



0. OLD BEFORE HIS TIME - Story Preface

1. BEGGAR IN THE PALACE

2. THE FIRST TSAR

3. THE GOOD REIGN

4. DEATH BY POISON

5. ARCHITECTS BLINDED

6. ART AT THE TIME OF IVAN IV

7. THE BAD REIGN

8. LEGACY and MURDER

9. OLD BEFORE HIS TIME

10. I'M SORRY

In this painting, by Alexander Litovchenko, we see Ivan the Terrible "lingering amidst all the riches he was soon to quit forever." He is showing his treasures to Jerome Horsey, an envoy for Queen Elizabeth of Britain. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD

Causing a litany of terror and tears throughout the second part of his reign, Ivan Grozny had fallen from grace into madness. As he aged, he was in constant pain. Doctors from England, summoned to Moscow, could not cure him.

Confined to the Kremlin, he became addicted to mercury. (Historians record that he kept a cauldron of mercury bubbling in his private rooms.) At the time, syphilis was treated with mercury (which, in high doses, can bring on fits of rage), and it has been speculated that perhaps Ivan had the disease.

Sir Jerome Horsey (an agent of Britain's Russia Company who carried letters between Elizabeth I and Ivan IV) met with Ivan Grozny in 1581. He could see the Tsar had grown old:

His body was shrunk and bent, and although his face seemed more ferocious than ever it was shrivelled prematurely and deathly pale; his ears and lips were tinged with blue and his breathing had become laboured; his eyes moved restlessly, casting furtive glances hither and thither as if he entertained fear of sudden attack; he had grown almost completely bald, and a few rugged grey patches were all that remained of his once luxuriant beard.

"I sleep badly," he complained querulously in answer to Sir Jerome's courteous enquiry regarding his health. "Evil dreams torment me; they are produced by my magic-working enemies. Yet I pray daily for the welfare of the souls of such as have been found guilty of treasonable plottings and transferred to the judgment place of the Eternal, there to answer for their sins. Withal, I concern myself greatly regarding the affairs of state, constant wars against hostile nations, and the welfare of my poor people. My health has consequently suffered greatly. I have grown old before my time." (*Stories of Russian Folk-Life*, Donald A. Mackenize, 1916, page 126.)

The man who had grown old before his time, and who had caused such terror throughout the realm, would soon face his own end.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/OLD-BEFORE-HIS-TIME-Ivan-the-Terrible>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/OLD-BEFORE-HIS-TIME-Ivan-the-Terrible>



An Elderly Ivan IV

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/An-Elderly-Ivan-IV>

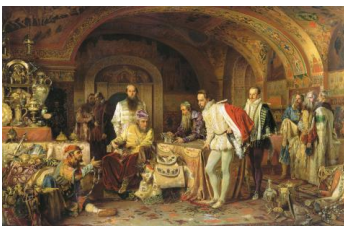


Sir Jerome Horsey - British Envoy to Russia

Image, described above, online via Wikimedia Commons.

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Ivan the Terrible - In the Treasury with Jerome Horsey

Ivan the Terrible - oil on canvas, by Alexander Litovchenko. Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Quoted passage, from *Ivan the Terrible* by Kazimierz Waliszewski (translated by Mary Loyd), J.B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia (1904), page 377.

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