

An Edwardian lady / Killing

1. This is the story of Charlotte Victoria Penelope - hey, Viscountess Walden. In 1906 she is a debutante and distantly related to the King, the ageing playboy Edward VII. She is pretty, protected, rather innocent, very intellectual and fiercely idealistic. This is her first London season. Her education so far has been narrow, liberal and impractical. Last year she wore pigtail and socks: now suddenly she is a lady. A year ago she asked her governess: "What will I do when I come out?" The governess replied: "Oh, go to parties and balls and picnics and just have a wonderful time until you get married." Lettie said: "And what will I do after I get married?" The governess looked a little shocked. "Why, my child," she said, "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 hedonistic Edward. People eat and drink hugely. Houses are spacious, clothes are gorgeous, entertainment is lavish. More than a million people are employed in domestic service. Maids curtsy, footmen bow, butlers buttle. Everyone pays lip-service to Victorian morality and all the homosexual intelligentsia have been driven abroad by the Oscar Wilde trial; but the King goes to Paris brothels and syphilis is endemic.

Coming home from a party at dawn, Charlotte is thunderstruck to see people sleeping in the street. She goes home and screams at her mother: "Why didn't anybody tell me?" For the first time she realises that she has grown up with blinkers on: the real world is very different from what she had been led to believe.

What can she do about it? Nothing. She realises that she can't even vote! She begins to seek out a somewhat different, more intellectual type of person. She meets some of the intellectual subversives of the day: Thomas Hardy, Sylvia Pankhurst, William Morris, Bernard Shaw and the Webbs. She terrifies her parents by attending a suffragette demonstration and scandalises her society friends by declaring an (entirely theoretical) belief in free love.

But the intellectual radicals do not satisfy her for very long, and soon she falls in with a more serious set.

2. At the other end of London is a very different society. In the East End of London the poorest of Englishmen mingle with even poorer immigrants from Eastern Europe amid dirt, disease, drunkenness and fierce exploitation. Here far-left political ideas find root. There are many brotherhoods, but it is

the anarchists who lead the field). The most powerful far left-wing organisation is the Federation of Jewish Anarchist Groups which publishes its own newspaper, *Der Arbeiter Fraynt* (in Yiddish). Prominent here is a Russian called Feliks, a Rasputin-like character, intense, magnetic, fiery. He meets Charlotte at a rally and cultivates her. He continues her radical education and seduces her. They are not in love, either before or after the seduction: she is experimenting and he — well, he is both enjoying her and preparing to use her. However he begins somewhat to fall under her spell.

He learns through Charlotte of the forthcoming visit to England of a young Russian prince who is related to King Edward. (Edward was uncle to the Czar ^{and} uncle-by-marriage to the Czarina as well as uncle to the German Kaiser and cousin to the Kings of Belgium, Portugal and Bulgaria.) Feliks and his band, which includes several expatriate Bolsheviks, decide that the Prince's visit must be the occasion for a shocking anti-Czarist demonstration.

3. During the first decade of the century European statesmen are busy forging the alliances which are to ensure that as soon as one of them goes to war the rest have to follow. But the immediate result is to encircle the Central Powers — Germany and Austria-Hungary — with hostile nations: France, England, Belgium, Russia, the Balkans, Italy. As always, the problem facing German military planners is the prospect of war on two fronts — against Russia in the east and France in the west. Eventually the preferred solution will be military: an (attempted) lightning knockout blow against France. For now the preferred solution is to neutralise Russia politically. One attempt to do this has failed already: the Kaiser and the Czar signed the treaty of Bjorko in 1905 but their officials tore it up afterwards.

The head of German intelligence at this time is an overblown, ambitious, scheming former Pinkerton detective called Arthur Steinbauer. He has a small network of spies in England, (to be exact he had 22 by 1914). One of these spies tells him of the forthcoming visit of Prince Orlow. Steinbauer, who is an adventurer, realises that if the Prince is murdered in England there will inevitably be a rift between England and Russia, thus eliminating — at least for a while — the danger of war on two fronts.

So Steinbauer goes to England (this is the way things were done in those days) to brief his next reliable spy there: Feliks.

4. Feliks' motivations are complex and mixed. He is a déclassé German bourgeois, both hating and revering aristocracy. Secret police work is the way he plans to re-join the ranks of the rich. He wants money and power. He wants war. This particular coup will advance him. But to kill an aristocrat will also feed his hatred. — He gets double rewards here.

Charlotte's circle of rich friends is equally excited about the visit of the young prince. As everyone is talking about it, it is not difficult for her to find out what his movements will be. In fact she is invited to a ball in his honour in London then, later, a country-house party which he (and the King) will attend.

Feliks keeps up the pretence of a demonstration as long as he can; but finally he has to tell Charlotte he is planning an assassination. She is shocked, but goes along with it.

5. Feliks recognises the country house. Meanwhile Charlotte goes to the ball and meets the prince. She likes him: he is young, charming and sincere. Or: Feliks instructs Charlotte to befriend the prince?

Or maybe this is 1914: the aim to keep Russia in the war and send-up German spies?

Then it is announced that the King will attend the country house party.

The whole thing transferred to summer 1914?

Aristocracy: Charlotte

Bolsheviks: Feliks

German: Feliks

Special branch

agents provocateurs

intellectual radicals.

An assassination at the coronation?

The Ochrana.

subterfuges.

M.O. 5 - Vernon Kell.

N.I.D.

Sidney Reilly

Peter the Painter

Winston Churchill

Wlad George.

Feliks' problem: it must be clear that the Bolsheviks, not Feliks, have done it.

Vernon Kell, by intercepting letters from Steinhausen to Feliks, learns something of the plot.

An Edwardian lady.

1. This is the story of Charlotte Victoria Pembroke - nee Vireumben Walden. In 1906 she is a debutante and distantly related to the King, the ageing playboy Edward VII. She is pretty, protected, rather innocent, very intellectual and fiercely idealistic. She begins her first London season like any other debutante, going to endless balls and making small talk while her mother vets prospective husbands for her.

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 Edward. Everyone eats and drinks enormous quantities. Houses are spacious, clothes are gorgeous, entertainment is lavish, etiquette is all-important. It is the age of hypocrisy: ~~for~~ ^{for} everyone pays lip-service to Victorian morality while syphilis is rampant.

Charlotte is too intelligent to take Edwardian society at face value and too idealistic to turn a blind eye to its hypocrisy. She is furious that she ~~is not~~ ^{cannot} ~~attends~~ to vote while the stupidest of the young men she meets can. She begins to spend time with arty people, and meets some of the intellectual subversives of the day: Thomas Hardy, H.G. Wells, Mrs Pankhurst. She humiliates her parents by attending a suffragette rally and scandalises her friends by declaring an (entirely theoretical) belief in free love. But the intellectual radicals do not satisfy her for very long, and soon she falls in with some other more serious people.

2. At the other end of the social scale, and at the New end of London, is an entirely different society: poverty, dirt, illness, drunkenness and fierce exploitation. Here in the East End of London the poorest of Englishmen mingle with even poorer immigrants from Eastern Europe. Far-left political ideas imported by the Europeans take root in the often-rich soil of East London. The most powerful political organisation of the day is the Federation of Jewish Anarchist Groups which publishes *Der Arbeiter Frunt*, a radical Yiddish newspaper.

Imminent ~~soon~~ here is a Russian Bolshevik called Felix, a Rasputin-like character, intense, magnetic, intelligent, fiery. He cultivates Charlotte and takes her virginity. (Their relationship...)

They learn (through Charlotte) of the forthcoming visit to England of a young Russian

prince who is related to King Edward. (NB: Edward was uncle to the Czarina - by marriage - to the Czar, and was ~~also~~ uncle to Kaiser Wilhelm and cousin to the Kings of Portugal, Belgium and Bulgaria.) Feliks and his band, which includes several Russian expatriates, decide that the prince's visit must be the occasion for a startling anti-Zarist demonstration.

3. During the first decade of the century European statesmen are forging the ~~to~~ web of alliances which will eventually ensure that when one of them goes to war the rest are obliged to follow. But the immediate result is to encircle ^{and A-H} Germany with hostile powers: France, England, Belgium, Russia, the Balkans, Italy. As always, the problem facing German military planners is the prospect of a war on two fronts - against Russia in the East and France in the West. Eventually the preferred military solution will be a lightning knockout blow to eliminate France. For now ^{the} political solutions ~~are sought~~ of neutralizing Russia is favoured. One attempt has failed: the Kaiser and the Czar signed the treaty of Björkö in 1905 but their officials tore it up afterwards. Perhaps somehow the Germans could foment a quarrel between Russia and England? Then, when Germany goes to war with France, and England joins forces with France, Russia - not wanting to side with England - will stay out.

The head of German Intelligence at this time is an ambitious, restless, scheming former Pinkerton detective (really!) called Gustav Steinhauser. He has a small network of spies in England. One of them tells him of the planned visit by the Russian prince. Steinhauser decides that if a Russian prince were to be assassinated in England this would serve Germany. He goes to England to give instructions to his most reliable spy there: Feliks.

4. Feliks' motivations are complex and twisted. He is a fierce royalist masquerading as a fierce revolutionary. His loyalty to the German ruling class, his desire to join them, his envy of them. To kill an aristocrat will vent his most secret unconscious hatreds.

His relationship with Charlotte is equally dark, for of course she too belongs to the ruling class. Feliks does not love her, but he loves to murder her.

Feliks decides that he personally will assassinate the prince - with Charlotte's help.

Charlotte's other circle of friends is also excited about the Russian prince. As everyone is talking about it, it is not difficult for her to find out what his movements will be.

The King will spend a week with his Russian relative at a country house. Several of the young aristocracy are to be invited as company for the prince. Charlotte is among them.

5. Felix recognizes the country house where the King and the prince will stay. He plans to get some kind of job as a servant there and murder the prince.