

*The Year of Our Lord, One Thousand Eight hundred and Seventy, First of January, Paris*

*Dearest Nikolai, I do hope that the newest year finds you well. I know that our time apart has been difficult even though we have managed to forge a path outside of Russian. My time in Paris has certainly been eventful and I am grateful for my soft steps and light touch [Great Stealth]. The architecture here in Paris can be challenging but our time spent running in the forest has helped me navigate the streets here [Good Athletics]. It is good that we learned at our Nona's foot because the manners here are strong, even amongst the newest members of the Tout Paris Set [Good Social Graces] but they have taken a fancy to my winning ways [Good Charisma]. While I have kept my practice up with the Pistol [Good Marksmanship], I am still at a loss for how to stop the bleeding when I hit my target [Poor Physician]. Show me sometime how you understand the body so well.*

*I know that it can seem unfortunate and that we have been dealt a poor hand by fate. You have been far more sanguine about the stories of our grandmother than I ever could be. It haunts me to this day, you know, about whether we are Romanovs hidden from the Russian Throne. The time we spent outside of Moscow was fine, until the Empire expanded their control. I miss the mushrooms and the chill of the night air before the Leshy would claim the night. I know that I worried you, and likely still do worry you even countries away, when I took up my time as a footpad. You saw the poor and the villages burned by the Cossacks while the favored nobility appeased the Emperor in splendor. I cannot tell you how much it helps my curiosity! Have you not wanted to know what was in those sealed letters slipped between them? Have you never wanted to see whether those jewels and gold could be better served in our hands than funneled to just a few? I know your response and I hear you in my mind again.*

*Despite my Guarded and Secretive ways here in Paris, I have had many compliments on how I present myself. I certainly style myself a lady in exile from the Russian Empire and the conical crinoline dresses with embroidery show not only my place here in Paris but the slight flair from which we know the Russian Court prefers. The strong features of our family are similarly striking where my dark hair and cheekbones are the toast of many at the Cabaret. I do wish that you could be here dear Nikolai as you mean the world to me. Along with Mother's locket, you are my last thread to our family. While Freedom has given me a great deal, I do worry constantly that I shall not see you again in this life. I do worry that the Russian winters we left behind will instead of freezing our bones freeze our words.*

*Having left you to go another way weighs on me, dear Nikolai. I know it is for the best and that the escape from Russia was needed but I wish I could be there with you now. I know you are capable, but as an older sister I still feel that I should protect you. With the World Crime Congress trying to find a way to remove me knowing too much of their Russian plans I am fortunate that the Russian Secret Police has stepped on their toes. I fear that I can play them against each other only for so long.*

*Before you write back to ask, I have not found a husband yet. I would dearly love longtime companionship and the comfort that we saw our parents have but I have yet to find a man who can keep pace with me. I do feel that this could provide more of an acceptance here in Paris. While it is certainly a cosmopolitan city, I think a husband may take me further than on my own. Finally, keep yourself safe. I have every intention of letting the World Crime Congress learn that they cannot prey on our family. I love you dear brother. Stay safe and I do find your way to Paris soon.*

*Olga*