

MISERY

In the bleak twilight, amidst swirling snowflakes, Iona Potapov sits motionless, cloaked in white, on his sledge. The world around him bustles with life, yet he and his horse remain still, engulfed in their own silence, contemplating their detachment from the familiar to the chaotic city life. Hours pass without a single fare, until finally, an impatient officer beckons Iona to Vyborgskaya, sparking a brief encounter filled with disconnection and misunderstanding. Despite Iona's attempt to share his grief over his recently deceased son, the officer remains indifferent, urging Iona to drive faster, oblivious to the sledge driver's emotional turmoil.

Later, Iona finds a momentary distraction with a trio of argumentative young men, seeking passage to the Police Bridge. Their banter and quarrels provide Iona a fleeting escape from his solitude, though his attempt to share his sorrow is met with trivial concern and brisk dismissal. As the night progresses, Iona continues to search for someone to listen to his pain, to empathize with his loss. He approaches a house-porter, seeking even the slightest interaction, but is again met with indifference.

Driven by a deep sense of loneliness and unshared grief, Iona returns home early, only to find himself amidst snoring figures, further emphasizing his isolation. In a place crowded yet devoid of understanding, Iona yearns for meaningful connection, to share the story of his son's death and his own relentless sadness. He attempts to converse with a young cabman, hoping for a moment of empathy, but finds his words falling on deaf ears, lost among those preoccupied with their own rest.

In the stillness of the night, he ventures to the stables to find solace in the company of his mare, diverting his thoughts to mundane concerns. Alone, he realizes the impossibility of grappling with his son's memory unaided. The desire for conversation, for shared emotion, is overwhelming, yet unattainable, leaving Iona to face the immense weight of his misery in solitude, underscored by the stark, unforgiving

environment of the city at night.