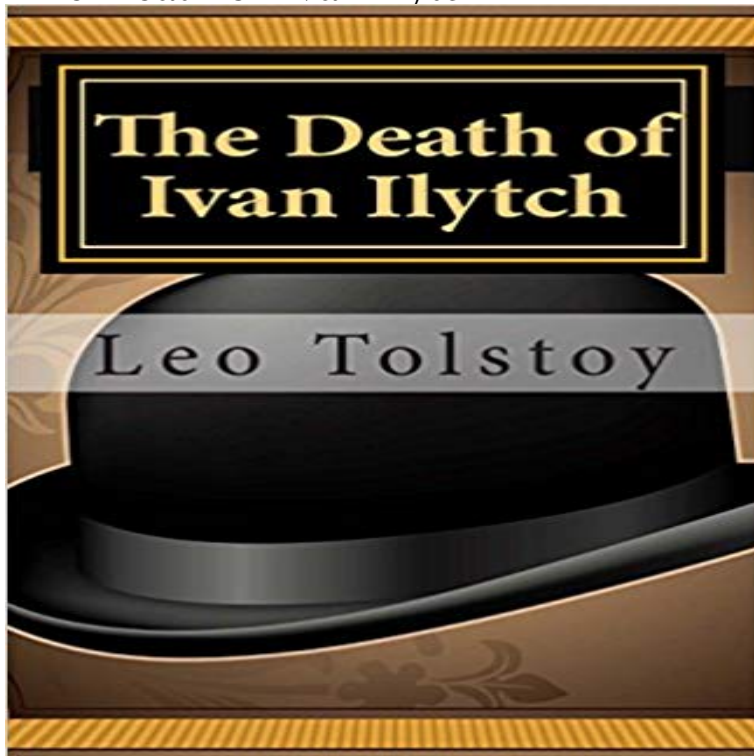


The Death of Ivan Ilytch



Tolstoy's novella makes a rewarding and unsettling reading, for there is hardly another that treats death and dying as boldly. Death is a fact. In this story Ivan Ilyich's life and death are plainly represented in a fashion that remarkably resembles when one is near someone dying. What the novel puts on display in so satisfying and disconcerting a fashion is the remarkable inability or reluctance of most people to take part in the life of a person who is inevitably and rather immediately dying. Only one character in the novel has the goodness, humility and patience to care for a dying man, the rest scurry about and take care of their anticipated needs in the face of losing a loved one. Tolstoy's book provides such a fine portrait of a bureaucrat whose family life does not entirely satisfy him and whose pursuit of a more meaningful life fails to cease even in sickness, when he understands that his mortality is soon to be demonstrated. There are few works of this nature that can attain the company of this short novel. This book is excellent.

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