**Stratego on a Dismal Day**

Characters:

* Earl Gray – a gentlemanly lord of an English estate
* Butler James – the Earl Gray’s manservant
* Lady Jane – a gracious woman with an estate neighboring the Earl’s
* Maid Anne – the Lady Jane’s maidservant

Props (a set for each of the Earl Gray and the Lady Jane):

1. Stratego game board with playing pieces
2. Writing slate
3. Window with a view of the neighboring estate
4. Spyglass
5. Log book
6. Notebook with set of favorite starting configurations

*The Earl Gray and the Lady Jane live in English manor houses just a short walk’s distance from each other. They enjoy getting together for a game of Stratego, but there are days when the weather is dreadful, so getting out is not always pleasant. Therefore, with the assistance of Gray’s butler, James, and Jane’s maidservant, Anne, together with some writing slates and spyglasses, they can conduct their Stratego games from the comfort of their own game rooms. Messages can be written on a slate and held up to a window that is visible from the other manor house. Today is just such a dreadful day.*

 *(Scene: the Game Room in the manor house of the Earl Gray)*

*Earl Gray:* James, the Lady Jane and I have arranged a game of Stratego. Of course, being the gentleman that I am, I will let the Lady begin. Please mark the invitation on the slate, indicating my preference that she begin, and place it in the window where it can be seen. Then watch for her invitation.

*Butler James:* Very well, M’Lord. *(Does as requested.)*

*(Scene: the Game Room in the manor house of the Lady Jane – nearly the same time)*

*Lady Jane*: Anne, the Earl Gray and I have arranged a game of Stratego. Of course, being the gentleman that he is, he will let me begin. Please mark the invitation on the slate, indicating ‘no preference’ for who should begin, as that is more polite than simply suggesting that I begin. His expected invitation indicating that I should begin will override my no preference.

*Maid Anne:* Very well, M’Lady. *(Does as requested.)* The Earl is a true gentleman, so there is little chance that he would also indicate ‘no preference’, thereby initiating embarrassing rounds of Rock Paper Scissors to resolve the crisis*. (Glancing out the window)* M’Lady, I can see the Earl’s invitation now! He has indeed requested that you make the first move.

*(Scene: the Game Room in the manor house of the Earl Gray)*

*Butler James:* *(Glancing out the window.)* M’Lord, the Lady Jane has made her invitation, accepting your offer to let her make the first move. How do you wish to set up your pieces?

*Earl Gray:* Let’s use one of the default set-ups from my notebook. Creating a new one would be inconvenient. *(Butler James takes the notebook and glances through it.)*

*Butler James:* M’Lord, here is an arrangement that has served you well in the past. *(Butler James sets up the pieces on a board.)*

*(Scene: the Game Room in the manor house of the Lady Jane)*

*Lady Jane*: Yes, always the gentleman. So, let us proceed!

*Maid Anne:* Very good, M’Lady. First, how do you wish to set up your pieces?

*Lady Jane:* Let’s use one of the default set-ups. Creating a new one would be inconvenient. . *(Maid Anne takes the notebook and glances through it.)*

*Maid Anne:* M’Lady, here is an arrangement that has served you well in the past. (Anne sets up the pieces on a board.)

*(Scene: the Game Room in the manor house of the Earl Gray)*

*Butler James:* M’Lord, the game is nearly ready. I will mark your positions on the slate and place it against the window so that Maid Anne can set up your pieces on the Lady Jane’s board. I will then watch for the Lady Jane’s board configuration with the spyglass. *(Butler James does this.)*

*(Scene: the Game Room in the manor house of the Lady Jane)*

*Maid Anne:* M’Lady, the game is nearly ready. I will mark your positions on the slate and place it against the window so that Butler James can set up your pieces on the Earl Gray’s board. I will then watch for the Earl Gray’s board configuration with the spyglass. *(Maid Anne does this.)*

*(Scene: the Game Room in the manor house of the Earl Gray, after a short pause when the slates are at the respective windows)*

*Butler James:* *(observing the slate in the window of the Lady Jane)* M’Lord, I see the slate. I can now set up the Lady Jane’s configuration on your board, and we will be nearly ready to begin. *(Butler James does so, carefully placing the Lady Jane’s pieces so that the Earl Gray cannot see their ranks.)*

*Butler James:* And here is a logbook for today’s game. I will record the opening board positions, and as the game progresses, I will record each move you and the Lady Jane makes. *(Butler James does so.)*

*(Scene: the Game Room in the manor house of the Lady Jane, after a short pause when the slates are at the respective windows)*

*Maid Anne:* *(observing the slate in the window of the Earl Gray)* M’Lady, I see the slate. I can now set up the Earl Gray’s configuration on your board, and we will be nearly ready to begin. *(Maid Anne does so, carefully placing the Earl Gray’s pieces so that the Lady Jane cannot see their ranks.)*

*Maid Anne:* And here is a logbook for today’s game. I will record the opening board positions, and as the game progresses, I will record each move you and the Earl Gray makes. *(Maid Anne does so.)*

*Maid Anne:* M’Lady, all is ready. What will be your first move?

*(Scene: the Game Room in the manor house of the Earl Gray, at nearly the same time)*

*Butler James:* M’Lord, all is ready. I shall wait at the window to watch for the Lady Jane’s move. *(Butler James does so.)*

*(Scene: the Game Room in the manor house of the Lady Jane)*

*Lady Jane:* *(to Maid Anne)* You may move my marshal from E4 to E5.

*Maid Anne: (after doing so and recording the move in the log)* M’Lady, I have made the move and recorded it in the log. I shall write the move on the slate and take it to the window for Butler James to see. *(Maid Anne does so.)*

*(Scene: the Game Room in the manor house of the Earl Gray)*

*Butler James:* M’Lord, I see the slate. It appears that the Lady Jane has moved her piece. Of course I will not share with you the rank of the piece, but I will now make her move on your board. *(Butler James does so.)*

*Butler James:* M’Lord, it is your turn. What will be your first move?

*(Play goes back and forth for a while. Eventually, after many pieces have been removed…)*

*(Scene: the Game Room in the manor house of the Lady Jane)*

*Lady Jane:* Anne, with this move, I win the game! I am sure that, as a gentleman, the Earl Gray will not take it too hard. Make the move and show it at the window for James to see. Then you may close the log and put away the game. *(Maid Anne does so.)*

*(Scene: the Game Room in the manor house of the Earl Gray)*

*Butler James:* M’Lord, I am sorry to report that with this latest move, the game is over and the Lady Jane has won.

*Earl Gray: (Make up your own ending lines.)*