

Holing Out

Arnold Johnston and Deborah Ann Percy

A ONE-ACT PLAY

CHARACTERS:

LUKE, mid-forties, high school English teacher, pretty good golfer.

JEANETTE, mid-forties, real estate agent, former high school social studies teacher, just learning to golf.

SETTING:

One-third down the fairway on the seventh hole of Finch Haven Golf Course. Green rolling hills and a clubhouse can be seen in the distance. Down R there is a section of fence on which grapevines are growing in a thick tangle.

As the lights come up, we see Luke searching in the grapevine with his five iron. He is wearing shorts and a polo shirt.

LUKE: Why me? What did I do to deserve this? Who radio-dispatched those old bats to tee off just before we did?

JEANETTE: *(Also dressed for warm weather, she enters calling to Luke.)* Do you see my ball? It went the same place yours did, didn't it? Isn't that what you call companionable golf?

LUKE: Cart golf. They call it cart golf. If your shots land near each other, you both get to ride in the cart.

JEANETTE: We don't have a cart.

LUKE: They still call it cart golf.

JEANETTE: (*Giving his waist a squeeze.*) I like companionable. More interesting options.

LUKE: (*Squeezing her, too.*) OK. Except for the fact that mine's right there on the fairway. Yours went in here somewhere.

JEANETTE: And except for the fact that it took me three strokes to get here, and you only needed one.

LUKE: (*Searching for the ball.*) That's because I used my five iron to tee off. (*He waves the club.*) I'm working my way up from the driver. I'll be teeing off with my wedge soon. (*Turning to her.*) You topped it. I keep telling you to swing down through the ball.

JEANETTE: When I swing down through it, I dig up great hunks of grass.

LUKE: Digging up grass is the least of your worries. You're supposed to dig up grass. And they're called divots, not green hunks.

JEANETTE: Divots. Can you see my ball?

LUKE: Not yet. But it's in here somewhere. (*He straightens, quits looking for the golf ball and looks over the grapevines toward the tee.*) We're not going anywhere, anyway. Not with those four old women ahead of us. They're not even on the green yet. They should have let us play through.

JEANETTE: (*She starts poking in the grapevines with her golf club.*) Wouldn't you know? One of my new balls. Pink Ladies.

LUKE: Actually, from this distance, it's hard to tell if they are all women, or if that one in the green sweater is a man. Old farts, anyway.

JEANETTE: I thought pink would be harder to lose. (*Straightening and looking toward the tee.*) The one in the green sweater is a man. You don't have to be nasty about everything just because you forgot you prom-

ised to have champagne and birthday cake with me tonight and now you turn out to have something more important to do. With your wife.

LUKE: (*Flaring a bit.*) It's not more important. I just have to do it, that's all. I couldn't know Caroline's brother was going to pay us a visit.

JEANETTE: Don't you and Caroline talk?

LUKE: I haven't seen Kent since Christmas. He'll be hurt if I duck out on him.

JEANETTE: And I'm not?

LUKE: I didn't say that. But we can have cake and champagne tomorrow night. Besides, it would seem strange if I didn't see Kent. I think Caroline's already suspicious.

JEANETTE: Tonight is the night George plays bridge. Tomorrow night he's home. (*Beat.*) Don't worry about it. I'll call Molly. We'll go to La Pasta. (*Beat.*) It's nice to have a friend you can depend on.

LUKE: Maybe you can call good olf Rex. Your new boss. I imagine he cuts quite a figure in his blue blazer.

JEANETTE: Rex's all right. He's a nice guy. He's single.

LUKE: (*Changing the subject.*) Christ. We're going to be here for hours. Look at them. They are just standing around.

JEANETTE: Why are you always in such a hurry on the golf course? No one's coming up behind us. It's a beautiful morning. We're together.

LUKE: It would be beautiful if it weren't so damn hot. Besides, somebody is behind us. (*Turning and looking back toward the tee.*) Where is that guy with the hat? He can't still be on the last green.

JEANETTE: (*Looking again in the grapevines.*) I thought I'd be less apt to lose pink balls.

LUKE: (*Turning back to her.*) Who would wear a hat like that? I'm al-

ways amazed that people actually go out and select and pay for things like that hat.

JEANETTE: You really are in a foul mood. Maybe you should give Dr. Raimundo a call later on.

LUKE: I'm amazed that somewhere there's a factory where human beings make a hat like that. Maybe the same place that makes those blue blazers with the phony gold crowns on the breast pockets that you and your colleague wear. I mean, are we supposed to think real estate agents are some sort of medieval guild?

JEANETTE: It's Rex's company. Rex means "king." The crowns make that clear. *(Luke gives the vines a vicious swipe with his five iron.)* You don't like it that you're going back to work in two days, back to school, and I won't be there. You don't like it.

LUKE: *(Looking again in the grapevines.)* That you've sold out?

JEANETTE: That *is* it. You are angry about my new job, after all, aren't you? I haven't sold out anything, you know. I've bought something. Freedom.

LUKE: Pink is as easy to lose as any other color. If you're going to lose your ball, the color isn't going to make a damn bit of difference.

JEANETTE: It won't be so easy from now on, will it? No more late nights at teachers' meetings. No more stopping in the park on the way to school in the morning.

LUKE: You've bought a fucking Oldsmobile. With leather seatcovers.

JEANETTE: Now I can afford a fucking Oldsmobile. With leather seatcovers. And wide seats I didn't hear you complaining about on Tuesday night.

LUKE: And push-button combination locks.

JEANETTE: It won't be so easy any more, will it?

LUKE: What's wrong with regular locks? What's so precious in that fucking car that it needs to be protected by combination locks? Do you really think someone will steal the leather seats?

JEANETTE: I think the locks are there to keep someone from stealing the whole car.

LUKE: Smells like some damn leather store selling mini-skirts at the mall. (*Pointing toward the green.*) What are they doing now? What's that old buzzard doing? He's down on his hands and knees, for Christ's sake.

JEANETTE: He is a man, see?

LUKE: Lost his car keys probably. Or his hearing aid.

JEANETTE: Luke, I think he's sick.

LUKE: He certainly has those old women dancing around. What do you suppose he knows that I don't?

JEANETTE: There's something wrong with him. He's fallen flat on the ground. (*She puts her club in her bag and starts off.*)

LUKE: Where are you going?

JEANETTE: They need help.

LUKE: You're too late. There's a foursome right near them on seventeen. And they have golf carts. One of them's already headed over there. They don't need you. Just stay out of it.

JEANETTE: You're really worried, aren't you? (*Beat.*) You'll never tell Caroline about us. You'd let somebody die before you'd risk anyone seeing us together.

LUKE: I'd help if we had to. Besides, are you going to tell me it wouldn't bother you if George found out about us?

JEANETTE: Not enough to let somebody die.

LUKE: Look, there's the other cart coming to the rescue. Like cars stopping on the freeway after someone's run into an abutment. Besides, those guys look prosperous. One of them's liable to be a doctor. There's probably a lawyer, too. Probably figuring out how to help the old guy sue the golf course for making the greens fast enough to give you a heart attack.

JEANETTE: What's wrong with you, Luke? The man's turning blue, and you're making jokes.

LUKE: *(Continuing.)* Probably a realtor in the foursome, too.

JEANETTE: I'm going up there.

LUKE: What are you going to do? Administer CPR?

JEANETTE: If I have to.

LUKE: Too late. The fellow in the plaid pants knows CPR, too. I told you one of them would be a doctor. And there goes number two golf cart back to the clubhouse to phone for an ambulance. They don't need you. Just stay out of their way. Just stay out of it.

JEANETTE: I'd like to help.

LUKE: That's you. You like to help.

JEANETTE: What does that mean?

LUKE: You like to help so much you've given up teaching kids about how the Constitution works to help young upwardly mobile families find mildly luxurious homes just out of their price range.

JEANETTE: I'll have to remember that. It'll go over big at the office. Rex will like it. *(Pause.)* You know, I really loved teaching. I gave it up because I had to. And you won't give it up, even though you don't like it.

LUKE: You say you had to. But not because you wanted to. You did it because George wanted it.

JEANETTE: That's what he thinks.

LUKE: Because he wants to make sure your kids don't need scholarships or loans or--God forbid--jobs.

JEANETTE: That's what you both think. *(Pause.)* Maybe the kids will learn to look out for themselves. Maybe you all will.

LUKE: Fine. Whatever you say.

JEANETTE: You're angry. I knew you were angry.

LUKE: I'm not angry. It's hot, that's all. It's hot. *(He stops looking for Jeanette's ball and swings the club angrily.)*

JEANETTE: I'm glad I'm not a golf ball. *(She points.)* Look.

LUKE: Jesus. The old sonofabitch is up on his feet.

JEANETTE: Maybe it wasn't a heart attack. Maybe it was just the heat.

LUKE: Maybe the whole bunch of them werre just radio-dispatched to make sure our round of golf was fucked up as much as possible. *(Pause.)* Or maybe the old fart just can't handle three old broads. Christ, now he's got a club out. They're going to keep playing.

JEANETTE: Can anybody handle three women?

LUKE: It's like cats.

JEANETTE: Cats? The musical?

LUKE: Cats the animal. If you have two cats, that's okay. They're company for each other. Three cats, you're on the edge. Four cats, you're certifiably nuts. That's what I told Dr. Raimundo.

JEANETTE: You pay your shrink seventy dollars an hour to talk about cats? No wonder you're not making any progress.

LUKE: I told him two women is like four cats. They make you crazy.

JEANETTE: So I'm like two cats. Very nice. What did he say?

LUKE: He said I was one off. He said three women made you crazy. He said I was just in trouble. Not crazy.

JEANETTE: *(After a long pause.)* Well, you have one and a third cats to go. Or one woman. *(Pause.)* Maybe I've made it easier for you. Is the same thing true for men?

LUKE: What do you mean?

JEANETTE: Maybe I've already made it easy on you.

LUKE: Easy how?

JEANETTE: You think you'd be able to tinker with the possibility of three women? Like teeing off with your five iron?

LUKE: That's not what I said. That's not the point of the story. What do you mean, does the same work for men?

JEANETTE: Nothing. I never have liked cats. *(Pause.)* I like my job. I like my Oldsmobile. I like my leather seats. My combination door locks. My blazer. I like birthday cake and champagne.

LUKE: You like Rex. Rex. And his symbolic crown.

JEANETTE: I'm not interested in symbols. Or cats. *(Changing the subject.)* The emergency's over, I guess. They're off the green. The cart guys are back on their own fairway. Playing cart golf. *(A golf ball lands between them.)* Where did that come from?

LUKE: That sonofabitch with the hat. What else did you expect? *(Calling.)* Hold your God damn horses! *(To Jeanette.)* I guess you'd better go ahead. The old farts are holing out.

JEANETTE: What shall I do now?

LUKE: Hit a provisional ball.

JEANETTE: Provisional?

LUKE: *(Patiently.)* A new one. A replacement for the one you've lost.

JEANETTE: Is that a penalty stroke?

LUKE: You bet. *(Taking a ball from his pocket and tossing it to her.)*
Here. Take one of mine.

JEANETTE: I've got one of my own. They come three to a box, you know.
(She tosses the ball back to him and gets one from her bag. Then she picks up a club, addresses it, and begins her backswing. Luke picks up a pink golf ball from the far end of the grapevines and holds it up.)

LUKE: Wait up. Here's your other one.

JEANETTE: *(She lowers her club.)* Pink Lady Four?

LUKE: Yep. Happy birthday. *(She drops the ball and starts to address it.)* You still get a penalty stroke.

She looks at him as the lights fade.