

= Princess Elisabeth of Hesse and by Rhine ( 1895 ? 1903 ) =

Princess Elisabeth of Hesse and by Rhine ( Prinzessin Elisabeth Marie Alice Viktoria von Hessen und bei Rhein ) ( 11 March 1895 ? 16 November 1903 ) was the only daughter of Ernst Ludwig , Grand Duke of Hesse and by Rhine and his first wife , Princess Victoria Melita of Saxe @-@ Coburg and Gotha . She was named after her paternal great @-@ grandmother , who was born Princess Elisabeth of Prussia . Her paternal aunt had the same name and was also nicknamed Ella . Elisabeth 's early death was rumored to be a result of poison meant for her uncle , Tsar Nicholas II , but the court physician said she died of virulent typhoid , probably caused by her taking a drink of water from a contaminated stream .

= = Birth = =

Her parents , nicknamed ' Ernie ' and ' Ducky , ' were first cousins who married at the instigation of their common grandmother , Queen Victoria . The marriage was an unhappy one from the start . Princess Victoria Melita was eighteen at the time of Elisabeth 's birth . She was fond of Elisabeth , but found it hard to compete with Ernst 's devotion to their daughter . Ernst was convinced even before Elisabeth could speak that he alone could understand her . At the age of six months , she was scheduled to move to a new nursery and her father ' consulted ' her on her color preferences . He claimed that she made ' happy little squeals ' when he showed her a particular shade of lilac material . Ernst then decorated her nursery in shades of lilac . He later had a playhouse built for his daughter that stood in its own garden . Adults were forbidden to enter " much to the frustration of royal nurses and tutors , who could be seen pacing up and down impatiently outside as they waited for their high @-@ spirited young charges to stop their games and emerge . "

= = Childhood = =

Margaretta Eagar , a governess for the daughters of Tsar Nicholas II , described Elisabeth as " a sweet and pretty child , with wide grey @-@ blue eyes and a profusion of dark hair . She was much like her mother , not only in face , but also in manner . " The four @-@ year @-@ old Elisabeth wanted a baby sister and tried to persuade her aunt and uncle to let her parents adopt one of her paternal first cousins , Tatiana or Maria . Her parents had only one other child together , a stillborn son , in 1900 .

She was a favorite with her great @-@ grandmother , Queen Victoria , who called the little girl " my precious . " Queen Victoria refused to permit the unhappily married Victoria and Ernst to divorce for the sake of Elisabeth . It was Elisabeth whom Queen Victoria asked to see first and to receive eightieth birthday greetings from in 1899 . When the child heard Queen Victoria 's pony cart approaching on the road below Windsor Castle , the four @-@ year @-@ old Elisabeth ran out on the balcony , waving and calling , " Granny Gran , I 'm here ! " Elisabeth 's playfulness made the queen laugh out loud .

Elisabeth 's grandmother , Grand Duchess Maria Alexandrovna of Russia , the Duchess of Edinburgh , brought five @-@ year @-@ old Elisabeth to see Queen Victoria on her death bed on 22 January 1901 . After the queen died , the child was taken in to see her body and told that her great @-@ grandmother had gone to be with the angels . " But I don 't see the wings , " Elisabeth whispered . Elisabeth sat next to her second cousin , Prince Edward of York ( called David by family and friends , later to become King Edward VIII ) during Queen Victoria 's funeral . " Sweet little David behaved so well during the service , " wrote his aunt Maud , " and was supported by the little Hesse girl who took him under her protection and held him most of the time round his neck . They looked such a delightful little couple . "

In his memoirs , written more than thirty years after her death , her father wrote of Elisabeth 's " deep sensitivity " and " very large heart . " He wrote that " I never knew a child who had so much influence on adults . Her inner personality was very strong , and she had a natural quality that protected her from being spoiled . " In October 1901 , after the death of Queen Victoria , Elisabeth 's

parents finally divorced . Her mother had rekindled a previous romance with another cousin , her future husband , Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovich of Russia . Her father , according to letters written by her mother , had been caught cavorting with domestic servants . Her parents ' divorce meant that Elisabeth divided her year between Darmstadt and her mother 's new home in Coburg . Elisabeth was at first mistrustful of her mother and resented the divorce , although Victoria did her best to mend her relationship with her daughter during her visit with Elisabeth in the spring of 1902 . She was only partially successful , though Victoria enjoyed turning her daughter into an outstanding horsewoman .

In his memoirs , Ernst said he had difficulty persuading Elisabeth to visit her mother . Before one visit , he found the child " whimpering under a sofa , full of despair . " He assured Elisabeth that her mother loved her too . " Mama says she loves me , but you do love me , " Elisabeth replied . Margaret Eagar thought the child 's eyes were the saddest she had ever seen . " Looking at her I used to wonder what those wide grey @-@ blue eyes saw , to bring such a look of sadness to the childish face , " she wrote . Eagar wondered if Elisabeth had a premonition of her own death because she often told her cousin Grand Duchess Olga Nikolaevna of Russia that " I shall never see this again . " However , despite Elisabeth 's sad eyes , she was generally a sweet , happy child who was a peacemaker when her cousins had a dispute .

= = Death = =

On 6 October 1903 , Ernst hosted a large family gathering at Darmstadt for the wedding of his niece , Princess Alice of Battenberg , to Prince Andrew of Greece and Denmark . A few weeks later he took Elisabeth to stay with his younger sister , Empress Alexandra Feodorovna , her husband , Tsar Nicholas II , and their family . At the imperial family 's hunting lodge in Skierniewice , Poland , Elisabeth went on long walks and had picnics in the forest with her cousins .

Her nanny , who called Elisabeth " my baby , " woke Elisabeth in the middle of the night and settled her in a window seat of the nursery so that she might look out on the game spread out upon the grounds below . One morning , the eight @-@ year @-@ old awoke with a sore throat and pains in her chest , which the Russian Court doctor put down to too much excitement with her cousins the previous day . Her fever rose to 104 degrees . The imperial party didn 't believe her illness was a serious one and went ahead with their plans for the day and attended the theater as planned . By the evening Elisabeth was in even more severe pain and had started gasping for breath . A specialist was summoned from Warsaw . The specialist gave her injections of caffeine and camphor to stimulate her slowing heart , but without success .

" Suddenly she sat up in her bed and looked from one to the other of us with wide , frightened eyes , " wrote Eagar . " She cried out suddenly , ' I 'm dying ! I 'm dying ! ' She was coaxed to lie down again , but remained agitated . " The child turned to me , and said anxiously , ' Send a telegram to mama . ' " Eagar promised it would be done . " She added , ' immediately . ' ... We continued to fan the feeble spark of life , but moment by moment it declined . She began to talk to her cousins , and seemed to imagine she was playing with them . She asked for little Anastasie and I brought the wee thing into the room . The dying eyes rested on her for a moment , and Anastasie said , ' Poor cousin Ella ! Poor Princess Elizabeth ! ' I took the baby out of the room . " Doctors told Alexandra that the child 's mother should be notified , but the telegram did not arrive until the following morning , when Elisabeth had already died . An autopsy following her death confirmed that she had died of virulent typhoid , although it was rumored she had eaten from a poisoned dish intended for the Tsar .

= = Funeral and legacy = =

Elisabeth 's body was placed in a silver casket , a gift from Nicholas II , for the journey back to Darmstadt . Her father arranged a white funeral , with white instead of black for the funeral trappings , white flowers , and white horses for the procession . The Hessian people came out by the thousands to view the funeral procession and " sobbed in unison so that I could hear it , " Ernst wrote . A cousin , Kaiser Wilhelm II , expressed shock at the child 's death in a letter to Tsar

Nicholas II on 7 November 1903 . " How joyous and merry she was that day at Wolfsgarten , when I was there , so full of life and fun and health ... What a terrible heartrending blow for poor Ernie , who doted and adored that little enchantress ! " Elisabeth was buried in the Rosenhöhe with other members of the Hessian grand ducal family . A marble angel was later installed to watch over her grave . In a final gesture to Elisabeth and Ernst , Victoria Melita placed her badge of the Order of Hesse , granted to her upon her marriage , into Elisabeth 's coffin . Ernst was still devastated by the memory of his daughter 's death thirty years later . " My little Elisabeth , " he wrote in his memoirs , " was the sunshine of my life . "

= = Titles , styles , honours and arms = =

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11 March 1895 ? 16 November 1903 : Her Grand Ducal Highness Princess Elisabeth Marie Alice Viktoria of Hesse and by Rhine

= = Ancestry = =