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Perpetual Check

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# PERPETUAL CHECK

Sarah Seville,  
on behalf of UCLA Law Women

You know this game.

You learned its rules before you even really knew  
what you were doing,  
learned that some pieces on this board took more risks than  
others just by breathing,  
that the dice were all loaded, that you had to play around  
the holes in the field.

He was never supposed to win.

When your childhood best friend's first crush turns out to be  
a rapist,  
a boy turning into a beast she'd never have been able to save  
before your eyes,  
he isn't supposed to become a big-shot baseball player within  
the decade.  
Then, he does.

So when you're seventeen and the football star threatens the one  
girl on his team,  
you don't let the chips fall where they may—you pick a fight  
that lands you both in detention.  
He isn't supposed to speak in your place at graduation, his record  
unblemished.  
Then, he does.

Soon you're twenty and you've told the truth to a boy  
you don't love, and  
some monster in his heart sends him stalking after you like a wolf  
in the woods for months.  
You don't say anything this time, it didn't work before, but he isn't  
supposed to get away scot free.  
Then, he does.

So you tell yourself it's small-scale. You're losing the game, but  
not everybody is.

Some people learn to throw loaded dice, learn to count  
stacked decks,

learn to hit the target with all the arrows weighed down.

It makes sense until you look up. It makes sense until it doesn't.

It makes sense until the man on the television screen looks  
like all the others,

the same set of his shoulders, the same sneer, the same rise  
in voice.

He wears a different face but it hardly matters, you'd know him  
anywhere.

The woman opposite him is better than you are, better  
than you ever were. He shouldn't win.

Then, he does.

This isn't a game, it's a firing squad. There's no fight  
with the odds this fixed.

But you've been in it so long, you don't know how to get  
off the board.