

Golf Widows

by

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First Edition

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SYNOPSIS

This short funny story set in Leinster, Dublin. It is 3.30 p.m. Friday 12th of November 1976. Four retired ladies, Freya Doyle, Evie Ryan, Molly Walsh and Eva Kelly are sitting around a table in the local Civic Centre discussing about their present lives, moaning about how bored they get with their husbands out constantly playing golf. A plan is hatched to make their lives a little more exciting. They decide to commit a robbery, but who's the target and do they get away with it?

The elderly pianist glanced around the almost empty room. "We might as well pack it in," he said to his two companions. They nodded agreement and quietly vacated the stage. Only four customers remained and the girl behind the service counter hoped they wouldn't be too long in leaving. Wednesday afternoons at the Civic Centre were boring enough, and she was anxious to get back to her TV. But the four ladies seated at a corner table seemed to be in no hurry. All were smartly but quietly dressed and appeared to be in the fifties/early sixties age group.

The girl behind the counter was getting impatient. "I'll give them five more minutes," she thought, "and ask them to leave as I've got to lock up." Her thoughts were rudely interrupted by the arrival of a delivery vehicle, and she was obliged to oversee the unloading and left the room and its four remaining occupants unattended.

At the corner table, Freya sighed. "It's the same routine week after week. Such a bore, in fact, my life has been boring ever since my husband retired." Her companions, Molly Walsh, Cathy Ryan, Eva Kelly agreed.

"It's the Golf," Molly said. "Since our husbands retired and joined that wretched gold club, we've all been bored."

The four ladies had been friends for many years, and their husbands were also, having all worked together at the local Social Security Office. "I take it you suggested to your husband that you go with him to the golf club," Eva said.

"Oh yes," Freya replied, "but he's as obstinate as a mule on that subject. Says that golf is not a woman's game, and men need to preserve some male strongholds. What about you three? Have you approached your better halves?"

"Many times," Molly answered, "and I know that Emily and Eva have. We all received the same answer as you."

Freya was angry. “Do you remember the one and only time they invited us to the clubhouse? We had to use the ladies lounge and weren’t allowed in any other area, except of course the toilets.” Her friends sighed agreement and for a while they sat in silence.

Finally, Eva said, “I think we’re overstaying our welcome. Look, the girl behind the counter appears anxious to leave.”

Freya checked her watch, “It’s only just gone three,” she remarked, “it’s a lovely day, so let’s go to the park and sit on our usual bench for a while.”

“I can’t stay too long,” Molly replied, anxiously, “I have to be home to get Ben’s meal by six o’clock.”

“You spoil that man of yours,” Eva snorted, “it wouldn’t hurt him, or the others for that matter to do for themselves once in a while. After all, it’s not as if they’re working these days.” They made their way to the park and sat enjoying the sunshine.

“You’re very quiet, Freya,” Cathy remarked, “have you got something on your mind, dear?”

Freya smiled, “It’s an idea I’ve been thinking over,” she answered, “something to fight the boredom.”

“What would that be?” Eva shrugged.

“Well,” Freya continued, “I was reading a book recently all about Raffles, a gentleman crook. He used to carry out robberies just for the buzz it gave him. He was quite well off, and in many cases returned the items he stole. As I said he did it for the excitement. I’m sure we could do something along the same lines.” Her three friends looked aghast. “Really Freya,” protested Cathy and Eva.

“Our husbands all have good pensions,” Cathy continued, “and for myself I wouldn’t get any ‘buzz’ carrying out a robbery. I’d be scared stiff.”

“Me too,” agreed the other two. “In any case,” Cathy said, “the banks these days have closed circuit TV and all kind of security devices. We’d never get away with it.”

“I wasn’t considering banks,” Freya said, “I was thinking of Finn Maloney’s betting shop.”

“What!” Molly gasped, “that’s right opposite your home, much too close for comfort, and from what I hear old Finn’s close to retirement and is letting the business wind down. He intends to apply for permission to turn the shop into living quarters when he retires, so there wouldn’t be all that much cash there for the taking.”

“Exactly,” Freya sighed, “we could return the loot anonymously after the fuss dies down.”

“No way,” said Molly, “maybe our lives do lack a little excitement these days, but at least we’re all fairly comfortably off. Just forget it, what do you say, girls?” Cathy and Eva agreed.

“As you wish,” Freya sighed, “it was only an idea. Anyhow, look at the time, we’d better get going, the boy will be home soon.”

Two weeks passed and on Friday Freya was as usual preparing the meal. “Tim’s late tonight,” she thought, glancing at the clock. When her husband eventually arrived, she could see that he was in high spirits. “Hello, dear,” she greeted, “it seems you’ve had a good day.”

“Wait ‘til you hear this,” Tim replied, “I’ve been chosen by the captain as part of the team to play a Dutch club in Amsterdam the weekend after next, and so have Ben, Jack and Simon.”

“How marvellous,” Freya gasped, “I’d really enjoy a weekend in Amsterdam.”

Tim looked at the floor, “Sorry,” he apologised, “the captain insists that we leave wives and girl friends at home, he thinks that they’ll prove to be a distraction, and he wants us all on top form for the match.”

Freya was furious, “That blacked club!” she stormed, “it’s made virtual strangers of us!”

“Don’t be angry,” pleaded Tim, “you know it’s an opportunity I wouldn’t want to miss.”

“What about me and the other wives?” Freya snapped, “you expect us to jump for joy at the prospect of sitting at home twiddling our thumbs whilst you lot are living it up abroad. It’s just not on.”

“Well, I’m going,” Tim responded, “and I can’t take you.

“Anyway, you’d be bored following us round the course. You’re not particularly fond of golf, are you?”

“There’s other things I could be doing,” she retorted, “I’m warning you; you haven’t heard the last of this.”

“Answer the phone,” Tim said, anxious to defuse the situation, “it’s been ringing for ages.”

“Who is it?” Freya growled into the mouthpiece.

“Freya, it’s Molly. Has Tim told you about this trip the boys are taking to Holland?”

“He certainly has,” Freya answered.

“Cathy and Eva phoned,” Molly continued, “they’re both up in arms, and think we should meet at two p.m. at Molly’s house tomorrow to discuss your idea you had, you know about the r...”

“Shush,” Freya hissed, “not over the phone. “Yes, I can make that time, I’ll see you all then, bye.”

“Who was that?” Tim asked when Freya returned.

“It was Molly,” Freya said, “nothing for you to be concerned about.”

“There,” Tim soothed, “you’ve got your friends. I’m sure you’ll all have a whale of a time while we’re away.”

“I don’t wish to discuss the matter any further at present,” Freya huffed, “but don’t think I’ve forgotten.”

The following day at 2 p.m. Freya arrived at Molly’s home to find her three friends awaiting her. “Typical chauvinistic males,” fumed Cathy. “Just like them to go off enjoying themselves and leave us to our own devices.”

“Selfish the lot of them,” Eva snorted, and Molly nodded agreement.

“Right,” Freya piped up, “let’s get down to business. I believe you’re having second thoughts about my idea.”

“Indeed so,” Eva replied, “but why did you choose Finn Moloney’s betting shop as the target? We all live nearby; in fact, your house is right opposite.”

“Yes,” Molly continued, “and there’s a distinct chance that we’d be seen, ‘casing the joint’, that’s the right term I believe.”

Freya smiled, “That’s the beauty of the plan, no-one would suspect four respectable middle-aged ladies of the crime. As you’ve already said, Eva, I live right opposite, and I’ve had plenty of opportunity to observe the target.”

“I’m not so sure,” Cathy said, “we’d have to make careful preparations, and a car would be needed for the traditional quick getaway. Whose car should we use? The registration number could be spotted, and then the game would be up for one, if not all of us.”

“Obviously we’ll have to steal a car,” Freya replied, “and we’ll have to do it shortly before the job takes place and whoever is the driver could dump it somewhere together with the proceeds.”

“What about keeping the money?” Berry asked, “we could all have a good holiday, and as Freya said, no-one would suspect us of such a crime.” Her three friends were not so sure, and for a while there was some argument.

Finally, Freya said, “Let’s just do it. We can decide what to do with the money if the job is successful.” The others agreed, and Cathy said, “Well, Freya, how do we go about it, have you any idea?”

Freya poured herself a sherry. “As you know,” she began, “I live opposite the betting shop, and for some time, in fact since I first had the idea, I’ve been keeping watch. The shop has a back yard, and a low wall encloses that from the side down Nelson Street. There are large double gates which give access to the yard from the High Street. As the rear of the yard are the iron railings which separate it from the railway track and the public footpath which runs alongside. Now, from my bedroom window I can see

over the wall into the yard, and I've been observing Finn's movements when he locks the premises at night. He's been sending his assistant home about five-thirty p.m., as there's no late racing this time of year. Half an hour later, after he's cashed up, I imagine, he leaves the shop, locks the front door, and goes home. But on Friday's it's different. So, on this day he leaves at seven p.m., and puts a duffel onto the yard. The bag obviously contains the weeks takings. Then he leaves by the front door, and opens the gates to the yard, collects his car and the bag, and drives out, stopping to lock the gates, and checking that the alarms are set."

"You've certainly done your homework," Eva smiled, "but how are we going to get hold of the bag?"

"The wall is only about four-foot six high," Freya replied, "so one of us could easily climb it."

"I don't like that idea," Molly broke in, "anything could happen, for instance one could be seen, and it would take time. I take it that this would be done during the time Finn was securing the shop, no Freya I think it's too dangerous."

Freya thought for a while. "You're right, Molly," she said, "it does pose a problem. Now let's see, we'll have the car positioned in Nelson Street right by the wall, so whoever is driving will be ready to drive off once they have the bag. He'll see straight away that the bag is missing so one of us must be around at the time."

"What's your plan?" Eva asked.

"Well," Freya continued, "the most likely point of entry would be from the footpath by the railway track. There's likely to be one or more bent railings in the fence, and if there aren't it should be fairly easy to bend on if two of us are involved. Eva, what about you and I taking the dogs for a walk along the footpath tomorrow whilst spying out the land?"

"OK, by me," Eva agreed.

“Right,” Freya approved, “then we’ll meet here again tomorrow evening, and Eva and I will report our findings.”

Freya and Eva were late in arriving the following evening. “Sorry to keep you waiting,” Freya said, “but there were a number of people on the footpath, and we waited until it was clear, and then the dogs had to be taken home.”

“That could be a problem then,” Molly replied, “we certainly don’t want any witnesses if and when we do the job.”

“You’ve got a point,” Freya agreed, “but don’t forget it was broad daylight when we vested. It’s a remote place with hardly any lighting, so I don’t think it will be greatly used after dark.”

“Anyhow, what did you find?” Cathy asked. “Well, there are one or two bent railings in the fence and there’s certainly one that’s wide enough to permit someone to get through providing they’re on the small side. I think you’d fit the bill dear,” Freya replied sizing Cathy up.

“Me and my big mouth,” sighed Emily, “but we’ll need a practice run before we decide anything.”

“Of course,” Freya agreed, “we’ll do that in the near future.”

“First we’d better sort out who’s doing what,” Molly suggested.

“Yes” replied Freya, “I suggest that I keep watch on the shop from my bedroom window. I’ll give you the signal by switching the light on and off. Molly, you’re the best driver, so I suggest that you attend to the car.”

“But how, and from where do I take it?” Molly pleaded, not liking to use the word steal.

“Oh, come on,” Freya snapped, “the obvious place is the Municipal Car Park, it’s nearly always full at all times.”

“But –” Molly pleaded.

“I know what you’re going to say,” Freya interrupted, “you’ll be seen. Well, it’s going to be dark when you do it, and we all know that the council’s policy since it nearly went broke was to reduce public lighting. There’re dark spots all over that car park.”

“Well, how do I get into the vehicle,” Molly grumbled, “do I break a window?” Freya sighed, “Really Molly, you’re quite clueless on occasions. We’ve all done it at sometimes you know, been in a hurry and parked the car leaving the keys in the ignition and forgetting to lock the doors. I guarantee there’ll be quite a few cars left like that particularly at that time of night. Give yourself some time and look around.”

“If you say so,” Molly sighed, as she crunched on a chocolate digestive.

“Who’s going to squeeze through the fence then?” Eva asked, “I don’t think I’d be able to.”

“I agree,” Freya said, “you have put on weight recently. Cathy, you’re the smallest, so that will be your job. I suggest you visit and take a look tomorrow.”

“All right,” Cathy said, “but I’m worried that I might not be quick enough to get in and out before Finn comes to collect his car.”

“Well, we’re going to have a dry run soon,” Freya replied, “see how it goes, and if you’re still worried then I suggest that Eva stands by to delay Finn when he leaves by the front door. After all, she hasn’t got anything else to do.”

“Just how do I do that?” Eva asked, anxiously. “You lot have no imagination,” Freya said testily, “for goodness’ sake, tell him you’re dropped your wedding ring or sprained your ankle, or something like that.”

“She glanced at the clock, “Look at the time,” she gasped, “I must go. Let’s all think on what’s been said, and we’ll meet at tomorrow evening and arrange a practice run.” “We’d better forget the car and Eva’s delaying tactics then,” Molly said, “we don’t want to draw attention

to ourselves to ourselves before the actual job.”

“Agreed,” Freya replied, “until tomorrow at eight p.m. then, now I really must be going.”

The following evening, they all met at Molly’s home. “Well,” Freya began, “what’s the verdict Cathy?”

“I checked the railings at the back of the premises,” Cathy replied, “and the gap is big enough for me to get through. I’m still worried that there won’t be sufficient time for me to get in and out before Finn collects his car. Don’t forget, he’ll miss the bag straight away and might raise the alarm.”

“I kept watch on the betting shop last night,” Freya said, “everything went as usual. Finn’s assistant left a five-thirty p.m. as about six p.m. Finn left and sure enough went to the pub. Shortly after I saw the side door open and by the light could see Finn dump the bag outside. Then he came out of the front door, locked it, unlocked the side gates and entered the yard. I timed him, and it took exactly three minutes and forty seconds from the time he put the bag outside until he entered the yard. That’ll give you enough time Cathy, for sure.”

“I’m still not happy,” Cathy shrugged, “but we’re having a practice soon, aren’t we? I’ll see how things go then.”

“Yes,” Molly broke in, “when is the practice?”

“I was thinking of this Friday,” Freya replied, “our husbands will be at the club getting the information on their forthcoming trip. I suggest we practice without the car of course, and there’s no need for you to play your part yet Eva but be around just to see how things go.”

“What time shall we get there?” Molly asked.

“I’ll be looking form my bedroom window from seven forty-five p.m.” Freya replied. “Molly, I want you standing in Nelson Street near the wall by then. You, Cathy, will be standing by the gap in the railings, and Eva You get ready when I turn my bedroom light off and on.

Cathy you'll know when to squeeze through the railings when the light shines into the yard from this side door. the practice will be mainly to check the timing, so I want everyone to act as if the job is actually taking place. Cathy, in and out as quickly as possible, but go through the motions of collecting the bag and throwing it over the wall. Molly, when you think the bag has come over the wall, walk away quickly. We've got a couple of days to think about it. We won't meet until after the practice, and if anyone gets cold feet, for goodness' sake let the rest of us know about it."

"Right," chorused the other three. "Then it's here at Molly's on Saturday afternoon. See you then."

On Friday afternoon Freya completed all her chores and waited impatiently for her husband to finish his meal. "You are going to the club tonight aren't you dear?" she asked.

"Yes, later on," her husband replied.

"About what time?" Freya persisted.

"I wasn't thinking of leaving until about seven-thirty," Tim said, "what's your hurry? Normally you can't do enough to prevent me from going."

Freya felt panic rising. "You know I like you to be here with me, but I want to watch that game show on TV. You don't like it, and you're moaning all the way through does spoil it for me."

Tim rose hurriedly. "When is it on, I can't sit through that!" he snapped.

"It starts at seven," Freya replied.

"I'll get ready and go," Tim replied, "in any case I need to talk over the arrangements for the Amsterdam trip. It's this weekend you know."

“All right dear,” Freya smiled. By 6.15 p.m. Tim had left and for a while Freya flicked through the TV channels but was unable to settle down with any programme. Finally at 6.45 p.m. she went upstairs to the bedroom. On looking through the window she could see Molly standing in Nelson Street and Eva walking slowly down the High Street. “Don’t panic girls,” she thought, hoping that Cathy was in position. At 7 p.m. the betting shop lights shone into the yard and shortly afterwards Finn Moloney came out of the front door. Freya switched her bedroom light on and off, hoping that Cathy had already done her part. She was relieved to see Molly walking away as Finn locked the front door and opened the gate to the yard. Freya waited until Finn had driven out and locked the gates. “Well,” she thought, “let’s hope it all went well, but I’ll know for sure later.”

On Saturday afternoon Freya arrived at Molly’s home. Her friends were already there. “You’re late again,” Molly scolded. “Sorry,” Freya replied, “I had to help Tim do his packing.”

“We’ve all had to help our husband too,” Cathy said sympathetically.

When they were all seated Freya asked, “How did it go? What about you Cathy?”

“Well,” answered Cathy, “I saw the back light go on and heard Finn open the door. I had no trouble getting through the railings, and I could see the bag where Finn had left it. I went back through the railings to the footpath. I still found time little tight, as Finn came into the yard only a short time after, so I think that Eva’s delaying tactics would be helpful.”

“Agreed,” Freya said, “what about you Molly?”

“No problems as far as I can see,” came the reply, “the only thing is when I should get the vehicles.”

“Obviously you don’t want to have it in your possession too long,” Freya said. “I suggest you steal it shortly before you need it.”

“Then what about after the job?” Molly asked.

“Get rid of it as quickly as possible. Park it somewhere off the beaten track, take the bag and bring it here, where hopefully we’ll all be waiting. Now, the job is fixed for next Friday, so are there any last-minute details we haven’t covered,” Nobody could think of any. “Then, good luck everyone, see you here after it’s all over.”

The four friends met briefly the following Friday when they said goodbye to their husbands at the golf club. Nothing was said about the job as they waved the coach away. Freya felt tense for the rest of the day and couldn’t wait for nightfall. She tried watching TV but couldn’t concentrate. Finally at 6.15 p.m. she gave up and went upstairs to the bedroom, where she stood for a while looking out of the window. At 6.50 p.m. a bright yellow Volvo stopped outside the betting shop and reversed into Nelson Street where it parked by the wall. It seemed that Molly had arrived. Freya was horrified. “My God,” she thought, “surely Molly could have chosen something a little less distinctive.” Looking to her right she saw Eva walking slowly towards the shop. When the light shone into the backyard Freya switched the bedroom light off and on. Eva quickened her pace and arrived outside the shop just as Finn emerged. Freya saw her approach him and point towards the road. Finn walked to the kerbside and they both seemed to be looking for something. At that moment the yellow Volvo drove quickly out of Nelson Street and vanished round the bend of the High Street. Eva bent down and appeared to pick something up from the kerbside, spoke briefly with Finn, and then continued on her way. Finn entered the yard, and there was only a short delay before he came out, locked the gates and drove off.

“That’s odd,” Freya, thought, he must have missed the bag. He should have gone back into the shop to phone the police and report it missing.” She waited for nearly an hour before going to Molly’s home, where she found Cathy and Eva waiting in the shadows by the side of the house. “Isn’t Molly here yet?” she whispered. “No,” Cathy whispered in reply, “something’s happened to her, I just know it.” The three waited for fifteen minutes and were about to leave when Molly entered the gate and hurried to the front door.

“What kept you?” Freya hissed, as they all followed Molly into the house. “Don’t you get on at me,” Molly replied, “I’ve had terrible time.”

“What’s happened?” Cathy asked. “Well,” Molly continued, “it all went well at the betting shop. I picked up the bag when you threw it over the wall and drove straight off. I decided to take the car back to where I got it, the Municipal Car Park. I was anxious to get rid of it as soon as possible as it did stand out a little because of its colour.”

“You can say that again,” Freya retorted, “whatever possessed you to pick a vehicle with such distinctive colour?”

“Oh, stop moaning,” Molly snapped, “it was the first one I found with the doors unlocked and the keys left in the ignition. Anyhow when I got to the car park, I couldn’t resist having a peep in the bag, just to see how we’d done.”

“Where is the bag?” Eva asked, “you haven’t got it with you.” Molly looked down at the carpet then continued, “All I found in the bag were poker chips and playing cards. So, I decided to take it back.” Freya couldn’t believe what she was hearing. “What!” she gasped, “you went back to the scene of the crime? You eejit, someone might have seen you. How did you get there, did you walk or take the bus?”

“I took the car of course,” Molly replied. Freya sat down on the settee. “I just can’t believe it,” she whispered, “you drove back to the scene of the crime in a stolen car.”

“That’s right,” Molly answered, “I parked the car in Nelson Street, got out and threw the bag back over the wall, then jumped back in the car and drove back to the car park. Everywhere was deserted so nobody saw me.”

The friends looked at one another for what seemed ages, then Cathy started to laugh. Soon all four friends were laughing uncontrollably. When they had quietened Eva and Cathy left.

The following Monday afternoon they sat at their usual table at the Civic Centre. “Well,” Freya said finally, “we weren’t much success as criminals, were we? I think in future we’ll have to take up something not quite so dangerous.”

“I hear they’re forming a lady’s section at the golf club,” Eva said, “I suppose we could join, and our husbands certainly couldn’t object, surely?”

“Good idea,” Molly approved, “I’m all for it.” Everyone nodded agreement and Cathy said, “By the way, I I’ve read a piece in the ‘Sunday World’ about our escapade.” She produced the newspaper from her coat pocket. “Read it to us please,” Freya requested, so she did. ‘Strange happening at local Betting Shop’ the article was headed. Cathy continued reading, ‘Local bookie Finn Moloney is mystified by events last night at his betting shop situated in the High Street. “Well, on Friday’s I always finish work an hour later, and in winter it’s seven because I have to do a few extra jobs. Now, at seven p.m. sharp I locked up as usual,” Finn told our reporter. “And I left a bag containing a load of loose poker chips and a packet of playing cards by my back door. You see, every Friday evening a group of us meet up, we take it in turns to play in each other houses. I looked all-round the yard but couldn’t find the bag anywhere. In the end I gave up and

went home. Anyway, when I opened up next morning, lo and behold there was the bag lying not far from the back door. I can only assume that somehow, I missed it in the poor light.” Finn said on a more sober note that he had often left a bag containing his week’s takings out back whilst he locked up. “However,” he told us, “I shan’t be doing that again. The events of Friday night have taught me that you can’t be too careful.”

Cathy put down the newspaper, and the four friends burst out laughing. “Poor Finn,” Freya sighed, “he must have thought he was losing his marbles.”

“Indeed so, he’ll certainly deserve his retirement,” Eva laughed.

“Those old trout’s look happy today,” thought the girl behind the counter, “let’s hope they don’t hand around too long. I’d like to get home early for once.” Her wish was granted, for as the band began to play, the four ladies rose and made their way to the door. “Hm,” thought the girl, “first decent band we’ve had in weeks. Trust them not to like it”.

The End