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### I Return My Ticket

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I RETURN MY TICKET

Caroline Caldwell

A Senior Honors Thesis project submitted to the Honors Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Bachelor of Arts

Belmont University Honors Program

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### *Introduction and Artistic Reflection*

The goal of this project is to create an accessible entry to Fyodor Dostoevsky's momentous novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*. I have pursued this goal by highlighting what I believe to be key points in the text that explore the most important aspects of the novel, namely a focus on human nature and behavior in the face of conflict and suffering. I did so by choosing music that was thematically appropriate for my songs, such as "What do they learn at school?" being the song for the schoolboys' conversation with Ilyusha, or "Tili Tili Bom," a supposed lullaby that discusses a stranger outside a child's house waiting to hurt them if they don't go to sleep for the scene detailing Ivan's mental break and conversation with the devil.

I believe that, through sharing and continuing to work on this piece, Russian literature and the conversations around it will become more accessible, drawing people into understanding Russian history and culture, which are growing in importance every day. Questions around human nature and the problem of evil are enduring and I have found more peace in the works of Dostoevsky than anywhere else. I know, however, that Russian literature and long novels in general are incredibly intimidating, so I chose to follow in the footsteps of Dave Malloy and his work *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812* to create an approachable and engaging avenue to consume Dostoevsky in a more palatable fashion. Knowledge of other cultures is incredibly important for a nuanced worldview and understanding Russian and Eastern European culture in particular is helpful at this time. I hope that my project brings hope and resources to those grappling with the major issues of the problem of evil, human nature, and family through diving into the world of Fyodor Dostoevsky and *The Brothers Karamazov*.

*The story begins in Skotoprigonyevsk, a small town in 19th century Russia, when the three sons of Fyodor Pavlovich, a disreputable landowner, reconvene in their hometown. Alexei (Alyosha) has stayed and is a novice at the monastery under the tutelage of the “starets” Father Zosima, Dmitri (Mitya) has come to town to collect his inheritance, and Ivan has returned at Dmitri’s request to mediate the dispute between Fyodor Pavlovich and Dmitri.*

1. Prologue – to the tune of Kalinka

There was a man in our district named Fyodor Pavlovich  
 A landowner, known so in jest, a sponger, quite senseless  
 Three sons he had by his two wives with diverse dispositions  
 A sponger and a toady with a dark and tragic death  
 His end was no great loss to us, and he will not be missed  
 But let’s not get ahead of ourselves, here our tale begins

(spoken) but remember, in most cases, people, even wicked people, are much more naïve and simplehearted than we generally suppose, and we ourselves are too.

2. The Brothers Karamazov – to the tune of Tsar Peter

Mitya came to town, expecting his inheritance  
 Sent off as a child he seemed to think he would be rich  
 But papa loved his ladies and he loved to play a part  
 And Mitya seemed to hold no lasting space in papa’s heart

Next Ivan began his life in gloom from charity  
 A brilliant if a sullen man who brought to town unease  
 And here a shadow clung to him, who took his words to heart  
 (Smerdyakov)  
 A half-brother and lackey to whom lying was an art  
 Ivan went to university and there he made a stir  
 And made the choice to come to town for Mitya, his brother

Alyosha was the youngest and a lover of mankind  
 Drunken tears and sentiment in his papa he’d find  
 Love by all Alyosha was, and called to holy life  
 A tender heart and quiet soul beyond his you won’t find  
 His papa said he’d burn, burn out, and then come back to life

So all the brothers in one house  
 For the first time we find  
 Fyodor Pavlovich’s sons had their fates in mind

*The brothers and father go to the church to meet with Father Zosima, the starets, in order to resolve a financial dispute between Fyodor Pavlovich and Dmitri. Dmitri is late and Alyosha is already there.*

## 3. The Old Buffoon – to the tune of Praise the Name of God

- Alyosha: Thank you, starets, for giving us time  
I know the demands of your day and your age  
But here I present this family of mine  
To hear what you have to say, your wise words to us
- FP: Oh sacred starets forgive who I am  
A buffoon, all mouth and no mind, *always out of place, really*  
But I dither here, a new Diderot, for your holy words  
Perhaps you, sacred elder, can save my poor stupid soul  
I'm my own worst enemy  
My feet in my mouth  
My mind all on humor, no tact  
I hope my high spirits fail to offend
- Zosima: don't be so ashamed, for there lies your conflict  
Your shame makes you lie to yourself  
Just do those things that you know are right,  
The Word serves as a pure guide  
know the Word and don't lie
- FP: I kiss your dear hand,  
You saw through my soul  
My life will forever be changed  
For all I speak now are lies and shame
- (interlude, mixed conversation)
- D: Pardon my fault at keeping you waiting  
I'd simply been told the wrong time (damn that Smerdyakov)
- Z: Worry not
- I: As I was saying we only love  
Out of a fear for our souls  
If we did not fear our immortality  
(Something about how we wouldn't be kind)
- Z: I know that you claim that souls will fade  
You claim that God is not there  
And yet you should thank him for the soul that he gave you  
The room for high thinking you have
- FP: You see my sons now?  
One high mind, one boorish

You see now why I act the fool?

- D: Enough!  
 Starets I'm sorry we've wasted your time  
 My father wants only a scandal  
 He makes up his reasons, he makes a fair farce  
 But this time I see through his ways
- FP: Oh God! He accuses me! All must accuse me!  
 But this one, he only wants lucre  
 He's been a disaster, he too plays the fool  
 What place has he to accuse me!  
 Taking money from a fair lady, what, shall I speak about this?
- D: Don't speak her name! Don't pull her in!  
 You fool, can't you just let things lie?  
 You're brazen, a humbug, a toady and fool!  
 I've been wrong but at least I say it!  
 Starets, I'm sorry, we all hold the blame.  
 We knew this would be a disaster  
 Despite knowing father, we all still came  
 This shame will now follow us after.  
 But tell me, does he deserve to live? No.  
 He's vile, a contaminant, I should take his life  
 But here I am (stops suddenly)  
 (Zossima bows to Dmitri)  
 \*quietly\* he bows to me? He bows to me? What could this be for?

*Dmitri, Ivan, Grushenka, and Katya explain their relationships. It's not an event in the plot, but expressed over time. I've put it here for clarity.*

#### 4. Confessions in Verse – to the tune of Troika

- D: I met proud Katya in the barracks  
 Her father destitute  
 She was breathless, frightened, with naught else to do  
 So of course, I had to play a game. (I *am* a Karamazov)  
 Prior I had promised to give to her aid,  
 a sum of money *which I had*  
 But when proud Katya sought what I had sworn,  
 I looked at her like she was mad  
 But now you know, Alyosha, we're betrothed,  
 But here I seek a different skirt
- I: Now I've been quiet with a secret love  
 I wish to make Katya my own

But naturally if I truly love  
I must let her choose alone

G: Ah now, poor Ivan, he doesn't know  
That I'm the skirt that's creeping there  
I've sworn my love to Fyodor Pavlovich  
But it's purely a transactional affair  
For Fyodor gives me lots of pretty gifts!  
And why on earth would I refuse

K: And Ivan, now he is my bosom friend  
But pride and duty rend my heart  
I'd in an instant turn and run to him  
If only Mitya and I'd part

Unison: And so a tangled sort of web we've got  
Each with quite a complex role  
Hiding lies within our souls.

*Alyosha and Ivan have dinner and engage in philosophical conversation. Ivan presents his "poem" to Alyosha*

#### 5. The Grand Inquisitor – to the tune of Coachman, Hold the Horses

I: I wish I could forgive and could embrace  
I wish that I could look past the baseness  
But the price is just too high and so  
I return my ticket to God

But you haven't mentioned your sinless one  
And I've a story for you  
I wrote it myself, please listen  
I'll set the scene for you in Seville

Come with me to the 16<sup>th</sup> century  
Your lover of mankind returns to earth  
He *Talitha cumis* and love streams from his eyes  
Until my Inquisitor sees

Of course, this he cannot allow  
So he brings in the lover of mankind  
For a conversation  
About what he's done wrong  
In the way things play out

I must know, must know, you must tell

How could you give so much freedom?  
 You gave us far too much to undo  
 Why not just give them bread then ask virtue?

Why bother with decisions of their own?  
 Why let them choose to make wrong and right?  
 They want to be slaves just as long as they're fed  
 We've perfected and refined what you gave

So don't add to what you've already given  
 I simply don't have the time to rework  
 You've burdened us when you burdened them  
 They're all baser than you knew

So tomorrow I must burn you  
 I know it's the holy thing to do

And your sinless one made no reply,  
 just kissed him on his bloodless lips

*Another scene not included in song is the bullying of Ilyusha due to Dmitri's treatment of his father. Dmitri pulled Ilyusha's father out of a bar by his beard, which resembles a whiskbroom. The boys relentless make fun of Ilyusha and he bitterly fights back. Alyosha tries to intervene but fails. As these events have been unfolding, Zossima has been on his deathbed. Alyosha rushes back to the monastery, realizing he has been gone too long. Zossima welcomes him and gives his last words.*

## 6. The Odor of Corruption – to the tune of Cherubic Hymn

Z: Enter, my son  
 Here my time has come  
 It's time to hold all that I've said inside  
 It's time I go home to our Father above

A: No, it cannot be  
 For I am not yet ready  
 (to self) But such a holy man  
 Will leave relics, legacy  
 I know that corruption will not touch you, no decay

Z: God will save our Russia  
 For the Russian soul feels God  
 Nurture it, the dignity, the faith and all we see

Don't neglect your prayers  
 For in them you will feel God  
 In prayer you will find your education and your hope  
 Ask Him for His mercy for all who come before Him  
 And your love will prove to beget more love

Do not fear man's sin  
 For sin brings you to God  
 Loving even past the sin is love's own highest form... highest form...

Do not sit in judgement  
 For that belongs to God  
 You're a criminal just like the man who stands before you  
 Take on yourself his crimes  
 Endure his suffering without thought for his response  
 Do for him as you know Christ has done

Some ask me of Hell  
 Of this place away from God  
 I maintain it is the inability to love and to be love..love..love

A: No! No! he can't be gone! They're taking his body? How does he already appear so small, so changed, so human, so old. Where has his holiness gone?

*After the death of Zossima, Alyosha is despondent. Grushenka has sent Rakitin to bring Alyosha to her with the goal of corrupting him and Rakitin believes that Alyosha's depressed state will make him especially susceptible to Grushenka's charms.*

#### 7. A Little Onion – to the tune of Long Road

R: Now dear friend, your face has changed  
 Has someone gone and done you wrong?  
 Where, dear friend, is your famous meekness?  
 Could it be you weren't an angel all along?

A dead old man dies and begins to stink  
 And you argue with your God?  
 Well come with me to Grushenka  
 Come with me and leave your stinking God behind

G: how nice to see you  
 You're not your brother  
 You don't know how relieved I am  
 For I have tricked him, I hope to fly tonight  
 But ask no questions and you'll receive no lies

May I join you? Sit on your lap, dear?  
 I'll cheer you up, my pious little boy!  
 Let's have champagne dear, a celebration,  
 For my sweet officer returns for me tonight

He's coming from Mokroye  
 And that's why I told my lie  
 I'm sitting here and waiting  
 Let's drink, dear, to the gates of paradise

(extend the pause in the music)

R: you and your sentimental slop, Grushenka! And you sit on his lap as you boast.  
 He rebelled against his God, he was going to feast! His elder died!

G: Zossima? He died? And you let me sit here on his lap? I didn't know!  
 (music returns)

A: Please do not taunt me about rebellion  
 I have no room for anger in my heart  
 I wanted wickedness, but she has spared me  
 I've found a treasure there beneath

G (spoken): I was boasting when I told Rakitin I had given away an onion, but it's not to boast  
 I tell you about it. It's only a story, but it's a nice story. I used to hear it when I  
 was a child from Matryona, my cook, who is still with me. It's like this. Once  
 upon a time there was a peasant woman and a very wicked woman she was. And  
 she died and did not leave a single good deed behind. The devils caught her and  
 plunged her into the lake of fire. So her guardian angel stood and wondered what  
 good deed of hers he could remember to tell to God; 'She once pulled up an onion  
 in her garden,' said he, 'and gave it to a beggar woman.' And God answered: 'You  
 take that onion then, hold it out to her in the lake, and let her take hold and be  
 pulled out. And if you can pull her out of the lake, let her come to Paradise, but if  
 the onion breaks, then the woman must stay where she is.' The angel ran to the  
 woman and held out the onion to her. 'Come,' said he, 'catch hold and I'll pull you  
 out.' he began cautiously pulling her out. He had just pulled her right out, when  
 the other sinners in the lake, seeing how she was being drawn out, began catching  
 hold of her so as to be pulled out with her. But she was a very wicked woman and  
 she began kicking them. 'I'm to be pulled out, not you. It's my onion, not yours.'  
 As soon as she said that, the onion broke. And the woman fell into the lake and  
 she is burning there to this day. So the angel wept and went away

G (singing): oh I am wicked, so sorely wicked  
 and yet I gave an onion today!  
 No, I'm not crazy, don't laugh Rakitka,  
 The onion means I have a heart

I gave an onion, not that I'm pure now  
 But you have made a change in me  
 I'd have corrupted you, but I just couldn't  
 And we should all love like you

I bribed Rakitka  
 To bring you to me  
 I wanted ruin and that's the truth  
 I thought you hated my base desires  
 So I went on despising you

Now I'm tormented  
 By who I am, dear  
 And here the letter calls me like a dog  
 My former officer came back to me,  
 Demands my presence and so I go

*After Grushenka's apparent redemption, Alyosha returns to the monastery where monks are reading. Alyosha falls asleep to the story of the Wedding at Cana and is greeted by Zossima in a dream.*

#### 8. The Wedding at Cana – to the tune of Cherubic Hymn

Z: Rest well, Alyosha, and bring to mind all love  
 Your onion, your kopeck will do well  
 Drink the wine of happiness, young lover of mankind  
 Love mankind and love their joy, you know the words I say

You brought forth an onion to a desperate hungry woman  
 You know that no onion is in vain

Do you see our light, my child  
 Do you fear His grandeur  
 Don't forget in Him we also find our merrymaking  
 Isn't He the one who brought the wine?  
 Our lover of mankind.

A: Our lover of mankind.

*Meanwhile, Dmitri has gone to the house of Fyodor Pavlovich to see if Grushenka is with him. In the process, he hit Grigory, his old caretaker, over the head and thinks he killed him. He went to the window and saw that Grushenka was not with Fyodor Pavlovich and returns to her house to find that she is gone.*

#### 9. A Sudden Decision – to the tune of Dark Eyes

D:           So have I killed him  
 And she's gone now  
 I killed Grigory  
 All for nothing!  
 Thought my father  
 Was the villain  
 Now this officer  
 Rises up!  
 How could I forget  
 That he stood behind  
 Ling'ring over all of her actions  
 My hands bloodied now  
 It was shed for naught  
 Now in front of me stands a fence  
 I'll jump over it  
 I'll remove myself  
 Though I know that you  
 Cannot understand  
 Oh, my pistols now  
 Make it quick

Now I go to her  
 One last night  
 Now she sees me and  
 Now she holds regret  
 Oh poor Yorick  
 What a night we'll have  
 All carousing  
 Bring the champagne  
 My 300 should be enough!

Spoken:     Grusha! I'm here for you! Let's show these polish officers of yours a Russian night!

G:           Oh Mitenka  
 Please don't scare me  
 Please don't talk like this  
 Are you on a spree?  
 But my officer  
 Has insulted me  
 Take me back, Mitya  
 I'm for you, Mitya

D:           Then I'll end it now  
 Perfect happiness

Manic joy found  
With my lover!

G: I'm your slave, Mitya  
Only kiss me now

D: You're a burning coal in my heart!

Police, spoken: we are here with a warrant for the arrest of Dmitri Fyodorovich Karamazov.

*Ilyusha has fallen ill and the schoolboys regret their poor treatment of him. They come to visit him, but he is so poorly that he will clearly die soon. They try to cheer him and hope he will get better.*

10. Schoolboys – to the tune of What do they learn at school?

All: We learn how to write our letters  
How they make up all our words  
When we study, when we study, when we study

We subtract and multiply  
We learn that we should not lie  
When we study, when we study, when we study  
X2

How does 2 multiply 4?  
What are all our stories for?  
When we study, when we study, when we study

And we learn to love good books  
All good manners and good looks  
When we study, when we study, when we study  
X2

We learn how to treat our friends  
As a means unto an end  
When we study, when we study, when we study

And our fathers' legacies  
Are passed down to you and me  
As we study, as we study, as we study  
X2

Ilyusha: I want no sentimental words  
When you say them it's absurd

At my bedside, at my bedside, at my bedside

Kolya: Well, a dog we've brought to you  
And a little cannon too  
At your bedside, at your bedside, at your bedside

All your friends have come to you  
We regret that we've been cruel  
When we study, when we study, when we study

All: Yes, your friends have come to you  
Trusting you'll be better soon  
And we'll study, and we'll study, and we'll study

*Ivan goes to Smerdyakov to try to gain some understanding about the death of his father after Dmitri insists on his innocence. Smerdyakov gradually and irritatingly reveals the truth.*

#### 11. The Visit to Smerdyakov – to the tune of Moscow Nights

S: You had left town  
Left our old man to rot  
At least that was the impression I got from you  
When you left you gave me  
Your own implicit permission  
To do that which you and Mitya  
Both desired to be done to that buffoon  
Our father!

I: So you did it?

S: You truly did not suspect a single thing?  
Well here are the roubles  
The loathsome subject of far too much family strife  
But someone said to me that without God all is permitted

I: That was me

S: Yes you, so you did it by extension  
It's what you wanted  
The end of all your thought  
I shammed a fit  
I feigned much pain  
And then, good sir, I did it  
But you knew and you did nothing  
You gave me these ideas  
So the guilt for this parricide

Falls  
On  
You

I: Oh the guilt is all on me

S: Take the money

*Ivan breaks down due to his own perceived guilt.*

12. The Devil – to the tune of Tili Tili Bom  
(the devil character is voiced by Ivan)

De: No thunder and no lightning  
No scorched wings come with me  
All that's great and beautiful is far too much to ask me

What, no welcome words?  
Don't say you don't believe!  
All hosannahs, no critique  
Makes a boring story  
So I'm here  
With you  
Aren't I?

(No, you can't be, you're in my mind! My illness! A hallucination!)

I know of a legend  
I think that you will like  
A man rejected conscience, laws,  
Faith and future life  
When his time  
Came to him he said  
"This goes against my convictions"  
*Hell! Against his convictions!*

We gave him a sentence  
A quadrillion kilometers  
Walk and then you will find your new  
Life and your redemption

He laid there on the ground  
Claimed it was on principle  
He laid there for a billion years  
Then got up and started walking  
He arrived

And he gave an  
Oversweet Hosannah

I: Now you've played your hand  
That story, I wrote it!  
I was 17 and it was boring then too

De: You say don't believe?  
But with how you deny me  
So much vigor, so intense  
There's at least a small part  
I had to plant  
The smallest seed  
Bouncing  
Between

I know that you believe  
You lose your faith and find it  
I know you and how you work  
My goals have been achieved now

Now hurry, your brother is at the door

*Following his breakdown, Ivan rushes to the court room where Dmitri is being tried, insisting on his own guilt.*

### 13. A Sudden Catastrophe – to the tune of Kalinka

Judge: Ivan Fyodorovich, are you well?  
I: I am well enough to speak...it's nothing special...I will or I won't....  
J: Please, speak clearly

I: Oh clarity?  
Here's clarity  
300 roubles there  
  
From Smerdyakov  
He did the crime  
But I won't stop just there  
  
I gave the thought  
To him and so  
The guilt remains on me  
  
I have no witness

That you'll take  
But trust me, I speak truly

He's got a tail  
My witness does  
A wretched paltry devil

I'm sure he's here  
With evidence  
Underneath the table

K (spoken): Wait! I have one more piece of evidence to present.  
A letter! He swears to kill his father! He wrote to me! Ivan is simply ill. Utterly delirious. Send him home. Mitya is the killer. He owed me money and killed Fyodor Pavlovich to pay me back, but felt such shame that he squandered that too. Ivan knew!! His conscience is so deep he could not keep it in. He has been tormented for days. He tried to convince me it was his own fault with this same Smerdyakov story but it's not so! It was Mitya! Ivan did it all to save the monster!!! (breaking down into hysterics)

G: Do you see what she's done?? Your serpent has destroyed you.

*Dmitri is declared guilty despite Ivan's insistence. Smerdyakov, the true criminal, has killed himself. Katya and Alyosha convene and she tells him of the plan to save Mitya and begs him not to tell.*

#### 14. Plans to Save Mitya – to the tune of Mother's Lullaby

K: regardless of what the people decide  
Our Mitya has to escape  
He's left money  
Help in case of this  
My Ivan agreed to help

We'll send him and his Grushenka  
To America to be free  
Please don't tell a soul  
A future that we four can see

*Alyosha goes to the funeral of Ilyusha and shares final thoughts with the young schoolboys.*

#### 15. Ilyusha's Funeral – to the tune of Red Sarafan

N: Cross him, kiss him, bless him  
Bury him beneath his stone  
No, take him to the churchyard

Don't let him rest alone  
 Scatter the breadcrumbs  
 To honor his wishes  
 Bring the birds to him  
 Don't let him rest alone

Shed your tears  
 Let candles fall  
 And set them back upright  
 Sing over him  
 A song of love  
 Don't let him rest alone  
 Bring the birds to him  
 Don't let him rest alone

A: I wish to resurrect him  
 But know it can't be so  
 We'll stay here with his family  
 Don't let them grieve alone

K: we'll go with them to dinner  
 Go into their home  
 Share our grief and mealtime  
 Don't let them grieve alone

A: Grief followed by pancakes  
 A quite unnatural sight  
 But here we are with our faith  
 Dictating that it's right

But I must go away soon  
 I pray, don't turn to rot  
 Be kind, be honest, don't forget  
 I promise I will not  
 Remember our Ilyusha  
 Keep your heart toward good  
 Keep Ilyusha eternal  
 Don't let him rest alone

K: And we'll see him someday  
 When heaven comes here  
 And now for Karamazov  
 We offer up three cheers

## Instrumentals

1. "Kalinka." uploaded by Vincenzo Anatolj, 24 August 2016,  
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2. "Long Live Tsar Peter," Songs of the Cossacks, 1989, <https://tinyurl.com/tsarpeterthegreat>.
3. "Гимны Надежды 3 Хвалите имя Господне (минус) (Praise the Name of God)." Uploaded  
31 July 2021, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=cejgW\\_lKqJc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cejgW_lKqJc).
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