

“PRAISE FOR *THE PUDDLE CLUB*”

“Golf is a journey to discover yourself and your soul. The Puddle Club has it covered under every angle.”

—Claude Brousseau PGA Master
- Maui School of Golf

“Jump right into The Puddle Club, the most imaginative introduction to our great game you’ve ever read. Skyler is the perfect unlikely hero.”

—John Maginnes PGA Tour player and co-host
of Katrek & Maginnes on XM and Sirius radio.

“The Puddle Club contains numerous life lessons for golfers of all ages. I want all of our juniors to take this journey with Skyler.”

—Eric MacCluen, PGA, Director of
Instruction Applecross Golf Academy

“The Puddle Club shows how golf and life can relate in many different aspects. Life is a journey and so is golf. This book appeals to any golfer of any age or skill level.”

—Rob Coyne, Golf Instructor/High School coach.

“A magical read that a parent and child can share. Now go out and play!!“

—John Godwin, PGA

“The Puddle Club takes you on a journey that combines both golf and life. It is a great start for golfers, especially juniors, using creativity and imagination to introduce them to this great game”

— Kevin Shimomura, PGA
Director of Instruction Ko Olina Golf Academy

The Puddle Club

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For Reagan

This book is dedicated to anyone who knows the joy of jumping right in.



CHAPTER ONE

THE PUDDLE



SKYLER LIE IN bed staring at the ceiling. She was not looking forward to being the new kid in school tomorrow and was already filled with that nervous-belly doom and gloom. This was her third move in six years, and that certainly is a lot for a child of only nine. This time they had moved way out into the country, far from the big city and everyone they knew and loved. Skyler didn't like moving, and didn't like losing a whole bunch of friends all at once, but Mom and Dad reminded her that she would make new friends, just like last time. They said that unexpected changes were a part of life, and the faster she learned to accept it and go with the flow, the happier she would be.

None of it made any sense to Skyler no matter how much she thought it through.

Skyler slid out of bed, peeked through the shades of her window, and sighed at the sight of dark lingering clouds from last night's rainstorm. Being stuck inside always

meant the same thing: another day with nothing very fun to do and nobody to play with.

Sure, the shelves were packed with board games, but after being played a gazillion times, they stopped being fun and actually made you bored instead.

Sure, the TV had unlimited reruns of all the best shows, but once you've seen them all more than thrice, they became re-re-repeats.

Skyler had recently come to the conclusion that nothing fun lasted forever, and realizing that made her feel very sad. She let out another sigh and wondered just how boring today was going to be on the boring scale. Super boring, bordering on mind-numbingly boring, was her guess.

She heard her Mom and Dad downstairs eating breakfast, and it made her feel hungry. Since it was another do-nothing day, there was no need to change out of her pajamas before going downstairs to eat. When she got to the kitchen, it was empty except for the leftover plates and a half-empty pot of coffee. She could hear them ripping apart boxes and unpacking her dad's office down at the end of the hallway.

"There's some doughnut holes for you in the cupboard," shouted her mom from another room. "Feed yourself, because I'm helping your father."

"OK," Skyler yelled back as she opened the cupboard and instantly found the box of doughnut holes. They were her favorite kind too, the small white powdered ones. She could pinch them with two fingers and pop them right in her mouth one at a time, and that is exactly what she did, until her face was covered in sugar and she needed a drink to wash down the baseball-size doughnut mound that now filled her mouth.

As she drank straight from the milk carton, she noticed something shimmering outside the kitchen window. She walked closer to the window and looked down at a huge puddle that took over a large portion of the backyard. A bit of sunlight peeked through the clouds and like a pointed beam, it hit the puddle dead in its center. The way the light touched the water was mesmerizing, and she wanted a closer look.

She put on her rain boots, wiped sugar from her lips, opened the door to the deck, and walked out. She slipped but caught her balance, then walked slowly across the wet surface. When she looked down at the backyard puddle, it looked more like a small pond. The water was perfectly still and showed a crystal-clear reflection of herself.

She looked bored and stared at her reflection for a long time, captivated by the way the puddle reflected her and the dark clouds. That's when something really strange happened—her reflection smiled and waved, even though she didn't move at all!

Skyler closed her eyes and shook her head. When she opened them again, her reflection was still smiling, but she was not. The look on her real face was confused and slightly frightened. The look on her reflected face was all smiles and happiness.

Skyler waved at her reflection, but the reflection didn't wave at the same time. It waved back a moment later.

Now Skyler started to freak out. This was the strangest puddle she had ever encountered, and the smiling, happy reflection of herself made her want to jump right in and play. But then she thought about the mess and the cleanup and how her mom and dad would not be happy if she got

all muddy. Puddle play was for baby time, and she was not a baby anymore.

The reflection had a big, happy smile on its face and waved at the real Skyler one last time. Then the reflection slowly faded away until there was no reflection at all.

“Hey! Where did you go?” she yelled out, running along the railing, searching the puddle everywhere for her reflection. How could this be? How could your own reflection wave good-bye to you and then vanish? Where did the reflection go? Skyler leaned hard on the end railing, looking down, and there was only a slight cracking sound before she was falling headfirst toward the water below.

There was no time to scream as her head was about to hit the puddle. She curled up into a ball and braced—but instead of the heavy thud of hitting wet ground, she felt the sinking sensation of falling into deep water.

When she opened her eyes, she was no longer in the puddle but instead falling gently like a leaf out of a clear blue sky over a large open space with rolling hills of green grass.

“Whoa!” was all she yelled before landing gently on the supersoft ground and then tumbling a few times before coming to a stop. It felt like squishy carpet with thick padding underneath, and the hills rolled on and on as far as her eyes could see.

“Where am I?” she said out loud as she stood up and looked around, sniffing the air like a curious dog. Her house and any recognizable landmarks were nowhere to be seen. She looked down at her pajamas, and they were drying very fast, but she was not hot. The air was just right,

and the sky was the perfect shade of blue. Other than being completely lost, it was a perfect day.

Skyler took a deep breath, walked toward the nearest hill and climbed to the top in order to get a better look around her. The strangest thing about this new land was how the green hills rolled on and on and then were interrupted by large flat areas of open green. There were also large pockets of thick woods scattered about. There was something so magical and peaceful about being here. She did not feel afraid. She spotted a small, lone woodshed way off in the distance, nestled on a hill among pine trees and tall grass. A plume of white smoke billowed from the chimney.

She noticed a gigantic eagle flying high in the sky towards her. She knelt down and covered her head as it soared by, casting its large shadow on the ground like an arrow. She watched as the shadow flew a few circles around her and then went in a straight line from her position to the woodshed. She took this as a sign and decided to head to the woodshed in search of help.

The ground was so squishy and springy. She skipped her way across the green, open space.

Next she had to climb up small hills and couldn't resist running down the other side. She fell once and tumbled to the bottom. It was so soft that nothing hurt, and all she did was laugh at herself. It felt good to laugh at herself, for some reason.

She then crossed over an old rickety bridge and quickly ran through a tunnel until she came out on the other side of a babbling brook. It was a strange, twisty path that led to

the woodshed, which must have been much farther than it looked, because Skyler was starting to get tired out.

She decided to take a rest when she spotted a small boulder under the shade of a tree that looked just big enough for her to sit on. She plopped down there, formed pretend binoculars with her hands, and looked at the woodshed. Not much farther now.

“Hey, wanna play?” said an excited little voice from somewhere down in the tall grass behind the boulder.

It startled Skyler, and she jumped up. “Who said that?”

“It’s me—Ralphie!” said the tiny voice again.

Skyler slowly peeked around to the back of the boulder.

“Ralphie who?”

“I’m Ralphie -- that’s who! Let’s play!”

Skyler knelt there, looking down. She could not see anything except tall wavy grass.

“Don’t just stand there. You gotta really dig around and find me—then we can play!”

Skyler waved her hands around in the tall grass, parting it here and there, looking for this Ralphie character she could hear but not see.

“You’re getting closer. A little more to your right, or is it your left? I get confused. Lower. Lower,” said Ralphie.

Skyler moved some grass and pinched a small white ball with her fingers and slowly lifted it out. She recognized what it was immediately.

“A talking golf ball?” she said.

“Mmm, mmm, mmm.” Ralphie’s tiny high-pitched voice was all muffled now.

“I can’t hear you,” said Skyler.

“Mmm, mmm, mmm,” replied Ralphie.

Skyler moved the golf ball from one hand to the next, and when she did, she saw Ralphie's face for the first time: two bright happy eyes, a small cute nose, and a huge excited smile.

"You had your fingers right on my face!"

Skyler screamed and dropped Ralphie. She'd seen a lot of strange things, but a talking golf ball with attitude was not one of them—until now. She took a couple of steps back and stood there.

"Aw, c'mon...don't you wanna play?" asked Ralphie, putting on the saddest face of all time.

"I don't have time to play right now. I'm lost and have to get home."

"I know the way home," boasted Ralphie.

"You do? Tell me, please."

"All you gotta do is take me to the first tee. It's just beyond Practiceopolis."

"Practiceopolis?" inquired Skyler. "What kind of a place is that?"

Ralphie's eyes grew big. "You really are lost. You need to go see Par. He'll get you set up."

"Where's Par?" Skyler kneeled down and picked up Ralphie again. This time she gently cupped him with both hands. He's so cute. She can't help but smile at him.

"Par's everywhere and nowhere all at the same time," mused Ralphie, the tiny philosopher, eyes rolling big for dramatic effect. "But you can usually find him in the clubhouse."

"Where's that?"

"Up there on the hill. We still have time to play if you hurry!"



CHAPTER TWO

THE PUDDLE CLUB



AFTER WHAT SEEMED like forever, they finally made it to the woodshed-style clubhouse. Surprisingly it was the size of a young child's play set, and Skyler was as tall as the roof. She could see nothing but more woods and bramble all around it. It was old and damp with moss growing up the sides. There were no windows, and the only door was too small for Skyler to walk through. There was a rusty, old, antique-looking metal sign posted to the door:

THE PUDDLE CLUB—ESTABLISHED YEAR 0.

“The Puddle Club? What is this place, Ralphie?”

Skyler inspected the sign, flicking it with her finger. It was made of steel and created a stinging sensation that she didn't expect. She shook it off and backed up a step.

“First you learn how to play the game, and then you play the game!” said Ralphie.

“But I want to get home.”

“Home is at the end of the game for you and me.”

“What game?”