

# Holdem's Hold

*Movie Pitch*

*By: Alex Gosselin and Remi Tremblay*

The dark and modern journey of a university student's poker ambitions.



Movie Script – Holdem's Hold

Contact us: [poker.movie.pitch@gmail.com](mailto:poker.movie.pitch@gmail.com)

Website: <http://www.pokermoviepitch.com/>

Building on the increasing worldwide popularity of Texas Holdem, Holdem’s Hold is a fictional work that outlines the arduous journey of a young university student on his rocky road to becoming the one of the best poker players in the world. The story is told from the point of view of Alex through a series of flashbacks while he sits through the ups and downs at the World Series of Poker (WSOP) Main Event.

## **Act 1 – The Early Years**

The movie starts at the MGM Grand Casino 2004 World Series of Poker - Texas Hold’em tournament. At one of the dozens of tables in the casino, Alex Dawson is nervously playing with his chips. This is his first time at the WSOP and he is not sure what to expect. Before the first card is dealt, the players at his table introduce themselves and shake hands. Alex avoids shaking hands, and instead offers a respectful nod. As the players sit and wait for the official start of the tournament, some of them take turns sharing stories about their first poker experiences. After a couple comedic stories, Alex shares his:

### ***Flashback #1: The beginning***

Alex’s journey starts at the University of Victoria UVic, in September 2001. After a wild and fun first month of University, things begin to settle down and his schedule has become more or less mundane. A group of friends decide to start a poker club, playing once a week to fill the time and have some fun. After a couple of weeks things start to get more serious, and the stakes begin to rise as they develop a better understanding of the game, rules and basic strategies. Alex begins to realize that he the innate ability to calculate outs and odds on the fly, but he still can’t turn this talent into a consistent winning streak. While playing for money was fun, Alex also recalls a few late games of strip poker and the first time that he met the love of his life Amber.<sup>1</sup>

The first few days of the tournament are uneventful. Alex is playing well and picking his spots to build his stack. On the third day, some of the younger players at his table start talking about the odds of certain turn and river cards. Alex decides to correct the math of one of the players and explains how his comments mathematically implied that he was holding certain cards (a low pair), and he should thus fold. When the player revealed his hand at the end, all eyes turn to Alex wondering how he was able to deduce the correct hand.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Flashback #2: Math 101***

At the weekly poker game in the fall of 2001, the conversation turns to the huge uptake in online poker. One of Alex’s friends who plays online was accused of being a “Bot” because of his conservative and consistent style of play. The group begins talking about Poker Bots (automated/ programmed computers that play poker online as if they were another human) and discuss if it is even possible to create a poker Bot. The group goes through some of the fundamentals and even toy with the idea of actually building a Poker Bot to win some money. At first it was just talk over a few beers, but Alex sees how it could actually work and lays out a plan that involved pulling on the different skills of the group. Within days they start developing a prototype - separating the work into logical areas. Alex was tasked with the poker math, strategies and decision support engine building upon his math skills and

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<sup>1</sup> **Production Notes:** This is the first time that Alex has met Amber in a social context and losing to her at strip poker starts an ongoing infatuation with her for the remainder of the school year. The opening of the film should also incorporate an opening internal monologue from Alex commenting on what he has learned on his arduous journey. This will be used to foreshadow parts of the upcoming story and whet the appetite of the audience.

<sup>2</sup> **Production Notes:** As Alex calculates the odds the overlay of stats should be visually imposed on the picture to highlight the mental math that Alex is performing. It will be important to outline the logic behind the statements so that the inexperienced players can follow the logic being laid out. This sequence should take no more than 5 minutes of screen time.

poker strategy. Praxis (the poker bot) was completed before Christmas just prior to everyone leaving for the Christmas break.<sup>3</sup>

The third day of the tournament continues on and the players head out for the last break of the day. Alex is seen sitting alone in the players lounge as various players mingle around talking about “bad beats”. Alex knows a few things about bad beats, and he knows that they do not always happen at the poker table<sup>4</sup>. He massages his right hand where his two middle fingers used to be, he thinks back to the rocky road that brought him to this point.

### ***Flashback #3: Profiting no money***

Praxis was ready to go, but no one wanted to risk getting caught using it. Alex believed in the idea so much that he began to skip his courses to devote his time to perfecting the decision support engine. Some of the group try to reason with him to go back to class, but Alex was obsessed with the idea. His obsession with perfecting Praxis pushed many of the original group further away, except Amber who continued to try and reason with him. Alex decides that since he is behind in school, that it would be best to withdraw before he started failing. He takes the refund from his tuition to acquire the needed computers and infrastructure for Praxis to run (servers hosted outside of the country to mask the traceability of Praxis). 100 Praxii were released into the online poker site<sup>5</sup> with unexpected results; 370K in revenue across the 100 accounts was generated over the first week. This created a new problem as generating this amount of winnings in a short amount of time would certainly raise attention. Getting the money out proves to be more difficult than anticipated, as this requires a 100 different credit cards, one for each account. Alex managed to get some of the money out and begins romancing Amber. However, the winnings keep piling up. After 1 month the 100 accounts have over 1 Million in winnings. After discussing the issue with Amber, Alex decides to turn off Praxis and forget about the money to focus on their relationship. Although he has good intentions, he also knows that 1M would set them up for life. Alex continues to think about different ways to get the money out. After some scheming he develops a plan that seems to be the least risky way to acquire the money.<sup>6</sup>

## **Act 2 – Hard Lessons**

The last hand of the third day is played, and the tournament stops until the next afternoon. Alex ends up back at bar in the players lounge where he opens his wallet and begins looking at photos of Amber. Just then Alex catches a glimpse of himself on the TV, featuring a large pot that he had taken down earlier that day. Alex takes note of the scar on his face and subconsciously begins to run his fingers to sooth an itch on his cheek.

### ***Flashback #4 Greed backfires***

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<sup>3</sup> **Production Notes:** During the late nights and tribulations of making of constructing “Praxis” the love interest unfolds between Alex Dawson and Amber Cope. In the creation of “Praxis” some issues that pose problems include account creation, credit card links, parsing of images, poker stats, mouse moment to overcome detection, random response times for sending bets to the online site. In order to “lead” the group it will be important that we establish that Alex is charismatic during the first two flashbacks. It will also be important to establish that Alex is a bit of a risk taker and likes to work around the edges. This could potentially be accomplished by having Alex “smuggle” Amber and a couple of his other friends into an event like a concert or bar which could be seeded as part of the sequence in flashback #1.

<sup>4</sup> **Production Notes:** This could be an internal monologue by Alex as he things about the bad beats that he has encountered.

<sup>5</sup> **Production Notes:** The account creation can be done using 100 different accounts: which was easily completed with 100 different e-mail addresses, however to get the money out you would also need 100 different credit cards. The trick is to not link the accounts and money back to Alex. Even dumping funds to one account would raise suspicions.

<sup>6</sup> **Production Note:** The obsession with the decision support engine can be also used to illustrate tendencies towards an addiction as Alex becomes consumed and focused. Possible ideas to extract the money from the online accounts should be presented to the audience outlining the potential challenges then eliminate them from being enacted, much the same way an analysis of how to rob a bank or steal an object is shown to the audience. This may allow for the interjection of some humour.

Alex’s had decided that the best way to retrieve his poker winnings from the online gaming site was to blackmail the company. Alex figured that he could leverage his ability to sell his story (to CBC, CNN,) outlining how he generated his cheated winnings using Praxis. This intern would ruin the online poker site creating a major consumer scare. Alex knows that online poker is a highly competitive industry which is quickly expanding, and any loss in the client base at this point would be devastating to a business. Alex believed that by only asking for 1/2 the money it would leave both parties with a profit, after all, the money came from other online gamblers. Given his willingness to share the profits, Alex was pretty confident he could pull this off. However, as Alex would soon find out there was one major hiccup, the online poker company was a shell corporation being run by the Hells Angles as a means of laundering money; something that Alex figured out only once it was too late. During the process of attempting to extract the money, Alex is chased through town on his motorcycle by a group of bikers in a daring escape that ultimately fails; the Hells Angels do not like to share or being blackmailed. Alex is brutally beaten leaving him with the scar on his face. Upon regaining consciousness, Alex is threatened by promises of physical assault on his family and friends.<sup>7</sup>

Day #4 starts and the first cards are shuffled and dealt. One of the players talks about the psychological game that plays out at the poker table. He states that some poker players like Phil Helmuth can play cards blindly - being able to make decisions strictly based on other players’ expressions and betting patterns. Alex enters into a side bet with one of the players at his table, as he proves his ability to also derive cards based on betting style and expression. This is an impressive task that draws the attention of everyone at the table. Alex’s only comment on the matter was, “Although a profitable skill, it cost me too much once”<sup>8</sup>:

#### ***Flashback #5: People skills***

While recovering from his earlier run in with the Hells Angels, Alex gets into a large fight with Amber about trying to recover the money. Amber scolds Alex for his foolishness, but can not deny his intentions. As with most young couples, they forgive each other quickly. They spend the night together, but the next day they are both awakened by pounding on the door. Alex is presented with a court order from the lawyers of the online company. Alex is charged with attempted blackmail and a “Gag order” is put into effect. Both his and Amber’s computers are seized with enough evidence on the development of Praxis to put them both away. The arrest was a total surprise at the time as the Hell’s Angels had already beaten any ideas of going public out of Alex’s head. Alex quickly decides to accept full responsibility for the development of Praxis in order to protect Amber and his friends. Within a month Alex is sentenced to prison for 2 years.<sup>9</sup>

While in prison Alex befriends a fellow poker player who takes him under his wing. Alex begins to learn that poker is more than numbers, and that the “human”/psychology side of poker is just as important. This older/respected inmate (potentially played by Doyle Brunson – poker pro and legend) begins schooling Alex on many tricks of the trade. After a few weeks Alex is getting noticeably better at reading people. This combined with his skill in math means that Alex starts winning much more often than he loses. Alex is thought of as being a cheater because of his winning ways and is eventually beaten up for it. Alex learns that knowing when to throw a pot is as important as winning the hand.

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<sup>7</sup> **Production Note:** This works well as the Hells Angels are a major bike gang in Quebec and The [Kahnawake](#) Gaming Commission is an organisation that licenses a large number of [online casinos](#) and [online poker](#) rooms.<sup>[1]</sup> It was established in 1996<sup>[2]</sup> and is based in [Kahnawake 14, Quebec](#).

<sup>8</sup> **Production Notes:** Much like Alex calculates the odds and the audiences sees overlaying stats, a similar visual should showcase how he reads his opponent(s), highlighting twitching eyebrows, moving hands or jumping legs while labelling them appropriately (nervous, bluffing, scare, thinking...).

<sup>9</sup> **Production Notes:** The sophisticated side of the Hell's Angels organization should be highlighted. Although they have the rough and tumble biker image, they also should be shown as having corporate swagger and clout. Even though the Lawyers wear suits, they are just as ruthless as their brethren.

Approximately five months into his sentence Alex receives a letter from Amber telling him that he will be a father. Amber is heartbroken and her parents don't want her to have anything to do with Alex, so they have asked her to come live with them. Alex begins to conjure up a scheme to get out earlier which involves taking money off other prisoners during their poker games as funds to bribe the Warden for an early release date and "Good behaviour" status. He seeks out the help of his mentor, Doyle to help him raise the money. Doyle introduces Alex to the "big game" with the various crime lords within the prison. During this game Alex uses both his math and people skills to take down pot after pot. Allegations of cheating ensue, and Doyle tries to come to Alex's rescue. The leader of the Diablo's becomes furious and accuses Doyle of signalling Alex about his cards. Doyle protests and gets shanked. Alex has his arm pinned to the table while one inmate takes out a knife and says "You tried to take my money cheater, now I take your fingers so that the world knows what you are". Alex loses his two middle fingers on his right hand before the game/fight is broken up by the guards. Both Alex and Doyle are rushed to the infirmary. On his last breath Doyle tells Alex the most important lesson that he has learned. (the audience cannot hear what Doyle's says at this point).<sup>10</sup>

### ACT 3 – Poker Pays

Alex continues his run in the 2004 WSOP knocking out one player after another. You can see that the other players are becoming weary of Alex, and begin folding more often in H2H (head-to-head) situations. Alex finally knocks out the poker player which he had debated stats with earlier. The game carries on and Alex sees people walking by in the background. He sees a father and his daughter walking together, seemingly happy and care free...

#### ***Flashback #6: Second Chance***

After being released from prison (two years following his arrest) Alex is desperate to see Amber and his new born daughter. Having no money and no place to stay, Alex decides to move back home. His Mother and Father are still unhappy with him for his run in with the Hell's Angels, and for the granddaughter that they have yet to see. Alex makes a solemn promise to them to never play poker again. Alex tries to contact Amber, but he cannot get in touch with her. He drives to the West Coast, (Comox) to connect with Amber at her parent's house. When he arrives Alex is informed that Amber is at the hospital with his daughter Emma who is very sick with severe intestinal complications. Unfortunately, Emma's situation is even worse than expected as she is not responding well to local treatment options. She needs an intestinal transplant soon, but is unable to gain priority status on the waiting list in Canada<sup>11</sup>.

Alex makes his way to the hospital. He is both excited to meet his daughter Emma, but sad because of the situation she is in. He offers to do what he can, and Amber informs him that unless he can figure out a way to bump-her up the waiting list, she has little chance of surviving. Alex and Amber make contact with old friends from university that are working with some medical researchers (introduced in Flashback #1). They advise Alex and Amber that their best bet is to try and contact Dr. Gatty who is evaluating new instestinal transplant procedures at the Children's hospital in Seattle. A few days and a

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<sup>10</sup> **Production Notes:** The ability to read and manipulate other players can also be linked to different demographics and personalities (prisoners / guards). The warden will need to be introduced during this scenario and shown as corruptible, (i.e. taking an envelope from a guard which was fed to him by a prisoner) this process can be outlined through the proper narration outlining the prison groups and leaders which will be necessary to set the context for the "big game". The letter from Amber must be compelling as it provides the motivation for Alex at this point in the story.

<sup>11</sup> **Production Notes:** The children's hospital in Seattle exists and people have to leave for the hospital within 24 hours <http://www.seattlechildrens.org/clinics-programs/transplant/intestine/preparing-and-waiting-for-an-intestine-transplant/>

few calls later, their daughter was accepted onto the waiting list conditional on a full payment of 750K before the operation.<sup>12</sup>

With a criminal record and little hope of raising the money in time, Alex decides that the only skills he can draw on are his poker skills. Alex sets his aim on the 2004 WSOP less than two weeks away. He figures that the only way to secure a seat in the poker tournament is to win a last minute entry. Having tried to win a few satellite entries unsuccessfully, he runs out of time and opportunities. His last opportunity is quickly approaching and he decides to update and redeploy the Praxis (a copy he had hidden in an old toy chest) to help gain him a seat in the WSOP. One small problem though, the Hells Angels have been waiting for the return of Praxis. Although Alex assumes that his newly re-built code went un-detected, he is sorely mistaken.<sup>13</sup>

Only 14 players are left, and 2 hours remain to the end of the day. Alex receives an urgent call from Amber letting him know that a suitable donor for the transplant has been found. However, they need the remaining 375K within the next 24 hours or they will lose their opportunity. Alex knows that this game will be carried over to the next day if he continues to play. Alex also knows that finishing in 12th place will secure enough funds (373K) for the operation; he forces 2 players all-in quickly and starts dumping chips to finish the game and collect his winnings as soon as possible. He is taken out on a 3-8 off suit; minutes before the last cards of the day are dealt, raising suspicions among the rest of the players. Alex, really doesn't care as he has secured the money for the operation. He flies directly to Seattle to meet Amber and Emma before the operation. After a few scary nights of waiting by his daughter's beside, she finally awakes with a smile and a hug. Something long awaited by Alex. That same day, Alex promises everyone that he is done gambling for good (to everyone's relief). He re-asserts his promises many times and too many people... It's genuine and the end of a chapter of Alex's life.

### ***Flash-forward #7: Happy times***

At this point, we see the lives of Amber, Alex and his daughter flash by demonstrating the happiest of families and the best of times. 2 years pass full of love, life and family. It shows them moving into a home, starting school, celebrating Christmas, Halloween, getting married, birth days, Emma growing up. It is the best of time s<sup>14</sup>

## **Act 4 – Poker Punishes**

Every day since bailing out of the poker tournament in 12th place Alex has wondered if he could have went all the way. It has been 2 years since the operation and 2 years since Alex had played poker in a competitive tournament. He enjoyed his day job selling cars, and the skill of being able to read people that he developed while playing had made him one of the top sales people in the country. Alex continued to play for fun (not telling Amber of course) in a weekly dealership game easily taking money off those who he didn't like and throwing a pot or two the guys he liked. He never spoke of his previous experiences, but he can't stop wondering if he could have won the WSOP. After cleaning up at his weekly game and taking the pink slip from one cocky rival, Alex starts obsessing about what could have been.

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<sup>12</sup> **Production Notes:** Both sides of the family did not have enough money put-together to pay for the operation, but both sets of parents have enough credit, cash and assets for the down payment (50%). All that was missing was 375K that no one could muster ...

<sup>13</sup> **Production Notes:** During Alex's use of the newly re-built code, there is scene where the audience sees the Hell's as having detected the return of Praxis and they clearly let Alex proceed. At this point the Hell's do nothing more and are seemingly pleased which should leave the audience somewhat perplexed.

<sup>14</sup> **Production Notes:** The Flash Forward should be done in a montage like the scenes for raging bull, as happy times are nice but not really interesting from a story perspective. The audience should be led to believe that the movie has come to an end, a happy ending. However this is not the case and the story continues in real time at an up-beat pace.

One day while watching TV Alex catches a glimpse of the WSOP (2006) and notices that the player who was knocked out in 12th place made over 1.2M! Alex continues to have a series of recurring dreams and he becomes obsessed with poker and thinking about how he could have won the tournament if it were not for ... For a month he continues to have the same dream, taking over his thoughts on daily basis. Knowing that he can get his hands on the money and it would not be immediately missed, he raids Emma's college savings account and pays his way into the 2007 WSOP (not telling Amber of course). He waits until the middle of the night the day before the tournament to leave, knowing that Amber would not support his decision or understand.

He tries to sneak out but Amber catches him. Alex tells Amber that he has paid for his entry into the WSOP and that she needs to understand that he was born for this. He tells her that he has been playing behind her back in a weekly game for the past 2 years and he hasn't gone crazy or gambled away the house. Amber reminds Alex of the many bad things poker brought to him and his family, and that he "swore on his daughter's life that he would never play again."

They fight loudly waking Emma and Amber reminds him of his promises and his responsibilities at home. Alex tries to convince her that he will win it all, but the weight of his betrayal overwhelms Amber. She tells Alex to leave and not to come back! Alex reluctantly heads downstairs and gets into the taxi cab. He sheds a man tear from his left eye, but he is convinced that she will understand and forgive him once he wins it all.<sup>15</sup>

Alex arrives in Vegas and goes to check into the Rio Hotel. As he checks in he is advised that his room has been "comped". Alex cracks a little smile knowing that his reputation has preceded him, and accepts the room. Little does he know that by using his credit card to cover the security deposit that the Hell's Angels are made aware of Alex's presence in Vegas.

### ***Flashback #8: Hell's Investment***

We flash back to the time (2 years ago) when Alex was racing to the Vegas airport to join Amber and Emma in Seattle. As he leaves the hotel, a small group of Hell's Angels are seen following him. At the airport, Alex waits in line to check his luggage for the flight, but never notices them. The bikers are seen in the background seemingly frustrated. They make a confirmation call - "What do you want us to do, boss?" The only thing we can hear is the phone answering "There is no money to be made here; we will keep tracking our investment from this end. Don't let him see you... ". The call ends.<sup>16</sup>

The 2007 WSOP tournament starts off and the first few days fly by quickly. Alex seems to take down one large pot after another almost effortlessly. On the third day Alex is receives an e-mail from Amber saying she has filed for divorce and that she is seeking sole custody of Emma. Although Amber is not sure, she feels like she is being watched. Alex is shocked, and at the end of the day he decides to phone Amber to talk. No-one answers.

The next morning back at the table, Alex is out of focus. He is second guessing every decision, and playing like a newbie ... He can't seem to focus on the cards and makes a bunch of costly mental errors. At the end of the 4th day he has only a fraction of his chips left. Alex walks back to the room, thinking about what he has done, wondering if he made the right choice in entering the tournament. As he walks out of the elevator, looking for his key card, a large bat swings across the corridor (almost in slow motion) and knocks Alex back

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<sup>15</sup> **Production Note:** Depending on the degree to fury that Amber needs to feel we could interject a female co-worker that is involved in the poker game at the dealership. Amber could have noticed in the past that she was flirting with Alex and that they had become close fiends (i.e. work wife). If Alex could lie about playing poker secretly for the past five years, what else (or who) was he doing those late nights at the dealership.

<sup>16</sup> **Production note:** The flashback is meant to be mysterious as no one knows what Hell's want with Alex. They are obviously following him, and that's all the audiences' needs to know at this point.

and onto the floor. A big greasy man with a Santa beard, bends over Alex (same guy from the flashback #8) exposing the Hell Angles insignia on his vest and says "We made you, you're our poker bitch now".

Alex passes out temporarily. As he begins regaining consciousness, the bikers drag him down the hallway to his room. A well dress man comes out of a dark corner of the room and explains to Alex that they knew he used Praxis in 2004 to win his seat into the WSOP. He explains that he let him go with the winnings because they knew that he would not be satisfied with a 12<sup>th</sup> place finish. They also knew that Alex had the potential to go all the way. The well dressed man goes on to explain how they have been grooming Alex for longer than he could have ever guessed...

### **Flashback #9: Playing the player**

This flashback is divided in into multiple sub-parts. It shows how and when the Hell's Angels have been playing with Alex's life:

1. (relates to flashback 4) Although the Hell’s Angels had scared Alex into silence, they recognized the skill that was used in developing the Praxis decision support engine. Realizing that Alex has a mathematical gift and a keen interest in poker, they develop a plan to make him a better poker player through his forced development in prison.
2. (relates to flashback 5) They strategically worked with Doyle in jail to have him teach him the skills he needed to become a champion.
3. (relates to flashback 5) We see how the Diablos gang are affiliated with the Hells Angels. They are also part of plan to teach what Alex he was missing while creating the "big game" for him to train/learn to. The Diablo’s were instructed to kill of Doyle, making sure that no evidence of his training would be revealed.
4. (relates to flash-forward 7) They show how they have been secretly monitoring his movements for years through his credit card and travel activities.
5. (relates to flashback 8) 2 years ago the plan was to take Alex's money after he won the tournament. However, his quick departure in 12th place didn't give the Hells the winnings they wanted. They also knew that if his daughter would survive they could use his family as leverage. They were planning on pushing him sooner, but the prize money at the WSOP just kept growing. Since Alex came back on his own volition, it was time to collect.<sup>17</sup>

They tell Alex that since he arrived in Vegas, they have started monitoring his family. They show Alex a video taken of Amber and his daughter leaving the house that very afternoon. Alex comes to quickly realize the severity of the situation. They tell him the plan is for him to win a spot in the "Final Table" (the last 9 players in the tournament). They have placed a handsome wager of 1 million on him making the final table; a bet at this point that pays 59:1 given his diminished chip count. They tell Alex he can keep the tournament winnings as motivation, but if he fails he would loose his family for good.<sup>18</sup>

Another day goes by and Alex continues his journey towards the November Nine. Alex regains his focus with the new pressure applied by the Hells Angels and the physical reminder of the pain and bruising that the baseball bat to the ribs has let. This time everything is even more stressful than before, and the stakes are higher then ever.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> **Production Notes:** It's important that the audience sees how all these flashback relate to this point in the story.

<sup>18</sup> **Production Notes:** Again, the audience is shown how sophisticated the Hell's are while being very brutal and well connected to the old Vegas mobs. Clearly this was a well thought out plan by the Hell's and Alex has been but a mere pawn in the patient game that the Hells Angels have been playing.

<sup>19</sup> **Production Notes:** All the poker players that get introduced in the games could be actual poker players. It would be great for movie marketing and realism where it is most likely that poker players would jump on the opportunity of a small guest role.

Alex continues to dominate play, taking out player after player. Being a short stack early on in the tournament has hurt him in terms of his overall chip count, but he is making up ground quickly. The field is reduced to the final two tables and Alex is gaining even more confidence and chips. As the day progresses 3 players at his table and knocked out and four are eliminated at the other table.

As he works his way towards the final table Alex lucks out cracking pocket aces. He makes an aggressive move and is called by a weaker (mentally and mathematically) opponent who has cracked kings. With the pressure to make the final table Alex becomes over committed to the pot and finds himself “all in”. The flop sees the first King drop, and the river brings the fourth King sealing Alex’s fate. Alex sits at the table in disbelief that he has been knocked out in 10<sup>th</sup> place. He eventually shakes hands (with his three fingered hand) and walks away. As he leaves the poker room the Hell’s Angels are quick to follow him up to his suite. The million dollars that they lost on him, and the time they had put into his education are no laughing matter. They are seriously pissed and tell him that his family is going to have to pay the price. They put a fellow biker in Comox on speakerphone and tell him that he needs to “acquire the package”. Alex hears the door being broken down and Amber’s screams followed by two shots. They tell him that his daughter will continue to live but, only if he performs better at the next tournament.<sup>20</sup>

Alex can’t believe that Amber is gone, and that life as he has known it has come to an end. In a rage of fury he attacks the greasy bearded Santa biker. He manages to wrestle the gun out of the biker’s hand and holds it to the biker’s temple. As they look at Alex he thinks back:

#### ***Flashback #10: Universal Truths***

Alex thinks back to his mentor Doyle’s dying words “In poker when you’re short of chips and time, you need to make your move. Pick the opportune moment and go all-in ... because it is the only move you have left... Your only way out”

Alex looks the man in the suit in the eye; he cracks a smile. He says “OK, you called my bluff your wife is still alive.” Alex can’t believe it and demands proof. He hears Amber scream out once more. The man in the suit says “If you want to keep her alive, you better give me that gun.”

Alex lowers the gun from the biker’s temple. As he goes to hand the gun to the man in the suit, he takes a step backwards.<sup>21</sup> Alex analyzes the situation for a moment remembering the words of Doyle. He starts calculating what it would take to get out of this situation and save his family. Alex quickly deduces that the only way he will be able to get out of the grasp of the Hell’s Angels and keep his family safe, is to go All In. Alex says “Poker is just like life. Sometimes you are short stacked and you don’t have the cards. You need to pick the right moment and go All In!” Alex puts the gun to his temple and pulls the trigger. The movie fades to black.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> **Production Note:** Although it seems like Amber is killed having only heard the shots, Amber could technically still be alive.

<sup>21</sup> **Production Note:** At this point you can see Alex performing mental calculations in his head similar to the poker odds calculations earlier in the movie. However, this time he is figuring out what is best course of action is. After calculating the odds there is a 98% probability that if he kills himself that the Hell’s Angels will leave his family alone as they would lose their investment and his family could not be used as leverage.

<sup>22</sup> **Production Note:** Depending on the production time and value invested the movie can flash forward to the 15 years in the future with Alex’s daughter playing poker with a group of friends and the Hells angels monitoring her play implying a potential sequel.