

Shah Mat

by

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EXT. DUF'S PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

Camera pans across the back of a Nissan Frontier Pickup truck. A sciency bumpersticker, binary license plate, and "I Saw My Favorite Super Hero at Duf's Playhouse" bumpersticker.

INT. IAN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

IAN sitting in the truck, slumped down. He does not look happy.

IAN

[V.O.]

Why did my mother have to tell him I was in town?

EXT. DUF'S PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

Slow pan across the storefront's sign: "Duf's Playhouse Comics, Cards, and Games"

INT. IAN'S TRUCK - NIGHT

IAN looking more miserable.

IAN

[V.O.]

I don't understand it. I've placed in tournaments. I've beaten beginners four at a time. I've almost gotten my rating past 1900. And yet I don't think I've ever been able to beat him. It's ludicrous... nonsensical. It's like one of those absurdist Russian satires.

[Pause.]

Maybe he won't challenge me. Maybe he's past rubbing it in my face.

[Pause. Deep sigh.]

Who am I kidding? Of course he's gonna want to play a game of chess.

IAN gets out of the truck.

EXT. DUF'S PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

IAN comes up to the front door. His face lit by the lights inside. He closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, and pushes the door open.

INT. DUF'S PLAYHOUSE – NIGHT

The Camera takes IAN's perspective, entering the store. We are hit with the noise and chaos of the store, filled with geeks playing games, trading cards, etc. We pass one table where three geeks are talking about Star Trek.

TREKGEEK

Maybe Vulcans could put up a fight in classic trek, but the Klingons in the later series were so much more vicious.

TREKKER

Klingons have the only civilization that, as it progresses forward in time, recedes backwards in culture!

TREKKIE

Star Trek is just philosopher kings in space anyways.

CUT TO Board Gamers.

PAT

BRIAN:

CUT TO Magic Players.

MAGICGAMER01

Need a play set of Sad Robots?

MAGICGAMER02

For a Platinum Angel? Are you nuts?

MAGICGAMER03

I'll trade up an Acroma.

MAGICGAMER02

It's a Platinum Angel. You can't lose the game while it's on the field.

MAGICGAMER03

It's also not allowed in Type II tournaments, so it's useless.

CUT TO a Dungeons and Dragon's group.

D&DGAMER01

DUNGEONMASTER

D&DGAMER02

Camera pans over to a Dungeons and Dragon's group.

Camera settles on TAI standing at the counter, looking up at the comics on the wall.
HENRY and DUF stand behind the counter.

TAI
Hey Duf. How much is that X-men issue?

DUF
40 bucks.

TAI
40... Gosh... I dunno...

DUF
This is a first appearance of Bishop, SIGNED. Marvel's most powerful telepath.

IAN'S eyes dart from person to person, watching this exchange.

HENRY
I thought Professor X was the most powerful telepath in the Marvel Universe.

TAI
Is Bishop even a telepath?

HENRY
No.

DUF
He has telekinesis then.

HENRY
He doesn't have that either. He's like a human power converter, absorbing energy and channeling it at his foes.

DUF
[Looking at Henry.]
What the hell are you still doing here?

HENRY
I work here.

DUF

Get the hell out of my store!

TAI

What's Overstreet's list it at?

Henry opens the Overstreet's price guide. Duf snatches it out of his hands.

DUF

Doesn't matter! It's signed, first appearance of Bishop, the key player in the Age of Apocalypse. 40 bucks. Take it or leave it.

DUF notices IAN, gets a look of surprise.

DUF

(Announcing)

Store's closed! Everybody get the fuck out!

IAN

(Holds out his hand across the counter)

Heya Duf-man. How ya been?

DUF starts to shake hands, but thinks better of it. Instead he comes around the counter, arms spread wide.

DUF

Heyyyyyy!

DUF hugs IAN, who looks uncomfortable at this contact.

DUF

What's up motherfucker!

IAN

Oof!

DUF

(Slaps Ian on the shoulder)

Shit man, it's been like four years!

IAN

Well, it took me that long to get my BS.

DUF

I heard man! Your mom told me you were even taking summer classes! That's some straight up nerdcore shit right there.

IAN

Nerd—what?

DUF

Nothing man, just something the kids keep saying. So how the hell have you been man?

Gamers are shuffling out of the store behind them. Henry and Tai are walking past in the background, looking at this exchange oddly.

TAI

Duf just hugged that dude.

HENRY

Maybe they're long lost lovers or something.

DUF

Get the fuck out! Store's closed!

HENRY

Okay. Okay.

DUF turns back to IAN.

DUF

Dude, look at you. With your button-up shirt. You're not even at work and your wearing a button up shirt! You fucking tool!

Uncomfortable silence. IAN looks down at himself, uncertain what to say.

IAN

Ummm....

DUF

Come on man. I'm just fucking with you. Lighten up.

IAN

I am not a tool.

(Pause, uncomfortable silence)

I prefer the term 'Useful Idiot.'

They laugh.

DUF

So admit it. You dressed up before you came over here to impress me.

IAN

(smiles knowingly)

I don't know what you're talking about.

DUF & IAN Laugh

IAN

Yeah, I guess I can drop the facade. (Unbuttons shirt, revealing rebellious geek shirt)

DUF locks the door and flips the sign to "CLOSED."

DUF

It's not like you gotta job to wear that finely-pressed shirt to.

IAN

I wear it to interviews.

DUF and IAN start to walk into the store.

DUF

(Looks back at IAN)

Like where?

IAN

I intend to wear it to interviews.

Duf flips on two(?) room lights, warmer lighting.

DUF

I gotcha. About to enter the work force. I hope you enjoyed college man, cause once the job starts, it don't stop until you're dead.

IAN

Unless you retire.

DUF

Retirement's death. At least, that's when I'll retire the way I'm going.

DUF turns off the florescent lights, making the room more friendly. We can still make out rows of fanboy merchandise in the surrounding darkness.

DUF

That's better.

IAN

You seem to be doing a lot of business.

DUF

Yeah, weekends are busy with all the gamers. Fucking geeks irritate the hell out of me sometimes, but they are my bread and butter. So how the hell are ya?

IAN

[Shrugs]

Just enjoying the respite from term papers and final exams.

DUF reaches below the counter and pulls out a bag of chess pieces and a rolled up mat of a chess board.

DUF

Right, before you have to enter the workforce.

[Sets the bag of pieces and mat down on a table.]

All right man. When you're mom told me you were in town, I immediately started thinking about old times. And I figured we could watch some TV and smoke some pot, but I don't have any pot right now and the cable's just got disconnected. So I figured I'd challenge you to a game of chess.

IAN

We always were strangely evenly matched in chess club.

DUF

You were second chair and I was like... what? Seventh? Before I dropped out I mean.

IAN

It was something like that.

DUF

(Pulls out a brown bag and pulls a bottle of Laphroig scotch from it. Presents it to IAN like a waiter presenting a bottle of wine.)
You ever had this stuff?

IAN
[Eyes light up.]
Laphroig! That's some very high-quality scotch.

DUF
It does kick ass.

DUF sets the bottle aside on the table. IAN unrolls the chess mat. DUF dumps the pieces out on it. IAN reaches to start setting up pieces.

DUF
Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!

DUF takes two pawns and holds them open palm before IAN, one white one black.

IAN
[shrugs]
Okay.

DUF puts both hands behind his back, and brings two fists out in front of him. IAN taps DUF's right hand, which opens to reveal a white pawn.

IAN
Ian takes offense.

They both begin setting up pieces on the board as fast as they can, like it's a race. They tie.

DUF
That's cool. I do better on defense anyway.

IAN
Yeah, I remember that.
[Reaches to move a pawn]
Waitaminute. Something's not right here.

DUF
Yeah, your king and queen are wrong.

IAN
No. Your's are wrong. The Queen's always on her own color.

DUF

No. King's always on his own color.

IAN

[quoting]

“The queen is a fashionable lady. She likes her dress to match her shoes.”

DUF

[confused]

HUH?

IAN

It's a mnemonic device. We learned it in chessclub.

DUF

I thought you majored in Anthropology.

IAN

Huh?

DUF

Nah man. The king should match his own color because he's the most important piece on the board.

IAN

No.

DUF

[holds out his hand]

Bet me!

IAN

No.

DUF

Then you admit I'm right.

IAN

Uh.. Noooooo. You have Internet?

DUF

Yeah. You wanna look it up?

IAN

Uh... Yeah.

They both get up and walk over to the computer. DUF opens google.com.

IAN

Google "Queen on her own color" in quotation marks. Or better yet, google "The queen is a fashionable lady." I bet that'll bring it up right away. Or you could try using a Boolean modifier to--

While IAN is talking, DUF types in "setting up a chessboard."

IAN

Oh.

An image of a chessboard comes up. DUF points at the Queen on her own color.

DUF

Oh yeah. It is Queen on her own color. That's right.

They both return to the board.

IAN

What was that you just used?

DUF

Google images.

IAN

I didn't know it had that feature.

DUF

You didn't? It's great for looking up free porn. You never heard of it? I thought you were supposed to be some Web wizard.

IAN

Web guru. That's the great thing about the Internet. It's so big, no two people use it the same way.

They sit down to the table. DUF switches his Queen and King, stares at them.

DUF

Oh yeah. That does look right. Queen on the right.

IAN

Or on the left if you're white. See? We mirror each other?

1. IAN MOVES e2 - e4.

1. DUF MOVES e7 - e5.

IAN

[**2. MOVES g1 - f3.**]

Ian opens with the King's Knight.

DUF

[**2. MOVES d7 - d5.**]

Duf responds by pushing a pawn. See I'm using this new opening where I attack with both pawns.

IAN

The Queen's Pawn Counter-Gambit. That's a semi-standard, although unorthodox opening.

DUF

Yeah, but I came up with it myself.

IAN

You didn't come up with it. It's a textbook opening.

DUF

But I didn't read about it in one of your books. So for me this is a Duf original.

IAN

Technically all openings are textbook openings. There's only so many pieces you can develop at this point.

3. IAN MOVES d2 – d4. He then pulls out a small sheet of paper and makes a note on it.

DUF

[Pauses, reaching for his pawn.]

What's that?

IAN

[Writing.]

A log of our game.

DUF

A log? Whaddyou need a log for?

IAN

In case any discrepancies come up.

DUF

Like what?

IAN

You know... discrepancies.

DUF

Such as?

IAN

[Shrugs, looks up.]

Like... uh... One of us makes an illegal move or something and the other doesn't notice it. Or the pieces get knocked over or something. We can reconstruct the game from these notes.

DUF

[Reaches for the log]

Dude. It's just a friendly game of chess. Have fun with it. Put the notes away.

IAN

[Clutching notes closer to himself and away from DUF.]

You know, technically we're both supposed to be keeping a log of the game, in case there are discrepancies in my log, we could compare it to your version and see which is more accurate.

DUF

Maybe technically we should have some neutral witnesses to record the game in case we *both* get it wrong.

IAN

You mean 'impartial observers.'

DUF

Drop the note-taking dude.

IAN

It's a habit.

DUF

Since when?

IAN

Since chess club.

DUF

Our chess club never took notes.

IAN

The University chess club did.

DUF

That's seems pretty uptight to me.

IAN

Yeah, it's kinda anal, but it's also practical. You wanna learn how to do it?

DUF

[3. Moves d5 – e4]

Nah. I ain't taking notes man. I'm just trying to have fun...
Duf draws first blood! .Drink motherfucker!

IAN takes a delicate sip of Scotch.

DUF

No! I mean take a shot!

IAN

I'm not taking a shot of Laphroig! That's a \$50 bottle of scotch. You're supposed to sip it.

DUF

Ah, you're no fun. Whatever happened to "Mad Dog" Ian?

IAN

Excuse me?

DUF

[Laughing, waving away his statement.]
I just made that up. You've always been a pussy.

IAN

Thanks.
[Takes another sip of scotch, inhales deeply, savoring the flavor.]
I love how the charcoal flavor infuses your nostrils. It's very aromatic, like drinking hickory smoke.

DUF

[Takes a shot, swishes it back and forth through his teeth, swallows, winces.]
Yeah, it's some wicked shit.

IAN

You know, these records have come in handy on more than one occasion. One time I was in a very competitive game where I had just lost my queen, and while we were taking a recess from the game I reviewed the record of moves. You know what? I found out my opponent had set up his pieces wrong. His king and queen were switched, so I was able to recover and eventually beat him.

DUF

Reviewing the moves?

Slow zoom in on IAN as he relates this.

IAN

Yeah, I was studying the game, trying to understand all the possible ways it could play out. There are a dozen possible first moves for white in the game, and a dozen possible responses for black. So there's 12 branches of possibility from move one, multiplied by black's 12 responses, comes out to 144 opening rounds, and, depending on the move made, opens up more pieces and more possibilities. All these branches, and as we move through time choosing our moves, some branches disappear. All possible games are branches at the outset of play, like a giant wave-function, and as we mutually decide the outcome, we collapse the world of possibilities into a single timeline. Unless the quantum theory of parallel worlds holds true, in which case we are splitting our world into multiple parallel worlds every time we move, spawning other worlds where we chose to make a different move.

DUF

[Off scene.]

You fucking dork.

IAN wakes out of his thought process at this.

IAN

[4. MOVES f3 – e5]

Ian responds to Duf's attack in kind.

DUF

[4. MOVES g8 – f6.]

I just took my shot.

IAN

[5. MOVES c1 – c3.]

And Ian wins the opening gambit.

DUF

What are you talking about? We've both got the same number of pieces.

IAN

[Points at the knight.]

Yes, but I've established a knight outpost.

DUF

So? What does that mean?

IAN

It means I've established control of the center of the board.

DUF

[Gesturing with his hands around the center of the board.]
Whoopdie shit. I always attack from the sides anyway.

IAN

Which will split your forces in two.

DUF

And let me surround your precious little knight thingamabob.

IAN

Knight outpost.

DUF

Whatever. I'm gonna kill it from all sides.

IAN

[Getting frustrated.]

There's not enough room on the board to-- You know what? Forget it. This is all hypothetical speculation anyway.

DUF

Exactly, you'll see how it plays out for real.

[5. MOVES f8 – d6.]

Duf brings out the worlds most powerful telepath.

IAN

The black Bishop.

[6. MOVES f1 - c4.]

I thought you said he was a telekinetic... and then that one kid said he was more of a power converter.

DUF

A person with telekinetic powers is a power converter. It's redundant. He telekinetically converts the energy.

IAN

[Frowning. Confused.]

I'm out of my league on this topic.

6. DUF CASTLES. He moves the rook over and then the king.

IAN

[Reaches for his knight, but stops, thinking.]

Damn.

DUF

What?

IAN

Nothing.

DUF

Tell me.

IAN

I was hoping you wouldn't see me going for the fork.

DUF

What fork?

IAN

The knight fork.

DUF looks confused.

IAN

But you castled before I could get there.

DUF
[Thinking.]

Huh.

IAN
When did you start castling? You never used to castle.

DUF
I dunno man. I don't know why I did it. I'm usually not that smart.

IAN
I'll say. You know, technically when you castle, you're supposed to move the king first.

DUF
Why's that?

IAN
[shrugs]
It's just proper etiquette.

DUF
What'd you read that in Miss Manners or something?

IAN
Proper chess etiquette. Like when you're at a tournament, if you touch a piece you have to move it.

DUF
Really?

IAN
Yep. Bobby Fisher used to sit on his hands to keep himself from touching pieces during a match.

IAN
Unless you announced you were adjusting the piece.

DUF
[Starts touching pieces]
I adjust. I adjust. I adjust. I adjust.

IAN
Cute.

DUF

[Semi-sarcastically.]

Sorry dude, I'll try to remember to touch the king first when I castle again.

IAN

[Looks confused.]

You know you can only castle once a ga—

DUF

I know! I was joking!

7. IAN MOVES b1 - c3.

DUF

[7. MOVES c8 - f5.]

Going for the pawn.

IAN

[V.O.]

Let's see.... How to untangle this in my favor. Okay...
Knight takes pawn. [c3-e4] Knight takes knight. [f6-e4]
No.

So push a pawn. [f2-f3] Pawn takes pawn takes pawn. [e4-f3] [g2-f3] Safe there.

Pawn takes pawn. [f3-e4] Knight or Bishop takes pawn. [f6-e4] [f5-e4] Knight takes either or... [c3-e4] and gets taken by the other... further strengthening my case for securing the Kings fourth square.

Unless... Bishop takes... [d6-e5] ... Pawn takes... [d4-e5]
Hmmm.... Opens a b-line to exchange queens. Duf would hate that this early in the game.

Best to play conservatively. Keep supporting pieces. Let him make the first mistake and capitalize on it.

8. IAN MOVES f2 - f3.

DUF

[V.O.]

Ian's probably doing that thing where he tries to focus everything on getting one pawn more than me battling it

out over the center of the board. I'll just sneak my knight in along the sidelines to do some damage.

DUF

[8. MOVES b8 - c6.]

You really want that pawn don't you?

IAN

[9. MOVES d1 - e2.]

No. No. No. After you.

DUF

[9. MOVES c6 - b4.]

Please sir, I insist.

IAN

[10. MOVES c4 - f7.]

Check.

DUF

[10. MOVES f8 - f7.]

Ooookay.

11. IAN moves e5 - f7.

11. DUF moves g8 - f7.

DUF

I came off better on that one.

IAN

That was an even exchange.

DUF

How do you figure? I got your Bishop and your Knight. All you got was my Rook?

IAN

And your pawn.

DUF

So? I still got two major pieces to your one.

IAN

The knight and bishop are worth three points each. The rook is worth five because of its importance in the end game, when the board is cleared. The pawn is worth one point. Ergo, we both captured six points worth of pieces; however, I also led out your king.

DUF

Well ipso facto corpus pluribus unum. So fuckin' what?

IAN

[12. MOVES e2 - c4]

So check.

[Pause]

And it's pronounced "pluribus."

DUF

[12. MOVES f5-e6]

Butt pirate.

IAN

Butt Muncher.

DUF

Cock Gobbler.

IAN

Cock Jockey.

DUF

Cum Drinker.

IAN

No. No. No. You gotta watch the alliteration. Co-ck. Gobbler. Cooock. Gooobler. Cock Gobbler. Instead of Cum Drinker, try Cum Guzzler. Cuuuum. Guuuuzzler. Alliteration.

DUF

Glad to see all those years at College were good for something man.

They Laugh.

DUF

You... Fucking Faggot.

IAN

Well done.

[Pause.]

Although there's nothing wrong with being gay.

DUF

There's nothing wrong with you being gay.

13. IAN MOVES d4 - d5.

DUF

[13. MOVES b4 - c2]

Check.

[pause, leans over to point at the board.]

That's a knight fork by the way.

IAN

It is.

DUF

You know. That thing you tried to pull off earlier.

IAN

Uh huh.

DUF

But I castled before you could do it.

IAN

Yep.

DUF

Oh and you can't castle out of check by the way.

IAN

Thank you.

DUF

In case you thought I forgot about that.

IAN

I didn't.

DUF

In case you were hoping to pull a fast one on me.

IAN

I wasn't.

DUF

Come on man! Get worked up! I'm trying to piss you off.

IAN

[Deadpan.]

I am worked up.

There is a long, tense silence. Both characters are staring at the board intensely. IAN is a statue. DUF's leg is bouncing. Cut to close up of the board from IAN's perspective. Cut to close up of the board from DUF's perspective.

The next 7 moves happen like an avalanche of action that comes to a dead stop.

14. IAN MOVES e1 – d2.

14. DUF MOVES c2 - a1.

15. IAN MOVES d5 - e6.

15. DUF MOVES f7 - e7

IAN

Check.

16. IAN MOVES h1 - a1.

16. MOVES e4 - f3.

17. IAN MOVES g2 - f3.

Pregnant pause.

DUF

[Starts off quietly breaking the silence, but builds in confidence.]

You know, that knight and bishop I just exchanged was actually worth the same points as your rook and pawn. Just in case you think you got the upper hand on that one.

IAN

Deja Vu.

DUF

Plus I led out your king.

[17. MOVES d6 - h2.]

And that pawn my friend is gonna cost you the game.

IAN

[Points to e6]

No, that pawn right there is the game.

DUF

I'm a pawn up. All I have to do now is go for even exchanges.

IAN

My pawn has your pieces pinned, exchanges are irrelevant.

IAN

[18. MOVES a1 - d1]

See?

18. DUF MOVES d8 - g8

The camera wobbles and flies over the board, following IAN's attention to the pieces.

IAN

[V.O.]

Okay Ian, stay on offense, don't lose the advantage. I can move the queen into his ranks. That would put him in check and even out the pawns-- No, that's right. His Bishop's all the way across the board waiting to take it. Whatever you do Ian, don't push the queen.

Okay, so how about the rook. I can push his king around with it and capture a pawn or two... No, he can exchange his knight for it. That's no good. The knight isn't much better. I don't want to go into an even exchange of pieces with him a pawn up on me. Maybe I should just push a pawn?

Oh, wait! I can attack with the queen.

IAN

[IAN MOVES c4 - c7.]

Check.

DUF

Uhhhh... Okay.

DUF MOVES h2 - c7.

Shazzbot!
IAN

You wanna take back?
DUF

No.
IAN

Come on dude. You obviously had a brain fart. Happens to everybody. Take the move back. Here.
DUF

DUF offers IAN the queen.

Gah... Okay.
IAN

IAN takes it without looking at it.

Just remember, if you win, it doesn't count because I let you have a take back.
DUF

Damn. I was afraid of that.
IAN

Make a note about that on your little log thingy. "Duf gave Ian take-backsies."
DUF

19. IAN MOVES e3 - c5.

You hungry? I'm hungry. Wanna order some delivery?
[Picks up a phone.]
Whaddya like on your pizza?
DUF

Mushrooms, tomatoes, and broccoli.
IAN

I can't eat any of that shit man.
[Puts the phone down.]
DUF

IAN

Okay, how about black olives...

[Pauses seeing DUF's tongue sticking out in disgust.]

Green peppers...? Pineapple...?

DUF

Nah man, I can't take vegetables on my pizza.

IAN

Pineapples are a fruit.

DUF

Well then too. Tell you what. We'll get half a pizza with your stuff on it and the other half I'll get anchovies and jalapenos.

IAN

But jalapenos are a--

[Shakes the thought out of his head.]

Never mind! Anchovies and jalapenos aren't something you can put on half a pizza. Their flavors will spread and ruin my half.

DUF

Okay... So... What...? Chinese?

IAN

Okay.

DUF

Nah man, I hate Chinese.

IAN

How about Sushi?

DUF

Barf man. I ain't eatin' no raw fish.

IAN

What about the Mediterranean place?

DUF

Nah, they put all that vinegar on their food.

IAN

It's called Jerk seasoning.

DUF

Well it's gross.

IAN

There's nothing wrong with vinegar. I like it on my pussy.

DUF gives IAN a funny and suspicious look.

IAN

I mean when I'm eating someone else's pussy.

DUF

Uh huh.

IAN

A girl's pussy

DUF

Right.

IAN

That didn't come out right.

DUF

Have you ever eaten a girl out?

IAN

Sure I have.

DUF

So you haven't. Oh damn!

[Wide eyes dart back and forth in realization.]

D-dude... Are you a virgin?

IAN

No!

DUF

It's okay if you are.

IAN

I'm not a virgin.

DUF

It's nothing to be ashamed of.

IAN

I've had sex.

DUF

[Skeptical look]

IAN

With a girl.

DUF

Who?

IAN

It's your move.

DUF

Come on man! I'm trying to get you on some ass!

IAN

I've gotten on plenty of asses! All throughout college I was banging psych-majors two at a time! They were dropping out of school left and right,

[Stands up and thrusts his hips forward unimpressively.]
struck dazed by my virility!

DUF

That's the spirit! If you're gonna bullshit, you should go no holds barred! Ha! Ha! But it doesn't change the fact that you're a virgin.

IAN

I'm not a virgin.

DUF

There's a party at Erin's house tomorrow night. You should come out.

IAN

I can't. I've got to work on sending out another batch of resumes.

DUF

You can do that Sunday. The mail won't go out until Monday anyway.

IAN

Yeah, but I need to revise my resume before I send it out, and I need to give myself a little space from it between Saturday and Sunday before that final polish.

DUF

You can edit your resume Sunday, polish Monday, and send out the mail Monday afternoon. Then you can hang tomorrow.

IAN

Ummmmm... No.

DUF

[19. MOVES e7 - e8.]

Knew I'd reduce you to that eventually. The boy understands Quantum physics, but pussy dumbfounds him.

20. IAN MOVES c4 - a4.

IAN

I had this Lebanese exchange student for a dorm mate my sophomore year and--

DUF

You mean an Arab?

IAN

Yeah, well--

DUF

Was he a Muslim?

IAN

Yes, but he told me--

DUF

Is it true Muslims have to wipe their asses with soap--

IAN

I don't think that's pertinent--

DUF

Cause Jimmy had a neighbor who was Muslim and he had these soap bars covered with sh--

IAN

Anyways, my roommate and I were talking about how chess originated in Persia, and that at the games conclusion you announce "The King is Dead." and he said "Shah mat," get it? Shah mat. Shah dead. It's Arabic.

DUF

Oh, yeah, I get it. Shah, like one of those Alibaba guys with the towel and stuff.

IAN

Um, yeah. Like an Arabian prince of sorts. Like the Shah of Iran or something.

DUF

That's pretty cool.

IAN

I thought so.

DUF

[20. MOVES c7 - c6.]

Shah mat.

21. IAN MOVES e6 - e7.

DUF

[21. MOVES g8 - e6.]

Check.

22. IAN MOVES e2 - f2.

DUF

[22. MOVES f6 - d7.]

Shah Mat... You know that sorta adds a whole new layer to the game.

[Waves a hand over the board]

Chess has always made me think of knights and kings and broadswords and catholics... but really its turbans and camels and scimitars and mercedes benzes...

IAN

And instead of a Queen they had a Vizicar... an advisor to the Shah.

DUF

Don't know what that would look like.

IAN

Me neither.

[23. MOVES a4 - d4.]

Mercedes Benzes?

DUF

It was a joke man. I'm not that much of a dumbass.

[23. MOVES d7 - c5.]

Drink.

IAN

You know I saw this movie, "The Seventh Seal"—

DUF

A great accomplishment in itself.

IAN

--and its about this knight whose come back from the crusades and death comes for him, but the knight convinces death to play him in a game of chess, and if the knight wins he gets to keep his life.

DUF

That's cool, but I guess the knight doesn't win.

IAN

No.

DUF

Can't beat death. Is that out on DVD?

IAN

Yeah, but none of the video stores carry it.

DUF

I'd like to see that.

IAN

It's subtitled.

DUF

So? I can read.

IAN

Well... Yeah... but...

DUF

But what?

IAN

Most people don't like subtitles.

DUF

I'm down with it. Comics are nothing but subtitles anyway.

IAN

[24. MOVES d4 - g7]

Drink.

DUF takes a shot.

DUF

[V.O.]

Huh? Ian doesn't make any move without over thinking it. He didn't take my knight in exchange for his bishop. So he's probably got some really big trick up his sleeve. He's all up on my king. So maybe he's seeing some check mate possibility there... or... something, but what's to stop me from taking that pawn? Ahhh... There's gotta be something there. What's the big picture? What's the trick?

[Pause.]

Oh hell, he did just give up his queen like an idiot.

DUF

[24. MOVES e6 - e7]

Drink.

25. IAN MOVES d1 - e1. Pinning DUF's queen in front of his king.

DUF

Fuck!

[pause]

Waitaminute.

[25. MOVES c5 - e6]

Unfucked.

IAN

[27. MOVES g7 - h8.]

Check.

[Gets up.]

Excuse me.

DUF

Gotta powder your nose.

IAN

That's one euphemism for urination.

DUF

Tiny little bladder can't handle a few shots, huh?

IAN

[Walks off scene.]

Guess not.

DUF

[Calling after him.]

I got some Hustler's under the sink if you need to spank the monkey.

IAN

[Offscene, voice fading into the distance.]

Thanks. I'll keep that in mind.

IAN goes to Bathroom. DUF goes to take a sip of scotch, thinks better of it and pours some of his glass into IAN's. Then he reaches into the back of gummy bears and takes out a handful of them. He takes one, licks it, and then sticks it to another. He does this several more time, putting the stuck-together gummi-bears around the scotch bottle.

He pops the rest of the handful in his mouth and leans over the board chewing. He starts moving the pieces around, trying out several ways of rearranging them. We hear a toilet flush in the background and a door open. DUF leans back casually, with another handful of gummi bears.

IAN

[Sits down to table, and gives the board a funny look for awhile.]

You know, when you rearrange the pieces, you should make sure you're not giving your Queen away.

[Takes the Queen]

DUF

[Snatching the Queen back]

Okay man. I was just seeing if you would notice.

27. DUF MOVES e7 - f8.

IAN

The Vizicar to the Shah invented Chess, so the myth goes, and the Shah was so happy with the game that he promised the Vizicar whatever he wanted as a gift for creating it. So the Vizicar tells the Shah he wants one grain for the first square, two for the second, four for the third, eight for the fourth and so on.

DUF

Man, you are just mister fuckin' factoid aren't you.

IAN

And the Shah says, "Sure!" and orders his servants to fulfill the request. So they get to calculating it up and quickly find out that there isn't enough grain in the whole kingdom to satisfy the request.

DUF

So what happened to the Vizicar. The King execute him?

IAN

I don't know. That's not in the story.

DUF

Man that's bunk.

IAN

No, think about it. It's an elegant demonstration of the power of exponential growth. See?

[Pointing at each square]

1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512--

DUF

I get it man.

IAN

--1024, 2048, 4096, 8192, 16384, 32768--

DUF

The numbers get really really big. Right.

IAN

[Struggling, doing the math in his head]

65536... 131072... 262144... 524... uh... 2... crap!

DUF

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. We all respect and admire your big brain. Now get over yourself and hang out.

IAN

[28. MOVES e1 - e6]

Check.

DUF

Fucked again.

IAN

And drink.

DUF

Get your priorities straight friend.

[Takes a shot. Points commandingly.]

It's "Drink Motherfucker!" and then "Check."

28. DUF MOVES e8 - d7.

IAN

[29. MOVES h8 - f8.]

Drink.

DUF

[Reaches to the board, pauses.]

How many points is a queen?

IAN

Huh? Uhhhh... Nine.

DUF

[29. MOVES a8 - f8. and pours two fresh glasses of scotch.]

Let's drink nine times.

IAN

[Eyeing the full glass of scotch warily.]

Let's not and say we did.

They both lean back, considering the chessboard and swishing their scotches in their glasses.

DUF

Remember Russell Dumbfuck?

IAN

I remember, that quasi-retarded skinhead you used to hang out with.

DUF

Well, it wasn't like I was trying to hang out with him man. He just sorta always seemed to show up wherever we were.

IAN

[Nodding.]

Anyways...

DUF

Anyways, he just finished getting his Psychology degree.

IAN

Russell the love-muscle got a Psychology degree?

DUF

Yeah, and here we always thought he was just some meathead.

IAN

Oh he's still a meathead. It's just now he's a meathead with a Psychology degree.

DUF

Yeah, no shit. I remember that one summer I spent every single day drinking with him at his grandmother's house... You know, the one with all the rats we'd throw blankets over and stomp with our boots.

IAN

This is not a shared experience.

DUF

You know man. The one that got condemned. It was in the paper.

IAN

[Shaking his head.]

No.

DUF

Anyways... I was getting completely trashed there every night. Just out of my mind. And one morning I crawled off

my blanket and went into the bathroom and found an earring on the end of my dick.

Shot of IAN, look of astonishment.

DUF

Dude, Russell Dumbfuck pierced my dick head while I was passed out. I took the mothefucker out right away, but it got all infected and shit and I was terrified my damn willy was gonna fall off. I mean, it didn't... obviously, cause I haven't committed suicide, but I've been pissing in two streams ever since.

IAN

[Same uncomfortable, astonished look.]
You're kidding right?

DUF

I never told you about that?

IAN

I think I would remember.

DUF

Well anyways... That much is a true story... but get this. I'm at a bar last year downtown? And I run into Mike Stanton.

IAN

[Knodding]

Diaper Mike.

DUF

Yeah, and he tells me he ran into this other classmate who says he saw me come into the bathroom in school once and that I pissed in two urinals at the same time.

IAN

Chinese whispers. Stories change with every telling.

DUF

Yeah. No shit. Like how you got to be the guy who had a cucumber up his ass.

IAN

[Shaking his head.]

It was a tampon. I was constipated. My mother gave me an enema. How the hell did it become a damn cucumber?

DUF

Russel Dumbfuck.

IAN

Great. I'm gonna go to our 10-year reunion and everyone's gonna remember me as that guy with the cucumber stuck up his butt.

DUF

That's cool. You'll be hanging out with the guy with an earring on the end of his dick.

IAN

My life is over.

30. IAN MOVES e6 - h6.

DUF

Man, we had some good times.

IAN

Yeah... well... For a while.

DUF

Waddya mean?

IAN

Until we started getting on each other's nerves.

DUF

What are you talking about?

IAN

We were bickering like an old married couple.

DUF

Nah man, we had good times.

IAN

Don't you remember what it was like there towards the end? Right before I left? Every night, night after night, sitting in your room watching TV. Zoning out, waiting for the Simpsons to come on, and then putting up with half an

hour of flipping channels waiting for X-Files. Smoking pot and cigarettes until midnight... it was like we were just waiting for life to be over.

DUF

We had good times man.

IAN

That's just nostalgia. You and me, sitting in your room all the time, not because we enjoyed each other's company, but because it was habit... and we didn't know what else to do. Aggravated about the fact that nothing was happening, but too afraid to break the cycle.

[Pause]

It was like Sartre's description of hell.

DUF

What's that?

IAN

Hell is other people.

[Pause]

It's your move by the way.

DUF

Yeah.

[Pause]

You telling me you don't like the Simpsons anymore?

IAN

I'm telling you getting away from here was a good thing.

DUF

So I was draggin you down, huh?

IAN

A good thing for both of us. We were codependent, enabling each other in a perpetual cycle of doing nothing. Look at you, I left and you started a comic shop. You were instantly a thousand times better off after you got away from me.

DUF

I did start getting laid a lot more.

Pan over to IAN.

IAN

I hate you.

DUF

It was like the moment you were gone the chicks started comin' outta the woodwork scrambling to get on my jimmy.

IAN

[Shaking his head.]

God you suck.

DUF

Almost as if you were some kind of geeky leprous growth on my neck and the moment you were gone the girls saw that I was cool and wanted to have sex with me.

IAN

[Pointing from his eyes at DUF.]

Daggers... Daggers... Daggers...

Long pause. DUF's smile slowly drops.

DUF

[30. MOVES h2 - e5.]

Man. That hurts my feelings.

IAN

What?

DUF

That stuff about me dragging you down.

IAN

I didn't say that.

DUF

Yeah you did. You just said it very politely.

Uncomfortable silence.

IAN

So how's business?

DUF

[Shrugs]

S'Okay. Just wish I'd gone with a different name.

IAN

How's that?

DUF

"Duf's Playhouse," people think it's an adult toy store.

IAN

Oh... wow... yeah, that's unfortunate.

DUF

It doesn't help that I've got nothing but ugly guys hanging out here all day.

IAN

I see your point.

[Pause. **31. MOVES h6 - h7.**]

And with that you lose your pawn advantage.

DUF

Enjoy it while it lasts man.

[Takes a shot. **32. MOVES e5 – d4.**]

Check.

IAN

[Nodding]

Ah yes. A good retort. Reminds me of Deep Blue's response to Kasparov in round three of their epic battle, the first in which a computer successfully beat a human being.

DUF gives this statement a funny look.

DUF

Are you shittin' me?

IAN

[**33. IAN MOVES f2 - e2.**]

I shit you not my friend.

34. DUF MOVES d4 - c3. DUF regard IAN suspiciously.

34. IAN MOVES b2 - c3.

35. DUF MOVES b7 – b5.

IAN

Wa-! Wa-! Wa-! Wa-! Wa-! Wa-! Wa-! You're in check!

DUF

When did you get me in check?

IAN

I—uh...

DUF

You're supposed to call that shit you know.

IAN

I did call it. You just didn't hear me.

DUF

I call bullshit.

IAN

[Pulling out his chess notation sheet]

Hold on! I can remedy this.

[Snaps the sheet]

Ha!

[Scrutinizing the sheet]

Okay... So... Queen's Knight five to Queen's Knight seven. [b5 – b7] Queen's Bishop three to Queen's Knight two. [c3 – b2] You get your bishop back. [c3] Queen's Bishop three to Queen four. [c3 – d4] I get my knight back.

DUF

No way dude.

IAN

Yes way, and then... King two to King's Bishop two. [e2 – f2] Puts me in check until we undo your bishop with Queen's four to King's five. [d4 – e5]

Ah ha! Which brings me to King's Rook six to King's Rook seven, taking the pawn and putting you in check.

DUF

That's not what happened!

IAN

Is so! See? It says right here!

DUF snatches the paper out of IAN's hand, frowning at it.

DUF

What the fuck is this? I can't read this!

IAN

Descriptive notation. See, this means King's Pawn. That means Queen's Rook. Bishop's Pawn. Etcetera. Etcetera. Etcetera.

DUF

Why can't you just use the A B C one two three labels on the damn chessboard? A-5 to B-Whatever?

IAN

Algebraic notation sucks!

DUF

But it makes more sense!

IAN

Oh bullshit! A-5 to B-7. You sunk my battleship! Algebraic notation's for pussies!

[Pause, folds arms over his chest, pouting.]

FUCK Algebraic Notation!

DUF

Dude this game is all kinds of fucked up.

IAN

Check! It's your move.

DUF looks at him skeptically.

IAN

I mean...

[Points at DUF. The words sound funny and stiff coming from IAN.]

Drink motherfucker! And you're in check.

DUF

[Takes a shot.]

Didn't I already drink for that pawn?

[31. MOVES d7 - c8.]

IAN

[32. MOVES a2 - a4.]

Yep.

DUF

[32. MOVES e5 - d4]

So you gotta drink one to catch up. Check.

IAN

Okay.

[Takes a shot. 33. MOVES f2 - g2.]

Camera focuses on the board during the following dance between the rook and king.

DUF

[33. MOVES f8 - g8. Unenthusiastically.]

Check. Drink motherfucker.

IAN

[34. MOVES g2 - h3.]

Were drinking for captured pieces, not checking one another.

DUF

[34. MOVES g8 - f8]

So just drink motherfucker and forget the check.

IAN

[35. MOVES h3 - g2]

I don't fuck people's mothers.

DUF

[35. MOVES f8 - g8]

Check. Drink motherfucker.

IAN

[36. MOVES g2 - h3]

Déjà vu.

DUF

[36. MOVES d4 - c3]

Now drink motherfucker.

IAN

[37. MOVES b2 - c3.]

No, why don't you drink motherfucker.

Slow pan down the scotch bottle to reveal only remnants. Around the bottle's base, there are gummy-bears stuck in various sexual positions.

DUF
[V.O.]
Majored in Anthropology, huh?

IAN
[V.O.]
Yeah.

DUF
[V.O.]
I bet there's a lot you can do with a degree like that.

IAN
[V.O.]
Um.

CUT TO shot of DUF and IAN talking.

DUF
So you got any jobs lined up?

IAN
I've been sending out resumes.

DUF
So you don't got any jobs lined up.

IAN
Well... getting a job isn't everything.

DUF
Uh-huh.

IAN
It's doing what you enjoy that's important.

DUF
So what are you gonna do that you enjoy?

IAN
I was thinking of getting a Masters degree.

DUF

Another degree? In what?

IAN

A Masters in Anthropology.

DUF

You're joking right? You all ready got one worthless degree, so you're gonna get another useless degree?

IAN

It's not a useless degree. It's—

DUF

What can you do with it?

IAN

That's not the point—

DUF

Yes it is! You gotta get a good-paying job to pay off all those student loans.

IAN

That's not why I—

DUF

I know that's not why you went to college. You went to postpone real life for four years.

IAN

“Postpone real life???” I worked my ass off to get my bachelors! I was pulling two-dozen all-nighters a year!

DUF

So what? I pull all-nighters all the time.

IAN

Working all-nighters, not binge-drinking all night.

DUF

Oh... right.

IAN

[Long pause, angry face drops, replaced with amusement]
Waitamminute... You thought I meant... Ha! Ha! Ha!

DUF

[defensively]

Well... I always hear about all the partying that goes on at college... Keggers... Frat Houses... Sorority Girls...

IAN

Yeah, there's a lot of that.

DUF

But you didn't take part in it.

IAN

I went to a few parties.

DUF

You mean you missed out on the best part of college?

IAN

I was busy. I had a lot of course work.

DUF

With a party major like Anthropology?

IAN

Hey! It's a legitimate major—(stops, seeing DUF is joking)

IAN

Make up your mind. Either I was postponing real life for partying or working.

DUF

If you say you were working, then that's what you were postponing your life for, so you could read books.

IAN

There was a lot of writing involved too, you know, research.

DUF

All so you could get out into the cut throat world of Anthropology.

IAN

What would you have majored in?

DUF

I dunno... something practical, like computers. You could be making a lot of money in computers.

IAN

Money isn't everything.

DUF

That's what I mean! Only someone who doesn't know anything about real life would say something that... that...

IAN

I think the word you're looking for is 'naïve.'

DUF

Yeah! Dumb in an unrealistic way! Money IS everything! The only reason you can say something so... so... naïve is because you haven't had to pay any bills in your whole life! You've just been living off the student loans, burying your head in the books, and eating at the cafeterias. That's not real life! That's summer camp!

IAN

[fuming]

It's still your move.

DUF

Yeah.

DUF concentrates on the board. They sit in silence for several tense moments.

IAN

[voice trembling]

So... Your assertion that I have been "postponing real life," as you put it, implies that you have been actively engaging real life while I was at College.

DUF

Now that's not—

IAN

How many different jobs have you had since high school?

DUF

I was working my way up—

IAN

How long were you living with your parents before you got this apartment?

DUF

I was paying them rent.

IAN

Uh huh.

DUF

I was paying them rent!

IAN

What? You were paying them rent. That's great.

DUF

So you think I was just goofing off the whole time you were at college.

IAN

Did I say that?

DUF

You're thinking it.

IAN

If you want to be a mind-reader, you should major in psychology, not computers.

DUF

And if you want to bullshit effectively, you should have gone to law school. Just call me a slacker!

IAN

That's not what I think. I just wanted you to realize that while you're sitting there, criticizing my life, you haven't exactly been the model of responsibility.

DUF

See? That's what I mean. "Model of Responsibility," you're always talking down to me. Just call me a slacker! Don't make yourself superior while you do it!

IAN

That's exactly what I'm saying to you! Don't lord your real-world experiences over me!

DUF

That's what I'm saying—Waitaminute... What the fuck are we arguing about?

IAN

I dunno man. I'm drunk. It's your move.

They sit in silence.

DUF

So is psychology a good party major?

IAN

It's the best of all party majors.

DUF

Cool.

IAN

Lot's of freaky chicks major in psychology.

DUF

Sweeeeeet.

IAN

Well... best party major after phys-ed that is.

DUF

Of course... nobody can party like the jocks.

IAN

Fucking meatheads.

DUF

I'll drink to that.

They tap glasses and drink to this.

DUF

So they got meatheads in college too.

IAN

They got meatheads everywhere.

DUF

We got squids, you got jocks.

IAN

It's like different breeds of the same species.

DUF

Yeah man, different kinds of assholes.

IAN

It's still your move.

DUF

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

37. DUF MOVES a7 - a6.

IAN

[Nodding]

Mm-Hm. An amusingly pretentious stratagem, reminiscent of Kramnik's gambit against Deep Fritz in game six of their eight-game man versus machine match up. You know, he accepted a loss when he could have forced a draw, but by that time the strain of competing against a tireless machine was wearing him down.

DUF

Kind of like how that alcohol is wearing down your ability to bullshit.

IAN

I prefer to think of it as my skills of rhetorical persuasion.

DUF

It's still bullshitting man.

IAN

Bullshit by any other name?

DUF

Would smell like bullshit.

38. IAN MOVES a4 - a5

38. DUF MOVES b7 - b5

IAN

[Eagerly **39. MOVES a5 - b6.**]

En Passant.

DUF

What the hell was that?

IAN

En Passant.

DUF

Nah man, back up. I moved here. Then you moved here and took my pawn.

IAN

That's called En Passant.

DUF

I call bullshit.

IAN

What!?!?

DUF

You totally just made that shit up.

IAN

It's a real move! It was added to the game in like the 14th or 15th century!

DUF

Yeah right, ha ha. Real funny. Now seriously give me back my pawn.

IAN

You've got internet. Go look it up!

DUF is skeptical.

IAN

You want me to look it up for you?

DUF

[Pause, measuring IAN]

Nahhhh... You can have your en piss-ant.

IAN

Passant.

Pregnant pause.

DUF

You know, technically, you have to hold your pinky out like this when you en pissaunt.

IAN

Passant.

39. DUF MOVES a6 - a5

40. IAN MOVES h7 - c7.

IAN

Check.

DUF

[40. MOVES c8 - b8.]

Bastard.

IAN

[41. MOVES c7 - c6.]

Drink.

DUF

Bastard.

[Starts to take a shot, but stops and puts the glass down. He rubs his hands together deviously.]

Ah, perfect. You fell into my trap. This is a special move called Zugzwang Simulacrum.

DUF reaches out over the board mischievously.

IAN

[Gesturing at the computer, smiling.]

Do I need to look this one up?

DUF

[Leans back in his seat, shaking his head, muttering]
En Pissaunt.

41. DUF MOVES b8 - b7.

IAN

[42. MOVES c6 - d6.]

Passaunt.

DUF

[42. MOVES a5 - a4.]

Duf goes for the gold.

43. IAN MOVES c3 - c4.

DUF

[43. MOVES a4 - a3.]

You gonna let me get that queen or are you gonna let me have those pawns?

IAN

Neither nor...

[44. MOVES c4 - c5. His hand remains poised over the pawn he just let go.]

Ah crap.

DUF

[44. MOVES a3 - a2.]

You sure you wanna let me have that queen?

IAN

[45. MOVES d6 - d1]

That was dumb.

DUF

[45. MOVES g8 - c8]

You forgot about my rook?

IAN

I didn't forget about anything. I am completely omniscient over this eight-by-eight board. The winds of my ancestors are multi-cultural cyclone of domination you can't hope to match wits with.

[Holds up his arm to make a sad little bicep.]

I have the blood of the Moors pumping through my veins. The fighting Irish boiling my temper! The Italian mafia fixing the outcome. British Imperialism marching to conquer all this. My ancestors came down from the Appalachian mountains to whup the South's butt just like I'm stomping you all over this board.

Slow pan over to DUF, who's staring at the board with a bored expression.

DUF

Yeah. I'm a mutt too man.

46. IAN MOVES d1 - a1

DUF

[46. MOVES c8 - c5]

Too bad your ancestors didn't tell you about my rook.
Drink motherfucker.

IAN

[47. MOVES a1 - a2]

And you drink.

DUF

[47. MOVES b7 - b6]

And you drink double!

IAN takes a shot and then takes another shot. He gags and coughs and wheezes.

DUF

[Sips his scotch, shaking his head, and staring at the board.]
Man...

IAN

[Looks up, eyes tearing]

What?

DUF

Just looking at these pieces. How old is this game?

IAN

About fourteen-hundred years; although, this European incarnation of the game is only about 500 years.

DUF

One-thousand four-hundred years. Man. Thinking about that... There were people sitting at tables one-thousand four-hundred years ago thinking about these pieces.

IAN

Not exactly the same. The game's changed over time.

DUF

I know that, but it's something to think about... People sitting at chessboards for hundreds of years, playing out infinite games.

IAN

Actually, there's something like a billion billion googol possible games of...

DUF

Right practically infinity possible games...

IAN blinks and gives this statement a confused look.

DUF

...and people are exploring all the possibilities while their moving through hundreds of thousands of years of time...

IAN

Fourteen hundred years.

DUF

...and I bet the games are changing as people's minds are changing. You know, strategies are like evolving as people get smarter. Right?

IAN

Absolutely right. That's a surprisingly existential observation to come from you.

The chess game, speaking to us through time. We always think of books and children as our messengers to the future, but here's a completely human artificial construct, a drama that takes place on 64 squares, being replayed over and over, black and white, good and evil, offense and defense--

DUF

Don't do that.

IAN

What?

DUF

Don't.

IAN

WHAT?

DUF

That thing you do to everything where you think about it and think about it and find the meaning of the universe in it...

IAN

What are you talking about?

DUF

...What's that word you use for it.

[Snaps his fingers]

Deconstruction! Don't! Don't deconstruct this.

[Points at the chessboard]

Not this man. Just leave it be.

IAN

What? You're the only one who's allowed to wax philosophical over the game?

DUF

Exactly right! With me it's just drunk-talk. It doesn't mean anything, but with you I know there's gonna be some earth-shattering revelation that's gonna keep me awake all fucking night thinking about it.

IAN

Oh come on! Let's explore this, the chessgame as a metaphor for life. A microcosm of of the human condition--

DUF

Knock it off!

IAN

If this were a book or a film this would be one of those existential moments of self-reference that--

DUF

SHUT-THE-FUCK-UP!

IAN

Okay... Jeeze.

DUF

Thank you.

IAN

Hmph.

DUF

What?

IAN

I was just thinking. Here you are fourteen-hundred years after this game's invention. Even as a high school drop out, you're a bazillion times more educated than even the wisest people of ancient times, and yet...

DUF

I'm still a dumbass.

IAN

[Shrugs in acknowledgement, and nods in agreement although his words don't match his body language.]

Not a dumbass... maybe willfully ignorant? It's like you don't want the challenge of trully exploring the difficult questions life throws at you. Maybe?

DUF

Absolutely. I'm just trying to enjoy life man. Chess ain't a metaphor for shit cause the game don't mean shit. It isn't real life, it doesn't mean nothing if you win or lose, you just walk away from the table no better no worse. You know?

IAN is scrutinizing the chessboard intently.

IAN

Hm.

DUF, seeing that IAN is ignoring him, begins to shift in his seat uncomfortably.

DUF

Anytime man.

IAN

[Deep in thought.]

Mmm hmm.

DUF

Come on man, you've got it.

IAN

I know.

DUF

So take it!

IAN

I'm figuring out how to get there from here.

DUF

You can start by picking a piece and moving it.

IAN

[Looks up at DUF.]

Do you mind? If you don't care about winning or losing, then why don't you let me figure out how to beat you so we can get this over with?

DUF

[Get's up.]

Fine. You figure it out. I'm gonna hit the head. Drain the main vain. Bleed the lizard. Syphon the python. Beat the piss outta the little guy. Shake hands with the President.

IAN

Right, I got it. Go tinkle all ready.

DUF

Man, I don't "tinkle!" I take a piss! I'm like a clidesdale! A firehose! A-- uh-- uh...

IAN

Okay already! Go micturate.

DUF

Does that mean pee?

IAN

Yes.

DUF

Then that's what I'm going to do!

DUF goes to bathroom.

Transitional Focus shot: The pieces, Ian, Ian looks behind him, focus on the computer, focus on Ian looking back to the board, focus-follow Ian as he gets up and walks to the computer in the background.

IAN sneaks over to the computer and starts up Chessmaster X000. Arranges the pieces like they are on the board and lets the computer decide the move. Before it can finish, DUF flushes and starts coming back. IAN shuts down the game.

IAN

[Getting into his seat just in time, looking casual.]
You're computer needs more RAM.

DUF

Why? So you can get Chessmaster 2000 to figure out your move while I take a piss?

IAN

Yeah.

48. IAN MOVES f3 - f4

48. DUF MOVES b6 - c6

IAN

[Eyebrows Raised]
Ah-ha! This is like the Immortal Game where--

DUF

Dude just stop. Stop right there. You are so full of shit. Just admit it.

IAN

[Smirking]
Yeah. I'm bullshitting you.

[Pause]

Although the Immortal Game was pretty amazing. It was these two math teachers... Russian names, I can't remember them right now, but white throws everything away attacking black. He loses his queen, his bishop, both rooks. Black has infiltrated his ranks and is pushing his king around and out of nowhere white pulls off a surprise checkmate with a knight and a pawn.

DUF

Wow.

IAN

[49. MOVES g3 - g4]

Most famous game ever.

DUF

Amazing.

IAN

They even used it in the movie "Blade Runner."

DUF

[49. MOVES c6 - d6]

Terrific.

IAN

When the android's trying to get into his designer's home.

DUF

Wow.

IAN

But you could care less.

DUF

[Yawns and stretches.]

Yeah, I'm sorry man. You're boring the fuck out of me.

[Pause, shanking his head in disapproval.]

And you got all that stored in that hard drive of a brain of yours.

IAN

[50. MOVES f4 - f5]

Yeah.

DUF

Bet the chicks really dig that.

IAN

Suprisingly they aren't impressed at all--wait. You're being sarcastic.

DUF

[Sarcastically.]

Naaaaah man.

50. DUF MOVES d6 - e5

IAN
[51. MOVES a2 - e2]

Check.

51. DUF MOVES e5 -f6

52. IAN MOVES g4 - f4

52. DUF MOVES c5 - c4

DUF

Check.

53. IAN MOVES e2 - e4.

IAN

Why didn't you take my pawn when you had the chance?

DUF

Because I wanted your rook instead.

IAN

It was a free pawn.

DUF

[Shrugs. **53. MOVES c4 - e4**]

Drink and check.

IAN doesn't take a shot. **54. IAN MOVES f4 - e4.** IAN says nothing.

DUF

Duf drink.

DUF takes a shot. **54. DUF MOVES f6 - g5.**

55. IAN MOVES e4 - e5.

DUF

Wasn't there some rule about 10 moves without a piece being taken being a draw or something like that?

IAN

[Still staring at the board.]

It's 40 moves.

DUF

You don't have enough pieces to win the game.

IAN

I will when I advance my pawn to the eighth level and promote him to a queen.

DUF

You're a queen.

[Pause.]

You're not going to get a queen, so there's no point.

IAN

You're not going to talk your way out of losing this one.

DUF

Dude this game is over.

IAN

Move!

Camera wobbles with drunk goggles.

DUF

[55. MOVES g5 - h6.]

Wait a minute. Weren't we gonna order some food?

IAN stares intently at the board, ignoring him.

DUF

Remember that time in chess club when you had mate in three?

IAN

I do.

Camera focuses on the board, urging the audience to figure out Check Mate.

DUF

[Shaking his head.]

Man, everyone was standing around your board, all whispering to one another. 'Mate in three!' 'Mate in three!'

IAN

Yep.

DUF

But you didn't see it.

IAN

[56. MOVES e5 – e6.]

Nope.

DUF

[56. MOVES h6 – g7.]

And everybody was like, 'Aw! How did he miss that?'

IAN

[57. MOVES f5 - f6.]

I still placed second in the tournament.

IAN

Check.

DUF

[57. MOVES g7 – f8.]

Second place is first loser man.

IAN

[58. MOVES e6 - e7.]

So that made you... what?

DUF

[58. MOVES g7 - h8.]

Last place. But you had mate in three!

59. IAN MOVES e7 - f6.

DUF

[59. MOVES h8 - h7.]

You'll never live that down.

60. IAN MOVES f7 - f8.

IAN

[Replaces the pawn with his queen.]

Queen me!

DUF

Okay, you're a queen.

DUF reaches out to move his king, but stops.

DUF
[CONT.]

I can't move anywhere.

IAN

Fuck!

DUF

Stalemate! I win!

IAN

It's a draw dimbulb!

DUF

Right! I pulled off a draw when you should have won. So I won.

IAN

What kind of warped logic is that? Just because I snatched defeat from the jaws of victory doesn't mean you won.

DUF

There! See! You just called it defeat! Meaning you're a loser and if you're a loser, then there has to be a winner.
[Looks around, does a Robert Dinero from Taxi Driver impression]
I don't see anyone else around.

IAN

[Holding up his hands]

It's not a defeat. It's a draw. A draw means that there isn't a winner or a loser. Thus the term "draw."

DUF

Nah man. You had me on the ropes, and I manipulated you into throwing the game away.

IAN

Manipulated me? Are you smoking crack? I just pushed you all over the board! You didn't go anywhere I didn't want you to go! You didn't have a choice in the matter! This whole draw was entirely my responsibility! You are my chess bitch!

DUF

Noooo. You only thought you were the master! I was totally psyching you out with all that stuff about your past loserdom. I was mind-controlling you man! Frazzling you up so you couldn't think straight! That's how I got you to screw up that end game!

IAN

That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard.

DUF

It's okay. If you want to stay in denial about it how easy it is to play you, then I can keep playing you.

IAN

I'm not that transparent.

DUF

Does that mean "easy to read?"

IAN

It does.

DUF

Then yes you are transparent!

IAN

No I'm not.

DUF

Dude you are so predictable. You're like this great big overachiever, trying so hard to prove to everyone how smart you are, but it's just a front. It's just a-- a-- a--?

IAN

A Facade?

DUF

Yeah! Whatever that means! You put on this costume of intellectual superiority, like you're trying to make up for something. It's like you think there's something wrong with you, so you try to distract everyone from it by showing off how smart you are.

IAN

You think I'm compensating.

DUF

You are! That's why you won't go to parties. That's why you won't hit on chicks! That's why you spend your time hiding from life in textbooks and knowledge of things that nobody else knows!

IAN

Pedantic demonstrations of...

DUF

Shut up and let me finish!

IAN

Okay...

DUF

Damn! I forgot where I was going with this.

IAN

It's okay, we're drunk.

DUF

No. No. No. Man. I was onto something here. I had it all figured out.

IAN

You were eventually going to tie this into why I'm easy to manipulate.

DUF

Yeah. Your... uh...

[snaps his fingers]

insecurity! Your insecurity makes you easy to psych out. You're such a self-conscious pussy that when someone pushes your buttons you can't take it. That's what the fahzad--

IAN

Facade.

DUF

--is for, to prevent people from even trying to criticize you. That tactic might work out there in college-land, but here in the real world, with someone who sees through that bullshit, that makes YOU MY bitch.

IAN

Okay genius. If I'm that easy to manipulate, why didn't you use your awesome psychological insights earlier in the game to garner yourself the win?

DUF

Nah man, see psyching you out is only good for making you screw up. Actually beating you requires all those book smarts you're always lordling over everyone.

IAN

So you're saying that you couldn't win because I'm the better player and the most you could ever hope for against me is a draw.

DUF

And that's why a draw is a win!
[Thinks about it, eyes roaming around.]
For me.

IAN

I can't believe you're trying to argue a win out of a tie.

DUF

I'm arguing that you need to believe in yourself dumbass. You're a smart motherfucker, but you don't believe it and you come off all fake and shit trying to make people believe you're smart when you don't believe it yourself.

IAN

So what about you?

DUF

What about me? I'm a loser high school drop out. I know I suck, but I don't have any higher aspirations

IAN

That is so unfair.

[pause]

Waitaminute! No! I call bullshit! Bullshit on you! Bullshit I say!

[Gestures around at the store]

What in Carl Sagan's great big fucking cosmos do you call this?

DUF

Nah dude, this is just a hobby.

IAN

BULL-SHIT! This isn't a damn hobby! A hobby is something you do for fun. This is a business venture! You're working your ass off trying to make this place work! You've got something to prove!

DUF

Nah man, it ain't like that.

IAN

See I'm all up in your psyche deconstructin' your underlyin' motives. You wanna talk about head games! Ha! I'm the freakin' mastermind! You got this great big, "Look at me, I'm Duf. I'm all laid back and don't care what anybody thinks about me." But that's bullshit!

DUF

[shrugs]

Cool man.

IAN

What?

DUF

Whatever man. It's cool. We've all got problems.

IAN

No! That's what I'm trying to-- You can't just-- Stop that!

DUF

Stop what?

IAN

Acting nonchalant!

DUF

Okay.

IAN

It's just an act!

DUF

Whatever you say.

IAN

You're being contrary!

DUF

How am I being contrary?

IAN

You're just acting like that to spite me!

DUF

I'm sorry to have spited you good sir.

IAN

Oh yeah? Well you misspelled 'collectibles'! C-O-L-L-E-C-T-I-B-L-E-S. Collectibles! Not collect-a-bles. Collect-ibles! It's right out there, in great big letters for all the world to see! Duf can't spell!

DUF

[smiling]

Dude! Did I really misspell that shit? Are you serious?

IAN

Yes.

DUF

[laughing]

Damn! That's hilarious!

IAN

FUCK YOU!

DUF

[Holding up his hands for peace.]

Okay dude. Okay. Let's calm down here and look at this logically.

IAN

[Skeptical.]

Logic... from you.

DUF

Fuck you too man. Listen to me. You can pretend all you want that this is a game of pure logic, but it isn't. There are outside factors at work here. If it were all about math, then

you would totally stomp my ass on this board. Hell, that's how you got to be second chair in chess club. You were that good... When you were playing against other math-geeks.

But even though you could kick everyone else's ass, you couldn't kick mine. Why? Because I had the psychological edge on you. It's like football players putting on their game face or something. You can't be so fragile to it. The game's only about skill if you have the skill to keep it that way.

IAN

[Mutters, pouting.]

You mean the emotional maturity.

DUF

Dude, are you still pissed?

IAN doesn't meet his eyes.

DUF

If you're still pissed off at me after I've explained how I'm using your anger to manipulate you, then...

[trails off, shaking his head.]

IAN

Then I'm a dumbass.

DUF

You said it first.

IAN

But I know I get to you sometimes.

DUF

You definitely had me with that--

[Act like IAN. Stroking his chin.]

"Ah yes. A intellectually flatulent rhetorical movement. It reminds me of Howdy Doody's response to Big Bird during their legendary battle of blah blah blah blah." That was pretty intimidating.

IAN

It was?

DUF

Yeah, but then you let on that you were faking. You're too honest... or just lack the self-confidence to try and pull it off.

IAN

But had I played it off...

DUF

Who knows? It's like those splitting worlds you were babbling about. You were talking about all the branches of moves, but what about all the branches of bullshitting?

IAN

[Looks at his record sheet of the game.]

The notation for psychological tactics would be incredibly complex. The end result would still ultimately be communicated on the chessboard.

DUF

This is all just theory man. It doesn't mean nothing.

[Snatches the sheet from IAN, starts scrutinizing it.]

I wanna go back to that point just before we exchanged queens. I didn't get what you were up to there.

IAN

Actually, there was point before that, when we were building up for our initial big exchange. I'd like to see how that could have played out differently.

IAN Reaches for the sheet, but DUF holds it away from him. DUF frowns and hands the sheet to IAN.

DUF

Man. I can't read that shit. Walk us back through the moves.

IAN

Actually, it would probably be easier to walk forward through the moves.

They race to set up the table for another game. Once the pieces are set up, they both just stare at the board.

DUF

Board's reset, but... I dunno. You wanna just play another game?

IAN

[Nods.]

It would give us the widest variety of alternative endings.

DUF

Hold up.

DUF gets up, walks off scene. IAN watches him, his face lights up as DUF returns and sets a chess clock down beside the board.

Camera slowly pulls away from the table.

DUF

Let's see how we do in a game of speed chess.

IAN

This definitely adds a new variable to the equation.

DUF

So maybe in an alternate Earth--

IAN

Parallel universe.

DUF

I'm the college genius and you're the dropout.

IAN

The chain of chance leading to you going to college seems pretty statistically improbable to me.

DUF

[Smiling.]

Ah fuck you man.

Credits: Reenacting the game as speed chess with a clock. Use trick photography. Hand enters the scene, moves piece, hand leaves scene. Splice all scenes together to reenact the game.