

It seemed somehow right that all the questions should be asked by Nerzhin, the younger man, who had so little to show for his life, and that the older man should reply as if he were ashamed of his straightforward academic career - after being evacuated during the war he had returned to work for three years with K--and had taken his doctor's degree in topology. Nerzhin, his lips tightly drawn, was inattentive to the point of rudeness; he did not even bother to ask what exactly Verenyov had written about this arid branch of mathematics in which he himself had done a little work for one of his courses. Suddenly he felt sorry for Verenyov. Topology belonged to the stratosphere of human thought. It might conceivably turn out to be of some use in the twenty-fourth century, but for the time being...

**I CARE NOT FOR THE SUN AND THE STARS, I SEE BUT MAN IN
TORMENT.'**

from "First Circle" by Solzhenitsyn (1968)