

BLACK AND WHITE

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOL ENTRANCE - FOOTPATH - MORNING

EMILY (30) Quietly bored, internally angry, stands in a rushing sea of uniformed school boys. They swarm around her like excited bees. Very loud bees. She shudders.

The swarm passes. Emily lights a cigarette, inhales gladly.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Fourteen year old BOYS cackle loudly. The room is moments from chaos. DILLON draws a grid on his copy book, fills in every other square. He watches a group of boys conspire around something wet, dripping...

Emily turns from the black board --

EMILY

Now--

-- Wet tissue slaps her in the face. She wipes it away. Disgusted, but not surprised. Laughter erupts. Dillon looks up at Emily sadly.

EMILY (CONT'D)

...Now, can anyone tell me...

INT. SCHOOL - STAFF CANTEEN - DAY

Emily sits alone at a table. She eats a limp sandwich. Something she made quickly.

EXT. SCHOOL ENTRANCE - FOOTPATH - EVENING

Emily steps onto the street, hurries away.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

A quiet residential suburb. Cold, damp, wintery. Emily keeps her head down as she walks.

INT. THREE BED SEMI - HALL - EVENING

Boxes are scattered, some open, contents laid out. The place has just been moved in to. Emily shrugs off her bag and coat, drops them over a chair.

INT. THREE BED SEMI - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Emily pigs out on pizza, browses the Internet on a laptop.

EMILY

Hmmm... Japan.

(a bite)

Konnichiwa.

She smiles to herself, makes a note on a piece of paper.

INT. THREE BED SEMI - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Emily empties a large cardboard box, lays the items on the floor around her. She removes a polished wooden container, opens it.

Hand carved chess pieces fill the container. Emily rummages gently amongst the pieces, finds the KING, examines it. She takes the chess board out of the box, places it on the floor beside her. Sets the King down in the middle.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Boys file loudly in, fill the seats. Emily sits at her desk, ignores them as best she can. She holds the King in her hand, places it on the edge of the desk. Dillon enters, sees the chess piece, glances at Emily. Then he takes a seat.

A bell RINGS.

Everyone escapes into the corridor. Dillon takes his time packing up his books. Emily clears her desk. Emily knocks the King off as she swings her bag over her shoulder.

Dillon rushes over, picks it up for her. She takes it, smiles warmly.

EMILY

Thank you, Dillon.

Dillon nods awkwardly. Can't find anywhere to put his hands.

DILLON

Do you play, miss?

EMILY

I used to. You?

DILLON

I'm on the team. Senior team.
Miss.

Dillon stands up straighter, proud. Emily taps his forehead with the King.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY
 You're a smart kid, Dillon. I'll
 see you tomorrow.

Dillon hesitates, returns to his desk, packs up and goes.
 Emily watches him leave.

INT. THREE BED SEMI - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

An army of pieces laid down on black and white. The last few
 key players --

Emily admires her handiwork. Quickly switches the white King
 and Queen.

EMILY
 Every time...

Another cardboard box is open beside her, along with a bottle
 of wine. She takes out a picture frame -- Emily and a man,
 tall and handsome. She dusts the glass with her palm.
 Quickly flips the frames and pulls the photo from the back,
 tears it in two.

EMILY (CONT'D)
 Bastard.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Emily is late. She rushes into the classroom. And chaos.

EMILY
 Quiet! QUIET!

Heads turn, but voices remain raised. She sinks into the
 chair behind her desk. Watches the storm grow. She catches
 sight of a big red apple hidden behind books in front of her.
 She picks it up, finds a postit note on the back -- "Check".

She smiles, stops, glances around the room, settles on
 Dillon's warm grin.

Emily blinks away her blush, stands as another boy gets
 thrown into Dillon --

EMILY (CONT'D)
 Lonergan! Principals office, now!
 NOW!

LONERGAN sheepishly exits the room.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - LATER

Emily hands out worksheets. On top of the copy she gives to
 Dillon is a sticky note -- "e2 e4".

(CONTINUED)

Dillon lights up as he recognizes the opening chess move.

Worksheets are piled on the desk as the boys leave. Dillon hands his to Emily directly. The sticky note has been amended -- "d7 d6".

The hint of a grin slips across Emily's lips.

EMILY

Thank you.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

A series of chess moves are passed between Emily and Dillon -- copy books, sticky notes, reports, even envelopes. Envelopes with chess pieces drawn on them.

INT. THREE BED SEMI - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Emily is hunched over her laptop, nose inches from the screen.

EMILY

I'll see your gambit and raise you the king's Indian defense... Ha!

She clicks the track pad, waits. Then --

Her brow creases.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Oh. Oh. That's my queen.

She's clearly been beaten. The screen shows a clear advantage to the black pieces.

EMILY (CONT'D)

You're getting an "F" on the next report.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Emily hands out more work sheets. At the top of Dillon's, one more move. Dillon smiles as he sees it. Emily sits behind the desk as the boys work.

The sheets are handed back. Across the top of Dillon's, one final move, under which is written -- "MATE!"

Emily laughs as she sees it, quickly shuts up. She comes around the desk, leans against it, close to Dillon. He scratches his neck.

EMILY

I said you were smart.

(CONTINUED)

Dillon grins.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Too smart for me, it seems.

DILLON
Practise, miss.

EMILY
You want to make this a regular thing?

DILLON
Really?

EMILY
I'm a little below your league--

DILLON
--not at all--

EMILY
--so you'd have to go gentle on me ok?

Dillon nods. Emily touches his shoulder.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Gentle.

Dillon moves, awkwardly pecks Emily on the lips. She pulls back, hand to mouth.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Oh, Dillon. No.

Dillon is frozen. Until the door opens. Lonergan stands there.

LONERGAN
Forgot me pen, miss.

Emily nods an "okay". Dillon escapes as Lonergan enters, goes to his desk.

LONERGAN (CONT'D)
You okay, miss?

EMILY
Fine.

LONERGAN
Right. See you tomorrow.

Thankfully, Lonergan is an idiot.

INT. THREE BED SEMI - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Emily stands at the table, stares at her open laptop. The screen blinks with a request -- from Dillon. For another game. She gently reaches out and closes the lid. The screen dims, goes out.

She moves to the counter, fills a glass with wine, drinks half it. She reaches out to the chess board, all set up, ready. She picks up the king, rolls it around in her hand.

And places it, on its side, in the middle of the board.

Mate.

FADE OUT.

THE END