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All In

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Wade stared at the cards in front of him. Try as he might, he was unable to hide his smirk. This was great. He had been on a losing streak, but he knew his luck was bound to change.

Wade gestured towards the dealer. "I'm going to need to buy more chips," Wade said.

The dealer eyed Wade up and down. "Are you sure?" the dealer said skeptically. It was painfully obvious that Wade was having a rough streak, and his choice to buy even more chips was ill-advised to say the least.

"I'm absolutely sure," Wade said.

Wade eyed the monitor next to him. The monitor was oddly high-tech for a poker match. It contained a list of stats for the player including how many chips they currently held, how many chips they

had lost so far, and oddly enough, the player's current height.

Wade was running low, but he wasn't completely out yet. He could afford another sixty chips. His hand was so great that he wished they let him buy more, but that was one of the rules of this place. They never let you go negative.

The other players at the table took turns glancing at each other and then back down towards Wade. Some looked impressed. Some looked confused, but this was a poker table, so it was tough to say what anyone was really thinking.

Wade reached down and propped up his cards again. He went down the list one by one to make sure that he hadn't somehow misread his hand. This was a sure bet. There was no way he could lose.

"I'm all in!" Wade cheered when it came back around to his turn to bid. He shoved the first stack of chips over. Then the second. Then the third. The rest of the table watched and waited as Wade deliberately shoved each stack one at a time from his side of the table out into the center.

The next player eyed Wade up and down. He then shrugged and said, "I fold." And set his cards down on the table.

The next player did much the same.

The player after that shrugged. "I call," he said and shoved a stack of chips into the center.

The last player eyed Wade up and down as if taking his measure. Wade could see it on the man's face as the guy ran the numbers in his head. Could he afford to call? Should he walk? The guy obviously had a good hand, but a good hand wouldn't save him.

Wade's grin grew and grew as he locked eyes with the last holdout at the table. There was a moment of tension as everyone waited to see what this man would do. Would he call? Would he fold like the others had?

Something about the way the man looked at Wade made Wade shudder. He knew that these people all had impressive poker faces. This man was most likely just giving Wade a look to unnerve him, but what would be the point to that? Wade had already bid. It was too late for that... unless...

The man sighed and said, "I'll call." He then slid a handful of his own chips across the table.

It was down to just the three of them. Everyone had either called or folded, so all that was left was to show their hand. The guy to Wade's left went first.

"Full house," he said with a smirk.

The other people at the table gave a nod and a murmur of agreement. It was clear that the guys who folded were glad they backed out when they did.

Wade was grinning like the Cheshire cat as he slowly bent down and flipped his cards one by one. A

five... a six... a seven... The other people at the table started to mutter amongst themselves. Even with two pair, Wade had no chance of beating a full house... unless.

Wade flipped his next card. An eight – in suit no less.

The guy who had gone before was sweating now.

Wade reached down and with one dramatic heave, flipped his last card. Another heart, just like the previous four cards, and this one a nine to round out the straight flush.

Wade puffed up his chest and was grinning from ear to ear. The guy who had just revealed his cards was now looking dejectedly at the chips he had just put into the pot. There was a look of fear in his eyes. He tugged at the collar of his very loose shirt as he ran the numbers in his head. He had bid so much on that hand. Meanwhile, the others who had already folded were looking on with a sigh of relief. They were glad that they had gotten out while they could. They had lost big, but they would have lost a lot more had they stayed in.

Wade glanced then to the last guy at the table – the one who had yet to reveal his hand. Wade was taken aback by how calm this guy was. Either he had an amazing poker face or...

The guy laid his hand down with a flourish. There, clear as day, was the one hand that could have

beaten Wade's otherwise impossible hand. A royal flush.

"what... no way..." Wade murmured.

The other members at the table winced and looked down at Wade. Wade had bid everything on that hand. He was sure he would win. This didn't seem real.

Wade staggered forward as if in a trance. He stepped over his own cards, which at his size now looked the size of couch cushions. He lurched slowly forward like a zombie. His eyes were locked on the other man's cards every step of the way.

Wade began to feel punier and punier with each passing second. He looked around him and saw the other players staring down at him. The guy to his left had been in much the same boat that Wade had been in. After a series of disastrous hands, the guy had been knocked down below the two-foot mark. The other two guys at the table were starting to look like children wearing their dad's clothing. Only the player who had won the most recent hand was looking unscathed.

Wade slumped down to his knees. He couldn't believe this was happening. It didn't feel real. Even as he stared at the cards which were spread out before him. Even seeing the cards which were now nearly half as tall as he was, he couldn't reconcile what he was seeing.

He ran his hands across the cards. At his size he could feel the grooves in cards that had seemed so smooth mere hours ago. Wade had been over six feet when he had come here, and even as he lost chip after chip, inch after inch, he kept bidding because he knew that he could turn this around. He just needed one good win, but now... He was shorter than a Ken doll. He was no longer able to buy feet and had to buy in smaller and smaller denominations. They had even cut him off from buying inches! He was currently only allowed to buy in half centimeter increments or less, and he had spent all the size he had just to get those!

Wade collapsed onto his hands and knees. The card beneath him was now the size of a mattress. The heart mark he now stared at was larger than his head, and he was still rapidly dwindling. The heart grew before his very eyes as the card spread outwards in all directions. The formerly imperceptible ridges on the surface of the card soon began to feel as thick as garden hoses.

Wade stared up pleadingly at the dealer. There seemed to be a hint of something in the dealer's eye. Pity? Maybe there was a tinge of pity there, but the dealer didn't seem moved enough to act on it. How often had this dealer seen this same scene play out before?

The stacks of chips which Wade had so easily thrown around now loomed over him like towers. The playing card at Wade's feet now looked to be the size of a backyard swimming pool. He had to be less than

an inch now and still shrinking. The formerly imperceptible grooves in the card now looked like speedbumps.

Wade looked pleadingly at the other players at the table. He silently begged them to spare him a chip or two. The guy to Wade's left who had folded first seemed to be considering it, but he was only a foot and a half as it was. He didn't have much to share. The others looked similarly sympathetic, but they also clutched their chips tightly to avoid a similar fate.

Wade slumped down defeatedly. The large heart symbol in the center of the card was now the size of a bean bag chair for him. He had dipped below half an inch. He was so small that he could now see the weave of the card which had previously appeared to be completely flat.

Wade's mind raced. He was six feet tall. Was being the key word. When he was big, he had always flaunted those six feet as a mark of station, but what did that mean now? He had never bothered to calculate how many centimeters tall he was... or how many millimeters. He had never had a reason to care, but now he had wagered every last inch of those six feet away and was desperately grasping to each fraction of an inch he had left.

He was so small he could almost grasp the microfibers of the card. Would he soon slip between the cracks? ... between the atoms? Wade's mind raced. His vision blurred. He had to be below a centimeter now and still getting smaller. How had it

come to this? He had been the big man on campus, but now he was little more than a bug.

As bug? No. He was less than that. He would be dwarfed by spiders. A bumblebee would be like a bison at his size, and that was saying nothing of what it would be like when he finally stopped shrinking. His mind raced to images of aphids the size of elephants. He wished he had paid attention to the minutia. He wished he knew how many millimeters he'd have left when he finally stopped shrinking.

As dread welled up inside of him, a deafening crash forced him to cover his ears. The whole world felt like it was shuddering. The earthquake that shook him would cap out the Richter scale. The deafening crash changed to an unrelenting roar. Wade clasped his ears and stared up to see a chip, a chip that may as well be the size of a county fair Gravitron and wobbled violently before him much the same way.

Wade glanced past the gigantic disk towards an even more massive figure. The man to Wade's left had tossed in one of his chips. It was a white chip – the lowest possible denomination, but it was enough to spare Wade from oblivion.

Tears streamed down his face as he stared up and up at his savior. The man had been reduced to less than two feet tall himself, but at Wade's size, he looked like the Statue of Liberty. This dude had been reduced to a foot and a half. He was maybe eighteen to twenty inches tall, but the now miniscule Wade wouldn't even come up to the guy's toenail.

Wade suddenly found himself caught between two metallic prongs. A pair of tweezers. He was being lifted through the air like a specimen in an entomologist's lab. It was fitting since he was barely knee-high to a gnat now. The dealer had obviously done this before. The grip on the tweezers was firm, but not tight enough to injure the now miniscule man.

Wade was unceremoniously dropped onto a warm, soft surface. He glanced down and quickly realized that this was skin, and as he looked around, he realized he was now in the palm of the guy who had just spared him.

"You purchased him. He's now yours to keep," the dealer's voice boomed from seemingly miles above. Wade felt the pit in his stomach grow larger and gnaw deeper into his soul. He had been reduced from competitor to consolation prize.

To Wade, the dealer's voice seemed like the voice of God. The dealer was so massive that Wade couldn't even comprehend the sheer scale of the guy. Wade tried to glance towards the sound of the booming voice, but trying to stare up at the towering dealer made his neck ache and his head spin. Wade's stomach turned as a mix of vertigo and dread knocked him flat on his ass.

"I would like to cash out now..." the man croaked weakly. Despite how huge he was to the now miniscule Wade, his voice sounded soft and skittish.

Wade understood. Seeing Wade's fate had scared him off from trying to win back his own size. The terror must have been intense to dissuade him from playing more. The man had been at that table for several hands and had lost much more than he had won in the interim.

Change in size wasn't calculated until someone left a table or went bust. Wade had wandered around the casino and visited multiple tables before he had ended up here, and this guy seemed to be in a similar situation. Wade had no idea how huge this guy was to begin with or how much of his remaining size he had bid but judging by the look of panic in the guy's eyes, it seemed he would be taking a sizeable hit when he cashed out.

The man gave another look down at the miniscule figure in his palm. Had it not been for that one-millimeter token the man had tossed Wade at the last second, Wade would no longer be visible to the naked eye. Wade was now so tiny that climbing up the side of a quarter would be like trying to climb up onto the stage at a rock concert.

The man knew he would be returning to the outside world a fraction of his former size. He had no idea what his final size would be yet. Once he finished cashing out, he was soon going to shrink again and be even a fraction of his current size... but, as the mite-sized figure in his hand could attest to, it beat the alternative.