

THE CHESS GAME

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CHARACTERS

1. SAM - A 70 something senior citizen
2. LEO - His pal, about the same age.
3. DORIS - SAM'S would be girl friend, ,70's, who has a cold and is stuck in her apartment.

SETTING

Doris' apartment in LaSiesta Senior Citizen Home. A table, three chairs. A magazine is on the table. A chess set will be needed and a lap top computer. (DORIS is walking around her apartment coughing and sneezing. She carries a box of Kleenex. Her doorbell rings.)

DORIS

Now who could that be? Eight O' Clock on a Thursday night? (She looks through a peephole.)

Go away I have a cold. (The door bell rings again.) I have the flu. (The doorbell rings again. . I may have the Corona Beer virus. (Laughter.) . Who's knocking on my door at this hour? Are you a masher? A door to door rapist who specializes in poor little old ladies who live alone in a senior citizen home? (She grabs a water pistol from her table.) Mister, answer me quickly. I got a gun. I am fully armed. And I know how to use it. I was the first place winner in the pistol shooting competition at the Wayne La Pierre Shooting Range in 1997. (A piece of paper is shoved under the door. She picks it up and reads it.) Sam is knocking at my door? And his sidekick Leo? They want to teach me what?

(She puts down the water gun. Sam and Leo enter. Sam has a chess case in his hand.)

DORIS

What were you knocking for? Western Union? I don't want a telegram.

SAM

Western Union, that's rich. I told you the woman is funny. She has class, Leo. She has intelligence. Who would have thought of Western Union?

LEO

Dot and Dash.

(SAM hits LEO on top of his head with the magazine on Doris' table.

SAM

What are you a comedian?

LEO

I'll have you know I won second place in the high school talent show with my comedy routine.

SAM

Sixty years ago? What was one of your best jokes? The one that got the fewest boos.

LEO

They didn't serve booze at the high school talent sho

SAM

(Hits him over the head with a magazine on a chair,)

Come on. What was your best joke?

LEO

Why did the chicken go to the séance?

SAM

You got it wrong. Why did the chicken cross the road?

LEO

Different setup. Same ending.

SAM

What are you talking about? (He tries to hit LEO on the head again, but LEO dodges.)

DORIS

I know the answer. (She giggles.)

SAM

What's the answer?

DORIS

To get to the other side.

(PAUSE)

SAM

I don't get it.

DORIS

(Laughing) You see the chicken must have mourned the death of her husband, a rooster, and she wanted to find out if he still could communicate with her after he was dead, so she went to a fortune teller who tried to contact the rooster through a crystal ball or a Ouija board –TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE.

LEO

(SAM looks puzzled, but Leo applauds.)

Exactly right. This lady's got a great sense of humor. But I forgot why we brought the chess set?

DORIS

Yes, why did you bring a chess set to a woman with a cold? (She sneezes.)

SAM

You forgot already? Because we knew there are no women chess players here in La Siesta Senior Citizen home. It is only two days before the first Annual Game Arama competition between us and the seniors from the Baby It's Cold Outside Senior Citizen home. They got two female players; we got none. They get the points by forfeit. We need to teach you how to play chess tonight and tomorrow. The competition starts Saturday afternoon. Ten different games.

DORIS

What's the prize for the winning senior citizen home?

SAM

The losers have to buy the winners breakfast Sunday morning at the Jelly Belly Deli.

DORIS

I don't think I can learn how to play this game in two days, especially with a cold.

LEO

Sam and I will teach you. You'll be great.

DORIS

I don't think so. I was bad at checkers. I didn't like all that jumping over. It made me air sick. The only game I could win was Sorry, and I won't apologize for that..

(LEO laughs, SAM doesn't)

LEO

Very funny.

SAM

What was so funny?

LEO

You see she said she was only good at the game of Sorry and she is not-- forget about it.

(The two men are setting up the chess pieces for the game.)

DORIS

(Picks up a black bishop and examines it.) This is a very old game, isn't it?

SAM

It was invented in the 7th Century A.D. in Persia. It has undergone many changes over the centuries.

LEO

So have you. (SAM tries to hit in the head with the top of the chessboard box.) I meant decades.

DORIS

(Sniffles and blows her nose)

I think it would be interesting to play a game that has been popular so long.

LEO

Sam is a good teacher and I agree with him that you will learn quickly.

DORIS

But why are you both here? Do you think with two teachers I would learn how to play twice as fast?

SAM

I thought we would teach you how to play chess by playing a game. We explain how the pieces move and the object of the game. We play, and tell you why we moved each piece. You're smart.

DORIS

Okay, but I'm usually in bed by 9. (She yawns.)

SAM

We'll play fast and talk fast. You'll learn fast.

(The two men have arranged the pieces on the board in their proper position. They take turns holding up the pieces.)

LEO

First we need to explain the pieces and how they move. The lowest in value are the pawns. (He holds one up.) Each player has eight pawns and each one can move one or two squares on the first move, but only one move after that. Also, he takes an opponent when he moves forward to the opponent's side, (He demonstrates.)

DORIS

Did you get them at a pawn shop?

SAM

No jokes, please. Next is the bishop and the knight who looks like a horse. The bishops move diagonally on their color, black or white. (He demonstrates and so does SAM.) He can take an opponent's piece as long as one of his is not in his way. Then he moves onto that square.

SAM

The knight's move is the most unusual. He moves in an L shape front or back. Either up one and over two. Or the opposite. Also, he is the only piece who can jump over other pieces. (He demonstrates.)

DORIS

That's weird. Is the knight the trickiest of the chess pieces?

LEO

You're right. He is. Players don't know which way he might land to take an opponent's piece. He is a trickster.

SAM

I told you she would ask good questions and make intelligent observations.

LEO

I agree. I think she will be able to knock up any woman from Baby .It's Cold Outside.

SAM

Knock off. Not knock up.

LEO

Oh, yeah. I always get those two mixed up.

DORIS

Not me. I was knocked up by my husband at 22. My uncle was knocked off by the mob at 52.

Like this? (She quirts both men with the water gun.)

SAM

Put that pistol down, girl. (She gives each a hand towel.)

DORIS

Gee, thanks, nobody's called me a girl since I was a girl. Keep going.

SAM

The rooks or castles (He holds them up) move forward or back or to the side as many squares needed to take an opponent's piece as long as there is not one of her own blocking it.

DORIS

What about the queen? Isn't she the most powerful of chess pieces?

SAM

Yeah, she can move like both the bishop and the rook. No piece is more powerful.

DORIS

What about the king? Isn't he powerful?

LEO

No, he's weak. All he can do is move one square forward or back or to the side to get away from an opponent.

DORIS

.Poor guy. Dependent on his men and his all- powerful wife.. Hey, I like that. So how do you win?

SAM

Remember one thing: The way you win the game is to put the king in a position he can't move unless he is in check. (She demonstrates.) What's that called?

DORIS

(She raises her hand) Checkmate. I should have done that with my ex-husband.

LEO

What happened?

DORIS

He left me for my, hairdresser.

SAM

That's terrible.

DORIS

No, he was a bum, but I hated to lose that hairdresser. Nobody could do my hair like she could. The woman could do a dye job to die for. She left him after three months.

SAM

Rook to bishop eight. Check. Did you ever hear from them again?

DORIS

I hear from him about twice a month. . He wants to come back, but I said only if he finds my hair dresser and she gives me a free dye treatment.

LEO

Rook takes bishop.

DORIS

I think I'm getting it. What are you guys doing in the tournament?"

SAM

I get two points for dealing blackjack; they have a guy who does the same.

DORIS'

What about you, Leo?

LEO

Playing chess and I'm in the dart throwing competition.

SAM

Where did we get that dart board?

LEO

From Target. (SAM hits LEO on the head with the magazine.)

SAM

Enough with the jokes. You're driving me crazy.

LEO

That's what the state said. They revoked my driver's license for the stupidest reason.

DORIS

What was the reason?

LEO

I was driving along the freeway minding my own business, the only car going north. Suddenly a horde of crazy drivers were speeding south towards me, honking their horn.

SAM

You were the crazy wrong way driver.

LEO

That's what the cop said. (Pause.) Bishop to rook seven.

DORIS

You guys are both crazy, coming in here at 8 O'clock at night to teach me how to play chess. I hope I will be able to compete but with all the Tylenol and Dayquil and Nyquil I'm falling asleep all the time. (She yawns).

SAM

Can I pinch you if you fall asleep?

DORIS

No pinching. No touching. I'm a charter member of the Me-Too movement.

LEO

I'm a charter member of the No Constipation movement. I'm a Ducolax junkie.

DORIS

Look, you guys are convincing me to play in the tournament, but you are also driving me crazy with the jokes and I'm not learning much chess. There must be someone who is more knowledgeable about chess and not so crazy.

LEO

Hmmmm.

SAM

Hmmmmm.

LEO

Bobby Fischer was the eight time U.S. Champ and wrote books about chess but he's dead.

DORIS

I've heard of him. There was a movie about him.

SAM

He was also crazy. He would have driven you crazier than me and Leo.

LEO

The movie was not about him. It was about a kid chess champ who idolized Bobby Fischer.

DORIS

(Yawns) Maybe I'll rent the movie.

SAM

There might be something about the way he played on YouTube or someplace online, but he definitely was a nut job.

DORIS

Do you think it was because he was so crazy about chess? (She coughs and covers her mouth.)

LEO

I don't think being great at something makes you a nut job, unless that's all you got.

SAM

I don't think he had anything going for him but chess.

DORIS

Well at my age and condition I don't think if I got to be a decent chess player that won't make me crazy. Will it?

SAM

I guarantee you won't become a nut job.

DORIS

When I was a teenager I was nuts about Bruce Lee and his karate movies and TV shows. I even took karate lessons. I was supposed to move up to brown belt, but then I heard Bruce Lee died and I guess I was just not interested anymore. I quit and did something else.

SAM

What did you do?

DORIS

I tried to play the cello and worked hard on it but I wasn't that good. I did other things, but I'm too tired to remember what. Which reminds me you guys have got to leave. I'm falling asleep. (She yawns.)

LEO

Okay, we'll try again tomorrow. No more jokes. I promise.

SAM

That's the first time I ever heard Leo promise. I promise too. No more crazy stuff. Goodnight Doris. See you tomorrow after lunch. (He and LEO exit.)

DORIS

Goodnight. (The lights dim. Doris is snoring.) Suddenly she sits up, yells.

Queen to bishop 7 Checkmate.

(End of play.)