

*Gossip Girls*



*Queen of Spades*



Gossip Girls (A Short Story)

By Author Queen of Spades

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**S**he always believes that I have a system when it comes to what I make for the Group. *Her Group*. Truthfully, it all boils down to what I smell when I rise from slumber.

Today, I smell coconut.

I glance at her, body curled like a loose ball of acrylic yarn. Her bottom lip is tucked in, per her usual if she is having a fantastic dream.

*It better be of me and not of those other men I picture drooling over her wherever she goes.*

My lips graze her forehead as I go about my routine. I cleanse my hair, face, and body in the shower. I throw on a gray T-shirt and some striped pajama bottoms, which I rescued from the trash a few days prior when she wasn't looking.

There are no holes in them, but the elastic gave out ages ago. For me, two sets of shoestrings tied just perfectly serve as substitutes. Also, it is one of the few pajama pants that have pockets, and one can never have too many pockets.

After sliding my feet into the plushness of the black slippers, I walk in the kitchen to check the percolator. Pleased that she remembered to put in the coffee grounds last night, I turn on the stove and set about my recipe.

By the time the ingredients are mixed, the melody of the percolator touches my ears.

*Perfect timing.*

I take the tall ceramic mug from the cabinet and pour the liquid. I inhale, immersing myself in the aroma. I wrap my lips around the top and await the coffee's heat and flavor. It is an ecstasy one would not understand. That is, unless, one is a coffee connoisseur. Which I am.

She is not. In her mind, all coffee is *the same*.

I am not offended. It just means I have more to myself. I savor the coffee and the silence. I operate better when there is less ruckus.

# Dahlia

I am never awakened by sounds. It is *always* by smells.

“Is that chamomile?” I mumble, my eyes not quite opened.

“That it is,” answers J.

I stretch before sitting up and opening my eyes.

“Does that mean I win the grand prize?”

“If by ‘prize’, you mean having a sneak taste of the dessert, then no.”

J laughs as I pout. “Come on Lia. You know it’s for the Group. Besides, you can’t show up there with a slice of the cake missing.”

“You made a cake?” I shake my head in astonishment. “You sure are spoiling those biddies.”

“Correction, *you* are spoiling ‘those biddies’. I am not dull enough to believe you’ve been truthful about your cooking prowess.”

“J, that’s below the belt.”

As I am about to take a sip of the tea, my eyes notice an article of clothing. *My least favorite one.*

“J, do you have on those *dreaded* striped pants *again?*”

“Lia, drink your tea. It will help with the congestion,” J deflects, sprinting from the bedroom before getting interrogated further.

*How the hell did J find them?* I marvel at J’s prowess while I finish the tea.

By the time I enter the kitchen, the cake is already in its proper dish.

“A masterpiece, as usual.”

“Thanks, as usual.”

“J, why must you be so modest?” I fuss. “You are amazing. Did you hear that the old department store building is up for rent?”

“Yes Lia, I did hear the whispers, but I’m not interested.”

“Dear, you haven’t even heard my plan.”

“Lia, I’m sure your plan is fantastic, but I am perfectly happy just showing off my skills to you and the Group.”

“Your skills should be showcased further. Not just to this community but the world.”

“That doesn’t matter to me. *You* do,” J whispers, pulling me close. We embrace and kiss passionately.

I pause the travel of J’s hands to my panties.

“If you start any of that, I won’t be going to see the Group.”

“Well, it was worth a shot. I hope you didn’t mind me selecting the outfit.”

“J, you know I don’t. Besides, you have a better eye for fashion than I do.”

I give J another kiss. “I love you.”

“I love you, Lia. Now go ahead and get ready.”

J playfully swats my behind as I rush past.

# Minnie

*Why is marriage always touted as the gold standard? The highlight reel for a woman's time on earth?*

*Why is having children promoted as proof that one is truly a woman? As if it's the only way to establish purpose in the world?*

I, Minnie Braitwite, do *not* feel golden.

Yes, I have children, but they provide no fulfillment. I look at my three creations as creatures to send off to a neighboring planet, not frail inhabitants that need to be nurtured until they are of maturation.

I dare not say these thoughts to my mother. My mother's theory would be that the "partum" has lasted longer than usual but that it will pass.

The only people I can confide in with these sentiments are Sherann and Dahlia. It is pathetic that our Sunday ritual is the pinnacle of my week—that the

act of speaking about someone, who at times, seems more myth than reality, provides the warm feeling in my heart that motherhood cannot.

The tug on my long dress startles me. “Momma, what’s for breakfast?”

“Pearl, what are you talking about? You haven’t had breakfast yet?”

“No, Momma, that’s why I’m asking you.”

“Where’s Poppa? He was supposed to be making breakfast because I’m going out today.”

“He’s not here,” yells Scottie Junior.

“What do you mean he’s not here?”

“When I got up, he was rushing out the door. Something about an emergency job he had to take care of.”

*Emergency job? So, that’s the excuse he’s now using to sneak off with that slut!*

“Junior, make Pearl and Pete cereal for breakfast. You can fry yourself a couple of grilled cheese sandwiches. There’s tuna already in the fridge, so help yourselves for lunch. I’ll be back by dinner.”

I hug and kiss Pearl on the cheek, then ruffle Junior’s red hair.

“Keep an eye on your sister and brother. Love you.”

“Love you too Momma. Tell Miss Sherann and Miss Dahlia I said hello.”

“Will do.”

Junior is right. Scottie’s pickup truck is not outside.

*To leave it be or to be petty?*

Even as I ask these questions, I drive in the direction where I suspect my husband is located.

My intuition is an excellent compass.

*What is it about men?* The majority of them never cheat up the social ladder but down the degenerate slope. *Do they lack ambition or just flat-out lazy?*

In Scottie’s case, a bit of both.

Do I bust in on the two of them? *No, too dramatic.*

Do I toss a lit cigarette in the worn-down mobile home? *No, too conspicuous.*

I do not care that Scottie’s cheating. It is that he lies about being unfaithful.

I do not love Scottie, never have. He was supposed to be the “good time guy” in the meantime. I slipped up by getting pregnant with Junior. Since both of our families are against abortion, he made an honest woman out of me. Pearl and Pete were not planned either, but having children is just something that married couples are expected to do. People believe there’s something wrong within the marriage if you do not.

Even so, I must hurt Scottie. I cannot let him believe I’m a compliant cuckquean. Also, he refuses to

consider divorce, citing it will have a negative impact on the children.

*So, having a poppa that's an adulterer is better?*

That argument lacks logic.

*One.*

*Two.*

*Three.*

I smile as the two front tires and one back tire deflate.

*Good luck getting those fixed, since all the auto spots are closed Sundays. Besides, his fat ass needs to lose weight anyway.*

Sliding the blade back in the glove compartment, I resume my travel to meet with Sherann and Dahlia.

# Sherann

*I should not have this party so close to meeting with the Girls. There's always one person who never wants to leave.*

In this case, it is Mack.

Actually, *in all cases*, it's Mack.

I should insist that he does not stay. He is only good for delivering compliments and fantastic sex. As per my design, those are the only two qualities that count. Wait, he must be drop-dead fine. That brings the total to three.

Mack is a fantastic chameleon at my outings and lounge parties. He lingers just enough by my side for onlookers to assume we are a couple and says just enough for people to be unaware of his baseline level of intelligence. Mack never presses for labels or exclusivity; he is aware of our arrangement.

*Again, as per my design.*

However, I am annoyed that he wants to be clingy the few times I permit him to stay the night.

“Mack, wake up already!” I yell, swatting him with the pillow.

“Come on, just five more minutes,” he complains.

I whack him harder. “You said five more minutes *ten* minutes ago. Wake your ass up! The Girls will be here soon.”

“Okay, okay, okay, just don’t hit me with the pillow again.”

Getting out of the bed, Mack comments, “I don’t understand why it is such a big deal if I’m around when they get here Sherann.”

“That’s *not* part of our arrangement, Mack. No need looking for the guest towels; there’s no time.”

“No time? Well, what if after I shower, I help you clean up?”

“Mack, I’ve got it covered. Besides, you’ve never offered to clean up before. That’s something guys with titles do.”

“And satisfying you sexually *whenever* you require doesn’t have a title? Isn’t the term for that ‘lover’ or ‘boy toy’?”

“Apologies. I should have specified the type of title. We have not had the ‘boyfriend’ conversation and

cleaning up isn't a 'boy toy' duty. The 'boy toy' fucks and flees, which is exactly what you need to be doing."

"Sherann ..."

"Mack, talk and get dressed at the same time, will you? Please be gone by the time I'm done with my shower. I'll call you."

Uncaring of his reaction or response, I rush in the bathroom to start the water.

Mack is gone when I return to the bedroom.

*Sex is supposed to soothe not stress. If Mack starts insisting on the next level because he's catching feelings, I'm going to have to find a new ointment to satisfy my itch.*

"Oh well, this house won't clean itself," I announce. "Perhaps my next sexual conquest should be a housekeeper."

# Dahlia

*I should have listened to J and shaved my legs last night. These pantyhose are making my legs extremely sweaty.*

The discomfort takes a backseat to all of the compliments I receive while strutting down the sidewalk. The praise varies from neighbor to neighbor.

Mrs. Hornsby gushes about how carnation pink is her favorite color and that I made a wise color selection.

Mr. Davenport notices the shine of my pink Mary Janes, the exact match to the roses on my poodle skirt. On many occasions, J stated that Mr. Davenport sits on the porch to drool over how the ladies prance when they come past the property. I often dismiss J's theory as paranoia.

Today, I glance back to make sure Mr. Davenport's eyes aren't lingering for too long. Upon being spotted, he nods and waves.

Even Miss Guttenberg, who is rumored to never have anything nice to say about anyone, claims I look less homely than I do on the weekdays.

*J will get a kick out of that.*

Luckily, Sherann's house is not far from my residence. The first streams of sweat develop near my thighs, and I become aware of the glass cake pan's weight.

After moving my left hand to the base of the dish, I extend my gloved index finger to ring the doorbell.

# Sherann

As I tie the button-down paisley top underneath my bosom, I check my image in the mirror once again.

*To change out of the hot pants or no?* I stare at the bellbottoms hanging in the adjacent closet.

“Nah, it’s just Dahlia and Minnie. Besides, it’s a matching set.”

Just as I head to the veranda, the doorbell sounds.

*It must be Dahlia. She’s always early.*

I blow my breath on my hand, then sniff. Dahlia has never condemned my marijuana use but she has not expressed approval either.

“Dahlia, wonderful to see you again,” I express cheerfully after opening the door. “Don’t you look like a bowl of strawberries and cream!”

“Is that supposed to be a compliment, Sherann?”

“I love strawberries and cream, so what does that tell you?”

“In that case, thanks.”

I take the cake from Dahlia’s hands then encourage her to follow me.

“Your outfit is very eye catching,” Dahlia comments. “What is the name of that print? Abstract? Geometric?”

“Dahlia, I don’t know. I just grab what I like.”

“Sherann, I’m glad we will be on the veranda today.”

“Are you now? I didn’t know you had a preference.”

“Um ... well, it’s not that. I just know that Minnie isn’t too keen on bugs, which was why we’d be in the kitchen or the lounge area.”

“It helps that I found a contractor who gave me a good deal on the fencing,” I offer as explanation while placing the stand in the center of the table. “Dahlia, can you please grab the tray with the sweet tea and water pitchers?”

“Of course,” Dahlia responds. While I remove the pitchers from the tray, she continues, “Any word from Minnie?”

“She is going to be a little late. Apparently, some confusion with who was supposed to make breakfast for the kids.”

“Ah,” Dahlia comments. We exchange looks, preferring to wait until Minnie’s arrival to get the true rundown on her tardiness.

# Minnie

I park near the curb in front of Sherann's house. Although Sherann insists I park in the driveway, I am particular about blocking in any of her cars.

*I know I am late, but I just want to finish this last puff.*

Balancing the cigarette holder between my fingers, I take a long drag, permitting the mesh of nicotine, menthol, and tobacco to work their magic on my nerves. I release the toxins slowly, counting the number of O's I'm able to make. Snuffing out the Eve Lights in the car's ashtray, I make my way to the house.

The brass door knocker sounds against the door a few times when it opens. It's Dahlia, debutante perfect like always. It is a trait I find admirable and enviable, all in one breath.

"Hey Minnie." She takes the bottle from my hand.

“Hey Dahlia. Hope you two haven’t been waiting long. I brought some wine. I thought it would mesh well with the dessert.”

Dahlia passes the bottle to Sherann.

“Even if it doesn’t, there’s never a bad time to have some wine. I’ll put this on the table. Minnie, can you grab the wine glasses? You remember where I have them?”

“Yeah,” I answer, willing myself not to stare at Sherann’s hot pants. More specifically, how well her *derriere* stretches the fabric.

My friend Sherann. The consummate hot girl. The woman who can strut into any room and garner attention. *Sigh*.

“Minnie, do you need help?” Dahlia yells from the veranda.

“No, I’ve got them,” I reply, pulling them out of the cabinet. “Why don’t you go ahead and serve the dessert?”

# *Dahlia*

“I hope you all are fans of coconut,” Dahlia put an equal sized slice on each plate before pouring some wine in the glasses.

“I like it, but don’t have it in the house. Scottie is allergic. Senior, not junior.”

“This better be some outstanding coconut cake. My mama makes the only one I eat.” Sherann eyes the slice with suspicion.

“I bet this will have you eating your words,” Dahlia confidently fires back.

“Okay, you know how we do,” Minnie announces. “On three. One ...”

We cut a portion with the side of our forks.

“Two,” Sherann adds while we balance the dessert on the utensils.

“Three,” I conclude as the morsels disappear in our mouths.

Sherann is the first to react. “Well, guess this makes two people whose coconut cakes I trust. This is delicious!”

“More than delicious ... it’s orgasmic!” Minnie concurs.

I smirk, watching Sherann and Minnie devour their slices. As I serve them a second slice, I keep wishing that J would reconsider opening a catering business.

“I am not sure I’d go that far. I hear that orgasms are hard to beat,” I joke.

“See, that is where I have to disagree, Dahlia. An orgasm is only as good as its source. If the source is subpar, so is the end result.”

“Sherann, why are we talking about orgasms? Did you get laid before we got here?”

“Actually Minnie, you are the one who brought up orgasms, as it pertains to the cake. And, if you must know, I got off before you got here.”

I almost choke on my wine. *Never a dull moment, and we aren’t even on the main subject of discussion.*

“Everybody is not as fortunate as you Sherann.”

“Fortunate? Minnie, *you* are the one who has a husband.”

Minnie downs her wine, points at me to pour her more. “Just because I have a husband doesn’t mean I’m getting shagged every night.”

“If not, then what’s the point?” Sherann counters.

“Ladies, ladies, ladies, this is supposed to be coconut cake and chill, not coconut cake and confrontation,” I interrupt.

“Dahlia, this isn’t a confrontation, just a difference of opinion. I just don’t get where people think that marriage means a couple is humping like rabbits.”

“Minnie, I thought one of the perks of two individuals getting married was constant access to sex. If a person isn’t receiving that on the regular, she might as well be single. That’s my stance, and there’s nothing to be said to convince me otherwise.”

“Fair enough, ladies.”

I finish what is left of my cake but decline to take another.

“What is the latest on our favorite topic?”

# *Minnie*

I help myself to a third piece of cake. Sherann asks if I want any more wine but I decide on sweet tea this round.

“I don’t recall if I told you ladies, but I decided to switch meat markets. The butcher and I got into a row. He called me a liar for saying he sold me a stank piece of meat.”

“That’s messed up, Minnie. Sorry you had to go through that,” Dahlia states.

“That’s okay. It’s his loss. I spent plenty of money in that place.” Shaking off the emotions associated with the memory, I press on with the story. “The next meat market is a couple of towns over, so I get my sister to watch the kids while Scottie is doing overtime at work. I heard from the butcher there that Juniper Casey is

looking into buying some land to build a house near his property.”

“Really?” Sherann’s eyes widen with surprise. “I thought she decided to make Mexico her permanent residence.”

“Well, the butcher’s sister-in-law is a real estate agent. As it turns out, Juniper may be moving back to the States.”

“Perhaps the spot in Mexico is Juniper’s vacation home,” Dahlia suggests.

“Dahlia, what woman do we know has that much money?” I ask.

“I don’t believe you need a lot of money in Mexico to purchase a home. Besides, didn’t one of Juniper’s lovers leave her a large sum of money?”

“Sherann, all I know is what the butcher said he heard from his sister-in-law. The sister-in-law said that Juniper seemed highly interested in the land.”

“What kind of house is she going to build on it, Minnie?”

“Dahlia, here is where it gets interesting,” I lean in, then lower my voice. “Rumor has it that she’s going to be growing *something* on the land.”

“Something? What do you mean by *something*? And why are we now whispering?” Dahlia inquires.

“You never know *who* could be listening, Dahlia.”

“Let me make sure I got this right,” Sherann pipes up, ignoring the whispering protocol. “In addition to being a money grubbing widow, Juniper is a drug kingpin also?”

“Sherann, I believe the technical term is queenpin. I don’t think the drug is *that* major. If anything, probably marijuana.”

“Well, anything that’s from the earth doesn’t count as a drug. Also, Juniper can’t be a queenpin if she isn’t selling it to others. Dahlia, it could be that theory we had before, that she’s investing in holistic healing.”

“Sherann, it very well could be,” Dahlia cosigns, “but if that is the case, how is Juniper going to have time to do this and keep low-key?”

“It’s not my job to make it make sense. I’m just telling you what I heard.”

I take a few sips of the sweet tea, then ask Dahlia if she’s heard anything new. Dahlia shakes her head while licking the icing from her fork. Just when I believe I’ll get a reprieve for a cigarette break, Sherann interjects.

# *Sherann*

“Minnie, just curious, how long ago did you meet up with the butcher?”

“Um, think it’s been about a month, give or take. Why do you ask?”

I clap, then rub my hands together. “Because I spotted Juniper about two weeks ago.”

“You don’t say?” Dahlia quirks an eyebrow. “Where did you see her?”

“Remember that old warehouse I’ve been eyeing, Dahlia?”

“The one you want to turn into a boutique?”

“Yeah?”

“What about it?” Minnie butts in, tapping her fingers on the table.

“Welllll, Miss Impatient Minnie, I was stopping by there, to see if the ‘For Sale’ sign was still up when I noticed a bit of movement within the building.”

Dahlia’s mouth forms an O.

“What did you do, Sherann? Did you call the cops?”

“For what, Minnie?”

“Trespassing, of course.”

“Now why in the hell would I do that? It’s not like I had any business being on the property myself.”

“She does have a point Minnie,” Dahlia concludes.

“I should have known you would side with her, Dahlia.”

“It’s not about taking sides, Minnie. Only about what makes sense.” Dahlia wipes the icing from the corner of her lips. “Go on with the gossip, Sherann.”

“You guys know me. I had to see what was going on. The door was ajar enough for me to slide in. The sound stemmed from the second floor, so I took off my shoes before tiptoeing up the stairs. What I saw nearly knocked me on my ass.”

I look at Dahlia, then at Minnie. I repeat for dramatic effect. Finally, Minnie blurts, “Enough with the theatrics. What did you see?”

“Juniper was in the throes of passion with not one man, but two.”

“Two!” Dahlia exclaims.

Minnie shrugs. "Is that all? What's so exciting about that, Sherann? You've had threesomes on more than one occasion."

"It's not the number of participants but what Juniper was doing to one of them."

"What could Juniper possibly be doing that would be shocking to you?" Minnie counters.

"Juniper had on this contraption. It looked like some type of harness. Only it wasn't because it had an object sticking out from the base. It looked just like a penis and she was sticking it up one guy's ass."

"Surely you jest, Sherann!"

"I kid you not Dahlia. And ... get this. The guy getting rammed was making all the pleasure noises."

"I've never heard of such, Sherann. What was the other guy doing?"

"Minnie, he was sucking on Juniper's breasts while getting his penis sucked by the other guy."

"Hot damn!" Minnie slams her palms on the table excitedly. "Juniper sure does lead an exciting life. What did you do? Did they catch you?"

"You're asking what did *I* do?" I glance at Minnie then point at my chest.

"Yes, Sherann. What did you do?"

"Yeah, Sherann. Like, did you join in?" suggests Dahlia.

“Girls, what type of woman do you take me for? I’m not going to join anything in which I am not invited!” After giggling at their preposterous suggestions, I continue. “I crept away from there quickly and quietly, then went home and took a cold shower. I had to, after being exposed to all of that action.”

After that tale, we sip on what remains in our glasses. We ponder about if we will have another Juniper Casey sighting to dish on for our next meeting.

In the meantime, we speak about ourselves. Dahlia picks our brains to come up with the next dish to bring over. Minnie resumes her lamentations about Scottie. I share the date of my next party and invite the girls.

Their answers are always the same.

Minnie needs to find someone to watch the children and will let me know. Dahlia will give it some thought.

I suspect they will not come. They have not come to any thus far. Yet, if surprises can occur in the life of Juniper Casey, I see no reason why they cannot manifest for me.

# *Dahlia*

“Ladies, this has been most delightful,” I say, removing the cloth napkin from my lap and shaking off the cake crumbs.

“Yes, as always.” Minnie sighs. “Now, it’s time to go back to my life.”

“You mustn’t feel that way about it, Minnie.”

“That’s easy for you to say Dahlia. You don’t have any kids or a subpar husband.”

Sherann hands Minnie a plastic-wrapped Styrofoam plate containing two slices of coconut cake.

“Wow, guess I am pretty predictable.”

Sherann does not speak but her eyes say volumes.

“Let me get going. Dahlia, thanks for the phenomenal cake. Sherann, appreciative of the hospitality. You ladies have a terrific evening.”

“You too,” Sherann and I say in unison.

Once Minnie leaves, Sherann extends the invitation for me to stay a while but I decline. However, I cleanse the dishes while she puts the remaining cake away.

“Do you want me to drop off the cake tray, Dahlia?”

“No, just hold on to it until our next get together.”

“Dahlia?”

“Yes, Sherann?”

“You don’t have to wait until we all converge to stop by. Like, you must live relatively close if there are moments when you can walk to my house.”

“Sherann, I appreciate that, but I don’t want to intrude.”

“If you really feel that strongly about it, then call first. You still have the number?”

“Yes, and with that, I’ll be on my way. Take care, Sherann.”

“Dahlia, can I drop you off?”

“No thanks,” I insist. “And besides, like you said, I don’t live far.”

Sherann presses the issue no further, sending me well wishes. I place extra pep in my step on the way home, eager to remove my pantyhose upon arrival.



*Lia should be arriving any moment.*

I carry the ceramic teacup and matching saucer to the bathroom, then place it on the edge of the tub. Anticipating that Lia's feet would be in pain, I already have the tub filled with water and soothing salts to assist with healing. I press my fingertip on the water's surface, watching the ripples.

"Temperature's perfect," I say.

A sound from the front of the house draws me from the bathroom. Lia's cheeks are flushed. *Tipsy but not plastered.* That was Lia's way.

Kicking shoes off with expediency that were annoying to the feet ... also Lia's way.

"Hold on. Don't rip those," I warn, kneeling in front of her. Carefully reaching underneath Lia's skirt, I maneuver the pantyhose until they pool around her

ankles. She finishes the removal and tosses them on top of the Mary Janes.

“Thank you Love.” After planting a kiss on my forehead, she points at the wrapped plate. “I saved you some cake.”

I mosey with the plate to the bathroom.

“Since when are we eating cake in the bathroom?” Lia jokes, unzipping the skirt and leaving it on the floor.

“Um ... I guess today. Finish getting undressed. There’s a warm bath with your name on it.”

Lia’s nakedness is in view within seconds. She eases her body down, careful not to knock over the tea I prepared.

“You’re amazing,” she groans as I take one dainty foot in my hands to massage.

Unable to resist, I brag, “I know.”

My cockiness is met with splashes of water to the face.

“I’ll pay you back later,” I promise.

“I’m counting on it.” she spits back, then winks.

As I attend to Lia’s other foot, I ask, “So, how are Minnie and Sherann?”

“Minnie was fussing about Scottie ... again. And Sherann ... well, is Sherann.”

“Gotcha. How juicy is the gossip this week?”

Lia wastes no time sharing the wild theories. Hearing about the harness contraption is the most laugh worthy.

It is astonishing what people will make up about a topic which they do not understand. It is even more baffling when they do not simply ask the person in question. Maybe, someday, they will realize that one may not be all that extraordinary.

Until then, let the hearsay commence.



## *About the Author*



The best way to describe Queen of Spades is an Antiquated Hybrid: a contemporary author whose writings have a down-to-earth resonance to anyone who reads them.

Since the age of eleven, Queen of Spades flowed with the fire of ideas indicative of rhythm inundated with stanzas. She made her writing debut as a presenter and poet in the anthology *Soulful Branches: Words and Sounds*. Her other poetry works include *Reflections of Soul*, the Eclectic collection (*Skin Edition & Beyond the Skin*), the Spaded Truths collection (*Themes and Proclamations and Life-O-Suction*), *Private Pain: Amidst These Ashes*, and *R.I.P.(E): Random Inspirations on Paper: (E)ve-olution*.

Queen of Spades also collaborates in subjects she is passionate about. She provided works in the April

2014 poetry anthology Words of Fire and Ice by Durham Editing and E-books. In addition, she partnered with fellow author MJ Holman addressing the stigma of mental illness: The Sea of Conscience and Waves to Light.

Storytelling took spotlight alongside poetry in Queen's literary evolution. She has written four independent short stories: "Taint on Religion", "Mr. Bradley's Garden", "When Summer Lingers", and "Finding My Heart". Furthermore, she has participated in a number of short story compilations, such as Continuous Drips, the Concordant Vibrancy anthology series (Unity, Vitality, Lustrate, Inferno, Extancy), and the Divergent Ink collection (Crackles of the Heart, Pleasure Prints). She released her first short story collection A Scribe's Sentiments in 2019.

Some tout Queen of Spades is a Poet of the People. Others classify her as a Life Writer. The primary quality that remains consistent is her dedication to contemporary creativity while remaining true to herself.

***[www.authorqueenofspades.com](http://www.authorqueenofspades.com)***