

# THE SPADE

ONE CUP CHRONICLES SERIES



VLADIMIR ROSS

# Vladimir Ross

## The Spade

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### **Аннотация**

All was going well for Nazar. Before noon, he had stolen enough wallets to last him for a considerable length of time. However, he had also managed to steal a note that would throw his life into disarray. Nazar suddenly finds himself tossed into a situation he never could have imagined as he tries to desperately hunt down a man he knows nothing about. He's quickly running out of time and growing more and more desperate. Fortunately, he knows exactly who to call.

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# The Spade

In the criminal world, a “shovel” or “spade” is slang for an especially full wallet. The word commonly refers to the large purses of the modern day Russian, although to be accurate, many today use attaché cases. What’s to be done? Money breeds money, and increasing amounts of money require increasing amounts of space in which to carry it.

Such spades represent the kind of accessories criminals lust after. Whether it was because of his noble heart or his own financial difficulties, Nazar rarely made use of such flashy displays of wealth, choosing to save his earnings rather than show them off. Nazar had bigger concerns than fashion trends and social status.

Today everything was going splendidly. Four fresh wallets were in his possession by lunchtime. The promise of the day’s harvest nearly compelled him to break from the routine process: allocate the “processing fee,” exchange the notes, and liquidate any noncash items from the emptied wallets. However, he dismissed the thought due to his sense of professionalism and self-preservation. The young man religiously observed the principles of thievery and would not deviate from them. Many thieves would dare to risk a violent act should they be caught or a question of their honor arise, but none would be so foolish as to provoke law-abiding citizens by going through their stolen

fortunes in a public place. That would be a foolish disregard of the basic laws of the trade. Nazar held himself to a higher standard and belonged to the elites who did the same.

Leaving his home territory of bus route No. 12, he walked to the parking lot where he had left his old Volvo. He walked past a stack of full, discarded suitcases some hapless citizens had forgotten.

*Interesting thing, life, thought Nazar. These days there is an uproar over the condition of the poor and the hardships they suffer and yet, they go and leave all of this luggage piled up like chuck beef in a refrigerator.*

The sad realization that he was only attributing to these hardships weighed heavily on him. Recently, evaluating his own strengths, Nazar was trying to work up from the ranks of petty thieves and pickpockets. He knew he was bound for a higher class in the criminal hierarchy. Money and jewelry were becoming harder to come across, and the cost of produce was beginning to reflect the local fears of an oncoming siege. Whether it was the bombing in Syria, the formation of ISIS, or the fatal conflict between North Korea and Japan, the habits of man always tend to bring forth the fear of an impending war. For Nazar, the thought of dying in combat didn't seem nearly as frightening as dying of starvation.

Inside the sanctuary of his car, he slowly pulled a spade out from his pocket and looked appreciatively at his prey. At first glance it didn't promise to be anything special. But one thing did

stand out. The letters “P.N.” were embossed on the leather, and in addition, the wallet was of a suspicious volume. Weighing the record-breaker in his palm, Nazar grinned. A pleasant feeling was flowing through his bones, leaving a thrilling warmth.

Reeling, he felt an unexpected sense of fulfillment. Hiding the goods under the passenger seat and revving the engine, he took off through the city, remembering the words of his teacher, a thief known as Sharik.

“Never clean a wallet in a public place. Your solitude, as in surgery, is an ally and a guardian angel.”

Soon the suburban highway was replaced by a rougher dirt road. Nazar entered the forest and, finding the coast clear, turned off the car engine. He dumped the contents of the haul into his lap. Dollars, euros, rubles, and hryvnia – a disparate pile of bills which were pleasing to the eye. ID cards, notebooks and other scraps, along with phones, made up a separate pile. He chuckled contentedly, examining the sum as a whole. It was nothing to brag about, but it would support him through the near future – something around one thousand dollars in total. Everything unimportant was flung out into the nearest bushes. Stretching a rubber band around the haul, he slipped it into the inner pocket of his jacket. Now it was time for the main event.

For the first time in his career as a pickpocket, Nazar had an inexplicable twinge of regret. This feeling made him treat the wallet of the mysterious man “P.N.” with respect. Thus, he went through it individually and almost, it seemed, with a hint

of reverence. Opening the wallet, Nazar was not surprised to see a neat series of hundred and five-thousand dollar bills. The relative thickness of the bills was unmistakable, and the sum value was close to three million dollars. His nose for these things rarely failed him. Large bills like this were no longer in print due to their being used almost exclusively for criminal purposes. It struck him as odd to find so many in one place. In a different part of the wallet he located a Visa credit card. Turning the card over in his hand, the pickpocket imagined an extension of this crime. The inscription "Platinum" seemed very promising, and Nazar firmly decided that today he would challenge himself to try a new art form and evolve his craft. Meanwhile, he continued to study the expensive wallet.

Disappointed by a lack of secrets, he was ready to give up the hope that had sprung from his initial investigation as he checked one final compartment. His interest was revived by what looked like a small white piece of paper hidden in the last fold of the wallet. Unfurling the tiny note, Nazar began to read the neat little letter. With every discernable line, he grew more and more uneasy. His mind was overwhelmed by a wave of anger and despair, making him gasp for air, thinking hard on a way out of this mess. With great difficulty, he was able to grasp the meaning of the final words. He glanced down at his watch. The adrenaline pumping through his veins scattered his thoughts in every direction and prevented him from focusing. He needed to expel all of this nervous energy. Jumping out of the car, Nazar

ran. Dodging under the branch of a tree, he nearly lost his balance and took a spill, causing his overstrained nerves to finally hit their breaking point.

“What the hell?! Why me? Don’t I have enough to deal with?!”

The pickpocket swiftly kicked the tire of his car. The pain failed to make it through to his overheated brain. He swore and slammed himself onto the hood of his car. That seemed to finally put his nerves to rest, at least for now. An immediate decision was required. The time... He glanced at his watch – almost 4 o’clock. Returning to the city too quickly was risky, but he had no other option.

The little Volvo raced along the avenue at high speeds. The driver pulled out his cell phone and, after his shaky hand pressed the wrong button a few times, he finally heard it ring. There was only one person who could possibly help in this situation; he was called Gene. He was a former math professor who had become the owner of a clandestine casino for high-profile modeling agencies who needed the Mafioso for endorsements. He had an army of no less than one hundred bodyguards, information specialists, and others of questionable professions on standby for any order. Such an organization created just to cause dissent and chaos in the criminal upper class evoked much disgust, and Nazar regarded all such men and organizations as revolting. Today, however, he had no time for disgust. He needed the help of these unsavory specialists, which only required their boss’ consent. Fortunately, Nazar was friends with him.

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