

What a prostitute does when you're 13

When I was just a dumb kid our gang liked mini-golf, but it was more than that, really. We went to a place my friend Bill called Slut Putt where it was rumored we could get help with more than our putting. (I didn't know kids could get lessons, either, but then mine was an entitled generation and I wasn't much surprised by it at the time.) Up and down dangerous curves, tapping over astro-turfed winding dens and rushy glens and finally through a working windmill that swallowed our balls whole - well that was the happy mini-golf ending on the front nine, anyway. There's so much of this I had to unwrap in later life, that I had to live down, really. But we were thirteen and who cares, right?



That mini-golf course on St. Andrews Road made it feel all the more illicit given the un-saintly acts rumored to go on out in the back parking lot, where David said "you can pay *a little extra* to get a used but guaranteed hole-in-one." Of course I'd never done anything like that before and was scared when he asked me to go over there that night and give it a try. We never had much money in those days but we'd devised a racket out at the country club, starting up at Weed Hill Driving Range where the Koosa family fixed clubs and rented golf balls for practice shots into the fields rolling up on Lake Murray Dam. There weren't a lot of jobs for 13-year olds in those days, of course, so we'd go off into the woods and liberate golf balls sliced and shanked next to Highway 6, carrying them in coffee cans across the road where the Club House was. We tried selling these crap balls five for a dollar and the old doffers complained about the quality and wouldn't pay. But the golf course is the place to find all the doctors and lawyers at the same place, and some would find sympathy in our cause.

We honed our sales skills that summer, waiting for the old hackers making the turn at the clubhouse, two sheets to the wind and stepping onto the 10th tee only to discover they'd lost three sleeves of Ultras on the front nine and were light in the pockets.

"The only reason I play golf is to get back at my wife for bad sex she said we have together," I remember one talking. "She thinks I'm having fun playing golf and it turns out sex with her and golf are the only two things in life that are fun even though I'm really bad at them."

He bought two cans.



When we arrived to Slut Putt that night there was a lot of bravado shared between us during the long bike ride on our Huffies. We acted as if Spector Vision on our fathers' bedroom TVs had made us experts on the nuances of pleasing women and we bragged wildly about what we'd do.

We skipped the mini-golf course on the road's frontage and parked our bikes against a red brick wall where a single streetlight flickered rose hues across the asphalt. David stepped around the corner to where a fat woman with curly red hair stood smoking a Pall-Mall. She looked inquisitively at us.

"Have you got any big women with no teeth and a bottom like a vandalized bus seat?"

"Where the hell did you get that from, David?"

"Shut up Richard."

"Stop using names..."

The plumb old woman behind the counter guffawed and looked at us with sympathy.

"You boys are really kinky," she said finally.

"Not really," I replied. "My friend here is looking for his mom."

"Shut your pie-hole," David snapped. Nothing sacred between us, he gave me a hard punch on my forehead.

"Stop it, both of you!" the ginger-headed madam told us. "You two give me your money now and walk over there to where that red van is. Knock on the teardrop window and wait your turns." She seemed angry. "She'll do the two of you at once. Take it or leave it."

We walked over to the bus and knocked on the window dutifully. A time went by that seemed forever when the door finally opened up and a man with a cowboy hat stepped out and looked at us and smiled with his teeth the size of dominoes.

Inside, a song I had never heard played, maybe from Dance Fever or something. The whole thing was tacky and creepy but we were over our heads by now and we stayed. The woman called us to sit on the vinyl wraparound seats. A lava lamp clumped on one side of its red light came and it was the first time I had ever smelled Spanish Fly. We did what she said and waited some more while she rummaged for something in the front seat. She returned, finally, with a stack of Hustler magazines and set them down.

"Take it or leave it," she said gruffly and stepped outside the conversion van. The door swung closed and snapped back open ajar and we watched the prostitute move away from us. She wore dark sweatpants that hugged her hips because of her full figure. She'd not made much of an effort in appearance and had a tight-fitting Foreigner tee on and long dark hair pulled into two pony tails.

"She's over there smoking?" I offered glumly.

"That's how it goes." David smirked back.

We stayed looking for a while, a little disappointed in the world's oldest business but also a little relieved.