

# BUNKER BABY

by Louis S. Pettey

"How am I supposed to putt what I cannot see?" asked Dr. Logan as he stooped, squinting down the green along the line from his ball marker to the hole.

"It's a six footer for five bucks, Hal. What do you suggest, we mark it and come back tomorrow morning? Quit your whining and putt the ball." his opponent, Fred Bernhard insisted.

Nelson Smith, the caddy for the twosome that evening, a seventy year old black man whose hunched over stance made him appear ten years older, circled behind the doctor, cradling the flagpole in his armpit as he cleaned the ball with a white towel. Handing the clean ball to the doctor, he whispered "Gonna slide just a lil left on ya from here doc, jus baby it one ball off the right edge."

"How can you see that line, Nelly, it's almost pitch dark out here?" Dr. Logan asked, peering down at the ball.

"Doc, you forget that Nelly can't hardly see when it's bright and sunny out anymore, can you Nelly?" Bernhard interjected, alluding to Nelson's advanced cataract condition. "He's often right, just the same."

"Prob'ly stood on this spot five hun'erd times the last forty years, doc, it don't putt no different, night or day, ya know." Nelly explained.

The doctor finally addressed the ball and tapped it to the hole, missing the putt a little to the right. He sighed and walked away, knowing that Nelly would retrieve the errant shot and clean the ball again. The two golfers had taken Nelly as a forecaddie for this abbreviated late summer round of golf. Nelly's job was to drive the cart with the two golf bags, allowing the players to walk. He would drive out ahead of each shot and locate the balls, if they missed the fairway or green, and place a towel or other marker to help each player find his ball for the next shot. Even though his eyesight was poor, he knew the game of golf and the layout of this course so well that he could still do the job. Nelly had anticipated from the time they began this abbreviated round that the June sun

would eventually fade and the men would want to drive the cart and clubs back in the dark from a far corner of the golf course, leaving the half-blind caddy to trudge to the clubhouse alone.

"Well Nelly, if you had read that putt right I would have walked back and you'd be riding, but it looks like you'll have to take the long walk now." the doctor joked as he discreetly palmed the caddy an extra \$40 tip.

"Think ya pushed it jus' a li'l doc, but I gets the blame when it miss and don't get no glory if'n it goes in, ya know." the caddy replied to the delight of Fred, who could be heard still laughing as the men sped away down the cart path.

Nelly began the lonely trek down the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> fairway, following the natural path of the golf course to the 18<sup>th</sup> green, the clubhouse and caddy shack. It was a warm humid summer night, he sweated through the blue cotton caddy's uniform, still carrying the big white towel, now draped over his right shoulder. As he turned with the dogleg of the fairway in the direction of the 15<sup>th</sup> green, he thought he heard the whimper of a wounded animal from the direction of the fairway bunker on the left.

The sand trap at the point of the dogleg of hole #15 was an addition made eight years ago during the 1995 renovation. Golf course architects would call it a "sight bunker" since it was put there mostly to give the golfer a target off the tee. Players referred to it as the "virgin bunker" since a drive so rarely landed there, and the usual second shot would be well past it. Any man who stubbed a second shot into the virgin bunker would be ridiculed for the rest of the day.

As Nelly approached the sand trap, its soft, white sand reflected brilliantly by the moonlight, his failing eyes made out a dark, moving blotch near the center of the trap. He climbed into the large kidney-shaped hole and approached the noisy, wriggling object, becoming suddenly nauseated by the overwhelming odor of blood and other body fluids that hung in the heavy, humid air.

The writhing object was a baby. A newborn. The sand around it was saturated with other fluids that Nelly assumed were part of the birthing process, although in his seventy some years he had never witnessed such a thing. Gnats and mosquitoes swarming in the windless dusk hovered like a storm cloud over the dark patch in the sand. He studied for a while how best to lift the child, deciding finally to use the big

white towel, fouled with dirt from golf balls and clubs, to wrap the baby and extricate her – yes, now he could tell it was a girl - out of the sand and into his shaking arms.

Although Nelly had fathered several children, he had never really experienced this kind of responsibility and he had no idea what to do or how to comfort the now screaming child. Then he remembered that he always carried a couple of water bottles to drink on hot days. Gently placing her on a soft mound of nearby grass, he pulled out the half empty bottle and squirted some of the lukewarm liquid through the sports cap onto the naked infant to clean off the insects and grit. That seemed to help a little, and then he took the unopened bottle and poured a little onto the cleanest part of the towel he could find and offered the soaking towel to the baby's mouth.

*What have I gotten into now*, Nelly thought as the infant sucked the towel, finally quieting down. He looked down at his watch and knew that by this time on a Monday night, the pro shop would be empty and all of the golfers and other caddies would be long gone. With the clubhouse closed on Mondays, he was sure to be quite alone.

Tammy had struggled out of that same sand trap one half hour before Nelly's discovery. Eighteen, blond and pretty, she was quite athletic despite the fact that even when not pregnant she was over 40 pounds overweight. She had worked her way through a path in the bramble to the fence bordering the golf course and then squeezed her large, aching body through a gap in the fence that she had cut the night before. Her parents lived two blocks away, and she walked home trying to stay upright and not draw attention to herself, ignoring the pulsating ache in her midsection.

Because of her weight, no one else had known that Tammy had been pregnant. Even she had disregarded her missing periods for months, attributing the lapse to playing too much field hockey or soccer. For the past 3 months, however, there had been no doubt, and she had eventually purchased a test kit to confirm that she was going to have a baby. She had considered abortion, knowing that 2 of her classmates had gone that route, but realized that her denial of the condition for so long had now placed that option out of reach. She was going to have this baby, and now what should she do. She was not going to tell anyone. She was not going to keep the baby or offer it up for adoption. She had heard on the news of women who had given birth and then abandoned the child. She could do that, and once she was away, she would make an anonymous call to alert the

authorities and they could save her baby. Two weeks ago, when she could tell that her time must be near, Tammy decided that she should have the baby in that bunker.

The previous September, at a party following a football game, she had been introduced to Dwayne Smith, a tackle for their school team. Tammy had seen Smith around the school but it was a large school and she had never met Dwayne before. They had hit it off right away, both were talented athletes with weight problems, and they soon discovered that Dwayne knew Tammy's father. Dwayne had spent the prior summer working as an apprentice caddy at the local country club, under the tutelage of his grandfather Nelly Smith, and had caddied for Tammy's father who was a member at the club. She and Dwayne eventually started dating, a little discreetly, however, because even in the 2000s, interracial dating can be controversial.

One day late in September, Dwayne suggested that they go to the club and he would take her on a tour of the golf course. He still had friends and some privileges at the club based on his summer job. Tammy treated for some sport drinks at the clubhouse and the pair took a cart in the waning light of that fall day traversing the course, trying to avoid a few laggard golfers. As darkness fell Dwayne took her to his favorite spot on the course, a secluded area of overgrowth along the left side of the 15<sup>th</sup> fairway, parked the cart along the tree line and there they kissed and fondled until the cart became too cramped and uncomfortable. Leading Tammy by the hand, Dwayne showed her the big sand trap, its soft sand piled against the side of the hill at an angle that made for a wonderfully cozy place to lie down together. It was there in the virgin trap on that cool September night that Tammy lost her virginity.

Tammy and Dwayne had only a brief romance, and while the experience with him had awakened her sexuality, and there had been several lovemaking experiences with other boys thereafter, when Tammy finally faced the reality of her pregnancy, there was no doubt in her mind of the identity of the father and of the time and place of conception. The birth of this brown baby, the brave girl thought, should be in the same place as that first loving act, the sand trap on #15.

As Nelly had anticipated, the country club was now deserted, and he had no ride home. The golf carts were locked up, there were no phones and he had no key to the caddy shack. This little girl was getting heavy in his arms and he didn't know what to do. Then he remembered that Dr. Logan, the player in his last group of the day, lived about two blocks away. Nelly had gone by the doctor's house to re-grip the doctor's golf clubs a couple of times and he knew the way to the house by heart. He didn't know what kind of doctor Logan was, but he figured a doctor is a doctor and that this man would know a lot more about what to do with this baby than old Nelly Smith would. He just hoped that the child would sleep in his arms for a little two block walk.

Mrs. Logan had never met Nelly before and the sight of this strange old black man at her door at 10 o'clock at night holding a white towel to his chest startled her at first. But when she saw the infant in his arms, it only took her a moment before she called for her husband, leading Nelly and the baby into the foyer. As Nelly related the story of how he came to find the baby, and Dr. Logan began a careful clinical examination, Lori Logan began to smile a mischievous smile.

Lori was a 46 year old woman who was about to become an "empty nester." Her youngest would be going off to college in the fall, and with Hal's medical practice and golf, she wasn't likely to be spending a lot of time with her husband either. She was soon going to miss motherhood, the soccer games and social time with the other mothers. Testing the waters, she had suggested boarding exchange students, contributing to foster care of unwanted children or even adoption. Hal had seemed cool about all of these ideas, but he was devoted to this woman and in the end would do anything she wanted. Lori's smile grew larger as she feasted on the prospect of this beautiful child.

"Where in the hell is the hot water in this house?" Hal barked as he tried to bathe the infant in the kitchen sink, the sight of the gross towel that had cleaned his muddy golf balls too much for his physician's psyche.

"Tammy came home feeling sick, so she said, and she took a very long shower, dear." His wife replied.

Tammy had in fact been feeling very sick, a complication which had derailed her careful plan. She had intended to walk the two blocks to a nearby convenience store after giving birth to phone in the report of the abandoned baby, knowing that her cell phone or the house phone would be easily traced back to her. Succumbing to the unanticipated intensity of her pain, she had gone home instead and taken a long shower to relieve the ache and cleanse her body. Now she lay in bed in tears, her breasts remarkably engorged, her midsection in agony and her mind emotionally distraught, wondering how long her baby could survive alone in that bunker and how she would make her report. The secrecy which was so crucial to the success of her plan was becoming its undoing, as she had no one to confide in to help make the call.

"I know what you are thinking Lori, and the answer is no." Hal Logan told his wife while showing the bashful caddy to the door. "And anyway, the fact that we happened to end up with this baby in our house tonight gives us no extra consideration in an adoption. I'll bet that the real parents show up soon enough, that's what usually happens in these cases."

"Hal—" Lori said, changing the subject. "Did you notice at all a resemblance between this baby and your caddy friend?"

"I don't think he's the father, if that's what you're getting at." He replied. "But I do see something of a resemblance, and it is a little odd. Somehow, this child seems all around familiar, I can't really place it..."

Lori stood silently as her husband tried to tend to the infant, who was more and more lethargic from lack of food. "I wish we had some baby formula." He remarked. "I mentioned a hungry baby when I phoned in the report. I hope those rescue squad guys bring some with them."

As time passed, Lori's silence had its intended effect. It had gained a weight even greater than the increasingly dead weight of this listless child in his arms. Hal finally made a little concession. "Okay, if no parents show up to claim this child I will *consider* that we may care for her for a while as foster parents. But no promises!"

Lori was now elated, and took the child into her arms, marching up the stairs. "Okay little girl, while we wait for the real doctors to get here, let's go up and meet your big sister."

Lori, the infant in her arms and her husband trailing behind, entered Tammy's room without a knock. Tammy, bundled under the covers of the bed, was trying to wipe the tears from her eyes as her mother approached her.

"Look Tammy, I've brought your new little sister in to meet you." As Lori spoke, the child came to life with a bloodcurdling scream, drowning out the sound of the approaching sirens. Seeing the brown baby in her mother's arms, Tammy outstretched hers, and her mother gladly set the crying baby on the bed with her daughter.

Tammy peered at the baby's face, blue with screaming rage, inches from her own nose, and an instinct, stronger than any sense of shame or self-preservation, seized her. Then, to the astonishment of her bewildered parents, Tammy pulled the sheets down away from her heavy breasts and offered to her starving child life's first nourishment.

THE END

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