



# Library podcast

## **Thrilling Tales, A Storytime for Grownups presents: "The Bet" by Anton Chekhov and "The Queen of Spades" by Alexander Pushkin**

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[00:00:41] Good afternoon, everybody, welcome back to Thrilling Tales. Today, we have a couple of stories that are a little bit older than our usuals. These are stories from the 19th century and they're both Russian and they're both about gambling, sort of.

[00:00:59] The first one is by Anton Chekhov and it's called "The Bet".

[00:01:06] It was a dark autumn night. The old banker was walking up and down his study and remembering how. Fifteen years before he had given a party one autumn evening there there'd been many clever men there and there had been interesting conversations, among other things.

[00:01:24] They had talked of capital punishment. The majority of the guests, among whom were many journalists and intellectual men, disapproved of the idea of the death penalty. They considered that form of punishment out of date, immoral and unsuitable for Christian states. In the opinion of some of them, the death penalty ought to be replaced everywhere by imprisonment for life. I don't agree with you, said their host, the banker.

[00:01:52] I've not tried either the death penalty or imprisonment for life. But if one may judge a priority, the death penalty is more moral and more humane than imprisonment for life. Capital punishment kills a man at once. But lifelong imprisonment kills him slowly. Which executioner is more humane? He who kills you in a few minutes, or he who drags the life out of you in the course of many years? Both are equally immoral, observed one of the guests, for they both have the same object to take away life. The state is not God. It has no right to take away what it cannot restore when it wants to.

[00:02:30] Among the guests was a young lawyer, a young man of five and 20 when he was asked his opinion.

[00:02:36] He said the death sentence and the life sentence are equally immoral. But if I had to choose between the death penalty and imprisonment for life, I would certainly choose the second to live. Anyhow, is better than not at all.

[00:02:53] A lively discussion arose. The banker, who was younger and more nervous in those days, was suddenly carried away by excitement. He struck the table with his fists and shouted at the young man.

[00:03:03] It's not true. I bet you two million that you wouldn't stay in solitary confinement for five years.

[00:03:11] If you mean that in earnest, said the young man, I'll take the bet. But I would not stay five but fifteen years. Fifteen. Done! Cried the banker. Gentlemen. I stake two million. Agreed. You stake your millions, and I stake my freedom, said the young man.

[00:03:32] And this wild, senseless bet was carried out. The banker, spoiled and frivolous with millions beyond his reckoning, was delighted at the bet. At supper he made fun of the young men, and said, Think better of it. Young man, while there's still time to me, two million are a trifle.

[00:03:51] But you are losing three or four of the best years of your life. I say three or four because you won't stay longer.

[00:03:59] Don't forget either you unhappy man, that voluntary confinement is a great deal harder to bear than compulsory age.

[00:04:05] The thought that you have the right to step out at liberty at any moment will poison your whole existence in prison. I'm sorry for you. And now the banker walking to and fro remembered all this and asked himself what was the object of that bet? What is the good of that man's losing 15 years of his life and my throwing away two million? Can it prove that the death penalty is better or worse than imprisonment or life? No, no.

[00:04:36] It was all nonsensical and meaningless. Then he remembered what followed that evening. It was decided that the young man should spend the years of his captivity under the strictest supervision in one of the lodges in the banker's garden. It was agreed that for 15 years he should not be free to cross the threshold of the lodge, to see human beings, to hear a human voice, or to receive letters in newspapers.

[00:05:00] He was allowed to have a musical instrument and books, and he was allowed to write letters to drink wine and to smoke. By the terms of the agreement, the only relations he could have with the outer world were by a little window made purposely for that object. He might have anything he wanted. Books, music, wine and so on. In any quantity he desired by writing an order, but could only receive them through the window. The agreement provided for every detail and every trifle that

would make his imprisonment strictly solitary and bound the young man to stay there exactly 15 years, beginning from twelve o'clock of November 14th, 1870, and ending at twelve o'clock of November 14th. Eighteen eighty five. The slightest attempt on his part to break the conditions, if only two minutes before the end released the banker from the obligation to pay him two million.

[00:05:54] For the first year of his confinement, as far as one could judge from his brief notes, the prisoners suffered severely from loneliness and depression.

[00:06:04] The sounds of the piano could be heard continually day and night from his lodge. He refused wine and tobacco. Wine, he wrote, excites the desires and desires of the worst foes of the prisoner. And besides, nothing could be more dreary than drinking good wine and seeing no one.

[00:06:21] And tobacco spoils the air of his room.

[00:06:24] In the first year, the books he sent for were principally of a light character, novels with a complicated love plot, sensational and fantastic stories and so on. In the second year, the piano was silent in the lodge and the prisoner asked only for the classics.

[00:06:41] In the fifth year, music was audible again and the prisoner asked for wine.

[00:06:47] Those who watched him through the window said that all that year he spent doing nothing but eating and drinking and lying on his bed, frequently yawning and angrily talking to himself. He did not read books sometimes at night. He would sit down to write. He would spend hours writing.

[00:07:02] And in the morning he'd tear all up all that he had written more than once.

[00:07:06] He could be heard crying in the second half of the sixth year. The prisoner began zealously studying languages, philosophy and history. He threw himself eagerly into these studies, so much so that the banker had enough to do to get him the books he ordered. In the course of four years, some six hundred volumes were procured at his request. It was during this period that the banker received the following letter from his prisoner.

[00:07:33] My dear gaoler, I write you these lines in six languages. Show them to people who know the languages. Let them read them if they find not one mistake. I implore you to fire a shot in the garden. That shock will show me that my efforts have not been thrown away.

[00:07:50] The geniuses of all ages and of all lands speak different languages, but the same flame burns in them all. Oh, if you only knew what an earthly happiness my soul feels now from being able to understand them.

[00:08:04] The prisoners desire was fulfilled. The banker ordered two shots to be fired in the garden. Then after the tenth year, the prisoners sat immovably at the table and read nothing.

[00:08:16] But the gospel seemed strange to the banker that a man who in four years had mastered six hundred learned volumes should waste nearly a year over one thin book, easy of comprehension, theology and histories of religion followed the Gospels. In the last two years of his confinement, the prisoner read an immense quantity of books quite indiscriminately. At one time, he was busy with the natural sciences. Then he would ask for Byron or Shakespeare. There were notes in which he demanded at the same time books on chemistry, a manual of medicine and a novel, and some treatise on philosophy or theology. His readings suggested a man swimming in the sea among the wreckage of his ship, trying to save his life by greedily clutching first at one spar and then another.

[00:09:01] The old banker remember this and thought. Tomorrow at 12 o'clock, he will regain his freedom by our agreement. I ought to pay him two million if I do pay him. It is all over with me. I shall be utterly ruined. Fifteen years before, his millions had been beyond his reckoning.

[00:09:26] Now he was afraid to ask himself which were greater, his debts or his assets. Desperate gambling on the stock exchange. Wild speculation and the excitability which you could not get over even in advancing years, had by degrees led to the decline of his fortune. And the proud, fearless, self-confident millionaire had become a banker of middling rank, trembling at every rise and fall in his investments.

[00:09:51] Cursed bet, muttered the old man, clutching his head in despair. Why didn't that man die? He's only forty now.

[00:09:59] He will take my last penny from me, and he will marry, will enjoy life, will gamble on the exchange, while I shall look at him with envy like a beggar, and hear from him every day the same sentence. I am indebted to you for the happiness of my life. Let me help you. Now it is too much.

[00:10:17] The one means of being saved from bankruptcy and disgrace is the death of that man.

[00:10:25] It struck three o'clock.

[00:10:27] The banker listened. Everyone was asleep in the house and nothing could be heard outside. But the rustling of the chilled trees.

[00:10:35] Trying to make no noise. He took from a fireproof safe. The key of the door which had not been open for 15 years. Put on his overcoat and went out of the house.

[00:10:47] It was dark and cold in the garden, rain was falling. A damp cutting wind was racing about the garden. Howling and giving the trees no rest.

[00:10:57] The banker strained his eyes, but could see neither the earth nor the white statues, nor the large nor the trees going to the spot where the lodge stood.

[00:11:05] He twice called the watchman. No answer followed. Evidently, the watchman had sought shelter from the weather and was now asleep somewhere, either in the kitchen or in the greenhouse. If I had the pluck to carry out my intention, thought the old man, suspicion would fall first upon the watchman. He felt in the darkness for the steps in the door, and went into the entry of the lodge. Then he groped his way into a little passage and lighted a match. There was not a soul there. There was a bedstead with no bedding on it, and in the corner there was a dark cast iron stove. The seals on the door leading to the prisoner's rooms were intact. When the match went out, the old man, trembling with emotion, peeped through the little window. A candle was burning dimly in the prisoner's room. He was sitting at the table. Nothing could be seen but his back, the hair on his head, in his hands opened. Books were lying on the table on the two easy chairs on the carpet near the table. Five minutes passed and the prisoner did not once stir. Fifteen years in prison meant had taught him to sit still.

[00:12:12] The banker tapped at the window with his finger and the prisoner made no movement, whatever in response.

[00:12:18] Then the banker cautiously broke the seals off the door and put the key in the keyhole. The rusty lock gave a grating sound, and the door creaked. The banker expected to hear at once footsteps and a cry of astonishment. But three minutes passed and it was as quiet as ever in the room. He made up his mind to go in. At the table, a man, unlike ordinary people, was sitting motionless.

[00:12:47] He was a skeleton with the skin drawn tight over his bones with long curls like a woman's and a shaggy beard. His face was yellow with an earthy tint in it. His cheeks were hollow, his back long and narrow, and the hand on which his shaggy head was propped was so thin and delicate that it was dreadful to look at it.

[00:13:07] His hair was already streaked with silver and seeing his emaciated, aged looking face. No one would have believed that he was only 40. He was asleep in front of his bowed head there, lay on the table a sheet of paper on which there was something written in fine handwriting.

[00:13:25] Poor creature thought the banker is asleep and most likely dreaming of the millions.

[00:13:33] I've only to take this half dead man, throw him on the bed, stifle him a little with the pillow, and the most conscientious expert would find no sign of a violent death.

[00:13:44] Let us first read what he's written here. The banker took the page from the table and he read as follows.

[00:13:49] Tomorrow at 12 o'clock, I regain my freedom and the right to associate with other men. But before I leave this room and see the sunshine, I think it necessary to say a few words to you with a clear conscience. I tell you as before, God who beholds me, that I despise freedom and life and health and all that in your books is called The Good Things of the World. For fifteen years I have been

intently studying earthly life. It is true I have not seen the earth nor men. But in your books I have drunk fragrant wine.

[00:14:21] I have sung songs. I have hunted stags and wild boars in the forests.

[00:14:27] Have loved women beauties as ethereal as clouds created by the magic of your poets and geniuses have visited me at night and whispered in my ears wonderful tales that have set my brain in a whirl in your books.

[00:14:42] I have climbed to the peaks of Ellsberg and Mont Blanc, and from there I have seen the sun rise and have watched it at evening flood, the sky, the ocean, and the mountaintops with gold and crimson. I've watched from there the lightning flashing over my head and cleaving the storm clouds. I've seen green forests, fields, rivers, lakes, towns. I've heard the singing of the sirens and the strains of the Shepards pipes. I have touched the wings of comely devils who flew down to converse with me of God in your books. I have flung myself into the bottomless pit, performed miracles, slain, burned towns, preached new religions, conquered whole kingdoms. Your books have given me wisdom.

[00:15:31] All that the unrest thing thought of man is created in the ages is compressed into a small compass in my brain.

[00:15:41] I know that I am wiser than all of you.

[00:15:45] And I despise your books. I despise wisdom and the blessings of this world. It is all worthless, fleeting, illusory and deceptive like a mirage. Hey, you may be proud, wise and fine, but death will wipe you off the face of the earth as though you were no more than mice burrowing under the floor and your posterity. Your history. Your immortal geniuses will burn or freeze together with the earthly globe.

[00:16:13] You have lost your reason and taken the wrong path.

[00:16:17] You've taken lies for truth and hideousness for beauty.

[00:16:22] You would marvel if owing to strange events of some sort. Frogs and lizards suddenly grew on apple and orange trees instead of fruit, or if roses began to smell like a sweating horse.

[00:16:36] So I marvel at you who exchange heaven for earth. I don't want to understand you. To prove to you in action how I despise all that you live by. I renounce the two million of which I once dreamed of as a paradise and which now I despise.

[00:17:00] To deprive myself of the right of the money. I shall go out from here 5 hours before the time fixed. And so break the compact.



[00:17:10] When the banker had read this, he laid the page on the table, kissed the strange man on the head, went out to the large, weeping at no other time, even when he had lost heavily on the stock exchange, and he felt so great a contempt for himself.

[00:17:27] When he got home, he lay on his bed, but his tears and emotion kept him for hours from sleeping.

[00:17:33] Next morning, the watchman ran in with pale faces and told him that they had seen the man who lived in the lodge climb out of the window into the garden, go to the gate and disappear.

[00:17:45] The banker went at once with the servants to the lodge and made sure of the flight of his prisoner. To avoid arousing unnecessary talk, he took from the table the writing in which the millions were renounced. And when he got home, locked it up in the fireproof safe. The at.

[00:18:10] Those Russians. And this one's an older story by Pushkin, it's called the Queen of Spades.

[00:18:17] At the house of room of a cavalry officer, the long winter night had been passed in gambling, at 5:00 in the morning, breakfast was served to the weary players. The winners aid with relish. The losers, on the contrary, pushed back their plates and sat brooding gloomily under the influence of the good wine.

[00:18:33] However, the conversation then became general. Well, serene? The host asked inquiringly. Oh, I lost, as usual. My luck is abominable. No matter how cool I keep, I'll never win. How is it here, ma'am, that you never touch a card? Remarked one of the men, addressing a young officer of the engineering corps. Here you are with the rest of us at five o'clock in the morning, and you've neither played nor bet all night.

[00:18:57] Play interests me greatly, replied the person addressed.

[00:19:01] But I hardly care to sacrifice the necessities of life for uncertain superfluity, as Hermann is a German, therefore economical. That explains it, said Tom Askey. But the person I can't quite understand is my grandmother, the countess, on a theater owner. Why? Inquired a chorus of voices. I can't understand why my grandmother never gambles. I don't see anything very striking in the fact that a woman of eighty refuses to gamble, said Narrow MOF. If you've never heard her story. No. Oh, well, then, listen.

[00:19:33] To begin with, sixty years ago my grandmother went to Paris where she was. All the fashion people crowded each other in the streets to get a chance to see the Muscovite Venus. As she recalled, all the great ladies played Faro. Then, on one occasion, while playing with the Duke of AURITI all she lost an enormous sum. She told her husband of the dead. But he refused outright to pay it. Nothing could induce him to to change his mind on the subject.

[00:19:59] And grandmother was at her wits ends. Well, finally she remembered a friend of hers. Count Sanj, your man. You must have heard of him. Many wonderful stories have been told about him. He said to have discovered the elixir of life, the philosopher's stone. Many other equally marvelous things. He had money at his disposal. As my grandmother knew, she sent him a note asking him to come to her. He obeyed her summons and found her in great distress. She painted the cruelty of her husband in the darkest colors, and ended by telling the count that she depended upon his friendship and generosity.

[00:20:35] I could lend you the money, replied the count, after a moment of thoughtfulness. But I know that you would not enjoy a moment's rest until you'd returned it. It would only add to your embarrassment. There is another way of freeing yourself. But I have no money at all, insisted my grandmother. Know that there's no need of money. Listen to me. The count then told her a secret, which any of us would give a good deal to know.

[00:21:02] The young gamestops were all attention. Tom Ski lit his pipe and took a few whiffs and then he continued.

[00:21:08] The next evening, grandmother appeared at their side at the Queens gaming table. The Duke of Orleans was a dealer. Grandmother made some excuse for not having brought any money and began to punt. She chose three cards in succession again and again, winning every time, and was soon out of debt.

[00:21:30] A fable remarked here on perhaps the cards were marked. I hardly think so, replied Tom Ski, with an air of importance.

[00:21:39] So you have a grandmother who knows three winning cards, and you haven't found out the magic secret? I must say I have not. She had four sons, one of them being my father, all of whom are devoted to play. She never told the secret to one of them, but my uncle told me this much on his word of honor. Chaplain Askey, who died in poverty after having squandered millions, lost one time at play nearly three hundred thousand roubles. He was desperate, and grandmother took pity on him.

[00:22:08] She told him the three cards, making him swear never to use them again.

[00:22:13] He returned to the game, staked fifty thousand roubles on each card, and came out ahead after paying his debts.

[00:22:21] As day was dawning, the party now broke up, each one draining his glass and taking his leave. The Countess nfz Grosvenor was seated before her mirror in her dressing room.

[00:22:32] Three women were assisting in her toilet. The old countess no longer made the slightest pretensions to beauty. But she still clung to all the habits of her youth and spent as much time at her toilet as she had done 60 years before. At the window, a young girl, her ward sat at her needlework.



[00:22:50] Good afternoon, grandmother, cried a young officer who just entered the room, I've come to ask a favor of you. What powerful.

[00:22:57] I want to be allowed to present one of my friends to you and to take you to the ball on Tuesday night.

[00:23:02] Take me to the ball and present him to me.

[00:23:05] Then, after a few more remarks, the officer walked up to the window where Elizaveta Ivanovna sat.

[00:23:13] Whom do you wish to present? Asked the girl. Not Omar. Do you know him? No. Is he a soldier? Yes. An engineer? No. Why do you ask?

[00:23:24] The girl smiled and made no reply. Pavel Chomsky took his leave and left to herself. Live8 glanced out the window soon. A young officer appeared at the corner of the street. The girl blushed, and Bender head low over her canvas. This appearance of the officer had become a daily occurrence. The man was totally unknown to her, and as she was not accustomed to coquettish with soldiers she saw on the street, she hardly knew how to explain his presence. His persistence finally roused an interest entirely strange to her. One day she ventured to smile upon her admirer, and for such he seemed to be.

[00:24:02] The reader need hardly be told that the officer was no other than hair. mine. That would be gambler whose imagination had been strongly excited by the story told by Tom Ski of the three magic cards. Oh, we thought if the old countess would only reveal the secret to me, why not try to win her goodwill and appeal to her sympathy with this idea in mind? He took up his daily station before the house, watching the pretty face at the window and trusting to fate to bring about the desired acquaintance.

[00:24:32] One day Elizaveta was standing on the pavement, about to enter the carriage after the count. She felt herself jostled, and a note was thrust into her hand turning. She saw the young officer at her elbow as quick as thought. She put the note in her glove and entered the carriage on her return from the drive. She hastened to her chamber to read the missive in a state of excitement mingled with fear.

[00:24:55] It was a tender and respectful declaration of affection, copied word for word from a German novel of this fact. Lisa was, of course, ignorant.

[00:25:05] The young girl was much impressed by the missive, but she felt that the writer must not be encouraged. She therefore wrote a few lines of explanation at the first opportunity, dropped it with the letter out the window.

[00:25:16] The officer hastily crossed the street, picking up the papers and entered the shop to read them. In no wise, daunted by this rebuff, he found the opportunity to send her another note in a few days. He received no reply, but evidently understanding the female heart, he severed, begging for an interview.

[00:25:35] He was rewarded at last by the following. Tonight we go to the ambassador's ball. We shall remain until 2 o'clock. I can arrange for a meeting in this way after our departure. The servants will probably all go out or go to sleep at 11:30.

[00:25:54] Enter the vestibule boldly, and if you see anyone inquire for the Countess, if not, ascend the stairs, turn to the left, and go on till you come to a door which opens into her bedchamber. Enter this room, and behind the screen you will find another door leading to a corridor. And from this a spiral staircase leads to my sitting room. I shall expect to find you there on my return.

[00:26:20] Harriman trembled like a leaf as the appointed hour drew near.

[00:26:24] He obeyed instructions fully and as he met no one, he reached the old lady's bed chamber without difficulty.

[00:26:31] Instead of going out of the small door behind the screen, however, he concealed himself in a closet to await the return of the old countess.

[00:26:42] The hours dragged slowly by and at last he heard the sound of wheels, immediately lamps were lighted and servants began moving about, and finally the old woman tottered into the room, completely exhausted.

[00:26:53] Her women removed her wraps and proceeded to get her in readiness for the night. Heiferman watched the proceedings with the curiosity not mingled with superstitious fear, when at last she was attired in cap and gown, the old woman looked less uncanny than when she wore her ball dress of blue brocade.

[00:27:12] She sat down in an easy chair beside a table as she was in the habit of doing before retiring, and her women withdrew as the old lady sat, swaying to and fro, seemingly oblivious to her surroundings. Hermione crept out of his hiding place. At the slight noise, the old woman opened her eyes and gazed at the intruder with a half dazed expression.

[00:27:37] Have no fear. I beg of you, said her man in a calm voice. I have not come to harm you, but to ask a favor of you. Instead.

[00:27:48] The tests looked at him in silence, seemingly without comprehending him. Her mom thought she might be deaf. So he put his lips close to her ear and repeated his remark. The listener remained perfectly mute.

[00:28:01] You could make my fortune without its costing you anything. Pleaded the young man, only tell me the three cards which are sure to win, and him on paused as the old woman opened her lips as if about to speak.

[00:28:18] It was only a jest. I swear to you, it was only a jest came from the with her lips.

[00:28:28] There was no jesting about it. Remember triplet ski, who, thanks to you, was able to pay his debts?

[00:28:35] An expression of interior agitation passed over the face of the old woman. Then she relapsed into her former apathy.

[00:28:45] When you tell me the names of the magic cards or not, asked him on after a pause.

[00:28:51] There was no reply.

[00:28:53] The young man then drew a pistol from his pocket exclaiming You old witch, and forced you to tell me.

[00:29:01] At the sight of the weapon, the countess gave a second sign of life. She threw back her head and put out her hands as if to protect herself.

[00:29:10] And then they dropped and she sat motionless.

[00:29:15] Herrmann grasped her arm roughly and was about to renew his fets.

[00:29:21] When he saw that she was dead.

[00:29:24] Seated in her room, still in her ball dress, Lizzie Viator gave herself up to her reflection. She had expected to find the young officer there, but she felt relieved to see that he was not.

[00:29:35] Strangely enough, that very night at the ball, Tom Ski had rallied her about her preference for the young officer, assuring her that he knew more than she supposed he did. Of whom are you speaking? She had asked in alarm, fearing her adventure had been discovered. Of that remarkable man was the reply. His name is Mom.

[00:29:53] Liza made no reply. This hair on continued. Chomsky is a romantic character. He has a profile of a Napoleon in the heart of a Mephistopheles. It is said he has at least three crimes on his conscience.

[00:30:07] But how pale you are? This is only a slight headache. But why do you talk to me of this man? Because I believe he has serious intentions concerning you. Where is he? Seen me? At church? Perhaps. Or on the street? The conversation was interrupted at this point to the great regret

of the young girl. The words of Tom, she made a deep impression upon her, and she realized how imprudently she had acted.

[00:30:33] She was thinking of all of this, and a great deal more. When the door of her apartment suddenly opened and Hermione stood before her, she drew back at the sight of him, trembling violently.

[00:30:46] Where have you been? She asked, in a frightened whisper in the bed chamber of the Countess. She is dead.

[00:30:54] Was the calm reply. My God, what are you saying? Cried the girl.

[00:30:58] Furthermore, I believe that I was the cause of her death.

[00:31:03] The words of Tom Ski flashed through Leeza's mind, Herrmann's sat down and told her all she listened with a feeling of terror, empty cost.

[00:31:14] So those passionate letters that audacious pursuit were not the result of tenderness and love. It was money that he desired. The poor girl felt as if she had, in a sense, been an accomplice in the death of her benefactress. She began to weep bitterly. Herrmann regarded her in silence.

[00:31:28] You're a monster, exclaimed Louis Liza, drying her eyes. I didn't intend to kill her. The pistol was not even loaded. How are you going to get out of the house? Inquired Lisa. It's nearly daylight. I intended to show you the way to a secret staircase while the Countess was asleep, as we would have to cross her chamber. I'm too afraid to now direct me, and I will find the way alone, replied Hebert. She gave him my nute instructions, and the key with which to open the street door.

[00:31:58] The young man pressed the cold, inert hand, and then went out. The death of the Countess had surprised no one, as it had long been expected.

[00:32:08] Her funeral was attended by everyone of note in the vicinity. Heiferman mingled with the throng without attracting any special attention. After all, the friends had taken their last look at the dead face.

[00:32:19] The young man approached the beer. He prostrated himself on the cold floor and remained motionless for a long time. He rose at last with a face almost as pale as that of the corpse itself, and went up to the steps to look into the casket. As he looked down, it seemed him, with the rigid face returned. His glance mockingly closing one eye.

[00:32:47] He turned abruptly away, made a false step and fell to the floor. He was picked up, and at the same moment Elizaveta was carried out in a faint.

[00:32:56] Hammond did not recover his usual composure during the entire day. He dined alone at an out of the way restaurant and drank a great deal in the hope of stifling his emotion. The wine only served to stimulate his imagination. He returned home and threw himself down on his bed without undressing. During the night, he awoke with a start.

[00:33:16] The moon shone into his chamber, making everything plainly visible, and someone looked in at the window and then quickly disappeared.

[00:33:25] He paid no attention to this, but soon he heard the vestibule door open. He thought it was his orderly, returning late, drunk as usual. The step was an unfamiliar one, and he heard the shuffling sound of loose slippers. The door of his room opened, and a woman in white entered. She came close to the bed, and the terrified man recognized the countess.

[00:33:46] I have come to you against my will.

[00:33:48] She said abruptly, but I was commanded to grant your request.

[00:33:54] The tray seven and ace in succession are the magic cards. 24 hours must elapse between the use of each card and after three have been used. You must never play again.

[00:34:09] Phantom then turned and walked away. Harriman heard the outside door close and again saw the form past the window. He rose and went out into the hall where his orderly lay asleep on the floor.

[00:34:21] The door was closed, finding no trace of a visitor. He returned to his room, lit his candle and wrote down what he had just heard. Two fixed ideas cannot exist in the brain. At the same time, any more than two bodies can occupy the same point in space.

[00:34:36] The tray seven and ASW soon chased away the thoughts of the dead woman and all other thoughts from the brain of the young officer. All his ideas merged into a single one how to turn to advantage the secret paid for so dearly.

[00:34:52] He even thought of resigning his commission and going to Paris to force a fortune from conquered fate. Chance rescued him from his embarrassment. Check. A man who had passed his whole life at cards opened a club in Saint Petersburg. His long experience secured for him the confidence of his companions and his hospitality and genial humor. Conciliated society. The gilded youth flocked around him, neglecting society, preferring the charms of Pharaoh to those of their sweethearts, Narooma of invited Herman to accompany him to the club, and the young man accepted the invitation only too willingly. The two officers found the apartments for generals and statesman's played whist. Young men lounged on sofas eating ISIS or smoking in print. In the principal salons stood a long table at which about twenty men sat playing FERRO, the host of the establishment being the banker.

[00:35:49] He was a man of about sixty, gray haired and respectable. His ruddy face shone with the genial humor. His eyes sparkled, and a constant smile hovered around his lips.

[00:36:00] Narooma presented Heiferman. The host gave him a cordial handshake, begged him not to stand upon ceremony, and returned to his dealing. More than thirty cards were already on the table. Check. Wolinsky paused after each coup to allow the punters time to recognize their gains or losses, politely answering all questions and constantly smiling. After the deal was over, the cards was reshuffled and the game began again.

[00:36:26] Permit me to choose a card, said Heiferman, stretching out his hand over the head of a portly gentleman to reach illiterate. The banker bowed without replying. Herman chose a card and wrote the amount of his stake upon it with a piece of chalk. How much is that? Ask the banker, scuse me, sir, I do not see so well. Forty thousand roubles, said Herman Cooley. All eyes were instantly turned upon the speaker. He has lost his wits, thought not of.

[00:37:01] Allow me to observe, said check Wolinsky with his eternal smile. Your steak is excessive.

[00:37:09] What of it? Replied Herman. Nettled. Do you accept it or not?

[00:37:13] The banker nodded in assent. I have only to remind you that the cash will be necessary. Of course your word is good. But in order to keep the confidence of my patrons, I prefer ready money.

[00:37:26] Herrmann took a bank cheque from his pocket and handed it to his host. The latter examined it attentively and then laid it on the card. Chosen.

[00:37:36] He began dealing to the right, a 9 to the left, a tray. The tradewinds said her man showing the card, he held a tray, a murmur ran through the crowd.

[00:37:50] Check Wolinsky frown for a second. Only then his smile returned. He took a roll of bank bills from his pocket and counted out the required sum.

[00:37:58] Hamman received it and at once left the table. The next evening saw him at the place again. Everyone eyed him curiously and check Wolinsky greeted him cordially. He selected his card and placed upon it his fresh steak. The banker began dealing to the right, A9 to the left of seven, Herman then showed his card a seven spot.

[00:38:23] The onlookers exclaimed and the host was visibly disturbed.

[00:38:28] He counted out ninety four thousand roubles and passed them to Herman, who accepted them without showing the least surprise, and at once withdrew.

[00:38:39] The following evening, he went again. His appearance was the signal for the cessation of all occupation.



[00:38:44] Everyone being eager to watch the developments of events, he selected his card and Ace.

[00:38:52] The dealing began to the right, a queen to the left, an ace. The ace wins, remarked Taman, turning up his card without glancing at it. Your queen is killed, remarked TCEQ Wolinsky quietly. Herman trembled, looking down, he saw not the ace.

[00:39:16] He had selected the queen of spades. He could scarcely believe his eyes. It seemed impossible that he could have made such a mistake. As he stared at the card, it seemed to him that the queen winked one eye at him mockingly. The old woman, he exclaimed in voluntarily. The croupier raked in the money while he looked on in stupid terror.

[00:39:42] When he left the table, all made way for him to pass. The cards were shuffled, and the gambling went on. Here man became a lunatic. He was confined at the hospital. Little book of where he spoke to no one, but kept constantly murmuring in a monotonous tone. The three.

[00:39:58] Seven Ace. The Tray. Seven Queen.

[00:40:13] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.