

Winter of the World characters sampler

Five interlinked families live out their destinies as the world is shaken by tyranny and war in the mid-twentieth century.

Berlin in 1933 is in upheaval. Eleven-year-old **Carla von Ulrich** struggles to understand the tensions disrupting her family as Hitler strengthens his grip on Germany. Into this turmoil steps her mother's formidable friend and former British MP, **Ethel Leckwith**, and her student son, **Lloyd Williams**, who soon learns for himself the brutal reality of Nazism. He also encounters a group of Germans resolved to oppose Hitler – but are they willing to go so far as to betray their country? Such people are closely watched by **Volodya Peshkov**, a Russian with a bright future in Red Army Intelligence.

The international clash of military power and personal beliefs that ensues will sweep over them all as it rages from Cable Street in London's East End to Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, from Spain to Stalingrad, from Dresden to Hiroshima.

Meanwhile events in Europe are being carefully watched across the Atlantic. **Woody Dewar** is bright enough to follow his eminent father into politics and to see that the opposing beliefs fuelling the Spanish Civil War will translate into a far wider conflict.

At Cambridge Lloyd is irresistibly drawn to dazzling American socialite **Daisy Peshkov**, who represents everything his left-wing family despise. But Daisy is more interested in aristocratic **Boy Fitzherbert** – amateur pilot, party lover and leading light of the British Union of Fascists.

Back in Berlin, Carla worships golden boy **Werner Franck** from afar. But nothing will work out the way they expect as their lives and the hopes of the world are smashed by the greatest and cruellest war in the history of the human race.

Winter of the World is the second novel in Ken Follett's uniquely ambitious and deeply satisfying the Century trilogy. On its own or read in sequence with *Fall of Giants*, this is a magnificent, spellbinding epic of global conflict and personal drama.

Winter of the World

Ken Follett

An exclusive introduction to the main families

Not for quotation or resale

Carla von Ulrich

Carla knew her parents were about to have a row. The second she walked into the kitchen she felt the hostility, like the bone-deep cold of the wind that blew through the streets of Berlin before a February snowstorm. She almost turned and walked back out again.

It was unusual for them to fight. Mostly they were affectionate – too much so. Carla cringed when they kissed in front of other people. Her friends thought it was strange: their parents did not do that. She had said that to her mother, once. Mother had laughed in a pleased way and said: ‘The day after our wedding, your father and I were separated by the Great War.’ She had been born English, though you could hardly tell. ‘I stayed in London while he came home to Germany and joined the army.’ Carla had heard this story many times, but Mother never tired of telling it. ‘We thought the war would last three months, but I didn’t see him again for five years. All that time I longed to touch him. Now I never tire of it.’

Father was just as bad. ‘Your mother is the cleverest woman I have ever met,’ he had said here in the kitchen just a few days ago. ‘That’s why I married her. It had nothing to do with . . .’ He had tailed off, and Mother and he had giggled conspiratorially, as if Carla at the age of eleven knew nothing about sex. It was so embarrassing.

But once in a while they had a quarrel. Carla knew the signs. And a new one was about to erupt.

They were sitting at opposite ends of the kitchen table. Father was sombrely dressed in a dark grey suit, starched white shirt and black satin tie. He looked dapper, as always, even though his hair was receding and his waistcoat bulged a little beneath the gold watch chain. His face was frozen in an expression of false calm. Carla knew that look. He wore it when one of the family had done something that angered him.

He held in his hand a copy of the weekly magazine for which Mother worked, *The Democrat*. She wrote a column of political and diplomatic gossip under the name of Lady Maud. Father began to read aloud. ‘“Our new chancellor, Herr Adolf Hitler, made his debut in diplomatic society at President Hindenburg’s reception.”’

The President was the head of state, Carla knew. He was elected, but he stood above the squabbles of day-to-day politics, acting as referee. The Chancellor was the

premier. Although Hitler had been made chancellor, his Nazi party did not have an overall majority in the Reichstag – the German parliament – so, for the present, the other parties could restrain Nazi excesses.

Father spoke with distaste, as if forced to mention something repellent, like sewage. ‘ “He looked uncomfortable in a formal tailcoat.” ’

Carla’s mother sipped her coffee and looked out of the window to the street, as if interested in the people hurrying to work in scarves and gloves. She, too, was pretending to be calm, but Carla knew that she was just waiting for her moment.

The maid, Ada, was standing at the counter in an apron, slicing cheese. She put a plate in front of Father, but he ignored it. ‘ “Herr Hitler was evidently charmed by Elisabeth Cerruti, the cultured wife of the Italian ambassador, in a rose-pink velvet gown trimmed with sable.” ’

Mother always wrote about what people were wearing. She said it helped the reader to picture them. She herself had fine clothes, but times were hard and she had not bought anything new for years. This morning, she looked slim and elegant in a navy-blue cashmere dress that was probably as old as Carla.

‘ “Signora Cerruti, who is Jewish, is a passionate Fascist, and they talked for many minutes. Did she beg Hitler to stop whipping up hatred of Jews?” ’ Father put the magazine down on the table with a slap.

Here it comes, Carla thought.

Ethel Leckwith (née Williams)

When they had ordered, Ethel explained her trip. 'I lost my parliamentary seat in 1931,' she said. 'I hope to win it back at the next election, but meanwhile I have to make a living. Fortunately, Maud, you taught me to be a journalist.'

'I didn't teach you much,' Maud said. 'You had a natural talent.'

'I'm writing a series of articles about the Nazis for the *News Chronicle*, and I have a contract to write a book for a publisher called Victor Gollancz. I brought Lloyd as my interpreter – he's studying French and German.'

Lloyd observed her proud smile and felt he did not deserve it. 'My translation skills have not been much tested,' he said. 'So far, we've mostly met people like you, who speak perfect English.'

Lloyd had ordered breaded veal, a dish he had never even seen in England. He found it delicious. While they were eating, Walter said to him: 'Shouldn't you be at school?'

'Mam thought I would learn more German this way, and the school agreed.'

'Why don't you come and work for me in the Reichstag for a while? Unpaid, I'm afraid, but you'd be speaking German all day.'

Lloyd was thrilled. 'I'd love to. What a marvellous opportunity!'

'If Ethel can spare you,' Walter added.

She smiled. 'Perhaps I can have him back now and again, when I really need him?'

'Of course.'

Ethel reached across the table and touched Walter's hand. It was an intimate gesture, and Lloyd realized that the bond between these three was very close. 'How kind you are, Walter,' she said.

'Not really. I can always use a bright young assistant who understands politics.'

Ethel said: 'I'm not sure I understand politics any more. What on earth is happening here in Germany?'

Maud said: 'We were doing all right in the mid-twenties. We had a democratic government and a growing economy. But everything was ruined by the Wall Street crash of 1929. Now we're in the depths of a depression.' Her voice shook with an

emotion that seemed close to grief. 'You can see a hundred men standing in line for one advertised job. I look at their faces. They're desperate. They don't know how they're going to feed their children. Then the Nazis offer them hope, and they ask themselves: What have I got to lose?'

Walter seemed to think she might be overstating the case. In a more cheerful tone he said: 'The good news is that Hitler has failed to win over a majority of Germans. In the last election the Nazis got a third of the votes. Nevertheless, they were the largest party, but fortunately Hitler only leads a minority government.'

'That's why he demanded another election,' Maud put in. 'He needs an overall majority to turn Germany into the brutal dictatorship he wants.'

'Will he get it?' Ethel asked.

'No,' said Walter.

'Yes,' said Maud.

Walter said: 'I don't believe the German people will ever actually vote for a dictatorship.'

Lloyd Williams

Lloyd Williams found a boxing club in Berlin where he could do an hour's training for a few pennies. It was in a working-class district called Wedding, north of the city centre. He exercised with the Indian clubs and the medicine ball, skipped rope, hit the punch bag, and then put on a helmet and did five rounds in the ring. The club coach found him a sparring partner, a German his own age and size – Lloyd was a welterweight. The German boy had a nice fast jab that came from nowhere and hurt Lloyd several times, until Lloyd hit him with a left hook and knocked him down.

Lloyd had been raised in a rough neighbourhood, the East End of London. At the age of twelve he had been bullied at school. 'Same thing happened to me,' his stepfather, Bernie Leckwith, had said. 'Cleverest boy in school, and you get picked on by the class *shlammer*.' Dad was Jewish – his mother spoke only Yiddish. He had taken Lloyd to the Aldgate Boxing Club. Ethel had been against it, but Bernie had overruled her, something that did not happen often.

Lloyd had learned to move fast and punch hard, and the bullying had stopped. He had also got the broken nose that made him look less of a pretty boy. And he had discovered a talent. He had quick reflexes and a combative streak, and he had won prizes in the ring. The coach was disappointed that he wanted to go to Cambridge University instead of turning professional.

Volodya Peshkov

Two boys approached. The younger, who looked about fourteen but was taller than Lloyd, greeted Maud with careful good manners and made a little bow. Maud turned to Ethel and said: 'This is Werner Franck, the son of my friend Monika.' Then she said to Werner: 'Does your father know you're here?'

'Yes – he said I should find out about social democracy myself.'

'He's broad-minded, for a Nazi.'

Lloyd thought this was a rather tough line to take with a fourteen-year-old, but Werner was a match for her. 'My father doesn't really believe in Nazism, but he thinks Hitler is good for German business.'

Wilhelm Frunze said indignantly: 'How can it be good for business to throw thousands of people into jail? Apart from the injustice, they can't work!'

Werner said: 'I agree with you. And yet Hitler's crackdown is popular.'

'People think they're being saved from a Bolshevik revolution,' Frunze said. 'The Nazi press has them convinced that the Communists were about to launch a campaign of murder, arson and poison in every town and village.'

The boy with Werner, who was shorter but older, said: 'And yet it is the Brownshirts, not the Communists, who drag people into basements and break their bones with clubs.' He spoke German fluently with a slight accent that Lloyd could not place.

Werner said: 'Forgive me, I forgot to introduce Vladimir Peshkov. He goes to the Berlin Boys' Academy, my school, and he's always called Volodya.'

Lloyd stood up to shake hands. Volodya was about Lloyd's age, a striking young man with a frank blue-eyed gaze.

Frunze said: 'I know Volodya Peshkov. I go to the Berlin Boys' Academy too.'

Volodya said: 'Wilhelm Frunze is the school genius – top marks in physics and chemistry and maths.'

'It's true,' said Werner.

Maud looked hard at Volodya and said: 'Peshkov? Is your father Grigori?'

'Yes, Frau von Ulrich. He is a military attaché at the Soviet Embassy.'

So Volodya was Russian. He spoke German effortlessly, Lloyd thought with a touch of envy. No doubt that came from living here.

‘I know your parents well,’ Maud said to Volodya. She knew all the diplomats in Berlin, Lloyd had already gathered. It was part of her job.

Woody Dewar

Woody Dewar impatiently inspected the yacht *Sprinter*, checking that the kids had made everything shipshape. She was a forty-eight-foot racing ketch, long and slender like a knife. Dave Rouzrokh had loaned her to the Shipmates, a club Woody belonged to that took the sons of Buffalo's unemployed out on Lake Erie and taught them the rudiments of sailing. Woody was glad to see that the dock lines and fenders were set, the sails furled, the halyards tied off, and all the other lines neatly coiled.

His brother Chuck, a year younger at fourteen, was on the dock already, joshing with a couple of coloured kids. Chuck had an easygoing manner that enabled him to get on with everyone. Woody, who wanted to go into politics like their father, envied Chuck's effortless charm.

The boys wore nothing but shorts and sandals, and the three on the dock looked a picture of youthful strength and vitality. Woody would have liked to have taken a photograph, if he had had his camera with him. He was a keen photographer and had built a darkroom at home so that he could develop and print his own pictures.

Satisfied that the *Sprinter* was being left as they had found her this morning, Woody jumped on to the dock. A group of a dozen youngsters left the boatyard together, windswept and sunburned, aching pleasantly from their exertions, laughing as they relived the day's blunders and pratfalls and jokes.

The gap between the two rich brothers and the crowd of poor boys had vanished when they were out on the water, working together to control the yacht, but now it reappeared in the parking lot of the Buffalo Yacht Club. Two vehicles stood side by side: Senator Dewar's Chrysler Airflow, with a uniformed chauffeur at the wheel, for Woody and Chuck; and a Chevrolet Roadster pickup truck with two wooden benches in the back for the others. Woody felt embarrassed, saying goodbye as the chauffeur held the door for him, but the boys did not seem to care, thanking him and saying: 'See you next Saturday!'

As they drove up Delaware Avenue, Woody said: 'That was fun, though I'm not sure how much good it does.'

Chuck was surprised. 'Why?'

'Well, we're not helping their fathers find jobs, and that's the only thing that really counts.'

‘It might help the sons get work in a few years’ time.’ Buffalo was a port city: in normal times there were thousands of jobs on merchant ships plying the Great Lakes and the Erie Canal, as well as on pleasure craft. ‘Provided the President can get the economy moving again.’

Chuck shrugged. ‘So go work for Roosevelt.’

‘Why not? Papa worked for Woodrow Wilson.’

‘I’ll stick with the sailing.’

Woody checked his wristwatch. ‘We’ve got time to change for the ball – just.’ They were going to a dinner-dance at the Racquet Club. Anticipation made his heart beat faster. ‘I want to be with humans that have soft skin, speak with high voices, and wear pink dresses.’

‘Huh,’ Chuck said derisively. ‘Joanne Rouzrokh never wore pink in her life.’

Woody was taken aback. He had been dreaming about Joanne all day and half the night for a couple of weeks, but how did his brother know that? ‘What makes you think—’

‘Oh, come on,’ Chuck said scornfully. ‘When she arrived at the beach party in a tennis skirt you practically fainted. Everyone could see you were crazy about her. Fortunately *she* didn’t seem to notice.’

‘Why was that fortunate?’

‘For God’s sake – you’re fifteen, and she’s eighteen. It’s embarrassing! She’s looking for a husband, not a schoolboy.’

‘Oh, gee, thanks, I forgot what an expert you are on women.’

Chuck flushed. He had never had a girlfriend. ‘You don’t have to be an expert to see what’s under your goddamn nose.’

They talked like this all the time. There was no malice in it: they were just brutally frank with each other. They were brothers, so there was no need to be nice.

Daisy Peshkov

‘Two things you need to know about girls in Buffalo,’ said Daisy Peshkov. ‘They drink like fish, and they’re all snobs.’

Eva Rothmann giggled. ‘I don’t believe you,’ she said. Her German accent had almost completely vanished.

‘Oh, it’s true,’ said Daisy. They were in her pink-and-white bedroom, trying on clothes in front of a full-length three-way mirror. ‘Navy and white might look good on you,’ Daisy said. ‘What do you think?’ She held a blouse up to Eva’s face and studied the effect. The contrasting colours seemed to suit her.

Daisy was looking through her closet for an outfit Eva could wear to the beach picnic. Eva was not a pretty girl, and the frills and bows that decorated many of Daisy’s clothes only made Eva look frumpy. Stripes better suited her strong features.

Eva’s hair was dark, and her eyes deep brown. ‘You can wear bright colours,’ Daisy told her.

Eva had few clothes of her own. Her father, a Jewish doctor in Berlin, had spent his life savings to send her to America, and she had arrived a year ago with nothing. A charity paid for her to go to Daisy’s boarding school – they were the same age, nineteen. But Eva had nowhere to go in the summer vacation, so Daisy had impulsively invited her home.

At first Daisy’s mother, Olga, had resisted. ‘Oh, but you’re away at school all year – I so look forward to having you to myself in the summer.’

‘She’s really great, Mother,’ Daisy had said. ‘She’s charming and easygoing and a loyal friend.’

‘I suppose you feel sorry for her because she’s a refugee from the Nazis.’

‘I don’t care about the Nazis, I just like her.’

‘That’s fine, but does she have to live with us?’

‘Mother, she has nowhere else to go!’

As usual, Olga let Daisy have her way in the end.

Now Eva said: ‘Snobs? No one would be snobby to you!’

‘Oh, yes, they would.’

‘But you’re so pretty and vivacious.’

Daisy did not bother to deny it. ‘They hate that about me.’

‘And you’re rich.’

It was true. Daisy’s father was wealthy, her mother had inherited a fortune, and Daisy herself would come into money when she was twenty-one. ‘It doesn’t mean a thing. In this town it’s about how long you’ve been rich. You’re nobody if you work. The superior people are those who live on the millions left by their great-grandparents.’ She spoke in a tone of gay mockery to hide the resentment she felt.

Eva said: ‘And your father is famous!’

‘They think he’s a gangster.’

Daisy’s grandfather, Josef Vyalov, had owned bars and hotels. Her father, Lev Peshkov, had used the profits to buy ailing vaudeville theatres and convert them into cinemas. Now he owned a Hollywood studio, too.

Eva was indignant on Daisy’s behalf. ‘How can they say such a thing?’

‘They believe he was a bootlegger. They’re probably right. I can’t see how else he made money out of bars during Prohibition. Anyway, that’s why Mother will never be invited to join the Buffalo Ladies’ Society.’

Boy Fitzherbert

‘I made a bargain with the Fascists,’ Lloyd said. ‘I said we’d refrain from marching if they would promise to do the same.’

‘I’m surprised they agreed,’ said Ethel. ‘Fascists love marching.’

‘They were reluctant. But I told the university authorities and the police what I was proposing, and the Fascists pretty much had to go along with it.’

‘That was clever.’

‘But Mam, guess who is their local leader? Viscount Aberowen, otherwise known as Boy Fitzherbert, the son of your former employer Earl Fitzherbert!’ Boy was twenty-one, the same age as Lloyd. He was at Trinity, the aristocratic college.

‘What? My God!’

She seemed more shaken than he had expected, and he glanced at her. She had gone pale. ‘Are you shocked?’

‘Yes!’ She seemed to recover her composure. ‘His father is a junior minister in the Foreign Office.’ The government was a Conservative-dominated coalition. ‘Fitz must be embarrassed.’

‘Most Conservatives are soft on Fascism, I imagine. They see little wrong with killing Communists and persecuting Jews.’

‘Some of them, perhaps, but you exaggerate.’ She gave Lloyd a sideways look. ‘So you went to see Boy?’

‘Yes.’ Lloyd thought this seemed to have special significance for Ethel, but he could not imagine why. ‘I thought him perfectly frightful. In his room at Trinity he had a whole case of Scotch – twelve bottles!’

‘You met him once before – do you remember?’

‘No, when was that?’

‘You were nine years old. I took you to the Palace of Westminster, shortly after I was elected. We met Fitz and Boy on the stairs.’

Lloyd did vaguely remember. Then as now, the incident seemed to be mysteriously important to his mother. ‘That was him? How funny.’

Werner Franck

Not many people had phones in their homes, but the Francks did, and Carla and her mother stepped into the hall. The instrument stood on a spindly-legged table near the door. Mother picked it up and gave the number of Father's office at the Reichstag, the parliament building. She got through to him and explained the situation. She listened for a minute, then looked angry. 'My magazine will urge a hundred thousand readers to campaign for the Social Democratic Party,' she said. 'Do you really have something more important than that to do today?'

Carla could guess how this argument would end. Father loved her dearly, she knew, but in all her eleven years he had never looked after her for a whole day. All her friends' fathers were the same. Men did not do that sort of thing. But Mother sometimes pretended not to know the rules women lived by.

'I'll just have to take her to the office with me, then,' Mother said into the phone. 'I dread to think what Jochmann will say.' Herr Jochmann was her boss. 'He's not much of a feminist at the best of times.' She replaced the handset without saying goodbye.

Carla hated it when they fought, and this was the second time in a day. It made the whole world seem unstable. She was much more scared of quarrels than of the Nazis.

'Come on, then,' Mother said to her, and she moved to the door.

I'm not even going to see Werner, Carla thought unhappily.

Just then Frieda's father appeared in the hall, a pink-faced man with a small black moustache, energetic and cheerful. He greeted Mother pleasantly, and she paused to speak politely to him while Monika helped him into a black topcoat with a fur collar.

He went to the foot of the stairs. 'Werner!' he shouted. 'I'm going without you!' He put on a grey felt hat and went out.

'I'm ready, I'm ready!' Werner ran down the stairs like a dancer. He was as tall as his father and more handsome, with red-blond hair worn too long. Under his arm he had a leather satchel that appeared to be full of books; in the other hand he held a pair of ice skates and a hockey stick. He paused in his rush to say: 'Good

morning, Frau von Ulrich,' very politely. Then in a more informal tone: 'Hello, Carla. My sister's got the measles.'

Carla felt herself blush, for no reason at all. 'I know,' she said. She tried to think of something charming and amusing to say, but came up with nothing. 'I've never had it, so I can't see her.'

'I had it when I was a kid,' he said, as if that was ever such a long time ago. 'I must hurry,' he added apologetically.

Carla did not want to lose sight of him so quickly. She followed him outside. Ritter was holding the rear door open. 'What kind of car is that?' Carla asked. Boys always knew the makes of cars.

'A Mercedes-Benz W ten limousine.'

'It looks very comfortable.' She caught a look from her mother, half surprised and half amused.

Werner said: 'Do you want a lift?'