PART VI - CHAPTER VII

The same day, about seven o'clock in the evening, Raskolnikov was on his way to his mother's and sister's lodging--the lodging in Bakaleyev's house which Razumihin had found for them. The stairs went up from the street. Raskolnikov walked with lagging steps, as though still hesitating whether to go or not. But nothing would have turned him back: his decision was taken.

"Besides, it doesn't matter, they still know nothing," he thought, "and they are used to thinking of me as eccentric."

He was appallingly dressed: his clothes torn and dirty, soaked with a night's rain. His face was almost distorted from fatigue, exposure, the inward conflict that had lasted for twenty-four hours. He had spent all the previous night alone, God knows where. But anyway he had reached a decision.

He knocked at the door which was opened by his mother. Dounia was not at home. Even the servant happened to be out. At first Pulcheria Alexandrovna was speechless with joy and surprise; then she took him by the hand and drew him into the room.

"Here you are!" she began, faltering with joy. "Don't be angry with me, Rodya, for welcoming you so foolishly with tears: I am laughing not crying. Did you think I was crying? No, I am delighted, but I've got into such a stupid habit of shedding tears. I've been like that ever since your father's death. I cry for anything. Sit down, dear boy, you must be tired; I see you are. Ah, how muddy you are."

"I was in the rain yesterday, mother...." Raskolnikov began.

"No, no," Pulcheria Alexandrovna hurriedly interrupted, "you thought I was going to cross-question you in the womanish way I used to; don't be anxious, I understand, I understand it all: now I've learned the ways here and truly I see for myself that they are better. I've made up my mind once and for all: how could I understand your plans and expect you to give an account of them? God knows what concerns and plans you may have, or what ideas you are hatching; so it's not for me to keep nudging your elbow, asking you what you are thinking about? But, my goodness! why am I running to and fro as though I were crazy...? I am reading your article in the magazine for the third time, Rodya. Dmitri Prokofitch brought it to me. Directly I saw it I cried out to myself: 'There, foolish one,' I thought, 'that's what he is busy about; that's the solution of the mystery! Learned people are always like that. He may have some new ideas in his head just now; he is thinking them over and I worry him and upset him.' I read it, my dear, and of course there was a great deal I did not understand; but that's only natural--how should I?"

"Show me, mother."
Raskolnikov took the magazine and glanced at his article. Incongruous as it was with his mood and his circumstances, he felt that strange and bitter sweet sensation that every author experiences the first time he sees himself in print; besides, he was only twenty-three. It lasted only a moment. After reading a few lines he frowned and his heart throbbed with anguish. He recalled all the inward conflict of the preceding months. He flung the article on the table with disgust and anger.

"But, however foolish I may be, Rodya, I can see for myself that you will very soon be one of the leading—if not the leading man—in the world of Russian thought. And they dared to think you were mad! You don't know, but they really thought that. Ah, the despicable creatures, how could they understand genius! And Dounia, Dounia was all but believing it—what do you say to that? Your father sent twice to magazines—the first time poems (I've got the manuscript and will show you) and the second time a whole novel (I begged him to let me copy it out) and how we prayed that they should be taken—they weren't! I was breaking my heart, Rodya, six or seven days ago over your food and your clothes and the way you are living. But now I see again how foolish I was, for you can attain any position you like by your intellect and talent. No doubt you don't care about that for the present and you are occupied with much more important matters...."

"Dounia's not at home, mother?"

"No, Rodya. I often don't see her; she leaves me alone. Dmitri Prokofitch comes to see me, it's so good of him, and he always talks about you. He loves you and respects you, my dear. I don't say that Dounia is very wanting in consideration. I am not complaining. She has her ways and I have mine; she seems to have got some secrets of late and I never have any secrets from you two. Of course, I am sure that Dounia has far too much sense, and besides she loves you and me... but I don't know what it will all lead to. You've made me so happy by coming now, Rodya, but she has missed you by going out; when she comes in I'll tell her: 'Your brother came in while you were out. Where have you been all this time?' You mustn't spoil me, Rodya, you know; come when you can, but if you can't, it doesn't matter. I can wait. I shall know, anyway, that you are fond of me, that will be enough for me. I shall read what you write, I shall hear about you from everyone, and sometimes you'll come yourself to see me. What could be better? Here you've come now to comfort your mother, I see that."

Here Pulcheria Alexandrovna began to cry.

"Here I am again! Don't mind my foolishness. My goodness, why am I sitting here?" she cried, jumping up. "There is coffee and I don't offer you any. Ah, that's the selfishness of old age. I'll get it at once!"

"Mother, don't trouble, I am going at once. I haven't come for that. Please listen to me."

Pulcheria Alexandrovna went up to him timidly.

"Mother, whatever happens, whatever you hear about me, whatever you are told about me, will you always love me as you do now?" he asked suddenly from the fullness of his heart, as though not thinking of his words and not weighing them.

"Rodya, Rodya, what is the matter? How can you ask me such a question? Why, who will tell me anything about you? Besides, I shouldn't believe anyone, I should refuse to listen."

"I've come to assure you that I've always loved you and I am glad that we are alone, even glad Dounia is out," he went on with the same impulse. "I have come to tell you that though you will be unhappy, you must believe that your son loves you now more than himself, and that all you thought about me, that I was cruel and didn't care about you, was all a mistake. I shall never cease to love you.... Well, that's enough: I thought I must do this and begin with this...."

Pulcheria Alexandrovna embraced him in silence, pressing him to her bosom and weeping gently.

"I don't know what is wrong with you, Rodya," she said at last. "I've been thinking all this time that we were simply boring you and now I see that there is a great sorrow in store for you, and that's why you are miserable. I've foreseen it
a long time, Rodya. Forgive me for speaking about it. I keep thinking about it and lie awake at nights. Your sister lay
talking in her sleep all last night, talking of nothing but you. I caught something, but I couldn't make it out. I felt all the
morning as though I were going to be hanged, waiting for something, expecting something, and now it has come!
Rodya, Rodya, where are you going? You are going away somewhere?"

"Yes."

"That's what I thought! I can come with you, you know, if you need me. And Dounia, too; she loves you, she loves you
dearly--and Sofya Semyonovna may come with us if you like. You see, I am glad to look upon her as a daughter even...
Dmitri Prokofitch will help us to go together. But... where... are you going?"

"Good-bye, mother."

"What, to-day?" she cried, as though losing him for ever.

"I can't stay, I must go now...."

"And can't I come with you?"

"No, but kneel down and pray to God for me. Your prayer perhaps will reach Him."

"Let me bless you and sign you with the cross. That's right, that's right. Oh, God, what are we doing?"

Yes, he was glad, he was very glad that there was no one there, that he was alone with his mother. For the first time
after all those awful months his heart was softened. He fell down before her, he kissed her feet and both wept,
embracing. And she was not surprised and did not question him this time. For some days she had realised that
something awful was happening to her son and that now some terrible minute had come for him.

"Rodya, my darling, my first born," she said sobbing, "now you are just as when you were little. You would run like
this to me and hug me and kiss me. When your father was living and we were poor, you comforted us simply by being
with us and when I buried your father, how often we wept together at his grave and embraced, as now. And if I've been
crying lately, it's that my mother's heart had a foreboding of trouble. The first time I saw you, that evening, you
remember, as soon as we arrived here, I guessed simply from your eyes. My heart sank at once, and to-day when I
opened the door and looked at you, I thought the fatal hour had come. Rodya, Rodya, you are not going away to-day?"

"No!"

"You'll come again?"

"Yes... I'll come."

"Rodya, don't be angry, I don't dare to question you. I know I mustn't. Only say two words to me--is it far where you
are going?"

"Very far."

"What is awaiting you there? Some post or career for you?"

"What God sends... only pray for me." Raskolnikov went to the door, but she clutched him and gazed despairingly into
his eyes. Her face worked with terror.

"Enough, mother," said Raskolnikov, deeply regretting that he had come.

"Not for ever, it's not yet for ever? You'll come, you'll come to-morrow?"

"I will, I will, good-bye." He tore himself away at last.
It was a warm, fresh, bright evening; it had cleared up in the morning. Raskolnikov went to his lodgings; he made haste. He wanted to finish all before sunset. He did not want to meet anyone till then. Going up the stairs he noticed that Nastasya rushed from the samovar to watch him intently. "Can anyone have come to see me?" he wondered. He had a disgusted vision of Porfiry. But opening his door he saw Dounia. She was sitting alone, plunged in deep thought, and looked as though she had been waiting a long time. He stopped short in the doorway. She rose from the sofa in dismay and stood up facing him. Her eyes, fixed upon him, betrayed horror and infinite grief. And from those eyes alone he saw at once that she knew.

"Am I to come in or go away?" he asked uncertainly.

"I've been all day with Sofya Semyonovna. We were both waiting for you. We thought that you would be sure to come there."

Raskolnikov went into the room and sank exhausted on a chair.

"I feel weak, Dounia, I am very tired; and I should have liked at this moment to be able to control myself."

He glanced at her mistrustfully.

"Where were you all night?"

"I don't remember clearly. You see, sister, I wanted to make up my mind once for all, and several times I walked by the Neva, I remember that I wanted to end it all there, but... I couldn't make up my mind," he whispered, looking at her mistrustfully again.

"Thank God! That was just what we were afraid of, Sofya Semyonovna and I. Then you still have faith in life? Thank God, thank God!"

Raskolnikov smiled bitterly.

"I haven't faith, but I have just been weeping in mother's arms; I haven't faith, but I have just asked her to pray for me. I don't know how it is, Dounia, I don't understand it."

"Have you been at mother's? Have you told her?" cried Dounia, horror-stricken. "Surely you haven't done that?"

"No, I didn't tell her... in words; but she understood a great deal. She heard you talking in your sleep. I am sure she half understands it already. Perhaps I did wrong in going to see her. I don't know why I did go. I am a contemptible person, Dounia."

"A contemptible person, but ready to face suffering! You are, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am going. At once. Yes, to escape the disgrace I thought of drowning myself, Dounia, but as I looked into the water, I thought that if I had considered myself strong till now I'd better not be afraid of disgrace," he said, hurrying on. "It's pride, Dounia."

"Pride, Rodya."

There was a gleam of fire in his lustreless eyes; he seemed to be glad to think that he was still proud.

"You don't think, sister, that I was simply afraid of the water?" he asked, looking into her face with a sinister smile.

"Oh, Rodya, hush!" cried Dounia bitterly. Silence lasted for two minutes. He sat with his eyes fixed on the floor; Dounia stood at the other end of the table and looked at him with anguish. Suddenly he got up.

"It's late, it's time to go! I am going at once to give myself up. But I don't know why I am going to give myself up."
Big tears fell down her cheeks.

"You are crying, sister, but can you hold out your hand to me?"

"You doubted it?"

She threw her arms round him.

"Aren't you half expiating your crime by facing the suffering?" she cried, holding him close and kissing him.

"Crime? What crime?" he cried in sudden fury. "That I killed a vile noxious insect, an old pawnbroker woman, of use to no one!... Killing her was atonement for forty sins. She was sucking the life out of poor people. Was that a crime? I am not thinking of it and I am not thinking of expiating it, and why are you all rubbing it in on all sides? 'A crime! a crime!' Only now I see clearly the imbecility of my cowardice, now that I have decided to face this superfluous disgrace. It's simply because I am contemptible and have nothing in me that I have decided to, perhaps too for my advantage, as that... Porfiry... suggested!"

"Brother, brother, what are you saying? Why, you have shed blood?" cried Dounia in despair.

"Which all men shed," he put in almost frantically, "which flows and has always flowed in streams, which is spilt like champagne, and for which men are crowned in the Capitol and are called afterwards benefactors of mankind. Look into it more carefully and understand it! I too wanted to do good to men and would have done hundreds, thousands of good deeds to make up for that one piece of stupidity, not stupidity even, simply clumsiness, for the idea was by no means so stupid as it seems now that it has failed.... (Everything seems stupid when it fails.) By that stupidity I only wanted to put myself into an independent position, to take the first step, to obtain means, and then everything would have been smoothed over by benefits immeasurable in comparison.... But I... I couldn't carry out even the first step, because I am contemptible, that's what's the matter! And yet I won't look at it as you do. If I had succeeded I should have been crowned with glory, but now I'm trapped."

"But that's not so, not so! Brother, what are you saying?"

"Ah, it's not picturesque, not aesthetically attractive! I fail to understand why bombarding people by regular siege is more honourable. The fear of appearances is the first symptom of impotence. I've never, never recognised this more clearly than now, and I am further than ever from seeing that what I did was a crime. I've never, never been stronger and more convinced than now."

The colour had rushed into his pale exhausted face, but as he uttered his last explanation, he happened to meet Dounia's eyes and he saw such anguish in them that he could not help being checked. He felt that he had, anyway, made these two poor women miserable, that he was, anyway, the cause...

"Dounia darling, if I am guilty forgive me (though I cannot be forgiven if I am guilty). Good-bye! We won't dispute. It's time, high time to go. Don't follow me, I beseech you, I have somewhere else to go.... But you go at once and sit with mother. I entreat you to! It's my last request of you. Don't leave her at all; I left her in a state of anxiety, that she is not fit to bear; she will die or go out of her mind. Be with her! Razumihin will be with you. I've been talking to him.... Don't cry about me: I'll try to be honest and manly all my life, even if I am a murderer. Perhaps I shall some day make a name. I won't disgrace you, you will see; I'll still show.... Now good-bye for the present," he concluded hurriedly, noticing again a strange expression in Dounia's eyes at his last words and promises. "Why are you crying? Don't cry, don't cry: we are not parting for ever! Ah, yes! Wait a minute, I'd forgotten!"

He went to the table, took up a thick dusty book, opened it and took from between the pages a little water-colour portrait on ivory. It was the portrait of his landlady's daughter, who had died of fever, that strange girl who had wanted to be a nun. For a minute he gazed at the delicate expressive face of his betrothed, kissed the portrait and gave it to Dounia.
"I used to talk a great deal about it to her, only to her," he said thoughtfully. "To her heart I confided much of what has since been so hideously realised. Don't be uneasy," he returned to Dounia, "she was as much opposed to it as you, and I am glad that she is gone. The great point is that everything now is going to be different, is going to be broken in two," he cried, suddenly returning to his dejection. "Everything, everything, and am I prepared for it? Do I want it myself? They say it is necessary for me to suffer! What's the object of these senseless sufferings? shall I know any better what they are for, when I am crushed by hardships and idiocy, and weak as an old man after twenty years' penal servitude? And what shall I have to live for then? Why am I consenting to that life now? Oh, I knew I was contemptible when I stood looking at the Neva at daybreak to-day!"

At last they both went out. It was hard for Dounia, but she loved him. She walked away, but after going fifty paces she turned round to look at him again. He was still in sight. At the corner he too turned and for the last time their eyes met; but noticing that she was looking at him, he motioned her away with impatience and even vexation, and turned the corner abruptly.

"I am wicked, I see that," he thought to himself, feeling ashamed a moment later of his angry gesture to Dounia. "But why are they so fond of me if I don't deserve it? Oh, if only I were alone and no one loved me and I too had never loved anyone! Nothing of all this would have happened. But I wonder shall I in those fifteen or twenty years grow so meek that I shall humble myself before people and whimper at every word that I am a criminal? Yes, that's it, that's it, that's what they are sending me there for, that's what they want. Look at them running to and fro about the streets, every one of them a scoundrel and a criminal at heart and, worse still, an idiot. But try to get me off and they'd be wild with righteous indignation. Oh, how I hate them all!"

He fell to musing by what process it could come to pass, that he could be humbled before all of them, indiscriminately--humiliated by conviction. And yet why not? It must be so. Would not twenty years of continual bondage crush him utterly? Water wears out a stone. And why, why should he live after that? Why should he go now when he knew that it would be so? It was the hundredth time perhaps that he had asked himself that question since the previous evening, but still he went.

By Fyodor Dostoyevsky