

Texas Hold'em

Genre: Romantic Comedy

Logline: He lost his family to gambling then gambled to win them back

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Jake Long, a former quarterback for the Texas Longhorns who was injured in his last game against Auburn, is now living in Dallas in a less than luxury apartment with his wife Jenny and his 8 month old daughter Sophie. Still reticent about his injury and his lost chances of any kind of contract in the NFL, he has trouble resigning himself to his lifeless, risk averse job at a local insurance company where he works as a telemarketer—a job was given to him by Jenny's Aunt--the head of Human Resources.

The story begins with the championship game against Auburn. It's fourth and inches with less than a minute remaining and the Longhorns have called a time out. Down by only three points, Jake is instructed by his coach to play it safe and run the ball for an easy first down to keep the drive alive. But Jake has different plans, and chooses to risk it all by throwing it deep to his wide receiver Charlie Owens on a play action pass. Owens catches the pass for the go-ahead touchdown, but Jake pays the price of the gamble by taking a big league hit by Auburn's huge defensive end Saratoga Williams. Suddenly, his would be multimillion dollar contract with the Dallas Cowboys has suddenly vanished and his childhood dream of buying Jenny a horse ranch has all but come to an end. He will never play football again.

Fast forward to four years later. Jake and Jenny live in a dumpy apartment with their baby daughter Sophie. Jenny works at a local restaurant called Rounder's and attends a night school to become a medical assistant. Jake works as a telemarketer for the Dallas based insurance company called CMG. Among his coworkers is an attractive blond by the name of Rhonda who has the hots for Jake. Needless to say he is bored with his job at CMG and often plays Internet poker while making calls.

Competitive and still looking for the quick strike like he did in college, Jake has squandered their savings on get rich quick schemes and power ball tickets as he continues to live in the past. His immaturity becomes the point of contention and when Jenny's car breaks down at her night school, she is given a ride home in a brand new Mercedes by guest lecturer and one of Dallas' most eligible bachelors Dr. Peter Lawford. Peter likes her. After he drops her off at home, Jenny stares at the garbage strewn across the parking lot. When she enters the apartment moments later, she discovers that Jake has bought a Powerball ticket instead of a second pair of diapers and reads him the riot act.

As if to exercise his man hood, he stomps out and joins Bernie--one of his coworkers--at a local bar where he is introduced to a poker game called Texas Hold'em. Fascinated by the concept of "all in", Jake watches. And when he gets his chance to play, he loses all his money. When Bernie suggests getting cash advances from credit cards, the light goes on

and on and on. Jake continues to borrow himself deeply in debt with credit cards, trying to justify his learning curve while continuing to hide the credit card statements from Jenny.

After a brief moment of success at the poker table, Jake is back to his old confident self again. When Charlie Owens, his buddy and wide receiver from college shows up, Charlie asks Jake about investing in his "Megafone" --a novelty echo chamber for rooting at colleges and other sporting events. Jake takes one look at the long tube, plays with it awhile, then turns him down because he has bigger things on the horizon. He then then buys Jenny flowers and tells her he has gotten a raise at "work". Her heart begins to soften thinking he might actually make something of himself...and that night as they lay in bed, they reminisce about their childhood and the porch swing where he proposed to her when he was only 13 and about the ranch he promised her that same night. Jenny suddenly asks him how he would describe the two of them and Jake replies: The King and Queen of hearts.

The next day at work, Jenny repents about all the bad things she has said about Jake to her friend Jill. Jake is on the rebound and finally starting to make some real money at work. But that afternoon, when Jenny is given the opportunity to come home early, she discovers the credit card debt in the mail and is livid. When Jake comes home, he tries to tell her he is playing poker to get a ranch, but she doesn't buy it; and then she takes off her ring and throws it at him. She then moves out with Sophie to her mother's home. Caroline (her mother) is more than accommodating to take her in having never liked Jake to begin with.

Shortly thereafter, Peter makes a visit to Rounder's Restaurant and sees Jenny without her ring. He asks her for a date and she agrees. Meanwhile Jake is trying to get a hold of her at work--and Caroline, like a good secretary, screens all of Jenny's calls. Excited at the prospect of her daughter marrying a doctor and having never liked Jake, Caroline strikes while the iron is hot and begins to encourage Jenny about not only getting a divorce but starts to make arrangements to do so. Jenny soon has the divorce papers in hand that were drafted by Caroline's attorney, but hesitant about divorcing Jake.

Frustrated at Poker and the prospect of losing Jenny, Jake starts drinking, When he catches wind that the three time world champion poker player named Buddy Richardson was from Texas, he decides to look him up in an attempt to see if he would mentor him, but Buddy has mysteriously dropped off the face of the earth. Jake finally finds him through the IT guru at CMG and they meet for lunch at a restaurant in Dallas. Buddy—a former marine who is now a recluse and an alcoholic and is never seen without his sun glasses--has agreed to meet him only because he knows who Jake having bet on him during his college career with the Longhorns.

As their relationship begins to develop, Buddy tries to teach Jake lessons in poker that relate to lessons in life---but Jake is stubborn and slow to learn under Buddy's tutelage.

Meanwhile, as Peter 's romantic intentions with Jenny escalate, Jake makes repeated attempts to see her at Rounder's. After drinking too much on one occasion, Jake is forced to stay in waiting area where he is given a pink stringed necklace with paper roses from a precocious little girl that is waiting to be seated along with the rest of her family. The little

girl tells him to put a ring on it and it becomes a good luck charm. "That'd be what I need right about now," he tells the little girl and takes the necklace. When her family is finally ready to be seated, she smiles and waves good by to him and he smiles and waves wearing it around his neck. When it is obvious that he won't be seated and able to see his wife, Jake makes a big fuss. The manager of the restaurant then calls the police who haul him off to jail where he meets a few drunks who tell him how good he looks in a pink necklace. Disgusted at his obnoxious behavior and encouraged by her mother, Jenny mails the divorce papers the next day

After Jake loses at a number of local poker tournaments, he gets the divorce papers from Jenny in the mail. Drunk, he starts throwing things against the wall but never signs them.

As Jenny is enjoying her courtship with Peter and their scenic drives in his BMW convertible, Jake is desperate for any kind of hope. When he sees the pink necklace in the bathroom, he decides to take the little girl's advice and ties on Jenny's wedding ring and wears it around his neck. Oddly enough he begins to win. He soon gains the title "The Pink Rose of Texas" and begins to succeed among the local tournaments while still being wooed by Rhonda who is there to meet him after every poker game.

Buddy then discovers a new Texas Hold'em tournament in Vegas called the Grand Prix that will be televised worldwide and begins teaching Jake a whole new level of poker in preparation for the big event. After a few weeks of intense training, they hit the road for Vegas and on the way, Jake stops at an old country store and while looking for a can of pop, he finds a birthday card with a porch swing on the cover and mails it to Jenny, knowing it's her birthday in a few days. When Caroline gets the card in the mail a few days later, she quickly throws it away.

In Vegas, Buddy accidentally meets Roger Beranger--the king pin who is responsible for the worldwide tournament. Roger is condescending and makes belittling remarks about what has become of the "once" great Buddy Richardson. Buddy, on the other hand, tells Roger 'I should have known it was you who put on this event.' Beranger and his cohorts have been carefully screening a few of the top contenders as a potential poster child for their up and coming campaign to capture more of the lucrative Asian poker markets, similar to Robert Redford in the movie *the Electric Horseman*. They like what they see in Jake—a charismatic "cowboy" and have rigged the event to help him reach the top ten finalists and Buddy now knows it, but decides not to tell Jake.

A few days into the tournament, Jake makes it to the semi final round of the Grand Prix and thinks he is pretty hot stuff. Jenny meanwhile, has received a huge engagement ring from Peter who asks her and Sophie to come and live with him. For her birthday the next night, her coworkers take her out to their favorite bar and present her with a birthday cake and all 25 candles. As Jenny is getting ready to make a wish and blow them out, she notices Jake playing poker on TV. As her coworkers urge her to make her wish and blow out the candles, she suddenly finds herself rooting for Jake as she did in college: "Come on Jake!" she cries as the candles melt down.

The night before the final showdown, Roger Beranger invites Jake to their penthouse suite and makes him an offer that seems too good to be true—telling him it is *they* who have helped him get to the final round. They will now make him the winner of the tournament, buying out every other player in the game in exchange for his unwavering commitment to “their program”. They show him a horse ranch on a big screen TV and new cars and a multimillion-dollar ranch. Knowing everything about him, they tell him he will finally get the success he deserves—something far more lucrative than any NFL contract could have offered. They tell him he will finally get what is owed him in life and Jake is soaking it in. The tournament is structured in the final round with an all-in or all-out card; and each finalist is given the option of either walking away with \$75,000 by laying down the all-out card—or--risk losing it all by staying in the tournament and laying down the all-in card in hopes of winning the 5 million dollar prize. All Jake needs to do to show his commitment to Roger Beranger is to choose the all-in card and nod to the TV camera signifying his decision.

When he leaves their penthouse, Jake is on cloud nine and thinks he has the world by the tail. When he opens the door to his hotel room moments later, Rhonda is there waiting for him wearing nothing more than a bathrobe and a cowboy hat.

As she starts to make her advance, the door bursts open and Buddy storms in and kicks her out. As Buddy and Jake argue, Buddy tells him he knows all about the Beranger Group and how they have orchestrated this whole thing to find their new poster child. He tells Jake they will use him and when they are done with him, they will sell him down the river like he sold him down the river years ago. Suddenly it becomes clear how Buddy became the poker “champion” and that he really didn’t make it on his own and that all of his teachings were just a façade because he didn’t really earn it...it was handed to him. Buddy tells Jake they chose him years ago because he was a great card player at one time and that he still is, but his promotions and success were because of the organization.

Buddy goes on to tell Jake he will be nothing more than a puppet on their string dancing to their agenda; and in the end he will lose his self-respect, his friends, his family and finally his soul. They will own him, and his life will never be the same. Jake unable to see the forest through the trees, violently argues to the contrary and tells Buddy that *he* is in control—they need *him* and *he* controls the strings--not them; then goes on to say that Buddy’s coaching days are over. With the help of Beranger, he will finally get what he couldn’t get in the NFL: success. Then he kicks Buddy out of the room. Alone, Jake suddenly finds himself staring at Jenny’s ring on his pink necklace and in frustration, starts throwing furniture against the wall. Buddy hears him outside in the hallway, but continues to walk away.

Meanwhile, Jenny has discovered from her Aunt Becky that her own father—a risk taker like Jake—had the opportunity to buy a local franchise that would have made him a multi-millionaire, but Caroline had squashed the idea of such a risk, telling him he didn’t have what it would take to make it work. Her bitter words had an ill affect on his heart, and he died of a broken will months later—and Jenny had always wondered why. After an argument with her mother about the incident, Jenny finds Jake’s birthday card in the

trashcan. When she opens it up and sees the bench swig on the cover and reads the note inside, she cries.

As the 10 finalists come forth to the championship game, each one has to decide if they are going all in or all out. Two out of the ten opt out, and last to decide is Jake. Millions are watching him world wide including Jenny who sits holding Sophie in front of the TV at her mother's home.

Clearly wrestling with the decision, Jake finally takes off the pink necklace, and holding Jenny's ring in his hand, he looks straight into the camera. 'Jenny,' he says...'if you are watching and can hear me, I want to let you know that I am all in.'

Roger and his associates begin to smile. But Jake continues...

'I am all in Jenny. I'm bettin on us. I'm betting that we can still make it just like I told you when I was 13 and you was 12 on you daddy's porch swing.... I'm all in Jenny...till death do us part.'

The audience claps and Roger is smiling. Then the tournament MC asks him to please choose what card he is going to lay down. Jake reaches for the all-out card and lays it down. 'I'm all out,' he says 'I'm going home.'

A hush falls over the crowd and Jake starts walking away. Suddenly, one person starts clapping in the far corner of the room near the exit. It is Buddy. As Jake approaches him, Buddy--now without his sunglasses--continues to clap; and when Jake sees him, he stops and salutes him. Buddy, with tears streaming down the sides of his face, salutes him back.

That night he arrives back to his apartment and the video of his old football game against Auburn is playing on TV. Startled he looks about the room and then sees Jenny asleep on the sofa. He wakes her up and asks her what she is doing in the apartment. 'I'm looking for my husband,' she tells him. 'He used to play football for the Longhorns.'

They kiss.

As the film credits come, we see Jake and Jenny asleep in bed. Suddenly Jake's cell phone rings and he answers it. On the other end is Clarence Owens in Hong Kong sitting in an executive suite of businessmen wearing suit coats and playing with the Megafone and having more fun than they ought to. Clarence yells over their voices and tells Jake that he just struck a deal with one of the biggest manufacturers in Hong Kong.

'Man, they love this thing,' Clarence tells Jake. 'And next week I'll be talking to Wal-Mart and Target and K Mart... Man I gots to know if you are in or out cause this thing is getting hot!'

Jenny wakes up and asks Jake who it is and Jake explains to her about Clarence and the Megafone. He then tells Clarence 'No thanks.' But as he is about to hang up, Jenny grabs the phone.

'Hello? she says. 'This is Jenny Long--Jakes wife. Now what is this all about?' Jenny nods. 'I see...yep...yeah, I get it...Clarence?....Hello Clarence? ...Clarence?...We're in...that's right...we are all in--sign us up.'

She hangs up and then hands the phone to Jake. 'What's gotten into you, girl? he asks her.

'Jake Long,' she says smiling.