Self-hatred+rampant guilt is a bad combination for life in general

The first time Dmitri kissed him, he shoved him away. He asked about his sister.
"Your sister is lovely," was the reply, "but she's not you."

The second time, he kissed back, but not without his heart thudding painfully and the core of his chest screaming for him to bolt. He asked why his friend would do such a thing, the unspoken words "with me" ringing in his head, and the response was only a smile.

Rodya loved his friend, to be sure, loved him in a way beyond what he could deny as platonic. The fact of his gender didn't bother him as much as he'd expected; after all, for a person as deeply flawed as himself, this was to be expected. Of course, of all the potential lovers in the world, he'd end up with the most taboo one of all. But Dmitri was too all-consumingly good for this kind of thing, and Rodya asked himself why. Why he did this at all, and mostly why with him, specifically.

Dmitri was kissing him again and he'd lost count at this point. The ball of guilt and panic in his chest urged him to shove him away, to run. He stayed put, though, stewing in his own guilt.

Truly, he thought, his issue was that he didn't deserve it. Dmitri, though his kissing was authoritative, to be sure, was always loving and kind and his hands were as gentle as they were firm. He kissed his cheek, his jaw, his neck, and Rodya almost wanted to cry. He wasn't worth it, he shouldn't have this, he didn't deserve it. He was caught, trapped painfully between his awful longing and his guilt.

He must have looked distracted, or perhaps his breathing had quickened as it tended to do when he over-thought, because Dmitri drew away and looked at him carefully.
"Are you okay?"

"I'm-" he felt as though his throat were packed with wax, and he started over. "I'm fine."

"You're not," came the reply. "What's wrong." It was unusually perceptive of Dmitri, who, for all his virtues, was not the most perceptive. There was genuine concern in his eyes, and the ball of guilt swelled until it was painful. "Is it my fault? I should have asked you before, I shouldn't have just-"

"I don't- it's not your fault." He choked out, "I'm- I don't deserve this from you. Or anyone, for that matter." His thoughts raced on, listing all the faults that kept him from anything he could enjoy.

"You do." There was a hand on his shoulder, warm and soothing, and it only made him feel worse.

"I don't." It came out as a whisper. He couldn't list the reasons, couldn't explain why he didn't deserve this. There were too many and there was too much. The reasons stuck to themselves inside his head.

"Rodya." The hand moved to his cheek. He looked away. "Rodion, look at me." A second hand moved to his other cheek, turned his head. He looked up begrudgingly.

"You," said Dmitri with a kind of violent firmness, "do not deserve this self-administered punishment. You are not as worthless as you believe."

Rodya must have looked disbelieving, because he continued, "I would not be here if I didn't love you. Do you understand that?"

He nodded, slowly, and reached up to grasp at Dmitri's shirt. "I'm sorry," he muttered, for lack of a better response.

"Shush," he was told, the direction enforced with a mouth upon his own.

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The next time he was kissed, he kissed back, and as the panic eased away he accepted the warm weight for the gift it was. And the next time, and every time after that, the ball of guilt slowly shrunk until it was gone, melted away by that same warmth.

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