

The Eighteenth Hole  
Bryan Kelly  
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Dereck had honors on this last hole. His driving had been terrible today so he pulled out his three wood and went up to the tee. There was only bit over three hundred yards to the green on this short par four. A quick survey indicated he should tee off from the left side. He set the ball a little high, took one more quick look down range, then swung with gentle smooth motion. The ball took off on a nice arc just a bit to the left, drifted right some, and landed about two hundred yards away, half way between the center and the right edge of the fairway. That left him about a hundred yards for his approach shot. Maybe he could finish this round with his first par of the day.

Jeff stalked up and crammed his tee into the turf. This was about the worst that he had ever played. For the last three holes Jeff had been muttering an endless stream, cursing at himself, the club, the ball, the course, and anything else that might be in the general vicinity. He had played here often and didn't take but a second to pick his line out. With his banana ball slice ruling his game all day he aimed a bit to the left. Straight into the sun that was less than half an hour from setting.

Dereck heard him grab a deep breath as he wound up his back swing, then clobbered the ball hard enough to knock the dimples off. Thwack! Oh, it was sweet. He had caught this one right in the sweet spot and it rocketed off the club head. His face relaxed and a smile started sneaking out from beneath the scowl. This drive looked like a solid three hundred yards. Awsome! Golf can be like that. One good shot can wipe out an entire bad day.

The ball soared right into the sun and they lost it in the glare. They watched to the right of the sun hoping they could see that little black dot emerge from the glare and settle down on the fairway. Holding up a hand or a cap as a shield, they strained to see where it was headed.

A good three hundred yards out, a couple of ducks burst out of a marshy stand of reeds in the water honking and squawking. Jeff's smile evaporated instantly. "Fuck you" he shouted at the ducks, himself, the club, the ball, the course, and anything else that might be in the general vicinity. He grabbed the club like a sledgehammer and barely restrained himself from bashing the tee. Standing over it he was so tensed up he literally broke out into a sweat. Dereck unconsciously held his breath waiting to see what Jeff would do.

"Fuck you" echoed across all eighteen holes of the course once more. He was bent over the tee, mouth open, teeth bared, tendons bulging out all over his neck, looking like he would either bite the tee off a couple of inches below ground level, or drive it six feet down with just the power of his voice. Without loosening up a bit, he stomped over to the cart and crammed his driver in the bag like a javelin. With the club head no more than an inch from his nose, his fists in tight knots, he told it off once more. "Eat me bitch!" He stared it down for another two seconds to be certain it had gotten the message.

Having taken care of that order of business, he jerked open a zipper on the bag and fished out couple of more balls, pocketing one, holding the second. He wrapped his other fist around one of the long irons in the bag like he was strangling it, yanked it out practically knocking the bag off the cart, and stomped back over to the tees. Jeff's arm looked like trying to squeeze the titanium core right out of the ball. When he got to the tee, he glared at it for a moment and knew he didn't have the finesse to gently rest the ball on that little bitsy tee. He wound up and slammed the ball down into the ground. It bounced, fell, rolled around a bit, and came to rest next to the tee. Having used up some smidgen of adrenaline he squatted down and teed the ball.

Jeff took a stance sturdy enough to anchor himself against a Mack truck. He took a breath, wound up, and let out a primal grunt as he swung for the stars. Whump!! The club head hit the ground about six inches behind the ball digging a trench about two inches deep. A spray of grass and dirt surrounded him. Dereck felt the impact through his shoes twenty feet away. A long skinny strip of grass with a pound of sod still attached went flying as a fist full of grass and dirt splattered all over Jeff's face. The strip of grass straightened out flat as it rotated in the air and landed grass side up. The tee was right in the middle, belligerently sticking up, mocking him. The ball went almost straight up, just missing Jeff's head then fell and rolled down the front of the elevated tee box.

Jeff hurled the club out over the water and chased it away with scream that went on until it disappeared into the water. He glared down at the trench he had just dug. Reaching into his pocket he dug out the other ball, then reared back and hurled it maybe a hundred yards down the middle of the fairway. "I'll play that Son of a Bitch!" Jeff marched over to the cart and sat down on the passenger side. He had been driving today but something in his fired up brain, some remaining shred of sanity, knew that he had no business behind the wheel right now.

Dereck quickly put the grass back in the hole and packed it in with a couple of scoops of sand. Picking up the tee and he slowly drove down range. He knew Jeff needed a few moments of quiet before attempting to hit again. He stopped a few feet behind and to the right of Jeff's ball. They quietly sat in the cart for a full minute, then Jeff slowly got out. Looking at his clubs, he saw the four iron, slowly pulled it out walked over to the ball. It was obvious that today, the course had won.

Jeff glanced down range as he approached the ball, took his stance and almost apologetically swung. The fire in him had burned out. Without so much as a peek, he slipped the club back in the bag, slumped down on the seat, and resumed his shoelace examination. Dereck watched the ball smoothly arc two hundred odd yards through the air, land on the green a few inches from the cup, and roll about five feet past. The best damn golf shot he had ever seen. He looked at Jeff for a moment, then drove on.

Dereck stopped at his ball and pulled out his nine iron. Still thinking about Jeff's shot, he miss-hit just a bit and left it twenty-five yards short of the green. Lying two on a par 4 and not on the green. So much for his par. But that's okay, Jeff would have another minute to calm down while Dereck finished his approach. He drove up to his ball, pulled

out his pitching iron and plopped it on the green less than a foot from the cup. All right! On the green in three with a six inch putt! I'm gonna make par!

Walking back to the cart, he quickly wiped the smile off his face so he wouldn't look like he was gloating. After parking the cart around at the back of the green, they got out of the cart, got their putters, and without a word, walked on to the green. Dereck continued on past Jeff's ball and pulled the flag from the cup. He stopped and stood there for a moment slowly eyeing the cup, then his ball, then Jeff, Jeff's ball, then the cup again. After his eyes had made the round twice a smile started to reshape his face, but with a tremendous effort he wiped it off and put his poker face back on. Finally he laid the flag down and putted his ball in. "Par!" Without another sound, Dereck took his ball out of the cup then walked to the edge of the green and sat down.

Dereck had putted out of turn but Jeff's emotions were spent and he was too far gone to care. He took his stance, tapped his ball, and watched it roll right in the center of the cup. But at this point, he honestly didn't care. He didn't notice Dereck grinning like an idiot as he walked over to the cup to retrieve his ball.

When he reached the cup Jeff squatted down, reached in, and pulled out his ball. But he didn't stand up. He slowly and thoroughly examined the ball. Finding his mark on it, he assured himself it was indeed his and slipped it in his pocket. With an utterly dumbstruck look on his face, Jeff gingerly reached back into the cup, and pulled out another ball. Mortally afraid of what he was going to find, he carefully rotated the ball in his fingertips. Right there, just below the manufacturer's name, he found his mark.

On a par four, he had made a hole in one!