



Problem Gambling Role Play: Chris's Story

Scene 1

Narrator: Chris, a high school senior, turned 18 last week. Chris is captain of the basketball team and has been accepted into college with a modest scholarship. Chris and Alex, another senior on the team, are talking in the locker room after practice. Chris worries about performing well on the court—winning the state championship would sure help with getting onto the university team next year. Chris also worries about getting good enough grades to keep the scholarship.

Chris: I shouldn't have missed that last basket.

Alex: Don't worry about it. You're doing great. Next year you'll make the university team for sure.

Chris: Maybe. But I'm worried about my grades. I've got a physics test tomorrow. I need at least a B.

Alex: I suppose you're heading home to hit the books?

Chris: I dunno. I'm so sick of studying. Sometimes I feel like my head is going to explode.

Alex: If you're worried, I can help you study. I just took physics in the fall.

Chris: Maybe I just need to relax tonight. I've heard it can be better to lay back before a test and let your brain consolidate what it has learned. Like I said, my head feels like it's going to explode already.

Narrator: Taylor, a university freshman who was on the high school team last year, stops by and joins Chris and Alex's conversation.

Taylor: I hear ya, Chris. I'm dreaming in algebra symbols these days. I gotta have a break. Hey, you wanna go to the casino tonight? I could sure use a night off.

Chris: Maybe.

Alex: (*concerned*) Chris, do you really think that's a good idea with the test tomorrow?

Taylor: Aren't you paying attention? Chris's brain needs some time to consolidate. Chris, have you ever been to the casino?

Chris: Yeah. Last week, in fact. It was the day after my 18th birthday. A couple of friends took me out to celebrate. I was playing the slot machines, and you'll never believe what happened. I put in five bucks. First round, nothing. I put in another five, and . . . jackpot! I walked out with two hundred bucks! What a high that was!

Taylor: Cool. Wanna win some more?

Chris: Oh yeah. Let's go.

Scene 2

Narrator: One month later, Chris's basketball team has made the championship play-offs. The play-offs are next week, but Chris isn't playing well. After history class, Chris and Alex are heading out to a pizza place for lunch.

Chris: Will you quit dawdling Alex? We don't have all day to get there, you know.

Alex: Chill, all right?

Chris: Don't tell me to chill. I'm fine. I wasn't the one whining about too much work in class.

Alex: What's eating you, Chris? You've been so cranky lately. What's going on?

Chris: Nothing, Alex. Really. I guess maybe I'm feeling the pressure of the play-offs. Anyway, let's hurry. I've got places to go.

Alex: What do you mean? We have class again in a half hour.

Chris: It's just French class. By the way, can you spot me twenty-five bucks?

Alex: What for?

Chris: I just need it, that's all. You gonna give it to me?

Alex: I don't think so, Chris. I lent you twenty bucks last week, and you haven't given that back to me yet.

Chris: Never mind. I'll figure it out for myself. I'm outta here.

Chris turns away from Alex.

Narrator: Taylor shows up.

Taylor: What's up?

Chris: I need a break.

Taylor: I was heading over to the casino for a little action. How's that sound?

Chris: It would sound great if I had any money on me. Can you spot me a hundred?

Taylor: Uh, I don't have that much on me. Don't you have a college savings account? You can stake yourself.

Chris: Yeah, okay. I know it's my lucky day. Lucky enough for the hundred dollar slots.

Taylor: I'm with you.

Scene 3

Narrator: Three weeks after that, Chris is walking home from school with Andy, a close friend since fifth grade.

Chris: Andy, I need to talk to you about something.

Andy: Sure, Chris, what's up?

Chris: I need to borrow some money.

Andy: I have twenty-five dollars on me.

Chris: Only twenty-five? I'm talking some serious money here.

Andy: How much?

Chris: Well . . . a lot.

Andy: What's going on? How much money are you talking about?

Chris: I need four hundred to hold my dorm room for next year.

Andy: Isn't that what your college savings account is for?

Chris: There's not enough in that account, and I'm going to lose my place in the dorm if I don't pay the fee by the end of the week.

Andy: Isn't that account the one your grandparents started for you when you were really young? You've been adding to that account since your first job. I thought you had, like, twenty thousand dollars.

Chris: Yeah, well, it's gone.

Andy: Gone! What do you mean, it's gone?

Chris: I lost it.

Andy: What? How? How do you lose a twenty-thousand-dollar savings account?

Chris: The thing is, I started playing slots at the casino. It was going great. First time I played, I dropped in ten bucks and won two hundred. You can't believe how cool that was! I was totally charged. I went back a couple times, lost a little, won a little. Then I made another forty. I figured if I started making bigger bets I'd make bigger money. So I drew some cash from my savings account and started playing the hundred dollar slots. First thing I knew, I was down eight hundred dollars.

Andy: Ouch. Tell me you stopped then.

Chris: How could I stop then? I had to get that eight hundred back. There's no way I could let my folks know about it.

Andy: Wow.

Chris: I switched to the blackjack table. I heard you get better odds there. I got in deeper than I meant to. I was raking in a pile, somebody raised me, and I went for it.

Andy: Don't tell me . . .

Chris: Yeah. One minute I had a pile of money. Next minute, I was down half my savings account. So I hooked up with an online Texas Hold 'em site.

Andy groans.

Chris: You don't get it. I *had* to get that money back. It looked promising for a while, but I ended up getting completely wiped out.

Andy: You mean, you really don't have anything left in your college account? All twenty thou' is gone?

Chris: Yes, that's what I mean. I knew you wouldn't get it. It just happened so fast. I don't know what I'm gonna do. I'm so tired and worried all the time. I can't concentrate at school. And the coach is getting on me for coming late to practice. I borrowed fifty bucks from my dad's top dresser drawer, and I've got to get it back before he notices it's missing.

Andy: I think you better just 'fess up. Talk to your dad.

Chris: No way. I heard about a sure-fire poker game tonight. If you'd just lend me that twenty-five, I know I'll make enough to pay my dad back.

Andy: Chris, you have to talk to your folks.

Chris: All right, all right. I will. But just lend me twenty-five bucks.

Andy: I'll lend you the twenty-five just for today if you'll use it for your dorm fee and promise to talk to your folks.

Chris: Okay, Andy. You're right. I need to face up to this. I'll do it.

Narrator: Andy gave Chris the twenty-five dollars. Here's what Chris said to himself after Andy left.

Chris: Twenty-five dollars is not going to go very far toward the dorm fee. And I think the casino's a better bet than talking to my folks.

Scene 4

Narrator: Chris's dad discovered the money missing from his dresser drawer, and he suspects Chris took it. He talked it over with Chris's mom, and they've told Chris they need to have a talk.

Dad: Okay, Chris. It's clear to us that something's going on with you. Something isn't right. You need to tell us what's happening.

Chris: Everything's fine. You guys just make a big deal out of everything.

Mom: You're missing school. Your grades are dropping. You're so irritable and tired all the time. We didn't even know where you were most of last weekend. You are not acting like yourself.

Chris: I told you, everything is fine. Drop it, okay?

Dad: We're not dropping this, Chris. You look like you're in some kind of trouble. The bottom line is that we love you, and we want to help.

Chris: *(starts to cry)* I never meant for it to happen like this. I'm such a loser. I'm so sorry. I don't know what to do.

Narrator: Chris tells them all about the gambling losses and wiping out the college savings.

Chris: What am I going to do? Can you guys lend me the four hundred dollars? I'll get a job again. I'll pay you back, I promise.

Mom: You are not a loser, but you did get yourself in some trouble, honey. You made some bad choices, and now you've got to get back on track.

Dad: We're not going to lend you the four hundred dollars. We're having a major change of plans here. First thing: no dorm room.

Chris: But—

Mom: That's right. I'm afraid you're going to be living at home as a college freshman.

Dad: And you'll be working a part-time job instead of trying out for the basketball team.

Mom: Most important, you need to get some help with the gambling, sweetheart. It's pretty clear you've got a problem.