

Putt-Putt

A comedy

JEFF.....Male, 20s, exuberant

BRIAN.....Male, 30s

DEBRA.....Female, 30s

DEXTER.....Male, 40s+

Setting: Office of an advertising agency. Three desks and chairs.

Synopsis: A new development idea, a Biblical/Christian-themed putt-putt course, causes problems for the members of an R&D division.

George Sapio
PO Box 403
Spencer, NY 14883
(607) 351-3765
sapio@gsapio.com

BRIAN enters, followed by DEBRA. They are both in a state of shock. BRIAN turns to DEBRA, opens his mouth, then gives up in hopelessness. He crosses to his chair and sits and stares into space. DEBRA crosses, sits also, equally without words. She lifts her head to speak; BRIAN turns to her, then they just give up. JEFF enters energetically.

JEFF

Wow! What a reaction! Did you see their faces? They were stunned! I mean I didn't think it would go over that well. Hey, look at you guys—stunned! I knew when I thought of this I was on to something. I mean is this gonna fly or is it gonna fly?

[JEFF makes an airplane sound, very enthusiastic. He continues to do so, moving around the office, his arms spread out like wings. DEBRA stands, grabs his tie.]

DEBRA

If you don't shut up I'm going to tear your face off.

JEFF

What? *(Beat)* Oh, I get it. You're jealous!

DEBRA

Jealous?

JEFF

I don't believe it! I thought we shared everything here. A success for one of us is a success for all of us! I included you guys in the presentation—you heard me. I wasn't going to hog the glory.

DEBRA

“Glory.”

JEFF

Yeah! Come on, guys. One for all, all for one?

BRIAN

Great. So it'll only take one of us to pick up all three unemployment checks.

JEFF

What?

DEBRA

What possessed you?

JEFF

I don't know! Something...unbelievable. I was up all night trying to think of something really...dynamic...bold...blockbusting! And then it hit me. It was like...it was like...ummm, can you let go of my tie?

DEBRA

No. I'm still going to strangle you

[BRIAN stands, crosses to DEBRA, with some effort removes her hand from JEFF's tie.]

JEFF

What? I don't get it.

[BRIAN starts to explain, then gives up and exits.]

JEFF

Oh, come on! Didn't you see their faces? They couldn't believe it!

[BRIAN returns with a box. He starts clearing out his desk]

DEBRA

Brian? What are you doing?

[BRIAN continues to load items into the box, one by one.]

JEFF

What?

DEBRA

If he says "What" again...

BRIAN

I won't stand in the way.

JEFF

Wait a minute, you two...you're not serious??

DEBRA

You tripped.

BRIAN

And fell over the chair.

DEBRA

Got tangled up in the lamp cord.

BRIAN

Panicked.

DEBRA

Strangled yourself. Shame.

[DEXTER enters]

DEXTER

[to JEFF] Are you suffering from some kind of disorder?

JEFF

What?

[DEBRA lunges at JEFF, but DEXTER steps in front of her, confronting JEFF]

DEXTER

Are you insane?

JEFF

I'm getting the idea you don't like my pitch. None of you.

[DEXTER's cell phone rings]

DEXTER

Yes. Yes. No, I'm... Absolutely. *[Hangs up]* Save me a box. *[Exits]*

JEFF

Can someone explain this to me?

DEBRA

Does the phrase "lynch mob" mean anything to you?

JEFF

"Lynch mob"?

DEBRA

"Drawn and quartered"?

JEFF

What?

[BRIAN stands, pulls out a coin, flips it. He crosses, grabs JEFF's tie and begins to strangle him]

BRIAN

"Bible Heaven Mini-Golf?" That's your brilliant idea?

DEBRA

"Mini-Putt for the Maxi-Faithful"?

BRIAN

"Eighteen holes of good ol' down home religion"?

DEBRA

"Sink one for the Big Guy?"

[DEXTER enters]

[to DEXTER] Get in line.

[DEXTER pulls BRIAN away from JEFF]

DEXTER

They liked it.

[Silence]

DEBRA

Oh, crap.

BRIAN

They liked it? How? Why?

DEXTER

They're in the conference room gushing so much it's unbelievable. Ferguson, the vee pee from Development, is seeing stars. He's talking about nationwide expansion, but nothing north of Tennessee. Wilkinson from corporate in Detroit keeps mumbling something about a key to the executive comfort chamber. They want a full workup by Tuesday. Eighteen diagrams, all planned out. Water traps, hills, hazards, the whole bit.

JEFF

But I've got that! I've got it all! I've got water holes, obstructions, mazes, chutes, everything! *[To BRIAN]* You ripped my tie.

DEXTER

They seem to think it's the biggest thing since doggie aspirin.

JEFF

Aha!

DEXTER

Stroke of genius, one of them said.

JEFF

Stroke? See? They have it! They have the mindset! The subliminal aspects are already working!

DEBRA

And they want us to work it up.

DEXTER

It came from this department. They think it's a group effort. Isn't it?

[Simultaneous]

BRIAN/DEBRA/JEFF

No!/NO!/YES!

JEFF

Look, guys, this is hot. They want it. They waaannt it...

DEXTER

You guys better get working on it.

DEBRA

Where are you going?

DEXTER

I think it's time for a vacation.

[DEXTER exits]

JEFF

Oh, boy! I can't believe it! We're gonna kill 'em. Let's get working. Now I'm thinking 18 holes, nine each side, we can split it between the old and new testaments...

[BRIAN crosses to his desk and resumes filling his box]

JEFF

What are you doing? They're not going to fire you!

BRIAN

I'm quitting.

DEBRA

What?

JEFF

You can't quit!

BRIAN

Watch me.

JEFF

If you quit, they'll probably fire you.

DEBRA

Brian...

BRIAN

Look, this is wrong.

DEBRA

Let's talk about it, okay?

BRIAN

Are you saying you agree with this?

JEFF

Sure she is! She—

[DEBRA reaches out and grabs JEFF's tie.]

DEBRA

[to BRIAN] We should talk this over. You can't just walk out.

BRIAN

I can't go through with this. It's wrong.

DEBRA

I agree, but...it's our job...and I can't...

BRIAN

I know. It's okay. You have, well...a family.

DEBRA

I have six dogs and an incontinent ferret. Brian, you can't leave me here. With him.

JEFF

That's right. You can't leave. We need you!

BRIAN

I have done some dumb things in this job. I designed a campaign for puppy thongs. I collaborated on a nationwide push for broccoli-flavored jell-o. But here I draw the line. I will not now, not ever, work on an ad campaign that features the slogan, "Stroke your putts for Jesus"!

[BRIAN frees JEFF from DEBRA again]

DEBRA

Brian, I know. I do. But please think about it. I mean don't think about it. Who will care?

BRIAN

Weren't you listening in there? He wants to replace the windmill obstacle with a revolving Christ on the cross!

JEFF

Yeah, and if you hit the cross as it revolves, the eyes light up and a deep voice booms, "You're damned!"

BRIAN

Debra, do you really think this is a good idea?

DEBRA

Hell, no. But that's not what I get paid for. Wow, Brian. Nine years of working with you, and I never knew you were religious.

BRIAN

Who said I was religious?

DEBRA

I thought... Then what are you bitching about?

[BRIAN digs out his wallet, pulls out a small certificate.]

DEBRA

National Putt-Putt Champion?

JEFF

What?

BRIAN

Nine times. Three years in a row.

DEBRA

You're the national putt-putt champion?

BRIAN

I've been playing since I was able to walk.

JEFF

Oh, wow.

[BRIAN pulls out a photo]

BRIAN

That's me with my first putter. I was Idaho's youngest putt-putt professional. I have nine golden balls. That's a world record. I took the Masters at the Hawaiian Rumble Golf Course with a perfect 18. Which isn't easy to do with the course volcano going off every 10 minutes. When that goes off, the ground *shakes*.

DEBRA

I think reality just bent.

JEFF

I'm in the presence of greatness! Wow! You must be a putt-putt god!

BRIAN

[Flattered] Hardly a... I still compete, you know.

JEFF

No kidding!

BRIAN

Yep.

JEFF

I love putt-putt. My parents used to take me all the time. I haven't played in years, though.

BRIAN

It's really good for hand-eye coordination. Builds good concentration. Strengthens character. When I was young and just learning I caddied for some of the greats. They taught me everything I know.

DEBRA

Why didn't you ever tell me about this?

BRIAN

Well, I used to mention it to people, but I would get all of these weird responses. People would either look at me kinda strange, some giggled, others shunned me completely. I had to move twice.

JEFF

That's so sad.

BRIAN

But I never gave it up.

JEFF

Good for you!

BRIAN

When you find something you love, something that fills your soul, you have to stick with it. Through thick and thin. No matter what.

JEFF

Or else what are you?

BRIAN

You're nothing, that's what. Well, I better get packing.

DEBRA

Wait a minute! We've worked together nine years and you never once told me about being the god of putt-putt!

BRIAN

I know. I'm sorry.

DEBRA

Sorry? I thought we were friends! I thought we trusted each other.

BRIAN

I wasn't sure you would understand.

DEBRA

About PUTT-PUTT?!

BRIAN

Actually the term is "alternative golf." "Putt-Putt" applies only to non-professional courses. Besides, there are a lot of people who find it easy to ridicule.

DEBRA

I would never ridicule you.

BRIAN

I didn't want to take that chance. I...didn't want you to...think...

DEBRA

Never, Brian...never.

BRIAN

I've learned to be cautious. I'm going to finish packing up.

[DEXTER enters]

DEBRA

I thought you were off to Disneyland.

DEXTER

[Ignores her] Rockaway Beach. 1983.

[BRIAN freezes.]

DEXTER

I knew it. As soon as you left the conference room, the veep from Pittsburgh sent out a research memo to R&D. Looking for, among other things, celebrities willing to endorse the project. And you know what they found? They found you. Brian Sanderson, three-time world champion and the youngest person ever to beat The Iron Horse.

JEFF

The Iron Horse?

BRIAN

It's the hardest alternative golf hole in the world. Some say it was designed by the devil himself. Nine levels of ramps, a dozen chutes, four rotating obstacles and a little traveling choo-choo with an empty coal car that you have to hit just right or...

DEXTER

Only two people have ever done it. And you were not even out of knee pants. You are our mascot. We are going to turn the putt-putt world on its ear!

JEFF

No you're not. He's quitting.

DEXTER

Quitting? You're not quitting.

BRIAN

I am.

DEXTER

You quit and you're fired!

BRIAN

I'm sorry. I can't do this. The sport means too much to me.

DEBRA

Then you should quit.

JEFF/DEXTER

WHAT?

DEXTER

[to DEBRA] You're fired, too!

JEFF

Does that mean I'm head of the department?

DEXTER

Look, we need to think about this. You can't quit. We need you. Both of you.

BRIAN

Look, Dexter...

DEXTER

You can't leave me here with him!!

DEBRA

Cut it out! Look, the two of you...please leave. Let me talk to Brian.

BRIAN

Debra...my mind is made up...

DEBRA

Go! Shoo!

JEFF

Ahh, the subtle female touch—

[DEXTER grabs JEFF's tie and hauls him offstage]

DEBRA

Brian.

BRIAN

I'm sorry.

DEBRA

So am I. I could have left a couple of times, I had a couple of really good offers...but I didn't. I wanted to stay with you. I even...named my ferret Brian.

BRIAN

The incontinent one?

DEBRA

He wasn't...then...

BRIAN

I wish I'd known...about the ferret, I mean...but this is something I have to stand by...

DEBRA

I understand. But you're not thinking about this the right way.

BRIAN

What do you mean?

DEBRA

This campaign could be huge, Brian.

BRIAN

I know. It will be.

DEBRA

And you won't be in it at all. Do you think they'll include you, even as the god of putt--...alternative golf after you quit?

BRIAN

I expect not.

DEBRA

And you'll be watching it from the outside. Watching your sport gain recognition, shaking off the putt-putt onus...and who will they get to be the spokesman? It won't be you.

BRIAN

No. It'll be "Hook" Harrison. From Toledo. He's a...a...a... ohmygod... he licks his putter after every hole in one!

DEBRA

That's right. It will be "Hook" Harrison. Not Brian Sanderson...the one person perfectly poised to take alternative golf from pathetic obscurity to the national spotlight. Not Brian Sanderson, who could have made sure the ad campaign was true to the natural integrity of his beloved legendary sport steeped in honorable tradition.

BRIAN

I didn't think [about that]

DEBRA

Instead this campaign's visible face will be Hook Harrison, a putter-licker from Toledo. Not the proper god of alternative golf, nine-time national champion Brian Sanderson, who missed his chance to have served as the only true spokesperson for...Sacred Holes Putt-Putt Paradise.

BRIAN

Did you really name the ferret after me?

DEBRA

I did. Before he developed his bladder problem. I love you, Brian.

BRIAN

I love you, Debra.

DEBRA

Shall we go make a putt-putt heaven?

BRIAN

You're right. Let's do it! [*As they exit*] Y'know...I actually liked the idea where a hole in one makes the whale puke up a dancing Jonah...

