

UTOPIA



a literary journal for artists, architects, and dreamers



UTOPIA

ABOUT

This literary journal focuses on three characters from the videogame series Pathologic: Andrey Stamatina, Peter Stamatina, and Daniil Dankovsky. Their role in the game is interpreted through a collection of excerpts, essays, poems, and artworks.

Ice-Pick Lodge

ice-pick.com

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Meiri

twitter.com/crybabimeiri

p.3

Molly

twitter.com/shabnakk

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Bunny

twitter.com/ignicordia

Centerfold, p.9

Max

maxbanshees.com

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SKY ARCHITECT

Paper architecture works are “projects of projects.”
They are not intended for direct realization,
but for mediated realization.

— Yuri Avvakumov, *Building Castles in The Sky*

*A conversation with Peter Stamatina
from **Pathologic 1***

—∴—

Peter Stamatina: You saved my life, Daniil. Thank you. I'll put it to good use; you won't regret it.

Bachelor: What are you going to do with your life? Tell me.

Peter Stamatina: Here's what's going to happen. The part of the town on this bank of the river will be deserted. The people who will have found shelter in the specular cocoon will become its new inhabitants.

Bachelor: What are you going to build?

Peter Stamatina: My brother and I will build the whole town. The Cold Hall will look like a mudpie in a sandbox compared to it. I've designed it in my mind already.

Bachelor: Really? Tell me.

Peter Stamatina: I told you already of the idea to construct a building with variable density... or was it someone else?

Peter Stamatina: ...but there is also a knot-house, there is a house that erupts from itself— an inside-out-house, so to speak, but without the 'inside' part... an encircled suburb that is at war with the centre, a bridge suburb... And, of course, a growing house that changes every week...

Bachelor: How could you possibly invent all that? Are you really going to build all of those things?

Peter Stamatina: That was an effulgent epiphany, a true eureka moment. My brother and I have planned the space already. We have laid roads, placed suburbs and districts... And when we saw the whole thing and realized how much energy was hiding in it... you know, we exchanged glances. It will rival the cities of the greatest ancient civilizations!

Bachelor: That town of yours will only exist on paper... Like with the Polyhedron, it will turn into a full-sized model of itself— made of its own designs...

Peter Stamatina: You're wrong. But why should I prove anything to you? Time will tell.

Bachelor: All right. I hope you'll stop sinking in the green whirlpool. The bottle is pulling you to the bottom already. There is neither warmth nor light there.





SHADOWPLAY

Farkhad... was a guild fellow of mine. His ardour was disproportionate to his talent... You see, he nearly convinced the rulers to grant him that side of the river for his project. Yes, he deserved to die.

– Peter Stamatina, *Pathologic 1*

On the Nature of the Murder of Farkhad

Essay by Molly, with additions from Max.

Just like how Simon Kain was never real— perhaps instead an ancestor from years and years ago being kept alive in the form of the epistemology or ideology of Utopianism— Farkhad was never real either. There was never a third Oneirotect, or a murder. Yes, there was a bid to build a structure that would house Simon’s soul, as well as a city across the Gorkhon river, but this bid was not between the Stamatins and a single person (post-humously) named Farkhad. It was quite literally between the Stamatins and all of architectural tradition.

Andrey and Peter Stamatina represent succeeding, or building upon, the past. However, their crowning accomplishment— the Polyhedron— is *a structure that could never be built*. A structure born of its own blueprints. A structure that not just symbolizes, but truly is made up of, gateways and dreams. A structure that contains Simon’s immortal soul— a soul that never belonged to a human, but rather an ideology. The Polyhedron is an impossible structure, housing an impossible soul, built-but-not-really-built in the nested space of *dialogue within a play within a kids’ morbid game within a real videogame*. Everything in Pathologic, even the world itself, points to something larger.

This is especially relevant for everyone who is dead before the game begins. Characters like Simon Kain, Victoria Olginskaya, Nina Kaina, and Isidor Burakh, are simply explanations for the sandbox. From the start of the game, their very existence is a source of contention.

So, why not extend this logic to the murder of Farkhad? If Farkhad is an epistemology of architecture, then perhaps Andrey likes to let Peter— in delusion— believe that he killed a real human named Farkhad, as to convince Peter that he truly is that talented of an architect. The name they’ve given him is itself a reference to an architect from Persian literature who was tricked into committed suicide after completing a seemingly impossible task in the name of love.

So, Peter is watching an architectural shadowplay, and he's confusing the puppets for the puppeteers. Is he entirely misguided for thinking this, though? In Pathologic, symbolism and reality frequently collapse into themselves to become the same thing. Someone like Nina Kaina can breath seven generations of history into a doll just by kissing it, just as the player breathes life into the game by immersing themselves in it. So can Peter, who, by ardently believing in the murder of Farkhad, spreads that belief to other characters, and possibly even the player.

Both of the Stamatins have attained their goals and seen a form of the truth through the illusions and beliefs they're lost in. In Peter's case, he *has* overcome architectural, artistic, and even scientific tradition through the initial conception of the Polyhedron, though he frequently conflates it with the murder of Farkhad. In Andrey's case, he has so fervently rejected earthly constraints that, in the process of piercing the ground with the anchor of the Polyhedron, he's managed to injure Mother Boddho—the originator and embodiment of Earth—herself.

Maybe Peter himself doesn't truly understand all of this, nor does Andrey, but they've both— from opposite ends— managed to kill their creators.

—∴—

On the Nature of the Polyhedron

Essay by Max, with additions from Molly.

“It's a multidimensional space. It is turned unto itself. It has no surfaces, borders, or bounds. It has no mass. It has no end. The discovery is not mine. I've nothing to be proud of, really... I've stumbled across it by accident. Moreover, I don't really understand how it works...”

— Peter Stamatina, *Pathologic 1*

In the game's Steppe language, *Udurgh* means 'a body that contains a world.' Early on, the player is entrusted with defining who, or what, the Udurgh is. Two candidates are Simon Kain, and the Polyhedron. Simon is at one point described as a self contained universe who had his own laws. I bring him up as this description is wonderfully succinct, and can be extended to the Polyhedron, where it becomes more complex.

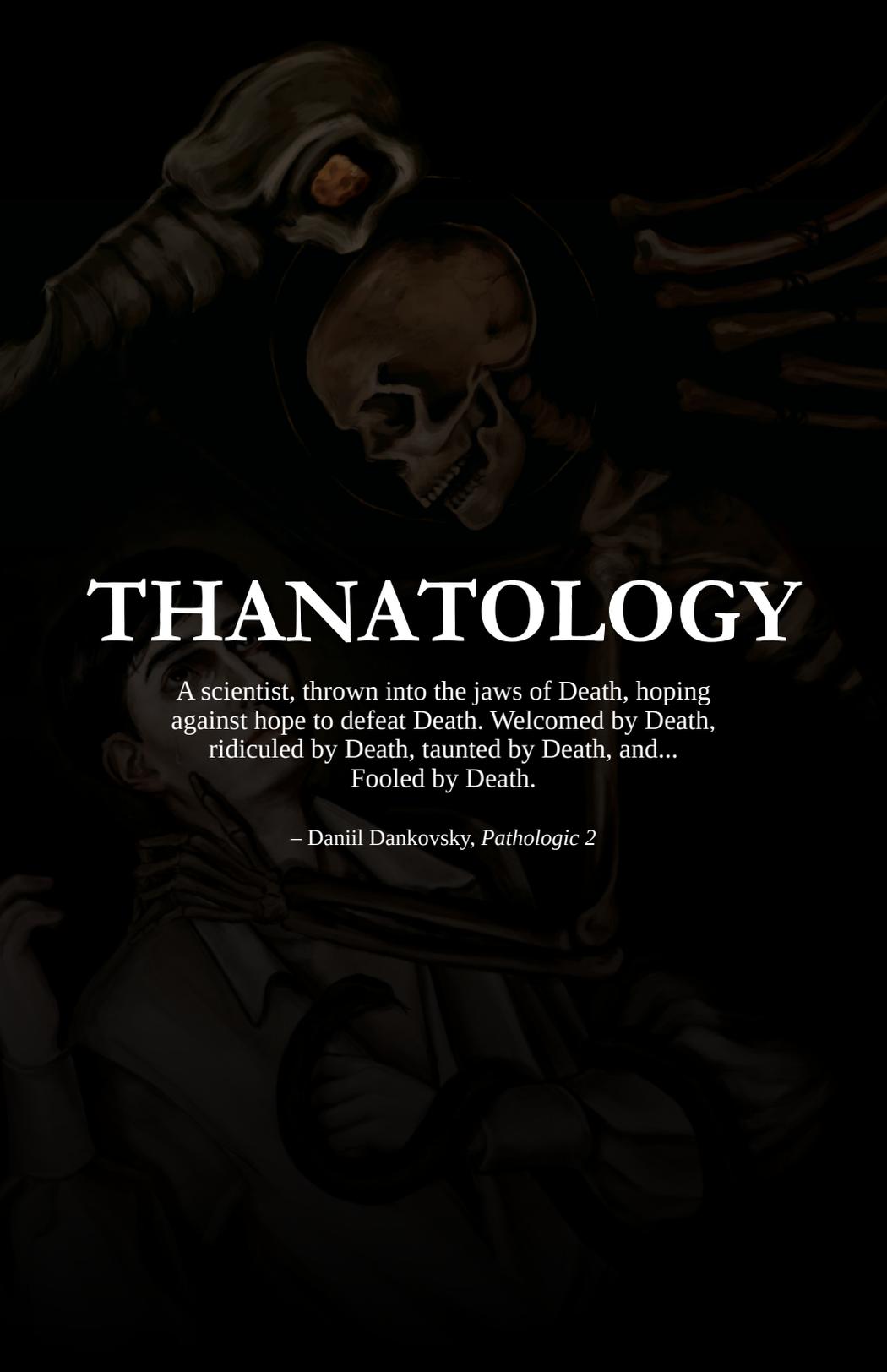
The Polyhedron is described as an inward-facing, multidimensional space where dreams and the impossible come true. At least, this is how Peter and the kids who have been in the Polyhedron describe it. The Townsfolk see it as being made out of mirrors, and the player sees it as being made out its own schematics. This could mean that the Polyhedron is reflecting itself, the Town, the dreams of children, and even the fabric of game, all at once. Essentially, the Polyhedron is an allegory for the game itself. It's art as a whole. It's a body that contains a world.

It can also be described as a one way mirror. You can look into the game through it, but the game cannot look out, lest the imagination and immersion is covalent between the non-meta observer and the metaobserver. The Townsfolk inside of the game see it as a mirror as they look inside-out, while the player sees schematics as they look outside-in. Children, however, don't see walls at all as they are, in essence, trapped inside of the glass. That is to say, they are between the game and us, since the children playing the sandbox game at the start of Pathologic 1 are our gateway into the game. They *are* the dreaming mechanism.

Inside the metaworld of art, ideas metastasize and solidify as they do. You, however, can look into that shapeless metaspace. Observing the Polyhedron, it's a magically-flying tower built of its own blueprints— Its code, if you will. If you look at a game in a physical form, it is no more than code and numbers. Perhaps a reflective, prism-like CD... It's too perfect to be a coincidence!

The Polyhedron is nothing but blueprints. A game is nothing but assets and code. Put in the right space, with the right person, however, it reflects inside of itself, and becomes a metaspace that is infinitely large. ♦





THANATOLOGY

A scientist, thrown into the jaws of Death, hoping
against hope to defeat Death. Welcomed by Death,
ridiculed by Death, taunted by Death, and...
Fooled by Death.

– Daniil Dankovsky, *Pathologic 2*

Dirge Without Music *by Edna St. Vincent Millay*

—:—

I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground.
So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind:
Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely. Crowned
With lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.

Lovers and thinkers, into the earth with you.
Be one with the dull, the indiscriminate dust.
A fragment of what you felt, of what you knew,
A formula, a phrase remains,—but the best is lost.

The answers quick and keen, the honest look, the laughter, the love,—
They are gone. They are gone to feed the roses. Elegant and curled
Is the blossom. Fragrant is the blossom. I know. But I do not approve.
More precious was the light in your eyes than all the roses in the world.

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave
Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.
I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.

BOUND

A tango in three texts.

*Excerpt from **The Little Prince**
by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*

—∴—

“Come and play with me,” he says to the fox.

“I cannot play with you,” the fox replies. “I am not tamed.”

“What does that mean — to tame?”

“It means to establish ties. To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world...please, tame me!”

“I want to, very much,” the Little Prince replied, “but I have not much time. I have friends to discover, and a great many things to understand.”

“One only understands the things that one tames,” the fox said.

*Collaged pieces from **You are Jeff**
by Richard Siken*

—∴—

Let’s say the Devil is played by two men.
Dark hair, green eyes, white teeth, pink tongues—they’re twins.

Let’s say the Devil is the space between two men.
Here: I’ll be all of them.

*Excerpts from the Pathologic 1 quest
Foundation of a Miracle*

—∴—

Andrey Stamatín: There's a rumour that Andrey Stamatín, the architect that had murdered every soldier in his studio yesterday and set fire to a stone stairway later, was just executed by the mutineers. That's when the assault began. What is that supposed to mean?

Bachelor: That was me.

Andrey Stamatín: So I am you! The furnace of this catastrophe has molded me, my brother, and you into a single person... The fire of war has molded us into a threefold bullet. It's natural. We are one. The three sides of a single process... Come to the Capital with us!



L'ALBATROS

de Charles Baudelaire.

—:—

Souvent, pour s'amuser, les hommes d'équipage
Prennent des albatros, vastes oiseaux des mers,
Qui suivent, indolents compagnons de voyage,
Le navire glissant sur les gouffres amers.

À peine les ont-ils déposés sur les planches,
Que ces rois de l'azur, maladroits et honteux,
Laissent piteusement leurs grandes ailes blanches
Comme des avirons traîner à côté d'eux.

Ce voyageur ailé, comme il est gauche et veule!
Lui, naguère si beau, qu'il est comique et laid!
L'un agace son bec avec un brûle-gueule,
L'autre mime, en boitant, l'infirme qui volait!

Le Poète est semblable au prince des nuées
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.

THE ALBATROSS

translated by George Dillon.

—:—

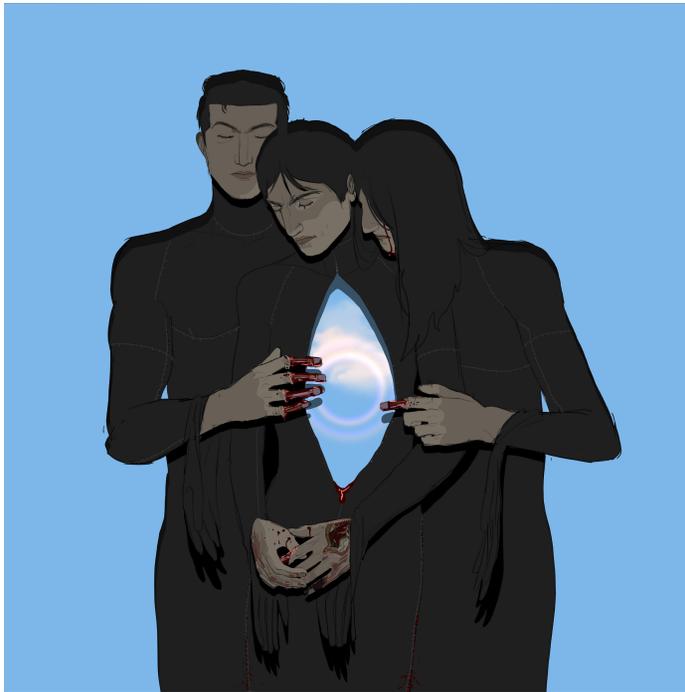
Sometimes, to entertain themselves, the men of the crew
Lure upon deck an unlucky albatross, one of those vast
Birds of the sea that follow unwearied the voyage through,
Flying in slow and elegant circles above the mast.

No sooner have they disentangled him from their nets
Than this aerial colossus, shorn of his pride,
Goes hobbling pitiably across the planks and lets
His great wings hang like heavy, useless oars at his side.

How droll is the poor floundering creature, how limp and weak —
He, but a moment past so lordly, flying in state!
They tease him: One of them tries to stick a pipe in his beak;
Another mimics with laughter his odd lurching gait.

The Poet is like that wild inheritor of the cloud,
A rider of storms, above the range of arrows and slings;
Exiled on earth, at bay amid the jeering crowd,
He cannot walk for his unmanageable wings.

УТОПИЯ



Why the dirt and the pedestrianism? Why the disheveled walls, the rusty beams, the drain covers?
Is this really what a utopia looks like?

– Daniil Dankovsky, *Pathologic 1*

Plague, Utopia

Essay by Max.

The original Russian title of *Pathologic 1* is ‘Мор. Утопия’. A direct translation of this is into English ‘Plague/More: Utopia’, which is a pun on the Russian word for plague and the 1516 book *Utopia* by Thomas More.

Within the title, there is already a sense of what the game is about: Plagues, and utopias. However, it isn’t that they are in perfect opposition of each other, or that it is the whole story. The title itself is a clever, intertwined pun, and the game carries that complex and conjoined nature throughout its story. There is a richness that is lost when Utopias and human suffering are viewed in isolation. In fact, within the context of this story, it might not be possible for them to exist by themselves. One always begets the other. They are trapped in a perpetual equilibrium.

Within the game, there are three major factions that the player can side with: The Termites, the Humbles, and the Utopians. Though the player is free to choose who they side with, the three playable characters are initially entrusted with taking care of the Bound (adherents) of one particular faction. The Haruspex is associated with the Termites, the Changeling is associated with the Humbles, and the Bachelor is associated with the Utopians.

The Utopian faction stand out for being named after the very title of the game. However, just like the clever nature of the title, their connection to the concept of a Utopia is not as straightforward as it would seem. Most of them are interested in transcendence, immortality, and boundary-breaking. They study (or even *become*) stories, ideologies, mechanisms, and memory in order to escape the cyclical confines of the game. If a Utopia is a wonderful but seemingly unobtainable society, then the Utopians are unified by wonderful but seemingly unobtainable goals.

Yes, the game is inescapable, but they yearn to be free, and they are all the more commendable for it.

The Kain family passes down the memory and wisdom of their beloved deceased through architectural or bodily vessels— that is, through buildings like the Polyhedron, or even themselves. The theatre director Mark Immortell stages plays that are as much of an interpretation of the world as they are the world itself. Eva Yan is a young woman who earnestly believes in miracles. Though not always considered a Utopian (a critical fact), Vlad the Younger is optimistic that he can interrupt the cycle of abuse that the indigenous population of the Town have faced at the hands of his family, thus ushering in a new era.

This leaves us with the three subjects of this book: The architects Peter and Andrey Stamatins, as well as the Bachelor of Medicine Daniil Dankovsky. Among the Utopians, they exemplify some of the most pure— but also the most selfish and inward-spiralling— aspects of people who search for some kind of transcendence.

The other Utopians are doing relatively well at the start of the game, but these three begin at a more disadvantaged position. The Thanatica, Daniil's laboratory where he studies death in the hopes of defeating it, has been shut down by The Powers That Be. He has travelled to a town out in the Russian steppe in the hopes of meeting with a man who might be able to save his research, and in turn, his life. After the construction of the Polyhedron, Peter has become deeply depressed, leading him to become a habitual drinker. His brother Andrey has been living a life of debauchery and crime. Neither of the brothers have made substantial work since they finished the Polyhedron for the Kains.

Spiritual enlightenment is not their primary concern at this point. Self-preservation is more like it. Despite this, the three of them— along with Maria Kaina— are framed as the champions and torchbearers of the Utopian cause. Daniil's actions as the player character can lead the faction to victory. The Stamatins are slated to build the Utopian city

across the river once the plague is defeated. Maria will fully come into her role as a Mistress, a title given to women from the ruling families that can make miracles happen. In doing so, she will be able to imbue the town on the other side of the river with magic.

This is a heavy burden to bear. All of these characters voice a certain anxiety about being able to fulfill their roles, or even to survive the plague that has struck the town. Notably, Daniil will attempt to flee the town with the Stamatins early on.

Maria is bound to the Town by duty to her family, love for her deceased mother, and her own conviction. The Stamatins and Daniil are not. All three of them are outsiders to the Town, having hailed from another vaguely named place called the Capital. Daniil and Andrey had been acquaintances during their time at school, and have a level of respect for each other. The Stamatins are used to being on the run, and it looks like Daniil will have to get used to it as well. Peter has become overly attached to his magnum opus, the Polyhedron, but even he admits that he would like to be free of it.

Being champions of the Utopian cause does not mean they swear undying loyalty to the rest of the people in the faction. In fact, Peter says he does not see eye to eye with the Kains, and is solely focused on the preservation of the Polyhedron, or, in other words, his capacity to make art. Andrey is concerned with the safety of his brother above everything else. Daniil is called out for only wanting to preserve the Polyhedron out of respect for its creators, or for the sake of his career. All in all, running seems like the best choice.

The three of them plan to escape on a freight train. It doesn't pan out. Their ploy gets out, and fate brings them back to the Town.

What would they have done if they escaped, though? Live a quiet, unassuming life, hiding away from The Powers That Be? Settle down, change their names, choose a middling profession, grow old, and die?

It's unlikely. At their core, they're uncompromisingly ambitious people who like to surround themselves with a like-minded crowd. The Utopians of the Town are just that, and they'll be hard-pressed to find a group of people like this anywhere else.

So, a certain level of suffering and sacrifice always comes with trying to break new ground. In an extraordinary situation, humans must become superhuman in order to overcome the obstacles they face. They meet as much resistance from society as they do from the natural world. But after all is said and done, what happens to them? What happens when the dust settles, and it turns out they've succeeded? Do the Utopians actually get to enjoy being the demiurges of a magical Utopia?

In a way, this is irrelevant. This is a story whose vitality is contingent on the drama that happens within it, as many stories are. Its purpose is not to settle the debate of who should inherit the earth and how that will look like. Rather, it's to show us a problem more fully. We never see the town on the other side of the river. Daniil will never defeat death. Peter's Polyhedron will never be populated by his own dreams and fantasies. Andrey may never mend his relationship with his brother. This is by design.

They don't have to take this in stride, either. Peter is perpetually tormented by the legacy of the Polyhedron, and attempts to kill himself by the end of the game. Daniil contemplates suicide as well after finding out that he doesn't exist at all. Andrey constantly endangers his life for Peter, all the while struggling to face the role he plays in creating and exacerbating his brother's problems.

They're imperfect people, with imperfect goals, and imperfect relationships. They make mistakes. They have regrets. They're selfish, or egotistical, or cowardly, or just downright unlikeable. Their failure is almost guaranteed, and they don't take it well. All of this make their moments of bravery that much more significant. ♦

