

N.T. CANON

# Ridiculous Cake

From Russia with Lovecraft.



IRON CURTAIN CHOCOLATE

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SMILER PUBLISHING

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# 1

The factory was as impressive as it was intimidating. Even from beyond the iron gates, its tall, dark shadow blanketed the brick courtyard leading up to its cast-iron doorway.

A long line of patrons waited to enter the hallowed grounds. One by one, they went up to the ticket booth, paid their admission fee, and entered the courtyard of the ‘Veronika Vedma Chocolate Factory’.

Eventually, a young woman with pale skin and frizzy brown hair came to the ticket window. A man with a Russian accent addressed her.

“Your name?”

“Uh, Jane... Doe...” She stammered, straightening her back.

“Alright, it is going to be three thousand rubles.” He responded, typing away at an outdated computer terminal.

Jane handed over the money, and received a green wrist-band with her name printed on it, and some sort of waiver. She had half a mind to snap a photo of it, but she just awkwardly signed her name. She would come back for another when she was finished.

“Thank you. Uh, have a nice day...” Jane said, quickly walking off. She felt anxious about using such an obvious fake name, especially on a legal document. But since when did you need to give such details to tour a candy factory?

Especially one that was such a notorious tourist trap.

Jane made her way through the courtyard to the main intersection at the heart of the property. A large map was placed at the crossroads, showing what the attraction had to offer: an impressive restaurant to the west, the factory to the north, and a theme park area to the east. Jane had grown up in Pennsylvania, and had her suspicions as to why carnival rides had been added to the chocolate factory's grounds.

“It's crazy, really... all these additions...” She spoke under her breath. Despite all of the distractions around her, she could not take her eyes off of the factory itself. She had heard so many stories, so many rumors and hushed, scandalous allegations.

Jane needed answers, and she had come to the factory to claim them for herself.

## 2

The Veronika Vedma Confectionary Company was founded at some point in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, though the age of the original business that it sprouted from was completely unknown.

The factory was one of the first producers of chocolate in the old world, and the only one in Eastern Europe. As its reputation for quality goods spread, it was soon viewed as one of the greatest candy companies in existence. There was only one problem; the factory was in Russia.

With the rise of the Soviet Union, Veronika Vedma's factory closed its doors. All employees were fired from their positions, and

production stopped entirely. But somehow, it was impossible for the communist government to breach the walls of the factory and repurpose the infrastructure. The exact details of their attempts are unknown, but all proved unsuccessful.

Eighty years passed, and only when the Berlin wall fell, did the factory once again open its doors. Hoping to re-establish itself in the international market, a contest was announced. Five keys were hidden in five unmarked chocolate bars, and the individuals who found them were granted access to the factory for the first time in nearly a century. The guests were each to be given a lifetime's supply of candy, and there were rumors of a secret prize, meant for only one of the lucky winners.

After the initial tour, the factory resumed normal operations, and soon expanded, bounding into the twenty-first century with bold aggression and shameless promotion. The factory itself soon became a tourist attraction, hosting an elaborate restaurant and theme park. Hotels sprung up in the surrounding area, commercials flooded the airwaves, and the company's products were soon in every store, in every country on the planet.

It was quite the comeback story. But even a casual glance at the history of The Veronika Vedma Confectionary Company left many confused as to how any of this was even possible.

People were asking questions.

Questions about the workers.

Questions about the products.

Questions about the owner.

### 3

A trim woman at the entrance to the factory checked Jane's wristband, and waved her through. There were a few people cluttering the entryway, posing for pictures and checking their phones before they'd enter the gigantic candy making complex.

The lobby of the building was quite impressive. The walls and flooring were covered in marble, with bright red carpeting paving the way towards a receptionists' desk. The brass fixtures, globe lights, and high ceiling gave the space an art-deco appearance.

In the middle of the room, past the desk, was a towering statue that split the carpeted paths in two. It was of a figure holding a balalaika, slouched on the ground, surrounded by wood carving tools. Three imposing forms stood, looming over the figure, holding out their hands.

Jane was impressed, and a touch intimidated. The lobby was far more pristine and elegant than she was expecting. She assumed it would be cluttered with vending machines, candy advertisements, and tacky, overweight tourists.

Well, she wasn't wrong about the last item. A congregation of sightseers was clustered around the receptionists' desk.

Jane trudged over to the group, running a hand through her messy hair and adjusting her jacket. She realized she had forgotten to shower this morning.

The group was comprised of adventurous college students, families with obnoxious children, and a few young couples who were in for a

rather lack-luster date night.

A kindly American woman noticed Jane, and gave her a friendly smile. “Hello. Are you here by yourself?”

“Huh? Oh, uh, yeah.” Jane replied, “I’m here for a work thing.”

“Oh? Are you an employee?”

“No, I’m a journalist. I’m writing a story about the factory and its founder.” Jane stood up a bit taller.

“Ah, I see. For one of those BuzzFeed sites?”

Jane deflated a bit. Truth be told, her journalistic career up until this point had been comprised entirely of fluff pieces and top ten lists. This wasn’t even a story she’d been assigned to write. She had scraped together enough cash to buy a ticket to Moscow, just to try and find her first ‘real’ story, entirely on her own.

But to explain all of that would be... a lot.

“...Yeah, like a BuzzFeed thing.” She muttered.

Jane was saved by the bell. There were mutterings in the crowd that they were about to begin the tour, and a guide soon called for everyone’s attention.

“Hello, hi! We are ready to start on the next tour, yes?” She had a squeaky voice and a thick accent. “Everyone pick up your things and follow me, the way is right through these doors, *okay?*”

She looked as odd as she sounded. She was no taller than four feet, and her arms seemed too short, even for her little body. Her skin didn’t look healthy, and while she had trim, black hair, it looked almost red at the roots. At least her office attire was appropriate, even though it looked two sizes too big for her.

If anyone else in the group aside from Jane noticed these oddities, they did not seem to care one bit. Everyone shuffled along, walking through a set of double doors at the far end of the lobby.

The group entered a more industrial looking hallway; it was a perfect square, nesting with a large bank vault door at the far end.

“Does anyone want to guess what our first stop is going to be?”  
The guide turned to the guests, effortlessly walking backwards.

Jane had a hunch. She’d read up about this before, and there were only a few sightseeing options on the ground floor. Her eyes were glued to the vault, watching as the tour guide input the combination.

A warm wave of air crashed over the guests, as they stepped inside.

## 4

They had entered the chocolate room.

With a ceiling ten stories tall and a floorplan the size of twelve football fields, it was a fantastic sight to behold; a real work of art.

Lush lemongrass covered the floor. Soft hills playfully swept across the ground, acres of cacao trees stretched to the walls, and faint wispy clouds danced about the ceiling. The brick walls of the room were painted to resemble mountain ranges and forests, and the ceiling was made wholly of glass. The entire space was one giant greenhouse, with a chocolate river flowing through the center, tumbling from a cliff of basalt pillars, which cut the room into two parts: the cliffs and the valley.



Pictures didn't do it justice. To the chocoholics of the world, it was the Garden of Eden.

And it was entirely walled-off behind a sheet of plexiglass. As the tourists snapped photos and fogged up the glass, Jane scooted over to the tour guide. She was nearly three heads taller than her...

"Hey, Ma'am? What's with the barrier? We're hardly even two yards inside the room."

"Oh, well, you know how it is. People can cause accidents and get into trouble with these things." The guide waved her hand dismissively.

"Accidents? What kind of accidents?"

The guide cut Jane off and addressed the tourists. "Hey! What is your favorite treat that we make her at Veronika Vedma's?"

"The Peanut butter pretzel bar!"

"Blue raspberry jawbreakers!"

"Black currant licorice!" Children called out from the group, along with a few over-excited adults.

"What about you? Sweaty American girl?" The guide asked Jane.

"Er... Those big honey buns that are like, twelve for three dollars?" The short woman smiled, and gestured to a path leading out of the chocolate room. "Well, we're going to see *all* of these things be made today. And at the end of the tour, you can each pick one free treat from the gift shop. So! Let's just enjoy ourselves, and keep moving, yes?"

The crowd gave a few approving claps, as they were led by their short hostess through the next set of doors.

Jane made sure she was the last person to leave the room, dragging behind and staying quiet. "Enjoy myself, yeah right."

The group marched down a fluorescent-lit hallway, coming to an intersection. 'Caramel room' was stenciled on the wall, with a large arrow pointing right.

As the group strolled along, Jane darted down the left path, hiding behind a concrete pillar. The sounds of footsteps slowly grew faint, and Jane lurched to peek around the wall.

There was a janitor coming right her way.

The amateur journalist jumped and pressed her back flush against the wall. Her mind was racing to come up with something to say if she was spotted. Fortunately the janitor had a pair of headphones on, and walked by without incident.

The janitor seemed even shorter than the tour guide...

Once the coast was clear, Jane scurried away down the left hallway, trying not to look *too* suspicious.

Jane attempted to open a set of double doors as quietly as she could, but the hinges were quite squeaky. Regardless, she didn't think she'd have any issue here. The area was abandoned office space. Everything was coated in a thick layer of dust. The cubicles, if you could even use the modern terminology, were all wooden, containing only loose papers and ancient typewriters. Occasionally one hosted a rotary phone and rolodex.

She pulled out her cell phone and began taking pictures. Flashes lit up the dim space, as she collected as much material as possible. She could not read a lick of Russian, but she could sort that out later.

Jane felt a renewed passion burning inside of her as she went from desk to desk, making her way through the complex. This was already ten

times as exciting as writing any article about a puppy being rescued from a sewer drain, and she was only on the first floor!

She made her way past a brightly lit doorway near the back of the office space, but something caught her eye.

Past the doorway, sitting at a grand desk, chipping away at a stack of paperwork, was an incredibly tall woman with long, blonde hair, dressed in a purple and white office attire.

It was Veronika Vedma.

She looked up from her desk, and locked eyes with Jane.

## 5

The room fell silent as the two women stared at one another. Jane could feel her heart in her throat, as the large Russian woman sized her up. Veronika was easily seven feet tall, with a plump, maternal build. Her skin looked cold, almost purple or pink, as if she was frostbitten and drunk all at once.

“... Can I help you, dear?” The factory owner replied, tapping her fingers on her birch desk. She had a warm, booming voice, like fuming steam engine.

Jane contemplated if she should lie; claim that she was lost and that she'd be on her way. But this moment presented a rare opportunity.

“Uh... Well, I was looking for you! I was wondering if I could ask you a couple questions, for a story? I'm looking for my big break...”

Vedma looked the trim girl up and down, before sitting upright, clasping her hands together. “By all means, I could use a break myself.”

“O-okay... so... You’re the factory owner, yes? The *original* factory owner?” Jane inquired, making her way into the art-deco office. The far wall housed a wide window overlooking the chocolate room.

“Yes, this is true.” She smirked slightly, looking to the side.

“But... how? How old *are* you?... Ma’am.”

Veronika chuckled and met Jane’s gaze. “It is very rude to ask a woman her age, dear.”

Jane decided to address more pressing questions. “The factory: You know there are many people who go missing here, right? And those five guests, back in the early nineties...”

The blonde woman threw up her hands and grinned. “The only people who go missing around here *deserve* to go missing. And of those that don’t, I can assure you, they all fall within the margin of error.”

Jane felt a pit growing in her stomach. She couldn’t place it as fear, rage, or something darker, but it was growing as she processed the CEO’s answers.

“So there’s *something* in the factory that’s to blame, or?”

“No one is to blame for such accidents except those who do not listen to instructions. This place can be dangerous. I’ll leave it at that.”

“But, what happens to them!? Are they dead? Hospitalized?”

Jane’s voice was quaking.

Veronika held up a hand, seeing how her guest was growing anxious. “Look, my dear. You should really get back to your tour group, yes? I need to get back to work, and you should be enjoying yourself!”

She gave Jane a surprisingly warm smile, softening her inflection.

Before she could respond, Jane heard a series of footsteps coming up behind her. She turned to see nine short women, who bore a striking resemblance to her tour guide, but even shorter. They had bright yellow skin, short magenta hair, and cheery cherubic faces. Each was dressed in a brown turtleneck, and white overalls.

And they were coming right for Jane.

“My employees will lead you right back to your group. If you’ll just follow them...”

Jane tensed up. She couldn’t shake the feeling that this was wrong. She didn’t know much, but she knew enough to not trust Veronika. She sprinted and fought past the munchkin girls, kicking one in the face, running out of the office complex, deeper into the factory.

Veronika looked to her little employees, who seemed quite upset.

“Sigh... She’s going to cause *trouble*, isn’t she?” Veronika sounded dejected, addressing them.

“Well. Go and grab her, before she gets into trouble.”

## 6

Jane ran as fast as she could down the centuries old corridors of the abandoned wing of the factory, pushing aside dusty office clutter and stumbling on the faded carpet. Those pint-sized workers were surely right behind her



“Come on, there has to be some way out of here!” Jane managed to cry, between shaky breaths.

Turning a corner, she saw salvation at the end of a long hallway: a pair of elevators, one climbing up, and another climbing down.

Jane had read about these. They were Paternoster elevators; they moved up and down continuously like an escalator. You simply had to step on and step off when it was safe to do so.

Jane looked at a directory next to the elevator shaft. There seemed to be only three upper floors in factory, but dozens of basement floors.

“...Guess I’m going down...” Jane sharply inhaled, and stepped onto the descending elevator car.

The first basement floor seemed to be a packing facility. Jane pulled out her phone to take some pictures as she continued to descend, as she didn’t dare step off of the elevator, and let her pursuers catch up with her.

“Okay, so the plan is to ride this all the way to the bottom. Then, it’ll eventually bottom-out, and bring me back up. They should have lost me by then... A-and, I can keep recording until that happens...”

Jane had a habit of talking to herself when she felt nervous. She had assumed the worst earlier, but those tiny terrors would at the very least confiscate her phone, surely...

The next floor was done up like a mini-golf course. Black lights bathed a velvet painting landscape in neon green. Jawbreakers rolled down astroturf hills and into golf holes marked with fruit on their flags. All of the floors had those same little yellow workers plugging away at their tasks. They occasionally stared at Jane.

“... Who keeps all of this stuff in the basement?” She pondered, as her car continued to the next floor, which was full of gigantic nutcrackers gnashing away, as Tchaikovsky played in the background.

A distillery with a two hundred foot ceiling was next, followed by an art gallery full of edible still-life paintings. They just kept coming: a gigantic bakery, a rock candy laboratory, a hall of mirrors made out of peanut brittle, fields of gigantic produce, cotton candy fog machines, lollipop forests, gingerbread villages, and soda pop church organs.

It was increasingly maddening. The floors seemed to serve no practical purpose, but more strange was the sheer size of the spaces, and the amount of workers Jane had seen.

She'd lost count at around eighty five, and that was twenty floors ago. Each level had at least two dozen of the freaks inhabiting it.

Jane started to look around the elevator car itself for any references to the factory's layout. She had to be on floor 'B' thirty seven.

“T-this doesn't make any sense... Gah, my phone is going to run out of space, I've been recording forever...”

She glanced out of the door as she passed another room. The workers were cutting the limbs off of gigantic starfish, before throwing them back into the shallow pools they were kept in. The limbs were being fed into a massive meat grinder, and what looked like ground beef was being tested and sampled. 'Work in progress' was written on a banner, facing the elevators.

Jane felt her stomach twisting around, and her blood running cold. She was all alone down here with these terrifying sights, these bizarre little women, half a mile underground, on the other side of the world.

The next level had wheat growing on the floor, wall, and ceiling of an M.C. Escher inspired room. The next featured a singular cow, as large as an apartment building, being milked by a smaller, robotic cow.

It suddenly dawned on Jane that what she was witnessing, what she was filming, was far more incredible than any story of missing tour guests or workers being payed under-the-table.

This was impossible, and she was all alone with these nightmares.

She started to laugh, and clutched her head.

She laughed at the room made of honeycomb, with dog-sized bees.

She laughed at the mountainous patchwork of jellybean faces.

She laughed at the towering bird legs and its marshmallow chicks.

She laughed at the tendrils of licorice trying to enter the elevator.

She laughed at the chocolate statue of her laughing at the statue.

She laughed as the hundreds of levels blurred together.

And she laughed as her phone battery died.

Jane couldn't look out into the swirling chaos of the factory any longer. She laid in the fetal position in the corner, listening to the humming of machinery, the laughter of the child-like workers, and the unearthly noises of the basement.

“I-I can't do this. Why did I do this. I can't, I can't...”

Eventually, things became entirely silent.

Jane slowly looked over her shoulder, out of the elevator.

It was too dark to see anything.

She climbed to her feet, and peered into the inky darkness, but there was nothing but black.

Looking over the edge of her car, she saw a daisy-chain of elevators lowering down into that infinite darkness, illuminated only by the lights in the cars. Another chain rose upwards, only a foot of space between them.

There was no bottom.

Jane would have to reach the ascending elevators.

She placed her left foot in the top left corner of the elevator, and pivoted her body half-way outside of the car, holding on to the flimsy wood-panel wall for support. Jane reached out a foot, trying to catch it on the elevator floor that rose to meet her.

Doing so almost broke her leg. She barely pulled it away before the rising floor bent her knee up enough to snap it.

She readied herself, and this time, she jumped for the next car.

Jane just managed to grab onto the linoleum and pull herself in. Breathing heavily, the young woman stared up at the dim lamp in the surface bound car, and went to work repressing what just occurred.

Soon, images once again bled through the doorway of the elevator. Jane nearly cheered at the sight of a room filled with nothing but molasses.

“It’s not as dark as that... that was...” She stood up, her knees shaking. She exited to rest at the next level: a desert of brown sugar.

It was peaceful, with a cream colored sky, and sweet warm breeze.

A sound crept into Jane’s ears from behind her.

She turned to look as another elevator steadily climbed to the room.

Inside were dozens of the little workers, grinning and sneering.

They poured out like a sea of roaches.

# 7

Jane felt the tiny yellow hands of the workers digging into her arms and legs. She was dragged inside the elevator, and brought up to one of the earlier floors: the bakery.

The level was dimly lit, like a movie theater. Large glowing ovens the size of houses lined the walls. Conveyor belts carried pastries along to be packaged, and swimming pool sized mixers kneaded actual tons of cookie dough and cake batter.

The swarm of snickering staff carried Jane towards a large piece of equipment the size of a hot tub.

“L-let me go! I didn’t even do anything! Just take my phone, I won’t tell anyone what I saw, honest!” She struggled, as the workers threw her into the stainless steel vat.

A specific one stepped up to the lip of the vat. She had a black eye. “ТЫ ПНУЛ МЕНЯ.” She said, running a finger across her neck.

“Wait, hey, I’m sorry! D-do you even speak English. *English?*”

The crowd of little woman laughed. One of them flipped a switch. The metal bowl began to warm up underneath Jane, and a strong, intoxicating feeling washed over her.

“What... what are you doing...?” She stammered, feeling her skin grow softer, and her flesh glow warm.

Suddenly, the eager crowd of workers went silent, and a hushed murmur spread through the room. The sound of heels tapping against the tile echoed through the bakery as Veronika Vedma arrived.



“M-ma’am! Please, help me!” Jane cried, lifting up her arms as if to reach for the towering matriarch. Her soft limbs felt so heavy...

“My dear. I do not know what compelled you to run off to these untamed parts of my factory, but I have been told you saw enough to discourage you from exploring on your own ever again, yes?” Veronika rested her hands on her wide hips, as if scolding a child.

“Help, please. What’s happening to me? Make them stop.”

Veronika looked at Jane’s body, and grimaced. “Now now, I may be their boss, but I am not their mother. It appears is already too late for you, I’m afraid. But you don’t need to worry...”

“W-what are they going to do with me?”

“Well... I have been told that you are going to be a honey bun. You’re melting into the dough for one right now.”

Jane felt a black hole in her stomach. She looked down, trembling at her body. Her legs were spilling out of her jeans. Her stomach oozed out from under her jacket, and her arms were dripping like candles into a creamy pale puddle that had gathered around her knees.

“You asked before; no one has ever died in my factory. That isn’t how things work around here. But the experience you are having is not unique, and it can only be appreciate *once*. You should enjoy yourself.”

Jane Doe could not take her eyes off of her body, as her neck sank into the puddle of batter she had become. She looked at the faces of the workers and to Veronika, as her head slipped below the surface. She wanted to say so much, ask so many questions.

But all she could do was laugh.

## 8

Veronika Vedma held her arms out, framing the scene before her, gesturing to her workers. “A little to the left? да, yes. Perfect!”

Two of the little scamps place down an incredible looking honey bun in the window of the restaurant. It was adjacent to the factory, and owned and operated by Veronika all the same. Plenty of treats and candies were piled in the window, but they were all for display only.

The pear shaped woman approached the pastry, and gave it a reassuring pat. “There there, dear. I know this may not be the big break you were looking for, but consider this a perfectly suitable vacation!”

Veronika dragged her finger across the surface of the bun, and sampled its sugary glaze. “And if anyone *were* to eat you? It would be me. Perhaps that doesn’t mean much to you, or perhaps it means everything...”

The honey bun seemed to shudder, and wriggle in an unseen way. It was warm and fresh, despite having been baked yesterday.

“You will be well taken care of, which is to say, you have nothing to worry about, except looking delicious and marketable. Enjoy, dear!”

She turned to leave, but stopped herself.

Veronika looked back at the doomed sweet roll, and stifled a giggle.

“Oh I do apologize, but...I just realized... I never got your name.”

**END**

Written by RidiculousCake, Cover art by RidiculousCake, 2021





## *SCREAM FILLED GOODNESS!*

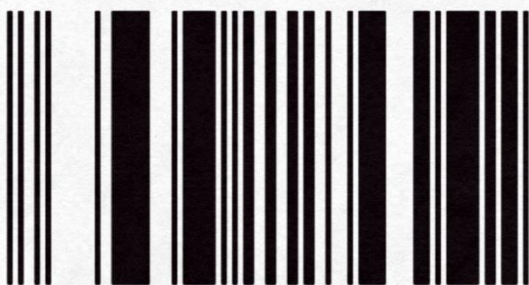
Veronika Vedma's chocolate factory is just as delightful as it is mysterious. No one knows who runs the machines. No one knows how old the owner is. And sometimes, tourists enter, and never come out.

Now Jane Doe is on the case, and she's going to expose everything rotten at the core of the Russian candy factory. Even if she ends up joining those missing guests.

Hold on tight – you're in for a fright!

**RidiculousCake**

Also available from N.T. CANON: THE TERROR ON THE SCREEN



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