

HACEK'S TRIPLE TAP

Short film

BY

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The film is very close shot in high contrast black and white or de-saturated colour and uses a variety of film speeds. Most of D'Aguilar's dialogue is delivered as internal monologue.

1. INT. HOTEL LOBBY – DAY

Lift doors open to reveal D'AGUILAR - Ian Richardson type - middle-aged, smug-looking in a three-piece suit of old-fashioned cut. He exits the lift flanked by an entourage. He walks briskly and purposefully towards camera.

D'AGUILAR:

(Cultured accent, dialogue to camera)

I have never lost to the Czech.

And today will be no exception.

D'Aguilar will never lose to

Hacek.

D'Aguilar and entourage sweep past camera.

2. INT. AUDITORIUM – DAY

On stage in the distance HACEK and D'Aguilar seat themselves at a chessboard.

In close up we see Hacek: Skeletal, unshaven, bird-like in threadbare jacket, hunched over the board. D'Aguilar, by

contrast is confident and smug, leaning back somewhat in his chair.

D'AGUILAR (V/O Internal Monologue)

I almost feel sorry for him,
sitting up here, an emaciated
figure in his shoddy ,threadbare
clothes. But pity has no place in
this arena.

D'Aguilar's hand moves a pawn. There's a flurry of opening moves at hyper-speed.

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

The Czech has opened with the
King's Gambit Reversed. If that
really is the best he can do then
I should relax. But I don't. I
never drop my guard. Chess is no
mere game to me. It is life. And
it is death.

The two protagonists bend their heads over the board, almost like rutting stags.

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

The doctrines of Sun Tzu are as relevant to the sixty-four squares before us as they are to the field of battle.

Cut to:

Chinese Wu shu exponents whirl and leap across a courtyard in a blur of movement and colour, swords flashing.

Cut to:

The chess board. D'Aguilar moves a piece in real time.

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

I respond with my own variant of the Budapest Defence.

Hacek drums nervously on his lips with his fingers. There's a noticeable patch of coarse stubble on his left cheek.

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

I'm eyeing my opponent now as he drums thick wet lips. I detect a small patch of neglected stubble

on his cheek, like a copse of
stunted trees - a careless,
hurried shave is revealing to me;
suggesting nerves and
preoccupation. His weakness makes
me queasy.

Hacek's thin white hand flutters over the board like a
frightened sparrow.

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

The snout of a cheap grey shirt
bursts through his jacket at the
elbow...

Hacek bends his elbow to make a move. He tweezes his bishop
between thumb and middle finger before lifting..

D'AGUILAR

I know what's coming next - the
Hacek triple-tap - watch as he
plants the bishop, he'll tap it
three times before letting go.

Hacek's bony fingers lift the bishop across the board, in extreme slo-motion he places it on a square. He taps the mitre three times with his index finger before releasing.

SFX: (Heightened sound) Boom, boom, boom.

D'Aguilar, sucks in air, with a sharp hiss.

D'AGUILAR:

I do this thing - I make this
hissing noise - not because I'm
troubled by the move but because I
wish him to believe that he has
made an error.

Hacek wipes the sweat from his palm with a grubby handkerchief.

D'Aguilar licks dry lips and nods, utterly unphased.

D'AGUILAR:

Uh, huh...

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

"Uh, huh." I call it the D'Aguilar
murmur. The D'Aguilar murmur is

not yet famous in chess circles.

But it will be.

Now I begin to establish the

Gurgenidze Counterattack.

At hyper speed hands pick up pieces and move them from both sides of the board. Pieces are shifted and taken in a flurry of blurred activity.

Time slows down again as Hacek positions his Queen before giving it another triple-tap.

SFX (Hyper-sound) :Boom, boom, boom.

D'AGUILAR:

Uh...huh...

D'Aguilar taps the table impatiently.

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

Pathetic...

Hacek rubs his threadbare elbow vigorously as he surveys the board.

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

I've studied the videos and I
know exactly why he does that:
he's getting nervous now.

Cut to:

A fuzzy video screen shot of another tournament. Hacek is wearing the same jacket. He rubs his fraying elbow in the same way.

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

No wonder that disgraceful jacket
is fraying so badly.

Cut to:

The chess board. In a slow motion sequence the black queen takes a white bishop. Hacek's index finger taps his black queen on the crown three times.

SFX: (Heightened sound) Boom, boom, boom.

D'AGUILAR:

He takes my rook with his queen
and pats her head, as though
rewarding her for such dismal,
predictable play.

The chess board explodes with animated overlays of hundreds of possible moves.

D'AGUILAR:

I see his game now. It's as though I have second sight today. The almost infinite permutations of the pieces lay themselves open before me like a great flower in bloom.

D'Aguilar's fingers rotate the signet ring on his left hand as Hacek scoops another of his pieces.

D'AGUILAR:

I allow him to take my Knight, a deliberate sacrifice for the greater purpose. My pieces are now deployed like the 'horns of the bull'. This is no chess gambit but a genuine Zulu battle formation in which the two flanks gradually encircle and enfold the enemy. It's one of the things I

love about chess, it's so much
like life.

Hacek places a pawn before giving it a triple-tap. He blinks.

SFX (Heightened sound) : Boom, boom, boom.

D'AGUILAR:

We're well into the middlegame
now and I have to admit that his
ploy is beginning to get on my
nerves. Don't get me wrong, I'm
not rattled, but frankly it's
sportsmanship of the worst kind.
He's lucky he's not grinning,
otherwise I might just be
inclined to triple-tap his rather
prominent front teeth with my
bunched fist.

D'Aguilar smiles at his opponent magnanimously.

D'AGUILAR

Uh huh...

D'Aguilar makes a counter move. In quick succession pieces are moved up the board. D'Aguilar's own pieces are now beginning to look rather sparse.

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

The man seems oblivious to the trap I'm laying here; blundering up through the centre like a crazy blind thing. To those unfamiliar with the intricacies of chess it might appear that the Czech has the upper hand. But as I've pointed out, this game is a microcosm, possibly even a macrocosm of life itself - to achieve one's ends one must be prepared to make sacrifices. The more intense the desire, the greater the sacrifice.

Hacek's black knight takes D'Aguilar's white queen. True to form, Hacek taps the knight three times as he places it.

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

I permit him to take my queen.

D'Aguilar picks up the defunct queen and raps his teeth with it over and over again.

SFX: Tap, tap, tap – Tap, tap, tap.

D'AGUILAR

I know that my opponent is an unsophisticated man, but really, I wish he could be persuaded to make his captures with better grace. That triple-tap thing is unquestionably setting my teeth on edge now. Perhaps I should appeal to the judges...

But no, I'm a bigger and better man than that.

Hacek's hand hovers over the board, moving faster and faster before deciding on his move. He picks up his queen and places it.

HACEK

Check.

D'AGUILAR:

Who the hell does this Hacek
think he's dealing with here?
Observe now. My king is on the
move...

D'Aguilar shifts his king. Hacek moves a bishop, places it
and gives it a triple tap

SFX: Boom, boom, boom.

HACEK:

Check.

D'Aguilar surveys the board with an eerily calm expression.
His king is surrounded by Hacek's black pieces.

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

Unbelievable, the way he ambles
straight into my traps; nets of
the most exquisite intellectual
mesh...

D'Aguilar addresses the camera, shouting directly into the
lens.

D'AGUILAR

...If only the sneaky Czech prick
hadn't already taken out my queen
and rook...

D'Aguilar drops his head close to the board and minutely
inspects his king, threatened on all sides. There are only
two white pawns left to him.

D'AGUILAR (CONT'D) (V/O)

...but he put me off. With that
fucking triple-tap thing.
And now I have one move left: a
faint.
Be careful here now.
You might think I'm referring to
a chess feint. (*Spelling it out*)
F.e.i.n.t.
But I'm not.

D'Aguilar begins to look woozy, his eyes flutter, his head
wobbles.

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

It's a faint.

D'Aguilar pretends to faint, slamming himself face down onto the chess board.

Fade to black.

Dissolve to:

3. INT. HOSPITAL WARD. NIGHT

D'Aguilar is in a hospital gown, playing chess with a porter. His eyes are heavily bandaged. He makes a move. The porter helps him place the piece on the board.

D'AGUILAR

Knight to Queen four.

D'AGUILAR (V/O)

Of course, it is regrettable that the two remaining pawns ended up puncturing both of my eyeballs.

I'm told that when they eventually raised my head, I resembled a cartoon character in

shock – two huge white discs in
place of my eyes...

Flash cut to:

4. INT. AUDITORIUM. DAY

In a flashback to the match, D'Aguilar raises his face from the board. The remaining two white pawns have punctured his eyeballs. He howls in agony.

Cut to:

5. INT. HOSPITAL WARD. NIGHT

D'Aguilar addresses camera.

D'AGUILAR

But of course, if you knew me,
you'd realize that I don't really
care: I can still see the board
and the moves in my mind, and
when all's said and done, it's a
small price to pay.

At least I didn't lose to the
Czech.

Cut to black.

End.