

ACT I

Prologue. 1906

A Small Bedroom in a Royal Palace

**[MUSIC NO. 01 "OPENING FANFARE AND
OPENING SCENE"]**

*(Icons lit by candlelight are the only source of
light. There is a sense of suffocating luxury.)*

*(A little girl is being put to bed by her
grandmother. The little girl is **THE GRAND
DUCHESS ANASTASIA**, the youngest daughter of
TSAR NICHOLAS II, the Emperor of All Russia.
The old woman, her paternal grandmother, is
THE DOWAGER EMPRESS MARIA FYODOROVNA.)*

RUSSIAN CHORUS.

AH AH AH AH

HMM

ANASTASIA. Why must you go, Nana?

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. It's time to go. I've stayed too long
here.

ANASTASIA. Take me to Paris with you.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. You'll visit me with your sisters and
little brother. There's a bridge there named for your
grandfather, did you know that? *Le Pont Alexandre*. He
never saw it. We'll walk on it together – and we'll go to
the ballet every night.

ANASTASIA. Take me with you now.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. I already have, my darling

Anastasia. Wherever I go, you'll always be with me.
You're my favorite. Strong, not afraid of anything.

ANASTASIA. Like you.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. Sssh, our little secret!

(She gives ANASTASIA a small music box and shows her how to open and wind it.)

[MUSIC NO. 02 "PROLOGUE: ONCE UPON A DECEMBER"]

Our lullaby. When you play it, think of an old woman who loves you very, very much.

~~FAR AWAY,
LONG AGO,
GLOWING DIM AS AN EMBER,
THINGS MY HEART USED TO KNOW,
THINGS IT YEARNS TO REMEMBER...~~

~~**THE DOWAGER EMPRESS & ANASTASIA.**~~

~~AND A SONG SOMEONE SINGS
ONCE UPON A DECEMBER.~~

(THE TSARINA ALEXANDRA FYODOROVNA enters on her way to a costume ball. She is superbly dressed in the style of the old Russia at the time of Peter the Great. She bows slightly to THE DOWAGER EMPRESS.)

THE TSARINA. Have you said your prayers, my precious Anastasia?

ANASTASIA. Yes, Mama.

THE TSARINA. For your father, the Tsar; for your sisters and brother; for Russia herself.

ANASTASIA. Yes, Mama.

THE TSARINA. What's this?

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. A music box. So the child will remember me.

THE TSARINA. Better prayers than music boxes in these difficult times.

(And now the TSAR NICHOLAS II enters. He, too,

is dressed in full old Russia regalia and cuts quite a figure in it. THE DOWAGER EMPRESS extends her hand. He kisses it.)

THE TSAR. *(One last appeal to her.)* It's the last ball of the winter season, Mama. All Petersburg will be there.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. We've been through this.

THE TSARINA. She's right, Nicky.

(She cannot wait to be rid of this woman.)

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. Remember, Anastasia: Paris.

(THE DOWAGER EMPRESS goes.)

ANASTASIA. Nana! Nana!

(NICHOLAS knows how to comfort his youngest daughter. She adores him.)

THE TSAR. The Tsar requests the first dance of the evening, *Mademoiselle...?*

ANASTASIA. I am the Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna Romanov.

(The TSAR bows slightly, then holds his arms out to ANASTASIA. They dance together in the old style. The music is very Russian. There is nothing "European" about the choreography. The TSAR loves "being" Russian. So does his youngest daughter.)

[MUSIC NO. 03 "THE LAST DANCE OF THE ROMANOVS"]

(Transition: musical and dramatic.)

(A brilliantly-lit ballroom in the imperial palace. The TSAR lifts his little daughter, and the ballroom is suddenly crowded with elegantly dressed men and women, dancing in the latest "European" style. It is 1917. The music is completely different. Everything is the same, yes, but everything has changed as well. We feel the passage of ten years at once.)