

## THE RUSSIAN PRINCE

### Walden

Stephen Walden was born in 1864, first son of the seventh Earl of Walden, a typical Victorian huntin'-shootin'-and'-fishin' aristocrat. Young Stephen learned to ride before he could walk and to shoot before he could write. 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. When in London he would pursue loose women, and in 1893 he had a mildly notorious affair with a singer called Bonita Carter. He even gave her a present of a small house in St John's Wood (which was at that time Mithrenville). Bonita threw him over for the Prince of Wales.

Even before that Walden found England suffocating - there did not seem to be room enough for him and his father - and young Walden spent little time at home. He was a restless young man who lived for kicks. He went on safari once a year and travelled the world in between. Being the heir to an earldom, he was entertained by England's ambassadors in the world's capital cities. The diplomats, having heard of his reputation as a hell-raiser, were usually surprised to find that he was intelligent and knowledgeable about international politics and had a useful flair for languages. In fact he was laying the foundations of what would later be a considerable expertise in foreign affairs. The diplomats' wives were equally surprised to realise that his scrupulous courtesy rested on a foundation of genuine gentility.

In 1895 he was in St Petersburg when he heard of the death of his father. At first he was just dazed, until his valet called him "My lord," whereupon ~~within~~ a sudden and permanent change came over Stephen. He proposed to Lydia, the beautiful daughter of a Russian count, and married her immediately. He brought her back to England, moved into the ancestral home of 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.

He has never had any kind of job, of course, except for a ceremonial post in the royal household. However he is active in the House of Lords and friendly with all

the senior Tory politician. While the Tories were in power he was often consulted on foreign - especially Russian - affairs, and was occasionally used as a confidential diplomatic messenger. He knew Czar Nicholas II and is related to him through Lydia. When the Kaiser persuaded the weak-willed Czar to sign the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk - a treaty which would, if it had ever been ratified, have permanently altered the balance of power in Europe - it was Walden who was dispatched to St Petersburg to talk the Czar out of it. Walden took back on his mission as the mission of his life.

In 1905 the Conservatives lost the election. For a few <sup>while</sup> years this made little difference; then in 1908 Campbell-Bannerman died and Asquith became the first-ever English Prime Minister without a country estate. To make matters worse he chose as Chancellor of the Exchequer the Edwardian equivalent of Tony Benn - Lloyd George, the Welsh huffhead. Thus began a period in politics more bitter than any this century. The Liberals tried to bring in a land tax, Home Rule for Ireland, ~~a diminution of the power of the House of Lords~~ a cheaper (but better) Army and Navy, ~~and houses of commons~~ old age pensions, the National Health Service, and - horrors of horrors - a diminution of the powers of the House of Lords. Before it was over the Army would threaten mutiny, the Lords would defy the constitution, the Monarchy would be dragged reluctantly into the political arena (for the last time) and - a very rare occurrence in London - members of opposing parties would refuse to eat at the same dinner table.

In all this Walden is on the side of tradition against change. And, in his person and his lifestyle, he contributes perhaps the only decent argument against reform. \*

He is now fifty, and is one of those men who are in their prime at that age. His big, heavy body has yet to collapse into fat, although he has a gony leg and walks with a stick. ~~He is a good landlord to his tenants and a considerable employer to the lot or so domestic servants he employs at his four homes in - Walden Hall, a town house on the edge of St James's Park in London, a shooting-box in Holland and a villa in Monte Carlo.~~ His stately, heavy manner conceals a sharp intelligence. He thoroughly enjoys life. He likes hunt balls and society parties, the opera and the music-hall, bitter ale and vintage port, the company of young men and mature women, and game from them to poker. He is in love with Lydia and adores a Charlotte. He hunts fox in <sup>?</sup> and shoots grouse in Scotland, but it is not the same as big game, and take at

\* His home is elegant, he is a patron of the arts, his servants are well-cared-for, his tenants' cottages are in good repair, his land is scrupulously well-maintained and scientifically farmed. His people would rather ~~be~~ ~~remained~~ keep the present system than have the government take his money in land tax and give it to them in pension.

night he and his retinue 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.

### Lydia

Back in 1845 Lydia was the belle of the Boston society. Then aged 19, she was beautiful in a frail, slender sort of way, and tentatively respectable: modestly dressed, obedient to her parents, respectful to her elders, a devout churchgoer, hopelessly impractical, and liable to faint at the slightest suggestion of impropriety. However all of this men to some extent an act, for at the same time she was conducting a most passionate sexual liaison with a disreputable anarchist student, Felix Merrivale. Her father found out about the affair and had Felix arrested about the time Walden proposed. Lydia accepted under pressure and from desperation.

Nineteen years later Lydia is still beautiful. Her public image is not much changed except insofar as it has been Anglicised. She is still highly respectable, and she plays out the part of an Edwardian lady with conviction. But what is happening beneath the surface?

She has never ceased to feel guilty that she doubly deceived Walden when she married him, for of course he thought (and still thinks) that she was (a) a virgin and (b) in love with him. This burden of guilt has prevented their having a warm, candid relationship. She has grown enormously fond of Walden, indeed she would say that she loves him, and she would never be unfaithful to him. Yet she has sacrificed the meaning of her adolescent passion for Felix, and her bohemian impulses are not dead, only dormant.

She, too, dotes on Charlotte - and fears for her as well; for Charlotte may suffer from the same duality as Lydia, and Lydia finds this possibility terrifying.

### Charlotte

Charlotte is an only child who has grown up among adoring family and servants. She is too good-natured to be quite spoiled, but she is at least wilful (like her father). Back in 1845 both her parents in their different ways suppressed the libertarian sides of their personalities in favour of respectability, and the submerged drives have surfaced in the offspring. Whether they know it or not, Walden and Lydia always smiled when baby Charlotte escaped from her crib.

Nevertheless her upbringing has been narrowly restricted. She has always been educated at home. Her only real friend is her cousin Belinda, who is the same age and has had a similarly protected childhood. Charlotte has never seen poor people's homes - indeed she has never seen the servants' quarters in her own home - and she has never allowed to play with the children of servants or tenants. Her 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, politics or finance. She is therefore cultured and intelligent but has a hopelessly one-eyed view of how the world works.

Witful, cultured, unprotected... she has one more crucial trait: idealism. She realizes 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.

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 to dress like a woman, and then she will be rivalling.

She recently asked her governess Mengya: "What will I do after I get married?" Mengya replied: "Why, my child, you will do nothing." Observing her mother and other Edmondian ladies Charlotte realizes that, although they are continually busy with social affairs nevertheless it is true that they do nothing. She feels, like any teenager, 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 1845 - face a choice between freedom and responsibility.

Delia.

Delia is the son of solid bourgeois Moscow shopkeepers. When he was in his early teens the shop fell on hard times - partly because of unpaid bills - and his father died. The social dislocation involved in changing from shopkeeper's son to poor widow's son was the initial cause of Delia's interest in radical politics. By the time he reached age of 20 he was an anarchist. He embodies the paradox of

anarchism, combining a deep and sincere compassion for the world's downtrodden with a bitterness that enables him (at least in theory) to advocate the murder of rulers in the cause of liberty.

When Lydia fell in love with him he was a tall, gaunt, white-faced fanatic with large, liquid eyes; mad as hell at the whole world yet tender and vulnerable as a lover. When Lydia's father had him arrested he was tortured by the Othman - the Czar's secret police. He was released from jail on the day of Lydia's wedding. He left the University and, dressed as a monk, wandered the Russian countryside preaching the anarchist gospel: that man's essential good nature is distorted by the apparatus of society - power, property and government - and that the people will rise up, overthrow the tyrants and inaugurate the anarchist utopia as soon as they realize they can. Eventually he was arrested again and sent to Siberia. After one year he escaped, killing a guard, and made his way to Finland. In Sweden.

Now aged 40, hardened both physically and in his convictions, he is an impressive figure: intense, dominant, magnetic. He is tall, thin, hairy and none too clean, but there is something about him which some women find irresistible.

In Sweden he is deeply unhappy. Russia is in a turmoil: the Czar is a halfwit, the Duma (parliament) is inept, the oil workers are literally at war with the landlords and one million workers are on strike. The country is a powder-trail waiting for a spark, and Felix wants to be that spark - but he knows that as soon as he sets foot in Russia and he will be sent to Siberia (as Stalin has been) and what could he do there? But what can he do here?

One.

"Churchill? Winston Churchill?" said the Earl of Walden. "Here?"

"Yes, my lord," the butler said.

"Send the blighter away. Tell him I'm not at home." Walden turned and walked to the window, thinking: Young whipper-snapper, I don't know where he gets the nerve, first calling on me in London then following me down here, knows damn well I won't see him —

The butler coughed.

Walden gave him an irritated look. "Still here?"

"Mr Churchill told me you'd be not at home, my lord, and insisted I give you this."

Walden saw that the butler was carrying a letter on a tray. "Give it back to him — no, wait." He had seen the seal on the envelope, and for once he was intimidated. He opened the letter and read it.

Buckingham Palace

1 May 1914

My dear Walden,

You will see young Winston.

George R.

Walden recognized the handwriting: it was the King's. He hesitated a moment longer, then said: "Ask Mr Churchill to come in."

\*

In 1914 Churchill is first lord of the Admiralty, which means not that he is a lord but that he is in charge of Britain's navy. He is part of the liberal government, so from Walden's point of view he represents the people who are hell-bent on destroying England as he knows it. However, Churchill — backed by the King — wants Walden to do a job which transcends domestic politics.

Viewed from England, Europe appears menaced by an increasingly wealthy and aggressive Germany. Germany's annual steel production, for example, has overtaken that of Britain and is still accelerating. The Kaiser is no smaller than the other European monarchs - which is to say he's dumb - but he is also militaristic. In the past year Germany's war preparations have ~~become~~<sup>been</sup> increasingly obvious. The government has imposed a new-off special tax to raise a billion 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 hardware. On the London money market German firms have been getting credits, i.e. discounting bills for early payment, with the result that Germany has collected all her debts while the rest of the world is still owed money by Germany.

But most important is her navy. English policy is that our navy should be bigger than the two next largest navies - but Germany is catching up and refuses point-blank to negotiate an arms limitation treaty.

In that 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 neutralize Russia. (Hence the abortive Treaty of Brest.) And for the same reason, England and France would like to extract from the Russians a firm commitment to join in on the Allied side if and when war breaks out. And this is where Walden comes in.

Churchill explains that he has arranged for a young Russian admiral to come to London for secret naval talks. He is Prince Alexei Andreivitch Mamonov, aged 30, a nephew and favorite of the Czar and a distant relation of Walden's wife. Churchill wants the talks to result in an Anglo-Russian military treaty; and Walden, with his expertise, his Russian connections, and his direct line to Czar Nicholas, is probably the only man who can bring about such a deal.

To obscure the real purpose of the visit, Mamonov - a very 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 strong personal reasons for wanting this: he loves Lucia, his wife is Russian, and he has rather a lot of money invested in the Trans-Siberian Railway. But more importantly, he knows that if Russia remains neutral, Germany will conquer Europe. [Walden devises security precautions]

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Lucia leaves the two men talking politics and strolls into the garden. She walks around the vast, lovely old house, and wanders mindlessly through the landscaped park. This talk of Russia has unnerved her: the tries to fight back the memories, without success. Finally she allows herself to remember the end of her affair with Feliks.

She had often an hour with him on her way to a dinner at the British Embassy. They had made love on the tiny bed in his little room. At the dinner party she had found herself next to Walden, and had liked him. Toward the end of the evening the news of his father's death had come to disrupt the party.

Next day Lucia's father ~~had~~ confronted her with a love letter from Feliks and ~~had~~ forbidden her to see him again. He stormed out of the house and went to Feliks' room. He was not there. The landlady told her Feliks had been arrested as an anarchist. She went home and pleaded with her father to have Feliks released. The old count said Feliks was being bothered by the Ochrana to make him give the names of other anarchists. However, Feliks could be released - if Lucia would agree to marry the Earl of Walden, who <sup>had</sup> <sup>been</sup> <sup>promising</sup> <sup>her</sup> <sup>for</sup> <sup>Lucia's</sup> <sup>hand</sup>. Lucia agreed - and married Walden.

Lucia sees now her daughter, Charlotte, and Charlotte's cousin Belinda.

\*  
Charlotte and Belinda are talking about being deconstructed, getting married, and sex. This last is a subject upon which they are breathtakingly ignorant. (Most children learned about sex despite the Russian "conspiracy of silence"; but Charlotte and Belinda are unusually protected.) They realize that babies grow inside women but cannot imagine how they come 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



defronity. 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 presumed to marry at 19 or 20.  
(They do something which reveals Charlotte's capacity for rebellion.)

\*

Feliks is aboard a boat now docking at Dover.

Feliks, too, knows about Prince Orlov's planned visit to London, and its purpose. Feliks considers the quarrel between Germany-Austria and the rest of the world to be a squabble between capitalists, a squabble which has nothing to do with the ordinary man; and he is horrified at the thought of the millions of young Russians who will be maimed or killed if Russia is in the war. So he is going to kill Orlov.

## Two

Feliks is at Victoria Station, armed with a gun, when Orlov arrives. However Orlov is hustled out of a private ~~car~~ coach (borrowed from the King, a second car.) into Earl Walden's carriage. Feliks gets merely a glimpse of a handsome, expensively-dressed young man. Feliks' thoughts are dark. Orlov represents the regime which is responsible for violence, murder and slavery in Russia - but he also represents an opportunity to bring down that regime.

Two servants who have travelled with Orlov load a mountain of baggage into the carriage. Feliks follows the entrance to a house on the edge of St James' Park.

Inside the house Orlov is greeted by Lydia. He was a 10-year-old page-boy at her wedding, and he is an uncomfortable reminder of her misspent youth.

Orlov speaks good English. He talks about Russia; and this pique of the Czar's regime turns out to be something of a radical. He speaks earnestly of the need for change in Russia: for land reform, mechanised agriculture, industry and parliamentary democracy. He is a rather appealing young man.

When Charlotte appears we find out why this charming, incredibly wealthy prince is still a bachelor at thirty: he is chronically shy with girls. As soon as Charlotte walks in (looking nothing) he turns into a nervous wreck, dropping his teacup, suddenly acquiring a thick Russian accent, blushing and stammering. But now Charlotte's hidden talents emerge, and with her unique naive charm she begins to put him at his ease.

Outside, Feliks realizes that if he is going to kill Olenov he's going to have to find a way to get into the house.

[Talks.]

The Waldens give a <sup>masked</sup> fancy-dress ball in the garden of their town house. Feliks, dressed as Dick Turpin, climbs in over the back wall. Of course he has some trouble identifying Olenov. When he does - just as a dance is ending - he draws his pistols and shouts: "Your death will free Russia!" Lydia screams "Help!" in Russian - just as she used to when Feliks made love to her. Feliks is frozen by shock. He stares at Lydia, recognizing her. In the instant for which he hesitates, Walden lifts his cane and whacks Feliks across both wrists. Feliks drops the guns. He runs away.

Walden covers it.

Three.

~~Olenov disappears. There is a monument for Feliks.~~

To Feliks' surprise, all his old feelings for Lydia are revived immediately - along with a renewal of his bitterness toward the embassy in general and Walden and the old Count in particular.

And Olenov has disappeared.

Walden sets a trap for Feliks at the Russian Embassy - but Lydia warns Feliks.

Feliks' gradual approach / Hurup frustrated by Walden / hysteria in deeper / Charlotte's education

Revelation of Charlotte/Feliks relationship. / Walden's kills / War / news

- One.
- Walden tricked by Churchill
  - hysteria remembers feliks
  -

ONE

Walden tricked by Churchill  
Hydia remembers Feliks  
Charlotte + Belinda.  
Feliks arrives in England.

TWO

Charlotte presented at court ???  
Walden's security precautions.  
Feliks watches arrival of Oblemar.  
Talks begin  
Fanny does ball

THREE

Talks continue  
Charlotte's night of revelations.  
Hiding Oblemar away: Walden sets a trap.  
Hydia warns Feliks (conscience).

FOUR

Hydia sells jewellery? (or something)  
Charlotte + Mrs Pankhurst  
Walden's trap fails.  
Feliks makes progress  
Talks continue

FIVE

Feliks + Charlotte.

Feliks, previously happy to die for the cause,  
now has something to live for  
(but dies for Charlotte).