The Kitchen Boy: A Novel of the Last Tsar  by Robert Alexander

In 1991, the day after Boris Yeltsin’s inauguration, the secret mass grave of the Romanov family was discovered. Imprisoned by the Bolsheviks in the Siberian Ural mountain town of Yekaterinburg, the former Tsar Nicholas of all the Russias, his wife Aleksandra and their five children were eventually shot to death in July 1918. However, not all the bodies were immediately found, nor were all the facts surrounding their imprisonment, or the failed attempt to rescue them nor the details of their final death and burial.

This work of historical fiction is an attempt to use factual knowledge and the power of imagination to fill key gaps in our understanding of not only the fairy tale existence of Nikolai and his family but the tragedy of his rule as Emperor of Russia, as a human being, as a man and as a father. In the telling of this story, we also come to understand more closely the epic tragedy that was the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, one of the watershed moments of the 20th century and in the history of the world.

The story unfolds through the eyes and ears of Leonka Sednyov, the 14 year old ‘kitchen boy’ who served the Romanovs in their imprisonment at the House of Special Purpose. Leonka’s story is recounted by Misha Semyonov, a 94 year old widower who fled to America and settled in Lake Forrest, Illinois during the Russian Civil War. Misha wants to record his story for his granddaughter and the world at large because he has his own conflicts to resolve. He claims to be the last living witness who ‘knows what really happened that awful night’ when the Romanovs were slaughtered.

But was he?

1. ‘Les amis ne dormant plus et esperent que l'heure si longtemps attendue est arrive. Translate this note and uncover the twisted plot to rescue the Tsar and his family.

2. “By July 5th …the Bolsheviks were terrified…The Germans controlled the Ukraine, the English had landed in the North, the Japanese invaded in the Far East, and the American marines were on their way…and the Bolsheveki were desperate and dangerous…”

Who were the Reds? The Whites? The ‘Letts”? What was the Russian Civil War about?

3. Who was Rasputin and how did he come to exercise such influence on the royal family?

4. “…The Romanovs were more than simply people….their five children were the ultimate symbols, both good and bad, of all of all that was Russia, and their brutal murders unleashed…chaos and darkness..of unimaginable proportions.”

Identify the children of Nikolai and Aleksandra and describe their existence (as a family) both before and during their imprisonment. To what degree would you consider them to be a ‘normal family’?
5. ‘Learn to make others happy, think of yourself last of all. Be gentle and kind, never rough or rude. Show a loving heart. Above all, learn to love God…Your Mamma.” (note to her children)

-“My Darling….soon the sun will be shining…But Oh, the victims and the innocent blood yet to be shed. Oh, God save Russia…I am still the Mother of this country, and I suffer its pains and I love it in spite of its sins. God have mercy and save Russia. We all kiss and bless you. Yours, Sunny” (note to her husband)

-“nemka” ‘The German Bitch ‘fornicator’ ‘traitor to the Motherland’

“In this century there has been no woman… more maligned or misunderstood than her. …just as there has been no woman whose gross mistakes –no matter how inadvertent-have hurt and even killed so many. Passionate, loving, beautiful….a wise woman she was not……More damage she could not have done to her beloved Russia…..The thing that surprised her and her husband the most was not the loss of power and wealth, but the realization that she {and they} were so widely hated.”

These are glimpses of the Tsarina, Aleksandra Fyodorovna. How could such a caring and gentle person alienate so many and ‘cause the death of so many millions’?

6. “Such a kind man was Nikolai II. A man of moderate abilities, still… a very caring man so sweet, so tender and gentle. He loved nothing more than his family and his country. He hated disagreements and wanted nothing more than to avoid violence{ yet} his reign was one of the most destructive in all of Russian history…and it was all his fault …because he was Tsar.”

Nikolashka - The Blood Drinker - The Blood Sucker - The Number One Capitalist

“Crush the Crowns of the Tsar, Tear Apart the Old World’

“To all his people Nikolai said
As for the republic, Go F….yourself instead.
So our Russian Tsar called Nick
We dragged him out by his D….k”

“While 90% of the Russian people did not want him dead, 90% did not want him back on the throne.”

How did Nikolai ‘lose Russia”? “How could he be so stupid? Couldn’t he see the tidal wave of blood”? How did he become so widely hated by the narod (masses)?

7. ‘You take one part decent man, but not enlightened ruler, one part heart broken mother…two parts in-bred dynasty and gossip obsessed court, one part Great War and three parts uneducated, worn and hungry people and BOOM!…..any ee-dee-ot can see that!”

What were the causes of the Russian Revolution? To what degree did kommunizm cure the problems?

8. ‘Oh, as the tragedies of Shakespeare have revealed, the fall of kings is but fodder for the richest of entertainment. …One day the people are kissing the ground upon which the Tsar’s shadow had fallen. The next day they are hacking him apart. …The tumble of this Tsar was the grossest…such were the times..so black, so crazy….kakoi kashmar”what a nightmare.”
“Would you be so kind as to line up against the wall...we would like to take your photograph..”

Reconstruct the nightmare of the slaughter of the Tsar and his entire family, including his attendants (and Jimmy?). What became of the bodies? Were they all accounted for? And the Empresses’ finger?

9. Explain the tragic irony of the" medicines and invincible carats' which provided a certain ‘divineness to the White princesses’ and shielded them from a quick death.

Trace the history of these gems, jewels and Faeberge eggs.

10. “Dearest Katya,

This tape and these documents are for you….{to} help you understand the complete picture. Please forgive me.

Misha”

Reconstruct the ‘complete picture’ by linking together the following:

- Who were (Leonka)Misha and (Marina)May? In what way were they married by the Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna….in duty and fate?"
- How were they linked to Katya (Katherine Semyonov)?
- "a gift to Ivan the Terrible…Aleksandra’s Easter present…diamonds dating back to Peter the Great….some bits of wire, a tiny chain, two small rocks, a flattened coin and some rusty nails.”

- “Please Father, do not forgive my sins…..first make me suffer. I am the devil’s creature. Torture me and make me cry out for mercy, but make me suffer…it was my stupidity.”

-the Novice Marina from the Novotikhvinsky woman’s monastery

-Sister Antonina

- ‘You see, my son is a bleeder"

-“…there are …certain wolves left unprovoked.”

-‘A blond beard…. The guard.Volodya Subottin ….my Grandmother’s executioner and..saviour….disappeared for all time.”

- ‘One enormous lie.”