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Rupert of Hentzau

Anthony Hope · *1898 · original English text*

Three years after Zenda, Fritz von Tarlenheim tells how the brilliant exile Rupert of Hentzau gets hold of a letter the queen wrote to Rudolf Rassendyll. The king is a sick, suspicious man, and the queen's honor is in danger. Rassendyll comes back to Ruritania, and the hunt for Rupert ends in a death at the hunting lodge and another in Strelsau. It is a darker sequel for older readers.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What does honor cost when an old love meets a clever villain, and who decides how a hard choice ends?

Hope's answer is graver than in Zenda. The queen's letter and Rupert's cunning cannot be undone, and Rassendyll must play the king once more. He kills Rupert and burns the letter, but he is torn over whether to keep a crown won by deceit. Before he decides, Bauer shoots him, and he dies saying that God has decided.

KEY CHARACTERS

Fritz von Tarlenheim
The narrator, a loyal officer of the queen.

Rudolf Rassendyll
The Englishman who once took the king's place.

Queen Flavia
The queen of Ruritania.

King Rudolf V
The sick, suspicious king.

Rupert of Hentzau
The wicked exile who holds the letter.

Colonel Sapt
The old Constable of Zenda.

Count Luzau-Rischenheim
Rupert's cousin and tool.

Bauer
A servant in Rupert's pay.

Grades 8–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01
The Queen's Letter
CHAPTER I

Three years after Zenda, the king is cold and jealous. The queen, who loves Rudolf Rassendyll, writes him a letter that Fritz is to carry to Wintenberg.

- The king is sick, jealous and fretful.
- The queen may send Rudolf only three words a year.
- She writes a longer letter.
- Fritz's servant Bauer is in the pay of Rupert.

02
The Road at Wintenberg
CHAPTER II

On the dark road outside the station Rupert and his men fall on Fritz and take the box and the letter. Rassendyll finds the wounded Fritz and rides for Zenda.

- Rupert's men take the box.
- Fritz is left wounded.
- Rassendyll finds him and learns of the loss.
- He wires Sapt and rides for Zenda.

03
The Plan at Zenda
CHAPTERS III–VIII

Rupert's cousin, Count Luzau-Rischenheim, comes to ask the king for an audience with the letter as his weapon. Sapt and Rassendyll lay a trap and send a false message to draw Rupert to the lodge.

- Colonel Sapt and the young Lieutenant von Bernenstein join the plan.
- The count slips away and rides for the capital.
- A forged message goes to the hunting lodge.
- Rassendyll joins the queen's friends at Zenda.

04
The Hunting Lodge
CHAPTER IX

The king stays at the lodge after a day's hunt. Rupert reaches him first and shoots him, and Fritz, Sapt and the servant James find the king dead.

- The king meets Rupert at the lodge.
- Rupert shoots him.
- Fritz, Sapt and James find him dead.
- They plan to hide the death for a day or two.

05
The King in Strelsau
CHAPTERS X–XVIII

Rassendyll again takes the king's place in Strelsau. The search for Rupert and the letter ends at a house in the Konigstrasse, where he fights and kills Rupert and burns the letter.

- A chancellor's wife has seen more than she should.
- Rassendyll shows himself to the people as king.
- A crowd gathers in the Konigstrasse.
- Rupert is killed at No. 19.
- The letter is burned.

06
The Decision of Heaven
CHAPTERS XIX–XXI

The queen and Sapt urge Rassendyll to keep the throne, and he wavers. Bauer shoots him, and he dies saying that God has decided.

- The queen and Sapt speak for the throne.
- Rassendyll weighs love against honor.
- Bauer shoots him.
- He dies, saying that God has decided.
- A Latin line is written in his memory.

Honor and love | Betrayal | Loyalty to a throne | Choice and fate | A duel

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 8–12

1. How the queen's letter is lost.
2. What Rassendyll does at the hunting lodge and in Strelsau.
3. How Rassendyll and Rupert differ in honor.
4. The last chapters and the words 'God has decided'.

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