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Personal Essay
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The epitome of being an adult

My eighteenth birthday was already predetermined for me by my friends three years ago. First step was to do everything that I can do now that I could not do yesterday. The night consisted of buying some cigarettes, a trip to the strip club and finally some gambling. All the stuff an adult does. The days of looking inside and wondering what they were doing in there were over. I was on the inside now and looking around to see what I could do as a new adult.

The strip club was funny because it consisted of four main groups of people that coincidentally are celebrating someone's eighteenth birthday. The strip club must be a corner stone in any young man's eighteenth birthday. If I would get addicted to anything it would be the strip club, but it was not.

The casino we went to was the biggest in town. Lights are everywhere and lit up dollar signs. It is too bad that I didn't look at the customer's face's when I came in, I might have had a better idea of what I was getting myself into.

The situations that arise during a blackjack game are all too familiar. There is no control over what the dealer does with the money. I feel like I have an upset stomach whenever I get a hand that was under a seventeen. I am young, impressionable and the house was an older brother trying to trick me into doing something I should not. Distraught from the non-stop stretch of fifteens and sixteens; I decided to make my way to a very unfamiliar place called the poker room.

The room seemed like a place that someone would pay respects to the deceased. There was also no smoking in the poker room as well and no drinking. Very slow methodical actions; almost as if everyone knew what they were going to do even before the cards were dealt. The poker table was the height of a kitchen table and the chairs were plush and comfortable. I did not have to constantly move around to make myself comfortable, as I did on the blackjack table stools. If the room had a wall to separate it from the casino, it would be dead quiet. Everyone respected each other at the table even after a person just won their money. It was an environment of only the most mature and modest people, not a place for kids. Now I know why they say that poker is a gentlemen's game.

The dealer looked at me and asked if I wanted to try. "Well how do you play," I said. "It's easy!" said the dealer in a persuasive voice, "first I deal you two cards face down, then there is a round of betting on the strength of the hand at that time. Then I deal out three cards in the center of the table that everyone can use for their hands. Then you bet again, another card, some more betting, then the final card and the final round of betting. These five cards are called the board or community cards." "Is that it?" I asked him. "Well there is a little bit more to it, but you'll get to that in a couple of years," he said.

I was still very nervous when I sat down at the table to start playing. My hands were shaking whenever I kept a hand and went to grab chips to bet. It took a couple of rounds to ease the tension enough so I could engage in casual conversation with everyone at the table. An older man at the other end of the table who was a lot more comfortable than I said, "The way he is shaking he must be sitting on a monster hand over there." He

laughed; he knew that I was just trying to test the waters out to see if I could swim. Maybe I reminded him of when he first started to play Texas Hold'em. I was in their group of jokers by just sitting at the table with them. We both joked around all through the game as if we have known each other for a while.

I did not know the actions even after the dealer tried his best to give me a good idea of how to play. I kept asking what I could do, it was embarrassing but people have to start somewhere. Even though I looked like I had no reason to be there, I was glued to the seat.

Hands were coming and going at an incredible rate. The time was flying by on my first night playing. One hand that sticks out in my mind that night was my first bluff.

There were many face cards on the board, (jacks, queens and kings). I did not have anything but a four card straight and in poker, it's the best five card hand. When it was my turn to bet, I raised someone, meaning I bet twice as much as they did. The opposing person folded and I won the hand without even a pair. I turned my cards over showing that I was playing the board (my hand was made up of the five community cards), later I found out that it was a bad move because it is better to let people you are playing against think that you have something good every time you win. I went from feeling like a new employee that does not know how to do anything, to a store manager that knew the ins and outs.

I was the youngest at the table, because I was just old enough to be in here two hours ago. I was able to beat these people in a hand; this made me feel like a natural. A feeling of utter satisfaction came over me as soon as I started to rake in the first pile of chips. With hold'em I feel like an intelligent adult whether I win or lose. A game that

takes some talent and skill deserves some respect. At that moment on, I knew this was my game. I felt grown up in a place where people complaining like children surrounded me.

It was not the naked girls or the smoke bellowing out of my mouth from the cigarettes that I bought that made me feel like the grown man I suddenly was tonight, it was the poker. I do not remember my first hand that night, probably because I folded it. That was not important, it was the fact that I belonged in a room of such great company.

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