Coffee and Code

a *Disco Elysium* ficlet

by **Rodo**

for *laughingpineapple*

"Here."

Soona Luukanen-Kilde blinked. The mug of coffee next to her right hand hadn't been there when her eyes had last left the lines of Vox code weaving their way past with every flick of her fingers against the keyboard. It couldn't have been there – the steam rising from it was a clear indication that it had been recently brewed. She looked up into the Seolite cop's eyes, enlarged by his bifocals.

"You looked like you could use some," he explained, waving at the mug with his left hand. "And since I was making one for myself..."

His own mug was in his right one. She should probably say something polite but didn't feel like it. She felt like coffee, though, and took a sip. Hot, strong, and plentiful. Just as she liked it.

"Shouldn't you be helping your... colleague?" she asked, glancing at the man who was – against all common sense – a cop. He was gesturing wildly at the reprobate that went by the name of Egg Head in the middle of the pillar of silence. Children.

"I think he's got it well in hand," the cop standing next to her said. Kitsuragi, that was his name. "But don't let me distract you from your work."

Soona blinked again. Right, the control flow. There was a mistake in there somewhere, she just had to find it. It was mind-numbing work, but the payoff would be worth it. The pillar of silence was unique and alien, and once she'd discovered its secrets, she'd be vindicated. No more accusing her of fucking up the transfer and dooming the entire project.

"I wasn't getting anywhere," she admitted. "It's like that sometimes, programming. You spend eighty percent of your time running in circles until something clicks."

"It's a little like police work, then. Although 'running in circles' has never been as literal as it has been these last few days. Astonishingly effective, though." Kitsuragi looked at his partner with a hint of fondness.

"I wouldn't go that far. A necessary evil, I'd call it. Everybody would program if it weren't for the tedium," Soona said.

"It's always fascinated me," the cop admitted. "Programming. We have one of these at the precinct. But I don't have the time, and it seemed quite daunting, truth be told."

"Oh, it's not as bad as all that. You see this bit here?" She switched back to the top of the program and pointed at the neat lines of letters and numbers. "It's where I'm declaring the global constants needed to calculate the strength and frequency of the sound waves. First, I give them a name and then that name gets assigned a value. It's all quite simple, really."

Kitsuragi leaned over her shoulder to peer at the screen. "And this bit?"

"Ah, that's an if statement. Simply put, a formalized way to express that if a condition – this bit here – equals true, the following code is executed. If not, we're jumping here." It was quite easy to get lost in the sound of your own voice, Soona found as she went on. At one point, she wondered if her polite audience was able to follow her elaborate explanations, but she decided she didn't care. Maybe this would finally allow for a breakthrough…

Fin