

**What chance did the dictator have to do any damage when a chess champion knew how to make the right kind of wrong moves?**

# Checkmate

# For Aradjo

By

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**T**HE SECRETARY of State frowned down angrily at Aradjo Ihanrani's serenely mocking face. "I'm not quite sure I heard you aright," he said.

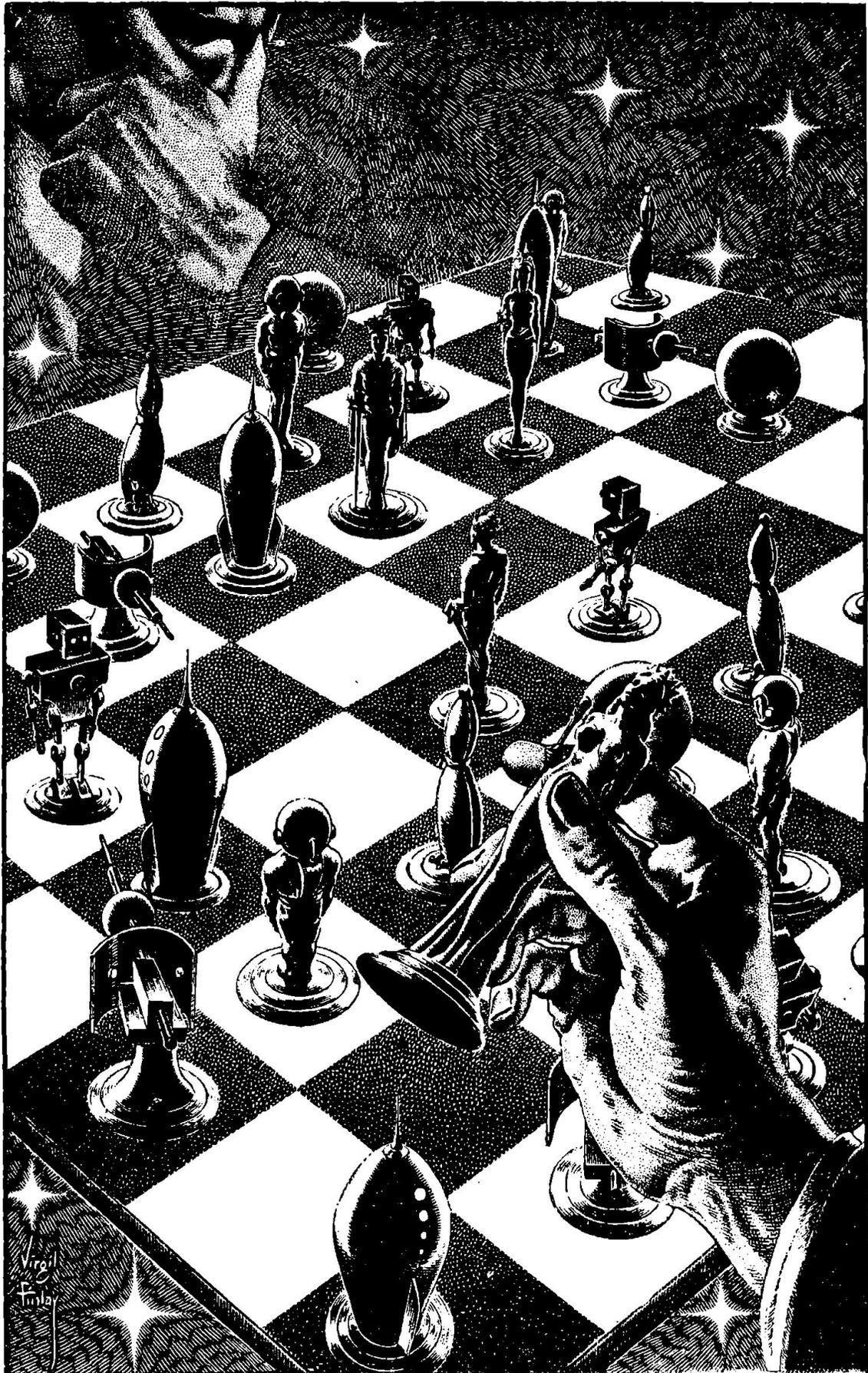
"I think you did," Aradjo said calmly. "However, I'll repeat my statement. My statement was: war is always avoidable. Only the supremely stupid need resort to it, even when an enemy is on one's borders with armed hordes intent on invasion."

"Do you know what you're saying?" the Secretary of State asked

frigidly. "You're saying—"

"I'm perfectly aware of the direct implications of my statement," Aradjo cut in. "As a statesman, you don't need to descend to the level of explaining the obvious. I'm not a statesman, thank Heaven. I'm only the world's greatest chess player. In chess—"

"In chess!" the Secretary of State interrupted in retaliation. "Man, are you so—so blinded by your successes against inanimate objects on a chess board that you have acquired a God-



In this game for Earth's survival, it took a Queen to make a pawn of the King!

complex? The affairs of the world can't be compared in the same breath!"

"Do you play chess?" Aradjo asked with innocence.

"No! I have no time for such games. Trying to keep the foreign policy on an even keel is a twenty-four-hour-a-day job."

"Then," Aradjo said quietly, "the least that can be said is that you are guilty of the crime you accuse me of—judging something you know nothing about. Chess."

"Hang it, I do know about chess. Used to play it quite well in college."

"But you were no champion. Not even, perhaps, in some small circle of chess players?"

The Secretary of State turned a brick red. "No," he said curtly. "And if you're going to give me another of your smug smiles and remark that what is needed is a Secretary of State who's a champion, save your breath. No champion could prevent this war."

"Perhaps not," Aradjo agreed. "But I can."

He had said it so calmly, and the actual meaning of what he had said was so far from what anyone could have expected, that it took the Secretary of State several seconds to grasp what lay behind his words.

"Hah!" he snorted. "I might have expected something like that. It bears out my contention. Perhaps I should turn my cloak of office over to you, so that you could wave your scented fingers under your powdered nose and let the Argenean Ambassador convey to his master, Radnar, your consent to his kissing your feet?"

"Exactly," Aradjo said. "You hit it on the nail head. Of course, we would have to be more subtle about it than that. Your plan, tactically correct though it is, is too childishly impulsive. A trait you have demonstrated before, I might add."

"Why, you—" the Secretary of State started to sputter.

"And are demonstrating right now," Aradjo said calmly. "In the first place, it would be unwise for you to step down and let me take your place, unselfish though that offer may have been. In the second place, one can seldom get an intractable foe to accept degrading suggestions directly. The essentials of your plan are quite sound, though. The kissing of my feet was meant figuratively, however, I surmise."

"You are the most preposterous pup it's ever been my misfortune to encounter," the Secretary of State said frigidly. "I must ask you to—" He stopped, at a loss for words.

"To stop exposing your ineptitude at handling delicate situations?" Aradjo suggested. "I see your point. There are reporters here. In fact, over half of these men around us are reporters, since this is the Press Club. I'm here myself only because my uncle owns one of the larger newspapers. It's really your party, and you have a right to expect nothing but respect. You may even have earned it in the past. But since I've gone this far, I'll go a step further. I'll bet you ten times your yearly salary against that yearly salary that I can prevent this war between Argenea and Usamere."

"You mean," the Secretary of State said, a triumphant light appearing in the depths of his eyes, "that you are making a flat bet with me at those stakes that you can prevent this war?"

"Exactly," Aradjo said. "And not in your office. I will do it as a private citizen. Do you accept?"

The Secretary of State looked around smugly. "Naturally," he said, holding out his hand.

Aradjo accepted it, shaking the hand with a grave dignity. "I will need certain information from your department of Government before I start,"

he said, "and also a certain amount of cooperation from you. Strictly q. t., of course."

"Oh, no," the Secretary of State laughed. "That wasn't part of the bet."

"You mean you refuse to cooperate with me after solemnly agreeing to permit me to attempt to prevent war?" Aradjo asked, his eyes round with feigned amazement.

The Secretary of State looked around at the ring of faces and realized, too late, that he had been trapped.

"ALL RIGHT," he said with great weariness. "what do you expect of me in the way of cooperation?"

Aradjo Ihanrani's manner changed abruptly from lazy superiority to sharp alertness. He looked gravely about him at the ring of faces.

"Of course you all realize," he said, "that if one word of this leaks out, I'll fail—and lose my life as well, in all likelihood." He waited until they had all nodded. "Very well, then. You have an underground organization in Argenaea?"

"We might have," the Secretary of State said cautiously. "though not enough of one to overthrow Radnar—if that's your plan."

"No," Aradjo said, "that's not my plan."

"Then what is your plan?" the Secretary asked in an irritated voice.

"I believe you are to make a speech over the international-radio hookup day after tomorrow." Aradjo said. "The announcements are in the papers. I want you to have a heart attack just as you finish your speech, and while the television cameras are still on you, so that the entire world will see it. You must show mild signs of distress a couple of times toward the end of your speech. Mark them on prepared text so that you won't forget

them. Have the ambulance men or the doctor state emphatically that you are dead before they leave your office with you on the stretcher."

"And have the President appoint you my successor?" the Secretary sneered.

"No, of course not," Aradjo said patiently. "Arrange it so that the radio station announcer will scoop the newspapers with the announcement that you have just died. An hour later, have the hospital emphatically deny it. Remain in complete seclusion in the hospital for two days, then return to your normal way of living. One of these reporters will then write a suggestive article about mechanical hearts and the possibility of your having been revived by one or actually having one substituted for your old worn-out heart. The article must be speculative only. Nothing concrete. There must be no interviews with you or with the hospital. In the next editions, the rest of these reporters here with us now must emphatically deny it. So emphatically that it will gain credence."

"Just what good will that do?" The Secretary was so puzzled he forgot to be skeptical.

"In chess, as you may remember," Aradjo said, "we make moves. What I have just outlined is a move also. A pawn move, I might say. A very important though not decisive one. It should be executed carefully, and I will expect it to be executed exactly as I have outlined. If I do not succeed in my game of chess there will have been no serious harm done, since global war will be upon us then anyway. But if I do succeed, you will have been instrumental in that success. Almost vitally so. There are other moves also."

"What are some of the other moves?"

"Well—four days from today, the *Queen Moradja* sails for Argenaea.

When it is twelve hours out, it must develop 'engine trouble'. It must then radio its apparent trouble and ask for assistance. The Government must immediately step into the picture and rush another passenger liner out to take off the passengers and continue them on their journey. The *Queen Moradja* must then be surrounded by a ring of battleships and patrolling aircraft. Apparent great secrecy must accompany this. By this time, Mr. Secretary, you will be back at work. You news reporters, each in your own way, must speculate on why the *Moradja* has stopped and is being surrounded with such secrecy. And you, Mr. Secretary, must issue denials. After seven days of this, the battleships will allow the ship to proceed to its destination. It would be wise to take none of the ship personnel into your confidence. Instead, have your own men with proper powers on the ship, and have them order the captain to stop, order the passengers onto the other ship, and order the battleships to patrol."

"Another pawn move?" the Secretary of State asked.

"No..." Aradjo pursed his lips. "It smacks more of a Bishop move. No, I change that. It would definitely be the Queen's Knight moving out onto the board."

"And your next move?" the Secretary asked.

"Aside from memorizing the identities and locations of key subversives in Argenea so that in case I need to contact them I may, that is all," Aradjo said calmly. "That should be sufficient to prevent war."

"Then you're going to Argenea?" a reporter asked.

"Whatever gave you such an absurd idea?" Aradjo assumed bland innocence.

"Then what are you going to do?" the reporter persisted.

Aradjo Ihanrani studied the man thoughtfully. "Why don't you tag along with me and find out?" he suggested. "You might even be of invaluable assistance to me."

"**H**ERE WE are up ahead, Kirol," Aradjo said.

Kirol did not need to look to know the place. It was the Argenean Embassy.

"Do you want me to wait outside?" he asked.

"Perhaps it would be awkward having you along," Aradjo said. "A member of the press... This is what we'll do. We'll continue along the street and circle the block. You will get out and catch a taxi to drive you up to the entrance. Then you go inside. In that way, you will be there during the time I am there, and you can observe my every move."

Ten minutes later Aradjo drove his car up to the Embassy and got out, ignoring the signs that gave notice he was in the spot reserved for the Argenean Ambassador's own car.

"Sorry, sir," the doorman said politely, "but you can't park there. It's reserved."

"And who says I can't?" Aradjo asked imperiously. "Perhaps you don't know who I am. I assure you you will learn soon enough."

He stepped calmly around the surprised doorman and entered the building. The ornate waiting room was empty of people except for the reporter, Kirol. Behind an ornately carved rail was a desk obviously intended for a receptionist.

"See here..." the doorman who had followed him in said with a mixture of determination and cautious politeness.

Aradjo strode briskly to the receptionist's desk and rapped loudly on its surface with his gloved knuckles.

"Where is everyone?" he asked the doorman angrily. "I'm not accustomed

to waiting like this. Get someone immediately."

An oversize intricately paneled door opened. The rather heavy man who stood there was instantly recognizable as one of Argenea's chief foreign relations officials. The dark scowl on his heavy features was intended to awe even the most important of visitors into silence.

"Are you the receptionist?" Aradjo asked imperiously, pretending not to recognize the man. "I'm here to see the Ambassador of Argenea. He will see me when he knows why I'm here." As he said this, he took out a card and laid it on the receptionist's desk. "I am the inventor of a weapon," he went on to explain, his voice oozing importance. "Whether the Ambassador will see me or not at this time, I intend to demonstrate my weapon tomorrow night. By killing the Secretary of State of the foul country I had the misfortune to be born in. Usamere. Now, be a good man and announce me to your master, the Ambassador."

"The Ambassador is not here now," the heavy man said, his face and tone expressionless. "He will be here day after tomorrow."

"You lie," Aradjo said frigidly. "Very well. But I am not coming back here. After tomorrow night I will go to Argenea and directly to Radnar himself. And part of my price for my weapon will be to see you and this insolent doorman sentenced to hard labor for ten years."

He marched disdainfully past the doorman, stepping on the man's foot. When the doorman started after him, the Argenean foreign relations official said something in Argenean that made him stop.

When Aradjo reached the sidewalk, Kirol was just slipping into the car. Aradjo slipped behind the wheel and pulled hastily away from the curb. Safely in the thick of traffic, he re-

laxed and looked sidelong at the reporter, chuckling with satisfaction.

"So that was the reason you had in mind for your pawn move!" Kirol exclaimed admiringly. "Very smooth. But how are you going to back it up?"

"That will be quite easy," Aradjo said. "But first we must book passage on the *Queen Moradja*."

"I thought you said you weren't going to Argenea?" Kirol said.

"I'm not," Aradjo said. "I'm just going to buy the tickets."

"Next," he said as they left the travel bureau office, "we must assemble our luggage. Two large steamer trunks should be enough. We can carry them in the open trunk compartment of the car until we get them to my apartment."

"**N**OW WHAT?" Kirol asked.

Aradjo was looking happily at the two large trunks sitting in the middle of the garage floor.

"I'm expecting some packages," he said. "They'll go into the trunks. Meanwhile, we should paint the destination on each trunk so that it won't get lost. The paint should have time to dry."

"What will be in the packages?" Kirol asked.

"Nothing," Aradjo said. Absolutely nothing."

"All right, don't tell me."

"But I did!" Aradjo protested. "I told you there would be nothing in them, and that's the truth."

Kirol watched as Aradjo took a can of paint and a brush and carefully painted a name and address on the side and top of each of the trunks. As the name emerged from the brush strokes, Kirol whistled in surprise. The name was that of the Argenean dictator—Radnar!

"How do you expect to get the trunks on the boat?" he asked. "Anything that would be sent to Radnar

would be closely inspected."

But the next morning when the packages came and were placed in the trunks, he was again surprised. The packages were bulky and heavy, and wrapped in a veritable mat of thick wrapping paper.

Along with them had come a small can of paint. After they were locked in the trunks, Aradjo used the new paint to write his own name and the name of a famous Argenean resort hotel directly over Radnar's address. When he had finished, there seemed only the one address.

"What's the idea?" Kirol asked, mystified.

"By the time these trunks are taken off the boat in Argenea," he smirked, "they will have assumed monumental importance."

"I don't get it," Kirol said. "Who's going to scrape off the paint and find Radnar's address underneath?"

"The mother of us all," Aradjo said. "Nature. You see, this second paint is one that has no body. It will hold together reasonably well when untouched, but when thoroughly dried will be nothing but powder. In the storage hold it will completely wipe off. There will be a mystery of two trunks loaded onto the boat under the name of Aradjo Ihanrani—that vanished during the voyage."

"And a mysterious stopping of the boat in midocean!" Kirol said in awed tones.

"Exactly," Aradjo said.

"What a plot!" Kirol said. "A weapon that kills the Secretary of State. It's shipped in two trunks to Argenea. The ship is stopped by the Usamerean navy and searched for seven days, then allowed to proceed on its way." He stopped suddenly, frowning. "But then there'll be two trunks in the hold anyway, not on the list. They'll open them and find the stuff you put in them."

"**B**UT THEY won't," Aradjo said complacently. "You see, the carefully wrapped objects are made of dry ice. The seven days' delay on the high seas is to allow the dry ice sufficient time to vanish."

"It's a nice idea," Kirol said, "but they'll guess that. The carefully wrapped parcels of air could be nothing else."

"I took care of that," Aradjo said, "by having the inner wrappings soaked in water. When the dry ice is gone, that frozen water will melt and collapse the wrappings. There will be nothing but loose paper."

"I see your strategy now," Kirol said. "You want to convince Radnar that a weapon has been invented that can kill at a distance without a trace, that you tried to smuggle it to him, and the Usamerean Government got hold of it and now has it. But do you think that will stop the war? I don't."

"You don't? Why not?"

"There are already weapons far more dangerous than that," Kirol said. "Radnar won't stop out of fear for his own skin."

"Granted. But he would stop if there were an actual weapon that could ensure the quick defeat of Argenea in a war, and it was proven beyond question that there existed such a weapon."

"Sure," Kirol said.

"I actually have such a weapon," Aradjo said calmly. "I've already built it and tried it out—and it works. This—" He took in the two trunks by a gesture. "—is more or less just horseplay."

"Where is this—this weapon?" Kirol asked.

Aradjo smiled. "Already on its way to Argenea," he said. "In fact, I would say that it's probably already safely hidden there where no one can prevent it from working. Why do you

suppose I wanted the names of subversives this country can trust?" He studied Kirol, silent laughter in his eyes. "As of a few hours ago," he said softly, "if Radnar declares war on Usamere, he will die, and there will be a change of government in Argenea before his first planes can start their journey across the ocean."

"You're kidding!" Kirol said.

"Am I?" Aradjo smiled enigmatically.

ON THE television screen, the Secretary of State appeared so vividly that he might have been in the same room. Sitting alertly erect about the room were the various members of the Press Club, including Kirol and Aradjo. And they were held together by the bond of conspiracy, each watching the hidden drama the Secretary was enacting.

"It is evident even to the most blindly optimistic," he was saying with ponderous slowness, "that Radnar will not stop until he has placed the entire planet under bondage. We will never begin a war. Not even a preventive war. But we will not, we dare not..."

He glanced down at his prepared text, frowned, and shook his head vaguely. The moment of silence was dramatic in the extreme.

"We dare not," he said, taking up his speech again, "sit passively and let ourselves be enslaved. Though it cost us half of those alive today, the freedom of future generations demands that we pay the cost, if it be exacted of us."

The Secretary stopped talking and looked directly into the screen, an expression of pain crossing his features. Abruptly, he seemed to try to rise to his feet. Half way erect behind his large desk, he collapsed, his prepared speech slipping from his fingers.

Another man darted into view on

the screen. The Secretary was out of sight behind the desk. The newcomer also vanished as he bent down. Part of his head reappeared above the desk. His voice, startled and horrified, sounded clearly.

"My God! He's dead!"

Then the man seemed to remember he was on the air. He turned and looked directly into the screen. Abruptly, the entire scene vanished as it was cut off the air.

The intense silence that followed was broken by the voice of one of the Press Club members: "If that was acting, it was the best performance I've ever seen!"

"It could have been real," another voice spoke up. "Just because a man is going to simulate a heart attack at a certain time, doesn't mean he can't have a real and unscheduled one at that very time."

Kirol was staring at Aradjo, his eyes wide in speculation. Aradjo smiled serenely and stood up.

"He did quite well," he said. "Quite sporting of him. I think I will go home now." He glanced at Kirol. "I'm expecting a caller this evening."

Kirol left with him. As they drove across town he sat silent, a dark scowl on his face. It wasn't until Aradjo had parked his car in the apartment house garage that Kirol spoke.

"Where do you want me?" he asked. "Hidden in the bedroom?"

Aradjo hesitated, then nodded. "That would be as good as any place," he said. "I hardly expect any rough stuff, but it would be wise to have someone handy. And, of course, there's always the possibility that no one will show up so soon."

THEY RODE up in the elevator in silence. The muffled silence of the hall followed them from the elevator to the door. Aradjo's key scraped

loudly. Kirol went past him through the opened door and switched on the lights.

"I'm glad that's over," Aradjo said as he pulled the key out of the lock and closed the door. "Something could have gone wrong, you know. But now it's over and the two trunks are safely in the process of being loaded onto the *Moradja*—" He stopped abruptly and began sniffing. "Someone who eats crillweed is around!" he said. "I can smell his breath!"

"Yes," a heavy voice sounded. The bedroom door opened slowly, revealing the foreign relations official of the Argenean Embassy.

"How did you get in here?" Aradjo demanded angrily. "And if you think you can get into my good graces now, you're mistaken. I haven't forgotten yesterday."

"Allow me to introduce myself," the man said. "I am Kurn Ardil. It took me a little time to contact my government, but now I have been authorized to pay whatever price you ask for— for this weapon."

"You may inform your master," Aradjo said loftily, "that I refuse to discuss the matter with an underling whose incarceration at hard labor for a minimum of ten years is part of my price. I intend to go to Argenea and talk with him. And if I'm not treated right, he'd better look out. Now, get out." He went to the door and opened it, standing beside it with haughty disdain.

"You are going to Argenea?" Kurn Ardil said, his eyes lighting up.

"That's what I said," Aradjo said curtly.

"I will tell my master," Kurn Ardil said with ill-concealed amusement.

He bowed slightly and left.

Aradjo slammed the door violently, then sped to the bedroom and looked in to make sure no one else was there. When he came back, he was grinning

broadly.

"FOR A MAN who isn't going to Argenea on the *Moradja*, you're certainly making every preparation to go," Kirol said dryly, swinging his leg idly where it dangled over the edge of the table.

Aradjo glanced up from his packing of three suitcases, a smile appearing briefly. He continued his packing without answering.

"I'm surprised Kurn Ardil hasn't shown up," Kirol said a few moments later.

"He's convinced I'll soon be in Argenea where they can do as they wish with me," Aradjo told him. "Why should he risk trouble here?" He locked the last suitcase and straightened up. "I guess we're ready now," he said. "You're sure the other reporters will be on hand?"

Kirol chuckled. "Foolish boy," he said. "They're like wild horses champing at the bit. Not one of them that wouldn't sell his soul to be able to give this to his editor."

"Help me down to the car with the suitcases," Aradjo said. He started to pick one of them up, then paused, smiling. "Could be that part of it could leak out after the *Moradja* is finally on her way to Argenea," he said. "I'll let them know just what they can print before then."

The sky was cloudless as they drove across town to the harbor area. Almost directly overhead, the twin suns gyrated in their tight spiral, revolving around each other once every twenty-seven seconds.

Aradjo parked the car in a garage two blocks from the dock. Kirol carried one of the bags until they were within sight of the huge ocean liner, then turned it over to Aradjo.

"Looks like some excitement ahead," he said. "I'll find out what it's all about."

By the time Aradjo reached the dock, Kirol was ready to rejoin him.

"Looks like this is it," he said. "The entire staff of the Argenean Embassy is boarding the boat." He grinned. "Including Kurn Ardil. Maybe they plan on working you over when they get out to sea."

Aradjo pursed his lips into a whistle. "This eventuality I didn't anticipate," he said. "It's going to be embarrassing to the Usamerean Government to stop that ship on the high seas now. Or maybe not, since war is imminent anyhow."

"But now they'll know you aren't on board," Kirol said under his breath as the crowd grew thicker around them.

"That was to be expected anyhow," Aradjo mumbled.

And then the reporters had descended upon him according to plan. Cameras were flashing.

"You're Aradjo Ihanrani, the chess champion of the world, aren't you?" a voice demanded.

"Why, yes," Aradjo said, a mixture of mystification and pleasure on his features.

"Why are you going to Argenea at this time?" another asked.

"To play chess! Of course!" Aradjo's tone implied there could be no other reason to drag anyone across the ocean.

"But don't you know war is imminent?"

"War? War?" Aradjo said. "Pardon me, gentlemen. Maybe I'm behind the times, but has war been declared yet? If not, how can you say it is imminent? And even if you are right, what does war have to do with the chess tournament at Smolsz two weeks from now. I'm quite sure that neither the President nor Radnar will let their differences break that up. The outcome of that tournament is of historic importance."

The reporters, suspecting sarcasm or hidden humor, laughed. Aradjo frowned at them as though he wondered what they were laughing about. But underneath the surface, all of them were aware of Kurn Ardil standing on the gangplank taking it all in.

"And now, if you will pardon me..." Aradjo pushed firmly toward the gang-plank. When he reached it, he turned to the reporters. "Would you like me to make an important prediction?"

"We certainly would!" several voices said quickly, eagerly.

"I predict..." Aradjo paused dramatically. "I predict that I will defeat any of my opponents at Smolsz in thirty-four moves!"

**K**IROL, IN the thick of the crowd, watched Aradjo walk with great self-importance up the gangplank. He also saw Kurn Ardil at the top and to one side, on deck.

He saw Aradjo pause at the top of the gangplank, less than three feet from Ardil.

His keen eyes saw the sudden change on Ardil's face, hastily concealed.

The next moment, Aradjo had stepped off the gangplank and was lost to sight. Kurn Ardil remained where he was for another minute, then straightened up and went back from the rail.

Kirol slipped out of the crowd and went back to the garage where the car was. Aradjo had told him to wait there. The whole strategy of the current move was quite simple. Aradjo would go to his cabin. There, he would swiftly change into a disguise. Different type of clothing, nostrils widened by inserted metal forms, tinted glasses. He had already rehearsed the change, timing it. Then he would join those who had boarded the ship to see their loved ones safely started over-

seas. On a ship as large as the *Moradja*, there wouldn't be time to determine absolutely that he wasn't still aboard in the twenty-four hours before the ship was to be stopped.

A long lonely blast sounded. Warning to passing shipping that the giant liner was about to move out. A moment later Aradjo in his disguise appeared through the opened doors of the garage.

"What did you say to Ardil that startled him so?" Kirol asked immediately.

Aradjo started the motor and slipped into low. "You have sharp eyes," he said, without looking at Kirol. "I just told him I wouldn't be on the ship when it sailed."

"You told him that!" Kirol exploded.

"It was a passing impulse," Aradjo said, a twinkle in his eyes. "It posed a dilemma to him. If he stayed aboard and I didn't, he'd be stuck on board without me. If he got off and I didn't, it would be as bad."

Kirol stared at Aradjo several minutes as the car wove through traffic. Finally, he shook his head.

"I don't believe you give a damn whether war starts or not," he said. "You're just having the time of your life mystifying people. Including me."

**A**RADJO laughed. "You're partly right," he said. "If you've read my book on chess strategy, you will know that my technique consists of making three randomly spaced nonsense moves in the early stages of the game. That is, with professionals and masters only," he added hastily. "With an amateur they would be wasted, and I would lose the game. The master is always trying to penetrate my style and the nonsense element is worth four and a third extra moves, or one Bishop and a fourth of a pawn."

"That's too technical for me," Kirol said, disgruntled. "What's your next move?"

To his amazement, Aradjo suddenly turned pale. "My next move?" he echoed slowly in an obvious stall to gain control of himself. A smile quirked the corners of his mouth. "My next move is to go to Argenea—by plane."

Kirol gasped, at an utter loss for words.

"But the very essence of your game," he finally managed to say, "demands that you stay out of their hands. As long as you do that, they'll believe from the interest the government shows in the *Maradja* that you really have a weapon on board, and that a weapon really exists!"

"I told you," Aradjo said, "that such a weapon does exist, and that it is now in Argenea. I have to be there to use it. And they won't catch me. I'll be entering the country under an assumed name and with a passport obtained by the Secretary of State for me."

"Even so, you'll be risking your life," Kirol said. "The very fact that they'll be convinced the weapon exists will make it suicidal. If you're caught, you'll be tortured until you give them the secret of the thing, and since you can't—because such a weapon doesn't exist—they'll just keep on torturing you, thinking you're just stubborn!"

"I'm going," Aradjo said quietly.

"How soon?" Kirol asked.

Aradjo lifted his arm and glanced at his wristwatch. "The plane leaves in an hour and twelve minutes," he said calmly.

He had reached a north and south crossroad. He turned north toward the international airport.

"Aren't you going to change your disguise?"

"This one should do quite well,"

Aradjo said, not taking his eyes off traffic.

Twenty minutes later, he turned into the parking lot at the airport. Kirol followed Aradjo to the exit visa desk and saw him take tickets and passport out of his pocket. The official ran a special down the list and checked off a name he couldn't quite make out.

"Well, goodbye," Aradjo said. "If things work out, I'll see you in the clubroom the day after peace is declared."

He regarded the confused expression on Kirol's face briefly, then turned and walked swiftly toward the doors to the field.

**KIROL ENTERED** the clubroom, his eyes darting swiftly over the scattered groups.

"Hi, Kirol," another reporter said. "Have you heard from him yet?"

"No," Kirol said. "I've been calling his apartment ever since it happened. No luck. Maybe he isn't back yet."

"How did he manage it?" a second man asked.

Kirol looked around at the crowd that was collecting. "I don't know," he said. "I was with him practically every minute until he caught the plane, and I can't figure it out."

All eyes went past Kirol toward the door. He turned to see what they were looking at. The Secretary of State had just arrived.

"Aradjo called me," he announced. "He said he would meet me here. Has he arrived yet?" He looked around questioningly, then added, "I'll wait. He should be here soon." A wry smile appeared. "I have a check with me for a year's salary. I lost my bet, and I don't need to tell any of you that I'm very happy about it. I am."

"I'm happy that you are," a new voice spoke up. "We should all be happy."

Everyone looked toward the door again. Aradjo stood there, smiling. At first glance, he seemed the same as when they had last seen him a month before; but then little things became subtly apparent. Kirol saw them with a growing sick feeling. Aradjo's face was thinner. And though his head still maintained its disdainful angle of elevation, there was added something that sent a chill of horror through Kirol. And the eyes. And why were his hands in his pockets? In his thoughts, as Aradjo stood in the doorway, Kirol came to the conclusion that he was looking at an unbreakable spirit that had recently withstood more than an ordinary man—ten ordinary men—could stand without breaking.

Impulsively, he rushed forward, holding out his hands. "Aradjo!" he cried, deep concern in his voice.

"Why, Kirol," Aradjo said brusquely. "You sound like a hen greeting her biddies."

"I have the check ready for you, Aradjo," the Secretary of State said. "But, man, what's happened to you? You look like a stallion who's been beaten to within an inch of its life. Did they torture you?"

"Of course," Aradjo said crisply, coming on into the room. "May I have the check, please?"

He took a hand out of a pocket and extended it to take the check. A silent gasp went up in the room as every eye fixed on that hand. Each of the fingers was neatly bandaged.

Aradjo took the check gingerly in his bandaged fingers and glanced at the figure on it. "Thank you," he said.

"What happened?" the Secretary asked humbly.

"I won my game of chess," Aradjo said. "I knew I would. And I suppose I owe you a debt of gratitude for playing your part so well. If you had not done so, I would have been left in the

position of an idiot running around blindly in thick boulevard traffic."

"Yes," the Secretary said. "I played my part well because I realized that maybe you could prevent the war. I realized that after I had left this club-room after we had made our bet. I suddenly knew that anyone capable of forcing me into such a bet in the manner you did, must have an abnormal amount of ability. Perhaps enough to succeed. So when I played my part, I was keenly conscious of the fact that my least facial expression, my least act, might mean the sacrifice or salvation of countless thousands of lives. But—even yet—I can make no sense out of it. Could you explain what you did? Or would you prefer to keep it secret?"

"There's no reason now to keep it secret," Aradjo said. He looked around the circle of faces. His eyes came to rest on Kirol. "First, I owe you an apology, Kirol."

"For what?" Kirol asked, startled.

"You will see shortly," Aradjo said. "Now, if you will permit me to sit down, and perhaps have something to drink..."

**“WHEN** I forced you into the position of making that bet, Mr. Secretary," Aradjo began, "I had no idea whatever of seriously tackling the problem. As I think back, I believe I was motivated by the conviction that you would never make such an insane bet, and if you did you would balk at following such absurd instructions." He stared at the rim of the glass held in bandaged fingers for a long moment, then chuckled humorlessly. "That's what comes of playing against amateurs—even when they are in the professional ranks. But once you had accepted, I realized I was definitely in for it. I would have to make good. Not only for the bet itself and possibly

to preserve the peace, but also to save you your job.

"I immediately, therefore, applied the rules of chess as laid down in my several textbooks on the subject. Certain moves had been made, or the pieces touched so that they would of necessity be moved in their proper sequence. There was no inkling in my mind of a proper strategy or plan of attack.

"It was quite like a game in which, after the first few moves, I discover my opponent has already set in motion a form of attack new to me that stands a chance of winning. I immediately discard my own game and use the already emplaced men as a basis of defense and eventually of attack."

"You mean my 'heart attack' was not a carefully thought out move?" the Secretary asked incredulously.

"Of course not!" Aradjo snapped. "It was merely the first thing that popped into my mind that I was quite sure you would refuse to do! The stopping of the largest ocean liner in existence for a week on the high seas was an even more preposterous suggestion designed to force you to refuse to cooperate with me—and thus give me a bloodless victory in a childish, at best, argument.

"I didn't quite realize how deeply you felt your responsibility, or quite how I affected you personally. You see, I'm not accustomed to thinking privately that I'm as smart as I try to appear in public.

"But I saw the moves were going to be made. And immediately something else happened that made me think I had gone beyond the point of no return. Kirol attached himself to me. It was a most fascinating development. A piece on the board whose color was neither black nor white, though it was coated with white quite conspicuously. There was a strong possibility

that Kirol was an instrument of Radnar—”

“Me?” Kirol interrupted indignantly.

“Yes—you,” Aradjo said dryly. “If you had not attached yourself to me, I would have undoubtedly called up the Secretary the next day and called the whole thing off with an abject apology. As it was, I thought I might have something tangible in the way of an enemy. And you crystalized in my thoughts the idea of a multiple strategy. Each move with many interpretations. To you I painted the idea of using the evidence of the Secretary’s ‘heart attack’ and the stopping of the *Moradja* at sea as evidence of a secret weapon. At the same time, I kept insisting I had a real secret weapon. Meanwhile, you were being investigated. By the way, did you know that Aua Vehig, the first girl you were ever in love with—second year grade school, I believe—is living in this city and still remembers you? Her phone number is Trialbin 43-87628, if you wish to call her.

“You were not finally cleared of all suspicion until I boarded the *Moradja*. A State Department man was waiting for me in my stateroom. The news that you were completely loyal crystalized my final strategy.”

“While we were at it,” the Secretary of State spoke up, “we did a good job of it. There were literally tons of highly incriminating documents aboard under the diplomatic seal of the Argentinean Government.”

“Yes, I know,” Aradjo said. “However, that had little or no effect on the final outcome of events. Kurn Ardil believed and still believes that those were of least concern to you.” He lit a cigaret with slow unconcern, being very careful of his bandaged fingers. “I had had no intention of actually going to Argenea until I learned on the

boat that you were cleared, Kirol,” he said quietly.

“**B**UT WE drove directly to the international airport and you already had your reservations!” Kirol exclaimed.

“You thought I did,” Aradjo corrected. “The tickets I used were boat tickets. The passport was the one I had had made out in case I decided to remain on the boat at the last moment. The reservations for the plane to Argenea were made by the State Department while we were driving out to the airport. You see,” a sad smile twisted his lips, “although you had been cleared, I regarded that clearance then as merely something to gamble on heavily, while still making routine moves based on the premise that you were a spy reporting my every act.”

“I think,” the Secretary of State said slowly, “that I’m beginning to understand you. Each move was opportunistic. Your strategy was extremely fluid, working toward several goals simultaneously, building up against possible attack from every visible piece on the board.”

“Yes,” Aradjo said, “until I saw that I could certainly checkmate in the next few moves. Then my strategy drove straight to that goal of checkmate, not considering sideline sacrifices.” He flexed his bandaged fingers gently. “One line of strategy was to build up, if possible, a belief that there existed a weapon capable of killing any man to the exclusion of all others, and at a distance while he was thoroughly protected. To add to that there was the stopping of the *Moradja*.

“But, at the same time, I was aware that belief in the existence of such a weapon would be practically impossible to create under any circumstances. Nothing in science points to the possibility of such a weapon.

"Another line of strategy was to build up in my opponents a belief that I was a crackpot with a god complex. And along with it a sincere doubt that I could be that stupid.

"A third line of strategy was to build up the conviction that I intended to call on Radnar in person.

"A fourth line was to learn of the everyday actions of Radnar himself. The State Department directed certain subversives in Argenea to provide me with those data. Along with that, I learned the identities and how to get hold of these key subversives if I needed them.

"I want to point out that these were isolated strategies. Any connection they may seem to have had was accidental. Any purpose they eventually served was opportunistic rather than by design. I had not the slightest idea up until the moment I learned Kirol was not an Argenea spy. how I could make Radnar decide to come to terms for continued peace.

**"AND THEN**, as so often happens in chess, I looked over the array of the pieces in midgame and saw my chance for victory, if I dared take it.

"I flew to Argenea. I was quite certain that Radnar himself would know about me by now. I was quite certain he would have toyed amusedly with the idea of my being determined to deal only with him. So, after calling on certain key subversives and issuing them instructions in the name of the Usamerean Government, I boldly called on him."

"What were your instructions to those key subversives?" the Secretary of State asked.

"One—I believe you know which one, sir—was suffering from cancer of the brain. I ordered him to make an attempt to assassinate Radnar, but in

such a way that he would not succeed. In other words, commit suicide, which he had long wished to do to end his pain, but in the services of international peace.

"A second one I ordered to give the go-ahead on a minor revolution in an outlying state of Argenea. The third one received orders to start several fires in such a careful way that it would be impossible to determine definitely that they were arson."

The Secretary nodded, satisfied. The rest of the audience looked more mystified.

"With that done," Aradjo said, "I got rid of my disguise and called at the Capitol and demanded to see Radnar, giving my true name."

Someone in the circle of listeners uttered an amazed whistle.

"I demanded fifty million dollars in cash, a billion dollars in various properties all over the world, and—," Radnar smiled, "—the immediate imprisonment of Kurn Ardil for ten years at hard labor. My alternative was death to Radnar himself."

The eyes watching him were very wide now. Aradjo glanced at the Secretary with a nervous smile.

"I would have been sunk if he had accepted my terms," he said. "I was quite afraid he might after my experience with you accepting absurd terms. But, fortunately, he was more experienced and ruthless than you. He had me taken away to get the secret of my weapon by torturing it out of me."

Aradjo turned pale and put his hand to his forehead.

"No, no. I'll be all right," he reassured those who rushed forward to help him.

**"PAIN IS** a strange thing," Aradjo said after a moment. "If it's forced upon you, it can be unbearable. In my case, I had deliberately sought

it. That knowledge kept me from breaking. But even if I had broken, my course couldn't have altered."

He smiled ruefully.

"I started out," he said, "by telling them the whole truth. The bet with you, Mr. Secretary. My instructions to you. Everything. I waited until I had experienced several hours of torture before confessing the complete truth, just to make it convincing.

"And of course they didn't believe me. I had known they wouldn't, and had told the truth first so that if I lost control later they would think I was merely repeating.

"From the complete truth I switched to contradictory stories. I insisted there was a weapon, but that it was on the Argenea unless the Usamerean navy had found it and taken it off. Then I told them the two trunks contained nothing but dry ice for weight, and would be empty when they arrived in Argenea.

"Part of the time Radnar himself stood beside me while his torturers worked on me. I became defiant. Finally I told him the weapon was already in Argenea and would be used to force someone to try to assassinate him, just to prove to him that it was in the hands of someone who knew how to operate it.

"That brought me a welcome relief from the torture for almost two days. Then it was resumed. I threatened to have it used to start a revolt in a certain outlying province."

Aradjo looked at his bandaged fingers ruefully.

"I believe the torturer had instructions to leave me alone for a time after that," he said. "But he continued torturing me for the sadistic pleasure he got out of it.

"Radnar came back, finally. I confessed that I had gone to various subversives and issued them their instruc-

tions just to make him believe I had a weapon and someone was using it for me.

"He listened to me, then ordered me released. After that he had me taken up to his own private quarters and treated by his personal physician. A very beautiful girl fed me and served as my constant nurse. For twenty-four hours I didn't see Radnar. Then he came in."

Aradjo looked past his listeners, a faraway light in his eyes.

"The big thrill of chess," he finally continued, "is when the fight is over. It isn't checkmate quite yet, but you look at your opponent and see the realization dawn in his eyes, the droop of his shoulders, that the next move or the move after is indeed checkmate, and there is nothing he can do to prevent it.

"I experienced that thrill as he stood beside my bed looking down at me. It was my move—and my move would place Radnar in checkmate, ending the game.

**L**OOKING back now I believe it will always remain the supreme moment of my life. I sent my nurse from the room. Then I calmly told Radnar not to start war, to immediately accept conditions for permanent peace and to hold to them.

"He immediately agreed. He then invited me to remain in Argenea, but I told him I preferred to return to Usamere, and might perhaps come to visit him sometime in the near future after I recovered."

"That much we know," someone said. "It's a matter of current history that Argenea and Usamere are right this minute mapping out courses of active cooperation or world peace on a long term basis. But why? Why would Radnar suddenly give in like that? It doesn't make sense!"

"Ah, but it does!" Aradjo said. "You see, I told him that unless he did as I told him, he would die and Argenea would break up into several small states engaged in a long civil war."

"You told him!" the Secretary of State said. "But why would he believe that? The subversive elements in all Argenea aren't strong enough and coordinated enough to even get started on such a plan."

"Why would he believe me?" Aradjo echoed, a silent smile on his lips. "Perhaps because I had told him the truth time and again without his believing me. I had told him the truth and I had told him lies, and he had believed none of it. But in all that I had told him I had studiously avoided even indirect mention of one thing and, pig-like, he was driven directly toward that belief by my every move."

"He refused to believe I had a weapon. He refused to believe the Secretary of State faked a heart attack at my orders, and the Usamere Navy stopped the *Moradja* at my orders. He refused to believe that the man who tried to

assassinate him had done so at my orders. He refused to believe that the revolt in that outlying province was at my orders."

Aradjo picked up the glass of now stale beverage and sipped it, shrugging his shoulders with an air of indifference.

"So," he said, "he finally came to the belief which I had been driving him toward. He became convinced that I must have the gift of prophecy. That was the only rational explanation."

Aradjo looked around at the circle of faces in various stages of amazed comprehension.

"It was all so simple," he said, standing up tiredly. Setting his empty glass down on the stand beside his chair, he straightened and threw back his shoulders, his head coming erect with something of his old haughty disdain settling over him. "I'm surprised," he added with a note of finality, "that the Secretary of State didn't think of it."

THE END

## TWO MEN IN A HURRY

By CHARLES RECOUR

**I**F ONE individual may be said to have made the world rocket and space conscious, that man is Willy Ley. To anyone who has read any amount of science fiction, the name of Willy Ley is familiar, for he, with unrelenting singleness of purpose, has continued for more than two decades to drive home the idea of men conquering space—and doing it in our time! In keeping with this conviction, he had the honor of doing basic work in rocket engineering during the golden days of the German Rocket Society, before the advent of the monster Hitler.

Ley is not reticent, at least in his publications, and he has described in detail in numerous articles and books the exact activities of the rocket society which led to the development of the regenerative rocket motor (cooled by its own fuel) and, eventually, to the predecessor of true space rockets, the V-2. Ley, by no means a scientist in the exact sense of the word, was

a good enough amateur engineer to make significant contributions. His major value, however, lies in the intensity with which he has attempted to persuade men to interest themselves in rockets. He has done this by taking the glamour-shell from space travel and rocketry and treating it in cold scientific terms, including economics, a technique which appeals to the peoples and governments which lay out hard cold cash!

Ley is impatient. He wants a moon rocket now—not a hundred years from now! From these efforts, from Goddard's early experiments, from the efforts of the German Rocket Society (pre-Hitler) and from the enormous advancements of the V-2 builders, including von Braun, along with the tremendous forces being used by the Army and Navy, it appears that he's going to get his wish. It's surprising how much the advancement of a cause depends upon convincing the right people there's rhyme and reason to it. Ley has done that.