

Raskol

**A new adaptation of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*
by Kira Obolensky**

**Commissioned by Ten Thousand Things Theatre
Raskol will premiere in a Men's Correctional Facility in Minnesota in April 2009**

Main Characters:

Raskol, an impoverished student
Sonya, a religious whore
Perfidy, a detective and avid bird watcher

Other Characters to be played by a company of actors:

Muzhin, Raskol's best friend
Leonard Wolf, a mountebank
Raskol's Mother
Dunya, Raskol's sister
Mr. Svid, a charming devil with a cane
A clerk
A john
A destitute prostitute
Zamyotov, a fop
Marmelade, a drunk
Katerina Ivanovna, Marmelade's second wife
A Socialist (also Andre)
Worker One
Worker Two
German lady with an impossible accent/Katerina's landlady
Alyona, the dead pawnbroker
Lizaveta, her sister, also dead
There are various "voices" throughout the play, which are performed by the company.

Place and Time:

St. Petersburg. Another century.
Most of the play takes place in a room, which should be rendered minimally—the place is both Raskol's room in Petersburg and his prison cell. When the scenes deviate from the location, they always return here—as if in a delirious swirl. The bed, it seems, could remain on stage at all times, ready for RASKOL to crawl into it.

Note: I see this play as a “play with music”. The music and songs break open the action. The songs are mostly solos, except for a duet at the end. Songs function as inner thoughts and torments, as markers of emotional states and desires.

The beginning of the play :

What we see:

[There’s a door. A bed. A bowl. Raskol in bed.]

VOICE: Have you heard the news?

CROWD: We are the news—

VOICE: Employment is down, ooh, way down.
The mines make money.
The government says this
The government says that.

CROWD: Ha!

[Raskol sits up. He notices his hands are red, stained with blood.]

[A man swings an axe through the door. A swirl of gossip--]

Man 1: I have this fantasy—

Man 2: tell me-

Man 1: that old woman who lives on Selvig Street-

Man 2: the one who lends money, pawns your silver, your watches--

Man 1: your most precious things—she takes them and then gives you money and then charges interest, and then generally makes life miserable—

Man 2: I know her. She is such a crow.

Man 1: so my fantasy is that I take an axe to her.

Man 2: an axe?

Man 1: chop her up in bits.

Man 2: Huh. A crime.

VOICE: and then the paper says the politicians want more for the people—

CROWD: More what?

VOICE: The paper says what the government says—

Man 1: The chopping up, now that’s a grisly detail.

Man 2: She's a greedy old bitch!

Man 1: I have thoughts like this all the time. Dreams you know.

RASKOL sings a song:

The thing I thought
Was just a pop
A bubble, a ping
A trouble, a thing
A thought I had
A speculation
Of emancipation
The thing I thought
Came in like bad news
And left like the weather
Maybe it's hot
Or maybe it's not
I haven't been sleeping
But that's an excuse
I don't have much feeling
But that's an excuse
I'm rotten inside
That's what I suspect
The thing I thought
Was just a pop
Something you don't even say
Something you can't even think

[Raskol notices blood, too, on his shirt. He lies down in bed.]

LANDLADY (from off): Raskol, your rent is past due! We need your rent! Now!
Raskol, do you hear me! Your rent is past due.

RASKOL: Jesus! I heard! The rent is past due! Stop tormenting me!

[A knock.]

MUZHIN: It's me, Muzhin. Are you OK?

[Raskol's friend, Muzhin, enters.]

MUZHIN: Raskol, why are you in bed today? It's too hot to be in bed.

RASKOL: Muzhin. I don't know.

MUZHIN: what don't you know?

RASKOL: I feel sort of weird.

MUZHIN: you look weird. What's up?

RASKOL: Things swimming in my head.

MUZHIN: You're studying too hard?

RASKOL: I dropped out.

MUZHIN: You need a job.

RASKOL: I need a job.

MUZHIN: I found you a job!

RASKOL: You did?

MUZHIN: I found a job--

RASKOL: Shoveling shit at the stable?

MUZHIN: No. No. NO.

RASKOL: Well, tell me.

MUZHIN: I can't.

RASKOL: Some job.

MUZHIN: I'll show you—Come on, get up—out of bed.

RASKOL: I've got to wash up.

MUZHIN: I can wait.

RASKOL: I'm modest.

MUZHIN: You're-modest?!

RASKOL: Muzhin, wait for me outside.

[Muzhin exits. Raskol bathes his hands in bowl of water, creating blood. He turns and there's--

[An old woman dead on the floor. An axe by her side. Another woman dead on the floor. Spilled blood. A knock at the door. Another knock at the door. Raskol is frozen. He runs out.]

[A man knocks, he's come to pawn something—he screams—he screams. The police come and take away the bodies.]

[Raskol back in his bed. He sits up—]

RASKOL: I thought I heard a knock.

[There is no knock.]

RASKOL: Muzhin?

[Silence.]

RASKOL: Back to bed.

[A letter is pushed under the door.]

[He gets up and looks at it carefully. Smells it. Opens it. Reads. We hear Raskol's mother)]

RASKOL'S MOTHER: My dear Raskol,
I am writing to you again, because you did not answer my last letter of June 13th and I wonder if you are simply busy studying or if, in fact,

[Raskol crumples the letter up. The voice stops.]

[He looks at the letter again—]

RASKOL'S MOTHER: To let you know that you are everything to us, all of our hope.

Also, the money—

[He puts the letter down, it keeps talking, so he picks it up.]

RASKOL'S MOTHER: Which I have pledged more to the bank, etc. etc.
And to let you know about your sister's troubles.

RASKOL: Dunya?

RASKOL's MOTHER: Of course, troubles is so strong a word. Let me start at the beginning. Dunya took the job as Mr. Svid's governess, he has those two horrible brats, but she took 100 roubles in advance, mostly so she could send you 60 to help with your expenses....

And then Mr. Svid began to expect certain things of her, all of it very difficult when he was under the influence of the vodka, and needless to say, she had to leave the position to keep her virtue in tact, but could not. Because she owed him the money.

Well. To make a long story short, another fellow has entered the scene. Mr. Leonard Wolf.

[Leonard Wolf appears]

RASKOL's MOTHER: He's an older man. Quite distinguished. Solid and decent, if a bit sullen and arrogant.

You get used to it.

He has proposed to Dunya!

[We see Dunya come and hold his hand and gaze out stoically]

He has a good job. He says he's happy she's poor. He's going to save her from destitution. Of course, there's no special love between the two.

But your sister is an angel! And I'm sure she will do anything she can to ensure Leonard's happiness.

We love you, Raskol. You are the family's pride and joy. We believe that if you are happy, then we are happy—if you are successful, then we are too.

In the meantime, now that Dunya is marrying a lawyer, my credit is up at the bank. So I'm including 35 rubles, for your tuition and your expenses.

RASKOL: Thirty-five rubles?

RASKOL's MOTHER:

Love, Your Mother.

[Raskol sits at the desk. He fiddles. Dunya and Leonard Wolf watch him and then exit.]

LANDLADY(from off): Raskol, I know you're in there. Raskol! As you know the rent is due!

[Knocking knocking. Raskol goes to a bar.]

[Marmelade sits and drinks.]

MARMELADE: My name is Marmelade. Did you get that?

RASKOL: Marme—like the—?

MARMELADE: like the what?

RASKOL: Like the...never mind. I know you.

MARMELADE: You know me? How is that possible?

RASKOL: I've met you several times, and each time you're two sheets past the wind. Vodka?

MARMELADE: Lots of vodka. It's the bucket I'm going to drown in.

RASKOL: Might as well have a few swims in the pool before you go.

MARMELADE: Let me tell you my misery, young man—

RASKOL: I don't want to hear misery. There's too much of it--

MARMELADE SINGS A SONG

My misery is my necklace
I wear it around my neck
A thousand colored baubles
Each one of them a wreck
Let's start with my thirst
It won't go away.
You can count on two hands
The fruits of my lust—
My children are losers,
My wife is a shrew
The government won't pay me
What I think is my due
I'm a civil servant, a man who did my time
I fought in three wars! I --

RASKOL: Would you mind? I'm trying to listen—

Man 1: I have this fantasy—

Man 2: tell me-

Man 1: that old woman, the crow who lives on Selvig Street-

Man 2: the one who lends money, pawns your silver, your watches--

Man 1: your most precious things—she takes them and then gives you money and then charges interest, and then generally makes life miserable—

Man 2: I know her. She is such a crow.

Man 1: so my fantasy is that I take an axe to her.

Man 2: an axe?

Man 1: chop her up in bits.

Man 2: Huh. A crime.

Man 1: No.

Man 2: how is that not a crime?

Man 1: because I take her money and I redistribute it—

Man 2: A murder. I don't know. It seems extreme.

Man 1: No, seriously, you take a total ignoramus, an evil, stupid old lady who does nothing good for anyone, and then on the other hand you've got these fresh young things who are wasting away. Don't you think thousands of good deeds make up for one little crime?

Man 2: What about the sister—

Man 1: Lizaveta, well, she's nice. Works all the time for the crow, does the wash, does the cooking, washes floors. She's her sister's personal slave.

I don't know. The old bag's a cockroach. I say squish her!

[Marmelade back into focus—]

MARMELADE: I fought in two wars—

RASKOL: I thought you said three-

MARMELADE: I fought in three wars, my mind starts to stray

I can't pay my bills, there's no work for my days.

I sit here and drink—

[Sonya enters]

SONYA: You make me sick!

MARMELADE: I make my own Sonya sick! Look at my girl, all tarted up.

SONYA: look at yourself you old fool!

MARMELADE: Come now, is that anyway for a daughter to speak to her--

SONYA: We're broke, and you still drink.

RASKOL: this one's on me—

SONYA: you can't buy drinks for a drunk.

RASKOL: I can't?

SONYA: it's a crime!

RASKOL: Here, then

[He hands her some money.]

SONYA: A kind man. Thank you—Oh, you got something red on your shoe.

RASKOL: Red on my shoe?

SONYA: Are you an artist?

[and RASKOL exits]

SONYA looks at the money and sings a song
CLEANLINESS COSTS MONEY

A ruble for soap
Another for water
Staying clean costs money
A ruble for soap
Another for cream
A scent for the legs
A rinse for the hair
To walk the street
Costs money

[Raskol takes off his shoes and picks at them.]

RASKOL: Blood on my shoes. How alarming.