One Man’s Last Story

It was a cold and desolate day in a seemingly unknown town in Northern Siberia. A middle aged man sits at the bar sipping black coffee covered from head to toe in winter clothes. The bar is quiet for it is around 2 in the afternoon, and yet it is pitch black outside. The man’s name is Boris Denisovich, a writer who is well known in the Soviet Union’s underground literature circuit. The door opens letting in a gush of ice cold wind. A younger man with dark black hair and stunning green eyes enters the bar, and sits next to Boris.

“I am glad you could meet me despite this horrible weather that we are having,” stated Boris.

“Of course I would come father no amount of horrible weather would keep me,” said the young man.

“Ivan, I believe you known why I have called you to meet me,” stated Boris.

“No dad, I am afraid I don’t. You concerned me with your sense of urgency for what is the matter,” questioned Ivan.

“Ivan I am afraid that I am dying, and I would like to get my story out to the precious souls of this land before it is too late for me.”

“Dad what is the matter? Are you sick,” questioned Ivan.

“I am afraid I have caught tuberculosis. My dear son it is your job to tell my story because it isn’t only my story, but the story of millions of our fellow citizens. Please my son don’t protest for I don’t have the strength to argue, and let this serve as my last wish before death knocks at my door.”

“I will write your story father, just tell me and I will write it for you.”

“Thank you Ivan you have always been the most loyal son to me. Before I start I would like to speak in a space where I can be more open,” stated Boris.

Boris and his son Ivan head to his house. As they walk it begins to snow furiously the wind whipping at their faces. As they cross the street to another winding road Ivan takes his father’s hand. Ivan remembers as a child his father helping him cross the street, and now he helps his aging father. When they arrive at Ivan’s long missed childhood home his father heads into the living room to lite a fire. But before he can do so Ivan interrupts

“Dad, let me start the fire for you,” stated Ivan.

“No it's alright Ivan. Why don’t you go and make us some tea,” said Boris.

Ivan heads into the kitchen to make the tea while his father strokes the fire. The house is warm, and the smell of vanilla candles reminds Ivan of his childhood. He remembers his mother cooking in the kitchen, and his father reading the evening newspaper. Before he can remember more happy memories he catches sight of a picture of him and his two brothers. At the sight of the picture he feels a sense of rage at his brothers for having abandoned their beloved father. When he was younger he didn’t understand why his brothers had left his father, but later he realized they had been fully brainwashed by the communist mantra.

“Ivan, don’t be angry with your brothers they don’t know what I have been through, along with millions of others and the horrors of the regime that they blindly support,” stated Boris.

“But father, you were the best father a son could ask for, and yet you forgive them so easily,”questioned Ivan.

“I never stopped loving them because they are my flesh and blood regardless of what they have become,” stated Boris.

Boris heads into the living room and sits in the leather chair in front of the fire. When the tea is done Ivan comes into the living room with two cups. He hands his father the warm cup of tea, and with a tired sigh he sits.

“I have yet to understand even at my old age what caused this country to revolt against its own beliefs and traditions,” stated Boris.

“It was the destructive ideas of a few hot-headed, power hungry, boys,” stated Ivan bitterly.

“What you say is true Ivan. Simply look at the type of men that have run this country. I hope by telling my story this world may avoid the deaths of more. The year was 1940 I was a young man still trying to find my place in this chaotic world. My passion as a boy was writing I loved to write about anything and everything. A dear friend of mine found what I had been writing, and decided that saving his own skin was more important than my friendship,” stated Boris.

“What was it that you were writing father,” questioned Ivan.

“I was writing about the vast amount of governmental systems available to us, and that each one had its fatal flaws, but the content didn’t matter to them Ivan. All that mattered was that I dared to criticize the system,” Boris stated. Ivan wrote quickly wanting to hear more of his father’s life story.

“The next day the KGB or the wolves as I liked to call them arrested me for treason. The only reason I am alive today is because it was before 1946. After 1946 they sentenced people to 25 years in the Gulags as where I only served 8 years. But still 8 years in that hell could make any man lose his sanity. Most of the Gulags are located around here, and I remember there being “special camps” were hard labor was the order of the day. We worked 14 hour days, and if anybody slacked the entire squad would get less bread. “

“How long did these places stay in operation,” questioned Ivan.

“You act like things have changed a lot Ivan, in reality these camps still are operating today,” stated Boris. Ivan looks at his father with a look of sadness and disgust.

“Ivan I know it is hard to understand how such a thing could exist, but the truth is that people have been committing these acts of depravity since the beginning of time. There is nothing special about what is being done. The only thing that defines this darkness is the number of dead left in its wake,” stated Boris.

“Why does the government carry out such things,” questioned Ivan.

“While think about it Ivan we are a threat to the government’s ability to rule, and we inspire others to think about things in which they might turn against the leadership. But back to my story I had served eight long years in the Gulags being transported from camp to camp. Many may ask how I dealt with the extreme cold. I kept my feet warm by stuffing rags into my boots. My fellow prisoners and I kept our faces warm through cloth, and pulling our hats as far down as they could go. Many of the men in my squad died because of an outbreak of typhus. I remember a father and son in my squad. The father’s name was Vladimir and his son was Ivan. The two depended on each other to survive their ten year sentences, and when Ivan’s father caught typhus, and died. Shortly, after his father’s death Ivan lunged at one of the guards, and was shot in the head. The poor boy he no longer had any will to live,” Boris stated with light tears coming to his eyes. Ivan sensing there was more to the story asked his father

“Father I feel like you're not telling me something about Vladimir's death,” questioned Ivan.

“Yes there is Ivan. It horrifies me to think about how his father was often bullied and harassed by the other men because he could not keep up with the work load, and as a result the squad had lost bread, and when people are put into such barely survivable conditions the worst is brought out. Eventually Vladimir was taken to the hospital wing if you could even call it such a thing, and it wasn’t long after he was emitted that the typhus took him. I will always remember him in my heart because he always helped others, and stuck to his morals despite the some of the men turning into wolves.”