

AT: Welcome to the Infinite Women podcast. I'm your host Allison Tyra and today I'm joined by Ann Foster, a Canada-based writer that people may recognize from her own podcast *Vulgar History*. Her new book, *Rebel of the Regency*, about Caroline of Brunswick is available to order now and she's here to tell us about Caroline's daughter, Princess Charlotte. As anyone who's listened to *Vulgar History* or my own episode about the rise of the Hanoverians to the English throne will know, this is a family with a lot of petty drama and Charlotte's life is no exception, starting basically from birth.

[Listen to Amy-Jane Humphries on the rise of the Hanoverians to the British throne](#), or [read the transcript](#).

AF: I would say starting from conception. So my book about Caroline of Brunswick, it's called *Rebel of the Regency* and it's coming out next year and as I was writing it, I got distracted. I don't know, I just really got into the story of Princess Charlotte. I'm like this is so amazing this is so interesting and then it's like, this isn't a book about her. I can't put all this into my book but I have all these notes. I'm like, what can I do with them? I need to let people know how cool she was. So I'm glad to have the opportunity to do this. Since you've done the Hanoverian dynasty on your podcast before, I'm just gonna refresh people's memory for where she fits in, because I know it's all really convoluted and everybody is called George. But so we're looking at her parents were, who would become George IV, at this point he's the regent. So the famous the Regency era, her dad is the regent. Princess Charlotte some people might know from the first episode of *Queen Charlotte: a Bridgerton Story*, which starts with her death - spoiler. So her parents were the future George IV and her mother was Caroline of Brunswick, who I wrote my book about. And George IV and Caroline of Brunswick, as far as they told other people, they had sex once on their wedding night and nine months later Charlotte was born, because they hated each other from first sight George and Caroline. They spent the whole rest of their lives really trying to get out of this marriage.

So Charlotte was born to this, well it's a situation where you need to have an heir to the throne. And I don't know if you got into this in your Hanoverian episode, but so George III and Queen Charlotte - who I just really need to emphasize were not as cool as on *Bridgerton*, nowhere near as cool as on *Bridgerton*. They had 15 children but none of those children had legally binding marriages and heirs. So there's this issue of who's, which is the whole point. The whole point of becoming the wife of the king and having all these children is to like ensure the succession. (AT: It's like, you have one job to do.) And she did the first part of that job, (AT: She did her job but they didn't.) No well they didn't because she infantilized them and prevented her daughters from ever getting married and forced them to come be her companions. And then because of the various legal things that had been set up by George III because George III's brothers kept having secret marriages to actresses and he's like, "you can't keep secretly marrying actresses, you need to have actual marriages to princesses." So then he made the Royal Marriages Act which said people in line to the throne have to get permission from the monarch to get married. And so what that meant is that George IV and his siblings just started having common-law marriages with actresses because they were like, "okay well I don't want to marry a princess, I just want to have fun with this cool actress I met." So they had these, we would call them common-law marriages, like they live together. Some of these guys, George and his brothers, had like ten children together or whatever, but it's not a legal marriage.

So there's all these children but none of them could actually be the heirs because no one in this family had had a legally binding marriage. So George IV eventually agreed to get married - he was the heir to the throne - because he was in such debt. And I did some conversions in my book because when you see like 50,000 pounds I'm like, "well that must have been a lot then." It's like, "oh this is the equivalent of \$600 million or whatever. He was in such debt just from redecorating his house and gambling. But they were like, "well if you get married, we'll increase your allowance and that'll help pay off your debts." And that's why he got married. He chose his cousin, Caroline of Brunswick, who he'd never met before because he didn't care who his wife was - she's like a bank account, she's a line of credit. Not thinking that she'd be a person. And then she showed up and they're both like, "oh you're horrible." But they couldn't back out of the marriage. Then they got married, had sex once and that's Charlotte's parents.

So she was born almost exactly nine months after the date of her parents marriage, January 7th 1796. People talk nowadays about, "let's return to the nuclear family," or like, "in my grandparents age, people didn't used to get divorced" and whatever. But that didn't mean the marriages were good. And it's very relatable to me, I have so many friends who had separated parents. She was going back and forth between two households just like toddlers do today. Because George and Caroline separated almost directly after Charlotte was born. They weren't allowed to get divorced for various Anglican reasons but they lived in completely, effectively separate cities. Caroline was living in Blackheath which is where Greenwich Park is now. It's technically part of London but back then, it was its own village. So they never saw each other and Charlotte would just go back and forth. I think she had weekends with Caroline and she spent the week with her father. And Caroline could go and visit her daughter sometimes but George made sure he wasn't in the palace when that happened. It was the most toxic relationship but they also found the way to co-parent was to just truly never see each other. So she was a little kid going back and forth which really feels contemporary to me, split custody with your parents who hate each other.

And Charlotte was the only legitimate child of the heir to the throne, so she was the next heir to the throne, because none of these other 15 brothers or sisters had any legitimate children. So she was it, which is wild. Out of all these princes and princesses, here's the one heir to the throne, it's this one little girl. And it's a girl. So there had been Queen Anne had been the queen. There's Mary I, Elizabeth, then William and Mary were together, so she would have been like the fifth queen regnant of England. So it wasn't like unfamiliar but it was unusual. So she grew up and given the personalities of both of her parents who were both very outrageous people in different ways, she obviously developed a very strong personality. She had no chance to not develop a very strong personality because that's what her genetics were. And so the thing about her, she was athletic especially as a young girl. She liked riding horses, these descriptions about her as a kid romping around. They arranged for her to have playmates and friends who were the children of other people from the aristocracy and she's just charging around, she's a tomboy-type figure. She's very fond of animals, especially horses. And this was just at odds with what was expected of the heir to the throne, but also just a princess and also a royal and also an upper-class girl of this time. And so from a young age, my heart goes out to her and people still go through this today, but she was just not the nice little girl that everyone needed her to be. And she took that in and she felt so bad about it and she always tried to be that nice little girl, but she just wasn't. She was this wild, passionate, outdoorsy, athletic person. And she tried so hard to not be. She tried to make that not who she was, but that's who she was and my heart breaks for her. Just from what I read about her, she slid down banisters, she climbed trees, she liked jumping her horse over hurdles. She would ride astride, with your legs apart instead of in the ladylike way.

So she was constantly in trouble with her grandmother, who is Queen Charlotte, who was very conservative. Queen Charlotte's whole thing, and I don't know how much you got into this in your Hanoverian episode, it sounds like you focused a lot on the - (AT: We stopped at Augusta. It was already an hour and a half long, so we had to confine it somehow (laughter).) Fair. So I really need everybody to completely separate in your brain the cool *Queen Charlotte Bridgerton Story* from actual Queen Charlotte who was, her whole thing was, as a woman, she saw her purpose is to never have an opinion on anything, to never express an opinion on anything, to always be modest, to always be quiet, to never speak up, to just sit there. And that's why she was chosen to be George's wife and that's why she did well as that because she just sat there doing and saying absolutely nothing and decades after big hoop skirts went out of fashion she still wore them. She was just really, really, really, really judgmental of other people and she wanted everyone to behave how she thought a woman should behave, which was just quiet and meek and submissive and never having an opinion about anything. And so you can imagine Princess Charlotte, her namesake is just constantly in trouble and then also when she was hanging out with her mother, her mother would badmouth her father. Look there wasn't family therapy at this point. God knows for the Hanoverians in general there's a lot of generational trauma so her mother was constantly badmouthing her father, her father was constantly badmouthing her mother and she's just in the middle of this. This little kid just like, "what am I supposed to do? I don't know," always forced to take

sides between them. So the most constant people in her life are her governesses, she became very close to them. I think one of them, she called her mother or something like that because she was with the governess more than she was with her actual mother. Although her mother, I do want to say Caroline of Brunswick was obsessed with being a mother. She loved being a mother, she had so much maternal energy, maternal instincts but she wasn't allowed to be with her daughter as much as she wanted. So as much as she wanted that relationship it wasn't happening and Charlotte wound up getting that mostly from her governesses. She's a little kid who you can picture everything I described, so of course she's a people pleaser. She wants to do things to make people happy, in like a child star way. They bring her to dinner parties and she would sing a patriotic song and it was like, "oh isn't she so cute." She would be like this little performer. When she was in public, people like, "wow, what a great little kid she is. She's so smart, she's so poised, this is great." But she did have a stammer when she was excited or when she was nervous and she was always nervous around her father because he was a nightmare person. And that made him more mad at her and like, "oh you're gonna be heir to the throne, why are you stammering?" And the more you yell at somebody who's stammering when that's their trigger then of course she's gonna stammer more.

On the one hand she's sort of an object not a person, she was just sort of handed off from place to place. When she was with her mother, her mother loved her and adored her but no one was really paying attention to her as a person in the context of her education. They're all just like, "oh yeah she'll figure that out." So her teachers changed when she was around 8 or 9 years old and the new teacher came in and was like, "oh no, she can't read or write. No one's been teaching her anything actually." So she was functionally illiterate at age 10, which her mother Caroline of Brunswick throughout her whole life had difficulties with reading and writing so there could be some sort of inherited learning disorder or dyslexia or something. But the fact that no one realized this just kind of speaks to how no one is really, I think because she was the heir to the throne, the teacher'd be like, "oh she's so smart, oh she's the best student I ever had." But the teacher wasn't actually teaching her anything. They just wanted to make the king happy.

AT: Was there anything where she didn't want to learn and you can't tell the princess no?

AF: I think that was probably part of it honestly, when she's so powerless in so many parts of her life, the only place where she could assert herself would probably be among her tutors and just being like, "hmm I'm gonna not do that assignment, I'm gonna go climb this tree." I could definitely see that happening

AT: I could also see if there's all this pressure on her to be perfect and she knows she's failing, then not wanting to deal with not being good at something else, if that makes sense.

AF: So I think that there's a lot, this is somebody who would have really benefited from some real intervention from people who really cared about her. But there was no one in her orbit like that, again because she was kept away from her mother so much. Her mother Caroline of Brunswick, at this point was bringing in orphan wards from her neighborhood and running a school for them to train them for their future lives. Caroline of Brunswick knew about childhood education but she wasn't in charge of her daughter's education. At one point her tutor, Mr. Nott had some sort of breakdown which, I don't know his situation, but Charlotte was apparently told that it was her fault because she wasn't a good enough student.

AT: 'Cuz there wasn't enough pressure on her already.

AF: Yeah, so a lot of what we know about her is because she wrote letters to her best friend and those letters were retained and still exist. And they read so, they're so fun. You really get a sense of her personality. It's almost like reading a novel. But she wrote at this time to her teacher, "I shall labor to recover your health by my industry and wish to please and make you happy." So she's like, "I'm gonna become a better student and that

will cure your illness, your psychological breakdown.” So much pressure’s on this poor little girl. But she was also, this is the thing, so much pressure’s on her but she still couldn’t restrain herself from being just a cool, interesting, funny person. It just comes out of her, especially - and she would hate this probably that we know so much about her from these personal letters that were never meant to be made public. But she made silly nicknames for all the people around her, which is just really relatable and feels just like a teenager, because she’s a teenager by this point in my retelling. So the overall supervisor of her education was the Bishop of Exeter and he would call himself, he’s like “I’m The Bishop” and she would call him The Great Up, making fun of how he would talk and how self-important he was. Apparently, there’s times when he would turn his back, she would imitate his gestures to make the other children, because she had companions with her who were also being educated. So she was just like class clown, basically.

AT: Speaking of people around her, there was also a situation where when she was 10, she for some reason decided to write her last will and testament. I just need you to tell us about that because it is weird and I love it.

AF: It is weird and very melodramatic and it’s funny because her father actually, just after Charlotte was born, so her father George IV, he had various health issues. But a lot of his health issues I would diagnose as being panic attack-related. When he was really upset he’d be like, “oh my god I’m dying” and people then were like, “here’s some leeches because you’re dying.” But to me reading it now is just, I think this man is having panic attacks. Anyway when Charlotte was born, he had a panic attack and he thought he was dying and he wrote his last will and testament. He didn’t die. So I think just this family trait of writing your last will, it’s just kind of a thing you did. So the various people who are with her, so there’s governesses. Lady de Clifford was her main governess and then there’s also the assistant governess Mrs. Campbell and then there’s a third governess Mrs. Utney who she called Nibs - don’t know why - who she did not like. So when she was 10 years old for some reason she wrote her will and so it read, “first I leave all my best books and all my books to the Reverend Mr. Nott” - the man who had the breakdown but I guess he came back. “Secondly to Mrs. Campbell my three watches and half of my jewels. Thirdly I beg Mr. Nott, whatever money he finds me in possession of to distribute to the poor. I leave with Mr. Nott all my papers which he knows of and I beg him to burn those he sealed up,” which is also a common thing that adults did. Caroline of Brunswick, when she when she knew she was dying, she burned all of her papers up. This is a thing people did. Again I want to emphasize Princess Charlotte was not dying, she was just being like an Anne of Green Gables sort of melodramatic 10-year-old. So she bequeathed her Bible and her prayer book to The Great Up and all her playthings to his daughters. The Dowager Lady de Clifford her governess who she liked, “would receive the rest of my jewels except those that are most valuable, and those I beg my mother and father the Prince and Princess of Wales to take.” Anyway so she continued on, so she suggested that Mr. Nott should be promoted to Bishop and requested that her two devoted maids would be paid handsomely and then the best part of this whole document, it concludes “nothing to Mrs. Utney for reasons.” So the whole will might have just been her way of showing who she liked and who she didn’t like and like and throwing some shade at Mrs. Utney.

So it’s a hilarious document, it feels very much like something that Anne of Green Gables or somebody would have done, including the part “for reasons.” So the will was discovered and then everybody around her was just like, “this is fucked up - a) why did she write a will, and b) why is she saying these catty things in it?” So all the household staff, who all their own drama, they’re all separately blamed, like “it’s your fault, you were the one who encouraged her to do this.” So Mrs. Campbell took the fall for all of this, so she was forced to resign. Mr. Nott was also blamed and he was suspended from duty. So Charlotte often referred to Mrs. Campbell and Mr. Nott as her adopted parents, because those were the man and woman who’re around her the most. She was obviously really upset because the two people who mattered to her most and I think that’s the thing, the document showed which people she cared for the most. And the servants are feuding amongst each other and this document proved she liked them better than others, that the others took that opportunity to push them out ‘cuz if they were her favorite servants and maybe when she’s the Queen, she gives them title whatever. So

people just kind of I was jockeying for position. But again she wrote this funny document and then out of that, she lost her two closest people to her, her adopted parents. So just this poor little girl.

And yet we do see she continues on being herself. So as she's getting older her mother, Caroline of Brunswick and I won't get into all this because it's complicated, but basically Caroline of Brunswick was investigated for adultery when Charlotte was a teenager. And so George IV wanted to punish Caroline because he hated her and she hated him, they hated each other. And he knew that access to their daughter was the most important thing to Caroline, so he started this adultery trial partially just to keep Caroline away from Charlotte. So Charlotte was not allowed to visit her mother as much as she wanted, but Caroline kept tabs on her and Charlotte was able to secretly get letters to her mother, so they could still communicate back back and forth. And Caroline wrote about how she's just proud that she's staying true to herself and being a spirited person and not letting them get her down. So this is the thing, Caroline had her daughter's back but she just wasn't allowed to be there. Charlotte had complicated feelings towards her mother but she was loyal to her and she was sympathetic to everything she went through because Charlotte was growing up in this household of vipers, of servants backstabbing each other and the princess and the king and the queen, everyone. There's all these factions and Charlotte's in the middle of it. And so she knew what they were like, and she knew if those people are against you that maybe you don't deserve it, these people are against everybody. So she's sympathetic to what her mother is going through. She told a friend, "my mother is bad but she would not have become as bad as she was if my father had not been infinitely worse." In 1810 she got a new lady-in-waiting, Lady Charlotte Bury, who wrote, "I pity her that she's born to be a queen. She would be much happier if she were a private individual." And this is it, because Charlotte was not what this family, what this culture needed the heir to the throne to be like was just not what she was like. And as much as she tried, and she tried so hard to be that but all of her instincts, that's just not who she was.

So by now chronologically, she's 14. She was very sociable, she was very friendly and she loved talking to people from all different walks of life. The positive example I always think of is Princess Diana. If Princess Charlotte went to a crowd, she would hug the babies and she would talk to the poor people. She loved talking to people no matter who they were, which in this society which is very class-based and very restrictive, the royals should not be talking to these people. Also she was growing up so isolated, she just loved human contact, frankly. She loved giving presents to her loved ones, which is also sweet but also sort of sad because she was so desperate for affection and for love, she really clung to any friends she was able to find. She also at this point, puberty was happening and she was developing a figure similar to that of her mother, which is a very voluptuous figure, a very Nicola Coughlan-style figure, very busty, very short. And this was at odds with her, so she wasn't able to climb trees as easily or horseback ride, just because of her figure. And her shape was changing and that was making things, she couldn't go running around with a body like that but also what's cute for a little kid is maybe when you have a womanly type figure, people don't really have patience for you to behave in those childish ways when you mature physically so young well.

AT: I would also assume that there were all of these, particularly for a princess there's a lot of "well you're growing up, you know what that means!" Nothing good, in my opinion.

AF: Mm-hmm, exactly. Absolutely yeah and then also as she was "becoming a woman," she really resembled her mother, who her father hated. So physically looked like her, psychologically she had similar traits to her mother. So suddenly it's just like, oh my god! They kept her apart from her mother but you can't forget Caroline of Brunswick exists when this miniature version of her is around you every day, basically, and that made her father hate her even more.

AT: Is that why he got so, like not that he was ever not controlling, but he seems to have gotten way worse once she was in her teens.

AF: He absolutely did and I think part of that is maybe because physically she resembled her mother and part of that was because he started to realize how popular she was. And the older she got, the more she was appearing in public in parades and stuff. And ever since she was born, everybody in England loved her. There's so many complexities to compare people to 2025 royals, but if you think about what it must have been like when Prince William or Prince Harry were first born. Everyone loved Diana, these are Diana's sons. The whole country worshipped these kids. So Princess Charlotte was adored, everybody loved her. She was the apple of everybody's eyes. She was kind of like everyone's little relative. And because she was also so popular and so nice and she would talk to everybody and her father saw that and everybody hated him and had always hated him and he was really jealous of that. And he's the sort of person who wasn't like, "oh well people like her more than me; what's she doing, maybe I can emulate that?" He was like, "everyone hates me? Well fuck them, I'm gonna make them like me." So he just started hiding her away to try to compete because he was jealous of how much attention she got. The vibes are a bit like Cinderella and the evil stepmother or something. It's like, "oh she's younger and prettier!" but it's like, "yeah and you're the Prince of Wales and you're an asshole, why are you jealous of this child?"

AT: Okay but I have to point out that this is super repetitious in terms of, again anyone who wants to go listen to the Hanoverians' rise to the throne episode, this is a cycle that keeps repeating. We saw it with George I, I think we saw it with George II and then his son Frederick who died before he could come to the throne. You see this king being jealous and feeling threatened by his heir and feuding with them, you see it over and over again with these people. They are such petty bitches

AF: They are and in this instance, there's no reason for him to be mad or jealous about this because she was not challenging him in any way. Maybe if it was an adult man who's the king and his adult man son, like "oh, is he gonna usurp the throne or whatever?" maybe you could see a reason for this. But this, he's just jealous, is like, "oh people like her more than me, well I hate it." It's just petty. It's just petty for the reason of being petty. His whole thing, he's just like "why doesn't everyone love me?" His whole life, he's just like, "why don't people love me?" But he never changed who he was or what he did or how he interacted with people. He was just always mad about it.

AT: He never actually asked the question of himself critically, he was just whining about it.

AF: Yeah yeah yeah, exactly. so he's like, "they like her better than me so I'll just hide her away so that will make them like me better." That made them hate him more, actually.

AT: So it's when she's about 14 that the Regency happens so as you were saying earlier and again as anyone who's seen the *Queen Charlotte Bridgerton* prequel, like we said it's not fully accurate but the major issue of King George III, who's Charlotte's grandfather, had a mental health condition and just was unable to rule for much of his later life. And so his son, Charlotte's father, starts ruling as regent in 1811 which as we said that's why this period is known as the Regency. So how did that change Charlotte's life, because he was already the heir to the throne, so what what difference did this make?

AF: So what this meant was that her father had more power than he used to before and he had wanted to be the regent for quite a while. And so he was so excited when he became the regent, he's like "let's throw a big ball to celebrate!" and his advisors were like, "you can't throw a big ball to celebrate the fact that your father is incapacitated, that's actually in really poor taste and also everyone already hates you." So he's like, "mmm but Napoleon had a big coronation, I want to have a thing like," - anyway he held off a few months on the ball. But so the actual Regency began not with a big event like he wanted it to be, but it was just in a room of his house. He signed some paperwork with a few other men in the room. He didn't allow Charlotte to attend even though

she was next in line to the throne, because he excluded her from everything. But because she was an icon frankly, they were on the ground floor of his house and so she got on her horse and she just rode her horse back and forth past the window of the room where they were signing the paperwork in, just to try and see what's happening, because she's an icon.

But yeah, so she was much more popular than he was. Eventually he was able to throw a ball and I think technically it was like, "yay my father's incapacitated" ball. But they combined it with some visiting notable people, like "oh it's a ball to welcome these people, yeah these visitors, totally not just to celebrate the Regency." She was forbidden to attend because that would take attention away from him, allegedly. When the current King Charles was having his coronation, Kate Middleton allegedly was told "you can't wear a tiara because that will take too much attention, you have to really dress down." And so she wore a flower wreath in her hair or something. And I think it's the same sort of, like the closest comparison I can think of is maybe Charles and Kate Middleton or even William and Kate Middleton. When Kate Middleton shows up, that's what every picture is gonna be of, that's what everyone's gonna be interested, that's who everyone's gonna talk about afterwards. And so he was like, "if Charlotte is at this ball, everyone's gonna be excited and they won't notice me, and I want them to notice me!" So she thought that she could go to the ball but she wasn't able to go to the ball. And as she was becoming a teenager, other girls of that age, upper-class aristocracy girls who would be sort of on her same level, they were able to go to balls with chaperones and stuff. But they were really keeping her, I forget what it's called. It's not the Unending Nursery but they kept treating her like a little girl, and she was really pushing back against that a lot from her mid-teens onwards. And so she was just a classic child of divorced parents, just trying to do anything to try to get attention. There's two different political parties which I tragically had to research for my book and I'm not gonna get into it now because I find it so boring. There's two different political parties and so she decided with the one her father didn't like, just to bother him basically. So at a dinner party that she was able to attend, her father insulted the Whigs, which is the party that she was supporting at the time. She burst into tears, which inspired the poet Lord Byron to write a poem about her. So just in terms of her being a muse and someone the people paid attention to. She showed up so rarely, when she did everyone was really interested in what she was up to and what she was doing.

AT: So her father kind of Streisand affected her (AF: Yeah) where he's wanting people to not pay attention to her but keeping her away from them is only heightening the mystery and "oh my god she's here!"

AF: When she shows up, everyone's so excited which again is a bit like Kate Middleton, post-cancer treatment where when she showed up, suddenly there was so much because she'd been away for so long. So I think it's a similar thing. So he kept her away from London. So Windsor Castle is where Queen Charlotte lived with her daughters, who she forced to be her companions and wouldn't let them marry. So it was just Queen Charlotte, her spinster daughters who were all going insane, obviously. Charlotte, in her letter she called this the grand convent. Also it's just an unpleasant castle, the heating was not good, the insulation was not good, it was really damp and moist. She got sick there a lot. Charlotte, on the odd occasion that she was seen in public, crowds again like you're saying, people would cheer for her. They used to be like, "oh we love Charlotte" but now she's being kept away and they knew she's being kept away because the tabloids at this time hated the royals. And there's a lot of insider gossip in the tabloids just being like, "oh George IV is keeping Charlotte kept away." So when she came out, people rejoiced. People were even more happy to see her, versus when George IV or Queen Charlotte were traveling around in their carriages, people would throw rocks and mud at them. The monarchy not popular at this juncture because of the American Revolution, having lost, and various reasons that I talk about in my book a lot. But everyone hated the royal family except for Charlotte. Everyone loved her and hated them and maybe part of why they loved her was because they knew that she was kind of their victim. And so while she's staying in the convent getting sick constantly from the mold and mildew and coldness, she was being spied on by her aunts. She was only able to visit with family members really. So one of those people was Prince Frederick, who was her uncle, and his wife Frederica of Prussia. So they

had no children not by choice just because of health issues and so they'd filled their house with basically a zoo. They had so many animals because Frederica had all this maternal energy she had to expend somewhere. So there's parrots, dogs and monkeys and Charlotte, who loved horses, she loved animals, she loved spending time there. They were nice to her and she got out of this gothic terror castle of insane women.

So at this point she's a teenager and she was boy crazy. This is a new aspect of her personality that truly emerged, similar to her mother who also had a weakness for men in uniform. But because Charlotte wasn't able to socialize much, so the only people that she really had to see were relatives. And so one of her first crushes was on her cousin. So you remember all the princes, they married actresses and had secret families with them? It's one of the sons of one of those families. So it is her cousin but officially it's not her cousin because we don't recognize that marriage of that prince with that actress, George FitzClarence. So she had a crush on him and then later she had a crush on another soldier. It's giving me Lydia Bennett, in *Pride and Prejudice* when she goes to flirt with the soldiers. Charlotte just loved a soldier's uniform on a man. So she then had a crush on a guy called Charles Hesse who she called the Little Lieutenant because she had a nickname for everybody. (AT: She was like a Lydia without a Kitty.) Mm-hmm mm-hmm, the closest she had to a Kitty was her friend who she wrote all these letters to, Margaret Mercer Elphinstone, which is why we know all of this because she brought all this stuff to her her bestie. So after about six weeks, her governess tried to end the courtship because it's one thing for a prince, for a young man to have a dalliance with an actress or whatever but if Charlotte became pregnant, that fucks up everything really because she's the heir to the throne and you kind of can't hide that so anyway so her governess tried to end this and Charlotte refused. Obviously no one's gonna tell her what, like "no one puts Baby in a corner" is like her motto of life. Her mother Caroline who's so not involved in her daughter's life but loves and supports her daughter, Caroline is just like, "I will support this match. You want to be with this guy, I will help you. You can use my rooms to meet with him."

AT: Okay not much how much of that is being the permissive parent in juxtaposition to the authoritarian parent, like wanting to be the cool mom? Because this was objectively not a good idea.

AF: No no, this was not the move. And I think part of it was, "oh your father's not letting you see this boy? Well I'll let you see this boy. I'm gonna close this door and let you be alone with him in this room." And these are things that Charlotte said happened, so I trust her. So again Caroline: instincts, not always great but her heart in the right place. So as she was just trapped in Windsor Castle, Charlotte found escape through reading novels and the novels of this era were sexy gothic novels, which is great. So there was a gothic novel she read called *The Sicilian Mysteries*. She wrote her book review of it, "was most interesting. It is in five volumes full of mystery and remarkably well worked up." So I picture her being on Goodreads writing about the book she reads. Jane Austen was writing at exactly this time and she was a huge fan of Jane Austen, who at that point no one knew her real name, it was just *By a Lady*. But she loved these books. Actually her father also loved these books, the one good thing he ever did was he supported Jane Austen. And I find this really interesting, she read *Sense and Sensibility*, the new bestseller and she related to Marianne, who's not the heroine of *Sense and Sensibility*. Eleanor is the "sense," Emma Thompson in the movie, that's the character that the readers are meant to sympathize with. But she sympathizes with Marianne, who's kind of the Lydia Bennet in this story. (AT: She's not as bad as Lydia, I have to just stand up for Marianne on that one.) No, oh nothing against Marianne, that's who I relate to in the story as well. So what Charlotte wrote was, "I think Marianne and me are very like in disposition, that certainly I am not so good. The same imprudence however remain," So I just find it really interesting that Marianne is a very passionate, sort of impulsive person and Charlotte was like, "oh finally a person like me in a book." It tells you something about her, that that's the character she related to, although she felt like, "oh I'm not as good as Marianne though." Charlotte, oh - the way she was raised to just hate herself.

So Charlotte, as I said, she got sick often in this castle because the castle was cold and damp. She got chronic headaches and colds. And so her mother was like, "can I visit her?" They hadn't been able to see each other

for a really long time but George IV would not allow it because the fallout of this adultery trial was basically Charlotte was being kept from her mother because the royals are saying Caroline is a bad influence, "we can't have you around Charlotte," where Charlotte's reading these novels, like that's where she's learning all these things. But Charlotte was still secretly writing letters with her mother even though she was forbidden to. They had servants in both households would secretly send the letters back and forth, which is cute and touching. But eventually George IV really wanted to get Charlotte to not care about her mother anymore, so he shared evidence from the adultery trial with her to be like, "this is what your mother allegedly did, look at all these shocking things she did." Until this point, she had been shielded from the details of the trial. He shared the evidence in the newspapers and then shares those newspapers with Charlotte is what happened. So she wrote "the publication of things I was wholly ignorant of before really came upon me with such a blow and it staggered me so terribly that I shall not ever recover from it. The horror of the knowledge of the whole can never make those feelings ever return again that might have allowed influence." So basically what she's saying is, "I had no idea these were the things my mother had been accused of."

AT: Okay, but what was she actually accused of? Because I feel like cheating on her dad who she knows is an asshole is not something that she would have held against Caroline. So what exactly was she so horrified by?

AF: I don't know how much of the adultery stuff she would have known happened at all. So it wasn't necessarily, "oh your mother maybe had an affair." And I do want to say in defense of Caroline of Brunswick that this whole investigation was fake and it was a lot of fake evidence and it was a lot of lies with kernels of truth. Caroline of Brunswick was a very flirtatious person and there was a lot of spies around her who would exaggerate what they saw to tell George IV, to make her sound bad. So "oh I saw her walking with this guy" turns into "I assumed that she then had his illegitimate child." And that's why she's never found guilty of adultery, there wasn't actually any evidence. So I think what what shocked Charlotte the most is probably - I mentioned that Caroline of Brunswick took in these orphans to school them - is there were allegations that those were secretly her own children, that she had been having so many affairs with so many men that she'd given birth to these children and was raising them. And so I think Charlotte was maybe horrified by the thought that those children were her half-siblings, that her mother had secretly been having other children. I think that would have been maybe what horrified her as evidence of a licentious lifestyle or something. But even that, so she wrote "oh my gosh, I was so shocked by these revelations I read about my mother." But she still felt badly for her mother. The whole plan of this, her father wanted her to just be like "oh my god, my mother is such a horrible monster. I don't want to see her anymore." But it just made her feel even more sympathetic towards her. Because she felt badly because when all this was published Caroline of Brunswick was ostracized from society because, to you and me it's like "oh my gosh, a woman who had been separated for ten years maybe like had an affair with a man, okay." But to them, if you're the Princess of Wales and you have an affair with somebody then that's kind of treason. It was very shocking, these allegations to the people at the time. So Caroline was separated from society but she was a very social person like Charlotte was, and Charlotte felt badly for her because now she was being isolated like Charlotte was in the castle. She was horrified by what she learned about her mother but she's glad to know the truth and ultimately still felt badly for her mother for being treated like this by the royal family

AT: So even though it was probably not true, she believed it

AF: Yeah yeah. There's, especially two of the children that Caroline was raising Charlotte absolutely believed that these were Caroline's own children. And that just shows how infrequently she saw her mother that she thought that her mother could have been pregnant, given birth, had children and that Charlotte was away from her mother so often that this could have happened without her realizing. And I think part of it is the fact that the people that Caroline was alleged to have had the affairs with were not royals, they were not aristocrats they

were a painter or a sea captain and I think that was also very shocking

AT: I'm just trying to wrap my head around the the idea that this Lydia Bennett-type figure who's boy crazy in her own right and whose mom let her be locked into a room alone with a guy, I'm just trying to reconcile that with someone who would be scandalized by this. And I'm just wondering how much of it is the idea that her mother, who she never gets to see, might be secretly raising other children - how much of it might be sort of like a sibling jealousy type thing?

AF: Yeah yeah, or also just the thing that happens to a lot of people when one day you realize your parents are humans. Your parents have sexuality. That can be appalling on its own, and it's not just realizing your mother's a sexual being but she maybe had these secret other children that she's been raising and the whole country is talking about it.

AT: Well especially because, unlike most people who have to suddenly discover their parent is a sexual being, she legitimately has been told they only, as far as she knows her mother has only ever had sex once. (AF: Yeah yeah.) which we joke about. But she genuinely had reason to believe that that was true.

AF: Mm-hmm, and also she's like 16 years old. Lots of reasons for her to feel shocked about this. But possibly also the fact that it would have been presented to her by her father in this very manipulative way, like "look at how terrible," who's been trying to make her hate her mother for years.

AT: That's another reason that I sort of have trouble reconciling the idea that she believed all this, is she knows what her dad is like both as a person but also they've both been talking trash about each other to her her whole life. And I'm kind of like, "come on, are you really believing this?"

AF: I don't know. I wonder if it's also part of, I think of, not even people I know but reality TV I watched. But if you're siding with one parent and it's so hard and you're struggling, if Charlotte could have felt like, "if I side with my dad, maybe my life's gonna get easier. So if I allow myself to believe that my mother is this horrible person then maybe life will be easier for me with my dad" or something. I don't know. She was really struggling with it and we can't know what was in her heart and also its 1812. 16 year olds don't have a lot, therapy doesn't exist again. She's struggling with a lot.

AT: Well and spoiler: things did not get better.

AF: Mm-hmm, no. So it's again the parallels of like Snow White or something where she keeps being this young woman who's lovely, who's popular and her dad is not and he just keeps being more and more mad about it. So when she's about to turn 17, her governess resigned largely because the governess also had to stay in Windsor Castle, this drafty depressing insane house of madness and the governess was just like, "I'm out. I don't want this job anymore. She's 17, she doesn't need a governess." And Charlotte agreed. She was 16 about to turn 17 and she wrote "other young people of my age who ceased to have governesses at 17." So she wanted to begin having a household with ladies-in-waiting as other people of that age did. It was called the plan of prolonged infancy, was what her father called it, to keep treating her like a child forever. So he hired a new governess for her because he wanted to keep treating her like a child because he's an abusive, manipulative person and he doesn't want her to have any independence at all. Because as much as this whole family has been trying her whole life to just crush her independent spirit, it's still there. They can't mold her into this quiet, meek person that they can manipulate. He hired a new governess. She announced that "I am not gonna listen to her at all if you hire a governess. Fuck that, I'm just gonna keep doing what I want." So then she got a lecture from Queen Charlotte about, "you have to do what you're told." And every girl in this era had to do

what they were told by a male relative, but she especially had to because her male relative was the Prince of Wales. So they're supposed to demonstrate, the whole thing with the royalty is there's this paternal figure for the whole country and you're supposed to do what the King says. So if the Prince of Wales's own daughter doesn't do that, then that doesn't bode well for the whole country not revolting against the monarchy. Anyway, so her father came, he yelled at her, she was brought before a panel of disapproving adults. So it was her dad, Queen Charlotte, the High Chancellor of England and they just yelled at her. Her dad said, "as long as I live, you shall never have an establishment unless you marry." So she's like, "got it." Like so many people in abusive controlling households, the way to get out of this is to marry somebody, anybody. "That's the only way I can get out of this? Great." So she's legally bound to do whatever he told her to do. And apparently during this lecture, people who were there reported she maintained her composure during the whole - remember she has the stammer that comes out when she's upset and stuff - but she stayed strong. But then afterwards she burst into tears, but she did write to her bestie that "I'm still not beat, they can't bring me down." Although this was the end of her quest to try to not have a governess. Clearly that is not gonna happen and she pivoted at this point to be like, let's get me married then. I'm getting independence, fine, that's what I'll do

AT: So you've referred to her bestie Margaret a few times - how did she have this long, close friendship if she was kept so isolated?

AF: So Margaret Mercer Elphinstone, and she actually went by Mercer which is a cool name for a girl I think. So they had been I think put together for play dates as children and they really hit it off. And then when at various points they are separated because her family was like, "oh we can't let her have friends," but they kept in touch. They were pen pals and for a while they were forbidden to write from each other but they still secretly wrote to each other. So it was a really devoted friendship that they had and thank goodness. At least the letters that exist exist because Mercer saved them. There's a point in the story where people are trying to get her to destroy them but she didn't. Mercer was an interesting person who I could also do an episode about. But the letters are almost like Charlotte's journal because she was so vulnerable in them, she was so honest in them, just all the jokes she's making and stuff. So they had become friends in person, George IV tried to separate them because they thought Mercer's not a good influence or something because she's a spirited, independent-minded person but they just became secret pen pals and then just being in a correspondence basically her whole life. Thank God. Thank God, she needs a friend, this girl needed a friend

AT: Okay so back to the "I will solve all my problems by getting married" plan.

AF: Yeah so her household, there's still people around her. So technically so she had a governess but the people who were around specifically, so a woman called Miss Cornelia Knight, who was a spinster in her 50s joined the household. And she and Charlotte got along right away, she was just like, "oh this person doesn't need a governess, Charlotte is an independent person. I'm gonna help her thrive." So Charlotte gave her a nickname which is how you know she likes somebody. She called her Chevalier, which is the French word for knight because she's called Miss Knight. She was well traveled, she was well read, so a really interesting person because Charlotte was dying to travel and see the world and talk about books and stuff. So Miss Knight had said that she accepted the position because she wanted to "assist in rescuing a noble young person from surrounding persecution" and she wanted to help train Charlotte to be ready to become the best queen she could possibly be. So she was there for all the best reasons and the two of them actually got along and she respected her. And so Charlotte was able to leave Windsor Castle finally. She's living in a place in London called Warwick House. I love the introduction of Miss Knight, like we talked about Mercer, her friend, so she could get support that way by writing letters. But Miss Knight was on the scene, seeing what was happening and just being like, "I'm gonna help. This is this is fucked up, I'm gonna help." So at this point though there's also lots more repressive forces around her. So she was sent a companion, the Duchess of Leeds's 15-year-old

daughter, Lady Catherine Osborne and her governess were sent to live with Charlotte as companions. And Charlotte and Miss Knight immediately were like, "oh she's here to spy on me, this person has been brought in to spy on me." And Catherine was. She's not good at stealth, she would loiter outside of rooms eavesdropping all the time. She was not good at being a spy. So Charlotte just became so tired of this spying that she pulled a prank on her, which I will describe in Charlotte's own words. "I took courage, walked on with her to the water closet, where I stopped and, finding the window open and very cold, contrived before she was aware to push her in and lock it, keeping her very agreeably for a quarter of an hour, consoling her with the assurance it could only be there she wanted to go every evening. The young lady's dismay was not small and her assurances through the door very amusing." So basically she trapped her in the bathroom. It's a hilarious prank and I think also it's a miniature version of some stuff that happens with Caroline of Brunswick that I get into in my book. But there were spies sent to spy on Caroline of Brunswick and there were also bad spies, and so Caroline would make sure she's overheard saying things that were not true and then the spies would carry that on. So Charlotte has the same instinct of, "let's just mess around with this."

AT: I just feel like the incompetence is the worst part.

AF: Mm-hmm, and underestimating Charlotte, not realizing that she's actually really smart and can figure out that she's being spied on. I think that this person was brought in to try and get Charlotte to be like, "oh I'm in love with this person and I'm secretly writing letters to this person." But she never took her into her confidence and never revealed anything damaging. So eventually things got worse with between her and her father where, it wasn't her own household, she wasn't able to have ladies-in-waiting, but she was living in a house where she had some measure of some power. And so she started ignoring invitations to go and visit her father. She wasn't able to just be like, "thanks but no thanks," but she'd be like, "oh no I'm sick" and just wouldn't go. But this is partially because she didn't want to be seen in public while her mother was still under suspicion because the whole adultery trial stuff was still going on. But then eventually rumors spread about that her sort-of cousin previous suitor, there were rumors that she was secretly pregnant. So she had to appear in public in a form-fitting dress to be like, "hey look I'm not pregnant! Thanks everybody!" So she went there's this place called Hyde Park that is still a place in London, but at that time there's two paths and people would, like people do on the road, I don't know if they do where you are in Australia, but people just drive along the main drag slowly to see and be seen where it's young people, you drive along like who's here? You just hang out on the street. So in Hyde Park, you would ride your open carriage in one direction, those people riding carriages in the other direction and "who's here today, who's gonna be in Hyde Park today?" And there's practically bleachers so that the public could watch and like, "who's gonna be here today" sort of in-person paparazzi. Anyway so she went to Hyde Park just to be like, "do-do-do, look at me, I'm not pregnant" despite herself. But everyone's just like, "oh my god, it's her!" and they cheered. So she's still beloved beloved by everybody and during one of these little visits in Hyde Park, she happened to be going down one way in her carriage and her mother was going the other way in her carriage by coincidence and they hadn't been able to talk for months. So they're able to like chat briefly and all the in-person paparazzi saw this so it was reported on, "Charlotte talked to her mom!" And she went right to her dad too because her new plan is, "be the perfect princess so I can get married" but he has to get permission. So she went to her dad to be like, "hey I did see Caroline of Brunswick, my mother but we just chatted for a minute and we didn't plan it and please don't be mad at me."

AT: Because she knows that whatever other people report is gonna be worse than the truth.

AF: Exactly and she had to get ahead of it to be like, "I'm not hiding this from you. I didn't secretly meet with her. Nothing untoward is going on." But yeah, as long as she was under her father's control she would have to continue fighting for every small privilege. And so again her plan is just, "I'm going to find a husband because

that's the way" - like it feels counterintuitive to us in today's society, that's how you get independence. But in this situation, and there are definitely families who I know where if you have a really controlling father, the only way to get out of that is to - the Duggars for instance. It's like the only way for those daughters to get out of that household were to get married where it's funny to think, "that's freedom for you?" But in a really patriarchal system, this it is and so that's what she planned to do

AT: Alright, so tell us about the options that came her way, God help her.

AF: Okay, so you know she had read Jane Austen by this point. So at this point she's channeling Charlotte Lucas *Pride and Prejudice*. She's like, "I'm not looking for romance." She's a really dreamy romantic person but she's like, "I'm not looking for romance at this point. I just want a practical husband so I can have independence and my one qualification is he has to be nice. Is this a nice person?" She saw the nightmare of her parents' marriage and she's just like, "I need to escape this by getting married, but it has to be a nice person." And so because she's being kept away still from balls and things, she couldn't meet various different people. Most people she met were her relatives at dinner parties. So one of her first options was her father's cousin, the 37-year-old Prince William Frederick, Duke of Gloucester and Edinburgh AKA The Cheese because Gloucester is famous for cheese. So he's 37, she's 17, he's her first cousin once removed and frankly not a great option, partially because he had already secretly gotten married like everybody had. (AT: All the men had.) All the men - all the women trapped in the convent, all the men, secret marriages. But also her dad didn't really like him, she probably wouldn't get permission for this. But did she even really want him? So her dad noticed her talking to The Cheese at one point and sent someone over to break it up because George IV did not like The Cheese. I don't know if she ever really considered him, but you look around a room that's full of like your uncles and your second cousin once removed, you're like, "I have to marry one of these guys - who's the least related to me? Him? Great. The Cheese, let's do it."

But another option that was more of a romantic pick was 23-year-old William Spencer, who is the Duke of Devonshire, whose mother you might have heard of: Georgiana, the Duchess of Devonshire from the Keira Knightley movie *The Duchess*. She was like It Girl of 20 years prior to this, so he's like It Boy. So it's sort of second generation, what I'm picturing is like Patrick Schwarzenegger, a nepo baby of the it girl, it's like "oh it's like Victoria Beckham's son." So she was sort of maybe thinking about him, but there's a lot of people in the story. These were all people she was rumored to maybe be considering. We don't know who she really was considering. So while she was trying to choose a husband who was nice for her these are two options: The Cheese, this other guy, Victoria Beckham son. And then meanwhile her father was like, "what I need to do is find a husband for her that will mean that she leaves the country because she's so popular and I want to be more popular, so I have to send her away somewhere." So Caroline of Brunswick, her mother's from Brunswick, she's from Germany and had come to England to marry him the same way that the other Hanover wives mostly had. It was usual for a woman to go to the country where her husband was from. So he's like, "great, let's find her husband not in this country," which leads us to the principality of Orange, which is in now what is southern France. And this had been part of the Netherlands.

So basically Orange had been taken over by Napoleon but it was newly independent. Charlotte was on the marriage market and there was a prince there and so they wanted to work, like this is what you would imagine out of a royal princess, the dads are gonna figure out an alliance-based marriage. This is the same from the medieval times: "who we want to ally with?" So the United Netherlands and the United Kingdom. So William was the 23-year-old Dutch crown prince and Charlotte, not a fan of this plan. She started calling him The Little Hero because he had fought in the Napoleonic Wars, allegedly.

AT: He's 23, how much of a veteran can he be?

AF: Exactly, exactly. So it's a killer nickname, "Oh, the little hero?" So her dad really wanted to get her out of

the country and also make this alliance. She did not want to marry some random person and I think we should discuss why, if she was the future queen of England, they would even be talking about her leaving the country.

AT: Yeah that's the really weird thing because usually when we're talking about marrying a princess off it's because she's not the heir to your own throne. This doesn't make any sense. He is so incompetent!

AF: George IV just really wanted to get rid of her and I guess when they were married maybe the plan was that William would become king of the United Netherlands and the United Kingdom and maybe they would both come over and co-rule, or maybe they would rule for - I don't, it's not a good plan as far as I understand it. But he was not a person who came up with good plans, George IV.

AT: I don't know that there really was a plan beyond "maybe if I get her out of the country, people will actually like me" which again - so dumb.

AF: I will say, not in his defense but just by way of explanation, George IV had been dosing himself with opium by this point for like 25 years and also a lot of cherry brandy on the daily. So he was constantly drunk and high (AT: Alright, that tracks) which is why he makes some weird choices. And he was doing both of those things under advice of doctors, because again it was olden days and it's more fun than leeches. So he wanted this much to happen. Charlotte was just like, "no I don't want to marry this person I've never met." So with her bestie Mercer - Mercer is clutch, she's your wingman, she's there for her, ride or die. I'm so grateful that she exists in this story. So they contacted some of the politicians just to clarify, can he, can Charlotte be forced into this marriage or not? And so the politicians were like, she's obliged to live under her father's authority but could not be legally forced into a marriage that she does not want. So this advisor said she should ask for a reasonable delay, like a gap year because she had been so isolated for so long. It's like, "can I just have a year to think about this instead of going from nursery to marriage?" And during that year she would hopefully find a way to get out of it.

During this time, William of Orange arrived in England and he was brought for meeting with Charlotte and basically she was told, "okay, you want to meet him? You can meet him - in five minutes, decide you want to marry him or not," which is not dissimilar to some reality dating shows. And so she met him and she's like, "okay, well he seems, in five minutes, okay I guess." And so her father was like, "great the marriage is announced" and it was revealed to everybody and everyone's excited, like, "oh my god, a royal wedding, we're so excited!" The country's little sister is getting married. But four days after this five-minute meeting, she learned, and her father had not told her this but The Little Hero told her this, that part of the marriage negotiation was she would be expected to spend six months a year with him in Orange. And she didn't know that and her father knew that she would not like that and that's why her father hadn't told her that. So she didn't want to go there, she saw how he had manipulated her into accepting this marriage. But it had been announced the same way her parents' marriage was announced. They met, they hated each other, but they had to go through with it. And she's just like, "I can't go through with this marriage. This has been announced but this is a nightmare and this is not the independence I wanted." She's like, "this marriage is happening," and so part of her is like, "how can I get out of this?" and part of her is like, "okay if this is happening, how can I make this happen as smoothly as possible?"

And the other part, the issue is, she had sent Mercer letters during her courtship with General Hesse talking about it and she's just like, "these cannot be made public, no one can ever know that I had this fling with this guy, that my mother locked us in this room together." And it's all written in these diary-style letters to General Hesse, love letters. So she's like, "Mercer I need you to track down General Hesse, find these letters and destroy them basically."

AT: This sounds like an episode of *Drunk History*.

AF: Well and this is where Mercer is just best friend of the year. She's like, "would love to, but it turns out General Hesse is on active service. He's an army soldier and not sure where he is, but we'll try to track him down." Because basically Charlotte is like, "if these letters are found, it'll ruin my reputation, it's this personal information, my father will be mad at me." It might wreck the marriage, but not in a way that would be beneficial to her as well. She has a new advisor at this point who was a lawyer called Henry Brougham, who is one of Caroline of Brunswick's allies. He's a lawyer and he's the sort of person who's out for himself but can be useful if what's good for him is also good for you sort of person. And so he was like, "okay what we need to do is let the public know that you're being forced into this marriage against your will because the public sentiment could maybe change your father's mind." And he was very canny with that and he also used that in the Caroline of Brunswick stuff. It's the first time public relations was used in this way, was in this era to try to, "if everyone in England is against this then maybe that'll put enough pressure on them to let you out of this." So Charlotte requested a copy of the marriage contract. She wanted to rework it so she didn't have to be like Persephone, half the year in Holland, half the year in England. Her father was like, "this is insubordination. This was your idea in the first place to marry this guy." (AT: What?!?) He's drunk. He's drunk and high and what's he talking about? But meanwhile the cool people of the Netherlands were like, "yeah that's fine, we can amend this document." So they added a clause saying she could not be removed from England without her consent.

AT: And so because everyone has the same name and I mean thank God for the nicknames because that's actually very helpful, I wonder if that's why. (AF: Thank you Charlotte.) Yeah, that's why she had to give everyone a nickname. But so we had William Frederick and William Spencer and now we've got a Frederick William - so tell us about this Prussian prince.

AF: So he's 35 years old and not sure how this courtship began but we do know that it continued on in letter form. There's so many letters in this story, which is funny because so many of the novels that Charlotte would have been reading at this time, that was the trend of novels were as though they were collections of letters back and forth between people, like if you've read Dracula, which is from several decades later. So it's just funny that this is a drama unfolding in letters, just like the books she read. Anyway so F - we're just gonna call him F - the Prussian prince. So Miss Knight, remember she's still on the scene helping out. She helped arrange secret meetings between these two. So this was Charlotte's secret choice. They met because there was this delegation from Prussia came for events in London and there would have been a ball or a dinner party that Charlotte was allowed to go to and that's where she met F. But in the entourage is Leopold of Saxe-Coburg who is this quiet, shy, handsome guy who also Charlotte noticed a little bit on the scene. But she and F are having her latest, she loves a man in uniform, she loves a man called Frederick or William - those are the only names men have.

Anyway, so one of the reasons why she wanted to stay in England was to support her mother because she knew that nobody else was. And she knew that her mother was, at this point Caroline of Brunswick is just isolated, she's ostracized, she's very unhappy and very few people on her side. And even though they've been separated so much, there is this maternal bond between Charlotte and her mother. And so she's like, "I can't leave for six months of the year, my mother needs me here." So, citing concern for her mother, she broke off the engagement. She formally said, "I am not going to marry this Orange guy. This is not happening." And then her father was like, "great, well then you're gonna be stuck in the Grand Convent forever." And then Charlotte ran away, and this is such a cool thing she did. So she was commanded to return to Windsor Castle and she's living in her house, Warwick House in London and she ran out of back entrance and this is at a time, so taxis do not exist but what there were were called hackneys, which are like a carriage that is painted yellow like taxis often are now. Truly it was the taxi of the era, Olde Tyme Taxi, and they could take you to where you want to go if you don't have a carriage. And so this is the first instance of a royal taking a taxi by themselves, because she went out and she was like, "I'm gonna hail a hackney," but then she's like, "wait I don't know how to do that, I'm a princess and I've never been on my own before." But she looked in distress and a man nearby was like, "do

you need help?" She's like, "can you hail me a hackney, please?" And so he did, and she went to her mother's house in London. But her mother was not in her house in London, her mother was in one of her other homes. So eventually she's just like, "I've run away and here's what's happening." So she had a messenger send word to her mother. Her mother started traveling in from where she was in Greenwich. Henry Brougham shows up, the ambitious lawyer. So various advisors come, but other people find out that she's there, so her father sends people. Brougham later described Charlotte behaving like "a bird set loose from its cage" because she had done this crazy thing, she actually ran away from home. And she and her mother were having a nice time. They were just like, "let's order food, let's have a nice time." And then as other people came, you remember her old tutor, The Great Up? He showed up and then it's like, "oh this guy's at the door," and then Caroline and Charlotte, they're having fun being like, "make him wait, this person can come in." They were just having fun not letting people in, basically.

Mercer shows up, as well Miss Knight shows up with a letter from F. So it's just the climactic drama of this all, all the characters of this story are all in this house together. So Henry Brougham is trying to be like, "why did you run away? I need to understand so I can figure out how to help you," and she just said, "I could not bear any longer the treatment that I was met with." And so just spilling everything. She's like, "they're trying to keep me like an infant. They're making me marry this person. He's gonna trap me away in this ghost castle." But basically everyone there was like, "okay this is fun for a night, but you have to go back to your father. You're the heir to the throne, there's no other way out of this for you." She would not budge. Eventually she was convinced to leave by Brougham who was just like, "okay, look out the window - that's Hyde Park." So imagine they've been there since, I don't know, 6 p.m. until like 3 a.m. the next day, just this adventure happening. And he's like, "okay daylight is gonna happen soon and there's gonna be a by-election, so there's gonna be a bunch of people out there in Hyde Park to come and vote. If they see you in distress and hear that you're in trouble, then they maybe riot. In that riot, people might die and do you want that to be your legacy as the Queen of England, that you caused this riot and death?" And maybe just because it's late at night and you're tired, she's just like, "okay, fine." This finally convinced her. But first she wrote an official document stating she did not agree to marry William of Orange and if such a marriage were announced, it was against her will and then everyone there signed it: the lawyers, some of the princes were there as well, not her dad but some of her uncles. Everyone signed it, Caroline signed it, "yes, we all witnessed this. She does not consent to this marriage." And so then she was sent back. And shortly after that, not the same day, but within a few weeks, her mother Caroline of Brunswick revealed to her that she was gonna be leaving England. And the reasons why Caroline was leaving England, one of them was because she knew that her being there was getting in the way of Charlotte making decisions and choosing what to do, so helping her daughter by leaving. And she's like, "I'm gonna go back to the continent and then once you're queen, I'll come back to England" basically was their agreement. And so they bid farewell to each other at that point.

And so having sort of flexed her muscle, having had some independence, Charlotte is like, things went her way for once. She was able to get out of this match, she has this paperwork signed. She can't be forced to marry this person, she's not gonna go to Orange. And she decided that she's gonna choose her own husband. And who she'd chosen at this point was not F the hot Prussian prince, but the guy from his entourage, Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, who she called The Leo, which feels very astrological to me. But he was nice. He was kind, he was handsome, he was a similar age and also he was the younger son of a king, so if they got married, she wouldn't have to go to his country, he would come to her country because she outranked him. And so in a welcome change for the family's convoluted gene pool, they were barely related to each other at all. They were related slightly, but not as much as The Cheese for instance. (AT: That is always an issue with the Europeans.) It really is, and they have so many health problems. You need to get the new DNA in there just for longevity of health. Anyway so she's like, "I want to marry The Leo," but she knew she couldn't just be tell her dad that. So what she did is, for the next two years, she was perfect. She behaved like the perfect heir to the throne, the perfect little princess. She didn't run away, she didn't talk back, she behaved perfectly well because she's like, "if I can do this, this is how I can get my father to agree to this." And so she and The Leo,

again they fell in love through letters because he was back in Saxe-Coburg, which is Germany now. So they were for two years just writing letters back and forth, being very demure, very mindful. And eventually her father was like, "okay, you've been so good you can marry this guy, The Leo." Everyone was so excited about this wedding, they cheered, they had loved her her whole life, they saw her through this broken engagement, they knew she'd been kept away in these castles. She's just the heroine of the nation and they're so excited she's marrying someone that she chose.

They got married at her father's house, Carlton House, and The Leo went over there first before the ceremony for a dinner and he was almost crushed by crowds because they were so excited to see him. Because they were just like, "oh here's the guy who loves our princess" and he's young. A royal marriage is still I think really exciting to a lot of people and she's choosing a nice person to marry and everyone's just happy about it. One of the contemporary diarists of the time wrote, "Princess Charlotte is happy and contented they are both of them prodigiously in love, he with his wife and she with her husband, and freedom," because now that she was married, she got to have her own household. She got to, for the first time, choose her own furniture, what color do you want to paint this room. She got to be independent for the first time in her life and the marriage had allowed her that. And he was nice, so it's win-win for her. She described to Mercer, she called him "the perfection of a lover." And so they lived together in the new home, which was called Claremont House. A few months after the marriage, she did have a miscarriage and although at this point she was often forbidden from writing to her mother, who's now in Italy, she and Caroline wrote to each other as much as they could in secret during this time, because this is where she wants the support of a mother, going through a miscarriage and stuff. And she wanted to reach out to her and she did.

AT: I feel like this is why you should never trust any story where the happy ending is "and then she got married to a guy she loved," because she finally got what was supposed to be her happy ending and as you spoiled at the very beginning, she died very young.

AF: Yeah, yeah so the *Bridgerton Queen Charlotte* series, and that's why I'm not too concerned about spoilers because I think most people who listen to history podcasts have watched that show. Episode 1 of *Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story* is the death of Princess Charlotte and everyone realizing, "oh shit there's no heirs anymore." Because just so you know during this whole time, none of the other brothers had legitimate children in these last 20 years. Because she got married when she was 20, so one year after their marriage when she's 21, she was pregnant again and everyone was so excited. The whole thing, it's so similar to right now when any celebrity announces a pregnancy, people get so happy for them. When a person is happy about being pregnant and they're a famous person, the world just delights in it, really. So she's pregnant again, everyone's so excited because she's like everybody's little sister. The pregnancy was medically complicated. So she put on a lot of weight as her pregnancy progressed, more than is average, to the point that Queen Charlotte, who's still around who had given birth 15 times, looked at her and she was like, "I'm no midwife but like it seems like something concerning is going on with the amount of weight she's putting on." It was probably gestational diabetes. From my book and my own curiosity, I talked to some OB/GYN who I know and I said, "these are the symptoms, what do you think?" and they were like, "oh yeah, no, that's gestational diabetes." She was putting on too much weight, which meant the baby was getting too big. But the doctors of the time, because it's olden days they're like, go on a diet, exercise more, which actually is probably what doctors still say today to a lot of people frankly.

AT: To be fair if you have gestational diabetes, because I have polycystic ovary syndrome and so my insulin is actually all messed up so I'm technically pre-diabetic, but what I understand is if you do have gestational diabetes there is a specific diabetic diet that you should be following but they wouldn't have known that so diet is not, in the correct sense is not the wrong thing to do but what he told her was definitely not based on the glycemic index or anything.

AF: No, no, again this is a time of leeches being the main medical intervention for every illness. So they're just like, "wow, she's getting really big, ew, okay." Anyway, so she went into labor on Monday November 4th. She promised her nurse, "I will neither bawl nor shriek," which is just, she's such a people pleaser to a really sad and sweet extent. Anyway, I won't get into all the details that I learned from my doctor friends, but basically these days if somebody has gestational diabetes, you diagnose it early and there's interventions you can use, like you said. There's a specific food protocol you can follow, there's medications you can do, they're gonna check your blood pressure and all these things. And almost definitely you would be induced early because in this instance, the babies get really big and really big babies have trouble being delivered vaginally. So she was in labor for 50 hours, largely because the baby was so big. She was also overdue, so she gained so much weight because of the gestational diabetes and was overdue. So the baby was too big to deliver but this is an era, a c-section would have killed her in the medical terminology of this time. And they were like, "she's the heir to the throne, we can't risk that." But even these of forceps was like, "whenever we use forceps, the mother always dies, so let's not do that." It's like, that's because you don't wash your instruments or your hands. Jerks. Anyway so their interventions are really based on prioritizing her life.

AT: That's not normal for this time. I feel like a lot of times the doctors would be like, "it's okay if she dies as long as the baby lives, assuming it's a boy."

AF: Yeah yeah so because she was the heir to the throne they really prioritized not doing any intervention that might kill her, which was just, none of them knew what were they what they were doing. It was all men, the doctors who were all there, and they were experienced in delivering babies. They're the royal doctors, they're people who had done this sort of thing before but/and I feel like a midwife, a woman, a folk healer, people might have made different decisions from these dudes.

AT: Okay also point of clarification here - there hadn't been any royal babies since Charlotte herself 20 years earlier (AF: Yeah, yeah.) How experienced can they be in delivering royal babies?

AF: Very fair point. I feel like these guys are old enough, they probably delivered all 15 of Queen Charlotte's. So anyway, the doctors are not the people you want on the scene but also her health situation had gotten to a level that you wouldn't often see today because there would have been earlier interventions for what was going on with her. At some point during the labor, the baby died. So she delivered, after her 50-hour labor, she was presented with a 10-pound stillborn son. And what happens when the child dies during birth is that you start getting sepsis, because that's necrotic tissue inside the living mother. So this is what my friends are guessing happened. So it was a son and apparently he was so overdue and she had been so large, it looked like a much older baby than just a newborn basically. And it would have been a son. So she was stoic in the face of tragedy and The Leo was there with her for all 50 hours, and they're like, "we're young, we'll try again." And Charlotte, god bless her, she tried to comfort the nurses and maids, she's trying to comfort everybody even though she had personally had just suffered this tragedy herself personally, she's trying to make everyone feel better because that's what she's like. Her husband, The Leo took an opiate and went to bed cuz he had been awake for 50 hours going through this very scary medical situation. And then three hours later she complained of abdominal pain, and she began vomiting and basically she died. She died of probably the infection, maybe a pulmonary embolism. Everything contributed to this: the gestational diabetes, the size of the child, the length of the labor, the lack of intervention, the doctors not washing their hands, the fact they didn't use forceps. Ultimately, she had an infection which became septic and then she just bled to death. And so she was dead. It was 1817, she was 21 years old. And they went to get The Leo, who was passed out from being awake for so long and the opium. They'd been married for a year, they'd been pen pals for two years, they knew each other pretty well, but they were still so young and still in a honeymoon phase. And he was there with his friend and

Leo said to his friend, "I am now quite desolate, promise to stay with me always," he said to his friend. The public, this was an outpouring of grief because they loved her, they adored her, she was everybody's honorary little sister. Remember her household, Lady Charlotte Bury wrote, "a greater public calamity could not have occurred to us." People took this personally like a member of their family had died, because they had all been there from childhood till now, like the way that people feel about Prince William or Prince Harry. People saw them from being born and now they're an adult and now they've got their own family. You feel connected to them because you've watched them grow up.

So her funeral has held at Windsor Castle, which is the place she hated most in the world, a bad choice in my opinion. So many members of the public tried to attend that the ceremonial procession could not get in, it was so crowded full of people. Her father did not attend because he was too overcome with grief. Her mother did not attend because she was in Italy and no one told her that Charlotte had died. And what happened with that was that George IV swore he would never communicate with Caroline because he hated her so much. So even when their daughter died he didn't write to her. And they're like, "well Leo can write to her." But Leopold was so overcome with grief that he didn't write to her. And so eventually somebody wrote a letter to inform the Pope that this had happened and then the messenger passed by Caroline's house. They had been waiting for news of the baby being delivered and they're like, "hey, messenger to the Pope, what news do you have?" And he's like, "no one told you?" And that's how Caroline found out. She's not at the funeral either.

People were so overcome about this. I did an episode a while ago on my podcast, *Vulgar History*, about Madame Tussaud, who is in England by this time. And her whole thing was, in a time before photography, in a time before TMZ, when there was a scandal or a news story happening, people wanted to see the faces of the people involved. And Madame Tussaud would make a waxwork of Napoleon, she make a waxwork of whoever was in the news. And so she made a waxwork of Princess Charlotte laying down dead holding a baby and the lineups of people who came to pay tribute to this waxwork just really speaks to how beloved she was. Three months after this happened, her main doctor killed himself out of grief and guilt for feeling responsible for all of this happening. So the death of Charlotte her child and the doctor was referred to as *The Triple Tragedy*. So the way that she was commemorated is that, she and her husband Leopold were living in this house in Claremont and they had started the construction of a summer house, a gazebo-sized little building that would just be a place where they could go to play music and stuff. So he adapted those plans, which were already in the works, to make it into a private monument to her memory. And he eventually left England. He went to Belgium to become the king of the Belgians eventually. But he granted permission for the public to visit this mausoleum as a place to pay their respects. So massive crowds arrived there to go and visit. Just before she died, Charlotte had been posing for a sculpture, a bust of her head and shoulders. And so that was put in this mausoleum as a tribute to her as well.

So she didn't become Queen of England because she died. Her son also died, and that's where all of George IV's brothers were like, "we need to suddenly have some legitimate heirs because there aren't any." So they all married young princesses. And one of them, his brother Prince Edward, married Leopold's sister actually, Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg, and they became the parents of Queen Victoria, and that's where Queen Victoria comes from. So she was first cousins with Charlotte. Her mother was Charlotte's sister-in-law?

AT: She was both her niece and her cousin, because like you were saying, "surprisingly for this time they weren't super closely related."

AF: Yeah, but they are still related. So when Queen Victoria became queen, she commissioned a grand memorial to Charlotte which is a big carving, like a mural but carved. And so currently it's in the church of St. George at Windsor Castle, and then the mausoleum that they had built was demolished when, in the early 20th century, the estate was sold to somebody else. In 2017 the National Trust had a replica of the mausoleum created just to be like, "this is where it was" and they put a stone nearby that said Leopold's words, "my Charlotte is gone." The replica was since removed but that stone is still there that says "my Charlotte is gone."

And that is the ultimately sad but in many parts funny and interesting story of Princess Charlotte. She's one of those people who when you look at this succession of British monarchs, like "oh well, she would have been queen, but she wasn't. She died in childbirth." That's what I knew about her before, but then she was this cool, weird, spirited, jokester tomboy. She did these cool things. So I was really glad to learn about who she was, because it just reminds me that everybody, even when you go to the National Portrait Gallery in London, there's a tree showing how did you get from the Stewarts to the Hanoverians to the Windsors, and Charlotte is not even on that. Which I was just like, "how dare you?!?" Because she never actually became queen, she's such a footnote but she's such a cool person and that's what I find about women's history in general, people are often, you hear so much, "oh she died in childbirth." Well yeah, but who **was** she? That's not the only thing she ever did.

AT: It's also making me think of the previous episode that I did about the Hanoverians, the recurring theme was these almost-queens. So starting with, when the Hanoverians first came to the English throne, it was supposed to be Princess Sophia of the Palatinate but she basically went for a walk, got rained on, got sick and died. And so instead we got George I. His wife, Sophia Dorothea, they also had drama. So she was basically locked in a castle and never became queen because she had been a little too indiscreet with her own affairs. And so she basically got imprisoned for life in a castle. And then George III's mother, Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, who we also see in the *Bridgerton* prequel series. She never became queen because his dad (AF: Frederick never became king.) Yeah, another Frederick, never became king because he died before he could. So this is what I keep seeing, is these really fascinating women who never became queen. They were so close but then we forget about them because they never became queen.

AF: And then Victoria did and she was The Queen but you forget that other people almost were. I think it's so interesting to look at, and then also all these men became king and they were all dirtbag jerks. But there was so many almost-queens. And other parts of history too are really interesting. We know the people who were the queens because everything they did was recorded. But the people who almost were, who were they? And that's where it's interesting to me to think about Charlotte. If she had become queen, would she and Leo have been like Victoria and Albert? Would they have had a whole bunch of children? Would she have implemented this really rigid conservative Victorian-type era on the world? Another major thing to bear in mind is, Leopold after this all happened, he's like, "do I need to stay in England, what's happening?" And Belgium had just become an independent nation and they were hiring a king. So they're just looking at royals all over, "who will be the king? Leopold, you want to be the king of the Belgians?" And he's like, "I guess." So he moved there and he got married again and became Leopold I, king of the Belgians. And then his son became Leopold II, king of the Belgians, who is one of history's most notorious war criminals, genocidal monsters. He went to the Congo and just decimated, they're still dealing with the fallout from that now. So if Charlotte hadn't died, Victoria might not even exist because Prince Edward wouldn't have had to marry a princess. She would never have been conceived. If she had survived Leopold, never would have gone to Belgium and that affects the history of not just Belgium but also the Congo and also the Netherlands and lots of places.

AT: That does also to me raise questions about his parenting skills and what kind of father he actually would have been if that's what came out of it.

AF: Yeah, exactly. She died so early, would he have been a good husband? Some of the writings hint that maybe he was quite controlling actually, and she was just so grateful to be not under her father's thumb, she was cool with it. But if they had stayed married, how would that marriage have gone? If they'd had a bunch of children. And even the fact that Queen Victoria and all of her children were so instrumental in World War I because her children and her grandchildren were the rulers of every country in Western Europe.

AT: Not just World War I because she was marrying them off to basically every royal family, and if I recall correctly that's why you got a bunch of hemophilia and part of what led to the Russian Revolution was the heir being a hemophiliac. I have a separate episode about Queens and Revolution if you want to go listen to more about Alexandra and how she didn't help when it came to the factors leading up to the Russian Revolution. (AF: Her life is just, there's so many ripple effects of it.) And also when you're talking about the vibes of Victorian England and therefore all the ripple effects of that had, just the vibes. I wonder how much of that came out of, we're talking about how infantilized and how controlled Charlotte was, but Victoria I would say had it even worse on that front. And it's again interesting to think about like how Charlotte responded to that treatment versus how Victoria did and how that would have shaped Charlotte's rule versus how it did shape Victoria's. This is all theoretical, but if you want to speculate?

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AF: That's really interesting to think about too, that Victoria was also part of this fucked-up family lineage with toxic parent-child relationships. And then she married Albert, had all these children who she kind of didn't like and perpetuated that whole cycle of toxic absentee parent. I don't know if Charlotte would have been like that or not. How different could it have been? I also read that because the Hanover's were so chaotic for so long, Victoria came in intentionally wanting to be like, "the royals are a patriarchal force and we're like your family and we're moral and we're ethical." She really established an understanding, and she's queen for so long that "the royal family should be respected and they're the moral authority" and stuff - they're not, but that's how she presented them. And then that carries on through to today. She really restored the admiration that people had for the royal family after everything that happened with the Hanovers. So I don't know, Charlotte maybe was poised to do that too because people loved her so much. But it's a really interesting, sliding doors thing of, what would have changed if she had survived at birth, or even if her son had survived at birth. What would have happened, the ripple effects internationally? It would have been really interesting or maybe different people would have done the same things and we might have been the same place we are now. I don't know.

AT: So from what I understand, you wanted to talk about Charlotte today because your book was too long and they made you cut her and you just needed to tell everyone about this but for anyone who wants to know more about Caroline and more of this petty drama, because I'm just like, how did they hate each other so much when they were together for such a short period of time? (AF: Mm-hmm) and so if anybody wants to read about that your book is now available for pre-sale, if you want to tell us about that.

AF: Absolutely first I do want to clarify that I was not told to remove the Princess Charlotte stuff from my book. I figure that out by myself when I was going through just before I submitted it, I was just like "this is way too much." I had like three chapters about Princess Charlotte and I'm like, "that's not what this book." I preemptively removed it before someone had to tell me to. But it left me all these beautiful notes I was able to use, so I was really happy to come here and share all of them because I want people to know about her because she's such a cool person. And yes, so she does appear, I would say an appropriate amount in my book. So *Rebel of the Regency: The Scandal Saga of Caroline of Brunswick, Britain's Uncrowned Queen* is available for pre-order and you can find out all the information about it and get all the links at [rebeloftheregency.com](http://rebeloftheregency.com) I had to skip over a lot of Caroline stuff to tell the Charlotte story and the Caroline stuff is even more bananas than the Charlotte stuff. And I think it really shows. If you read the book in combination with listen to this episode that you can see how Charlotte really took after her mother just in her stubbornness and her spiritedness and her inability or unwillingness, that I admire, to change who she was. Both Charlotte and her mother, Caroline of Brunswick, couldn't not be themselves and I think that's an admirable quality for a woman then as now.

AT: Join us next time on the Infinite Women podcast and remember, well-behaved women rarely make history.