

INTRODUCTION OF THE GOLFLINS

This is an account of a strange event in my life. If you are like me, we've seen a lot of strange things happen on the golf course; things that defy the laws of nature. Because of them, and this event, I have become a believer.

The story begins one gloomy morning in the northeast region of North America . . . slightly south of the Great Lakes.

My life had become a nightmare, and I needed something to clear my mind. Knocking the golf ball around early in the morning has always been a perfect way to enjoy nature and take in some fresh air.

So the night before, I set my alarm for 4:30 a.m. If you can be on the first tee at first light, you can usually get about two holes ahead of the morning greens crew. In the morning, after stumbling out of bed in the dark and quickly dressing, I threw my clubs into the trunk and drove to the golf course. No other cars were in the parking area so I pulled up close to the first tee. I was driving my small two-seater sportscar, so I had to swing my legs out to put on my golf shoes. Then, I retrieved my golf bag from the trunk and set it on the ground.

What happened next is an incredible experience that may change the way you look at the game of golf. As I knelt down to retrieve some balls and tees from my bag, I saw something moving under the car. My first thought was that it was a chipmunk or a field mouse. I looked under the car, but it was still too dark to see very well. I thought I saw a small furry creature standing on two legs waving to me just inside the rear tire! At first, I squinted my eyes straining to see. Then, I stood up and looked around to get a reality check touching my face and my car to make sure I wasn't hallucinating. I got down on my hands and knees, and looked under the car. I remember lowering my head and very distinctly thinking, "Please don't let anything be there. Whatever it is, it ran off; you just imagined the waving."

When I looked under the car, it was still there and I strained to see what it was without getting any closer. This time, I was sure it was waving to me. Then it stopped, took several steps toward me, and waved again. I jumped up, walked several feet from the car and slapped myself very

hard. I looked around to see if anyone was watching me. Thank God I was alone!

The sky was just beginning to brighten with morning light. When I looked back at the car, the tiny creature was standing under the bumper in clear view. I rubbed my eyes and it waved again. Feeling foolish, I waved back. It motioned me to come closer. At a moment like this, anyone would begin to panic. If this thing had not been under my car, I would have jumped in it and left. Feeling trapped, I cautiously stepped closer. I was standing about ten feet away from a small chipmunk-like creature. Suddenly, it turned toward my car, jumped up on the back trunk, and turned back to me. If this creature could jump 4 feet straight up, it could jump on me from 10 feet. I began to slowly step backwards.

The next event was even more bizarre. A voice said, Don't be afraid, NOMAN. I will not hurt you. The name NOMAN was a secret pseudonym I used. Not even my wife was privy to this name. Resisting the urge to respond to a strange creature the size of a golf ball, I whispered, "Are you talking to me?" It looked around and said "Do you see anyone else? Of course I'm talking to you." "Wonderful", I thought. "I've started a conversation with a smartass chipmunk." It seemed only natural to ask another question. "Excuse me, but why am I having a conversation with a chipmunk who is standing on the trunk of my car?" He said, First and foremost, I am not a chipmunk and I resent being called one. My name is Irgo and, I have been chosen to introduce the Golflins to the golfing world." My next question was, "What is a golflin and why did you choose me?" Irgo's response was quite sarcastic. He said, "We were looking for a gullible dope and your name came to the top of the list." I said, "Look, I don't know who or what you are, but I'm not going to stand here and have a conversation with you. This must be just a bad dream.

With that, Irgo leaped off the car and landed on my shirt just about belly high! "How's this for a bad dream?", he said. I jumped back, but he was firmly attached to my shirt. I tried to brush him off and he stuck to my hand. After shaking my hand violently, I realized he was not coming loose. I raised my hand and said, "You're scaring the heck out of me." He grinned and said, "Just calm down - I have a story to tell you, things to show you, and tricks that will entertain you. When I am finished, you can tell all your friends. Now you just sit down on that bench and I will tell who I am and why I'm here."

At this point, I thought, "OK, this thing is stuck to me. He is obviously not going to go away, so I might as well do as he sez." So I sat down. Irgo was now standing in my hand. I calmed down enough so that I could look more closely at this creature. My first observation was that he didn't seem to have any weight. He was about 3 inches tall, furry, wearing a cute little vest and golf pants. The strangest thing was that he seemed to be transparent.

Then, Irgo jumped off my hand and stood on my knee. He looked up at me and began his story.....

THE STORY OF THE GOLFLINS

(Narrator: Irgo)

As I told you, my name is Irgo. I am one of many and we were created by Mother Nature. When humans started playing golf, they began to interact with the elements of nature, Mother Nature saw a great opportunity to test human nature and mold characters.

Earth is the great testing ground of the human spirit, you know?

The Golflins' evolution was similar to humans, but our energy level is not as intense or as dense as yours. Our original purpose was to react to the attitudes of golfers in ways that would build their characters.

As time went on, some of my brethren became misguided in their interactions. They began to delight in their ability to alter the outcomes of your golf shots. This really got out of hand and Mother Nature decided it was time for humans to be aware that we exist. When we misdirect our energy, Mother Nature cannot reverse it or redirect it. Some humans have been so frustrated by our antics, they have walked off courses, thrown clubs in the lake and even given up the game - never realizing that what happened was totally out of their control!

How does knowing that we exist help? Well, let me tell you. The game of Golf, in its purest form, is one of the best tools for character building on Earth. It is a game where only you have control over the ball and you alone are responsible for the end result.

Unless, of course, a Golflin interferes with it.

OK - enough of the philosophy lesson. Sometimes I get carried away. You are probably wondering why I look like this. Our Creator thought that since we would be out in nature, we should blend into the environment. Who are we? We are cousins to the elves, fairies and leprechauns that permeate your writings. Since this is our coming out, we have chosen the name Golflins for our clan. There are some of us on every course in the world. Each course has a Head Golflin called the Courselin. I, Irgo, serve as Courselin here on this course. There are many of us around each course and I will introduce them later to explain their various duties. They are called Teelins, Fairlins, Treelins, Hazlins, Bunklins, and Greenlins. Our names describe where we hang out.

We have developed some unique characteristics that allow us to manipulate a golf ball anyway we wish. As I said, we exist in a physical state just outside human vision. Since we do not operate on the same resistance level as humans, we travel extremely fast. We can communicate with other golflins within a mile radius to let them know the state of mind of every golfer on the course. When you become angry, we let everyone know that you are primed for further aggravation. We can be helpful or we can aggravate you. A lot depends on you. We are here to use the game to test your character; that testing can go either way. If we help you, we expect you will remain humble and appreciate your good fortune. However, if you become too boastful, look out - it will only be a matter of time before we knock you down a notch.

The same testing is done when we manipulate your ball in ways that seem totally unfair. This is the true test of your character and the one we use most. We all know trials and tribulations work the best when it comes to refining human character. Why don't we step out onto the course and play some holes? I'll show you how we work; I know you came to play. So let's have some fun!

THE LESSONS BEGIN

The Tee:

When I stood up, Irgo jumped into my shirt pocket. As we approached the tee, Irgo bellowed out, "Lazer!" With that, another little character

appeared sitting atop the ball washer. Irigo said, "Norm, this is Lazer, the Teelin; he is assigned to the first tee here at your home course." This guy looked slightly different than Irigo. He had long legs, toes and fingers, a barrel chest and a mischievous grin.

Irigo suggested I wash my ball before playing. As I approached the ball washer, Lazer clung to the side. When finished, I extracted the ball from the washer. Lazer jumped onto my hand, kicked the ball out of it, and laughed as it hit the ground and rolled around in the dirt. "Well, what do you think of that?", asked Irigo. "I feel pretty stupid. All these years I got mad at myself for dropping the ball." "Exactly!", said Irigo, "now why don't you tee up your ball?"

I picked up my ball, pulled a tee from my pocket and strode up to the tee. I bent over, pushed the tee into the ground and carefully placed the ball upon it. I stood up, took my stance, and started to address the ball. Lazer jumped off the ball washer, scurried across the ground to the ball and pushed it off the tee. I looked down at him and he smiled. I looked at the ball, looked at Lazer and smiled. I bent over and re-teed my ball. Lazer ran over and pushed the ball off the tee again. I pointed my finger at him and said "If you do that again, I will step on you." I re-teed the ball. With that, Lazer gave me a devilish grin, ran over and kicked the back of my driver which hit the ball and caused it to fall off the tee.

At that point, my brain stopped functioning and I went into a rage. I picked up the head of my driver and started slamming it into the ground trying to flatten this little piece of fur. Each time I hit the ground, he would jump just out of the way. Then, I hit him squarely. He was under my driver, and I had smashed him. Fear came over me. I looked at Irigo; he just shook his head. I looked back at my driver. All of a sudden, Lazer popped right through the driver, stood up and gave me a big grin. At first, I was relieved; then the anger returned as I realized this little guy was making a fool out of me.

With that episode out of the way, Irigo barked, "Lazer, show him what you do best!" Lazer jumped onto the ball and clutched it with his fingers and toes. Irigo then said, "Norm, try driving right down the middle. We know you can." I stepped up to the ball, addressed it, and put a nice relaxed swing on it. The ball took off high and straight. As the ball reached its highest point, Lazer put out his right hand, and the ball veered right. It ended up so far right that I knew I couldn't have sliced it that bad. As I

bent down to pick up my tee, there was Lazer leaning against the tee smiling. "Nice job, you little creep.", I said. He started clapping and said "Nice drive, Fatso." Irgo piped in loudly, "Calm down, boys. This is supposed to be a lesson - not a war."

I was beginning to see how ornery these little golflins could be. Irgo now suggested I drive another ball without the help of Mr. Lazer. I did so and my ball landed in the fairway some 230+ yards out. As we walked out to my ball, he asked me what I thought. I told him that the whole matter was extremely disturbing. Irgo then explained that Lazer, like most golflins, could be just as much a help as a deterrent. It all depends on the person. If a person approaches the game with the right attitude, treats other golfers with respect, takes care of the course, and adheres to the rules of golf, the golflins will become a friend rather than an adversary.

The Fairway:

As we approached my ball, Irgo called out "Ork!" and another little character appeared - sitting on my ball. This little fellow looked different than Irgo or Lazer. He looked like a ferret in clothes. Norm, this is Ork, the Fairlin." Ork stood up on my ball and bowed graciously. I returned the gesture with a salute. Irgo said, "Ork, show Norm what you like to do." Ork jumped off my ball and started pushing it directly for a huge divot left by some inconsiderate golfer. "Hey, don't do that.", I said, just as my ball rolled over the edge and down into the middle of the divot. Ork wasn't done. He jumped in and pushed my ball back edge of the divot. He turned, looked at me, and got this big sheepish grin on his face. "Well, how about them apples?" asked Irgo. For years I thought I was just unlucky when my ball rolled into a divot.

Maybe I need to rethink this whole luck, thing. "Pray tell, what other fiendish actions are in a Fairlins repertoire?" I asked. Irgo replied, "Well, they love to push your ball into the edge of the rough or into a fairway bunker. Another favorite is to stop your ball just on the outer edge of the trap where you have no stance at the ball. I personally like their ability to ride your ball into the green making it stall just enough to land in a greenside bunker or keep flying right over the green. That always gets a bewildered look from the golfers; they can't believe they hit it so far."

The Trees:

Lets move on, I've got more surprises for you. Why don't you remove your ball from the divot, and hit it over by those trees, next to the fairway?" I didn't question his motive; I just aimed for the trees and let it fly. My ball started into a large group of trees; any hope of ever seeing it again was very slim. As the ball entered the trees, you could hear it banging into tree after tree. All of a sudden, it came flying out into the middle of the fairway. Irigo said "Throw another ball down and try that again. You must have been very lucky on that shot." I threw a second ball down, and hit it like the first one. Again it looked like a hopelessly lost ball. You could hear the ball bounce off one tree after another. This time it sounded like the ball was going deeper and deeper. Then it came flying out into the middle of the fairway. "Man, you sure are lucky; would you like want to try another ball?" Irigo asked. No, what's your point?, I asked. Irigo pointed in the direction of the trees and called out., Hey, Vek! I could barely make out a tiny figure moving down the side of one of the trees and waving vigorously. Irigo said, C'mon Norm, let's go over and meet Vek, the Treelin.

As we came closer, I could see that he looked like a squirrel. Irigo said, Vek, this is Norm. Vek was perched on a low thin branch. He look directly at me and said, Hi, Norm . Then he fell off the branch backwards. As he tumbled to the ground, his arms shot back up to the branch like they were made of rubber. He grabbed the branch with his hands and shot back up on it as if he were on a bungee cord. When his body reached the branch, he swung around it three or four times, let go and landed feet first facing away from me. Then he turned slowly toward me and bowed graciously. Out of amazement, I started clapping. Irigo said, Sorry Norm, but Vek thinks he's an Olympic Gymnast. I'm impressed, but what's with those rubbery arms? I asked. Irigo said, Vek, show Norm what you can do with your arms. Vek extended his arm all the way out into the fairway, grabbed my ball, and pulled it back

to him. His arm looked like frog's tongue going after a bug. Irgo said, Vek, show Norm your favorite trick. With that, Vek extended his arm to the ground, neatly placing the ball up against the trunk of the tree. I had no shot. Wow, I always thought the golfing gods were mad at me when that happened. I said. Irgo replied, Sorry Norm, GOD has more important things to do than mess with your golf ball - just Golflins here, buddy. Now you get the drift of how the treelins can mess up your game. Let's move on.

The Hazard:

We proceeded back onto the fairway. Vek replaced my ball on the fairway so I could hit it towards the green. Fifty yards in front of the green was a small creek running from one side of the fairway to the other. As my ball approached the creek, Irgo yelled out, Enu! . A small blur flashed up and out of the creek, grabbed my ball and pulled it straight down - plunk! What was that? I asked. That was Enu, the Hazlin. He takes great delight in sending a ball to a watery grave, said Irgo. He is probably the most devious of the golflins. I think it's because he spends so much time in the water. He thinks everything should be in there with him. As we walked up to the creek's edge, Irgo said, Enu, come on out and meet Norm. Give him his ball back. Enu came up to the water's edge pushing my ball with his nose, and nudged it out onto dry land. He gave me a big grin and said, Howdy in a very deep voice. I wasn't sure whether he said Reebee or Howdy. Irgo began telling me about Enu's favorite tricks while Enu sat there with a mischievous smirk on his face. Enu loves to pull your ball into his hazard and place it just far enough from dry land that you can't reach it with a club or ball retriever. He also likes to grab your ball when it's close to his hazard, and drag it in. Enu gruffly piped up, What! Don't you want to tell Norm about how I help balls skip across lakes? Bounce balls off rocks in my creek? No, everything you talk about, Irgo, is negative. Sometimes, I think you don't like my looks. Irgo leaned out of my pocket and said, Enu, why don't you go sniff swamp gas? Hey, boys! Be nice! You're sounding like some humans I know. , I shouted. Irgo leaned back into my pocket and said quietly, He's always like that; no matter what I say it's never right. Hazlins are just a bunch of bullies; let's move on. Move your ball back into the fairway and hit it over to the green.

The Bunker:

Just in front of the green was a huge bunker. As I hit my ball, Irigo yelled out Ula! . This unnerved me enough that I half hit the ball. It landed over the trap and came to rest inches from the bunker s edge.

A small creature scurried out of the bunker, ran up to the ball and start rolling it back in. Hey! What the heck is that? I asked. Irigo said, That s Ula, the Bunklin. Huba! Huba! . What s the attraction? I asked. Irigo swooned, I dont t know whether its her long eyelashes, or her beautiful fur - but, Oh! Baby, Irigo s in love. Wait till you see her up close.

Sounds like a personal thing, Irigo, but I would like to meet her. I said. As we neared the bunker, Irigo started squirming. I could now see the Bunklin. She was definitely cute. A sweet voice wafted across the sand, Hello, Irigo. Irigo swallowed as he shyly responded, Hello, Ula. I could feel Irigo shaking in my pocket. Ula s sweet voice responded, Irigo, why dont t you come down in the sand and we can show your friend what I do best. I thought I felt my shirt pocket getting wet and warm. When I put my hand up to my pocket, sure enough it was wet. Irigo, I think you should get out of my pocket, you ve been there too long. Irigo sheepishly whispered, Please, Norm, dont t make me get out of your pocket. I think I just wet my pants, and I m really embarrassed. OK! Let me see if I can cover for you, but you re gonna owe me.

Ula, Irigo promised to introduce me to the Golflin Clan, and I need to leave soon. So Irigo has to continue the tour as quickly as possible. Ula looked up at me, batted her long eyelashes, and gave Irigo a sultry look. Irigo slid down into my pocket like a melting candy bar. Ula scurried over to my ball, pushed it up against the lip and started throwing sand on top of it. When she was finished, she said, Have you ever seen a lie like that? How about this one? She dug my ball out and moved it into the heel part of a footprint. Actually, Ula, I ve not only seen those lies, but they seem to be the ones with which I am most familiar. Do you think all the golflins enjoy testing my character? Ula said Norm, I can tell you this. You are the kind of person who can take a joke. I ve seen you come by here many times. As a matter of fact, you ve been in my bunker many times. I can honestly say I love watching you when I ve given you a tough lie. I remember a few years ago when you hit your ball about a foot from

the bunker. I pushed it right to the lip of the bunker so you would not have a stance. You strolled up and with all the confidence in the world, took a very awkward stance, lost your balance and fell into the trap. Unbeknownst to you, I ran over and added insult to injury by pushing the ball from its perch into the trap. The ball rolled down the slope and struck your club. Your opponent walked up to the trap's edge, looked in, started laughing and said, That will be a two stroke penalty for grounding your club in a hazard, and another two strokes when the ball hit your equipment. You looked up, laughed at him, picked up your ball, and threw it onto the green in the direction of the flag. The ball rolled across the green, hit the flag and dropped in the hole. Your opponent said, You can't do that! And you said, Kiss my behind; show me the rule. What you didn't know was that you had help from Mery, the Greenlin, when your ball came scooting across the green. Oh!, and who is Mery the Greenlin? , I said.

The Greenlin:

Irgo said, You know, Norm, I'm glad you asked. With that, Irgo called to Ula, Ula, would you please throw Norm's ball out of the trap and onto the green? As my ball rolled across the green, it appeared to be curving uphill. As it approached the hole, the ball passed by very close on the left, and made a very mysterious swerve behind the cup. It caught the lip, made a 360-swing around the hole, and fell in. Hm, Irgo, did I just see that ball roll uphill or were my eyes playing tricks on me?

Irgo replied, Norm, I just spent 15 minutes introducing you to all my relatives, and showing you some of our secrets. Now, you don't think that we would play games with your ball on the green, do you? You know, Irgo, I was starting to like you, but I'm not sure if I can trust you when you make a statement like that. Irgo replied, Oh, come on now, Norm, why would I play with your head? Do you think I'm trying to build your character? OK! Go over and get your ball out of the hole and place it about 5 feet from the hole. Straight in, no break. Then try to putt it into the hole. I did as I was told. On the first attempt, the ball rolled straight

into the cup. Irigo suggested that I try several more times. On the second attempt, the ball veered left of the hole by several inches. On the third attempt, the ball veered right of the hole by several inches. The fourth attempt appeared to be going straight in, but somehow managed to stop on the lip as if it had brakes.

OK, Irigo, I give up; what's going on? Irigo said in a faint whisper, MERY, come on out. All of a sudden, I heard my ball fall into the cup. I looked down and saw my ball rolling back up the side of the cup and perching itself once again on the edge of the hole. Then a cute little golflin, who looked like a raccoon, peered around the side of my ball, batted her eyelashes and said, Hi. Irigo said, Norm, this is Mery, the Greenlin. She is responsible for more missed putts than anyone cares to remember. Her favorite trick is to help your ball curve around the hole, leaving you on one side and your ball on the other. Another of her favorite tricks is when she grabs your ball as it is speeding across the top of the hole with no hope of going in and all of a sudden, she pulls it in. Ever wondered about that, Norm?

THE LAST LESSON

So what do you think so far? , Irigo asked. Well, I guess it answers a lot of my questions about things that happen on the golf course. I won't be getting as mad as I used to, that's for sure. Irigo then said, Why don't you step over to the next tee and let us show you what we can do when we know you need to have a good day.

The second hole at my course features a medium range par 3, trees in back of the green, and a dry creek in front. I selected my favorite club for this hole, a six iron. I stepped up to the tee, set the ball down and took my stance. As I addressed the ball, it rocked slightly as if something had climbed onto it. I made a healthy pass, sending the ball directly at the flag. The ball started to dive short of the green even though I knew I had struck it solidly. It fell short of the green and into the creek. As my heart sank with disgust, my ball came flying back out of the creek as if it had landed on a rock. My hopes elevated and then quickly sank as the ball hurtled over the green and into the woods. All I could think was, How is this going to make me have a good day?

No sooner than that, my ball came flying out of the woods, back onto the green and headed for a front bunker. As my ball passed the flag, it began

to make a sweeping U-turn. I watched in utter amazement as the ball rolled closer and closer to the cup. As it took what appeared to be its last slow revolution, it fell into the cup for a hole-in-one. I was beside myself. I jumped up and down. I couldn't believe what had happened. Irigo, Irigo, did you see that? There was silence. I looked down into my pocket. It was empty. I looked all around the tee . nothing! Irigo, where are you? Did you see my hole-in-one? Again silence prevailed.

All of a sudden, I became very sad and depressed. Without even getting the ball from the hole, I picked up my bag and started walking back to the car. What just happened? I looked at my watch; time had passed. The greens mowers were heading out to the first hole. Every thing seemed to be the same, but I didn't feel the same. I squinted, trying to see the golflins, but to no avail. Was I nuts? Should I tell anyone about this? I got to the car, put my clubs away, and took one last look under the car. As I drove off, all I could think was, Golflins - are they real or not?