



Shuffle Up and Peel: The Rules of Strip Poker and the Meaning of Life

Cotton Colquitt

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Getting naked. Or, more accurately, getting someone else naked. It is, after all, the reason the game is played. The game, of course, is strip poker. Take one deck of regulation playing cards and the clothes on your back, add a dash of spirits and play. Sounds simple. What could possibly go wrong?

Everything. In "Shuffle Up and Peel: The Rules of Strip Poker and the Meaning of Life," author Cotton Colquitt bares all about the game, tracing it to its historically murky brothel and boarding school roots as she explores how this clumsy adolescent rite of passage has evolved into the clumsy adult rite of passage it is today.

"It's most likely strip poker originated in your basement. Or in that tree fort back in the woods. Or church camp. Anywhere your parents weren't. But mom and dad really didn't have all that much to worry about. Few, if any, mixed gender puberty-laced and hormone-fueled games of strip poker ever managed to get much beyond socks and belts. Not that consenting adults have a track record that's a whole lot better."

The reason is simple. While nearly everyone understands poker, or can easily learn the basics, nobody really knows for sure what's supposed to happen when you mix in the "strip" part. It's not all that hard to figure out when just money is on the line. "I take yours, you take mine. At the end of the night we settle up and head home. Doesn't exactly work that way with brassieres and Jockey shorts. If, that is, you somehow manage to get that far."

There really aren't rules for how the get-naked version of the game is supposedly played. Until now. And those that purport to exist simply don't work. Not well, that is. And certainly not for long. While losing your lunch or mortgage money by drawing to an inside straight might be painful, it generally doesn't involve publicly answering the question "boxers or briefs?" Or shedding your modesty. Or, in some cases, your dignity. Or, in many cases, everything.

Colquitt takes would-be players on a step-by-step journey through the do's and don'ts of strip poker, from the supermarket produce section all the way to that moment when the clothes begin hitting the floor. It's equal parts irreverently sensuous, amusingly blunt and thoroughly insightful.

"The song says you've got to know when to hold 'em and know when to fold'em in poker. That's pretty much it. But strip poker is a lot more complex than an old country-western tune. Especially when someone decides the game's no longer the good clean fun they envisioned with that first shuffle up and deal. The challenge, of course, is to keep it fun by creating an environment that's non-threatening, one where the focus is on the "social" part of the game and the "strip" part - with all its associated baggage - becomes almost an after-thought."

How do you as a strip poker wannabe tiptoe your friends, strangers or other consenting adults into embracing the notion of getting naked around a card table? How do you take the game from its status as mindless show-and-tell to something that's both challenging and fun? And keep it that way?

"Impossible? No. But making it happen is, ultimately, up to you. You're the difference between a complete waste of time, a disaster of colossal proportions, or a fun night with friends who'll still be friends - perhaps very, very good friends - when the sun comes up the next morning."

In "Shuffle Up and Peel: The Rules of Strip Poker and the Meaning of Life," Colquitt leaves nothing to chance - other than the cards you're dealt. It's mandatory reading if you've ever thought about strip poker, if you've ever found yourself talking about strip poker or, most importantly, if you're about to shuffle up and peel, Simply curious? Of course you are, And who knows?

Reading "The Rules of Strip Poker and the Meaning of Life" is arguably the most fun you can have with your clothes on. What comes next is entirely up to you.

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