



# **I Was Anastasia**

*Ariel Lawhon*

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## I Was Anastasia Ariel Lawhon

**Ariel Lawhon, a rising star in historical suspense, unravels the extraordinary twists and turns in Anna Anderson's fifty-year battle to be recognized as Anastasia Romanov. Is she the beloved daughter, revered icon, and Russian grand duchess or is she an imposter, liar, and the thief of another woman's legacy?**

*Countless others have rendered their verdict. Now it is your turn.*

**Russia, July 17, 1918:** Under direct orders from Vladimir Lenin, Bolshevik secret police force Anastasia Romanov, along with the entire imperial family, into a damp basement in Siberia, where they face a merciless firing squad. None survive. At least that is what the executioners have always claimed.

**Germany, February 17, 1920:** A young woman bearing an uncanny resemblance to Anastasia Romanov is pulled shivering and senseless from a canal. Refusing to explain her presence in the freezing water or even acknowledge her rescuers, she is taken to the hospital where an examination reveals that her body is riddled with countless horrific scars. When she finally does speak, this frightened, mysterious young woman claims to be the Russian grand duchess.

As rumors begin to circulate through European society that the youngest Romanov daughter has survived the massacre at Ekaterinburg, old enemies and new threats are awakened. The question of who Anna Anderson is and what actually happened to Anastasia Romanov spans fifty years and touches three continents. This thrilling saga is every bit as moving and momentous as it is harrowing and twisted.

## I Was Anastasia Details

Date : Published February 5th 2019 by Anchor Books (first published March 27th 2018)

ISBN : 9781101973318

Author : Ariel Lawhon

Format : Paperback 432 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Cultural, Russia

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# From Reader Review I Was Anastasia for online ebook

## Dianne says

After the entire Romanov family was brutally slaughtered by a drunken firing squad, the family's bodies were spirited away, hidden from the world. When all seven bodies could not be accounted for, the rumors began, and a young woman became the vortex of decades of guesswork. Was Anna Anderson really Anastasia Romanov? Is it possible she survived the slaughter of 1918 only to have an attempted suicide thwarted when she was fished from a frigid canal? Is this woman fitting the basic description of Anastasia and carrying the scars of wounds inflicted by both bullets and blades more than an opportunist seeking fame, fortune and the family treasures? Is she a delusional lost soul clinging to a fantasy that would make her life so much more meaningful? Was she like a leopard trying to change its spots?

Ariel Lawhon's **I WAS ANASTASIA** is a brilliantly complex and tumultuous tale of possibilities, with questions that can never be answered, of facts that are sketchy and suspect at best. One thing for sure, Ms. Lawhon's two-pronged tale is fascinating, intriguing and very hard to put down!

Anastasia's final days are laid out in a linear fashion, from her life at the palace to her life in a foreboding Siberian home where her pampered family was forced to become common-folk, doing common labor to survive. Anastasia is presented as a strong young woman, adaptable to the circumstances of her family's new existence. Just reaching an age where young love can bloom, only to have her life stolen away.

Anna's tale is much different as we meet an older Anna, still fighting to be recognized as Anastasia. Believers believed in her, or at least in her entertainment value. Benefactors were more than willing to champion her cause through court after court, continent after continent. We will see her life unfold in reverse until we reach the final truth of a woman who felt she deserved the life she was denied.

Fabulous reading, dark, detailed, gritty and magnetic. Regardless of the outcome, regardless of what history has proven, Ms. Lawhon's version is spellbinding from start to finish and her treatment of each character reflects the chaos each one lived through, factual or manufactured.

I received a complimentary ARC edition from Doubleday Books!

Publisher: Doubleday (March 27, 2018)

Publication Date: March 27, 2018

Genre: Historical Fiction

Print Length: 344 pages

Available from: Amazon | Barnes & Noble

For Reviews & More: <http://tometender.blogspot.com>

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## Lori says

I hate to not finish a book, however, we are in the process of moving and this is just not holding my interest. I've struggled to get 50% through and have no desire to fight my way through the rest. This story's timeline bounces around a lot which is extremely distracting & I made the huge mistake of Googling the people

mentioned which ruined the story for me. I'm a Googler when it comes to true events... it usually enhances the story for me by allowing me to picture the people & places. This time it backfired, big time.

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## **Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says**

You might have heard about Anna Anderson and her claim (to fame) to be Anastasia Romanov. But, if you haven't, then I suggest you google her and read up on her life. Anna Anderson's life was very interesting and it has btw been made into a movie with Ingrid Bergman and a miniseries with Amy Irving. I've seen both since I find the Romanov's a captivated subject.

I was curious to see how of Ariel Lawhon would construct the story since much has happened since Anna Anderson died in 1984. Now I take for granted that you know all about that, but if you don't know, then I will spoil the story a bit. Or rather I will reveal some truth's that may or may not be included in this book. So, read on if you dare!

Since Anna Anderson died in 1984 has two things happened, for one thing, has DNA showed that she was not Anastasia, and also the graves of the Romanov's family has been found with the bones of ALL the children. So, how do you write a book when this is well-known? Easy, you make the both Anna and Anastasia's stories so believable that you want it to be true.

All through the book does Anastasia's story interlopes with Anna's. We get to follow Anastasia through the years in captivity while Anna's story we get from the end unto the beginning. And, Anna's chapters. It's like reading a book backward. But, it works. It's very different, but it works so well. It's like two cars moving towards each other and you know they will crash, but you can't stop them!

I Was Anastasia is a great book. Reading the author's note at the end, where she wrote about wanting to believe that the story would be true made me realize that she made me want to believe that it's true that Anna was Anastasia. Because deep down we all want the story to have a happy ending...

*I want to thank Doubleday Books for providing me with a free copy through NetGalley for an honest review!*

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## **Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says**

### **4 engrossing stars to I Was Anastasia! ?? ?? ?? ??**

Being approved to read an early copy of I Was Anastasia was like winning the lottery to this historical fiction fan. Not only because of my love for the genre, but also because of my interest in Anastasia. Not because she was a princess necessarily, but because growing up I remember discussions about Anna Anderson and if she was or was not the real Anastasia Romanov.

Ariel Lawhon ambitiously tackles this notion in a genius structure through writing from two viewpoints in different timelines, Anastasia's in forward-progression, and Anna's in reverse.

In the Author's Note, Lawhon describes that it was challenging to write this way, and I kept thinking that as I read. She even read biographies of Anna Anderson in reverse order so that she would formulate it in her head

the way she would eventually write Anna's voice.

It would have been easier to write in linear form, and perhaps easier for the reader to follow; but I enjoyed this convergence in storylines. It built the suspense for me. Even though I already knew the true outcome, I longed for a different one as I quickly read through this book waiting for the timelines to intersect, waiting for the answer Lawhon would write.

Reading the Author's Note also inspired me to dig deeper into Romanov history. I have a nonfiction book she cited as a reference, *The Romanov Sisters: The Lost Lives of the Daughters of Nicholas and Alexandra*, and plan to read it soon to learn more.

Thank you to Ariel Lawhon, Doubleday, and Netgalley for the ARC. *I Was Anastasia* is available now!

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### **Ann Marie (Lit•Wit•Wine•Dine) says**

DNF'ing at page 93. I'm not really loving it and the horrible deaths and treatment of animals has totally turned me off.

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### **jessica says**

i am absolutely obsessed with all things romanov. i couldnt tell you how many times i watched the animated film '*anastasia*' as a girl. and what i thought was just a childhood phase has slowly become something of a passion, so you can imagine my excitement when this book came out earlier this year.

the story of anna anderson is not one that i am too familiar with. i was aware there was someone who claimed to be the grand duchess anastasia, but beyond the claims eventually being dismissed, i knew nothing specific. however, i think that enhanced my reading experience, as i didnt know what to expect and it gave the story a sense of mystery.

and although this book is right up my street, i couldnt help but feel a little let down. i think the biggest disappointment was the method in which this story was told. this book tells both annas and anastasias stories in a very nonlinear fashion. anastasias is told chronologically (beginning in 1917) and annas is told backwards (starting in 1970) until the two stories converge. and i understand why it was told this way. unfortunately, what was meant to be alluring only lead to frustration. the constant switching between the two was difficult to follow. also, i was quite bored with annas story, which was half the book. not particularly sure why that was, but i found myself skimming through her chapters just to get to anastasias.

regardless of my minor displeasures with this book, there was still a lot of new information that i learned. this book was very well researched and i could tell a lot of time went into making it factually accurate. i dont regret reading it, but i would only recommend it to those really interested in anna andersons story. for those looking for other historical fiction novels about the romanovs final days, i would recommend '*the kitchen boy*' or '*the house of special purpose*' instead.

### **Bam says**

I admit to being endlessly fascinated with Romanov family history and with the woman who claimed to be Anastasia. So apparently is Ariel Lawhon, as she weaves together both those stories in her latest work of historical fiction: one, about the last tragic eighteen months of the Romanov family's lives told through the eyes of their youngest daughter and the second, about Anna Anderson who claimed to be Anastasia. Anna's story is told backwards chronologically--beginning with her last court case in 1970 and then regressing back through time (what happened before that, and before that and so on). Eventually the two stories come together and the reader sees why the author chose to tell her story in this manner.

It worked for me. I know a few readers have said that they abandoned the book because of this frustrating chronological structure, which keeps the reader off balance, making it hard to grasp the plot and remember names and places. But my advice is to stick with it: it does get easier to understand and there's a payoff at the end.

Ariel Lawhon has done some fine writing here. I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with both Annas! This book may launch me on another Russian literature craze!

Thank you to NetGalley, the author and publisher Doubleday for granting me the opportunity to read an arc of this fascinating new book. I am also grateful for receiving a hardcover copy through the Keep Turning Pages group giveaway.

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### **Tammy says**

Those unfamiliar with the Anastasia Romanov/Anna Anderson story will find much to like in this fictional novel. It's an effective introduction to the bizarre controversy surrounding two historical people. My experience was a bit different. As others have mentioned, Anastasia's story is told chronologically while Anna's story is told in reverse order. Given that this is well worn material, I understand that the author chose this structure for dramatic effect. However, I found it to be a contrivance that was more annoying than dramatic. Characters carry on conversations and you don't find out until one or more chapters afterwards who some of these characters are which blurs the meaning of the initial conversations. And then there are the characterizations which left me cold and I mean the kind of frigidity that one would find in, say, Siberia. Granted, *I was Anastasia* is about the Anastasia/Anna dispute but I have read other historical fiction that has handled the questions surrounding the violent tragedy of July 1917 deftly. If upon reading this book you find that you are interested in the Romanov Dynasty, I would recommend anything written by Robert K. Massie. His narrative biographies are accessible and thorough providing the socio-political background necessary to understand why events happened as they did. Not a bad read but it didn't make me want to do cartwheels either.

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### **Diane S ? says**

3.5 I am fairly familiar with the last days of the Romanovs, having read a few non fiction books about the

subject. The woman who appears and tries to prove that she is a Romanovs daughter Anastasia, I was less familiar. In alternating chapters we follow both stories. The one of the Romanovs imprisonment and eventually murder is written in a linear timeline, the story of Anna is told backwards in time, even within the same Chapter, we go backwards.

I did like learning more about the girls personalities, though of course the focus is on Anastasia. They went through some terrible things, even more so because they had such a protected upbringing. Quite heartbreaking that the children were blamed for their parents mistakes. The part with Anna was also told well, but I found because of the way it was written, sometimes confusing.

A great deal of research went into this novel, and the author explains in her authors note what that entailed and what she changed to make the story flow better. She also explains why she wrote it the way she did. I enjoyed this for the most part, but though I read why she wrote it this way, I still found myself liking those sections less.

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### **Susan Meissner says**

I adored this book. It was cleverly constructed, expertly researched, deeply moving and I couldn't wait to get to it at the end of the day, which is when I read for pleasure. Highly recommend, folks.

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### **Crumb says**

This book, for me, was mediocre. The history behind this story was fascinating, but the way the story was executed, was ill-conceived. There were two alternating story lines that were asynchronous to one another, which made for a pretty confusing reading experience. However, with all that being said, I still really enjoyed the story and the history.

This novel chronicled the final days of the Romanov family, shining a light on Anastasia. Did she die in Ekaterinburg with the rest of her family or didn't she? That is what the author wants the reader to decide.

The other story follows a woman claiming to be Anastasia, who goes by Anna Anderson.

If you are interested in Russian history, I definitely think you would like this book. I liked the story..I did. I just thought it could have been *better*. Written *better*. Told *better*..  
Like Shania Twain says.. "That Don't Impress Me Much"

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### **Angela M says**

[ Even though I knew the story of The Romanovs and their fate, I knew very little about Anna Anderson who for decades claimed to be Anastasia Romanov and worked to prove that she survived the firing squad that took the lives of Tsar Nicholas II and his family. I was pulled in at the beginning, but my interest in Anna's story waned. Maybe it was because I knew the outcome even though I knew not much else about her. There are dual narratives - Anna's which moves backwards in

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## **Cindy Burnett says**

The story of whether Anna Anderson was actually Anastasia Romanov has fascinated me since I was young. When discoveries were made relevant to this story, I followed them closely. Naturally, I was very excited to read *I Was Anastasia*, and I knew how the book would turn out (I am choosing my wording carefully because I do not want to spoil the ending for those unfamiliar with the tale). While I enjoyed the book, I had significant trouble following the story as it unfolded in *I Was Anastasia*. Lawhon chose to tell Anastasia's story chronologically and Anna's backwards through time making it very hard at times to understand where I was in the story. I also felt it could have been edited down a bit more.

*I Was Anastasia* is clearly a labor of love for Ariel Lawhon, and her research and effort show through in her retelling of Anna Anderson and Anastasia Romanov's stories. Thanks to Doubleday for my ARC. All opinions are my own.

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## **Debra says**

"Once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth." -Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Most people know the story of the execution/assassination of Tsar Nicholas II and the rest of the Romanov family in Elakterinburg, Russia at the hands of the Bolsheviks following the Russian revolution. Most have also heard of the woman (Anna Anderson) who claimed for years to be Anastasia Romanov and that she survived the brutal attack that claimed the lives of her family and servants. This is a clever telling of that story. The question about what whether Anastasia Romanov survived the firing squad in the basement has fascinated people for decades. Lack of DNA testing and location of a grave/burial site helped many who stepped forward to claim that she was the sole survivor. Of course, through the passing of time, DNA testing has been conducted and grave site excavations have given a clear answer.

But as the saying goes...it's not the destination, it's the journey. Lawhon takes the reader on a unique journey using two story lines. While reading this book, readers will either enjoy or become annoyed by the storytelling. While Anastasia Romanov's story is told chronologically, the story of Anna Anderson is told in reverse. In Author's note, Ariel Lawhon states that the movie "Memento" is a favorite of hers. This style of writing also reminded me of the book "All the missing girls" which was also told in reverse.

I found that I rather liked how she told her story. The storytelling was unique, granted, it did take me a couple of chapters to wrap my head around it. Thankfully, the chapters are labeled with the time you are reading. That is a big help! There is a lot of historical detail in this book. It is evident that the Author did a great deal of research prior to the writing of this book. History buffs may detect that Lawhon blended several characters into one (i.e. had one character be a blending of 2 real life guards of the Romanov's) in order to help the reader keep track of events and not be weighed down by too many characters.

It is hard to say too much without giving away spoilers, but this work of historical fiction was very good. I really appreciated how she blended historical facts with fiction. If you do not know the entire history about

the Romanov's family's fall from grace and the events leading up to their execution, it is laid out for you here.

I highly recommend reading the Author's note at the end. I think this is essential. She details her research, why she blended characters, her inspiration for the reverse story telling and what lead her to write this book. I was actually deciding between a 3.5 and a 4 star rating, and then I read the Author's note and that pushed the book to a 4 star rating for me.

I love when books cause me to think, feel and also to learn. I did learn some facts while reading this book and I found I often wanted to put the book down and think about what I had just read. Mainly because things in this book really happened. Sitting and thinking about the horrible treatment of this family (especially the girls) and what they endured -living in constant fear and dread, I can't even imagine.

Again, interesting story-telling and a compelling read.

Thank you to Doubleday books and NetGalley for providing me with an advanced readers copy of this book.

See more of my reviews at [www.openbookpost.com](http://www.openbookpost.com)

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## **Julie says**

I am Anastasia by Ariel Lawhon is a 2018 Doubleday publication.

No matter how many movies, documentaries, or books I've watched or read, the romantic in me simply can't resist the fascination and the mystery of Anastasia Romanov. This book examines the life of Anna Anderson, who claimed she was Anastasia, while also chronicling the period of time the Romanov's were in exile, leading up to their execution during the Bolshevik Revolution.

Anna's claims captured our imaginations for decades and sparked many debates over the legitimacy of her pronouncement. While she was often met with skepticism, she also had many staunch supporters. I, for one, always loved the notion surrounding this legend. I hoped, no matter how far-fetched or doubtful the probability, that Anna Anderson really was Anastasia Romanov.

If a miracle did happen, and Anastasia somehow managed to survive, we could all rationalize our fascination with the Czar's daughter, from Ingrid Bergman's oscar winning portrayal, to the animated Disney film, and all points in between. But, of course, the reality is far more serious and grim.

This novel is obviously a very ambitious undertaking. Giving voice to Anastasia, and Anna Anderson, describing minute historical details, adding authentic and vivid dialogue, along with solid pacing, and well-drawn characterizations.

This story is very interesting, and the author certainly did her homework, doing a great job of laying out Anna's complexities. Anna was difficult, but also lived with a host of mental issues, making her a sympathetic figure on occasion, which left me with conflicting emotions. I often wondered how other people who have read this book felt about her in the end.

However, I must address the elephant in the room when it comes to the way the author structured the novel.

She explains the method to her madness in a note at the end of the book, and it does make sense, from the viewpoint of the writer, and logically, I see where she's coming from. However, the backwards/forwards, first and third person narratives made the book more difficult to read than need be, in my opinion. I did struggle with the format, I must say. However, others may not be bothered by it at all, and may even benefit from it. I'm not always the sharpest tool in the shed, so there is that. However, I did agree with the concept of separating 'Anastasia' from 'Anna', but I did wish for a more traditional type of dual timeline, without all that skipping around.

The novel's strongest area is the pacing and the agonizingly taut build-up of suspense. We must watch with mounting dread as the Romanov's are taken to Siberia, the clock ticking away as they careen towards their ultimate, tragic fate. This part of the story is interwoven with Anna's as she sits in a German court waiting on their decision, hoping she will at long last lay legitimate and official claim to the name 'Anastasia Romanov'. The theories mapped out here are very imaginative, plausible, realistic and thought provoking. I can tell the author put a great deal of thought and time into this novel, which is much appreciated. Although it took me a long time to get through the book, really struggling with it at times, ultimately, I found it to be quite interesting and I'm glad I didn't give up on it.

One point I think we can all agree on, no matter what, is that Anna's claims turned Anastasia Romanov into a legend, taking on a life of its own. If not for her, Anastasia and her sisters would most likely have long been forgotten over time, along with other royal families who were met with the same fate. Just a little something to ponder over-

I do recommend this book to anyone who enjoys Romanov history, of course, but be prepared- this is not a fairy tale! I would also recommend this book to anyone who enjoys historical fiction in general. This book will most likely spark your curiosity about the Romanov family and you will want to learn more about this them, and the events leading up to their capture, exile, and murders.

4 stars

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