



Chapter 2: The Guest Player

Many years later, Peter eased his new BMW M3 out of his personal parking spot that read “Peter Davis - Vice President of Sales,” a title he loved. He had fought tooth and nail to get it, bled for it, and still had plans to go higher. He had once shared his business philosophy with his wife and it was simple: “I want all my toys and everybody else’s toys as well.”

Peter worked for Drexochem, the third largest pharmaceutical company in the world. Their company motto was “to heal and cure the world’s diseases.” In the sales department, however, the motto was a little different: “We will not rest until the whole world is using our drugs.” Peter often dreamt of what his bonus would be if they could get seven billion people

using Drexochem drugs. That thought would always make him smile and exhale slowly as he added up the zeros. His wife had once asked what the difference was between him and a drug dealer. He laughingly replied, “The government helps me sell drugs but arrests the dealer.”

Once in the car, Peter gunned it out of the parking lot, listening appreciatively to the 444 hp V6 roar through the custom M3 exhaust as some would listen to and enjoy classical music. It was a beautiful Friday afternoon and life was truly good. Peter’s sales team had worked hard to achieve their monthly targets and make their bonuses. They had overpromised on what they could deliver and some of the drugs were controversial, but that didn’t concern Peter or his team. He wanted to win all the business he could and that meant doing whatever it took to make the sale. They would deal with the fallout when they could not deliver on their sales promises.

Speaking of winning, Peter was off to the Drexochem Country Club to play golf. (Drexochem had bought a major share in the club at Peter’s recommendation.) Since it had a higher than normal percentage of

doctors as members, golf was not a hobby for Peter; it was an obsession. His wife described it as “the other women in their marriage.” As much as he tried to get her to play, she flat out refused, reasoning that one golf-obsessed person in the house was enough.

Peter was the reigning club champion for two years running, but of course, that was not enough for him. This year’s tournament was two weeks away and he was desperate to win, which would make him the first person in the club’s history to achieve a “three-peat” as members were referring to it at the club. The win would make him the “Big Dog” and would hopefully lead to becoming Club Captain—another title he coveted. In his case, it wasn’t only the title but also how the title would open doors and help him network and schmooze with company execs on the work front. That would be a double win and Peter was all about winning not just some things but everything.

Peter had it all planned out. His handicap was plus four, best in the club. He was playing well, and knew he was head-and-shoulders above the next best player in the club because he had played him often enough.

He had even beaten Brad, the club pro, for the first time the previous week. This was another notch on his belt because the pro had been a PGA tour player for four seasons, only to stop when his wife gave birth to their first child, a girl with a congenital heart problem. From what Peter heard, her care took all the money they had. To Peter, Brad seemed like a broken man. He'd gone from the tour to an ordinary life and seemed grateful for the regular pay check the club provided. While Peter understood Brad's reasons for leaving the tour, deep down he considered him a loser.

Peter's goal today was off to get in a quick nine holes, playing from the championship tees of course. He knew he needed to practice from those tees to set him up for the upcoming championship tournament. After Peter eased the M3 into the club's parking lot, He confidently strode towards the club house and changing rooms. Just as he was about to go in, Brad called out to him, saying, "Peter, can you do me a huge favour?" Brad did not wait for a response because Peter was not in the habit of doing favours unless there was something in it for him. Brad continued, "I've got a really good player and I just gave him a lesson. He

wants to play the course but since he's never played here before, he thought it would be good for him to have a partner. Would you play with him?"

There was more silence from Peter, and Brad added, "You never know. He could teach you a thing or two," appealing to Peter's pride that told him few people had anything to teach him. "Oh and Peter, I think this guys a high roller. He had some serious money in his wallet. Said he's a cash-only kind of guy. I know how you like a gamble, so you can probably win a few bucks." Brad was pushing all Peter's buttons and knew money was the biggest one. The last one got the response Brad was hoping for.

"Okay, Brad, what the heck." A little fresh meat for the champ to chew up will make for a fun afternoon, he thought. "I would love to play your guy. Hope you warned him that he's about to become a sacrificial lamb."

Brad smiled and shook his head. "He'll find out in due time. Thanks! I'll go tell him to be on the first tee in 15 minutes. His name's Ben, by the way, CEO of some international company, I think. You're kind of

guy.” Deep down, Brad was thinking, I hope this guy Ben is as good as I think he is. It would be so good to see Peter get thrashed for a change.

Peter went into the clubhouse to change. As he did, he thought about what Brad had said that Ben was “my kind of guy.” Peter had come a long way from being the son of a small-town plumber and provided quite a contrast to his father, a plumber who worked hard, valued God, and always put his family first—but didn’t have much to show for it. He had constantly talked about God’s purpose for Peter’s life, much to Peter’s annoyance. On the other hand, Peter loved his wife but they both knew the sacrifices needed to have the lifestyle they were enjoying, so business success was first and foremost—which meant lots of company-sponsored evening dinners, golf outings, and travel. There was no time for church, for Sundays were often golf days and time to rest from a hectic weekday schedule.

Despite Peter’s approach to life, his dad had quietly resolved not to give up on his son coming back to church and to his senses, for Robert saw Peter become more and more consumed with work,

success, and things—and told him so on several occasions. This annoyed Peter, for he saw it as his dad being “religious.” The only interest that they seemed to share any more was golf, and they loved to play the local municipal golf course, although it was getting more and more difficult for Peter to find the time.

Truth be told, his dad was a good player who, on more than one occasion, had scores well below the par for the course. Peter smiled as he remembered one of those below-par rounds during one of their regular friendly Saturday morning games when he was a boy. His dad had broken the course record with a 62 on the tricky par 71 layout and was quite underwhelmed about it. Peter would have been bragging and showing off but not his dad. His only comment was “It was a good game, Son.”

Peter felt he was way beyond the municipal course, even though it held fond memories of growing up and the summer when the visiting Scottish pro had profoundly impacted Peter and his dad. Right now, Peter had more important things to think about, that being the visitor who was about to get a lesson in how to play the Drexochem course.

Peter approached the first tee and gave Ben the once over. Average, he thought, average height, average build, in fact everything about him is average, even his clothes. There were no logos on his clothing, even though his clothing looked very good quality. Peter remembered his dad again, because quality and not branding was his thing to. In sharp contrast, Peter was 6 feet 1 inches tall, wore Hugo Boss golf attire, and had been told he was pretty good looking by the ladies in his sales team.

“Hello,” said Peter.

“Hello there” replied Ben.

Peter at once noticed Ben’s eyes. He couldn’t find the word to describe them. For a moment, Ben’s gaze made him feel out of kilter. Then it came to him, Ben’s eyes are deep, like the eyes of someone who has seen it all before—and I feel like I have met him someplace before. Yet instead of being cynical, Ben’s friendly attitude suggested he still cared after all he had been through and seen. Wow, thought Peter, he would make a great salesman.

Ben put his hand out. “Nice to meet you Peter. I’ve heard good things about you from Brad,” he added with a wink. “I’m in town for a while and love the game. Brad gave me a lesson and then was kind enough to lend me his clubs. I used to play a bit but work got in the way. As a CEO of a company that operates worldwide, I don’t feel good taking the afternoon off to play golf while my team is hard at it.”

Peter wasn’t phased. His introductory remarks simply confirmed to Peter that Ben was a loser. If you’re the CEO, you can take all the time you want and need. You’re the boss.

“Anyway,” Ben continued, “I used to be pretty good, but I’m a bit rusty now.”

“You said Brad lent you his clubs? Nice of him,” replied Peter. Peter knew that Brad, like most good golfers, did not like others playing with his clubs. Peter thought, He must be going soft.

“What’s your handicap” Ben?” Peter inquired.

“Plus four,” said Ben.

“Same as me,” said Peter, trying not to sound surprised at the realisation that they were the same handicap. “Okay, so we can play off scratch. In fact, why don’t we have a little side bet on the game, say \$100 dollars a hole, or is that a bit steep for you?” Peter was in full alpha-male, competitive mode.

“Fine, but if you’d prefer, I can go a \$1,000 a hole,” Ben suggested.

What the hell? thought Peter. Maintaining his poker face, he asked himself, Is this guy hustling me or just trying to get into my head? “Heck, why not? My wife could do with some new outfits,” said Peter, smiling his nicest smile. At that, the men shook hands again and the game was on.