

The Anarchist An Edwardian Thriller

Background: Origins of WW1

Serbia was a small country in what is now Yugoslavia. It was dominated by its large and powerful neighbour, Austria-Hungary, which was then an empire. Austria-Hungary wanted to absorb Serbia, so Serbia sought the protection of Russia. Nevertheless in 1908 Austria annexed a big chunk of Serbia, a province called Bosnia. In 1914 a handful of nationalist Serbian students assassinated a visiting Austrian Archduke in the town of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia. Then:

1. The Austrians, who wanted to conquer Serbia anyway, used the assassination of the Archduke as a pretext and declared war on Serbia. (However they did not go to war, not yet anyway.)

2. Russia, which was supposed to be Serbia's patron, reluctantly mobilised her army. At first Russia mobilised only partially, against Austria; but then the Russian generals realised that partial mobilisation left them defenseless against Austria's ally Germany, so the Russians ordered full mobilisation.

3. Once Russia had mobilised against Austria and Germany, of course Germany had to mobilise. However Germany's problem was that Russia was allied with France, and the German generals were afraid that while they were fighting the Russians in the east, France would attack them from the west. They decided they would solve this problem by trying to put France out of the war with a lightning knockout blow. So Germany invaded France.

4. The Germans had long ago decided that if and when they invaded France they would go through neutral Belgium. Nobody really cared about Belgium, although there was an ancient treaty (1839) under which the neutrality of Belgium was guaranteed by England. Moreover England was worried about Germany. Germany was growing fast and seemed to threaten British dominance of the seas, world trade, and the colonies. So when Germany invaded Belgium England used the 1839 treat as an excuse to declare war on Germany.

This is how a quarrel between Austria and Serbia turned into a war between England and Germany.

(Moral: defense treaties are used an excuse to go to war.)

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The Anarchist

1. This is the story of Charlotte Victoria Pembroke-Ley, Viscountess Walden. In 1914 she is a debutante and distantly related to the Royal Family. She is

pretty, protected, rather innocent, cultured, and very idealistic. This is her first London season. Her education has been narrow and impractical. Last year she was wearing pigtails and knee socks; and suddenly she is a woman. A year ago she asked her governess: "What will I do when I come out?"

"Oh, go to parties and palls and picnics and just have a wonderful time until you get married."

"And what will I do after I get married?"

"Why, my child," said the governess, a little shocked, "you will do nothing."

This conversation is on Charlotte's mind as she rides the London merry-go-round, making small talk while her mother schemes weddings.

The British Empire is at a peak. On the map, half the world is coloured pink. The wealth, power and privilege amassed during the sixty-three solemn years of Victoria's reign are now being spent with gusto, under the influence of the aging playboy King Edward VII and (since 1910) George V. People eat and drink hugely. Houses are spacious, clothes are gorgeous, entertainment is lavish. A family of 4 such as like the Waldens employs more than 100 servants at its various residences. The rules of etiquette have attained unparalleled complexity. Men and women have different clothes for morning, lunch, afternoon, evening, town and country, indoors and outdoors, etc. For example, brown boots may not be worn closer to London than Ascot. More than one million people (out of a working population of 18m) work as domestic servants. Everyone pays lip-service to Victorian morality, and the homosexual intelligencia has been driven abroad by the Oscar Wilde trial; but Edward VII is a patron of the Paris brothels and syphilis is endemic.

Coming home at dawn from a party, Charlotte is shocked to see someone sleeping in the street. Her chaperone tells her that thousands of Londoners sleep in the street because they have no homes. Charlotte goes home and screams at her mother: "Why didn't anyone tell me?" Her anger has another, secret source: she has recently discovered how babies are made. It seems to her that her education so far has been little more than a conspiracy to deceive her. Charlotte has inherited her mother's soft heart and her father's strong will. She doesn't take shit like this lying down.

Now that she finds out what the world is like, how can she help to change it? She can't even vote! She begins to seek out a different kind of companion. She meets of the intellectual subversives of the day: Emmeline Pankhurst, Thomas Hardy, Bertrand Russell, Bernard Shaw.

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She terrifies her parents by attending a suffragette demonstration and scandalises her society friends by declaring an (entirely theoretical) belief in free love.

*The prince of the season is the young Russian, Prince Oblomov. Dashing, handsome, foreign, related to all the crowned heads of Europe and obscenely rich, he's the man every mother wants her daughter to marry. Charlotte, like all the others, rather fancies him. He talks very earnestly about the need for reform in Russia: for mechanised agriculture, free speech, land reform and democracy.

But academic radicalism does not satisfy her for long and soon she falls in with an altogether more serious crowd.

2. At the other end of the social scale, and at the other end of London, life is very different. When school medical examinations are introduced it is found that one child in six is too undernourished, verminous or sick to benefit from education. The infant mortality rate is 33%. Gin is the universal panacea, and is cheap. Pubs are open all day until midnight.

In London's East End the poorest of Englishmen mingle with even poorer immigrants from Eastern Europe. To the annoyance of the rest of Europe, England permits entry to all kinds of political revolutionaries. Far-left political ideas brought by the immigrants take root in the richly [illegible] soil of London poverty. The powerful Federation of Jewish Anarchist Groups publishes its own newspaper, *Der Arbeter Fraint* - in Yiddish - and organises a successful strike of sweatshop workers.

Prominent in this milieu is a Bolshevik called Feliks, a Rasputin-like character, intense, magnetic, fiery. He meets Charlotte at the Jubilee Street Anarchist Club, cultivates her, takes charge of her education, and seduces her. They are not in love, either before or after the seduction. Charlotte is merely furthering her education, although she enjoys it too. Feliks gets a big kick out of screwing an aristocrat but he also plans to use Charlotte in other ways.

3. While Charlotte is growing up, European statesmen are busy forging the alliances that will ensure that when one of them goes to war, the rest will follow. The Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary, are encircled by hostile nations: France, England, Belgium, Russia and the Balkans. As always, the problem facing German military planners is the danger of war on two fronts - against France and Russia in the east. The aim of German diplomacy, therefore, is to neutralise Russia. One attempt to do this has failed: in 1905 the Kaiser persuaded the Czar to sign the treaty of Bjorko, but immediately afterwards the treaty was torn up by German

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and Russian officials.

The head of German espionage at this time is an Gustav Steinhauer, an overblown, self-serving, ambitious, scheming former Pinkerton detective (really). He has a small network of exactly 22 spies in England. As war

begins to loom up during 1914 Steinhauer has a bright idea. If a prominent Russian noble were to be assassinated in England - by expatriate Russian Bolshoviks when England persists in sheltering despite all protests - this would surely cause a cooling of relations between Russia and England might serve to keep Russia out of the war in a crucial moment.

He goes to England to connect with his most reliable spy there.

4. Scotland Yard does have a newly-formed political section, called Special Branch. The detectives of Special Branch don't know the difference between a Bolshevik and an Anarchist. They are further confused by the fact that some of the most militant extremists are in fact agents provocateurs, planted by the Ochrana (the forerunner of the KGB). (This can seem incredible but is established that one Ochana agent provocateur, named Azeff, was responsible for the murder of the Russian Minister of the Interior and the Czar's uncle.) Peter the painter, cultural figure in the Siege of Sidney Street, is thought to have been an a.p., and so is Peshoff, a leading organiser of the sweatshop workers' strike.)

Special Branch is not too hot but M.I. 5 is better. It was started in 1906, when it was called MO5 and had a staff of exactly one, its founder, Captain Vernon Kell. Kell's superiors were horrified when he asked for an assistant, but now - in 1914 - he has four officers, a lawyer, two investigators and seven clerks - and very extensive files. His officers, believe it or not, are in the basement of the Little Theatre in John Street, off the Strand.

Kell is a curious man. His father was a soldier and his mother a Polish countess. As a boy Vernon Kell travelled all over Europe and learned to speak French, German, Italian and Polish. In the Army he passed interpreter's exams in Russian and Chinese. He served in China during the boxer rebellion, but the Orient shattered his health. He has asthma, recurrent dysentery, and back pains so bad he can hardly sit upright and goes even the shortest distances in his motor car: a man with an iron will who is almost continuously in pain. He describes his hobbies in Who's Who as fishing and croquet. He is [illegible] tough and deeply pious. One of his colleagues is quoted as saying: "He could smell a spy like a terrier smells a rat." Superficially he is an officer of the old school, but in reality he is

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flexible, cunning and at times most ungentlemanly. He is referred to as K, setting the tradition that Intelligence chiefs in England are known by an initial. Kell has a good relationship with the Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, who help him cut through red tape.

Kell knows about most of Steinhauers spies in England. Steinhauer was once followed to a barbershop in the Caldonian Road. Subsequently the barber's mail was intercepted. The barber, Karl Gustav Ernst, is the "post office" for all German spies in England. Kell did not have Ernst arrested until after war was declared. Instead he kept track of all the spies, only arresting them if they discovered something really important or tried to leave England.

So when Steinhauer visits Feliks, Kell knows. He watches and waits.

+ an Ochrana a.p.
+ a working-class hero.

Feliks' problem: he must make it look like Bolsheviks.
Kell's problem: he thinks Feliks is merely a spy.

So Feliks lets Kell know about the plot?
No, the Ochrana agent tells Kell. (?)

Head of Scotland Yard regularly dines with the Waldens?

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1. Charlotte gets herself invited to the country house.
2. William Henry meets the Bomb Man (through a.p.).
3. Will takes a job as a footman in the country house.
4. Kell, having intercepted a letter from Steinhauer to Feliks, begins investigating Feliks.
5. Kell sees Feliks with Charlotte.
6. Sarajevo.
7. The weekend begins.
8. The Prince proposes.
9. Kell learns of the bomb. And Steinhauer's plan. Through a.p. Andrew Priov.

1. Charlotte sets up a house party and at her parents' country house and invites Prince Oblomov.

1. Charlotte persuades her mother to have a weekend party at their country house and invite Prince Oblomov. She manages this partly by hints that Oblomov is in love with her and might propose. Naturally the Prince also draws the conclusion that a proposal would be well received.
2. The a.p. takes Will Henry to meet a mad little anarchist who makes bombs.

No. Priov tells Will where to get the materials. Will gets the gear together and figures out how to make a bomb.

3. Charlotte hires Will as a groom at Walden Hall.

4. Kell intercepts a letter from Steinhaus to Feliks and begins to investigate Feliks. He sees Feliks with Charlotte.

How does Charlotte learn the truth about Feliks?

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Feliks meets Charlotte 7

Feliks persuades Charlotte 8

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Charlotte hires Feliks 12

Kell figures it out 15

Charlotte figures it out 16

Charlotte prevents the am. 18

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All spies arrested, Russia mobilised. 22

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Charlotte meets Feliks 7

Kell meets A.P. 10

Feliks gets the bomb 11

Charlotte meets F's wife 13

Oblomov proposes 14

Feliks learns Charlotte knows 17

Feliks blows himself up. 20

Charlotte accepts Oblomov. 21

A: 1. Felix to England
2. Kell discovers Ernst
3. Charlotte meets Oblomov
4. Steinhauer briefs Felix
5. Charlotte's conversion
6. Kell learns of Felix
7. Charlotte meets Feliks.

B: 8 Felix persuades Charlotte
9. Charlotte arranges party
10. Kell meets A.P.
11. Feliks gets the bomb
12. Charlotte hires Felix
13. Charlotte meets Feliks' wife

C: 14: Oblomov proposes
15. Kell figures it out
16. Charlotte figures it out
17. Feliks knows that Charlotte knows
18. Charlotte saves Oblomov
19. Kell arrives at Walden Hall
20. Feliks blows himself up
21. Charlotte says yes to Oblomov.
22. All spies arrested and Russia mobilises.

Suffragette demo.
Role of A.P.
Seduction.
AP wants O killed.