

The icy wind bit Peshkov's ears and seemed to blow straight through his thin woollen coat. He hadn't moved in so long that the snow had started to settle on his boots; two miniature snow drifts mounted on scruffy faded leather. His mother had told him that he had been lucky to get the boots but he questioned whether it was really his luck or hers, now that it meant he was the one that had to brave the elements whenever his mother or sister needed anything. He stamped his feet and watched the flurry of snow slide and tumble to the ground beneath him. Unfortunately, the sun had already made its **petty** appearance for the day and he knew a typical Russian winter blizzard was moving in. How he hoped he would be back inside the cluttered smoky room he shared with Tonya and his mother before the snow started to fall again. He felt a pang of hunger thinking of his sister, as she would be heating up cabbage soup on their small stove about now. He wanted to pull the hunk of bread she had packed him out of his pocket but he knew he had to save it, there was no guessing how long he would be in this queue. He looked ahead of him and tried to guess how much longer he might have to wait – it was **futile** – the gates of the palace were **looming** far in the distance and an enormous dark train of people were ahead of him. An icy gale of wind surged past him and towards the palace, 'Damn!' thought Peshkov, it didn't look like he would escape the blizzard after all.

In the Palace garden, Tsarina Alexandra pulled her fur blankets up higher as a fresh breeze of wind whistled past her sled. It was a bitter January afternoon, and she was glad for the foot stove burning steadily beneath her. The warmth hugged at her feet and legs and her fur blankets meant there was no need to return to the warmth of the palace any time soon. Anyway, she preferred to be outside and her sled was her favourite place to be in the winter months. The beauty of her rides never failed to impress her, the sheen of the dark horses, their sparkling bells and ribbons **valiantly** announcing her journey throughout the forest. She enjoyed the feeling of isolation, well almost isolation. She turned to look at her driver, something she rarely did, who was sat behind her with a **sullen** face. Though the wind had hurried the horses and he was showing no obvious signs of wanting to turn back, she knew his coat was not doing the same job as her furs against the cold. He kept his eyes fixed in the distance and his hands steady on the reigns, but she could see something in his **demeanour**, something that... unnerved her. But she had no intention of turning back yet, she **sought** to continue her escape into the forest, away from the elaborate preparations for the Carnivale ball that had recently overtaken life at the Palace. Her husband Nicolas had wanted to uphold the centuries-long tradition of rewarding a few tickets to the cities workers, but the thought of them queuing like ants in a blizzard for days outside the palace reminded her only of their poverty and desperation. She shuddered at the idea and motioned for the driver to pick up their speed. The horses' tinkling bells quickened in response.

Peshkov could hardly believe his luck as he ran back towards the centre of the city clutching three tickets to the Palace's Carnivale ball. Sure enough, as the wind had picked up so had the snow, and the less determined ahead of him had finally admitted defeat. Peshkov clambered through deep powder desperate to get warm. Plus there wasn't much time. The gates would open up in exactly two hours to the lucky ticket holders and, though Tonya and his mother certainly didn't have anything impressive to wear, they had both washed their spare dresses just in case luck (and Peshkov's patience) was on their side.

'I think rubies *as well as* pearls are simply **audacious** Alexandra', her mother **berated** as she and her daughter swept through the corridor towards the ballroom. 'One or the other is quite sufficient'. Her mother had always been **opinionated**, but since Alexandra had become Russia's Tsarina, her mother had become almost unbearable.

'It's a ball, mother!' Alexandra snapped back, 'not a dreary dinner party, plus it's Carnivale – I am meant to look...' she caught a glimpse of herself in a smirking marble statue '...extravagant'.

As the doors to the ballroom opened, Tonya and Peshkov were frozen to the spot, but for once that winter – it wasn't because they were cold. They were astonished; beyond astonished, they were utterly enraptured. The ballroom stretched as far as the eye could see and ahead of them were tables decorated like ornaments with food piled so high you could hardly make out the plates that carried it. Grand but delicate chandeliers hung high above their heads, gently pouring light into the room and causing the silverware around them to sparkle and gleam. Their mother, eager to lay eyes on more, was in the crowd ahead of them. She stood desperately on tip toes attempting to see the Tsar and his beautiful Tsarina for herself. Music began to flood the room and slowly but surely Peshkov's eyes adjusted to the wealth and beauty that suddenly surrounded him.

Her mother's fears regarding Alexandra's lavish jewellery choices turned out to be unfounded. Mainly because by the end of the night there were neither rubies nor pearls left around the Tsarina's neck anyway. Not that Alexandra cared either of course, she knew by now not to wear her best jewellery to such events. The dancing and merriment had a habit of becoming so vigorous it was to be expected that by the end of the night only the floor would be glistening with whatever jewels women had arrived in. As she lay in bed watching the sun rise the following day, Alexandra mused at the night before: that Champagne fountain had wiped the smile off the Spanish Princess's face she thought gleefully. She busied herself with what she might do today, another sled ride she thought, or perhaps she might try that new tune on her piano.

Peshkov and his mother had been up for hours, she was at the factory and he was due there soon as well. He would set off now he decided. He would be early but at least he wouldn't have to tell any more nosy neighbours about the ball again, it was becoming draining to keep repeating the story. So far he had told it six times to different people that asked but something about the last time he told it was bothering him. As Peshkov pulled the wooden door closed behind him and began trudging through the snow, he replayed the conversation he had with Igor (his friend's older brother) earlier today. It was the final time he was describing the way the Champagne seemed endless when Igor had scoffed, slammed his cup down and looked disdainfully at Peshkov, 'Were you impressed?' he asked. Peshkov didn't answer but something told him Igor knew the truth already. It wasn't that he wasn't impressed he thought, at first, but during the night his amazement had begun to be replaced with something else. It was gentle annoyance at first, that the Tsarina wouldn't look over at his mother, and that food was being dropped on the floor, but as the hours of drinking and revelry danced on it, Peshkov became filled with a fury that seemed to engulf him entirely. He was suddenly angry with himself for queuing for so long for a ticket and angry at Tonya for crying when they had to leave.

He quickened his pace and stuffed his hands in his pocket. He felt something he had forgotten to show anyone; its smooth, secret surfaces calming him. He toyed with it in his palm before picking it out to have another greedy look. He stopped to stare at the dazzling ruby that lay in his hand, throwing red shards of light onto the snow. Maybe he should have felt bad for taking it, but it was only on the floor. Maybe he should feel pleased to have it, but for some perverse reason he didn't. He stuffed it back in his pocket and went to continue walking, but something red continued to peek up at him from the ground. He bent down and dug it up from under the wet slush that had formed on the well-trodden path ahead of him. It was a flier, depicting a red flag and the words, 'Workers Revolt, Over-throw the Greedy Tsar! There is one of him and thousands of us!' He re-read the words again, but it was the flag that he kept looking at, funny he thought, it's the same colour red as my ruby.

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Rubies in the Snow – Y6m (Black) – Text

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The Russian Revolution

Tsar Nicolas II was Russia's final Emperor, his wife was Tsarina Alexandra. Tsar Nicholas is cousin to King George V of England (Queen Elizabeth's Grandfather).

When Nicolas became Tsar after the death of his father, he felt unprepared and nervous. He married Alexandra in 1894, and she became known quickly as his advisor and confidant.

Nicolas and Alexander had four daughters, Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia and one son, Alexi. The Tsar was not well liked by the people; Russia had started a War with Japan and despite showing signs of losing, Tsar Nicolas refused to admit defeat. He finally accepted peace talks, but the Army were diminished and Russia had lost a huge amount of money by continuing the conflict. Jewish people were badly treated in Russia and education was only offered to the elite. Factory workers were expected to work 11 hours a day. Despite the country being financially unstable, the Tsar kept holding lavish parties and had Palaces filled with servants.

In 1905 workers revolted. They peacefully protested at the Winter Palace demanding a more democratic system. However, when they were mercilessly gunned down at the orders of the Tsar, thousands of workers revolted with a full scale rebellion. After weeks of strikes and thousands of demonstrators threatening to topple his regime, Nicolas finally allowed some reforms that would quell the revolutionaries.

However by the start of the First World War, soldiers had no boots, no coats and the price of food had soared. Bread and fuel were impossible to find. Revolution had been brewing for years and the lack of food caused by the War was the final straw for the Russian people. In 1917 soldiers arrested the Royal family, and in 1918 Nicolas, Alexandra and their five children were executed.

Who are the two main characters of this story?

In which country is the story set and how do you know?

What is the difference between the first gust of wind as Peshkov and Alexandra describe it? Use direct quotes from the text.

What do these different descriptions tell you about the characters?

What type of narrator tells the story?

Why do you think Tonya cried at having to leave the Ball and why did this make Peshkov angry?

What is the effect of the use of the ellipsis (...) in the quote ‘something in his demeanour, something that... unnerved her.’ Why do you think the author has used it?

Why do you think the champagne fountain 'wiped the smile off the Spanish Princess's face?'

Alexandra refers to the workers as 'ants in a blizzard' whilst Peshkov sees them as 'an enormous dark train of people'. What does the use of these different metaphors tell us about the characters opinions?

The flier is advertising revolt. What does revolt mean?

Do you think the flier was right to call the Tsar greedy or not? Support your answer with quotes from the text.

Do you think Peshkov should have taken the ruby? Why or why not?

How did Peshkov know Igor?

Why do you think the author chosen to describe the snow on the path to the factory as well trodden slush?

Why do you think that Peshkov sees the ruby as 'smooth and secret'? Does this show a change in his character?

Do you know what happened to Tsar Nicolas and Tsarina Alexandra? Including textual references explain whether it is possible to predict this from the story?

Write the meaning of each of these words.

petty _____

futile _____

looming _____

valiantly _____

sullen _____

demeanour _____

sought _____

audacious _____

berated _____

opinionated _____

extravagant _____

enraptured _____

unfounded _____

disdainfully _____

revelry _____

engulf _____

perverse _____

Find the subject, verb and object in the following sentences. State whether the sentences are passive or active.

- *Peshkov clutched three tickets to the Carnivale Ball.*

subject: _____ object: _____ verb: _____

Is the sentence passive or active? _____

- *Tsarina Alexandra pulled her fur blankets up higher.*

subject: _____ object: _____ verb: _____

Is the sentence passive or active? _____

Take one example from above and rearrange the verb, object and subject into the passive voice.

Find and copy two subordinate clauses from the text.

Find one synonym and one antonym for each of the following words

	<u>synonym</u>	<u>antonym</u>
anger	_____	_____
jealousy	_____	_____
greed	_____	_____
elaborate	_____	_____
luxury	_____	_____

Who are the two main characters of this story? **Peshkov and Tsarina Alexandra (or Alexandra).**

In which country is the story set and how do you know? **Russia. Peshkov gets stuck in a 'typical Russian blizzard' and Alexandra is Tsarina of Russia.**

What is the difference between the first gust of wind as Peshkov and Alexandra describe it? Use direct quotes from the text. **Peshkov refers to it as 'an icy gale of wind that surged' and Alexandra calls it a 'fresh breeze of wind that whistled'.**

What do these different descriptions tell you about the characters? **It tells us that they experience the storm and life, differently. One is wrapped up warm and protected whilst the other is out in the cold. What feels like a breeze to Alexandra is a gale to Peshkov.**

What type of narrator tells the story? **Third person omniscient.**

Why do you think Tonya cried at having to leave the Ball and why did this make Peshkov angry? **Tonya cried because she didn't want to leave the luxury of the ball and go home to the cold house she lived in. This made Peshkov angry because he felt bad that they couldn't have this much money.**

What is the effect of the use of the ellipsis (...) in the quote 'something in his demeanour, something that... unnerved her.' Why do you think the author has used it? **The author's use of ellipsis adds tension and confusion. It reflects that Alexandra can't quite work the situation out and creates an uneasy atmosphere.**

Why do you think the champagne fountain 'wiped the smile off the Spanish Princess's face?' **Because she was jealous that Alexandra had one.**

Alexandra refers to the workers as 'ants in a blizzard' whilst Peshkov sees them as 'an enormous dark train of people'. What does the use of these different metaphors tell us about the characters opinions? **Alexandra sees the peasants as unimportant, tiny and annoying whereas Peshkov sees them as powerful, strong and important.**

The flier is advertising revolt. What does revolt mean? **To attempt to overthrow the authority of the state, in this case the monarchy.**

Do you think the flier was right to call the Tsar greedy or not? Include quotes from the text in your answer. **Various answers if justified with references.**

Do you think Peshkov should have taken the ruby? Why? **Various answers if justified.**

How did Peshkov know Igor? **Igor is his friend's older brother.**

Why do you think the author chose to describe the snow on the path to the factory as a path of well-trodden slush? **To show the large numbers of workers that have gone to work at the factory, demonstrating that the flier is right – there are thousands of workers and only one Tsar.**

Why do you think that Peshkov sees the ruby as 'smooth and secret'? Does this show a change in his character? **Peshkov kept the ruby a secret, indicating that even though he got angry at the royal family for having all of the wealth, he is somewhat jealous. He also doesn't want to share what he now sees as his. When the text says he got angry with the royal family, you don't expect him to have taken a ruby for himself. Various answers regarding whether this changes his character or not.**

Do you know what happened to Tsar Nicolas and Tsarina Alexandra? Including textual references explain whether it is possible to predict this from the story? **They were overthrown during the Russian Revolution. Various answers if justified.**

Write the meaning of each of these words.

petty – of little or no importance

futile – does not produce any result; ineffective, useless

looming – can be seen indistinctly at a distance or through a fog

valiantly – boldly, courageous or brave

sullen – showing irritation by a gloomy silence or reserve

demeanour – behaviour

sought – (past tense of seek) to go to

audacious – bold, going against the rules, showing off

berated – to scold or tell off

opinionated – fixed views on a matter

extravagant – spending much more than is necessary or wise and being wasteful

enraptured – to be hugely impressed and happy

unfounded – unnecessary, not based on truth

disdainfully – to treat with contempt or to despise

revelry – festivity

engulf – to swallow up completely

perverse – going against what is expected, unusual reaction

Find the subject, verb and object in the following sentences. State whether the sentences are passive or active.

- *Peshkov clutched three tickets to the Carnivale Ball.*

subject: **Peshkov** object: **tickets** verb: **clutched**

Is the sentence passive or active? **active**

- *Tsarina Alexandra pulled her fur blankets up higher.*

subject: **Tsarina Alexandra** object: **fur blankets** verb: **pulled**

Is the sentence passive or active? **active**

Take one example from above and rearrange the verb, object and subject into the passive voice.

Three tickets to the Carnivale ball were clutched by Peshkov.

The fur blankets were pulled higher by Tsarina Alexandra.

Find and copy two subordinate clauses from the text.

Their mother, eager to lay eyes on more, was in the crowd ahead of them.

She turned to look at her driver, something she rarely did, who was sat behind her with a sullen face.

Find one synonym and one antonym for each of the following words

	<u>synonym</u>	<u>antonym</u>
anger	fury	delight
jealousy	resentment	satisfied
greed	gluttony	generosity
elaborate	rich	simple
luxury	affluent	poverty