

SMALL FRY

In "Small Fry," a story from "The Schoolmistress and Other Stories," the reader is introduced to a petty clerk named Nevvrazimov, laboring over an Easter congratulatory letter in a dimly lit, dingy office. The setting is lonely and desolate, emphasized by the presence of a stray cockroach and the distant sound of a porter cleaning his boots, suggesting a mundane and unfulfilling life. Nevvrazimov's musings reveal his dissatisfaction and yearning for a different existence, contrasted sharply with the vibrant life outside where people are celebrating Easter.

Nevvrazimov's inner turmoil is highlighted by his contemplation of the unfairness of his position—stuck in the office while others enjoy festivities and camaraderie. He reflects on his life choices, hinting at greed and poverty as the forces that keep him tethered to such a joyless situation. The story subtly explores themes of social status, the longing for betterment, and the constraints of poverty.

Paramon, the porter, serves as a brief foil to Nevvrazimov, offering a moment of connection through the shared experience of listening to the Easter chimes. Yet, this momentary escape into the communal joy of Easter does little to assuage Nevvrazimov's deeper discontent.

As Nevvrazimov contemplates more drastic measures to escape his predicament—ranging from stealing to writing a secret report to advance his position—the narrative delves into the desperation and moral dilemmas faced by those stuck at the lower rungs of society. The bells and the celebrations outside amplify his feelings of isolation and despair.

The conclusion leaves Nevvrazimov still trapped in his monotonous life, the office's darkness mirroring his lack of hope for change. He stands still, realizing the futility of his daydreams for a better life—a poignant reflection on the human condition and the

struggle against societal and personal limitations.

"Small Fry" thus captures the essence of introspection and the inevitable resignation to one's fate, encapsulated in the mundane yet complex life of a petty clerk.

