

# ***BACKBONES***

Or

Men with Clubs, Hunting

a friendly competition

by

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## CHARACTERS

- ERNIE      He seeks redemption, solace, the meaning of life. He may never find it.
- TOM        He seeks enlightenment, an average Joe, mild-mannered, nice, always a peacemaker
- CLIFF      He seeks good times, revenge, and alcohol at all times, never any specific order. He lives in constant state of release.
- STUART    He seeks acceptance. The new guy. Seemingly naïve, unthreatening, and will do anything to blend in.

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## TEE OFF

A man walks on. Sets clubs down. Waits. He speaks this section to the audience and as if confessing on a psychiatrist's couch.

ERNIE

Sunday mornings. These are my cherished moments. My whole week revolves around Sunday morning. No. I'm not a religious man. Golf. A round of golf every Sunday now for five years. It's one of the few routines I enjoy. Chasing this little white ball. Men with clubs hunting. My wife does not understand it. Didn't want me to go today but...

TOM enters.

TOM

Hey, Ernie. Yeah, my wife cried.

ERNIE

I need this today, Tom. More than anything.

TOM is getting ready.

TOM

It is going to be a great day. Woke up bright and early, made love to the wife, cooked breakfast and arrived early. Days like this, God loves me.

ERNIE

Alarm busted. Awakened by wife, not-too-happy. Water heater quit working which meant cold shower. No breakfast and I forgot our wedding anniversary.

TOM

It was today?

ERNIE

Next month.

TOM

Next month? But--

ERNIE

(dismissing him)  
Don't ask. I just need this today.

TOM

Yeah, my wife begged me to stay home.

ERNIE

I said don't ruin this for me today.

TOM

Cliff called. Said he was going to be late.

ERNIE

Wonderful.

TOM

And Joe can't come.

ERNIE

Oh, man. I want this day, Tom. I gotta swing at something.

TOM

His back still hurting him. But relax, Ernie, Cliff mentioned bringing someone from work.

ERNIE

Great. I do not like playing with strangers. Makes me nervous.

TOM

Ernie. Cliff swears by the guy.

ERNIE

(mumbles, shuffles through golfbag)

And that's who's word I'm going to take. We are talking about Cliff? Right?

TOM

Ernie. We need a fourth.

ERNIE

Whatever.

TOM

You want to go hit a few.

ERNIE

He's not borrowing anything from me. Cliff. It never fails. Cliff forgets something. I

ERNIE (cont'd)

still have not gotten my glove back from him. A brand new glove. Well, no more.

TOM  
Okay, whatever. Let's knock 'em around.

ERNIE  
Right behind you.

They walk to the driving range. ERNIE pulls out a club and takes a few swings. TOM does as well.

ERNIE  
(teeing up)  
Tom?

TOM  
(practice swinging)  
Yeah?

ERNIE  
Do you enjoy my company?

TOM  
(teeing up, focusing more on the swinging than on ERNIE)  
Nope. That's why I come out here--to thoroughly torture myself once a week. Of course, I do, Ernie. Your melancholia balances my life.

(swings)  
Oh, yeah. Right down the middle.

ERNIE swings. He watches the ball slice badly.

ERNIE  
Well, that's good to know.  
(to ball)

Damn it.

ERNIE tees up again. TOM watches. ERNIE swings and watches the ball again fly right.

ERNIE (cont'd)  
Damn it. That's not what I need.

TOM  
You're stopping your swing--

ERNIE  
I'll get it. Hit your ball.

TOM does. Once again, straight down the middle.

ERNIE  
I hate you.

TOM  
(laughing)  
I know. Your problem is--

ERNIE  
I know, I'm stopping my swing. Follow through. Follow through

TOM  
No. Your problem is you're too negative. This is a game. Not your life.

ERNIE  
(teeing up)  
That's why I come out here, Tom. It's not my life. And I don't think Helen understands this. I love my wife, Tom. I love my Sundays. But they are mutually exclusive.  
(swings. Hooks left.)  
Damn it!

TOM  
(teeing up)  
Well, at least, you corrected your slice. That's my point. Find a positive.

ERNIE  
(teeing up)  
Okay, I'm positive I'm going to hit this right into those trees.

TOM  
Ba-dum-bump.

TOM swings.

ERNIE  
Right down the middle. That's you. Not too long, not too short, just right down the  
ERNIE (cont'd)  
middle. Average. You see, I prefer to be more colorful. Anyone can take the fairway. It says something for the man willing to risk it all, swing with wild abandon.

ERNIE swings. Hook left. ERNIE begins to lose his temper.

ERNIE (cont'd)

Shit. If you say relax, I'll kill you.

TOM

Come on. It's no use. Let's go find Cliff.

They head back to the tee-off.

TOM

(as they walk back)

Take Cliff for example.

ERNIE

What do you mean?

TOM

Well, is Cliff a great golfer?

ERNIE

He's okay.

TOM

Right. But he thinks he's a great golfer. When Cliff reaches for a club from his bag, he yanks it out, like he's ripping the backbones out of small animals.

ERNIE

Lovely image.

TOM

Yes. Cliff's a sick individual. But he doesn't have your slice.

ERNIE

You're saying the reason I knock balls around the way I do is because I think of myself wrong.

TOM

No, you hit balls the way you do because you're a terrible golfer, but you can be a terrible golfer and still have fun doing it.

ERNIE

Is that your secret?

TOM

No, I think of the ocean.

ERNIE

The ocean?

TOM

Yeah, very fluid. Tidal. Smooth. Scoop up the ball. Push it forward. Make it surf.

ERNIE

That's ridiculous.

TOM

Yeah. But it works. I can't explain it.

CLIFF enters.

CLIFF

Prepare to have your asses kicked.

TOM

Cliff.

ERNIE

Hey, Cliff. Nice glove.

CLIFF

(proudly)

Had to stop for refreshment.

Cliff shows off his six-pack and begins finding places in his bag to carry it.

ERNIE

Cliff, it's nine a.m.

CLIFF

You want one?

ERNIE

That's not what I meant.



TOM

Where's your friend?

CLIFF

Oh, he'll be here in a minute. Fellas, this guy just started at the lot a month ago. He's new in town so I thought I'd be friendly. I have to warn you though, he hasn't played much golf.

ERNIE

Great. I hate playing with someone I don't know.

CLIFF

That's okay, Ern. Now you won't be the worst player on the course.

CLIFF pops open a beer.

ERNIE

And why did I decide I liked coming to play golf with you guys?

STUART saunters in.

CLIFF

Hey, Stu. This is Tom and Ernie.

STUART

Hello.

(correcting CLIFF politely)

Stuart.

TOM

Hi, Stuart.

ERNIE

(shaking hands)

I don't like playing with strangers.

STUART

Really? Well, I'll apologize ahead of time. I've only played a few times so--

CLIFF

I told Stuart that it was all a friendly game. Well, hey, we can talk while we play. Same as always.

TOM

Stuart, it's five bucks a hole. Ties carry over the pot. Ernie and I have taken a few swings so you guys feel free to warm up.

CLIFF

I don't think so. I feel like a god today. I'm sorry, guys, but I'm afraid you really don't stand a chance.

STUART

I guess I'm ready as I'll ever be. Man, there are a lot of squirrels out here on the course.

CLIFF

Yeah, damn things will eat anything. I think the groundskeeper must be feeding them.

STUART

Look, there's another one. He's huge.

TOM

Okay, well, anyone's game.

CLIFF

I'll do the honors.

CLIFF rips a backbone out of one of the small animals in his bag. He tees up and swings hard. It's a long shot.

CLIFF (cont'd)

WHAM-O! Oh, yeah. Houston, we have lift-off.

They all watch the ball fly a long way.

TOM

Jesus, Cliff. What did you use on that? A railroad tie?

CLIFF laughs confidently.

CLIFF

A three-wood. I'm saving my good stuff for later. You guys sure you don't want a beer? It will ease the pain.

TOM

Well, I hate to follow that but here goes.

TOM tees up.

STUART

So how do you guys know each other?

TOM swings. Straight down the middle as always.

TOM

Don't look over your shoulder, Cliff. I'm right behind you.

ERNIE

Tom and I have known each other since college. I met Cliff at a party of Tom's a few years ago and this little ritual just sort of developed.

CLIFF

Who's next?

STUART

I guess I'll go. I can't get over the number of squirrels out here.

STUART tees up and swings. They follow the ball fly left slightly.

TOM

That's not too bad. You're under the trees but I think you can get out of that.

CLIFF

Well, Ern. It's your turn, buddy.

ERNIE

Here goes nothing.

ERNIE tees up then begins to talk to the ball quietly as he addresses.

ERNIE (cont'd)

Come on, now, baby. I need this. One time. One time just start off well. I'm not asking for much. Just fairway. Ocean. Ocean. Make it surf.

ERNIE swings. The ball flies right.

ERNIE (cont'd)

I think I'll take that beer now, Cliff.

BLACKOUT

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FAIRWAY

TOM addresses the audience.

TOM

Some would question my sanity when I insist that this group of guys, this thing we do is important. I find a great value educationally from my Sunday rounds. It's philosophical. Did you know that when Ernie has a good shot--they don't come often but when they do – he narrates for at least the next three holes. And Cliff becomes a poet on the back nine. Granted, he's had several beers and his speech is slurred but...

Lights up on CLIFF obviously talking to the group.

CLIFF

I saw a squirrel one time stuff six golf balls in his mouth.

STUART

(staring into the distance in utter amazement at the perpetration)

Yeah?

ERNIE

Sorry, about your ball. Who knew?

STUART

(still almost blank)

God damned squirrel.

Lights out on scene and back up on TOM.

TOM

I really don't mind the bickering. Cliff actually sold Ernie his first car. A convertible. Yeah, Ernie wanted a sedan. Cliff yawned at him then handed him the keys to his car he has now. Okay, Cliff refused to sell Ernie a sedan. In fact, I think they got in a screaming match at the car lot, but Ernie caved. Cliff means well. Ernie loves his rag top.

Lights out on TOM as he exits. Lights up as ERNIE rushes on. CLIFF is close behind. He is mildly drunk.

CLIFF

Come on, Ernie.

ERNIE

No, Cliff.

CLIFF

It was an accident.

ERNIE

You stepped on my ball. Flattened it into the ground.

CLIFF

I didn't see it.

ERNIE

You leaped on it with both feet then yell “got the bastard.”

CLIFF

Have a beer. You’re no fun any more, Ern.

TOM enters.

TOM

I can’t find him anywhere.

CLIFF

He’ll find his way here. How can you get lost on a golf course?

TOM

He went over in the bushes to look for his ball, and then he disappeared.

CLIFF

(teeing up)

He’ll catch up. That guy has been at the lot for a month and has already outsold me. Let him forage around some, teach him some restraint.

ERNIE

Answer me this, Cliff. How does this guy outsell you in his first month there?

CLIFF

Management calls him a people person. Whatever the hell that means? Hey! I like people. Last week he sold four Cadillacs. Who the hell sells four Cadillacs in one week? Crack dealers! He’s selling cars to crack dealers! Damn, I broke my last tee. Ernie, can I borrow a few?

ERNIE

No.

CLIFF

What? Come on.

ERNIE

No.

TOM

Oh, here, Cliff. You can have some of mine.

CLIFF

What the hell is your problem?

ERNIE

It ends here.

CLIFF

What ends here?

STUART enters. He has a tear in his shirt.

TOM

What happened?

STUART

Briars everywhere. I fell into them.

CLIFF

Did you get your ball back?

STUART

(holding it up with pride)

Yeah, found it.

ERNIE

So, Stuart, Cliff tells us you're really sweeping the floor with him at the lot.

STUART

No. Beginner's luck, that's all.

CLIFF

My ass. Don't be modest, Stu. Fellows, you are looking at the only man to sell a car to Mrs. Lyla Meridian.

TOM

Old Ms. Lyla?

STUART

She's just some eccentric old lady.

CLIFF

Stu, the woman rides a mule around town she's so old. Stuart here sold her a brand-new Ford Escort. And gave her a fine trade in on the mule.

STUART

Who's shot is it? It was really nothing.

ERNIE

It's Cliff's. Did she call you Jimbo?

STUART

Yeah, never could get my name right. Is that her son?

TOM

No, her cat.

STUART

Her cat?

CLIFF

Yeah, it died a few years ago. She never recovered. Well, I'll go.

CLIFF starts off then remembers.

CLIF (cont'd)

What ends here? Huh, Ernie? What ends here? What did you mean by that?

TOM

Forget it, Cliff.

CLIFF

No, what is it?

ERNIE

I am sick of your imposing on everyone.

CLIFF

I didn't know I was.

STUART

Maybe I'll go first.

CLIFF

No, I'll go.

(back to ERNIE)

You know, I said I was sorry about stepping on your goddamn ball. I offered you a beer.

ERNIE



You see, that's it.

CLIFF

What?

ERNIE

(searching for tact)

That...that flagrant...lack of any...clue!

CLIFF

You know, Ernie, I'm tired of being your friend.

ERNIE

(laughing)

What?!

CLIFF

You know, I have tried to be patient. I have ignored all the uppity shit. And now, I can't any more.

ERNIE

Oh, you can't? You can't?

TOM

Now, guys. Let's play like good little boys.

STUART

Tom, I'm gonna go ahead and swing.

TOM

Yeah, I don't think they'll mind.

STUART steps up to swing while ERNIE and CLIFF stare at each other and quietly bicker.

ERNIE

Don't ever ask for a thing from me again. You bring your own balls, your own glove, your own tees, towel, water bottle, spikes, sunglasses, visor, markers, shoes and socks! No more.

CLIFF

(after a moment)

Okay. You can't have any more beer.

ERNIE

Keep your damn beer.

CLIFF

I will.

STUART swings and watches his ball fly south again.

STUART

This is fun. I'll pay someone one thousand dollars to go get that ball for me.

BLACKOUT

### THE ROUGH

CLIFF addresses the audience.

CLIFF

You know somebody all these years, you think, hey, if I need something I can go to them. Hey, screw, Ernie. Ernie's problem is he's jealous. I really try to understand. Ernie's not a great catch. He's no mental giant. We gotta look out for the little guys sometime. You know? And I like the guy, usually. A little morbid. But hell, he's married. Tom is nice guy, but sometimes I'd just like to see him lose it. I was in a car with Tom once and some guy cut us off. Tom hit the brakes. I thought we were dead. The first words out of my mouth were...

(editing himself as best he can)

"G.D.M.F." Tom just paused, took a deep breath, and started home. He said something about the guy needing to watch where he was going, but nothing else. Not one "shit" or "piss." Not even a "crap." Well, I wanted to hunt the guy down, kill his in-laws. I mean, the guy just pulled right out--never mind. But Tom's older. Maybe that's it. I tell you,

though, he'll make you think that married life ain't that bad.

(reaches in his pocket and pulls out a golf ball)

Stuart? He's breaking my heart. Old Lady Lyla thinks she bought a car from her cat. I mean, I could have been that cat. I could be a cat. A damn fine one.

STUART walks on. CLIFF puts the ball away quickly.

CLIFF

Did you find it?

STUART

No.

CLIFF

I could have sworn it fell right over by that pond. Right on the edge. I don't think it went in but you may want to check.

STUART

That was my last one, too.

CLIFF

Oww, that's tough. Well, don't give up. You may need to wade in a little bit.

STUART exits toward the pond. CLIFF pulls out the ball and throws it the opposite direction. TOM and ERNIE come on, ducking under the throw.

TOM

What was that for?

CLIFF

Tom, it's survival of the fittest out here.

ERNIE

It's golf, Cliff.

CLIFF

(not acknowledging the comment)

Screw or be screwed. God, someone oughta be writing this down. Shakespeare ever write a play on golf? He wrote just about goddamn everything. He and Stephen King.

ERNIE

No! Shakespeare did not write any plays on golf.

Well, he should have. CLIFF

Where's Stuart? TOM

He can't find his ball. CLIFF

I wonder why. ERNIE  
(calling to STUART offstage)  
Stuart! Stuart! Come on, you can use one of mine. Forget about it.

CLIFF looks at him. STUART enters.

I couldn't find it anywhere. Man, and that was my lucky ball. STUART

What's your score again? TOM

Seventy-five. ERNIE  
(referring to the card)

Seventy-five with three holes left. That is not a lucky ball, Stu. CLIFF

Give me time. STUART

So how do we stand right now, Ernie? TOM

Tom, you've got a sixty-two with that birdie on the last hole. Cliff, you're right on par. And I'm... ERNIE  
(tallying)  
seven over?!

CLIFF

Alright, hole number sixteen. Say your prayers, men. This is my territory. Par three, small dog leg left. Watch the bunker in front.

ERNIE

Just swing, okay?

CLIFF

You're seven back of me right, Ernie.

(swings and follows the ball.)

Easy, easy.

(a little disappointed)

It's on the fringe. Well.

ERNIE

I hate par threes. I hate them. They hate me. Three and seven killed me.

TOM

Come on.

ERNIE

You go on. I have to...think.

CLIFF laughs.

TOM

Stuart, you wanna go ahead.

STUART

Sure. Oh, I need a new ball. I don't know where that one got a way to.

TOM hands STUART one of his.

CLIFF

Maybe another squirrel.

CLIFF laughs.

STUART

Did you see one?

CLIFF

Forget about the ball, Stu.

STUART

Yeah, but it was my Titleist Pro. Arnold Palmer autographed it.

CLIFF

Bull.

STUART

Really, he did. I sold him a car one time in Tallahassee.

TOM

You met Arnold Palmer?

STUART

Well, I sold him a car.

CLIFF

Bull. You're lying.

STUART

No, he's really a nice guy. And his wife.

TOM

Man, can you believe that, Cliff?

CLIFF

I do not believe you.

STUART

It's true. A nineteen ninety-four Seville.

CLIFF

Another Cadillac. What is it with you and Caddies?

STUART

What do mean?

TOM

Cliff, here, says you're selling them like crazy.

STUART

No. This past week I've sold a few,--five, maybe--but nothing unusual. Everyone here is so friendly.

CLIFF

Five? You sold five cars this week?

ERNIE  
(stepping forward and smiling)  
Have you ever sold five cars in a week, Cliff?

CLIFF  
I don't know, Ernie, how many did I sell you?

STUART  
(swings)  
Nope, I just can't get the hang of this. I think that one went into a tree. Serves you squirrels right!

TOM  
Come on, Ern. You're up, rag top.

ERNIE  
(walking up boldly)  
I don't want to play any more.

TOM  
What? What about your solace? How much you need this? Come on.

ERNIE  
The hell with golf!  
They all gasp as if he has blasphemed.

CLIFF  
Ern, hit the ball. Don't be a baby.

ERNIE  
Forget it, Cliff. I don't like losing to you. I don't know why I try. This is the stupidest sport. It's not even a sport. "The game of golf." A game. A silly game. I refuse to agonize any more. Screw this.

CLIFF  
Hit the damn ball, Ernie.

ERNIE  
Screw the ball! Screw the squirrels and screw you! I'm leaving.

CLIFF  
Hit the ball, Ernie.

TOM  
Come on, Ernie.

No.

ERNIE

ERNIE starts to leave.

CLIFF  
Oh, for the love of God. Stop being so goddamn dramatic. Hit the fucking ball!

ERNIE  
I'm leaving.

CLIFF  
Oh, no you're not.

CLIFF grabs him.

ERNIE  
Cliff, has it occurred to you that you may be taking this game a little too seriously?

CLIFF  
Fine, walk back to the clubhouse because the cart stays here.

ERNIE  
You are going to argue over a cart?

CLIFF  
It's got the beer on it.

STUART  
I could take him in.

CLIFF  
No. Ernie. Don't leave. This is friends out having a good time.

ERNIE  
I'm not having a good time.

CLIFF  
Yes, you are.

ERNIE  
No. I'm not.



CLIFF

Yes, you are.

ERNIE

I am not, Cliff.

(anticipating)

And if you offer me a beer, --

STUART

Hey, guys, relax.

TOM

Well, Stuart, personally I'm glad you came out and joined our little game.

ERNIE

Fine. Fine. I'll hit the damn ball.

(grabs his club and ball and sets up resentfully)

Where would you like it? Over there? Or maybe over there?

ERNIE (cont'd)

(taking a deep breath.)

This is a ridiculous game.

(talks to the ball)

I have never loathed an object more. You have caused me nothing but headache and misery since I first laid eyes on you. May you rot in hell, little ball!

TOM

These are the actual moments I enjoy.

ERNIE

Shut up! I christen thee "Cliff's testicle" and may I strike you with the angst of my five long years.

ERNIE rears back and swings straight, beautifully, and with an impact that makes CLIFF twinge.

CLIFF

Ouch.

They follow the flight of the ball. It's headed toward the hole.

TOM

Hey, Ernie, that's all right.

STUART

It's headed straight...

The ball falls into the cup. Ernie stares dumbly.

ERNIE

(screaming)

I can't believe it! A hole-in-one! A hole-in-one! A freaking hole-in-one! Holy cow!!  
AAAAHHHH!!!

CLIFF

Son of a bitch.

The others are beside themselves. Ernie begins running around waving his arms and screaming.

ERNIE

I love this game! I love this game! An ace, baby!

(suddenly calm)

Cliff, I would like to apologize for everything I have ever said about you.

ERNIE

(then back to manic)

AHH! A hole-in-one! Can you believe it? Let's hear it for Ernie!! Well, come on, let's go get my ball.

ERNIE runs off celebrating.

TOM

(calling then realizing it's useless)

I haven't hit my ball yet.

STUART

He forgot his clubs.

CLIFF

Yeah. I'll get 'em.

BLACKOUT

**THE GREEN**

STUART addresses the audience.

STUART

I would just like to say that the paintings of Georgia O'Keefe are just a bunch of giant vaginas on canvas. I mean, come on, subtlety, lady. That has nothing to do with golf but I had to let someone know. This last set up is like this. Eighteenth hole. Ernie actually started playing better. Tom and Cliff stayed right around par and I continued to stink up the course and scare wildlife. After a terrible shot off the green, Cliff played up under a tree, a near impossible shot, but he refused to let the tree beat him and with a nice roll, ended up in the fairway. He chipped on and lies here. About six feet from the hole. Ernie is putting for par from the fringe and Tom has hit a nice little wedge out of the sand and he lies about right here. Other side of the hole about fifteen feet out. Me, I'm on the fringe--a hellacious thirty footer with a very hard break to the right. I would just like to say first hand that I enjoyed myself today. You'll see, I don't get the chance to tell the guys later.

Lights up as the guys are all sizing up their shots.

CLIFF

Oh, man, Stu. It looks like you're gonna have to settle for another bogie. And after I drain this six-footer, I'll be taking you guys money.

TOM

Don't miss. I'm only one shot back of you.

CLIFF

Automatic, baby. Stuart, you can tell the guys back at work tomorrow who is “da man”. No Cadillac charm gonna get you outta losing all that money to me. Did you even win a hole?

ERNIE

You know you’re arrogance is incredible, Cliff. But I don’t care because  
(singing softly)  
I got a hole-in-one, I got a hole-in-one.

CLIFF

Yeah, yeah.

STUART

What is the deal?

TOM

I think Cliff’s out of beer.

CLIFF

Yeah. So? I can still drain this putt without my Arnold Palmer autographed golf ball.

STUART

Did I do something wrong?

ERNIE

No, Cliff just--

CLIFF

Ernie, shut up.

STUART

What? Cliff, are you angry because I’m outselling you this month?

CLIFF

Hey, the month’s not over, Stu.

STUART

Is that what this is all about? Cliff, do you have my ball?

CLIFF

Of course not.

STUART

Cliff, do you know where my ball disappeared to?

CLIFF is silent.

STUART (cont'd)

I see. Cute. Real cute.

CLIFF

Sure was. I especially enjoyed your little wade in the hazard. Now which one, I'm not sure--the one on four or twelve? Hmm?

STUART

I can not believe this.

ERNIE

Stuart, we had nothing to do with this. I gave you a ball to play with.

STUART

You guys knew he was doing this.

TOM

I didn't know until the twelfth, well maybe the ninth. I saw Cliff burying something in the sand trap. I thought it was a beer can at first.

STUART

Ernie?

ERNIE

I don't like playing with strangers.

STUART

I see. How much do I owe?

CLIFF

After this shot, ninety dollars, I believe is the total. Maybe I can put a down payment on a Cadillac? What do you say, Stu?

STUART

(pulls out his money, hands it to TOM, and begins to leave.)

Here. Nice playing and goodbye.

CLIFF

Hey, Stu, come on. It was a joke, man. I was pissed that you're out selling me. And I'm

slightly drunk.

STUART stops and turns on CLIFF.

STUART

No. I tell you what, Cliff. I'll bet double or nothing I can make my putt for birdie. Hell, I haven't made one today. Come on, Cliff. One hundred and eighty bucks, yours. Easy.

CLIFF

Stu, I'm not gonna take your money. Let's just finish the game and call it quits. It's been a long day.

STUART

All right, two hundred. Two hundred dollars to the person who can win this hole. You

STUART (cont'd)

guys can just throw in your stakes for the day. To the winner goes the spoils. Come on, Cliff. Surely, this will be easier than trying to outsell me. I want this over.

CLIFF

I am not going to take your money, Stu.

STUART

My name is Stuart, Cliff. Stuart, not Stu. God, can you please just say it right? Do me at least that courtesy.

CLIFF

(angry)

Okay. Fine. I'm glad I threw your ball in the drink. You in, guys?

TOM

Sure, my money's yours anyway, today.

ERNIE

Same here. I'm in. Hell, at least I got my five dollar hole-in-one.

CLIFF

You know, Ernie, I'm happy that you got that ace. But give it a rest.

STUART

I'll even let you get it over with. Go on.

CLIFF

Fine.

(addressing the ball)

Six feet. Piece of cake.

ERNIE

(quietly narrating as a golf announcer)

This putt for birdie breaks slightly to the right.

CLIFF

Shut up, Ernie. I got this.

CLIFF swings and watches as the ball rolls past the hole.

CLIFF (cont'd)

Shit.

ERNIE

(still softly announcer-like)

Ooo, tough break for our leader. He'll have to settle for par.

(out of it)

I told you, Cliff.

CLIFF

Shut up, Ernie.

(tapping the ball into the hole.)

Fine, well, there's par. I got par, at least, so it's even money, right?

TOM

Hey, I could do this.

TOM lines up on his ball.

TOM (cont'd)

Breaks to the right. Huh, Ernie?

ERNIE

Well, on your side, play it more to the left.

TOM

(swings)

Oh, almost. Oh, well. That's a bogie for me. I'm out.

ERNIE

Let me get this over with.

(swings)  
Okay.

(“announcing”)  
Our challenger lines up. This is a difficult one, folks. Near impossible, but our challenger take home the consolation of his first career hole-in-one--

CLIFF  
Putt the ball, Ernie.

ERNIE  
(swings and watches)  
Aw, close. Well, I gave it a shot.

CLIFF  
All right, killer. Step up.

STUART  
You know, Cliff. I came out here with every honest intention of making a few friends.

CLIFF  
You’re breaking my heart. Look, I said I was sorry. It was a joke.

STUART  
You know why I’m a better salesman than you, Cliff?

CLIFF  
You are not a better salesman than me. Just because you can sell Arnold Palmer a car does not make you a great salesman.

STUART  
I have put up with a lot today. I didn’t have to come out here. And you didn’t have to invite me, Cliff. But you did. And I accepted. But you just couldn’t leave it alone. It was eating at you so bad. The new kid on the block can run with the big dog. “Well, I think I’ll just show him up at the club. Won’t that be fun?” Did you ever check that ball for an autograph? Did you?

CLIFF  
No.

STUART  
There wasn’t one. You know that. You see, I’m a better salesman than you because I’m a better liar than you, Cliff. And a better actor. Oh, I sold five cars last week, could have sold seven probably, but I didn’t want to overdo it. You know, being the new kid and all. Hell, you have to make friends, right? Oh, and by the way, I am also...



STUART swings and watches the ball roll and roll and roll toward the hole and drop in.

STUART (cont'd)

A better golfer.

STUART walks over to the hole, retrieves his ball, and throws it to TOM.

STUART (cont'd)

Thanks for the ball, Tom. See you at work, Cliff. Bye, boys.

STUART grabs the money from TOM's hand and walks out with clubs over his shoulder. TOM, ERNIE, and CLIFF stand silent for a minute.

CLIFF

Son of a bitch.

ERNIE

I hope Joe's better next week.

TOM

What are you going to say tomorrow at the lot?

CLIFF

Not a word. I think work just got a lot more interesting.

ERNIE

(tossing his golf ball in the air)

You are my new lucky ball. Come on, Cliff. I'll buy you a beer in the clubhouse.

TOM

I'm going home to the wife, gentlemen. I'll see you next Sunday.

CLIFF

Here's your glove, man.

ERNIE

Keep it.

BLACKOUT