

“Checkmate!” yelled Chris, moving his bishop. It was true. I was stuck, there was nowhere I could move to avoid the incoming doom. I stared at the board. Questioning how he beat me. I made a great attempt, but it just wasn’t enough. As most stuff in my life, it was a swing and a miss. I was too involved in my own thoughts to hear Chris asking loudly, “Another game?” After he realized I wasn’t listening, he gave me a hard smack on my shoulder.

“What?” I asked, startled.

“Do you want to play another game?” asked Chris. Although chess for him was not a metaphor for life, it was for me. That is why I hated to play chess. Whenever I die, I start getting very metaphorical.

“There is really only one game you can have, isn’t there?” I asked Chris. Chris made a scrunched up face in confusion. I knew I would only confuse him, but I liked seeming mysterious.

“Want to play a video game instead?” asked Chris.

“Why do you even need to ask?” I questioned. I got a bag of Doritos, and Chris put some pocket pizzas in the microwave. We headed downstairs to his Xbox.

Chris’s house isn’t very big when you first come in through the door. It has a kitchen, two bedrooms, and a bathroom. But his basement is amazing. It is certainly bigger than my house. It has two televisions, three computers. An expansive carpet floor. They even have a bathroom with a Jacuzzi. Downstairs is where Chris sleeps. Upstairs is where his brother Ryan sleeps. Chris is tall, and a bit chubby. I am his same height, and I am the skinniest person in the grade, even though I eat the most junk-food, and probably do the most sitting around, in my class. Chris is always jealous of my weight, he works out an hour a day on his fancy treadmill, in his basement, but his body just has trouble losing weight.

I sat on his leather couch, while Chris inserted “Zombie Apocalypse Slayer 3.5” into the game drive.

As we were munching on the cheesy godliness of Doritos, and killing zombies with a variety of guns, I asked Chris, “What do you think happens when we die?”

“Well, I would suppose we go to heaven, at least according to my parents, we do, as long as we don’t sin,” Chris was raised very Catholic. He didn’t seem to care as

much as his parents do. When you enter Chris's house, the first thing you see is a light-up cross on the wall.

I would certainly be fine thinking of there being heaven, or anything else after you die. I wasn't curious about what happens after I die, I was curious if you just get checkmated, with no second chance, just checkmate.

"Do you think people only get one chance in life?". Chris pressed the Left button, and his character stabbed a zombie with his, very bragged about, golden edged knife.

"Well these zombies, lived twice," said Chris.

"Yeah, but I mean in reality," I explained

"Is this not reality?" asked Chris. I laughed, but then realized he was being serious.

"We play the game too much." I said sternly.

"God, you sound like my mom," we both laughed. right on queue, Chris's mom called downstairs.

"Nicolas, you're mom is on the phone!" She was the only person that called me by my full name, most people called me Nick.

"See you later Lassie," said Chris. "Lassie" was Chris's name for me. He took the "las" from Nicolas, and made that into Lassie. He couldn't stand to be ordinary.

I walked up his stairs, and grabbed the phone that his mom was holding out in front of the stairs.

"Hey mom," I said.

"Wassup dawg!" My mom exclaimed. It hurt my ears. Lately she was trying to be "hip". It was terrible.

"Mom..."

"What's troubling you Easy Deezy?" That's the "hip" name she made up for me.

"Mom, stop."

"Just bein' a cool cat."

"Mom!"

"Fine honey, but sometimes you just have to let the bird fly."

"What the hell are you talking about?" I asked.

"Don't swear," my mom warned. "I saw a study saying it is good to try and act like a teenager, around your kid to make them feel more comfortable." Ugh, Parents and

their studies.

“First, that is not true, second, why did you call?” I asked.

“We need to go college huntin’ Deezy.”

“Mom... STOP!” I exclaimed. My mom just laughed.

“I’m going to pick you up from Chris’s and take you to look at Boulder’s campus, since that is closest college to us.”

“Mom, I don’t want to go to college, in a driving distance of you, and I probably wouldn’t get into Boulder.”

“Lets call this a practice run, then,” my mom said.

“Okay,” I agreed, there’s no point arguing with my mom anyway.

“See ya’ soon Easy,” my mom said.

“See ya’,” I said back. I hung up the phone, gave it back to Mrs. Cemplinson, and went back to the basement to finish off the rest of the pocket pizzas, with Chris.

The doorbell rang upstairs, and I knew it was my mom. I came upstairs. My mom was at the door, and Mrs. Cemplinson, and my mom were talking about, some scandal, that at happened at the school they both teach at. A janitor had paid a kid a dollar to work his shift. Mrs. Cemplinson was my First grade teacher, and my mom was Chris’s third grade teacher. My mom looked up and noticed my at the top of the stairs. “Ready honey?” she asked.

“Sure,” I said. We walked out the door, and got in my Mom’s Honda Civic.

“I call driving!” I said, I had gotten pretty good, at driving over the past year.

“Nope, I already called it, you just couldn’t hear me,” my mom said, and she sat down in the drivers seat. I climbed in the passenger seat, and my mom started the car.

On the highway I asked “Mom?”

“Yes, honey?”

“What do you think happens when we die?” I asked.

“What do you mean?”

“Do we go to the afterlife, and live there forever, or do you think we have some sort of other life?”

“Well, I think when you die, you die.”

“So what happens to our mind?”

“I imagine it just shuts off,” my mom said, half concentrating on finding the next exit, half on my question.

“So you only live once?”

“Yep,” my mom said, “well that’s what I think, you can be free to your opinion.”

“Uh huh,” I never really asked my mom her opinion. She always used to be the cliché mom, and say all the animals went to heaven, I guess I assumed that was what she thought too.

The boulder campus was beautiful, but on first sight I knew I wouldn’t be able to get in, I was maintaining a low 1.5 GPA, and the SATS are coming up, and I keep putting off studying. Whenever I have time to study, but watch TV, play basketball, or whatever I’m doing instead, I want my mom to tell me not to, and study. But when I first started high-school, my mom told my she was never going to remind me what to do, or force me into any homework. “It is your life,” she said. That made it so I ended up arguing with myself, and my wanting to have fun seemed to win every time.

“Can we just leave? This is useless,” I said “I will never get into this school.”

“This is a test-run,” my mom said, “even if you don’t get in to Boulder, this will still be a good experience.

“Okay,” I sighed. We took a tour of the building, and I got more acquainted to college life.

“See this is cool,” Mom said.

“Yeah,” I agreed, but I was still trying to figure out the puzzle of death. My mom noticed that I was concentrating really hard. “Why are you suddenly interested about this now?” my mom asked “Most kids have grown out of this phase already.” “It just really interests me,” I replied.

“Maybe you should sign up for Philosophy.”

“Yeah, maybe.”

“Let’s go home.”

We got back in the Civic and started driving back to our house. “So Easy, which college do you want to check out next?”

“I don’t know mom, stop calling me Easy.”

“Got it Deezy”

I sighed.

“Want to check out Harvard?” my mom asked.

“There is no way I’m getting into Harvard, if I can’t even get into Boulder.”

“Why not try?”

“How about we check out the community college?” I asked.

“Why aim so low?”

“Because I am stupid!” I yelled. The car went silent. My mom looked at me with a look of worry.

“Don’t say that about yourself, Nick. You would be excellent at Philosophy.”

“I don’t want to be a philosopher Mom! I don’t think I could even get paid!” My mom started to say something but stopped. We didn’t talk for the rest of the ride.

When we pulled up in the driveway, I jumped out of the car stormed through my house, and went into my bedroom, slamming the door. I decided I was depressed. I wasn’t sure what depression felt like, but I thought this was it. All I wanted to do was die. I was curious about death, and I was going to go to a crappy college. I just felt lost. I could still get into a good college, but I can’t control myself. I am a procrastinator, my mom should have never let me do stuff for myself. I have no self control.

A knock came from the door.

“Nick?” my mom asked.

“I want to kill myself Mom.”

Three months since then, I gradually got more depressed. I heard it was a clinical thing, and I was on medications. I didn’t have big problems with my life, but I still wanted to leave the earth. I could barely eat. Every time I tried, I ended up vomiting it all out.

I could see my mom couldn’t handle it at all. I could hear her crying whenever I passed her room at night.

Chris and I hardly hung out anymore. At school, I avoided everybody. My GPA got lower still. It dropped to .7.

I was seeing a therapist regularly, and it was still not helping. My friends didn’t see why I was depressed. They thought I didn’t have enough problems, and I agreed. But that didn’t stop me from not being able to get out of bed, not having enough physical will

to lift my body. I hardly ever attended school, or played video games. My dad even visited to try and cheer me up. My dad travels a lot, and was going on a four month vacation, that's what my mom said, but I could tell she and me dad were splitting up.

I heard them yelling from my room. They were arguing about if the cause of my depression was caused by my dad. I guess that could be it too.

My dad started crying, I heard my mom was accuse him of abandoning me, and making me turn out like this. I wish I didn't hear this whole thing. I liked my dad, and missed him when he left. I didn't want him to cry. I didn't think it was his fault.

I heard my mom telling him to leave. I liked him here. I tried to get up to protest, but I didn't have enough strength. I ended up rolling out of my room. The thought of an eighteen old, rolling out of his room cheered me up. When I got outside of my room, my dad was already gone.

I got mad.

"Mom!" I yelled.

"What?"

"Why did you make Dad go?"

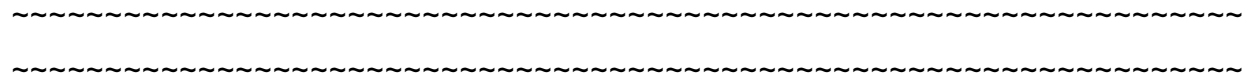
"He abandoned you!"

"I want him here, Mom."

She sighed and picked up the phone. "He wants you back, James."

My dad came back in about ten minutes. He stormed through the door and grabbed me "I never want to leave you again, If I ever try and leave don't let me.

I nodded.



I remember that moment, looking off the bridge. A tear starts to come down my cheek. The day looks so beautiful, shame it will be ruined. No cars are on the bridge, just me and myself.

I close my eyes and let my mind wander. This will be hard on my family, but me

being around may already be harder.

I whisper "Checkmate," and jump off the bridge. Immediately I regret this, I remember every good moment, every fun time, what I hadn't done in life. All of this goes by in my head in a millisecond of time.

But I am no longer falling. There is a firm hand holding my shoulder. I look up. My dad and mom are sprawled over the bride reaching for me. Together they pull me up. I roll over to get fully back on the bride. My mom is frantically crying, holding on to my face, and torso. My dad is smiling.

Maybe it isn't always just checkmate.