

Full House

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Our characters are Paul, Everett, Lennie, and Josh. All are about 25 years old. All of them are in leisure clothes, though their clothing still demonstrates something of their position in society: Everett's clothes are the most respectable, perhaps a sweater and khakis; Lennie follows in a button-down shirt and jeans. Josh, once a rather good college football player, is dressed perhaps in a football jersey or some shirt advertising a particular team. Paul is also in a T-shirt and jeans, perhaps some brand-name shirt.

It is winter in Borenton, the city in which they live, and it is snowing somewhat heavily outside. Borenton is a small city, perhaps 100,000 residents or so. They all grew up here.

We are set in the front room of Lennie's apartment. The stage is divided into two rooms: the living room (where they all are now), which doubles as a dining room, and thus has a table to sit at (around which they will be playing poker), and the kitchen. There is a door dividing the two rooms.

Throughout the scene, they are all drinking and munching, and getting drunk. This is generally omitted from the stage directions to avoid clutter.

Everett and Josh are sitting at the table in the living/dining room; Lennie is in the kitchen, getting beer out of the refrigerator. Lennie does already have a spot; each player has personal chips lined up in front of him (or, in Lennie's case, at his spot), and the "bank" or stock of chips is at Lennie's spot.

LENNIE

(sticking his head through the door)

Paul here yet?

JOSH

Nope.

LENNIE

Okay. Then I'll just get three.

(he comes out with the three beers, handing one to each person)

JOSH

Why's he late?

LENNIE

I don't know. The weather sucks.

EVERETT

(absently shuffling a deck of cards.)

He'll get here.

JOSH

Poker's no good with just three.

LENNIE

Yeah, Josh, we know.

EVERETT

He'll get here.

LENNIE

Actually, as long as he's not here yet, since we have nothing to do but say over and over again how you can't play poker with three people...

JOSH

Sorry.

LENNIE

...I figured I ought to tell you both that I'm going out with Andrea.

EVERETT

(Pause. Stops shuffling.)

Congratulations.

But, I thought she was going out with Paul?

LENNIE

(Struggling to euphemize.)

Well...

JOSH

She dumped him.

LENNIE

Andrea decided it wasn't best for her.

EVERETT

Ah.

(resumes shuffling.)

JOSH

But yeah, congratulations. Even if I wish it was with a money-making stud like Everett here.

LENNIE

Hey, hey! I'm gainfully employed, Mr. Overprotective Brother.

EVERETT

As an insurance salesman.

LENNIE

A claims processor.

JOSH

One of those people other people love to hate.

LENNIE

At least I *am* employed. And there are a lot of opportunities to move up.

JOSH

Yeah, yeah. We're just playing with you, Lennie.

EVERETT

Yeah. Mostly. I mean, *I* wouldn't object if Josh set me up with Andrea...

LENNIE

(laughing)

Shut up both of you, or I'll pour your next beers over your heads instead of into your cups.

JOSH

Seriously, congratulations. I'm kinda glad she's off from Paul.

LENNIE

(Suddenly very serious.)

Uh, yeah. That's actually the other reason I mentioned it. I think it might be best if we don't talk about her while Paul's here.

EVERETT

Yeah, knowing Paul, he might be a little bit hot-tempered tonight. He hasn't even told me yet.

JOSH

(Not joking, or if he's joking it falls flat as the others take him seriously.)

Sure. We won't get him started, so I won't have to rip him a new one tonight.

There is a long pause. They all drink. Everett shuffles.

Josh stands up, goes to the window, with his beer. He stares out for a bit and sips; maybe paces a little bit.

EVERETT

(Muttering to himself.)

Two weeks on break from law school and already the soap opera begins.

LENNIE

Kinda like a movie.

EVERETT

Hey, if it was *my* movie, I'd get the girl!

JOSH

I think Paul just got out of the bus.

LENNIE

Finally.

PAUL

(Coming in the door; clearly tipsy.)

Hey guys!

LENNIE

Hey, Paul.

EVERETT

You made it.

PAUL

Sorry. I totally forgot when I stopped in O'Leary's, and the busses were slow because of the snow.

JOSH

Getting drunk before the poker even begins?

PAUL

It's been a long week. (dropping a bombshell) Andrea broke up with me.

EVERETT

(There is a momentary pause while everyone is unsure if they should act as if this was news. Paul wonders: where's my bombshell?)

I'm sorry, man. That sucks.

Paul sits down in the only empty seat, between Everett and Lennie.

EVERETT

(dealing.)

We'll start with straight five-card draw, nothing wild. Sound good?

LENNIE

Yeah.

PAUL

(picking up his cards.)

What's with these small cards?

EVERETT

Bridge-sized. Sorry.

PAUL

(together with Josh.)

Bridge-sized?

JOSH
(together with Paul.)

Bridge-sized?

EVERETT

Yeah.

I don't have any other decks — Lennie, do you have something?

LENNIE
(getting up.)

I'll check.

PAUL

You play bridge? Like for old ladies?

EVERETT

I play it at school. With guys like us.

JOSH

Like us?

EVERETT

Like, 25-years-old us. It's a good game.

PAUL

You wanna teach us?

EVERETT

I don't think it's your kind of game.

PAUL

Yeah.

LENNIE
(He's been looking for cards.)

I can't find any. We'll have to play with these.

Ante?

(everyone antes, using a white chip, the smallest denomination)

JOSH

Fine, let's just play.

A quarter.

(throws in another white chip.)

LENNIE

(throwing in a white chip.)

Sure.

PAUL

Can I get chips?

(He takes out his wallet and changes some money for chips.)

Done.

(Puts in a white chip.)

EVERETT

(Putting in a white chip. Extrapolate the further flow of money.)

Yup.

(Offering the deck for the "draw.")

Okay, how many?

JOSH

2.

(Trades in two cards, etc.)

LENNIE

3.

PAUL

1.

EVERETT

Well, well. Okay. Dealer takes 3.

JOSH

One dollar.

Bluffing so soon, Josh?

PAUL

It worked on me. Fold.

LENNIE

I call.

PAUL

I'm out.

EVERETT

JOSH
(Showing his cards.)

Well, it's a pair queens. Only a half-bluff.

Two pair.

PAUL

(He takes the pot.)

JOSH
(Taking the cards to shuffle and deal.)

Well, the night is young. I live to bluff again.

It's true.

PAUL

Hey, Josh?

Yeah?

JOSH

Does Andrea really want to break up with me?

PAUL

Yeah, I think so.

JOSH

Do you think you could maybe put in a good word for me?

PAUL

JOSH
(Starting to deal. Two cards up, one down.)

It won't work.

PAUL
We hit it off sometimes. I think I just screwed up.

JOSH
Lennie, your bet, with the queen showing.

PAUL
C'mon, Josh, really.

LENNIE
What's the game?

JOSH
Oh, right. Another warmup. Straight-up seven card stud. Ante up.
(They do.)

LENNIE
I'm going to start right with a dollar.

EVERETT
On the first round?

LENNIE
Yeah. I like my cards.

PAUL
Maybe. Still, I'm in.

EVERETT
No way I'm letting that get through.

JOSH
Same.

(Begins dealing the next round.)

PAUL

Seriously, do you think flowers might help?

JOSH

Paul, I *really* think it's over.

My bid with the ace. You guys think I should go for the inside straight?

PAUL

Don't be so short-sighted.

LENNIE

It'd be brave and stupid. *And* it'd fatten my purse.

JOSH

You're on. One dollar.

EVERETT

Aren't you supposed to start bidding cheaply? This is going to be one expensive game of seven card stud.

PAUL

I think she might listen to me if I apologized.

LENNIE

I have a feeling they'll get even richer later on.

Still, I'm in.

PAUL

I fold.

Do you think an apology would work?

JOSH

No, Paul.

EVERETT

I'm in one more round, but I maintain that you guys are nuts.

JOSH

Okay. Here we go again.

(Deals.)

Everett, pair of fours and the bet's all yours.

EVERETT

A quarter.

JOSH

Yeah, okay, I'll go with that.

LENNIE

Me too.

PAUL

There any more beer?

LENNIE

Yeah, in the kitchen.

PAUL

Okay.

(Gets up and goes to the kitchen.)

EVERETT

(To the others.)

We've gotta tell him.

LENNIE

Are you kidding? After all that? He'd go ballistic.

JOSH

(Dealing.)

Yeah, I think Lennie's right.

EVERETT

I just can't *sit* here...

(Paul walks in and sits back down, much more mellow now.)

JOSH

Pair of kings and it's mine. A dollar.

Here we go again. EVERETT

I'm in. LENNIE

I'm out. EVERETT

Okay. Last card. JOSH

(Deals.)

Fifty cents.

Done and done. I call. Three queens. LENNIE

Three kings. JOSH

Oh, ouch. EVERETT

So close... and yet, so far. JOSH

It happens, I guess. LENNIE

New game time. Spit in the ocean?

Sure, we'll start spicing it up. EVERETT

(Deals: four cards to each player, one, the wild card, face up in the center.) LENNIE

Looks like jacks are wild. Paul?

Check. PAUL

Fifty.

EVERETT

JOSH
(Puts chips in.)

I'm in.

LENNIE

Fold.

PAUL

Paul, come on.

EVERETT

I'll just sit this one out.

PAUL

Don't sulk.

EVERETT

My hand sucks, so I'm folding.

PAUL

EVERETT
(Lennie offers cards for Everett to draw.)

Okay, okay. One.

JOSH

Two.

LENNIE

Dealer takes one.

EVERETT

A dollar.

JOSH

I'm out.

LENNIE

Let's see it.

EVERETT

Straight to the ten. Using a whole two jacks.

LENNIE

Yeah, beats my three queens. I figured if they lost last time, maybe they'd win this time.

EVERETT

The ladies'll win it for you some time, but not this one...

(He collects the pot.)

LENNIE

I think I need some more chips now. You guys are pretty beastly at this!

(He takes out his wallet to get some money.)

PAUL

What the hell?

LENNIE

What?

PAUL

Why do you have a picture of Andrea in your wallet?

EVERETT

Oh God.

LENNIE

I just...

PAUL
(Yelling.)

Why do you have a picture of Andrea in your wallet?

There is a loud silence.

EVERETT

Paul...

LENNIE

No. No. This is stupid. Paul: I am dating your old girlfriend. It's tough for you, but there's nothing I can do about that, and you're just going to have to pull yourself together and deal with it.

PAUL

Oh God. Oh God oh God oh God.

EVERETT

Just calm down.

PAUL

The slut.

EVERETT

Calm down!

JOSH

Yeah, stay cool, Paul.

PAUL

What, you can't take the fact that your sister waited all of a week before deciding to start going with another guy?

JOSH

It was a long time coming, Paul.

PAUL

What, she was seeing Lennie behind my back, is that it?

JOSH

No, you were being a jerk, like you are now.

PAUL

You have no idea.

EVERETT

Stop! Jeez, I'll deal this. Five card draw. Straight up. Let's get back on track.

PAUL

I don't think I want to play this. I want to hear more about Lennie's new girlfriend.

EVERETT

Okay, stop. Can you guys hold on one minute? I'm going to put in some pizza.

LENNIE

Yeah.

EVERETT

(Looking at Paul.)

And you're going to help me.

PAUL

Yeah, whatever.

They get up and go to the kitchen. While in the kitchen, they have a discussion among themselves, while preparing the pizza, and Josh and Lennie talk in the main room.

JOSH

Damn it.

LENNIE

I'm sorry, I should've cancelled this week or something. Or talked to him before.

EVERETT

Paul, you *have* to calm down.

JOSH

He probably would've punched you. I'm ready to take him out myself.

PAUL

I can't believe you didn't tell me.

LENNIE

Oh God, don't do that.

EVERETT

I just found out myself.

JOSH

He deserves it.

PAUL

And then you held out on me until now.

LENNIE

We should've told him straight up. Or I should've.

EVERETT

Because you're dealing with this so rationally now?

PAUL

We're friends, Everett.

JOSH

Let Everett deal with it. They're friends.

EVERETT

And as your friend, I thought I might wait to tell you until you weren't drunk off your ass.

LENNIE

I don't think anyone can get through to him when he's this drunk.

PAUL

I can take care of myself.

EVERETT

Yeah, well, you're this far from getting Josh to knock you flat. Or worse.

JOSH

If he doesn't calm down, I am going to hit him. I don't care how drunk he is, he doesn't get to trash-talk Andrea.

EVERETT

Do you remember what Josh did to Phil Goodman? Paul, he got put into the hospital.

LENNIE

Just let him blow off his steam. It's been tough for him.

PAUL

Yeah, well, he has to learn to take the truth.

EVERETT

And, whatever you do, you're *not* going to tell him about Andrea and Todd, or you'll

probably go to the hospital too.

JOSH

He needs to learn better than to lie like this.

PAUL

He doesn't know about Todd? Everyone knows about Todd!

EVERETT

No, and you'd better not tell him. That's a line you don't get to cross.

LENNIE

Maybe Everett can get through to him.

PAUL

I can't believe no one's told him about Todd.

EVERETT

I mean it, Paul. You don't tell someone that his sister went with someone like Todd Fredricks. He's still your friend.

PAUL

We'll see.

EVERETT

Just don't go there. It's not worth it.

PAUL

Everett... this guy lives in a dream-world where he thinks his sister is some angel, some perfect woman. But she's not. Do you know what she was doing with him when her roommate walked in?

EVERETT

Yes, I do, and that was before you two were going out, and we worked hard to make sure Josh never heard about it.

JOSH

I wonder what they're talking about.

PAUL

How can you live and not tell someone about that? Why not tell him?

EVERETT
(With unusual intensity.)

Because there are things we just have to keep to ourselves. Because it's better that way: better for us and better for our friendship. So deal with it and shut up about it.

LENNIE
I dunno. They are taking a while.
Maybe Everett's getting through.

PAUL
Okay.

EVERETT
Paul, you're my best friend. Listen to me. Really.

PAUL
Okay.

EVERETT
Look, you have a choice. You can get in your petty comments, get beat up, ruin the friendship and go spreading dirt about someone because you're pissed at her. Or you can keep control of yourself, cool down, and keep your friends. But once you choose, you're done, that's it.

PAUL
Yeah, okay. I'll try.
Thanks.

EVERETT
Let's go back. The pizza'll be ready soon enough.
They come back in; sit down. No one speaks; Paul picks up the cards.

PAUL
Okay. Five card draw, deuces wild.
(He deals.)

EVERETT
Check.

JOSH

Fifty.

LENNIE

Done.

PAUL
(Puts in money.)

I'm in.

EVERETT

Okay, how many?

PAUL

Two.

EVERETT

One.

JOSH

Two.

LENNIE

Dealer takes three.

PAUL

Fifty.

EVERETT

I'm out.

JOSH

Shoot, I forget to get those chips.

LENNIE

(Takes out wallet, exchanges money.)

I may not be in for much more. I'm low on cash, and this is not my night.

PAUL
Why, so you can save it to take your new girlfriend out?

Frankly, yeah.

LENNIE

Would you shut up already, Paul?

JOSH

Let it go. I call.

LENNIE

Fold.

PAUL

Okay. Three fives.

EVERETT

Dangit, two queens.

LENNIE

Sorry, Lennie, looks like you're getting all the girls and none of the cash.

JOSH

(He laughs.)

What the hell kind of joke was that?

LENNIE

A drunk joke, that's what.

EVERETT

And you said *I* was being a jerk.

PAUL

I make a joke, and you think that vindicates your incredible rudeness?

JOSH

No, I'm just totally outclassed by your rudeness.

PAUL

The game is five card draw, no wilds.

EVERETT

That's boring. PAUL

I think boring is just fine right now. EVERETT

(He deals.)

A dollar. JOSH

Fold. LENNIE

Raise you a dollar. PAUL

I call. EVERETT

Your dollar, and another dollar. JOSH

Your dollar, and... PAUL

Just call, *please*. EVERETT

Okay, okay. Let's see what the cards give. PAUL

Dealer calls as well. How many? EVERETT

Two. JOSH

Two. PAUL

EVERETT

Dealer takes one.

JOSH

Two dollars.

PAUL

Done, and I raise you two.

EVERETT

Dealer folds.

Give it a rest, guys.

JOSH

Your two, and five more.

PAUL

Done, and ten more.

LENNIE

Guys, don't be stupid.

EVERETT

House limit is raise of five.

PAUL

Fine, I raise five.

JOSH

Your five, and another five.

LENNIE

If Andrea were here, she'd say this was just another case of testosterone poisoning...

PAUL

If Andrea were here, we'd really have it out. Your five, and another five.

JOSH

(He doesn't have enough chips; he takes out his wallet and throws in a bill.)

Another five.

PAUL
(Does the same.)

And another five.

EVERETT
Stop! Dealer sets the limit here. No more raising. Just call the bet.

JOSH
You can't do that.

EVERETT
Yes, actually, I can. Because I'm the dealer and you're being jerks and I'm pissed and I say so. Now call or fold.

JOSH
I call.

PAUL
Yeah, well, my apologies, but I have a full house. Read them and weep.
(Everett whistles.)

JOSH
(He laughs.)
Wow. So do I. Queens and fours.

PAUL
Tens and aces.

EVERETT
I've never seen two full houses at the same time.

LENNIE
They're full all right, but full of what?

PAUL
Well, I've got the aces, so I'll take my pot...

JOSH
It's the three-of-a-kind that matters, and my queens are higher than your tens.

PAUL

It's highest card.

EVERETT

I think Josh is right.

PAUL

What? That's stupid.

EVERETT

It's the rules.

PAUL

What, so you're siding with him?

LENNIE

Paul, they're *rules*.

PAUL

I won the fucking hand. I have the aces.

JOSH

Stop being an idiot!

PAUL

I'm not that one who didn't know my sister was sleeping with Todd Fredericks!

LENNIE

Oh my God.

JOSH

What the... you're the one who's been spreading that stupid rumor?

(He stands up in rage.)

PAUL

(Also standing up.)

It's no rumor, my friend. It's the truth. Todd's bed, to my bed, to our mutual friend Lennie's bed. Everyone else knew about it but you.

JOSH

You little shit.

Josh starts moving around the table, heading for Paul. Lennie grabs him to hold him back.

PAUL

Who's being rude now, huh?

Paul, too, starts heading for Josh; Everett grabs him. They struggle. Paul takes a swing at Everett, who dodges, and swings at Paul; he connects, and Paul goes sprawling on the floor. He gets back up, and rushes Everett; Lennie and Josh are just watching now, having forgotten their own struggle. Everett connects with him, flips him, and sends him sprawling to the ground, unconscious.

EVERETT

(Pause, looking at Paul.)

Aw hell. That felt good.

JOSH

Not every day Harvard boys get to punch their best friend?

EVERETT

Maybe he'll thank me for it in the morning.

(Looking at the body.)

Or maybe not.

(They all laugh.)

LENNIE

Guys, I'm sorry about that. I should've cancelled this week. Said that I had to stay at work or something.

JOSH

It's okay.

EVERETT

We needed it, I think.

JOSH

Yeah.

(A pause.)

EVERETT

Do you want me to take Paul to my place? I don't think he's waking up any time soon.

LENNIE

It's okay. He can stay on a couch. I just need to clean up.

EVERETT

Okay.

(Beat.)

So what about next week's game? I'll still be in town, but I don't know if we want to keep going.

JOSH

I'll do it, if he calms down. You're only in town for one more week.

EVERETT

He will.

LENNIE

(As Everett is going for the door.)

Yeah, who knows.

Hey, Everett? Ask you a question?

EVERETT

Shoot.

LENNIE

Why are you still coming back to Borenton?

JOSH

Borenton the Boring Town...

LENNIE

Like we've never heard that one before.

EVERETT

What do you mean? I live here.

LENNIE

I mean, why do you still hang out with us? Look at this. A bunch of drunk guys, who get into fights and play poker, and that's it.

You go to Harvard. You've gotta be able to get girls. Anyone'd probably love to go with you. Why haven't you moved on?

EVERETT

Hell, Lennie, I don't know. What kind of question is that to ask a guy when he's drunk?

(Lennie laughs.)

Seriously, we've been friends forever. I'm not gonna stop just because I go to a fancy law school, or because we punch each other for fun at night.

Well, as long as I can still give better than I get, anyway.

Plus, I dunno. Maybe someday I'll get a turn with Andrea.

Goodnight, guys.

LENNIE

Yeah, goodnight.

JOSH

You're crazy, you know that, Everett?

EVERETT

Yeah.

JOSH

Goodnight.

Everett walks out. Lennie takes a deep breath, gives Josh a look, and starts cleaning up. First, he cleans off the table. The buzzer rings for the pizza, and he goes to turn that off. Then, together, Josh and Lennie carry Paul out a door in the back to the bedroom. Fade out.