

Daughters of a Dead Empire

By Author, Carolyn T. O'Neil

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A nationwide struggle manifests in an interesting and unlikely friendship between a princess and a revolutionary.

When the once revered Romanov family is executed, seventeen year-old Anna narrowly escapes and is on the run from the Red Army. She stumbles upon a chance to safely flee to the safety of the White Army. That chance is in a young Red Bolshevik named Evgenia. Evgenia and Anna embark on a journey together on uneasy terms, not realizing each other's true associations. Their bond grows as they encounter the historic confusion that would contribute to the Russia of today.

Daughters of a Dead Empire is meant to be a retelling of the rumor that Tsar Nicholas II's youngest daughter Anastasia had survived the Romanov family execution. It is an exploration of how Anastasia would have survived in 1918's Russia by herself. It deals with how two girls, each with Tsarist and Bolshevik agendas, both suffered in what they believed was right.

Personally, I love this theme. It gives the Bolshevik Revolution nuance. You can only say so much with textbook facts, but you can say so much when you build a character off of it. There is an importance of conveying history in a way that you can feel what a person of that time would feel. You might root for one side, but you start to wonder if the sides truly matter. As described in the book, both the Bolsheviks and Tsarists have people of good and bad morals. It is not just one side.

The plot was relatively stale for me. Nothing was grabbing my attention except for a few scenes. The book was meant to have a bit of a contemporary feel, so I do not have any real problems with it. I'd recommend this book to anybody 12+ looking for some good Russian historical fiction and feminist undertones. There is some graphic violence and quite a bit of profanity and death. Overall, it is a great debut book with unexpected complexity inside.

Recommended Titles:

Blood Heir by Amélie Wen Zhao

Sparkers by Eleanor Glewwe

The Water Mirror by Kai Meyer