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One Over Par

A Mash-up of Shakespeare and Contemporary Comedy for Teens

by

Mark Rigney

With thanks to my parents, who first took me to see Shakespeare, and to Tara Sorg and the cast and crew of the Franklin Central High School production in Indianapolis. Y’all took a chance on a new work and put it on its feet; Ariel and I are forever grateful.
One Over Par
by Mark Rigney

CHARACTERS
4F / 4M
With Opportunity for Non-Binary Casting

CLARA CANTRELL: Female, seventeen. Dying of leukemia. Has run out of patience with rational behavior; there’s simply no time. She is possibly a dancer, or a musician, or...?

NICK WELLS: Male, seventeen. His inherent decency has led to inordinate caution. Bold moves are scary. So far.


STAVROS, (ETC): Male, nineteen. He has five secrets, one of which is that he is not who he claims to be, and another is that he can read palms and tell the future. Come to think of it, five secrets might not even begin to cover it.

BETHANY KING: Female, seventeen. Believes it is human nature to complain. Organized, an active Girl Scout. A lousy golfer with an outsized personality and a BIG voice.


ARIEL: Female or not? Immortal. The spirit from The Tempest...and perhaps a little more. In this guise, she portrays any sort of statue or decoration that could reasonably exist at a mini-golf course, including but not limited to: scarecrows, monkeys, gnomes, fairies, etc.

PUCK: Male or not? Immortal. The fairy messenger from A Midsummer Night’s Dream. In this guise, he, like Ariel, portrays any sort of statue or decoration that could reasonably exist at a mini-golf course, including but not limited to: scarecrows, monkeys, gnomes, fairies, etc.

SETTING
A putt-putt course on a warm summer evening, a few weeks after the start of school

ETC

SET REQUIREMENTS: A bench. A changeable sign (possibly magnetic?) indicating which hole is which. The “fairway” and hole should be as realistic as possible, an anchor in an otherwise neutral space: use Astroturf, wooden berms, etc. One or more hiding places (shrubbery, potted grasses, fencing) are essential. Additional structural elements found on typical mini-golf courses are welcome (tunnels, hills, pipes, etc.) but by no means required. Other décor such as cutesy gnomes, ceramic frogs, tiki torches, etc. are entirely optional, although a bench and enough surrounding shrubbery or fencing, etc., would be handy to the point of indispensability. Overall, a slightly tacky sensibility would be ideal.
ONE OVER PAR
by Mark Rigney

SETTING: A Midsummer’s Night. The weather? Dreamy—but with a hint of shipwrecking storms in the distance...

Well. It’s actually late summer, not midsummer, and it’s just past dark on the local, rather poorly lit putt-putt golf course. There is one fairway made of Astroturf and bordered by sections of log, wood, or other material. Off to the side, a signpost declares this to be HOLE 1 – PAR 3. Near the fairway stand two “statues,” ARIEL and PUCK. They face away from each other, each unaware of the other. For now.

Over darkness, we hear a single, echoing chime.

AT RISE: CLARA and NICK are ready to tee off, NICK first. Attached by a slipknot, CLARA carries a plain Helium balloon. She wears a summery dress, something to impress (without being too obvious about it). NICK is much more casual. NICK’s golf ball is yellow. CLARA’s is red.

NICK
Wait—if I don’t get it in par I have to say what, now?

CLARA
You have to say you love me.

NICK
Do I have to mean it?

CLARA
If you don’t, what’s the point of saying it?

NICK
What’s the point—? Clara, you don’t just say a thing and it becomes reality.
CLARA

Par three. Go.

NICK

No.

CLARA

Why? Because you don’t love me?

NICK

No, no, no. Not playing.

CLARA

Nick. Work with me here. Is falling in love rational?

NICK

Is this a trick?

CLARA

Just answer the question. Is falling in love rational?

NICK

No.

CLARA

And neither is declaring you love someone based on your score in a game of putt-putt. Which makes it the perfect method for deciding the whole question.

NICK

Can we just, you know, play some golf?

CLARA

Nick. We’ve been dating now a long time—

NICK

—Two weeks!—

CLARA

—yes, two weeks, which is a very long time. So, it’s appropriate we hammer out some details.

NICK

Oh, so now love’s a detail.

CLARA

Par three. The ball’s in your court.
What if I get it in four?

He loves me, he loves me not.

What if I get it in two? Under par?

He loves me, he loves me not.

What if I don’t know if I love you so I intentionally bogey?

He loves me, he loves me not.

What if I do love you and I make par but I’m a coward and I still can’t say the words, ‘cos actual like long-term love is pretty seriously scary?

(CLARA)
(To the skies)
Will somebody please knock some sense into this boy’s head?

In response, ARIEL shifts. One abrupt, swift movement. Neither CLARA nor NICK notice.

Clara. Why draw this line?

Romeo and Juliet fell in love in two seconds.

And I’m supposed to live up to that?

My parents. Love at first sight.

Yeah? And where did they meet? Hamlet?

They were at the pet shop. Looking at bunnies.
Oh, okay. Good thing the zoo wasn’t our first stop. “Look, Clara, see the pretty camel?” “Ooh, yes, Nick, and now I love you oodles and lots.”

I’m talking about our hearts. Our future.

Our future? Our future? I’m here to play putt-putt! With a stupid too-short driver and a crayon-colored ball!

You are such a boy.

What’s that supposed to mean?

Girls mature faster.

Yeah, according to girls.

Neuropsychology. The hemispheres of girls’ brains fuse faster.

Fossilize, more like.

Look. I am not asking for permanence. You could love me today and wake up tomorrow and feel differently.

Then what’s the point?

Love isn’t constant. It comes, it goes, it falls down a gully and gets lost...we shouldn’t be afraid of that. No, listen. My parents don’t wake up every morning desperately in love with each other. They forget. They get busy, you know? But then, because they work at it, they get it back again. They re-fall in love.

So on bad days, they like rush off to the pet store and scope the latest batch of bunnies?

Sometimes, yes! And that’s why they’re so inspiring!
NICK
Come on. Nobody’s got inspiring parents.

CLARA
They make it work. Warts and all.

NICK
Clara, you’re making me feel like I’m twenty-five, thirty! This can wait.

CLARA
No. It can’t. Because there’s something coming—

Again, ARIEL shifts.

CLARA (Cont’d)
—something I have to do, something I really don’t want to do at all—

And again, a quick shift from ARIEL.

CLARA (Cont’d)
—so probably I shouldn’t be dating in the first place, but now, having started...

NICK
I just want to play some golf, you know? Plain vanilla fun.

CLARA
Tonight, we play for keeps. And then if it goes wrong – tomorrow, whenever – we can decide to either work at it, and get the feeling back, or we can drift and let go.

NICK
Look, I know this’ll sound cynical, but I’m not sure I believe in happily ever after.

CLARA
Even a sad story is better than no story at all.

NICK
Okay. Fine. But my answer doesn’t ride on this one hole. We play eighteen holes. Then I answer.

CLARA
Nick. You suck at golf and you’ll never get par over eighteen holes.

NICK
So, we change the rules. If I get over par in eighteen holes total, I’ll say I love you. That way there’s no way I can throw the game, ‘cos you’re right, I do kind of suck at this.

CLARA
And if you’re under par?
NICK

Then it’s on you.

CLARA withdraws her cell phone and prepares to photograph NICK.

CLARA

All right. You’re on. And the first hole is still par three.

NICK

Yes, it is. And here we have the set up. (Hits the ball—CLARA takes a photo) The approach. (Hits the ball—CLARA takes a photo) And the coup de gras.

If the ball goes into the hole, continue here. If not, skip to ###, below:

CLARA

Smile! (Takes a photo) Cute. Now, what happens if you get par exactly?

NICK

We go straight to the nearest pet store and we stare at cuddly baby animals until one of us breaks.

CLARA

Do fish count? I prefer fish.

NICK

I’m kind of more into birds.

CLARA

Well, either way, I’m up. And no commentary. (Referring to the balloon) Wait, can you hold this?

NICK

Sure.

NICK takes the balloon, but he slips it on to some handy fixture — the bench, the sign, ARIEL? — rather than keeping it himself.

NICK (Cont’d)

(As CLARA takes her first swing)

Nice. (Off her second attempt) Hmm. That’s trouble.

CLARA

Nick!
CLARA takes her third shot.

If CLARA's ball goes into the hole, continue here. If not, skip to $$$, below:

Par.

NICK

Par. Kiss?

Yes. A quick one.

Next?

NICK

Next.

CLARA and NICK exit, hand in hand, toward Hole Two, taking their golf balls but leaving the balloon behind.

###

CLARA

Uh-oh. *(Takes a photo)* Love is in the air.

NICK

Don’t count your chickens.

CLARA

What, you don’t want to be in love?

NICK

No, ‘cos I’m too immature, remember? I just want to mess around with Hot Wheels and Angry Birds.

CLARA

*(As NICK finally sinks the ball)*

Get off the green, champ. I’m up. And no commentary. *(Referring to the balloon)*

Wait, can you hold this?

NICK

Sure.
NICK takes the balloon, but he slips it on to some handy fixture – the bench, the sign, ARIEL? – rather than keeping it himself.

NICK (Cont’d)

(As CLARA takes her first shot)
Nice. (Off her second shot) Hmm. That’s trouble.

CLARA

Nick!

CLARA takes her third shot.

If CLARA’s ball goes into the hole, continue here. If not, skip to $$$, below:

CLARA

Par.

NICK

Par. Kiss?

Yes. A quick one.

CLARA

Next?

NICK

Next.

CLARA and NICK exit, hand in hand, toward Hole Two, taking their golf balls but leaving the balloon behind.

$$$

NICK

Huh. What if you’re over par?

CLARA

What if I am?

NICK

Shouldn’t there be some risk in all this for you?
CLARA
I’m risking plenty already, thanks. Ready for the next hole?

NICK
Kiss?

Yes. A quick one.

CLARA
Next?

NICK
Next.

CLARA and NICK exit, hand in hand, toward Hole Two, taking their golf balls but leaving the balloon behind. ARIEL animates. She inspects herself.

ARIEL
‘Tis not the form I would have chosen. But…

ARIEL turns her attentions to PUCK. She removes a small pouch, takes out powder, and blows the powder over PUCK, which he, newly animated, doesn’t like at all.

PUCK
Fie, a pox upon’t! Desist, I say, desist!

ARIEL
If awake you be, I will.

PUCK
Do I speak? Yes! But hold. Art thou Ariel?

ARIEL
Aye, Ariel, whom Prospero did free. Charged to the elements! Yet more am I, though speak we not of this, if need ne’er be.

PUCK
How came you hither, Spirit of the Isle?

ARIEL
Here I stand, summoned from air by a maid in need.
PUCK
And thou in turn brought Puck to bear. Wherefore?

ARIEL
The gods above employ fine tools. I’d fain
Have help.

PUCK
Puck stands honored. But prickle up your ears!
Unless I be mistook, two more come.

ARIEL
Let us retire, to learn both such and some.

ARIEL and PUCK quickly reverse the sign identifying the hole and reposition it so that it now reads “HOLE 2 – PAR 3.” Then, satisfied, they assume a frozen position just as STAVROS and BEN enter. BEN has a spiffy digital camera slung over his shoulder. Big lens. Serious stuff. STAVROS wears sleek black leather gloves, form-fitting, and speaks with the gloomiest Russian accent ever heard.

STAVROS
Wait. There is another of these holes?

BEN
Yes. Eighteen total, and we’re going to play every last one because my job, tonight, is to keep you entertained.

STAVROS
But Stavros has already won.

BEN
We played the first hole, sure.

STAVROS
Stavros smashed his ball into the hole. Stavros showed the ball that he is superior force. What more does the ball want?

BEN
It wants you to have eighteen holes worth of fun.

STAVROS
Yah, fun. In Stavros’s country, we have fun by not starving to death in winter.
BEN
Right, but here, since we don’t have that problem—

STAVROS
—Stavros’s parents, his teachers, they say, “This year, this winter, go to United States. Be the foreign exchange. This way, you will not starve to death.”

BEN
C’mon. You weren’t going to starve.

STAVROS
When I return to my country, to my school? All my classmates will be dead.

BEN
That is the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard.

STAVROS
Stavros alone will live. He will live because he is here in the great U.S. of A. and because your dad is the very good cook. And because of these, Stavros is so happy! He will have lots of leftovers to send this winter to his family so they do not starve to the horrible death.

BEN
Is everyone where you come from really that poor?

STAVROS
Most, not so much. But Stavros’s grandfather, he was KGB, so everyone hates him. His grandmother, she worked in the Kremlin, so everyone hates her. His other grandfather and grandmother, they started a church, which was illegal, so they brought shame and danger on all the family, so everyone hates them. Then Stavros’s father converted to be a Jew, and that is wonderful, but now everybody hates him because that is the polite thing to do in my country. And Stavros’s mother? I cannot talk about it.

BEN
Maybe it’ll help to just say it. Maybe it’s not as bad as you think.

STAVROS
Ben. My friend. My mother, she has the incurable leprosy.

BEN
Oh.

STAVROS
So not only does everybody hate her, we are all terrified to get anywhere near her. And in all of this hate, there is left only the sister and the brother, the older brother.

BEN
Let me guess. Everybody hates them, too.
STAVROS
No. Stavros’s sister everybody loves, because she works for organized Russian crime syndicate and she gives TVs and cigarettes for free. Old people, babies, donkeys, everyone gets the free TVs and cigarettes. But, they hate her, too, because she never brings them food, which is what they really need.

BEN
Okay, how about maybe we just play this hole?

STAVROS
The donkeys, they hate her most, because when they eat the TVs, they get glass in their mouths.

BEN
Look, just put your ball on the spot...

STAVROS
Poor, stupid donkeys. As if the sharp, jagged glass is not bad enough, then they eat the cigarettes and they get the cancer of the tongue and mouth from all the tobacco and this drives them in-sane, so they go kick, kick! Kicking everyone they see, and soon all that is left in my village is hate and pain and hate.

BEN
Stavros. Hit the ball.

STAVROS
You did not ask about Stavros’s brother.

BEN
Fine. How is your brother?

STAVROS
He is not feeling so well.

BEN
Look, there’s gonna be other people, wanting to play through...

STAVROS
This brother, he was milking the cow, our one, last cow, the cow that used to give milk, but the cow had a stroke and the heart attack and then she pulled the muscle in her teats and so she fell on Stavros’s brother and crushed him and now he is dead, so everybody hates the cow for dying and also they hate this brother for being dead, and why? For because they are jealous.

BEN
So is this like a clause in your family, it’s just a requirement to suffer and hate?
STAVROS
No. Everybody likes Stavros. You know, because he is so cheerful.

BEN
Can we please play the hole?

STAVROS
Yes—if you tell me why you bring the big camera.

BEN
In case I find something worth shooting.

STAVROS
Ah. Like me, maybe.

BEN
With you, I might not use a camera.

STAVROS
Hah! Good one. Now. Stavros should hit again the ball?

BEN
Over eighteen holes, it’s the aggregate score, the total of all the holes added together, that’s what counts.

STAVROS
Aggregate. Stavros likes this. Okay.

STAVROS takes aim at the ball as if the club is an axe. He brings the club down, and misses the ball completely—at least twice.

STAVROS (Cont’d)
This ball, you know what? This ball hates Stavros’s slimy Russian guts.

BEN
It’s ‘cos you’re hitting it like you’re chopping wood.

STAVROS
Oh, Stavros at chopping wood, he is very good. He is a good wood chopper. Whack! Whack! Whack!

On each “whack,” STAVROS chops at the ball, missing each time, until BEN reaches in and steals the ball away.
BEN
No, that’s it. You have just lost your golf ball privileges.

STAVROS
(Ignoring BEN)
At home, Stavros every day is up before dawn, splitting the wood for the stove, so his family does not freeze. Whack! Whack! The wood is cut, so. He brings in the wood. He lays it in the stove. Everybody gets close all ‘round in the tiny freezing shack, wishing we had a little tiny something to cook in our tiny, pathetic fire.

BEN
I’m sorry, I’m not buying this.

STAVROS
Okay. Stavros is not selling.

BEN
No, I mean you, this whole “I’m the poorest person ever” routine.

STAVROS
Routine?

BEN
I saw you get off the plane. I’ve seen your luggage, your stuff, your clothes. Really, truly poor people don’t ever wind up at my high school, sharing my house, living in my guest room.

STAVROS
Your parents’ guest room.

BEN
You have an iPhone.

STAVROS
You accuse Stavros of lying?

STAVROS raises his club like a whack-whack axe.

BEN
And what’s with all the third person? You speak perfectly good English.

STAVROS
There is third person, where? Stavros thought it was just us.
BEN
No, how you address yourself. You’re supposed to say, “I play golf.” “I play golf with Ben.” “Thank you, Ben, for taking me out for putt-putt.” You get it? Not, “Stavros plays golf and Stavros chops wood, whack-whack.”

STAVROS
You don’t think this makes Stavros sound tough?

BEN
It makes you sound confused.

STAVROS
Stavros is never confused!

BEN
Well, I am. We’ve had foreign exchange students before, and you’re all weird, okay? Weird, for you guys, that’s like normal. And I’m fine with that. It’s a big world, everybody’s different. But you? Even your name. Stavros. That’s Greek!

STAVROS
Stavros is Russki!

BEN
Sure, you, maybe. But not your name.

STAVROS
Stavros and Ben will play the next hole.

BEN
I haven’t played this hole.

STAVROS
Stavros is done with this hole. (STAVROS steals his ball back from BEN and chucks it somewhere far away) Next!

STAVROS marches off, exiting.

BEN
You’re going to make it very tough for me to get a girlfriend, you know that?

BEN exits. ARIEL and PUCK spring to life.

PUCK
What fools these mortals be!

ARIEL
I do concur.
PUCK
This Stavros. Preposterous indeed be he.

ARIEL
Think you then that we should clip his feathers?

PUCK
Others come. Consider we this newfound weather.

By now, PUCK and ARIEL have amended the HOLE 2 sign to read HOLE 3 – PAR 3. Satisfied, they freeze as BETHANY and CANDICE enter. BETHANY wears a rugged-looking backpack; Army surplus, or the kind of thing REI would sell for day hikes. The two girls are entirely absorbed in BETHANY’s cell phone.

CANDICE
You wouldn’t.

BETHANY
Oh, yes, I would.

CANDICE
You wouldn’t.

BETHANY
Definitely would.

CANDICE
No. Not in a million years.

BETHANY
Try me.

CANDICE
You wouldn’t.

BETHANY
Would, too.

CANDICE
 Wouldn’t.

BETHANY
Absolutely would.
CANDICE: You wouldn’t dare.

BETHANY: Try me and see.

CANDICE: Nah, no way. You just wouldn’t.

BETHANY: Would too.

CANDICE: Would not.

BETHANY: Would.

CANDICE: Wouldn’t.

BETHANY: Would.

CANDICE: Wouldn’t.

BETHANY: Wouldn’t too.

CANDICE: Would so.

BETHANY: Wouldn’t ever.

CANDICE: Definitely would.

BETHANY: You wouldn’t ever, not in ten million years.

CANDICE: Wanna bet?

BETHANY: How much?
Nah, no bet. ‘Cos I kind of already did.

Didn’t.

Did so.

Did not, no way not! And I don’t count, anyway.

Wait. Which way are we arguing?

I think I’m for it.

Why?

To teach you a lesson.

But from what we just said, I’m for it. Except why would I be for it?

Did we just switch?

No way.

Yes. Way.

No. Not in a million years.

But we did.

Did not.

Did so.
Girl, that’s just dumb.

Well, let’s just check and see whose phone this is.

It’s mine.

No, it’s mine.

No way. Mine’s got the texting icon right up top.

So does mine.

Well, mine’s got that homecoming shot for wallpaper.

And mine doesn’t?

Crap. Here, check the phone.

I am checking the phone.

No, the numbers. The recents. If your number comes up first, then it’s my phone.

Not necessarily.

What are you talking about?

You might have dialed yourself.

Girlfriend, why would I dial my own number?

To talk to your own sweet self.
CANDICE

(Trying to grab the phone)
You need to stop being so salty.

BETHANY
Hey, get off.

CANDICE
Next time, can we not get cases that look absolutely alike?

BETHANY
This phone is mine ‘cos when I go into Photos, and I see those photos that nobody should have, of you? That’s how I know. That this, see? Is my phone.

CANDICE
Whatever. But I do not need to be taught a lesson.

BETHANY
I say you do.

CANDICE
I don’t.

BETHANY
You do.

CANDICE
I do not!

BETHANY
Do, do, do!

CANDICE
Gimme that phone.

BETHANY
No.

CANDICE
Will you just erase them already?

BETHANY
Why? You’re smiling and everything.

CANDICE
And why did you bring that lame backpack? I mean, the rest of you looks nice. The top—I mean, what is that? Lulu?
BETHANY
Lucky—and you should know, you were with me when I bought it.

CANDICE
But with that? It’s like you’re off to join *Survivor*.

BETHANY
What’s wrong with “Be Prepared”?

CANDICE
That’s Boy Scouts.

BETHANY
No, that’s Scouts, period, and this backpack contains everything I could possibly need, for any emergency. Including, look, your phone.

CANDICE
*(Taking her phone)*
How’d that get in there?

BETHANY
Focus, Candice, and answer me this: Why do I have these photos in the first place?
*(Prompting, since CANDICE knows the answer but doesn’t want to say)* Okay. Repeat after me. “Bethany has these photos because I am an irresponsible airhead.”

CANDICE
Fine. You have these photos because I am an irresponsible airhead. Now what exactly do I have to do to get them back or have you get rid of them?

BETHANY
Play to lose.

CANDICE
This is why you dragged us here?

BETHANY
I would like, for once, to win a round of mini-golf.

CANDICE
Last year, last summer, you beat me like twice.

BETHANY
Candice, when you make things up hoping it will make other people feel better? Really, all you’re doing is being condescending, and I’m telling you right now that needs to stop.

CANDICE
Fine. So we play putt-putt...
BETHANY
And I swear, if I win these eighteen holes, I will erase your photos forever. And, yes, I will erase the copies I’ve got on my computer and my iPod and my thumb drive, Time Machine, CD, floppy disc, Betamax, you name it.

CANDICE
Even your back-up phone?

BETHANY
Everything.

CANDICE
This doesn’t make sense. You won’t feel good about winning if I throw the game.

BETHANY
Girlfriend, I’ll take a win any way I can get it.

CANDICE
All right. Deal.

*BETHANY pockets her phone and lines up a shot. She makes the most careful preparations, eyeballing every last detail, and then—thunk. She hits the ball on the backswing and it disappears in completely the wrong direction.*

BETHANY
Oh-oh.

CANDICE
You do realize that losing on my part is going to take some serious effort.

BETHANY
Crap. It’s headed for the pond.

*CANDICE, after thinking about it, simply tosses her (green) ball in the same general direction.*

CANDICE
Oops.

*CANDICE exits, also pursuing her ball. ARIEL and PUCK animate.*
 Ariel
I do agree with thee, good Robin Puck.
What fools these mortals be.

 Puck
And yet, were I
Made of stone, my affections would be tender.

 Ariel
Good Puck, toward one above all my interests go,
For hers is the case that drew me hence,
But of the others, help I’d grant them all.

 Puck
Might medicine for the one serve the rest?

 Ariel
The drug we seek, the action quick, be “rearrange.”

 Puck
A change of partners, yes!

 Ariel
We’ll mingle each couple.

 Puck
Then all a-flustered, hearts a-jumbled—

 Ariel
—with us as fae instructors, we’ll cure their stumbles.

 Puck
It would be best if this golfing crew would see
Us less.

 Ariel
Their sight I will obscure. Freely
Then we’ll move, and they’ll be none the wiser.

 Puck
But one thing more. You’ll free me e’er we’re done?

 Ariel
When the battle’s lost, and won. You have my word.
Having reversed the sign so it reads HOLE 4 – PAR 3, ARIEL and PUCK freeze once more. Or do they? CLARA enters, along with, from the opposite direction, STAVROS, still wearing his gloves. Unnoticed, ARIEL blows fairy dust on both CLARA and STAVROS, rendering them unable to see the two sprites.

Nick? Are you coming?

CLARA

Ah! A female!

STAVROS

Excuse me?

CLARA

Yes. You. Are. Female.

STAVROS

He gives her an experimental poke, someplace soft but not too risqué, just to prove his hypothesis.

CLARA

Get off. Nick! Nick?

STAVROS

Why do you say this “Nick”?

CLARA

Take two steps back.

STAVROS

But I am Stavros.

CLARA

Nick?

STAVROS

Or, better, Stavros is Stavros. But harmless. From Russia. The freezing winters. The terrible snows. The longest novels ever written.

CLARA

Did you see anyone else come past here?
STAVROS

Stavros did not, and I include even the person he is actually looking for.

CLARA

I didn’t think a putt-putt course would be this confusing.

STAVROS

Neither did Stavros, but. Here we are, Stavros and the female.

CLARA

This female’s name is Clara, thank you.

STAVROS

Ah! You are from Hoffman.

CLARA

From what?

STAVROS


CLARA

The ballet?

STAVROS

The dancing! Yes. And Hoffman’s Clara dances to the great composer of Russia, Tchaikovsky.

CLARA

I’m not that Clara, and I need to go find my boyfriend. (Referring to the balloon, which she now retrieves from whatever it got tied to) This is mine, by the way. Just so you don’t think I’m stealing. Although how it got to this hole...

STAVROS

Wait. Stavros will tell you his secrets.

CLARA

No, your secrets are really not my problem.

STAVROS

Stavros has five secrets. He will tell you only one.

CLARA

Is there something I can do to stop you?

STAVROS

Stavros has Secrets of Who, of What, of Where, of When, and of How. You will hear the Secret of What, and this secret is that Stavros can read the future. Your future.
CLARA
You don’t know anything about me.

STAVROS removes his gloves.

STAVROS
Give me your hand.

CLARA
No.

STAVROS drops to one knee, as if proposing.

STAVROS
Please. It would be the very great honor.

CLARA
Sure, fine. Whatever. (Having offered her hand) You know, I get this done every summer at the fair. The most they ever get is my age or maybe my height, weight. Stupid stuff. (Off STAVROS’s worried countenance) What?

STAVROS
(Accent slipping away)
You’re in love. But you’re totally afraid of love, so you’re making the guy you’re in love with say the words first.

CLARA
Okay, gaslighting is really not cool.

STAVROS
This isn’t—wait. You’re sick.

CLARA
(Retrieving her hand)
Excuse me?

STAVROS
I think maybe you’re dying.

CLARA
What?

STAVROS
You have leukemia. And I think you know it.

CLARA
Nick? Nick!
STAVROS
Okay, look, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said anything. With people our age, it’s usually all good news.

CLARA
Wait. What happened to your stupid accent?

STAVROS
Crap. Look, don’t tell anyone, okay?

CLARA
Tell anyone what? That I met some guy who likes to fake being Russian? And who would I tell? I don’t know you from Adam.

STAVROS
I wish there were something I could do.

CLARA
There is! Vanish!

STAVROS
Okay. I’m sorry.

STAVROS exits. CLARA puts her ball down and tries to play out the hole, but it won’t go in, and the balloon is most definitely in the way. Putt. Putt. Putt. No good. Plus, something inside pains her, like a cramp but more lethal. Wincing, furious, she finally scoops up the ball.

CLARA
Nick! Nick, where are you?

CLARA exits, with her balloon.

PUCK
This one called Stavros with his secrets five...

ARIEL
Oberon’s touch runs quick in that one’s blood.

PUCK
A changeling, then? Of devil’s kith and kin?
ARIEL
No, a mortal he. But if I am not mistook,
Twice brushed by prying elven hands. And now,
Prepare! Here comes another, all agog.

Enter CANDICE, with binoculars,
looking for her ball. ARIEL gives PUCK
some of her magic dust, and he ensures
that CANDICE gets a dose.

CANDICE
Hello? Who’s there?

(To ARIEL)

PUCK
Why, none but two.

(To PUCK)
Prospero’s slave and Oberon’s fool.

CANDICE sort of hears them, but can’t
spot either of the two fae. NICK enters.
CANDICE spots him immediately,
through her binoculars. ARIEL gives
NICK his requisite dose of dust. Thanks
to ARIEL and PUCK, the sign now
reads: HOLE 5 – PAR 3.

NICK
Hi. Nice binoculars.

CANDICE
Oh. Thanks. They’re not mine, actually. Borrowed from my friend. She’s got all sorts of
things, you know, for emergencies.

NICK
So, are you bird-watching or looking for your ball?

It’s nighttime.

CANDICE

NICK
I know, I was making a joke. (As CANDICE continues her search) So, what color are we
looking for?
CANDICE
Oh, I hope it doesn’t always stay the same color. When I play golf, I want to play with a ball that changes, orange purple green pink, a ball that has all the colors of creation. Isn’t that funny? As soon as I get away from Bethany, look what happens to me. I get all, I don’t know. Misty. Like a really lonely poem.

NICK
Okay, well. I’m going to keep looking for my girlfriend.

CANDICE
Very sensible. Which is what I should be looking for.

NICK
You’re gonna look for my girlfriend?

CANDICE
No, I meant I need to look for sense, basic common sense. Because right now, the way things stand, I lose things, I find things. I do things. Things happen.

That’s a lot of things.

CANDICE
I know. And one of the craziest, most wonderful things I do is that I fall in love with pretty much every boy I meet.

NICK
Is that a fact?

CANDICE
It is.

As she moves closer, NICK backs up at the edge of the rough, falls, and more or less lands on CANDICE’s ball.

NICK
Oh, hey, look at this. Golf ball.

CANDICE
But it’s only green. And it keeps on being green. So it can’t be mine.

I guess not.

CANDICE
Still. It’s nice of you to find it. Like a fairy tale. The handsome prince helping the lady in distress.
I’m not a prince.

Modesty, I love modesty.

Ever heard of a prince named Nick?

Modesty is the color of kindness.

Prince Nick, heir to the throne of modesty.

Or maybe Prince Nicholas?

I’m just ordinary Nick.

Says who?

Well, no one exactly has to say it.

I’m Candice. I am not and never will be ordinary.

I’m Nick, and I’m taken.

Okay.

Only a breath of air separates them from a kiss—and then even that breath is gone. Tension. Release. CANDICE pulls back.

CANDICE (Cont’d)

Thanks for finding this. But. (Takes her ball from NICK and tosses it far away, off-stage) I’m playing to lose.

Apparently.

NICK
CANDICE
The reality is, I’m having digital image issues, so according to Bethany – she’s the friend I was telling you about – I need to, you know. Get the genie back in the bottle.

Ah.

CANDICE
Because your digital self – or at least this is what Bethany says, Bethany plus my mother – oh, God, my mother – anyway, your digital self, it’s like forever. Like extinction. For-ever.

Except really it’s the opposite.

CANDICE
The point is, I do things. And then later, I realize I shouldn’t have done them.

_NICK kisses CANDICE._

Should you have done that?

BETHANY _(Off)_

Candice! Candice, where are you?

CANDICE
Oh! That’s who I’m looking for.

NICK
Wait, could you maybe leave a glass slipper or something, so I know how to find you?

CANDICE
How about this? (Writing her number with a Sharpie on NICK’s yellow golf ball) Eight one two seven three six four.

BETHANY _(Off)_

Candice, you airbrain, how can you get lost on a putt-putt course?

_CANDICE (To NICK)_
And you know what? You should take this, too.

_CANDICE hands NICK her cell phone._

NICK
I can’t just take your phone.
CANDICE
But for me, it’s not a phone. It’s more like, I don’t know. A grenade. And you wouldn’t want a girl like me, a lonely poem, to be carrying a live grenade.

NICK
How do I call you if I’ve got your phone?

CANDICE
I think there’s a very good chance that I’ll love you forever.

Then stay. Talk to me.

BETHANY (Off)
Candice Martinez, if you don’t unloose yourself right now, I will yell so loud that every living creature within two miles will be deafened! Is that what you want? Is it?

CANDICE
She’s that way, right? Or maybe...over here.

*CANDICE exits.*

NICK
Hey, Candice! Wait!

NICK starts off in pursuit of CANDICE, but PUCK and ARIEL abruptly redirect him.

NICK (Cont’d)
Whoa. All right. I guess I’ll go this way.

NICK exits. BETHANY enters, carrying a powerful flashlight and a compass.

BETHANY
Candice! I am never taking you golfing again! Ever!

Unseen by BETHANY, ARIEL and PUCK flip the sign to HOLE 6 – RAP 6. Oops. BEN enters, from opposite BETHANY. Each gets a dose of ARIEL’s magic dust.

BETHANY
You’re not Candice.
BEN
And you’re not Stavros.

BETHANY
Something very strange is going on here.

BEN
You think?

BETHANY
This course is not that big. But I cannot find Candice.

BEN
I hear you.

BETHANY
If she’d just turn her phone on... And look, this is Hole Six. Again. I’ve been past here looking for Candice I don’t know, like fifteen times.

BEN
Maybe we’re all going in a circle.

BETHANY
And at the same speed.

BEN
In which case, if we maybe just reversed course—

BETHANY
—so I head south southeast—

BEN
—and I go back this way—

BETHANY
—we’d find the people we’re looking for.

BEN
Except the person I’m looking for, he’s a foreign exchange student, and I’m supposed to be showing him around, entertaining him. But the fact is, he’s really weird, and it’s not like I was, you know, popular at my school to start with, but now, with Stavros? You’re the first girl who’s talked to me in like weeks.

BETHANY
Still. It’s the right thing to do. Helping him out like that.

BEN
I guess.
BETHANY
I spent last spring in France. My host family fed me, but that was about it. And the other kids in the family? They like totally abandoned me. Sink or swim. Like totes.

BEN
“Like totes.”

BETHANY
Yeah.

BEN
So I should stop complaining.

BETHANY
Oh, I don’t know. “To complain is human,” right?

BEN
No, that’s “to err.” *(Rhymes this with “air”)* Or err. *(“Her”)* Urrrr. Whatever. Now I just sound like an idiot.

BETHANY
Kind of, yeah.

BEN
Great, thanks. I finally get up a decent conversation, and I screw up a word that’s all of three letters long.

BETHANY
No, that’s cool. I’m not sure about that one either.

BEN
So now we’re both idiots. Crap. That’s not what I meant.

BETHANY
Whoa, chill. I’ll judge you no matter what you say. And that’s totally all right.

BEN
Really.

BETHANY
No, seriously. It’s not a bad thing, making judgments. Even if it were, you can’t stop water from running downhill. To judge is human.

BEN
So to be human, we judge, we complain, and we urrr?

BETHANY
And take photographs. Apparently.
BEN

Yeah. My hobby.

BETHANY

But not people?

BEN

No, people. Definitely. Portraits.

BETHANY

But not me.

BEN

It’s hard to explain, but no. I hope you aren’t offended.

BETHANY

Never. Now hang on, cover your ears. (Yelling) Candice!

Wow, can this girl yell.

BEN

(Ears ringing)

Oh, ow.

BETHANY

Hey. I tell you what. You can help me. (Gets out her phone) You can help me look for Candice. Here.

She shows BEN her phone: a clothed shot of CANDICE.

BEN

Okay. Got it. And here, you know what? You can help me look for Stavros.

BETHANY

(Looking at BEN’s phone)

Huh. He doesn’t look like a foreign exchange student.

BEN

Nobody looks like a foreign exchange student.

BETHANY

No, I mean, he’s not a foreign exchange student.

BEN

Course he is. He’s from Russia. The frigid winters, the howling blizzards.
No, he’s from Arizona.

BEN

What?

BETHANY

His name’s Stefan Zeldovich and he is definitely from Arizona.

BEN

What are you talking about?

BETHANY

Your foreign exchange pal? He’s like my ex-boyfriend.

BEN

Seriously?

BETHANY

How long’s he been here, in town?

BEN

Not long. Two, three weeks, just since school started.

BETHANY

He can’t know I’m here.

BEN

Okay. I won’t tell.

BETHANY

And I’m warning you. He’s really dangerous.

BEN

Stavros? Dangerous?

BETHANY

Stefan, not Stavros. He has secrets, and he can read palms.

BEN

No way.

BETHANY

Yes, way. Look, I met him last summer, he was working this marina place on Lake Powell. He helps me into this motorboat that my parents rented, and then he holds onto my hand for an extra second, and he says, “Bethany. Your name is Bethany. Your locker number is four-seven-seven, you have a cat named Tonks who actually comes when you call, and we are going to see a lot of each other for the next two weeks.” And we did. I mean, I was stuck out
BETHANY (Cont’d)
there in the desert for two weeks anyway, and here’s this totally mysterious guy who knows everything about me just from touching my skin, so of course I hang out with him every chance I got. Not that I let him touch me. Well, not with his hands, anyway.

BEN
‘Cos he might learn more.

BETHANY

BEN
You can stop right there.

BETHANY
But on the last night, we were kissing, right? And I got careless or he forgot or something, I don’t know, but suddenly we’re holding hands, and next thing I know he jumps back and goes, “We’re getting married.”

BEN
And you believed him?

BETHANY
He can see the future!

BEN
Guessing your locker number isn’t the future.

BETHANY
My school? We’ve got one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two lockers. So, he had a one in I-don’t-know-what chance.

BEN
One in one thousand eight hundred sixty-two?

BETHANY
He told me, on our first date, that my mother would break her left ankle hiking Paria Canyon. And she did.

BEN
Lucky guess?

BETHANY
What I need to do is get off this course. I have to find Candice and get out of here.

BEN
Okay, I told you, I’d help you look.
BETHANY
If you see your friend? Just remember. He is not who he says he is.

BEN
And if I see Candice, I’ll tell her to call you.

BETHANY
But be careful, okay? This girl, Candice? She falls in love just like that. So be nice. Let her down gently.

BEN
Is there anyone you know that doesn’t come equipped with a warning?

BETHANY
We reverse course on three. Your heading is...due west.

BEN
Due west, got it. Toward the setting sun.

BETHANY
No, don’t do that. This time of year? The sun sets, like sixteen degrees north of due west, so unless you’re like intentionally trying to get lost…

BEN

BETHANY
On three. One.

BEN
Two.

BETHANY & BEN
(Simultaneously)
Three.

BETHANY and BEN exit, BETHANY following her compass like a bloodhound on a scent. ARIEL and PUCK begin replacing the sign with a new one reading HOLE 7 – PAR 0.

ARIEL
Good Puck, our playthings are all knit up In their distractions. They linger in our power.
And so far, glad I am it so did sort,
Their jangled collisions I do esteem as sport.

Suddenly, a yellow golf ball gets lobbed
onto the green from somewhere, which
spooks both the fae. They look around.
No owner in sight. The ball remains, a
tiny temptation.

An’ dare we touch this mortal charm?

Not I. It be pebbled with vexation.
Were we to lay but one finger ‘pon it
Compelled would we be, ensorcelled—

(Liking this idea)
—Compelled to use yon glinting metal sticks.

They call them clubs.

O, what winsome wicked fun!

No!
Ensnared would we be. We must resist.

Why?

Because.

NICK and STAVROS enter, from
opposite directions. STAVROS carries
his gloves; his hands are bare. PUCK
and ARIEL retreat.

Well. All I’ve got to say is, thank goodness you’re not a girl.
STAVROS

(No accent at all)
Here’s to that.

NICK
The last girl I met, she fell in love in thirty seconds flat.

With you?

I guess.

NICK
The last girl I met? She has leukemia. She’s dying.

Huh. That sucks.

STAVROS
Yeah. She seemed like the kind of person who’d have a really bright future, but...

NICK
And she just up and told you this? Blurted it out?

Not exactly.

NICK
‘Cos being sick, seriously sick, that’s private.

STAVROS
For some people, maybe. Where I come from, nothing is private.

NICK
Where do you come from?

STAVROS
You see all that webby mess up there in those branches?

Sure. It’s moths or something.

STAVROS
Tent caterpillars. Making a safe place to wait, to turn into butterflies.

NICK
No, it’s moths, I’m sure of it.
STAVROS
Moths, butterflies, the point is, they don’t actually want to go. Where they are is safe, comfortable, sheltered. They only leave because they’re forced. And once they’re gone, out on their own? Suddenly everything is private. And that is very frightening.

NICK
Sounds like you need to make some friends.

STAVROS
I have five secrets. And each of my friends gets to know one of my secrets. Would you like to know one of my secrets?

NICK
That would imply that I’m your friend.

STAVROS
Do you have a reason to not be my friend?

NICK
No, I guess not. So, what’s my secret?

STAVROS
For you, I will tell the Secret of Where. Until I turned eighteen, I lived in an orphanage. Not many people know that.

NICK
And you’ve only got five secrets, total?

STAVROS
Yes.

NICK
‘Cos in my experience, most people have way more than five.

STAVROS
With me? Five.

NICK
What about your name? Or is that a secret?

STAVROS
My name’s Stavros. But sometimes people call me Stefan.

NICK
Nick. Nick Wells.

STAVROS
I like that. Nick, Nicholas. (Adding his Russian accent) Very Russian.
NICK

Want to play the hole?

STAVROS

Might as well.

PUCK

(To ARIEL)

Does it help that now they’re friends?

ARIEL

It will. (To NICK) Nick!

NICK

Who said that?

ARIEL

A question burns your tongue. I charge thee, ask.

NICK

(Confused)

Yeah, all right. (To STAVROS) So, um, who’s this girl who’s about to die?

STAVROS

She’s the Nutcracker girl. Clara.

NICK mis-hits his ball.

NICK

Did you say you met her here?

STAVROS

Wait. You’re Nick? You’re that Nick?

NICK

You talked to my Clara?

STAVROS

Oh, fudge. I shouldn’t have told you.

NICK

Stavros—

STAVROS

—Listen, I’m sorry. I didn’t know it was gonna be like that.

NICK

How do you know she’s sick?
Don’t be angry.

How do you know?

She has leukemia, all right? And she doesn’t want to tell you. You of all people.

One last time. How do you know?

She told me.

Do you know her from somewhere?

I’d never seen her before tonight.

So why would she tell you and not me?

She’s scared you’ll run away.

I need to find her.

I’ll come with you.

No, you won’t. I’ll find her on my own.

NICK exits. STAVROS leans down to the ‘turf and picks up NICK’s yellow golf ball, with CANDICE’s phone number written on it.

Hey! You forgot your ball!

No response. STAVROS takes note of the numbers written on the ball.
STAVROS (Cont’d)

Hey, Nick! Wait up!

STAVROS exits. ARIEL and PUCK alter the sign so that it reads POLE 8 – HAR 3.

ARIEL

So far blameless proves our enterprise.

PUCK

Marry, if confusion be its own reward.
Which, of course, it is!

ARIEL

You sell us short.
Their lives are brief, they need a push
As we interfere, their heartbeats quicken.

PUCK

And mine, ‘tis true. To push and poke? Heaven.

ARIEL

Yes, well.

PUCK

Might we do more?

ARIEL

More what, good Puck?

PUCK

Ariel, by your leave, I will give one at least
The countenance of an old gray donkey!

ARIEL

What? No.

PUCK

I do not mean the Russian sort, the beasts
That Stavros did invoke, their gums of glass,
The pain and hate, but rather Bottom’s kind:
The clopping hoofs, the drooping ears, that bray!

ARIEL

Puck, no donkeys. Nor mules or otherwise. Now
Attend. Here be the one who apprehends
Our presence most clearly. Be still.
PUCK
Oh, one quick spell! She’d make a lovely goat.

ARIEL claps her hand over PUCK’s mouth to silence and subdue him.
CANDICE enters. Her golf club is bent and twisted (at least into a U-shape, and possibly into a pretzel). Her binoculars are missing.

CANDICE
Hello? I know I heard someone here.

CLARA enters, with her balloon.

CLARA
Just me. Wow. What happened to your club?

CANDICE
I don’t know. One moment it was nice and straight, and the next? This. But it’s all right. I have moments like that all the time. Spells, my mother calls them.

What, like Harry Potter?

CANDICE
No. More like seizures. Part of me switches off, but part of me keeps going. And then, wham! Things happen.

CLARA
Things.

CANDICE
You know. Like for example, last winter? I crossed the river. On the ice. When it was paper thin. I didn’t know I was going to do it. I don’t even remember starting across. But there I was, on the other side.

CLARA
So you have, like, blackouts?

CANDICE
I suppose. But it’s never scary. It’s like someone’s watching over me. So when I go skydiving and my parachute doesn’t open, I don’t fall. I float.

CLARA
You jumped out of a plane and your parachute didn’t open?
CANDICE
No, on that one, I was just, you know. Being metaphorical.

CLARA
Well. Sounds like the kind of parachute I’d like to have.

*Another wincing, tiring moment of pain.*
*CLARA has to sit.*

CANDICE
Oh, hey. What’s wrong?

CLARA
Nothing. Well, no. I have a—I’m sick. Really sick. With the kind of thing no one wants to have. Because for this, there’s no getting better.

CANDICE
That makes me feel like rain.

*CLARA, startled and affected, stares at CANDICE. That is quite possibly the most sensitive, perfect thing anyone has said to her since she was diagnosed.*

CANDICE (Cont’d)
Look, I don’t suppose this will help—and it’s not like we even know each other—but you don’t want my parachute.

CLARA
If it works, it works.

CANDICE
But it doesn’t. Not always. What it really does is give me a false sense of security. Because I don’t actually have seizures, and things don’t “just happen.” I let them happen. And sometimes they turn ‘round and bite me in the backside, you know? Hard.

CLARA
You look all right so far.

CANDICE
Yes. But reality? The thing about reality…it’s invisible.

CLARA
Okay.

CANDICE
No, what I mean is, under my skin, underneath, mixed in with the rest of me, the rest of my more obvious reality…
CLARA
I’m sorry, what are we talking about?

CANDICE
Am I really saying this?

CLARA
I don’t know. Are you?

CANDICE
What I’m, what I’m trying to say is, I have AIDS.

CLARA
What?

CANDICE
You heard me. AIDS.

CLARA
I’m sorry.

CANDICE
Not as sorry as I am! But hey, it’s not like it’s a death sentence or anything. Not the way it used to be.

CLARA
No.

CANDICE
I’ll probably live to see fifty. Maybe even sixty.

CLARA
That seems like a long way off.

CANDICE
My mother’s forty-one. To live to be older than she is now... I can imagine a lot worse things. But hey, don’t get all mopey on my account. I mean, you don’t have AIDS, right? So, get happy! Here we are, on the great putt-putt course of life...

CLARA
But look what you have for a club.

CANDICE
Oh, that’s all right. I’m playing to lose.

CLARA
I should go.
CANDICE
(As CLARA, unsteady, rises)
You sure you’re okay?

CLARA
I have rivers to cross.

CANDICE
And the ice is thin.

CLARA
 Doesn’t matter. My boyfriend’s on the other side.

CANDICE
Don’t worry. You got this.

CLARA
Thanks. You, too.

They separate. CLARA exits, but CANDICE hesitates when she spots BEN entering. As CANDICE greets BEN, ARIEL and PUCK rearrange the sign with the intention of getting it to read HOLE 9 – PAR 3. Unfortunately, they’re paying scant attention to the sign, and it winds up reading REAL – HOP 93.

CANDICE
Hello. Who are you?

BEN
My name’s Ben.

CANDICE
You’re cute.

BEN
Is your name Candice, by any chance?

CANDICE
How’d you know?

BEN
Lucky guess.
CANDICE
I love boys who make lucky guesses.

BEN
I figured you would.

CANDICE
Do you believe in love at first sight?

BEN
No.

CANDICE
Really?

BEN
Snap judgments, sure. But not zap-you’re-in-love.

CANDICE
Have you ever had a girlfriend?

BEN
Does that matter?

CANDICE
If you were a boat, would you rather be in the harbor, or out on the waves?

BEN
What is this, a quiz show?

CANDICE
Dare me to do something. Anything. Dare me, and I’ll do it.

BEN
No.

CANDICE
Then dare yourself. Dare yourself to let yourself go. Just this once.

BEN
No.

CANDICE
Then I’ll do it for you.

*CANDICE takes BEN’s head in both hands and kisses him.*
CANDICE (Cont’d)

There, now. Risk first, think later.

BEN

Bethany’s looking for you.

CANDICE

Yes.

Kiss.

BEN

She says she has to find you right away and then you both have to get out of here, because her ex-boyfriend is here, and she doesn’t want him to find her.

CANDICE

Okay.

Kiss.

BEN

She says you fall in love with everyone you see.

CANDICE

Does that make me – (Kiss) – a bad person?

I think so, yes.

BEN

Then stop kissing me. (Kiss)

CANDICE

You need to go.

Yes.

Kiss. By this time, both Ben’s golf ball and club have migrated to CANDICE. And vice versa.

BEN

I need to go.
CANDICE
But what if I’m the love of your life? What if you leave, and trek through the deserts and sleep for weeks in the arctic, and you wake up and you realize that you don’t even know my last name, and you can’t ever find me again?

BEN
Well, when you put it like that...

CANDICE
(Producing her Sharpie)
Here. Give me your hand.

BEN
What are you doing?

CANDICE
Relax. I’m just going to write my number. So when you’re feeling braver, you can call.
There. That didn’t hurt, did it?

BEN
Do you always carry a Sharpie just, you know, everywhere?

CANDICE
(Presses the Sharpie into BEN’s hand)
Not anymore.

BEN
You’re giving me your Sharpie.

CANDICE
I think you’d be scared of just about anything else.

BEN
All right. Thank you.

CANDICE
You’re welcome. Do you want to take my picture?

BEN
Yes, but no.

CANDICE
Are you sure?

BEN
I have a rule. I take one photo per week, maximum. And it has to be the exact, perfect shot.
CANDICE
You do realize the world’s gone digital. It’s not like you’re going to run out of film.

BEN
I know. But this is how I work.

CANDICE
Wow. Restraint like that, you and I are very different kinds of poem.

BEN
The idea is, catch the thing that matters. Catch it in here, so you can’t forget. Does that sound crazy?

CANDICE
No. Well, yes. But I’ve heard worse.

BEN
Look, Bethany says you have to call. Right away.

I am such a bad person!

BEN
What?

CANDICE
If you had a terrible problem, and then I made up a worse problem so that you’d like me, and maybe, I don’t know, to try to take some of the weight off, off of you, would that be condescending?

BEN
So, you’re just inventing this mystery problem?

Yes.

BEN
Then yeah, that is condescending. And kind of cruel. But you haven’t done any of that. So everything’s fine.

CANDICE
I think there’s a very good chance that I’ll love you forever.

BEN
Look, it’s been great to meet you, but I don’t believe in forever. And we both have to go. You go get Bethany. And I’ll go get my crazy housemate.
BEN exits—with the bent golf club. CANDICE watches him go. She puts the ball down. Using what was lately BEN’s club, she hits it toward the hole.

CANDICE (Cont’d)

He loves me not.

It doesn’t go in, so she hits it again.

CANDICE (Cont’d)

He loves me not.

Again, she misses.

CANDICE (Cont’d)

He loves me not.

Again, the ball won’t go in.

CANDICE (Cont’d)

Okay, this is depressing.

She takes another swing, and this time PUCK intercepts the ball and, using his feet (which she can’t see), guides the ball toward the cup.

CANDICE (Cont’d)

Oh, oh, oh! (As PUCK knocks the ball into the hole) He loves me!

CANDICE exits, newly happy. She takes the club but leaves BEN’s golf ball in the hole. ARIEL goes over to inspect it, but as for actually touching it, she’s very reticent.

ARIEL

Full fathom five their rounded charm doth lie.

PUCK

You stretch the mark. ‘Tis a fingertip span.

PUCK dares to pick up BEN’s golf ball from the hole.
ARIEL
From green to hole, and hole to green, for what?
How holds their mortal minds, this charmed ball?

PUCK
This calls for a severity
Not native to our kind. Think you
Like Prospero, while I to Oberon incline.

They think. Hard.

ARIEL
Oh, Puck. My head, it aches.

PUCK
And mine. And yet, I profit.

ARIEL
How so?

PUCK
Chase they the ball for the ball’s own sake? No.
An excuse, this charm, and hardly charming,
For while they hit and club and poke and tap,
It is their hearts that stir the blood. The game
Does naught but calm their nerves and hold their eyes
Lest, staring at their prey, their heart’s desire,
They are caught! Unmasked. All pretense shorn.
So: have we here a blind, a hiding for
The hunters, Cupid’s merry band. ‘Tis love
They play for, not these drops and rolls. ‘Tis love!
Or I’m no Puck, and Puck I am say I.

ARIEL
I am mistook. I thought you’d go longer.

PUCK
Why so?

ARIEL
With three lines more, you’d have a sonnet.

PUCK
Be off, pixie! Nay-saying fairie fiend!

BETHANY peers out from behind some obstacle or other.
BETHANY

Pssst! Candice! Candice?

ARIEL and PUCK retreat, having “fixed” the sign so that it now reads ROLE 3 – PAH 10. BETHANY comes out of hiding, and begins hunting for CANDICE.

BETHANY (Cont’d)

Come on, Candice. Come out, come out, wherever you are. We totally have to shove off. Candice?

BETHANY explores behind a planter, fence, or what have you, then screams and jumps back. On the far side, coming into view fast, is STAVROS.

STAVROS

Bethany!

BETHANY

Get back! I’ve got a club!

STAVROS

Bethany, it’s me! Stefan! I’ve been looking all over and I couldn’t find you.

BETHANY

Looking all over—? Stefan, what are you doing in (Insert state name, as in Illinois, Maryland, etc.) in the first place?

STAVROS

Looking for you.

BETHANY

But I don’t want you to look for me!

STAVROS

I couldn’t help it. With what I know? How could I not?

BETHANY

Go away.

STAVROS

Wait. Bethany. We are getting married. It’s a stone-cold fact.

BETHANY

What we are getting is a restraining order.
STAVROS
The future is the future, but it can be a good one. Especially if we take charge of the how. I agree, if we just sit around and ignore each other until one day, poof! We’re married—

—Poof? I don’t poof.

BETHANY

STAVROS
Bethany, if we take our time and get to know each other, so that we value each other, respect each other, then, when the time comes, when there are actual wedding bells and a cake and a long white dress—

BETHANY
—Just so you know, I really hate cake—

STAVROS
—then we have a chance. Because we’ve primed ourselves for love.

BETHANY
Primed. What am I, house paint? A rifle?

STAVROS
You don’t have to make this so difficult.

BETHANY
I’m being stalked, Stefan! You’re stalking me! From Arizona to here and now all over this golf course, and you may be gullible enough to believe in pre-destination, great big Newtonian cogs or whatever, but I? I do not. I have free will, and my free will, right now, tells me that you need to get lost. Like totes.

STAVROS
I have five secrets.

BETHANY
Stefan!

STAVROS
I need to tell you the Secret of Who.

BETHANY
What you need to do is jump off a very high bridge.

STAVROS
My real name is Stavros.

BETHANY
You’ve sure got your host family believing that.
STAVROS

What, you know them?

BETHANY

Your buddy Ben. He was helping me look for Candice.

STAVROS

Oh. *(With his accent)* If you see this Ben, tell him Stavros speaks with wonderful whole-body Russian accent.

You’re pathetic.

STAVROS

No, Bethany, listen. Stavros is my name. My father was Greek, he moved to Russia, married a Russian woman – my mother – and it doesn’t matter how I got to Arizona or how I wound up in that orphanage, what matters is you believe me. Stavros is my name. The orphanage didn’t like it, they changed it to Stefan. Well, Stefano. ‘Cos they were mostly Mexican, so for them, that was easier, but—

BETHANY

—Candice!

*If people were paid to yell, BETHANY would own the planet.*

STAVROS

Bethany. Come on. We had a good time last summer. We got along.

“*We got along*”? 

You have beautiful elbows.

Candice!

Will you stop shouting?

BETHANY

You used to like my shouting. You said I was the only person you’d ever met who could bounce echoes across the entire Grand Canyon, six times each way.

STAVROS

I didn’t actually mean that as a compliment.
BETHANY
You are unbelievable.

STAVROS
Except I’m not. You know I can see the future.

BETHANY
Does it work on you? Like, what if you hold hands with yourself?

STAVROS
Nothing. Which is why I’m here. You’re the only person, ever, where I’ve gotten a view of where I’m going. And I know that seems ridiculous, because yes, we barely know each other, but I liked that. I am happier knowing who I will spend my life with. Maybe for you, it’s anti-romance or voodoo or I don’t know what. But for me? It takes the pressure off.

BETHANY
You said we’d get married. You never said we’d stay married.

STAVROS
I’m not honestly sure. But if you give me a little time, I can find out.

STAVROS holds out his hand.

BETHANY
No.

STAVROS
You don’t want to know?

BETHANY
Knowing isn’t living. And I intend to live.

I didn’t ask for this.

BETHANY
I know.

STAVROS
Does that mean you just stopped living?

BETHANY
Stefan. Wait, is that—whose number’s on that ball?

STAVROS holds up what used to be
NICK’s yellow ball, the one with
CANDICE’s number on it.
I’m not sure.

*BETHANY takes the ball.*

BETHANY

That’s Candice’s number. Candice, the girl I’m looking for.

Where are you going?

BETHANY

To find Candice, what do you think?

STAVROS

Bethany, stop. Will you at least come visit?

Is that some kind of trick question?

BETHANY

*(Extending his hand)*

It doesn’t have to be.

Good-bye, Stefan.

STAVROS

Or maybe, as we say in Russia, *au revoir.*

*BETHANY exits, taking the yellow golf ball. STAVROS trails after BETHANY, exiting.*

ARIEL

What fools we faeries be. These six we toss, A mix of marbles, in waves of jest and joke, As if they were but pets, diversions For our immortal faculties. In truth, We do more harm than good.

PUCK

Let’s take a page from Prosp’ro’s book.

ARIEL

I will attest, he had far more than one.
Though chaos be our craft, let calm replace
Our guile. If harm we’ve done, we shall with grace
Undo.

Saffron powders have I withal.
Mist and saintly wellings. Starlight. Moondust.
Titania’s warmth, and Avon’s love, all mixed
Anon for this new noble enterprise.

And its effect?

The truth, and nothing but the truth.

Clara? Hey, Clara!

Stavros? If you can hear me, answer me!

Hey.

Hey.

How’s it goin’?

Good.

Good. That’s good.

Yeah. You?

I’m good. Mostly. Nice club.
Yeah. It’s not the best.

You looking for someone?

Yeah. You?

Yeah.

_TO ARIEL_

By the Green Man’s beard! These two would bore the stones.

You gift one and I the other. On leaving here, They’ll be forged as brothers.

PUCK and ARIEL sprinkle Titania’s dust on the two newcomers, and instantly, they become effusive, generous conversationalists. Sharers to a fault.

The fact is, I am painfully shy and I am terrified of the gaps, the gaps in my memory. If I can’t remember who I used to be, how am I supposed to know who I am right now?

I totally get that.

You do?

I mean, look at me. Life just nudges me along, but how do I get a grip on it? How come I never jump in headfirst?

Dude. I know exactly what you’re talking about.

And that’s really strange. Because I never talk about this with anybody.

Me, neither.
NICK
I mean, I might talk about it with my girlfriend.

BEN
Oh, me, too.

NICK
Except that’s a lie, ‘cos she’s pretty much always in charge, so I don’t think I’d bring it up.

BEN
I don’t have a girlfriend. I’ve never had a girlfriend.

NICK
My girlfriend’s dying, and she wouldn’t tell me. No, really. I had to hear it from some random putt-putt player.

BEN
That’s one seriously screwed up relationship. I’m sorry. That was totally inappropriate.

NICK
You should’ve just said something like, “Whoa. Heavy.”

BEN
I tried. I couldn’t.

NICK
I like you. I respect you. You’re a good person.

BEN
Oh, you, too. I mean, like totes.

NICK
What?

BEN
Sorry. But sometimes, it’s a relief to talk like a girl, y’know? Not all girls, obviously. But the ones who, you know, gush.

NICK
Oh, I so know what you mean.

BEN
Just whooosh, you know?

NICK
Like, who knows what’s gonna come out next?
And giggle! How come guys never get to giggle?

I love giggling.

Me, too!

Like totes!

They collapse into a froth of bubbly giggles.

Oh, man. How come we can’t do that every day?

Because we’d be laughed out of school.

True. So your girlfriend, she’s really dying?

I honestly don’t know. But when I find her, I am going to insist that she tell me, one way or the other.

Like totes.

Who are you looking for?

Well, officially Stavros, except that now I’m kind of looking for some girl as a favor to another girl, but mostly? I’m looking for one great, perfect photo. That, plus me. Me, myself, and I. But I can’t find me anywhere. Cognition is a joke, the basal ganglia are the most messed up, hopelessly organ in the entire body, and for long-term memory, the hippocampus? Forget it. I mean, you could argue that the most important event in life is getting born, and does anyone remember even a second of it? No.

A fair point.
So I’m pretty sure that identity is fluid. This guy I am, “Ben,” is just input. And if I get chaos and static for input, I might be someone else—or nobody at all. (A moment) Plus, my golf partner, who I thought was a wood-chopping Russian foreign exchange student, turns out to be a horn-dog Arizona fortune-teller, so. You see my problem.

Identity. Fluid.

My name’s Ben.

Nick. Or at least, that’s who I am right now.

Touché.

My name is Nick and I am ready for bold action.

Yeah? What kind?

I, Nick Wells, am going to get over par on this hole.

NICK places his (Not yellow) ball and tees off.

Mm. Bold.

You think I’m kidding, but this is how I fall in love.

Really? Putt-putt?

I, Nick Wells, am tired of a rational life.

Well, I grant you that it’s definitely not rational to intentionally beat yourself at mini-golf.

Even if it led to true love and happily ever after?
With the girl who’s dying?

BEN

I told you. Not rational.

NICK

NICK knocks his ball into the hole after enough intentional misses to guarantee one or more over par.

And what are you going to do?

BEN

I’m going to call Candice.

NICK

Candice?

BEN

You know her?

NICK

We met. A few holes back.

BEN

Don’t tell me she kissed you, too.

NICK

I think she kisses pretty much everybody.

BEN

Maybe because she’s hoping somebody will kiss her back.

BEN is already dialing his cell, using the numbers CANDICE wrote on the back of his hand. We hear the ring. NICK removes CANDICE’s ringing phone and holds it up for BEN to see.

Sorry.

NICK

Wait, she gave me your number?

BEN

No. This is Candice’s phone.
What are you doing with her phone?

BEN

She said it was a grenade.

NICK

Huh. All she gave me was a Sharpie.

BEN

You need to go find her.

NICK

I don’t think I do. But there is someone else.

BEN

Here we go, then. Bold like a lion.

NICK

Go big or go home.

BEN

Like totes.

NICK

They bump fists — or something similarly manly — and exit.

PUCK

What is this “totes”?

ARIEL

I’ve heard it said my speech is out of touch and full of dust: antique! But Heaven forfend, at least I don’t say “Totes.”

As they speak, they change the sign to read PAR 12 – HOLE 3.

PUCK

Then nor shall I from this day hence. But think, on old Midsummer Nights, how slumber served Our purposes best. Magic fixed our mixings.

ARIEL

Did not Oberon fault your endless errors?
PUCK

Pa! I stand as blameless as dew in the morning.
Now see: my drowsy powders await your command.

ARIEL

Might those be the lesser part of wisdom?

PUCK

And what have you accomplished, mighty sprite?
Stand aside, that clever Puck may stir the pot!

ARIEL

Alone? I’d sooner hang.

PUCK

Too late! Here come
The trout that must be caught with the tickling.

PUCK sets off to ambush the next two approaching golfers.

ARIEL

Give me that pouch!

ARIEL tries to swipe PUCK’s suspect powders.

PUCK

Unhand me, villain!

A scuffle. The fairy dust blows up in their faces.

ARIEL

You loggerheaded, hedge-born foot-licker!

PUCK

Try not to breathe.

ARIEL

Too late.

They both collapse to the ground—on the green. CLARA and BETHANY enter from opposite ways. CLARA is about to speak— to say hello— but BETHANY, now consulting a topographical map, charges over her attempt.
BETHANY
Hold that thought. Do you know Candice Martinez?

CLARA
No, I don’t think so.

*BETHANY holds up her phone, showing CANDICE’s picture.*

BETHANY
This girl. Dreamy. Things happen to her.

CLARA
Oh. Yeah. We talked, a few holes back.

BETHANY
Which way?

CLARA
That way. Hole Eight.

BETHANY
Hole Eight.

*BETHANY heads off. CLARA tries to stop her.*

CLARA
Wait! I’m looking for someone, too.

*CLARA scrolls through the photo albums on her phone.*

BETHANY
I’m kind of in a hurry here.

CLARA
Hang on, hang on.

BETHANY
You take like way too many pictures.

CLARA
Well, it’s now or never, right?

BETHANY
I don’t know, is it?
CLARA
There. Nick. My boyfriend. Have you seen him?

BETHANY
Never.

CLARA
This one’s better. Isn’t he cute?

BETHANY
I don’t know the guy.

CLARA
He’s really great. Except that he’s lost.

BETHANY
Yeah, well, welcome to the club. If they’d shut these lights off so I could see more than just Polaris, that would help, but.

CLARA
You can steer by the stars?

BETHANY
You can’t?

CLARA
No one ever showed me how.

BETHANY
See, people make fun of the Girl Scouts like it’s going out of style, but if I ever get stuck in a zombie apocalypse? I have mad survival skills. Now, I have really got to go.

CLARA
Wait! Do you have an extra ball? Mine is...I don’t know, it’s like it ran away.

BETHANY
Sure. Be prepared, right?

CLARA
Okay. ‘Bye.
Alone, CLARA hesitates. She makes very certain that she really is alone, and then? She shakes out her hair and allows herself a noisy, damn-the-world tantrum. Which could morph into something much more choreographed and poetic: a ballet. A dance. Gymnastics? A short, gorgeous melody played on a flute—the instrument handed to her perhaps by semi-wakeful ARIEL. The possibilities are endless and limited only by the talents of Actor Clara and her Director. Whatever happens, if it happens, it’s one brief minute of sheer magic. Until:

STAVROS (Off)
(With Russian accent)
Hello, Ben! Ben who is not from Russia!

Instantly, the lights return to normal. If need be, any instrument returns to ARIEL, who hides it.

CLARA
Not again.

STAVROS (Off)
Ben? Where are you? Hello? Hell-o!

CLARA quickly recovers her balloon, then dives for cover. She secretes herself just as STAVROS enters. From the opposite direction, CANDICE enters.

STAVROS
Ah! You are not Ben. Ben, he is the boy-who-will-be-a-man, and you? You are the female.

CANDICE
You know, for once, I am absolutely one hundred percent certain that I will not be falling in love.

STAVROS
Was this because of the something Stavros said?

CANDICE
Wow. And people tell me I don’t English good.
STAVROS

These people? I would listen. Maybe you will stop changing nouns into verbs.

CANDICE

Where are you even from?

STAVROS

Russia. Where the snows are white and the winds full of bluster and freezingness.

CANDICE

And your accent’s from where, Wal-Mart?

STAVROS

No, it is from two days north of Petrograd.

CANDICE

Right. Have you seen my friend Bethany?

STAVROS

(Bent gone)

Bethany? You know Bethany? Bethany King?

CANDICE

Well, yeah. She’s like my best friend.

STAVROS

I really have to talk to her.

CANDICE

Wait, where’d your accent go?

STAVROS

Listen to me. I am Stavros. Give me your hands.

*Gloves off, STAVROS grabs both of CANDICE’s hands and presses them in his.*

What are you doing?

STAVROS

You’re Candice, the one Bethany yells for. Just tonight, you told someone you have AIDS but you don’t. You just wanted to make the other person feel better. The last four digits of your VISA card are 7242, and I could tell you the rest but I won’t, for security purposes, and for some reason, you took photos of yourself that could pretty much ruin you for the rest of high school at least, but then, because you’re impulsive in the same way that a breeze is impulsive, you sent the pictures to Bethany, which was meant to be funny but really it was to
stop yourself from sending them anywhere else, but she didn’t delete them, and now you’re starting to wonder if she really is your best friend.

CANDICE
I do things. Things happen. It’s not Bethany’s fault.

*She pulls free.*

STAVROS
I have five secrets. I will tell you the Secret of When.

CANDICE
Go away.

STAVROS
I am a compulsive liar! All right? I tell lies.

CANDICE
How is that a secret, and what does it have to do with when?

STAVROS
I do it constantly, and constancy has everything to do with when.

CANDICE
Liar.

STAVROS
Yes! That’s my point!

CANDICE
Oh, come on. Take a little responsibility! You’re for real. Get used to it.

CANDICE
Everything you just told me was one hundred percent accurate! So how is that lying?

But I was just guessing.

CANDICE
No, you weren’t.

STAVROS
Was too.
CANDICE
You weren’t.

STAVROS
I was!

CANDICE
Were not!

STAVROS
Yes, I was!

CANDICE
(After a strangled noise of frustration)
This is horrible! You’re making me act like I’m with Bethany!

STAVROS
Am not.

CANDICE
You are! See? Now listen, Stamos or whoever you are, you can’t just drift. You’ve got a talent, one you don’t want. So what? At least do something productive with it. Pick a direction. Go for it. And if you don’t like the direction, change it. But don’t just do what I do and float around, blaming everybody else for the mess you’ve made of your life.

STAVROS
You know what I think? I think Bethany is very lucky to have you as a friend.

CANDICE
That I doubt.

STAVROS
Do you maybe know where she is? Because we’re both looking for her, and maybe we could look together.

CANDICE
But I am a poem, a real live poem, and you? You dim my rhyme and over-saturate my meter.

STAVROS
I don’t think that’s my normal effect.

CANDICE
You want me to help you find Bethany? Give me a real secret, the real Secret of When. No faking.

STAVROS
Hablo español fluido.
CANDICE
Oh, me, too! Viví en Argentina hasta que fuera diez.

STAVROS
Bueno. With me, it was the orphanage. El resto de niños eran de México y Nicaragua.

CANDICE
So how is your speaking Spanish a Secret of When?

STAVROS
Because when I learned it, I was alone, and my only language, what little I had, was Russian. So it was a very dark time. It was the time when I learned that no matter what the language, “abandonment” is a word that eats your soul.

CANDICE
What do you know. You’re a poem, too.

STAVROS
Name me someone who isn’t.

CANDICE
Most people forget.

\[CANDICE \text{ has by now taken }\]
\[STAVROS’s \text{ hands into her own. And somehow when she lets go, his gloves are in her possession. And he doesn’t notice.}\]

CANDICE (Cont’d)
Let’s go find Bethany. And once we do? You will promise to keep these gloves on, if that’s what she wants.

\[CANDICE \text{ and STAVROS exit, together. }\]
\[CLARA \text{ creeps out of hiding, making sure CANDICE and STAVROS are really gone. She accidentally treads on PUCK, who screams and leaps up. His scream wakes ARIEL, who also cries out in alarm. CLARA, too, shrieks in fright – now she can see them – and all three, panicked, flee in random directions, exiting. NICK enters, and so does BETHANY. BETHANY now has an LED headlamp, a compass, and a hiking pole for use as a walking stick.}\]
Hello? Did somebody scream? *(Examining the hole marker, which still reads HOLE 3 – PAR 12)* This can’t be right.

*BETHANY enters in time to hear this last.*

Agreed. This is Hole 14.

Par 3. Should we change it?

Ooh, change. Spooky-spooky.

This part’s stuck.

*From her backpack, Bethany produces a large pair of scissors.*

Try these.

I don’t think scissors—okay, never mind, got it.

Now that the sign is right (HOLE 14 – PAR 3), he tries to give the scissors back, but BETHANY’s paying no attention: she’s busily freeing something bulky from her backpack.

I don’t think we’ve met. My name’s Nick.

Bethany. *(Now we see what she’s got: a megaphone. She raises it and yells.)* Candice!

Oh, help. And we thought she was loud before.

Okay. So you’re Candice’s friend.
BETHANY

*(Still using the megaphone)*

Wait, you’ve seen her?

NICK

*(Staggered)*

Will you put that thing down?

BETHANY

Sorry. You saw Candice?

NICK

Fell in love with her, too. Just like that.

BETHANY

She does have that effect on people.

NICK

It’s no big deal. I’m over it now. Which is probably just as well. Watch this.

*He drops his ball to the turf and prepares to tee off. Of course, to manage this, he has to get rid of the scissors. These wind up in his pocket. His first shot is lousy.*

BETHANY

Boy, do you suck.

NICK

And what are you, some kind of mini-golf pro?

BETHANY

Oh, my mini-golf skills? Un-believable.

NICK

Well. *(As he knocks the ball into the hole)* I do have my moments.

BETHANY

You’re the Nick Clara’s looking for.

NICK

You saw Clara?

BETHANY

She showed me your picture on her phone.
NICK
Why do you keep looking around?

BETHANY
My ex-boyfriend is stalking me. Plus, I’m looking for Candice.

NICK
Well. It’s nice to see I’m holding your attention.

BETHANY looks right at NICK.

BETHANY
I’m starting to think I am not a very good friend.

NICK
Sorry to hear that.

BETHANY
I have some things I shouldn’t have. And what I should do is destroy them.

NICK
What’s stopping you?

BETHANY
The same thing that stops anybody from doing anything.

NICK
Sounds like you need, I don’t know, permission.

BETHANY
Oh, and who gets to give that?

NICK
I, Nick Wells, do hereby grant you permission to do the right thing, whatever it is, and to do it right speedily.

For a split second, BETHANY considers. Then:

BETHANY
Like I need a guy’s permission to do anything.

NICK
I don’t think my gender has anything to do with it.

BETHANY
I can take care of myself, thank you. And you? Can get lost.
I was only trying to help.

**NICK**

Next time? *(Megaphone)* **Don’t.**

**BETHANY**

*BETHANY knocks over the hole marker sign, then exits. In a huff. NICK picks up the sign, dusts it off and changes it to HOLE 15 – PAR 3. BEN enters, still with his camera, and his bent club.*

Huh. You again.

**BEN**

Me again. Bold as a lion.

**NICK**

How’s that working out?

**BEN**

Well, my new goal is to catch up with, um. Hmm. Can’t even remember her name. But I have to go.

**NICK**

No worries. I’ll play the hole.

**BEN**

*NICK exits. BEN sets down his ball, prepares to tee off. Using his drastically bent club. CLARA enters, with her balloon. Watches. Digs out her phone and prepares to take a photo. BEN hits the ball.*

One.

**CLARA**

You’re going to keep score? When I’m using this?

**BEN**

Yes.

**CLARA**

*BEN hits the ball. CLARA takes a photo.*

Two. Par at best.
Whoever you are, will you stop?

What, too much input?

I have a very fluid identity!

Come on. You can do it. *(Taking more photos)* There. Par.

*Or “Bogey,” or “Two over,” etc., if need be.*

Which is nothing to crow about.

I don’t know. If you’ve got such a fluid identity, doesn’t a decent golf score with a club that’s bent beyond recognition make you feel like you’re on top of the world?

No.

Then maybe you’re not as fluid as you think.

Actually, that’s what I’m afraid of. That I’m just very normal. Normal as in, uninteresting.

It is possible to be too interesting.

Oh, really.

My life? Dull would be nice. Or just...long.

You look pretty normal.

Come here.

*CLARA motions for BEN to come closer.*
BEN
I really don’t think I can handle any more kissing tonight.

CLARA
Will you just come here?

She leans in and whispers — inaudibly to anyone else — that she’s dying of leukemia.

BEN
Oh! You’re Nick’s girlfriend. I’m sorry. That’s totally inappropriate. I mean, you’re—

He can’t say more than the letter “D” of “dying.” CLARA helps him.

CLARA
Dying?

BEN
Yeah. And all I can do is label you. “Nick’s girlfriend.”

How do you know Nick?

CLARA

BEN
We met on Hole Ten. No, eleven. And he was here, just now.

Really? Which way’d he go?

CLARA

BEN
Wait. Don’t leave.

CLARA
I have to find Nick. While I’ve still…while I’ve still…

Got the energy?

BEN

CLARA

Yeah.

BEN
Look, you’re gonna be spending the rest of your life with Nick. I’m sorry, that didn’t come out the way I wanted. What I meant was, you’ll be seeing him. Soon. And I just want one minute of your time.
CLARA
For?

BEN
(Already exploring possible angles, compositions)
I want to take your picture.

CLARA
I don’t know you.

BEN
You took mine. And besides, Nick knows me.

CLARA
Nobody knows you. You’re fluid.

BEN
Not if I control the input. And I can. Some of it. If I try. And look, I’ll introduce myself. Ben. Ben Stallings. Very pleased to meet you.

CLARA
Why do you want to take my picture?

BEN
With most people, most of my shots, it’s to get a glimpse of what’s real, what makes a person tick. But with you it’s more...

CLARA
What?

BEN
It’s so that when you aren’t, you know, here anymore, I can remember. So that I can remember to maybe get off the couch and do at least some of the things you never had a chance to try. And that way, you can inspire someone – a stranger, I admit – me – even after you’re gone.

CLARA
What if I don’t want that kind of responsibility?

BEN
A few months down the road, how will your opinion matter?

Ouch. Reality check.

CLARA
All right. Go ahead.
BEN
Take two steps left. Better light.

*CLARA does so, and suddenly the stage lights shift. CLARA and her balloon stand alone in a brilliant spotlight. It’s as if she’s become a flare, a flame. She glows.*

BEN (Cont’d)
Wait. Here. Hold this.

*BEN hands CLARA his bent club.*

BEN (Cont’d)
There. The real you.

*Click! A blinding flash! Perhaps a bank of strobes goes off, just once, a bright white pulse... and then the lights abruptly return to normal.*

CLARA
Just one?

BEN
Think Ansel Adams. If you know what you’re doing, if you pick the right subject, one is all you need.

CLARA
Like life.

BEN
Yeah. Maybe.

CLARA
I have to go.

BEN
Yes.

CLARA
You know, if I weren’t already in love with Nick...

BEN
Please. Don’t finish that thought.
CLARA
Wait. Your club.

BEN
Oh, that’s okay.

CLARA
But I don’t want it.

BEN
I don’t think that matters. It’s yours.

BEN exits, and CLARA, after hesitating for a moment, toying with her bent club, exits in the opposite direction. She takes her balloon with her. Enter ARIEL and PUCK.

PUCK
You see? Our dust has not offended—so Our part, methinks, is very nearly played.

ARIEL
Mayhap, but now, with cowl and orders holy, Let us consecrate this rough and greensward ground. We may be spirits of another sort, But let us tonight be allies withal.

PUCK
Truly did the gods make thee poetical. Hereafter, and in a better world than this, I shall desire more love and knowledge of you.

ARIEL
I would not desire that we were better strangers. But come! To task! With mine, this time: fairy Dustings design’d to profit troubled hearts. This charm but one demand doth have. Prithee, Go to thy bosom, seekers all! Knock there, And ask your heart what it doth know.

By now, ARIEL and PUCK have spread glittering dust all over the ground and righted the sign again. It now reads HOLE 16 – PAR 3. Off, we hear BETHANY.
BETHANY (Off)
(Via megaphone)
Candice! Candice, if you don’t show your face in the next thirty seconds, I swear I will leave you here!

CANDICE enters. She carries STAVROS’s gloves.

CANDICE
Bethany! Over here!

BETHANY enters, megaphone in one hand, hiking pole in the other.

BETHANY
(Via megaphone)
You were this close to getting marooned.

CANDICE
Bethany. Are you my friend?

BETHANY
Yes.

CANDICE
Then erase those photos. All of them. And we are not making this a golf contest. I want them gone, before you go to bed, tonight. (After BETHANY says nothing) Did you hear me?

BETHANY
I’m trying to decide who this is that’s speaking to me.

CANDICE
Once you agree, I have a present for you. But this is not a trade. You need to do the right thing here. If you really are my friend.

BETHANY pulls out her cell phone. She pulls up the photo library. She deletes three photos.

BETHANY
There. Gone.

CANDICE
And the copies?

BETHANY
Soon as I get home. Promise.
CANDICE

Thank you.

BETHANY

One thing. Swear to me you aren’t about to start being all ordinary.

CANDICE

In at least a couple of arenas, shooting for ordinary could save me a lot of trouble.

BETHANY

Fair enough. What’s my present?

CANDICE holds out STAVROS’s gloves.

BETHANY (Cont’d)

Where did you get these?

CANDICE

From Stefan.

BETHANY

That’s it, we’re leaving.

CANDICE

No. Not yet.

BETHANY

Are you crazy? I told you about Stefan, and look! He’s here! Tracking me down!

CANDICE

Yes. And he went to a lot of trouble to find you.

BETHANY

A lot of trouble...?

CANDICE

He’s a nice guy. A nice guy who’s crazy about you.

BETHANY

He’s crazy, that’s for sure.

CANDICE

In his way, he’s a poem. And he’s agreed to wear gloves. Permanently, if he has to. So that you don’t have to spend your life worrying about the future.

BETHANY

I don’t want to see him. Forget about touching him.
CANDICE
You do want to see him.

BETHANY
I don’t.

CANDICE
You do, absolutely.

BETHANY
I really most definitely don’t.

CANDICE
You do. You know you do.

BETHANY
I don’t. Like totes!

CANDICE
Totes you do so.

BETHANY
Totes I never.

CANDICE
That’s right, never.

BETHANY
Exactly.

CANDICE
I just know I wouldn’t.

BETHANY
Exactly.

CANDICE
And you wouldn’t, either.

BETHANY
Would so.

CANDICE
Would not.

BETHANY
Would.
Wouldn’t.

CANDICE

Would! Definitely would!

BETHANY

You would?

CANDICE

What is this, “Green Eggs and Ham”? Yes! I would! Wait. What’d I just say?

BETHANY

You said yes.

CANDICE

I hate saying yes.

BETHANY

No, you don’t.

CANDICE

Yes, I do!

BETHANY

Bethany.

BETHANY digs out her compass, consults it.

BETHANY

Like any of that matters. I can’t even find the exit.

CANDICE

(Taking away BETHANY’s compass)

Bethany, chill. I know where to go.

CANDICE leads BETHANY off, and they both exit. PUCK and ARIEL begin changing the sign to read HOLE 17 – PAR 3.

ARIEL

Though this be madness, yet there is method in’t.

PUCK

I am but mad north-northwest. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a hand-saw.
ARIEL
I do suspect your lines of being stolen.

PUCK
I am a-feared of this myself, and yet
Words, words, words—they spring unbidden to my lips!

ARIEL
Words without thoughts never to Heaven go.

PUCK
Ariel: the cruelest fairy living.

ARIEL
But have a care! Look who now approaches.

BEN and STAVROS enter.

BEN
There you are.

STAVROS
I can explain.

BEN
What, no accent? Stefan?

STAVROS
I have a final secret. The Secret of How.

BEN
When I drive us home tonight, what do I say to my parents?

STAVROS
Ben, my full name is Stefan Stavros Zeldovich. I was born to Greek and Russian parents who left me in an orphanage in Tucson, Arizona—and it’s the orphanage that named me Stefan, because they couldn’t deal with Stavros. I know, it sounds preposterous, to me, too. But, I grew up. The orphanage turned me loose. I went to work at the Antelope Point Marina, and I met a girl named Bethany King who wasn’t like anyone I’d ever met before, and two things happened: I fell for her hook, line and sinker, and I discovered I could tell fortunes. Bethany left, went home with her parents, just like any other tourist, but one day, I couldn’t stand that anymore and I drove to the Vegas airport and I caught a plane, even though I didn’t know Bethany’s number or her address—I still don’t. All I knew was that this was her city. But on the plane, I wound up sitting next to a Russian foreign exchange student, on his way to meet his host family. We got to talking, and it turns out he didn’t want to be an exchange student at all. What he wanted was to get out of Russia, live in the U.S., have a new life. We looked a lot alike. Next thing I knew, we’d traded I.D.’s. He became Stefan Zeldovich, and he’s at the marina right now, renting boats and selling ice. And me? I’m him,
STAVROS (Cont’d)
living with you, and hoping Bethany won’t send me away. (Returning to his Russian accent)
So, Ben. I am Stavros, and it is very pleasing to meet you.

*BEN does not take STAVROS’s extended hand.*

BEN

You are my worst nightmare.

STAVROS

No, come on. Ben. Am I really so awful?

BEN

I’m pretty sure you are, but...

STAVROS

But…?

BEN

I took a photo tonight...I may never need to take another.

STAVROS

A shot of...?

BEN

A girl who’s already part of the past.

STAVROS

A place-holder, then. Like a bookmark.

BEN

Can you really tell the future?

STAVROS

Unfortunately, yes.

BEN

Hi. I’m Ben. Good to meet you.

*This time, they shake. BEN refuses to release STAVROS’s hand. A moment, a moment where STAVROS understands what BEN expects of him. STAVROS closes his eyes.*
You will live a long, challenging life—a life that will never be dull. You will change jobs, change career, and change religion. You will visit all seven continents before the age of thirty-two. When you meet your future wife, you will not understand her—she will speak no English, and the first word you teach her will be “music.” You will have children. And someday, I will not tell you when, you will wake up comfortable in your own skin for the first time, and your family, for this, will love you all the more. It’s going to take a few years, but you are going to be happy. Do you understand how wonderful that is? How rare?

As STAVROS finishes, BETHANY enters.
She holds out STAVROS’s gloves.

Hey. You forgot something.

I thought you’d gone.

I probably should have. But. You got a phone with you?

I left it at home.

You got something to write with?

No.

Hang on. I do.

BEN produces CANDICE’s sharpie and BETHANY takes it. She writes her phone number on STAVROS’s shirt.

My number. (She first recites an area code local to the producing company, then:) five five five, six seven four seven. Got it?

Got it.

You are wrecking Stavros’s shirt.
BETHANY
Are you saying I’m not worth a shirt?

STAVROS
Bethany, I am going to write that number on every shirt I own.

BETHANY
You do that. And once you have? Call me.

*BETHANY turns on her heel and exits with CANDICE’S sharpie.*

BEN
Maybe we shouldn’t worry too much about the last hole.

I think we got what we came for.

STAVROS
Then let’s go home. We’ll see what my dad’s got in the ‘fridge.

Ah, good! Now Stavros will not starve!

*BEN and STAVROS exit together.*

PUCK
Think you that we shadows have offended?
Could it be, our revels now are ended?

ARIEL
Nay. Much enchanting good we’ve done, in our
Nimble fairy way. And yet one task remains.

*By now, ARIEL and PUCK have fixed the sign to read HOLE 18 – PAR… Yes, that’s right: the number for par has been left off and is now effectively infinite. CLARA and NICK enter, perhaps already together. CLARA carries the bent club and her balloon, which still strains skyward at every opportunity.*

NICK
Well, like it or not, here we are. The official last hole.

CLARA
So, let’s hear it. What’s your score?
Believe it or not, par.

CLARA

 Seriously?

NICK

I was actually trying to get over par, but I somehow eagled the last three holes.

CLARA

Three eagles?

NICK

I know. I wasn’t even aiming.

CLARA

Wait, you were trying to get over par?

NICK

You heard me.

CLARA

Okay. Here. Use my ball. For luck.

CLARA hands NICK his own ball, yellow, the one with CANDICE’s phone number.

NICK

Wait, this is my ball.

CLARA

Could be. I got it from some Girl Scout in a hurry. I guess that’s her phone number?

NICK

No. That number’s for Candice.

CLARA

Who’s Candice?

**This is Not the End of the Play**

**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**

Continue to next page for Production Notes
PRODUCTION NOTES

1) I have referred throughout the text to Ariel as female and Puck as male. These pronouns may be thrown out entirely depending on casting, and all such gendered references occur in the stage directions and only in the stage directions. As Ben points out, identity can, at times, be fluid.

2) In strictly pedagogical terms, One Over Par provides an opportunity to learn both scansion and Shakespeare. A good many lines have been borrowed from various Shakespearean texts, a few altered, and nearly all wrenched bodily out of context. Using those extant lines as mortar, I have adhered fairly closely to a formal arrangement of iambic pentameter for Ariel’s and Puck’s dialogue. There are exceptions, however—intentional breaks in the form. If your players have never heard of a spondee or a pyrrhic, now might be an excellent time to introduce such terms, and to have them hunt down the examples contained herein.

3) On occasion, with Ariel and Puck, a word may need to gain a syllable that we, in the 21st century, would typically not employ. I have not marked these in the text, but here is an example: Ensnared would we be. Note that to make this line sing, the “ed” of “ensnared” must be given its due, such that the word reads, phonetically, “en-SNAR-ed” and becomes a three-syllable word.

4) If the producing company happens to be in Arizona or extremely close to “Lake” Powell, contact the playwright for appropriate geographical revisions.

5) If a Lucky Brand women’s top isn’t available, pick something else and change the dialogue to match that brand.

6) Mini-golf courses often have music playing. For pre-show music, but not during the actual run of the play, may I suggest tinny renditions of Link Wray’s “Rumble,” Booker T. and the MG’s “Green Onions,” King Curtis’s “Soul Serenade” and other similar “oldies” instrumentals?

7) Clara’s “tantrum” just after her scene with Bethany is crucial, but its extension into something more theatrical and poetic is optional. If you pursue this, the key is not so much what she does as how she does it. The essential thing is to give Clara a moment to express herself in the most kinetic, lyrical way possible—and then to let brevity govern the length of the moment.

8) Clara’s balloon shouldn’t be over-filled with Helium. Once released, if it rises slowly, not in a rush, that would be ideal. Possibly more than one balloon (though never more than one at a time) could be employed. Like the movies: stunt-double balloons, with different amounts of Helium for different scenes. Please don’t use Mylar. Mylar cannot be recycled, and it refuses to decompose. Eco-theatre is good theatre.

9) One Over Par works exceptionally well in intimate, black box and studio theatre spaces.

10) A curtain call with dancing and party music is most definitely appropriate!

Continue to next page for Properties List
PROPERTIES LIST

Six golf clubs, putt-putt style
Six or more golf balls, of various colors, including yellow, green, red, and white
One bent golf club, putt-putt style
A Helium-filled balloon on a string, preferably blank, and not made of glitzy Mylar
Black leather gloves, men’s
A high-quality digital camera w/zoom lens (but it doesn’t need to work)
A black Sharpie (magic marker)
Six cell phones, one per golfer
Two matching cell phone cases
A rugged backpack
A compass
A megaphone
A large pair of scissors
A folding topographical map (of who knows where)
A strong flashlight
A hiking pole
An LED headlamp
A young woman’s top from Lucky Brand (see notes)
Binoculars
Three different “fairy powders”
Three or more small decorative sacks, purses, or pouches to contain said powders