

THE
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IAN C. SIMPSON

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*In memory of David F. Simpson WS
1919–1994*

*'The British Amateur
– The Most Important Tournament of My Life'
Bobby Jones, Golf is My Game*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

As with *Sons of the Fathers* I have tried to weave a wholly fictitious murder mystery into an authentic account of a highly significant golf tournament. Almost all the people I have brought into the story are creatures of my imagination except the Jones party and the first six competitors, Jones' actual opponents, named in the list of characters at the start of the book. Any resemblance the rest may have to persons living or dead is coincidental.

I said almost. Jimmy Alexander was the Old Course starter for some decades. A.B. Paterson was a stalwart of St Andrews theatricals for many years, notable for his work in the famous Byre Theatre, which he founded in 1933. Norman Boase is also mentioned. He was in fact the provost of St Andrews in 1930. As Hector remarks, he would never have allowed the situation I describe to come about. It was necessary for the purposes of the plot to terminate his period of office early and promote an inadequate, and fictitious, replacement. Lastly, MacGregor Mitchell KC was the unofficial leader of the Scottish criminal bar at the time. He was also my great-uncle; I was privileged to wear his horsehair wig throughout my own professional career. I hope my literary nepotism will be forgiven.

When writing about real people I have tried to have them act in character. In the case of Jones I have used quotes from my sources. His victory speech was quoted verbatim in the next weekday's newspaper. I have taken some liberty with O.B. Keeler and Sidney Roper. The latter, an unsung competitor who came close to making Jones fall at the first fence in his epic endeavour, seemed to make a promising man of mystery. About

the former, Jones wrote: 'Whatever the mood, Keeler was the ideal companion. He had read almost everything and remembered most of it; he could, and frequently did, recite verse for hours ... he was an acutely sensitive, instinctively gallant and wholly unselfish friend whose loyalty and devotion could never once be questioned.' It was not fanciful of me to ascribe to him an intimate knowledge of *Macbeth*.

I have relied on archive material from *The Scotsman*; also *Golf is my Game*, Bobby Jones; *The Bobby Jones Story*, O.B. Keeler; *St Andrews, Home of Golf* and *About St Andrews – and About*, both by James K. Robertson.

Thanks go to Steve Caron and all at DB Publishing. With any factual errors, the buck stops with me.

Ian C. Simpson

List of characters you will meet and those associated with them:

The Drummond household:

Sheriff Hector Drummond
Lavender Drummond, his wife
Jake Drummond, his stepson
Marie and Charlotte Drummond, his daughters
Mrs Alves, their housekeeper

The Jones party:

Bobby Jones
Mary Jones, his wife
O.B. Keeler, his biographer
Eleanor Keeler, O.B.'s wife
Jack McIntyre, Jones' caddie

St Andrews caddies:

Tommy Addison
Jeannie Addison, his sister
'Stuartie'

The police:

Inspector McTaggart, Cupar
Sergeant McNeill, St Andrews
PC Graham Gemmell, St Andrews

The courts:

Sheriff Principal Crichton 'Fatty' Fairweather, KC, Hector's superior
Forbes, Hector's bar officer
Newton, the local procurator fiscal, who prosecutes
Hotchkiss, a local solicitor
MacGregor Mitchell, KC, an eminent senior counsel

Competitors in the Amateur Championship:

Sidney Roper, Nottingham
Cyril Tolley, England
Harrison 'Jimmie' Johnston, USA
Eric Fiddian, England
George Voigt, New York
Roger Wethered, England
Laurence Fishburne, St Andrews
Brian Maxwell, USA

St Andrews citizens:

Gordon Macmillan, a solicitor
Lucy Macmillan, his wife
Sorley Macmillan, their son
Alex B. Paterson, director of *Macbeth*
Alan Corbett
Jane Corbett, his wife
Dr Doris Moncur
Willie Moncur, her brother, a golf professional
'Bean' Hamilton
Freddie Torkington
Fiona Torkington, his wife
Daisy, the Torkington's maid
Jim Liddell
Mary, telephone operator/receptionist at the Grand Hotel
Courtney Haversham, MP
Bert Wilson, his valet
Dan Saunderson, a fishmonger

Others:

Dr Henry Fallon, Perth
Janet Fallon, his wife
Bailey, head porter at Gleneagles
Other people of little importance to the narrative are named in the text.

SCOTLAND
EARLY MAY 1930

1

‘Not bad. Where did you get it?’ Sorley Macmillan smacked his lips and inspected the label of the sherry bottle.

Jake Drummond lounged on the narrow, lumpy bed in his friend’s basically furnished study. ‘Guess.’

‘Smuggled from home?’

‘Cold.’

‘You bribed a groundsman?’

‘Still cold.’

Sorley looked out of the window. While the long shadows of an early May evening covered most of Glenalmond’s Front Quad, sunshine brought out the red in the sandstone wall opposite. The prestigious boys’ boarding school nestling in the Perthshire hills was looking its best. ‘You didn’t pinch it, did you?’ His voice betrayed a tremor of fear.

Jake smiled like a Cheshire cat. He reached over for the bottle and swallowed until he choked. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. ‘What if I did?’ He handed the bottle back.

‘Brave thing to do.’ Sorley let the glass touch his lips.

‘You’re just sipping.’

Sorley looked his friend in the eye and drank deeply. ‘Where did you take it from?’

Jake wondered about keeping him guessing. He took

another swig and saw the bottle was half empty. ‘The masters’ common room,’ he whispered.

‘How? When?’

‘A couple of days ago. I was late for lunch so didn’t show up at all. The common room door was open and the cupboard was unlocked. Easy-peasy.’

‘Strange they didn’t notice.’

‘This bottle was at the back. There was a nearly-full one open.’

‘Right.’ Sorley took another sip, his waning enthusiasm obvious. ‘Aren’t you going to keep some?’

‘I’ve promised myself I’d get squiffy tonight.’

‘Why?’

‘Fifteen years ago today,’ he paused, ‘my real father was killed at Ypres.’ Tears pricking his eyes, Jake got off the bed and breathed deeply at the open window.

‘I didn’t think about ...’

‘Few do. To hell. Drink up.’

Sorley obeyed and Jake sat back down. They passed the bottle to and fro in morose silence.

‘Second best,’ Jake muttered after a while.

‘What do you mean?’

‘Papa – Uncle Hector, when I was small. Only he’s not my papa. He’s not even a real uncle. He was second best for my mother, and he’s second best for me.’

‘I like the Sheriff.’

‘Oh, he’s a good chap. But blood’s thicker than water. He’s said that to me himself. He doesn’t really think of me as his son, though he pretends.’ He shook his head.

‘Everyone here pretends,’ Jake continued. ‘We all troop into chapel but half of us don’t believe a word of the hogwash they preach. They go on about duty and moral fibre, but that’s

just so we'll be good, brave little fellows and die cheerfully for our country the next time some statesman decides to have a war. "The first hundred thousand will represent the College, sorry, the country against Germany in France ..."

'It's not as bad as that ...'

'As if it were a bloody ruggie match ...'

'No need to get bolshie ...'

'Yes there bloody is. What did a sense of duty do for my real father? It got him a bullet, that's what.'

'But we won the War. Because of men like him.'

'He may be a hero, but he's dead. Away. Up there, in the sky. Or deep in the mud. He got to see me toddling, that's all. And I can't remember him.' He paused for another swallow. There was not much left in the bottle. 'I saw Earl Haig once, years ago,' he said, his voice quiet. 'Strutting into the R and A as if he owned it. Papa called him "The man who won the war". Callous, murdering bastard, more like.'

Sorley spread his hands in front of him. 'It's terrible luck for you, but ...'

'We've just got to take whatever comes our way. If you really believe that, bugger you, Sorley. Bugger everyone here.' He jumped up then hurled the bottle through the open window. He watched as the brown glass somersaulted down and shattered on the paved surface of the quad, close to where two masters were taking an evening stroll. Startled, they both jumped then looked up.

'They'll see it's my window, you bloody fool.' Sorley tugged Jake back.

'I'll take the blame,' Jake said, steadying himself on the sill. 'We St Andrews boys must stand up for each other. I suppose you'd better not be here when they find me.'

Sorley stood indecisively, looking at his friend. 'What have

you done, Jake?' he said. He made for the door, checked the corridor was clear, then stepped out, turning the handle slowly and quietly behind him. Trying to look natural, he walked towards the washrooms at the end, his footsteps loud on the polished wooden floor.

'Macmillan! Where do you think you're going?' Sorley turned to see Harrigan, the Classics master, at the other end of the corridor. He was breathing heavily as he advanced, his index finger pointing accusingly.

2

Three weeks later

‘Lady Macbeth? Wow, that’s a challenging role.’ Bobby Jones smiled admiringly at Lavender Drummond, his hostess. ‘And your first night is Tuesday?’

‘You’ll have to put on your meanest face. Save the milk of human kindness for home.’ O.B. Keeler, the owlish American who chronicled Bobby Jones’ achievements, sipped his claret then brought a forkful of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding to his mouth.

‘Some milk of human kindness would be nice here,’ Jake Drummond said. ‘*Macbeth* is one of the books I have to know for my exams, so I help Mama with her words, shift scenery and play odd parts. She keeps me hard at it.’ His confident manner belied the fact that three weeks earlier he and his best friend, Sorley Macmillan, had been summarily expelled from Glenalmond.

‘It’ll be worth it. Culture apart, it’s a great feeling when you hear you’ve passed an exam, and the older you are, the bigger the feeling of relief,’ Jones told him in his honey-smooth Georgia drawl. ‘Do you hope to go to university here in St Andrews? I’ve seen a lot of students in their red gowns. They look mighty fine.’

‘I’m trying for Oxford, but if they won’t have me it’ll be Edinburgh. If they’ll take me,’ he added quickly. ‘It’s better to get away from home. For a bit.’

‘Sow your wild oats somewhere else?’ O.B. said, eyes twinkling behind round glasses.

Sheriff Hector Drummond cleared his throat and went to carve more beef from the joint. Sunday lunch was his favourite meal and Bobby Jones, Bob to friends and family, was his sporting hero. He had got to know him and O.B. when they had helped him solve a series of murders at the time of the 1927 Open. Defying his absurdly pompous superior, Sheriff Principal Crichton ‘Fatty’ Fairweather KC, he had taken on an investigative role that was no part of his duties as the local judge, and they had provided invaluable help. Three years on, he felt greatly honoured that they, with their wives, should come for lunch the day before the British Amateur Championship got under way. He could scarcely believe that the stocky, fair-haired young man, a warm and gracious guest with a ready smile, was the grim-faced competitor with an iron determination to win if he fairly could that the rest of the world knew and admired.

The mahogany dining table, adorned with silver and crystal, looked splendid and Mrs Alves, their housekeeper/nanny, had excelled in the kitchen. Hector had asked Tommy Addison, the caddie who had risked his life helping him in 1927, to help serve. He too practically worshipped Jones. Making up the party was Hector’s stepson, Jake. Hector wished he were back at school, where he should be. An Old Glenalmond himself, he had not forgiven him for the humiliation of being summoned by a telephone call from the Warden: ‘Please collect your son as soon as possible. He has let you down very badly.’

‘Is Hector in the play? From the way he wields that carving

knife, I can tell he'd make a great murderer,' O.B. said with a puckish grin.

'Papa's too nice to stick the knife right in, even if Mama told him to,' Jake said, his face flushed with claret. 'I'm a murderer, actually. Macduff's son calls me a "shag-haired villain" ...'

'Good casting. Under that slimy Brylcreem muck, your hair's far too long,' Hector interjected.

Undeterred, Jake got to his feet. 'I say: "What! You egg. Young fry of treachery!" Then I stab him.' With gusto, he thrust his knife into an imaginary victim. 'It's fun, but I have to be careful I don't really stab him – or giggle.'

'It sure doesn't sound much like any Shakespeare I've heard.' Mary Jones grinned, her dark eyes sparkling.

'Perhaps Jake has found a new edition,' Bob said.

O.B. clapped his hands and said 'Bravo' as the young actor sat down.

His carving knife dripping gravy, Hector turned from the joint. 'You can see we have more than enough thespians in the family. I just hope I'll wield my putter with deadly effect this week.'

'Well, I'm glad I haven't been drawn against your husband,' Bob said.

'Why?' Lavender failed to keep the surprise out of her voice. The British Amateur was the first of the year's four major golf championships, and it was well known that Jones' preparations for 'The 1930 Campaign' had surpassed what he had done in any previous year. That week, as usual, he was the clear favourite to win. By contrast, Hector had entered simply because he had got his handicap low enough to do so. His modest objectives were to win a game then avoid ignominious defeat in the second round.

Bob grinned. 'In 1921 at Hoylake, there was a little man

called Hamlet, who played in one of those high, starched collars and a bow tie. He nearly beat me ...'

'He scored some "very palpable hits" on Bob,' O.B. interrupted.

'I played badly. The experience left me apprehensive about opponents who remind me of Shakespeare's tragedies, such as Lady Macbeth's husband.'

'Don't they call *Macbeth* "The Scotch play" for some reason?' Eleanor Keeler asked.

'Theatrical types say it's unlucky,' Hector said. 'Baloney, of course. It's just that there are a lot of murders in it. I believe some actor chap got himself killed by accident. Slip of the knife, or something. Anyway, Bob, you should be safe enough tomorrow. Shakespeare never got round to writing *Sidney Roper*. From what I hear, he's a level fives man.'

Bob winced. 'I don't want to hear that. It's possible for any competitor in this championship to beat me over eighteen holes. Everyone playing is capable of scoring under eighty, on his day. And if I play badly I can be over eighty. When I meet Mr Sidney Roper tomorrow afternoon I shall give him my full attention and respect.'

'I gather from *The Scotsman* you had an interesting practice game with Miss Wethered on Friday,' Lavender said.

'Joyce is a terrific player,' Bob said. 'If she hadn't fallen away at the end she'd have beaten all three of us.'

'She's better than most of your Walker Cup team,' O.B. said. 'I've even heard British gentlemen opine that she could play number three or four, if only they'd let the ladies in.'

'Pity she's not playing in the Amateur, so she could beat a man,' Jake said, glancing at Hector.

No-one rose to this remark. Outside, pink rhododendrons and brilliant yellow laburnums swayed in the cool east wind.