

# **BETCHA I CAN!**

*My Gamble to Succeed*

**By Stu “The Source” Feiner**  
*as told to Tom Sabellico*

## CHAPTER ONE

*Despair is the damp of hell, as joy is the serenity  
of heaven.*

**John Donne, English poet, 1572-1631**

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What I was seriously thinking of doing was totally insane. I could've never predicted the fate I was facing, and that's so ironic since I made my living, my lavish living, by predicting outcomes and probabilities. But who could have predicted this scenario?

For thirty years I was the living example of positive thinking. I was an extrovert, the most gregarious, outgoing, party animal you would ever want to meet. I never sat still and was never alone. My house and my office were filled with friends and friends of friends. The door was always open, the conversation heated, and the action non-stop and fast-paced. I literally couldn't find enough time in any day to accommodate all the people I wanted to talk to, all those who wanted to talk to me, and to plan and do the things I wanted to accomplish.

Confidence was something I never lacked in my adult life. Nothing was out-of-reach. I had built million dollar businesses. I had four great kids and a gorgeous wife. I lived in the biggest house in the community,

with the most luxurious, lush grounds. If you mentioned “Stuie” to anybody in my area, they knew it was me – no last name needed.

I was never bored, depressed, or alone. I didn’t have time for that, and my friends and business associates were constant companions. I had attended twenty Super Bowls and tons of World Series games. I sat in courtside seats, right next to Spike Lee, at Knick games at the Garden, when the Knicks were good. Broadway shows, Vegas night club acts, the best restaurants in every major city in the country, always in the best seat in the house and always surrounded by a gang of friends. My picture was on the front page of *The New York Times* in 1999, standing in the first row at Shea Stadium with both thumbs up, screaming, when the Mets beat Arizona in a National League Playoff Game. I could be seen in the front row of an Elton John video, dancing happily. Al Pacino starred in a role based on my life in the movie *Two For The Money*.

Money was never an object, certainly not spending it. Tales of my excessive spending and generosity were epic. Being able to spend money freely was the realization of the American Dream for me. A barbeque for a few friends meant a catered party in my backyard with a guest list over 100, with an open invitation for the invited guests to bring guests. A flat screen TV in every room, a full-blown gym in the house. A ballgame wasn’t a ballgame without spending a few grand on souvenirs. (For ten Super Bowls in a row, I spent at least \$25,000 on souvenirs. One post-season game, I spent \$50,000 on souvenirs and another \$5,000 to have them FedExed back to my office, so they would be there for me to distribute to friends and business associates when I got back from the game.)

But not this night. This night I was alone, in every sense of the word. Not only were my friends and business associates gone, so was any trace of my trademark confidence, optimism and lack of fear about spending money. I sat alone in my office, or what was left of it – some scattered

fast-food wrappers on an otherwise unbusy desk; a phone that wasn’t ringing except for calls from collection agencies; sports memorabilia and photos that once served as happy souvenirs of the high life I lived now just haunted me as reminders of how far I had fallen.

Everything I was touching was turning to shit. All my business ventures went sour. My credit source had run as dry as the Sahara, and my debt seemed to eclipse Mt. Everest. My partners left me. My wife wanted out. (She really wished I was dead, and told me so repeatedly.) My oldest son, who graduated as Valedictorian of his high school class, was attending Brown University and I couldn’t help him with his tuition. Sadly, I couldn’t even honor my youngest son’s request for 75 cents so he could buy school lunch. Seventy-five cents! I used to piss on hundreds. I would use them as wicks to light Cuban cigars while spending thousands enjoying meals at places like Nanni Il Valletto in New York and today I couldn’t afford John Allen’s macaroni and cheese at elementary school.

Only eight months earlier, I was living like a winner. It appeared I had finally conquered my on-going battle with weight and fitness. I had dropped seventy pounds and was buff. Everybody who saw me commented on how great I looked. If they could only see me this night. All of the weight was back. I had self-medicated with food. I drowned out all the fears and pressures by sitting at my kitchen table watching American Idol and stuffing my face. All the friends I thought I had were replaced by new friends: Colonel Sanders, Mickey D, Wendy, Dunkin’, and the Burger King.

But not this night. No, I wasn’t interested in food, sports, money, or life. I just wanted a way out. A way out of the debt, the pressure, the losing, the loneliness, the misery. I was no longer living the life I had come to know and love, and I was searching for a safety valve, anything to remove me from the pain of my despair. I was already

taking anti-depressants. Imagine, me, Stu Feiner, The Source, needing anti-depressants. Well, that's only half the bad news; the rest is that even the anti-depressants didn't help get me out of the rut I was in. Now, I was groping in my mental darkness for something stronger – something to end the agony.

There before me in a little plastic bottle lied an apparent answer. For weeks I had not been able to obtain any relief from the mental pressure and gloom. Every waking moment hurt, and they were all waking moments because I couldn't sleep. So my doctor prescribed sleeping pills, which didn't help when I took them as prescribed. Now, at my all-time low, I thought if two pills couldn't help me sleep for a night, maybe a hundred pills could help me sleep forever.

I picked up the orange colored cylinder filled with pills and shook it like a shooter at a craps table in Vegas. What were the odds? What were the odds that an intentional overdose would cure my ills by killing me? What were the odds that I could ever recover from where I was in my life? What were the odds that Stu Feiner, The Source, the most positive, energetic guy you could ever meet, would end up dead, sitting alone at my desk, with an empty pill bottle in my limp hands? I had been an underdog before. It's how I started. And I had beaten the odds before. I made my life beating the odds. It's just that now they seemed so overwhelming, and so personal. As my mind wandered over those thoughts my eyes started to glaze over. It began to feel like it was my body that was shaking and not the pill bottle. Then the whole room was shaking. Although I was alone in the room, I heard all the people around the table yelling for me to shoot the dice.

I collapsed from fatigue, both mental and physical. The effort to overcome my problems had been enormous. When I came to, several hours later, awakened by a knock on my office door, I was slumped over my desk, in a total sweat, with the full pill bottle still in my clammy hand. I squinted my eyes open to see that outside my office window

the sun had come up. Had it really? My exhaustion had spared me from finding out if the answer to my troubles was contained in that pill bottle. Had my luck just changed? I thought: can I build on what just happened, or didn't happen, to beat the odds again? Betcha I can!