

Using Mini-Golf as a Metaphor for the Shortcomings in My Love Life

by Bob Eckstein

I called just as I heard her segue into a song. The station manager or whoever that was said they'd go get her for me. That was easy. I planned this while driving home in the dark listening to her on the radio. She had left the party early, letting those who she just met and captivated, that she went on the air after midnight. She was sexy, stick-thin and kind of beautiful but so confident that she convinced those in her presence that she was even that more beautiful. But that voice was a 10. Off-the-charts seductive. A classic radio voice. That was the consensus among us, the men, the wreckage of those talking about her since she left. I told the two guys who were acting more natural now that I too would be leaving the party. I didn't have her number but I knew what radio station she was on. While driving in the night I listened to her in the breaks of the music. I said that already, didn't I? She sounded like she was in a teddy, sipping a dry martini or something. This is what I did New Year's Eve 2004. I had impressed her with my gumption and she said yes to dinner. *[applause]*

My girlfriend, Anna, was not at that party but out of town for the weekend. I promised myself I would kick her out of my apartment soon. That was in the works since God knows when. She was never going to leave voluntarily and this maneuver, I figured, would have to be coordinated with her sympathetic, and the operative word here, grounded, sister. Anna had been trying to complete her thesis

for over 5 years. Probably going to have a few points deducted for tardiness, you think? There was no romance anymore and the sex was impersonal, only continuing out of the logistics of there being room for but one bed in a tense Brooklyn studio.

Never try a new restaurant on a first date. I premeditate all my actions so it looks like I'm thinking on my feet. Almost scripted to forge spontaneity. My first date with the celebrity DJ was going well. As with all first dates, by the time the check comes, both sides have sized each other up as to whether any further personal time or emotional investment was merited. After dinner we walked outside along the water near Battery Park.

So what should I make of this? She told me she had to pee and found a place behind some bushes where no one could see her except me. Yes, it was pitch black and I could barely see her lifting her shirt. But she's no kid, upper-class. Maybe she did this to turn me off to make it easier to get rid of me. Or was it to turn me on? Or make herself seem more pedestrian (or just too many drinks). Was she sharing this personal act as a sign of affection? This was the most memorable thing of our date. I drove her back in time for her midnight shift and I hung out with her in the empty studio making out when she wasn't on the air. She told me to call her. *[laughter]*



The next time I saw Anna she was walking around our apartment with her blouse unbuttoned, tied at the belly. If she wasn't sleeping, which was almost always, she was dressing or undressing. It's all she did and I'm sure her way of reminding me that while she contributed nothing to the bills she still brought something to the table, accessibility. She had wanted to be a model but was not pretty or ambitious enough. Ironically, she was most beautiful when sleeping. Bi-polar, tall, thin, unpredictable and dysfunctional to the point of being totally reliant on me—she obtained all the superficial attributes I looked for in a woman. We could not speak long at this point without it escalating into a fight. My assessment of what I gained from the three years; a new proficiency in lying and an increase in my salt intake.

This was our last fight. I stopped fighting when she spat in my face. With that she stormed off and locked herself in the bathroom. I don't

know how long she stayed in there because I left and stayed at a friend's, Kate, the one who held the New Year's Eve party the week before.

In the morning making small talk in bed, I told Kate I had gone out with her DJ friend. I assumed she wouldn't care...I was very supportive of her new fiancé...I told her nothing happened on our date but I could see now there was a double-standard—our DJ in question was now being called a skank. Their friendship would eventually end. I stand corrected, open communication has no place in relationships. I really miss when the word friend was elastic and had nothing to do with links.

Men are seldom even sure when a serious relationship begins. Ladies do. Often they go out and buy new sheets. For men it's often a matter of weeding out those who seem the least interested, decreasing the frequency of calls until so much time has passed that you're sure she won't remember your name and then you're afraid to call. This process is called finding "the one."



I got boxes from a supermarket and quickly packed her things while she visited her sister. I wrote a check out to her for everything in my bank account minus \$500.

Each woman has they're own routine for keeping your attention...always getting sick...dabbing their perfume on some object in your workspace...touching your friend's arm...eating from your plate. Ever get spat in the face? Something you'll never forget.

My hot DJ friend and I would never have a second date. How could we, she never returned my messages. I left three. Maybe it was ten. Even left my number slowly. Ever wonder why people leave their phone number on a machine so fast that you have to play it over four times to write it down? Is it to prove how smart they are or is it their way of just saying they got back to you while making sure not to hear from you again? Eventually I'm sure if I ever got Miss DJ at

home she would have said, “Bob? Bob, who?” *[laughter]*

But this is all Okay. I had met someone else in the meantime. I don't recall her name, but she was special, not like the others.

Anna cried far less than if she would have had to pack her own stuff, I thought. Instead of driving to her sister's she directed me to a brownstone of someone I never met in Park Slope. A man about 15 years older than me just glared at me as they took the boxes from my car. So does this have anything to do with mini-golf yet?



Later that year I went alone to Kate's wedding. It was me who helped stop her previous wedding, the one she didn't want. I met Kate through an old girlfriend. They were roommates and used to be best-friends until we get caught. The fiancée was gone but my ex-girlfriend showed up in the bridal party. Good for them. I introduced myself to a bridesmaid I never met. Something I said helped her put two and two together and she laughed “Oh, I heard about you.” None of this moves my story along but I enjoy sharing this

entanglement...the same way I would show off the scorecard to a good round of golf to my friends. This, by the way, is my favorite miniature golf course. Instead of Astro-turf, the putting greens are made of dirt, or actually clay. It's more unpredictable that way and much harder to sink a putt. It's in Arras, France. In the Middle Ages, the town symbol for Arras was the rat. King, where are your people now?

Once, during a softball game in Central Park, a top-heavy blond wearing a small, tight pink terrycloth outfit roller-bladed behind our backstop while dancing to her iPod. My friend Elan called timeout and everyone watched as he jogged in from the outfield to introduce himself to her. Within a minute, they walked away leaving left field empty.

I would listen to her on the radio every so often. I saw her on a TV commercial. I can't remember what it was for. She changed her look. She's experimenting.

I was wrong. Miss DJ remembered my name when we ran into each other one year later. We were on dates with other people but we took a minute to speak in private in the dark lobby of a Tribeca restaurant. Our dates walked ahead of us or were just being ignored. She whispered proudly that she had just did some coke with the old guy she was with. She was trying to top me. Shock me. She did. It was uncomfortable hearing this. Her begging for my attention was unattractive. She changed gears and asked suddenly, "Why did we stop seeing each other?" I don't remember what I said but she responded, "Oh, well. What a shame." This flattered me. It's all about me.

