

## American Czar

**Keith Blaine Martin**

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Set in Russia, Martin weaves a wild tale of treachery, wars, prophecy and resolution with a swift finale.

Beginning in 1913, Rasputin, also known as Grigori Yefimovich Novykh, has secretly wed an American called Katherine and once she is pregnant has a vision of disaster. Katherine is whisked back to the United States carrying papers written by the Czarina which can only be opened upon Katherine's death or when the son she bears reaches twenty-one. When her husband is killed, she flees to Ohio with her young son. Fate leaves both mother and son dead in a fatal train accident.

Suddenly the reader is fast-forwarded to the year 1950 and to the death of Katherine's lawyer. The letter Katherine carried is within his files and after being translated, a cry races through Russia that a new Czar will rule once again. With the unrest in Russia, people wait in vain for the new Czar. However, in 1950, the American Czar is only a precious three-year-old wanting to be King.

Leaping swiftly to present day, John Farley convinces a college professor to allow him to travel to Russia to help rebuild the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Having time to himself while his fellow classmates and professor sleep off jetlag, John cleans the room they are to repair and notices the structural problem comes from above. Investigating further, John enlists the help of Ayna and together they find the room directly above them filled with riches—all placed there years ago unbeknownst to the museum curator. Because John is the one who found the riches, the Russian people are determined to believe he is to be the new Czar and will not rest nor let them out of the museum until he takes his rightful place.

American Czar is rich with human truths of people dreaming of a better life. As John quickly learns, sometimes it's the ordinary people who can do extraordinary things if only given a chance. Written by a master story-teller, Martin tells a tale that is difficult to put down, yet at the same time, is a quick read with true-to-life characters and circumstances which relate to everyone no matter where they live.

BRENDA RAMSBACHER (May / June 2000)

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