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I replay that hand in my head, from time-to-time, and always pause at the moment when the dealer taps the table, right before she flips the river card up. I glance one more time at the board: Kc Jc 8h 5c. Ace, Queen, Ten, Club, I hear my section of the rail shouting. It didn't come. It's been a decade since the river blanked off, but it still feels like yesterday. I don't compete in tournaments often, so I still haven't got the chance to rewrite that history with a different result. The truth is, unless you grind the circuit full time, play small field high-rollers, or, frankly, are on the positive side of variance more than your fair share, you may not either. It's something I understood conceptually as a professional, but until I lived it, I couldn't fully grasp the nature of tournaments, and to a larger extent, poker in general. It's not just winning your coin flips, where one experiences the luck. Variance comes in many forms in poker: You may get coolered with the second nuts to the nuts, or your opponent may draw out on you. But variance also comes in hidden forms: a bad turn card that kills your action; or positional variance, such as getting aces under the gun instead of on the button; or situational variance, by merely being in the right place at the right time to get into a great game, which earns you a fortune. While these things will, in theory, even out over the long run, poker players, too often, don't realize just how long that long run is. In the meantime, they go broke in the name of expectation, never reaching the point where their skill trumps the luck. Just how long does it take? In a sentence, much longer than you think. In tournament poker, evening out the variance can take a lifetime or two. This explains the phenomenon of how the world's best players can go years without winning a major event. Conversely, there will