

A man and a woman, both wearing crowns and clad entirely in white, stand side by side looking listlessly into the distance. A small man, also in white stands in front of them poised as if waiting to be called upon. A large man, once again in white, slumps in the corner contemplating his knuckles.

KING
(Befuddled)
Checkers.

QUEEN
Pardon?

KING
How do they do it?

QUEEN
I assume it takes time and patience. You know?
Like lots of things.

PAWN
It's a fun game. You should...

KING
The lawn. How do they mow the lawn like that?

QUEEN
Oh...

KING
I'm not an idiot. I know about "checkers." I
might need a primer, you know? If I were to
ever *want* to play. But I could.

QUEEN
It's been a long time hasn't it?

KING
I've been preoccupied with this whole. This
whole...

PAWN
War.

KING
Please, let's not get political.

PAWN
Battle.

KING
Something more tangy.

PAWN
Campaign.

KING

Mmm. Yes campaign. That has a certain, how do the French say? Ring to it? I don't have time for some rip-off, spreadsheet take on tiddlywinks. I have a campaign to oversee.

QUEEN
Well I think its fun.

PAWN
And it keeps your mind sharp.

QUEEN
And your hands busy.

PAWN
Sometimes when you're really in the zone everything just lines up and it bing bang boom...

QUEEN
KING ME!

KING
I knew it!

Queen and Pawn freeze up realizing they've said too much.

KING
Old Bishop Mark's got a limp.

QUEEN
Oh! Poor guy.

KING
Yeah, I've been asking him if he wants to hit the links some weekend, but he always sidesteps the question.

QUEEN
He should get a prescription for that.

KING
Oh sure, like they have doctors for shoes.

PAWN
Pediatrists.

KING
He's an old man, not a baby, buddy. Hey Mark! E7! You got this!

PAWN
Poor guy.

KING
Look I've gone through the first few chapters of the art of war multiple times because the CD keeps skipping. It's all about control. I've forced their hand. It's like a dance. Do you want to be the one leading or the...

He looks over at Queen.

QUEEN
When was the last time you danced?

KING
This morning in the shower during breakfast.

QUEEN
During?

PAWN
But don't you want to force the battle...

KING
Campaign.

PAWN
Campaign in a way that they're the one losing people.

KING
That's nonsense. I don't consider any of you people.

QUEEN
What!?

KING
Oh hun, not you. You and I are a team. Like CEO and vice-chair, bring your kid to work and give them a star that says "CEO" CEO.

QUEEN
Excuse me!

KING
Excuse me, knight F3 to G5. They may be one trick ponies, but at least I have two of them!

PAWN
I heard in passing that some of the pawns were thinking of going on strike. What if nobody was here to protect you? What would you think of your "non people" if we turned on you?

KING
Pawns can't turn pissant.

PAWN
It's en passant and I can turn. Someday I'll show all you ivory tower, cucumber sandwich tightwads. I can turn into anything I want!

QUEEN
Ok I get that we're in the heat of battle

KING
Heat of campaign.

QUEEN
Stop. You're having a tough day, but I just want to address that I'm not really comfortable with the term "ivory tower."

KING
And I'll have you know I let the servant kids keep the crusts on my cuke sammies, not only because I'm a nice guy, but also because that's where all the nutrients are!

QUEEN

I mean I love elephants.

KING

Oh and you think you're having a hard day? F2!
HEY F2 look alive! Forward! I have a lot on my
plate and I wish it was pancakes, because all I
had for breakfast was a soggy Clif Bar and a
war with the... I dunno, Italians?

QUEEN

Huh, I always thought they were Persian.

PAWN

They're from India.

QUEEN

Same difference.

PAWN

Are you kidding? Those two cultures are vastly
different with distinct languages, religions,
economic throughput, not to mention being
separated by literally thousands of miles.

QUEEN

You know you're a lot more fun when you're not
trying to be intellectual.

KING

Do you two know each other?

QUEEN

Oh well you know. Sure! He's the pawn. My pawn.
My little pawn who's always right here.

PAWN

My name's Dylan.

QUEEN

Of course it is. It's good to get out there
with the troops and all and mix it up.
Sometimes I... For morale... It's all about
camaraderie and esprit decor.

KING

I'm afraid I've never been much for interior
decoration.

PAWN

You could say that again.

Queen gives Pawn a quick "shut-up" slap.

QUEEN

Heh heh. We're all in this together right? May
as well make the best of it!

KING

Oh sure I can see how you might want to improve
your image a bit after that time with the...
With the booger that everyone saw.

PAWN

I'm sorry about that, I should've said
something.

KING

But I'm the troops' golden boy. They can't get enough of me, *(to Rook)* ain't that right big guy?

Rook give a thumbs up.

KING

He's got such a kind soul. We kick it sometimes. Listen to records. Talk about our emotions in veiled metaphors so it doesn't get weird.

PAWN

I think he's def.

KING

Def..initely a cool dude!

King flashes Rook some finger guns, but Rook is following the path of an ant. He stomps it before seeing King. He waves back.

KING

We should hang out some time! WE! SHOULD!
HANGOUT! *(To offstage)* What are you looking at short stuff? Didn't I tell you to move ahead. Yes, keep going. *(back to Rook)* You have to be so hands on with these people.

Attention shifts to Queen and Pawn and King and Rook carry out a pantomimed conversation.

QUEEN

(To Pawn) So, what are you up to later?

PAWN

Well if I don't die I was thinking about catching my friend Jack's band down at Hoyles.

QUEEN

Oh really?

PAWN

Yeah, they've got this round robin, open-mic sort of thing going on. It's cute. Sometimes I get up and spit some poetry. The place only holds about fifty, so it's intimate, you know? It always feel like a full house.

QUEEN

Cool... So what are you doing later, later?

PAWN

Her highness too good for a little culture with the proletariat? Like you've got something better going?

QUEEN

I have a lot of interests and I have a lot of responsibilities.

KING

Honey! Rook's coming over for a dinner party tonight. For, get this... An all you can eat breakfast for dinner!

QUEEN
No!

KING
Way!

QUEEN
No!

KING
Way!

QUEEN
N... I'm not coming to dinner tonight.

KING
That's right. You're going to breakfast tonight.

QUEEN
I'm going to go to. Ugh. An open mic poetry night thing with Dylan.

KING
(*To offstage*) I know, I know. I'll be right with you! (*To Queen*) Who's Dylan?

PAWN
Hi, I've worked here for years. And it's alright you can call it a slam.

KING
Ew. (*To offstage.*) Hold on a minute! (*To Queen.*) W-w-w-why?

QUEEN
Because... We're in love! His eccentricities. His deep blue eyes. His squat, perfectly symmetrical bulbous appearance. It was love at 500th sight.

Silence. King casually pulls out his sword.

KING
(*To Pawn*) Kneel.

PAWN
Golly, I mean. I knew you two were on the rocks, but I don't know if it calls for a knighthood.

KING
It calls for an execution!

QUEEN
Dylan run!

Pawn jumps as far as he can.

KING
Oh man, that was like twice as far as I thought you could possibly go!

PAWN
(Exhausted)
Frankly I think I only have one of those in me.

KING

(*To offstage*) Wait no! That wasn't me. I want a do over. Give me a do over! Dammit! Queen! Seize him!

QUEEN

I have a name.

KING

Ugh I know, but...

QUEEN

It's always Queen this and Queen that. I'm a human being you know?

KING

(*Exasperated*)

Your Royal Highness The Queen Caïssa, Duchess of Zwischenschach, Marchioness of Lasker, Baroness Yifan, Royal Lady of the Most Noble Order of Alekhine, Defender of the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Greek Gift, Member of the Order of Gardez, Grand Master and First and Principal Lady Grand Cross-Check of the Most Excellent Order of ELO, Lady of the Order of Countergambit, Additional Member of the Order of J'aboube, Extra Companion of the King's Service Order, Royal Chief of the Order of Prophylaxis, Extraordinary Companion of the Order of Tabia, Extraordinary Commander of the Order of The Marócy Bind, Baronet of His Majesty's Most Honourable Kibitz Council, Privy Councillor of the Scholar's Mate, Personal Aide-de-Camp to His Majesty, High Tactician of WIM.

QUEEN

Cassy would have sufficed.

KING

Look if we don't deal with things like this quickly and firmly then this whole feudalism racket goes out the window.

PAWN

More like fuitable-ism!

Rook lets out a guffaw.

KING

See! Que... Cassy come on! I'd do it myself, but you know. My sciatica.

QUEEN

No! I'm tired of being bossed around. I'm my own woman! I'm going with Dylan and...

PAWN

And we're going to move to Greensboro North Carolina and have three kids and they're going to play fiddle and guitar and mandolin and we're going to start up our own no kill homestead.

QUEEN

We are?

PAWN
Don't worry. I've got it all figured out.

QUEEN
Oh... Well, so yeah. See. I've got a lot ahead of me. I'm not just some pre-ordained lover you can take for granted.

KING
It was an arranged marriage. That's literally what you are! I can't believe this.

QUEEN
Believe it. I'm busting out of this two bit seat of luxury and power and...

KING
I can't. I just...

PAWN
We're going to make our own apple variety. There's a lot of money and spiritualism in that industry. Did you know that every apple tree is...

King turns and claps his hands together.

KING
CASTLE!

Rook leaps to attention. King whips his finger around in the air.

KING
KING SIDE!

Rook and King do a do-si-do.

QUEEN
Oh God, this is so embarrassing.

PAWN
It's like sending yourself to your own room.

KING
What? I can't hear you. There's a building in the way.

ROOK
Ur!

KING
(*To offstage*) Oh come on. really?

King takes a step towards stage right.

KING
(*To offstage*) You're really gonna be like that?

He steps back to where he just was. Annoyed at movement happening offstage he takes a step back and forth to the right again.

KING
(*To offstage*) Okay. I'll be the bigger man here.

He steps diagonally in front of the rook. This begins a series of movements where King moves back and forth from in front of Rook to the right of Rook.

KING
(*To offstage*) Look this has got to stop. We're grown adults and we can figure out a compromise that makes everyone happy. We don't have to get stuck in a false dichotomy! Please! C'mon man! FINE! You know what. Fine!

King steps back to his original position and is face to face with Queen.

KING
See. I dance.

PAWN
Now's our chance. Take out that line backer looking guy and I'll make a break for it.

QUEEN
Um. Won't that leave me a bit exposed?

PAWN
No way! We have the edge with the cross support. We can pin them down just long enough for me to slip by and become a queen!

QUEEN
Excuse me?

PAWN
Yeah! I just know if I can get past all the obstacles that are holding me back, rid myself of the chains that hold me down, I can become anything I want to be! I can go anywhere I want to go, and as far away from here as I can imagine!

QUEEN
Oh. So, is "becoming a queen" like a metaphorical, symbolic sort thing.

PAWN
Sure, there are a lot of metaphysical mental blocks that I think doing something like this could really help with, but on top of that I'll also become female on like, a biological level. But don't worry, I'll still be me.

KING
I know your dad didn't pick this one.

QUEEN
Well. But. But, I thought you wanted to have kids?

PAWN
We'll get a donor for you.

QUEEN
Why don't we get a donor for you?

PAWN
Because... I... Don't want to?

QUEEN

I don't want to either.

KING
(Triumphantly)
Oh Queeny! Could you be a dear and take care of
that rogue pawn?

QUEEN
What's in it for me?

KING
A lavish home with a caring husband. An army to
protect and fight for you. The finest gems and
diamonds from across the sea and land...

She looks at Pawn who shivers with fright and then back at King.

QUEEN
Rex. I know those are glass.

KING
Damn! The box said she'd never know!

QUEEN
I think I'm going to go that way and just keep
on going till I find whatever it is I'm looking
for.

She exits stage left.

PAWN
Go take your gap year or whatever you selfish
little brat! I don't need you! Alright rook us
working class underdogs have to stick together.

KING
Ha! You were right you know. Dumb lug can't
hear a thing. He only responds to ASL:
Architectural Sign Language.

Pawn claps his hands then mimes out a few ludicrous gestures.

PAWN
Castle! Do to them what they did to Penn
Station.

Rook seethes with rage as he runs and screams, exiting towards the crowd.

KING
How did you?

PAWN
Eh, I have a step brother who's a column.

King gasps at the offstage horrors he's seeing Rook unleash.

KING
Oh my god. OH MY GOD! He just broke that old
man like a stack of commandments!

PAWN
I may not be your wife's personal assistant
anymore, but, you could call me a lady in
waiting.

Pawn exits towards audience.

KING
No! I won't let you win. I won't let us win! I
forfeit. The king is dead!

He falls on his sword. The various characters return to their positions. King
gets up and dusts himself off. He inspects his surroundings.

KING
(Hesitant)
Checkers.

QUEEN
Pardon?

KING
(Satisfied)
Pawn D2 to D3.

Pawn steps forward.

Curtain.