



## THE DAY WE ALMOST WOKE UP

*by Joseph Newfield*

“Good show!” Edward was grinning as his eyes traced Phillip’s booming shot. It flew in a graceful arc above the sea and landed on the green with a bounce. Surrounded on two sides by a lapping ocean, the green was beautiful, its surface manicured and glistening in the warm sun. The three of us stood across an inlet of water near the tee. It was really quite a nice morning; the ocean breeze waved the rough gently against our feet and I was really quite caught up in it all as I watched Edward steady, arms straight, and then smoothly whip his club. Another splendid shot. I was warm and felt hardly a bit sick — the air was especially nice today.

“Let’s see it now, Harry.” Edward’s voice followed me as I walked to the tee, “Smooth stroke!” I spun my club in a clean cloth as I contemplated the shot.

“Smooth stroke, Henry,” Edward continued, “Right onto the green. That’s it, make sure the club’s clean from the last shot. It’s got to be clean. Otherwise one may get a bit of slippage and then you’ll never steer clear of the water.”

“Right,” Phillip chimed in. “Stroke it, now!”



I straightened my arms and held the club's edge against the ear as they had done, my elbows a bit nervous as I cocked and released a practice stroke. Then I raised the club again and uncoiled it with full force. The sharp edge of the club struck, as it should in all proper shots, just below the ear of the suitor, severing cleanly. I knew immediately though, that mine had been a poor shot — too short — and I watched as the head flew end over end, clumsily splashing into the finger of ocean which separated us from the hole. The suitor's head bobbed for a moment and then sunk.

“Good show, Henry. You'll get it next time.” Edward was wiping blood as he spoke. “To sixteen we go!”

“What do you suppose it is?” I looked to either man for help. “Is my stroke proper?”

They laughed, Well, I wouldn't call it proper. . .” Edward replied. He looked to Phillip who was grinning as he added, “No, not exactly proper. . .”

I wiped my club again, careful not to cut myself on the sharp edge, returned it to the bag, and replaced the cover. Edward, Phillip and I towed our bags across the waving grass and then when we were around the inlet, turned out toward the ocean again. We moved merrily, the bright finger of land extending before us towards the green. A hundred feet below, the ocean rose and fell, not quite cresting. I smiled as I watched the more experienced men reminisce.

“. . . and that frightfully stormy Sunday. It's a wonder any of our shots found their mark.” Phillip spoke



with a faraway look as Edward gazed down to the water and then laughed.

“Yes, yes, yes. I recall. What a shameful waste of suitors. That one of yours wanted so badly to be placed well. Ho! We were sports just in trying, weren't we? But luck wasn't ours that day.”

The breeze was very nice today, and even out on the point I hardly noticed any smell. What a morning, just topping!

Back at the tee workers had already removed our suitors' bodies and were preparing holes for the next group. I enjoyed watching them work. It was like watching a fine machine, a fine, efficient machine. I felt a funny feeling in my stomach. A good feeling, I think. I think it must have been pride.

\* \* \*

Inland, away from our game, the suitor's game was going well. I could tell from the occasional roars of audience applause that floated out to us. That and the wide smiles on the suitor's faces as they were brought out to Course One and buried in preparation for their shot. They looked so funny in the ground! Their beaming faces seemed to be just resting in the tall grass, as if the slightest breezes would topple them.

The suitors' game is a bit different from our own. They used a small white ball and their clubs didn't have a blade, but rather a flat side to them. Otherwise, the game was quite similar, with the men attempting to sink the white all into a tiny cup, as opposed to our larger cup. The suitors played to the best



of their ability and the finest were brought out and made ready for play on Course One. It proceeded quite logically, with the finest suitors matched with the finest of our players. And what players ours were! Despite the suitor's flinches (sometimes even the best suitors flinch, and there's just no reliable way to test for that) and the varying tensions of suitor necks, the veteran players consistently scored well. The thing that has always amazed me is how some of our players can be completely unaffected by the crowd noise from the suitors' game. And the way those same players are never bothered by the smell of the used suitors. Actually, though, I don't suppose either are so much trouble. I think the problem is that I'm not quite used to it at all. The excitement and fun of it all.

\* \* \*

Out on the green we were putting now, Phillip and Edward in the highest of spirits. Edward was especially well outfitted today, from his shiny white vinyl cap to his red argyle sweater to his deep blue slacks and stunning emerald snakeskin cleats. It can be a chore to restrain my envy. The shoes, of course, were not real snakeskin, but were nevertheless quite an impressive imitation. Edward is a vehement conservationist and despises those who fail to see how fragile our world really is. In fact, it seems that lately most everyone at the Club is showing himself to be quite concerned with the state of our environment. I know I certainly am.



Edward's drive had been an accurate one and he needed only to sink a short putt to score an Eagle. Kneeling and squinting, he tried to gauge the grain of the green. His shot was resting with its nose on the grass toward the hole, making it unusually difficult since the nose is probably the most unpredictable aspect of our game.

As Edward moved about, cocking his head and squinting, Phillip echoed my thoughts: "Old Man, that's some shot. You've got to stop choosing those hook-nosed fellows." Phillip chuckled and I chuckled and Edward grinned and at last set the putter. He gave it a sharp tap at an angle away from the cup and lo! That hook-nosed fellow hooked right into the cup.

"Eagle!" Phillip and I shouted. Edward strode to the cup, bent and lifted his shot by the hair.

He held it up above him and looked at it. I looked at the neck, the cords dangling, and at the face, bent halfway between a smile and a grimace. I'm sure it had been a smile back at the tee. I looked at Edward and Phillip and for an instant it seemed nobody was smiling. I suddenly felt tremendously heavy and quite sick and could hardly remain standing. Looking at Edward, it seemed he had barely the strength to hold that hook-nosed fellow aloft. And for that instant, the smell, no the stench, of death was overwhelming, so thick I couldn't breathe. I really could hardly see as Edward, with a horrible grimace, cast that hook-nosed fellow over the cliff; and I looked at Edward's brilliant shoes and they seemed suddenly



quite dull. And Phillip, his eyes burning orange, stretched his mouth open and looked skyward and began to scream. And then he was laughing and I was laughing and we were really quite caught up in it all. Imagine, a putt like that!