

Johnny Cash, The Gambler

About twenty years ago
On a train bound for nowhere
I met up with The Gambler
We were both too tired to sleep
So we took turns a starin'
Through the window at the darkness
'Til boredom overtook us
And he commenced to speak

He said, 'Son, I've made a life
Out of readin' people's faces
And knowin' what their cards were
By the way they held their eyes
And if you don't mind my sayin'
I would say you're out of aces
And for one taste of your whiskey
I will give you some advice'

So I handed him my bottle
And he drank down my last swallow
Then he bummed a cigarette
Then he bummed a light
The night got deathly quiet
And his face lost all expression
He said, 'If you're gonna play the game, boy
You better learn to play it right'

'Cause ev'ry gambler knows
That the secret to survival
Is knowin' what to throw away
And knowin' what to keep
And ev'ry hand's a winner
Just like ev'ry hand's a loser
And the best that you can hope for
Is to die in your sleep.

You got to know when to hold 'em
Know when to fold 'em
Know when to walk away
Know when to run
You don't ever count your money
While you're sittin' at the table
There'll be time enough for countin'
When the dealin' is done

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And when he finished speakin'
He turned back t'ward the window
Put out his cigarette
Faded off to sleep
And somewhere in the darkness
The gambler he broke even
But in his final words
I found an ace that I could keep

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