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**Product Code A0563-FC**

# 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.*

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# 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.*

**BEN STALLINGS:** *Male, sixteen. Frightened by identity. Its fluidity. And by his latest exchange-student companion, Stavros.*

**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 outsize personality and a BIG voice.*

**CANDICE MARTINEZ:** *Female, sixteen. A breeze on the winds of reality. Consequences? What consequences? Falls instantly in love with anyone and everything. So far.*

**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.

NICK

What if I get it in four?

CLARA

He loves me, he loves me not.

NICK

What if I get it in two? Under par?

CLARA

He loves me, he loves me not.

NICK

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

CLARA

He loves me, he loves me not.

NICK

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.*

NICK

Clara. Why draw this line?

CLARA

Romeo and Juliet fell in love in two seconds.

NICK

And I'm supposed to live up to that?

CLARA

My parents. Love at first sight.

NICK

Yeah? And where did they meet? *Hamlet*?

CLARA

They were at the pet shop. Looking at bunnies.

NICK

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."

CLARA

I'm talking about our hearts. Our future.

NICK

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

CLARA

You are such a boy.

NICK

What's that supposed to mean?

CLARA

Girls mature faster.

NICK

Yeah, according to girls.

CLARA

Neuropsychology. The hemispheres of girls' brains fuse faster.

NICK

Fossilize, more like.

CLARA

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

NICK

Then what's the point?

CLARA

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.

NICK

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

CLARA

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. CLARA

Par. Kiss? NICK

*Yes. A quick one.*

Next? CLARA

Next. NICK

*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 prick 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.

You wouldn't dare. CANDICE

Try me and see. BETHANY

Nah, no way. You just wouldn't. CANDICE

Would too. BETHANY

Would not. CANDICE

Would. BETHANY

Wouldn't. CANDICE

Would. BETHANY

Wouldn't. CANDICE

Wouldn't too. BETHANY

Would so. CANDICE

Wouldn't ever. BETHANY

Definitely would. CANDICE

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

Wanna bet? CANDICE

How much? BETHANY

Nah, no bet. ‘Cos I kind of already did.

CANDICE

Didn’t.

BETHANY

Did so.

CANDICE

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

BETHANY

Wait. Which way are we arguing?

CANDICE

I think I’m for it.

BETHANY

Why?

CANDICE

To teach you a lesson.

BETHANY

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

CANDICE

Did we just switch?

BETHANY

No way.

CANDICE

Yes. Way.

BETHANY

No. Not in a million years.

CANDICE

But we did.

BETHANY

Did not.

CANDICE

Did so.

BETHANY

CANDICE  
Girl, that's just dumb.

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

CANDICE  
It's mine.

BETHANY  
No, it's mine.

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

BETHANY  
So does mine.

CANDICE  
Well, mine's got that homecoming shot for wallpaper.

BETHANY  
And mine doesn't?

CANDICE  
Crap. Here, check the phone.

BETHANY  
I am checking the phone.

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

BETHANY  
Not necessarily.

CANDICE  
What are you talking about?

BETHANY  
You might have dialed yourself.

CANDICE  
Girlfriend, why would I dial my own number?

BETHANY  
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.

*BETHANY rushes off, chasing her ball. 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.*

Get off. Nick! Nick?  
CLARA

Why do you say this “Nick”?  
STAVROS

Take two steps back.  
CLARA

But I am Stavros.  
STAVROS

Nick?  
CLARA

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

Did you see anyone else come past here?  
CLARA

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

The German. E.T.A. Hoffman. He writes *The Nutcracker Prince*.

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?

PUCK

*(To ARIEL)*

Why, none but two.

ARIEL

*(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?

CANDICE

It's nighttime.

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.

NICK

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.

NICK

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.

NICK

Modesty, I love modesty.

CANDICE

Ever heard of a prince named Nick?

NICK

Modesty is the color of kindness.

CANDICE

Prince Nick, heir to the throne of modesty.

NICK

Or maybe Prince Nicholas?

CANDICE

I'm just ordinary Nick.

NICK

Says who?

CANDICE

Well, no one exactly has to say it.

NICK

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

CANDICE

I'm Nick, and I'm taken.

NICK

Okay.

CANDICE

*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.

NICK

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.

NICK

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.*

NICK

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.

NICK

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.

BETHANY

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

Exactly. So we touched, you know. Legs. Elbows. Lips.

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

No. Never. Due west. Period.

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.

PUCK

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.*

PUCK

An' dare we touch this mortal charm?

ARIEL

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

PUCK

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

ARIEL

They call them clubs.

PUCK

O, what winsome wicked fun!

ARIEL

No!  
Ensnared would we be. We must resist.

PUCK

Why?

ARIEL

Because.

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

NICK

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.

STAVROS

With you?

NICK

I guess.

STAVROS

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

NICK

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?

STAVROS

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?

NICK

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.

Want to play the hole?

NICK

Might as well.

STAVROS

*(To ARIEL)*  
Does it help that now they're friends?

PUCK

It will. *(To NICK)* Nick!

ARIEL

Who said that?

NICK

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

ARIEL

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

NICK

She's the Nutcracker girl. Clara.

STAVROS

*NICK mis-hits his ball.*

Did you say you met her here?

NICK

Wait. You're Nick? You're that Nick?

STAVROS

You talked to my Clara?

NICK

Oh, fudge. I shouldn't have told you.

STAVROS

Stavros—

NICK

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

STAVROS

How do you know she's sick?

NICK

STAVROS

Don't be angry.

NICK

How do you know?

STAVROS

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

NICK

One last time. How do you know?

STAVROS

She told me.

NICK

Do you know her from somewhere?

STAVROS

I'd never seen her before tonight.

NICK

So why would she tell you and not me?

STAVROS

She's scared you'll run away.

NICK

I need to find her.

STAVROS

I'll come with you.

NICK

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.*

STAVROS

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.

CLARA

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...

I'm sorry, what are we talking about?

CLARA

Am I really saying this?

CANDICE

I don't know. Are you?

CLARA

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

CANDICE

What?

CLARA

You heard me. AIDS.

CANDICE

I'm sorry.

CLARA

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.

CANDICE

No.

CLARA

I'll probably live to see fifty. Maybe even sixty.

CANDICE

That seems like a long way off.

CLARA

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...

CANDICE

But look what you have for a club.

CLARA

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

CANDICE

I should go.

CLARA

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.

I love boys who make lucky guesses.

CANDICE

I figured you would.

BEN

Do you believe in love at first sight?

CANDICE

No.

BEN

Really?

CANDICE

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

BEN

Have you ever had a girlfriend?

CANDICE

Does that matter?

BEN

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

CANDICE

What is this, a quiz show?

BEN

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

CANDICE

No.

BEN

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

CANDICE

No.

BEN

Then I'll do it for you.

CANDICE

*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?

BEN

I think so, yes.

CANDICE

Then stop kissing me. (*Kiss*)

BEN

You need to go.

CANDICE

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.

CANDICE

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?

CANDICE

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—

BETHANY

—Poof? I don't poof.

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.

BETHANY

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.

BETHANY

“We got along”?

STAVROS

You have beautiful elbows.

BETHANY

Candice!

STAVROS

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.

STAVROS

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.*

STAVROS

I'm not sure.

*BETHANY takes the ball.*

BETHANY

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

STAVROS

Where are you going?

BETHANY

To find Candice, what do you think?

STAVROS

Bethany, stop. Will you at least come visit?

BETHANY

Is that some kind of trick question?

STAVROS

*(Extending his hand)*

It doesn't have to be.

BETHANY

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.

PUCK

Though chaos be our craft, let calm replace  
Our guile. If harm we've done, we shall with grace  
Undo.

ARIEL

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.

PUCK

And its effect?

ARIEL

The truth, and nothing but the truth.

*NICK enters, at a distance.*

NICK

Clara? Hey, Clara!

BEN (*Off*)

Stavros? If you can hear me, answer me!

*BEN enters, with his U-shaped club.*

NICK

Hey.

BEN

Hey.

NICK

How's it goin'?

BEN

Good.

NICK

Good. That's good.

BEN

Yeah. You?

NICK

I'm good. Mostly. Nice club.

BEN  
Yeah. It's not the best.

NICK  
You looking for someone?

BEN  
Yeah. You?

NICK  
Yeah.

PUCK  
(To ARIEL)  
By the Green Man's beard! These two would bore the stones.

ARIEL  
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.*

BEN  
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?

NICK  
I totally get that.

BEN  
You do?

NICK  
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?

BEN  
Dude. I know exactly what you're talking about.

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

BEN  
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 whoosh, you know?

NICK

Like, who knows what's gonna come out next?

BEN

And giggling! How come guys never get to giggle?

NICK

I love giggling.

BEN

Me, too!

NICK

Like totes!

*They collapse into a froth of bubbly giggles.*

BEN

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

NICK

Because we'd be laughed out of school.

BEN

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

NICK

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

BEN

Like totes.

*Giggles.*

NICK

Who are you looking for?

BEN

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, hopeless 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.

NICK

A fair point.

BEN

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.

NICK

Identity. Fluid.

BEN

My name's Ben.

NICK

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

BEN

Touché.

NICK

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

BEN

Yeah? What kind?

NICK

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

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

BEN

Mm. Bold.

NICK

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

BEN

Really? Putt-putt?

NICK

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

BEN

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

NICK

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?

NICK (Cont'd)

I'm going to call Candice.

BEN

Candice?

NICK

You know her?

BEN

We met. A few holes back.

NICK

Don't tell me she kissed you, too.

BEN

I think she kisses pretty much everybody.

NICK

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

BEN

*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.

NICK

BEN  
What are you doing with her phone?

NICK  
She said it was a grenade.

BEN  
Huh. All she gave me was a Sharpie.

NICK  
You need to go find her.

BEN  
I don't think I do. But there is someone else.

NICK  
Here we go, then. Bold like a lion.

BEN  
Go big or go home.

NICK  
Like totes.

*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?

*BETHANY tosses her NICK's ball, the one with CANDICE's phone number on it, then exits, toward Hole Eight.*

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

*(Accent 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.*

CANDICE

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

STAVROS (*Cont'd*)

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.

STAVROS

Excuse me?

CANDICE

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

STAVROS

But I was just guessing.

CANDICE

No, you weren't.

STAVROS

Was too.



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 Mexico 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 has by now taken STAVROS’s 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 and STAVROS exit, together. CLARA 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.*

NICK

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.*

BETHANY

Agreed. This is Hole 14.

NICK

Par 3. Should we change it?

BETHANY

Ooh, change. Spooky-spooky.

NICK

This part's stuck.

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

BETHANY

Try these.

NICK

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.*

NICK

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

BETHANY

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.*

NICK

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.

NICK

I was only trying to help.

BETHANY

Next time? (*Megaphone*) **Don't.**

*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.*

BEN

Huh. You again.

NICK

Me again. Bold as a lion.

BEN

How's that working out?

NICK

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

BEN

No worries. I'll play the hole.

*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.*

CLARA

One.

BEN

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

CLARA

Yes.

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

CLARA

Two. Par at best.

Whoever you are, will you stop?

BEN

What, too much input?

CLARA

I have a very fluid identity!

BEN

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

CLARA

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

Which is nothing to crow about.

BEN

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?

CLARA

No.

BEN

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

CLARA

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

BEN

It is possible to be too interesting.

CLARA

Oh, really.

BEN

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

CLARA

You look pretty normal.

BEN

Come here.

CLARA

*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."

CLARA

How do you know Nick?

BEN

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

CLARA

Really? Which way'd he go?

BEN

Wait. Don't leave.

CLARA

I have to find Nick. While I've still...while I've still...

BEN

Got the energy?

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.

You do want to see him. CANDICE

I don't. BETHANY

You do, absolutely. CANDICE

I really most definitely don't. BETHANY

You do. You know you do. CANDICE

I don't. Like totes! BETHANY

Totes you do so. CANDICE

Totes I never. BETHANY

That's right, never. CANDICE

Exactly. BETHANY

I just know I wouldn't. CANDICE

Exactly. BETHANY

And you wouldn't, either. CANDICE

Would so. BETHANY

Would not. CANDICE

Would. BETHANY

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. CANDICE

*BETHANY digs out her compass,  
consults it.*

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

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.*

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

I am but mad north-northwest. When the wind  
Is southerly, I know a hawk from a hand-saw. PUCK

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.*

STAVROS

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.*

BETHANY

Hey. You forgot something.

STAVROS

I thought you’d gone.

BETHANY

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

STAVROS

I left it at home.

BETHANY

You got something to write with?

STAVROS

No.

BEN

Hang on. I do.

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

BETHANY

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

BEN

Got it.

STAVROS

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.

STAVROS

I think we got what we came for.

BEN

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

STAVROS

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.

NICK

Seriously?

CLARA

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

NICK

Three eagles?

CLARA

I know. I wasn't even aiming.

NICK

Wait, you were *trying* to get over par?

CLARA

You heard me.

NICK

Okay. Here. Use my ball. For luck.

CLARA

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

Wait, this is *my* ball.

NICK

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

CLARA

No. That number's for Candice.

NICK

Who's Candice?

CLARA

**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 21<sup>st</sup> 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