

"NO LIMIT: THE EXTREMELY SHORT STORY OF MY POKER CAREER"

BLACK SCREEN

ME (V.O.)

Me? I was a smart kid. Everybody
always said...

(high-pitched voice)

... 'You're sooo mature for your
age! And smart too!

FADE IN:

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

The voice belongs to ME (age 30, tall, not dark, and almost handsome). I'm sitting in a plastic seat and speaking to someone off-screen.

ME

(still high-pitched)

You'll achieve whatever you set
your mind to... the sky's the
limit!

(back to normal)

And I believed them.

INT. RON'S KITCHEN TABLE - NIGHT

The lid of a polished wooden box opens to reveal an organized arrangement of poker chips around a central deck of cards, all snugly situated within sculpted green felt.

A crisp one-hundred dollar bill lands in the open lid.

A pair of hands reaches in and retrieves one-hundred dollars worth of chips.

ME (V.O.)

The sky's the limit. Why would you
lie to a kid like that? I guess
everybody does. Who knows, when
I'm a parent maybe I will too.

I place the chips in front of me at the empty table. I'm wearing dark, wrap-around sunglasses that make me look like an insect.

ME (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Maybe it's even good for kids to hear that. Maybe their undeveloped little minds have an innate need to believe that the world is their own personal watermelon... just waiting to be sliced up and devoured.

I arrange the chips into five stacks of five whites, one stack of five reds, and one stack of five blues.

ME (V.O.) (cont'd)
 (sarcastic)
 The sky's the limit! Shoot for the moon... even if you miss, you'll land among the stars!
 (normal)
 That was my Dad's favorite.

INSERT - SNAPSHOT OF MY DAD

He wears a suit and tie and stands against a blank backdrop.

MY DAD (V.O.)
 (filtered through phone)
 Shoot for the moon, Son... even if you miss, you'll land among the stars!

ME (V.O.)
 And that's why I decided to play football for the Washington Redskins...

INSERT - SNAPSHOTS OF ME SIGNALLING, "I'M NUMBER ONE!"

Me (eight years old), wearing Redskins' pajamas.

ME (V.O.) (cont'd)
 ... and design skyscrapers for my own architecture firm.

Me (twelve years old), standing beside a model house I built out of balsa wood.

ME (V.O.) (cont'd)
 ... and represent the United States at the Winter Olympics...

Me (sixteen years old), standing on cross-country skis in a very unflattering, full-length spandex suit.

ME (V.O.) (cont'd)
 ... all while writing, directing,
 and starring in Hollywood films...

INSERT - SNAPSHOT OF ME IN COLLEGE

Me, behind an old film camera, gazing into the distance and pointing at something off-screen like all good directors do.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

I continue talking to someone who remains off-screen.

ME
 Well, as you can see, none of these worked out... but it wasn't until failing at something entirely mundane that I realized the whole "you can do anything you put your mind to" propaganda was just an outright lie.

EXT. "SOMETHING FISHY" RESTAURANT - DAY

The sign reads "Something Fishy: A Restaurant"

ME (V.O.)
 I put my mind to it. I gave it my all. I shot for the moon.
 (pause for effect)
 And failed... at waiting tables!

INT. "SOMETHING FISHY" RESTAURANT - DAY

CARL, the restaurant owner and head chef (50's, Seminole heritage, graying pony-tail) hands me my check over the high counter that separates the servers from the cooks.

CARL
 Sorry, Son. I think it's best for all concerned, y'know?

I nod, wearing a splotchy apron and a baseball cap.

EXT. "SOMETHING FISHY" RESTAURANT - DAY

The glass doors slam shut behind me with a rattle.

ME (V.O.)
 Whatever happened to "the sky's the
 limit?"

I spike my baseball cap into the pavement as the door reopens behind me. With a bad case of hat-head, I look over my shoulder and see Carl in the doorway.

CARL
 Your apron.

ME
 Oh yeah, sorry.

I untie the apron and attempt to disentangle myself.

ME (V.O.)
 Apparently when my DNA was braided together, several important traits were left out, including a few that come in real handy as a waiter... traits like, oh, multi-tasking, good short-term memory, quick decision-making...

I toss the apron to Carl.

CARL
 You can keep the hat.

My hand scoops the hat from the pavement.

INT. MY CAR - DAY

Sitting in the parked car, I exhale and count my tips while wearing the hat, which reads: "Got a taste for Something Fishy?".

ME (V.O.)
 I was such a bad waiter I actually started warning my tables as soon as they sat down.

I shake my head at all the "ones" in my wad of cash.

ME (V.O.) (cont'd)
 I'd be like, "Okay, so here's the deal: I'm not very good at this, okay? So if you start feeling neglected, just flag me down and tell me what you need."

I fold the cash, place it on the passenger seat, and grip the steering wheel with both hands.

I scream, voice cracking, and repeatedly bang the steering wheel hard enough to bruise both palms.

EXT. MY CAR - DAY

The "Something Fishy" sign reflects off the hood of my car, which trembles from all my muffled screaming and banging.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

I bite my lip and stare at the floor.

FEMALE (O.S.)

So what does all this have to do
with your poker career?

My confused face turns toward the off-screen voice.

ME

What? Oh, yeah. Well... after
being politely asked to put in my
resignation at the seafood place, I
began... quote, un-quote...
"looking for a job full-time."

INT. MY LIVING ROOM - DAY

A newspaper lays on the coffee table, opened to the Classified ads.

One by one, my pen crosses out "Help Wanted" ads with a pen.

ME (O.S.)

No, no, no, never, no, no, no...

Four slices of bread sit on one sheet of paper towel.

My knife applies peanut butter to two pieces. Then I squirt concentric circles of honey on the other two.

ME (V.O.)

And that's how I found myself glued
to the couch every day at one in
the afternoon watching reruns of
Celebrity Poker Showdown on Bravo.

I subconsciously bite my lip repeatedly, holding a sandwich in one hand and the remote in the other.

PHIL GORDON (O.S.)
 (from the television)
Bonnie Hunt's got suited connectors. A lot of players really like these cards... and yes, she calls... so we've got three-way action now before the flop.

I take a bite of the sandwich.

ME (V.O.)
 It wasn't long before I was saying things like...

ME
 I could beat that Doogie Howser shmuck any day of the week!

ME (V.O.)
 ... and spending my leftover tip-money on Phil Gordon's "Little Green Book" about poker.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Standing in line, I stare intently at the green cover of Phil Gordon's book. A finger taps me on the shoulder.

I turn to see RON (30-something yuppy, clean-cut, smiley) pointing at my book.

RON
 You like Texas Hold'Em?

ME (V.O.)
 And that's how I met Ron, who asked me to join the weekly game at his house. "Not high stakes," he said. "Just a hundred to buy in."

Ron's mouth lip syncs the words: "Not high stakes. Just a hundred to buy in."

EXT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Ron holds the door for me as we exit the store.

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