**The Jollys**

**The Jollys Play Putt-Putt**

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CHAPTER 1

Plan for Fun

Springtime was upon the city of Los Angeles. The weather was beautiful, and there was not a single cloud in the sky. The Jolly family wanted to get outside and play.

“What should we do today?” John asked everyone.

“Maybe we could go bowling?” Grandpa Henry suggested.

“That is an indoor sport, though. We want to be outside!” Tom exclaimed. This was followed by cheers of support from the other children.

“Maybe we could play some soccer?” Tom suggested.

“That is not fair for the rest of us,” Grandma Helen joked and winked at Tom. “You would run circles around your old grandmother.”

“Oh, oh, oh, I know!” John said jokingly. “We could all go and play golf.”

This joke drew groans from the Jolly family until Wendy startled everyone.

“Sure,” Wendy said, shocking the entire Jolly family.

Everyone looked towards Wendy with wide eyes. They had all expected to hear the joke from John and brush it off to continue thinking of new ideas.

“Really?” John asked with thoughts of playing golf with his whole family running through his mind. His face went from excited to hesitant, as he thought of his three small children running around on a golf course with clubs. Wendy laughed as she watched his face change and began to explain her idea.

“There is a new putt-putt golf place that opened just down the road,” Wendy informed everyone. “I think that it would be a great way to spend the day together.”

John’s face filled with relief. Tom and Alan looked at each other. Grandma Helen and Grandpa Henry nodded. Anne looked confused.

“What is putt-putt?” she asked.

“Putt-putt is where you take little swings with a golf club to tap the ball gently into the hole,” Wendy detailed. “They make each of the holes like an obstacle course. There are things that you have to putt around, or through, or under. Does that sound fun to you?”

Anne thought about the idea. It didn’t seem like it would be too hard. The boys wouldn’t be able to outrun her like they did when the family tried to play soccer. She nodded in agreement.

“Okay, let’s do it!” Anne grinned.

“Woohoo!” the boys whooped and hollered.

“This will be a blast,” John joined in.

“I am going to win!” Anne chirped.

Grandma Helen and Grandpa Henry held hands and smiled amicably.

Wendy nodded to herself and shouted, “Everyone pile into the cars. Let’s go play putt-putt golf!”

Shouts and laughs filled the Jolly house as everyone headed out to the cars. Grandma Helen and Grandpa Henry got into their station wagon, and the rest of the Jolly family piled into the van.

“Is everyone buckled up?” Wendy asked.

“Yes, ma’am!” came the chorus of voices from the back seats.

“Then off we go,” Wendy exclaimed as she backed the van out of the driveway and headed to play putt-putt golf.

CHAPTER 2

One Club, Two Club, Red Club, Blue Club

The Jolly family arrived a short time later at the putt-putt golf course. Anne and the boys flew out of the car and ran up to the front desk. By the time they reached it, they were out of breath.

“Hello there!” the assistant said from behind the counter. “What can I do for you?”

“We want to play putt-putt golf,” Anne said between breaths.

“Our mom, dad, and grandparents will be here in a second,” Alan huffed.

Tom didn’t say anything. He was too busy staring at the rainbow of colored golf clubs that were behind the desk. The assistant looked at him for a moment, then looked back to see what Tom was staring at.

“What is your favorite color?” he asked.

“I have a lot of favorite colors,” Tom said, mesmerized. There were so many colors that Tom did not know if he could name them all. He also didn’t know if he could pick just one. John, Wendy, Grandma Helen, and Grandpa Henry walked up and were amazed at the range of colored clubs available to rent.

“It is like an entire rainbow,” Grandma Helen marveled.

“Do you have a regular putter?” John asked.

“We do not have regular putters here, sir. We like to think of putt-putt as a less-than-serious kind of game. Golf can be so serious, and we like to hear the sounds of laughing, rather than shouting,” the assistant informed him. “I think that you would do great with a pink putter,” he continued.

Everyone laughed at that except John. John had become a serious golfer from playing with his boss Mr.Grandbucks. He played to win every time that he had a chance to play. This was his opportunity to show his family how good he was at the game.

“I’ll take a blue one,” John grumbled.

“An excellent choice!” the assistant said and handed him a blue club and a blue golf ball. “Here you go. What can I get for the lovely young lady?” he gestured at Grandma Helen.

“Oh, this one is a charmer,” Grandma Helen blushed. “I’ll take that pink one that you offered my son earlier.”

“Here you go, ma’am,” the assistant handed her the pink club. “Which color would you like to play with today, sir?” he said, looking at Grandpa Henry.

“I’ll take orange,” Grandpa Henry said gruffly.

The rest of the Jolly family chose their clubs one by one until it came to Tom’s turn. Tom couldn’t choose. There were so many colorful options that he felt a little overwhelmed. He stood frozen in front of the counter. The assistant eyed him for a moment and then made him a deal.

“I’ll tell you what. How about we make a special deal, just for you,” he began. “You can play the first nine holes with one color, and then come back to me, and I will let you trade it for a second color. How does that sound?”

Tom’s eyes sparkled. Getting to choose two colors made things much easier.

“I’ll take the red one to start,” Tom crowed.

“An excellent choice, young man,” the assistant replied and handed him a red club and ball. “Now, the rules are simple,” he continued. “You count how many times you hit the ball to get it into the hole. After all eighteen holes, you count up the total number of hits it took you. Whoever has the least amount of hits, wins the game!”

Everyone nodded to show that they understood the rules. John rolled his eyes a little bit. This caught the attention of the attendant.

“One last thing, everyone. Remember that the goal is to have fun and enjoy time with each other. Don’t take this too seriously!”

Everyone except John shouted, “Alright!” and headed towards the first hole. John lifted one eyebrow and followed the rest of his family to the beginning of the course. I am going to show everyone how good I am at golf. Today is my big day, he thought to himself.

CHAPTER 3

The First Nine

The Jolly family played through half of the course, and almost everyone had a grand time. The only person who was not having as much fun as the rest of the group was John. He didn’t know how it was happening, but he was losing! He was in second place. Somehow, through a series of lucky shots, Anne had the fewest strokes out of the group. He was losing at golf to a five-year-old!

Grandpa Henry and John were left scratching their heads as she sank the putt on the ninth hole in two strokes less than anyone else.

“Maybe she was born to be a golfer,” Grandpa Henry said to John.

“I can’t believe this,” John muttered under his breath. This had been his chance to impress his family. He practiced golf all the time.

After Alan and Grandma Helen finally finished the last hole, everyone added up their total strokes. Anne had a total of twenty-seven strokes - three strokes less than John. Alan and Grandma Helen laughed heartily as they announced that they had both reached over one hundred. John needed a small break to focus on the game. He walked over to Tom to see if he still wanted to exchange his club for another color.

“Hey Tom, do you want to take the assistant’s special deal that he offered you?” John asked.

“I sure do, Dad!” Tom replied and began to sprint off towards the rental shack.

“Wait for me!” John huffed and jogged to catch up to his son.

When they arrived at the rental desk, a different assistant was there. Tom looked around, but there was no one else to be seen. He shrugged and approached the counter.

“Hello! I would like to change my club color now,” Tom said cheerily.

“You can’t do that,” the new clerk said dryly. “We don’t allow exchanges. Go and finish your course.”

Tom’s eyes filled with tears. The way that the new assistant had dismissed him had hurt his feelings. Dismayed and too embarrassed to argue his case, Tom turned around, shoulders sagging, and started walking back to the group. John walked up to Tom and put his hand under his chin. He lifted his son’s face to his and looked into his eyes.

“I’ll take care of this,” he promised.

John solemnly walked up to the front desk. The clerk looked up at him and then back at Tom. “Can I help you?” he mumbled.

“Yes, you can,” John began. “The previous assistant was fantastic and rather than trying to rush my son along to pick a color, said that he could come back and exchange it after the first nine holes. I would like you to honor what he said.”

The clerk looked at John. He could tell that John was telling the truth. He looked over at Tom again and saw his teary eyes. He frowned and then looked back at John.

“Okay, I can do that,” he said.

Tom brought up his red club and ball. He placed them on the counter and started to look at all the colors again.

“Which color would you like this time?” the assistant asked and offered a smile as an apology.

“I would like to have the green one, please,” Tom replied.

The assistant exchanged the club and ball for Tom and said, “Enjoy the back nine!”

Tom smiled and walked with John back to the rest of the Jolly family.

CHAPTER 4

The Clown on the 18th

When Tom and John returned to the family, everyone was laughing and having a good time. Before they were within earshot of the rest of the group, Tom grabbed his father’s hand and looked up at him.

“Thanks, Dad. You are my hero,” Tom said in admiration.

John didn’t know what to say. He smiled broadly and gave his son a big hug. Tom returned the hug with equal enthusiasm. When they separated, the rest of the Jolly family was watching them. John noticed and looked again at his son. Tom was staring back up at him. His face still showed the signs that he had cried. John knew that Tom would not want the others to know that he had cried, so he stepped in front of him and addressed the family.

“Is everyone having a good time?” he yelled.

“Yeah!” Everyone shouted in return.

“Then let’s start the back nine!”

Everyone cheered and hurried off to the second half of the putt-putt course. Tom tugged at his father’s shirt.

"Thanks for that, Dad."

“You’re welcome, Tom,” John said, and then the two ran to catch up with everyone else.

An hour later, the putt-putt game was drawing to an end. Grandma Helen and Alan were well over two hundred strokes behind everyone else, and John and Anne were tied at fifty-four strokes each. The two leaders eyed each other up and down before they started the last hole. The competition had been fierce, and both of them wanted to win.

The eighteenth hole of the putt-putt course was guarded by a giant clown. To get to the hole, one had to putt through the opening and closing mouth of the laughing clown. After you passed the first obstacle, you had to putt through a twisting green, and then into the hole. John putted first. He tapped the ball lightly, and it glided effortlessly through the first obstacle. Anne’s ball followed the same path. They were still tied. The second shot brought both of their balls through the maze and next to the hole. Both balls were within one foot of the final hole. John stepped up to his ball, prepared to sink the shot, and be the winner. He looked over at Anne, who was watching him with undivided attention. John looked back at the ball and knew what he had to do.

John slowly drew the club back a few inches and then tapped the ball. It started rolling, but it missed the hole. Everyone gasped. Anne stepped up to her own ball, looked at her father, and grinned sheepishly. She drew her club back and tapped the ball. It went straight into the hole. Everyone broke out in cheers and gathered around Anne. They lifted her up into the air and chanted her name.

While everyone was around Anne, Wendy walked up to John and held his hand.

“You did that on purpose,” Wendy said wryly.

“There are things in life that are more important than winning,” John replied, and the two watched their family celebrating and having a great time together.