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The Bet and Other Stories

Anton Chekhov (1860–1904) Translated by S. S. Koteliansky and J. M. Murray

Read by: David Wales Language: English
 Length: 6 hours and 7 minutes Style: Solo
 Genre(s): Fiction, Short Fiction

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The Bet and Other Stories is a collection of 12 stories and a novella. Eleven were written between 1885 and 1889 when Chekhov was in his twenties. These are book-ended in time between “That Wretched Boy” (1883) and “After the Theatre”(1892)”. The title story, “The Bet”, is considered one of Chekhov’s finest and involves a bet between a banker and a lawyer about whether capital punishment or life imprisonment is more humane. Others in this collection also rank high in the Chekhov canon. In “A Living Calendar” a State Councilor sits by the fire with his wife and complains of the lack of culture in their town and recalls the past visits of stars, marking time by the ages of their four children. “A Tedious Story”, the novella also known as “A Dreary Story”, “A Boring Story”, and “A Dull Story”, was influenced by the death of Chekhov’s brother Nikolay and chronicles the alienation and confusion of a renowned professor of medicine during his physical decline from an

unspecified illness. “A Gentleman Friend” depicts the dilemma of a beautiful young woman who finds herself penniless upon discharge from a hospital and her stratagems to recover her good fortune. Throughout this collection we see a master at work, showing life as it is in all its messy and inconclusive details, in a style that Nabokov described as “writing the way one person relates to another the most important things in his life, slowly and yet without a break, in a slightly subdued voice”.

Anton Chekhov (January 29, 1860 – July 15, 1904) was a Russian physician, playwright and author of short stories. He is considered one of the finest writers of short fiction in history and, along with Ibsen and Strindberg, one of the founders of modernism in the theatre. He was born the third of six children in the port town of Taganrog on the north shore of the Sea of Azov in southern Russia. His father, a grocer, declared bankruptcy in 1876 and moved the family to Moscow, leaving Anton behind to liquidate the property and complete his schooling. Anton joined his family and entered medical school in 1879, supporting the family by writing short vignettes and humorous sketches for the newspapers and gaining both popular and literary attention. He became a doctor in 1884 but practiced little. At about the same time he contracted tuberculosis. Noted author Dmitry Grigorovich helped him win the Pushkin prize in 1888 for his short story collection *At Dusk*. He settled in a small country estate in 1892, where he wrote his first major play, *The Seagull*, in 1894, and then built a villa in Yalta after his tuberculosis worsened. He married actress Olga Knipper in 1901. *The Cherry Orchard*, his last major play, received accolades when it was produced a few months before his death in 1904 and established his reputation a great Russian writer, second only to Tolstoy, which stands to this day.