

421. To Anna Dostoevskaya
16 (28) April 1871. Wiesbaden

Wiesbaden. Friday 28/71

Anya, please, for the sake of Lyuba,¹ for the sake of our future child, don't worry, don't be upset, and read this letter through to the end, carefully. In the end you'll see that in essence the problem isn't worth such despair, but, on the contrary, is something that will be gained and will be worth much more than what was paid for it! And so, calm down, angel, and listen, read to the end. Please don't go to pieces.

My priceless one, my eternal friend, my heavenly angel, you realize, of course, that I lost everything, the whole 30 thalers that you sent me.² Remember that you alone are my savior and there's no one in the whole world who would love me. Remember also, Anya, that there are misfortunes that also carry punishment in themselves. I'm writing and wondering what will happen to you. How will it affect you, I just wouldn't want anything to happen. But if you feel sorry for me at this moment, don't, I don't deserve that much.

I didn't dare send you a telegram and won't dare do so after your recent letter where you write that you'll be worrying. Just to imagine how the telegram would arrive tomorrow: "Schreiben Sie mir..." [write me].³ Well what would have happened to you!

Oh, Anya, why did I go!

Here's how it was today; first I received your letter, after 12 PM, but I hadn't yet received the money. Then I went home and wrote you an answer (a vile and cruel letter; I nearly reproach you in it).⁴ You'll probably receive it tomorrow, Saturday, if you go to the post office after 4 o'clock. I mailed the letter, and he again told me that the money wasn't there; it was already 2:30. When I came for a third time, however, at 4:30, he gave me the money and in response to my question "When did it come?" answered very calmly that it was around 2 o'clock. Why hadn't he given it to me

1. Lyubov Dostoevskaya.

2. According to Dostoevskaya's *Memoirs*, she herself suggested a gambling trip as a tried and true means of helping Dostoevsky out of a depression. She was to send him enough money for him to get back to Dresden should he lose everything at roulette.

3. The Dostoevskys told Anna Dostoevskaya's mother, who disapproved of gambling, that Dostoevsky was going to Frankfurt on business. As part of their further strategy for concealing the true purpose of the trip to Wiesbaden, the Dostoevskys had agreed that the phrase "Write me" would mean Anna Dostoevskaya was to send Dostoevsky a predetermined amount of money.

4. The letter in question is not known to be extant.

then, when I was there after 2? Then, seeing that I would have to wait until 6:30 to leave here, I set off for the gaming hall.

Now, Anya, believe me or not, but I swear to you that I didn't intend to gamble! So that you'll believe me, I'll confess everything to you: when I asked you by telegram for 30 thalers instead of 25, I wanted to stake the additional 5 thalers, but even that wasn't for certain. I was expecting that if there was money left I'd bring it with me all the same. But when I received the 30 thalers today, I *didn't want* to gamble for two reasons: (1) your letter struck me very much: just to imagine what would happen to you! (and I'm imagining that now) and (2) I dreamed of my *father* last night, but in such a horrible way as he has appeared to me only twice in my life, foretelling a terrible disaster, and twice the dream has come true. (And now when I also recall my dream three days ago, that you had turned gray, my heart stops! Lord, what will happen to you when you get this letter!)

But after arriving at the gaming hall I went over and stood by the table and began staking money in my head: would I guess right or not? What do you think, Anya? I guessed right about ten times in a row; I even guessed zero. I was so struck that I started playing and in 5 minutes won 18 thalers. At that point, Anya, I lost control of myself: I thought to myself—I'll leave on the last train, wait out the night in Frankfurt, but after all at least I'll bring something home! I was so ashamed for that 30 thalers that I *robbed* you of! Will you believe, my angel, that I dreamed all year of buying you the earrings that I still haven't given back to you. You have pawned everything of yours for me in these 4 years and roamed after me, homesick for your native land! Anya, Anya, remember too that I'm not a scoundrel, just a passionate gambler.

(But here's what else you should remember, Anya, that now this fantasy is finished forever. I've written you before, too, that it was finished forever, but I have never felt in myself the feeling that I'm writing with now. Oh, now I'm through with that dream and would bless God that it has worked out this way, even though it's with such a disaster, if it weren't for fear for you at the present moment. Anya, if you're cross with me, remember what I have suffered now and what I'll suffer for another three or four days! If ever in our life later on you find me ungrateful and unjust to you, just show me this letter!)

I lost everything by 9:30 and went out like a madman; I was suffering so greatly that I immediately ran to see a priest (don't worry, I *didn't* go, *didn't* go, and won't!). I thought on the way, running to see him, in the dark, down unfamiliar streets, that after all he's the Lord's shepherd, that I'd talk to him not as with a private person, but as at confession. But I got lost in town, and

when I reached the church that I'd taken for a Russian one, I was told at a shop that it wasn't a Russian one, but a Jewish one. It was as though I'd had cold water poured on me. I came running home; it's now midnight, I'm sitting and writing to you. (I won't go see a priest, I won't, I won't. I swear that I won't go!)

I have a thaler and a half left in change, so I have enough for a telegram (15 groschen), but I'm afraid. What will happen to you! And therefore I've decided to write you a letter and mail it off to you tomorrow at 8 in the morning, and so that you'll get it on Sunday without any delay, I'm writing it to the address, not to *poste restante*. (Well, what if because of expecting me you didn't go to the post office!) But tomorrow I may send you another letter *poste restante*, but I'll mail it late, and the day after tomorrow, Sunday, I'll write another one for certain.

Anya, save me for the last time, send me 30 (thirty) thalers. I'll take care that it is enough, I'll be thrifty. If you manage to send it on Sunday, even late, I can arrive on Tuesday and in any case on Wednesday.

Anya, I lie at your feet and kiss them, and I know that you have every right to despise me, and therefore, to think: "He's going to gamble again." What can I swear by to you that I *won't*; I've already deceived you. But, my angel, try to understand: after all, I know that you'll die if I were to lose again! I'm not at all a madman! After all I know that then I'm done for. I won't, I won't, I won't, and *I'll come right away!* Believe me. Believe me *for the last time* and you won't regret it. Now I'll work for you and for Lyubochka, without sparing my health, you'll see, you'll see, you'll see, my whole life, AND I'LL ACHIEVE MY GOAL! I'll see you provided for.

If you don't manage to send it on Sunday, send it early Monday. Then I'll be back with you Wednesday, by noon. Don't be alarmed if you can't send it on Sunday, and don't think very much about me, I don't deserve it, I'm not worthy of that.

But what will happen to me! I'm capable of great endurance, to the point of coarseness. Moreover, it's as though I've been reborn morally (I'm saying this both to you and to God), and if it weren't for the worrying these three days for you, if it weren't for the constant thought of what's going to happen to you, I would even be happy. Don't imagine that I'm insane, Anya, my guardian angel! A great thing has been accomplished over me, a vile fantasy that had *tormented* me almost 10 years has vanished. For ten years (or, rather, since my brother's death, when I was suddenly crushed by debts) I kept dreaming of winning. I dreamed seriously, passionately. Now that's all finished with! This was ABSOLUTELY the last time! Will you believe, Anya, that my hands are untied

now; I had been bound by gambling; I'll think about serious things now and won't dream whole nights on end about gambling, as I used to. And therefore *the serious business* will move better and more quickly, and God will bless it.⁵ Anya, preserve your heart for me, don't start to hate me and don't fall out of love with me. Now, when I've been renewed, we'll go together, and I'll see that you're happy!

And Lyuba, Lyuba, how vile I've been! But I'm only thinking of you: I can just imagine what will happen to you when you read this! And even before this letter how much you'll wear yourself out with worry, seeing that I'm not coming, you'll worry yourself to death! Will they deliver the letter to you in time? And what if it gets lost! But how can it get lost if a telegram arrived with the same address? Just in case I'll also write a few lines *poste restante*. I'll mail it tomorrow during the day.

I wonder whether I will or won't receive a letter from you tomorrow. Probably not! You're expecting me in person tomorrow and won't be writing.

If you *don't* manage to send me the money on Sunday, write me a letter. I'll be so happy, even if you curse me, for at least a few lines from your hand. If you don't manage to write on Sunday, send the letter early on Monday along with the money (if you don't manage the money on Sunday either). The letter will arrive before the money in any event. And I'd be so happy for a letter from you!

Anya, when I think what will happen to you when you receive this, it's as though I faint. That's the only torment that there'll be. All the rest (depression, longing, uncertainty)—I'll be able to bear all of that. I deserve worse! I'll try to do something; I'll sit down in these three days to write two needed letters—to Katkov and Maykov! Anya, believe that our resurrection has arrived, and believe that beginning today I'll achieve my goal—I'll give you happiness!

I kiss you both, embrace you. Forgive me, Anya!

Entirely yours from today on,
Fyodor Dostoevsky

P.S. I *won't go see* a priest, not for anything, not in any case. He is one of the witnesses of the old, the past, the former, the vanished! It will be painful for me even to meet him!

5. Dostoevskaya notes in her *Memoirs* that this was in fact the last time that Dostoevsky gambled, that he was somehow "cured" after this episode. Scholars have pointed out, however, that it is also true that Dostoevsky simply had no further opportunity to gamble, because all the casinos in Germany were soon closed by official decree.

P.P.S. Anya, my eternal joy, my only happiness from here on in—don't worry, don't torment yourself, preserve yourself for me!

Don't worry about that cursed, paltry 180 thalers either. True, we're without money again, but really, not for long, not for long (and perhaps even Stellovsky will help us out).⁶ True, the time for the cursed pawning, which you hate so much, is coming on! But really, this is the last time, absolutely the last! And then I'll get some money, I know that I will! If only we could get to Russia soon! I'll write to Katkov and implore him *to hurry it*, and I'm sure he'll take that into consideration. I'll write in such a way that he will.

Please just don't worry about me (after all, you're an angel, after all, you'll curse me, too, and feel sorry for me, and therefore, you'll worry). But don't be alarmed: I'll be reborn in these three days, I'm starting a new life. Oh, if only I could be with you sooner, sooner! The only thing that's frightening is what will happen to you when you receive this letter. Just believe in one thing—my eternal love for you. And now I'll never ever torment you again, in any way.

P.P.P.S. I'll remember this my whole life and bless you every time, my angel. No, now I'm yours, yours inseparably, entirely yours. But until now I belonged *half* to that cursed fantasy.