ess to mention that this happy idea originated in the mind of the young man, and the on of Maria Gavrilovna. The winter came and put a stop to their meetings, but the limir Nikolaievitch in every letter implored her to give herself up to him hemselves at the feet of their p he lovers, and would infallibly y h was not t for a flight were rejected. At l nted: on th he pretext of a headache. Her i both to go into the gar would find ready a sledge, into which then driv ve of the lecisive d Venaradova, where Vladimir wo she packed and tied up her line ote a gletter to n the most touching ter ther to her parents. She took le red the in ep she was taking, and wound up with the assu er it the owed to throw herself at the fee eale both let vo flaming hearts with a suitab ed just be she threw herself upon s constantly being awakened b that at the ver order to go and get married, he ow with f s abyss, down which she fell headlong king of the heart. I loodstained. With his dying br visions floated before her one sual, and inquiries: "What is er observed her uneasiness; their te but in vain sure them and to appear chee cut her to the heart. She tried last day she would pass in the b heart. She was rybody, of all the objects that surrounded her art began d that she did not want any supper, an uld hardly restrain herself from reaching own room, she threw hers er to be calm and to take coura asha wou er peaceful girlish life. . . . Out heav y; the wi varo ything seemed to her to portend mistor Soon an was quiet in e: everyor it on a warm cloak, took her small box in b escended into the garden. The ew in their f ifficulty they reached the end or iem. The still; Vladimir's coachman was y ing to re nd her maid into the sledge, pl seized th the young lady to the care of fate and to the coachman, we will i ole of the day in driving about. iest of Jadrino great deal of difficulty, he the ighbouri self, a retired cornet of about f was Dravin, conser inded him of his young days and his pranks in the Hussars. would have no difficulty in finding the ith moustache and spurs, and the son of o sir een year y not only accepted Vladimir's dy to sad k for som vith rapture, and returned home to get ever elf the si aradova with his sledge and with detail ut any coachman, for Jadrino, rney would only occupy about But scarcely had Vladimi the wind rose and such a snows bjects disappeared in a thick yellow top nd himself in the middle of the field, and tried in vain to find the road again. His hor her stepping into a snowdrift or stumbling into a hole, so that the sledge was cons to lose the right direction. But it seemed to him that more than half an hour had;

TACET BOOKS



August Nemo

Table of Contents

<u>Title Page</u>

The Author

The Queen of Spades

The Shot

The Snowstorm

The Postmaster

The Coffin-maker

<u>Kirdjali</u>

Peter, The Great's Negro

About the Publisher

The Author

Alexander Pushkin published his first poem at the age of fifteen and was widely recognized in literary circles even before his graduation at Imperial Lyceum, located in the Tsarskoye Selo, the then royal village. Considered the greatest of Russian poets and the founder of modern Russian literature, he pioneered the use of colloquial language in his poems and plays, creating a narrative style a mixture of drama, romance and satire - as a poet, using popular expressions and legends, marking his verses with the richness and diversity of the Russian language. It influenced authors like Gogol, Liermontov and Turgeniev forming with them the famous Russian pleiad of authors. To Gogol, for the friendship and mutual project of development of an authentically Russian literature, Pushkin bequeaths some ideas like the one of the theatrical play The inspector general.

Due to his progressive ideas, having been friends with a few Decembrists, responsible for an attempted coup against Tsar Alexander I, he was banished, wandering between 1820 and 1824, through the south of the Russian Empire. Under severe surveillance of state censors and barred from traveling as well as publishing, he writes his most famous play, Boris Godunov, with the obvious influence of William Shakespeare. The piece can only be published years later. He wrote the novel in verse, Eugene Onegin, a panoramic portrait of Russian life, in which he introduced elements that led to the designation of his style as Russian "romanticism" of the nineteenth century. The novel was published in serials from 1825 to 1832, and was the basis of Tchaikovsky's homonymous opera.

In 1826, the writer received the czar's pardon, returning to Moscow. Two years later, Poltav wrote, an epic that tells the love story of Cossack Mazeppa. Growing increasingly prose, he achieved great success with works such as Belkin's Tales, The Lady of Spades and The Captain's Daughter.

Because of his liberal political ideals and his influence on generations of Russian rebels, Pushkin was portrayed by the Bolsheviks as an opponent of bourgeois literature and culture and a forerunner of Soviet literature and poetry.

The Queen of Spades

I

There was a card party at the rooms of Narumov of the Horse Guards. The long winter night passed away imperceptibly, and it was five o'clock in the morning before the company sat down to supper. Those who had won, ate with a good appetite; the others sat staring absently at their empty plates. When the champagne appeared, however, the conversation became more animated, and all took a part in it.

"And how did you fare, Surin?" asked the host.

"Oh, I lost, as usual. I must confess that I am unlucky: I play mirandole, I always keep cool, I never allow anything to put me out, and yet I always lose!"

"And you did not once allow yourself to be tempted to back the red?... Your firmness astonishes me."

"But what do you think of Hermann?" said one of the guests, pointing to a young Engineer: "he has never had a card in his hand in his life, he has never in, his life laid a wager, and yet he sits here till five o'clock in the morning watching our play."

"Play interests me very much," said Hermann: "but I am not in the position to sacrifice the necessary in the hope of winning the superfluous."

"Hermann is a German: he is economical—that is all!" observed Tomsky. "But if there is one person that I cannot

understand, it is my grandmother, the Countess Anna Fedotovna."

"How so?" inquired the guests.

"I cannot understand," continued Tomsky, "how it is that my grandmother does not punt."

"What is there remarkable about an old lady of eighty not punting?" said Narumov.

"Then you do not know the reason why?"

"No, really; haven't the faintest idea."

"Oh! then listen. About sixty years ago, my grandmother went to Paris, where she created quite a sensation. People used to run after her to catch a glimpse of the 'Muscovite' Venus.' Richelieu made love to her, and my grandmother maintains that he almost blew out his brains in consequence of her cruelty. At that time ladies used to play at faro. On one occasion at the Court, she lost a very considerable sum to the Duke of Orleans. On returning home, my grandmother removed the patches from her face, took off her hoops, informed my grandfather of her loss at the gaming-table, and ordered him to pay the money. My deceased grandfather, as far as I remember, was a sort of housesteward to my grandmother. He dreaded her like fire; but, on hearing of such a heavy loss, he almost went out of his mind: he calculated the various sums she had lost, and pointed out to her that in six months she had spent half a million francs, that neither their Moscow nor Saratov estates were in Paris, and finally refused point blank to pay the debt. My grandmother gave him a box on the ear and slept by herself as a sign of her displeasure. The next day she sent for her husband, hoping that this domestic punishment had produced an effect upon him, but she found him inflexible. For the first time in her life, she entered into

reasonings and explanations with him, thinking to be able to convince him by pointing out to him that there are debts and debts, and that there is a great difference between a Prince and a coachmaker. But it was all in vain, my grandfather still remained obdurate. But the matter did not rest there. My grandmother did not know what to do. She shortly before become acquainted with a very remarkable man. You have heard of Count St. Germain. about whom so many marvellous stories are told. You know that he represented himself as the Wandering Jew, as the discoverer of the elixir of life, of the philosopher's stone, and so forth. Some laughed at him as a charlatan; but Casanova, in his memoirs, says that he was a spy. But be that as it may, St. Germain, in spite of the mystery surrounding him, was a very fascinating person, and was much sought after in the best circles of society. Even to this day my grandmother retains an affectionate recollection of him, and becomes quite angry if any one speaks disrespectfully of him. My grandmother knew that St. Germain had large sums of money at his disposal. She resolved to have recourse to him, and she wrote a letter to him asking him to come to her without delay. The queer old man immediately waited upon her and found her overwhelmed with grief. She described to him in the blackest colours the barbarity of her husband, and ended by declaring that her whole hope depended upon his friendship and amiability.

"St. Germain reflected.

"'I could advance you the sum you want,' said he; 'but I know that you would not rest easy until you had paid me back, and I should not like to bring fresh troubles upon you. But there is another way of getting out of your difficulty: you can win back your money.'

"'But, my dear Count,' replied my grandmother, 'I tell you that I haven't any money left.'

"'Money is not necessary,' replied St. Germain: 'be pleased to listen to me.'

"Then he revealed to her a secret, for which each of us would give a good deal..."

The young officers listened with increased attention. Tomsky lit his pipe, puffed away for a moment and then continued:

"That same evening my grandmother went to Versailles to the _jeu de la reine_. The Duke of Orleans kept the bank; my grandmother excused herself in an off-hand manner for not having yet paid her debt, by inventing some little story, and then began to play against him. She chose three cards and played them one after the other: all three won _sonika^[1], and my grandmother recovered every farthing that she had lost."

"Mere chance!" said one of the guests.

"A tale!" observed Hermann.

"Perhaps they were marked cards!" said a third.

"I do not think so," replied Tomsky gravely.

"What!" said Narumov, "you have a grandmother who knows how to hit upon three lucky cards in succession, and you have never yet succeeded in getting the secret of it out of her?"

"That's the deuce of it!" replied Tomsky: "she had four sons, one of whom was my father; all four were determined gamblers, and yet not to one of them did she ever reveal her secret, although it would not have been a bad thing either for them or for me. But this is what I heard from my uncle, Count Ivan Ilyich, and he assured me, on his honour, that it was true. The late Chaplitzky—the same who died in

poverty after having squandered millions—once lost, in his youth, about three hundred thousand roubles—to Zorich, if I remember rightly. He was in despair. My grandmother, who was always very severe upon the extravagance of young men, took pity, however, upon Chaplitzky. She gave him three cards, telling him to play them one after the other, at the same time exacting from him a solemn promise that he would never play at cards again as long as he lived. Chaplitzky then went to his victorious opponent, and they began a fresh game. On the first card he staked fifty thousand rubles and won _sonika_; he doubled the stake and won again, till at last, by pursuing the same tactics, he won back more than he had lost ...

"But it is time to go to bed: it is a quarter to six already."

And indeed it was already beginning to dawn: the young men emptied their glasses and then took leave of each other. The old Countess A——was seated in her dressing-room in front of her looking—glass. Three waiting maids stood around her. One held a small pot of rouge, another a box of hair-pins, and the third a tall can with bright red ribbons. The Countess had no longer the slightest pretensions to beauty, but she still preserved the habits of her youth, dressed in strict accordance with the fashion of seventy years before, and made as long and as careful a toilette as she would have done sixty years previously. Near the window, at an embroidery frame, sat a young lady, her ward.

"Good morning, grandmamma," said a young officer, entering the room. "_Bonjour, Mademoiselle Lise_. Grandmamma, I want to ask you something."

"What is it, Paul?"

"I want you to let me introduce one of my friends to you, and to allow me to bring him to the ball on Friday."

"Bring him direct to the ball and introduce him to me there. Were you at B——'s yesterday?"

"Yes; everything went off very pleasantly, and dancing was kept up until five o'clock. How charming Yeletzkaya was!"

"But, my dear, what is there charming about her? Isn't she like her grandmother, the Princess Daria Petrovna? By the way, she must be very old, the Princess Daria Petrovna."

"How do you mean, old?" cried Tomsky thoughtlessly; "she died seven years ago."

The young lady raised her head and made a sign to the young officer. He then remembered that the old Countess was never to be informed of the death of any of her contemporaries, and he bit his lips. But the old Countess heard the news with the greatest indifference.

"Dead!" said she; "and I did not know it. We were appointed maids of honour at the same time, and when we were presented to the Empress..."

And the Countess for the hundredth time related to her grandson one of her anecdotes.

"Come, Paul," said she, when she had finished her story, "help me to get up. Lizanka, where is my snuff-box?"

And the Countess with her three maids went behind a screen to finish her toilette. Tomsky was left alone with the young lady.

"Who is the gentleman you wish to introduce to the Countess?" asked Lizaveta Ivanovna in a whisper.

"Narumov. Do you know him?"

"No. Is he a soldier or a civilian?"

"A soldier."

"Is he in the Engineers?"

"No, in the Cavalry. What made you think that he was in the Engineers?"

The young lady smiled, but made no reply.

"Paul," cried the Countess from behind the screen, "send me some new novel, only pray don't let it be one of the present day style." "What do you mean, grandmother?"

"That is, a novel, in which the hero strangles neither his father nor his mother, and in which there are no drowned bodies. I have a great horror of drowned persons."

"There are no such novels nowadays. Would you like a Russian one?"

"Are there any Russian novels? Send me one, my dear, pray send me one!"

"Good-bye, grandmother: I am in a hurry... Good-bye, Lizaveta Ivanovna. What made you think that Narumov was in the Engineers?"

And Tomsky left the boudoir.

Lizaveta Ivanovna was left alone: she laid aside her work and began to look out of the window. A few moments afterwards, at a corner house on the other side of the street, a young officer appeared. A deep blush covered her cheeks; she took up her work again and bent her head down over the frame. At the same moment the Countess returned completely dressed.

"Order the carriage, Lizaveta," said she; "we will go out for a drive."

Lizaveta arose from the frame and began to arrange her work.

"What is the matter with you, my child, are you deaf?" cried the Countess. "Order the carriage to be got ready at once."

"I will do so this moment," replied the young lady, hastening into the ante-room.

A servant entered and gave the Countess some books from Prince Paul Aleksandrovich.

"Tell him that I am much obliged to him," said the Countess. "Lizaveta! Lizaveta! Where are you running to?"

"I am going to dress."

"There is plenty of time, my dear. Sit down here. Open the first volume and read to me aloud."

Her companion took the book and read a few lines.

"Louder," said the Countess. "What is the matter with you, my child? Have you lost your voice? Wait—give me that footstool—a little nearer—that will do."

Lizaveta read two more pages. The Countess yawned.

"Put the book down," said she: "what a lot of nonsense! Send it back to Prince Paul with my thanks... But where is the carriage?"

"The carriage is ready," said Lizaveta, looking out into the street.

"How is it that you are not dressed?" said the Countess: "I must always wait for you. It is intolerable, my dear!"

Liza hastened to her room. She had not been there two minutes, before the Countess began to ring with all her might. The three waiting-maids came running in at one door and the valet at another.

"How is it that you cannot hear me when I ring for you?" said the Countess. "Tell Lizaveta Ivanovna that I am waiting for her."

Lizaveta returned with her hat and cloak on.