

# MURDER ON THE GOLF COURSE

A spine-chilling tale of foul play on the fairways

## PART 1

Alice Higgins was one of those annoying lady golfers who take a half swing off the tee, neither hook nor slice, hit the ball 150 yards in a straight line, never lose the ball, never hit bunkers and invariably bogey the hole except for the occasional times they make par. She was cheerful, helpful, never ventured to give her partners golfing tips or advice and was convinced she was terrible at the game and would never be able to play it properly.

If she had a fault at all it was her tendency to make pleasant little jokes as she proceeded serenely around the green and pleasant fairways of Assbury Hole Golf and Country Club. She was, as we mentioned, infuriating.

Her conviction as to her inability to play the game properly was bolstered and reinforced on a daily basis by her husband, Mr Henry Higgins.

Higgins could hit the ball 280 yards with his 'Massive Monster' graphite-shafted titanium-headed space-age driver, a fact which he repeated loudly and often to all and sundry at his golf club, to colleagues at the office and in the pub, casual acquaintances, strangers on public transport who had the misfortune to sit within several yards of him, and to anyone else within earshot

What he did not tell them was that the magic 280 had been achieved once only, with the aid of an astonishing bounce from a rock at the edge of the fairway.

Neither did he mention that although he was capable of sometimes hitting his ball to a reasonable length it was rare that this coincided with his striking it in the right direction. He could slice his drive 240 yards into the rough, hook it 250 yards onto the adjacent fairway, smite it mightily, gloriously in a straight line in the wrong direction, never to see it again. Some golfers are prone to hit left, some slice right, others line up wrongly; very novices are known to stand back, swing at speeds known only to captains of spacecraft, and knock their ball fourteen yards, ending up some distance behind the ladies' tee.

Higgins was multi-talented. He could do them all.

His definition of a practice swing was a wild flail at the ball on the tee which propelled it to the edge of the tee-box. Had he known the famous Mr Mulligan they would undoubtedly have become firm friends.

Occasionally, when his overly strong grip coincided neatly with his slice swing, and when, by some strange coincidence he happened, at the same time, by accident to be pointing in the right direction, his drive would disappear in a straight line down the fairway, and Higgins would casually pick up his tee and saunter off after his ball confident that only he and Arnold Palmer had ever really mastered the game of golf.

Once away from the tee Higgins enjoyed an unprecedented amount of good fortune. Balls hit into the rough re-appeared miraculously in perfect lies; trees removed themselves from his line of sight; sand shots sailed magnificently from deep bunkers almost as if propelled by hand; balls which all his partners were convinced had sailed into water hazards turned out to have held up on the very lip.

Higgins, secure in the knowledge of his golfing prowess also thought it only fair that he should assist his fellow players, those less skilful than himself with a few rudimentary tips on the basics of the game.

“Grip!!” he would growl as they took back their woods on par fives.

“Alignment,” he would sigh as his partners stood poised on the tee.

“Just thought I’d mention, old man,” he would say kindly, to a golfer of twenty years experience and a handicap of three, “that you’re pointing straight into those trees over there.”

“I was actually trying to hit a draw,” would come the reply through clenched teeth.

“Oh, I see, a draw,” Higgins would say knowingly, hiding a smile.

He was especially scathing of the advantages given to the fairer sex. “Can’t see the point of playing the game off the red tees,” he would grumble. “Only club you need’s your putter.”

Henry Higgins was convinced that his liberally massaged round of 101 was of far greater value in pure golfing terms than his wife’s stodgy, boring 89. He was in short a perfectly normal club golfer with every reason to hate the woman he had had the misfortune to marry.

As nature celebrated the end of the cold days of winter Henry Higgins ploughed and scattered up and down the greens and fairways. As spring sprung birds singing in the trees became accustomed to seeing Henry Higgins stomping among those same trees looking for his tee shot. Lambs gambolling in the fields kept a wary eye out for an

enraged golfer hacking among them with a seven iron. As the days became summer, Higgins perspired and cursed and removed large portions of turf from the environs and surroundings of his golf club. The only reason that any grass at all was left on the fairways was that he so rarely managed to hit them. The days became hot. Higgins became hotter. Through the long summer evenings he lined up and swung, peered and swore, searched and cursed, as his wife proceeded serenely from tee to fairway, from fairway to green, convinced the while that her own golf was of a very poor standard whereas only evil forces and sheer bad luck kept her husband from assuming his rightful place among the giants of golfing legend.

Autumn arrived, season of mellow fruitfulness and hooks and slices and lost balls and huge divots and golf clubs tossed angrily into the nearest clump of trees. Winter followed when, mercifully, little play was possible and all that was to be done was to sit in the Club bar telling of heroic drives, courageous long irons and superbly read putts.

Until eventually the green and pleasant hills of Assbury Hole Golf and Country Club lay beneath a sprinkling of the first snows of winter.