Hot Cinnamon Sunset

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Summary

A crossover of Crime and Punishment (Which I love) and Frankenstein (Which I hate) in which the two main characters are shipped. And I mock their angst while also writing interesting philosophical discussions between two very compelling men. Seriously, can you imagine Raskolnikov meeting Victor? They had the same ideas, and both fell short of being "extraordinary men". I don't even know how many of you are as nerdy as me but... I hope you enjoy reading this as much as I enjoy writing it.
Chapter 1

Hot Cinnamon Sunset

Victor Frankenstein almost regretted the arrival in Russia, because it marked an end to a much needed respite. Of course, there was still the ride back through his much-beloved, scenic landscapes, but going back he dreaded nonetheless. Back at the Chateau Frankenstein there was the constant lurking threat of the daemon, that monster he had left to the world... It was the reason he had gone somewhere besides England, a favorite nation of his, the reminder of that Creature. Not that he had any illusions of getting away from the monstrous thing with its inexplicable strength and speed, but being on the move allowed for at least the feeling of freedom. Yet the feeling was just that, nothing more, and he was still kept up at night dreaming of William, and Justine... Guilt tormented him, escaping all responsibility was a hard burden to bear, after all. Not that it was his fault, damn fate and all, but conscious and grief are, regrettably, still haunting him despite this...

No one at home understood, not that he had given anyone a chance, with his refusal to mention that a monster existed at all- much less that acknowledge he created it, but he was sure that they wouldn’t understand even if he did start trying. His father Alphonse was too old and frail, his sweet best friend far too, well, sweet and optimistic, his cousin Elizabeth such a gentle woman, and... oh, who was that other brother that wasn’t the late William? What was his name? He was a middle, youngest now, brother, hmmm... Ah! Yes, Ernest. Uhm.... He was rather useless, really. No hope there for understanding.

The Swiss man is lurches from his musings when his carriage comes to a stop. He blinks a few times, really taking in the city of St. Petersburg for the first time.

“This is where the... university is?” Victor asks, his disgust mixing with some surprise. He was not akin to such... well... how to say this- Victor is rich.

“Yes’ir.” The carriage driver confirms.

“Indeed.” Victor comments dryly.

His first reluctant step from the carriage is met with terrible heat, bustle, plaster, and dust, creating a sort of airless feeling. The stench is very unfamiliar to him, one so used to open air. Yet, it not too different from the stench of death: which he remembers very clearly from his work. Really, his expression of disgust has lost all the elements of surprise. Surely there can be nothing that could redeem this place! Why, the monster dilemma has him so very distracted that he hadn’t bothered to do a... quality check. Fate truly punished him endlessly. Such inescapable misery by whose hand he could only guess!

He’d have to make the best of this... Surely the monster would not bother him here, he’s already terribly miserable. How intelligent could anyone be in this sort of a hell?! He supposed this university would adore him, in that case... perhaps the ride home was not something to dread after all...

At the moment of entering the university he pauses. Not for any real reason, just because he had the oddest feeling... and in that moment he first set eyes upon The Man. An exceptionally handsome young man, with a refined face, just above average height, slim, well-built if on the thin side, with the most beautiful dark eyes, dark hair, and that charmingly pale Russian complexion. Victor is so immediately drawn to this man that he lets go of the door all together. It certainly wasn’t for the man’s dress either, as the rags he was wearing would have made the shabbiest of beggars turn away in shame. Certainty it wasn’t that ridiculous, leaning top hat either... No. No there was some sort of enlightenment. Some sort of withdrawn angst that Victor immediately recognized.

“You there!” Victor called at first in German, forgetting himself. A confused few turned. The Man did not even glance up. He was in a state of deep thought, and not caring to observe anything, or anyone, around him.

Some peasant asked Victor a question in Russian, and the Swiss man quickly corrected himself,
pointing after The Man and repeated some Russian phrases. Too late though, as the strangely nervous Man had already disappeared into the bustle of the city.
No. No! Not too late. Victor had paused at that door for a reason. He had seen and been drawn to that strangely ethereal, and also somewhat filthy and disgusting, vagrant- who had been muttering to himself- for a reason! Now, Victor Frankenstein may have been a man of very little follow through after completion, but he was a man of completion! A man of passion! And a very, very staunch believer of the whiles of fate. He would act upon this man, or he would be haunted by the those beautiful dark eyes and their gleaming madness as he had been haunted by his desires to create life from decay.

“Tell them I may be late,” Victor remarks shortly, flicking a coin to the carriage driver.
He then plunges into the crowds of St. Petersburg undaunted by the prospect of crime, as well-dressed as he is. There is a focus in his mind now, and when he latches onto a target he sees no consequences! (Until they are direct consequences that, which directly affecting him.)

“You! You there! With that hat!” Thank goodness for that hat.
The Man is taking no notice at all, it must be such a fascinating thing- whatever is on his mind.
Victor weaves through the mobs of rather dirty Russians, dodging beggars who grab for the clearly wealthy man.
His target pauses long enough, thank you destiny, and Victor manages to catch up. Evidently he’ll need to take a direct approach to this problem. So he grabs a hold of the man.
“Good evening!” Victor exclaims, a tad out of breath.
Terror and confusion seem to grab the poor shabby man, who immediately freezes- looking ready to run, or perhaps faint. Hard to tell. Victor isn’t quite sure how to continue...

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Rodion Romanvich Raskolnikov was supposed to be in bed. He had spent nearly the last two days there, after all. The doctor, his doctor wasn’t he? That damn man...
“Stay in bed?” He scoffs to himself. “As if I were mad after all that would help...”
Another lapse into silence. Mad, is he mad? What makes him mad? Acting upon his impulses? Or failing at those impulses...
No! No, he hadn’t failed yet, had he? He was still free...
“What man has not felt as I have? The greatest of us, they were not mad for doing as I have done... not remembered as being mad, surely... damn if this is madness than I shall endeavor to be mad!”
Well... madness didn’t make him think less of that sock he’d hidden, the one dipped in blood, or that money he’d hidden... He thought of little else really.
Suddenly, as though his thoughts had summoned it, he was seized upon. His heart clenched in fear, and he froze.
There isn’t anything... they can’t know... who would have told them?! What could they have found?!
“...good evening sir.” The well-dressed man who had grabbed him commented.
Raskolnikov squints, confused. What kind of game was this? His accent was decidedly foreign.
Was he even real at all- ah, that had become a concern these days.... the grip on his arm felt real enough...
“Are you a beggar?” The foreign man continues after a long pause in which he had been waiting in silence waiting for Raskolnikov to speak.
A beggar? Why do people assume such things...? He did not ask for this sort of intervention in his affairs! Why must people come upon him like this? Wasn’t it clear he needed to be alone...
“I am a student.” Raskolnikov finally comments, rather shortly.
“Oh! A student! Well, I am a guest of the college; I am speaking this week on natural sciences!”
The foreigner seems relived to have found something the two can speak about
Raskolnikov’s eyes narrow, what was he doing? Calling him out like that? Why must he take away the one thing...
“I am a beggar then.” Raskolnikov attempts to pull his arm away and is surprised by the other mans strength. Perhaps though, he has just grown immensely weak...
“You just claimed you were a student! Now you turn back on your word?”

“Unhand me!” Raskolnikov replies, again trying to pull free. He is sick of this unprecedented confrontation, he is very sick in general. Certainly this is not what he needs now... No, he just needs more time to think.

“You are more than a beggar or a student, I cannot unhand you! Fate has led me to you, and that much I do know!”

There’s a moment of silence where they both stare at one another. Raskolnikov cannot believe the university would be paying this man to teach! And they believe him to be mad...

“I am not concerned with your ideas of fate, or with whatever other strange beliefs you possess and I am ill and damn you unhand me or... or I shall call the police!”

Yes, he would too. Call down upon them the very people he most feared right now. It was some kind of sick force that continued to draw him to the people that could enslave him... the guilt, the thrill of it...

“Ill?” Is it Raskolnikov’s imagination or does the mad stranger seem pleased? “I can help you with that! Where is it you live?”

... Fine. Fine! Who was he to deny help? Had he not been trying to help himself? Why not give this foreign man, this teacher if he even was, the chance to fulfill some twisted sense of duty or charity?

A dark smile crosses Raskolnikov’s face. Once a man such as this saw the place he lived in he would not stay long. No one wanted to stay long in that miserable hovel... his miserable, tiny room. Why, he imagined that the richer man wouldn’t even come inside!

“Follow me...” He finally yanks his arm back and turns abruptly. Back towards the Hay Market, back to his home.
Chapter 2

The Russian beggar is strange indeed... He has claimed to be ill, and it is the first thing that Victor finds himself truly believing. Really he can’t tell if his first impression of intelligence is mistaken or not.

“You never told me your name, by the way.” Victor makes an attempt at small talk. The silence is strange on his end, at least, but he isn’t sure if this beggar... student?- isn’t already preoccupied by his own, er, voices.

The Man glances back, mutters something, seems to laugh to himself, then responds.

“Rodion Raskolnikov.”

“Ah.” How Russian, “My name is Victor Frankenstein.”

“Frankenstein? Germanic then...”

“Swiss.”

“Mmmm...”

Victor is hoping that disgusting, cramped complex that Raskolnikov has stopped before isn’t rally his home.

“This is my building.” Raskolnikov comments with that Victor feels is a rather menacing tone. Victor sighs.

“No wonder you’re ill, man. This place is absolutely terrible, just disgusting.” He comments, being very truthful. Victor isn’t sure he would have fallen ill a long while ago, subject to these conditions, in this terrible city.

Instead of responding positively, as no one seems to when Victor is going about being honest, Raskolnikov’s dark smile dissolves into a deep scowl.

“You were born into privilege, I can tell. And accident of birth- many of us are not and you haven’t the right to critique me so harshly! What does give you the thought to such a right? Simply because you happen to posses money? All those who are rich are hardly extraordinary.”

On that note he trails off, shoves his hands into the pockets of his filthy coat.

“... well.” He begins after a long moment, anger fading to consideration. “Accruing wealth is part of it, I suppose. Money after all, represents power... not to claim a birthright matters, I don’t think it does, anyways.... The right is much deeper than that. Must be something you’re born with, yes, but not necessarily entitled to. More of an action of the soul than your family...”

My, my, Victor cannot take his eyes off Raskolnikov. He sees he was mistaken in doubting this man’s intelligence. Absolutely fascinating, this talk of “the right”. What could he mean? Is it far too much to ask that perhaps he has stumbled across a man who... who possibly understands? The Russian man seems to startle from his thoughts when he meets Victor’s intense stare. He blinks once, before reverting back to a scowl and turning on his heel once again.

“You’re still here... back to my room then.” Raskolnikov mutters.

He guides Victor up a cramped staircase before shoving open a chipped wooden door with the attire of a long faded number. As soon as he opens the door a flurry of activity spills out to greet them.

“Brother! You weren’t supposed to leave! You are ill!”

Victor steps back a bit to make room for the much larger Russian man. In the doorway another, a tall, fat man with a puffy, colorless clean-shaven face, straight flaxen hair, wearing spectacles, took in Raskolnikov with a sort of bored hunger.

“Perhaps his ravings have gotten worse. Where you hallucinating, perhaps?” The spectacled man asks of Raskolnikov.

In response Raskolnikov glares at him.

“Razumihin.” He first addresses the larger of the Russians. “I may leave when I please. I am an adult. And you Zossimov,” to the second man, “I have not been hallucinating, what do you know of it? You’ve never been mad.”

“So this is your home? Seems... crowded.” Victor comments, ready to enter the proceedings now.
The two men, pre occupied with Raskolnikov to the point of not noticing the swissman, turn on him.
“You’re the one who brought Rodya home? Thank you sir!” Razumihin begins, heartily shaking Victor’s hand.
Rodya? Must be a nickname from Rodion. How very... sweet.
“Yes... you can go now.” Zossimov adds, lazily going to re-enter the room after Raskolnikov has shoved past him into it.
“I think not! I’ve been asked to help with his illness!” Victor goes to follow him into the room.
“Well... you aren’t needed.” Zossimov inserts. “He already has a doctor.”
“Oh yes? And who would that be?” Victor asks, he and Zossimov are both very convinced of their own self importance.
“Me.” Zossimov replies, as though bored with the challenge.
“I’ll do it for free!” Victor claims haughtily.
“I’m already doing it for free.” Zossimov smirks slightly.
Razumihin looks between them and back to where Raskolnikov has collapses onto his couch.
“Why... can’t the both of you work together?”
“I don’t work well with others interfering.” Victor says at the same time as Zossimov says- “Raskolnikov is my case!”
They exchange looks. Victor can see he isn’t going to get anywhere with this pretensions fat Russian doctor, so instead he turns to Razumihin, who has seemed to have seized control of Raskolnikov’s care.
“My friend, I can assure you I am more than qualified to treat this patient. In fact I have travelled all the way from Switzerland to share my expertise and learning in the sciences, natural and chemical. I know the human body better than anyone that I can swear to.”
“So?” Zossimov yawns, “You know me. I’m not some stranger whose methods have been undemonstrated.”
Victor just crosses his arms, ready to drive home the point, “I do not believe Raskolnikov to be mad, my friend Razumihin. And I know it upsets him to be considered so.”
This was an assumption based on the darkly inclined Russian’s reactions to both his own words, and Zossimov’s assumption of hallucinations. Razumihin perks up accordingly, as Victor had been hoping.
“Of course he isn’t mad!” He sounds relived. He’d been afraid to say so to Zossimov for fear of losing the doctor’s interest and then losing his free service.
“Well... we haven’t decided so.” Zossimov is rather fascinated with madness, and he hopes that Raskolnikov is truly mad. Razumihin knows this, and he disapproves.
“I have decided he is not so! And I didn’t even need long!” Victor declares, sensing his victory. Nothing stands between him and his obsessions. Currently his obsession is the Russian man in question.
Zossimov is also sensing the tide turning, and he doesn’t like it. He clears his throat, ready to challenge this foreigner to a battle of intelligence for the rights to Raskolnikov’s case.
“Well, listen to this Razumihin-“
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What were they talking about? Him?
Raskolnikov closes his eyes, arms crossed tightly across his chest where he lays facing the couch away from the arguing men. Neither of them owned him! They had no right to argue over him! No right! Ah, he wished they’d all leave him alone... Especially Razumihin... They all wanted him to break, to be amused by his “madness”. Well, he wasn’t just a toy! And he didn’t want Razumihin to know of that he had done- for any of them to know. At this rate they would know... prying into his life so incessantly...
A door slams as Raskolnikov is musing internally. His eyes open. Who has just gone? Perhaps all of them... it is too much to hope.
He feels a hand on his arm, and then weight on that hand as someone leans down over him. The
rich looking Swiss man... Victor was it?... is looking down at him. Raskolnikov makes eyes contact for a moment. Yes, it’s defiantly Victor... and he looks like a victor right now. Smug, used to getting what he wants.

“Hmph...” Raskolnikov looks away again.

“Don’t be so harsh! I am now your new doctor, Rodya.” Victor says in a way that bars argument. Many feelings swirl about Raskolnikov’s head at that statement. Good, Zossimov is gone... damn there’s a new doctor poking about his life. Who even is this strange foreigner? Is this all real? Certainly it isn’t a dream... not this time... What game is this “Victor” playing at?

“Only my sister and Mother call me Rodya.” Is what comes out of Raskolnikov’s mouth after all that.

Victor raises a brow, “And your friend here.”

The Russian man’s eyes narrow. “Well... Razumihin is...” He pauses for a bit, glaring at the couch he’s facing. “He’s... yes. Yes. He does.”

“Well! I’m not very good with the Russian language. Rodya is... easier for me.”

Rodya is pushed slightly down into the couch as Victor straightens up, not giving the other man a choice in the matter of his nickname. He’s very satisfied with himself. This has all be rather easy... Rodya can feel that smugness. He doesn’t like it, and he doesn’t appreciate men of means anyways.

“You said you were teaching at the university?” Rodya rolls onto his back, making abrupt eye contact with Victor- who falters a bit.

“Why... yes. I’m surprised you heard that, Rodya. You didn’t seem to be paying attention.”

Rodya, Rodya, Rodya... why does it feel so much as if this man is attempting to exert power over him? Rodya’s eyes stay locked on Victor's.

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“Many people have made incorrect assumptions about events, particularly concerning how involved I was.” Rodya’s voice is cold. Victor feels uncomfortable with this comment, and he feels as if he’s underestimated Rodya in... something. But what?

“I don’t know why you have come into my life at all.” Rodya continues, sensing Victor’s unease, “I don’t think I would have invited you in, had I known you’d have some other motive with me. You’re too easily charmed my friend, and while I appreciate you driving away that infernal doctor, who wished me to be mad, I can’t imagine you have a set of selfless desires. While some who are rich pretend to do charity through actions such as this- I think you are a different type all together. Whatever your desire is with me, I don’t think it is as selfless at all, and I wish you would return to the university now- to do your lectures, and leave me to my life. Or give me money alone, and if I am wrong, fulfill whatever desire you have to dabble in my world.”

Victor is taken aback by the bitterness in Rodya’s voice, as well as his sudden burst of speech. This man is so very strange... very dark and elegant as well. The fight in this ill Russian man, the knowledge that he will be less than simple to dominate is... thrilling. A challenge. The suggestion of inner demons, of a deep intelligence... even as cruelly as Rodya will treat him- he can sense in many ways they are the same.

“Do you really think such things, brother?” Razumihin asks in concern, he is distressed by Rodya’s anger. Victor waves a hand.

“It’s the illness, he’s pushing us away. He needs a doctor, that much is sure.” Victor answers for Rodya.

Razumihin still looks unsure. Rodya scoffs, curling up again.

“I’ve changed my mind. I don’t care one way or the other. You two should at least keep one another company and let me alone.”

“Well.” Victor comments matter-of-factly. “There we have it.”

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Victor hadn’t told anyone he was no longer teaching— he had simply ceased to do so. It was a position he hadn’t needed in the first place, and their Russian man was providing more a distraction than the university would have. Maybe his family would worry, but he was still writing and perfectly healthy. Honestly, this was his trip, and Rodya was his business.

Speaking of, Victor had not found anything actually wrong with Rodya. He wouldn’t claim the much poorer man to be healthy, what with his not eating and cramped conditions— but, physically he was not any different from Victor himself! Many thorough examinations had been done— first priority— and much to Rodya’s displeasure. He was very uncooperative about it all; he refused to remove any clothing at all.

So, yes, Victor had come to the same conclusion as Zossimov: that it was all in Rodya’s mind. However, Victor didn’t believe that Rodya was at all mad. Just because he had mood swings, hallucinated occasionally, had terrible nightmares, and was very withdrawn didn’t make him insane! In fact, besides the hallucinations (his monster was quite real) Victor recognized these symptoms. Rodya was hiding something.

And also was very unhealthy because St. Petersburg is a filthy, terrible place— damn it Rodya, you really must eat more, I’m trying to help...

Beyond that, his patient was surrounded by a very interesting cast of characters. Razumihin was by far Victor’s favorite, beside Rodya himself, because he was not only very welcoming and complimenting, but also because he was very forthright with information. Only with a few drinks Victor had gotten Rodya’s life story from Razumihin. He meant well enough, but each time Victor would levy some new piece of information against Rodya, his best friend would receive a fresh sharp glare. Any questions Victor had, and some he didn’t know to ask, were quickly answered.

For example: why was a detective visiting? Well, apparently Rodya was somehow embroiled in the investigation of a murder. His pawn broker and sister had been murdered, and Rodya had recently sold them a watch from his father. That the rather round, giggling detective suspected Rodya was rather obvious to Victor (not so to Razumihin, who would believe nothing ill of Rodya).

Rodya becomes very ill at the time of, or directly after a murder? He is very withdrawn before a dramatic action? He now suffers from some constant mental strain?

Well, Victor wouldn’t have suspected poor, sick Rodya either. If Rodya were actually sick, and if Victor didn’t completely understand the process of guilt.
Again, and again Victor baffles Rodya. It is unclear what this newcomer wants. He refuses to go, yet asks for nothing. Everyone has something they want, and men of money do not just step down to the level of the street for no reason. Perhaps he would believe it was some altruistic drive but... no, Victor is far too driven. Far too focused on... him. Why him? He has nothing to offer...

This strange obsession became sharply evident when Rodya’s mother and sister visited. Three days into Victor’s visits with his patient. Rodya had anticipated this. He was waiting for this man of wealth, just like his sister’s ex-fiancé Luzhin, to take a liking to Dounia, his sister. That will kill two birds with one stone, as Razumihin, who is fond of Dounia, would be jealous and drive him away while Victor’s hidden motives would be revealed.

Nothing like that happened.

Victor gave none but polite glances to Dounia, who possessed much the same dark prettiness as Rodya. His intense... searching? gaze kept tight to Rodya, following his thin form, the curve of his neck as he refused to make eye contact. The stranger was charming, sweet, and came out all the more amicable with Razumihin, Dounia, and mother, than before. Only Rodya still remained as suspicious as he was, but then again Rodya was the only one being carefully watched. Like some sort of prey.

The feeling is very unnerving. Perhaps he is not an... extraordinary man- though he has not quite given up on that idea- but he is still in charge of his own mind. He won’t let some stranger take that control, despite... his current weakness, his current confusion. No, there isn’t any room to worry about Victor, not with the murder, not when he must contemplate the daring... No...

Even now, after... Rodya looks up and finds Victor’s dark eyes on him. They are alight with curiously. Damn him! What does he seek to find?!

Again Rodya looks sharply away. He has thus far been dealing with the threat posed by this rich stranger with silence. A silence that been very hard to maintain with the infuriating comments that Victor tends to make. These thoughts, these emotions have been bottling up... Petrevich demands so much, with his constant interrogations, the girl he met... Sonia, she makes him question his own soul...

And now a rich man who gazes at Rodya as if he knows, as if he understands...

But he couldn’t know. He couldn’t understand. Rodya himself hardly understands... What then, what could this man of privilege possibly know of anything Rodya has experienced?!

Rodya gloomily looks down at his hands. Near every action he commits to these days can be described as gloomy. Or brooding. He is much too deep in his own mind, and has lost reality... And without such, how to determine the importance of anything? Dear God, he feels so detached... yet in such terrible suffering- and for what? To be someone extraordinary? For the sake of knowing? He was not any better for either... What suffering was greater? To be alone and ignorant or to be with those who do not know while he alone is ignorant?

“We are rarely alone.” Victor comments. Rodya startles, eyes briefly drawn to Victor’s again.

No response.

“You rest so often. When you are not resting there is someone else in the room.” Victor continues, moving to sit on the small couth beside Rodya. “When both of those are untrue- you’ve been summoned to the police station, or are off attending to your friend Sonia, or are off just wandering pointlessly, or you’ve just been pretending to rest and... do I need to continue? I think that covers the general idea well enough. I’ve placed my claim.”

Rodya sighs. Victor is very much a man of science. He goes about life through hypothesis, research, and conclusions. Rodya has never been one for nature seen through science, but instead human nature. He scoffs.

“What of it? You’re my doctor not my Mother.”

Victor laughs, “I didn’t see that sort of control when she visited. I bet you do listen to me more.”
A deep sigh from Rodya, “You listen to me, now, I won’t have-”
Victor lays a hand on his shoulder, “Hush. I just made the point about us being alone because I want to talk to you about something alone.”

A dark (gloomy) look from Rodya, bordering on hateful glare. “What is that?”
“The murder.” Such a smug grin.
Rodya’s heart stops. He knows. You fool... flashes trough his troubled mind. He has been so pleased with his acting, had he let something slip? No... he’d been so silent. Victor had nothing. “What of it? I’ve been ill. You know that better than anyone!” He replies after a moment of his heart pounding.

Victor raises his eyebrows. “It’s really truly amazing how calm you can become. Trust me. I understand deceit.”

“Deceit?” Rodya stands abruptly, getting away from Victor. “What are you accusing me of? You’re a doctor- did you not tell me to avoid stress?! Why do you-”
Victor stands as well, grabbing hold of Victor’s arm.

“It isn’t an accusation. I am sure it is a fact.” Victor’s gaze burns into Rodya’s black stare.

“Nonsense!” Rodya jerks away as Victor lets go, sending the Russian man sprawling against the wall. He falls onto the floor, looking up at Victor with wide eyes, breathing heavily.

“What are you so afraid of Rodya?” Victor asks, crossing his arms, looking down at Rodya with some degree of satisfaction.

What proof could he have? He can’t know! How is he so sure?! What game is he playing?!
“What is the matter with you?” Rodya cries. “Why won’t you leave me alone?”
In response Victor crouches down to Victor’s level. “I don’t have any proof, if you’re concerned about that. I don’t want to tell Petrevich a thing. I don’t want to see you sent off to Siberia.”
This is all so... abrupt, confusing... had the end come so soon? Did Petrevich already know?!

It’s a rather good thing that Rodya is on the floor, as he’s beginning to feel faint... Perhaps this would be better if Victor really thought he was a madman... it feels as if the swissman can see into his consciousness. That can’t be possible though...

“Who are you really? Why have you come here?! What is it you want from me?” Rodya’s voice is weak. “You come at me with baseless accusations, claiming to be a doctor!”
Victor seizes both of Rodya’s arms, to pull him closer. “And you are not ill by any doing but your own. That we both know.”

“What do we both know? How can you know?!” Sonia’s words rush though Rodya’s thoughts, “Is... is it possible- are you divine, somehow?”
The words seem utterly ridiculous once they escape, but also fitting. Sonia has filled his mind with ideas of God, and angels, and forgiveness... He is not sure anyone- what is real. All that he’d assumed had not been quite right...

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“Divine?” Victor sighs. He has considered this point very deeply. “I do not think so. Some have called me God, creator but... no- I do not think in the way you mean.”
“I... I don’t under-”

“Understand! Yes, understanding- that is what I want. You asked that of me, did you not? What it was I wanted? There are so many people in my life, so many that I love, and who love me. Yet... yet none of them can know...”
Victor searches Rodya’s face desperately. He receives no response.

“Where do I even begin?” Victor squeezes Rodya’s arms. Another deep sigh. “You’re a murderer-”

“I am no such-”

“...and as a murderer, you don’t really matter do you? You’re of little consequence in society. A criminal. Who would even believe you once I told you my secret?”
Rodya is staring at Victor, whose intensity is borderline feverish, incredulously. “What right do you have to speak down to me?! You are-” Rodya tries to cut in.

Victor stops him with a harsh squeeze, pulling him closer yet. His voice is a harsh whisper. “But that is only half of it! There is more to you- I know this to be true. Understanding is not just a
that is only half of it! There is more to you— I know this to be true. Understanding is not just a body that listens, because I have known murderers. You are uncommon among them. The guilt you feel is my guilt! This beautiful sensitivity you possess is... is something that I went through! Can’t you see? Fate has drawn us together! Has delivered to me a brother who will share my burden! Fate has gifted me—"

Thought this monologue Victor’s voice has been steadily rising, and Rodya expected to smell vodka carried on his hot breath, but Victor was not even remotely drunk. This is something he truly believes! And Rodya has run out of what little, sporadic, patience he had been trying to cling to.

“Fate?!” Rodya demands attention with his voice, the intensity of his stare. He feels far too weak to do it physically. “You have come here because of some idea of fate?! Are you not a man, who makes your own decisions?!”

Victor blinks. He is not used to being torn from monologueing in such a way. "Whatever do you mean? I make decisions, yes, but once I have done so fate guides the consequences.”

Rodya is greatly annoyed. Victor can see that in the look he gives him. “the consequences of your actions stem from your decisions. That is not fate! That is facing what you have done and deciding whether or not you will accept the cost of that action or if you cannot.”

“But this was fate! My actions have sent me to you. Why else would two people as different as us have come together?”

“I had no desire to met you! It was not fate that drove you to chase e down! I do not know what did! But it was not fate; it was entirely your own madness!”

“I’m no more mad than you! You know that- you know a great deal. As fate has commanded it, now let me finish my confession!!”

“Ach... Victor.” It seemed as if Rodya was going to make some form of retort, but instead he fell silent. This rich Swiss man was immensely frustrating. “Thank you...” Victor takes a deep breath, he has been clutching Rodya, knuckles white, and he now relaxes that grip. “Oh... I don’t know how to confess this... it has all been like a dream... no, a nightmare. Where could I even start??”

“After all of that you won’t even get to the point?!?” Rodya cries. “Don’t you rush me! Not in confession to this depth! Don’t you understand what this means to me?!?”

“No! Damn you no! How can I when you refuse to explain a damn thing?! I never asked you to even come here let alone force your secrets upon me!”

Victor is stunned. Anyone back at his home would have hung off his every word. Yet this Russian man doesn’t seem to care... but, no, it can’t be! Victor is just overwhelming him, that’s all. So he must calm down- Rodya is just scared, not cold.

He takes a deep breath and released the air as a sigh, rubbing Rodya’s arms. “Hush now. Don’t be distressed.”

Rodya just stares at him. It must be working.

“I’ll continue, then, now that we are both calm. What I must confess is the darkest of my desires fulfilled. My greatest guilt, secret, and regret. I am loathe to say the words aloud, as I have never confessed them to a single other soul.”

“Don’t let me change that for you.” Rodya mutters, trying to bat away Victor’s hands. “Rodya! Rodya, you are beyond cruel to me! I cannot bear this alone any longer!”

“I do not want to know your secret!”

“Are you not the least bit curious even, Rodya?! I have defiled nature!”

“As have I? I have no room to shoulder the burdens of others! Perhaps, before, I may have asked, but I do not like you to begin with!”

“Before the murders?!” Victor snaps finally, as though he’s striking a blow. Rodya’s eyes just flash. “Yes.” Victor has driven him to this point, and now Victor cannot bear to by the only privy to a secret. Understanding must go both ways. “I shall not know your confession and keep mine to myself!” Victor’s heart beats, he feels a single
drop of perspiration. It is time! Finally time!
“Victor, you forced me to-”
“I HAVE CREATED A MAN!”
Silence.

†††

Victor is mad. He is mostly certainly insane. Everything is very clear now.
“He... he is a creature... hideous and deformed... I made this thing...” Slowly Victor trials off, staring into Rodya’s eyes.
“No you haven’t.” Rodya says firmly.
“What?”
“No.” Rodya looks away, crossing his arms.
“I have!” Victor rocks back on his heels, looking as though he’s been punched. “I have played God! I—”
“Cannot believe you wasted my time for this. And you call yourself a doctor?”
“I am a doctor! Of sorts. Look, I have studied the sciences for years! Down to discovering the secret of life! What more could a doctor provide than giving life?!”
Rodya sighs. For a moment, the way Victor was talking about regret, desires, and playing God, he thought this rich man might truly be extraordinary, or at least understand as he claimed to. However, he sees the follies of these hopes now. Creating life is a matter of fiction. Rodya knows now that Victor has targeted him to share his madness. Well, he is not mad, so Victor is out of luck. They may share some ideas, the same base perhaps... but, no. No, there are no further similarities.
“You have proof of this ‘life’?” Rodya asks after his momentary pause. He is feeling really lightheaded after all this excitement.
“I do! The creature stalks me... a bitter daemon that searches to destroy all that I love! He is a monster, hideous, with taunt, dead, yellow skin, sunken eyes, and although I’ve given him the nicest teeth and hair... oh, it only makes it all worse!”
Rodya shakes his head, “As such an incredible doctor you should be able to diagnose your own hallucinations.”

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This is not how Victor imagined that his grand confession would go, and he grows weary of Rodya’s tone with him. He will not stand to be mocked! No man will dominate him, not even another who may be... equal in wit. Rodya’s last comment sparks his passion beyond any other. “I have told no lies! I am not mad!” Victor cries out, seizing Rodya’s collar, “And you shall not mock me for the horrors I have been witness to!”
Victor yanks Rodya to his feet, for a full groan man the Russian is far too thin and light, before slamming him into the wall of the tiny room. The plaster cracks. Rodya winces, taking the attack well, as Victor cannot see the waves of dizziness that sweep over him, darkening his vision.
“My little brother was murdered! My sister, my best friend— they are under constant threat! And you will not dare to—... Rodya?”
The other man’s eyes have closed, and he isn’t resisting at all... Victor releases Rodya, and then barely catches the Russian against his chest as he goes limp.
“Hmm. You’ve fainted.” Victor observes, anger fading. He pulls Rodya into his arms, lifting the limp figure completely from the ground. For a moment he just cradles the man, feeling how insubstantial he is.
“Rodya you need to eat more... You should really listen to me.” Victor carries the other man to the door, careful not to hit him against anything, a difficult task in the tiny room. “This place is poisoning you, such a nasty little hovel.”
Victor has decided his medical treatment needs to become more forceful. Also, he very much desires to control their environment. He carries Rodya from his room, holding him close, and
down the stairs.
Rodya opens his eyes in conditions that are considerably better than his previous ones in every way. This is confusing, and also confusing. Slowly he sits up and comes face to face with Victor. His eyes widen for a moment, but then everything makes sense.

“I’ve been kidnapped.” Rodya comments dryly.

“Nonsense! That implies you’re being held here against your will!”

“Yes.”

“I’m your doctor! This is a treatment! Besides this is above your means. What man does not want to live above his means?”

“Mmm...” Rodya’s eyebrows draw together. His thoughts silence a response. That is a good question... Are means everything to a man? Surely for survival nothing else matters, but is that true even? What makes ideology greater than survival, than means, and if not an ideology than perhaps... a person. But that isn’t the original question, is it, that was an exception. What man does not want to live above his means? Is this not the constant lust for power that drives man? The hubris which leads many to their own destruction? Who is truly content to live within what means they are provided?... ah, but what is it to be provided? Should we not strive for what is beyond us- that is human innovation- what makes us great! But... what of the balance between content and power lust? What of the balance between humble and-

“Ah! Unhand me!”

Evidently Victor had tired of just staring while Rodya internally contemplated his beliefs, and had processed to pick him up.

“I think not. You most defiantly need a bath.”

Alarm.

“You will not be bathing me! Unhand me now!”

Victor had been very forceful about examinations and what he wanted to see of Rodya, making the Russian man terribly uncomfortable, and very reluctant to allow Victor too close.

Laughter, Victor sets Rodya down in the bathroom. “I’m not planning on bathing you. I don’t need any more physical evidence of your maladies. I just think a cleansing will help you recover from your weaknesses and fatigue.”

A warm bath does sound nice... ut has been a while... Rodya crosses his arms. He can see that warm water has already been drawn by the steam rising from the bath tub.

“Leave.”

“Good! You’re cooperating! I’m glad!” Victor smiles encouragingly. Rodya looks away. Any idiot knows that cleanliness was beneficial. He wasn’t doing this for Victor. He was doing this for himself.

“Go on now. Set your clothes outside too. They’re filthy.” Victor adds as he leaves, gently shutting the door behind him.

Rodya pauses before stripping. As soon as he slips his pile of rags out of the room he makes sure to lock the door. A sigh. He might as well do with this what he can...

The hot water feels amazing. It’s been a long while since he could enjoy something like this... The water settles to room temperature before he decides to dry off. A physical layer of filth has been removed and he feels, very literally, lighter. For a long moment he stares at the door, and he doesn’t want to leave, to go back to his troubles but...

Rodya cracks open the door. No clothes. Annoyance replaces his calm juts like that. Victor has that effect on him.

∞∞∞

Victor sits in the main room of the hotel space he is renting. He feels reassured knowing that Rodya is so close and at hand. Without any clothes he can’t escape. No matter how long he takes. Another page of his book goes by, Victor misses the click of the door opening in the hall. Rodya’s
footsteps are muted by the plush carpet. This time it is Rodya that is staring down Victor without permission. However, at the realization of another presence, Victor does not startle.

“Ah! I can actually see you!” Victor exclaims, leaping out of his arm chair, the writings of Rodger Bacon falling to the ground, upon seeing the towel-clad Russian. “You are so much paler than I had assumed! Look at that! I can see your veins...” Victor crosses the room to where Rodya is standing, and glaring, dark hair dripping into his eyes.

“So gaunt as well... don’t worry Rodya, you’ll have better food from me than you could afford before!”

There is nothing but silence from Rodya at those comments. Victor is amazed by the transformation he has witnessed. He seizes hold of Rodya’s face, twisting it this way and that, inspecting the pearl-toned skin in the sunlight, his delicate bone structure. Rodya scowls deeply.

“Agh...” Victor falls back, the breath knocked from him. For a moment he is immensely confused. Then he sees that Rodya’s hand is curled into a fist. Further confusion. No person has ever punched him—why would anyone want to punch him?

“You are clearly not Russian.” Rodya’s voice is as cold as the nation to which he was born.

“Well... n-no...”

“Where are my clothes?”

“Hold on...” Victor straightens back up after a moment of regaining his breath. He thinks himself lucky that Rodya is in such poor health... “I’ve got you new clothes. Not that you’ll thank me for it. You’ve done nothing but wish me ill for my kind doctoring.”

“I’m not that one here that wants something.” Rodya almost crosses his arms, but quickly recalls that he has a towel to keep hold of.

“The ideal is that we both gain. Go back into the bathroom and I’ll hand deliver your new outfit.” There’s always this moment before Rodya obeys whatever orders Victor throws out, and that moment grows only shorter with time. Soon his patient is dressed as Victor himself is dressed. As a man of Rodya’s intelligence should be dressed!

† † †

“You look wonderful, dear-” Victor starts, with that stupid gleam in his eyes.

“Did you bother to inform my friends, family, and— as seems true of my current situation—the authorities, where exactly I am currently?” Rodya interrupts before Victor can get started on whatever overly flowery point he was sure to have made.

“I... hadn’t considered that, no.” Victor says, blinking a few times in shock at the idea that such a responsibility would possibly be his.

“No? Of course not.” Rodya sighs and sits down, arms crossed. “I would appreciate it if they did know. So they won’t plague me with accusations.”

“You seem content enough to leave them on your own! In such a way that you completely isolated yourself before the murders.” Victor stands before Rodya, having taken offense to his dismissive tone. That offence is how Rodya knows he has pegged Victor correctly in this aspect of his personality.

“I was yes. And look at where that has left me! I hate to be bothered— I wish you all to go and yet... And yet alone I know my own mind is a poison. Sonia, my friend, my family... lately I have been questioning my isolation. I have been entertaining an idea that there is no way to think, without community that to have the right— if we all believed the right to be ours...” He trails off and frowns, not quite ready for such thoughts. “Never mind that! I want them told...”

“Why do you still push me away? Rodya, Rodya can’t you see? By your own words, we need another soul who understands! Can I not be that for you as you are for me?”

“Sonia, my sister, Razumihin they—...”

“Cannot know. Can they? They will give you such a look that your heart cannot bear! They will turn away from you— as you have become a monster! You know there is no way of understanding—even if there were would you want your loved ones to bear this ugly burden that tortures you, and you alone?”
Rodya is silenced. Victor is speaking aloud the things that have been holding him back from interacting with the people he does love, and also pushing him towards a confession, towards danger... but how could a well-off man such as this, Victor- as mad as he is- possibly know...
A pause where Victor goes to his knees, moving down to Rodya’s level.
“I know you understand what it is I am feeling. I know I am speaking to you. Because I have heard you speak of some sort of right, and I too have tried my hand at God’s work, and I corrupted nature... and I learned, as you did, that I was not one who could go through with what I had done.”
Rodya closes his eyes, “... you’re just mad. There’s no creation!”
“But your murders are real? Just because you cannot see what I have done while I can see your sin-”
Rodya’s fists clench. He does not appreciate how candidly Victor speaks of the horrors he has committed. “Just tell them! I shall not be arrested because of you!”

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A deep sigh from Victor. Why is it do hard to get what he wants? Rodya may be frustrated, but he is as well. He knows that they would be perfect- why wasn’t Rodya listening? He’s always right isn’t he? Nonetheless...
“You won’t be arrested. You’re here on doctors orders.” Victor pats Rodya’s thigh in a way he thinks is very comforting.
“Yes, yes, because Petrevich will simply accept an excuse that goes something like: My rich doctor who took me while I was unconscious, for my health as you can imagine, will attest for me. No, nonsense. These new clothes would only convince him the stolen money is indeed in my hands and he would only subject me to more of that infernal laughter...”
“There’s no reasoning with you is there?” Victor asks with a dramatic sigh, stranding.
“With me?!” Rodya replies, incredulously.
“I’ll go inform everyone!” Victor grabs his coat, ignoring Rodya’s pointed look.
“You’re the one who came into my life and wouldn’t leave!”
“Get something to eat Rodya!” Victor is walking to the door.
“You kidnapped me!!”
“The kitchen is fully stocked! You need the energy!”
“You have-”
The front door slams behind Victor.

†††
Rodya sits still for a long time, before standing and walking to the kitchen. First things first, he makes himself tea that is actually hot. Nothing like that weak, lukewarm liquid he usually is limited to. While this is calming- a novelty really- he gathers what he can eat without cooking. Rodya is aware of his limitations in the kitchen.
Yet, the quality of the food and the tea make no difference, as he doesn’t take any notice to what he’s eating- being much too distracted by his own thoughts. Victor is... like nothing, like no one he has ever encountered. So he has confessed his crimes! So another man is aware he is a murderer and...
And what of it? Nothing has changed, not a thing had happened! He knew and he looked no different upon him for it...
But Victor was mad! That was of no comfort... For being mad, however, he seemed to understand exactly what Rodya was feeling. What he was thinking... He made Rodya, for the first time since the murders, feel like he was centered. Feel accepted. Feel... that perhaps he was not so adrift after all...
Why then was this anchor- this... this madman- let us not forget his delusions- so absolutely infuriating! And how did such a man even find him!? Perhaps... fate-
No! No, he won’t give in to that sort of thinking. He shouldn’t be measured by someone who is
insane! What does that say of his own state of mind?
... yet... how wonderful, how beyond hope that anyone could understand...
Oh, he’s run out of food... and feels oddly full. Many experiences as of later have been so very odd. Murders have lead to all of these things... does that make them wrong?
It does doesn’t it? He knows that, he’s loathe to know it but... no, no can’t give up yet, can he?
These ideas, before the murders lead him here... He is still free.... of body alone though! Not of mind...
Agh... How necessary is it?- redemption? How essential is it... community? What of sin? What of this right... it...
A deep sigh. Rodya rests his head on his arms, closes his eyes. Odd, how easily he became used to others, how alone he felt so abruptly, when his precious isolation took months. Why is it so much easier to fall into the trap of others than to fall into the trap of one’s own mind? Another reason he has not the right. He isn’t arrogant enough.... he isn’t strong enough in self. Because he never really believed, maybe that was the difference all along. Perhaps... though, that selfishness is not such a good thing...
Fate... what an idiot.
Chapter 5

Victor returned home to find his patient asleep at the dining room table. He’s pleased. Rodya has listened to him and is comfortable enough to sleep around him! To be vulnerable in his home! Well... that may be an oversimplification. After all, Rodya is very nearly a chronic insomniac, and this is not the Chateau Frankenstein. Nonetheless!

Gently, gently, Victor slowly shifts Rodya from the table he’s resting on and into his arms. He carries him to the bedroom, laying him down carefully. As he works on taking off Rodya’s shoes and coat the Russian stirs, one eye opening.

“Hush now.” Victor murmurs soothingly, while hanging Rodya’s coat on the bedpost. “Sleep, you need your rest.”

Rodya babbles something, half coherent; Victor thinks he might catch a few curses, before rolling away and closing his eyes. Victor pulls the blankets up around his patient’s shoulders with a slight smile. Rodya is... endearing in a way. Such a dark, lovely being- alight from within with his... thoughts. Victor wishes to be a part of that inner world.

He stands there a few long minutes, admiring how pale his Russian is when clean, how his hair falls- stark against that snow-white skin, how dark his lashes are resting against high cheekbones...

Yes, Victor hadn’t been quite sure how much he wanted from this man. Now he was certain to what goals this particular obsession stretched. With the touch of a ghost he brushes aside a few strands of ink black hair. For the first time since before the thing was alive, the thought of his monster brings a smile to his face.

I will be with you on your wedding night, the thing had said. His wedding night? With whom? Elizabeth?

Well, both his father and monster make far too many assumptions.

†††

“...who are you?”

A soft groan in response to the sound of German. Rodya is finally sleeping fitfully; he doesn’t want to be bothered. He so rarely sleeps well these days, as plagued by fears and hallucinations as he is...

“Victor leave me alone...” Rodya’s muffled Russian response comes. He knows no others who speak German.

“You know of Victor? What language are you speaking? I have seen you with Victor...”

“Damn you Victor, you’re the one trying to force me to rest... leave me alone...”

“Are you... close to him?” This time the voice is trying French.

Rodya rolls over; he is a student of a Russian school. He knows French. It’s the prominent language of the time. He has also woken enough to realize that a voice that gruff could not belong to the effeminate Victor. Above him lurks a massive shadowy figure. His dark eyes widen- another nightmare, another hallucination.

“No...” He freezes, knowing that running from the figures that stalk him is impossible, as they are all in his own mind.

“Do you speak French? Tell me what I need to know!” The figure rumbles, with a voice that is surprisingly elegant despite his massive size.

“Surely you... you know of my confessions! Is that not why you are here... because of what I have done...” Rodya's French is a little rough, heavily accented.

A pause, “I am only concerned with your relationship to Victor. I know nothing of confessions.” Rodya is confused by this multi-lingual apparition. After all, he doesn’t know German, how could he hallucinate it? It might truly only be a man, if he knows nothing of the murders. The hallucinations have been very negatively affecting him: destroying his sense of reality. So many times he feels like a fool... making such illogical assumptions that he never would have assumed before. The wit he has held such worth to is fading because of the actions he took to prove it.
“How did you get in here? Is Victor not here? I know nothing of where he is.” Rodya fears turns into annoyance, and he takes on a curt tone. This stranger has interrupted his sleep, and has caused some irrational assumptions and has mentioned Victor. All of it was so... irritating.

“You are in his bed.”

“Am I?” Rodya sits up, squinting around himself in the darkness. “How was I to know that? I was sleeping. Either way- that isn’t any of your business. But if you do have business with Victor, however, I do not care.”

A pause, and Rodya gets a distinct sense of confusion from the larger man, “But... what of you and Victor?”

“If I tell you will I be allowed to sleep?”

Silence.

“Fine! It means nothing to me! Victor is my doctor. Not something that I wanted, but I am poor and he insisted.”

“He seems to care deeply for you.”

A sharp laugh from Rodya. “Care is one word for his obsessive stalking. What he wants from me is no more than... a product of his imagination.”

Tempting as it was, Rodya had been entrusted with a secret, and he was not just going to share that with others- at least not in his current mood. Rodya was admittedly very unpredictable and less than stable. What does this man know of them anyways? Of the way that Victor looks at him?

“Have I seen you before? Or are you an associate of Victor’s? He speaks of me?” Rodya ventures after the silence that met his bemused comment.

“No...” The large man finally responds. “I have been watching.”

Rodya’s heart skips a beat. The last thing he needs is a witness. “How long have you been watching?”

Had he seen? Did he know after all? No... Earlier he said he knew nothing of confessions... but if he had been watching... Yet, didn’t he want the truth to come out? Had he really given up on the idea of being extraordinary? Ah...

“I have always been watching Victor.”

Rodya calms. He has no qualms about someone haunting Victor’s life as Victor had been doing to him.

“Then go and wake him, wherever he is.” Rodya crosses his arms, having lost all patience.

“Are you not afraid of me?”

“What...? Why would I be-”

“Rodya!” A voice and matching footsteps move down the hallway towards the bedroom. Victor is speaking Russian still. “Are you having nightmares? Who are you talking to?”

“There is some man here to speak with you! I am trying to rest...” Rodya doesn’t bother to switch from French, Victor knows the language.

“That can’t be! If you do not know him who would know me?” According Victor has switched to French, and upon entering the room he gives a loud, dramatic gasp. “That is no man! You-daemon! Get away from my patient! Have you come now just to kill for fun??!”

The large man turns, baking away from Victor, and the bed, “Are you so surprised? There are no mountains, nor any ocean, that can separate us. No number of nations you cross guarantees your protection, my creator!”

“Go! Leave us! You are a cruel monster! He is ill and weak! Curse you- though I would not make any claim to Rodya’s innocence I still condemn his death as wrong!”

Rodya frowns for a good number of reasons.

“It is for this ignorance! For your continued judgment, your damnation for creating me- that you shall ultimately be destroyed! I will now leave you, leaving you still well aware that you are never safe with your promise to me broken, that all you love can never be safe! Recall again- I will see you again. On your wedding night!!”

Victor heaves a yell, throwing the mug he has been holding upon entering after the thing. The curtains blow for a moment around this massive man, and through the window moonlight briefly illuminates him. Rodya’s eyes widen. Dead yellow skin that’s taunt over his misshapen skeleton,
sunken eyes, perfect hair... and just as Victor had said... perfect teeth. This can be no man! He is... not even human...
It’s gone.
Rodya continues to stare out the window. So many things have changed for him, in less than a month. So many shocks have been delivered that for once his thoughts have... stopped.

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Victor glares after the daemon for a moment. He is far too deeply involved emotionally after the death of his younger brother to see clearly when it comes to this creation. Mistakes that are far too deep to any longer be separated from the self haunt him in this matter.

A sigh. Then he looks back at Rodya, who is safe and sound. And for once, he is the one who is annoyed.

“You couldn’t tell that that was not a man?!” He demands.

Rodya seems dazed, “That’s not such an unusual size for a man...”

Victor swears. “Russia is a terrible nation! I thought I was tall... this this is absurd!”

“You? No, you are barely taller than I... and I am of average height.” Rodya is only half committed to this conversation.

“Hmph. And speaking French...” When did the thing learn French? His monster was learning multiple languages! “I can’t believe I made it that intelligent! I’m an amazing doctor.... curse my abilities. Rodya-”

The Russian isn’t even looking at him.

“...do you still think me mad?” He abruptly changes subject, realizing he isn’t taking enough advantage of Rodya’s disconnect. His anger and sorrow upon seeing the monster turns to triumph. Rodya’s silence in enough for him, it’s an answer in its own way. Victor smirks. “Very well then, go back to sleep. You do need rest. Worry not. My creation only hates me.”

He leaves Rodya there, without bothering to shut the door. These things he has sorted long ago was now for Rodya to come to, the understanding he sought he knew could now be achieved. Rodya would come to Victor’s own conclusion, of this he is sure.

It takes much less time for this process to occur than Victor has imagined it would. Not soon after he had left the silenced Russian, soft footsteps come up behind the swissman and then stop. Finally. A smile slips across Victor’s face. Finally.

“You... that creature... how? No... No, no that’s not important is it? You did it. You made life. You played God and you... you are an extraordinary man!”

Victor turns. Rodya’s eyes are ablaze, and he looks feverish in his excitement.

“Do you believe that?” He asks calmly.

“Yes! It’s... well- listen Victor, there’s something you need to... something you must know- I had given up hope! I had thought perhaps- but this- you- Yes it must still be true I-”

“I’ve already read those papers. Your essays on the extraordinary man, Rodya. I already understand.”

“So you can say- You... you can tell me... is it true?!”

“No.”

Rodya steps back, physically affected by the words. With a sigh Victor steps forward, catching Rodya as he slumps back against the wall. This time his grip is not forceful or coercing, but instead a gentle supportive hold.

“We have failed.” Victor’s voice is calm. He realized this. Not in the form of struggling with being extraordinary, but in the form of being a “creator”, a “deity”.

Rodya raises his eyes to meet Victor’s gaze, his dark eyes shattered, all of the cracks finally broken. “No... Victor, we... never had a chance to succeed.”

Victor pauses. This man always takes him off guard. He is so much more than Victor could have imagined, and so much more intelligent than anyone he has ever met. (Besides himself).

“Is that such a bad thing...?” Rodya asks softly, “We have been so inside our own heads there is no room for connections. And there can be no redemption alone...”

“Yet you push me away?”
“You, Victor, do not believe in redemption.”
And I am no longer pushing...
Victor traces Rodya’s jaw line with one thin figure, before hooking his chin- tilting the Russian’s head up.
“I can find redemption through you.” Victor’s voice is very soft, as he leans down, closing the distance between them. Claiming what he has wanted for days.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Romance, finally.

†††

The last two weeks have not gone in any sort of direction that Rodya would have ever imagined. At least, with the murder, he has carefully planned and debated it for months. Well... one of the murders. He had ended up with two.

... Maybe he just needed more time to think. Surely if he sat alone and thought for long enough he would come to some sort of conclusion where everything would make sense. Yet, that hadn’t quite been working out for him. This may be why he was not extraordinary. He thought too much, acted too little, and took back most of what he did act on. Rodya just wanted to be sure. Wanted to know, very clearly, what the truth of every situation was- so that he could be on the “winning side”. Life has proved much more complex than that...

And then there was Victor! Who acted without thinking, and did what he wished as he wished it. He was damn near impossible, but... in a way Rodya envied him. That ability to act, to focus, and to create was extraordinary. Follow through, however, was lacking, and in that way Victor could use some of what Rodya was so good at: thought. Without Rodya’s indecision would be best.

Right now, thought was difficult. Rodya still managed. He was trying to sort out whether or not he wanted Victor’s lips on his. On one hand the kiss was a welcome connection, on the other hand Victor was very annoying. He was a very attractive man... but, still a man. Very wealthy, but Rodya slightly detested that.

In this time of thought, Rodya has become rather breathless. Victor’s arm is wrapped around his waist, and he has been pulled much closer, Victor’s other arm braced against the wall beside his head. He’s completely satisfied with himself, Rodya can tell that easily, and he finally understands what it is that Victor wanted from him. So, in a way, he is satisfied as well.

A few soft breaths as Victor breaks away, resting his forehead against Rodya’s. “Are you going to punish me again? My pale devil?”

Was he truly attracted to Victor? Just because he is comforted by someone who understands... need that go further? Lately, in the light of his sister’s recent failed marriage- in no small part due to Rodya himself- and her current courting of Razumihin- a pairing Rodya approves of this time- he has given some thought to romance. Yet, there was also a great deal more that Rodya was concerned with, not only in this moment but for a long time... Romance especially in his isolation, has been something of a joke. Something all but impossible. Who would ever love a murderer?

Well, evidently another how is guilty...

“You aren’t listening! How can that be?!” Victor sounds so hurt. “No reaction?! Not even to that? But... but... Rodya!”
-it was playing Russian Roulette with a full clip and one blank. He had gambled knowing full well the cost. He was suffering for it now...

“I have confessed again to you Rodion Raskolnikov. And here you are still so very cruel to me! I have suffered so greatly need you add- You should know this: how I feel! And you should ease my burden by giving me an answer!” Victor steps back and assess Rodya, and then again steps towards him. “Curse you! Have your murders made you so cold? What of your talk of community! What of my understanding! I know you as you know me! We share a burden Rodya, dearest Rodya–”

While Victor has been speaking Rodya has been growing tenser and tenser- the force of his thoughts and feelings adding pressure from the inside out. As it had been during the murders, as Victor reaches the crescendo of his speech: Rodya reaches a breaking point.

Before Victor can finish his last sentence, or a sentence that could have feasibly been the middle of a monologue, Rodya shifts positioning, puts all of his strength into a single motion- and punches Victor in the face. With a cut off yelp Victor’s head snaps back. He falls to the ground. Rodya looks down on him for a moment, licks his lips, and then slumps down on the couch. He drops his head into his hands with a sigh.

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Victor can taste... blood. The left half of his face is throbbing... what did he do so wrong? He had thought Rodya finally accepted the burdens of understanding! He had had Rodya, and everything he wanted from him... what went wrong with that?

For a few minutes Victor just stays on the ground: lamenting his pain. He wonders if he can still succeed, if he should be angry with Rodya...

Finally, he stands up, opening his mouth to rebuke the perfectly still and silent Russian. Rodya’s slight tremor stops him. The man looks ashen, his face covered by his hands, lost deep in thought. Victor understands that wretched feeling, and, even as he sucks blood from his broken lip, his anger fades. He sits down beside Rodya and gently draws the shivering, paler man to his chest, running his fingers through that inky black hair that he adores so much.

Victor felt the same when he realized the full extent of his breach of nature. Once William had been murdered, and he stood above that hole in the dirt where his innocent younger brother was to “rest”- to rest! He had seen the dead, worked with them far too long for rest to comfort him! There was no peaceful term, no way to come to terms with the fact that this child whom he had loved and vowed to protect was going quite alone into the unfeeling, cold ground. He had not only failed to protect his family, but there was blood on his hands... He had been overwhelmed. Been so helpless in the face of what he had done wrong, in the knowledge that nothing, nothing, would ever be what William was again... The creature was his and he ran. He had made a mistake, and as the casket was lowered, and he saw the child’s pale unmoving face for the last time... he knew it was not one he could remedy.

Rodya was right. Victor did not believe in redemption.

“I understand your pain... your suffering.” Victor murmurs. “I had been at my lowest point upon realizing that I was only playing God. Something I knew as soon as that thing awoke, but it was something I only fully understood when my William was dead, and Justine hung I... I didn’t want the responsibilities of creator, of God. I only wanted to learn! To... to push my limits. I claimed to do it for the rest of humanity but I think my secrecy reveals that is not true. I did it for me. And for me alone...”

“Yes!” Rodya springs up from Victor’s chest, staying his hands upon the swissman’s shoulders. “I spoke of that woman I killed as a louse... I took a life for the better! I took two... and what a joke it was! I did not kill them for some greater good... no, no I was at the edge and I had to jump and if my life stayed as it is now, if I faced infinite punishment, what did I care?! Because I had to know! More than anything I had to know whether or not I had the right- if it existed at all! I was suffering before and it is worse now- but at least now I know!”

“We both know now. I have been a giver of life, and you a taker of it, but in both ways... we were arrogant enough to play God.”
“For the betterment of humanity? No... for ourselves.”
“And now we are damned.”
Rodya frowns, settling back against Victor. “Not forever. Not unless we are not willing to change.”
Victor sighs, wrapping his arms around Rodya, rubbing his back. “I have done too much to-”
“Stop right there! Sonia has told me of redemption, and I believe what she told me...”
“Because you must?”
“Because if I do not then there is no point in being alive is there? We shall live in the past, never moving forward, never moving on and that will slowly kill us! There is no future without redemption.”
Victor’s arms tighten around Rodya, “I have sworn revenge. That is my future.”
“That is no future.”
“What else do I have?! There is no separating me from that beast! No escape for me... whatever I change he will undo!”

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Rodya draws up his legs, “And why does he hate you Victor?”
Because Rodya is sure that Victor did something beyond just make the thing. Victor does tend to anger those around him from what he has seen.
“I will not make him a wife... and can you blame me? This mistake haunts me and... and I could not again play God! I could not curse this world with another like him! Yet is I do not... agh, would you murder again, Rodya? Can you not understand?”
“Hmm... I think there is a great difference between murder and creation but,” Rodya’s dark eyes reflect the fire that burning in the fireplace before them, “perhaps I would. I would like to say not. Why is this monster so terrible?”
“He killed-”
“Your brother. Yes. Let me tell you, as a murderer myself, it is not always so simple. Why did he do it? Did he tell you?”
Victor is silent for a moment. He sighs, no longer rubbing Rodya’s back, very tense.
“William screamed, that’s what he told me, and he wanted him to... to stop.”
“Was it an accident then?” Rodya gets straight to the heart of the matter. Silence from Victor. So the Russian continues, “You gave him strength. You made him hideous as to be screamed at. And did you teach him how to handle these things?”
“I left him...”
So that’s what Victor did. Rodya is not so surprised. “Your mistake was leaving your work. Your mistake-”
“Killed William! Yes I know that! I killed my baby brother... that is my burden... Rodya, cruel Rodya...” Victor’s hands are fists in Rodya’s shirt.
“So you’ll have to fix your mistakes. And you have to find a way yourself. If you can’t find redemption, then the fault is within you. Not because I have not offered it, as it was offered to me.” Rodya says firmly.
“What of you! You cannot offer me redemption when you feign to take any help!”
“I am in your arms am I not?” Rodya snaps, and then sighs, resting his chin on Victor’s arm. “I know I was wrong... I am wrong. Even as I run. And I am trying, Victor. To be held is difficult. To talk with you in any sincerity is... difficult.”
Though that might always be how it is with Victor’s personality.
They sit in silence together for a long time, contemplating as they have so often done. This time, however, is different. When one sighs or shifts, there is a comforting touch, the slightest murmur of reassurance, and the crushing feeling of isolation is chased away.
Two restless minds chase one another as the fire burns down to embers.
“We should sleep.”
“I was sleeping when your monster awoke me...”
“You need the rest, nonetheless.”
Victor picks up Rodya, this time facing little resistance. In a bold move he takes Rodya into his bedroom. Setting him down and getting batted away when he tries to work with Rodya’s coat. “I don’t need your help getting ready for the night.” Rodya tells him coldly.

Victor sighs, and turns, getting undressed himself, folding his clothes and setting them away. He climbs then into his own bed, not willing to give it up now that he wants to sleep. Rodya stands back, a figure barely visible in the dark.

“Are you sleeping on the couch?” Victor smirks, knowing the answer he wants. Rodya hesitates, then without confirming or denying, he leans down and kisses Victor. And abruptly pulls away. Perhaps… that was a mistake. He had acted hastily. Was that a commitment? Maybe he doesn’t want to commit… Whatever Victor thinks he’s wrong-

“I’m sleeping on the couch.” He says curtly. Having entirely changed his mind, which is a theme with him.

“What?” Victor is confused. He’s pretty sure that kiss meant something… “Rodya-”

“No!”

“Rodya!” Victor sits up, seizing Rodya’s arm, “Come to bed.”

“Ah…” Rodya allows himself to be pulled down, allows Victor to pull the blankets up around the both of them.

“You taste like blood.” Rodya comments after some long moments in which talking had not been an option.

“Yes, well, whose fault is that?” Victor snaps.

“Yours. Arguably. You pushed me to-” His dry remark is cut off with a gasp.

Victor has rolled so he is now atop Victor. “I’m tired of your belittling me, Rodya. I think you would do well to be quiet for a while.”

“Is that truly what you want me to do in your bed? Be silent?”

“I want you to be mine! To be dominated by me.”

“That’s something you can never hope to achieve mentally.”

Victor makes a sound of frustration; Rodya bites back a kind of sound he’s never felt the need to make before.

“I… I thought you wanted me to rest, doctor…”

“I have new orders.”

“That won’t help your already questionable q-qualifications…”

“You ignore me for days! And now you will not cease your comments!”

“Something about knowing you better… it makes me more determined than ever to make sure you don’t get the last word…”

“I’ll have something from you if not the last word.”

Then Rodya, for some time, for the first time, stops thinking entirely.
Chapter 7

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Rodya wakes feeling... odd. He sits up with a wince and a sigh. Now was the time to regret every decision he had made last night. Where was Victor? This certainly wasn’t the way he had ever pictured any of this going. In the fleeting moments he had considered romance in no way was a rich, foreign, doctor- male nonetheless- an ideal, or even feasible, partner. Yet, in a way, it was fitting. His life was unorthodox, and his decisions could more correctly be called a series of ill-advised mistakes...

Rodya gets out of bed and finds a set of clothes from among those strewn about the floor. If they match is not of consequence, he won’t realize either way.

Why did he allow Victor that power over him? Allow him to take something so personal... What was he doing in the first place- Victor was a man! He was already a sinner, God, he knew that much. Was it enough to be redeemed at all? Would this push him deeper into suffering- no he was not alone now, so surely-

The apartment is quiet. Why is it this quiet? He hasn’t come across Victor...

It’s in the kitchen he finds the note.

Dearest Rodya,

It is not to say that I do not enjoy your company, or that I was in any way lying in my search for mutual understanding. However, I found that I urgently need to return home, as I found that I had been gone a long time without any sort of contact with my family. I don’t want you to feel any ill will towards me, sweet, dark, Rodya. You have been fortune’s gift to me. I meant all I said before to you. Beside this note you will find what I consider to be an appropriate sum of money for our interactions...

The note went on for several more pages. Rodya skims them, raising his eyes to find the pile of rubles on the table. A very slow breath in. And then another breath out.

He does not feel any anger, or sadness, or pain. Instead Rodion Romanvich Raskolnikov is prompted to do something he has never done in his entire life:

Make a rash decision and follow through with it.

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Victor Frankenstein almost regretted his departure from Russia, because it truly was the end of a much needed respite. Only his tour through his much beloved landscapes was keeping his mind off of his dreaded return home. No, what he was worried about was not his monster, not this time. He hadn’t ever had any illusions about staying with his Russian. It would never have worked out. Rodya was a murderer. He was poor. He lived in Russia. He was a man! None of this, of course, was either of their faults. Just couldn’t be helped. Their relationship would never have worked out...

Miles away from home and he had found someone who understood. Raskolnikov had been perfect! A murderer foolish enough to believe... someone that almost gave the man who played God hope. Was he to risk that connection to his monster’s murderous hands? He had run away so many times... was it just habit now? Saving the lives of others... was that an excuse for cowardice? The swissman is lurched from his musings when his carriage comes to a stop. He blinks a few times, sighing deeply before unfolding himself from the carriage.

Elizabeth and Henry are waiting.

“Victor!” Elizabeth claps her hands, running to Victor. He smiles slightly and catches her in his arms.

“My God man! Where have you been?” Henry grins and clasps him on the shoulder.
For a moment Victor juts closes his eyes. This is his home. He is safe here, and loved. Henry will never insult him like Rodya. Elizabeth will never taste like Rodya...
What does that matter! It was only a month...
“I apologize for not writing you. Both of you. I was otherwise occupied. It does not mean that you two mean any less to me, sweet cousin, dearest friend.”
“You’re always otherwise occupied.” Henry nudges Victor with a grin, and Elizabeth blushes faintly.
“Oh, Henry, don’t imply such things! He means your work in education, Victor.”
Victor just smiles dryly. Neither of them have any idea. He forgot what it felt like. This self-induced loneliness, a wall of secrets. “Yes. Well... it is good to be home. St. Petersburg is... it is not like home. Russia is a quite dreadful place.”
With an arm around his best friend, and another around his favorite sibling (adopted cousin), he re-enters Chateau Frankenstein. Ready to wash away every way that Rodya has touched him.

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Victor really had no idea how much money was a lot. A stop at Sonia’s, then at his families’, then at Razumihin’s, and he still had enough money from Victor’s “gift” to go to Switzerland. Yes. He was leaving Russia for the first time. Rodya knew where Victor lived, the man had mentioned it multiple times.
The Russian was obsessive once he committed, and he had committed a great deal to Victor. The scientist that came while he was vulnerable, infuriated him, and stole his heart. Or at least stole something as valuable. He knew from experience that this act was not something he would ever be able to stop thinking about. Murdering two people had resolved some issues, but compounded most others in his mind. This sin was now much the same. Satisfying in some ways but... Rodya had to do this. He could not let go. Victor was right about some things. He needed understanding, community, redemption.
What was right and wrong beyond that was hazy in his mind.... Victor had helped him sort out these thoughts... he was selfish in murdering the pawnbroker and her sister... he was selfish again for staying in Victor’s bed. One he had done with a theory in mind and the other... purely for his own desires.
He had many questions on the differences in these actions, many concerns.
And a long train ride to think.

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Victor had not yet decided his next step now that he was home again. He had spent the weeks home from Russia with his family, Henry, and in his lab attempting to figure out how he made the daemon so fast and so strong. Nothing was sure, however, as a plan for continuous action. Perhaps he could somehow engineer something to take the life he had given... Revenge, as it always had, occupied his thoughts.
Being home was both poisonous and a pleasure. He truly has missed his friends, his family. Their proximity to him, though, had him fearing for what could happen. No moment was untainted. William had left a hole in this home, a silence that felt like an immeasurable void, no matter the noise made to fill it. An addition to these feelings a pesky pull remained in Russia. Thoughts flitting back to the dark beauty he had left... a twisted north star. Not that he would allow himself to imagine anything like love, not with-
“Victor! Victor?”
Ah, Elizabeth’s sweet voice rings down from upstairs.
“Yes, Elizabeth?”
Footsteps down the stairs and she appears in the doorway.
“There is a man here to see you.”
To see him? Who could that be? If it were Henry he would have just come inside. Perhaps a villager who wanted to thank him for something his family had done, or someone with new
business for his family...
“I’ll go answer the door now, Elizabeth.”
He wipes his hands clean and follows her back upstairs into the grand entryway.
“He’s waiting outside. Rather... odd looking foreigner with a very thick accent.” She comments lightly.
“Is that so?” Victor responds, not for a moment considering what he does not know to be the truth.
“Very pale. You’ll see.” She parts from him to enter the kitchen as he goes to the large double doors.
“Mmm...” No one could be paler than- “Rodya?!?!?!”
“Victor.”
“Oh... you... here... I... this must be a dream! How...?” Victor takes multiple steps back from the entrance.
“You look faint.” Rodya comments without moving. Normally he is the one fainting.
“I... I... no this... I might be slightly ill... I am prone to falling ill.” Victor isn’t even sure what he’s saying. He is in shock. Why is it that all of the things he attempts to escape stalk him? Curse fate! Perhaps he should engage with more inanimate objects... the monster had been inanimate! Damn all this...
Rodya has stepped inside and is removing his coat- the coat had Victor given him. “You do seem the type to fall ill constantly. That’s a luxury of the rich. When the poor fall ill they simply die.” Victor’s indignation spurs him out of shock a bit. “You were ill when I found you!”
“Was I? You spent weeks convincing me I was not truly ill. Where you lying, ‘doctor’?” Rodya hangs his coat and turns back to Victor. His dark eyes are burning from within the bruised-looking crescents caused by sleep deprivation.
“Yes well-” Victor huffs, flips the tails off his jacket while straightening up, makes strong eye contact, and takes a fighting stance. Rodya raises a brow. “How did you even get here?”
“Ah, yes, that. I was expecting repertoire. Not an obvious question.”
“Is that so obvious? You are poor! You cannot afford to come here! How did you even know where here was?! You were so... so distraught when I brought you only miles from your hovel. You would not move nations away! You spoke of the law! This trip could be damning to you! And what of your good friend? Of your family? Hmm? This is not an obvious thing for you to have done! You... Raskolnikov why are you looking at me in such a manner?!’”
Rodya tilts his head, looking Victor up and down, allowing a long moment of silence before speaking. “I am wondering how you managed to create life with the level of intelligence you are currently presenting.”
This is Victor’s home! He will not take such an insult here. Before Rodya has a chance to comment further (whether he was planning to or not is of no consequence) Victor has his hands fisted in Rodya’s shirt collar, and is slamming the other man into a wall.
“GO HOME RODY-”
Victor never finishes that sentence. Rodya had curled his hand into a fist as soon as he was grabbed, and does not hesitate to connect it with Victor’s face. This time Victor takes the blow without yelping; though still falling back. He glares up at the Russian, who’s still holding his fist in the air, with indignant malice. Damn Rodya, damn you, damn-
“Excuse me, Victor?” Elizabeth’s voice rings out, and is followed by her gentle footsteps. “I-... oh. Oh, my.”
Rodya slowly lowers his fist.
“My apologies,” He mutters to the lady.
Although he can’t be sure she ever hears the sentiment because Victor has thrown his arms in the air upon seeing the woman.
“Elizabeth! Elizabeth! Why didn’t you mention he was a Russian? Elizabeth, you should have told me! You should have sent him away! He is not a good man, Elizabeth, he-”
“Victor...”
“He isn’t safe for you to be around!” (Rodya knows this isn’t true. Only Victor receives his anger physically, barring one or two murders.)
“Victor your face...”
“Elizabeth, listen!”
She just kneels down and gently wipes at his lip.
“No, you’re bleeding, hush.”
To Rodya’s great surprise Victor actually falls silent at Elizabeth’s urgings. He closes his eyes; her soft voice fading to the busy noise of his own thoughts. He wished he could exert that sort of influence on Victor, if only to make him fall silent without the use of his fists when he felt red hot anger building, but... No, he would never be as pure in touch as Elizabeth; that opportunity was long gone. He could not consol himself as Sofia had done for him...
A hand clasping his shoulder wrenches him from these ponderings. With a glance to the side he finds Victor standing again.
“Downstairs.” Victor says with the slightest of squeezes.
Rodya follows him after casting the lovely blonde woman once last glance. In part apologetic, in part envious. It may turn out as a glare.

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Victor brings him down a flight of stairs into some sort of odd room. He seems to sense Rodya’s quiet confusion.
“It’s my workshop.”
“Ah.” Rodya regard the vials and machines with skepticism.
“I made my monster in a lab not unlike this one! I am working now to.... Well, never mind that.”
Victor has learned when to abandon his less effective monolouging for a slightly better monologue. It is a slight improvement born of this relationship. “Rodya, did you read the whole of my letter? I meant those words, even as was writing them, and I mean them still. But I did not intend my heartfelt words to bring your to Switzerland. I did not intend to make you fall so deeply in love that you flee the law and traverse nations to return to my arms. Perhaps a shorter latter may have been better...”
“Less money.”
“Excuse me?” Victor blinks, the entire time Rodya has been standing still: alive inside but unmoving outside; his emotions burning through his eyes.
“It was not your letter that enabled me, you fool. Your reference to me as though I were a common escort... No, you have no idea what is a lot of proportional sum. You are detached from the world and here, again, your speaking does nothing but prove that.”
Victor gives this point serious consideration. It is true that he does not know how much money would be considered enough for a poor man. He was attempting generosity in what he considered to have been a selfish move (maybe). So, frustratingly, he cannot argue.
“Even still. You used my gift, letter aside, to come to me. That is a connection.”
“A connection I’m not denying, Victor! But more than anything I want answers. I want you to cease being such a coward! Have you not learned by now there is no running from your decisions? You need to take responsibility.”
“And have you ceased running? Rodya, you are a murderer and I know you have not faced the law!”
“No.” The feverish glint is back in Rodya’s eyes, his slight frame atremble, his pale skin an unearthly pallor in the dim lights. “I have not. But for my crime I suffer each day.”
“As do I!”
“Yes, we suffer. You run. I do not. That is what makes me more justified than you.”
“You are not-”
Rodya steps forward; physically silencing the other man. “I was wrong! I am not extraordinary or alone! I am a foolish, foolish, individual that spurned convection- which I now know is the only way to fine any redemption. What I did was my fault alone; my sin to bear, and as much as it pains me you’re right! I’m a murderer!”
Victor’s eyes narrow. Rodya has taken steps that he has not, and again Victor finds himself in the wrong. He is Rodya’s power, trapped by the Russian’s logic and his own guilt.
Aggression has not worked, and neither has logic. He will not again be subservient to this lowly beggar, this violent soul, this brilliant mind, this dark beauty—Damn it!

“Rodya...” He turns now to a new tactic: closing, again, the distance between them as he had done once before. “We need not argue any longer is our reunion is brought about as it has been, and is inevitable.”

Rodya’s eyes narrow. “That isn’t how you felt a moment ago.”

Victor leans in to kiss Rodya’s protests from his chapped lips. What he receives is a hard shove that sends him flying backwards.

“You only want my silence when you’re losing.”

Victor rubs his chest; his broken lip still stinging. “I see you’re feeling better.”

With a deep, frustrated sigh Rodya leans back, and rests his palms against the cool marble of one of the counters.

“This was a game I enjoyed playing with you, but I tire of it now. I am making a change. I need to make this change because you have seen me without redemption, and the only hope I would have in that life is death. That is the end to a life alone! That is the end to acting as a God, or to acting selfishly! And that is the end you’re facing if you do not change!”

“Have you come only to threaten my end, Rodya?”

Rodya pauses to think. “I was not sure what was going to happen when I came here. I only knew that I needed to. I had so many unfinished questions, and so many decisions that I, again, was on the cusp of...” His eyes close, and his body has grown tense. “How many examples do I need...? There are things that I know now. If I do not act then I am a fool, as much as I have accused you of being. Without redemption I am not a man at all... I have no life, but one where I know what I have done, and that is no life at all!”

Rodya’s eyes fly open, and he shoves past Victor to the stairs.

“Where are you going?!” Victor demands; wasting no time in following.

“You said it yourself! I have not faced the law...”

Rodya bursts through the door back into Frankenstein Manor’s main floor, back into the parlor, and back to the entrance.

“What-” Victor hesitates. “You only just arrived!”

With a hard smirk Rodya is pulling on his coat.

“I have stayed long enough for my questions to find their answers.”

“Rodya!”

The Russian opens the doors outside with a bang. Victor trails him onto the stairs, but goes not further than his own porch.

“Raskolnikov!”

Finally the man turns, ceasing his relentless and sudden pace; Victor cannot believe the look in those dark mean what has been implied...

“What happened to community in your decision?” There is a tremor in Victor’s voice that he is not familiar with. His confidence is not merely shaken, but shattered. “Where is my voice in your fate?!?”

This time Rodya’s smile is not cold, nor mocking, but genuine. There are many things he could say in response to the question; perhaps arguing the way Victor has so entirely missed the point, but he only wants Victor to understand.

“Victor... could you eve love me, or anyone for that matter, as much as you hate yourself?”

Rodya waits in the silence following his word with little surprise. Victor never replies. Rodya again turns towards the road.

“No. I didn’t think so. I will no longer be a coward like you, Victor.”

And the esteemed creator of life stands still upon his stairs as his dark North Star guides towards a place he cannot follow... Not one move does he make to stop Rodya’s departure. He keeps a tight grip upon the rail, and stares after the man long after he is no longer in sight. Once he feels the footsteps that have faded are not coming back he turns, retreats back into his home, and doesn’t again think of following; as though Rodya was never there at all.

Because Raskolnikov, again, was right.
Victor sits quite alone before William’s tombstone. The day is cold, and his breath rises in clouds around a face that has grown much paler in the last few weeks. He doesn’t know how long he’s been sitting, but his fingers have gone completely numb. Since Raskolnikov had gone he was teetering on the brink of illness; he knows the decision he is avoiding is one of life and death, but he fears death both ways. How could Raskolnikov have overcome this doubt? Did he have a strength that Victor did not? Was not his crime worse...? Victor reaches out a numb hand to touch William’s name. He has no right to judge crimes... Perhaps he is thinking too much of crimes. Wha happened could never be changed. He is trying to repent... Was not his dark north star repenting now? Yet his crimes had died! Victor dealt every day with his mistakes... dealt? Had he done so yet? Not entirely. He would be free if it were dead! He would be free if he were dead... These are the things that he knows. It has already taken immense willpower to see past his own blind judgments and hatred. Still he is missing something... dear God, what was he missing? “Victor?” A sweet voice drifts from beyond the tombstone that has become his world. He sighs but does not respond. “Victor? You’ve been out here greater than an hour...” Elizabeth emerges over the hill with a blanket folded over her arm. “It’s too cold for such behavior.” She kneels beside Victor and drapes the blanket over his shoulders; she looks, as well, at the grave of their beloved little brother. For a moment they stay like that, and her warm touch brings some light o Victor’s dark thoughts. “You mustn’t linger like this. You must let go, my dear. Henry and I have been waiting for you to come in and have tea, and it seems like we have been doing so for over a year now. Please, Victor, why you blame yourself... I don’t know. But I forgive you. I forgive you for standing back when Justine was hung and I forgive you for your fear.” Her voice is soft. Victor has been avoiding her since Raskolnikov’s departure, since the monster, for this very reason. He will love her all the more and then lose her, lose Henry, as he has lost William. Isn’t he already losing them? He’s lost Raskolnikov... Abruptly he stands. The blanket slips from his shoulders, drifting in a gust of wind to obscure the tombstone completely. Elizabeth stays on her knees, the picture of innocence staring up at him, and Victor cannot bear the thought of imparting anything dark upon her.... but he knows his silence is breaking her heart. He turns from her when he finally speaks. “I blame myself even more than you know for Justine’s death because she was innocent!” “But Victor I do know that!” “No. You know only because you are too good to see the evils of others, but in Justine you were right to trust. She was a kindred spirit to you, dear. I am not. For... it was I who killed William.” His second confession is not nearly as dramatic as the first. This time his voice shakes, and he does not relish the thought of a reaction. “Victor, such a terrible thing could never be true. I beg you— stop thinking such things. You have been looking so ill...” “You don’t understand. I built it.” “Built...?” “The monster that attacked William! I have created life in the form of a hideous parody of man and it was he who crushed the light from my brother!” The silence he receives in response to this confession is more devastating than any words she could have uttered. He cannot turn to face her. “I never wanted you to know... I never wanted you to deal with what I had done but that...” He
moans, “it has consumed my life and my every thought and I feel so helpless and guilt wracked...”
“Oh,” Elizabeth stands. Victor does not notice her movement.
“I played God, and I am sorry to God for it! I have been wrong so many more times than I have been right. I knew you couldn’t bear to love me once you knew the truth because somewhere deep inside I have stopped loving myself...”
“Victor please...” She tries to reach out a hand, but remains unnoticed as the broken man before her becomes more frantic.
“I created a monster and destroyed any chance it had not to be so! I lost my redemption when William was buried, when I turned my back on what I had done, and if I were you I would leave now! If I could run from myself I would! I met such a queer man in Russia and he spoke of faith — he implicated the name of God— he begged me from a dark place to imagine... to hope, but I am not him! I cannot be asked to face my fear, to face you, because I have always been selfish but never enough to drag you with me... I”
“Victor!” She throws herself upon him, forcing her arms around his trembling form. “Victor face me!”
She knows she is asking him to do what he fears most, and she is sorry for it, but she cannot watch him fall apart in this way. When he finally does turn to her he is shocked to see the tears on his cheeks reflected upon hers.
She gently touches his face. “Do you not understand love...?”
After her silence he has not expected such a reaction.
“Love?”
She sighs. “Yes, Victor. I love you. As Henry loves you. And William loved you. It matters not if you love yourself, nor what you’ve done. In facing your fear... in facing me, we can end your end this wretched loneliness that has made you think such terrible things. I can ease your burden.”
“Elizabeth, I never wanted to hurt you...”
“I know that, but I have suffered more watching you suffer alone, than I ever would have by your side. Because when you truly love someone you never want to be alone, and you are willing to sacrifice your own comfort for such a lofty ideal...”
“I am sorry...” Victor allows himself to relax. “I am so... so... sorry...”
“I forgive you, always. I love you, always.”
They stand together for a long time. Victor is beginning to understand what Raskolnikov meant, and he feels, perhaps, he was too quick to dismiss his own redemption.
“Come back inside...” She eventually whispers. Now they have both lost feeling in their fingers.
“Henry is no doubt concerned.”
“Yes, of course.” Victor stiffly steps back from Elizabeth’s embrace. He gathers the blanket brought for him from William’s tombstone: he has accepted that it won’t do any good for the boy now. Elizabeth’s warm heart gives him the strength not to be held by the dead.
As they walk she gathers the courage to ask the question that hangs over them both, “Will you tell him?”
“Henry?”
“Of course.”
Victor ponders that. He hadn’t even meant to tell her, and now he must face his best friend...? He is already so drained. Elizabeth seems to sense this reluctance.
“If you do decide to tell him I will stand beside you as you speak and hold your hand.”
Yes... that does bolster his confidence.
“I suppose,” He steps inside, and holds open the door for Elizabeth. “I should tell him because I have abandoned you both for such a long time. I was trying to prevent your suffering, but I see now I only made it greater by leaving.”
“You have missed a lot...” Elizabeth takes the blanket from him and folds it carefully. She replaces it where it had laid on the back of a wicker chair in the parlor. “And, well, with time... I must confess something of my own, now that you are willing to listen.”
“Of course! You may speak of anything. I should have been by your side as you tried to be by mine.”
She does not meet his eyes. “...that is the issue. I worked hard for your attention. I loved you unconditionally. Almost every day I wrote you letters. Yet as you ran from your mistakes you shut me out as though I were one of them. You broke my heart and I loved you still. Since we were children I had believed it would always be you and I. That was difficult to let go of... I wanted it Victor. I wanted you to care more than I valued my own happiness, and it seemed a perfectly one-sided affair once you to school and forgot your childish pastimes. Forgot... me.”

“Elizabeth... I have been so selfish. How could I have not seen...?” He realizes, now, what it means to be connected to another in a way that Rodya could never have shown him. For the first time he sees his actions through the lens of another’s emotions. He is crushed by guilt again.

“Victor, please. Do not fold in on yourself so soon again after you have just begun to truly listen. I am not bitter from my unrequited love. I feel carry no burden from my choices. Victor, dear, we have both suffered so much. I do not tell you of my feelings to prolong your guilt, but to make you understand my forgiveness.”

“Yes... yes, Elizabeth. You must be an angel. Have I always had this? Your purity lifts my soul, and my fear is vanished in your light. Any reasonable man,” Raskolnikov had not been reasonable, “would turn from me in disgust, but you are no mere man.”

“Listen, Victor, you must also forgive me.”


“I have moved on.”

Victor pauses his tumultuous thoughts. “Moved on?”

“My heart is no longer reserved for you.”

Victor waves away that comment. “Yes, yes, I understand that, but to whom or what?”

She blushes delicately. “Well, you see... Henry and I-”

The full realization of what he has missed strikes him like a bolt of lightning, and he jolts upright, seizing her shoulders.

“Say nothing further!” He laughs a wild laugh like nothing he has felt in almost two years. “That is wonderful! Absolutely wonderful! Why... I could not have predicted fate would bless me so! You must go and tell him that I know immediately! Tell him you have my blessing! Of course you have my blessing!”

Elizabeth is taken aback by this burst of good will. “Oh... my... I... Thank you!”

“Of course! Yes! You glowing angel did you imagine I would say no? I could never deny your happiness for my own!”

But isn’t that what he had been doing? It is time he made a true sacrifice. It is time he allowed others to be happy before himself. Giving his two dearest friends their happy ending— one his monster sought to destroy because of his own mistakes— showed him this. So he grabs her and drags her after him.

“Henry! My dearest friend! My own heart!” He exclaims upon finding the other man. Henry startles, and he drops the book he was trying to read. Almost all of his time was spent in the library.

“Yes? What is it, man? Look at you! You’re so... vibrant. It’s very odd for you. Are you quite alright? Is this fever animating you?”

“No! No! Quite the opposite! I feel much better than I have since— never mind, we’ll talk of that in time— I have heard to most wondrous news and I am happy!”

“Oh...?” Henry gives the happy pair a keen look. “What could that be? I haven’t seen you in this much a fervor since we were children and-”

“Stop your stories— Elizabeth has told me of the two of you!” Victor, with these words, practically shoves Elizabeth upon him.

Elizabeth wraps her arms around him with a laugh. “Look at him! He was so morose not an hour ago, just as we had discussed, especially since that strange man arrived, but things have clearly changed! Can you see? He is laughing! I have not felt so light since you went off to school. Why do you look so queer Henry? Is this not everything we had hoped?”

Victor’s best friend causally loops an arm around his soon to be fiancée’s waist. He is regarding Victor rather blankly.
“You... truly do not love this woman? I felt guilty for my feelings for so long...”
Victor smiles graciously, resting a hand on each of their shoulders.
“I love her. I do. As I love you my friend. This is something I want because she must be happy.
You must both be happy. I cannot make you happy myself, and my feelings are more...
complicated than you could understand in the area of romance.”
Henry beams. “Are you saying that you truly, truly approve?”
“Yes! You have more than my blessing in this area!”
They laugh with him, and they hug him. They spend time in a perfect moment, and for the first
time since William’s death it is not tainted by fear but colored by hope. He knows that he cannot
fail them now. Instead he feels that he can finally fulfill a duty to protect them.
Raskolnikov does not get along well with the other prisoners. They are mostly revolutionaries: hard men with the spark of an idea motivating them to action. Raskolnikov scoffs at their naivety; yet he says nothing. As always he remains silent and solemn. He thinks their faith is misplaced. It is very cold in Siberia, and that is his greatest concern. The food is terrible, but he does not mind that. He eats better than he did when he was alone because the labor he does demands it. And the labor... it keeps him occupied. He has no time for idle hands to act upon idle thoughts.

He is suffering, yes, but that feeling is no stranger to him. Now, at least, his suffering feels though it is building towards something; before his suffering had only been pointless: a slow fall from grace. Raskolnikov knows from Sonia of God’s forgiveness for his regret alone, but he is not accepting this punishment to please God. He is bowing to the law of man for his own sanity. He must feel, for himself, as though he deserves God’s grace: regardless of if he does.

It all proved to him something he would hold to in the future: there are no extraordinary men, no men above God.

Sonia had accompanied him to this place; despite his pleas for her to stay behind she had insisted. The other man loved her: her sweet disposition, her unending faith, and no doubt her pretty face. They loved her more than they even noticed him, but he imagined that was how it should be. Sonia had a tendency to reach out to those who needed her, and enlighten them with an ease Raskolnikov did not understand. He knew his limits: he was focused on his own recovery.

Sonia makes even the frozen wasteland they occupy bearable. She reads scripture to the prisoners, she prays with them, she brings in much better food than they can get themselves, she hand-makes blankets: she is warmth. Raskolnikov would have protested her working so hard, her coming at all, if he did not know that she enjoyed the work: that she was seeking a redemption for her own sins.

Raskolnikov thinks often of Victor. He sits beside Sonia when he can, and he tells her everything that transpired between them. She is quick to reassure of him of God’s grace, but she also scolds him for aspects of the attachment. He is not bothered by this; he has long accepted he will never be completely pure of heart. What man is? Either way it does not really matter... Raskolnikov is not sure that he will ever see Victor again. He has years left in this sentence yet...

Victor paces the floor of his make-shift lab, but he really does not have to wait long. The monster, his monster, arrives in short order.

"Are you seeking to mock me with this?" The monster growls while surveying the equipment. "What is your intent replicating an experiment you yourself swore you would never do again?"

"Things have changed." Victor says this with a smile that he cannot contain.

"Before you refused another like myself. You were going to sacrifice not only your life but the lives of those you professed to love to keep me in this purgatory loneliness you created me to bear. What could have possibly changed so much that I can trust you?" The monster is stalking around the lab.

"Love." Victor chuckles. "Being in love. Being loved. Realizing that I too could love myself as others did. That is why you can trust me, because you are right about me; I was willing to sacrifice them and myself... My excuse before was that I was beyond it all. What point, I imagined, would there be in amending what I had done? Love showed me the err to this way of thought. There is no man, nor any monster, beyond saving."

"Saving?!" The monster lifts an arm of the corpse that rests between them. "I am not in need of saving from any sin besides my own existence and that, 'doctor', is not my fault!"

This time Victor does not feel anger or sorrow upon pondering his monster’s accusations. He has finally dealt with those emotions, and will no longer overreact.

"Yes. I have been nothing but wrong when it comes to you." He thinks of the love in his heart for
Elizabeth, Henry, his dark north star… “And I see, having seen I was not lacking what I imagined I was, how devastated I would be without it. That is what I did to you. Left you without what all men need. I left you destitute, ignorant, and beyond love. Not once have I faced that. Tonight I do.”

Creator and created face one another in the birthplace of grisly horrors as God had never intended; the first bows his head.

“Do you forgive me, my creation? Will you allow me this redemption? To do what I owe you?”

The creation looks down upon the man who has tormented him for over a year now. “Will she love me?”

Victor smiles. “I cannot guarantee that. But either way you will not be alone.”

“And if you don’t keep your promise to me… I will keep mine. Remember that.”

Victor laughs at his creation’s threats. After this he will see Rodya again and without fear; he will look him the eyes and share his conviction; he will no longer be ashamed….

“I could never forget.”

†††

Raskolnikov was resigned to his fate; he did not dream of rescue any more than one was expected.

Sonia, then, bore him unexpected news when she arrived in the company of one of the men expected to keep the prisoners as such.

“A man has… well, I think he is your man that is to say the one you have spoken of he has come here and…” Sonia seems to be in shock.

The guard impatiently takes over, grabbing Raskolnikov’s arm. “Come with me.”

“I have not done anything wrong since I’ve been here!” Raskolnikov protests without struggle.

“This not a punishment. You have a friend outside.” The guard snaps.

Raskolnikov falls silent. He knows what it means to be taken to an outside friend. He knows how common release is upon bribery… What he does not know is who… Sonia had said something about his man, but it could it be? The state he last saw victor in gave him little hope for such a possibility.

Snowflakes twist through the depressingly thick grey atmosphere, one at a time landing on his ragged clothes and pale skin. Before he had never detailed the things around himself… he had never stepped from his own head long enough to observe, and now Freedom. Could it be? Was he truly redeemed? Did he even deserve to be free? These days he met his questions with a calm mind and the knowledge that his asking them about his future was reassurance that he would have one.

They come to a waiting carriage, one that is just out of view of the prisoners and the other guards. Beside this carriage a tall man waits. Raskolnikov smiles in spite of himself. He knows that other man instantly. No longer does he see a phantom of a man… he is truly reformed.

“And the payment?” The guard steps between them menacingly.

Victor just smiles. “Of course good sir. No need for aggression.”

He pays off the guard without even batting an eye. Raskolnikov shakes his head; reformed or not Victor still has no head for money.

“Take him then.” The guard shoves Raskolnikov forward, executing a last show of authority before returning to the camp behind them.

“I’ve come to rescue you.” Victor says.

“Well, yes, obviously I can see…” Rodya stops himself. He smiles. “Yes.”

Victor extends an arm. “As you have rescued me.”

Rodya accepts the other man’s hand; through the holes in his well-worn gloves he can feel black silk and the warmth of flesh. Victor pulls Rodya gently against his chest.

“You have gained much needed weight.” Rodya comments. Victor was so thin before… Victor chuckles. “You have not.”

“No.” Rodya’s smile fades. “I am… in prison, after all. And while I do appreciate, Victor, I am not sure I belong outside of such a place.”

Victor holds Rodya tighter; he does not need to meet his eyes to understand his doubt.

“This place will grant you no more redemption than you have already allowed yourself. The
confession was what you truly needed; the courage to face what you have done and take responsibility before others. You are not being reformed here because you are already irrecoverably changed.” This might be the longest that Rodya has allowed Victor to speak, and the first time Rodya finds his words comforting. “What is it to be here? What could it be but a waste of human life to punish a man who is already healed? You possess no danger to anyone around you any longer. I can tell you such, but you already know it to be true. As does your friend here.” Rodya turns his head slightly. He had forgotten about Sonia… She sighs, fiddling with the edges of her coat.

“… I have no doubt you have experienced great guilt because you are not the sort that would commit such violence, in your heart, and upon having realized that you shall not try again but… oh, Rodya must you go now? Even if you are no longer a danger to anyone, is he in your best interest?”

“Have I not proven a part of me will always live in sin? Sonia I understand your concern and I appreciate your love for me but…” Rodya looks back to Victor. “I love this man. Strange as it seems I need him.”

They exchange a tender look. Sonia does not move. Rodya moves away from Victor for a moment, to approach her.

“Will you not join us? There is no reason for you to stay here any longer.”

“No.” Sonia steps back as though he may grab her. “You are wrong. You are far from the only man here who needs me still. I am making a change in these men’s lives and that is important to me. I… I am doing much better for their virtue than I could at home.”

“Sonia you need not atone here~”

“I know, Rodya, but I want the men here with me to have the chance to atone. I am not here because of some twisted guilt. I am here still because this work is deeply rewarding.”

Rodya takes her hands in his. He kisses her knuckles gently.

“Do you allow me this leave?” He asks. Her permission is essential to his decision.

She smiles. She knows what she is to him. “You go with my blessing, Rodya. Remember you go with the grace of God.”

“Thank you… You have saved my life. You have been invaluable.”

And for a moment they stand together. Victor is silent; he recognizes this moment as the same he shared with Elizabeth not one week ago.

“Go.” Sonia pulls her hands from his. “You waste your time with me.”

“I love you Sonia.”

She smiles. “Go.”

Victor mounts the lower step of his carriage and again offers a hand out. Rodya takes it, and allows himself to be pulled into the carriage. Just before the door closes he steals one last look back at Sonia; she has turned away, and is quickly disappearing into the misty grey horizon.

Within the thick velvet lined walls there is a bubble of peaceful silence. Rodya turns away from the window to settle under Victor’s arm; both men break from their past to rhythm of wood on stone.

“My dark north star…” Victor mutters into Rodya’s hair. The target of this utterance snorts.

“Is that how you think of me?”

“Yes, of course. You are my guiding light in the north, a dark pull that~”

“I have called you fool in my thoughts. Selfish. Delusional. Impossible… broken.”

Victor raises an eyebrow. “And you accept those things, accept me, to love me?”

“No. I love you despite those things. I love you because you are not the sum of your issues: I love you for the man that you can become despite what you are. I would never want you to accept me as a murderer. I want you to believe I am more than that. My love does not come as mere acceptance; it is a promise to work against your faults every day for your own sake.”

“Every day?”

Rodya glances up at Victor. “You’re a poor listener.”

“Did you just promise forever to me?”

“We are both obsessive.”
“Yes…”
Beyond the glass the snow has stopped its soft fall and the grey skies are giving way to a vision of pink and gold as the sun begins its rest below their new horizon.
“Where are we going?” Rodya asks.
Victor laces their fingers. “Anywhere.”
And they ride together into a hot cinnamon sunset.

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