

Body Parts

by Bill Yarrow

They were playing chess with body parts of children they had sacrificed to God.

The battalions of pawns were tiny teeth. The darting rooks were eyes. The frosty knights were hollow cheeks. The blushing bishops were ears. The Queen was a nose. The King was a tongue, upright but unsteady, like a vertical snake.

Antoine was red, his soldiers bristling and bloody. Emily had black, her men dark with decay.

Antoine went first and moved the tooth in front of his tongue one space. Emily moved her same tooth two squares.

Antoine took out his nose's cheek. Emily nudged her tooth forward another square.

Antoine matched her by moving out his other cheek. Emily considered his move and put her hand on her ear.

Antoine attempted the moves leading to Blake's Mate, but as he went through those tired motions, Emily had moved out all of her black teeth, forming a moat of absence between her front and rear lines, her nose proudly exposed.

Then Antoine played the Irresistible Tongue. Emily countered with the Insatiable Eye.

It was as if they were playing two different games or playing two different kinds of chess, one landed, one lunar.

I gave up my space in the front row and pushed out through the

thronging crowd which howled or moaned at each succeeding move.

The hall was air conditioned and, as I was cold, this spurred the urge to empty my bladder.

"Who's ahead in points?" I ask the bearded man in the urinal next to mine. "No pieces have yet been exchanged," he says, zombielike, staring straight in front of him.

I zip up and wash my hands.

I would have liked to have stayed, but having given up my seat and realizing there was no viable way back into the hall, I left, regretful but resigned.

I read in the next day's paper that patriarchy, though threatened, had prevailed. Antoine had won, but, so shaken had he been when playing Emily, he ceded the championship to her.

Emily thanked him but declined the offer. She refused to win the crown by forfeit and was applauded in the press for her integrity.

"Self righteous!!!" cried her fans.

"Self righteous!!!" cried her foes.

I was undecided. I could see both sides of the equation as I could see both sides of the game, its divergent opponents and contradictory styles.

Ultimately though, it made no difference.

The government stepped in and, citing sanitation and health concerns, banned all games played with body parts.

