

POKER QUEENS

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FADE IN:

INT. CASINO POKER ROOM - DAY

NICKI ANDERSON (32) is standing in a casino at a poker table. She's petite and curvy with snark to match. She's teaching an assortment of eight adults how to play poker. Among the assembled around the table are an ELDERLY WOMAN and a young hipster named JASON. Nicki's frustration is showing as she continues to teach the players the game. She is dealing cards.

NICKI
(to Elderly Woman)
You need to post your big blind.

ELDERLY WOMAN
(confused)
Why is that, again?

NICKI
Because it's the rule. It's a forced
bet to get the action started.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Oh my. Okay.

She slowly puts out some chips.

NICKI
No. You have too many. Just one
hundred.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Which is one hundred, again?

NICKI
Again, one hundred are the black
ones. That say "one hundred" on
them.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Oh. Here you go.

Nicki deals out the cards. Jason, next to the Elderly Woman, confidently shoves his chips out in front of him.

JASON
All in.

NICKI

Are you sure you want to do that? I know this is a free lesson and all, but . . .

JASON

All in.

Nicki sighs. The rest of the players fold quickly except the Elderly Woman.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Oh, dear. I'm not sure what to do.

NICKI

Remember, what you learned about hand strength. If you have a good hand and think it's better than his, you may want to call him. Or fold. Either way, it's a free game, we're just learning, and the tournament starts in five minutes, so let's get a move on, sister.

ELDERLY WOMAN

So much pressure. Okay. I'm all-in, too.

Elderly Woman shoves her chips into the middle of the table. Jason smirks.

NICKI

Flip 'em up. Whatcha got?

ELDERLY WOMAN

Do I have to?

NICKI

That's kind of the point.

Jason confidently flips over a seven and a two.

JASON

Beat that!

NICKI

That's like the worst starting hand. Were you even paying attention?

Jason eyes Nicki up and down.

JASON

Oh yeah.

NICKI
 Okay, Texas Dolly. Way to bluff
 there.
 (turns to Elderly
 Woman)
 Ma'am?

Elderly Woman flips over her cards showing two kings. Nicki smiles.

ELDERLY WOMAN
 Is that good?

NICKI
 You've got him dominated, about 85
 percent.

ELDERLY WOMAN
 (excited)
 Oooh. I like to dominate!

NICKI
 (turns to Jason)
 Looks like you picked a bad time to
 bluff.

Nicki deals the flop of three cards. None match the
 player's hands.

NICKI (cont'd)
 No help. Kings are still good.

Nicki deals the turn card. The card is a seven.

NICKI (cont'd)
 Well, my friend, you're still alive.
 You picked up five outs. Five cards
 to give you the win. You need a
 seven or a deuce.

Nicki deals the last card. The card is a two. Jason raises
 his arms and yells.

JASON
 Woo Hoo! Take that bitches!

NICKI
 And with that, lesson over. See you
 guys in the tournament. Good luck.

The rest of the players get up and begin to exit. Elderly
 Woman walks over to Nicki and talks to her in a hushed
 voice.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Thanks, dear. I meant what I said about liking to dominate. Perhaps you'd like to join me and my boyfriend, later?

Elderly Woman points out an elderly man standing to the side, smiling.

ELDERLY WOMAN (cont'd)

Our RV is parked in the lot outside.

NICKI

Ummm. Perhaps another time.

A voice over the loudspeaker announces the start of the tournament.

NICKI (cont'd)

Okay now. Time's up. Gotta go. Thanks.

Nicki hastily leaves. Elderly Woman spots Jason entering the tournament area and quickly walks toward him, yelling.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Hey! Seven-two. Wait up.

INT. CASINO POKER ROOM - DAY, A SHORT TIME LATER

Nicki has been playing the tournament for several hours. She has a short stack of chips in front of her. She looks up at the TV overhead displaying the tournament status.

NICKI

(to herself,
sighing)

Bubble time. One more player out and I'm in the money.

The game continues. Nicki is dealt a pair of fives. A PLAYER to her left shoves his chips forward.

PLAYER

All In.

TOM

We have an All-In on table seven.

The other players fold and it now is Nicki's turn. Nicki hesitates, then throws her hand into the pile.

NICKI

Nice move.

The other player smiles. Tom continues dealing. Nicki looks at the status board again, and sees that it has changed. There are now two less players. Nicki smiles.

INT. CASINO POKER ROOM - DAY, A SHORT TIME LATER

Nicki continues playing. Her chip stack is considerably larger. A player goes out at her table and rises to leave. Tom, the dealer turns around and shouts to the Tournament Director.

TOM

Six out on table seven.

The tournament director nods and walks over to another table where there are four players. He speaks to them and they get up. He directs each of them to different tables. Nicki looks up to see Jason approaching, his hands overflowing with chips, smiling.

JASON

Hey everybody.
(to Nicki)
Hey, babe!

Nicki glares at Jason. As he sits down, chips spill out onto the table.

JASON (cont'd)

Sorry. Just too many of them. Got lucky, I guess.

INT. CASINO POKER ROOM - DAY, A SHORT TIME LATER

Nicki continues playing. Jason has a huge stack of chips. He and Nicki are facing off on a hand. It's Nicki's turn.

NICKI

I raise. Twelve hundred.

Other players fold, except Jason.

JASON

I call.

The dealer deals the cards. On the board are a ten of hearts, a seven of clubs, and a two of diamonds. Jason shoves his chips into the pot.

JASON (cont'd)

All in.

TOM

We have an All-In on table seven.

Nicki looks at him, and he gives her a smug look. Nicki looks at her hand, a pair of queens.

NICKI

No way.

Nicki looks at the status board, then back at her hand.

JASON

I call time.

The other players let out sounds of disapproval.

NICKI

Thanks douche. That was like, less than a minute.

The dealer calls the TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR over.

TOM

Player six called time.

TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR

You have one minute. After fifty seconds I will count down the last ten seconds. Time starts now.

Nicki stares down Jason. He smirks at her. Nicki looks at her cards again. She continues to ponder what to do.

TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR (cont'd)

Ten seconds. Nine. Eight.

NICKI

I call.

Nicki flips up her cards. Jason sees them and is ecstatic.

JASON

Four tits! Nice hand.

Jason flips over his cards, a seven and two. The dealer deals the last two cards, of no help to Nicki and Jason wins the pot, scooping up the chips.

NICKI

(groans)

I knew it. Why would you call me pre-flop with seven deuce off?

JASON

Fave hand, babe!

NICKI

Fave? I thought you just started playing?

JASON

Here. Just started here. Been playing online since the sixth grade, babe. Thanks for the lessons.

TOM

Two out on table seven.

Nicki gets out of her seat and makes her way to the tournament desk. They hand her a receipt and she walks over to the casino cage. She hands her receipt to the CASHIER.

CASHIER

(smiling)

Congratulations. That's twelve hundred and fifty. Here's a tax form for you to fill out.

The cashier slides a form over to Nicki. Nicki grabs a pen and starts to fill it out.

CASHIER (cont'd)

I'll need your ID. Do you want cash or a check?

NICKI

I'd better get a check.

CASHIER

Just a moment.

The cashier types into her computer. She turns around and walks over to a printer. A handsome man, RYAN, about the same age as Nicki approaches the teller window with a receipt in his hand.

RYAN

Did you cash?

NICKI

Yep. 19th. Twelve hundred and fifty.
You?

RYAN

20th. A grand.

NICKI

Looks like I beat you. Hey, a win is
a win.

(smiles)

So. You staying here?

RYAN

Not tonight. At least not yet.

INT. CASINO HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT, A SHORT TIME LATER

Nicki and Ryan come sprawling into Nicki's hotel room in each others arms, kissing, and hurriedly removing clothes. Nicki breaks their embrace.

NICKI

Wait. Wait.

Nicki grabs a bag by the bed. She pulls out a vibrator and tosses it aside. She finds a condom package, and holds it up, smiling.

NICKI (cont'd)

Ready to rock?

INT. CASINO HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT, A SHORT TIME LATER

Nicki and Ryan are on the bed, sheets pulled down. Nicki and Ryan are heavy into their foreplay, making out. Nicki is enjoying herself.

NICKI

Oh yeah. That's it, sweetie. Just
give me a sec.

Nicki reaches over to the nightstand to grab a condom.

RYAN

You're so hot. So sexy.

NICKI

Keep talking.

RYAN

I'm so glad we got together. I don't meet too many hot gals on the circuit.

NICKI

What do you mean? Plenty of us. I've counted.

RYAN

It's just, you know. Not many women have the skills.

NICKI

For what? Fucking or poker?

RYAN

Yes. I mean . . .

NICKI

What exactly do you mean? Don't think we can beat your ass in poker? I certainly did.

RYAN

I just. You don't have-

NICKI

Have what? Use your words big boy.

RYAN

It's just ... everyone knows women aren't aggressive enough. They don't know how to go for the kill.

Nicki seethes. She holds up the condom and flicks it into the trash.

NICKI

Looks like we're both out of luck tonight.

RYAN

(conciliatory)

Why do you have to be so difficult, babe?

NICKI

Babe? Why is that becoming a trigger word for me? I think it's time for you to go.

Nicki hops off the bed and motions for Ryan to leave. She trips over her bag and out spills a variety of sex toys and condoms onto the bed. Ryan laughs which only adds to Nicki's annoyance.

NICKI (cont'd)

Funny huh? Look, I've had a shitty day. I taught a bunch of clueless newbies how to play, only to have the class asshole beat me in a tournament where I should have made final table. The only thing I got for my efforts was thirteen hundred bucks and this "luxury suite" overlooking the parking lot.

Nicki starts to stuff the items back into her bag, but when she grabs the vibrator it turns on and starts gyrating. Embarrassed, Nicki quickly shuts it off and lays it on the bed.

NICKI (cont'd)

And then I meet this cute guy who I immediately offer to pound the living shit out of me and he turns out to be a shitty, sexist jerk. What a surprise. Jesus, what is wrong with people?

Ryan remains silent. Nicki fumes.

NICKI (cont'd)

Tell you what.

Nicki picks up the vibrator, turns it on, and points it like a weapon.

NICKI (cont'd)

OUT!

Sound of door slamming shut as Ryan hastily exits. Nicki walks over to to hotel window and looks out over the parking lot. She sees an RV with Elderly Woman and her husband with drinks in their hand, embracing Jason. Elderly Woman grabs Jason by the crotch and escorts him into the RV. Nicki sighs.

Nicki walks back to the bed and sits down. She grabs the TV remote and turns on the television. The movie "Castaway" is playing. She picks up the vibrator, and speaks to it.

NICKI (cont'd)
 Looks like just you and me again,
 George Screw-Me. If I were alone on
 a desert island, I'd pick you over
 everyone else.
 (looks over at the
 TV)
 Holy shit! I just realized. Tom
 Hanks and Wilson were fuck buddies.
 That movie makes so much more sense,
 now.

INT. NICKI AND ASHLEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Nicki opens the door to the house she shares with her sister
 ASHLEY (27). She hauls in her luggage and looks around.

NICKI
 (yelling)
 Ash? You home?

BRAYDEN (5) comes bounding into the room and runs to Nicki,
 excited.

BRAYDEN
 Auntie Nickel!

Brayden hugs Nicki around the ankles. She pulls him and her
 luggage toward the sofa and sits down.

NICKI
 How's my boyfriend? Kissy?

Nicki offers Brayden her cheek and he kisses it.

NICKI (cont'd)
 Still the best. You will always be
 my boyfriend.

Ashley enters the room. She looks frazzled, with her
 strawberry blond hair pulled back in a tight bun, dressed in
 sweats and a t-shirt.

ASHLEY
 Let's not corrupt your nephew sis.

NICKI
 You have a dirty mind, Ash.

BRAYDEN
 Did you bring me a present?

NICKI

Of course.

As Ashley looks disapprovingly, Nicki grabs her bag, unzips it, and rummages through it. She briefly picks up her vibrator, and as Ashley gasps, quickly hides it back in the bag. She pulls out a deck of cards.

NICKI (cont'd)

Here. Genuine casino cards. Have fun.

BRAYDEN

Thanks, Auntie Nickel.

Brayden runs off, exiting the room.

NICKI

Nickel. That's about what I cashed.

ASHLEY

Really?

NICKI

Not much more. Thirteen fifty. Here's the check.

ASHLEY

Good timing. Rent's due.

NICKI

No luck on the job front?

ASHLEY

Just temp jobs. Now that tax season is over, even those are drying up. Plenty of jobs for CPAs, not as many for bookkeepers. Not anywhere I can make enough to afford daycare for Brayden.

NICKI

You'll find something. And between me and Aunt Kate, we'll take care of our little guy.

ASHLEY

Thanks. I need to get something soon.

NICKI

You will. You should start something. You've got great ideas.

ASHLEY

Great ideas take money. Got any?

NICKI

Working on it. Some day, Main Event Final Table. I promised Mom I would take care of you and Brayden.

ASHLEY

And she made me promise I'd take care of you.

NICKI/ASHLEY

Bitch.

Both laugh.

NICKI

Oh, by the way, I'll need six twenty five of that.

ASHLEY

What? What for?

NICKI

For BC's cut. He staked me for half.

ASHLEY

(sighs)

Nick. We talked about this before. I can't deduct that as an expense. You'll be in the hole with taxes. Again. Do you want another audit? You're already on a payment plan.

NICKI

I'm sorry. I just didn't have the cash.

ASHLEY

Well, we're just going to need to get BC to fill out a W-9.

NICKI

Good luck with that. You can ask him tonight. He'll be playing with us.

Nicki gets up and starts to go upstairs.

NICKI (cont'd)

I've got to get a quick shower, my shift is in a half hour.

ASHLEY
What about sleep?

NICKI
(yelling on the way
up the stairs)
On the job, as usual.

INT. MIKE AND MARIE'S BAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Ashley enters the run-down dive bar and sees Nicki waiting tables. Nicki waves to her and motions her to the bar. Ashley takes a seat at the bar and MIKE (60s) the owner, is behind the bar talking to one of the regular patrons. Mike is gravelly voiced and barrel-chested. He's wearing a well-worn Minnesota North Stars hockey jersey. He sees her, smiles, and comes over to her.

MIKE
Hey sweetie. Waiting for your
sister? She's almost off.

ASHLEY
Yeah. How's it going, Mike?

MIKE
Couldn't be better. What are you
having?

ASHLEY
Just a diet, thanks.

Mike walks away and returns with a glass of beer. He sets it in front of Ashley. Ashley is puzzled.

ASHLEY (cont'd)
Ummm, Mike, I said a diet.

MIKE
That is a diet. A diet beer.

Mike walks away to attend to another customer.

ASHLEY
Ummm, okay.

Ashley sips her beer and Nicki comes over and sits next to her. She sees Ashley's beer and chuckles.

NICKI
Well, well. A little early for you,
sis.

ASHLEY

It's just that ... Mike didn't hear me.

NICKI

Don't sweat it. To Mike it's either beer or a shot. We're always re-doing orders. You got BC's money?

ASHLEY

Yeah. In my purse. Where is he? I got to get home soon before Brayden wears out Aunt Kate.

NICKI

He'll be here soon. He must be out on a delivery. He's works like a dog.

ASHLEY

Listen. I need to tell you about something.

GORDO, an older, jovial African-American patron is sitting a few seats away at the bar with a huge pile of opened pull-tabs in front of him. He yells at Nicki.

GORDO

(yelling)

Nick!

NICKI

(yelling back)

Yeah, Gordo?

GORDO

Beer me!

NICKI

Okay. Mike will be back in a sec. I'm talking to my sister.

GORDO

Oh. Sorry. Hey, Ashley.

ASHLEY

Hey, Gordo. How's the pull-tabs running?

GORDO

Fan-fucking-tastic. Pulled a thousand!

ASHLEY

That's great.

GORDO

(sadly looks at his
pile of tickets)

Put it all back in.

NICKI

Way to parlay, Gordo.

Mike comes back to the bar and serves Gordo. Nicki turns her attention back to Ashley.

NICKI (cont'd)

So, what's up?

ASHLEY

They called back. About an hour ago.
That place in North Dakota.

NICKI

In the oil fields? I thought you
said you weren't interested. We
talked about this and we decided-

ASHLEY

You decided. I don't think I can
pass it up. It pays three times
anywhere here. And it has benefits.

NICKI

And it's in bum-fuck North Dakota.
And what about Brayden?

ASHLEY

There's a daycare. Nick ... I know.
It's just I need something stable.
And I need to pay off my student
loans and give Brayden a stable
environment.

NICKI

You mean away from me.

ASHLEY

No! You're a great aunt. It's just
... we're just barely keeping our
heads above water. I've got to do
something. Nobody's hiring without a
4 year degree or CPA. My associate's
only good for temp jobs around here.

NICKI

Fucking shit school. Took your money and you're still paying it off. When do you go?

ASHLEY

I start in three weeks.

NICKI

That's in the middle of the Main Event.

ASHLEY

They have TV in North Dakota. I love you, sis. You know that right?

NICKI

I love you, too.

Nicki reaches over to grab a beer that Mike has just served to another CUSTOMER next to them. She raises the glass in a toast.

CUSTOMER

Hey!

NICKI

To bum-fuck North Dakota.

ASHLEY

To my big sister. May she finally make the final table. Remember, sisters can do anything.

They clink their glasses and drink their beers.

NICKI

(to Mike)

Hey, Mike. Get this guy a beer. And make it something local. Not this shit. On me.

Mike pours another beer for the customer. Nicki looks out the front door and see's a delivery van pulling up. Smiling, she motions to Ashley.

NICKI (cont'd)

He's here. Let's go.

(to Mike)

Back in a sec, Mike.

EXT. MIKE AND MARIE'S BAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Nicki and Ashley exit the bar and walk over to the delivery truck. Inside is BC (30s), dressed in a delivery uniform and seated in the driver's seat. He's tall and thin, with well toned arm muscles from lifting heavy packages daily. Nicki approaches and see's that he's leaning back, snoozing.

ASHLEY

Aww. So cute.

NICKI

I know, right. Poor thing.

Nicki loudly bangs on the side of the truck.

NICKI (cont'd)

(yelling)

Wake up, fuckboy!

Startled, BC wakes up. At first he's annoyed, but see's Nicki and smiles.

NICKI (cont'd)

How's it going, hon?

BC

Tired as hell. I made back to back runs to Iowa.

ASHLEY

Shouldn't you get some sleep?

BC

Sleep don't make money. I'm fine. How'd you do?

NICKI

Not great. Your share's six twenty five. Ash?

Ashley pulls out cash from her purse and a paper form.

ASHLEY

I'll need a W-9 filled out.

NICKI

Sorry BC. My bitch of a business manager insists.

Ashley sticks out her tongue at Nicki

BC
 No problem. I'll just add it to the
 pile. Fucking 1099 job.
 (air quotes)
 "Independent Contractor" my ass.
 Anyway, no big deal.

NICKI
 Thanks, sweetie.

Nick gives him a kiss on the cheek.

NICKI (cont'd)
 More of that and lower if you want.

BC
 I'm so fucking tired, I probably
 won't remember. Maybe later.

NICKI
 You got it. You staying for poker?

BC
 Maybe. If I can stay awake. A
 little Red Bull and vodka will perk
 me up.

ASHLEY
 I'm not so sure—

NICKI
 How about just the red bull. And why
 don't you go home and get some sleep.
 (flirty)
 I'll come over later and ... Wake.
 You. Up.

BC
 You know I can't say no.

NICKI
 Then it's a date. Get home and get
 some sleep.

BC
 Yes, ma'am. Bye, Ash.

BC starts the truck and drives off.

NICKI
 He's such a sweetie. And a good fuck.

ASHLEY

I thought you broke up with him.

NICKI

We were never together. Just fuck-buddies.

ASHLEY

You said he was sweet. What's the problem?

NICKI

No problem. He is sweet. And would make a great boyfriend. I just don't make a great girlfriend. You can't cheat on a fuck-buddy. And I wouldn't want to do that to him.

ASHLEY

Then don't cheat.

NICKI

Easy for you to say. What's it been? Going on five years of no dick for you? How do you do it?

ASHLEY

Too busy. Life.

NICKI

A life without sex is no life. You need to get laid, sis. You should give BC a try. After you gave him that stupid tax form, you owe him at least a blowjob.

ASHLEY

Nick!

Nicki laughs. They head back into the bar.

INT. MIKE AND MARIE'S BAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Ashley is sitting at the bar talking with Nicki. Mike comes over to speak with them.

MIKE

Listen, Nicki. I've got something to tell you.

NICKI

I'll get back to work in a minute.
Just talking with Ashley. Everyone's
got a drink. They're happy.

MIKE

Not about that. I've got something
important to tell you.

NICKI

Oh, Jesus. This day's going great.
What is it?

MIKE

I'm selling the bar.

NICKI

What? You can't. This place is
like, an institution.

MIKE

It's time. Ever since Marie died.

ASHLEY

Marie didn't die.

NICKI

Yeah. She ran off with the Grain
Belt delivery guy.

MIKE

(tearing up)

Don't remind me. Bitch is dead to
me. Anyway, I just got an offer.

NICKI

From who?

MIKE

Some corporation. They're gonna
bulldoze the place and put in one of
them "theme" restaurants. You know,
where the girls dress up and show off
their--

NICKI

Tits? And ass?

(sarcastic)

Sounds like a great place to work.

MIKE

They said you can apply with them. I got them to give you and the other girls first shot.

NICKI

Way to think of me, Mike. We've been together, what? Ten, twelve years?

MIKE

Look, I'm really sorry. It's just ... this place doesn't make me much money anymore. I can't afford to remodel. And besides, I've got more news.

NICKI

What? You've learned how to go fuck yourself?

ASHLEY

Nick!

NICKI

Sorry. What other news?

MIKE

I'm getting married!

ASHLEY

What? Congratulations!

NICKI

Who's the lucky girl. Or guy?

Mike pulls out his phone.

MIKE

Her name is Rosita. She's from Columbia. I met her online. She's a real fireball.

Mike taps on his phone revealing a nude photo of a overly made-up middle aged woman.

ASHLEY

Oh, shit.

NICKI

Does she wear clothes?

MIKE

Sorry. Here's a better one.

Mike taps the phone again and holds it up. A video starts playing with Mike and Rosita both naked and having very loud sex.

ASHLEY

I can't un-see that.

NICKI

Jesus, Mike, don't you have any nice pics?

MIKE

These are the nice ones. Let me tell you, fuck Viagra. She's the real deal.

NICKI

She's definitely real.

Nicki looks at Mike's adoring face as he watches the video. She realizes he's happy.

NICKI (cont'd)

Congrats. Even though you've just fucked all of us over. How come you never talked about any of this before?

MIKE

Everything happened so fast. Last month I went down to see Rosita.

NICKI

I thought you were in Duluth?

MIKE

I didn't want anyone to know. I-

ASHLEY

I understand.

NICKI

Glad someone does.

MIKE

Anyway after she made my dick feel-

NICKI

Again. Too much information.

MIKE

I love her, Nick.

NICKI

Yes. You do. And the bar?

MIKE

Like I said. No takers. Then last week I got the call. They offered full price. I've been trying to unload it for over a year. But when anyone looks at the financial statement, they pass. Then these guys came along.

ASHLEY

Can I ask, how much?

MIKE

Sure. Six hundred eighty thousand. Most of that's because of the real estate. The bar ain't making much.

ASHLEY

Oh. I wish I had known. Or had seven hundred grand.

MIKE

I would have loved to sell it to you. Or anyone, really. I was willing to finance and everything. But I need at least ten percent down. I've got a new bride to please.

NICKI

I'm sure you'll make her happy.

(looks at the clock)

Hey, my shifts almost over. Time to set up for poker. Poker. I don't suppose you made them promise to keep poker.

MIKE

It's up to them, but maybe they'll keep it. It's a good draw.

NICKI

Somehow I doubt it. Corporate tight-asses.

(sighs)

What a fucking day. Sister moving, bar closing, losing my job.

(pushes up her
breasts)

Unless I can put these girls to work. And no poker.

(MORE)

NICKI (cont'd)

If I knew he was going to sell, I would have tried to buy it. I know I could have found a way to get the down payment. Hell, a couple of good cashes and we're there.

A customer raises her drink and points to it indicating a refill is wanted.

NICKI (cont'd)

(yelling)

Give me a minute and I'll get your fucking drink! See you later Ash. Have a drink ready when I get home. I'm going to need it.

Nicki gets up from her stool and starts to walk to the back room.

ASHLEY

(distracted,
thinking)

Sure, Nick.

Ashley motions Mike over.

ASHLEY (cont'd)

Mike, can I talk to you? In private?

MIKE

Sure

INT. MIKE AND MARIE'S BAR, MIKE'S OFFICE - DAY

Mike and Ashley enter Mike's office. It's cramped and filthy, with piles of papers and boxes scattered about. Empty beer cans are strewn everywhere. Mike moves behind his desk and sits down. Ashley looks around hiding her disgust.

MIKE

What's up?

ASHLEY

Mike, do you still have those financial statements?

MIKE

Sure. Why?

ASHLEY

Have you signed any contracts?

MIKE

No. They have some corporate bullshit to do. They're sending me an offer letter. I told them I couldn't do anything for three weeks as I'm going down to Columbia at the end of this week.

ASHLEY

Let me ask you ... If somehow I could come up with the money for the down payment ... would you be willing to sell the bar to me?

MIKE

Well, they are offering all cash.

ASHLEY

I can't swing that. I'm not sure I can even swing the seventy grand. But ...

MIKE

I don't know.

Ashley looks for a place to sit, and pushes aside some papers revealing a beer keg. She sits down and tries her best to look seductive. She awkwardly tries to do a sexy pose, but starts to slip off the keg. Embarrassed, she stops and hops back up on the keg. She regains her composure and speaks softly in an attempt to sound sexy.

ASHLEY

Now Mike. Mikey. You know how much this place means to Nicki. And me. Don't you think you owe it to her and the others to keep it going? Like she said, it's an institution. And we'd both be really grateful.

Turned on and embarrassed, Mike clears his throat.

MIKE

Okay. If you can get me the down payment in three weeks, I'll cancel the other deal and finance you.

Ashley leaps up out of her seat and kisses Mike on the cheek.

ASHLEY

Thanks, Mike. I can see why Rosita can't resist you.

(MORE)

ASHLEY (cont'd)
 But, I want to see those financials,
 first. Just to be sure.

MIKE
 You bet. Let me get those papers.

Mike searches through a pile of papers. Finding the folder,
 he hands it to Ashley. Pleased Ashley exits the office
 closing the door behind her. She pauses and smiles.

ASHLEY
 (to herself)
 Who says I can't sex it up?

INT. NICKI AND ASHLEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nicki enters the back door of the house into the kitchen.
 Ashley is leaning up against the kitchen counter, wine glass
 in hand. She hands it to Nicki as soon as she enters.

NICKI
 Thanks. You'd make a great
 bartender.

ASHLEY
 Exactly. Listen, I-

NICKI
 Man, I'm sooo tired. Kept it
 together and made about two hundred
 at poker and about the same in tips.
 Not bad. I gave most to Mr. Lee.

ASHLEY
 The pot dealer? Sis, you spent your
 money on pot?

NICKI
 No, no. Mr. Lee has other
 businesses. Pot is just on the side.
 He has that travel agency. He's
 getting me a deal on a hotel and
 plane ticket for Vegas. For the
 World Series of Poker. Main Event.

ASHLEY
 Oh.

NICKI
 Sorry, sis. I know you're moving,
 but it's the biggest tournament of
 the year. Last year I cashed.

(MORE)

NICKI (cont'd)

You know it's my dream to make it to final table--then I can really make a living playing poker. I'll help you pack and everything. I promise. Besides, I'll have a breakdown when you go. So it's for the best.

ASHLEY

You're right. Besides ... maybe I don't have to move after all.

NICKI

(squeals)

Really! That's fucking awesome. Did you get another job?

ASHLEY

Not quite. But there's this great opportunity--

NICKI

Not peddling that essential oils shit again.

ASHLEY

No, no. It's the bar.

NICKI

What bar? Those stupid weight loss bars? Made me shit all day.

ASHLEY

Mike's bar.

NICKI

You want to buy Mike's bar? With what? Why? He said it was losing money.

ASHLEY

That's the thing. He's losing money, but it's a gold mine.

NICKI

How so?

ASHLEY

Let me show you.

Ashley motions Nicki to sit down at the kitchen table. On the table are the financial statement, legal pads with notes and figures scribbled on them and a calculator. Ashley starts paging through the financial statement.

ASHLEY (cont'd)

Here. Mike's right. He's only pulling about forty thousand a year right now. It's down twenty percent from last year. It's been going down for a while. Right after Marie left him.

NICKI

Bitch did run a tight ship.

ASHLEY

But look here. His food and beverage costs are huge, but his sales are way out of line. He must be giving away a lot of booze. Or his employees are skimming.

NICKI

Yes. And Yes.

ASHLEY

(shocked)

Nick!

NICKI

Not me. Well, not much. A few freebies for friends. Maybe a twenty or two if the tips are short. Okay, I admit it, it's a free-for-all. But Trey and Betts are the worst. And I have no idea what's going on in the kitchen. I gotta ask. How much?

ASHLEY

If things were run the way they should be? Over a hundred grand a year. Maybe one-fifty.

NICKI

Are you sure?

ASHLEY

I've been doing restaurant books for years. If anything I'm under estimating. Maybe with a new coat of paint, better menu.

NICKI

Holy shit. A hundred grand. Man, we're a bunch of criminals. And boozers.

(MORE)

NICKI (cont'd)

The customers are always complaining about how strong the drinks are. Mike can't pour worth a shit.

ASHLEY

We've got to buy this bar. It's what I've always dreamed of.

NICKI

I'd love to, sis. But where am I going to get you seven hundred grand? Best I've cashed at the Main Event is fifty.

ASHLEY

I know. But we only need seventy. Mike will take ten percent down and finance me. Us. And if we run it right, we'll pay him back in no time.

NICKI

You? Me? Bar owners?

ASHLEY

Think of it as a owner of a poker room. With a bar attached.

NICKI

It would keep poker going.

ASHLEY

And me and Brayden here.

NICKI

Yes! Fuck North Dakota. I'm all-in!

ASHLEY

The thing is ... we need to come up with seventy thousand. In three weeks.

NICKI

Three weeks?

ASHLEY

So, any ideas?

NICKI

(smiles)

Poker school starts tomorrow.

INT. NICKI AND ASHLEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Nick, Ashley, and Brayden are sitting in a circle on the floor playing poker. Brayden is mimicking his mom and aunt, holding the cards and playing with the chips in front of him.

NICKI
You're first to act, bud.

BRAYDEN
(proudly)
I'm all in!

Brayden shoves his chips forward. He smiles and turns over his card, revealing an ace and a joker.

ASHLEY
Where'd that come from?

NICKI
(teasing)
Are you cheating, again? I'll show you!

Nicki playfully tries to grab Brayden and he runs away. KATE (60s), their aunt, enters the room carrying a large purse. She has a warm smile and opens her arms inviting Brayden. Brayden runs into her and they hug warmly.

BRAYDEN
Aunt Kate!

ASHLEY
Aunt Kate, can you take Brayden upstairs? We're working on something here.

KATE
(sarcastically)
I can see that. Sure. C'mon Brayden.

Kate takes Brayden by the hand and they leave the room.

NICKI
I think you got this.

ASHLEY
Me? You sure?

NICKI

You're better at math than I am,
that's for sure.

ASHLEY

But you're better at reading other
players. Why do I need to do this?

NICKI

Like I said. Working together, we
can earn faster.

ASHLEY

I'm not up for cheating.

NICKI

We're not cheating. Just ... helping
each other. As long as we're
careful, they can't accuse us of
collusion. We're not signaling or
anything. Just making plays to
benefit each other. Believe me,
players do it all the time.

ASHLEY

You sure?

NICKI

Trust me. Tonight at Mike's we'll
put it into practice. And Thursday,
there's a huge tournament in Iowa.
Hundred thousand guaranteed prize
pool. We should get a shot at that.
First should pay at least fifteen
grand. Maybe higher

ASHLEY

How much are we going to need?

NICKI

Four hundred each. Plus more if we
want to do some cash games.

ASHLEY

Eight hundred?

NICKI

At least. Gotta eat, too. I've got a
couple hundred, and if we run the
table tonight, that will get us half-
way there. I can sweet-talk some out
of BC.

(MORE)

NICKI (cont'd)

If we're short, we'll just have to get their early and try to win some more at a cash game.

ASHLEY

Are you sure?

NICKI

Listen, sis. If you want this, we've got to do it my way. Do you trust me?

ASHLEY

I guess so.

NICKI

Great. Let's review strategy. You're only going to play premium hands. Tight passive pre-flop, then aggressive post flop if you hit. If you hit the flop, three-bet it.

ASHLEY

Premium, tight what?

NICKI

Premium. Best hands. High pairs, suited Ace-King and Ace Queen. Playing those kind of hands is called tight. If you get good cards just call pre-flop but raise if you've got something post-flop. But if you have a high pocket pair, three-bet. Then I'll know you got a good hand.

ASHLEY

Isn't that signaling?

NICKI

No. It's just . . . just do it!

ASHLEY

Okay, okay. Pre-, post-. Ummm, got it. I think.

NICKI

If I'm still in hand, we'll get others to call and build the pot. Hopefully, I'll get a good read on them, then I'll shove to isolate. You fold. Otherwise, just play it out.

ASHLEY

Fold? Why?

NICKI

So I can take your chips. It's okay. We're partners, remember? I'm going to use you to increase my stack. And if you call, you have to show your hand, and we don't want anyone accusing us of cheating.

ASHLEY

Okay. I think I get it.

NICKI

Look, this is the only way we're going to take these guys quickly. We've only got three weeks, right?

ASHLEY

Right.

Brayden runs into the room, brandishing a large, black dildo. He waves it around like a Jedi making light-saber sounds.

ASHLEY (cont'd)

Jesus! Brayen, give me that thing.

Nicki bursts out laughing. Brayden continues his Jedi moves. Ashley leaps up and chases him around finally catching him and taking away the dildo. Ashley glares at Nicki.

ASHLEY (cont'd)

Really, sis? Can't you keep these locked up?

NICKI

(giggling)

Me? I thought it was yours.

ASHLEY

I don't think so.

NICKI

Don't be all innocent with me. The walls aren't that thick.

ASHLEY

Well, it's not mine.

NICKI

Then it must be--

A moment later Aunt Kate enters the room, out of breath and flustered.

KATE
(embarrassed)
Oh my. Seems the little guy got into my purse. I'll just take that.

Kate reaches out and Ashley hands her the dildo. Kate awkwardly misses grabbing it, sliding her hand over it.

NICKI
That's it, Kate. Stroke it.

Kate gains her composure and takes the dildo from Ashley and quickly stuffs it in her purse.

KATE
I'll be sure to keep my purse secure.

ASHLEY
You do that.

KATE
Thanks. You girls got everything worked out?

ASHLEY
Yep. You okay watching Brayden all day Thursday?

KATE
Sure. Don't be surprised if I'm asleep on the couch when you get back. That little bugger sure wears me out! Where are you going, again?

ASHLEY
Iowa. For a poker tourna--

NICKI
(interrupting)
A Pokemon tour. It's where ... they make those card things all the kids love. In Iowa. I've always wanted to go. I thought Ash and I needed some sister time.

KATE
(puzzled)
Sounds like fun.

NICKI
Oh believe me, it is.

KATE
(to Brayden)
C'mon sweetie, let's go upstairs and
find something more appropriate to
play with.

BRAYDEN
Okay. Do you have any more light
sabres, Aunt Kate?

KATE
One is plenty. How 'bout we go
outside?

Kate takes Brayden by the hand and they exit the house,
going outside.

ASHLEY
What was that all about?

NICKI
Apparently Aunt Kate's still gets her
groove on.

ASHLEY
No, I mean about the Pokey thing.

NICKI
We are not telling her. They don't
call her Kate-net for nothing.
She'll blab about us buying the bar
all over town. We can't tell anyone.
Especially the guys at the bar.

ASHLEY
Why not? They might be able to help.

NICKI
Yeah. Help themselves to a great
deal. They'll want it on the action.
Or they'll buy it out from under us.
Promise me, you won't tell anyone.

ASHLEY
Okay. Promise. But what about BC?
He's nice. I think he loves--

NICKI
Fucking me? Yes. He does.

ASHLEY

I meant--

NICKI

I know what you meant. Like I said,
were friends. With benefits. And
I'm not mixing in business with that.
So, no, we're not telling BC, either.

Brayden comes into the house and walks into the room,
covered in dirt, holding some flowers with the roots still
on them.

BRAYDEN

Mommy, for you.

Brayden hands the flowers to Ashley.

ASHLEY

Awww. Thanks sweetie.
(yelling)
Aunt Kate!

INT. MIKE AND MARIE'S BAR - EVENING

Gathered in the back room at Mike's bar are a motley
assortment of poker players spread among three tables, each
with about eight players. Nicki and Ashley are at a table
with MR. LEE, Gordo, and BC. The other players include
bikers, professionals, millennials and retirees a mixture of
men and women all different backgrounds and ethnicities.
One woman, in her mid-40s is dressed in a "Poker Bitch" t-
shirt. Gordo has a stack of pull-tabs in front of him and is
busy opening them. The poker game is in full swing. It's
Nicki's deal at her table.

NICKI

Big blind, Gordo. Gordo?

Gordo looks up from his pull-tabs.

GORDO

Oh. Sorry. How much?

NICKI

We're at two-four.

GORDO

Okay.

Gordo puts out four black chips. Nicki deals the cards.

BC
 (to Ashley)
 What brings you out tonight, Ash?

ASHLEY
 Just having some fun with my sis.
 Kate's with Brayden. He got to sleep
 just before I came, thank God.

GORDO
 Kate? She's a real fire cracker.

NICKI
 Down boy.

Gordo looks at Ashley's chip stack.

GORDO
 You're doing alright, girl.

ASHLEY
 Thanks. How's the pull-tabs?

GORDO
 Same as ever.

Gordo pulls a winner.

GORDO (cont'd)
 (excited)
 Two-fifty! Broke even!

NICKI
 Why do you play that cardboard crack?

GORDO
 I don't know. The action, I guess.
 I'm always looking for action.
 (to Ashley, flirting)
 You looking for some action, hon?

NICKI
 (scolding)
 Gordo. It's okay, Ash, he's
 harmless. He hasn't gotten it up in
 years.

Everyone laughs.

GORDO
 You know that's not true.

Ashley turns to Nicki, shocked.

NICKI

Stop spreading rumors, Gordo. Never happened.

(looks around the table)

Who are you going to believe? Him? Really? Whatever.

ASHLEY

Your reputation proceeds you, sis.

NICKI

See what you did, Gordo? Your such an asshole.

(shouts to the other players)

Hey everyone! Gordo's an asshole.

Everyone raises their glasses in a toast.

ALL

(toasting)

Asshole!

GORDO

I'll drink to that.

NICKI

Let's keep it moving. It's on you, sis.

ASHLEY

(looks directly at Nicki)

I'll raise. Three-bet.

The other players fold. It's Nicki's turn. She stares directly at Ashley.

NICKI

I re-raise. Nine hundred.

BC

(lets out a low whistle)

Looks like little sis is gonna get schooled.

Nicki smiles at Ashley. BC folds his hand. Gordo is next to act. He holds a pull-tab in one hand and looks at his cards with the other. He sets the pull-tabs aside and looks again.

GORDO

I call.

Ashley looks at Gordo. She realizes he has a good hand.

ASHLEY

I'm all in.

Ashley shoves her chips into the middle of the table. Disgusted, Nicki throws her hand in. Gordo carefully looks at his hand.

GORDO

(to Ashley)

You got aces? Or Kings?

ASHLEY

Does that beat your shitty pair?

Then, yes.

Gordo folds his hand. Everyone at the table, except Nicki, claps. Ashley scoops up the chips, smiling. A timer goes off.

NICKI

Break time. We'll color up. Ten minutes.

EXT. MIKE AND MARIE'S BAR - EVENING

The players are on break on the bar patio. Some are gathered around a fire pit smoking cigarettes. Nicki and Ashley are away from the others, talking.

NICKI

What the fuck, Ash?

ASHLEY

What?

NICKI

Our plan. You three-bet and I go over the top. I need the chips.

ASHLEY

Well, that went out the window when Gordo called.

NICKI

He just called. Why didn't you fold?

ASHLEY

The only way we were going to win that hand was for me to shove all-in.

NICKI

How do you know?

ASHLEY

I had Ace-King suited. He had a pocket pair. He had you beat.

NICKI

A pocket pair? Are you sure?

ASHLEY

He stopped playing pull-tabs. He does that every time he has a good hand. And he plays tight. I didn't think he had aces or kings. He would have shoved. Probably tens or jacks.

NICKI

So you shoved? What if he called?

ASHLEY

Then it's a race. A fifty-fifty shot. I figured I had a better chance than you.

NICKI

Okay. Okay. I'm sorry. It's just that--

ASHLEY

Your still the best, Nick.

NICKI

Damn straight. Stops playing pull tabs when he's got a hand, huh?

ASHLEY

Yep. We should be able to both take him down.

NICKI

We're going to need to. There's a couple of big stacks at the other table. If we can chop first and second we'll have almost three hundred bucks. BC said he'd spot me three hundred.

ASHLEY
You didn't tell him.

NICKI
No. He didn't ask. I'm going to
keep it that way. For now.

ASHLEY
Okay.

A timer is heard going off.

NICKI
(yelling)
Okay guys, break's over. Let's
shuffle up and deal.
(to Ashley)
Let's take these guys.

INT. MIKE AND MARIE'S BAR - EVENING

The poker game is finishing up. Nicki and Ashley both have a large stack of chips in front of them. Nicki is handing some cash to one of the other players.

NICKI
Fifty for third. Thanks for coming.

The player walks away. Ashley is bursting with excitement.

ASHLEY
How much?

NICKI
Three for you, chip leader. And one
fifty for moi. Not bad.

ASHLEY
We did it!

NICKI
Now we just need to parlay this
tomorrow. You ready?

ASHLEY
Are you kidding? I want to go
tonight.

NICKI
Slow your roll there. Let's get home
and get some sleep.

BC comes over to the table.

BC
Nice work. Looks like you've finally
got some competition, Nick.

NICKI
(sarcastically)
Thanks. She is good, isn't she?

BC
Almost as good as you.

NICKI
You're sweet. That'll definitely get
you laid. Come over?

BC
Can't. Need to crash. Big day
tomorrow. Later?

NICKI
Ash and I are going to Iowa. See if
little sis can play with the big
boys. Spot me?

BC
How much?

NICKI
Three.

BC
Sure.

BC reaches into his pocket and hands Nicki the money. She
snatches it from his hand and stuffs it in her purse.

BC (cont'd)
When you heading out?

NICKI
Like seven. We're going to stop here
in the morning for burritos and
coffee. Jorge will open the kitchen.
With Mike gone, Trey and Betts won't
come in till lunch. Lazy fucks.

BC
Sounds good. Good luck.

BC leans in and kisses Nicki

ASHLEY
(mocking)
Bye, Lover.

NICKI
Stop it.

ASHLEY
What?

NICKI
You know. Shipping us.

Ashley grabs the money from the table.

ASHLEY
I'll ship whatever I want. I'm the
poker princess.

NICKI
Fuck that princess shit. We're the
poker queens.

ASHLEY
Damn straight, girl.

Both laugh and gather their money.

INT. CASINO POKER ROOM - DAY

Nicki and Ashley enter the casino and confidently strut through the crowd past the slot machines and enter the poker room. They stop just inside the entrance and survey the scene. Some of the players recognize Nicki and she acknowledges them. They approach the tournament sign-in table. A TOURNAMENT WORKER smiles as they approach.

NICKI
Two entries.

TOURNAMENT WORKER
That will be eight hundred.

Nicki reaches into her purse and pulls out money. She lays them out on the table randomly and starts to count them up.

NICKI
Six fifty, seven.

Nicki digs deeper into her purse pulling out a some wadded up bills.

NICKI (cont'd)
Seven eighty.

TOURNAMENT WORKER
Twenty more.

Nicki turns to Ashley, motioning her for more money. Ashley pulls out some money, including some loose change and hands it to the tournament worker, who counts it.

TOURNAMENT WORKER (cont'd)
Umm. Thanks.

The tournament worker types on her laptop and a small printer prints out two slips of paper. She hands one each to Nicki and Ashley.

TOURNAMENT WORKER (cont'd)
Here you go.
(to Nicki)
Table seven for you. And ...
(to Ashley)
table nine for you. Good luck
ladies.

ASHLEY
Thanks.

The girls walk away looking for their tables.

ASHLEY (cont'd)
So what's the plan?

NICKI
Win.

ASHLEY
Duh. What are the payouts?

NICKI
Nothing yet.

ASHLEY
Nothing?

NICKI
This is the preliminary. Top ten go to the finals tonight. Prize pool is guaranteed at least a hundred thousand. If we can make final table we're in the money. I'm hoping together we can score about thirty grand.

ASHLEY

But we got to get in the top ten?

NICKI

Yep. And this is the last prelim.
So this is it. At least one of us
needs to place. Hopefully both.

ASHLEY

No pressure.

Ashley turns to Nicki and hugs her.

ASHLEY (cont'd)

Wish me luck, sis.

NICKI

And me, too. That's it for sisterly
love. Nobody knows were together,
got it?

ASHLEY

Got it.

They part ways, walking toward their separate tables.

INT. CASINO POKER ROOM - DAY

Nicki and Ashley are playing at separate tables. Nicki looks over at Ashley's table and sees her scope up a large pot. She smiles. The dealer, TARA, tries to get her attention.

TARA

Ma'am? It's on you.

NICKI

Ma'am? Really? Sorry. What's the
bet?

TARA

Four hundred to go.

NICKI

I raise. Twelve hundred.

The other players fold. Nicki scoops in the chips and stacks them in front of her.

Ashley is playing at her table. A middle aged male PLAYER 2 eyes her up and down. Ashley smiles at him.

PLAYER 2
I haven't seen you here before?
First time?

ASHLEY
Yes. First time here. First time in
a real tournament, actually.

PLAYER 2
(smiling)
Well, then sweetie. Welcome to the
table.

INT. CASINO POKER ROOM - DAY

The tournament continues, Player 2 slams down his cards as he loses to Ashley. She scoops up the chips adding them to her huge stack.

PLAYER 2
(disgusted)
First time my ass. Nice hand.

ASHLEY
(smiling sweetly)
Beginners luck, I guess. Thanks.

At Nicki's table, it's not going as well. Nicki's stack of chips is low. She shoves them all in.

NICKI
All in.

DEALER
We have an all-in on table seven.

Other players fold, until PLAYER 3 calls.

PLAYER 3
I call. I've got jacks.

NICKI
Dammit. Tens.

Nicki flips over the cards. The dealer finishes the hand and Nicki has lost.

DEALER
Number four out on table seven.

Nicki walks past Ashley's table. Ashley gives her a shocked look, but Nicki shrugs and walks toward the bar. She sits down. The BARTENDER acknowledges her and comes over.

BARTENDER
Hey, Nick. Bust out?

NICKI
Yeah. His jacks beat my tens.

BARTENDER
Sorry. Can I get you something?

NICKI
Unless you can float me a loan. My sister's still playing and she has the credit card.

BARTENDER
Your sister? Where?

Nicki points out Ashley. The bartender lets out a low whistle.

BARTENDER (cont'd)
She's hot. Can you ...

NICKI
Sure. After today, nothing would surprise me.
(to herself)
Younger, prettier, and better at poker.

A bar patron in his fifties, JIM, notices Nicki and moves closer.

JIM
Can I buy you a drink?

NICKI
Sure. Ummm?

JIM
Jim.

NICKI
Nicki. Thanks. I'll have a beer.

Jim motions to the bartender.

JIM
The lady will have a beer.

NICKI
I'm no lady. You going to finish
those wings?

JIM
Ummm. No. Go ahead.

NICKI
Thanks, I'm starving.

Nicki grabs his basket of wings and starts devouring them.
Jim is a little disgusted at Nicki's eating habits.

JIM
So. You from around here?

Nicki looks up from her basket of wings, her mouth covered
in sauce.

NICKI
(talking with her
mouth full)
Twin cities. You.

JIM
Des Moine. Born and raised. Can I
get you a napkin?

NICKI
In a minute.

Nicki finishes her wings and tosses the basket on the bar.

NICKI (cont'd)
There. Thanks for the wings. And
beer.

JIM
My ... pleasure?

The sound of cheering and applause erupts from Ashley's
table. Nicki looks over, but can't tell what's happening.

JIM (cont'd)
Looks like this round is over.

NICKI
You think? I can't see my sister.

JIM
There's two of you?

Ashley rushes over, excited.

ASHLEY

Nick! I won! Well, I made it to the top ten. They gave me this.

Ashley holds out a large poker chip.

NICKI

That's a lammer. It's your entry to the final round.

JIM

Congratulations ...

NICKI

Oh, Ashley. This is Jim. He bought me a beer.

ASHLEY

I see.

NICKI

It's okay. He also shared his wings with me. Sorry, all gone. But I'm sure he'll buy you one after our threesome.

ASHLEY

She's kidding.
(to Nicki)
You're kidding, right?

NICKI

I don't know. You tell me.

ASHLEY

Okay sis, that's enough. Jim, thanks for entertaining my sister. Obviously we, need to adjust her meds.

NICKI

We gotta go, Jim. Ashley has a tournament to win. Not that she needs my help.

ASHLEY

Really. I think I'd rather stay here and fuck Jim.
(to Jim)
No offense.

JIM
(puzzled)
None taken. I think.

NICKI
You're a sweetheart. Maybe some
other time. C'mon Ash.

Nicki grabs Ashley by the arm and they walk toward the door,
leaving Jim confused.

ASHLEY
What is wrong with you? We're here
to win, right? Does it matter who
plays?

NICKI
Your right. Sorry. Congrats on
winning sis. I'm proud of you. I
really am.

ASHLEY
Thanks. Here.

Ashley hands her the lammer chip.

ASHLEY (cont'd)
Take it. You should play the final
round. You're the pro.

NICKI
You sure?

ASHLEY
I trust you one hundred percent.
You've got this.

INT. CASINO POKER ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Nicki is at the final table of the tournament. They are down
to six players. Tom is dealing. Nicki is first to act on
her hand.

NICKI
Raise. Forty thousand.

Two other players fold. The next player reaches for chips.

PLAYER 4
Re-raise to one hundred twenty
thousand.

The other players fold. The action is on Nicki. She checks her hand, sighs, then folds it. She looks up at the status board and sees that sixth place pays \$1500. She looks at her stack, dejected. The timer goes off indicating a break.

TOM

Ten minute break. Blinds are up to seven thousand, fourteen thousand with a thousand ante.

Nicki gets up to the poker table and goes over to the bar to talk to Ashley.

NICKI

I don't know Ash, I'm down to about twenty big blinds. I tried to make a move, but I'm just not getting the cards.

ASHLEY

(encouraging)

You can do it.

NICKI

If I bust now, we'll make about seven hundred bucks.

ASHLEY

First is paying almost fifty.

NICKI

I know. I'm trying.

ASHLEY

I know you are. You just need to believe in yourself.

NICKI

Easy for you to say, Oprah. I gotta get back.

Nicki starts to walk back to the table.

ASHLEY

Remember, confidence!

Nicki turns and gives Ashley the middle finger. She returns to the table and sits down. The other players are having a discussion.

PLAYER 4

I fine with that. Give me twenty and the rest of you take five each.

NICKI
Fine with what?

PLAYER 4
Chopping. You in? Otherwise we can
keep going.

Nicki looks at her stack and the payouts on the status
board.

NICKI
Sure. I'm in.

Nicki walks back over to the bar to see Ashley. Ashley
looks at her, worried.

ASHLEY
You bust out. Shit.

NICKI
No. Good news. We chopped.

Ashley looks puzzled.

NICKI (cont'd)
We agreed to split it.

ASHLEY
How much?

NICKI
Five.

ASHLEY
That's not nearly enough.

NICKI
Better than a grand. Look sis, I'm
doing my best. For you.

ASHLEY
You're right. Sorry. But, what's
the plan?

NICKI
Keep grinding. We just made four
thousand in one day.

ASHLEY
(smiling)
A pretty good start, queen.

NICKI

Four grand and almost a threesome with Jim-Bob. I'd say it was an excellent start. So, how about a cash game?

ASHLEY

Sure, but not too late. I've got to get home to Brayden before he calls Aunt Kate "mommy".

NICKI

Okay. Let's see if between us we can double up.

INT. CASINO POKER ROOM - LATE EVENING

Nicki and Ashley are seated at a cash game table. Their chip stacks have dwindled. Ashley is glaring at Nicki, but she is ignoring her sister. There is one empty seat between them, and Jason appears and sits down in it. He immediately sees Nicki.

JASON

(smiling)
What's up babe?

NICKI

(to herself)
Fuck my life.

INT. CASINO POKER ROOM - LATER THE SAME EVENING

Play continues. Their chip stacks have dwindled even more. Ashley emotions are a combination of seething anger and despair. In the hand are Ashley and Jason. On the board are a Jack of hearts, a seven of spades, and a two of hearts. Nicki looks at Ashley trying to signal her, but Ashley is staring at the board.

ASHLEY

Raise. All-in.

Nicki sighs. Jason smiles.

JASON

Call. Two pair.
(looks at Nicki)
Seven-deuce. Always wins! You know, right babe?

Ashley glares at Nicki. The final cards are dealt and Ashley loses. The dealer scoops the chips and shoves them over to Jason. Ashley quickly gets up and leaves, with Nicki following her.

INT. NICKI AND ASHLEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Aunt Kate and Brayden are playing in the living room. The sound of a door opening is heard and Ashley enters the living room, upset. She's followed closely by Nicki.

KATE

There you are. How was your trip?

ASHLEY

Don't want to talk about it.

BRAYDEN

Mommy. Want to play with us?

ASHLEY

Can't sweetheart. Mommy has to pack for our trip. You need to get ready for bed. It's late. Fifteen minutes.

BRAYDEN

Okay.

Nicki starts to say something, but Ashley just glares at her. Ashley turns and goes up the stairs.

INT. NICKI AND ASHLEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In her bedroom, Ashley grabs a suitcase, opens it and places it on her bed. She starts to open drawers, pulling out clothes and placing them methodically in the suitcase. Nicki knocks lightly on the door and hesitantly comes into the room.

NICKI

Can we talk about this?

ASHLEY

There's nothing more to say. We gave it our best shot. It's not gonna happen.

NICKI

We can keep trying. I can keep trying. I'm not quitting.

ASHLEY

Fine. Whatever. I just can't wait.

NICKI

Look. I can do this. I have a Plan "B". The Main Event is next week. I've already got my room and plane ticket. I'll find a way to get the entry fee. I promise.

ASHLEY

Well, you've promised a lot lately. I'm can't rely on your Plan "B".

NICKI

Well, maybe if you had used Plan B, you wouldn't be in this situation.

Nicki looks at her sister who is red-faced. Nicki realizes what she said.

NICKI (cont'd)

Oh, Shit. Sis, I'm sorry I didn't mean it. I...

ASHLEY

(angry)

You bitch!

Ashley lunges for Nicki. Both tumble onto the bed and roll over onto the floor.

INT. NICKI AND ASHLEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In the living room, Aunt Kate hears the commotion coming from upstairs.

BRAYDEN

What's that?

KATE

Ummm. I'm sure it's nothing. Mommy's just packing some things.

BRAYDEN

Mommy must be packing an elephant.

KATE

Or, the gorilla in the room. Brayden, can you wait here a minute. I need to see if Mommy needs some help.

BRAYDEN

Okay.

Aunt Kate gets up and goes up the stairs.

INT. NICKI AND ASHLEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In the bedroom, Nicki and Ashley are wrestling on the floor. Ashley has Nicki in a headlock. Kate enters the room.

KATE

Girls!

ASHLEY

Apologize, bitch.

NICKI

Okay, okay. I'm sorry. I didn't mean it.

Ashley releases Nicki. Panting, they both try to compose themselves. Brayden enters the room.

BRAYDEN

Mommy!

ASHLEY

It's okay, Brayden. Mommy and Aunt Nicki are just getting our exercise. Go with Aunt Kate and get ready for bed. I'll be there in a minute.

KATE

Come on Brayden. Let's pick out your pajamas.

BRAYDEN

Okay.

Kate takes Brayden by the hand and they leave the room.

NICKI

Jeez. I forgot you're scrappy. All those years fending off the boys.

ASHLEY

(sarcastically)

According to you, I guess I should have fended off one more.

NICKI

Ash. I'm sorry. I didn't mean...

ASHLEY

I know. But he's the best thing in my life. Next to you.

NICKI

I don't want to see you go. Or Brayden.

ASHLEY

You think I want to? This is the best chance I have to give Brayden and me what we need. Some stability. I can't keep living like this. Paycheck to paycheck. Living-

NICKI

With me.

ASHLEY

It's not that. I've got responsibilities.

NICKI

Oh, and I don't?

ASHLEY

No. You don't. You work when you want and ...

NICKI

Say it. Say it, sis. I fuck who I want. I'm your slut sister who fucks around and slings drinks and pretends to be a professional poker player. I'm never going to be a pro. Say it.

ASHLEY

That's not what I meant.

NICKI

But it's what you think. It's what everyone thinks.

ASHLEY

No they don't Nick. I don't either. Look, I appreciate that you tried.

NICKI

I'm not done. This if for me, too. You think I want to keep serving drunks and getting beat in poker by assholes? And screwing around on probably the best guy I'll ever have?

ASHLEY

He is, isn't he?

NICKI

Yep. I'm a shit.

ASHLEY

No. Just scared. Don't be.
Sometimes you just have to take a
chance and go all-in.

NICKI

Thanks Lifetime Movie. Wait are we
talking about BC or poker?

ASHLEY

Both. Now, help me pack.

EXT. NICKI AND ASHLEY'S HOUSE - DAY

The next morning Ashley's car is packed with boxes and suitcases. Brayden is in the car seat in the back. Nicki and Kate are saying goodbye. Nicki leans into the back seat window and kisses Brayden.

NICKI

I'm going to miss you squirt.

BRAYDEN

When are you going to visit?

NICKI

Soon. In a month. Sooner if things
go right. Be good for Mommy, okay?

BRAYDEN

Okay.

NICKI

Promise?

BRAYDEN

Promise.

Nicki attempts to smile while holding back her tears. She turns to Ashley who is seated in the driver's seat.

NICKI

Drive safe.

ASHLEY

You know me. Good luck next week.

NICKI
When I win it all, will you come
back?

ASHLEY
Right away.

NICKI
Promise.

ASHLEY
Promise. I'll be watching you.

Nicki leans into the car and hugs Ashley. She steps back and Ashley starts the car and drives off. Kate and Nicki wave goodbye.

KATE
They'll be fine.

NICKI
I know.

KATE
I'm going into town. You need
anything?

NICKI
What I need, you can't get for me.
See you later.

Aunt Kate walks away. Nicki pulls out her phone and dials it.

NICKI (cont'd)
BC? Get over here. I need you.

INT. NICKI AND ASHLEY'S HOUSE - DAY

In Nicki's bedroom, BC and Nicki are having sex. Nicki is on top and they finish their lovemaking. Nicki rolls over and snuggles next to BC.

NICKI
Thanks, hon. Just what I needed.

BC
My pleasure.

NICKI
Oh, believe me the pleasure was all
mine.

Nicki lets out a heavy sigh.

BC

You okay?

NICKI

I miss her and Brayden already.

BC

I hear you.

NICKI

Listen, BC. I was thinking...

BC

World Series. I know. It's next week, right.

NICKI

Yes, but-

BC

You want me to buy a share?

NICKI

Actually, I was going to talk to you about something else. But now that you mention it.

BC

How much?

NICKI

How about seventy thousand?

BC

Huh? I thought the entry was ten.

NICKI

It is. This is for something else. A business venture. I wouldn't ask, but it'll get Ashley back. I had another plan, but that didn't work out.

BC

I'd like to. Really I would, but I don't have that kind of money. I've just invested a bunch into my own business.

NICKI

You have?

BC

Yeah. Deliveries are up. Everyone is ordering online. I bought two new trucks. I'm going to expand. Get some other drivers to take the routes. Sit at a desk.

NICKI

Wow. That's great, BC. How come you never said anything.

BC

I don't know. When we get together we either-

NICKI

Screw.

BC

Or sleep. It all came together pretty quick. I just decided to go for it. Sorry.

NICKI

No, that's okay. Good for you. And good for me. Maybe you won't need as much sleep.

BC

But I can spare five if you want to sell me a share of your entry.

NICKI

I don't know. I need the cash, it's just that, with this investment, I need to keep as much prize money as I can. I don't know if I can give you half.

BC

You've got nothing to worry about. You're the best poker I've ever known.

NICKI

(mocking)

Stop. I'm the best poker player you've ever--

BC gets a serious look in his eyes as moves closer to face her.

BC

You are great Nick. Why can't you see that?

NICKI

It's just sometimes I get in my own way I guess. But I'm always going to try. I can't let it get in the way of my dreams.

BC

That's my girl. I'm serious. I still want to invest. In you. What did you cash last time?

NICKI

About fifty.

BC

I'd do five thousand for half your winnings above fifty.

NICKI

How about half above seventy?

BC

Are you taking advantage of me?

NICKI

(sweetly)

Always.

BC

Sure. You know I'll do anything for you.

NICKI

You will won't you? Listen, BC. I've been thinking--

BC

You'd never get that deal from any of the other guys. They'd probably only do it for above fifty.

Nicki sits up in bed.

NICKI

What did you say?

BC

Above fifty. I'm sure any of the guys would do five grand for half above fifty. They'd jump at that.

NICKI

They would?

BC

Sure. Gordo, Tee. Those guys are always looking for action. Hell, most of the regulars would be up for it.

NICKI

(to herself)

Six times five is twenty. Minus ten for the entry. Plus fifty.

BC

Nick? You say something?

NICKI

Nothing. You've got a deal. But you need to promise one thing.

BC

What's that?

NICKI

Don't tell anyone about our deal. You know the guys, they'll be pissed I didn't offer it to them.

BC

Okay. No problem.

NICKI

Promise?

Nicki rolls over and starts kissing BC on his chest.

BC

Promise.

Nicki kisses him lower and lower. BC moans in pleasure. Nicki raises her head.

NICKI

That's my guy.

INT. MR. TEE'S OFFICE

Mr. TEE (50s, Asian) is in his office sitting behind his desk. Nicki is standing in front of his desk.

MR. TEE

Five thousand? But no payout unless you win more than fifty?

NICKI

Yep.

MR. TEE

I don't know. You're good, but you aren't Johnny fucking Chan.

NICKI

C'mon, it's a great deal. It's better this way, I'll be motivated to win more.

MR. TEE

Okay, I'm in.

Nicki walks out of the office with a wad of cash in her hand, smiling.

INT. MIKE AND MARIE'S BAR - DAY

Gordo is sitting at the bar, playing pull-tabs. He finishes his beer and before he sets the empty glass down, Nicki slides a full glass in front of him.

GORDO

Thanks. Nick. You read my mind.

NICKI

My pleasure. I see you have some winners.

GORDO

Two five hundreds.

Gordo picks up the tickets and starts to get off his bar stool. Nicki puts her arm on his shoulder to stop him.

NICKI

Listen, Gordo. Instead of replaying those. How about some different action?

GORDO
 (flirting)
 What do you have in mind.

NICKI
 Me. You. And five thousand.

INT. MIKE AND MARIE'S BAR - DAY

Nicki is seen in separate scenes talking to three other bar poker players. She shakes their hands sealing the deals. After talking with one of the players, she turns and runs into Mike.

MIKE
 Hey, sweet-pea.

NICKI
 Hey. I'm kinda in a hurry. Gotta go.

MIKE
 What about your shift.

NICKI
 Oh yeah. I'm on break.

MIKE
 I've been wanting to talk to you.
 About the bar.

NICKI
 Working on the down-payment, Mike.
 No worries.

MIKE
 Well, I've got a lot of worries. I
 gotta know if you guys are serious.
 Because they are.

Mike points to two guys in suits with clipboards taking notes.

NICKI
 Suits? Mike, you promised.

MIKE
 I did. If you guys came up with the
 money. Looks like you can't. I hear
 Ashley's off to North Dakota.

NICKI

Just a rumor. We'll have your money.
I just need a little more time. I'm
working on something. Here.

Nicki pulls out a roll of hundred dollar bills from her
purse.

NICKI (cont'd)

Down payment. On the down payment.
The rest when I get back from Vegas.
I promise. Just put those guys off
for a bit.

(pleading)

Please?

MIKE

(sighs)

Okay Nick. But no more extensions.
Got it?

Nicki gives Mike a kiss on the cheek.

NICKI

You're the best Mike! Oh, I also
need to get off early today. Thanks!

Nicki rushes off.

INT. NICKI AND ASHLEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Nicki is packing a small suitcase. She's on her phone
texting Ashley.

NICKI (SUBTITLE)

I'm off the Vegas.

ASHLEY (SUBTITLE)

Good luck, sis. I miss you.

NICKI (SUBTITLE)

I miss you to. How is the job going?

ASHLEY (SUBTITLE)

It's a job. Boss is a creep.

NICKI (SUBTITLE)

Don't sweat it. I've got a plan. I
promise for reals.

ASHLEY (SUBTITLE)

Good luck. Shit. Gotta go. Boss.

INT. LAS VEGAS CASINO - DAY

Nicki has arrived in Las Vegas to the World Series of Poker for the Main Event. She's in the large casino ballroom where there are hundreds of poker tables and thousands of players. She looks around, awestruck. Later we see her at a table making pleasantries with her fellow players. The Tournament Director, Jack, takes to the microphone to announce the start of the tournament.

JACK

Welcome to the World Series of Poker Main Event. Ladies and Gentlemen, let's get started. Shuffle up and deal.

The tournament gets underway. We see Nicki playing and winning several hands. All the while she's looking up at the leader board. The tournament day ends and we see Nicki at her table putting her chips in a plastic bag for safe keeping. Jason, the smug player, sees Nicki and comes over, smiling.

JASON

Babe! Great to see you here.

NICKI

Oh. Hi.

JASON

How'd you do? First day's always a bitch for newbies.

NICKI

I've cashed before.

JASON

You too? Awesome. What's your stack?

NICKI

About one fifty.

JASON

Sweet. I'm over two hundred.
(eyes her up and down)
So maybe, you and I?

NICKI

Or maybe not.

JASON

Whatever, babe. See you tomorrow.
That's where we separate the roosters
from the hens.

Jason walks away.

NICKI

The hens do all the work while the
cock struts. Asshole.

Nicki finishes bagging her chips and turns around and runs
into Ryan.

RYAN

Nick?

NICKI

Speaking of which. Hey Ryan.

RYAN

(embarrassed)

You here? Of course you're here. I
mean. Listen. About the other night.

NICKI

No worries. I've already forgotten
about it.

RYAN

I haven't. I was a complete asshole.

NICKI

Yes. Go on.

RYAN

I shouldn't have treated you that
way. It won't happen again. With
anyone.

NICKI

Apology accepted. You still in?

RYAN

Barely. Less than ten big blinds.
I'll be out early tomorrow. Out of
the money.

NICKI

That's too bad.

RYAN

It's not all bad. I ran into you.
Maybe we could start over? Tonight?

NICKI

I'd love to. I want to. Believe me,
we'd be on our way to my room right
now, But ... I'm seeing someone. I
only realized it recently. And I
don't want to screw it up.

RYAN

Okay. I understand.

NICKI

Don't worry, sweetie. I'm sure
there's a nice girl out there for a
hot guy with an above average dick.
Keep looking. You can use me as a
reference.

RYAN

(laughs)
I will. Take it down, Nick.

Ryan kisses her on the cheek and leaves.

NICKI

(to herself)
I plan to. Just two more days, Ash
and we're in the money.

INT. LAS VEGAS CASINO - DAY

Nicki continues to play poker. Cheers erupt in the room.

PLAYER 5

What's that?

NICKI

Someone went out and it's another pay
jump.

PLAYER 5

Wow. I've never made it this far.

NICKI

It's a good feeling isn't it?

PLAYER 5

What's the payout now?

Nicki looks at the status board.

NICKI

I think it says about forty thousand.

Nicki looks at her pile of chips. It is her turn. She is dealt two aces. She looks at her cards, thinks about it, then throws her cards into the middle of the table, smiling.

NICKI (cont'd)

I fold.

INT. LAS VEGAS CASINO - DAY

While on a break, Nicki approaches the Tournament Officials table. She speaks with a tournament OFFICIAL.

NICKI

Excuse me, I have a question.

OFFICIAL

Sure. How can I help.

NICKI

What are the next pay jumps?

OFFICIAL

The next jumps are on the board. We're at forty-six thousand.

NICKI

Yes, I see, but what's next?

OFFICIAL

The top hundred and sixty will get fifty-five thousand. That's the next jump. Top one hundred get about sixty-two. It's all on-line, but I can get you a print-out.

NICKI

That would be great. Thanks.

The Official types on the computer and a printer nearby prints out a piece of paper. The Official hands it to Nicki.

NICKI (cont'd)

Thanks.

Nicki walks away, reading the paper to herself.

NICKI (cont'd)
Looks like today's the day. Just got
to pick my spot. To lose.

Nicki folds the paper and puts in her pocket. She walks
back to her table. Nicki continues playing. She gets dealt
a pair of queens. The other players fold to her.

NICKI (cont'd)
Raise. Eighty thousand.

Two other players fold. The last player looks at his cards.

PLAYER 7
I call.

The cards are dealt. There's a queen, ten, and three.

NICKI
Check.

PLAYER 7
Check.

The fourth card is dealt. Another three. Nicki looks at her
cards.

NICKI
Check.

The other player reaches for chips.

PLAYER 7
One hundred and twenty.

NICKI
I fold.

Nicki folds her hand and smiles.

NICKI (cont'd)
Nice move.

INT. LAS VEGAS CASINO - DAY

Nicki continues playing, constantly looking at her stack and
the status board. A signal goes off signifying a break.
One of the tournament DIRECTORS comes over to the table.

TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR 2
We're breaking your table up. I'll
have your assignments in a bit.
(MORE)

TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR 2 (cont'd)
It's a longer break as we have camera
setups for the evening broadcast.

Nicki puts her chips in the chip bag. She looks up and sees Ashley at the gallery rail, waving to her to come over. She walks over to the rail to speak to Ashley.

NICKI
Ashley? What are you doing here?

ASHLEY
Keeping you from getting into
trouble.

NICKI
What about North Dakota?

ASHLEY
I quit. Shit job, boss was a creep.
Daycare was a nightmare. And I belong
home.

NICKI
I'm glad you're here. I did it!
I've got us the money for the bar.
Guaranteed.

ASHLEY
Nick--

Nicki looks over to the crowd and see's BC and the others.

NICKI
Shit! What are they doing here?

ASHLEY
They came to cheer you on. They came
because they want to see you win.
For them.

NICKI
Oh. I--

ASHLEY
I know. So does BC.

NICKI
Know what?

ASHLEY
What you're up to. On the plane, BC
told me how you made deals with all
the guys. I figured out your scam.
(MORE)

ASHLEY (cont'd)
I'm good at math, remember? Nick, how could you?

NICKI
I did it for you. For me. For us. Shit. BC knows?

ASHLEY
Yeah.

NICKI
The other guys.

ASHLEY
Not so far. But I wouldn't count on it. What are we going to do?

NICKI
What I planned.

ASHLEY
You can't. It's not fair to your friends. To BC.

NICKI
I'll smooth it with BC. And for the others. We'll make it up to them. We'll pay them back. You said it yourself, the bar's a goldmine. Free drinks for all of 'em. Forever.

ASHLEY
I don't know, Nick.

NICKI
Trust me. Oh, here's my room key. Meet me after the tournament and we'll celebrate.

ASHLEY
What if you get caught? You'll be banned from every tournament.

NICKI
There's no way I'm going to get caught.

At that moment a PRODUCER with a headset and clipboard stands behind Nicki. When the woman speaks she startles her.

PRODUCER
Nicole Anderson?

NICKI
(startled)
What? Yes. I'm Nicki Anderson.

The Producer motions Nicki to follow her.

PRODUCER
Come with me.

The Producer leads Nicki away. She looks at Ashley terrified. She looks over at the guys, worried. The Producer leads Nicki to a poker table surrounded by cameras and lights.

PRODUCER (cont'd)
Congratulations. You've been selected for one of our featured tables.

NICKI
Featured? How?

PRODUCER
On TV. Let me show you how the cameras work.

NICKI
Cameras? I'd rather not.

PRODUCER
You do know we are broadcasting, right? You agreed to be on camera when you entered the tournament. Don't be nervous. It's like we're not even here.

NICKI
Can't I go to another table.

PRODUCER
It's already decided. The Tournament Directors agreed. I was the one that suggested it. You're one of the few women left in the tournament, you know.

NICKI
I didn't.

The Producer points to the table.

PRODUCER

There's a sensor on the table that allows us to show everyone in the TV audience your cards. Be sure put your cards over the sensor spot when it's your turn to act.

The Producer takes two cards and demonstrates how the camera works to Nicki.

NICKI

So, you'll see all my hands? I'm already pretty nervous. I'll likely screw it up.

PRODUCER

You'll do fine.

(listening on headset)

Oh. We're starting again in five minutes. Good luck!

NICKI

Thanks.

The Producer walks away.

NICKI (cont'd)

I'm going to need it.

INT. LAS VEGAS CASINO

Nicki is sitting nervously at the featured table. Ashley and the guys are in the gallery. With the exception of Ashley and BC, they are all happy and excited. At the announcer's table, NORM, LON, and ANTONIO weigh in on the action.

LON

As we end our day here at the Main Event, we have a new player at the featured table. Thirty-two year old Nicole Anderson from Minnesota.

NORM

This isn't her first time at this rodeo. Last year she cashed at about the same level we're at now. She's a good player, but seems to have slowed down a bit.

ANTONIO

You see that with a lot of amateurs. They play it safe, waiting for the next pay jump.

LON

We've only got about ten players to go before the next pay jump to a little over fifty thousand.

NORM

It would be nice to see a woman make final table. It's only happened once when Barbara Enright did it in 1995, finishing in 5th place.

LON

Only a few hundred women this year in a field of over six thousand.

ANTONIO

I keep saying it. You can't win unless you play.

NORM

True that, Antonio.

LON

Let's get back to the action.

Nicki is distracted trying to look at the status board. The bright lights are preventing her from seeing it. She sighs, and looks at her cards. She has a pair of fours.

NICKI

I call.

LON

Nicole limps in. Is that a good strategy here, Antonio?

ANTONIO

I wouldn't. She should raise and get some other players off their hands. She's likely to hit over cards on the flop.

The action goes to young cocky British player, WILL.

WILL

I raise. One point two million.

NORM
That's why you're the pro, Antonio.

ANTONIO
Like I said, Norm. Now Nicole probably should fold.

The other players fold. Nicki looks at her cards.

NICKI
I call.

ANTONIO
Hey, don't listen to me.

NORM
Like my ex-wives.

The dealer deals the cards. The flop is an ace, king, and four.

LON
She flopped it.

ANTONIO
Hello, set.

LON
Uh Oh. Will's in a whole lot of hurt.

NORM
No one's getting out of this alive. Will has aces up.

NICKI
Check.

WILL
Check.

The dealer deals out the fourth card, a four. Nicki now has four of a kind. She tries to hide her reaction, swallowing hard.

NICKI
I check.

LON
Just a check? Is she trying to trap him?

ANTONIO

I think so. I would have made a bet here, Lon.

NORM

Let's see if it works.

WILL

You want to have a go? You want to play big pot or little pot? I've got you beat.

NORM

Will, hubris. Hubris meet Will.

WILL

Okay. Two million.

Will shoves a stack of chips out. Nicki looks at her cards, worried. Nicki takes her time.

NORM

What's she waiting for?

ANTONIO

It's not often you have the nuts in this situation. She doesn't want to scare him away. She also wants him to think his two pair are good.

NICKI

I call.

Nicki places her chips out. The dealer deals the last card, an Ace.

NORM

This may be the end of Will's run.

NICKI

Check.

NORM

If Will's smart he'll see the trap.

ANTONIO

The only thing that beats him is quad fours.

WILL

I'm all-in.

The dealer calls out the all-in and places an "All-In" chip in front of Will. Nicki looks at her hand one last time, but hesitates.

NORM

What's she waiting for. Slow rolling is rude.

ANTONIO

Give her some credit. He could have quad aces. Doubtful. I hand it to her to pause and think.

NICKI

(unenthusiastic)

I call.

LON

She doesn't seem excited.

NORM

Probably stunned. Like we are.

Will turns over his full house, but his smile quickly fades as he see's Nicki's four of a kind. They get up and shakes her hand.

WILL

Nice hand.

NICKI

Thanks.

WILL

Well, forty thousand isn't bad for a few days work.

TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR 2

Over fifty. We're already at the next level.

NICKI

(to herself)

Shit.

LON

Well, that will do it for today. I'm Lon. For Norm and Antonio we'll see you tomorrow as the World Series of Poker Main Event continues.

The TV lights go out. Nicki bags her chips. The other players congratulate Nicki.

Some more famous players come over to congratulate her, stunning Nicki. She's honored, and a bit star-struck, but it's a bittersweet moment for her as she realizes her plan has failed.

INT. LAS VEGAS CASINO HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The door to Nicki's hotel room opens and Nicki enters and walks down the small hallway.

NICKI

Ash? I'm back. Sorry, it took a while to pack up my chips--

As Nicki enters the main part of the room she sees Ashley and the guys. Ashley is sitting on a chair. Gordo, Tee, and one of the other bar players are squeezed into the sofa. The two other bar players are sitting on one of the beds. BC is standing next to Ashley, his arms crossed.

NICKI (cont'd)

Hi, guys. So is this like an intervention? Or maybe an orgy? Okay, I'm in.

ASHLEY

Nick.
(looks at Gordo)
She's kidding, Gordo. They know Nick. I told them.

NICKI

Oh. Look guys, I'm sorry. I got carried away. I was just trying to help my sister.

GORDO

And you couldn't ask us for help? You know we'd come through, we're friends. At least that's what I thought. I don't care about the money.

MR. TEE

I care! I'm out five thousand.

The other guys start grumbling.

NICKI

I'll pay you back. I promise. As soon as I can.

ASHLEY
We're paying all of it, sis.

NICKI
Ashley, no. What about the bar?

ASHLEY
Maybe it was never meant to be.

MR. TEE
I'll buy it. It's a great deal.

Gordo elbows Mr. Tee.

MR. TEE (cont'd)
Oww! Okay, I won't buy the bar.

NICKI
I'll tell the tournament director I
need to quit. I'll cash out
tomorrow.

ASHLEY
Actually, we have a different plan.

NICKI
You do?

ASHLEY
Call it Plan "C". I've got the guys
to agree to split all the winnings.
You, actually we, get half. But only
if you make final table.

NICKI
Final table? There's like eighty
players to go.

ASHLEY
And the minimum payout for final
table is a million. Guys?

GORDO
We love you Nick. Hell, I'm not mad,
just disappointed. I know you can do
this.

MR. TEE
I love you to. Even when you beat my
ass at poker. You're our friend.

NICKI
Really?

The guys express their agreement. BC remains silent.

NICKI (cont'd)

Thanks. I guess I didn't know. I'm sorry, I truly am. And I'll make it up to all of you. Let's do this!

The guys cheer. Ashley and the guys get up. Gordo and Mr. Tee hug Nicki and Ashley motions them to the door.

ASHLEY

C'mon guys. Let's go to the bar. It's on Tee.

Ashley and the guys make their way out of the room. BC stays behind. Nicki hesitantly walks up to him.

NICKI

You haven't said much.

BC

Not much to say.

NICKI

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you. I just wanted to help Ash.

BC

I know. That was actually good of you. But--

NICKI

It still hurts. I know.

BC

I'm used to it. Getting hurt. By you.

NICKI

Hey, we were never exclusive. You know that.

BC

That doesn't make it better. Maybe we need some time apart. I've got my new business.

NICKI

No! I mean. Maybe I haven't said it, or shown it. But ... I love you BC. I've known it for a while, I just didn't find the right time to tell you.

BC looks down, avoiding eye contact.

BC

Nick, I-

NICKI

No! I love you. I said it. And I just want you. I know that now.

BC

It's not that. I lost the Nicki I fell in love with. The one who kicked ass and never gave up. Who believed in herself as much as I believed in her.

NICKI

She's still here.

BC

I'm just not sure. I need to go. Good luck in the tournament.

BC turns and walks toward the door. Nicki sits on the end of the bed, crying.

INT. LAS VEGAS CASINO - DAY

Nicki walks into the tournament room. She looks tired and dazed. As Nicki walks to her table she runs into a couple of women professional players, MARIA and VANESSA.

MARIA

There you are. Congratulations on making the final three tables! We're so excited!

NICKI

Wow, Maria. You. And Vanessa! Thanks. And Vanessa ... sorry about--

VANESSA

Don't sweat it sweetie. It's all good. That's poker. Fucking river. Use my chips to take 'em all down.

NICKI

(smiling)
I will! Thanks, guys.

INT. LAS VEGAS CASINO - DAY A SHORT TIME LATER

Nicki is playing at one of two featured tables. She keeps winning hands, busting out one player after another. The Tournament Director, Jack comes over to the table.

JACK

We've got a couple of players coming over. We're down to the final two tables.

Two players come over. One is Jason. He sees Nick and smiles.

JASON

Babe! Made it this far?

NICKI

So nice to see you, Jason.

JASON

Took Hellmuth out with my seven deuce. Dude was pissed.

Play continues. Nicki continually looks into the audience for BC. Not seeing him affects her attention. Nicki loses a hand to Jason for a small pot. Once again they are heads up.

JASON (cont'd)

Two million six hundred.

NICKI

(disgusted)

Fold.

JASON

No shame in folding, babe.

The Announcers comment on the action.

NORM

We're getting close to the final table. Just twelve players left.

ANTONIO

This really separates the amateurs from the pros.

LON

How do you think our last remaining woman, Nicole Anderson, is fairing, Antonio?

ANTONIO

She's really stepped up her game.
But Jason putting the pressure on
her. Heads up, he's beating her.
She can't seem to get a read on him.

NORM

He's bluffed her off a couple of
hands. She just seems really annoyed
with him. Reminds me of my second
wife.

LON

Second?

NORM

Okay, all of them.

Nicki looks at her hand. She's dealt a pair of queens. She
thinks for a moment.

NICKI

I'm all-in.

One other player calls Nicki. He shows his ace and king.

NORM

Classic race. A coin flip.

LON

Nicole at risk. But doubling up puts
her in a great position to make final
table.

The dealer deals the cards. Nicki holds her breath as the
final cards are dealt, making her the winner. She jumps up
and down excitedly. Ashley and the boys cheer from the
gallery.

NICKI

I needed that.

LON

Down to eleven. Two to go for final
table.

The next hand the player Nicki beat shoves his remaining
chips. Another player calls and knocks him out of the
tournament.

NORM

Well, this is it. The bubble.
Antonio, what do you do in this
situation.

ANTONIO

Everyone is going to tighten up.
Nobody wants to go home in tenth
place. Eight hundred thousand is a
nice payday, but final table has a
nice ring to it.

Play continues. Nicki pulls her cards slightly to the side,
avoiding the card sensor as she looks at her cards. She
places the two cards together and covers them with a chip.

NORM

Nicole is in the small blind. We
didn't get a read on her cards, so
we're not sure what she has.

NICKI

I raise. Three million.

Jason looks at his cards, a seven and two.

ANTONIO

Seven deuce. Worst starting hand in
hold 'em. I don't see how Jason can
call here.

JASON

I raise. 7 million.

ANTONIO

Looks like Jason is making a play.
He better hope Nicole hasn't woken up
with a hand.

NICKI

I call.

LON

Okay. We'll see a flop.

The dealer deals the cards. The flop is a seven, a two, and
a queen.

ANTONIO

Two pair for Jason.

NICKI

Check.

JASON

Ten million.

NORM

There's a lot of money in the pot.

ANTONIO

We don't know what Nicole has. If she has a pocket pair she'll likely re-raise here. She might try a bluff. Jason's not going anywhere.

NORM

We could be seeing final table here.

LON

No doubt.

NICKI

I call.

The dealer deals out the fourth card. It's another two.

LON

A boat.

NORM

Looks like Jason's ship has sailed. Sailed him right to final table.

LON

She has him covered, but barely.

NORM

She'll be crippled if they both get all of their chips in.

NICKI

Check.

ANTONIO

He should bet for value here. He knows he probably has the best hand. He'll bet to extract more from Nicole.

JASON

Check.

ANTONIO

Or not. Looks like he's decided to trap on the river.

The dealer deals the last card, a five.

NICKI

Check.

ANTONIO

Now Jason's going in for the kill.
He may just bet enough to get a call,
but he doesn't have much more left.

JASON

All-in.

LON

There it is.

The crowd erupts into cheers.

NORM

If she calls here, she'll be down to
less than five big blinds.

ANTONIO

And the sharks will circle around
smelling blood in the water. She's
effectively done.

Nicki looks at Jason. He smirks at her. Nicki glares. She quickly looks at the audience. She she's BC standing there. They exchange glances. He smiles and gives the heart sign.

JASON

Time.

ANTONIO

What a jerk!

NORM

This is ridiculous! How obnoxious!

The dealer signals to the Floor Manager. He comes over and begins the countdown. Nicki glares at Jason while her friends anxiously watch. She lets the count get close to the end, then tosses a single chip onto the table.

NICKI

Call.

Jason, ecstatic, turns over his cards.

JASON

Full house! Final table, babe!

Nicki remains stone-faced, then slowly cracks a smile. She flips over her cards, a pair of queens for a bigger full house.

NICKI

You got that right ... babe.

The crowd erupts. Ashley, BC and the guys cheer, hug, and high-five each other. Nicki sits back in her seat, smiling.

INT. ASHLEY'S BAR - DAY

Workers are busy remodeling the bar. Ashley is supervising as Kate and Gordo walk in with Brayden who runs over to Ashley, excited.

BRAYDEN

Mommy!

ASHLEY

Hey sweetie. Kissy?

Ashley leans over and Brayden kisses her on the cheek.

ASHLEY (cont'd)

Thanks for watching him guys.

KATE

We had fun. The zoo was packed.

GORDO

Yeah, I'm worn out.

ASHLEY

Can I get you guys something to drink? The bar's open.

GORDO

Sure, I'll have a beer. Are the pull-tabs open.

ASHLEY

Yes. Lindsay's over there.

(to Kate)

Can't keep him away can you?

Kate reaches into her purse and pulls out money.

KATE

Don't want to. Gordo, sweetie, here's twenty.

GORDO

Be right back.

Gordo walks over to the pull-tab station. Kate lifts Brayden up and sits him on a bar stool.

KATE

Have you heard from Nicki and BC?

ASHLEY

There still on their honeymoon poker tour. She texted me some pics.

Ashley takes out her phone and starts scrolling through photos.

ASHLEY (cont'd)

Wait. Not this one. Or this one. Jeez, those two.

KATE

(smiling)

You'll show me those later, right?

ASHLEY

Who are you?

(laughs)

Sure. Okay here's one that safe for little eyes. They're on the beach.

KATE

Wow! BC is packing!

ASHLEY

And slide show is over. Brayden, you want burgers and fries for dinner?

BRAYDEN

Yes!

ASHLEY

Okay, you and Aunt Kate go into the kitchen and ask Jorge. Tell him you know me. Don't forget to get me one.

Kate helps Brayden off the bar stool and they walk to the kitchen. Ashley continues to organize the bar. A handsome Grain Belt Delivery Driver BRETT (30s) walks with a clipboard. He approaches Ashley. She turns around and immediately attracted to him. She smiles.

ASHLEY (cont'd)
Can I help you? Mister ... Grain Belt
guy?

BRETT
Brett.

ASHLEY
Nice to meet you Brett. You have my
delivery? You can put it in my back,
umm, I mean the back door. No mine, I
mean the back of the bar.
(flustered)

BRETT
(laughs)
Yes. It's just that the door is
blocked by someone's work truck.

ASHLEY
Sorry. I'll have them move it. Can I
get you a beer?

BRETT
(stammering)
Not while I'm working. I mean I like
beer. Grain Belt, I like it. It's
the only beer I drink--
(pause)
I hate beer.

ASHLEY
(giggles)
It's okay. Your secret's safe with
me. So, are you new to this route?

BRETT
No. We just haven't delivered here in
a while.

ASHLEY
Oh. Yeah. Previous owner.

As Ashley says this a construction worker walks past them
carrying out a broken Grain Belt beer sign that's riddled
with bullet holes.

BRETT
Who's the new owner?

Ashley stares.

BRETT (cont'd)
(embarrassed)
Oh, sorry. Shit. Of course, you're
the owner! I mean why wouldn't you
be?

(sighs)
Can I start over? I'm Brett
Matthews. I'm your regional rep.

ASHLEY
Tell me more. About you.

BRETT
Me? I like to fish. Kayaking in the
Boundary Waters.
(pause)
Single. Just an average guy.

ASHLEY
Well, I'm not your average girl. I
am an extraordinary woman.

BRETT
I believe that.

ASHLEY
How about a pop?

BRETT
Diet.

ASHLEY
My kind of guy.

Ashley grabs and glass and pours a soda for Matt.

BRETT
So -- Tell me more about you.

ASHLEY
I'm twenty-seven, just bought this
bar. I live with my crazy sister.
And ... I have a five year old son.

BRETT
Tell me about him.

Ashley smiles and continues her conversation with Matt, both
smiling.

FADE OUT.

THE END