

# POSI-CHIP POKER

By Chris Stiles

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## CHARACTERS

*(1 Male, 2 Female, 1 Either Gender)*

MARCY	A tough girl of 16
HEIDI	A sheltered girl of 16
WILLIE	A low achieving boy of 15
TEACHER'S VOICE	An unseen authority, coming from a PA

## SCENE

The in-school suspension room of a high school. It is a sparsely furnished, dark and bleak room, perhaps a basement. Three chairs form a semi-circle around a table. On the right side of the stage is another small table; it holds a box full of poker chips.

## TIME

The present.

## PROPERTIES

Deck of playing cards, poker chips.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

**Playing Indian Poker:** The rules are simple: Every player antes an agreed amount. Dealer deals everyone a single card. No player looks at his or her card. On signal, every player places his or her card on the forehead, face out. Every player looks at the other players' cards and places bets based on those cards. After bets are made, the cards are laid down. High card wins ( 2 is lowest, ace is high).

**Dealing the scripted cards:** The deck will need to be stacked with the cards that are in the script. One method is to stack the cards in order and only pretend to shuffle, leaving the order intact. In the original production, the actor playing Willie devised a more complicated system that I never did understand, but it didn't matter –it worked. The order of the cards to be dealt should be 8, 4, 9, A, 10, 5, 7, 7, 8, A, J, 3.

**Types of cards:** A standard deck works, but one that has larger letters and numbers on the face is helpful to the audience (although the audience really doesn't need to see the cards, as the dialogue and actions make it clear who has the best/worst card).

## POSI-CHIP POKER

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**MARCY enters from R, followed by HEIDI. MARCY walks in like SHE's familiar with the place, because SHE is. SHE walks over to the table on R, sets down a slip of paper and grabs five poker chips. HEIDI is entering cautiously, as though the territory is unfamiliar. BOTH are lugging backpacks.**

**The TEACHER'S VOICE comes from a PA system. When HE speaks, the students look towards the audience and up. It is unclear whether the VOICE is the presence of a person, or if the STUDENTS are hearing an ominous big brother voice. The VOICE can be either male or female.**

VOICE: (to MARCY) We meet once again.

MARCY: (looking downstage and up towards the VOICE) You always say that. (SHE crosses to other table, sets backpack on floor, sits in center chair.)

HEIDI: (also looking towards VOICE) Excuse me...I don't know what to...

VOICE: Where's your slip?

HEIDI: My what?

VOICE: Your suspension slip.

HEIDI: Oh, right. (SHE digs a slip of paper out of her backpack, sets it on table.) Sorry, I've never been here before.

VOICE: Sit down.

(HEIDI crosses to table and chairs, sits in far R chair.)

MARCY: Yo, what are you doing?

HEIDI: (confused) I'm sorry?

MARCY: You can't sit there.

HEIDI: I can't?

MARCY: That's Willie's spot.

HEIDI: (looking around) I don't see a Willie.

MARCY: Doesn't matter. That's his spot. Besides, he'll be here.

VOICE: Willie doesn't have suspension today.

(WILLIE enters from R. HE has a confident stride. HE carries nothing but a suspension slip in his hand.)

WILLIE: Oh yes I do. (HE crosses to R table, sets down his suspension list and grabs five poker chips.)

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VOICE: You're not on the list.

WILLIE: *(looking towards VOICE)* That's because I wasn't suspended at the beginning of the day. *(HE looks towards MARCY and HEIDI.)* Things didn't go so well, though.

HEIDI: The beginning of the day?

WILLIE: *(looking exclusively at HEIDI)* Yeah, I kind of got into it with Mr. Carlson in the hall. He tried to confiscate my Big Gulp. *(HE impersonates a teacher.)* "No food or drink from outside the building." I paid two bucks for that drink. I wasn't gonna let Carlson have it. So I told him if he wanted it, he'd have to shove it up his...

VOICE: That's enough, Willie. Sit down.

WILLIE: I would, but there's someone in my seat.

MARCY: *(to HEIDI)* Told you.

HEIDI: *(getting out of WILLIE's seat)* Well, excuse me for not knowing all the unwritten rules of this underground society.

WILLIE: Underground society! This is in school suspension!

VOICE: Everyone, sit down.

HEIDI: *(moving across to the vacant seat on L)* Can I sit here? Or does it belong to some other unseen denizen?

WILLIE: What?

MARCY: Yeah, you can sit there. I think this is it today.

WILLIE: *(taking a deck of cards from his coat)* Hey Marcy...I deal first today.

HEIDI: Marcy...are you Marcy Lanford?

MARCY: What's it to you?

HEIDI: Well, there's a Marcy Lanford in my Algebra 2 class. Except she's never there. Everyday, Mrs. Culley does roll, and calls out, "Marcy Lanford?" And someone says, "She's doing in school suspension." And I'm thinking, how can someone always be doing in school suspension?

WILLIE: That's Marcy. What is it Marcy, seven straight days?

MARCY: Eight.

HEIDI: So it is you. I didn't think anyone could be in that much trouble.

*(The bell rings. WILLIE reaches in his pocket, pulls out a poker chip and tosses it into the middle of the table. HE begins shuffling the cards.*

*MARCY reaches in her backpack, pulls out the poker chips SHE picked up when SHE came in, as well as several more. SHE tosses one into the middle of the table.)*

VOICE: Begin your day. You all know how it works.

HEIDI: *(to VOICE)* Um, excuse me? I don't, actually, know how it works. I've never been here before.

MARCY: Duh.

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HEIDI: Hello? (*SHE turns to MARCY.*) He's not answering me.

MARCY: He won't, unless it's important.

HEIDI: Well, it is important. I've never been here and I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do with myself. Do we do homework? Or is there some sort of punitive writing we're supposed to do? I just don't know!

MARCY: Shut up. I'll tell you what to do.

HEIDI: What?

MARCY: Ante up.

HEIDI: Excuse me?

WILLIE: She said "ante up". Hurry up, I'm ready to deal.

HEIDI: You mean bet? I don't want to bet!

WILLIE: You have to.

HEIDI: I have to?

MARCY: It's how it's done.

HEIDI: How it's done? (*SHE speaks towards the VOICE.*) What do they mean, how it's done?

VOICE: They should know how it's done.

HEIDI: (*to VOICE*) But... (*To MARCY*) But I have nothing to bet.

MARCY: (*menacingly*) You better find something.

HEIDI: I...I didn't bring any money.

WILLIE: We don't bet money.

HEIDI: No?

MARCY: No. We bet Posi-Chips.

HEIDI: What? Posi-Chips? What are Posi-Chips?

MARCY: (*holding up one of the poker chips*) These.

HEIDI: Where am I supposed to get these Posi-Chips?

WILLIE: You get them for positive behavior here.

HEIDI: But I've never been here to have any positive behavior.

WILLIE: You better get some now to play.

HEIDI: I don't want to play. I've got homework.

MARCY: You have to play.

HEIDI: That's ridiculous. (*To VOICE*) I don't have to play.

VOICE: You have to play.

HEIDI: This is ludicrous.

MARCY: Ante up!

HEIDI: I told you, I don't have any of those Posi-Chips.

VOICE: You need to find more chips.

HEIDI: (*very frustrated*) Where?

MARCY: (*with a sly look*) Mr. Berger's history quiz.

HEIDI: What?

MARCY: Mr. Berger's history quiz. I have to make it up today. What's on it?

HEIDI: I can't tell you that!

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WILLIE: Ante!

MARCY: I'll give you five Posi-Chips.

HEIDI: No! It's cheating.

WILLIE: Ante!

HEIDI: Alright! It's all true or false. The first five are true. Then I think it alternates false, true for the last five.

MARCY: *(looking satisfied)* Thank you. *(SHE gives HEIDI three chips from her backpack.)*

WILLIE: Can I deal now?

*(MARCY nods. WILLIE deals everyone a single card.)*

HEIDI: What are we playing?

MARCY: Just play.

*(MARCY and WILLIE each slaps their card on their forehead without looking at its value. THEY stare at HEIDI, who eventually does the same. WILLIE's card is a nine, MARCY's an eight and HEIDI's card is a four.)*

WILLIE: *(surveying the cards of the OTHERS)* I bet two. *(HE throws in two chips.)*

MARCY: Call. *(SHE throws in two chips.)*

HEIDI: Um...I only have two left.

MARCY: So call.

HEIDI: Okay. *(throws in chips)* Now what?

WILLIE: Cards down. *(HE puts his card face up; others follow suit)* Yes! I win.

HEIDI: What, high card wins?

MARCY: High card wins.

WILLIE: Ante up again.

HEIDI: But I lost all my chips!

MARCY: Tough game, isn't it?

HEIDI: Okay. I see how this works. Pick on the new kid. Bully the one who's never done in school suspension. An initiation rite, of sorts. Okay. That's done with. Shall we do homework?

WILLIE: Ante up.

HEIDI: What? Again? I have no chips left.

MARCY: Ante up.

HEIDI: *(sighing)* Okay. What do you want now?

MARCY: What have you got?

HEIDI: *(thinking for a moment, then to WILLIE)* Aren't you in Mr. Munson's English?

WILLIE: Only when I have to be.

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HEIDI: Right. Well, I'm his aide.

WILLIE: So?

MARCY: So, dummy, she's probably got inside information.

WILLIE: Ooo...inside information. Sounds illegal.

MARCY: What have you got for him?

HEIDI: (*indicating VOICE*) He might hear.

MARCY: He will hear. He won't care.

HEIDI: He won't care?

VOICE: I won't care.

HEIDI: Okay. Those daily grammar quizzes?

WILLIE: I hate those. I don't do them half the time.

HEIDI: Well, you should. He doesn't grade them.

WILLIE: What?

HEIDI: All you have to do is write something. Anything. He has me mark down who does it and who doesn't.

WILLIE: That's it?

HEIDI: That's it.

WILLIE: I could be passing English.

MARCY: That would be a first.

WILLIE: You're telling me. (*HE hands HEIDI a big handful of Posi-Chips.*) Here.

HEIDI: Thank you. Are we playing again?

WILLIE: Ante up.

(*ALL THREE toss two chips into the middle of the table; MARCY shuffles and deals the next hand.*)

MARCY: Go.

(*ALL THREE put their card on their forehead. MARCY has a five. WILLIE has an ace. HEIDI has a ten.*)

WILLIE: I bet one.

MARCY: Me too.

HEIDI: I bet...eight.

MARCY: Eight! That's all you have!

HEIDI: I stand by my bet.

WILLIE: I'll call.

MARCY: (*disgusted*) I fold.

HEIDI: (*putting down her card, looking at the OTHERS*) I win!

MARCY: Are you kidding?

WILLIE: An ace beats everything.

HEIDI: Not in all card games.

WILLIE: What?

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HEIDI: In some games it's worth one. Others it's worth eleven. Some it beats everything, others it beats nothing. You didn't clarify.

WILLIE: How can an ace be worth two things?

MARCY: An ace is high.

HEIDI: I think we should throw out this hand because you didn't make it clear beforehand.

WILLIE: That's just weird. An ace worth one or eleven.

HEIDI: We need an objective arbitrator. *(To VOICE)* What do you think?

VOICE: I think Marcy and Willie should know how to play this game.

MARCY: Hah!

HEIDI: That's not fair! I never would have bet everything against a high ace! I have nothing left.

MARCY: Yeah, well, life's tough.

HEIDI: I suppose you want more information to cheat your way through school. Well, I'm sorry. I refuse to cater to your extortion.

WILLIE: Extortion. Cool word.

MARCY: You know, you can get five chips from him. *(SHE indicates the VOICE.)*

HEIDI: What?

MARCY: Everybody gets five Posi-Chips to start the day.

HEIDI: *(to VOICE)* Why didn't you tell me that?

VOICE: It didn't seem important.

HEIDI: For a teacher, you're very unfair.

VOICE: Take four chips.

HEIDI: I thought I got five.

VOICE: You're being rude. I took one away.

*(HEIDI grumbles, takes four chips and returns to her seat.)*

WILLIE: *(to HEIDI)* Um, your deal.

HEIDI: Fine. *(SHE takes the cards, shuffles and deals.)* Cards up.

*(WILLIE and MARCY both have sevens; HEIDI has an eight.)*

WILLIE: I bet two.

MARCY: Raise one.

HEIDI: Call. That's all I have.

MARCY: Show.

HEIDI: I win!

WILLIE: Oh man!

HEIDI: I can't believe it! I win!

WILLIE: Chill out.

HEIDI: *(counting chips)* I have...twelve! This is exciting.

MARCY: You'll need a lot more than twelve.

HEIDI: For what?

MARCY: You'll see.

HEIDI: (*standing, stepping towards the VOICE*) For what?

VOICE: Sit down.

HEIDI: You're not being very helpful.

VOICE: That'll be two chips.

HEIDI: Oh fine. (*SHE returns two chips to the boxes, crosses back to her seat.*) What do you call this, anyway?

MARCY: Call what?

HEIDI: This game we're playing.

WILLIE: Indian Poker.

HEIDI: Indian Poker?

WILLIE: Are you deaf? That's what I said.

HEIDI: Why is it called that?

WILLIE: What?

HEIDI: Are you deaf? Why is the game called "Indian Poker"?

WILLIE: I don't know.

MARCY: (*to WILLIE*) You idiot. This is why you'll be twenty when you graduate. (*To HEIDI*) It's called Indian Poker because it has to do with Indians.

HEIDI: East Indians or Native Americans.

MARCY: Huh?

HEIDI: Are we talking about East Indians or Native Americans?

MARCY: What's the difference?

HEIDI: East Indians are from India. Native Americans are from, well, America.

WILLIE: Why are people from India called East Indians?

HEIDI: (*stating the obvious*) Because it's in the east.

WILLIE: Can't you go west to get there?

HEIDI: What?

WILLIE: Yeah. Isn't that what Columbus tried to prove? Show that you can get from Spain to India from a western route? Because the world is round?

MARCY: Wow! I'm impressed! You do learn something in school.

WILLIE: I learned that in the second grade. I stopped paying attention after that.

HEIDI: Must we digress?

WILLIE: Digress. Now that I never learned.

MARCY: It means off the subject.

HEIDI: Yes! Thank you! Can we get on the subject?

WILLIE: What was the subject?

HEIDI: (*exasperated*) Why is Indian Poker called Indian Poker?

WILLIE: Because of the Indians.

HEIDI: What about the Indians?!

WILLIE: (*holding a card on his forehead, like in the game*) What does this look like?

HEIDI: A card on your pimply face?

WILLIE: A feather. A feather on my head. Like an Indian.

HEIDI: A feather on your head. Isn't that a little disparaging?

WILLIE: Big word again.

MARCY: It means like a put down. Or prejudiced.

HEIDI: Exactly. Don't you agree?

MARCY: It's just a feather.

HEIDI: It's a stereotype!

WILLIE: Hey, I know that one. Stereotypes...like saying all smart people are nerds.

HEIDI: Hey!

MARCY: Yeah. Or that smart people are snobs.

HEIDI: I resent that.

MARCY: Resent? What do you have to resent? Let me tell you about stereotypes. Stereotypes like being called "white trash" because your family lives in a trailer, or because your mom's a waitress, or because your mom drops you off at school in her rusty Ford Escort instead of letting you drive a brand new Mustang.

HEIDI: I never called you white trash. I would never say anything like that. It would be dis...

MARCY: Disparaging? You know, you don't have to open your mouth to be disparaging. It's how you and your friends look at us in the hall. That "don't come near me" look. Or the parties you say "the whole school is invited to," but you know and I know you'd kick our butts if we showed up.

WILLIE: Or the look you give us in the classroom when we say something stupid.

HEIDI: Yes. It's always some cute remark to make people laugh. Get things off track. You know, the look you get isn't disparaging. Some of us want to learn.

WILLIE: Who doesn't want to learn? I can't help it if the teachers go too fast. I can't help it if I can't sit still for a whole class. I can't help it if no one wants to help me learn.

HEIDI: Maybe you should try harder.

WILLIE: I've tried. I've tried and I've tried to keep up, but just when I think I get one thing, here comes something else. The work never stops. It never stops! And then you end up some place like this and you never get your work done.

HEIDI: Seems like this would be a great place to work. Quiet. Out of the way.

MARCY: Doesn't work like that.

HEIDI: Or, you could just stay out of suspension in the first place.

WILLIE: Easy for you to say.

HEIDI: How hard is it to stay out of trouble?

WILLIE: Pretty hard, I'd say. Even you can't stay out.

MARCY: Yeah, how'd the likes of you get in so much trouble, anyway?

HEIDI: The likes of me?

MARCY: Yeah. Smart girl. Rich girl. Little Miss Perfect.

HEIDI: How come you can stereotype and I can't?

MARCY: What?

HEIDI: You think you know me but you don't. Smart girl. I'm not that smart. I have to work for my grades. I mean, sure, some things come easy. Like English. I love English. But math? Oh my gosh! Sometimes I'm up all night working on Algebra. I'll be up till three a.m. working on one problem set that takes everyone else 45 minutes. And then I'm crabby and worthless the next day, struggling through classes.

WILLIE: I know what you mean. Sometimes I'm up till three or four with my Playstation, trying to master a game. The next day, I've got no focus.

HEIDI: And rich girl? Maybe my family has more than yours, but why does that make me bad? And what was the last thing you called me?

MARCY: Nothing.

WILLIE: I believe you called her "Little Miss Perfect".

HEIDI: Well, obviously I'm not. I'm here, aren't I? Why would I be here if I was perfect? Why would they sentence me to a day in a basement with you, and you, and (*pointing towards the VOICE*) and you! What kind of worthless teacher are you, anyway? Letting kids gamble? It's no wonder they stick you with in school suspension.

VOICE: Tch, tch. Somebody's going to lose a few Posi-Chips.

HEIDI: Fine! Take them!

*(SHE throws all her chips across the floor, crosses to the left, sits on the floor and cries. WILLIE gets up, picks up her chips and puts them back by her spot at the table.)*

VOICE: Willie gets twenty Posi-Chips.

MARCY: What for?

VOICE: Random acts of kindness. He picked up Heidi's chips.

MARCY: I've never got any random kindness chips.

VOICE: You've never been randomly kind.

MARCY: Whatever.

VOICE: And Heidi gets fifteen.

MARCY: What? Why?

VOICE: Pity.

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MARCY: Pity? How about throwing a little pity over her? I've been stuck down here for eight days! (*SHE turns towards WILLIE.*) I gotta get out of here.

VOICE: Only one way to do that.

MARCY: I know.

WILLIE: You'll never get enough. And I've got way more than you. Even Heidi has more.

MARCY: I know how to get more chips.

WILLIE: You're not going to...

MARCY: I think I will.

WILLIE: You've never taken yourself that low.

MARCY: I can't let her beat me out. I'm going for it.

WILLIE: This I gotta see.

MARCY: Hello? I'd like to confess.

HEIDI: (*looking up*) Confess?

MARCY: That's what I said, brainiac. Confess.

VOICE: Step forward.

(*MARCY moves downstage, almost to the front of the stage.*)

Begin.

MARCY: Forgive me teacher, for I have wronged.

HEIDI: (*not believing what SHE's hearing*) What?

VOICE: Continue.

MARCY: On February 1<sup>st</sup>, I skipped my fourth hour class to avoid a test.

HEIDI: That's all?

WILLIE: Oh, there's more.

MARCY: I snuck into the second floor bathroom and lit a cigarette.

HEIDI: Well, that's a little worse.

WILLIE: There's more. Shhh.

MARCY: Then it occurred to me that I had a paper due fifth hour, which I had not finished.

VOICE: Finished?

MARCY: Started.

VOICE: That's better. Go on.

MARCY: So I knew I wouldn't get away with skipping two straight classes...

VOICE: Go on.

MARCY: So I tossed my cigarette into the trash, starting a fire.

HEIDI: That was you? Thanks to that evacuation, my biology experiment was ruined. Ruined, I say.

VOICE: Heidi?

HEIDI: Yes?

VOICE: That'll be five posi-chips.

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HEIDI: What? Why?

WILLIE: You spoiled the sanctity of the confession.

HEIDI: Sanctity of the confession? You don't even know what that means, you moron.

VOICE: Make that seven Posi-Chips.

HEIDI: What?

VOICE: For patronizing Willie.

HEIDI: Oh brother. *(SHE grabs seven chips from her pile, crosses L to the chip table and deposits them in the box.)*

MARCY: Can I go on now?

HEIDI: There's more?

WILLIE: There's more.

MARCY: Anyway, as the fire is starting, in walks three seventh graders.

HEIDI: Seventh graders! Seventh graders aren't supposed to be in the high school part of the building.

ALL: Shut up!

MARCY: *(continuing)* And to make sure none of them narked, I stuffed their mouths with toilet paper.

HEIDI: You're a very mean person.

MARCY: Well, I feel kind of bad about it. I mean, you should have seen those little girls, running from the burning bathroom, screaming, "MMMMMPH! MMMMPH!"...I didn't mean to hurt anyone.

VOICE: Sixteen Posi-Chips.

MARCY: Only sixteen?

VOICE: You seem remorseful about the girls, but not about the fire.

MARCY: It's just burning trash.

HEIDI: Hello! It's called a felony.

MARCY: Alright! Alright! *(SHE grabs her chips from the box, sits down and counts all of her chips.)* Nowhere near enough.

HEIDI: Why are you guys so determined to win Posi-Chips?

MARCY: Just passing the time.

WILLIE: Yeah, just passing the time.

HEIDI: No, it's more than that.

MARCY: No it's not.

HEIDI: How many chips do you have, Willie?

WILLIE: Nineteen.

*(MARCY gives him a look of death.)*

I mean, I don't know.

HEIDI: Yes, you do. You know exactly how many you have. *(To MARCY)* And so do you. There must be something you're playing for. Some magic number.

MARCY: No magic number.

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HEIDI: What's the magic number, Willie?

WILLIE: Fifty.

MARCY: You told her!

WILLIE: She pressured me.

HEIDI: What happens when you get fifty Posi-Chips?

MARCY: Don't tell her.

WILLIE: You're free.

HEIDI: What?

WILLIE: You're free to go back to your regular classes.

HEIDI: *(to the VOICE)* So does this happen very often? Do kids ever buy their way out?

VOICE: Hardly ever.

HEIDI: Well, today is different. Come on, let's play some Posi-Chip Poker.

MARCY: Some what?

HEIDI: Posi-Chip Poker. That's what we're calling it now. Instead of Indian Poker. It's not dis...

MARCY: Disparaging. Give me the cards, Willie. Let's play.

HEIDI: I'm going to win.

MARCY: I don't think so. You might be smart, but this is a game of luck. And the way I figure it, I'm overdue for a lucky streak.

HEIDI: Deal.

*(THEY play. WILLIE has a low card; HE folds quickly. MARCY has an ace. HEIDI has a jack. The betting is frantic. THEY keep raising each others bets, until finally HEIDI shoves her entire pile of chips into the center of the table, indicating SHE is betting it all. MARCY hedges.)*

MARCY: If I bet any more and I lose, I'll have nothing.

*(WILLIE begins frantically waving his hands, mouthing "no" to MARCY. SHE hedges, looks at WILLIE, then folds. WILLIE indicates disgust.)*

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