

Anya/Empress

(THE DOWAGER EMPRESS stands quietly as ANYA continues to hurl things into her suitcase.)

remains silent. ANYA holds up a book.)

START

ANYA Russian history! Save it for your next Anastasia.

(She turns to throw the book at him but is astonished to see THE DOWAGER EMPRESS.)

Your Imperial Highness.

(She curtsies before THE DOWAGER EMPRESS.)

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. I think history demands we play this game to the end.

ANYA. Please, be seated.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. There's no need. I shall be brief. Who are you?

ANYA. I believe I am the youngest daughter of -

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. Spare me my family history! It's in every bookstore along the Seine. Anyone can read it.

ANYA. I didn't think you'd be so cruel.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. I'm old and impatient. Kindness has become a luxury.

ANYA. My Nana was the most loving woman imaginable.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. That was before they murdered everyone she loved.

ANYA. Her bosom smelled like oranges when she hugged me.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. It's a common enough scent.

ANYA. Not hers. It came from Sicily, made especially for her, in a box of polished olivewood.

(ANYA sits down.)

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. How dare you sit without my

(ANYA leaps to her feet.)

All right, sit. You have my permission.

(ANYA sits.)

In that case, I shall sit, too.

(She sits.)

Who was my favorite lady-in-waiting?

ANYA. You didn't have one. You kept dismissing them.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. It was a trick question. You're clever, I'll grant you that.

I'm trying to see the resemblance. I don't trust my eyes.

ANYA. You should wear spectacles.

I'm sorry.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. Name the three -

ANYA. Why don't you want me to be her?

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. I have found solace in my bitterness. It doesn't disappoint me. You Anastasias always do.

ANYA. If you give me a chance, maybe I won't.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. I don't believe Anastasia exists.

Anya *bursts into tears.*

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. You all cry at some point. Do you rehearse? Tears will get you nowhere.

ANYA. Why did you come here?

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. Your young man told me you weren't part of his scheme.

ANYA. He's right, I wasn't.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. He believes that you very well may be my granddaughter. He says you've come to believe it yourself.

ANYA. I believe it with all my heart but I can't be her unless you recognize me.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. You can't be anyone unless you first recognize yourself.

STOP

ANYA. *(Bowing her head.)* I know.

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. Do you know what it means to lose everything, young woman? My son, his children, everything I held dear and loved with all my heart – all lost and gone in one terrible moment.

(ANYA cowers at THE DOWAGER EMPRESS' feet.)

I'll ask you one last time, young woman, be very careful what you answer: who are you?

ANYA. I don't know anymore. Who are you?

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. *(Sitting back a little at ANYA's bluntness.)* An old woman who remembers everything the way it should have been, nothing the way it was.

ANYA. Do you remember the last time you saw Anastasia?

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS. *(Shaking her head.)* I didn't know it was the last time. We never do. We never know which goodbye is the last.

ANYA. You were leaving for Paris. You never came back. You gave her a music box. I believe this was it.

[MUSIC NO. 24C "ONCE UPON A DECEMBER (REPRISE)"]

(She opens the music box. It is out of tune and the mechanism is labored, but the music is potent. They listen to it together.)