

## The Club

(A Short Story by T. U.-P.)

On the 10<sup>th</sup> hole of Gwenlyn Valley Golf Club, two men march with their golf bags after teeing off. As they walk along the long, narrow fairway toward their shots, they casually talk business. One player then heads over to the rough left of the fairway while the other puts his bag down and waits since his ball has travelled closer to the hole.

“I’m a bit worried about our pitch to Deer Creek Point First Nation. I don’t think they’re going to be on board with our plans to re-designate land for the Shadaskoma Cottagers’ Club.” One of the men says as his buddy prepares to settle over the ball and take his second shot. A few moments after, a 5 iron is used to clear the water hazard onto an area just short of the green.

“We’re going to have to sell the deal with some type of ecological story... We can say that we’re trying to protect the area as a biosphere reserve...”

“They’re going to be annoyed that the land they’ve fished on for centuries or more will be appropriated by a small group of cottagers who have barely been in the Bay for fifty years.” The other man says as his golf shot clears the water and right side bunker to land about twenty feet from the hole on the elevated domed green.

Soon, the two men walk toward the small brown bridge to get to the other side of the water hazard. As they cross the bridge together, a pileated woodpecker calls in the woods nearby with loud doleful repeated high-pitched notes.

The next day, members of Deer Creek Point First Nation all gather by a woodland road leading to the marina, beating their drums around a fire pit. One indigenous woman in tears holds up a placard with a long feather drawn onto it that reads: “Give us back Heather! She is our blood!”

Soon, a small SUV arrives on the scene with a family of four cottagers from the Bay area. As they approach the fire pit and indigenous protestors from the First Nation reserve, the man behind the wheel slows to a halt.

“What’s goin’ on here again! They’re always complainin’ about somethin’!” The man says to the rest of his family.

“Honey... Let’s be civil about this and not cause a scene here again!” The woman in the passenger side says to her husband.

“Who is Heather anyways?” One of the boys in the back seat asks his parents.

“She is the girl from the reserve that was found dead about a week ago. Lots of violence occurs in their community you know son...” The father replies.

“Why are they so angry at us? We’re just trying to get to our cottage for the long weekend?” The other boy in the back seat asks.

“They can be a very angry people. It’s best to just keep your distance at times and stay separate. We’ll just be with our group of fellow cottager friends and they can keep with the folks from their Indian reserve.” The mother says.

After being halted temporarily by a group beating their drums and holding a small smudge bowl, the man accepts a small flyer from an indigenous elder through his car window and speeds off toward the marina.

A week later, a group of ten cottagers go for a hike on Stolen Island. As they pull up their outboards onto the shore, one of them takes a laminated sign out of the small compartment of the green boat along with nails and a hammer. After finding a large enough tree at the edge of the forest path, he nails the sign to the tree which reads: “Shadaskoma Cottagers’ Club-No Trespassing”. The group then heads past the newly fixed sign and onto the now private trails.

“That’s ‘The Cedars’ over there to the South. All hell broke loose earlier this month when that girl was found dead there.” A man says to the other hikers heading further away from the granite boulder beach.

“Looks a bit like a painting by that architect... What was his name again?”

“Oh, you mean the guy who died about two years ago and donated all of his money to the Skelter Bay Land Trust?”

“Yeah, it was James Hunterton... He was the older man who had that show of all of the oil paintings. They say he named that island ‘The Cedars’.”

Soon the group continues their jaunt through the woods, following makeshift rock piles to guide them on their course.

The following weekend, the same two golfers finish a round of golf together and head into change rooms at Gwenlyn Valley. As they take their golf spikes off, they start to converse again.

“We got our signage out there and we’ve got some hundred cottagers on board. Stolen Island has just been added to the Club.”

“Bummer we couldn’t add ‘The Cedars’ to Shadaskoma land. Too many indigenous folks are in those waters now after little Heather was found.”

“Have you looked into that painting for me? I want it auctioned off with no traces on the web or anything. I’m fed up that the name ‘The Cedars’ is now being used by investigators as well...”

“We sent someone over there the other day with the case pending in the Shaskokas. Our man who came by boat with a chainsaw had to flee when aboriginal thugs showed up.”

“What was the stunt with the chainsaw anyways?”

“We wanted to change the island’s profile before the case hits the court system in full swing. From a distance, it still has that recognizable silhouette with its signature stand of tall cedar trees.”

“I think it was a big mistake to hide her there... It was too shallow a pit with all of this granite bedrock.”

“That wasn’t even the issue... We should have made this land deal go through first. Then Deer Creek would have had to stay out.”

After continuing to converse about the latest, the two men hit the showers prior to having a fancy late lunch in the country club.

The following day, an auction goes on for some of the possessions of the late Bay area cottager James Hunterton. Soon, his painting ‘The Cedars’ hits the auction block. With the auction was about to begin, Bay area police search Stolen Island, which is now designated as Shadaskoma Club land and find an important document for the case of Heather Smallfeather. Putting the document into a large re-sealable bag with a set of gloves, a female officer heads back to the Bay Authority boat and speeds off to the marina.

Back at the marina a few hours later, a man is escorted in handcuffs to a stationed police van. As his head and body is pushed downward to fit in the rear area of the van, two officers walk just behind him, one carrying his large set of golf clubs and bag and the other carrying an individual iron with its head covered by a plastic evidence bag.

“We found this 6 iron checking out a particular ground anomaly on Stolen Island.” One officer says to another two, waiting in the driver’s seat of the police van.

“We’re going to see if this club belonged to the suspect at any point.” His partner says, still holding the golf bag.

“What we do expect to see is that the club was actually involved in Heather Smallfeather’s murder.”

Soon the makeshift police base at the marina begins to clear out as afternoon turns to evening. As the police convoy leaves the marina, their vehicles pass the same fire pit by Deer Creek Point First Nation. One lone elder along the same woodland road stands close to the fire pit which is emanating a faint trail of cedar wood smoke. Eyeing the police cars, trailers and vans, he holds up a sign that says: “Stay out of our waters and our lands”.

-The End-