

CHECK, CHEAP, ALL IN, OR FOLD

At this table, every bet reveals something—and the quietest player may be the most dangerous.

SUSPENSEFUL DRAMEDY SHORT • ONE LOCATION • FIVE SPEAKING ROLES • WRITTEN BY GARY B. HALEY

LOGLINE: A cocky investor, an anxious analyst, a revenge-minded ex going on a cruise, and an unreadable prodigy gather for a Texas Hold ‘Em lesson where tells emerge and tensions rise as patience proves more powerful than bravado.

THE STORY

Beneath a cone of warm light, poker instructor Chip deals cards—and hard truths—to four very different students: cocky Holden, analytical Miles, quick-witted Kimber, and unreadable Kennedy. Each has come to learn Texas Hold ‘Em, but each is also trying to master something more personal: ego, uncertainty, revenge, or the power of remaining unseen. Chip’s rules sound simple: check when you can, see the flop cheaply, go all in only when the moment is right—or fold before a bad decision gets expensive.

But every lesson becomes a test. Holden’s swagger exposes his tells. Miles nearly thinks himself out of the game. Kimber discovers the dangerous pleasure of a well-timed bluff. Tension climbs with every raise as alliances flicker, confidence fractures, and the students begin weaponizing Chip’s advice against one another. Kennedy barely says a word—until the final hands erupt into reversals, nervous laughter, and one beautifully earned reveal: the quiet player has read the room better than anyone.

WHY IT WORKS

- A contained story with a clean, marketable hook.
- Poker strategy exposes character rather than becoming a lecture.
- Escalating hands create genuine suspense, reversals, and dark humor.
- Five distinct roles give actors sharp, memorable moments.
- A satisfying twist rewards attentive viewers.

THE PLAYERS

- CHIP** — charming mentor and master observer
- KIMBER** — witty competitor with an ex to defeat
- KENNEDY** — silent, unreadable—and dangerously patient
- MILES** — brilliant analyst learning to trust a decision
- HOLDEN** — born cocky, betting big and loose with his tells

TONE & AUDIENCE

A suspenseful dramedy in which humor grows naturally from personality, pressure, and bruised pride. The mood begins inviting and playful, then tightens as the bets rise and the balance of power shifts. Casual viewers can follow the human contest without knowing poker, while experienced players will recognize the tells, traps, and strategic details. The result is festival-friendly, highly watchable, and suited to digital platforms or expansion into a character-driven series of high-stakes lessons.

DIRECTOR’S CANVAS

One table becomes a pressure chamber. The warm overhead light isolates the players from the surrounding darkness while cards snap across felt, chips click into growing stacks, and reaction shots reveal what dialogue conceals. Camera placement can begin controlled and observational, then move tighter as certainty unravels. The poker montage accelerates the rhythm; the final hands slow time, allowing glances, stillness, and sound design to carry the suspense. Kennedy’s restraint gives the ending its cinematic payoff: she has been present in every frame, yet underestimated by everyone—including the audience.

ACCOLADES

Check, Cheap, All In, or Fold was a finalist in the 2026 Wiki: The World's Fastest Screenplay Contest.

PRODUCTION APPEAL

1 CONTROLLED INTERIOR, 5 SPEAKING ROLES, 2 SHOOT DAYS, \$18K–\$593K SCALABLE BUDGET RANGE

The table is set. The pressure is rising. And the player everyone overlooks is about to earn everything.