

0. BEGGAR IN THE PALACE - Story Preface

**1. BEGGAR IN THE PALACE**

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No portrait of Ivan IV as a young man is known to survive. This image is a poster for Sergei Eisenstein's film "Ivan Grozny" (Russian for "Ivan the Terrible"), which relates what the young prince had to endure when he was a beggar in the palace. Click on the image for a larger view. PD

Vasily III, Grand Prince of Muscovy, was worried. The ruler of Russia had no heir. If he stayed married to his current wife, he might die without a successor. Deciding not to take that chance, Vasily disposed of his first wife by sending her to a convent. (He was, in 1524, the founder of Moscow's famous Novodevichy Convent where Nikita Khrushchev, among other notables, is buried.)

Yelena Glinskaya, Vasily's second wife, bore him two sons. During the birth of the first (the heir, Ivan Vasilyevich) Moscow experienced a fearsome thunderstorm. Safe within the walls of the Kremlin, all seemed well with the royal family. But there were other omens, it seems, beyond the thunderstorm. Omens that warned of troubles ahead.

To the southeast, in Kazan, the wife of the Khan had thoughts of things to come. Of the child born on the 25th of August, 1530, she reportedly said:

*A Tsar is born among you; two teeth has he. With one he will devour us. But with the other, you.*

Three years after the birth of his son, Vasily III knew his own life was nearly over. On his deathbed, inside the Kremlin, he named his firstborn as his successor. Obviously too young to rule, Ivan needed regents to act in his name. Before he died, Vasily named those regents, one of whom was Ivan's mother.

Palace intrigues insured that Vasily's widow would not live long. In 1538, when her son was not yet eight, Yelena died. Ivan and his deaf-mute brother, Yuri, were orphans.

At the time, land-owning nobles (called "boyars") had considerable power in Russia. Although they treated the royal princes with respect in public, they behaved shamefully toward them in private. The children often roamed through the palace without shoes or proper clothes, begging for food.

Shabby treatment was not limited to neglect. Boyars entrusted with the children's care were cruel. Armed men would sometimes enter Ivan's room, removing whatever they wished. Before long, young Ivan - the Grand Prince - took out his frustrations on animals.

Cruelty breeds cruelty; torture of animals gives way to torture of people. And memories - of those responsible for making one's life utterly miserable - are often long-lived. Very long indeed, as the boyars would find out.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/BEGGAR-IN-THE-PALACE-Ivan-the-Terrible)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/BEGGAR-IN-THE-PALACE-Ivan-the-Terrible)

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### Bronze Bust of Vasily III

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### Map of Muscovy Compared to Present Day Russia

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### Meeting World Leaders: Khrushchev and Kennedy

Photograph from the U. S. Department of State in the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### Nikita Khrushchev's Memorial

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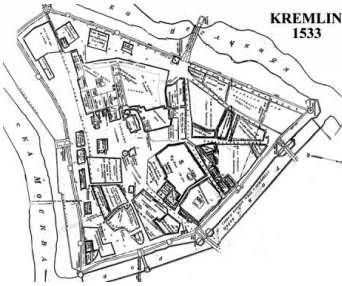


### Map Depicting Location of Kazan Khanate

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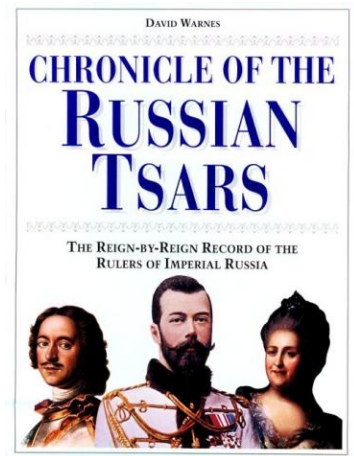


### Architectural Drawing of the Kremlin - 1533

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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### Chronicle of the Russian Tsars - David Warnes

Image online, courtesy the [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com) website.

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### Ivan Grozny - Tsar Ivan the Terrible

From *Ivan the Terrible* - part of the series *The Most Evil Men in History*, aired on the Discovery Channel. Online, courtesy hbavishi's Channel at YouTube. Clip provided as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with the program.

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