

# O N E

“Horovitz, you’re with Kenny.”

Rick Mackenzie thrusts a pin sheet into my outstretched hand. Twenty old Scottish caddies mill about the window of the caddie shack. It seems like a slow day. I nod to Rick, thank him, offer up a sunny smile. I want to make a good first impression, to charm him, and the smile usually works with most people.

Rick does not return my smile. “Get going,” he barks instead.

I get going.

I’m about to do a “shadow round”—the final stage of my official Old Course caddie training program before I can begin earning money. I’ll be following a professional caddie around the Old Course, observing how he operates. Secretly, I’m pretty sure I don’t need this shadow training. I’ve played the Old Course close to 150 times this year. I had the best round of my life (2 under, the only time I’ve ever broken par) on these very eighteen holes back in December. I’ve also caddied summers at Bass Rocks Golf Club since I was twelve. The

way I see it, I'm already qualified. Still, a shadow round is what Rick's requiring, and I tell myself it'll be good to hang with one of the professional caddies, to pick up some tricks. In fact, going in, I have a romanticized view of this relationship; I see us as Caddie and Shadow, teacher and student, father and son even.

I find Kenny by the first tee. He is a Scot with an accent so thick, even other Scottish caddies have difficulty understanding him. He has three friendly American women in his group, all, like me, from New York City, and I happily chat with them while we await our tee time. My caddie mentor, observing this friendly chat, is all smiles, and I feel my caddie career is off to a great start. As we walk onto the first tee, Kenny yanks me aside, motions to his mouth, and whispers fiercely, "Yuh see what ahm pointin' to, Jimmah? Shut it!"

The high point of this shadow round, beyond my raking traps and searching cacti-sharp gorse bushes for lost balls, comes on the fifteenth hole, when I'm told (not asked . . . told) to run to the Eden Clubhouse to grab a bottle of water. Upon my breathless return, the professional caddie takes the bottle, turns to his player (who has, of course, witnessed none of my excursion), and charmingly announces, "Here, Judy. I got you some water." This is not the opening day of my dreams.

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By nine p.m. I'm back in my rented St. Andrews flat, and the memory of the day's caddie humiliation is mercifully fading in the recesses of my mind. From my closet, I pull out a crimson-colored packet that's arrived in St. Andrews. There's a boldfaced message on the front cover: *Welcome (in 3 months!) to the Harvard Class of 2008.*

I open up the packet, revealing twelve pages of advance orientation info. Move-in dates, freshman-year academic requirements, a picture of a dorky kid smiling in pastel green shorts. I really don't need to look at this packet yet—there are still months before freshman registration—but tonight, I pore over everything. I'll be living

in Weld Hall, the welcome sheet says. That sounds nice. It looks like it's in the middle of Harvard Yard. There's also a laundry room in Weld. Sweet.

I count the days till I start. Eighty-three. A part of me wishes it were less. I notice my pin sheet from today lying on the bed and tuck it away in my drawer. I realize I'm actually scared to go back to the shack tomorrow.

My great-grandfather was a junk man. My grandfather was a truck driver until age fifty. My father did all kinds of odd jobs until he was able to earn an adequate living as a playwright. By comparison, I had it pretty easy growing up. I spent my childhood summers in Gloucester, Massachusetts, and from age nine, these summers were mostly spent on a golf course. If I wasn't playing golf, or hitting balls until my glove wore out at the pads, I was probably somewhere sulking and wishing that I were playing. I also watched golf on TV religiously; I could tell you everything about Viagra and Lipitor by age twelve. Occasionally, I had a job teaching golf to little kids in the city of Gloucester golf program (frequently forgetting our age difference and dropping F-bombs in front of seven-year-olds). I also caddied at Bass Rocks. But more than anything else, my summers meant golf.

I guess for me, spending thousands of hours hitting golf balls felt sort of like a job in itself. Because in the way that all twelve-year-old boys are pretty sure they are going to be professional athletes, I was always pretty sure I was going to be a professional golfer. And in the same way that every twelve-year-old boy keeps a running narrative of his personal details for future TV interviews, I secretly stored away my golf eccentricities, secretly waited for when I would tell Bob Costas about how I always used a women's putter (I won it when I was eleven, not noticing the green and purple color scheme). I never told anybody at Bass Rocks how I was secretly filing our private conversations away for future Golf Channel specials—how when I played with Pat O'Donnell and shot 2 under on the front nine, that that was the first time I *knew* I'd be a pro. I never told any-

one these things. But each day I went to work. And each week I had to buy a new golf glove.

Obsessions are funny things. When you're in the midst of them, they don't seem in any way strange. Or perhaps it's when you're young that they don't seem strange. In elementary school, while some kids drew Spider-Man comics in their notebooks, I drew golf holes. In fourth grade, I conducted a putting demo in my class for show-and-tell day. I also dressed up as a golfer for Halloween. Two years in a row. Yeah, I was that cool.

I felt like I had another job, too, aside from golf: school. I was, by light-years, never the smartest kid in class, but I worked hard. At Stuyvesant High School, a public school with an entrance exam taken by twenty-four thousand New York City kids for eight hundred spots, I made the cut by one question. All stereotypes of high school were thrown out the window at Stuyvesant. Stuy's football team had perfect SAT scores. Cheerleaders took eight AP courses. My classmates were seriously interesting, funny, but also shamelessly dorky. Everyone knew everyone else's running grade point average, to the decimal place. The more exciting days of the year were report card days. Our robotics team was nationally ranked. While at Stuyvesant, I would sometimes study five hours a night; there weren't a lot of chances to relax. But I felt like it was my job to get good grades. I felt like in my family, it was a way to distinguish myself, to carve out some kind of niche. Getting into Harvard, a school that my dad and his buddies in Wakefield, Massachusetts, had only seen and heard of from the outside—this made me feel, I dunno, good.

A St. Andrews seagull squawks outside my window, snapping me back to Scottish reality.

I stare outside at Market Street, past the seagulls and down toward the Central, a pub where my friends and I would grab post-round pints during the school year. The sun is sinking lazily behind chimney tops and church steeples, bringing dusk down onto the cobblestone street. I think more about my gap year in St. Andrews, how great it's been. How it's given me a (forced) chance to finally

breathe. To have fun. To live. I'd been hoping that this summer of caddying would be all that, and maybe more. Because at the moment, I see myself not as a St. Andrews caddie, but as an American kid about to start at Harvard. Sure, I know the course, but I feel a lot more like the American golfers teeing it up here than the guys carrying their bags. I'm here because it'll be a cool summer job. A thing I can brag about to my friends. And maybe I'm pathetically leafing through my Harvard information packet in my room right now because I'm sure I don't belong in the caddie world. Because I'm trying to convince myself that there are more important things in my life than the humiliation of this afternoon's shadow round. Because I'm trying to pretend that I don't care. I look down at the dimpled blue folder.

*Ninety-six percent of Harvard seniors find immediate job placement in their field.*

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The old caddie doesn't respond.

I repeat my question. "Is that what he paid you in?"

Again, no response. I'm outside the caddie shack, on the damp concrete path, waiting for another round. The caddie I'm addressing—Neil Gibson, it says on his badge—has been showing another caddie a traveler's check, seemingly made out to him by his golfer. I've walked over to the two Scots, interested and wanting to join in on the conversation. But I'm getting the silent treatment. Both caddies are acting as if I'm literally not there. Other caddies are staring now. This is humiliating. Stunned, I walk back to my bench and sit down. I guess I was somehow out of line.

My first few days here have been a quick introduction to the caddie social structure—which is extremely complex and as firmly in place as the hierarchy of any Mafia "family," the only discernible differences being that Old Course caddies 1) don't tend to speak Italian, and 2) drink a lot more Guinness. At the top of the pecking order