



Memoirs of the Empress Catherine II of Russia

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These are the memoirs written by one of the most famous women rulers in history, Russian Empress Catherine the Great. She has long been remembered not only as one of the most powerful women of her time but also one of the most powerful and capable rulers in all of Europe. And her path to the throne was just as remarkable as her reign.

In a story that sounds like it could have been a precursor to Cinderella, Catherine the Great was born into a family of minor nobility, but she managed to forge her own destiny through her own cunning use of diplomacy and intrigue, gradually gaining allies and power. By 1762, she confident enough to conspire against her own husband, Peter III, whose reign as Tsar lasted just six months before his arrest at the hands of his wife. Upon his arrest and death, Catherine took power as the regent for their son, Grand Duke Paul. Despite the strong-arm tactics, Catherine came to power in the midst of the Enlightenment, which was flourishing in France and Britain, and she would rule as an Enlightened ruler. A known correspondent of Voltaire's, Catherine sought to modernize Russia and turn it into a force in its own right, creating a rich and cultured court at the same time. Over the course of nearly 35 years in power, Catherine ushered in the Russian Enlightenment and presided over a period of time known as the Golden Age of the Russian Empire. Given her length of reign, forceful character, and lasting legacy, it was inevitable that legends about Catherine the Great would also pop up in the wake of her death. To an extent, certain legends have overshadowed her actual accomplishments, even as they continue to be circulated.

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