servants (while paying them next to nothing). But Charlotte is ignorant of the downside: all she knows is that old servants get a pension and a cottage, newly delivered mothers are sent a basket of provisions, and in a hard winter everyone gets her soup.

Finally, Charlotte is as beautiful as her mother. At present her beauty is entirely natural: an innocent smile, a clear complexion, a graceful walk. But soon she will learn how to dress like a woman, and then she will be ravishing.

She recently asked Mamma: "what will I do after I get married?" Mamma replied: "why, my child, you will do nothing." Observing her mother and other Edmondston ladies, Charlotte realises that while they are continually busy with social affairs they do nothing. She feels, like any young girl, that she is faced with a decision about what kind of person she is going to be; and she is not at all happy with the prospect of a life spent doing nothing. This is Charlotte's personal version of the perennial adolescent identity crisis; and in confronting it she will, as her parents did in 1844, face a choice between freedom

and responsibility.

Charlotte and Belinda talk of these things in the Filly, and eventually the conversation turns to sex, a subject upon which they are (by modern standards) breathtakingly ignorant.

The Victorian conspiracy of silence about sex cannot then have been as completely effective as it is in this case. The children of the poor sleep in houses too small for secrets; middle-class children learn about sex from school friends; aristocratic boys go to boarding schools; even aristocratic girls learn from older brothers. Total ignorance is possible only for protected, isolated girls like Charlotte and Belinda.

They realize that babies grow inside women but cannot imagine how they get out. Charlotte knows where eggs emerge from chickens, and Belinda once 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 consult about this. They do not consider the question of how a baby gets started - they assume it happens spontaneously around the age of 21, and for them this explains why girls are pressed to marry at 19 or 20.

(iii) Richer Hartmann, senior aide to the ~~Prussian~~ German ambassador in London, has a picture of the European situation rather different from Walden's. He is proud of his country's uphill struggle to greatness; and where, he asks, is it written that Britain shall rule the world and Germany shall always be a second-class power?

The problem is that Germany is in danger of being cut off from the outside world - notably the USA, Africa and the Far East - because of the policy of encirclement masterminded by Britain. Germany is partly surrounded by hostile nations - France, Belgium, England and Russia. Italy is warring and the Balkans are turbulent. Germany's only route to America is via the North Sea, where Britain rules the waves (~~which is why~~^{so} a naval limitation treaty, which Britain keeps proposing as if it were the essence of sweet reason, would simply maintain the status quo and keep Germany trapped). Her route to Africa and the Middle East is via her ally Austria-Hungary and the Balkans, which is why Germany supports Austria's aggressive domination of the Balkans. Her only way to the east is via Persia, a territory which England and Russia have just carved up between them (incidentally securing Persia's oil, the fuel for the new generation of fast warships). Germany wants colonies like everyone else, but each move she makes in Africa is denounced as troublemaking by the powers which are already

sitting on rich possessions. Is there any way for Germany to avoid being suffocated?
Hartmann, a pessimist, sees only one: war.

Hartmann learns of the forthcoming visit of Stolover through a well-placed spy in the Russian Embassy (see opening quote). Hartmann, like as Walden sees the need for a firm alliance between Russia and England, so Hartmann is desperate to drive a wedge between the two - and now he sees, in the visit of Stolover, what may be his last chance of doing this.

In the East End of London the poorest of Englishmen mingle with even poorer immigrants from Eastern Europe. England is the only European country with no restriction on immigration. Consequently London is a haven for political refugees from Russia, Poland and Germany. The anarchists are particularly strong, with their own clubs and their own newspaper. The open-door policy is a cause of friction between Russia and England, for these expatriate revolutionists contribute a permanent, if distant, threat to the tsar. However, public opinion, and the conscience of the governing liberal party, will not allow dissidents to be sent home for imprisonment, torture and execution at the hands of the Czar's brutal police.

Hartmann sees how this friction between the two countries might be inflamed into a full-scale quarrel on the eve of war. For what if an expatriate Russian anarchist were to assassinate the Czar's favourite nephew in London? At a minimum the tides would be submerged. At best it could keep Russia out of the war.

Hartmann calls in an informant, Andrei Barne, who poses as a French bookie with the object of keeping an eye on expatriate German troublemakers who might be planning to return home. Hartmann asks Barne: Who is the leading Russian revolutionist in London?

Well, says Barne, now that little boy Katin's left, I suppose it's Feliks Murmukhin.

(iv) Feliks was released from jail the day after Lydia's wedding. He left the University and, dressed as a monk, wandered the Russian countryside preaching the anarchist gospel. Eventually he was arrested again and sentenced to life imprisonment in Siberia. After some years he escaped and made his way to England. He and Lydia got married and left Russia, but he does not know where she went nor does he know what her name is now. But he has not forgotten her: whenever he dreams about sex it is always with a woman

who shouts "Help!" at the clinax.

Now aged 40, hardened both physically and in his convictions, he is a Rasputin-like character: intense, dominating, magnetic, naive. He is tall, thin, hairy and none too clean, but there is in him an animal energy which some women find irresistible.

Every few months he and a small gang of non-political villains do a house-burn a house. Most of Feliks' share goes to the anarchist cause, for his own lifestyle is frugal. Most evenings he is to be found at the Jubilee Street Anarchist Club in Stepney, drinking and planning the anarchist Utopia. He dominates any group by his autocratic manner and the evangelical fervour blazing in his eyes. However he is secretly very discouraged. He has been in London for three years and in that time he has done nothing to further the cause. Meanwhile Russia is in a turmoil: more than a million workers are on strike, the Duma (parliament) is a farce, and the oil workers are at war with the Cossacks. The country is a powder-barrel waiting for a spark. Feliks wants to be that spark, but he knows that as soon as the Molin set foot in Russia he was packed off to Siberia, and what good could Feliks do in Siberia? But what can he do in London?

Tonight Feliks' acquaintance Andrus home comes to the Jubilee Street club bringing with him a German anarchist called Peter. Through a contact at the Russian Embassy Peter has learned that Prince Momen is coming to London, and would like to be interested in helping kill him?

Three

On 4 June

(i) Charlotte is presented at court. This is the biggest and most gorgeous ceremony of British royalty, when the aristocratic girls of the kingdom parade before the monarch at Buckingham Palace. "Court dress" is obligatory. For women this means a white dress with a low-cut bodice and a train three to four yards long, a head with three white plumes, and just about all the family jewels. Men wear velvet knee-breeches, silk stockings, and all their medals. In the main part of the ceremony the King and Queen sit in their thrones while the debutantes pass before them one at a time.

Charlotte's debut is marred by a (real-life) incident. The girl ahead of her

suddenly drops to one knee and says: "Your Majesty, for God's sake stop torturing women!"
She is hurried away by two footmen. The royal couple pretend not to notice, but Charlotte is flustered. She assumes the girl is completely mad, and for now nobody will tell her otherwise.

(ii) From the spy in the Russian Embassy Hartmann learns the date and time of Othman's arrival. He and Feliks go to Victoria Station to take a look. They hardly see Othman. He has travelled in a private coach (borrowed from the King, to whom he is related). He steps from that straight into Walden's Rolls-Royce and is whisked away. Feliks and Hartmann follow on Hartmann's motor-cycle. Feliks' thoughts are dark. Feliks and Hartmann get a mere glimpse of a handsome, expensively-dressed young man. They follow the car on Hartmann's motorcycle. Feliks' thoughts are dark. Othman represents the regime which is responsible for torture, slavery and starvation in Russia - but he also represents an opportunity to bring that regime down. They follow the Rolls to a large house on the edge of St James's Park. It is the town house of Lord Walden.

Inside the house Othman is greeted by Lydia. She is 39 and still beautiful. Her public image is not much changed since 1894: she is still respectable, though Anglicized, and she plays the part of an Edwardian lady very convincingly. But what ~~has~~ is happening underneath?

She has never ceased to feel terribly guilty that she doubly deceived Walden when she married him, for of course he thought she was (a) a virgin and (b) in love with him, and this burden of guilt has made it impossible for them to have a warm, candid relationship. Nevertheless she has grown fond of Walden, indeed she would say that she loves him, and she would never be unfaithful to him. Yet she has nourished the memory of her adolescent passion for Feliks, and her Bohemian impulses are not dead, merely dormant. Othman, who was a ten-year-old boy at her wedding, is an uncomfortable reminder of all this.

Othman speaks good English. He talks about Russia; and his pillar of the Tsarist regime turns out to be something of a radical. He speaks earnestly of the need for change in Russia: for land reform, mechanized agriculture, industry and participatory democracy. He is a rather appealing young man.

When Charlotte appears we find out why this charming, inevitably wealthy prince is still a bachelor at thirty: he is chronically shy with girls. As soon as Charlotte

walks in (looking ravishing) he turns into a nervous wreck, dropping his teacup, suddenly acquiring a thick German accent, and mumbling. But now Charlotte's hidden talents begin to emerge, and with her unique naive charm she manages to put him at his ease.

Outside, Feliks and Mastmann walk in the park and discuss what they have seen. It seems that Orlow is reluctant to show himself in public: he will not be an easy target. (Perhaps the possibility of assassination has occurred to him too.) Somehow we'll have to get into the house, says Mastmann; but how?

I have the answer to that, says Feliks, and he shows Mastmann an announcement in the society pages: Walden is giving a fancy-dress ball to introduce Orlow. That's when I'll kill him, says Feliks.

Four

(i) Walden and Orlow exchange information on mobilisation and military planning, and begin to discuss joint campaigns. The talks are given added urgency by the news that the Germans have completed the widening of the Kiel Canal, enabling their Dreadnoughts to pass between the North Sea and the Baltic. This is a strategically vital project without which they could not go to war. But now Orlow drops a bombshell.

Russia's great long-term aim is to have a warm-water port. She has her Black Sea coast, but the Black Sea is connected with the Mediterranean by a narrow strait, the Bosphorus, at Constantinople. ~~The coast on~~ Both the European and the Asia Minor ^{banks} coasts of the Bosphorus are controlled by Turkey. Russia has been supporting Slav nationalism in the Balkans, in the hope that when the Slavs throw out the Turks they will guarantee Russia free passage. But better than Slav control of the Balkans would be Russian control; and Orlow now announces that if Russia is to fight on the Allied side in the coming war, the price of her co-operation will be Britain's recognition of the Balkans as a Russian sphere of influence.

Of course Walden is not mandated even to discuss this, and the talks adjourn while he puts the question to the Foreign Office.

(ii) For the first time in her life Charlotte is reading the newspapers, and she

learn of the suffragette movement. She ~~strongly~~ disapproves strongly of women who break windows and slash paintings. She talks to Pritchard about the deb who made the scene at the court. Pritchard explains the reference to torture: suffragettes who are jailed go on hunger strike, and consequently are force-fed by a degrading and painful process. Charlotte refuses to believe this.

But she does not give it much thought, for today is the day of the fancy-down ball, and the house is full of people all day long. The ballroom is being transformed into a Sultan's palace. Charlotte is to go as little ~~Bob~~ Bob Peep, and out in the stables is a darling little real live fluffy lamb which will be part of her costume.

Meanwhile, blackman buys and tests a pair of duelling pistols; and Feliks tests a Dick Turpin outfit complete with marks.

At the start of the ball Charlotte, Lydia, Walden and Mamma stand in line, in a reception room off the ballroom, to welcome the guests.

Feliks arrives in his costume. He bluffs his way through the front door (for he has no invitation) and gets to the door of the reception room. There he gives his name as Dick Turpin, and to the other announces him. Everyone laughs. Ignoring the line, he approaches Mamma and draws his pistols. Now everyone is wondering if it's really a joke. Feliks breathes in Russian: "~~You die~~ You death with face hemia!" before him lies the third word at Lydia - who of course understands - screams "Help!" in Russian - just as she ^{used to} did when Feliks made love to her. Feliks is thunderstruck. He stares at Lydia, recognizing her. In the instant for which he hesitates, Walden lifts his cane and whacks Feliks' arm with the wrist. Feliks drops the guns, turns, and runs out.

For a moment everyone is too stunned to move. Then Walden picks up the dropped pistols and reloads them. "Blanks," he lies. "A joke carried too far. That didn't come off. Wonder who the telephone was?"

And the ball goes on.

Five.

(1) Feliks broods over Lydia. He is sure he could seduce her all over again. But what he feels for her is not love. He daydreams ~~about her being naked~~ and that she is

begging him to make love to her, and in his fantasy he refuses. He also thinks about Walden. So that gony did squeeze is the one who stole Lydia! Felix's pride is wounded by the way Walden liberally ripped his knuckles with the cane.

Felix wants to destroy this family.

He thinks he can do that in the course of killing Monroe.

But Monroe has vanished.

Hastmann talks to the Embassy spy. Although Walden diplomatically smoothed over the Dick Turpin incident, he and Monroe ~~are aware~~ and everyone in the Russian Embassy knows it was a serious assassination attempt. Consequently Monroe left the house in the park. The spy says his luggage came to the Embassy - and went straight out again by the back door, no one knows where, but the bills are still going on.

Back at his own Embassy Hastmann hears the news that is about to shock the world: the Austrian Archduke Franz-Ferdinand has been assassinated at Sarajevo in Bosnia.

~~But~~ Monroe must be found.

(ii) Felix now makes a characteristically bold move: when Walden is out he knocks on the door and asks to see Lydia. He gives his name as David Parsnky - here and is admitted. When Lydia sees him she turns white. She will not look at him or speak to him. He has to prevent her ringing for the butler. He did not anticipate such a hysterical reaction, and he realises that here and now he is not going to be able to coax her into revealing Monroe's whereabouts. But if he leaves empty-handed he may not get a second chance. Unthinking at first, he asks her for money. She says she has none. Then I'll have to ask your husband, he says. No! Lydia cries. Her reaction confirms what Felix guessed: Walden has no idea Lydia had a pre-nuptial affair. This puts her somewhat at Felix's mercy. He tells her to meet him at a restaurant in three days' time - with the money. Then he leaves.

(iii) Charlotte attends Belinda's coming-out ball. This is a glittering occasion, with all the girls in fabulous gowns and the young men in white-tie-and-tails. Belinda has joined the "fast" set: she wears ankle-revealing dresses, does the Turkey Trot, smokes cigarettes in restaurants, and goes to boxing matches. Since

that afternoon in Lady Walden's folly she has learned the sexual facts of life, and tonight, during a girl-to-girl chat in the ladies' powder room, she relays them to Charlotte, who is stunned and for the moment cannot take it in.

On the way home from the ball at dawn Charlotte is horrified to see a woman sleeping on the pavement. Meryn reluctantly 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 Annie, the maid who used to deputise for Meryn at Walden ball. Annie says she was fined for getting pregnant. Charlotte says, 'Come home with me.' Annie knows better than to accept, but she asks for money. Charlotte, who has no money, makes Meryn hand over all the cash in her purse.

Charlotte is opened up by the revelations of the night. She screams at her mother: "Why did nobody tell me?" It seems to her that her education has been little better than a conspiracy to deceive her. From now on, she resolves, she will find things out for herself.

(ii) Lydia has problems of her own. She has no cash. The household shopping is of course done by servants. Lydia's dresses, hats, shoes etc. all send bills to Walden who pays by cheque. At Lydia's birthday evening coffee at the Cube Regent during a shopping expedition she signs for it. She has no bank account of her own. Her personal fortune consists of property and houses which she cannot sell without the knowledge of the family lawyer, a personal friend of Walden. So, highly embarrassed, she goes to Hatton Garden and sells some jewellery for cash. When the transaction is done she examines her own emotions, and realises with a rather American sense of fatalism that she is trying to see felicit again.

Six

(i) Walden asks Lydia to wear one of the pieces of jewellery she has sold. She tells him she has sent it for repair. She feels so guilty that she cannot look her husband in the eye. [Walden is vaguely aware of her mood but pays little attention to it. He is enthralled by the foreign beauty to make

a counter-offer to the Prussian: the Bosphorus to be an international waterway with freedom of passage ^{for all nations in peacetime} guaranteed jointly by England and Russia.

Walking down Broad Street Walden sees Lydia's jewellery for sale in a shop window. Thoughtfully, he comes in and accuses them of theft. The manager takes him into the office and explains, with ill-veiled relish, that this happens not infrequently: a lady needs cash for a clandestine purpose and so sells some jewellery unbeknown to her husband... He then Walden Lydia's signature on a receipt. Humiliated, Walden keeps back the jewellery.

He takes it home, intending to confront her with it. But on his way he gets more and more angry at her; and when her arrival he says nothing to her but writes in Panshurst. He tells Anthea to spy on Lydia and find out whether she has a lover.

[Panshurst will appear more often in the book than he does in the outline. Now 43, he is Walden's valet and personal valet, and he is also responsible for motor cars, which are his personal enthusiasm. He quarrels continually with the governess, Marya, who unlike him is more conservative than her employer. But perhaps their constant bickering serves to conceal an underlying mutual attraction.]

(ii) ~~Chudette calls on Lebia de Vies, the debt in the bank incident.~~ Now that Chudette is beginning to understand the real world, what can she do about it? As a woman she cannot even vote! The action of Lebia de Vies, the debt in the bank incident, now appears in a different light. Chudette calls on her. The de Vies family has been advised as a matter of course, so they are pleased to see Uscubius Walden. Mrs Panshurst is there. Chudette is ripe for conversion. She promises to go on a self-sacrificing march. She comes home and defiantly tells her parents where she has been. They weep and forbid her to leave the house uncompromised.

(iii) Lebia and Lydia have lunch in a private room in a restaurant. He gives him the money. In a roundabout way he asks her where Anthea is. She will not say. He spins her a yarn about wanting to get a message into Russia. Eventually he manages to reveal all to Walden. But Lydia is a principled woman, and she knows that Anthea's life is in danger, and she will not

tell.

Parkhurst discovers this meeting. He follows Feliks home and notes the address. He reports to Walden that Lydia had lunch in a private room with a man of her own age and they spoke Russian together. Naturally Walden and Parkhurst assume the man is a lover. Their hunting instincts are aroused: they decide to find out all about the man.

Walden is distressed by all this. Walking around, brooding, he finds himself in St. John's Wood, near the house he gave to Bonnie Gordon. What is the like now? he wonders; they had, she must be fifty. A carriage draws up and a plump, well-dressed middle-aged woman gets out. It is she. Walden watches for a distance. She smiles at the coachman, a good big beaming smile that Walden knows well. Suddenly he is filled with a longing like a pain. He looks in her direction. He runs quickly and walks away, not ~~knowing~~ ^{knowing} whether she has seen him or not.

(iv) Clemens learns that the Kaiser has promised Austria unconditional support in any war against Serbia. War comes daily closer. Meanwhile the American have persuaded Walden with a multiplied demand: they want European Turkey. Clemens thinks the British may well concede this. He asks Feliks what is happening. Feliks says he has drawn a blank with Lydia but will now try Charlotte.

Six

Charlotte sneaks out of the house, wearing a coat and hat of her mother's, to go on a suffragette march. Feliks, waiting near the house, follows her. Parkhurst, who is watching Feliks, follows too; but Parkhurst thinks it is Lydia in the hat and coat.

King George V has refused to give audience to Mrs Parkhurst, so the suffragettes are marching on Buckingham Palace. The police have been ordered to repel the marchers with a minimum of arrests (because the women are more trouble in jail than at) but lacking the weapon to arrest the police resort to violence. Late male hysterical join in the fighting. Some of the women wield Indian clubs and throw pepper, but Charlotte, wise as

always in unanswer.

Prikkhwa ^{now} realises that this is Chudalbe, not Lydia, but he assumes wrongly that Feliks is making the same mistake. He sees Chudalbe knocked down. Forgetting Feliks, he plunges into the water to rescue her. He is hit over the head and falls unconscious.

Chudalbe tries to get up, is kicked, falls again and is trampled. Nothing remotely like this has ever happened to her. She is too shocked even to scream. Suddenly she is picked up by a pair of strong arms and carried out to danger. Her rescuer is Feliks.

He takes her back to his dingy lodgings and redresses her in the sickly bed. He plans to use her, but this does not spoil his pleasure: he just loves to doubt the authority. For him this is more than anything else an act of spite against Walden and Lydia.

Chudalbe is mesmerised by Feliks: first by the power and confidence he displayed in the riot when she was helpless and terrified; second by the convincing simplicity of his political ideas; third by his feroceous eyes, his hairy hands, his animal smell, and - not to put too fine a point on it - his work. Feliks makes love the way he does everything else: - boldly, imaginatively and passionately. And Chudalbe learns the one thing she believed was unobtainable to tell her about sex, namely how nice it is.

Feliks tells her (truthfully) how the Ocherona tortured him. There are many brave Russian languishing in these infernal cells, he says. But we must do something! cries Chudalbe. All right, no says, let's kidnap Ocherona and help him to ransom against the release of political prisoners. Wonderful! says Chudalbe.

But where is Ocherona? Feliks asks.

Chudalbe says: At Walden's skull.

Ah, says Feliks.

Eight

(i) Prikkhwa gets his head bandaged (by a surprisingly gentle Mawga) and reports to Walden.* When Chudalbe gets home there is another row. Realising that she cannot be trusted to stay in London, Walden sends her to Harry Smith at Cambridge + the British.

to keep her out of trouble. Lydia goes too. But Charlotte manages to send a note to Felix telling him what has happened and asking him to meet her in Hardy Walden's Alley.

(ii) Walden's world is falling apart. The balance of power is toppling irreversibly, his daughter is a subversive and his wife is an adulteress. He calls on Bonnie. Yes, she did see him that day, and she has been waiting for him ever since. She is living on her savings, a little lonely, and horny as hell. They spend a wonderful afternoon in bed together, and Walden considers how he might continue to spend more time with his family. Bonnie and her with his family.

(iii) Potshard, still spying on Felix, observes a meeting in a park between Felix and Hartman. ~~On a bench~~ when they part company Potshard, on a bench, follows Hartman - all the way to the German Embassy. Potshard gives the woman a sovereign and gets Hartman's name.

Walden now realises that Felix may be none other than Lydia's lover. He makes an appointment to see the Commissioner of Police the following day.

(iv) Sam is home, Charlotte has nothing to do but spend time with Adam. They ride together, dine together, play cards and explore the countryside. He is rapidly falling in love with her. She likes him a lot, and is embarrassed to find herself wondering what he looks like with his clothes off. She is beginning to have second thoughts about kidnapping him when Felix arrives.

They make love in the belly, and Felix cares for the joint.

He decides the best plan would be to have Charlotte bring Adam to the belly. Felix will kill both of them here. He will leave a bicycle concealed in the woods near the road, at a spot about ten minutes foot walk from the belly. The bike will take him to the railway line where he will jump a freight train. He will do all this with care, hiring each man.

With what shall he kill them? A knife is silent, but noisy and tricky to use; and besides, he does not trust himself - when it comes to the crunch - to plunge a blade into Charlotte's beautiful body. A gun is more impersonal and requires less bloodthirsty accuracy, but the noise might bring people among

and interfere with his getting. A bomb makes even more sense, but by using a timing device he could get some distance away before the explosion.

He decides to postpone the decision by buying all three.

(v) Walden sees the police commissioner. The commissioner proposes that Hestmann (who has diplomatic immunity) be expelled for consorting with known terrorists and beliefs he committed an act of attempted murder (i.e. the Dick Turpin incident). Walden is much relieved, and prepares to go to bed for the weekend.

(vi) Germany's gold reserves are at a record high and the British feel in an awkward position at Potsdam. Hestmann learns that the British have accepted the American proposal for a ceasefire and the draft, and the secret treaty will be signed this weekend. Now he is told he must pack his bags and leave for Germany in the morning.

Which gives him time to meet Belits at the bank and warn him not to go home.

Nine.

On Thursday 23 July Austria sends an ultimatum to Serbia with a 48-hour deadline for reply acceptance.

Belits sees his criminal friends and collects knife, gun, bomb, and a few other things, including a roll of fine wire. Then he goes back to home. Explosive barrel, room, into deposit.

Walking in the woods, Lydia sees Belits entering the valley. She knows nothing of the recent events activity in London, and she still thinks Belits is in love with her. In a moment, she hurried back to her room. The housekeeper, in Walden's room, she finds the jewels, and realizes she has been found out after all.

Belits instructs Chertok to bring Holmes to the valley tomorrow at 3pm. Then they make love.

Lydia cannot sleep. She will surely now be divorced by Walden. She reckons she might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. In her

neighborhood she goes to the ferry to give herself to Feliks. She sees him making love to her daughter. She leaves silently.

Ten.

(1) On Saturday morning Olszew asks Charlotte to marry him. She is afraid that if she says No he will leave immediately and spoil the kidnap plan. (She also feels a mingled respect: if things had been different she might have said Yes. But she is committed.) She says Maybe - and promises him his answer this afternoon at 3pm in the ferry.

Walden and Pohlman arrive at the same time as a cable from London saying that Feliks has disappeared. They immediately realize he could be around here somewhere. Walden suggests to Olszew that he move away. Charlotte tries desperately to think of a way to prevent this. She suggests Olszew could camp out in the ferry. Walden is not keen but Olszew is, for he wants Charlotte's answer. So it is done - but ~~Olszew's~~ ^{armed} two servants go with him.

Feliks sees the trace of them arrive at the ferry, realizes something is amiss, and hides nearby, watching.

Walden gets another cable, this one from the Foreign Secretary. Austria has declared war on Serbia. Now it is not just Olszew's, but the future of Europe that is at stake. Walden organizes search parties to hunt Feliks.

One of Olszew's servants comes out for a pee. Feliks hits him over the head, ties him up, and waits for the other one to come out and investigate.

Charlotte says to Marga: "Is it at all serious if a woman stops, you know, bleeding?" Marga tells her: "You're pregnant." Charlotte goes rushing off to find Feliks and tell him.

Marga tells Lydia that Charlotte is pregnant. Lydia goes berserk. She gets a shotgun from the gun-room and a horse from the stable and heads for the ferry, overhauling Charlotte.

Olszew's second servant comes out. Feliks disposes of him, goes inside, and ties Olszew up.

Lydia arrives with the gun but Feliks disarms her easily and ties her up too. He aims the horse and sets the timer. When you hear a hissing noise, he tells Olszew, you will have five seconds to

live.

By now the woods are full of scoundrels, so Feliks really needs the few minutes head time the breeze will give him.

He is about to leave when Charlotte arrives. Flushing he ties her up. Then she utters that she is pregnant. Feliks stares at her, dumbstruck, thinking of himself, an illegitimate child, and thinking that he will be murdering his own child if he lets the bonds go off. He starts to untie Charlotte —

and the breeze blows.

Five seconds.

There is no time to untie her.

He picks her up.

Five.

The struggle ends he drops her

Three, two.

You fool! he shouts at her.

One.

Feliks throws himself on the bomb, covering it with his body. It explodes, killing him.

Charlotte begins to cry.

(22)

Epilogue.

Charlotte, Lady Walden, has been talking to Peter and his wife all day. At luncheon they shared Peter's sandwiches. In the evening, when all the servants had gone, they moved into Walden Hall and had dinner in the great dining room. Now it is midnight, and the 25-year-old Charlotte is finishing her story.

Yes, she married Orlanov. Russia's army tipped the military balance in the first few months of the war and prevented Germany overrunning Europe. Of course Orlanov kept his Walden and Lydia inherited all to Walden, and they were reconciled. Although Charlotte strikes Orlanov lost his entire fortune in the Russian Revolution. Walden got him a job directorship in a

bank and to everyone's surprise he became a successful international banker. Walden himself lost a lot of money in the depression, and when he died he left half his estate to the illegitimate son of a singer called Bonnie Carter.

~~Walden~~ It is Charlotte's grandchildren who have rescued the family fortunes (again!) by buying Walden back into a misty atmosphere. Oh, the mother museum is run by ~~fatherhood~~ ^{the} grandson of the ~~original~~ ^{Polish - his name is -} who did the original money? believe it or not, Mungo. next for it - Mungo.

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

Charlotte laughs. "Nobody would believe it."

"Mungo not." Peter smiles. "Well," he says after a while,

"you could make it a novel."