

3 January 1914

Tsarskoe Selo

Well, that's over, and I'm glad of it. I hate dancing. I'd rather climb trees any day! My feet still hurt — especially the toe that clumsy Lieutenant Boris stepped on while he was trying to waltz. What an oaf.

Hundreds of people attended the ball — all the court society of St. Petersburg, Papa says. If you piled all their jewels in a heap, they would weigh at least a ton.

Mama had a headache and left before midnight. Our little brother, Alexei, is feverish again, and Mama wanted to be at home with him. I wish I could have gone with her, but

that would have upset Grandmother. She is already annoyed at Mama, I think.

Grandmother gave us each a diary as a keepsake of the ball. Olga and Tatiana and Mashka (that's what we call our Marie) have begun pasting things in theirs — the invitation, the menu for the midnight supper, the program of music played by the orchestra, and my sisters' dance cards signed by the officers who danced with them. (I did not collect my dancing partners' signatures.)

It was very late when Papa had the sleigh drive us from Anitchkov Palace to board our train for the ride back to Tsarskoe Selo. He sipped tea while my sisters chattered all the way home. I could hardly keep my eyes open but pretended to be wide awake.

4 January 1914

Ts. S.

I've decided to write a play about the ball. I'm calling it *The OTMA Snow Ball: A Jest in One Act*.

OTMA is the name we made up with the initials of our first names — Olga, Tatiana, Marie, and Anastasia. That's me, trailing along at the end, the youngest, the last

of the Romanov sisters. Papa calls me *Shvibzik*: “Imp.”

When I told my sisters about my play, Mashka said, “What a good idea! We can perform it for Mama.”

Olga added with that worried look of hers, “Promise you will make it nice, Anastasia?”

I promised I would.

The Main Characters:

GRANDMOTHER — also known as the DOWAGER EMPRESS, wearing her diamond tiara and white brocade gown

PAPA — also known as NICHOLAS ALEXANDROVITCH ROMANOV, TSAR OF ALL THE RUSSIAS, in military dress uniform, with lots of ribbons and medals

THE GRAND DUCHESSSES — OTMA

OFFICERS from the yacht *Standart*

The Scene: Grand Ballroom of Anitchkov Palace (actually our library)

The Grand Duchesses enter. They are dressed in matching gowns of white silk embroidered all over with pearls and crystal beads, and satin slippers.

My slippers pinched, but at least I didn’t have to wear a corset. This is because I don’t have a “figure,” as Olga calls

it. She's eighteen and has one. So does Tatiana, who's sixteen, and Mashka, who's fourteen. I'm twelve and haven't yet gotten a bosom. When I say "bosom," my sisters are shocked.

"Say 'figure,' Anastasia," Olga corrects me. "Proper ladies don't speak of . . . of bosoms." She blushes when she says it.

"But I'm not a proper lady," I remind her. "I'm a *shvibzik*."

7 January 1914

Well, we did it. Mama's friend Anya Vyubova came to our rooms after supper. And we rounded up Dr. Botkin and his son, Gleb, and Baroness Buxhoeveden and as many of Mama's ladies-in-waiting and Papa's gentlemen as could be found to make up the audience. There was no one to play the role of the Dowager Empress, of course, and so we put one of Mama's tiaras on an embroidered cushion on a gilt chair and pretended that was Grandmother.

Papa put on his white dress hat with a gold braid. First he bowed to Olga, and she curtsied, and then they danced while he whistled a waltz. Papa is the best whistler! Next it was Tatiana's turn, and then Mashka's.

I would have been next, but I decided not to play myself in this production. Instead, I borrowed a pair of tall

black boots and a white jacket from one of the servants and took the role of Lieutenant Boris. Shura, my nurse-governess, painted a huge black mustache on my lip. Alexei made me a cocked hat of folded paper. Then I ordered my sisters to dance with me while I pretended to stomp all over their feet. (Mashka said I didn't pretend enough, and that I really did step on hers. But it was truly not on purpose.)

It ended badly, because Alexei insisted that he was going to dance "like Lieutenant Boris," and he got rowdy and crashed into Mama's table. Now we're afraid he'll get one of those terrible bruises and be ill again.

9 January 1914

Faugh! I detest schoolwork! Monsieur Gilliard, our French tutor, says that my efforts "lack inspiration." What he means is, I am lazy. We've been working on the pluperfect tense, and what could be inspirational about that? I was supposed to write my sentences ten times each, but I "forgot" a few of them and instead drew a border of flowers around the paper. M. Gilliard says that my flowers don't make up for lack of inspiration.

