

JUSTIN. About five minutes ago. And I haven't even been fired yet!

LOUISE. That is so great! But how did you get the job?

JUSTIN. Well, a few days ago I-I stopped by the club to say hi, and I saw Mr. Bingham chasing some man across the ninth green, trying to hit him with a 7-iron. He was shouting "You incompetent bungler!" – so just to be funny I said, "You should use a pitching wedge so when you hit him you'll get more loft," and he turned to me and said, "Would you like a job, because any moment now there'll be an opening," and so he gave me an interview!

LOUISE. Oh, wow. Then it must have gone well.

JUSTIN. It went like a dream! I-I told him how much I love golf and I think that impressed him. I mean not that I'm allowed to play here, as an employee.

LOUISE. Did you tell him your scores?

JUSTIN. Yeah. He said what did you shoot the last time you played and I told him the truth – it was a hundred and thirty-six – and he laughed so hard that he spit up his coffee. So at least I put him in a good mood.

LOUISE. Well, I think you play very well.

JUSTIN. Thanks. *You* played for a while.

LOUISE. Not as well as you. I'm not *that* good.

JUSTIN. Aw. Anyway, he told me all about the job and said I'd have to work really hard.

LOUISE. I'm not surprised. He's tough as nails. Somebody told me he eats barbed wire for breakfast, but I said that's not possible, it's not on the menu. I also think he's unhappy in his personal life.

JUSTIN. Is he married?

LOUISE. Yeah. He calls her Lady Voldemort, She of Darkness. But you know this is tournament weekend, so if he hired you now he really must have confidence in you.

JUSTIN. Tournament weekend?

LOUISE. Yeah. Every year we play Crouching Squirrel Country Club for the Inter-Club Championship. It's a really big deal. Sort of like Troy versus Greece in the 8th century B.C.

JUSTIN. Night school?

LOUISE. We're studying the Homeric epic. I'm reading *The Iliad*. Our teacher asked us what *use* we thought it would be, studying Homer, and I said maybe picking up old blind Greek men. But he said we should compare the story to our everyday lives and this tournament has turned out to be like perfect!

"O hear thou Gods of the game of sticks
And little dimpled balls,
For thou hast pitted Crouching Squirrel
Against Quail Valley
And the greens this day are tricky!"

That's part of my term paper, I'm writing a sort of ode to golf. And Quail Valley is just like Troy cause we always lose.

JUSTIN. Always?

LOUISE. For the past five years. And Mr. Bingham gets really upset about it. Between you and me, I think he puts money on it. Muchacho dolores.

JUSTIN. Listen, I haven't even told you the *big* surprise yet.

LOUISE. You haven't?

JUSTIN. See, now that I have a full-time job, I have a salary, right? And-and you have a salary. So you see what that means?

LOUISE. ...Two salaries?

JUSTIN. Right...and with two salaries, I guess we can afford to...

(He takes a ring box out of his pocket and opens it. Then he gets on one knee. Her jaw drops.)

Louise Margaret Heindbedder, will you marry me?

JUSTIN / LOUISE

LOUISE. Oh, Justin! Oh! Yes! Yes! Yes! A hundred and forty-seven times yes!!

(She kisses him and hugs him and dances around the room.)

Oh, Justin! Oh look at this *ring*.

JUSTIN. It was my grandmother's.

LOUISE. Wow.

JUSTIN. It's been in my family for over 40 years.

LOUISE. Oh my God. Oh, Justin, you've made me the happiest woman in this room! Let's make out!

(LOUISE starts getting very enthusiastic with JUSTIN. She kisses him with passion and runs her fingers through his hair. Then she starts removing his belt. JUSTIN can't help responding and has his hands all over her – at which point MR. BINGHAM enters. He's carrying a framed photo of a golfer. He watches them for a moment.)

BINGHAM. ...Excuse me?

JUSTIN & LOUISE. Ahhhh!

JUSTIN. Mr. Bingham, I-I-I was looking for you!

BINGHAM. And you thought you might find me in Miss Heindbedder's brassiere?

JUSTIN. No. No, no. This is special!

LOUISE. He's telling the truth!

BINGHAM. You know this could be a record. Hired and fired in ten minutes.

JUSTIN. No! No sir, listen, I-I-I just asked Louise to marry me.

BINGHAM. And did she say yes or was that your consolation prize?

LOUISE. I said yes. I mean I'm in love with him!

BINGHAM. You know that's genuinely touching. I'm very moved. Inside. My giblets are doing a little dance of joy. But may I remind you that this is a country club and not a cathouse, and that if anyone else had walked through this door and seen your live demonstration of "The Kama Sutra," I would have had to FIRE BOTH OF YOU!

JUSTIN. I'm sorry, sir.

LOUISE. Me too!

BINGHAM. Miss Heindbedder you may go. Or would you like one last grope to keep you going until lunch time.

LOUISE. ...I'm fine sir.

(She exits.)

JUSTIN. Sir, I'm-I'm very sorry, only we just got engaged, sir. Pretty soon I'll be a married man!

BINGHAM. Oh aren't you lucky. Marriage. Such a wonderful state. The state of marriage. I believe it's located above Alaska. Same climate but in my case there's no drilling allowed.

JUSTIN. Aw, you're putting me on, aren't you sir. As they say these days, "You're messing with my head."

BINGHAM. Wouldn't that be a pleasure. But no, not today, because today of all days I will let nothing spoil the fun.

JUSTIN. Is there something special happening, sir? I-I know it's Tournament Weekend.

BINGHAM. It is indeed.

JUSTIN. Do you think we have a chance, sir?

BINGHAM. "Do we have a chance?" No, Hicks, we don't have a chance. We have a shoe-in.

JUSTIN. A new member, sir?

BINGHAM. A new member indeed. The fellow's name is Tramplemain. There he is. Look at that extension. Mwa.

(He kisses the picture he carried in.)

And he is the nicest man in the entire world. He joined the club about a month ago, he's in finance, I think, plays golf as a hobby and his last four rounds were 75, 73, 76, and 71! Ha!

(He casually takes a picture of another golfer off the wall and drops it in the trash, then puts up Tramplemain's picture in its place.)

~~JUSTIN. So what happens next? We just start the tournament?~~

~~BINGHAM. Not quite. In about five minutes we have the "Signing Ceremony." The Director of Crouching Squirrel, my counterpart, a man named Richard Bell, who, I might add is the lowest chiseling son of a bitch who ever walked the earth, and I say that with all due respect, arrives in one of his ugly sweaters and we sign the Tournament Book, thereby confirming the names of the players. Then he and I shake hands, I excuse myself, I wash my hand and we're off and running.~~

~~(He glances out the window.)~~

Ah, here he comes now. You can always tell it's him from the heavy shoes he wears. They're meant to hide the cloven hooves inside the *Dickie Bell*, how are you *Dickie Bell*.

(DICKIE BELL enters. He's an unpleasant man full of bonhomie. He's wearing the ugliest bright yellow sweater in existence.)

DICKIE. Hello Henry, just look at you, don't you look marvelous! A little tired, though, eh? Around the eyes? You've got to stop working so hard, old boy. It's just too late. Life has passed you by, eh? Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

BINGHAM. Nice sweater, Dickie. Very understated.

DICKIE. Do you like it? It's called Positano yellow, I believe.

BINGHAM. Ah yes. Italian word for vomit, I think.

JUSTIN. Hel-hello.

BINGHAM. So sorry. Dickie Bell, Justin Hicks.

DICKIE. Capital. Just capital to meet you.

BINGHAM. "Capital?" Are you English today?

JUSTIN. Would you like a drink? I-I can –

DICKIE. Don't mind if I do. So what if it's early. So's the worm. Otherwise he wouldn't catch anything.

BINGHAM. You mean the bird.

DICKIE. Sorry?

BINGHAM. You said the worm.

DICKIE. I meant the worm.

BINGHAM. No you meant the bird.

DICKIE. Didn't mean the bird.

BINGHAM. Of course you did. The early *bird* catches the *worm*.

DICKIE. Yes, but if the worm wasn't up even earlier, the bird couldn't catch him. So the worm's the early one. Right, eh? Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

BINGHAM. Oh that's excellent, Dickie. You could go on stage with that one.

JUSTIN. Maybe I should, uh –

BINGHAM. Yes, of course, I'll see you later.

(JUSTIN exits.)

So, Dickie, how's it going?

DICKIE. Oh I can't complain and who'd listen anyway, eh? Ha? Big day of golf ahead. Mm? Love golf.

(He looks out the 4th wall toward the golf course.)

And how's the wife? God, I love Muriel, she's such a strong woman. Like a Sherman Tank. No feet, she has treads on the bottom, churning forward over the landscape.

(He makes a tank-going-over-terrain noise.)

Keeps you in line, eh? Ha ha! Love that.

BINGHAM. I'm sure you do.

DICKIE. Now, now, it's just a joke, we can all take a joke from time to time, eh? And speaking of jokes, how's your team this year?

BINGHAM. ...I beg your pardon?

DICKIE. I said how's your golf team. Speaking of jokes.

BINGHAM. Are you honestly standing here in *my* tap room, drinking *my* liquor and insulting *my* club?!!

DICKIE. Now, now I didn't say you don't have a chance. It's golf, eh? Drives, chips, putts, who knows what could happen.

BINGHAM. (*bravely*) Yes, of course, you're right. In fact, just to show you I'm not a sore loser, I suppose I should put a little money on it, shouldn't I.

DICKIE. Now there I agree with you. A bit of jousting I call it. A clash of arms. So what do you say? How much?

BINGHAM. Oh I don't know. You do have the better players of course.

DICKIE. Not necessarily! Where's your spirit? Let's hear it for Quail Valley. Chucka chucka chucka!

BINGHAM. Chucka chucka chucka!

DICKIE. So what do you say, shall we call it ten?

BINGHAM. Well –

DICKIE. Ten thousand dollars, straight up, no odds.

BINGHAM. Ten thousand dollars! Oh, I couldn't.

DICKIE. Well, if it's too much money –

BINGHAM. Let's make it twenty. I mean why not. What's a little wager between friends, hm?

DICKIE. Well now, if you're talking twenty, I suppose we should say thirty.

BINGHAM. Forty.

DICKIE. Fifty.

BINGHAM. A hundred.

DICKIE. A hundred thousand?

BINGHAM. What's the matter? Afraid, are we? Not man enough? Oh, Dickie, you disappoint me.

DICKIE. I'll tell you what. I'll go for a hundred thousand dollars on one condition. That if I lose, I'll pay you *two* hundred thousand dollars, but if you lose you pay me a hundred thousand and throw in your wife's antique shop.

BINGHAM. ...Muriel's shop?

DICKIE. Muriel. Your wife. Big woman. Wears camouflage.

BINGHAM. Her antique shop?

DICKIE. Ye Olde Crock. Now I know it's not worth a hundred thousand, but I've always had a fondness for it. I like all that wood, the old tables, mirrors.

BINGHAM. But she loves that shop. She lives for it. If anything happened to it, she'd kill me. She'd murder me. I'd be a dead golfer.

DICKIE. Oh all right, I understand. Get on her bad side and she might shoot you with those swivel guns near the hatch. "A-a-a-a-a!" So let's just call it off, no bets, just golf.

BINGHAM. We can still bet the cash, of course.

DICKIE. Nah. Why bother. You know me, I don't like to go halves.

BINGHAM. Oh come on. Make it interesting. A hundred each way. Or seventy-five. Or fifty.

DICKIE. Nah. Not worth it. Cheers. I'll come back later and sign the book.

(He heads for the door and walks out.)

BINGHAM. ...All right.

DICKIE. (*returning*) What's that?

BINGHAM. I'll do it. One hundred against two hundred.

DICKIE. And you throw in The Olde Crock?

BINGHAM. My wife?

DICKIE. The shop.

BINGHAM. Oh. Yes.

DICKIE. Done! Let's shake on it. Ha ha! What a man. Congratulations. You got me again, you devil. Shall we sign the bookage? Give it the old Johnny Hancocks?

BINGHAM. Oh let's. Why not. Then we'll have the whole day ahead of us just for golf.

(DICKIE signs the book.)

DICKIE. Ah, I see you have Tramplemain down here.

BINGHAM. Oh, you've heard of him, have you?

DICKIE. I've seen him play. Good man. Good short game.

PAMELA / BINGHAM

~~it down and...Did you say Bell and Son? That wouldn't be run by Dickie Bell, the fellow who's director of... Oh my God! So if let's say he won the shop in I don't know a wager of some kind, he wouldn't have to buy it at all, he could just... Well why didn't you tell me all this before?!... Well if the offer came in last night you should have called me last night!... Yes, I'll still need the second mortgage unless Quail Valley Country Club burns to the ground in the next twenty minutes!~~

~~(He slams the phone down – at which moment, PAMELA PEABODY enters. She's blondly beautiful, about 39, and extremely soigné. Her clothes are impeccable and she has seen it all. Clearly she's a member of the club.)~~

PAMELA. Hello, Mr. Bingham.

BINGHAM. Mrs. Peabody. How are you?

PAMELA. Oh I'm all right, but you're not so good, I'm afraid.

BINGHAM. I'm sorry?

PAMELA. I've just come from a meeting of the Club's Executive Committee. Do you want the good news or the bad news first?

BINGHAM. Bad news?

PAMELA. No, I'll start with the good news. The good news is that the committee realizes that it was not your fault that we lost the Inter-Club Cup five years in a row. The bad news is if we lose it again you're fired.

BINGHAM. They can't fire me, I'm a member of the club!

PAMELA. Not if you're fired, apparently.

BINGHAM. But I've run the club for them for the past five years.

PAMELA. Vindictive bastards, aren't they. Drink?

BINGHAM. At 10:15 in the morning?

PAMELA. I know, I got a late start.

(She goes behind the bar and gets a bottle of brandy and pours two glasses. Meanwhile, BINGHAM sits down and puts his head in his hands.)

PAMELA. (cont.) Look, it can't be that bad. We could still win the tournament, couldn't we? We must have some pretty good players.

BINGHAM. (laughs hollowly) Not good enough. It's medal play and now they have Tramplemain.

PAMELA. Tramplemain?

BINGHAM. Best player in the city. It was arranged by your ex-husband, the all-time snake in the grass Dickie Bell.

PAMELA. Snake in the grass is too kind for him. What about venomous weasel-toad jackal from hell.

BINGHAM. You had a good marriage, then.

PAMELA. (getting caught up in her feelings) Lying, adulterous, clawed rat-vulture from the Kingdom of Mordor... Pissing, fly-specked, warthog-lemur from the Land of Vomit.

(catching herself)

Hahahahaha. These are jokes, Mr. Bingham. To cheer you up.

BINGHAM. (tries vainly to smile) Yes, of course...

PAMELA. Oh come now. Surely we have someone who can compete with this Tramplemain. What about that boy I just passed on the practice tee? He looks quite good.

BINGHAM. I have no idea who you're talking about.

(We hear the distant thwack of a golf ball. PAMELA goes to the picture window and looks out.)

PAMELA. There he is. He's still at it.

(Thwack.)

Look at that drive, it's straight as a die.

(Thwack.)

There's another one. That must be 300 yards. I'll bet he has incredible back muscles. Honestly, come look.

(HENRY sighs and drags to the window. Thwack.)

See what I mean? The kid's a champion.

(Thwack.)

JUSTIN. I am now a butterfly and my body is weightless and I am flapping gently in the warm summer breeze. Ommmmmm.

BINGHAM. *(Indian accent)* Ommmmmm. You are my assistant playing golf at club and if you lose I kill you.. Ommmmmm.

JUSTIN. Mr. Bingham!

BINGHAM. Sorry, *sorry!* It just slipped out. Here.

(He sits JUSTIN at the table.)

How do you like our little spread? Rather romantic, wouldn't you say? Champagne?

JUSTIN. ...Hey. Wait a second. Is this dinner for me and Louise?

(i.e. the dining table)

BINGHAM. *(modestly)* Well, it's just a little something that Mrs. Peabody and I –

JUSTIN. No.

BINGHAM. What?

JUSTIN. I-I don't want to have dinner with Louise.

BINGHAM. Why not?

JUSTIN. Because I know she hates me now and she'll think I'm trying to buy her affection again.

BINGHAM. But that's ridiculous. You want to apologize, and what could say it better than a little goose liver and steak tartare –

JUSTIN. No, I really can't. This is just too important to take a chance of -...I-I-I'll be outside.

(He hurries out.)

BINGHAM. Justin! *Justin!*

(He runs out after JUSTIN just as LOUISE and PAMELA reenter through the club door – and therefore overhear the following:)

BINGHAM. *(off)* Justin get back here! This is the right thing to do!

JUSTIN. *(off)* No! I don't care what you say! I'm not having dinner with Louise!

(LOUISE starts hiccupping with little sobs.)

PAMELA. No, don't. ...Don't...

(But LOUISE can't help herself. Her lip starts quivering like mad – and she bursts into tears and runs out of the room.)

Louise...Oh, Louise!

(At which point, BINGHAM marches back in.)

BINGHAM. Lord, give me strength! Were we like this when we were youngsters?

PAMELA. Are you kidding me? I'd have been up to the figs in cream by this time.

BINGHAM. Slancha.

PAMELA. Prosit.

(They each grab a bottle of champagne and hurry out of the room.)

BINGHAM. Justin!

PAMELA. Louise!

(DICKIE hurries in through the club door, followed closely by MURIEL. DICKIE is wearing a tuxedo with an outlandish, patterned vest. Or he might even be wearing an outlandish tuxedo. Whichever it is, it reflects his hideous taste.)

MURIEL. Dickie, please!

DICKIE. No, Muriel.

MURIEL. Would you listen to reason!

DICKIE. I have listened, Muriel. I don't want to talk about it.

MURIEL. But Hicks and Tramplemain are *even* now, so you should call it quits!

DICKIE. I have a funny feeling that Mr. Hicks is not quite over his histrionical behavior.

MURIEL. But if he is, you lose all that money.

DICKIE. And if he isn't, I acquire an antique shop.

MURIEL. That is so unfair! You know how I feel about that shop. I built it from nothing to fill an emptiness inside me.

DICKIE. Well I'm sorry, Muriel, but a wager's a wager.

MURIEL. We once meant something to each other, Dickie. When we were youngsters at this very club. We met at that Dinner-Dance. You wore a boutonniere.

DICKIE. You wore a tuxedo.

MURIEL. You had a moustache.

DICKIE. You had sideburns.

MURIEL. Do you remember our first date together?

DICKIE. Of course I remember.

MURIEL. We saw that documentary about the Luftwaffe.

DICKIE. I loved that film.

MURIEL. You said you found all that efficiency very inspiring.

DICKIE. I did, I *did*. Some of those babies could drop twenty tons in a single night.

MURIEL. Boom.

DICKIE. Right on target.

MURIEL. Boom.

DICKIE. And look at you. You've barely changed at all.

MURIEL. Oh, stop it.

DICKIE. You may have put on a bit of poundage, but it's all in the right places, eh? Ha? Hahahahaha!

MURIEL. Oh you devil. You always had a way of bringing out my feminine side.

DICKIE. Did I, Muriel?

MURIEL. Something my husband has completely lost sight of. He married me for my warmth, but he doesn't see it any more.

DICKIE. The brute.

MURIEL. Don't call him that. It's not his fault.

DICKIE. He is a brute if he can't see how warm and gentle you can be when you're –

MURIEL. *I SAID PUT A SOCK IN IT! Now will you call off the bet or not?!*

DICKIE. No!

(They stare at each other angrily, then suddenly kiss each other ferociously. When they break it off, DICKIE has a split-second of indecision: call it off or not. He decides not, and turns and strides from the room.)

DICKIE. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no...

MURIEL. *Dickie, get back here!*

(She runs out after him. Immediately LOUISE marches in through one kitchen door as JUSTIN runs in through the other. In surprise they see each other. Then they speak simultaneously:)

LOUISE.

I realize you don't want to see me after what happened and all – !

JUSTIN.

I'm sorry if I'm just making things worse by seeing you again and – !

JUSTIN. What did you say?

LOUISE. I said I can understand if you never want to see me again.

JUSTIN. See you again? Louise, I want to see you all the time!

LOUISE. You do? After I lost Granny's ring?

JUSTIN. Of course I do! That was just an accident. And I was so unfair about the car and all.

LOUISE. Oh, that doesn't matter. I was just bein' psychosomatic or somethin'.

JUSTIN. Really?

(She nods.)

Do you want to go talk about it?

LOUISE. I'd love to, if it's all right with you.

BINGHAM. *(off) Justin?!*