# TALISMANIC OBJECTS (4)

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*One in a* [*25-part series*](http://hilobrow.com/tag/talismanic-objects/) *of nonfiction stories about objects of talismanic significance. This is the second volume in the PROJECT:OBJECT series. Please* [*subscribe to the P:O newsletter*](https://tinyletter.com/ProjectObject)*; and purchase* [*P:O apparel and accessories*](https://projectobject.threadless.com) *— all profits will be donated to the ACLU!*

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I got lucky in romance, or so I thought. A man fixed his gaze and imagined he fell in love. His most treasured object, he alleged, was a pair of dice fixed on a chain. He called them by their singular, “die.” Die that tangle together; you can no longer toss. And so we did. He dangled destiny around my neck, and I dutifully followed him into the night and remained for a decade. What is love, if not a long-con that goes both ways? They say confidence men first talk themselves into believing the swindle, and deceive only themselves, in the end.

The wise say luck is no one’s servant, everyone’s master. Poker players call it chasing the bitch. Despite the randomness of the hole cards, the flop, the river, players insist it to be a game of skill. Take me to the river, they croon. They cleverly manipulate luck or lack of it. One night I met a poker player, and followed him into poker rooms for a few years. The Rio in Vegas. The Aviation in Paris. The Borgata in Atlantic City. The Gutshot in London. The Genoa, a mob club in New York. Atlantis in the Bahamas. Was this the luck of my draw, or his?

One of the sources of a poker player’s loose grip on reality is the tell and reverse-tell. In order to bluff when you’ve got rags, or lure suckers into a pot when you’re holding the nuts, some players spend time creating nuanced behavioral ticks. They lean forward, narrow eyes, tap fingers, in order to project “false tells” for strong or weak hands until the other players think they’ve got you and your cards pegged. It is a dance of delusion. It works in low-level games against suckers, but even the pros do it to each other; chatter too much or go stone mute. When the misdirection is flipped, a huge pot can be stolen.

I led a wild life. What do you miss, while chasing the bitch? I once wrote a comic book where the hero’s superpower was the long shot — he possessed a lion’s share of luck. Play the long shot and win. If he used his luck for ill gains, there would be blowback. This hero’s anti-power was that he had no idea who he was. A blank card drenched in luck.

Dice are an obvious symbol of chance. My talisman keeps me vigilant, wary of the complex bait and switch skills of confidence men. I didn’t wear them for a few years, but feel the need to wear them again now. My dice remind me of a game being played large on a political stage, the gaslight of the century. A king baby, a misdirection artist, who twitters away thinking he has a relationship with his flock. It isn’t a relationship; it’s an endless one-night stand. Politics, like love and poker, is a game of incomplete information. A player’s hidden cards are his secret consorts, and, insatiable, he needs a never-ending supply. He knows that when a bluff works, and his opponents fold, money flows towards him. He’ll never even have to reveal his hand. The Twitter King knows that the bigger the lie, the more likely it will be believed.

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