



0. FROM SECRETARY to WIFE - Story Preface

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After her husband's death, Anna Dostoevsky (Anna Dostoyevskaya)—the wife (then widow) of the famous Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky—organized letters which the couple sent to each other during 1867. The material was thereafter released from the archives of Dostoevsky's widow and was published, in Moscow, during 1923. This image depicts that book's cover.

Telling his secretary about the plot of a new "novel," Dostoevsky became personal:

"And then what happens is that this artist, at this decisive moment in his life, meets a young girl who crosses his path, a girl of about your age, or perhaps a couple of years older. Yes, let's call her Anya, so as not to have to use the word 'heroine' all the time. Anya's a pretty name...But is it really possible that this young girl, so distant from him in age and temperament, could ever come to love this artist of mine? Wouldn't that be a psychological impossibility? Yes, it's that that I'd like to hear your opinion about, Anna Grigoryevna."

Anna had a ready answer:

"Why should it be so impossible? If this Anna is, as you say, not a frivolous coquette but a girl with a good and sensitive heart, why should she not fall in love with your artist? What does it matter that he's sick and poor? It's not wealth or outer lustre that count! And she wouldn't be making any sacrifice either. If she loves him, she'll be happy too, she doesn't need to feel the slightest remorse about it." I spoke with great warmth. Fyodor Mikhailovich looked at me, moved.

Finally Dostoevsky got to the point of the conversation:

"You really think she could love him all of her life?" He said nothing for a while, just stood there, seeming to hesitate. "Put yourself in her place," he said at last, in a trembling voice. "Imagine that it is I who am this artist, that it is I would have entrusted my love to you and asked you to be my wife. What would you say to that?" Fyodor Mikhailovich was in a state of such confusion and anguish that I finally understood that all this was not simply a question of literary entertainment, and that I would deal his pride and self-esteem a terrible blow if I were to give him an evasive answer. Then I looked into his dear, anxious face and said: "I would say that I love you, that I will love you all my life!"

For the next fourteen years, Anna took her husband's dictation. During these "Miraculous Years," Dostoevsky wrote what are still among the most respected novels in the world.

Sometime later, likely after her husband's death, Anna scratched out some of Dostoevsky's reflections (written before he met her) about his love for Polina Suslova. Anna also burned Polina's letters. What survives is Suslova's book about her relationship with the writer.

But what of *The Gambler*? Did the novelist meet his impossible deadline?

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/FROM-SECRETARY-to-WIFE-Dostoevsky>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/FROM-SECRETARY-to-WIFE-Dostoevsky>

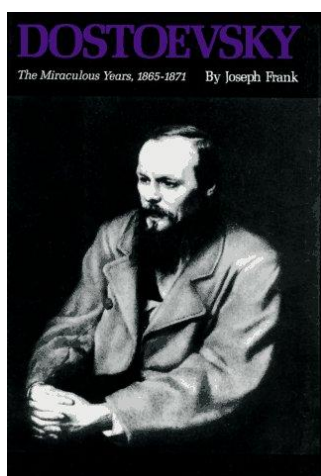
Media Stream



Anna Dostoevskaya

Image online, courtesy the dostojewski.eu website.

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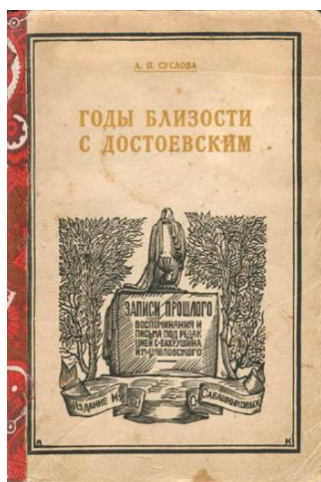


Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years 1865-1871 - by Joseph Frank

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Memoirs of Polina Suslova

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