

## Catherine The Great Empress Of Russia Wicked History

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Princess Sophia of Anhalt-Zerbst became Empress Catherine II of Russia, an indomitable, feisty ruler who was very complex and became an infamous historical figure.

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Empress Catherine II brought Europe to Russia, and Russia to Europe, during her long and eventful reign (1762—96). She fostered the culture of the Enlightenment and greatly expanded the immense empire created by Czar Ivan the Terrible, shifting the balance of power in Europe eastward. Famous for her will to power and for her dozen lovers, Catherine was also a prolific and gifted writer. Fluent in French, Russian, and German, Catherine published political theory, journalism, comedies, operas, and history, while writing thousands of letters as she corresponded with Voltaire and other public figures. The *Memoirs of Catherine the Great* provides an unparalleled window into eighteenth-century Russia and the mind of an absolute ruler. With insight, humor, and candor, Catherine presents her eyewitness account of history, from her whirlwind entry into the Russian court in 1744 at age fourteen as the intended bride of Empress Elizabeth I's nephew, the eccentric drunkard and future Peter III, to her unhappy marriage; from her two children, several miscarriages, and her and Peter's numerous affairs to the political maneuvering that enabled Catherine to seize the throne from him in 1762.

Catherine's eye for telling details makes for compelling reading as she describes the dramatic fall and rise of her political fortunes. This definitive new translation from the French is scrupulously faithful to her words and is the first for which translators have consulted original manuscripts written in Catherine's own hand. It is an indispensable work for anyone interested in Catherine the Great, Russian history, or the eighteenth century.

'One of the great love stories of history, in a league with Napoleon and Josephine, and Antony and Cleopatra ... Excellent, with dazzling mastery of detail and literary flair' *Economist* It was history's most successful political partnership - as sensual and fiery as it was creative and visionary. Catherine the Great was a woman of notorious passion and imperial ambition.

Prince Potemkin - wildly flamboyant and sublimely talented - was the love of her life and her co-ruler. Together they seized Ukraine and Crimea, defining the Russian empire to this day. Their affair was so tumultuous that they negotiated an arrangement to share power, leaving Potemkin free to love his beautiful nieces, and Catherine her young male favourites. But these 'twin souls' never stopped loving each other. Drawing on their intimate letters and vast research, Simon Sebag Montefiore's enthralling, widely acclaimed biography restores these imperial partners to their rightful place as titans of their age.

There is no shortage of biographies of Catherine the Great, of varying quality and degrees of sensationalism. But there exists no brief account of her reign that incorporates the extensive research findings of the last twenty years and presents them accessibly, accurately, and concisely to the student and the general reader. Following her magisterial *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, Isabel de Madariaga has written the most informative, balanced and up-to-date short study of this spectacular period in Russian history. De Madariaga establishes an authoritative account of the events of Catherine's life, disentangling the myth from the verifiable reality. But her principal aim is to provide an account of the achievements of the thirty-four-year reign. Well-read and intelligent, Catherine presided over a fundamental reorganization of central and local government, of financial administration, of law, and of literary and cultural life. De Madariaga tracks the changes and explains the reforms, placing them in the context of

eighteenth-century Europe and the ideas of the Enlightenment and of the French Revolution. Chapters on the wars against the Turkish empire, the annexation of the Crimea in 1783, and the partition of Poland demonstrate Catherine's part in building Russia into a formidable European power. The text is distinguished throughout by the attention paid to historical controversies over the interpretation of Catherine's policies and to the historiography on the period in general. Praised by French writers of her day and attacked by later historians for her neglect of the welfare of the serfs, Catherine's achievements are now measured against the difficulties she met. The book points to the problems Catherine faced, the human and material resources on which she could draw, and the intellectual climate in which she operated. De Madariaga considers past and present assessments of Catherine and consolidates balanced judgments, profound understanding, and exhaustive research into a highly assimilable form. In this newly-translated excerpt from his five-volume "Course", Kliuchevsky (1841-1911) provides a colourful description of Russian court life in the 18th century, a dramatic narrative of the coup d'etat that brought Catherine II to power, a portrait of the empress herself, and an analysis of her foreign conquests and her major internal initiatives. While Kliuchevsky is critical of Catherine, he draws upon her memoirs and other writings and the accounts of her contemporaries to achieve a well-rounded and deeply human analysis of her character and personality. It is an extraordinary act of historical re-creation of the sort that brought Kliuchevsky such renown in his own time, and it remains so lifelike that it fairly leaps off the page. Kliuchevsky's examination of Western influence in Catherine's reign leads him to questions that were of urgent significance for Russia's development in his own day, and have remained so ever since: how to use Western ideas and practices to improve and enrich Russian life, without turning them into idle fashions or political bludgeons, and where to find the social leadership capable of performing such a delicate task.

"[A] superb biography...Scholarly, refreshing, commonsensical, and compelling, vividly portraying the charismatic Empress and her times." —Simon Sebag Montefiore, author of *Sasha* Simon Dixon's *Catherine the Great* is a complete and revealing portrait of an extraordinary leader, chronicling her rise to power and her remarkable reign as empress of Russia. Catherine Merridale, author of *Ivan's War*, calls this definitive history, "attractive, engaging, and very intelligent...Established fans of the Russian empress will find plenty of new material and those who are meeting her for the first time will be dazzled."

"Makes *Game of Thrones* look like a nursery rhyme." —Daisy Goodwin, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Fortune Hunter* "[Alpsten] recounts this remarkable woman's colourful life and times." —Count Nikolai Tolstoy, historian and author *Before there was Catherine the Great, there was Catherine Alexeyevna: the first woman to rule Russia in her own right.* Ellen Alpsten's rich, sweeping debut novel is the story of her rise to power. St. Petersburg, 1725. Peter the Great lies dying in his magnificent Winter Palace. The weakness and treachery of his only son has driven his father to an appalling act of cruelty and left the empire without an heir. Russia risks falling into chaos. Into the void steps the woman who has been by his side for decades: his second wife, Catherine Alexeyevna, as ambitious, ruthless and passionate as Peter himself. Born into devastating poverty, Catherine used her extraordinary beauty and shrewd intelligence to ingratiate herself with Peter's powerful generals, finally seducing the Tsar himself. But even amongst the splendor and opulence of her new life—the lavish feasts, glittering jewels, and candle-lit hours in Peter's bedchamber—she knows the peril of her position. Peter's attentions are fickle and his rages powerful; his first wife is condemned to a prison cell, her lover impaled alive in Red Square. And now Catherine faces the ultimate test: can she keep the Tsar's death a secret as she plays

a lethal game to destroy her enemies and take the Crown for herself? From the sensuous pleasures of a decadent aristocracy, to the incense-filled rites of the Orthodox Church and the terror of Peter's torture chambers, the intoxicating and dangerous world of Imperial Russia is brought to vivid life. *Tsarina* is the story of one remarkable woman whose bid for power would transform the Russian Empire. Catherine the Great was one of the most remarkable women in history. Born in 1729 into the family of one of the lesser princelings of Germany, she was married to the heir to the Russian throne at the age of 16. The marriage was an unhappy one and Catherine was banished from her husband's palace but, when Peter came to the throne and was then ousted from it in the space of a few months, it was Catherine who replaced him and became Empress. She ruled her vast domain for more than thirty years, until her death in 1796, and greatly expanded its territories. In her lifetime and since she has been infamous for her intrigues, her possible involvement in political murders, including that of her dethroned husband, and her numerous love affairs. Vincent Cronin's highly readable biography sifts the facts from the legends in Catherine's extraordinary life.

*The Epistolary Art of Catherine the Great* is the first study to analyse comprehensively the letters of Empress Catherine the Great of Russia (reigned 1762-1796) and to argue that they constitute a masterpiece of eighteenth-century epistolary writing. In this book, Kelsey Rubin-Detlev traces Catherine's development as a letter-writer, her networking strategies, and her image-making, demonstrating the centrality of ideas, literary experimentation, and manipulation of material form evident in Catherine's epistolary practice. Through this, Rubin-Detlev illustrates how Catherine's letters reveal her full engagement with the Enlightenment and further show how creatively she absorbed and responded to the ideas of her century. The letter was not merely a means by which the empress promoted Russia and its leader as European powers; it was a literary genre through which Catherine expressed her identity as a member of the social, political, and intellectual elite of her century.

Presents a reconstruction of the eighteenth-century empress's life that covers her efforts to engage Russia in the cultural life of Europe, her creation of the Hermitage, and her numerous scandal-free romantic affairs.

Catherine the Great (1729-1796) wrote over two dozen plays and operettas, but not until this edition has a complete translation of any of them been available to an English-speaking readership. *Oh, These Times* (1772) is a satirical attack on many vices Catherine wished to root out from her society: religious hypocrisy, superstition and slander. The main character, Mrs. Pious, is a superficially religious old woman who resembles Moliere's *Tartuffe*. Catherine again sets her sights on superstition in *The Siberian Shaman* (1786), this time by satirizing shamanism as a deceitful profession which preys on the gullible. This play was part of a group of three plays usually known as Catherine's "anti-masonic" trilogy, written as a warning against the growing influence of the freemasons. In a comprehensive introduction, Lurana Donnels O'Malley relates the plays to Catherine's status and philosophy.

*Great Catherine* *The Life of Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia* Macmillan Perfect for readers of Hilary Mantel, Alison Weir, and Philippa Gregory, *Empress of the Night* is Eva Stachniak's engrossing new novel, told in the voice of Catherine the Great as the Romanov monarch reflects on her ascension to the throne, her rule over the

world's greatest power, and the sacrifices that made her the most feared and commanding woman of her time. A critically acclaimed historical drama and instant #1 international bestseller, *The Winter Palace* brilliantly reimagined the rise of Catherine the Great through the watchful eyes of her clever servant Varvara. Now, in Eva Stachniak's enthralling new novel, Catherine takes center stage as she relives her astonishing ascension to the throne, her rule over an empire, and the sacrifices that made her the most feared and commanding woman of her time. As the book opens, the charismatic monarch is in her final hours. From the fevered depths of her mind, Catherine recalls the fateful trajectory of her turbulent life: her precarious apprenticeship as Russia's Grand Duchess, the usurpers who seek to deprive her of a crown, the friends who beg more of her than she was willing to give, and her struggle to know whom to trust and whom to deceive to ensure her survival. "We quarrel about power, not about love," Catherine would write to the great love of her life, Grigory Potemkin, but her days were balanced on the razor's edge of choosing her head over her heart. Power, she learns, is about resolve, strategy, and direction; love must sometimes be secondary as she marshals all her strengths to steer her volatile country into a new century and beyond—to grow the Romanov empire, to amass a vast fortune, and to control a scheming court in order to become one of history's greatest rulers. Gorgeously written with vivid detail and lyrical prose, *Empress of the Night* is an intensely intimate novel of a woman in charge of her fortunes, who must navigate the sorrows, triumphs, and hopes of both her soul and a nation. Praise for *Empress of the Night* "[Eva] Stachniak's absorbing novel opens readers' hearts to an extraordinary and misunderstood woman. . . . Wonderfully, lyrically written, Stachniak's story vibrates with passion, drama and intrigue. This is a feast for fans."—RT Book Reviews "Stachniak's insight into the opulent lives of Russia's rulers continues in this reflective second novel. . . . Historical fiction fans will appreciate this personal account of a formidable and, indeed, infamous ruler."—Library Journal "The book takes on a dreamlike quality. . . . Ambitious . . . moving . . . structurally complex and psychologically intense . . . vivid descriptions."—Quill & Quire "Stachniak brings to life one of the most fascinating—and controversial—female rulers of all time."—DuJour "Empress of the Night casts light on Catherine's life with unflinching honesty and intimacy. This fun novel of lovers, intrigue, and malicious and manipulative nobility keeps readers enthralled with every page."—Virtuoso Life "The Imperial Wife is a smart, engaging novel that parallels two fascinating worlds and two singular women. Irina Reyn writes beautifully of immigrants, art and the vagaries of love". --Jess Walter, National Book Award finalist and author of the New York Times bestseller, *Beautiful Ruins* Two women's lives collide when a priceless Russian artifact comes to light. Tanya Kagan, a rising specialist in Russian art at a top New York auction house, is trying to entice Russia's wealthy oligarchs to bid on the biggest sale of her career, *The Order of Saint Catherine*, while making sense of the sudden and unexplained departure of her husband. As questions arise over the provenance of the Order and auction fever kicks in, Reyn takes us into the world of Catherine the Great, the infamous 18th-century empress who may have owned the priceless artifact, and who it turns out faced many of the same issues Tanya wrestles with in her own life. Suspenseful and beautifully written, *The Imperial Wife* asks whether we view female ambition any differently today than we did in the past. Can a contemporary marriage

withstand an "Imperial Wife"?

A fascinating life of a ruler who was deservedly styled 'the Great'

So highly coloured was Catherine's private life that it has often distracted attention from her remarkable professional statecraft. Dr de Madariaga, the doyenne of Catherine the Great scholars in the West, redresses the balance in this authoritative and substantial account of Catherine's personality, her politics and the nature of the Russia she ruled. This 1931 volume includes key documents relating to Catherine II of Russia. An introduction and notes are provided, together with a chronological table covering events between 1762 and 1777. This book will be of value to anyone with an interest in Catherine's reign, Russian history, and eighteenth-century history in general.

Describes the life and times of Catherine the Great, one of Russia's longest rulers.

One of the most colorful characters in modern history, Catherine II of Russia began her life as a minor German princess, until the childless Empress Elizabeth and Catherine's own scheming mother married her off to the Grand Duke Peter of Russia at age sixteen. By thirty-three, she had overthrown her husband in a bloodless coup and established herself as Empress of the multinational Russian Empire, the largest territorial political unit in modern history. Portrayed both as a political genius who restored to Russia the glory it had known in the days of Peter the Great and as a despotic foreign adventuress who usurped the Russian throne, murdered her rivals, and tyrannized her subjects, she was, by all accounts, an extraordinary woman.

Catherine the Great, the first popular biography of the empress based on contemporary scholarship, provides a vivid portrait of Catherine as a mother, a lover, and, above all, an extremely savvy ruler. Concentrating on her long reign (1762-96), John Alexander examines all aspects of Catherine's life and career: the brilliant political strategies by which she won the acceptance of a nationalistic elite; her expansive foreign policy; the domestic reforms with which she revamped the Russian military, political structure, and economy; and, of course, her infamous love life. Beginning with an account of the dramatic palace revolt by which Catherine unseated her husband and a background chapter describing the circumstances of her early childhood and marriage, Alexander then proceeds chronologically through the thirty-four years of her reign. Presenting Catherine in more human terms than previous biographers have, Alexander includes numerous quotations from her reminiscences and notes. We learn, for instance, not only the names and number of her lovers, but her understanding of what many considered a shocking licentiousness. "The trouble is," she wrote, "that my heart would not willingly remain one hour without love." The result of twenty years' research by one of America's leading narrative historians of modern Russia, this truly impressive work offers a much-needed, balanced reappraisal of one of history's most scandal-ridden figures.

The first in-depth study of Catherine the Great's plays and opera libretti, this book provides analysis and critical interpretation of the dramatic works by this eighteenth-century Russian Empress. These works are shown to be remarkable for their diversity, frank satire, topical subject matter, and stylistic innovations. O'Malley reveals comparisons to and influences from European traditions, including Shakespeare and Molière, and sets Catherine in the larger field of Russian literature in the period, further illuminating her relationship to the aesthetic debates of the period. The study investigates how Catherine expressed her social ideas throughout her drama and

exploited the stage's power to promote political ideals and ideology. O'Malley sets close textual analysis within an historical framework, analyzing the major plays according to content, style, themes, characters, and relation to Catherine's life and political aims. In *Creating the Empress*, Vera Proskurina examines the interaction between power and poetry in creating the imperial image of Catherine the Great, providing a detailed analysis of a wide range of Russian literary works from this period, particularly the main Classical myths associated with Catherine (Amazon, Astraea, Pallas Athena, Felicitas, Fortune, etc.), as well as how these Classical subjects affirmed imperial ideology and the monarch's power. Each chapter of the book revolves around the major events of Catherine's reign (and some major literary works) that give a broad framework to discuss the evolution of important recurring motifs and images.

Of all of history's great romances, few can compare with that of Catherine the Great and Prince Grigory Potemkin. Their turbulent and complicated relationship shocked their contemporaries and continues to intrigue observers of Russia centuries later. Lovers, companions, and, most likely, husband and wife, Catherine and Potemkin were also close political partners, and for a time Potemkin served as Catherine's de facto co-ruler of the Russian Empire. Their letters offer an intimate glimpse into the lovers' unguarded moments, revealing both ecstatic expressions of love and candid insights on eighteenth-century politics. In February 1774, the Russian empress took Grigory Potemkin for her lover and, it is now believed, secretly married him a few months later. Particularly in the first two years of their relationship, Catherine was consumed by her passion for Potemkin. The hundreds of letters and notes she dashed off to him between assignations in the Winter Palace during this time attest to the giddy exuberance of the new love that so fully embraced her. *Love and Conquest* contains the most historically significant and personally revealing of these letters, only a few of which have ever before been translated into English. Beginning with Potemkin's letter to Catherine written while off fighting the Turks in 1769 and concluding with his farewell note scribbled the day before his death in 1791, the correspondence spans most of Catherine's reign. The letters are at once personal and political, private and public. Many of Catherine's love letters to Potemkin written during their stormy affair reveal the empress's passionate personality. Potemkin's letters provide rare insight into his arrogant and mercurial character, while serving to dispel the myth of Potemkin as little more than a corrupt sycophant. *Love and Conquest* reveals the complexity of Catherine and Potemkin's personal relationship in light of dramatic changes in matters of state, foreign relations, and military engagements. After their love cooled, Catherine and Potemkin continued to discuss and debate a wide range of state affairs in their letters, including the annexation of the Crimea, court politics, wars against the Ottoman Empire and Sweden, and the colonization of southern Russia. Together they carried out the most dramatic territorial expansion in the history of imperial Russia, transforming Catherine into a powerful world leader and creating a bond of affection that would never fully fade. Readers will find in the letters new insights on Russia's most famous empress, her passions, and her world.

The Siberian shaman: Cast gender - mixed; number - 10 males, 5 females (total 15); size - large; length - 5 acts, 53 scenes. Satire on shamanism as a deceitful profession which preys on the gullible.

A portrait of the late-eighteenth-century Russian ruler discusses how she seized and

kept the throne in spite of her illegitimate claim and a series of wars, rebellions, and plagues, tracing how she rendered Russia a major European power.

Born an obscure German princess who suffered under the control of a domineering, narcissistic mother, the fourteen-year-old Princess Sophie von Anhalt-Zerbst seemed to be destined for a minor marriage and a forgettable career. Destiny had other plans for her: summoned to Russia, then considered by most Europeans to be a vast, primitive wasteland, devoid of culture or sophistication, she became the Grand Duchess Ekaterina, wife of the future emperor Peter III. What followed her short, unhappy marriage was a legendary rise to supreme power. At the age of 33, the Grand Duchess Catherine became the Empress Catherine II, ruler in her own right of the largest empire on earth. In this book, you will learn how, during Catherine's lonely years as a neglected wife in the court of the Empress Elisabeth, she bided her time and amassed the necessary political and military support to overthrow the heir to the Romanov dynasty and seize his throne. You will also learn why, over the course of her 34-year reign, which saw rebellions, foreign wars, popular uprisings, and a string of jealous lovers vying for her favor, she came to be remembered by history under the name conferred upon her by her own people: Catherine the Great.

Learn how a Prussian princess grew up to be Russia's longest-ruling female leader! Born in 1729, Princess Sophie of Anhalt-Zerbs was never supposed to come to power. But at age sixteen, she married the heir to the Russian throne. By 1762, Sophie, known now as Catherine, overthrew her immature and incompetent husband, Peter III, to lead the nation. Catherine became the sole ruler of Russia. This exciting Who Was? title explores how Catherine was able to turn Russia into one of the great powers of Europe by expanding its borders, helping improve its educational system, and advocating for the arts. Her three-decade reign is considered the Golden Age of Russia, and she is called Catherine the Great.

Sophie von Anhalt-Zerbst was an intelligent and ambitious girl. She first met her cousin Karl Peter Ulrich when she was ten. She didn't like him. The scheming of others saw both their lives turned around. Name changes, a new country and an unhappy marriage to each other saw "Peter" on the Russian throne. Catherine soon overthrew him.

Ruling Russia for 34 years, she became known as Catherine the Great. Find out more about this legendary ruler in this 15-minute children's biography. Ages 10 and up.

Reading Level: 6.9 Learning Island believes in the value of children practicing reading for 15 minutes every day. Our 15-Minute Books give children lots of fun, exciting choices to read, from classic stories, to mysteries, to books of knowledge. Many books are appropriate for hi-lo readers. Open the world of reading to a child by having them read for 15 minutes a day.

Details the life of the German-born Russian empress, from her birth in Stettin to her death at sixty-six, and recreates the extravagant life of her court, portraying the men and women who shared or succumbed to her power.

Accessible to students, tourists and general readers alike, this book provides a broad overview of Russian history since the ninth century. Paul Bushkovitch emphasizes the enormous changes in the understanding of Russian history resulting from the end of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then, new material has come to light on the history of the Soviet era, providing new conceptions of Russia's pre-revolutionary past. The book traces not only the political history of Russia, but also developments in its literature, art

and science. Bushkovitch describes well-known cultural figures, such as Chekhov, Tolstoy and Mendeleev, in their institutional and historical contexts. Though the 1917 revolution, the resulting Soviet system and the Cold War were a crucial part of Russian and world history, Bushkovitch presents earlier developments as more than just a prelude to Bolshevik power.

In a dual biography crafted around the famous encounter between the French philosopher who wrote about power and the Russian empress who wielded it with great aplomb, Robert Zaretsky invites us to reflect on the fraught relationship between politics and philosophy, and between a man of thought and a woman of action.

The follow-up to the #1 bestseller *The Winter Palace*--perfect for the readers of Hilary Mantel and Alison Weir. Catherine the Great, the Romanov monarch reflects on her astonishing ascension to the throne, her leadership over the world's greatest power, and the lives sacrificed to make her the most feared woman in the world--lives including her own... Catherine the Great muses on her life, her relentless battle between love and power, the country she brought into the glorious new century, and the bodies left in her wake. By the end of her life, she had accomplished more than virtually any other woman in history. She built and grew the Romanov empire, amassed a vast fortune of art and land, and controlled an unruly and conniving court. Now, in a voice both indelible and intimate, she reflects on the decisions that gained her the world and brought her enemies to their knees. And before her last breath, shadowed by the bloody French Revolution, she sets up the end game for her last political maneuver, ensuring her successor and the greater glory of Russia.

In August 1779, Charles Cameron, a Scottish architect based in London, set sail for St. Petersburg. He had been summoned by Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia, to create a magnificent architectural setting for the splendours and extravagances of her court - most especially the two luxurious palace ensembles outside St. Petersburg at Tsarskoye Selo and Pavlovsk. His reputation prior to his arrival in Russia was based almost entirely on his authorship of a book on the baths of ancient Rome - he had built nothing as yet - but while serving as Architect to Her Imperial Majesty, Cameron was responsible for some of the most dazzling and original architectural creations of the eighteenth century. This book tells a fascinating story of enterprise, initiative, amazing patronage and very remarkable architectural achievements on a large scale, all of which took place within a unique historical and cultural context. Dimitri Shvidkovsky weaves together the intriguing, and still not completely documented biography of an enigmatic architect - possibly a Jacobite rebel and exile - and the life of the great Russian ruler, Catherine II. This is set against the backdrop of the rapidly developing influence of British culture on Russian society. Architects, park designers and gardeners from England and Scotland were to be found in every part of Russia by the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, helping to establish a particular form of design whose cultural impact was made all the more dramatic by its adoption and development by native

Russian architects and designers. This book, ravishingly illustrated with views of the palaces and gardens of imperial Russia - many now destroyed - places Russian architecture and garden design of the neo-classical period within its European context for the first time, and explores the hitherto neglected connections between British and Russian architecture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It offers a fascinating and original account of Russian culture in this period.

Behind every great ruler lies a betrayal. Eva Stachniak's novel sweeps readers into the passionate, intimate, and treacherous world of Catherine the Great, revealing Russia's greatest matriarch from her earliest days in court, where the most valuable currency was the secrets of nobility and the most dangerous weapon to wield was ambition. Two young women, caught in the landscape of shifting allegiances, navigate the treacherous waters of palace intrigue. Barbara is a servant who will become one of Russia's most cunning royal spies. Sophia is a pretty, naive German duchess who will become Catherine the Great. For readers of superb historical fiction, Eva Stachniak captures in glorious detail the opulence of royalty and the perilous loyalties of the Russian court.

This is an art-oriented biography of the mighty Catherine the Great, who rose from seemingly innocuous beginnings. A German princess who married a decadent and lazy Russian prince, she mobilized support amongst the nobles, playing off of her husband's increasing corruption and abuse of power. She then staged a coup that ended with him being strangled with his own scarf in the halls of the palace, and she being crowned the Empress of Russia. Intelligent and determined, Catherine modeled herself off of her grandfather-in-law, Peter the Great, and sought to further modernize and westernize Russia. She felt that the best way to do this was through a ravenous acquisition of art, which Catherine often used as a form of diplomacy with other powers throughout Europe. She was a self-proclaimed "glutton for art" and she would be responsible for the creation of the Hermitage, one of the largest museums in the world, second only to the Louvre. Catherine also spearheaded the further expansion of St. Petersburg, and the magnificent architectural wonder the city became is largely her doing.

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