

Ken August

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INT. KITCHEN - IKE & VANESSA'S HOUSE – MORNING

IKE, a mellow 40-year-old slender black man is standing in his robe pouring himself some coffee. From another room we can hear his wife talking loudly, as usual.

VANESSA

(from another room)

You best not be thinking about raising that bid, mmm-kay?

Ike opens the cabinet, grabs the bottle of Bailey's and pours a couple of shots in his coffee.

INT. DEN - IKE & VANESSA'S HOUSE – MORNING

VANESSA, a cherubic African American woman with a high-pitched, booming voice is sitting on the love seat watching *The Price Is Right*. Ike enters with his coffee and the sports section as he takes a seat and begins to read the paper.

VANESSA

Bid a dollar, girl. You best bid a dollar, girl, mmm-kay?

The woman on tv bets one dollar.

VANESSA (cont'd)

That's right, baby.

Vanessa seems happy till we see the last contestant bid \$2.

VANESSA (cont'd)

Ooh that was cold, bitch.

Ike peeks out over his paper to see what happened. Suddenly, we hear what sounds like a little girl screaming from upstairs.

VANESSA (cont'd)

Are you alright baby?!

The screaming continues. In a panic, Ike grabs a bat as he and Vanessa sprint upstairs. They get to the closed door and Ike busts it open.

INT. JULES' ROOM – AFTERNOON

The room is filled with comic book posters and playing card paraphernalia. In the middle of the room, jumping up and down and pointing at his computer is Ike and Vanessa's twenty-one year old Asian son, JULIUS. Jules is plump with thick glasses and a creepy stare. The computer screen is flashing the word "Winner".

CUT
TO:

OPENING CREDITS:

INT. DEN - IKE AND VANESSA'S HOUSE – DAY

Ike and Vanessa are standing for an interview with Jules standing between them. A subtitle pops up underneath him that reads "JULIUS JACKSON -- LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA". A few feet away is a small camera crew wearing purple satin jackets with "PokerNation.com" emblazoned on it.

IKE

Nigga thought he won ten thousand dollars.

Jules smiles and seems to enjoy his dad's story.

VANESSA

I told you I don't like when you call him that.
He's mama's little chunk.

Vanessa strokes her son's hair. Jules backs away a little bit and seems uncomfortable with the touching.

IKE

We got this e-mail from PokerNation last week.
The boy was playing a poker tournament on
the Internet and won himself a ten thousand
dollar entry fee for the World Series of Poker.

VANESSA

WoowooooeEEEEEEEE!

IKE

They said we couldn't take the cash equivalent, though.

VANESSA

I don't want to hear nothin' about no cash equivalent. My baby's gonna win us a million dollars.

Vanessa hugs and kisses her son who, looking uncomfortable, tries to squirm away from the physical display of affection.

INT. SCHOOL NURSE'S OFFICE – MORNING

ERWIN, a geeky thirty-something with a very pleasant way about him, sits at his desk in his all white nurse's uniform. A subtitle pops up underneath him that reads "ERWIN FISHBEIN -- DAYTON, OHIO."

ERWIN

Well first of all, I have to say I'm quite excited that PokerNation has chosen me to be one of the players in their documentary. Because I've always loved the game of poker. To me, it's the perfect blend of luck and skill. I also enjoy playing Scrabble, Boggle and I play a pretty mean game of Othello. I guess I decided to sign up for the World Series of Poker, technically, about...seven years ago. You know, a ten thousand dollar entry fee is a lot of money for a high school nurse, so I just started saving up little by little. Now, I guess the reason that I wanted to play...

The door of the nurse's office flies open and a very large, very tough looking student stumbles in looking sick to his stomach. Erwin rushes over to him.

ERWIN (cont'd)

Tyrone, what's wrong? Are you ok?

TYRONE

Fuckin' Escobar, man! I think he poisoned me. My stomach is killing me.

ERWIN

Oh Tyrone. Nobody is trying to poison you. Sometimes people just get sick. Did you try making a doody?

TYRONE

Makin' a what?

ERWIN

Making a doody. Sometimes when I get stomach cramps, I just have to sit down and really...

(scrunching up his face)

Push out all the doody, you know what I mean? Really clean the system.

Tyrone looks disgusted, then leans over and vomits on Erwin before running to the bathroom.

ERWIN (cont'd)

There must be an extra uniform here somewhere and then we can finish our chat in the teachers lounge.

INT. TRAILER HOME – MORNING

ZACK is sitting in his mobile home with his girlfriend, VAL, and their baby. Zack, in his mid-thirties, has a dirty blonde mullet and looks like your stereotypical redneck. His girlfriend Val is a skinny, chain-smoking brunette who often holds her baby like a handbag. A subtitle pops up underneath him that reads "ZACK STEVENS -- WATERPROOF, LOUISIANA".

ZACK

Hello. My name is Zack. And this is my girlfriend Val.

VAL

And this is our baby Zack Jr.

Zack Jr. is an adorable, smiling baby.

ZACK

Yeah, he's kinda cool. But check this out. Let me show you the real love of my life...

Zack quickly gets up and runs outside.

EXT. TRAILER HOME – MORNING

We follow him outside where he is leaning back, posing on the hood of his corvette. We catch a glimpse of a van parked out front with "PokerNation.com" written on it.

ZACK

My 1969 Corvette Stingray, mint condition. I lost my virginity in this car... Still has the same upholstery.

The trailer door opens and out comes Val, holding Zack Jr.

VAL

Are you startin' off about that stupid car again? People don't care about that stupid thing...

ZACK

(shouting at the top of his lungs)
You got a big trap woman!

Val starts yelling at Zack as Zack is yelling at her.

ZACK (cont'd)

I told you to keep your trap shut while they were filming for the Tee.V!

Zack storms off.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE – DAY

Erwin is grabbing a cup of coffee and is now wearing a female nurse's outfit, including the hat.

ERWIN

Please excuse my outfit. It seems the only extra uniform they have, used to belong to the previous nurse, Miss Minokonoye. Okay, where were we? Oh, I remember... Okay, now I've never been much of an athlete...

He takes off the hat.

ERWIN (cont'd)

Actually, a funny little story...when I was a kid, one of the last things that my father said to me before he left was; "son... you're not much of an athlete."... Ah, those were good times. But to win the World Series of Poker? Forget winning. To even compete in the World Series of Poker...Now I'd say that sounds pretty athletic.

Erwin looks pretty impressed with the whole idea.

EXT. FRONT OF THE CORVETTE – DAY

Zack is leaning on his Corvette next to Val, who is holding Zack Jr. and smoking a cigarette with the other arm.

ZACK

I don't even know how you all found me, cause I ain't played on no PokerNation since our computer got broke.

VAL

Yeah, it ain't broke. It got clogged up with all that dang porn.

Zack scratches his head and seems a little embarrassed.

ZACK

Anyways, I was watchin' the World Series of Poker on the E.S.Pee.N.

Val accidentally drops some ash on the baby's head. She casually rubs it in to make sure he doesn't catch fire.

ZACK (cont'd)

And I was yellin' as to how all those guys were pussies, you know? Me, myself, I like to play an aggressive kinda poker. There oughtta be some threat-a-violence...

VAL

He was goin' on and on like that. So I told him that he was a dumb ass. I told him he was

good for nothin'. I told him he don't smell that great.

ZACK

Yeah, she said all them things. So I called her fat, you know?

VAL

(taking a drag from her cigarette)
Yeah, I didn't like that.

ZACK

But when I woke up the next day, I also done signed up for the World Series of Poker. So baby, I guess I got you to thank.

Zack grabs Val's face and gives her a hard kiss on the lips. As they separate, they stick out their tongues and continue touching them together. Zack Jr. sits cluelessly on mom's arm.

EXT. FLORIDA RETIREMENT COMMUNITY – AFTERNOON

HERB, a short, plump bald man in his mid-60's is slowly rolling around on a "Segway" scooter in front of his home. His wife DORIS, a few years younger than him, is standing by watching. In the garage we can see the back of a red Ferrari convertible. The license plate reads: LEGWRMR.

HERB

How many thousands of dollars did you spend on this damn contraption?

DORIS

You don't like it?

HERB

I feel like an idiot.

Herb continues slowly rolling around.

HERB (cont'd)

Why wouldn't I walk? My freakin' legs still work, and where the hell am I supposed to take this thing anyway?

DORIS

You can take it to the clubhouse.

HERB

That's not a bad idea...Maybe I can lose it in a poker game.

Herb veers into the curb. He unsuccessfully tries to maneuver it in the right direction before he just walks off of it.

HERB (cont'd)

Let's take the damn car!

They both get into the Ferrari. Herb backs out and begins to drive away, never going faster than 8 miles per hour.

DORIS

Herb, slow down!

EXT. CLUBHOUSE – AFTERNOON

The valet waits patiently as the Ferrari slowly rolls up to the entrance of a lavish community clubhouse.

DORIS

So they just finished remodeling this clubhouse.

INT. CLUBHOUSE – AFTERNOON

Herb and Doris are now sitting in the dining room of the clubhouse. A subtitle pops up underneath them that reads "HERB SHECKLEMAN -- BOCA RATON, FLORIDA".

DORIS

(glancing around)

Actually, I think they did a beautiful job but they just keep it so damn cold in here.

HERB

Oh Doris, you're always cold! I think you're missing a layer of skin or something.

DORIS

Who knows? Maybe.

HERB

Anyway. So we moved to Florida almost two years ago from New York.

DORIS

Actually, we could have moved down here almost ten years ago but Herb wouldn't move down full-time until he knew that he had a regular poker game a couple of days a week.

HERB

Poker is one of the few things that I've continued to enjoy over the years. So I wasn't about to leave my three weekly card games so I could move down here to die.

DORIS

If he has to stay at home, it drives him crazy.

Herb rolls his eyes as if to say, "no shit." After a couple of seconds of silence...

DORIS (cont'd)

Wow, you're not cold? It's like ice in here.

INT. CORVETTE -- EARLY MORNING

Caption reads "5:00 AM." We are sitting shotgun as Zack drives his corvette down a dirt road. Bon Jovi's "Wanted Dead or Alive" is playing in the background. Zack is alternating stepping on and off the gas to demonstrate the car's power.

ZACK

Do you feel that? Huh? Do you feel that power? What a ride. That's the sweet ride of a Corvette, baby.

Zack rolls up his window.

ZACK (cont'd)

Here. I want you to smell this.

Zack takes a couple of exaggerated deep breaths and signals for the person behind the camera to do the same.

ZACK (cont'd)

Do you smell that? That is genuine 1969 Corvette you're smellin' there. That's the best year to smell a corvette.

Zack enjoys one more inhale.

ZACK (cont'd)

So, right now, I'm on my way to work. I chose the morning shift, mostly cause the other two shifts were already taken. But I like it anyway, cause this way I get to go down to the boats at night. And shit, that's where I make my real money. I'd have to work at the AMPeeM for like...forty years before I could afford the ten thousand dollar entry fee. We even started an account for the entry fee so as to not spend it before the tournament. So far we got almost five thousand dollars in there and I'm planning on winnin' some more tonight...Ooh wait, I love this part.

Zack leans over and turns up the radio, which is still playing "Wanted Dead Or Alive." He lets it play loudly for a few seconds before he quickly lowers the volume and sings, "WANTED!" On cue. Then he turns the volume back up. After a second or two, he looks to the camera.

ZACK (cont'd)

Hey, can you take the wheel for a sec? Here, take the wheel.

A hand hesitantly comes out from behind the camera and grabs the wheel, just in time for Zack to play some serious air guitar for the closing part of the song. Eventually, the car starts to swerve and as the camera goes black we hear...

ZACK (cont'd)

Hey, hey! Man, if you fuck up my alignment, so help me god!

INT. IKE AND VANESSA'S FRONT-YARD – AFTERNOON

Ike is leaning on the side of the porch, in an interview by himself.

IKE

I had read some medical studies in the tv guide that said that the average human only uses about fifteen percent of his brain. But that you can train yourself to use much more than that.

INT. JULES' ROOM – EVENING

Back in Jules' room we continue to hear Ike's interview as we join their training session already in progress. Jules is sitting in the hanging egg chair, holding a figurine of Professor F while Ike is sitting at Jules' desk.

IKE

And then once your brain starts to work at a higher clip, then you can start to pick up on other people's brain waves and start to read their minds and shit. I think that's what makes people like the Dali Llama so smart. He probably thinks at like a thirty-five to forty percent clip...I bet that dude can play some poker.

The training goes as follows: Ike pulls the top card, looks at it, Jules incorrectly guesses what it is, Ike immediately says what the card actually was and then picks up the next card and does it again. Jules has gotten zero correct but at least they seem to be going through the deck at a rapid pace.

JULES

Eight of clubs.

IKE

Jack of spades.

Next.

JULES

King of hearts.

IKE

Four of clubs.

Next.

JULES

Queen of hearts.

IKE

Niiiiice. The ace of hearts.

Vanessa shouts at Ike from downstairs.

VANESSA

Ike! There's something down here crawling by the meatloaf!

IKE

(Towards the door)

Well, if it ain't payin' rent then kill it!

Ike pulls off the top card and then looks at Jules.

IKE (cont'd)

Now focus son. We're trying to train your mind to see the things your eyes can't see.

JULES

That's a lot like Professor F. He can see things with his mind too, that nobody else can see...

Ike is still holding up the card waiting for Jules to stop talking when Vanessa screams again from downstairs. Jules keeps talking right through.

VANESSA

Ike get down here, Goddammit!

IKE

Five minutes, Vee!

JULES

Like there was this one time when his arms and legs were tied with this magical ivy and he had to trick the bad guys into thinking about the combination for the safe...

VANESSA

Ike! I know I didn't just spend hours making a meatloaf for you to let some damn animal start crawling...

JULES

So when they got in the safe, they found all this special weed killer that could kill all the magical ivy...

Ike can't take any more noise!

IKE

Jules!

Jules shuts up immediately with his eyes as wide as they can be. He doesn't move a muscle...

CUT
TO:

IKE AND VANESSA INTERVIEW—

Ike and Vanessa are sitting on their couch.

VANESSA

Julius was adopted when he was just a little baby. But we haven't told him that yet.

Ike glances briefly at his wife.

IKE

The agency told us that we would've had to wait up to two years for a black baby.

VANESSA

Cause, you know, they're cuter than other colored babies.

IKE

I figured, two years? Shit, I might not even want a kid in two years. So we just took whatever they had in stock.

VANESSA

But I'll tell ya. My boy knows everything there is to know about comic books and poker.

IKE

That is true. And now I don't know much about comic books, but when he was five or six, he showed alotta interest in his momma's card

games. I mean, he picked up on that shit mighty quick. Almost like Rain Man, but without all the social skills. So I figured, shit, Asian kids are good with numbers. So let's see where this brings me.

VANESSA

That's right. We wanted him to be the Tiger Woods of poker. That was our idea.

Ike and Vanessa sit quietly for a few seconds as if they're done talking. Then:

IKE

To be honest with ya, I originally wanted to own a white baby. I thought that would be pretty funny.

INT. AMPM—MORNING

Zack tosses his jacket over the security camera and snatches a package of Twinkies and a 40 oz. bottle of malt liquor.

ZACK

I could definitely make more money playing poker than doing this job. I think after the tournament, I'd like to maybe play poker for a living but right now, we only got three managers in this place and likeÉ Zero employees. So if I quit, that's almost a third of the managers gone and then there's like, no employees to move up to become manager. This place would just fall apart.

We take a quick scan of the empty store. Zack takes a seat at the counter and starts shuffling through a deck of cards. Through the window behind him we see a Lexus pull up and honk the horn. Zack finishes chewing his Twinkie.

ZACK (cont'd)

I learned how to play poker a little over five years ago. And I took to it pretty quick. Come to think; I won my girlfriend Val in a poker

game. That was pretty cool. She's like the third biggest pot I ever won.

The car honks again. Zack turns to see it.

ZACK (cont'd)

(toward the window)

This ain't no full serve, lady. What'd ya think, you pulled your car into 1977?

He turns back around and continues.

ZACK (cont'd)

But the strange thing about poker is that there really ain't a lot of strategy in the cards. Your hand is your hand and there ain't nothin' you can really do about that. All card players know what to do with a good hand. But the real key is gettin' inside of people's heads. It's like what my grandmother used to call, "the Mind-Fuck"... Although I don't think she played cards. But you gotta get inside their cage and rattle 'em up a bit. You know? Piss'em off. Then you can get 'em off their game.

INT. ERWIN'S APT. BUILDING – EVENING

Erwin is walking into his apartment building. He's carrying a grocery bag filled with snacks for his regular poker game.

ERWIN

So this is where we live, on the outskirts of one of the most beautiful cities in the world, Dayton, Ohio.

We approach the elevator and Erwin pushes the button.

ERWIN (cont'd)

Ma and I have an apartment on the sixth floor. The penthouse...Well this building doesn't really have a penthouse but it's the top floor so, if there was a penthouse, that's where they would put it.

He waits for a moment then turns and looks down the hallway.

ERWIN (cont'd)

When I was living on my own, I lived down that hallway there. Apartment 8F. But then I felt that ma was starting to get up there in age a little bit, you know? So I decided to move back in...about twenty years ago. That's when I took over running the building's weekly poker game. Ma had been running it for years. But now; she's blind in her right eye and she can't hear with her left ear. So she kinda has to come at you like...

Erwin looks at the camera with his head tilted. He turns his head smoothly till his right ear is facing the camera.

ERWIN (cont'd)

It's kinda cute actually, once you get used to it. And she's still quite the card player. I always tell her that "the reason there's no one-eyed queen in the deck is because, she's the one-eyed queen."

(he smiles)

Well, that's not true of course but...

The elevator door opens and in he walks. The elevator door closes.