

Hold `em

a play

By

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Cast

AMARI

KELLY-ANNE

* Both age in the play from 16 to 28

Time

The present

Settings

Tamworth, NSW

Sydney

Las Vegas, USA

Hold 'em

KELLY-ANNE: Texas Hold 'em is a game with seven cards.

AMARI: For those of you not in the know it's a kind of poker.

KELLY-ANNE: But not any kind. It's the most popular form of poker in casinos and card rooms across America and Europe.

AMARI: And Australia.

KELLY-ANNE: And not just in casinos and card rooms.

AMARI: Online too.

KELLY-ANNE: It's estimated that about six million people play Texas Hold'em on line everyday.

AMARI: So if you hear the busy click-click of a mouse coming from little Jenny's or Jonny's room.

KELLY-ANNE: Don't get too worried.

AMARI: They're probably just on Facebook playing Texas Hold 'em with Sapan from India

KELLY-ANNE: Anas from Saudi Arabia

AMARI: and Matthew from Pittsburgh.

KELLY-ANNE: Although little is known about the invention of Texas hold 'em, according to Wikipedia the Texas State Legislature officially recognizes Robstown, Texas as the game's birthplace back in the early 1900s.

AMARI: After its invention in Texas, Hold 'em was introduced to Las Vegas in 1967 by a group of Texan gamblers and card players, including Crandell Addington, Doyle Brunson, and Amarillo Slim. And that's where I come in. I'm named after him - Amarillo Slim. But you can call me Amari.

KELLY-ANNE COUGHS.

AMARI: I guess my Dad wanted a boy –

KELLY-ANNE COUGHS AGAIN.

AMARI: What is it now ?

KELLY-ANNE: You have to introduce me too.

AMARI: Oh, I'm sorry. This is Kelly-Anne. And she isn't named after anybody. Back to the story. I guess my Dad wanted a boy but then he thought 'Well Amarillo can be a girls' name too' – which I guess it can. So he kept it. Or I kept it. You know what I mean. But that's all just history – what you want to know is what makes Texas Hold'em so good. Much better than regular poker. When Crandell Addington first saw Hold 'em played in 1959 he said:

KELLY-ANNE: (AS ADDINGTON) They didn't call it Texas hold 'em at the time, they just called it Hold 'em... I thought then that if it were to catch on, it would become *the* game. Draw poker, you only bet twice; Hold 'em, you bet four times. That meant you could play strategically. This was more of a thinking man's game.

AMARI: I don't know about thinking man's game. Or a thinking ladies' game. But it is a good game. There are two things that make it so good. First it's bigger than regular poker.

KELLY-ANNE: Everything is.

AMARI: What ?

KELLY-ANNE: In Texas. Everything is. Bigger.

AMARI: Yeah, right. (TO AUDIENCE) In regular poker you only get five cards but in Texas Hold'em you get seven.

KELLY-ANNE: (HOLDING UP FINGERS) Seven.

PAUSE. **AMARI** WAITS FOR SOMETHING.

AMARI: That's your cue.

KELLY-ANNE: What ?

AMARI: Seven.

KELLY-ANNE: Seven ?

AMARI: That's your cue. For the ...

KEELY-ANNE: Oh. Sorry.

KELLY-ANNE PRODUCES A DECK OF CARDS. SHE MOVES TO THE TABLE AND STARTS LAYING OUT CARDS.

AMARI: (TO AUDIENCE) But you don't get all seven cards at once. At the start you just get dealt two cards.

KELLY-ANNE: Now ?

AMARI: Yes Kelly-A. Now.

KELLY-ANNE DEALS TWO CARDS TO EACH OF THEM.

AMARI: These are known as your hole or pocket cards. The best starting hand you can get is double Aces. Also known as "pocket rockets"

KELLY-ANNE: Or "American Airlines."

AMARI: Then comes king-king

KELLY-ANNE: "King Kong"

AMARI: And next –

KELLY-ANNE: "Ladies" –

AMARI: Pair of Queens. So once everybody has their two cards, then comes the flop.

KELLY-ANNE DEALS THREE CARDS FACE UP ON THE TABLE.

AMARI: These are community cards which means they're available to every player. The idea is to make up the best hand you can using your pocket cards and what's on the table. But it's not done yet. Next up the dealer gives you a fourth community card.

KELLY-ANNE DOES SO.

AMARI: This is called the "turn".

KELLY-ANNE: Or "fourth street."

AMARI: No it isn't.

KELLY-ANNE: Yes it is.

AMARI: I never heard it called "fourth street". Who called it "fourth street" ?

KELLY-ANNE: If you don't believe me look it up.

AMARI: Okay. Okay. The fourth card is called the “turn” *or* “fourth street”. This is a chance to use the four cards now on offer to everybody, with the cards you got in your hand, to make an ever better hand. But we’re not done yet. There is one last community card. This is called –

KELLY-ANNE: “Fifth street.”

KELLY-ANNE DEALS THE FIFTH CARD FACE UP. AMARI LOOKS AT HER.

KELLY-ANNE: It is. Look it up.

AMARI: Okay. Some people – a very small some – may call it “fifth street” but the fifth card is more commonly known around the world by lots and lots and lots of people as the “river.” And as a player you either hate it or you love it. And that changes all the time. It can either save you or kill you. So after the river is dealt, once more you calculate your best possible hand and then comes the showdown. This is when the last player’s remaining – the ones who haven’t folded like pussys – show their hole cards and the player with the best hand wins the pot. That’s the other great thing about Hold ‘em – the betting. Like ol’ Crandell Addington said. In regular poker you only get to bet two times. But in Hold ‘em you get can bet four times. (TO **KELLY-ANNE**) Raise you 500.

KELLY-ANNE: Raise ?

AMARI: I’m betting.

KELLY-ANNE: I didn’t know we were betting. I just thought we were showing the audience how to play.

AMARI: We were. But I got such a good hand.

AMARI PUTS DOWN HER CARDS.

AMARI: Full house. Jacks to tens.

KELLY-ANNE: Aren’t you going to tell them about your Dad ?

AMARI: I’m getting to it. (TO AUDIENCE) My Dad is the reason why I love Texas Hold ‘em and the reason I started playing. One of my oldest memories was toddling in to one of my Dad’s poker nights. Not sure what I was doing up. It was way past my bed time. But I walked in and there was all these men crouched

AMARI: (CONT) around a big old table playing Hold 'em. And there in the middle of them was my Dad.

KELLY-ANNE PLAYS AMARI'S DAD.

AMARI: A huge beaming smile on his face. I found out later he was a terrible player. The world's worse bluffer. He was just too damn nice. He'd go all in on a pair of 6s and the guy next to him with a flush to King would be just about to fold and Dad would say: "No. Stop. I only got a pair of sixes." Like I said, just too damn nice. He'd lose all his money every single poker night. They were only playing for five and ten cent pieces – and they all went back in the glass jar at the end - but still, it was moola. But he loved to play – and he sat there that night with this huge smile gazing around the table at his poker buddies.

KELLY-ANNE BECOMES THE POKER BUDDIES.

AMARI: There was Leo Badasci who drove over all the way from Werris Creek just to play.

KELLY-ANNE: (AS TONY) How you doin' ?

AMARI: You see we lived in Tamworth back then. You know ? Home of the country music festival, place that doesn't like Sudanese people. You get the gist. Then there was Little Pete, who ran the BP station out on the Highway to Gunnedah.

KELLY-ANNE: (AS PETE) Evening everyone.

AMARI: Big Tony, who was actually smaller than Little Pete. Never really understood that.

KELLY-ANNE: (AS TONY) I'm calling you Mick.

AMARI: And that was the last of the quintet. Slick Mick – who never looked all that slick.

KELLY-ANNE: (AS MICK) And I'm raising you right back Tone.

AMARI: And then there was my Dad – Grantham Morace Nobile.

KELLY-ANNE BECOMES GRA AGAIN.

AMARI: All though everybody just called him Gra. He'd gone bust hours earlier but he was still sitting there, smiling. Just happy to be sitting at a table where people were playing Hold 'em. Then he

AMARI: (CONT) looked down and saw me and his smile got even wider, if that was possible.

KELLY-ANNE: (AS **GRA**) Here she is. My little Ami. (*Pronounced 'Ammi'*)

AMARI: That's what he always called me. His little Ami.

KELLY-ANNE: The most beautiful girl in the world.

AMARI: And then they all turned to look at me. All these big, red sweaty faces – staring straight down at me. I don't know if I've ever been so terrified in my life. And then I started coughing. Dad laughed, all of them laughed, and then he swooped down and picked me up with his big soft hands and carried me back into the lounge room to where Mum was waiting. You see ? That was it. The other poker tradition. They all smoked cigars. Big fat stogies. They smoked 'em from the moment they arrived till the moment they left - Leo Badasci, Little Pete, Big Tony, even Slick Mick. All except Dad, who never took a single puff. And of course – as life goes – he was the one who suffered. Second hand smoke. In the ground by the time he hit thirty eight and I was seven.

KELLY-ANNE BECOMES AMARI'S MUM IN MOURNING.

AMARI: Mum went very quiet after that. Everybody came in to town for the funeral. All his poker buddies. Leo Badasci even drove over from Werris Creek. But Mum never said a word to them. To anyone. She never said anything for five years. Then one day she started talking again but I've still never heard her laugh. And the boys from poker night kept playing. They moved it to Little Pete's house, over at Nemingha. Even kept a spare chair for Dad. (BEAT) I don't remember much that my father ever said to me but I do remember one thing. Few years after that first night I was sitting on the floor under the poker table.

AMARI CRAWLS UNDER TABLE AND SITS THERE.

AMARI: That seemed to be my favourite spot to play. Listening to the cards being dealt above me. The clink of the coins. The ribbing, the laughter, the coughing. Dad was already getting sick. Couldn't they see what they were doin' to him. Big idiots.

KELLY-ANNE: Ami.

AMARI: What ?

KELLY-ANNE: You mustn't get angry like that. The councillor said.

AMARI: I can get angry if I want.

KELLY-ANNE: Just tell them what your Dad said.

AMARI: Dad lost again as usual. And he leant down and pulled me out from under the table. Carried me back to Mum. And as he carried me through the house he said to me:

KELLY-ANNE: (AS GRA) Sometimes Ami, the best hand doesn't win.

AMARI: "The best hand doesn't win." I can never forget that. I just wish I could remember more that he said.

KELLY-ANNE: Tell them about your Dad's dream.

AMARI: I'm getting to it. Gee, you're so pushy.

KELLY-ANNE: Sorry.

AMARI: (TO AUDIENCE) My Dad's one dream was to go to Las Vegas to play Texas Hold 'em at one of those fancy casinos. He was always saving up to take us all down there. Play one hand. But he never got there. So that became my dream. I'd go to Las Vegas for him. Play a hand in one of those fancy casinos. And I'd win. But first I had to practice. So I started playing. But always in secret. My Mum saw me playing once and got all upset. So I never let her know I was playing. But I played and I played and I played.

KELLY-ANNE: And that's where I come in. Finally.

AMARI: Of course I needed someone to play with and the only person around was Kelly-A.

KELLY-ANNE: And cause I was your friend.

AMARI: But mainly cause you were the only person around. So we'd sit on boxes in Dad's old toolshed out the box and play hand after hand. I'd always win.

THEY SIT ON BOXES AND PLAY.

KELLY-ANNE: Cause you never told me the rules.

AMARI: That's not true. You just couldn't remember them. So we'd play.

KELLY-ANNE: What's better ? A flush or straight ?

AMARI: (TO AUDIENCE) I told you she couldn't remember.

KELLY-ANNE: Hey, I'm trying here.

AMARI: Okay. Now listen good cause this is the last time I'm going to tell you. The best hand you can get is a Royal Flush.

KELLY-ANNE: Which is ?

AMARI: Ace, King, Queen, Jack and 10 – all in the same suit.

KELLY-ANNE: Suit ?

AMARI: Spade, diamond, heart or club - to hit you over the head with.

KELLY-ANNE: Don't get mad.

AMARI: I'm not getting mad. I just told you all of this one hundred times before.

KELLY-ANNE: Tell me again.

AMARI: The best hand is a Royal Flush then straight flush – five cards of the same suit in order, say 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of diamonds. Next is four of a kind – four eights, four Queens. After that comes a Full House. Three of a kind and a pair - 10, 10, 10, 6, 6. Then you got a flush - five cards of the same suit, a straight - five cards in order but not the same suit, three of a Kind, two pair, one pair and High Card.

KELLY-ANNE: High card ?

AMARI: If that's all you got – you don't want to be still in. Trust me.

KELLY-ANNE: And then one-day – we heard about the tournament.

AMARI: Hey, I heard. I heard.

KELLY-ANNE: Ami, we both heard. I was there. You know it.

AMARI: No you weren't.

KELLY-ANNE: Why do you have to be so mean sometimes ?

AMARI: I'm not mean. It's just I heard. (BEAT) Alright, we heard about the tournament. It was the anniversary of Dad's death. On that day every year all his old poker buddies would come around and visit.

- KELLY-ANNE: Guilt is a powerful motivator.
- AMARI: Kelly-A was there too and we were both lying on the floor in the lounge room, watching the TV. Batman or Get Smart. And Leo Badasci was sitting on the sofa with Mum.
- KELLY-ANNE: (AS LEO) There's a big tournament Rose.
- AMARI: He was saying.
- KELLY-ANNE: (AS LEO) "Play your way to Vegas. You know ? Las Vegas in the USA. Where all the big casinos are."
- AMARI: My ears started burning. I wasn't watching Maxwell Smart anymore.
- KELLY-ANNE: (AS LEO) So me and the boys are gonna enter. Fly over to Vegas, for Gra. Make his dream come true.
- AMARI: And I was thinking – "You're not going to Vegas, Leo. If anybody's going to live out Dad's dream. It should be me. Not one of the fat ol' cigar smoking bastards that killed him." I was thinking it. But I didn't say it. I just lay there, in my very own Cone of Silence. Then after Leo left Kelly-A looked it up on Mum's computer. She's good with that stuff.
- KELLY-ANNE: You're good too.
- AMARI: Not as good as you.
- KELLY-ANNE: So I googled "Play your way to Vegas" – and there it was. An all expenses paid trip to Las Vegas for every state winner in Australia.
- AMARI: And better still. There was a junior section.
- KELLY-ANNE: They like developing the next generation of "clients" nice and early.
- AMARI: The winning boy and girl under 18 in New South Wales would also get a trip to Vegas. This was a dream come true. Dad's dream come true.
- KELLY-ANNE: You have to win the competition first.
- AMARI: Piece of cake. (TO AUDIENCE) So we practiced and practiced even harder.

KELLY-ANNE: Ami – I gotta go home.

AMARI: Just another hour.

KELLY-ANNE: It's cold and there's things crawling around in here and my Mum will be getting worried.

AMARI: You've missed dinner before.

KELLY-ANNE: Ami – dinner was five hours ago. It's almost midnight.

AMARI: Then there was a bit of a hang up with the School Principal.

KELLY-ANNE: (AS PRINCIPAL) No pupil of this school is going to play in a poker tournament.

AMARI: Luckily Miss Lehman, our Social Studies teacher – she's actually pretty cool – talked the Principal into it.

KELLY-ANNE: (AS MISS LEHMAN) In coming to a fuller understanding of the culture of modern society – both in Australia and the USA – it's important to understand the significance and place in society of poker in all its variants.

AMARI: Man she can talk some crap ! (TO AUDIENCE) How can you say no to that ? But there was one small hitch. The principal had one condition – another student had to play in the tournament. That way he could pass it off as an official school activity. Not just giving Mrs Lehman – and me – what we wanted. I had the perfect stooge.

KELLY-ANNE: You want me to play in the tournament ?

AMARI: Come on Kelly-A. It'll be fun.

KELLY-ANNE: Fun ? It won't be fun. Sitting in a room with hundreds of people watching me, at a table with people I don't know, people who'll laugh at me when I don't know that a straight flush beats three of a kind. That's not fun.

AMARI: It does.

KELLY-ANNE: What ?

AMARI: Straight flush does beat three of a kind.

KELLY-ANNE: But I don't know that.

AMARI: Come on. We get to go to Sydney.

KELLY-ANNE: Sydney ?

AMARI: Where do you think they'd play the state titles - Armidale ?

KELLY-ANNE: I'd love to go to Sydney.

AMARI: Lots of cool shops. Fun stuff.

BEAT.

KELLY-ANNE: Okay. But if I look really stupid. It's your fault.

AMARI: You don't need any of my help to look stupid.

KELLY-ANNE GOES TO THE TABLE AND STARTS SHUFFLING THE CARDS.

AMARI: (TO AUDIENCE) The tournament was in a month's time. So we practiced even harder. Then one day we drove through the Cottan-Bimbang National Park and down the coast to Sydney, with Miss Lehman as chaperone. See – everyone wins. Mum didn't want to come. She was okay about me going – living Dad's dream – she just didn't want to be part of it. So we arrived at the tournament.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

AMARI: It was at this huge convention centre in Darling Harbour – of course - and as we walked in we had to register and sign in as "Official Players." Then we walked under a sign saying "888.com Play Your Way to Vegas" – gotta plug the sponsors – and into this huge room full of many many – so many – poker tables. If only Dad could see me now. I am really playing. Then a man came over with a clipboard and looked at the number on my chest.
(AS OFFICIAL) Number 532 - Table 23.
Then he looked at Kelly-A.
(AS OFFICIAL) Number 533 – Table 6
Kelly-A wasn't happy.

KELLY-ANNE: But no. We can't be on different tables. She's my friend. We always play together.

AMARI: (AS OFFICIAL) Well not today. Table 6.
(TO KELLY-ANNE) You'll be okay Kelly-Anne.

KELLY-ANNE: But I don't know how to play.

AMARI: Sure you do. Just remember what we practiced.
(TO AUDIENCE) Table 23 looked pretty mean. All boys – and if they were under 18, then I'm still a toddler. One of them sniggered as I sat down. Weren't too many girls at this tournament. They looked mean but it soon became clear they had come in on the last bus from Palookaville. And they were going back on it just as quick. Because I was a girl they thought I'd be a soft touch and they focused on knocking me out first, with bluffs even my Dad could spot. As for strategy – I favoured the Doyle Brunson approach – “tight and aggressive.” You don't play many hands – tight - but when you do you bet and raise often - aggressive. They didn't know what hit 'em. Round 2 goes pretty much the same. Then it was the end of the first day. Already. I strolled out into the foyer and Miss Lehman and Kelly-A are waiting. I'm thinking they've been doing some sightseeing. How nice. (TO KELLY-ANNE) You two have a good afternoon ?

KELLY-ANNE: (AS MISS LEHMAN) What do you mean Ami ?

AMARI: Do a bit of shopping ?

KELLY-ANNE: (AS MISS LEHMAN) I did but Kelly-Anne was playing.

AMARI: She made it through the morning ?

KELLY-ANNE: (AS MISS LEHMAN) And the afternoon. Both you girls will be playing tomorrow.

AMARI: I'm thinking – “Man, the players on her table must've been totally crap.” But I congratulate her all the same.
(TO **KELLY-ANNE**) That's great Kelly-A.

KELLY-ANNE: I got lucky.

AMARI: (TO AUDIENCE) You can say that again.
(TO **KELLY-ANNE**) Where we going for dinner Miss ? Can we go to Star City ? It's just across the road. Watch some real games.

KELLY-ANNE: (AS MISS LEHMAN) No, we're going back to the hostel. Get an early night. Big day for you girls tomorrow.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

AMARI: (TO AUDIENCE) And so it arrived. The day when I finally booked my trip to Las Vegas. The day Dad's dream came true in

AMARI: (CONT) me. Just eight tables left in the morning. The winners go through to the final table. And on this second morning – these kids are good. They're all playing very tight and very mean. They bet big and fast and start clicking their fingers if you take too long. I even lose a couple of hands. The boy from Bondi opposite keeps looking straight through me. But then I get lucky. Pocket rockets. American Airlines. Thanks Dad. The flop has another ace and I'm sitting pretty. Bondi Boy goes all in. I do too. We show our cards and his face looks like it just melted. Turns out he's some kind of legend in junior Hold 'em. His legend ended right there. After that everyone looks at me different. I burn them off – slowly – and my seat at the finale is booked. The last table is set up like a little stadium. Lights and raised seating all around – so all the other kids who got knocked out can watch. Even a TV camera from Channel Nine. Wide World of Sports. Hold 'em's a sport now ? Poker is big these days.

SHE SITS AT THE TABLE. **KELLY-ANNE** SITS OPPOSITE.

AMARI: I sit down and who's right across from me but Kelly-A. (TO KELLY-ANNE) What you doing here ?

KELLY-ANNE: I made it to the final table.

AMARI: You're kidding ?

KELLY-ANNE: Looks like all that practice paid off.

AMARI: (TO AUDIENCE) I smile at Kelly-A. That's great. She made the final table. Something to tell the other kids back in Tamworth. I'm a better teacher than I thought. But her journey ends here – like the rest of these palookas. I'm looking around the table and I'm feeling very confident. They don't look like much. The best player in the whole tournament was that boy from Bondi I knocked out last round. I get the feeling my work here is done. But I remember my Dad's words.

KELLY-ANNE: (AS **GRA**) Sometimes Ami, the best hand doesn't win.

AMARI: And I wipe the smile off my face. Play some poker. The boy on my right looks like a junior version of Leo Badasci – red sweaty face, all he's missing is the cigar - and he goes out almost as quick. So does the boy from Deniliquin, the girl from Blacktown and the boy from Mittagong. Soon it's just me, a girl from Maitland, two boys from Parramatta and Kelly-A. She's still hanging in there. Somehow.

KELLY-ANNE: And I'm hating every second of it. I didn't even want to come to the bloody tournament and now I'm playing at the final table. I tried to get knocked out at every table I played but every time I went all in everyone else folded or the one person who did call my bluff had a worse hand than me. Now I was sitting here with everyone watching me and playing against Ami. I looked across at Miss Lehman and she kept smiling at me, encouraging me on, but my hands were sweating so much I could hardly hold the cards. All I wanted was to go to the bathroom and be sick. I was just waiting till Ami had a good hand then I could give all my chips to her – so I didn't give them to one of the other players.

AMARI: The chick from Maitland went next and it was down to the girls from Tamworth versus the boys from Parramatta. Country versus city – winner takes all. And the best thing was I hadn't even had to do anything. I'd just been sitting here playing nice and safe and they were falling like flies. Soon my big hand would come and I'd be on the way to Vegas. Sitting with Dad at the Casino Royale. And the very next hand – it came. The big slick. Ace and King of Spades. I had a feeling this was it. I raised 1000.

KELLY-ANNE: I called. Ami had something. All I had was a pair of twos. At last I could get out.

AMARI: The boys from Parramatta both called as well. I was so close. The flop. Jack of Spades, two of Diamonds and six of spades. One more Spade and I was home. One of the city boys liked his hand as well and raised 5000. I called – so did Kelly-A.

KELLY-ANNE: Please win the hand Ami. I want you to get the chips. Not him.

AMARI: The turn. Ten of spades. A flush to Ace ! No one was going to beat that. Well Dad, sometimes the best hand does win. And guess what ? I had it. (TO TABLE) All in.

KELLY-ANNE: She's got the flush. Thank god.

AMARI: I looked at the boy from the big smoke. I was trying to look a little nervous, edgy, like I wasn't sure - but in my head I was thinking "Go all in, go all in." And he did. Probably had two pair. Maybe even three of a kind. At best – he had a flush as well - but not one to Ace. The other boy folded. Very smart. I looked over at Kelly-A. She let out a big sigh of relief.

- KELLY-ANNE: I was looking at Ami. She gave me a little smile. I knew what that meant. She had the flush. At last – it was almost over. Here’s your chips Ami. (TO TABLE) “All in.”
- AMARI: Very nice of Kelly-A. She’s a true friend. Giving me her chips. Then it was just a matter of time. Turn over the river – give me the money. Then it’ll just be me and the last loser from the city. Be on my way to Vegas very soon. The dealer flipped. Doesn’t matter if it was a spade. I had the Ace. I was home. Two of hearts. The pot was all mine.
- KELLY-ANNE: (QUIET) No, no.
- AMARI: Parramatta boy flipped over his cards. Jack and a six. Two pair. He went all in hoping for the full House. Pretty big risk.
- KELLY-ANNE: (LOUDER) No, no.
- AMARI: I flipped over mine, watched his face fall. Reached out for my chips. Then I stopped. Kelly-A was just sitting there frozen. It’s okay girl, throw them in. It’s over.
- KELLY-ANNE: (LOUD) No ! No !
- AMARI: What was up with her ?
- KELLY-ANNE: I hadn’t even looked at the river. I was so happy to see Ami raising. So desperate to get off this table.
- AMARI: What’s the matter girl ? Throw them in.
- KELLY-ANNE: I couldn’t. Not that. Not that.
- AMARI: Then she just let her cards drop on to the table. They sorta fell out of her hand. A pair of twos. You got a pair. Good for you. Then a cold shudder goes through me.
- KELLY-ANNE: (TO **AMARI**) I’m sorry Ami.
- AMARI: I look up at the flop – and there between my spades is the two of diamonds. And then I look at the river – another deuce. She’s got ... She’s got –
- KELLY-ANNE: Four of a kind. I’m sorry Ami.
- AMARI: I’m so shocked I can’t speak or move. I don’t move for a long time. In the end Miss Lehman has to come and take me away

AMARI: (CONT) from the table. I look over at Kelly-A. She's crying. I sit in the stand next to Miss L and stare into space.

KELLY-ANNE: What have I done ? Didn't even want to play in the tournament. Now I've knocked Ami out. It was her dream to play in Vegas. And I've knocked her out. I'm crying so hard I can't even see the cards. The next hand the last boy from Parramatta goes all in and I call. He wins with a full house. I don't even have a pair. It's all over. Miss Lehman gives me a pat on the back and we drive back to Tamworth. Ami doesn't say a word the whole trip.

AMARI: Now I finally understand what Mum felt when Dad died. You don't say anything because words have no point. Nothing has any point. You just sit and stare into space. My Dad had just died all over again, all cause of Kelly-A and her quadruple twos. I even stopped playing poker. (BEAT) The summer after that Kelly-A and her family moved away. I never even said goodbye. But many years later - I did get to Vegas.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

AMARI: It was a business trip. I found an escape from poker in work. I know, usually it's the other way round. But for me it was work, work, work and I became pretty successful. I flew over to the USA for a convention, and Vegas is sort of like their Darling Harbour. One night I wandered past the Casino Royale. I walked in for a look. And there they were – hundreds and hundreds of Hold 'em tables, and all smoke free. Dad would've loved it. I thought what the heck. I'll play a hand. Just for Dad. I sat down at the nearest table and bought some chips. The croupier handed them to me and called –

KELLY-ANNE: All bets.

AMARI: Hey, I know that voice. I looked up. It was Kelly-A. I played for awhile and then another dealer arrived. Kelly-A got up from the table. I cashed in my chips and followed her. I found her standing out the back. Smoking a cigarette.(TO KELLY-ANNE) Kelly-A ?

KELLY-ANNE: Hi Ami.

AMARI: I didn't think you remembered me.

KELLY-ANNE: From the moment you sat down.

AMARI: Smoking'll kill you.

KELLY-ANNE: Thought you be pleased about that.

AMARI: It was years ago.

KELLY-ANNE: Ten years.

AMARI: Ten years, eight weeks and four days. See ? I don't think about it at all. (BEAT) What are you doing here ?

KELLY-ANNE: My family moved here.

AMARI: To the States ? I didn't know.

KELLY-ANNE: I thought you wouldn't want to.

AMARI: Never saw you working in a place like this.

KELLY-ANNE: Neither did I. One thing there isn't a shortage of in Vegas – people who want to play cards. But there is a shortage of people wanting to deal them.

AMARI: Always thought you'd be a doctor or a lawyer or something.

KELLY-ANNE: So did I.

AMARI: What happened ?

KELLY-ANNE LOOKS AT AMARI. BEAT.

AMARI: It was a game of cards. It wasn't your fault.

KELLY-ANNE: It was your dream.

AMARI: It was my Dad's dream. And anyway here I am. Ten years later. Living his dream.

KELLY-ANNE: Bit late.

AMARI: Never too late. And besides – I got to live out a dream of my own.

KELLY-ANNE: What was that ?

AMARI: To find you again. (BEAT) I missed you Kelly-A.

KELLY-ANNE: I missed you.

THEY HUG.

KELLY-ANNE: I finish in another hour. Can you come back then ? I got so much to tell you.

AMARI: Sure. If you promise not to smoke.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

AMARI: Texas Hold 'em is a game with seven cards.

KELLY-ANNE: It's a game that Dad's dream about

AMARI: And a game that can split friends apart.

KELLY-ANNE: And bring them back together.

THEY HOLD HANDS.

AMARI: And it's much better than regular poker.

KELLY-ANNE: Much.

LIGHTS FADE