

1993

Checkmate

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Checkmate

I was in a bar in Breckenridge
Drinking with my friends.
And he came along.
He sat down at the bar next to me.
He was worn and gray
With an unkept beard.
He was also carrying a small briefcase.
We got to talking.
Eventually we did a shot of Tequila
That one of my friends
Had bought on his Dad's Mastercard.
The man sitting next to me
Had come West twenty years earlier.
He was leaving the war behind.
We talked of skiing and fishing.
And then I brought up shooting.
I said I learned to shoot
On an old Italian over under gun.
He didn't shoot.
Why not? I asked.
He told me.
Whenever he hears a gun shot
He has to kill somebody.
He made it very clear.
Gunshots meant he had to kill
Because of what he saw
In the jungles of Southeast Asia.
He opened the briefcase and pulled out a chess set
Which he gingerly set up on the bar.
He grabbed my shoulder.
Then he asked me a question.
"How many knives are you carrying?"
"None", I said.
"I thought so," he said back.
Then he organized the chess pieces
And the game began.

— Kevin Nix '94