

Pyramiden, Polar night.

The night of the storm fills the town. Battering the buildings, hammering the windows, encasing the settlement in steep snowdrifts. It is clear that time has passed, but it isn't clear how much. SASHA is crouched in the corner, clearly working on something out of sight. SLAVA enters from patrol, carrying her rifle. She sees him.

SLAVA: Sasha... What are you doing?

SASHA reacts poorly and immediately covers his work, taking his own rifle in hand and standing up.

SASHA: Nothing.

SLAVA: You were doing something just there.

SASHA: I wasn't. Go away.

SLAVA: What's your problem?

SASHA: Sorry. You scared me.

SLAVA: What, you thought I was a bear?

SASHA: Yeah.

SLAVA: A talking bear that knows your name and has my voice.

SASHA: Piss off.

SLAVA: I'm sorry I interrupted your alone time.

SASHA: Just tell me how the patrol went - talk about something else.

SLAVA: Not good. No visibility in the storm. No sense in going back out till it breaks. The generator is broken.

SASHA: Yes I noticed. It's bad news, storms like this. Could be days before it breaks. Weeks.

SLAVA: Weeks?

SASHA: Best get comfortable.

SASHA sits down at one of the chairs and pats the one opposite, inviting her to join him. There is a moment of reluctance. SLAVA relents and comes over. They sit and, without speaking, they decide it is time to drink again.

SLAVA: Are you going to tell me what you were doing?

SASHA: Looking over notes. I'm writing a book.

SLAVA: What's your book about?

SASHA: My life. It's about memories.

SLAVA: Who is the ring for?

SLAVA points to SASHA's hand - a silver band on his ring finger.

SASHA: Let's not discuss that.

SLAVA: You didn't wear it before.

SASHA: I know. Reacts badly to the cold.

SLAVA: Why didn't you tell me you were married?

SASHA: I'm not anymore. She died. Cancer.

Beat.

SLAVA: I'm sorry.

SASHA: She was a natural scientist. She would have liked it here.

SLAVA: I can imagine.

SASHA: Have you ever seen death? I mean... up close?

SLAVA says nothing.

A long time ago, I saw someone die on the ice. I found him after a storm, like this one. The polar bears had got to him. Took his legs. He took an hour to die. Maybe he didn't see the warning signs - the eyes, you can see their shimmer. You don't look for white fur in a blizzard, look for the eyes. You can see two dark marks looking back at you. In those shapes there is death: a howling, terrible death. No meaning, not good or bad. A simple instinct to kill you. And then once you see that... the meaning of death changes. It's the end, yes, but it's a neutral thing now. At