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Normally Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote his manuscripts by hand with numerous pages containing drawings which the writer also created. *The Gambler* was different. Due to an impossibly tight deadline, Dostoevsky ended-up dictating that manuscript. His future wife, Anna Snitkina, made an on-time delivery possible since she knew how to write in shorthand.

Anna Snitkina took Dostoevsky's dictation most days between noon and 4 p.m. As their working partnership blossomed, the young stenographer told the novelist exactly what she thought of his story and characters.

She didn't think much of the gambler whose moral weakness and addiction to roulette seemed - at least to her - quite unforgivable. Dostoevsky - perhaps defensively - told Anna a man could have a strong will but still find the roulette table irresistible.

Early in the novel, Alexei argues with himself (all quotes, hereafter, are from the Constance Garnett translation) over his true feelings for Polina:

*..."Do I love her?" And again I could not answer it, or, rather, I answered for the hundredth time that I hated her. Yes, she was hateful to me. There were moments (on every occasion at the end of our talks) when I would have given my life to strangle her! I swear if it had been possible on the spot to plunge a sharp knife in her bosom, I believe I should have snatched it up with relish. And yet I swear by all that's sacred that if at the Schlangenberg, at the fashionable peak, she really had said to me, "Throw yourself down," I should have thrown myself down at once, also with positive relish. (*The Gambler*, pages 14-15)*

As she took down Dostoevsky's words, Anna began to realize the novel was, at least to some extent, autobiographical. Then Fyodor Mikhailovich proposed the plot of a new story. Anna later recalled that discussion in her *Reminiscences*:

"Who is the hero of your novel?"

"An artist who is no longer really young - about my age."

"Oh, tell me, tell me about him, please."

*And, like an answer to my prayer, there followed a dazzling improvisation. Never, either before or since, have I heard him deliver such an animated and inspired narration. The longer he kept it up, the more clearly I realized that it was his own life he was telling me about, with a few changes here and there concerning people and background. As he spoke, everything he had told me earlier in fragments was here gathered into a whole. Only now did I receive a detailed, uninterrupted account of his relationship with his deceased wife and his relatives.*

Thereafter followed the real reason for telling Anna the "novel's" plot.

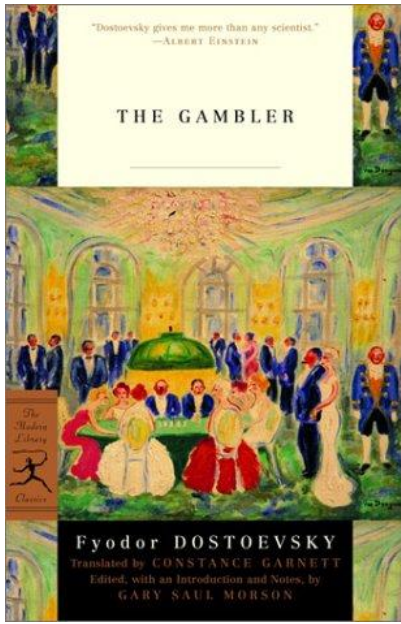
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## Media Stream



### The Gambler - by Fyodor Dostoevsky

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### Schlangenberg

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