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The  
Dublin  
Pawn



*By* John  
Keckhut

W · W · NORTON

The  
Dublin♣  
Pawn

& COMPANY · INC · NEW YORK

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ONE

# The Opening



## THE KING



Peña balanced on the edge of his chair and tugged at the hair by his right temple. He glanced from the chessboard to the clock at the table's edge. Six minutes remained for his next ten moves.

The noisy Irish crowd packed the auditorium, talking loudly and moving restlessly in their seats. Peña glared at them briefly, then hunched over the table and tried to control his thoughts. The game should have been won an hour ago. Resentfully, he brooded over the chessmen.

Across from him, Borovek posed confidently, right elbow

on the table, chin in hand, acting as if the game was already his. Had he forgotten the shellacking Peña had given him in the first two games?

Peña cursed silently. His game was by no means lost, but he was in danger. Worrying about earlier mistakes and irrational play, he searched for a safe continuation.

Four minutes were left. Already the minute hand touched the red flag. If the flag fell, he would lose. He hadn't lost on "time" in years. Almost reluctantly, he studied his king position, disliking the threats against it and the attacking possibilities of Borovek's pieces. If the Russian had the nerve, there were chances for a sacrifice.

Donegal, the referee, distracted Peña by edging closer to the playing table. His red complexion shone in the lights. An alcoholic glow, Peña thought irrelevantly.

Characteristically, he wiped his hands on his jeans, stiffening his arms, hunching his shoulders, drawing his hands from his knees toward his crotch, where he gripped himself briefly. His body turned rigid as simultaneously he rolled his head around and looked up until the lights blinded him. A quiet settled over the audience.

Then quite suddenly a series of ideas for his next move hummed through his head. Quickly he sorted through several variations, selecting the best moves for each side, imagining the successive positions in which he would defend his king and counterattack.

A loud crack like a breaking seat startled him and he whirled toward the noise with a loud "Shu-u-s-sh!" Christ. Everyone was standing, giggling, coughing. Damned Irishmen.

He took his pencil from behind his right ear and clamped it in his mouth until it crunched and split into pieces. Impatiently, he threw them aside, picking splinters from his teeth.

The taste and smell of cedar was pleasant and seemed to relax him. With a stub of the pencil he scribbled a move on his score sheet, glanced at the clock, and calmly examined the position. Although he had no special inspiration, he was satisfied.

With a quick gesture he slid his black king to an adjacent square and punched the clock lever, stopping his clock and starting Borovek's. There were two minutes and nine moves to the time control.

Stretching in his seat and leaning back, Peña loosened the tension all through his body. For a moment he watched Borovek, who now rested his chin on both hands. There was no clue to his intentions, no nervous tic or wildness in his eyes; only a steady frown.

Seconds passed. Then minutes. Peña leaned on the table with arms folded, studying the position. The crowd was noisy, but he tried to ignore it.

Abruptly a loud rap shook the table and the pieces wobbled on their squares. Immediately Peña knew that Borovek was swinging his leg again and had kicked the table—his usual sign of tension. The habit was familiar; every chess player had his own peculiar mannerisms. Borovek's clock had caught up with and passed his own. Soon they would both be in time trouble.

Shaking his head impatiently at the interruptions and wasted time, Peña forced himself to concentrate. Determination drove him, scattering useless thoughts, prying out useful ideas, discarding poor moves and selecting only the strongest, picturing the potential sequences and remembering them.

Only when assured that his king could be defended did he feel partial satisfaction. Confidently, he rose in the seat, tensing stiffly to view the whole board, quickly reviewing every detail of the probable lines of play.

Uncertainty nagged at him, but he tried to thrust it aside.

Mistakes must be forgotten, noisy crowds ignored. The coming moves meant everything.

Borovek lifted his pen and wrote on his score sheet.

Peña knew exactly what he would do.

Borovek's hand came toward the pieces. With a rapid but delicate gesture he took his bishop between thumb and forefinger, captured a pawn near Peña's king, and placed the bishop down. All with incredible speed.

"Check." he said. In the same continuing movement he pressed the lever on his clock. It stopped and Peña's started again.

The auditorium buzzed with excitement. The two men stared at the pieces obsessively.

Peña was shocked. What foolishness was this? His hand hesitated, resisting an intuitive command to capture the bishop at once. He had foreseen this move and dismissed it, considering Borovek incapable of such a weak sortie. Was there something he had overlooked? Previous uncertainties welled up again, shaking his confidence. Former predictions were now useless and he anxiously considered new lines of play, refusing to proceed blindly.

Seconds ticked by. The hubbub increased. Time, noise, and the enemy bishop harassed him. Fear of an oversight made him sweat, and he fidgeted, scratched his forearm, and inched forward in small, jerky movements, astounded by the Russian's nerve. Had Borovek gone mad?

Time was critical. Peña thought of a new array of moves usable against any attack and stored them away in his mind quickly.

The sacrifice was senseless. Peña glanced at the clock and became desperate. His elbow slipped. A piece fell.

"*J'adoube, J'adoube,*" he said, and righted it impatiently. He captured the bishop and punched the clock, determined to

make an instant response to any move that Borovek made, his mind, eyes, and hands a unified, high-speed weapon.

Borovek's hand flicked out almost too fast to be seen. "Check!" he said, moving his queen.

Peña interposed a knight instantly and punched the clock. Not a second went by. Borovek moved a piece in the same instant. Hands and pieces flashed over the board with incredible speed, whipping and slamming the pieces, banging the clock, breathlessly alternating with staccato swipes and jabs.

Borovek paused abruptly and updated his score sheet. Nearly panic-stricken, Peña waited, his mind crammed with ideas, eyes flicking over the board. He was alert and driven, moves and countermoves boiling in his head.

His enemy had committed himself to an attack that would smash on and break in. Peña was ready, determined to ignore the uneasiness that gripped him. He didn't dare blink or glance away, but sat perched on the edge of his spine, his mind racing.

Borovek was poised. Rooks were exchanged in a scramble of hands. The enemy queen slashed in and snared the other rook.

"Check," muttered Borovek.

Peña responded triumphantly, snatching the queen, replacing it with his king, banging the clock and dropping the queen in the litter of captured pieces. All in a split second.

The table gave a violent shake. The pieces wobbled.

He tried to see Borovek's score sheet. Borovek captured a pawn. As Peña grabbed for a knight, it fell. He got it and moved. He reached for the clock and slammed down the button.

"Your flag dropped!" Borovek said loudly.

"What?" cried Peña, bending toward the clock.

"Your flag dropped."

"Your foot kicked the table."

"Your flag dropped before you made your move. You have lost the game," replied Borovek icily. His voice shook and sweat rolled down his face.

"Have you recorded the moves?" interrupted Donegal.

"Yes," said Borovek, handing him the score sheet.

Donegal studied it.

Peña watched angrily for a moment, then turned to his own score sheet and tried to reconstruct the game. He registered only confusion. His hand wouldn't respond. His mind wouldn't tell it what to write.

"You have lost on time, Mr. Peña," said Donegal.

"What?" shouted Peña, leaping to his feet and knocking the chess pieces in all directions. "Borovek kicked the table and knocked over my knight! While I tried to get it my flag dropped. Why should I lose on time when something like—"

"I know nothing of Borovek kicking your table," Donegal interrupted. "You touched the knight yourself."

Borovek bent to retrieve the pieces. Peña stooped to re-examine the clock, not listening, not knowing what he was doing. He resumed the argument, not believing that this could happen when he had a clearly won game. They shouted angrily, but neither listened to the other.

Reporters jammed their way onstage and surrounded the two gesturing men. Network men pushed the reporters aside. Other officials shoved their way toward the action. Everyone closed in.

". . . and I think you owe Mr. Borovek an apology for knocking the pieces to the floor," Donegal shouted.

Peña's lips tried to find the words but his mind was unable to deliver. Blinding flashes startled him. A jumble of faces crowded in, like a massive caricature intent on his destruction.

He broke away and pushed through the crowd. . . .

## THE CHALLENGER



A short stairway led Peña to the control room below the stage. Bursting in, he saw Markowitz, the television network director, facing a panel of monitors. Peña tried to get his attention.

“You going to show a replay?” he asked.

A string of incomprehensible syllables came from Markowitz, who looked right through him, then turned away to watch the monitors. The man’s harsh, Jersey accent made no sense, and Peña didn’t like being ignored.

On the monitors they were getting ready to interview Borovek. Imperatively Peña squeezed the director’s arm.

“What the hell are you doing here?” hissed Markowitz. “Can’t you see I’m busy? What do you want?”

“The replay. Did you show it?” He was quite used to Markowitz.

“Yeah, it’s already gone out. Come back later. Hey, listen, Peña, they want to interview you up there.” He turned away and talked into his mike.

Peña could not tear himself from the monitor. The camera lights were full on Borovek now, and someone wiped the sweat from his brow. The crowd pushed and stared. Borovek sweated but he smiled and gloated. Peña wanted to slam him in the face. Markowitz screamed orders in the background.

The interviewer was a Yugoslav, himself a good chess player. They were ready now. The questions and answers were in English.

“Now, Mr. Borovek, I congratulate you on winning this third game of the World’s Chess Championship match. Ladies

and gentlemen, this is Alexei Borovek, the challenger from the Soviet Union, who has won the right to play Manguel Peña, the present world champion from Los Angeles in the United States, in a twenty-four-game match. The first man to win six games, with draws not counting in the final score, will be the new champion. . . . Now, Alexei, I'm sure you are pleased on winning your first game."

It took all of Peña's self-control to stand there silently. But stubbornly he listened, squinting at the pale, uneven skin of the Russian's face, the gray milky eyes, and the thin, smiling mouth.

"... a perceptible lack of precision in the world champion's play this afternoon," Borovek was saying in almost perfect English, "which I was fortunate to capitalize—uh, you must excuse that expression—uh, take advantage of . . ."

Some jokester! thought Peña, increasingly anxious as the men in the limelight discussed details of the game. Finally they came to the wild finish.

"Was the queen sacrifice sound, Alexei?"

Borovek thought for a moment, no longer smiling.

"A move made under the pressure of time has a separate value, an unusual value, especially an offer of the queen. It may be evaluated as sound or not depending on psychological or, in this case, in combination with temporal factors, you see. I considered the move for a very long time, you may recall—"

"I believe it was a few seconds, Alexei," interrupted the Yugoslav.

"I meant before the time problem, naturally. Other conditions might have proved me unsound, but within these particular circumstances, my queen move was adequate, wouldn't you agree?" He smiled benignly.

What bullshit! Peña thought. The queen sacrifice was *un-*

sound under any circumstances except time trouble. Why didn't he just say so?

". . . then why did you pick up the chess pieces?" the interviewer was asking on the monitor.

Borovek frowned and said, "I did not want to see the pieces damaged. They are a beautiful set, a special finish which my opponent apparently does not appreciate."

Peña's fists clenched. He hated his own pitiful clumsiness and the anger that had swept away the pieces.

"You have a different view of chess from the champion's?"

"Oh, yes. I strive for oneness with the chess, with its beauty and magnificence down to the lowly pawns—as they are called by Americans. I have respect. Of course, I mean no personal offense to Mr. Peña . . ."

"Yes, wouldn't it have been more sporting, uh, respectful, to allow Peña to replace the fallen knight before you claimed the game, Alexei?"

Borovek appeared shocked by the question and turned as if to leave.

Sporting, hell! thought Peña. Any player would do the same. How would he weasel out of that one?

"Well . . . our rules . . . uh, Mr. Donegal, uh . . . uh, ruled in my favor. In any case strict adherence to the rules is required in a match of this kind with no favors granted to either contestant . . ." Borovek suddenly looked very tired.

"Well, a last question, then. What comment do you have regarding your opponent now, Mr. Borovek?"

"Yes, the champion. Well, we are each entitled to our individuality, are we not? It is a free country, as the Americans say." He tittered and Peña snorted. "Peña's ability as a chess player is unquestioned; of course, erratic at times, not always the best moves, as you have seen, but highly motivated, and

often unfortunately emotional almost to the point of, how do you say, an extremely determined player.”

The newspaper reporters stirred restlessly in the background. Peña knew they might be after him in a minute. His anger grew again. How had he lost to this insipid, insulting opponent?

Having no desire to be caught and harangued about his loss, he sped out of the little room and headed for the back exit.

## THE FLIGHT OF THE KING

---

As Peña charged into the streets of Dublin he was dimly aware of the ragged clouds that hung over the city and the thundering trucks and their thick, choking exhaust. He joined the crowd and rushed into anonymity, running the gauntlet at intersections, automatically shying from the splashing traffic, vaguely aware of the colored signals and the flow of moving objects around him. He saw nothing but a seething mass of grubs that he wanted to crush beneath his feet. He moved in a silent rage, ready to kick anything in his path.

The dim light blinded him. The roar of traffic broke through his consciousness and he chose successively quieter routes until he reached the safety of a park.

As he raced along, the last ten moves of the game repeated in his mind. Again and again he saw his fallen flag. Over and over he heard the words: “Your flag dropped, you have lost the game!” He blamed the flimsy table, the noisy crowd, his nervy opponent, the sneering referee; but most of all, he blamed himself.

For that moment he had been the world's worst instead of the best. Hating this feeling, he tried to recall pleasant memories, drifting backward in time. The years since childhood were a history of chess and tournaments, every move of every game clearly remembered. The rest was a blur.

He knew that his father, the world traveler before him, had left Spain as a young man, had courted and married his mother in Los Angeles. Together, they had given him those happy years of early childhood.

Then, before the world war, his father had taken them to the Philippines. Living had been pleasant even when war and the Japanese came, for they had taught him chess.

He recalled little else until that terrifying day the Japanese went on a rampage, killing many Filipinos and taking his mother away. That was 1945 when he was twelve.

After that, chess became his life. He entered serious competition and became the world traveler, climbing the ladder toward the championship.

Now, traveling constantly, his parents had become distant relatives, his friends changeable linen, his women three-dimensional relief.

Three years ago he had easily defeated Larry Stein for the world title. Now, at thirty-seven, his one purpose was to remain champion. A short reign of three years was insufficient. It must last for years to come. The obsession enveloped him completely, and now he must punish himself for this unforgivable defeat. Then next time, he would do better.

Abruptly he stopped at the edge of the park, startled by sharp, acrid odors. He faced a city street which had been blockaded by the police. Two apartment buildings were missing from the regular pattern. The reek of explosives and the sight of destruction filled his mind for a moment with a memory of the American attack across the beaches of Luzon.

Splintered lumber, broken bricks, and powdered plaster lay about in ugly disorder. He remembered reading about it a week before the match. The IRA had been blamed. The IRA denied it, and they were believed. Honesty seemed to be a point in their favor.

The scene added to Peña's sick feelings and he strode away, feeling a peculiar hurt for those who must have been killed. Bewildered, he turned into a graveyard and wandered among the stones, seeking peace with himself. The reaction to losing was again intolerable and he bathed in the pain of it, shamed by his clumsiness. He was an inept bastard and he despised his uncontrolled and arrogant behavior. When would he learn?

Contemptuously he composed an epitaph: Here lies Manguel Peña; Temporary chess champion; Who shouts in public; Who knocks over chess pieces . . .

A headstone stood before him. It read: "To Our Loving Mother—Mary McKittrick—1900-1970."

He pictured his own mother when he was a boy, recalling her strong arms, her soft face, her dark eyes deep and alive. What would he record when she died? It might read: "Here lies my mother, Barbara Leighton Peña: Whose mind was blanked by the Japanese; Whose love was stolen . . ."

Tears blurred his eyes; his thoughts clouded and darkened. As if driven again, he hurried from the graveyard. Running, he hoped to kill the feeling, exhaust it. Panting, he found himself on a park bench staring down at the black water of a sluggish stream. It reflected the trees and the dim outlines of a bridge. Standing on the bridge, visible only as a silhouette in the water, was a huge, stationary form. Curious, Peña shifted on the bench until the figure could be seen. This was a man he did not recognize. He studied the hard lines of the shadowed profile and the intense posture. Still breathing heav-

ily and wanting to be alone, Peña made no other move. He watched, glad to be distracted.

The man stared across the park. Peña listened. The distant roar mingled with a tinkling sound, foreign to racket, and musical. An accordion player was approaching. He recognized the instrument before he could distinguish the characteristic sounds. Gradually the music dominated the scene. The old man playing moved slowly, but the accordion breathed and rocked to a plaintive Irish tune, wild and unpredictable. Peña was captured by the sound and rhythm, breathing in time, feet tapping involuntarily.

The music was loud, seeming to shake the drops from the leaves, hypnotically holding the man on the bridge in place. The old man's head bent over the instrument while his fingers moved over the keyboard furiously, arms bending and pulling, forcing out the spirited sounds.

The two men were close now. Neither appeared to notice Peña. The younger man took a newspaper from his coat and tucked it into the old man's pocket.

The music never paused. Unexpectedly, the younger man turned with a violent twist and walked away with steps that smacked the pavement, rudely breaking the delicate rhythm of the song. The old man continued off the bridge, walking slowly, playing to himself.

The episode left Peña feeling cold and alone. He saw himself in those two men, each alone, meeting in the dusk for a brief second, then breaking apart to go their separate ways.

As he rose, he felt the sweat drying coldly on his face and the chill of the night air. The loneliness inside was a strangling pain that knotted every strand of his body.

Why didn't he throw aside this chess insanity? Since childhood he had endured these blows to his ego, testing the resili-

ency of his belief in himself. Every loss left a scar. Few were as bitter as today's, he told himself.

The years of chess playing were a unit, set apart and paralleling the rest of his life. Any moment of his chess career could be recalled instantly. The memory which served him well during a game became a curse when he lost, forcing awareness of not only every detail of the lost game but also bringing back agonizing recollections of previous blunders. Would he never forget a single one? Would he ever forgive himself for the wrong capture at Hastings, an out-of-order sequence at Groningen, a seemingly innocuous but impetuous move at Mar del Plata, an oversight in Zagreb, inexperience at Manila . . . ?

He saw the positions and errors more clearly than the trees around him and tried to force the images from his head, searching for something more pleasant, something strong enough to block out the stream of painful memories. But bad chess moves continued to ricochet in his head as he left the park.

He tried to console himself by remembering his two-to-one lead in this match. Four more victories would clinch the world title again. Surely he could do that without letting the match go the full twenty-four games. But the score should be three to nothing! he told himself. Damn that clock!

## SORTIES



Peña felt better as he moved on through the streets of Dublin. It was dark now and the lights reflected on the wet pavement. He stopped at the window of a candy store and looked at the large, clear jars filled with brightly wrapped

candies, red, green, blue, and yellow. Squinting past the jars, he saw a woman—alone, her face hidden by a mass of fluffy brown hair. Then his eyes found her bustline.

A child appeared next to him, fists clenched tightly, his eyes concentrated on the candies. He looked up at Peña.

Peña was startled by the whiteness of the child's face and the wide-open blue eyes.

"Are you hungry?" asked the boy.

"No, I'm not." He tried to answer kindly and not frighten him.

"Do you have money, sir?"

The boy's small tongue circled his lips slowly and then stuck far out. Peña jingled the coins in his pocket.

"Would you like some candy?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Come on, I'll buy you some." The boy raced ahead as Peña walked to the entrance. Immediately he was repelled by the woman's thin, mean lips. The boy already had his fist in a large candy jar, looking warily from face to face.

Peña glanced uncomfortably at the woman, thinking that she might say something sour; she looked the type.

Gratefully he turned to the Irish lad. "Go ahead, take another handful," he coaxed, avoiding the woman and shifting from foot to foot.

The boy gripped two bulging fistfuls. His face beamed.

"Put them in your pocket so that you don't drop them," said the lady. Her voice was raspy and irking.

Triumphantly the boy ran from the store, slamming the screen door aside with his shoulder.

"Ten pence, please," said the woman. "You're the second one tonight." She seemed to laugh at him.

Peña threw twenty pence on the counter and crashed out of the store, ignoring the woman's receding voice. For a moment

he looked angrily for the boy, then he stormed off on his aimless journey, muttering to himself.

A fat man passed him, reminding him of his aide, Larry Stein. Guiltily he realized that he and Larry should be together now.

Constantly he searched the store windows, the pedestrian faces, even the drivers of vehicles, looking for a friendly face. His mood was black as he passed the tangles of traffic and smelled the putrid exhausts.

A headache struck him. He felt in his pockets, then searched for a drugstore. Walking on, he stopped by one with a sign that read *Hennessey* on the front. Inside, the storekeeper was toting up a customer's bill with a pencil that he continually put to his lips. He had a gray, cranky face. Peña's impulse was to leave, but instead he walked around the store. Little cookies lay in an open bin and he leaned over to sniff them, thinking they were creams. They smelled of pork. He tripped over a box on the floor and the pint bottles of milk chimed pleasantly. Hennessey's look of annoyance spoiled the musical sound.

From a small cooler Peña selected an ice cream popsicle and went to the counter.

The grocer finished with the woman, who was dropping change into her purse, counting slowly. Hennessey looked at him, then at the ice cream.

"How'd you come by that?" he asked unpleasantly.

Peña was surprised and pointed to the cooler. The grocer made a disgusted face. "You're not supposed to . . ." But he turned away and Peña could not hear the finish. Instantly he was angry again.

"What did you say?" he demanded. He leaned forward to catch the words, holding the ice cream and glaring at the back of the shopkeeper.

"You're showing your ignorance touching the merchan-

dise, Yank. Are you taking this for an American supermarket?" The grocer snatched the money and abruptly turned to the cash register.

Peña moved around the counter in three quick steps and stood close by. The grocer muttered angrily as he counted out the change into the hand defiantly thrust at him. Peña took the money, and with a flourish he crammed the popsicle into the cash register drawer.

"I didn't want it anyway," he yelled in the grocer's face.

Old Hennessey turned purple with rage.

"You Yank bastard, you—"

"You old crank, why don't you post the rules if you expect people to know them?" Peña turned away.

"You couldn't read them if I did!"

"Dumb Irishman." Peña shot back at him. He slammed the door and strode away rapidly, expecting shouts from behind him. He was secretly pleased with himself and pictured the grocer fuming as he wiped the ice cream from the paper money and change. A pleasurable flush covered his face. Gradually he slowed his pace, feeling more peaceful. He ambled along peering into the stores.

An image in a mirror struck him and he stopped to look at the haunted, bleak face over which the hair hung in a faint wave concealing his forehead and heavy black eyebrows. Roughly he pushed the hair aside and looked into the eyes. That was too painful. Sadly he rubbed his fingers over his cheeks, feeling their smoothness and the hard bones underneath. There were no wrinkles or unpleasant markings. I can thank the old Spaniard for that, he thought.

Then he pushed off down the busy street.

## POSITIONAL MANEUVERING

~~~~~

Peña paused by a liquor store. A woman was dusting the shelves, moving in a way that attracted him. She glided easily along the aisle and when she came his way he tried to see her face and upper body, but her blonde hair blocked the view. He edged along the display window, hoping she might look up. Suddenly she came upright to stretch, giving him a quick view of her profile and full breasts. She returned to work immediately; and Peña decided on a bottle of wine.

When he entered the store she abandoned the shelves and came toward him.

"Hello," she gazed at him. "May I help you, sir?" The *r* had a slight roll.

"Hi. I'd like a bottle of wine." He saw immediately that her face was beautiful, with wide-apart gray eyes and a slight tilt to her nose.

"Over here then," she smiled and led the way. "We have the finest wines. I know because I've tasted them all. What sort do you prefer?"

"I don't know." Peña liked her voice. It was friendly and very Irish. Intently he watched the rhythm of her hips and legs. "You're in the right business if you like to drink," he added.

"I don't drink up the profits if that's what you're thinking. Here we are. What would you like?"

He poked among the bottles and pretended interest, but his mind was on her. She seemed just right. Perhaps she was a

divorcée. She had the bearing of someone who liked people and knew her way around.

"That's a fine wine you have there," she said, coming nearer. They stood almost face-to-face in the narrow aisle. Her skin was quite fair and smooth. Occasionally their eyes met in short bursts of curiosity. She smiled. "It's a dry, red wine and lovely. *Nuits St. George* . . . see?"

Peña read the label and held the bottle to the light. He glanced at her sideways.

"It's quite expensive," she continued in musical tones, "but I feel it's right for you."

"Why do you say that?" he asked, gazing at her steadily, warmed by her closeness.

"I was pulling your leg."

"Come on!"

"The concern of tourists is not with money, now, is it?"

"I look like a tourist?" He liked her bantering tone.

"Certainly not a south-sider," she said. "A sort of different swagger, money jingling in your pockets."

"Obviously a rich American?"

"Not for certain, but there are indications." Her eyes swept over his blue jeans and fixed on the locket suspended around his neck.

In return, he looked pointedly at her hair. "I thought you might be Scandinavian."

She blushed. "A gift from my Viking ancestors."

"It's nice."

"Thank you."

They paused, shifting slightly.

"Now then . . . the wine?" she suggested.

"How much?"

"It's not in your mind to be changing your character to

prove me wrong, now, is it? If you don't enjoy it, the next bottle will be gratis."

"It's only money," he said with a sigh, and followed her to the cash register, where she wrapped the bottle in brown paper, a quite inadequate disguise. Peña didn't care about the cost. She seemed to know his game and like it.

"Two pounds, please, tax included."

Peña thumbed through a wallet stuffed with bills and handed her a fifty-pound note.

"Thank you. You have nothing smaller?" She leaned forward to look. "Jesus! . . . But please don't worry; I have change." She took the bill and went to a section of the wall which had no visible opening until she pushed a panel aside, revealing a wall safe.

"I see you're afraid of robbers here too," he said.

"Oh, not quite that. I have a certain love for the mysterious." She locked the safe and counted out the change in his hand. "Are you visiting Ireland then, enjoying the grand tour?"

"Sort of." He wondered how to prolong the visit. "Do you have a telephone? I need to make a call."

She looked around the store thoughtfully. "Our telephone is in the back. Would you . . . ?"

He nodded and she led the way. He followed close behind—close enough to tell that she wore no fancy perfume. He liked the smell of her.

They passed along a short hallway and into a warmly ornate living room.

"There you are," she said. "It's time I was closing anyway." She left him alone.

The sudden shock of silence replaced the racket of the street. Solitude was welcome. Her apartment was a pleasant

oasis of quiet inside the noisy city. The phone was by a chair and he sat down, reluctant to make the call.

From behind the highboy a small brown cat peered out timidly, then disappeared. A soft ticking gradually penetrated Peña's hearing and he turned to examine an antique clock. Its painted figurines were painstakingly carved and beautifully simple.

In a far corner hung a wooden crucifix, also hand-carved. A suffering Christ gazed at him. Peña resisted an impulse to cross himself. To his surprise he saw portrait paintings of the Kennedy brothers on the front wall.

This place was hers alone. No photographs. No sign of a man. No ashtrays. A slightly musky odor, not unpleasant.

Settling back in the chair, thinking of the blonde, he was satisfied with his luck. Not a store front in Dublin could have produced a better one, and he began to daydream, imagining what was ahead. . . .

Peña was well aware of his need for women, even though he had not bothered to analyze it deeply. When they suited him, he liked their companionship and loved them in bed. He assumed that all women were romantics, and that made them perfect. To him, they were not competitive and suspicious as men were, and they loved to be in love. He played this game to the hilt. It was serious and complex, but always a game, providing a relaxing contrast to chess. To date he remained uncommitted to any one woman, never deeply involved. He thought only of the pleasure they gave him.

Now Peña brought out his pocket chess set. Automatically he opened the cleverly concealed drawer. The pieces were neatly held in place by spring-loaded clamps. He pried each one loose and set them in the holes on the board, forming the position he wanted. Since his opponent played white in this

game, he unfastened the gold locket, removed the white king, and gently placed it, completing the position. He moved the pieces rapidly, gradually becoming agitated.

The woman's return registered only dimly. She stood silently by the door, a remote shadow.

"That's it," he said aloud, moving the pieces at a furious pace, occasionally rearranging them and continuing, lost in the manipulations.

Slowly his anger returned.

Eventually he found better moves and agreed to a temporary truce with himself, then reached for the phone and got Larry Stein at the hotel.

"Where in hell are you?" Larry snapped. "Everybody's looking for you, even your press agent. Fenley's really pissed. Where are you?"

"I don't know. Somewhere in this city."

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah, don't worry."

"The reporters want to interview you; they—"

"The hell with them. Tell Fenley to handle it. Have you been over that goddamned game?" For several minutes they became involved in a postmortem of the recent chess game, discussing it with increasing irritation until Peña finally hung up in disgust.

"I see you're a chess player," the woman said. He had almost forgotten she was there, and he jumped at the sound of her voice.

"Yes. I just made a telephone call." Nothing was more obvious, he realized uncomfortably.

He stared at her, thinking of how differently he could talk to someone he knew well, hating these tiresome preliminaries.

"Is anything wrong?" she asked sympathetically.

"Nothing I can't fix later on." He looked away, scanning

the room slowly as if preparing to take possession of it.

“Are you in trouble?”

“It’s a nice place you have here.”

“Oh, do you like it? It’s convenient; I am relaxed here . . .”

He didn’t listen. Larry had upset him, talking about the game accusingly as if he had thrown it deliberately. Of course, Larry hadn’t actually said so . . . How much had she heard? He wanted to show his interest in her and forget the rest.

Her eyes were on him steadily. She was asking him something.

“What?” he asked.

“Are you far from home?”

“Oh . . . yes. I’m from Los Angeles. Do you know that city?”

“I’ve never been there. It must be a wonderful place. It’s where they make all the TV programs, isn’t it?” She fussed with the pillow on a chair as if preparing to sit, but not quite knowing what to do.

Their conversation had become strained and he searched for a way to break the ice again, hesitating and twirling the chess pieces.

“How about a glass of wine?” He held up the bottle. The air cleared immediately as he smiled up at her.

“But you must allow me.” She was relieved.

“Let’s kill this first.”

“Well . . .”

“Got a corkscrew?”

“That wouldn’t be very hospitable.”

“Come on,” he insisted. “I’d just be drinking it alone. Besides, if I don’t like it you’ll have to give me another . . . free.”

She laughed, humor lingering about her eyes and lips.

"All right, you win," and she flew from the room.

Peña leaned back and smiled to himself, determined to ignore the ache in his stomach. Concentrate on the woman, he told himself. You couldn't have planned it better.

He remembered that they hadn't even exchanged names and here she was serving him wine, and he was doing what he wanted to do—crashing madly ahead as always, letting his instincts guide him.

On returning, she placed a glass next to him and filled it. He tasted it briefly and gulped it down, licking his lips greedily. She held hers to the light so that the deep red wine glowed, then drank slowly.

"Hey, I just thought of something," he said, examining the chessboard, clearly forgetting his purpose in being there.

"Who are you playing—the invisible man?"

"I only wish he were." Stubbornly he moved the pieces.

"Why do you move white *and* black?"

"It's a game I played earlier."

"Oh."

When she stood close by, his concentration was divided. She sat on the arm of his chair and he wanted to slip an arm around her waist.

"Would you like more wine?" she asked.

"Yes, thanks." Smiling absently, he tapped the board, mumbling and making faces, unable to think. "May I use your phone again?"

"Of course." Surprised, she moved out of the way.

He dialed, but Larry's room didn't answer.

Again he looked at her, eyes already blurred. "I should have won," he announced to an imaginary sympathizer. "This is good wine." It was the perfect antidote for pain and confusion, and he drank down the refill immediately.

"Do you like it?" she asked.

"No. It's terrible."

"Well, I owe you another then." She left the room, laughing.

## ATTEMPTED MATE



Peña put the chessboard aside and looked up at the woman sitting opposite him.

"What's your name?"

"Annette Maloney."

"Annette? That's nice. French?"

"Maybe, but I'm quite Irish."

"I'm Manguel Peña."

"Spanish?"

"Only the name . . . my father's."

"You're here for the chess, then?"

"How come you know about it?"

"Oh, the papers. Even TV . . . You look familiar!"

Immediately Peña began trying to impress her, but in a few moments he sensed that he wasn't making the desired impression. He noted a sardonic twist to her mouth, an amused sort of grin.

". . . and there's a relentless machine working inside me," his voice continued, even while he resolved to drop that subject.

"Oh, and does God operate this machine, or do you?"

"No, no. Larry Stein operates it. Thinks he does, anyway. But he's only my aide."

"Only your aide? His ego must be the size of an elephant's."

"Exactly. You guessed it. You should see him. Have to cut the chessboard to fit his stomach."

"It's lucky that fitting your head is not required," she said to the corner of the room.

"What?" He might have to strangle her for that.

"Nothing. Nothing at all." She smiled.

Silently he cursed his inability to steer things in the right direction.

". . . and you know lots of stars, I suppose?" she was saying.

"What? Oh, you mean movie stars. Don't know any," he said, not caring for that subject either. "They all live over here. When I go back to the United States, the bastards there will take half my winnings."

"If you should win."

"Don't worry, I will."

"You *are* one hundred per cent American."

"Well, by upbringing . . ."

"You act quite like an American."

"Yeah?"

"Yes, quite straightforward. Compared with Europeans, we Irish make ourselves quite clear, don't you think? That's why we get along so well."

"I wondered what it was," he answered dryly, uncertain if things were improving or not.

She poured again, bending close to him, the stream of wine absorbing their attention.

"Of course, we're not always a perfect match." She grinned at him sideways, then whirled and sat down, showing the startling image of her thighs.

His arms felt leaden. The wine glass became unbearably heavy until he emptied and carefully placed it on the table.

"Do you mean we're rude?" he continued.

"Americans? Oh, no. I like Americans. One knows how they feel about . . . things."

"Yeah, I let the referee know how I felt. What a mad Irishman! We had a shouting match. It was awful."

"With you? So you have a temper, then?"

"Only when I'm angry."

They laughed aloud, scarcely knowing what was funny, but both feeling more relaxed.

"More wine?" She raised her eyebrows and looked at him steadily.

They were more at ease now and he knew they were comfortably past the worst part. He had no doubt of what was coming next if only he could get moving.

A new glass appeared. A new color. A new taste, faint, but good, hot in his throat, melting the heaviness.

They were talking, he wasn't sure about what. A string of words floated by until he lost the thread. At least the pain had dissipated. Dully he recalled the wild finish of the game, the yelling. But it was remote and he ceased to care.

"You feel better?" she asked.

"Yeah, but it'll take a while." They drank for a few minutes in silence, his eyes on hers, focusing with difficulty.

"It's been a long time since I invited a man into this apartment. You seemed in trouble."

"Just losing the game. Let's forget that." He decided to go to her but he didn't get up.

"Will you have dinner?" she blurted out.

"Sure. What've you got?"

"Just like an American," she laughed. "You'll see."

"Fine," he answered drunkenly, knowing he had had too much.

Annette went to the kitchen. Peña noticed a whisky bottle and refilled his glass. The shadow of defeat passed through

him momentarily but he dismissed it. Without effort he drifted into a pleasant daydream of lovemaking there in the living room, their naked bodies grappling erotically . . .

She returned and announced that dinner was cooking. This time she stood by the dining room entrance, leaning against the doorjamb.

Peña got up to clear his head, wandering about the room, his fingers lingering over the furniture, the wood carvings, the Christ.

Finally he came uncertainly toward her, reached out to hold her, and kissed her warm, dry lips, slipping his arms around her waist and pulling her close.

“To victory!” he said, and kissed her again. This time she responded and held his shoulders. They swayed together, leaning on the wall. A picture frame crashed to the floor. The cat yowled and scrambled from the room.

He pulled her toward him hard, wondering why he had waited so long. They seemed to be falling and he opened his eyes wide to get his balance, relieved to see the wall nearby.

He kissed her, tensing his muscles, needing her as much as wanting her.

The feel of her body barely registered on Peña. He decided it was time for action, but her grip immobilized him. Grunting weakly, he forced his hands inside her arms and with a sudden thrust broke free. In the same motion he picked her up, staggered, and swung her desperately toward the couch, banging her head hard on the armrest.

Losing his balance, he fell on her. She didn't seem to notice as she fastened her arms behind his neck and pulled him down. Their weight was unbalanced on the couch and they both rolled to the floor, Peña underneath, landing with a heavy thud which emptied their lungs and banged their faces to-

gether. He paid no attention and returned to kissing her wide open mouth which seemed to be laughing.

Lying underneath, Peña fumbled at the buttons of her blouse, ripping them down the back. Awkwardly he unfastened her bra strap. As she tore off the blouse and bra, he rolled her over so that she fell hard on the carpet, laughing.

Peña buried his face between her breasts, caressing her soft smooth skin with his tongue and lips, pressing her breasts against his cheeks with his hands.

Annette became impatient with that. She pushed him off and got to her knees. She yanked at his belt and then at his pants, getting them down to his ankles where she couldn't pull them over his boots even though she tugged him across the room in the act. For a moment she cursed, but then grew quiet as she rummaged in his shorts.

Peña was barely aware as she held, squeezed, and rubbed him while he struggled to sit up. When he made it, he grabbed her hair in both hands and dragged her up beside him roughly, kissing her mouth, her nose, her neck, her breasts, working his way down in a rocking, wrestling way until he discovered she was still half-dressed. Like two persons in a semihypnotic trance they rolled about on each other while he tried to pull off her remaining clothes.

She interfered more than helped and they started laughing. The harder they tried to undress, the more they laughed, both on their knees, half-collapsed, clothes caught around their ankles, as they tore at them ineffectually.

He pushed her down. Something about mating her kept repeating hungrily in his head. He searched for the right position, feeling his body spin in space, feeling a floating, weightless sensation when he finally passed out.

## BISHOP AND KING



The pattern on the wallpaper was restful. There were silver lines surrounding little diamonds of green, millions of them, providing his eyes with a distracting pastime as they followed the intricate network. Gradually Peña saw more clearly.

He looked around. It was the bedroom of the hotel suite. Finally, he recalled walking in the night. And the woman. Then he remembered.

He got up carefully and found two aspirin tablets, forcing them down his throat with a glass of water. A hot shower burned away some of the dullness, but he couldn't recall what had happened with the woman. Or her name.

His balls ached. He touched them, thinking they were bruised, and washed them gingerly. She was eager!

The memory of the game came back . . . and the reporters, they'd be after him . . . and Fenley would be sore at him.

He went to the phone . . .

"Hi, it's Peña."

"Where the hell have you been?" demanded his public relations man. "The reporters want to talk to you. I can't make up stories forever, you know . . ."

He'd never heard Fenley so angry. Usually the man was friendly, agreeable, never upsetting anyone—a perfect screen to keep the press at a distance. Peña insisted that he would be happy to meet the reporters later in the day, but not now. He was exhausted after being up all night studying the lost game, he said.

". . . I just got in, but don't tell the reporters that, Fenley.

Schedule the interview up here. Let's make it at five."

"They have deadlines to make. Can't you make it earlier?"

Fenley argued until Peña agreed to three o'clock. He called Larry and asked him to come on down. He couldn't tell how Larry felt but he'd soon find out. Larry had asked about breakfast, which wasn't surprising. How that guy could eat! He had eaten himself right out of the world's championship.

In a semidaze Peña sat at the chess table in his living room, absently moving the pieces and having miscellaneous visions of the lost game, the aftereffects, and Larry Stein, all mixed with unpleasant imaginary fragments of the interview ahead. The reporters would ask embarrassing questions. So would Larry.

In their years of travel together, it was amazing that they got along so well. Larry didn't seem to mind not being champion, as if being there once had been sufficient. Neither jealousy nor renewed ambition made problems between them.

Larry had easily substituted eating for chess competition, but Peña was determined not to allow anything to interfere. Larry was weak, that was the trouble. Almost daily, he received packages from his mother, even jars of borscht.

Secretly, Peña wished his own mother would send something. It was sad that neither of them ever went home.

Snatches of yesterday kept reappearing. Everything about the game annoyed him. Everything about the Irish woman made him wish for her now. How could he have gotten so drunk?

When he slipped on a robe, he found a note on his bureau. It read: "Dear Manguel, I hope you recover for the next game. You missed dinner but I shall be happy to offer another. Please call me . . . Annette Maloney . . . P.S. There's more Irish in you than I thought."

Yeah, Irish whisky. He smiled when he saw her phone

number. She must have liked him. In what condition had she brought him to the hotel? He must have been blind drunk!

The hall door was unlocked. He sat at the table and set up the pieces to replay yesterday's game. A few minutes later, Larry came bursting in.

"Have you talked to Fenley?" demanded Larry.

"I've got an interview here at three."

"Yeah, okay. So we have till then. You ready to look at this thing?" He sat across from Peña at the chess table, his giant frame more than filling the seat. "I never thought I'd see you again, Peña."

"Oh, come on."

"Where the hell were you?"

"Walking around mostly. I met a nice girl. She took care of me."

"You're always fucking around with women. How can you concentrate on chess when you're always thinking about women?"

"So I like them. I need a diversion after a game. It keeps me thin," he said pointedly.

They began to move the pieces, going over the opening. Peña thought Larry was upset over something which he hadn't yet made clear. It would come out sooner or later. His own remark about women sounded casual, but he had no intention of revealing just how important a woman was to him.

"Here's where you went wrong." They looked at the position. "This move is what cost you the game, Peña."

"So don't shout. My head's a little light."

"How could you make that move?"

"It wasn't that bad."

"The hell it wasn't. You made an ass out of yourself with that move. You threw away the game like some fish. The worst patzer wouldn't play like that."

"You want to sit in for me next time?"

"Hell, we worked on that position a million hours and we really found a great continuation; then you don't play it. What's with you anyway, Peña?"

"You know it was that goddamned table, for Christ's sake. I thought you were supposed to take care of things like that, Larry."

"Don't blame it on that. They stuck it in there temporary. And don't change the subject anyway; that wasn't why you lost. Christ, how many times did we go over that variation? Your first loss in three years, you realize that? You know I was the last person to beat you?"

"So you were lucky once, don't remind me. But it was four years." He got up and paced the floor.

"And that stupid bishop sacrifice and you staring at it. Christ, I would have grabbed the thing in an instant."

"You talk like *you* lost the game. How do you—"

"And me getting paid for this and supposed to be helping you. Then you go off on your own like I didn't exist, after I thought we agreed on how to beat Teddy Bear."

"So that's what's bugging you, Larry? Listen, I need your help, and you're a great player, but I happen to be the one playing the game, and whatever I decide at the board is my responsibility, win or lose. So don't worry about it. Chances are the same position will come up again, you'll see, and then I'll hit him. He thinks he has a real advantage in this line now."

"That doesn't explain why you didn't use it this time. Did you forget? Hell, you wouldn't forget. Just explain it, will you, if you can."

"It's very simple. I beat him so easily in the first two games I didn't think I would need that good a move to beat him again."

"I thought you believed in always making the best moves. Everybody else does."

Peña looked at him and went to the window. Larry had him at the edge of a door he didn't want to open. Why shouldn't he trust Larry now? They had worked together three years. It should continue. He liked the guy, ornery and greedy as he was. But to tell him the truth now was impossible.

He turned to Larry and sat down, fingering a pawn, spinning it round and round. Larry loomed over him like a cathedral.

"Look, Larry, you've made it to the top one way. I've followed another," he began.

"You mean you learned from those slant eyes some occult thing us simple-minded hicks from New York wouldn't understand?"

"Don't be funny. Listen, will you? So you and everyone else has wondered why I win with some of the moves I make, like when we played for the championship."

"Yeah, I've wondered. I don't know to this day how I let you get away with it. I should have smashed you."

"You don't think I was just lucky, do you?"

"Yeah, I do, as a matter of fact, and it pissed me off when you got away with it, blundering your way to beat me."

"Lucky, hell. They weren't accidents. They looked bad to you and that bugged you and they got question marks from all those great analysts, which shows how much they know. You didn't find the right answers across the board, that's all."

"Bullshit! You telling me you made those moves on purpose? I don't believe it. What's the point of making a weak move when you know a better one?"

"So think about it. I'm not stupid." Peña sat back, looking blandly at Larry, who stared back suspiciously.

“You *bastard!* If I’d known that I’d have smashed you.” Larry laughed, but only with his mouth.

“I never overplay my hand. You should know that by now, Larry. The minute I play the best move, every guy in the universe will use it. So I hold back until I have to use it.”

“More bullshit. You could have told me. I’m sitting there thinking you’re going to cream him, then you wander off in a drunken stupor—I mean the game, not after.” He threw up his hands in disgust.

Peña knew perfectly well that he hadn’t planned this strategy in advance. Another idea had obsessed him during the game. Impulses and moods influenced his play constantly.

Larry was more of a “mental” player, who could calculate beautiful moves, then play them without hesitation as if there were no more to it than hammering a nail in a board. His style differed from Peña’s; his mind would have difficulty grasping the machinations that Peña went through at the chessboard.

Peña’s style was often clear, simple, sensible. At other times it was tortuous. In the recent game something had been grossly wrong; he hadn’t felt “right.” His explanation to Larry now seemed to sound logical, but he knew it was a fabrication.

Together they worked at the game, arguing about the moves that had been made, constantly looking for better ones.

“By the way,” Larry said after going through the game, “I have something to show you.” He dug out a sheet of paper covered with handwriting. “I wrote this up. See what you think of it.”

Larry read a statement protesting the award of the last game to Borovek, basing his arguments on the weakness of the chess table, Borovek’s unruly leg, and the piece falling at a critical point in the game. Peña agreed that a protest was worth trying;

they might luck out and get another chance at the point, although he wanted to forget it.

Peña was standing at the window looking at the city skyline when there was a knock at the door.

“Who could that be?”

“Didn’t I mention I sent for breakfast?”

“This time of day?” Peña went to the door and opened it to a pretty young woman in dumpy clothes, standing by a food cart.

She pushed the cart in, looking at each of them in turn expectantly. “Shall I be setting the places, sir?” she asked, looking at Peña.

“Ask him. It’s his little snack,” answered Peña.

“Put everything on the table there, hon.”

She moved the many covered dishes to the table, but Larry couldn’t restrain himself and had to inspect each dish as she put it out, lifting the covers and sniffing greedily. Peña watched with amusement. Every chess player had a weakness. There was no question what Larry’s was as he pranced around the table.

The girl was as enticed with the food as Larry. What a pair! He was about four times her size.

“Shall I be setting the places, sir?” she repeated, smiling prettily, her pale little face contrasting with her dark hair.

“You hungry, Peña?”

“Yeah, I guess so.” He returned to the window, thinking of Annette out there, wondering if women would ever get to him as food had gotten to Larry. He doubted it. Nothing was going to keep him from—

“Hey, look out,” Larry yelled from behind him.

He turned to see Larry enveloped in a cloud of steam.

“Oh, I’m so sorry, sir. Did I scald you?” The girl reached up and patted Larry’s jowls gently. “Oh, I’m so sorry, sir. I was

just sniffing the steak. It's so delicious, I didn't see you were close. I suppose you'll be reporting me now . . ."

"Naw, it's okay," Larry mumbled. Peña could see that the little wench appealed to him. Probably because she brought the food.

"What's your name, hon?" Larry asked.

"Maureen."

"That's very Irish."

"Is it, now?"

"Yeah. That's the champ over there. Did you know that?"

"Oh, yes." She turned her dark eyes toward Peña. "Everyone knows him—everyone in the world, I should say."

"Listen, don't we have work to do? You going to take all day with just eating, Larry? You ordered enough to feed an army." Immediately he sensed their outrage.

So he turned away.

"He has no class," Larry spoke confidentially to the girl.

"Or love of good food."

"Why don't we just eat it together and ignore him?"

"Oh, I couldn't do that, sir."

"Why not?"

"He doesn't like me," she answered in a loud stage whisper, then giggled.

"Okay . . ."

"All right. Thank you, sir."

Peña heard the door open and close, followed by the clinking sounds of silverware and plates.

"You better sit down before it's all gone."

"I don't want much. That Irish whisky . . ." Peña sat at the table and selected a small portion from the mountains of food. "Is this breakfast for two?"

"Well, the chef knows me by now . . ." Larry's plate was heaped with eggs, ham, potatoes, bacon, and Peña couldn't

see what else. They ate silently for a few minutes.

Peña was tired and had little appetite. He finished quickly. "I'm exhausted, Larry," he said, getting up. "Take your time. I'm going to rest till the interview. Do me a favor, will you? Break it up after half an hour. You and I have a lot of work to do."

Larry waved his hand in acquiescence, chewing vigorously as Peña shut the bedroom door.

At least things had worked out fairly well with Larry. Peña didn't want the big man upset and there was no point in going into it further. The arrival of food had soothed everything.

His thoughts turned unwillingly to the interview ahead as he climbed back into bed. Reporters made him uneasy and often angry. It was one of the more unpleasant parts of being a champion, not because he couldn't answer their questions or match wits with them, but rather because of his natural secretiveness and independence. He knew that his resentment often appeared as arrogance, a trait that had become the focus of numerous cartoons and articles. It was better when Fenley handled the press.

At last he fell asleep.

## KING AND PAWNS



Peña woke with a start and reached for the chessboard that lay on the nightstand. Rapidly he played over a line that he had been half-dreaming about, murmuring to himself with satisfaction. The phone rang five or six times before he answered it.

"What?" he asked, not really listening, but moving the

pieces. "Yeah . . . yeah . . . I'll be ready . . . yeah, in half an hour."

The phone slid to the floor and he resumed the analysis. When Fenley came in later, Peña was still in bed.

"They're here, Peña." His light skin and freckles looked more Irish than the Irish themselves.

"Who's here? Oh, the reporters . . ."

"They're anxious to see you. I apologized for your disappearance, but they weren't too kind to you in the morning papers."

"Don't tell me; it's bad enough to lose." He liked Fenley, his gentle ways and soft, melodic voice. They understood each other. "Keep them in the living room till I get dressed, will you, Fen?" He hopped from bed and stepped into his shorts.

A flash lighted the room.

"Jesus Christ!" yelled Peña. "I thought I asked you to keep them out of here!" He turned to find a handsome young woman with a camera. She ducked away. Immediately other reporters appeared in the doorway. Peña shoved them out and slammed the door, muttering to himself. He dressed quickly, eager to tell them off.

With shirttails flying, he charged into the living room a minute later. There was no chance for a greeting; everyone yelled questions at *him*. Peña glared them into silence.

"Now, don't quote me on this, but goddammit, I'm not going to have you people barging into my bedroom and assaulting me. If you do, I won't give you the time of day."

"Yeah, yeah," somebody said. "Where were you yesterday, Peña?"

"Before the interview starts," Peña interrupted, "I want to get a couple things straightened out. Fenley here is authorized officially to answer questions. Talk to him whenever you can't find me. But if you can't approach me politely, no one will get

anything from me. Do I make myself clear?" He looked around warily. "Okay, so go ahead."

There was a scramble of questions until someone got the floor.

"How do you feel after that rotten loss, Peña?"

"Like shit—but don't print that. I had the bastard beaten and he knew it. Don't print that either."

"What *can* we print, for Christ's sake?"

"Was it the table?"

"I should never have gotten into time trouble, but, yes, that freaky table—I think Borovek kicked it deliberately and we're going to protest it. Now, wait . . . I've written up an official complaint and you'll be hearing about it through channels. We—"

"Come on, tell us about it. We won't break the story."

"You better not. I don't know how we missed the table when we inspected everything. It was like someone pulled the screws from it, and, well, you saw yourself how it shook. Anyway, we're going to have a look at the TV tapes and protest the game."

"Are you claiming that one of the Russians took the screws out of the table?"

"Of course not."

"Do you have any comment about Borovek's remarks after the game?"

They had to come to that, he knew—to anything that would stir up trouble.

"Well, for one thing, both sacrifices were foolish. Borovek had no business in either the case of the bishop, or later with the queen. He grabbed the first piece of wood he got his hand on. He'd never convince me that he had it all figured out in advance. They were poor moves and he knew it, and he said those things to cover up for himself."

“What about his remarks that you are uncontrolled and indifferent toward the pieces? You did knock them down, didn’t you, Peña?”

The questioner received a contemptuous look. “That was an accident and Borovek knew I had a won game at that point. You can’t blame him for putting himself in a good light, can you? He’s a real scholar, a real student of English; you could tell that, couldn’t you?” Peña tried to resist further sarcasm. “Of course, I have great respect for the game and have appreciated its beauty longer than Mr. Borovek has lived. It was galling to lose a game that way. Anyone could see that he was in time trouble and tried something desperate that worked. The sacrifices were unsound and he knew it. He won’t try anything so foolish again . . . unless I’m in time trouble, and that won’t happen again.”

“What opening will you use next game?”

“One that’ll win,” he answered evasively, grinning and buttoning his shirt while glancing at a woman in the crowd. “Ladies, I hope you don’t mind my getting dressed.”

“Don’t worry, monsieur,” offered a brunette, the one with the flash camera. “We’re not interested in your anatomy.”

“Well, I might be interested in yours,” he said, taking a step toward her and unbuttoning his shirt.

Everyone laughed. She stepped back, surprised and laughing. Her neatly combed hair almost hid the identification card pinned to her lapel. It read: Nicole Rennette—Tunis. By the time she recovered, Peña was ready for their next question.

“What do you think of your opponent, now that he’s won a game from you, Mr. Peña?”

The question jarred him. “Psychologically, he played just right and knew how to get me rattled. He’s a dangerous player who I may have underestimated. He’s a genius in his own right: creative, combative, and combinative. I’ll be extremely

careful with him from now on.” And with you too, he thought.

“What bullshit!” someone said.

Peña laughed harshly, recognizing the voice of America. He had rehearsed those lines so carefully. “What do you expect me to say—that I hate the son of a bitch? Don’t put that in your paper. Borovek and I aren’t exactly enemies, you know; so don’t try to start the cold war again. You can write that I have every intention of beating him; of destroying every idea, every vestige of chess ability, every crumb of desire he’s ever had to compete. I intend to remain the champion.”

“What will you do with the money if you win?”

“If I win?” He smiled gratuitously. “I’m not in this for the money. In most of my years there wasn’t a nickel. I suppose the money could buy an island in the Mediterranean or a castle in Ireland. But I don’t need those things.”

“Have you given any thought to retirement?”

“Not so long as I can sit up. There’s nothing else I want to do, and at my age I’m just reaching my prime.”

“Mr. Peña, is it true that great chess players go insane?” asked a squeaky Irish voice. It belonged to a pretty, wrinkled-face old lady with blue hair and black clothes.

“Most people think *chess* players *are* insane,” Peña laughed. “I’m really not joking, however. It’s true. People believe chess players have lost contact with reality. That’s not true, in my opinion, but it’s to be expected, because playing chess is not what most people believe *they* are capable of. The average person can become a rather good player. It requires a high interest in the game, of course. You wouldn’t get very far if you weren’t interested. Only a few can be near the top, and I believe they are there because they love the game to the exclusion of almost everything else, and because they have exceptional skill to begin with. To become a champion or

among the best in the world, one has to have a clear head, logical processes, unbreakable determination, and a well-controlled temperament. These are certainly not the ingredients of insanity, madam." Peña smiled at her.

"But, sir," she continued, "we always hear that the great players gradually go mad if they are not mad already: they cannot stand the strain, and their brains crack."

"That may be the story of one or two, but the public remembers only the strange and exciting things about champions. This catches their fancy and explains why these men are so different—at least to them. The champions who have lived in my lifetime are all normal people who play tennis, drive cars, have wives or women, with possibly a quirk here or there among them. Those things don't make an exciting story, but there's no insanity among the great players. They may *seem* that way at times, but don't we all?"

At that moment Larry entered the room, and several reporters moved aside to make way for him. His massive frame demanded attention, and people paused to notice him as he shoved his way through the crowd.

"Mr. Stein," someone asked, "do you think the champion will retain his title?"

"Not if you keep him here, asking dimwit questions," Larry answered impatiently.

Fenley interceded to lighten the rudeness of Larry's interruption. "Larry's right in a sense, everyone. Peña has an awful lot of work to do . . ."

Fenley talked on in his smooth, friendly way, clearly indicating the end of the conference.

Peña was thinking of the reporters, knowing that many of them didn't know a chess piece from an African wood carving, and even less about the game itself. He had tried to be polite and helpful, but felt wrung out and helpless. Did they under-

stand? Set in type, his remarks could be twisted into insults, lies, and exaggerations. Too much had been said about Borovék, too much about the sanity of chess players. It never worked. He resolved once again not to look at another newspaper or talk to another reporter.

## QUEENSIDE ATTACK



As the morning sun climbed into the sky, Peña lay in a half-dreaming state in which he saw himself walking on a road paved with golden chess pieces while cheering crowds throwing bouquets lined the curbs. Everyone smiled at him.

A thinly clad woman stood by his throne at the end of the road with her arms outstretched. They made love passionately.

The rays of sunshine brightened the wallpaper near his head, making his face glow. He awoke in the midst of his passion.

The woman of the dream was gone, lulling him pleasantly, making him want her again . . .

Dreams could be better than the real thing. His coming victory would hardly call for a parade and cheering throngs, but it was pleasing to imagine; even more delightful to dream about. Getting the woman was the perfect ending, the perfect mate, without bother and consequence; clean and brilliant, planned and executed with precision.

Peña smiled to himself in partial embarrassment, remembering the drunken scene with Annette. It wasn't so clean and

neat; more like a continuation of that awful chess game. She must have been drunk too. He had always hoped that soon he would have control of himself. Well . . . maybe when he was forty.

Did the woman in the dream have blonde hair? Gray eyes? He couldn't picture her. She was nice enough, though, in all the right places . . .

The sun shone in his eyes and he turned away, wondering why the hotel had such high windows.

A chess game was scheduled for that afternoon. Peña clenched his fists, testing their strength, pleased with his optimism as he considered how he would destroy Borovek.

The night before Fenley had called him down to the auditorium and into the dimly lit control room. Markowitz stood before one of the TV monitors watching a skin flick, gyrating like the participants, his bald head shining with sweat. What a character he was, talking to himself in explosive bursts as if trying out for a role in a 1937 gangster film!

Markowitz tried to ignore him but was finally persuaded to show a replay of the previous game. Only the frantic motions of the players' hands could be seen from the overhead camera. Three times they watched, but it was impossible to tell whether or not he had touched the knight before it fell.

Markowitz complained, "Shit, this is boring."

"Let's see the other view showing the legs," Peña requested.

"Now you're talking!" said Markowitz, deliberately misunderstanding.

They looked at the stage camera view. Borovek had kept his feet flat on the floor. The tapes wouldn't help. Frustrated, Peña had asked Fenley to withdraw the protest. That's when

Fenley told him that the story had already broken in the newspapers.

"Do it anyway. It's hopeless," Peña had said.

Peña jumped out of bed and found the morning papers in the living room. One headline declared, "RUSSIAN CHEATS!" Christ! They'd love that. He turned to the other paper. "CHAMP CLAIMS FORFEIT!" That was closer to the truth.

No one could be trusted, not even Fenley, who was always anxious to please someone or to fill the headlines. He read further. The Russians wouldn't like this. They'd be hopping mad. Would this match never settle down? The Irish had better have a decent table in there today.

He turned the page. There was a photo of him stepping into his shorts. He couldn't believe it. That woman should be locked up, and the editor too.

Disgusted, he threw the papers aside and checked the time. The game was an hour away.

Walking with Larry from the hotel to the auditorium, Peña was confident and determined. Larry towered over him, but Peña felt as big as the whole world. For this match game, he was—for him—well dressed. The TV commentator would politely describe his outfit as "coordinated blue." Most people accepted any style of dress in a chess champion, and Peña took advantage of it.

Borovek was the current Russian hope. Many regarded him as the greatest genius to appear in many years, and the one most likely to return the championship to Russia. Peña believed this unlikely, if not impossible. The man lacked *his will* to win. He was inexperienced at this level. Mastery of technique wasn't enough, nor were creative ideas, new stratagems, or computer systems. Peña didn't doubt his own superiority.

Borovek's supporters cited his youth as a prime consideration. He was at least ten years younger than Peña, and in a long match youth was believed synonymous with stamina. To Peña, this was nonsense, for he had never felt stronger. Physical reserve was only part of it. The main ingredient was toughness and an overpowering will to win.

Many were counting on the Russian chess-playing machine to give Borovek the edge. It was a brilliant system of computer programs that performed at a grandmaster level and was designed to support their champion between games and in the analysis of adjournments. It alone should earn at least a full point toward a Russian victory.

Peña could count only on Larry for help. He had no doubt that their combined talents were superior to any computer. Besides, the critical time was on stage. After the opening moves they were on their own, where computers and aides were nonexistent.

Belief that his power was still on the increase was Peña's main support. His rise to the top had been steady. Confidence and a relentless will to win had made him almost unbeatable. Minor setbacks were regarded as accidents. Drawish games were fought to exhaustion. The essence of victory was an unrelenting wish to wear the enemy down.

The analysts were confused by Peña's play, describing it as erratic, risky, unsound, and brilliant. It was certainly not steady, conservative, or methodical. It was irritating, and it won. No one quite knew how.

His most complimentary backers said he had an intuitive understanding of his opponents in relation to the developing position on the chessboard. They said he employed bewildering insight in his strategy and tactics, creating positions that defied analysis across the board, *except by him*. Since many books had been written on the subject, devising a method to

defeat Peña was of keen interest. If Borovek became the champion, he would receive the same analytical treatment.

The audience was cheerful and noisy as Peña entered the stage. It didn't bother him. He sat down and reviewed the defensive systems that Borovek might use, considering his replies. Educated guesses were essential. Complex lines were always available, but he preferred to create his own, knowing that today ideas were abundant and complications would come easily. He was confidently aware of his desire to win and hopeful that his perception of subtleties would increase when necessary.

A temporary chess table had been installed. He checked it for stability and was satisfied.

The Russian contingent arrived, shook hands with Borovek, and shouted encouraging words as he took his seat. Peña offered his hand and they shook briefly, exchanging a glance before their eyes dropped to the chess pieces. It was obvious that Borovek had not seen the morning papers.

Peña pulled closer to the table and waited in silence, head bowed slightly as if he were saying grace. He remained quiet for only a moment before he fussed with a pencil and looked in a pocket for spares—there were none—looked around for Larry—he stood nearby—noticed some friends in the front seats waving to him like schoolchildren—acknowledged them with a nod—and waited, enduring the butterflies in his stomach.

A moment later he was at the water cooler. At last Donegal approached to start his clock.

The game progressed quietly, following a classical line. Peña played the opening from memory, thinking primarily of the middle game, where he planned a surprise. Borovek played confidently, comfortable with his knowledge of this opening. He'd soon learn better.

Peña diverted the game into unknown lines and knew immediately from Borovek's slight change in posture that he was startled. With Borovek it was always minutiae that gave him away. Peña noticed, but his concentration was almost totally on building an attack.

Gradually the edge vanished from his nervousness, leaving his thoughts clear and precise. He was able to penetrate the position in the three essential dimensions—length, breadth, and time. There before him stood the familiar pieces, their beautiful wooden shapes carved in classical patterns, their immediate capabilities obvious over the sixty-four squares.

But beyond the pieces he tried to penetrate the intentions in the mind of his opponent, that hidden power which plotted to destroy him. Peña considered the occasional clues to that mind. He wasn't fooled by the familiar manipulations and the innocent development of the pieces. In Borovek's hand they often had the casualness of finger-tapping or thumb-twirling.

Each move must be examined for threats. There were many—subtle, aggressive, and dangerous. Borovek struck at him again and again, but Peña struck back, consumed with confidence that he would get the upper hand.

There were such days. Today was marvelous. Like a visionary, he predicted the best moves of both the black and the white pieces; envisioned his own attack forming, and the best defense, making the moves without hesitation. The familiar enemies of doubt and confusion were pushed back in his mind.

Slowly Peña exhausted Borovek's ingenuity until he held a slight initiative on the queenside, forcing Borovek to defend, wearing the Russian down, accumulating small advantages which broke into the enemy position and threatened to win material.

Borovek had seen this coming as he raced his pawns on the

kingside in a desperate counterattack. Peña made neat defensive moves and resumed his own attack against the weakened enemy. He knew he would win.

Unexpectedly, Borovek resigned with a slight gesture of his hands and left the stage, leaving Peña with the pure joy of another full point.

There was no way for Peña to avoid the reporters and TV men. He allowed himself to be placed in the spotlights and questioned by all comers.

"Well, Mr. Peña, how do you feel after winning your third game of the match?" The Irish TV interviewer was allowed the first series of questions as a courtesy.

"Great," announced Peña. "It was a very straightforward victory, or at least it looked that way. Borovek came up with a good move here and there but I stomped him down. He was completely fooled when I attacked on the queenside so early. Usually it's not done until a little later and black gets counterplay on the kingside. I could tell by the look on his face . . ."

"You took some time with your next move if I recall. Did Borovek surprise—"

"I had to run through some old games that followed this line. He dredged up a variation from . . . uh, I'll have to check on it later." He knew perfectly well but was struck by an unaccustomed modesty. He felt the heat from the camera lights and imagined himself bathed in glorious sunlight, the center of attention all over the world, just like a dream.

"Then what went through your mind when Mr. Borovek began his counterattack?"

"That it wouldn't work."

"Well, you must have, uh, . . ."

"No, I just made the right moves to stop it."

"You make it sound quite simple, Mr. Peña."

“It’s easy when you’re properly prepared, as I am. I don’t take the game lightly, or depend on a computer system and a roomful of grandmasters to help me. Real ability shows in a match of this kind when we deviate from established lines. It’s all within the player—that’s obvious.”

“Could you tell the audience something about your preparations for a match like this?”

Peña smiled broadly. “Sure,” he said. “Actually it takes months of preparation, including the tournaments I have played in during the last year. It’s partly a question of keeping up on all the latest theory, the games played around the world, any new discoveries. I don’t like surprises, you—”

“What about you personally?”

“Oh, nothing special. I have to keep in shape, lots of exercise, good diet, and sunshine. No rigid routines, though, except regular study at the board with my chief of staff here—” He stopped to acknowledge Larry, who stood close by. They grinned at each other self-consciously.

The interviewer asked a few technical questions about the game which Peña answered thoroughly. Then he asked if Peña thought the best chess player in the world had been brought up to play him.

“Well, not exactly, since I’m the best chess player in the world.” Everyone laughed, but Peña was serious. “If he were the best, he’d be champion. He’s pretty good, don’t get me wrong, or he wouldn’t have won the matches he did.” His patience was ending.

“You think you’re the superior player then?”

“Of course. If I doubted it, I wouldn’t have much chance, would I?”

The interviewer was a little disconcerted by these replies, probably more used to modest avowals of luck and good fortune.

“Could I ask you just what it is that makes you the superior player . . . uh, what . . . uh, qualities?”

Some of the reporters were amused by all this.

“I’m a chess player, not a psychoanalyst, although *they* don’t know either. You can read a ton of literature on the subject if you want to. I don’t know and I don’t think anyone else does. You could say I’ve got a natural talent or that this is the only thing I’ve done all my life. But I’ll tell you one thing—I’m the best player alive and I’m going to win this match!”

He felt like a different person when he returned to his hotel suite. The moves and feeling of the game bounded in his head. As soon as he and Larry went over the game, he would give Annette a call.

## KING AND QUEEN



They walked with the lunch crowd, a hurrying, lean, distracted group, but more friendly-looking today. He watched Annette, beautiful in a lavender pantsuit and sheer rose-shaded blouse; he wanted to say something about her beauty but was somehow tongue-tied. Approaching a park, they talked above the traffic.

“You missed your dinner. It burned on the stove.”

“You owe me another, then. I remember kissing you; then my brain left my body.”

“Did it, now? Well, then it missed out on the fun.”

As he looked at her, she laughed as they turned into the park. They crossed the green to where a stream wound among the planted areas. The day was as brilliant as his feelings. Near

the stream a boy threw pieces of bread to a group of pigeons, obviously enjoying the fight over each crumb. One bird dominated the others, pecking viciously at every intruder.

"There's a champion at work, Annette."

"You and all the little Boroveks?"

"Right. All trying to steal a piece of my title. They'd give their right arm . . ." He looked at her uptilted nose and the curious lift of her eyebrows.

"I wouldn't fight you for it, Manguel Peña."

They walked toward a crowd around the pavilion. "How long will the chess match last?" she asked.

"A couple of weeks more."

"You're after winning straight to the finish?" She sounded disappointed.

"Damned right. Of course, I could stay on after."

"That would be lovely. You make winning sound quite simple."

"I wish it were."

"I should be so bored. No one to talk with, nothing to do, the clocks ticking away the days . . ."

"Now you're pulling my leg again."

"Yes," she laughed. "It hardly seems peaceful watching you circling over the board like a hawk preparing for the kill."

"Now you've got it," he said, pleased with the analogy. "I didn't think anybody noticed."

"Oh, I did. Your feathers were ruffling, your eyes became cold and beady, your mouth opened like a beak."

"Don't overdo it. But tell me more," he laughed.

They walked on.

"The papers are highly excited about you."

"They overdo it too."

"Did you threaten to expel the reporters from the interview?"

"Damned right. They broke into my bedroom. Did you see me in my underwear?"

"It wasn't the first time."

"Well, how would you like it—"

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't laugh. It's usually the women who are pictured in their underpants."

Peña only smiled. She made everything much easier.

"There's been no end of excitement over the match," she went on. "It's bringing in the crowds, I can see that."

"Yes, now they think it's a sideshow."

"The Irish are not inclined to turn away from a scrap, especially the Free World against the Communists."

"Is that what they're saying? I might have known it! I should keep my mouth shut."

"A fair protest is not wrong."

"There's more to it than that. I made the mistake of telling the reporters about it, *then* looking at the TV replay. That was like executing a combination in the wrong order. There wasn't anything to protest and I withdrew it even though it had already been publicized."

"Why didn't you call Borovek and explain?"

"Huh?" he said, dumbfounded at so naive and straightforward a suggestion. "That would have been rubbing it in. They wouldn't have believed me anyway." He looked at her sideways to see how she took all this.

"Will they create trouble?" she asked sympathetically.

"They haven't yet. But if *they* don't, *somebody* will." Privately, he knew that calling Borovek was unthinkable. Communication between opponents was wrong. He had no friendly feelings toward the Russian. Not now. Before the match, yes. But as soon as Borovek was named his opponent,

he became the enemy. Former exchanges were forgotten. Any show of friendliness now would be hypocritical. The reaction of the press was not his doing. Let nature take its course.

He thought suddenly about the interview after the last game.

"What'd they say about me?" he asked abruptly.

"Who? When?"

"The news, after the interview."

"Oh, they quoted you at length."

"Well, what did they say?"

"Don't you read the papers?"

"Hell, forget it."

"They were not kind, but I'll not be the one to tell you. You're not to be blamed for ignoring it. I certainly would."

"I should too. I've told myself that a million times. They always make me out to be some kind of nut, no matter what I say. Grist for the mill . . ."

Peña looked around to see if they were being followed. It had happened before. He always made an effort to keep people off his trail, especially when a woman was involved.

"You have a publicity man?"

"Yes, but he's prejudiced. To talk with him, you'd never suspect his ambition, but he wants to make me world-renowned . . . put chess on the map, so to speak. And himself, of course. He's done it too."

"But not what you wanted?"

"You're wise to me already. Hell, I hired him to keep everybody away. I'll have to remind him of that. It's good for chess, though. The United States is so backward! The heroes there are jocks and TV comedians. They think something is wrong with me. Chess playing isn't considered manly; they think it's weird, like being a scientist. Hell, no wonder I spend so much time abroad."

At the pavilion they watched two children dressed in white dancing around the stage like computer-controlled marionettes, while an accordion reeled off an Irish jig. Peña eyed the musician curiously but saw little similarity between this man and the one he had seen on the bridge. They took seats in deck chairs, where his chess set and a chess magazine miraculously appeared, and he was absorbed immediately into an article on a subvariation of the Sicilian Defense, hardly noticing the man who came to collect for their seats and the tinkle of coins when Annette paid him.

When the concert was over, she shook him back to reality and they walked into town, past the iron grill fences of Trinity College and across the Liffey, stopping to watch a tugboat going by. The noise and fumes moved with them along the street, but Peña's thoughts were on his woman, her casual, swaying walk, the lines of her body. His longing to touch her grew.

They entered an underground restaurant, descending the stair into an elegant dining room, decorated in soft reds and gold. They ordered prawns and a bottle of white wine, toyed momentarily with the silverware, and looked at each other.

"Tell me about yourself." He got the question in first.

"Oh, I'm a simpleminded country girl come to the big city, where I've made good."

"Yes, hooking innocent pedestrians on drink."

"Yes, but I never thought I'd hook a chess player."

"You didn't tell me much."

"Oh, well, would you like to hear of my years as a milkmaid or a goose girl? Or of my first roll in the hay? Actually I came to Dublin with the usual dreams of making it with ITV—that's Irish Television—and I studied drama at Trinity, then a touch of modeling, which they assured me at first was impossible because of the size of my bosom. Not that it's so large . . . now,

don't be staring like that! Watching my pounds and pence, I saved enough to purchase my own business, a little security for my old age, you see. Now, what about you, Mr. Chess Player?"

"Well, actually I'm a spy for the CIA, a double agent dealing in drugs which I keep inside the chess pieces. No one ever suspects, and I have the very best credentials, since it can easily be established that I've done nothing else all my life but play chess. Traveling from country to country, I pile up tremendous profits. I'm above suspicion."

"Yes, I suspected that. You do have talent."

"Of course."

"As a liar and an egotist." They both laughed.

She talked about her store and the problems of living in Dublin until her thoughts turned to the IRA.

"My fiancé was against them, fighting the IRA constantly, trying to expose and destroy them. It cost my Johnny Cullen his life."

"What happened?"

"You really want to know?" She paused, touching her lips. "We were to be married soon—this was about a year ago—and we were driving south in Dublin toward the ferry to meet friends who were crossing from Wales. It was a lovely day, nothing to worry about, so I thought, not thinking of how nervous Johnny was. He was that type anyway—a little like you were in that last game—still, he was worse than usual, not driving straight at all. We came to a roadblock, and there were two men walking toward us. Johnny must have recognized them, because he yelled something and fumbled in the map pocket and came up with a gun. They grabbed him and pulled him out of the car. I screamed and they dragged him into an alley by his arms, hauling him on his back like a sack of grain, me coming after them, trying to make them stop. It was terri-

ble. If I'd had any idea what was going to happen—one of them knocked me down, and when I looked again, they were gone.

“Then they came running out of the alley without him, making off up the street, yelling something that frightened me. Then the whole alley exploded, knocking me completely flat. Oh! I was horrified. I thought I'd go out of my mind thinking that Johnny was in there blown to pieces. I felt so helpless and frustrated, knowing that someone I loved had surely been killed right before my eyes. Lord Jesus, I can see it now, just as if it were happening all over again! People came running, the Garda, mobs of people. They never found a shred of him, not a boot, nothing.

“Just think of the things they can do to people and what you have to live through afterward. I suppose it made little difference that he was killed then because they would have gotten him sooner or later.”

“Did he work for the government?”

“Oh, he did indeed. I wish we could have gotten married sooner and left the country, but that would have been so hard to do, loving Ireland the way we did.”

“I would have left. You don't do much living when you're dead.”

“It makes me angry just thinking of it. Those beasts! I wish I could fight them.”

“Maybe he wasn't killed. Maybe it was just a ruse to make the IRA think he was dead.”

“Oh, you've been watching too many crime shows. You're only trying to make me feel better.”

“Well, I guess he knew what he was up against.”

“He did, and there was no stopping him. In a way, he reminds me of you, Manguel, sort of an insane dedication, except that what you do is much safer.”

"Call me Peña. That's all I like."

"Really? . . . All right, Peña."

"Chess isn't that safe. I suffer plenty from it, any time I lose."

"Naturally you won't ever give it up."

"Naturally." He grinned at her, admiring the harmony of her features with her wide-set gray eyes.

"What are you thinking?" She lifted her wine glass to hide her smile.

"I, uh, think you're pretty neat."

"Thank you for the American compliment, Peña," she said, reddening. "You're sounding the way of an Irishman."

"Sorry, my blood is not Irish."

"Spanish would be my guess."

"Partly. My father is—or was—the modern conquistador."

"Who conquered the New World, enslaved a beautiful Indian girl, and you were the astonishing result?"

"He never conquered anyone. The Japanese conquered him."

"Fighting with flashing swords."

Peña laughed and sipped his wine, wondering how he could laugh at this unpleasant subject. How had it slipped so imperceptibly into the conversation? "The modern explorer does it differently," he went on. "He takes his wife and son to a strange land—in this case, the Philippines—where he finds nothing but barren land. He plants sugarcane. Then the Japanese invade and offer him his life in exchange for the property."

"And you were the son?" She was more serious now.

"Yes." He could picture it, but still couldn't believe it. "Maybe he was lucky to have something to trade."

"What happened then?"

"They made us live in a compound with Spanish people. We

didn't reveal that my mother was American. I guess they couldn't run the sugar central without my father's help, so he ran the place."

"While you played chess?"

"Oh, no. I didn't know how. That's a strange thing . . ." He hesitated, feeling his temperature climb, unsure of whether this was caused by the subject or the wine. Exploring his past always had this effect, but he forced himself to continue. "I was curious about them at first, naturally. When it quieted down, I began working for them, mostly to steal food."

"The Japanese?"

"Yes. They were okay in that little town. All they did was play chess and mind their own business, once they trusted my father." He knew she could sense his reluctance, but he couldn't change the subject or treat it lightly. He hoped she would.

"The papers have written of your learning chess. They say you were very brave."

"Hell, I was a kid. The Nips were scared to death, and not much bigger than me. One was a great player, but a practical joker, always playing tricks on the other two. He'd even play them blindfolded, but cheat—or make believe he was. When he discovered that I had an aptitude, he taught me secretly, then matched me against the other two. They thought it was a trick, naturally. Signals or something. So they locked him out and played me alone. I still beat them."

"You loved it, didn't you?"

Peña's smile disappeared. "Yes, I did," he said finally, feeling sick. "Excuse me a minute, will you?"

He hurried off to the men's room, fighting to regain his composure. Something rotten lay there that he couldn't bear. He washed his face in cold water, swallowed hard, and got control of himself.

When he returned, he saw she was concerned, but he smiled. "Had enough?" he asked.

"Yes, thank you. It was lovely."

"Let's go," he said abruptly.

She looked up in surprise.

## MATE



On the way to her apartment Peña was thinking ahead to the expected intimacy already begun in the soft grip of hands and exchanged looks. The traffic noises faded and he was silent, knowing his intentions spoke clearly enough. In her apartment she offered a cup of tea but he felt the offer was more of herself. He pulled her gently until they faced each other, and then he looked steadily into her wide eyes and waited.

Slowly, clearly knowing what to do, she undressed. Watching her eyes, he sensed her hands moving over the buttons, the zipper, the snaps, the elastic bits—unhurried. Her nakedness appeared gradually with the clouding of her eyes and a gentle, teasing smile on her lips. He felt his body grow rigid. Holding off, he imagined touching her breasts, resisting his eagerness to hold her. Controlling himself, he held back.

Finally she stood among the heap of clothes, looking up at him, smiling slightly, eyebrows raised, and waiting. She reached out and started on his shirt buttons, arousing him from a semitrance. Rapidly he threw off his clothes and led her into the bedroom.

The four-poster bed and canopy surprised him, gaudy in pink and white with bows and frills of bright green. They

stood together and kissed. As he held her, pulling her close, he was totally absorbed in having her.

She went down slowly to her knees and the sensation of her touch grew to uncontrollable heights of pleasure. The pressure for Peña became unbearable.

He had to lie down with her. Indifferently he saw the cat as it peered at the naked figures on the floor, seeming to listen to their heavy breathing. The cat pushed sensually against the stiff furniture legs, got closer, sniffing, moving in its own shy way.

A slow draft inched over Peña, cooling the drops of sweat. After several minutes he raised his head and moved a hand to Annette's face.

Their eyes met. Hers looked moist and eager.

"Why did you do that?"

"I hope you liked it." She smiled.

"I did. What about you?"

"It's my turn next. Are you up to it?"

"Hell, yes! But let's get in bed?" He jumped up.

Peña pulled her close, kissing her lips, wrestling her tongue, and, holding both breasts, rotating his hands slowly with his thumbs on her nipples, pressing lightly and rubbing them until they stood up like tiny castles. His desire returned. Knowing that she was ready, he moved quickly into her, feeling her stiffen. As they kissed, her body rose, her abdomen hardened as she gripped him, clinging with great strength.

She swung her head back, moving against him, driving her hips. He could no longer think from the pleasure and pain of it, wanting the moment to end but wanting to keep it forever . . .

Gradually the intense emotion subsided and his mind cleared. He sensed both his despair and the pleasure of having this woman. He saw her clearly, liking her smell, her strength,

her wanting him; liking her body and hair, the taste of her lips, the feel of her skin, the softness of her body against his. Knowing she would look at him, he closed his eyes, feeling her kiss, but not moving when she got up.

Annette stood before the full-length mirror, viewing her body. It was settled and relaxed, slightly bent. She pushed her hair aside and arranged it over her breasts and shoulders so that her breasts stood out erect, the nipples showing through. When she wet her thumbs and rubbed her nipples, swaying slowly, lost in the sensation of stimulating herself, he grew tense, wanting her again.

She smiled in the mirror, watching him, then ran to the bed and jumped on him playfully. They wrestled and laughed together as she held him down and laughingly punched his arms and chest.

“Oooh, you!” she kept saying until he threw her over and started again. They lay on the bed moving slowly, kissing and murmuring.

They were there for a long time.

When the final orgasm came, Peña was exhausted and free of the stored tensions which had gathered in him. Quite suddenly he felt free of the woman, and his thoughts returned to chess.

## ATTACK AND COUNTERATTACK

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As Peña entered the stage to play the fifth game, a disconcerting racket greeted him. An official reprimanded the audience. Although new warning signs prohibited drinking as well as talking, promising arrest to

violators, the noise suggested a party in progress.

He asked Donegal what was wrong.

"We've had to frisk the devils, bringing their bottles to amuse themselves."

Peña looked at him quizzically, clearly smelling whisky scented with mouthwash on Donegal's breath. "You expect us to play chess in such a racket?" he asked.

Donegal shrugged. "We'll have them quiet in time."

A new chess table occupied center stage. Its size was astonishing, with legs like tree trunks supporting it. Peña ran his hands over the inlaid chessboard squares and was pleased with their perfect alignment and smooth mat finish. Then he tested the hardness with a fingernail, tapping gently, believing the black squares to be *lignum vitae* and the white squares light walnut, all perfectly matched, the grain warm and silky against his palms.

Donegal came to set up the pieces, adjusting them meticulously in the center of each proper square while both men concentrated on the ritual. At least this beginning would be orderly. Donegal adjusted the clocks with the same care.

Near the starting time Borovek had not appeared, but Vermily, the smallest member of the Russian contingent, handed Donegal a formal-looking document. Vermily, whom Peña disliked, was a small, wiry, pale man with elevator shoes. He assaulted Donegal with arguments and gestures, looking intermittently toward Peña in a distracting pantomime. They argued for some time.

Trouble was brewing. The Russians obviously had chosen this moment to get even, but Peña didn't care. He was comfortably relaxed, feeling above it all.

Finally Donegal came to Peña and bent low, glancing about suspiciously. Markowitz crowded in behind, directing the cameramen.

“The Russians have complaints that will delay the game, Mr. Peña,” said Donegal. “They don’t care for the new table. Borovek claims it is too high, making it impossible for him to view the board properly.”

Markowitz could be heard ordering close-up shots.

“Get that camera out of here,” Donegal hissed.

Markowitz hissed back, gesturing insanely. “The world’s paying for this. What do you mean?”

Donegal moved in front of the camera.

“That’s ridiculous,” said Peña. “It may be all of half an inch higher.”

“They say we didn’t inform them of the changes, so what am I to do? I’ve sent for someone to make alterations.”

“Oh, yeah? What sort of alterations? I may complain about *them!*”

“They are not changes to the table and shouldn’t affect you. Anyway, there will be some delay.”

“What else are they bitching about?”

“There are other points, but they are not important.” He walked to the microphone to inform the crowd.

It was to be expected—this craziness. Vermily was behind it; it was a face-saving scheme to even up the publicity score. Peña was determined to ignore it.

After hearing from Donegal, the audience booed and many left the auditorium. Peña wished they would all go. This particular crowd had a holiday spirit inappropriate to chess playing. The Russians looked angry. His own patience was at low ebb.

A grouchy-looking carpenter appeared on stage, carrying several thin planks. Donegal directed him to Borovek’s chair and gave him instructions. The carpenter found numerous problems with whatever he was asked to do. Persuaded at last, he moved Borovek’s chair aside, laid the boards on the floor

in a neat row, and placed Borovek's chair on them, shaking his head all the while.

First the referee, then Vermily, tried the chair. Only Donegal was satisfied. Borovek came on stage and sat down. He shook his head angrily and spoke to the referee, who spoke to the carpenter. The TV cameras followed everything and Markowitz bounded about the stage in a tangle of wires and commands.

"What the hell's wrong?" Peña demanded of Donegal, but the referee only waved a disgusted hand and walked away.

The carpenter returned with a high-speed drill and bored holes through the planks and stage and screwed them together. The sitting tryouts were repeated. Now Borovek was satisfied.

Peña wanted to needle his opponent by asking if he liked his new throne, but he restrained himself. Perhaps he should ask for changes too, but he didn't care that much.

At last the sawdust was swept away and the lights were dimmed in the auditorium. It grew quieter and Donegal started Borovek's clock with the usual dramatic flourish of his hand.

Peña hoped the comic opera had ended. It hadn't.

Borovek was talking with Donegal, obviously complaining.

Donegal went to the microphone and announced that the players were not yet able to concentrate.

"Is that so?" a voice called out. "Then give us our whisky back!"

Loud laughter and cheers followed this remark.

"It's a police state," another voice yelled. Boos and whistles filled the hall.

Donegal turned around in despair. "We'll have five hundred drunks on our hands, no matter what we do," he

shouted. "We'd better call for help. I believe we've made a dreadful mistake."

Eventually it was announced that the packages would be returned to their owners. The crowd cheered and many rushed for the lobby.

A long delay followed. Peña felt like an upstaged actor and sulked in his chair, looking glumly from the chessmen to the officials to the audience, trying to place the blame.

Through all this, Borovek had ignored him, not that *he* made any sociable effort. He knew the Russians were unhappy over his protest and the media reaction. But, hell, that was a dead issue. Didn't they know he had withdrawn it, even though the papers mistakenly had printed it? Officially his protest *had* been withdrawn.

To pass the time he took out his miniature set and lost himself in it. When at last they were ready and relative quiet had returned to the hall, Borovek's clock was restarted.

The game proceeded rather quickly as if each player wished to recoup the lost time. Peña gained an opening advantage on the kingside and was pleased with the Russian's increasing discomfort as the game moved on.

At move twenty-two, Peña got up to pace, thinking about the coming moves and his developing attack.

Borovek sat quietly, intent on the chess pieces, his leg swinging impetuously. A TV camera focused on it.

When Peña returned to his seat, Borovek's leg suddenly struck the table. Peña pointedly leaned over to look. Immediately the crowd roared with glee, and the two men exchanged surprised glances.

A moment later there were loud shouts from the audience. Two men stood up and swung at each other, grappling in the aisle, shouting and punching until one went down.

The Garda ran toward them. The shouting increased. Immediately a leaping melee of bodies jumped up to flail at one another and their new opponents, the Garda. The cracking of fists and hysterical shouts seemed completely unreal, like a western barroom fight scene from the movies.

One man crashed a bottle on a uniformed head; then the man himself was grabbed and thrown down as two Garda jumped him. Women screamed "murder" and ducked their heads. People ran in all directions, some panicking for the exits, others running to the fight, especially the Garda, who blew shrill whistles and shoved through the crowd to pull the combatants apart and pressure them to the floor.

The uproar was deafening. At the edge of the stage two burly Garda wrestled with one giant who swung drunkenly, missed, and fell. He was quickly pinned down.

Peña stood with an arm raised to protect himself from flying objects. He was intensely disturbed. Nothing like this had ever happened at a chess match.

Gradually the fighting men were subdued and handcuffed. With bruised and bloodied faces, shouting and cursing, they were dragged from the hall, leaving behind a clutter of broken seats and wild excitement.

Peña stood at the edge of the stage, staring at a woman who knelt in the aisle, holding a bloody handkerchief to her face. Her shoulders shook, her head was bowed, her dark hair shone. He jumped down to comfort her, putting his arm around her shoulder, instantly reminded of a Filipino woman who had been forced to kneel in the mud that day long ago when the Japanese went crazy. She had been beaten and thrown down some stairs. A soldier had stood over her, fingering his sword while she screamed helplessly . . .

Peña wrenched himself away and returned to his seat. But the image persisted. He didn't dare glance back at the kneel-

ing woman; he couldn't shut off the nightmare in his memory.

Looking around for a distraction, he saw that Borovek's clock was running. Donegal had forgotten to stop it during the fight. He should be told. It wasn't Peña's responsibility, but it was the polite thing to do.

He pointed to the clock and Borovek noticed. Almost immediately an argument started. Borovek insisted that his clock be set back fifteen minutes, which Peña thought was outrageous.

Donegal argued first one way, then the other, until the officials arbitrarily decided on ten minutes, angering both players.

Everything seemed unreal. When play resumed, the game resolved into a kind of chess slugging match, with most of the punches missing their mark. Both players attacked with vigor but defended poorly. The game became exciting and reckless. Unprotected pieces hung *en prise*, but neither player gained a clear advantage because of more important threats against opposing kings and queens. The entire chessboard was alive with danger.

Excitement and tension gripped Peña. He wanted to prove that nothing could upset him, not the fight, not the Russians. His moves were not the best, but they were daring and rationally complex, as he exerted the utmost pressure on Borovek.

When the Russian made a gross mistake, Peña easily recognized it. Jubilantly, he smashed into the enemy king position with a rook sacrifice that caught the enemy king in a mating net and forced a resignation.

Borovek rose slowly to leave as Peña sat watching, knowing that this game perfectly represented his greatest strength.

The interviewers surrounded him but he shook them off brusquely. "Don't you have enough material to write about for one day?" he asked.

## THE SECOND QUEEN

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Alone in his room, Peña mentally played the game over, immediately discovering its disgusting flaws. He decided to write a scathing letter to Donegal.

The phone rang. Larry invited him upstairs for dinner and he accepted. They exchanged a few obscenities about the audience before hanging up.

While he was gathering his magazines, the phone rang again. It was Harold O'Donnell, head of the Irish Chess Committee and Minister of Recreation.

"Mr. Peña? I want to apologize most sincerely for the unseemly behavior of your audience at today's match game. It was a disgrace to Ireland and made us a laughingstock worldwide."

"Well—" Peña began.

"It will not recur. I guarantee. Some rowdy elements came to make trouble and I assure you they will not return. Will you accept my apology?"

"Yes, well—"

"Thank you. I'm sorry I cannot discuss this with you at length. Good-bye, Mr. Peña."

The phone went dead. Astonished and pleased, Peña hung up. The man sounded as if he meant what he said. O'Donnell had spoken with authority and assertiveness. There seemed to be hope that he would get this unruly match under control.

Feeling more optimistic, Peña picked up his magazines and charged into the hall. As he walked toward the stairwell, he stopped suddenly. A young woman rushed toward him at top

speed, her breasts bounding inside her shirt, flapping shirttails revealing patches of bare skin.

Momentarily entranced, he was about to turn away when a smile and a wave stopped him.

"Monsieur Peña," she called. "Isn't that you?"

"Yes, that's me. What's your hurry?"

Her accent was distinctly French and vaguely familiar. From close up she looked better, although her mouth was too big and her eyes were nearly invisible behind her uncombed hair.

"Oh," she gasped, "I just remembered I must call my editor and report in—you know, on what's happening. That is what they are paying me for—something significant to make the news tomorrow." She smiled broadly, watching him closely, her breasts heaving as she caught her breath.

Peña stood there, amused, attracted, and suspicious.

"I'm Nikki Renette, by the way, and I work for the only French newspaper left in Tunisia. . . . But I am at such a disadvantage to the other reporters. They have been here since the beginning. . . . They know all about chess . . . and you. But . . ." She paused, excited, but standing perfectly still now, her eyes directly on his.

She reminded him of other beautiful young girls who just pretended to be helpless. But her manner was so direct, bright, and energetic, her voice so soft, that he couldn't help being curious.

"You say you're a reporter?"

"Yes, but a small African newspaper, Monsieur Peña. That is why I am so late . . . and so ignorant."

They looked at each other in the way people do when each sees through an obvious ruse but is nevertheless delighted.

"Maybe I could fill you in on the finer points," he said, smiling. "You'd better make your call to your editor on time."

She offered her arm. Surprised, Peña took it and they walked together, she leading the way—rather triumphantly, he thought—while the back of his hand nudged her jiggling breast.

“If we could talk a few minutes . . . it would be such a help. You don’t know how much I, uh . . . I know so little of this check, mate, and all. . . . Here’s my door.”

They entered a room containing only a bed, a bureau, and two chairs—everything draped with clothes and towels.

“Come sit here on the bed,” she invited, flinging bits of underwear into a drawer. “I like to sit on the floor.” Quickly she cleared a space for him on the bed and squatted on the floor.

Peña repressed a smile. Was she playing dumb? No, of course not. He leaned against a bedpost and glanced at her crossed ankles, her spread-apart legs, and the skintight jeans. A pleasant, victorious look showed on her face and in the erect pose of her head.

Her face was angular and not pretty, but he liked it. The suddenness of their encounter pleased him. Her speech was a peculiar combination of French sounds and English vernacular, matching her disheveled appearance, with its charm and vivacity. She spoke and acted with such ease and alarming frankness that he felt pulled in two directions—both attracted and repelled.

Reporters were not to be trusted, and her aggressiveness was typical. It made him want to reject, impress, and dominate her. Yet the warm sensation of life she created between them filled the room.

“Before I write up my article, won’t you tell me something more about this awful match—oh, I didn’t mean that—or something . . . ?” she was saying.

“Look at this.” He took out his chess set and arranged the

pieces, knowing exactly how to get the upper hand, especially necessary after her blunder.

She moved to the bed and sat down. Quickly he discovered that she could identify the pieces by name and knew how to mate with the rook or queen. She was more eager to talk.

"I've never seen you mate one another during the game," she complained.

"No, it never comes to that. The *threat* of losing a piece will make a player resign. He can see it's going to happen—that the game's lost—so he resigns. Do you understand?"

"You resign only because your opponent threatens to win a little piece?" She was incredulous.

"Sure. A piece up's a tremendous advantage. Usually a pawn up is enough."

"I didn't know . . ."

"And if I were going to mate my opponent in a few moves, and he knew it, he'd resign. To let it actually happen is ridiculous. He sees it, I see it. So why continue?" He felt his territory expanding and taking over. She was not so confident now, although she was plainly undefeated.

"But, monsieur, I watch the play, then you each arise and leave, and I never know what happened. I am such a fool, always having to ask while the others run for the telephone . . ."

He assured her that only professionals understood the players' agreements. She considered that with a dubious grimace as if she saw right through him.

"You will teach me, oui?" She smiled sweetly.

"You should watch television. The analysts explain how the game is going and how it ends."

"Hmmm, yes," she said, disappointed. "My main desire is to learn about the players and write what everyone is interested in. Chess is only part of the mystery, you see?" Fre-

quently she pushed her hair back so that her eyes could be seen more clearly. Even without makeup, they were large and ingenuous.

“Why were you chosen to come?” he asked.

“Well, maybe it sounds silly, but I knew most about the game . . . and . . . please tell me more.”

“Let’s take a position that puzzled everybody.” He pulled a chair toward the bed and sat on several lacy articles of underclothing which she made no effort to remove. She watched while he manipulated the pieces.

“Where is the white king? He is missing,” she said.

“Oh, I never put him out if I’m playing white. I just *imagine* him there.”

“So . . . you are superstitious!”

“Let’s take another game,” he continued, ignoring her remark. Seldom did anyone notice this peculiarity about the white king. Why had he said anything? She could probably make an entire story of it. The subject was not one he wanted delved into. “I lost it,” he added. “They’re sending me another one.”

“Oh, I see.”

He tried a simple position, but the result was the same: she would have to be taught slowly, and he had no time for that. Nevertheless, he was pleasantly anchored in place.

“May I make a phone call? You’re not going anywhere, are you?” He knew *this* was going somewhere.

“No, go right ahead,” she replied instantly, a knowing and satisfied expression on her face.

Peña phoned Larry and said he would be late for dinner.

“You expect me to wait?” asked Larry.

“Of course not. Just save me a morsel.” He hung up and turned to Nikki. For a long moment they looked at each other.

She was still too complacent, too eager, and too victorious. He decided to increase the dosage.

"Do you know how the players prepare for a game?" he asked.

"Not really, monsieur."

"See this pile of magazines?" He riffled the pages to show her a glimpse of the contents.

"Just a moment." She got a notebook and pen and sat on the floor near him and wrote something in French. "Go on," she said, completely serious now.

"See this one?" Peña continued. "All chess games and analyses; lines of play, combinations, variations, endings . . . all technical material, right?"

She nodded, writing.

"I look for games with variations that I plan to use. I know Borovek prefers certain lines of play, and we both know about how deeply into the game the *usual* moves will be played. Then it's a test of courage—maybe adequate preparation or ingenuity is a better way to put it—to see who'll deviate first, who'll try a new move. Sometimes we make the first ten or fifteen moves in one minute, then take thirty minutes on the next move. Then you know something unusual's happening."

"Wait, wait . . ." She wrote quickly but neatly, then looked up. "And you possess this *élan*, Monsieur Peña?"

"We're not discussing me, are we?"

"Aren't we?" she asked rhetorically.

She was a tough one to beat down, but he thoroughly enjoyed the challenge. "Now . . ." he began.

"One moment, s'il vous plaît." She added a few notes as his eyes wandered over her body. "Yes?" she was asking, looking up.

"Oh. Well, during the early part of the game I watch out

for new moves and recall if I've seen the move before, maybe in these magazines. That's why I have to study. You got that?"

"In a moment, in a moment . . ."

"Now, the Russians have it better, in a sense. Do you know about their computer system?"

"Well, something. But I don't understand much of it . . ." She moved to a kneeling position and rested the notebook on the bed.

Looking at her tangled hair, Peña continued: "They have a computer in Moscow that holds every game and variation back to the fifteenth century. If Borovek is interested in a certain line, he can have it displayed on a little TV screen right here in the hotel."

"Here in Dublin? All the way from Moscow? Mon Dieu!"

"That's only half of it. If he asks, the computer automatically predicts which side will win."

"Oh, monsieur, how can you play against such odds as a computer?" Frowning, she looked at him, then continued to write. He began to talk again, but she touched his leg, signaling him to wait. It was a touch that lingered.

Her perfume was nice. Usually he disliked perfume and deodorants and liked the smell of a woman's hair, skin, and sweat.

Now this one, moving to his side, was becoming more attractive, more feminine . . .

Vaguely he recalled someone like her at the interviews. Her face was familiar, but the image was entirely different. Hadn't she been dressed in high fashion? At least neatly?

He couldn't force the memory and didn't want to. When she touched him again the suspicion slipped away.

## THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT



A faint scent of perfume circled his head. "The computer doesn't play against me," Peña said quietly.

She rested the notebook on his thigh and wrote rapidly while he waited. When she stopped and looked up, her mouth was large and appealing, her eyes a soft, light brown.

He said nothing.

"Yes, yes, go on." She smiled serenely.

"Damn!" He bent to kiss her. For a few moments she kissed him back, clutching his legs, digging in with her fingernails. She was strong and eager, pulling at him while impatient sounds stuck in her throat in a language he clearly understood.

Peña wanted her, but he was in no hurry and felt rushed by her actions as she threw off her clothes and struggled with his. He knelt with her on the floor, wanting to hold and kiss her, but she was too excited, as if the previous hour had been an unbearably quiet prelude to this moment.

He gripped her with his knees as they sat opposite each other on the carpet, his hands on the sides of her face as he kissed her, trying to calm her and know her better. The quivering tension in her body told him how she felt.

"Come on!" she muttered impatiently. Then, with unbelievable strength, she pushed him backward and scrambled on top.

"Are you ready already?" he asked, slightly exasperated.

"What do *you* think?"

Christ! he thought, arching his body so that she could move more freely. Her eyes were half closed and her breath came in quick, painful gasps as if she were biting her tongue in two.

The action of her body became almost wild, but he felt little that was pleasant. In a moment she collapsed on him and they lay flat while he moved slowly in her at his own pace.

Her hair lay across his face and sweat dripped from the tip of her nose. He caught a drop on his tongue and liked the taste. Still, she seemed a stranger.

"That was good," she said in his ear.

"Of course."

"Are you kidding me?" She raised up.

"Me? Did you enjoy yourself?"

"Don't be sarcastic," she said. "Do you get dizzy on your back?"

"Now who's sarcastic?"

She bit him lightly on the ear and touched his nose with hers.

"Don't stop," she said.

"Don't worry." He took both her arms and with a forceful twist he pushed her sideways to the floor and pinned her.

"Now you may torture me," she said.

"Is that what you call it?"

"In a way. I wanted to find out if you could take it."

"Did you?"

"Maybe." She grinned maliciously.

"Well, keep still, then, and don't be in such a rush."

"Most men want only to hurry."

"I'm not most men."

"I can feel that, Monsieur Peña," she said, wiggling under him.

"Are you sure you feel anything?"

"Don't be mean. Of course I feel something. And very good too."

"Then shut up and let's try to feel it together."

"I'm better on top," she insisted.

"All right, for Christ's sake!" He let her up and gradually she worked herself into an exaggerated state of ecstasy. He enjoyed watching her, helping her, but that was all.

"That was good," she finally whispered in his ear.

"You said that before."

"But still you hold back?"

"Something like that."

"We can learn to do better together, eh?" She smiled worriedly, fixing her eyes on him intently. Then, squirming away, she sorted a ragged bathrobe from a heap of clothes and went into the bathroom.

She was hurt. Had he meant to hurt her? He didn't think so. But in an obvious way he had rejected her and they both knew it.

Idly, he turned the pages of her notebook. The French was surprisingly neat and he could make out an occasional word. At the beginning it was dated back to a few days before the match began. Dated in Dublin.

Why had she lied about that? It seemed childish, but he didn't care.

Peña finished dressing and took up his chess set. When she returned, she sat near him. "Did I do something wrong?" she asked rather pathetically.

"Don't worry about it."

"But you must tell me. I want to please you."

"It's me—something in me. I have to feel it. That's not your fault."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know. It wasn't there. For a while I thought it was."

She was appealing but nothing had happened. He couldn't explain it even to himself.

"I know I did it wrong," she said more confidently, recovering her composure and picking up her notebook.

They remained silent for several minutes, each concentrating alone. Peña was puzzled by his reaction to her sexual excitement and aggressiveness. Secretly he planned how it would be next time.

"Do you speak any foreign languages?" she asked casually at one point.

"Just some Tagalog and a little Spanish. How's your report coming?"

"Almost ready."

Eventually she dialed the operator and asked for a number in Tunis.

Page by page, Peña searched the magazines, time-consuming but essential work. Gradually he became aware of Nikki's voice on the phone, feeding her story. An occasional phrase registered: ". . . *les dispositions de detail du tournoi . . . Monsieur Peña et Monsieur Borovek . . .*" Much that he didn't understand.

Finally she said, "*Au revoir, monsieur.*"

The pieces and board jumped as she flounced on the bed.

"What are you doing now?" she asked as he retrieved a white piece from the bedspread.

"Studying. Do you want me to leave?"

"No, of course not."

"I'm getting ready for the next game." He tried to concentrate, but she squirmed around restlessly, annoying him.

"Do you often make love like that?" she asked.

He ignored her, remembering Gabrielle in New York with her French ways, but more placid, refined. This one—what was her name?—wanted to make love, but her willful attitude hinted of greater demands, and he steeled himself to resist. She was too young, too aggressive, and certainly dishonest.

She was bent on getting his attention. As she edged closer, her scent and touch made him shift uncomfortably. Finally he

leaned back and looked down at her open robe. She pulled at it self-consciously, leaving it more open than it had been.

"You've got a nice body," he said.

"Merci. Are you through with the game?"

"Yes."

"Why don't we talk, then? It's been such a long time; so long, I believe introductions are in order," she said with mild sarcasm.

"Just call me Manny," he laughed. I haven't forgotten your name—Rennetti, wasn't it?"

"You must think I'm Italian, with a name like that."

"I knew there was something wrong with it, unless of course I'm right, and you are."

"And working for a French newspaper?"

"Why not? I live in the United States and no one would ever guess who I really work for."

"You probably work for the government. Doesn't everybody over there?"

"Not everybody. Only about ten out of every eleven."

Nikki got up and sat on the bed.

". . . and your first name, let's see . . . uh . . . Micky . . . something like that . . . Vicky. Was that it?"

"Pretty close. It's Nikki. Nikki Rennette, from Tunis, Tunisia; 23 years, 61.2 kilos, 1.74 meters tall; single; a reporter assigned to cover the world's championship chess match, et cetera, et cetera. I love covering it this way!" and she leered at him comically.

"You sound like an American movie script," he said, laughing.

"I've seen a few. Do you like the cinema?"

"If it's good. I don't like a bad movie."

"I think you should star in one. It would be easy for you;

you're so used to acting. I can see that."

"No one's made me an offer," he answered. "You think I'm putting on an act?"

"What else?"

"But—" She was an incisive bitch.

"Anyone who performs before so many people must be putting it on to impress everyone, especially your opponent. I think this Russian is afraid of you, Manny."

"It may look that way, but it's got nothing to do with the way I act."

"Oh, no? Do you remember the way Borovek groveled on the floor after you tumbled the chess pieces? . . . No, of course you don't; you were too busy giving the referee hell."

"What do you mean, grov—" So she had seen that.

"Creeping around, picking them up like a servant. Is this the behavior of a potential world's champion, unimpressed by his opponent? Why, I believe he's frightened to death of you. You weave a spell over him, enchant him . . ."

He had to admit she had a point.

"Why, see how angry you were when you lost the game. He didn't wish to displease you further, eh? But since then, he has been putting on little performances of his own, trying to show his displeasure; but nothing like yours, eh?"

"You think I put on an act, huh?"

"Yes . . . And with me too, you are a super actor, the way you look at me, why . . ."

Peña burst into uproarious laughter.

"Now, just a moment. Allow me to explain to you . . ."

Nikki smiled as one who tolerates a misbehaving child.

He knew he was getting the best of her.

"Just think back a moment when we met in the hall—the way you looked at me, staring at me hungrily, putting your . . ." She leaped to her feet and posed like a statue.

“Ah, mon cheri, amourez avec moi,” he mimicked and laughed uncontrollably.

She gave him a sharp, suspicious look. “Such terrible French! Now, don’t tell me you couldn’t resist my charms. You approached me with such beautifully styled manners, monsieur.”

“You’re the first one who ever said that!” Amused, he threw himself on the bed.

“See what a difference there is in your behavior when you obtain the victory—how you lord it over everybody. You are a clever one, Monsieur Peña.”

“Well,” he grinned at her, “let me lord it over you once more before I leave. I can’t resist those Grand Tetons.” He pulled her down.

## A CRUSHING VICTORY



The restless pattern of the early match settled into a head-to-head struggle between the two grandmasters. Two weeks passed in which six games were played. Peña pressured his opponent constantly and often played brilliantly, but draw followed draw as neither player could win.

The chess match enveloped Peña like a cocoon. He was totally absorbed, holed up with Larry, and devouring chess just as Larry consumed his double, full-course dinners. They appeared publicly only for the games. Fenley had arranged an international TV hookup after today’s game, saying it was good for his image. Hell! It was good for *his* image!

Peña often thought of Borovek: quiet but dangerous, ready to jump at the slightest mistake. He planned many ways to

crack Borovek's shell and crush him, believing that the Russian couldn't stand the strain much longer as the playing pitch was tuned higher and higher.

It was two hours until the next game. He relaxed on the couch and examined his score book. Eleven games had been played and he led four to one, draws not counting. With the match nearly half over, he had won a third of the games. Two more wins would end it!

The tension of the match lay deep in his body, slowly eating his reserves of strength. Used to that, he thought of the satisfactions, the intricate combinations and exclamatory moves that often stunned his opponent.

Gradually he drifted into a dream, in which he climbed persistently through a long tunnel, conscious of a blinding light behind driving him on. A woman with fiery hair and black eyes blocked the way obscenely. She worried him. He crawled over her, glad to be moving again . . .

A knock at the door wakened him. His hand searched for the locket. He held it and imagined the white king safe inside. Larry was waiting.

Peña sat on the stage facing the chessmen, indifferent to his surroundings. His lips pressed against the back of his left hand as he concentrated intently.

The game had proceeded with Borovek's best opening. At move sixteen, they were in the exact position of the third game of the match. Peña had used thirty-five minutes on his clock; Borovek slightly more.

Peña made a daring move and glanced up. Their eyes met in a conscious exchange of challenges. The fight was on.

The next three moves required an hour on each clock. Immediately Borovek deviated from the expected continuation. The grandmasters almost knocked heads as they leaned over the board, contemplating attack and defense.

Peña searched for the best moves, sorting through complex variations, placing great reliance on intuition when his conclusions were unclear, always striving for an aggressive initiative. Sporadically he grasped his hair and yanked. The ideas resisted. The tense struggle went on.

Neither outside disturbances nor inner voices needed him. Impossible ideas were continually generated. Eagerly he examined each of them, unwilling to discard any idea as ridiculous without a thorough exploration.

He found excellent moves and, feeling incredible pleasure, he pushed the game into wild complications and pure danger, always intent on finding the winning line that would collapse the enemy defense into helpless shambles.

Conscious doubts were non-existent as Peña suddenly sat back, hoisted a knee to his chest, grasped it with both hands, and rocked, enjoying the comforting motion of his body and the clear vision of what he would do. The killing moves became a dagger that would cut through the confused array of pieces and slice his enemy in two.

He pushed a pawn, punched the clock, and exploded from his seat feeling in complete command, hoping that Borovek would acknowledge immediate defeat. In his mind, it was inevitable.

For almost an hour Peña waited restlessly at the side of the stage, back to the audience, eyes on the wall board. Waiting was destructive, giving time for doubt to grow, time for a more thorough investigation of the consequences of his last move. He considered a double-edge response that had escaped his notice, then worried that Borovek might find it and successfully strike back, crippling him. The alarm subsided as further thought proved this to be a phantom.

Yet he persisted, knowing the outcome was not a mechanical certainty. A glance around pleased him to see Borovek

sunk in thought, probably suffering under a cloud of pessimism.

Suddenly Peña found a genuine flaw deep in the position. He stiffened and clenched his teeth, visualizing the precise danger and searching desperately in his mind. He didn't panic. If Borovek found this astonishing line, he would calmly return to the board and find a killing response. It had to be there . . .

Finally there was a movement at the chess table. The Russian lifted his king and laid it down carefully, then deliberately stopped both clocks. A shocked silence gripped the audience before they roared their approval. As Borovek walked to the exit, Peña thought he smiled and shook his head in wonder. Peña smiled.

The world's championship was again nearly within his grasp. One more win!

## DOUBLE CHECK



Peña stood in back of the crowd and watched Fenley and the TV people prepare for the interview. He considered doing an about-face and marching off.

Fenley's flaming hair and freckled face towered over everyone. The TV lights made his skin glow; he breathed self-importance. This was Fenley's arena.

Jerry Komansky came on stage. Christ, why had they sent him? The network interviewer looked and chirped like a baby bird.

"Has anyone seen Peña?" Fenley called out to the crowd. "We're almost ready to begin."

"He's back here," someone shouted.

Peña made his way to the stage. They directed him to one of the microphones. A makeup man fussed with his hair. Sweat poured down his body under his clothes.

"How you been, Peña?" asked Komansky, offering a yellow hand. "I understand you've got him licked. I knew you'd bring back the bacon to the good old U.S.A."

Peña gave him a brief nod, then turned to Fenley.

"Is this going out live?" he asked.

"Yes, worldwide. Didn't I tell you?"

"You didn't tell me this character would be here."

Fenley shrugged helplessly.

"Can't *you* handle this interview?" asked Peña.

"It's their hookup. They want Komansky on it."

Komansky was still talking. They were about ready to begin. Peña involuntarily brushed his hair over his eyes to block off the lights. They were on the air.

"Well, Mr. Peña, you have completed your fifth win of this championship match . . ." Komansky rushed on without a pause, ". . . and I'm certain no one is more surprised than yourself . . ." Komansky talked on and on.

Peña stared at the crowd, trying to calculate the time in Manila, wondering if his parents or friends were watching. Komansky was theorizing about Borovek's impending loss and his return to Russia, guessing at the probable reaction of the Communist regime.

". . . he'll be back in the arms of Mother Russia very shortly if you continue at your present pace, Peña, undoubtedly hoping to survive the public and political reactions to his defeat. I have to give the man credit, however, for not showing his discouragement at the trouncing you are meting out to him, but—"

"He has to be discouraged," Peña interrupted, unable to

stand the monologue any longer. "Even if he doesn't show it, he has to be disappointed after putting in three years to reach this point. Besides that, he isn't beaten yet, and even if he loses, he won't have anything to be ashamed of. He's played some great games."

"My point exactly," said Komansky. "Now, Peña, it's my understanding that most chess players are over the hill at your age and that it's a mystery to everyone what keeps you going. Now—"

"Wait a minute, Komansky, who says I'm over the hill? My desire to win hasn't changed one iota since I began. I wanted to be world's champion at the age of fifteen, as soon as I heard there was such a thing. But then I was too weak a player in every respect. I've always wanted to win every game I played, and still do, regardless of my age."

When Komansky smiled. Peña knew the man was baiting him.

"Now, what about the third game of the match—let's review that. If you wanted to win then, you didn't show it. You made a number of weak moves during the game. How do you reconcile these facts?"

Peña glared. "No move is weak unless an opponent takes advantage of it."

"Well, the analysts—"

"Sure, the analysts sit in their easy chairs after the game and find all sorts of better moves. Who couldn't? That doesn't mean a thing at the playing table. A lot of people like to tell the experts what they did wrong."

"Why did you lose the third game, then?"

"Borovek took a big chance in the final seconds and got away with it, that's all."

"Is it usual for you to refuse an interview after losing?"

"That was just a coincidence. Something important came

up. That's all water over the dam now in any case." Peña looked at the crowd. A few hands tentatively rose. "I think there are reporters in the audience with questions. Why don't we give them a chance?" He shouldered his way in front of Komansky. There was an immediate stampede of noise from the audience until he gave the floor to a young man.

"Is it true, Mr. Peña, that you spend all night, every night, with Mr. Stein?"

Several people laughed loudly.

". . . uh, analyzing the games, of course, I meant."

While the crowd tittered, Peña tried to keep a straight face.

"Only when we have an adjourned game or something pressing related to the match to go over. . . . Of course, we are good friends and spend a lot of time together." He couldn't resist rolling his eyes.

"Does Mr. Stein perform his services from the goodness of his heart, Mr. Peña, or is he paid by the government, as the Russians are?" Loud laughter greeted this question.

"Oh, Mr. Stein is paid handsomely enough for his services—by me not the government! And more than enough to keep him in excellent condition. A weak, sickly aide wouldn't be much good, would he? So we keep his larder well-stocked." He enjoyed the resulting laughter. "I think you're really wondering something else. The chess federation has specific rules about analysts and aides. The players can have all the help they want from any place they can get it between the games, even for adjourned games. The Russians have three grandmasters assisting Borovek, and I have one. That makes it about even." He smiled at his joke. "In chess ability, I meant," he added, as he laughed with the crowd. He resisted an impulse to leave the stage.

There was a clatter of questions until Peña pointed to someone.

“How did you learn to play chess?” an English female voice asked.

“The Japanese taught me. Don’t you know the story? It’s been told often enough.”

“Well, we’ve never heard it from you, Mr. Peña, and there are so many different versions.”

“That’s because Mr. Fenley here has such a marvelous imagination. If you insist, I’ll tell you.”

The general response demanded the story. He resisted, thinking that his parents or even the Japanese might be listening. He hated to dredge up the past, and for a long moment he stared at the faces that looked back, waiting.

“In some ways it’s a very sad story because it ended with the death of—not that chess had anything directly to do with it—the death of the man who taught me the game. I was just a ten-year-old boy at the time. The Japanese had occupied the Philippines, but they didn’t bother us in our town. Not at first. I became friends because we needed food and I thought I could get it from them. They trusted me all right and paid me with food, which helped my family survive. In the meantime I learned to play chess by watching their games. I couldn’t play at all, but chess came naturally to me and almost the first time I was able to make the moves. I can’t explain it. I got fairly good, which they didn’t like too much.

“Everything went all right until the American invasion of the Philippines began in Leyte. The Japanese got worried and finally panicked. They rounded up a lot of people and killed some. My father was beaten up and my mother was taken away. We thought she would be killed. I couldn’t stop them.” He broke off, feeling his anger rise. “We found her in prison. She didn’t know me. She might as well be dead!” He paused again, seeing nothing.

“I turned to chess after that. There was nothing else.” Now

he could see the quiet faces of the audience again, looking up at him. "After the war, I went to Manila and entered a few tournaments, then on to the United States . . . and you know the rest."

"What about the deaths? And the story that you were kidnaped by the Japanese after the war and held in a cave until you helped capture them?" a reporter called out.

"They're exaggerations. When the Americans liberated the Philippines, my Japanese . . . uh, teacher was killed resisting the invasion . . . and . . . there's nothing more to it, really." Why couldn't he say "Japanese friend"?

The reporters wanted to know more of the details of what had happened and continued to ask questions that annoyed him.

"There has been a rumor circulating for years that your mother was involved with the Japanese in—"

"There isn't any truth to that," Peña cut him off.

"Is it true that your parents are still living there, Peña?"

"Yes, but they like their privacy."

"But didn't your father work for the Japanese during the war?"

"Only as I did, against my will." He was rapidly getting angry.

"But didn't the Filipinos resent the . . . umm . . . let's call them 'interactions' of you and your family with the Japanese?"

"There wasn't anything like that. We were forced into the position of . . . uh, there isn't any resentment, believe me. I still have many friends among the Filipinos. They know we suffered as much as they did."

"Perhaps you could—"

"Let's get onto something else. No more questions about the distant past," he insisted, trying to end the interview. He gave a few brief answers to other questions and then excused

himself, leaving a smiling Jerry Komansky. Peña joined Larry and Fenley and they walked hurriedly out of the conference room.

“Why did you open up that bag of worms?” Fenley demanded. “I’ve always tried to cover for you nicely about those early years, make you a sort of hero.”

“Do you expect me to substantiate your tall tales, for Christ’s sake, Fenley?” He hardly realized what he was saying before Larry chimed in.

“And I hope you enjoyed being so goddamned clever at my expense, you stand-up comedian. Christ! Us spending nights—”

“All right, you bastards, next time I’ll let you handle the whole thing. I didn’t want this interview in the first place.”

With that, Peña turned abruptly and walked away from them and out of the hotel, thinking what a fool he was, determined to refuse all future interview requests. He headed for the river that led to the sea.

## THE WANDERING KING



Peña was striding down the street when he heard his name. He turned to see Nikki running toward him.

“What’s your hurry?” she called, catching up.

“I’m going for a walk, that’s all.” He walked brusquely away, aware that she was beside him.

“Do you mind if I come along?”

“Suit yourself. I’m not going anywhere.” He was silent, annoyed with the interview and the remarks of his two friends.

"I think it's wonderful that you beat him again, Manny."

"Yeah, I'll polish him off next time."

"You don't sound overjoyed."

"Why, of course I am. The whole world is waiting to crown me."

"Oh, stop it. They're happy for you. You're so sarcastic sometimes. You have a better side, you know."

"Yeah? Don't *you* nag me now."

He walked rapidly along the streets bordering the river, not caring where, wanting to reach a quiet part of the city. At one point he saw the quays below and took a stairway down, hearing her footsteps at his heels.

Several tugs and barges were moored and a few men unloaded one by hand, piling the cargo on the dock. Silently they manhandled the boxes. Nikki watched him and the men slyly watched her. He wanted to assist the off-loading and push everything else from his mind.

A man suddenly tripped and the box he was carrying crashed on the dock. Someone cursed, and the Irishman leaped to right the box but not so quickly that Peña missed the sight of tightly packed rifle stocks at the broken end.

"Move back now," someone growled, and Peña stepped away resentfully.

"Did you see *that?*" asked Nikki, glancing over her shoulder as they retreated.

As they walked along the quay and came to a tugboat, Peña remembered the name, *Kapstan*. It was the tug that he had seen go under the bridge at O'Connell Street a few days earlier. The engine idled quietly and the single man on board was preparing to leave as he loosened one of the lines. He was slightly stooped and moved sluggishly but apparently he was strong.

“Hello there, are you looking for work?” The Irishman smiled as if that might be a joke, his accent soft and deep in his throat.

“We were just walking,” said Nikki.

“Tourists from France are you, then?”

“A marvelous deduction, monsieur. But, no, I’m from North Africa—Tunisia, to be exact—here for the chess tournament.”

The man straightened and looked at her. Peña looked straight at Nikki for the first time. Her chin was raised in that determined, proud way she had. Only her long, thin nose and jaw showed through the mass of hair.

“Ah, the chess match!” the man said. “It’s lovely that people have time for games.”

“If you had ever played, you’d know it’s more than that,” said Peña, instantly on the defensive. They coolly stared sideways at one another.

“You’re a familiar one,” said the Irishman, turning his head suddenly to show his face under the short-peaked cap. He had a large, square jaw and rough skin—a masculine version of Nikki.

“How’s that?” asked Peña.

“Aren’t you the champion? Yes, you are! Now I’ve put my foot in it! You’re not one to argue with about chess. Come on board and we’ll have a drink to soften my rudeness. I’d like to toast your coming victory. Come on now, miss; don’t be shy.” He reached out to help Nikki, who hadn’t shown the slightest hesitation, then turned to shake hands with Peña, who took his big, rough hand and forced a smile.

“My name’s Kap, owner of this tug that plies the Liffey, master of my puny boat, such as it is.”

They introduced themselves. Quickly a bottle and glasses were produced from the little cabin and Kap invited them to

drink up, pouring a liberal quantity into each glass and offering them around. The whisky helped squelch the smell of brine and mildewed canvas that mixed with the gagging blue exhaust. They drank a few toasts.

“Lovely day, isn’t it? I’m going downstream to pick up supplies. Perhaps you’d care to come along for a river view of Dublin.”

“I’d love to,” said Nikki.

Peña accepted a refill. He no longer cared. Nikki bounded about the tug, helping Kap. Soon they were gliding with the slow current in the pleasant, cool air. They moved through eastern Dublin toward the Irish Sea, under the traffic bridges and quickly changing sky.

“What do people call you?” asked Kap.

“Mostly Peña.”

“Isn’t that a Spanish name? What does it mean?”

“Rock, like a mountain of rock, or a boulder.”

“Don’t be modest, Manny. I know you think of yourself as a mountain,” said Nikki. “He is too,” she said to Kap, “and such a hard one!” She pounded his arms and chest. “May I steer her, Kap? I’d love to. I won’t ram anything.”

“Why, of course. But not while you’re drinking. I’ll hold the glass for you.” He took the drink and Nikki took the wheel.

“Tell me about the chess if you’ve a mind to. It’s years since I played myself; I’m more concerned with my work and the struggle here in the Republic. It is ironic that they chose Ireland for the chess match—drink up, Peña, there’s lots more.” Kap filled their glasses.

Peña was loosening up. He had figured the man for a simple type but realized he was wrong. While Kap listened, he described the match.

“Why is it ironic about the match being here?” he finally asked.

“Chess is a sort of miniature war between two players, is it not? Do we need another war in Ireland? I believe we have got our hands full as it is.”

The man’s eyes were overpowering.

“It seems peaceful enough,” Peña said.

“Oh, Manny,” Nikki called out. “Don’t you know there’s a war in progress?”

“I’ve seen a bombed-out building. You call that a war?”

“Up North, the British and everything . . .” she said.

“She’s aware of the discord, Peña. But war is not your concern, now, is it? A man can tolerate only so much, but there are people dying here now. We’ve been trying to oust the British for hundreds of years and they’re forever imposing their imperial ways on us. They should have left Ireland to the Irish long ago, the stinking scum!”

“I’d rather fight it out on the chessboard,” said Peña.

“Well, I’d prefer to arrange that, and you on our side, Peña. Our own country has been the hardest fought over and least won by ourselves in the history of mankind. By the faith of the Church we’ll eventually throw the pigs into the Irish Sea. They’ll scream bloody murder.”

“I’ll drink to that,” cheered Peña, warmed by the whisky and Kap’s enthusiasm.

“Hey, someone take over here, you’re leaving me out,” shouted Nikki.

They moved toward her and Kap took the wheel. The liquor was soothing to Peña. He liked the way Kap talked and looked.

“I feel the same way about chess, Kap. Have you seen Borovek on television? The bastard! I’m going to grind him into dust and then . . .” He held up his palm and blew. “Phuff!

That'll show him." He sat on a dirty coil of rope and watched the exhaust puffing out over the wake.

"You'd be a fine compatriot, Peña, I—"

"Wait!" Peña interrupted. "I've heard of someone on the other side I'll bet you know about—Johnny Cullen. Do you know him?"

"An informer for the government, one of the worst sort. A real Irishman would never violate his own blood. Good riddance to the bastard!" Kap muttered. "How did you hear of him, Peña?"

"I read about him." Nikki clutched his arm, but he was thinking of Annette and her fiancé and watching the wake as it rippled against the stone walls. "Did the IRA kill him?"

Kap's face turned stony. "They didn't. To my knowledge they never revealed any part in his disappearance. It was quite violent and mysterious."

The boat slowed and Kap turned the wheel toward a make-shift dock.

"I'll be stopping off here at a pub to meet with friends for a time. You can wait here if you'd like or come up with me. You're welcome to. Then we'll return."

Nikki pulled at his arm. "Let's go," she said.

"We'll come up," said Peña.

Kap led the way up a shaky outdoor staircase, the unpainted boards splitting and gray, creaking to the top. Peña saw "Murphy's Pub" painted awkwardly on a small sign over the door. The miserable building appeared about to fall into the river.

Inside two men were seated, each with a pint of brew. It was a drab, barren room, but pleasant. A few bottles lined the wall behind the little bar. Despite the grimy mirror and filthy windows, Peña liked the place.

A man he assumed was Murphy stood behind the bar, grinning and nearly toothless. Peña followed Nikki to a table and

sat down. The place looked centuries old, sanded by hundreds of hands, feet, and beer mugs.

"Make yourselves at home," said Kap, putting a bottle and two glasses on the table. "I have to speak with the big drinkers over there for a few moments."

Kap ambled toward the two men who looked like farmers, each dressed in dark work clothes, knee boots, and short-peaked caps—dark shapes in the poorly lighted room.

"I'm getting bombed," Nikki said.

"Come on, have another. What's it matter?" Peña poured.

"You don't have to play tomorrow, do you?"

"Naw, I've a couple of days."

"You feel better now?" She sounded less French than ever.

"About what?"

"Don't tell me you've been acting normal."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Cheers, then." They touched glasses.

"Let's drink to an early victory. I'm gonna smash the bastard."

They toasted again.

"What do you think of Kap and his friends?" she asked.

"He sure hates the British."

"I believe he has something heavy going. Look at them, thick as thieves, and speaking Irish, too."

"Why don't you mind your own business?"

"Where is your curiosity, Mr. Peña?"

"I have enough to occupy my mind, if that's what you mean."

They drank quietly for a few moments. He wished he were without Nikki; then he'd be sitting with the Irishmen.

"What was the trouble—" she asked suddenly, "at the interview?"

"Oh, they pissed me off, that's all. Nosy reporters." He emptied his glass.

Nikki leaned forward to whisper, her eyes flashing.

"I think they are members of the IRA," she said. "Don't look at them now."

"You're nuts. They're no more killers than I am. You're always letting your imagination run away with you."

"Well, why would they meet in an out-of-way place like this? There's not a civilized person around here. Look how they have their heads together? Conspirators, that's what they are."

"You've had too much to drink. You want another?"

"We should eat something," she said.

"Yeah. See if he's got anything. Hey, bartender." Murphy came over. "What's your name? Are you Murphy? I never met an Irishman named Murphy, I—" The man's glass eye stopped him.

"Murphy it is. What would you like?"

He stared at the man. Nikki asked about food and the bartender said he would be glad to bring a hot plate. Nikki got up and followed Murphy to the bar. Immediately Peña threaded his way to Kap's table.

## INVADING ENEMY TERRITORY

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"I didn't meet your friends, Kap," said Peña. "We're having a bite to eat. Would you like me to order for you?"

One of the men was bigger than Kap, but Peña couldn't see their faces clearly. Kap introduced them and they shook hands, the big one trying to crush Peña's hand, although he barely felt it.

"I didn't mean to intrude," he said, noticing their hostile stares. The other two men were older than Kap, pale, and weather-beaten.

"No, no, sit down, Peña, sit down. I've been forgetting my manners, being so engaged. This here's the world champion chess player, boys, Peña himself. I know you've seen him on the television."

At that the two Irishmen came alive, smiling idiotically. Peña thought they were drunk.

"I never seen him," said Fallon, the bigger one.

"Aye," explained John Cavanaugh, looking up cautiously, "He has time only for his work."

"I don't have the television operating," growled Fallon. "The children would have it if I did, and be watching the brainless BBC."

"Where's your lass gone to?" asked Kap. "She's a pretty young thing."

Peña looked around but couldn't see Nikki. The three Irishmen were attentive now.

"She's probably investigating the area for a story. Hell of a curiosity, that girl. Crazy reporter—"

"Reporter?"

The three Irish faces were poised only a few inches away, the reek of beer and whisky thick in his nostrils. He wondered who had spoken.

"Why are you consorting with a reporter, Peña?" asked Fallon. "Bad news—reporters."

"Convoluting schemers!" squawked Cavanaugh.

"Right! I agree one hundred percent," Peña answered, amused at their responses. "But listen! She's crazy enough to think you guys are members of the IRA! Now what do you think of that?"

"My ass!" said Fallon.

"She'll be bringing us trouble with remarks of that sort," Cavanaugh muttered.

"Who does she write for, Peña?" asked Kap calmly, placing a hand on Cavanaugh's arm.

"A North African newspaper—French, I think," said Peña. "She's a curious little creature, but it's me she's interested in."

"She's approaching now, Peña. You'd better tell her to repress such talk or she'll come into serious trouble," said Kap.

Peña nodded with the others, not believing these events were more serious than a fairy tale. The men leaned back as Nikki came up.

"Jim Fallon here is the local champion arm wrestler, aren't you, Jim?" Kap informed Peña.

"That I am. Would you care to test your strength on that score, lad?" asked Fallon, looking down at Peña with a broad smile.

"You're on!" Peña called out, drunk enough to think he might win. "Hey, Murph, let's have another round for everyone here!"

They pushed the mugs aside and Peña and Fallon squared their elbows on the table, Peña staring at the man's huge head and hard, gray eyes, making preliminary tests of the other's biceps. He felt a hand on his shoulder and looked around to see Nikki.

"He's the local champion," he said.

"So I heard. He'll break your arm."

"Oh, no, he won't." Suddenly he flattened Fallon's arm to the table. "There! See that!"

Everybody laughed except Fallon, who yelled a protest. A

mug of ale crashed to the floor and hands reached out to rescue the others.

"Let's begin fairly now," said Kap. "When I say three. You ready now, boys? One . . . two . . . three!"

Peña put all his strength into his arm, locked his legs, and pressed into the powerful arm and hand of Jim Fallon. He watched him intently. He knew the man expected to take him easily. His face reddened, his shoulder and arm muscles stretched. For several moments he held Fallon off, hands upright close to their jaws. They hissed at each other, straining and growling.

Suddenly Peña's strength went. In a flash he was put down.

"Well, you got me there," he said. Hands clapped him on the back; voices congratulated him.

"You're a strong one, Peña," said Nikki, hugging him from behind.

"How about a little game of chess, then?" Peña whipped out his pocket chessboard and stared from face to face. There were no takers. They spent a few moments admiring the set until Nikki interrupted.

"Aren't you going to introduce me?" she complained.

Peña introduced her, but the Irishmen only nodded.

Murphy brought a single plate of a dozen boiled potatoes with slabs of dark, roasted meat.

"Will you join us?" asked Peña.

"No, thank you," Kap answered politely.

They returned to their table and ate silently. The food tasted good.

"I'll beat him next time as soon as I practice up," said Peña.

"Sure you will," said Nikki.

"This is the kind of place I like—away from those damned reporters, always prying into things."

"Don't forget, I'm one."

"Hell, I don't think of you as a reporter until you start nosing around. You'd better forget you ever saw those guys. They wouldn't like you calling them IRA. You could make real trouble for everybody."

"So you agree with me for once?"

"I didn't say that."

"They're not very nice. I'm glad I brought my pocket camera."

"Are you kidding? You *are* dumb. . . . Say, are you the one who took me in my underwear that day in my bedroom?"

"Of course not. What makes you say that? You know I was late for the match."

"Well, if I ever catch that dame . . . She got it published in a Dublin newspaper."

"I wish I'd seen it."

"You've seen enough."

"I never see enough of you."

"Why would you want to?"

"*You're* the one who's dumb."

"You think I have time to fool around when I'm playing a serious match?" Peña asked.

"I wish you weren't so pigheaded."

"Christ, I won a four-hour chess game, then had to put up with those needling reporters."

"It's only our job."

"Are you sure you're French?"

"Of course. Why do you ask?"

"You don't talk much like a Frenchman when you're drunk."

"That's because I am a French *woman!*"

"One of those!"

"When I was sixteen, I ran away with an American to the big city. He taught me the American idiom. Left me with a

baby but not much more. Men can be cruel.”

“Are you sure you weren’t an American who ran away with a Frenchman?”

She only made a face at him.

“What happened then?” he asked.

“My mother came to help with the baby.”

They ate in silence. He felt sorry for her but couldn’t really clarify his thoughts. She suddenly seemed depressed.

“I suppose you’d like to know about my parents. My mother had her hands full with me but my father was a different story. He opposed the revolt in Algeria and we seldom saw him after that. There were threats against him, until he was captured and tortured. They shipped him back to us in a wagon. It was horrible. My mother and I found him in the morning, but he soon died. I can never forgive them.” She hid her face but did not cry.

He touched her gently. “It’s better not to think about it,” he said, not certain he believed her.

“Oh, I think about it.” She revived instantly. “It’s not an experience to brood over. He was aware of the price. I inherited his interest in political affairs. Here in Ireland I feel it deeply. I seem to have my father’s compulsion to be in the thick of it. He is in my blood.”

“You’re dying for trouble, aren’t you?”

“Why not? You live only once.”

“Well, I learned my lesson long ago. Fight your own battles.”

“You call chess a battle?”

“Listen, my parents were wrecked in the war too, and they minded their own business. Remember to keep this evening to yourself, now.”

“Do you think I am a child? I don’t know why I put up with you!”

"Calm down!" Peña warned her.

"You were so nice to me the first night . . . but you can be an insulting old bastard!"

He drained his glass.

"All right, I'm sorry," she said, touching him.

"I can't imagine anyone going out of his way to get into the thick of it. They just have no idea of what can happen."

"What happened, then?"

"They ruined my mother. Didn't I tell you? The Japs took her. They raped her or made her the camp whore or something."

"She is Japanese?"

"No, American."

"Why didn't your father stop them?"

"I don't know." He was miserable. "Hell, they had treated us well up to then. Maybe he couldn't believe they would turn on us. It all happened suddenly. And I learned to play chess from those bastards . . . How did we get on this, anyway?"

"She was killed, then?"

"Might as well have been."

"That is ghastly. It makes you ill to think of it, eh?"

"I try not to."

"That's just it—you try not to. You must get it out in the open and face it. There's nothing to be ashamed of, but you act as if there were, as if you were hiding secrets from everyone, even yourself."

"Do you think I want them spread all over the newspapers?"

"I didn't mean that. You are so completely mistrustful, you know such horrors do occur, yet you behave as if they occurred only to you."

"Bullshit!"

"Yes, bullshit. Bullshit this, bullshit that. It's the answer for

everything, isn't it?" She shifted to a whisper. "I know you think I am a fool when I speak of those men over there, but take me seriously. I know something of these underground movements and can sniff them out, I tell you, Peña."

"Go on, play with fire."

"If I discovered the truth, they would notice me!"

He looked at his empty glass, turning a drop slowly in the bottom. "By the way, what happens to the stuff you write?"

"It must be buried in Africa," she laughed bitterly. "If I worked for a Parisian daily . . ."

He looked at her questioningly, thinking, despite himself, that he had felt the same way at her age. Perhaps he still did.

"Why have you never married, Peña?" she asked impulsively.

"I'm married to chess. I never had time for anything else."

"It's lucky your parents had time for you," she said.

"Don't be ridiculous. You want another drink? . . . Hey, Murphy." He held up two fingers and looked around vaguely. "Was that his name?" he asked Nikki.

She nodded.

"Bring a round for my friends over there, Murph," he called.

"I've got to go to the men's room," he said, and got up. He looked around. The bartender pointed and Peña started off through an open door into a weed-filled yard. The glare was blinding. He wandered in the yard looking for the men's room, walking among wild yellow flowers until he came to a wall on which he read the spray-painted words "WE WANT HOUSES NOT EVICTION—IRA." He was tempted to relieve himself where he stood but, looking across the lot, he saw a woman watching from an upstairs window in the pub. So he walked back, and started over.

This time he saw a hand-painted arrow on a broken board.

It led to a tiny room with a concrete floor, a long depression at one end. Had Nikki gone there? Nervy girl. Not even a door. A toilet seat lay on the floor near a sawed-off pipe stuck in the floor, a light bulb and cobwebs hung from the low ceiling. The smell was heavy.

Peña held his breath while he fumbled with his zipper. He heard a noise. When he turned, he saw Kap's craggy face.

"I'll be done in a second," he said. Kap was already beside him. He turned away slightly.

"Listen, Peña, I have something to tell you for your own good. Much of the business of Ireland cannot be regarded in a lighthearted fashion, I'm sorry to say."

"I'm not surprised, Kap. Why should it be different here? Hell, the blacks burned some of our cities to the ground. The Indians will be next. Have you got enemies?"

"The enemy is unrecognizable here unless he declares himself. The passions may appear passive but they are intense. I tell you, there's a serious struggle boiling beneath the surface. It often rises up. You must be careful who you keep company with. The girl there, for instance, may have a loose tongue and be a danger."

He stared at Kap sideways, squinting in the poor light, not quite understanding.

"You mean the Irish Mafia, for Christ's sake?"

Peña laughed to show he was joking. "Hell, I've been to cities all over the world, Kap. What's so different, what's so different here?"

Kap shifted to plainer English. "Jesus God, I hope you will remain unaware. I wouldn't be telling you if I wasn't concerned with your welfare, Peña. Loose talk and poking around mean trouble. Any mention of the IRA and identifying specific persons is a serious charge in this country. The IRA are wanted by the Republican government as well as the British,

including many enemies in Northern Ireland where the IRA are more active. There is torture and imprisonment or death waiting those who are captured. Do you get my meaning clearly?"

Kap gripped Peña's arm as they stood there together, their eyes on each other. He nodded slowly. Kap left. Peña stared at the cobwebs, thinking they were in his head.

"Did you get lost?" Nikki asked, laughing, when he returned.

He was silent, trying to clear his thoughts. Kap and the two Irishmen were still talking quietly together.

"What's the matter? Did you see a mirage?"

He felt her warm hands on his.

"No, I'm okay. Just trying to recover from the stench of that place. I think I've lost my appetite."

They were silent for a few moments. He looked over at Kap. Everything was normal.

"I think you hurt my feelings before."

"Sometimes I'm a crumb, huh?" he said.

"At times, yes. But you don't try to be. I love you anyway."

"Sure you do, like beetles love roses. You know what I'm going to do? I've one more game to win, right? I'm going to beat the bastard and get away from here before we all go crazy. This place is insane. A war you can't see or hear, making friends with terrorists, having dinner with a newspaper reporter half my age, peeing all over my boots—" he paused while they looked and laughed. "That shipment of guns was probably for Kap and his cronies—Christ!"

"I love it, don't you?" she beamed, leaning close. "But peeing into a pipe is extremely difficult when one is improperly equipped!" she added.

They both laughed aloud.

"I'd like to have seen that," he said.

"Ah, you are a voyeur then!" she laughed, leering at him.

"No. Just drunk."

The light grew more dim and Murphy lit two kerosene lanterns. Peña's mood blended with the quiet peacefulness of the pub. Without moving, he felt safe, although at times giddy from the liquor. However, the room held still and he waited expectantly, idly considering whether to repeat to Nikki what Kap had said. He was on the verge of telling her when an old man carrying an accordion came in the door and everyone turned to look, calling out his name and a welcome.

"Let's have some music, Harry," said the bartender, setting up a drink. "We've had a quiet day here." The old man grinned appreciatively, downed the drink, and began a medley of Irish tunes. Harry sat at each table and played, gulping down the drinks that Peña and others bought him, reeling off tunes continuously. The pub seemed to come alive. Peña thought how lucky he was to run into this same accordion player twice.

"Do you agree with me?" Nikki asked once.

"About what?"

"Those men?"

"You'd better keep your nose clean and forget it."

"You never want to have fun," she snapped, and turned away to the music.

The time passed like magic and the music filled the little pub and Peña's body, adding to his already mellowed feelings. Other people came into the pub to drink and sing, and the evening sparkled.

When Kap finally said he must go, Peña shook hands with the two Irishmen and walked with Nikki out onto the ancient stone bridge. They stood close together listening to the muted music and looking off into the haze forming over the river. The clouds lightened suddenly, making the river look radiant.

"The rain is so beautiful. I think I will miss it when I leave here," said Nikki, her arm around Peña's waist.

Both the warmth of her body and the cold stone parapet touched his thighs.

"I prefer sunshine," he said.

"Don't you love me a little?" She looked up at him, light reflecting on her face from the river.

"Of course. I love everyone a little."

"We had such a lovely time. Once you made love to me."

"We hardly knew each other. You call that love?"

"Yeah," she mimicked his American talk, "I call that love."

"You Africans are as bad as Americans."

They were speaking softly, not wanting to interrupt the quiet river and drifting music.

"You know what?" she continued.

"No, what?"

"Sometimes you are a real pain in the ass."

He turned quickly and whacked her on the rear. She ran across the bridge.

He reached her easily. She turned to look into his face, waiting to be kissed. He didn't disappoint her, but his lips were numb against hers. He hardly knew why.

"Will you make love to me?" she whispered.

"I have to save my strength."

"Oh, shit!" she said and kissed him hard.

Kap called them then. The river had darkened again. Sadly he followed Kap down to the tug, listening to the clomp of his feet, and Nikki's behind him. He didn't want to leave. Why couldn't he sit at a worn-out table in Murphy's Pub forever and listen to Irish music?

On the dark river they were soon part of the moving shadow of the boat among the rippling lights on the water. He let Nikki cling to him, her breath on his neck, while he

counted each overhead bridge as a measured step back into the only world he knew.

## GIUOCO PIANO



The sun sparkled on rooftop puddles below his hotel window. In the distance slate-gray clouds carried the recent storm eastward. Behind him Larry loomed over the chessboard, manipulating the pieces and intermittently dipping bunches of fried potatoes into a plate of catsup. They had worked since yesterday in preparation for the next game.

The phone rang and Peña took it quickly. A moment later he had a jacket and rain gear in hand.

"Where the hell are you going?" asked Larry.

"I've had enough. I'm getting stale. Keep at it if you want to. I'll see you later."

He took the hotel stairs two at a time, then burst through the kitchen, waving cooks and waiters aside.

Annette was parked in back. He jumped in the car.

"Let's go before they get on my tail," he said.

She laughed and drove away.

"It's good to see you in person again," she said.

"You too. Where are we going?" Excited, he looked out the back of the car.

"To the Boyne valley. I know a lovely place where we can picnic."

"That's a huge basket back there. Were you expecting me to bring Larry?"

"No, no," she laughed. "It contains rain things, just in case. Why are you so nervous?"

"Nervous? Oh, this crazy driving on the left. I should be studying, but I'm sick of it. I'll beat him anyway." He was thinking how perfect she looked.

"I know you will."

"A change of scenery will do me good."

"It was nice to hear from you again."

"I was thinking about you." He reached for her hand and held on until she had to shift gears.

Heavy traffic rushed along the dual highway. Signs noted the mileage to Drogheda, Newry, and Belfast—the distance from peace to war. There was an occasional downpour.

"Are they really vicious enough to kill someone in cold blood?" he asked, thinking of Kap.

"The IRA? The British? Lord God, it's a war. They kill all right, each believing Ireland is theirs."

As they drove into Drogheda, it cleared up, or so Annette claimed, though the sun never showed itself. The cars and trucks jammed up. On the open road again, they veered away from the traffic that headed into Northern Ireland.

Eventually they drove along a narrow, lonely road and parked by a cemetery. The car shuddered like a dying animal when she turned off the ignition.

He leaned over and kissed her.

"It's nice to see you again," he said. "But where in hell are we?"

"You're such a city animal." She smiled. "But you'll survive the country. I'll see to that."

"God, what a miserable day!" The windows were steamed over. "Great for sight-seeing!"

"You'll learn not to complain over trivia in Ireland. Come, it's a beautiful place."

They got out and stood under the dripping trees, blinking

into the mist. Not another car or person was in sight. He felt stranded in an ocean of green.

“Why did you bring me here—to bury me?”

“I may. You’ve not been to Ireland until you’ve seen Monasterboice. It’s over thirteen centuries old. The stone carvings are embedded exactly where they were made.”

It was a maze of very tall gravestones, the older ones worn and covered with lichens. Grass grew wild everywhere. Dominating the scene was a bulky round tower of gray rock broken at the top. It seemed to touch the clouds.

They walked quietly on the paths, reading the inscriptions and examining the site.

Suddenly a woman’s voice called, indistinctly at first, seeming to rise from the graves.

“Oh, mister, mister?” A large woman appeared, calling to him. “Could you assist me with my car? I can’t get it started, the stubborn thing . . . oh!” She screamed as she fell on the uneven turf. Peña ran to her.

“Here, let me help you.” He strained at her armpits, thinking of a fallen hippo. She finally rose from her hands and knees. Annette stood laughing behind a tombstone.

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” the woman said, very flustered. “Wasn’t that stupid of me? I don’t want to trouble you, but could you look at my car—just a peek?” She moved off, chattering incessantly, and he followed, thinking how little he knew about starting cars.

“ . . . as you can see, I’ve raised the bonnet and set it properly in place. But I don’t have the faintest idea of mechanics. I do hope I’m not asking too much of you. I’ll press the starter key.”

She struggled into the driver’s seat, grunting like a hog. In a moment the starter motor whirred, the fan turned, but the

motor remained silent. He shrugged and asked about gas.

"Gas? Oh, petrol." She checked the gauge. "It's all right."

"Could I give you a lift into town?" he asked.

"Oh, no, that would be too much trouble. I'll make a call to the garage; there's a telephone down the road. Thank you so much."

He was doubtful about leaving her alone without help, but she seemed confident, so he returned to Annette.

"Did you get it started?"

He shrugged. "If I'd been a carabao, I might have helped." It was a relief to be away from the chattering voice.

"What on earth is that?"

"What? Oh, a water buffalo. We had them in the Philippines. I used to ride them when I was a kid. They go through water, muck, anything. They'd be perfect here."

"Oh, would they, now?"

"Forget it. I was just kidding."

As they walked along, he took her hand and pulled her toward him.

"None of that!" she smiled. "This is a holy place. Just imagine yourself being chased by Norsemen and hiding up in that tower. How would you feel then?"

"Maybe they were your ancestors. That's why you're blonde."

They stood by a stone cross which towered above them. The scenes carved in the rock were eroded and unclear, but deeply sculptured.

"They're crucifixion scenes. Can you make them out?" she asked.

"I don't know much about religion, but that's some job of carving."

"Archaeologists come from all over the world to see this stone cross."

"It makes me think of the chess sets I've carved. I—"

"You've made your own? From wood?"

"Sure, lots of sets."

"I'd love to be able to do something. I have such empty hands. And an empty head."

"You're fishing for compliments."

"Oh . . . Tell me how it feels to play chess all these years. You must love it."

"Love it? It's my life!"

"It's like creating, isn't it?"

"Well, yes, it takes work. First you learn the game; then you study your opponents and learn how to beat them. I've got that down pat. The hard part is *me*. Sometimes my hands get away from me. Ever have that happen to you?"

They were walking together, touching the wet stones and each other. He felt strangely light.

"Of course. I don't have perfect control over myself. Who does?"

"In chess you're supposed to be nothing but a brain—like a computer."

"That's the last thing on earth I'd mistake you for—the computer, I mean." She laughed.

"Well, don't let anyone know you've discovered my secret—that I'm human."

"I wouldn't dream! But chess does seem complex. Often my mind doesn't get together with my wishes and part of me is going one way and part another. Then I feel so stupid and botch everything. Is that what you mean?"

"Right . . . I think I could learn to like you," he said, stopping.

"You do already." She put her hands on his shoulders and kissed him. They stood in the misting fog holding each other.

"Lucky for me I love chess," he said, recovering.

"Yes, and don't you love the solitude of this place?"

"They said I was great for a kid, but they didn't know what it meant to me." Peña was back to chess again. "In the first tournament I lost half my games. I'd play them over until it drove me mad, asking myself a thousand times why I made such stupid moves. Then it became an obsession, and all I thought about was chess. If I worked, it was to buy chess books; if I met a girl, there was a chessboard between us. I guess it *has* been a lifelong love affair."

They sat on a low cement wall that protected a grave from invading weeds. The inner space was covered with small gray pebbles. He chuckled at the words inscribed in the wall, "KNEEL AND PRAY HERE." The dead were directing the living.

He looked at Annette and felt her touching him.

"You do something to me," he said.

"I'm glad. I feel the same way."

It started to rain, and he reached behind her neck and pulled the hood over her head; then he donned his rain cap. The rain gathered on the grass and rocks, clinging to the ends of their hair in fine droplets and running down their cheeks and noses. He touched a faint mole on her face with his forefinger. She smiled.

"You have a nice face," she said, as if reading his mind. She leaned toward him and he kissed her, tasting the cool rain water on her lips.

"You have a beautiful face. I saw that the first time I saw you. I didn't think about your blonde hair, although that surprises me now. It even surprises me that I'm here with you."

"I'm surprised as well. Isn't this lovely, being together?"

"Yes, I can't explain it to myself . . ."

"Chess can't be your only love . . ."

"Did I say it was?" A cold chill shook him.

"I have that impression."

"I can feel it down to my toenails, but . . ." he hesitated.

"Aren't you getting hungry?"

"I'm always hungry!"

They moved toward her car.

"It's awfully wet."

"And chilly."

"Yes." The lady's car sat on the hill. When she saw them, she got out and waddled to the edge of the road.

"It's difficult for me to get involved in something besides chess," he continued at last. "I know what it's taken to become the champion and I'm not about to give it up. I can't afford too much diversion because that'll be the end of my chess career." He looked at her. "Now I've hurt your feelings. I . . ."

"No, I'm just being selfish, feeling that I may be only a diversion."

The rain stopped as they reached the car. They decided to look for a place to eat and headed for a public footpath that wound up and away from the cemetery. He glanced back once at the sound of a car door slamming.

The footpath was weedy, obviously used by cattle as well as wagons and people. A rock wall on each side separated the narrow path from the surrounding fields, where a few black-and-white cows grazed. A rocky hill sloped up to the left, blocking the view. Large full-leafed trees grew in clusters in the crevices where the hills met. As they climbed, the view of the countryside expanded into a broad, lush-green valley.

It began to rain heavily. She pointed toward a hay barn and, eyed blankly by the cows, they climbed over the loose rock wall and ran.

The barn was little more than a corrugated steel roof sup-

ported by a skeletal structure. They climbed in among the pungent-smelling straw, breathing heavily from the quick dash.

"Oh, what a mess," she said, wiping her shoes.

The soft, musical sound of rain tapped on the metal roof above.

"This is a beautiful spot," she said.

"Why don't we think about this and nothing else?"

"Except lunch," she added.

"Let's wait a while."

He looked off into the distance where low in the valley a river lay. The fields formed alternating patterns of light and dark. Trancelike, he searched for an area where the correct pattern fitted—eight on each side—to form a chessboard. Then he forgot the landscape and played an imaginary game.

Annette nudged him. "Here, you need some nourishment for that everlasting daydream."

They ate the lunch of wine, cheese, sliced lunch meat, crackers, and coffee.

Annette was thoughtful and remote.

"I should like to be important to you too. There seems to be room in your life—and considering the little time we've spent together . . ."

"But I'm into something that's become a way of life. It grew up inside me. I know that doesn't answer you, but I've told you how I feel because I want you to understand. In fact, I don't understand what's happening to me."

"Me either. A year ago I could never have believed . . . But can't you tell me how you feel . . . about me?"

"No, I don't think so. I don't know if I like it. I can only see clearly how I feel about the match, and Borovek; and that I must win—I have to beat him. I'm better than he is, and I'm

proving it. Every three years they're going to bring someone else up to challenge me, and each time I'm going to beat him down."

"Every three years?"

"Is that so bad?"

"For the rest of your life?"

"It's *my* life."

"Be reasonable. When you're old, do you think you'll be as good?"

"Others have faded, but I don't intend to. If I ever reach the point at which I can't win, I'll probably kill myself . . . or want to."

"Have you thought about doing anything else in your life, like falling in love, or getting married? Having children?"

Peña couldn't help being disturbed. "Are you trying to retire me now?"

"No, of course not. Someday you'll be too old to have children."

"I'll adopt them."

"Don't be ridiculous!"

"You're talking like a mother. How do you know what's best for me?"

"What kind of life is it? It's not a normal life, where you settle down someplace and have a wife and family . . . oh, damn . . . I shouldn't be talking this way. I understand how much you want something more than anything else. Or anyone . . ." She bit her lip.

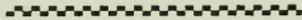
"We're not getting anyplace this way. Let's skip it for a while. Let's say we like each other, and that we enjoy being together. You know I do, don't you?"

"Well, I sort of assumed it." She managed a smile.

“Okay. So hand me the chessboard. I want to show you something.”

“Oh, Lord,” she said under her breath, and dug her hand deep into the lunch basket.

## DOUBLE ATTACK



Peña looked down at Annette as she relaxed in the hay, wanting her and wondering how to begin.

“Are we far enough from your ‘holy’ place now?”

She looked up, puzzled at first, then slowly relaxing. “Yes,” she said. “We’re a great distance from everything.”

The air was heavy and chilly, but he felt the heat spreading inside as he kissed her, hands searching. She moved with him and he liked that. He took off her shoes, squeezed her feet, and touched her legs. Her stockings went only to the ankles. He reached for her belt.

“You want me to help?”

“Let me do it.”

“Be careful where you put them.”

“Don’t worry.” Very deliberately he removed each article and laid it in the hay, exaggerating each step, thoroughly enjoying himself.

Her legs were lovely and very white. He investigated slowly, perhaps to tease himself, touching her with his lips and probing deliberately until his own frustration became too great. He undressed quickly, aware that imprisoned feelings were coming alive, wanting to make her feel them as he did.

The minutes passed with increasing pleasure as if the feeling was passing back and forth between them. Her breath came quickly, her hands gripped his shoulders as he pulled her

close, trying to please her. Her eyes were closed, her mouth partly open, gasping as if in pain.

Afterward he remembered with surprise that he had wanted her so much: her, not just anyone. Then he had slipped into semi-consciousness aware only of vague sounds and overwhelming desire.

Slowly they recovered. "I didn't know it could be so lovely," she said, looking at him.

He had difficulty repressing a smile. "I didn't either. Something caught on." The surprise hadn't left him. It was the first time love-making had not been for his own relief only.

"Were you temporarily deranged?" she asked, smiling.

"Had to be." He studied the flecks of blue that shone in her irises, pleased to relax with her, touch her face, and enjoy the pleasant euphoria that drifted through him.

A distant scream brought them up, sitting.

"What was that?" she asked.

"It might have been that woman," he said, crawling toward the edge a few feet away. Sharp straws pricked his bare knees as he squinted through the haze. The cows stood sleepily in the nearby field. Further on, the path was empty. Far away, the road was a black stripe in the gray-green. The fat woman's car sat like a miniature on the near side. Nothing moved.

A man's head appeared by the car. The door opened and the woman emerged slowly, pulled by the man. He could have been helping her. Or hurting.

"Can you see anything?" Annette called.

"Looks as if someone came to help that big woman with the car."

Peña was about to return to Annette, when the woman, standing by her car, broke into a run, awkward, but remarkably fast for her. She yelled and ran across the road, head down, arms upraised.

"Hey, look at this!" he yelled.

Annette reached his side as the man, running, caught the woman by the arm and gave her a blow that sent her sprawling. She landed, skidded in the mud, and lay still.

"Jesus! What's he done to her?"

Peña pulled on his jeans and boots.

The man, dressed like the local farmers, ran to the car and threw up the hood. He gestured, appearing to talk to someone in the car. Then he slammed down the hood and ran out of sight.

"I'm going down there," Peña said, buckling his belt. He sensed no danger, only disbelief, viewing the scene as though it were a pantomime of miniature people acting out a script. Quite simply, he thought he would join the final act, rescue the woman, and drive off the offenders.

Annette finished dressing and they climbed from the hay barn.

"Look, they're bringing up a lorry." She was excited.

They ran across the meadow to the rock fence. One or two loose rocks clattered off the pile as they scrambled over. He helped her. The road was now blocked from view. Half running, they began the slippery descent, side-stepping the muddiest tracks and puddles.

All the way down Peña wondered what he would do. He had never fought anyone.

They steadied each other until the path came around the hill. Neither car nor truck could be seen. They came out on the road, panting. Wildly he looked around for a sign of life.

"They're gone." Relieved, he ran to the woman, who was apparently unconscious, lying face down in the grass and mud. He turned her head to look at her. Her face was obliterated in the mud. Blood streamed from her temple. He found a handkerchief and pressed it against the wound.

Annette came stamping across the road.

"How is she? This is terrible! Who would do a thing like this?"

"She's hurt, but I think she's all right. She needs a doctor, though."

"I'll call for an ambulance."

"Then call the police." He knelt by the woman, worrying. She had struck a rock. When he saw that she was breathing, he was relieved.

Strange thoughts and fears popped in his head at random. He had the queer feeling the men might be back, that something worse would happen. Was that the sound of a motorcar or his imagination?

He checked the bleeding. It had stopped.

Something else stopped in his mind, looking back to that day in the Philippines when there was blood on the streets and on the Japanese swords; blood that couldn't be stopped. The life blood had gushed from so many Filipinos in the most violent way to die. Again he could see them dragging his mother away.

Hating the memory, he shook it off. In the excitement he hadn't thought to turn the woman. He put his arms under her and heaved until she came face up, limp and unconscious. Now he could clean the muck away from her face.

He heard the sound of a car and jumped up to see. It was a truck. Were the men coming back? He thought of searching for a weapon or of hiding. It was too late.

To Peña's relief, the driver waved and slowed down. A sign on the truck door read "O'Grady's Repairs."

"Have you seen a stalled car, sir?" the driver called out. Then he saw the woman. "What's coming off there? Has she suffered a stroke?" He leaped from the truck. "Let's have a look."

“Wait, did you see which way they went? We’re calling the police, the Garda; my friend’s on the phone over there.”

“A lorry and car raced by me at the corner. Were they responsible for this atrocity?”

“Where were they headed? Did you see?”

“Toward Ballinknock.”

Peña ran across the street to Annette.

“Are you talking to the police?” he interrupted.

“Yes. They’ll be coming.”

“Tell them the men were headed toward Ballinknock. You know it?”

She shook her head. “Yes, I’ll see to it. How is the woman? The ambulance is on the way.”

“She’s coming to.” He ran back across the road. The garage man was cleaning the wound, using a first aid kit.

“Hold still, miss. You’ll be all right.”

“What happened to me?” she moaned.

“Someone hit you and ran away,” Peña said. “Do you remember?” He wished he had thought to follow them.

“Let’s help her to the lorry, mate,” the man said.

Together, they lifted her up, and on wobbly legs she inched toward the truck. She was a frightful mess, tears streaking her face as she babbled incoherently.

Annette came to comfort her too, and they waited with the Irishman, talking of the cruelty of the man who had struck her down and his panicked departure.

“It’s the method of the IRA,” Annette said, looking at Peña anxiously.

He stared at her, remembering the scene at Murphy’s Pub.



Two

# The Middle Game



## STALEMATE



Three bitterly contested draws filled the next week. Preparation and play had consumed every moment as Peña ate and dreamed chess, straining for one more victory.

Borovek's self-confidence seemed to be increasing when it should have been deteriorating. Instead of faltering, the Russian's play improved. Peña couldn't understand why he didn't crumble as any normal grandmaster would with the score standing at 5-1. Perhaps Borovek *was* of championship caliber.

In the present game, Peña faced serious trouble and would

certainly lose unless he found a brilliant continuation. Annoyed and nervous, he hovered over the board searching desperately for a drawing method. It was against his principles to try for a draw, but there was no hope of winning.

Numerous schemes had already been considered and abandoned. Now a new idea was hatching, far-fetched and tricky. Grasping his hair in both hands, he bent to the task with renewed determination. Intermittently his heart pounded hopefully as the flickering insights seemed favorable, but more frequently he found holes in his logic, and then gloom set in momentarily. He kept at it, cramming the frustration down. There had to be a way . . .

He pushed his brain to the limit, forcing it eight, nine, ten, twelve, fourteen moves ahead, demanding that his mind retain the visual images. He studied Bovek's counterchances and looked for flaws in his own reasoning, his thoughts branching out, remembering every detail.

A wrong calculation would make him a fool, accused of delaying tactics in a lost position, or he might be called an amateur swindler. But if he were right, he'd save half a point.

Just then a distraction interrupted Peña's thinking. The mental constructions sagged as if a strut had been removed. What was it?

Bovek's fingers were tapping, just three fingers, tapping a quiet rhythm, barely audible as the fingernails touched the hard wood. They stopped.

Peña returned to the game, irritated but determined. Again he built the mental images as slices of future time in which he viewed the changing positions like the single frames of a movie film. Relentlessly he held each picture in his mind and examined it, inevitably moved on to the next, searched for the right move, found it, and moved on, forcing his mind into the future.

Hands cupped across his forehead limited his sight; thumbs pressed gently against his ears blocked his hearing.

His right hand found the pencil and recorded a move. The clock showed a minute to go. It meant nothing now. He tried to look casual. Everything depended on getting the kings positioned first. With a sigh he slid his king to the left. He glanced at Borovek, who looked complacent. Casually Peña pressed the clock and slumped in his seat. His excitement threatened to explode.

He waited. In a moment Borovek reached out and moved his bishop with obvious annoyance, not bothering to punch the clock.

Ah! Now the critical step. Feigning boredom, he pushed his king another square to the left. Borovek followed, neither recording the moves nor punching the clock.

Peña's temple pulses beat against his palms. He moved his bishop. Borovek moved his as expected. Peña grabbed his bishop and snapped off an enemy pawn, replacing it with his bishop. Using the bottom of the pawn, he whacked the clock lever down and dropped the pawn.

Borovek came alive and, with contemptuous delicacy, slowly lifted Peña's bishop. The noise surged in the auditorium.

Pawn sacrifices followed which Borovek had to capture. The Russian was slowing down but still making each move in an exaggerated arc over the board, flaunting his obvious disgust.

Then Peña had his own flourish. With his forefinger he gently nudged his king, moving it bit by bit until it rested comfortably on a new square. Then his forefinger rose straight up and came down in a pretty swan dive onto the clock lever.

He stood, shoving his chair back a good six feet.

"Draw," he said.

Borovek coughed his contempt, blowing the sound from the side of his mouth.

Peña strutted across the stage. He paused before the giant display board where lights flashed the position change, and glanced back at the black-draped body now hunched over the board. He flushed with pleasure at his brilliant escape.

He reviewed his plan and searched for flaws. Miscalculations had spoiled beautiful sequences in the past. This was airtight. Borovek had only one possible line of play and *he* had to find *it* to achieve a draw!

He paced the stage, imagining Borovek's reaction, recalling moments of overconfidence that were upset in previous games by wily opponents. Again and again he reviewed the coming moves, pacing the stage.

The auditorium was in a turmoil. Overhead, in the box seats, Larry Stein rose and left, gesturing with both hands. Peña smiled to himself. The Russians and other Borovek fans in the audience pondered the situation gravely.

He returned to his seat and stared at Borovek. His opponent moved his hands across his brow, struggling with the problem. It was a beautiful moment in chess which every player aspired to, and Peña was no less pleased than when he found his first knight fork of an enemy king and queen. A glow spread through his body. He had designed the near-impossible.

He quietly stared at the pieces as if expecting them to execute his will. Soon everyone in the chess world would play over the game and say to himself: Why didn't I think of that?

Many minutes later Borovek collapsed in his chair, annoyance written all over his face. He struggled slightly and rose from his chair. Peña leaned toward him. Their hands met briefly. The Russian stopped the clocks, turned, and marched off the stage.

Peña grinned. He glanced at Donegal, who stood nearby, chin in hand.

“What was the result?” asked Donegal, stepping forward.

“Draw.” he said. “By stalemate.” Reporters were coming. Hurriedly he escaped through a wing and circled down into the control room, wanting to see the reaction.

“What happened?” grinned Markowitz.

“Draw.”

“Draw? How could you get a draw out of that thing? Christ, look at them, would you!”

The stage was jammed with chess players, reporters, and television workers. Markowitz gestured into his mike, giving orders to the cameramen. Every moment or so Markowitz shouted in his ear, absolutely ecstatic.

The chess players struggled to the table, where they clustered in an attempt to show each other the correct finishing moves. The overhead camera shot was like a blimp-side view of a football huddle. Several hands moved the pieces, with each hand more impatient than the last. Peña laughed at the confusion. Then a jeweled and giant hand supported by the magnificent body of Larry Stein pushed the others aside and demanded order. Larry calmly moved the pieces, threading the Russian’s bishop through the labyrinth of pawns, moving Peña’s remaining passed pawn until it was captured by the bishop. In the final position Peña’s king was not in check, nor could he move it or any remaining pawns. Stalemate!

Markowitz still had him in his grip.

“Christ, you’re a genius, Peña.”

“Thanks, doll.” He slapped Markowitz on the back and left.

## DEVELOPMENT



“Ah, it’s a lovely day,” said Annette.  
“Where’ve I heard that before?” asked Peña as he fumbled with the windshield wiper control.

“Oh, that little cloud is nothing; a few drops and the sun will be out again.”

The few drops resembled a cloudburst and he slowed the car as they neared Sligo on the west coast. “YEATS COUNTRY,” a dripping sign proclaimed. The car wound down a long, slippery hill, splashing through the running water. Suddenly the rain eased and the view displayed a wide green valley of woodlands and lakes intermingled with small fields and widely spaced buildings. Heavy clouds raced in from the west, and the valley flickered with light and shadow. Watching the sky, he nearly ran off the road.

He was strongly conscious of Annette, of having her to himself; aware of his own contentment. He touched her yellow scarf and hair. She was the epitome of cheerfulness in her brilliant green pantsuit.

“You’re pretty Irish today,” he said, searching for the right words, wanting to say more, but unaccountably reluctant.

“Thank you.”

“It’s a relief to get out of the rain.”

“And away from the match?”

He nodded as the car rounded a sloping curve and emerged onto the valley floor.

“What’s ailing Borovek?”

“Probably the strain of the match. The doctor said he required hospitalization.”

The road was blocked ahead. He slowed down. There were men in dark uniforms and cars waiting. A sign read: "STOP—GARDA."

"What's going on?" he asked, immediately annoyed.

"It's a checkpoint."

He pulled to a stop next to the policeman who stood by the road. Farther on were two soldiers in combat regalia. They stared at him and held their weapons alertly.

"Lower your window, please, and tell us where you are headed, miss."

"We're traveling to Sligo together, from Dublin," she said. "What could have happened? Not another escape?"

"Two of the IRA, miss. Who's the driver? May I see your identification?"

"Don't worry. I'm American."

"We have to check everyone, sir."

"Haven't you seen me on TV?" He dug in his pocket and produced an international driving license.

"Are you this person, then?"

"Yes."

"The authorized date for its use has passed. Would you step outside, please, sir?"

"For Christ's sake," muttered Peña, noticing that the soldiers were walking his way.

"Don't make trouble; those are armed men," Annette murmured to him.

As he got out, he heard creaking boots and the rattle of equipment. The Garda came behind him.

"May I see other identification, sir?"

He took out his California license and a handful of credit cards, ready to hand everything over. "I came here to play chess."

"Where were you staying in Dublin?"

Feeling like a criminal, he gave the name of the hotel.

"He ain't no Irishman," said the nearest soldier. His drooping mustache looked obscene on the boyish face.

"May I have the boot key, sir?"

Annette handed them out. The man opened the trunk and looked in the back seat, taking his time.

"Better have this updated, sir," the policeman said, handing the keys and license back. "You can move it along now."

"Thanks a lot," said Peña. He drove off, feeling everyone's eyes on him.

"Christ, do I look like a criminal?"

"Only the scar by your ear."

He touched it instinctively. "Did you see those young punks with the guns? They're ready to kill someone and they're just out of diapers. Who are they looking for, anyway?"

"Two of the IRA. Probably the ones who stole the car. They're always escaping. They—"

"You mean the police got those two who took that fat lady's car?"

"My Lord, Peña, have you not seen the papers?"

"I'll be damned. How did they get them?"

"Very strangely. The Garda were searching Ballinknock when they received an alarm from the Bank of Ireland. Someone was robbing it. The Garda rushed there and found the fat woman's car stalled in the street with the two robbers trying to push it. There was a gunfight but they surrendered."

"Serves them right. I guess I wasn't the only one who couldn't start that car."

"It came to nothing. The bank got its money back. I'll swear by the Church the IRA has broken them out."

"Those two were IRA? How do you know that?"

"I suspected all along. They were known by the Garda.

Belfast wanted them transferred, but as usual the Republic refused. Now they're out, I feel certain!"

"Why are they looking way out here?"

"They look everywhere. It's more to alert people to the danger. There could be killing. It's happened before. You must be careful. They're ready to kill; you could see that. A man was shot at another checkpoint down near Galway, he—"

"They knew damned well I wasn't Irish."

"I'm serious, and so are these men. Don't fool with them. It's not a game they're playing. We're away from it now. This is the main route to Donegal and Northern Ireland. They'll not be checking after this, so let's leave it. All right?"

"Okay." Her hand was on his. "I get carried away."

"I've been worried, that's the damned part of it, ever since Monasterboice."

"Hell, you didn't know they were IRA. Why should they blame you?"

"They have ways. I had a suspicion. It's their idea of fund-raising—stealing cars, robbing banks—as if there weren't money enough from America!"

"The United States? You're crazy!"

"The Irish-Americans, and others sympathetic to the cause. The money pours in, that's well known. To think I was caught in the middle of it!"

The sun was brilliant over Sligo as they entered the narrow streets lined with white-painted stucco buildings that shone from the rain and morning sun. The geometric patterns were vivid in the clear air. Few people moved about and the only sounds came from the car and the splashing water on the street.

They found a hotel room which viewed the whale-shaped mountain called Ben Bulbin.

"It's beautiful," she said. "Aren't you glad we came? I feel safer now."

They stood together and watched a distant storm.

## LIGHTNING PLAY



"Let's do something outside while it's nice," she suggested. They went to the car and drove to Lough Gill, east of town. He parked, and they walked to the edge of a bluff where they could see over the lake to the far shore. There were occasional islands. Directly below was a dock and two boats tossing in the choppy waves. Two men talked on the pier, each holding a fishing pole. The wind whipped across the water, making the entire lake sparkling blue. Peña was remembering when he last stood on Taygaytay Ridge south of Manila and looked out over Lake Taal, where the distant islands seemed like tiny plugs of green, much like the scene before him.

"They say that is Innisfree, where the poet Yeats used to visit." Annette pointed to the nearest island, a small hump of greenery crowded with trees and bushes. Far beyond were green hills on which the clouds made endless patterns.

"It makes me a little homesick for the Philippines—the lake and everything."

"And me for my childhood. I came here as a teenaged girl. I was in love with the poet himself then. He wrote lines that I hardly understood but thought I did. When he lived here as a boy they teased him, saying he had a lover because he stayed out so late at night. I doubt if it was true. It was in his nature to see the land and the caves and the sea when they are most

mysterious. Childhood is such a fantasy world for everyone. Of course, not anymore!”

Peña laughed. “Let’s talk to the fishermen. Come on.” He pulled her by the arm.

The fishermen were a school principal from Limerick and a local physician, both delighted to find someone new to talk to. Neither one recognized Peña and both were “on holiday.”

“I bring my family here each summer,” said the principal, a man of immense proportions and a piercing voice. “Just over the hill there is Northern Ireland, but you’d not know it, would you? It’s like a primitive world here. One can forget the troubles of the city.”

The two strangers monopolized Annette in their talk, so that Peña felt left out. He was jealous of their admiration for her and their intense pleasure in talking about Yeats and poetry. Jealousy was an emotion he had never experienced before.

His thoughts turned to the speedboat, brilliant blue, star-studded like a nightclub ceiling decoration, with four seats, inboard motor, mahogany paneling, loaded with instruments and stainless-steel fittings. He walked to the boat and touched it wistfully, listening to the suck and lap of the waves under the hull.

“Is this yours, doctor?” he called.

“It’s mine,” said the principal. “Would you like to try her?”

“What does she do?”

They came over and decided on a cruise around the lake. The principal took the wheel and seated Annette next to him—not exactly what Peña had in mind. They tied on life jackets and cast off, heading into the wind slowly, moving like a tug. Even then spray was caught by the wind. The movement was not exciting enough.

“Mind if I take the wheel?” Peña interrupted their talking.

In a minute they had maneuvered to exchange seats and

Peña had his foot on the throttle. Gradually he increased the speed, amused at how the others ducked from the spray and shouted to compete with the noise of the motor.

Not another soul was on the lake, only the expanse of a mile or more of open water and the occasional island blobs. He had the boat leaping now, and smacking the water with loud claps, sending spray into the faces of the men behind him as he and Annette crouched behind the windscreen.

“Head into the wind!” the principal shouted.

Peña raced on in a wide arc as if he hadn't heard while Annette gripped his leg. He wouldn't let up, pushing the tachometer toward the red line while the boat shuddered with a loud crash at each impact, and smiling with pleasure at the stinging spray. The water surface flew by as a glittering blur. They came to an island and Peña cut around it like a slalom racer, wrenching the wheel and turning the boat. They leaned hard to keep their balance, the sense of speed and centrifugal force making everyone yell. Peña was all nerve ends. He slowed down, feeling a part of the boat and water—like a flying missile. Only the present existed. He smiled at Annette and said he was sorry, he hadn't meant to scare her.

“You're quite a speedster,” the principal said. “I didn't know it would go that fast.”

“He's one of your fast Americans,” she called out.

“Head for Innisfree,” said the principal. “We'll go ashore.”

Peña soon had the boat skipping along again; he was thoroughly exhilarated, planning a banking curve that would bring them into the lee of the island. He broke the speed perfectly to drift them to a small stone wharf. They climbed ashore. The silence was startling, but not for long. A discussion of the IRA quickly arose while they walked around the island, pushing through the bushes and following a rough path.

The principal was praising England at the moment for pro-

viding jobs to young Irishmen. Peña was thinking how different the complaints were here. The political talk was not of graft and corruption but of conflicts with England and the IRA. No one mentioned smog, traffic, freeways, or work. And here they were miles from anywhere, trying to settle the major problems of the country. It surprised him to see Annette so wound up. She seemed to know everything that was going on and to have opinions about it all, as if she could take over the country herself if it were left to her. The two men were no less informed.

Peña grew tired of listening to them and poked among the rocks at the water's edge, gathering a few purple flowers and tossing them in to see if any fish would investigate. He wondered what he would do when the chess match was over. He thought about asking Annette to go with him. They could fly back to New York and spend a few days there if it wasn't too hot, maybe drop in at the Marshall Chess Club, then fly on to Los Angeles and show her the sights.

He imagined them lying together on the deck of his boat, walking along Muscle Beach, buying hot dogs on a stick, dipping shrimp on the pier, driving in the sun through the Santa Monica mountains. It seemed right somehow. The thoughts warmed him, and the lavender heather seemed noticeably prettier.

The discussion behind him was exuberant, Annette in the middle of dressing down the principal.

" . . . You must be a Protestant to talk that way or a traitor to the cause of Ireland," she was saying, shaking her forefinger and tossing her head.

"A Protestant I am but I love my country as much as you do, I—"

"Well, you'll not hear me praising England. Without her we'd not have these troubles."

"No, you'll have others if the IRA doesn't blow us to bits first," the principal shouted into the wind.

"What are you yelling about, Annette?" Peña interrupted. "You don't like the IRA any more than he does."

"She talks like a Republican," said the principal, turning to Peña.

"That I'm not, but if I'm to choose between an Englishman and an Irishman, I'll not take one of *them*." She tossed her head indignantly.

"And those two who escaped most recently—you'd be letting them go free?"

"I would not; there's such a thing as robbing and hurting people lawlessly. Why—"

"We saw it happen; we were there when they took the car and beat the woman," said Peña, and he went on to tell them about it.

"Well," said the principal, "if I were in the government, they'd not be escaping and making their threats, holding hostages, and executing people. O'Higgins knew how to handle them when he promised executions of prisoners for every atrocity they perpetrated, and he had the courage of his ways, none of your faked tortures and polite notices in the papers."

The doctor interrupted. "There's one man in the government today with the courage for such treatment," he said.

They turned to him. "And who might that be?" asked his companion.

"Minister O'Donnell. There's a man."

"The Minister of Recreation? Phuff!" said Annette.

"You mean the guy who's in charge of the chess match?" asked Peña, remembering O'Donnell.

"Yes, I suppose," said the doctor quietly. "He remains in the background, a former army man, and a pity it is to see him in this inconsequential position."

"I don't know," said Peña, suddenly aroused. "He arranged the chess match and that's going to bring plenty of money and publicity to Ireland. He outbid almost every country in the world."

"Are you connected with this chess thing? You do seem vaguely familiar," said the principal.

"Manguel is champion of the world," said Annette proudly. "You must have seen him on ITV."

Peña felt better after that, hearing the others talk about him—a subject he was fond of. The two Irishmen were astounded. Rather quickly they led the way back to the boat, where an ample liquor supply was concealed. Peña and Ireland and chess were toasted, and Peña felt friendly again.

"I would certainly enjoy a chess game against the world's champion," said the doctor, a quiet sort of man with bushy eyebrows and glassy blue eyes set in deep sockets. He had hardly been noticed by Peña up to this time.

"You're in luck," said Peña, putting his glass of whisky on the stone wall. "I have a set right here. What odds would you like?" He arranged the pieces, including the white king, a ritual which everyone watched. He was sociable and lively now. "How about knight odds? We could start with that. What strength player are you, doctor?"

The doctor was modest, unusual for a chess player. "I believe I'd have a better chance with a queen advantage, at least at first. Is that too cowardly?"

"You'll probably smash me," Peña said, certain he would win easily. He felt clear-eyed and sharp, his eyes frequently on Annette, her hair in the wind, her smile.

"Is a queen very much?" she asked as the game began.

"Too much if he's any good," said Peña.

The principal filled their glasses and talked of the allegorical

significance of chess, comparing it to the struggles of states against one another. Peña paid him little more than a fragment of attention, his mind on winning material from the doctor. It wasn't easy, but it didn't take long.

## CLASSIC EXPLOITATION



**S**training to see through the fog, Peña drove slowly, as the pale forms of trees, fences, and houses flowed by on either side.

Finally, they found the sign they had been looking for and entered a parking lot by the graveyard where Yeats was buried. A brooding mist saturated everything and seemed to magnify the noise they made closing the car doors and crunching through the gravel.

Peña looked around warily. They walked, holding each other, watching the blurry forms in the distance become a church, trees, and gravestones, blurred and gray, and apparently without substance.

Reaching the soft, wet grass, they stood quietly in the light rain. Peña placed a hand on a giant stone, relieved to feel its hardness.

"It's spooky," whispered Annette.

"Couldn't we find something more cheerful? An army could be hidden here. Or those prisoners."

She shivered, and he pulled her closer as they approached the church, a translucent monster, until they reached it and touched the cool rock itself. The bell tower above remained invisible.

Walking slowly, they searched among the tombstones until

they found Yeats's grave, a plot that was neatly maintained with a simple low wall, a headstone of black marble, the epitaph in white.

"Let me hear how you say it," he asked.

She looked up at him, holding him until he leaned down and kissed her lightly.

"'Cast a cold eye on life, on death. Horseman, pass by!'" she recited in her Irish way.

"That was lovely," he said, imitating her. "What do you make of it?"

"It's quite pessimistic. At one time I thought differently. But it is beautiful."

"Yes, maybe."

"He wanted to be returned here," she said.

"'Horseman, pass by.' What does that mean?" he asked.

"Perhaps it's not so pessimistic. Do you remember the German poem, the Earl King, I think, the rider is Death and he takes a child from its mother?"

Or a mother from her child, he thought.

"No, but I don't like that either," he said.

They walked on slowly, the trees faded and unclear above them, the air misty and penetrating.

"Where do you suppose they are?" she asked, stopping.

"Who?"

"Those escaped IRA men."

"They could be right over there." He pointed. "Come on!" He pulled her arm and they ran from the graveyard in a pretended fantasy of escape, laughing a little too hysterically as they reached the car and collapsed against it, holding each other close.

To the west it was clearing and they drove toward Mullaghmore in search of the sun. The several houses of the town rested on an inlet that joined Donegal Bay. A wide-curving

beach stretched toward the eastern horizon, occupied mainly by a cattle herd and several fishing boats that lay awkwardly on their sides, stranded by the tide.

A rising grade took them into sunlight and toward the west, where the Atlantic lay. A moderate gale blew in their faces and the sun brightened everything. Two schoolgirls approached on bikes, their black skirts flapping in the wind, their faces flushed and smooth.

"Hello, there," one called, smiling.

"Hello," said Peña, turning to watch them until they became moving black dots among the green hills. He wished he were as young and carefree.

Looking out at the whitecapped sea, he faced the wind. The day was perfect. The clarity and brilliance of the view matched his feelings.

A large cove came into view, formed by high cliffs of dark rock. Below them, the surf broke a hundred yards out and surged in among huge boulders that covered most of the beach. They climbed down, holding hands and helping each other.

There were many tide pools among the rocks where coiling strands of chartreuse seaweed swayed in the running water. The way was slippery with moss and slime, and they had to descend carefully until they reached the flatter area of the beach. They sat on a rock by a tide pool and stared at a tiny crab. Peña moved the shadow of his hand toward it. The animal stopped, considering this intrusion, then scurried for shelter.

"Is he afraid?" he wondered aloud.

"Perhaps he's luring you to follow."

"Wily little devil!" he said.

"It's a pretty spot, isn't it?"

Silhouetted against the dark cliff, her hair glowed, almost fiery white.

“You’re the prettiest part of it,” he said.

“Why, thank you, Peña. I believe it’s you and I together.”

As they walked toward the narrow beach, she began to talk of Johnny Cullen, mourning him, and spoiling the peaceful mood. In this lively, bright place it seemed they should be talking of more hopeful subjects. He thought it might be the visit to the grave and the escape of the IRA men that reminded her of her former lover. Or that she and Cullen might have visited a place like this together.

“You knew he was that kind, didn’t you?” he interrupted, wishing to change the subject.

“Well, I often had the feeling that he’d be killed from the reckless way he lived. I wish I’d held back. But what’s the good of that?”

“What do you mean? Was it a mistake to love him?”

“My feelings were not so easily manageable as to call them a mistake.”

“Well, these wild ones are dangerous,” he said.

“Yes,” she said, smiling into the wind. “Now I’m getting on to *you*.”

“Are you comparing him with me? Or your feelings?”

She turned and faced him seriously so that her hair blew about her face. “I don’t know.”

“Be careful. I’m dangerous too.” It came out like a warning.

“On the chessboard, for sure.”

“More than that. It’s the way I am.”

“You can’t be having the feelings for those wooden pieces that two people have for each other,” she said incredulously.

Peña didn’t reply. He moved away among the garage-size boulders along the water’s edge until he came to a beach that

was clear and sheltered by overhanging rock. The sand was warm to sit on.

She had posed a difficult choice. There was usually no question in his mind which was more important, but she was raising the issue, forcing him to consider another choice.

"It's not the pieces. You don't think I care about them, do you? It's my opponent I have feelings about. Not always good. Practically never, in fact. I control the pieces. Without touching him, I defeat him. I'm inside his mind. The pieces don't touch him. I move them and destroy him."

"Or he destroys you."

"Not this one."

"Someone, then."

He looked out to sea, irritated. "I've been destroyed all I'm going to be. From now on, I do it."

"And you call that 'mate'?" she asked coldly.

"Yes. Ironic, isn't it?" Wanting peace, he put his arm around her, but she sat unmoved. When he touched her breast, she got up and walked away. Strangely remote, she gazed into the distance.

"What's the matter?" he asked, watching the white gulls that soared in the drafts rising against the high cliff.

"Nothing," she said.

He knew she'd come around. If his remarks sounded harsh he couldn't help that. Idly he played with the sand, drawing squares and tiny men.

Her shadow fell over the etching.

"Something occurred to me," she said.

"What's that?"

"In this game—the one between you and me—we have mated each other often, have we not?"

He erased the sand design and stood up, facing her. Her

eyes had an unexpected mean intensity that made him feel she was inside his mind.

"Don't think of it that way," he said softly. "I don't want us to destroy each other."

"That's lovely," she replied. "I have no wish for your torturing me."

Her eyes softened and relaxed.

## CLIMAX OF THE GAME



As they drove southward, he thought about what lay ahead where the mountain rose up from the Atlantic coast, St. Patrick's mountain, Croagh Patrick. Conical, not forested, but a constant part of the landscape of Annette's earlier life, she had said. Only an occasional shift of the gears caused a change in the steady drone of the car. Peña drove, feeling more at ease on the lonely country road.

"We should see it soon," she said. "I feel as if I were headed home; it's so exciting."

"Are we going to your home?"

She didn't answer. He reached over and squeezed her hand.

"I heard you," she said. "It's a difficult problem. They are very old-fashioned, you see. You might say they were simple or backward, but they live their life the way they are used to living it, and that makes them comfortable. There is no running water, just a spring and a deep protected well where they take the water. The toilets are primitive, and the donkey's barn is as nice as the house. The beds are overslept in, the

stove and furnace are in the kitchen and fed by the bogs—the turf, you know—and—”

“Do you think any of that would bother me?”

“It was not of you I was thinking. It was of them. They . . . they wouldn’t like me to bring a man I was not—” She stopped.

They were silent. He knew her concern was not only for her parents, but for herself as well. It was not a subject they had honestly discussed.

“Do we have to tell them anything?”

“They’ll assume . . .”

“What’s it matter if they’re wrong?” From the look she gave him, he knew immediately he had erred.

“Can’t you put yourself in their place? I see them every year or so. They have never been to Dublin or Limerick. My visit is an event of great importance to them and I have been coming alone for years—well, not quite; I brought Johnny once, and you know how that ended. They would see you and me as . . . well . . .” She trailed off.

He knew they were avoiding the issue and was surprised to find himself considering the idea of being married to her. It was better forgotten.

He glanced at her and smiled. She reached for his hand as he took the gearshift and downshifted, veering the car smoothly into a sharp curve.

“Would you like to leave Ireland?” he asked.

She smiled, then leaned toward him and kissed his cheek.

“After we climb Cro’ Patrick, then I’ll decide.”

In the morning they could see Croagh Patrick prominent in the distance, partially hidden at the summit by a persistent cloud. The steep western side rose directly from the horizon and, on the eastern side, Peña studied the humplike outline where the path was said to go less steeply.

"There is a church at the top," she said, "but if it's closed, I won't be able to complete the rituals." She turned to him. "I'm so glad we're doing this together. You'll have good luck now. You always do when you're with me." She squeezed his hand.

He turned the car toward the mountain, and automatically glanced into the rear-view mirror. No one was there. After parking, he got out and stretched as he gazed up at a statue of St. Patrick. The white face shone luminously against the mist-shrouded peak in the background. He wondered if he would make it to the top.

At first the climb was not difficult. The trail slanted steadily upward, well-cleared and not too steep. A small stream coasted down the hillside, weaving among the rocks and low shrubbery. Far to the west the Atlantic was nearly invisible, hidden by the bulk of the mountain and storm clouds. As they pushed on, the trail gradually steepened. A young woman sat alone on a rock, watching their ascent.

"Hello," she said, smiling.

"You're up here alone?"

"Ah, no. My husband's up there, but no Englishman would wait for an Irishwoman."

"Wouldn't he, now?" asked Annette with mild mockery. "You must come along with us, then. We're not going too quickly."

"No, thank you, I'll wait. I cannot be lonely here on St. Patrick's mountain."

They went on. The eastern saddle of the mountain was closer now, finally disappearing into the mist. Black and white sheep grazed on the intervening slopes, occasionally rushing across their path. Peña took off his outer jacket, for he was sweating torrents. From time to time they came together to walk arm in arm. As the slope deepened they

panted heavily and took frequent rest stops.

At the saddle, a fierce wind blew up from the valley. Behind them was Clew Bay, spotted with tufts of green. To the South rose the hills of desolate Connemara.

"I lived there." She stood still, pointing. "Do you hear it?"  
"Hear what?"

"Listen . . . It's the voice of Ireland. I know you're beginning to feel it even if you can't hear it as yet."

He watched the clouds and looked at the distant landscape, the soft lines of gray-green mountains.

"I should miss the wind sweeping up from the Atlantic blasting my face with the cold salt spray," she said.

"Are you telling me you won't leave Ireland?"

"Certainly not. I'm extolling its virtues."

They stood together and looked at the rocky slope far ahead.

"This will be easier now."

"For a time."

"How often have you made the climb?"

"Oh, I don't know exactly. Every year since I was ten, perhaps. It used to be quite fun, at night with the torches, everyone so happy, mostly from drinking too much, I think. They had their celebrations, they did. The Fathers asked them not to bring their whisky, from the danger of falling, but it made no difference, they brought it anyhow, and fell down by the scores. It was funny, until someone got hurt. When my own dad fell, I cried. Knocked him cold, it did. I thought he was dead."

"I think your accent is getting thicker here on the mountain."

"Is it, now?" she asked, smiling.

They paused, holding each other.

"It is much nicer to know you now than at the beginning

—to know a little about what's behind those somber eyes," she said.

"I'm glad to hear you say that."

"Can you relax now and forget the match?"

For answer, he kissed her. Then they moved on.

The slope steepened again. They neared the first pilgrim station. It was a small sign in the form of a cross, with white letters carefully printed on a black background. She had been watching for it, and they read the instructions silently. She knelt and prayed, chanted, and walked about the cross like a practiced pilgrim, while he waited, impressed by her concentration on the religious ceremony. The soft curves of her hair lay upon her shoulders, almost touching the rocky ground when she knelt low.

Above them, a heavy cloud hung steadily as if drawn irresistibly to the summit. Through the thin layers near them the green hills could be seen stretching for miles until they lost their color.

Finally she turned and came close to him. He touched the streaks of sweat and her dampened hair.

"I'm ready to go."

"You are beautiful," he said.

"Like this?"

"Yes."

"Thank you," she said. "You're handsome yourself."

They turned to the slope. It steepened again, rapidly becoming a loose rock pile. Stones were everywhere, in sizes from one to two feet in diameter and making poor footing.

"I wish I could see the top. How far do you think it is?" he asked.

She peered into the opaque fog above. "I don't know. How do you feel?"

"All right."

He was worried about what lay above but wouldn't say so. He imagined the IRA concealed at the top.

The rock pile was about fifty yards wide at that point, tapering off sharply at either side. A powerful upsurging wind ripped at them, drying the sweat as it formed on their faces, making it difficult to see. The world below disappeared gradually into a faint glow. Their clothes were soaking wet, but despite the chilly air, he was hot. They made frequent stops to regain their breath.

"There's a river running inside my clothes," she gasped.

Peña felt his sprinting heart and wondered if he was putting too much strain on it. It must be strong to have lasted as long as this, he decided. The stillness became complete as their breath slackened. He felt he had the world to himself.

Then a cracking sound of rock upon rock came from above them. Startled, he looked up.

With relief, he saw a man emerge from the mist, out of focus at first, occasionally kicking a rock that spun down the slope. Gradually his gray, short-cropped hair and reddish-pale face came into focus.

"She's socked in above." He pronounced the words with a distinct English accent, moving on by, stepping carefully but rapidly.

"Is it for sure?"

"Have a good climb," he called, already disappearing into shades of gray.

The last portion of the climb was exhilarating, and Peña's doubts ended. The top was within reach, invisible, but near. He lifted one weary leg past the other, and gradually the rock pile sloped less steeply, showing the hulk of a building to the left. A railing to the right enclosed a rectangular space surrounding a rocky area labeled "ST. PATRICK'S

BED." It looked uncomfortable, even for a saint.

"I'm dying of thirst," Annette said as they walked to the church.

He wondered that anyone had dragged plaster and lumber up the mountain. They searched for an open door. The church was locked. There were no water outlets.

Then he spotted a slow-dripping rainspout. He collected a palmful in his cupped hand and held it for her to drink. Her lips on his palm and the ceremony of collecting the water and drinking touched him.

"I never knew water could taste so wonderful," she said. "Thank you."

They moved on from the church and the feeling of isolation grew. The sky and horizon seemed almost within reach. They came to a wall enclosing a grassy place where they sat close by each other.

"I feel better now. How about you?"

"Yes, fine. I'm glad you asked me to come." The ascent hadn't been a great accomplishment, but every muscle ached. He leaned back against the wall and took her hand.

"I was wondering."

"Yes?"

"There's a tournament coming up in Manila . . . Would you like to go?"

"Yes, but not alone," she added jokingly.

He laughed and kissed her. She was flushed and radiant.

He reached for her.

"Here on Cro' Patrick?"

As they lay in the grass, Peña knew he was strong. Climbing and having this woman proved that. He realized she was *the* woman he wanted. He wondered if he could keep her.

He took his time, able to caress her and enjoy the lovemak-

ing. He felt her excitement and allowed himself to be carried away. As they murmured tender words, he found great satisfaction.

For a long time they held each other peacefully. The moment to leave the summit was hard to choose. There were promises to think about. They moved to the final pilgrim station.

"The instructions can't be completed with the church closed to me," she said.

"We could break in."

"Oh, you! Saint Patrick himself would turn over in his grave . . . if he hasn't already."

He laughed. "Now you're a sinner like the rest of us."

"Did you take me for an angel, then?" she asked. "Drunkenness, fornication, and missing confession and mass are sins enough for the devil to love me."

"Maybe I'm the devil, then," he said.

They stepped among the rocks and headed for the descent. The slope steepened and the wind struck. An unfamiliar contentment resided in Peña. It required no thought.

The view opened and the world reappeared when they descended the mountain, as if they were returning from heaven.

## AN UNEXPECTED ATTACK



Peña hurried through the hotel lobby and into the street. The sunshine warmed him and a fresh breeze struck his face. The August afternoon was like spring. He walked on Irish air toward the auditorium.

His mood was dangerously noncompetitive, coaxing him to enjoy life. Competition required a consuming fire directed only toward defeating the enemy across the board. This new mood disturbed him, even though he couldn't shake it. He was filled with doubt and suspicion of the stranger within and immediately resolved to gird himself against this new opponent, afraid it was already too late.

Enthusiastic applause greeted him onstage. He acknowledged it with a slight hand movement, keeping his eyes on Borovek. A halo of light crowned his opponent, glowing on his hands, hair, and face. He was an imposing figure. Peña hesitated, thinking of the reporter who had learned the details of Borovek's hospitalization by impersonating a nurse. At the moment the Russian appeared godlike. Amused, Peña smiled.

He went to his chair and was about to sit down when Borovek held out his hand. He shook it. The grip was strong, the palm hard and dry. He took his seat.

The lights dimmed and Donegal started his clock. Immediately Peña moved his king's pawn. The opening moves developed into a Ruy Lopez and proceeded without disorder. The line they played was well known and virtually automatic, leading to a middle game in which sharp play would be required of each opponent.

Only a few minutes elapsed for the first thirteen moves. The crowd had barely settled down. A feeling of novelty gripped Peña pleasantly. He had been away from the game, even from the world, and he returned to find it changed for the better.

An inner smile screened out the growing danger. The pieces were light and warm and pleasantly arranged—old friends on familiar paths. The paths were well trapped, but he played carefully and with pleasure. Mentally he scored the competition in his favor. It was like the old days when chess

was part luck, part bluff, part skill. No bloodletting. The illusion protected him like a fur coat in winter.

A flurry of exchanges occurred three hours later, a complex combination by Borovek which cost Peña a pawn and alerted him to serious end-game trouble. He must wake up. Reserves of courage and brilliance were always available. He'd need them now.

Rooks and two minor pieces remained on each side, a sizable force with which to maneuver. Borovek's plan was clear. He would march his pawns toward the queening squares while endeavoring to trade off pieces. There was time to generate a counterattack, but sharp maneuvers employing clever tactics would be required.

Peña thought for over thirty minutes. He would fake an attack against the enemy pawn center, then blockade the enemy queenside pawns so that they could not advance. He knew that a superior strategy might even win and thought well of his ideas, for they were tricky and subtle, concealing the malicious intent.

Accidentally he glanced at the captured queens, which stood side by side. The white one, his own, reminded him of fair-skinned Annette, naked and probably covered with fingerprints. It annoyed him to think that Borovek had touched her. The black queen glistened impudently, obviously enjoying her exposure. No doubt who she was.

The struggle thickened as the two men battled for advantage. Borovek was neither fooled nor intimidated and Peña could not wrest the initiative. His plan was increasingly disappointing and he felt a grudging admiration for the Russian's moves.

Time strung out. Peña was forced to trade rooks and the enemy queenside pawns marched, threatening to devour him.

He grew impatient between moves, pacing the stage, look-

ing in the corners, examining shoes. He stopped to glare at a red light, thinking he must stop—stop Borovek! Alarms rang in his head; dangers flashed their warnings of defeat. He teased the animal inside him to arise and bite, to attack, to become vicious . . . It didn't. He returned to the board when Borovek moved.

Chances were slim. Solutions to save the game brightened then faded as flaws were uncovered. He executed his best plan, the only hope of drawing.

A conviction that Borovek was reading his mind tormented Peña, though he was a nonbeliever. Mind reading was impossible, he thought; yet the possibility disturbed Peña as if his thoughts were exposed.

The game was lost. Ideas condensed, crystallized, then crumbled and left only defeat. He struggled to accept it, hating himself.

Somehow he resigned. Borovek offered his hand, but Peña slipped away from the cutting smile that he could not face. He retreated from the crowd and their roar.

In the dimly lighted street he expected rage to overtake him but it didn't. Instead, he walked rapidly toward Annette.

On the way he pinpointed the exact moves which had lost him the game. They were inept moves, like wooden dolls which had defied him, marching wrongly on the board, dragging him relentlessly toward disaster. Astonishingly he felt no pain. She would listen and understand.

Annette Maloney sat quietly at the counter, reading a book. Peña hid in the dusk to watch her, pleased with the understanding between them, pleased with the absence of awkward barriers and trite preliminaries. He smiled to think that she belonged to him.

She turned a page. Light reflected from the book onto her face. She was thoughtful, obviously absorbed, her face glow-

ing. Resistance to her was unthinkable. It held him like a trap. Suddenly resentful, he realized that now. Beauty enveloped and smothered, tricking the mind.

She looked up, straight across the store, reflecting. Impulsive, neurotic fear might possess her, frighten her, change her to a withered, cowering person . . . But nothing happened. Why was she so perfect? Perfection was a hideous competitor that defied misery and unhappiness. What could she know of life and of herself? Imperfection must live within her as a dormant seed, hiding and waiting. He would nurse it to life . . .

As Peña went in, she looked up and put the book away. He leaned over the counter and kissed her lightly on the lips, thinking that she smelled of whisky but appeared to be sober. Her eyes were clear and soft, mesmerizing him.

He told her what happened. "It doesn't matter, though," he said.

"You don't care that you lost?"

"It's not that. He won't win."

"Of course not. You're too good for him."

Her certainty equaled his. Even close up there was no fault to find. He walked around the store aimlessly as if searching for one, holding back his increasingly discouraged, angry feelings. They talked, but he didn't listen. The things he wanted to say seemed crude and out of place. They would attack and hurt her unfairly, yet he almost wanted to drive her away.

Imperceptibly the distance between them grew.

At that moment the phone rang. It was a friend or relative named Christina. Annette became increasingly upset as she talked, saying little but fidgeting constantly. The phone went dead unexpectedly. She held it quizzically.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Jesus, it was my sister, Christina, traveling alone as usual.

I suppose she's at the bus terminal. A potato blight is less trouble!"

"Should we get her?"

"She'll hire a taxi. Will you watch for her while I change? She always wears a black, ugly hat and a black coat that reaches her ankles."

Alone with the liquor stock, Peña brooded and poked among the bottles, reading the labels without interest. Would he lose twice in one day? It grew dark outside. Store lights came on across the street. Neon signs stammered their messages. The "H" was out in "Hennessey's."

Then Peña saw a woman in black stumbling along the opposite sidewalk, carrying two suitcases and gaping about frantically, as if being attacked by a flock of birds. He ran to get her. Annette was just behind.

Christina apparently regarded him as a rapist and stifled a scream. But when Annette got there, the sisters exchanged kisses and greetings.

Christina began with: "Oh, I didn't remember you had a liquor store—I thought it was a chemist's shop, or something like . . . Oh, that bloody taxi driver! I was certain one of my bags was stolen—he left it lying on the pavement—and, Lord God, to claim it they insisted on my identification. He was circling around just to run up the tariff. Why didn't you tell me your address on the phone? We had the awful—but I don't carry it around my neck, now—Oh! How have you been, Annette dear? Who is this man? Why, isn't that nice of you? But try not to lose them. The hired help these days . . ."

Peña took her bags while Annette hustled her across the street away from people who had stopped to gawk.

"I've been—" Annette began.

"I suppose he'll expect a small remuneration. What do you

think I should give him, dear? People are so careless down here. I gave that man a piece of my mind. He wanted to search my bag, the bloody fool. You might think I was carrying a bomb and planning to blow up the city, you know. But why didn't you tell me you had a liquor store? I'm certain I gave the taxi the right address, but you know . . ." She paused to place a penny in Peña's hand, and followed Annette into the apartment, taking the bags from him and shutting the door in his face.

For a moment he gritted his teeth in the dark. Why had this unexpected event happened? Annette was his. Couldn't he have her without interference? He reopened the door and followed into the living room. The clatter continued.

"—here at Christmas time," Annette was saying.

"Yes, but that seems years ago. It's terrible up there. You know, them British with their bloody soldiers and guns taking over the town, parading up and down our streets like they owned them, those young pips. They'll kill us all . . ." She slumped in a chair. "What about a whisky? God help me, I need it after all this . . ." She trailed off.

Annette left the room. The cat jumped into Christina's lap and she stroked it. Peña stood near the door, undecidedly. "Ah, Colleen pussy, you remember your aunt, don't you? Sweet little ball of fur! You've grown so much. I hope your mother is feeding you properly. If she doesn't, you must tell me and I'll take you home with me, sweet thing."

The cat explored her lap, circling warily. It leaped toward Peña and scampered into hiding.

Just then she noticed Peña, standing there.

"Well! There's no telling how Irishmen will dress anymore. What are you waiting for? I gave you the penny, which certainly was enough for the little you did. Deliveries should be

made to the store, and I should think . . .” She glanced at his boots and jeans.

“With what I have in the bank I hardly need your penny,” he said.

Annette arrived with three glasses and a bottle of Irish whisky.

“Oh, Peña, I haven’t properly introduced you . . .” She did and gave them each a whisky. There was a moment’s silence, disturbed only by the sounds of swallowing.

“Where are you from?” he began.

“Just call me Christina; everyone else does. It *is* an easy name to remember. Oh! I’m so exhausted from the bus trip, you might think it was a thousand miles and now I’m here I don’t want to go back ever. You know what I was talking about on the phone, dear—about the British taking over the power company because the IRA has gotten the workers to strike—I did tell you—and now there is no electricity. Those bloody British can’t accomplish anything. So we’re all sitting in the dark. Can you imagine? Then I heard the IRA were threatening to bomb out the power station, and what would that leave us with? We’d be back to candles and kerosene, we would, I—”

“Poor Christina, you—”

“—let us join up with the Republic and forget this bloody nonsense and fighting and killing.” She paused to refill her glass and drink it down.

She ran on like static. Peña felt himself dwindling, losing, retreating to a shadowed corner of the chessboard.

“Christina’s from Northern Ireland, in case you didn’t realize it, Peña. You can see how terrible it is and her need to get away. Christina, Peña is from the United States, he’s the world’s chess champion,” Annette shouted.

“You mean them little pucks they push around? That’s a

silly game, isn't it? Why, if you're the champion you must be in the Guinness book, but it won't be for long. Them records change every year."

"You needn't say that, Christina. Besides, it isn't that sort of game. They play the world's championship only every three years, it's so important."

"That's an entirely different game from chess, Christina," interrupted Peña. "Chess is played with kings and queens." He wanted to attack but she retained the initiative.

"Don't tell me more, I'm in no condition to learn about royalty or anything else. I suppose you're a wealthy dope peddler over in the States. You look like you're from one of those Arab countries that's holding off our oil." She paused to brush something from her coat. "Too many birds in this poor city; that's one of the troubles with it. Then the streets don't run right. It's a wonder I ever got here."

Peña refilled his and Annette's glasses, exchanging a look of impatience.

"You're after complaining tonight, Christina," Annette said softly.

"You needn't be criticizing your older sister, now. You should be remembering that it was my money that started you out and not be speaking with disrespect. It's the rich Americans who keep the IRA bombing us to death what with the trash they send on the television inviting us to corruption and sin, preying on each other and teaching our children their heathen ways."

Peña paced the floor, then walked into the kitchen. Annette followed.

"How long is she going to be here?"

"Oh, maybe a week. She comes only when there's bad trouble. But she'll soon be fed up with me."

"What's the matter with her?"

"Nothing. She's quite normal."

"Yeah? Well, I've *bad* it!"

"I'll have her for only a few days."

"That's a few too many."

## THE KIBITZERS



**A**ngrily, Peña retraced his steps toward the hotel, wondering how such a zany person could be Annette's sister. Aimlessly, he followed a group into a pub. The crowd and noise appalled him. At the bar the drinkers were arguing about whether the Garda was or was not making a serious effort to apprehend the escaped IRA bank robbers. He drank a Guinness straight down and left, aware of a painful blankness in his mind as he wandered on, trying to decide what to do.

At the hotel he went to the playing room, where there were rows of long tables and many chess players. Larry called him over and they sat at an unoccupied board.

Feverishly he set up the pieces, annoyed that a crowd immediately gathered around them. Strangely enough, there were Borovek supporters among the kibitzers. Many were his friends and competitors, but he had no wish to talk with them.

The room grew quiet as he and Larry rehashed the previous game, pausing frequently, exploring lines that would improve on the moves actually made.

Sometimes it took all night to analyze a complex game. Over a period of weeks, even centuries, a game could be reviewed for new insights.

The kibitzers gradually grew more active and daring, mak-

ing remarks and suggesting alternative moves. Peña resisted them, holding the captured pieces, collecting them in bunches, and distributing them again and again over the surface of the board, setting and resetting the positions, armed against any efforts to interfere. All the while he challenged and rebutted ideas he didn't agree with.

Annette might not have recognized him in this crowd. As the hysteria and noise grew, he talked more and more loudly, annoyed at his oversights, impatient with foolish suggestions. The excitement was contagious, but in a sense he resented it, preferring to be set apart as he usually was.

Occasional flashes in the room indicated that someone was taking pictures. He glanced up to see Nikki watching from a nearby bench, intent on the performance. Her presence disturbed his concentration.

Despite his efforts, the kibitzers gained in courage and determination. Improvements were not only suggested; they were actually made by other hands on the board, and the impromptu session slipped out of control. The disorder grew to the point at which he could tolerate it no longer. Suddenly he rose and dropped the pieces, then pushed his way through the crowd and started out of the room.

Nikki was beside him in a moment. "Hello," she said.

"What are you up to?" he asked, walking rapidly.

"Are you finished with the boys?"

"Don't be funny."

"I'm sorry. I only meant that I felt left out."

"You wanted to be part of that?"

"They all think you're wonderful."

"Sure they do!"

"And of course you are."

"Why don't they listen then?" He glanced at her serious face. Her eyes were dark, but her step and bearing were light.

A longing question was apparent on her face. He was surprised to notice it; even more to be concerned. Although he was still angry, he was glad she was there. He needed someone.

She continued, "I wish I could understand what you are doing and admire it as they do."

She was sincere. For once she had the hair pulled away from her face and she looked almost pretty.

At the elevator he pushed the button and waited, perversely acting as if he were alone and expecting to leave her standing there. She moved around where he had to look at her or turn away further. Her discomfort was plain enough, but he did nothing to help.

"May I talk with you?" she asked, impulsively.

"I feel pretty tired."

"Don't be mean. I feel idiotic enough following you around. Do I have to beg?"

The elevator doors opened and he went in. She held the door but didn't follow him. When he looked at her, she seemed as lonely and defeated as he felt. He knew he needed her then.

"Oh, come on," he said.

She ran into the elevator. It carried them up as he concentrated on the overhead light. They walked together to his suite and he let them in.

"I need a drink," he said.

"I'll fix it. What do you want?"

He told her and flopped in a chair. Fragments of Irish tunes sang in his head. Snatches of images appeared momentarily.

Nikki handed him the drink and sat down. He knew she was watching him.

"Are you tired?" she asked.

"No, fresh as a daisy."

"Sometimes I hate you, Manguel Peña," she said softly.

He glanced at her to see if she meant it. He wasn't sure and didn't care. The windows were black, showing distorted reflections.

A sound made him look at her again. She was nearly in tears.

"What's the matter? Lots of people hate me," he said, wanting to feel more sympathetic.

"Don't you care why I do?"

"Are you kidding?"

"Oh, shit!" she said. "You make me sick." She thought that over for a moment, gaining control of herself. "I make *myself* sick. You're not a god, you know. I'd like to smash that wooden world of yours to bits."

She went to the window.

Was she acting or really upset? He stood behind her, swirling the vodka and ice in his glass and watching her reflection in the window.

"I'm so awful," she sobbed. "I don't know why I do such terrible things."

"What are you talking about?"

"Oh . . . probing into people's lives . . . exposing them . . ." Gulping for air, she tried to control herself.

"Well, that's your job, isn't it?" he asked, feeling sorry for her.

She turned to him, trying to speak. "Well . . . I want more from you . . . Oh, I *am* so ridiculous, Peña. I want so much. I want to understand you. And what you are doing out there and with those men down in the chess room . . . and with me."

Quietly he watched her, listening and waiting.

She continued, "I don't know why I can't let it go. You don't think I'm simpleminded, do you?"

They stood eye to eye. Hers were filled with tears. The

light sparkled in her eyes, softened the brown to amber.  
He took her in his arms.

## MANEUVERS WITH THE BLACK QUEEN



As he pulled up the long hill in Drogheda, Peña shifted into second gear. His hand touched the side of Nikki's leg. Neither moved to avoid the pressure. He held her thigh gently, glancing at her as she leaned toward him. At a turn in the road a towering stone gateway allowed only one-way traffic.

"This was a walled city when Oliver Cromwell broke in and slaughtered the inhabitants in the seventeenth century," Nikki read from a touring guide. "That was the north gate."

He grunted and roared down a cobbled incline. Her car protested with a series of backfires. Ahead the River Boyne appeared as a broad expanse of blue water encased in green. He drove along the empty, curving road that followed the river. Her car was cranky but powerful, and he revved it up, driving carefully.

"Go faster," she squealed. "Don't let up on the curves."

"The shocks are no good, it bounces too much . . ."

"Don't be chicken." She slapped his leg and hunched forward.

The sky was partly filled with billowing white clouds, intermittently hiding the sun. A kaleidoscope of reflections raced on the river. Puddles splashed over the car, blinding him temporarily until the wipers cleared the windshield. The curves were frequent but not too sharp. Nikki egged him on until they hit a deep puddle on the right side and the car

dipped and swung, skidding in a quarter circle before it stopped.

Peña leaned on the steering wheel shaking his head slowly, thinking he must be crazy.

“Are you all right?” she asked, putting a hand on his shoulder.

He looked at her then. Her eyes were wide and lustrous with excitement. He thought of how alive she was. He thought of the chess arena where the men were wooden, life existing only in the mind. A player might suffer a thousand deaths but never a loss of blood. He never risked real life.

He drove off more carefully.

“Look, a bird sanctuary! I must see it!” she cried.

Peña turned at the sign and sped down a flat, straight road. It became dirt, and sand dunes rose ahead. He stopped where a sign indicated it the Boyne estuary.

“Let’s walk.” She struggled with the door. “Such a gale!”

Every strand of the wide expanse of green shimmered in the wind. Nikki’s hair blew straight out. The wind roared in his ears and made his eyes tear. They turned to the lee and walked toward the dunes, following a trail of deep sand, climbing until they stood at the top. Far to the east was the sea. Directly below was a weedy golf course. Nikki ran down the slope, leaped, and disappeared into a bunker. Peña followed and in a moment they sat in the bottom of a natural sand trap, protected and quiet. He lay in the sand and watched the sky, listening to the hum of the breeze in the overhanging reeds.

“Well,” she said, lying close to him, “we are alone at last.”

“Another movie script?” he asked.

He lay in an in-between state, vaguely intrigued by Nikki, vaguely resistant, aware of the curl of her body near him. He should be studying for the next game but he would come back with renewed energy, refreshed and eager. Brovek was play-

ing better, but that didn't worry him; it couldn't last. He sifted the warm surface sand.

"Does the cat have your tongue?" Nikki asked, brushing the hair from his forehead and breathing in his ear.

"Hmmm." In spite of himself, he wanted her. He turned to kiss her, sliding his hands under her shirt. The numbness passed as he undressed and pushed her into the warm sand. He opened her shirt. She lay back, looking up happily. Her nipples were like brown pawns on each floating breast. He hardly knew which to touch, to kiss, to think about. It seemed wrong to be with her, but he didn't want to think about that.

He held her in a steel-like grip. She cried with pain, eyes closed, head thrown back, seeming quite lost. He pressed harder, wanting to release the clot of pressure gathered inside him. She was panting and sweating and calling out words he liked. But he was thinking of Annette.

He found himself staring at the yellow sand. When he rolled on his back, she rolled with him and for a few moments he watched the clouds and wondered how they stayed afloat.

"Get off me, will you? Something's biting me." He pushed her. "Can you see it?"

"It's only a burr on your shoulder." She pulled it off to show him, then kissed the spot affectionately. She tried to lie on top of him, but he wouldn't let her.

"You're intense today," she said.

"Yeah," he said, not wanting to talk or think.

"We fit together nicely," she said. "I hope you at least remember my last name by now."

"Renetti, isn't it?"

"Rennette. For a chess player you have a terrible memory. No wonder you didn't recognize my article in the Dublin newspaper."

"About me?"

"My name was on it, my own byline. But I am sorry they would not accept anything about you. It was about those Irishmen we met. Do you remember?"

He sat up. "What do you mean? You wrote about them? What, for God's sake?"

"About their little secret activities. I have been watching them, and—"

"Are you kidding me?"

"Stop interrupting! I was right about them, you see. They are with the IRA and I can prove it."

"You silly ass! I suppose you said so in the paper."

"Of course. They need exposing, those rude and cruel men. You see what they do, how they kill innocent people along with their victims. I will show them. Do you remember the guns we saw? Well, you said yourself they were for the IRA, and I discovered it was true."

"Do they wear letters on their T-shirts, you ninny?"

"They have a charming network, importing guns and explosives and distributing them; robbing banks and stealing money. You remember the bank robbery in Ballinknock and the IRA men who were captured? Well, it was them—those men we met in that little pub!" She knelt in the sand, completely nude, facing him, gesturing with each revelation. "And there is more I can't tell you as yet."

"So you wrote all this up and took it down to the editor, and he published it, I suppose."

"Not before he assigned one of his reporters to investigate with me. Then they believed my story!"

"The IRA is going to love you."

"I am safe, protected by international law. They would not dare to touch me." She held her breasts up, pointing and squeezing them defiantly.

"Of course not. You're invincible. There's something I

ought to tell you. I don't know why I didn't before, except that I didn't think you'd pay attention anyway."

"What is that?" She shivered.

"Here, put this on. Listen, I talked to those men that day while you were out in the john. I must have been pretty drunk."

She was all eyes now.

"I said I thought they might be in the IRA."

"No!" she said, ecstatic. "What did they say? Did their teeth fall out?"

"They said I'd better mind my own business."

"Did they threaten you? What did they say? Oh, why didn't you tell me? I wish I had been there!"

"I had enough trouble shutting you up."

"It should make a name for me," she said.

"Yeah, carved in granite with a nice little saying."

"You would miss me?"

"What? Sure, like that sticker." He stood up and put on his shirt, looking through his flying hair toward a fairway studded with bunkers and overgrown with weeds. In the distance were two golfers walking toward him. Nikki's fingers were running along his thigh, making it twitch.

"Someone's coming." The wind hurt his eyes.

She got up to look. "Oh, you said that to frighten me. They won't bother us, but I'll make certain."

Before he could stop her, she climbed up and posed naked in the wind, her shirt blowing out, arms akimbo and insolent. Peña had to laugh as he pulled her down. "Crazy bitch!" he said, and kissed her, feeling her wildness. For a moment they gazed at each other intently.

They got dressed and returned to the car.

"We are close to the North, Peña. Why don't we go there?"

"I'm game." The distraction might be what he needed.

"We could visit for a few hours in the daylight when I may take pictures. You'll really go?"

"Sure. Why not?"

"But all your studies, mon cheri, all those cobwebs from ear to ear!"

"You're the one with cobwebs."

"And when the chess match is over, I feel so sad. We will return to our nests. You will come and visit me, yes?"

"Sure, if I make the tournament in Tunis next year." He drove back over the dirt road until they came to a group of houses. A sign for "Bed and Breakfast" was posted in front of a cottage and they decided to stay overnight and leave for Northern Ireland early in the morning.

A tall, thin, homely woman answered the door and examined them curiously.

"I thought you were down-and-outers when first I saw you," she said. "Come in. I have a lovely bedroom you may have."

They inspected the room and were quite satisfied. Mrs. McLaughlin laid out towels and invited them to remain for high tea, although they might try Ballinknock if they preferred.

"We'll stay and eat here," said Peña. He went to the car to get a suitcase and his chess magazines. Nikki groaned when she saw them.

"He always buries himself in chess," she told the woman. "You know, he is the world's champion."

"Ah, my son is a fanatic with the game. I wish he were here to meet you; he would be delighted. Make yourselves at home now. I can tell you are French, mademoiselle. Perhaps we could talk together when the champion is busy?" she said.

"Mais oui," said Nikki, delighted. "Perhaps later."

"How close are we to the border?" Peña asked.

“Only a few miles. Sometimes I imagine the sound of guns rolling down across the hills. It’s not in your minds to be going there now, is it? It’s no place for the human race, as we say.”

“We know how to avoid trouble.” Nikki exchanged glances with Peña.

After dinner they returned to the estuary, walking across the tidelands where streams divided and drained the land. The fierce wind still blew, driving the marsh reeds, forcing the feeding flocks of birds into wild gyrations whenever they flew, their cries plaintive and whining.

The tide was low and they strolled among the tiny streams that fed the marsh, watching for water animals. Peña felt completely isolated. He tasted the water. It was fresh and cool.

They knelt to examine a strange formation on the stream bed, a coil of sand in the form of a cone, as if squeezed out by a cake-decorating instrument. Peña stood behind Nikki and watched her as she leaned over the water, one hand in the stream. He ground his teeth and got on his knees behind her. He undid her belt, moving quickly.

“What are you doing? I’ll fall in,” she laughed.

“No, you won’t. Stay where you are.”

Holding her immobile, he stared down at her.

The heavy salt odor of the marsh struck his face as she wiggled suggestively, arousing him further. He sighed and pulled her legs apart.

“I’m sinking!” she cried, sobbing and laughing. “Go on, you bastard! Do it before I drown.”

“Be quiet, then.” He shoved into her. She collapsed, and they fell into the water.

## TACTICAL BLUNDERS



The transition was deceptively routine as they drove toward the North—a matter of avoiding the humming, splashing wheels of the truck trailers and staying within the white lines. They battled the slapping windshield wipers and the steaming windows. When the rain stopped, Peña found himself straining forward in his seat.

“This is worse than driving on a freeway,” he said, risking a glance at Nikki. She leaned on the dash, her hair hanging in strings, arms folded, shoulders hunched.

“We’ll be there soon . . . one more mile.” She lowered a window and cool air struck the back of his neck.

The traffic slowed and finally stopped. He could see a checkpoint ahead, bristling with soldiers, bulky in short ponchos and camouflaged jump suits.

“Let’s have your passport,” he said. “What are you going to tell them?”

“That I’m a newspaper woman on assignment. You may be my equipment boy if you’d like.”

“Thanks a lot.”

She handed him the passport but continued to dig through her purse. Next she looked through the map pockets and in the back seat.

“What’s the matter?”

“Have you seen my notebook? I can’t find it.” He stopped the car, so she could take the keys and look in the trunk. “I must have forgotten to pack it. How could I? We must go back.”

“Come on, we can pick it up when we return to Dublin. Buy another one, they’re cheap.”

“But all my notes! How could I be so stupid?” She stamped her feet.

Peña moved the car whenever the line moved. The inspectors worked fast, jumping on the truck running boards, talking to the drivers briefly, examining papers while others looked through each vehicle or stood aside, ready for trouble. Nikki pointed a telephoto lens through the windshield and began to snap pictures.

“Why don’t you go up there and see if we have to fill out papers?” he said.

“Good idea.” She found the registration and walked away from the car. The nearest soldier snapped around to watch, gun pointed and ready. They exchanged words. He motioned her toward a parked military vehicle. With hips swaying saucily, Nikki almost stopped operations. Peña remembered those hips, wet and cold.

The line inched on. Peña could see the youthful faces of men no older than Nikki, clearly serious about their jobs. He tried to reassure himself that he was doing a sensible thing.

She came back to the car, her stride long, a smile flickering on her lips.

“What’d they say?” he asked.

“They pretended they must hold me here for confirmation, the lechers,” she grinned, getting into the car.

“You could make a bundle!”

“Disgusting man!” She punched him on the arm and laughed. “They hinted at a detailed personal inspection.”

“Did you get the papers?”

“Oui. We are welcome guests in Northern Ireland. Think of that!”

Sometime later they entered the outskirts of a town, and within minutes approached an open square. The scene was almost deserted. The row houses were old and colorless, the streets cobbled. Even the trees looked in poor condition. Across the square was a barricade of oil drums and barbed wire, irregular and ugly. Peña stopped the car. The only sign of life was the soldiers by the barricade. An armored vehicle passed them and slowly drove around the square to the barricade. The soldiers had come alert, watching the carrier. It stopped and was inspected. A few moments later it passed on through. Peña glanced around. Many buildings were boarded up. The windows looked broken or missing. A roof and upper story were gone on one building. A corner building was painted black to a height of about eight or ten feet, patches of white paint showing through.

"There's parking down that side street. Let's go there," he said, starting off and turning quickly. The soldiers were watching them.

"This place is creepy. Did you see those buildings?"

They saw a British patrol and stopped to let it pass in the narrow street, listening to the clacking boots, watching the faces that watched them—that same grimness, weapons pointing aloft.

Peña entered a parking lot. From the number of cars it was clear that many people lived or worked nearby.

"I wonder what it's like to come here every day?"

"Why don't you ask someone? . . . If anyone is still alive."

"I'll take the movie camera if you'll carry the supply case and still cameras," she said. "The light is fading badly." She squinted up at the sky. They got out and gathered the equipment. Nikki took a headband from the glove compartment and slipped it on.

"Genuine Apache," she said.

“Probably made in Japan.”

Her stringy brown hair was now held in place, which gave her a rather severe look. She and Peña were matched stride for stride, as they walked off.

“They wanted to search me at the checkpoint,” she repeated.

“What a braggart!” He felt unaccountably numb.

Nikki looked almost masculine with her hair pulled back, face strong and angular. He wanted to stop her, but they marched on, their footsteps echoing in the brick canyon. He felt they were being watched and kept looking up at the windows to catch a glimpse of hidden faces. On the other side the buildings were set back from the walk a few feet and the hardy remnants of gardens survived in tiny plots. Most were overgrown with weeds and spotted with hedges and shrubbery. Shades and curtains on the windows, indoor plants, wrappers and containers on the street indicated the presence of someone somewhere.

Up ahead the signs of two pubs hung over the sidewalk.

“You hungry?” he asked.

“Yes, we may find someone alive inside.”

A man, almost bumping them, rushed by as if chased by a phantom. A maintenance truck stopped in the street, brakes squealing. The driver jumped down from the cab and went to the back of the truck. Nikki took pictures. He never looked their way. Peña watched her. She had an admirable intensity, graceful and alert. He wondered that he hadn't noticed that before.

“Come on, I'm hungry,” he said.

They entered the pub. In the darkness he could make out rows of tables scattered in the foreground and a long bar to the side where a few men sat. Large menu signs decorated the right wall. In the dim light the details were blurred.

"Let's sit here." He unloaded the cameras and hooked them over a chair back. They sat down and studied the menu until a loud whistle shattered the near silence.

"What the hell was that?"

"Are you nervous, Peña? No one else is."

The sound of people talking came through the door. A group of women entered, followed by several men. They chattered amiably and occupied the tables around them. He asked Nikki what she wanted and went to the bar to order. When he returned, she was talking with a group of three women.

"Ah, the situation is terrible just now," a friendly Irish-woman with a long nose and small mouth was saying. "We don't know what the soldiers will do next."

"Aye, if things get worse, there could be no work for us," added a second woman, whose face was heavily lined.

"What sort of work do you do?" asked Nikki.

"We're in the clerical section of the factory across the way. Can't you smell the bloody fish on us?" The woman puckered her face. Several people laughed.

"What are you doing with them cameras?" she went on. "Going to take our picture?" She fluffed her hair, mimicking a movie star, and made a face feigning loveliness. It was grotesque enough to make Peña laugh.

"You're too much, Rose," laughed the third woman.

"Why don't you take them, Nikki?" urged Peña.

"Can you explain the barricade down by the square?" asked Nikki.

The women exchanged glances. The long-nosed woman said, "The soldiers have their headquarters beyond and they don't care for traffic on their street."

"They're afraid of us," said Rose, puffing out her flat chest.

"There have been bombings already and most likely several

killed. They don't publish their deaths, but we know."

"Have you lost anyone in your family?" asked Peña.

The women looked at him. Rose answered, "We've none of us lost family in the bombings, but they are constantly nosing us, breaking into our homes, lining us up in the pubs. We'll be lucky to see through our dinner." She pursed her face into a knot.

"Our lunch is ready," said Nikki.

Peña collected the dishes and paid. Nikki was posing the women for their portraits when he came back. Everyone in the pub watched her as she knelt to get the right camera angles. She took pictures of men at the bar, although some turned away. Peña recalled that moment in his bedroom when the camera flashed. It was Nikki, all right, that same irrepressible spirit. The people had worked themselves into a state of excitement by the time they were ready to leave.

"It's seldom like this till late at night," said Rose to Nikki. "You've brought us a bit of daytime cheer, darling."

They finished their lunch and started to leave.

"Good-bye," said Peña, stringing the cameras over his shoulders. He walked out into the street.

"Wasn't it scary?" Nikki caught up. "Didn't you have the feeling there was a bomb somewhere in the pub ready to explode?"

"If I'd felt that way I'd have left. Let's go—"

At that moment an earsplitting racket made him jump. It filled the street, echoing from the walls and deafening him with the noise. Involuntarily he jerked around. A few yards away a man with a jackhammer pried into the cobblestones. He stopped and glanced their way.

"That scared me!" Nikki hugged Peña.

A cloud of dust and smoke arose around the man who stood over his digging tool. He was alone and intent on his work.

"I know what I want to do now," Nikki said. "Let's go a little farther up the street toward the square. I want to get a movie shot of you coming toward me—"

The jackhammer drowned her words. They moved away. He wanted to be far away, but Nikki would ridicule that. He had the awful feeling that all this had happened before. The play was written; they need only act it out.

The jackhammer rattled a continuous blast. Soldiers could be seen in the distance, huddled together, rifles on their shoulders.

Nikki stopped and Peña moved on.

"Be quick about it. I don't like this place," he said.

"Turn around when you get to the corner," she called.

He glanced back to see her kneeling on the sidewalk. He continued up the slight incline, looking warily at the buildings. He twitched each time the jackhammer burst into action. The metallic sounds stuttered against his eardrums.

He looked over his shoulder at Nikki. The only person on the sidewalk, she waved him on, holding the camera at her shoulder, focusing it.

He went on rapidly, feeling like a trespasser. Store windows were boarded up. Upper-story windows were broken and deserted. Small cardboard signs in Irish were fastened to some buildings. Black, gaping holes looked into nothing. He thought he saw a movement in an upper room and stared.

The hammer let out a roar. Peña turned slightly to watch it plunge violently into the street, with blue smoke and brown dust rising steadily.

He looked away. Two soldiers rounded the corner. They stopped abruptly, then separated and ran toward the curbs.

Peña stared at them. Starting from his groin a cold chill pierced his body.

The soldiers threw themselves down. Their equipment clanked. One shouted an order. They crouched low, rifles aimed, bodies hugging the stones, their eyes sighted along the gun barrels.

The scene froze in Peña's mind.

A roar of noise burst into the street. The racket spilled over him. Splinters of stone struck his face. He ducked and covered his eyes. He twisted to see the target.

The soft, blue-clad body of Nikki hurtled backward, quivering uncontrollably. She fell on her back in a helpless sprawl.

Peña heard screams and shots. He ran to the soldiers. "What have you done?" he yelled. "What the fuck have you done?"

They were still.

He ran toward Nikki. She lay on her back, legs underneath, chest and face torn by bullets. He stood silent for a moment. Then he touched her fearfully, leaned over, hands quivering, touching her knees and staring. He shook her slightly and called her, hoping she would sit up and say it was a hideous joke.

Then he vomited.

## THE KING IN CHECK



Peña watched the people who passed beyond the window along the hallway. The sound of their boots clomping on the wooden floor came faintly through the partition. He wandered stupidly around the room, trying the doorknobs. Nothing opened.

He faced the wall where a number of bulletins were framed beneath glass. His reflection could be seen as a washed-out silhouette.

"Why don't you sit down and tell us about it?" said a reasonable voice. Peña turned to the officer sitting by the table, his hands sorting through papers.

"What time is it?" asked Peña. "Where's my watch? I've told you ten times I have to get back to Dublin for the next game."

"We are putting through a call. Will you please—"

Peña wasn't listening. A clock had stopped in his mind. Every life had a time clock. Hers had stopped. Someone had reached in and smashed the works. Was it that simple? Was life that fragile? He couldn't believe hers was finished.

"Please tell us what you did with the gun, Mr. Peena."

"You don't answer *anything*. I asked you what time it was," demanded Peña.

"Fifteen hundred or so."

"On Tuesday?"

"Yes."

"Have I been drugged? If I lose this game I'm holding you responsible." Was that his voice? It came from nowhere and sounded ridiculous. It was complaining about a game, a chess game. This person who was talking had to play a game of chess. And this other madman—who was he?

"Come now, isn't chess a bit on the trivial side considering . . . ?"

"Listen, private—"

"I'm a major. No need to be insulting."

"All right. Major whoever-the-hell-you-are . . ."

"Major Wesson-Smythe. Please try to maintain this interview on a courteous plane."

Peña looked at the man as if he would devour him. The

major was a meaty type with flapping lips that muffled his voice and bulbous milky eyes that looked as if they were ready to slide from his face, lying there like poached eggs.

“Now, about the gun . . .”

He had seen guns. They were dead sticks all over Ireland. They stuck in the air like the remnants of a forest fire—dead, black, ugly. A young, fresh soldier was planted under each one, the very best fertilizer. Soon all humanity would be underground, feeding the green shoots. He could see the new forest growing . . . Peña blinked his eyes and forced himself to stare at the Englishman.

“Let me tell you once more, major. I’m the world’s chess champion—you know, those little pucks they push around. What I mean is, there’s a match in Ireland, in Dublin, for the championship. You must have heard about it, and about me. Don’t you believe those ID cards you have there? Now how about letting me out of here?”

“When we get the answers we require.”

“What happened to the woman?”

“She died from bullet wounds.”

“It was murder. Your GIs don’t know a camera from a gun. They blaze away at anything. Right on a public street! I can’t believe it.”

“You have concocted a neat tale. You say you saw two approaching soldiers and that they fired on this woman. All the while you were an innocent bystander, I suppose. You must think we’re rank beginners, Mr. Peena.”

“That’s Peña.”

“You have to understand that we are making an official inquiry into this incident, and—”

“Incident? That’s a nice term for it,” said Peña.

“Let me finish.”

“What’s your routine for disposing of foreign bodies,

major? Every army has a procedure for covering up its mistakes." He glared at the officer.

A uniformed woman entered the door behind him.

"Excuse me, sir," she said. She placed a folder in front of the major and left. A few minutes passed. Peña paced the room restlessly, feeling trapped, wondering how to make himself understood. His identification meant nothing here. He wondered if they had found Nikki's car and their passports.

"Sit down, Mr. Peena. . . . Now, two of our men have died in this tussle, and—"

"They must have shot each other."

"I'm afraid not. With a caliber of bullet we do not use."

Peña looked at the eyes, at the report on the table.

"Don't look at me, major. I had nothing to do with it. You can ask the people where we had lunch. We were carrying cameras; we took pictures and went for a walk on the street. You can check the film in her cameras."

"We have done just that. The evidence appears to be inclined in your favor. Luckily those wretched people didn't steal the camera, and—"

"And it shows me walking along unarmed."

"Precisely, unless you were concealing a weapon."

"Balls!"

"There is something quite peculiar about all this, Mr. Peena. British bullets did not kill your young woman."

"Well, whose did? Your men fired and she went over."

"Not at all. The angle of firing and the caliber of bullets belie that theory. Someone else was in the street, or above it. Perhaps more than one. We are checking ballistics."

"I didn't hear any shooting."

"Because of the pneumatic drill. We are checking a photograph which the deceased took of the worker. His identity may be revealing."

The woman returned and handed the major another folder.

In the next instant he knew who had killed Nikki. That bastard Kap was serious. He could see them in the upper stories aiming their weapons and putting out her life. Lead pellets exploded out of gun barrels and entered at her left breast, crushing and ripping her, splitting the ribs, and tearing through lungs and liver and right on through, to her face, where they broke the jaw and teeth and impressed him with a bleeding imprint that burned in his brain.

The major was saying he had contacted Donegal, that the game had been forfeited.

Peña knew that would happen. Now there would be another fight.

"We've found your car . . ." The major was talking about next of kin and shipping cameras and remains and . . . Would she go parcel post or special delivery, and what would her mother say when she opened the package, and how do you wrap a wooden box the size of a person? There should be a card: "Dear Mrs. Rennette, We regret . . . we regret to send you Nicole Rennette, whose face and breast are soiled and wet . . . (signed) The British Army."

"Can you keep my name out of this?"

"From the newspapers quite possibly, since it's not our habit to report our findings publicly from a war zone. We had to tell Mr. Donegal something, and local news will ask for an official statement. We don't take kindly to having our men shot in the street. I'm sure you've learned your lesson, sir."

"Don't worry."

"Do you remember anything else, anyone suspicious?"

He couldn't shake her image from his mind: the headband, the hair splattered with war paint, badly smeared, running at the chin, eyes blank in death.

"Just her—she's all I saw."

"I'm sorry," said the major.

"Yes, so am I." He remembered the dim hospital chamber, the white body, the antiseptic smell, the buzzing, pumping machinery, and life seeping away while she moaned and fought desperately, her hand clenching his.

"You required sedation, Mr. Peena, after the . . ."

The last critical second, the violent decision of life to desert her body and slowly leave the lifeless remnant of a woman called Nicole Rennette . . . How close life was to death, inseparable but infinitely distant.

Filled with sadness, he had pried her hand away, fully aware of how much he had wanted her to hold on.

## ESCAPE FROM THE NET



Peña stopped at the first telephone kiosk after crossing the border and called Larry Stein.

"Did you have to go to Northern Ireland just to forfeit a game, you freaky tourist?" demanded Larry.

"Well, what happened?"

"What could happen? No show, no game, one point thrown away. You could have called."

"How could I call? The British were holding me."

"Yeah, a British female, I bet."

He asked Larry to schedule a meeting with Donegal and the Russians. They would understand . . . not about the girl, not about going North with her . . . but about the shooting on the street, the deaths, the accident of his being there, the stubborn British . . .

Almost in a trance, he drove off, building the justification. He wanted to retreat to that hard shell of self-protection that had been his until coming to Ireland.

Repeatedly the memories shuffled in his head. The soldiers firing—Nikki falling over. Cameras didn't lie . . . But did that major?

What to tell them? Whatever he said would be published all over the world.

Nikki was gone. His hand moved restlessly over the empty seat beside him. A sign pointed toward Ballinknock and he followed it.

Downtown an informal parade was in progress. Children and adults carried bunches of flowers, the girls in pretty clothes, the boys in dark suits, all walking casually along the curbs. How astonishing that life could go on so unaware.

He stopped where the children were gathering in a Protestant churchyard. A priest came toward him, eyes shining in his heavily lined face.

"May I help you, sir?" He leaned in the window.

"Yes, I'm lost. I—"

"Lost, you say? Will you be coming with us then?" He laughed at his joke.

"Do you say mass in a Protestant church in Ireland?" Peña asked.

The priest thought that was a good one.

"No, no," he said, laughing. "We're at the Catholic cemetery to place flowers on the graves. Only the church is Protestant. It's confusing, one might say, but quite satisfactory."

Peña shook his head in wonder and drove off, thinking that a few miles away the Catholics and Protestants were killing one another, with the British in the middle holding each by the throat. The scene at the church was peaceful and beautiful,

with the sun shining, the flowers bright and cheerful, the tall gravestones casting shadows on the green. Beneath it all were the dead, nicely hidden.

He thought back, seeing Nikki's final wave and smile, the camera on her shoulder, the imperceptible disintegration of the scene into running, screaming. The pubs had emptied. Sympathetic voices had sounded in his ear; consoling hands had soothed his arm while the shouting raged around them.

Now he stopped at Mrs. McLaughlin's rooming house.

"Of course I have the notebook," she said. "I should have brought it to you in Dublin. Is everything all right?"

The worn face and worried eyes watched him.

"Have you heard something?" he asked.

"The radio says you were detained in Northern Ireland and lost a chess game because of it. Were you there, young man, and did something happen?"

"She was killed."

"God and bejesus! Are you all right? Come and rest yourself. I could see by the look on your face. I'm so sorry." She urged him into the house and made him tell her about it. "She was a lovely girl. You must have been terribly shocked, but it's the way of Ireland these and other days. I hoped you would not venture there." She insisted on giving him a cup of tea.

"We had a lovely talk the night you were here while you studied in your room. A sweet thing, she was, so bright and young. She reminded me of my youth when the world was full of hope for me. Here are the things she left. I have a confession. It was unavoidable and I didn't mean to pry, but the book was under the bed and I couldn't be certain of the owner, so I had a look. You will please forgive me, Mr. Peña?"

Peña smiled. She was so sweet and open and innocent that he thought he was talking to his mother, the way his mother should be.

"It is in French; I saw that," she continued. "I looked for her name, but of course I needn't have done that, need I?"

"That's okay."

"She had so many interesting thoughts, your lovely girl. I hope they bring her no harm—now that is silly, isn't it? She told me of her findings here in Ireland and of Algeria, and of knowing you, Mr. Peña. I lost my own father to Ireland, and now my son is involved. I'm not certain of the cause he is supporting. I would rather see him conduct himself as a chess player like you and stay safely out of the way. But I am meddling to no end."

"Did Nikki mention the IRA?" Peña asked.

"Ah, she did. But more from curiosity than malicious intent. She was too sweet a girl for that. Her death is such a shock to me. I can pity her mother, losing a husband and a daughter . . ."

"I think the IRA caught up with her, Mrs. McLaughlin." He explained the street scene in greater detail.

"They will take their revenge when they must, sad as it is. I can believe they might have done it if she had interfered with their operations. Even you may be in danger, Mr. Peña."

"They could have killed me if they had wanted to. I had nothing to do with it. I hope they realize that."

They talked a while longer. She informed him that Nikki had called Tunisia that night. Later she mentioned her embarrassment to hear most of it, although Nikki did not mind and knew she understood French. He thought her revelations were an apology for reading Nikki's notebook. His curiosity was aroused but he had to go.

"Go then, and God bless."

In a few minutes he was speeding down the road by the river, imagining Nikki by his side urging him on.

He found the car rental agency, left the car, and caught a

cab. He looked at the package. The outer manila envelope bore the name and address of Mrs. McLaughlin. He opened it and was surprised to find the notebook and another packet. There were several photographs. They were all candid shots of men, probably taken with a telephoto lens and further enlarged. He looked at them with increasing apprehension, recognizing the faces at Murphy's Pub and some he didn't know taken by the river. Then a picture of the *Kapstan* with Kap on board. Then a tall, hard-looking man walking along the quay, the *Kapstan* in the background. The same man stepping on board. The same man in a park. Then close-ups. Suddenly Peña recognized the face. It was Harold O'Donnell, chairman of the chess match and Minister of Recreation.

Peña looked up. The driver was watching in the mirror. "Hey, would you go through the alley there, driver?" He had a sudden premonition of death.

At the end of the alley, he looked back. Another car turned in after them.

"Go around the corner and let me out," he ordered. The car behind was a block away and coming fast. They turned into the main street and stopped. Peña paid, got out quickly, and told the driver to move on. He ducked into a doorway and watched. A Mercedes sedan came out of the alley and stopped. When Peña saw it was an old lady driving, he felt better.

Walking along the street, he tried to be sensible. Why should anyone follow him now? They knew where to find him. Someone must have followed them into Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, holding the photographs, he felt uneasy.

He looked across the street at the Bank of Ireland. That's the safest place, he decided, and crossed over.

## A NEW OPPONENT

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The atmosphere was icy and restrained in the meeting room and Peña contributed little to change it. Meetings had always produced conflict, and cranky decisions, even when they ruled in his favor.

In the past he would have accepted the forfeit, relying on his strength to win. Lying and excuses were not in his makeup. Being there made him feel vulnerable and disturbingly weak.

Harold O'Donnell sat stiffly, his blue eyes gleaming coldly. Seated opposite, Borovek and Vermily muttered quietly, their lips moving and heads bobbing. Donegal, obviously confused, fussed with the international chess regulations. A constant rumble came from the hall. The doors rattled. A nod from O'Donnell sent Donegal scurrying.

"All right, gentlemen," O'Donnell began. "Are you ready to begin? . . . Good. Let's arbitrate this matter quickly. I believe Mr. Donegal has performed his duties correctly concerning this forfeit. He started Mr. Peña's clock at the appointed time, and after the passage of one hour, Mr. Peña failed to arrive. Mr. Borovek requested a forfeit and the point was awarded to him—a situation clearly supported by the rules. Is that correct, Mr. Donegal?"

"Yes, sir."

"Furthermore, Mr. Peña failed to notify you of his probable absence. Correct?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now then." O'Donnell's voice had an aggravating and militant lilt. "This meeting has been called at Mr. Peña's request to reconsider the forfeit. After he presents his argu-

ments, I will entertain comments from the Russians and make a final decision. Understood?"

Peña glanced quickly from face to face. All eyes were on O'Donnell. A harsh look passed between them.

"Proceed then, Mr. Peña."

Peña told a story which made him the victim of an accidental street fight between British soldiers and the IRA in a completely unexpected flare-up which unfortunately led to several deaths. As a result, he was held for investigation—a period which overlapped the match schedule. The British, he said, prevented his telephoning. Finally he offered his apologies. But he felt uneasy. The words had sounded false and empty.

"You went alone into Northern Ireland, Mr. Peña?" O'Donnell asked.

"I went with a reporter."

"Were you in danger?" asked Borovek.

"There was shooting, but I ducked into a doorway in time." It was going well so far, despite his conscience.

Vermily, the slight, blond-haired Russian who had made faces and impatient gestures throughout Peña's explanation, shook his head emphatically and talked to Borovek in Russian. A rapid exchange between them left Borovek staring ahead thoughtfully.

Borovek finally said, "Mr. Vermily disagrees, but I believe Mr. Peña acted in good faith and explained his situation clearly. We—" Vermily interrupted again.

Peña remembered playing Vermily, his irritating habits, always managing to create antagonism. It had been a pleasure to defeat him.

"We accept his apologies," Borovek continued. "I prefer that the game be played, but in order to equalize handicaps I have one request which Mr. Peña may not accept. The time

of waiting was for me anxious and anticlimactic. I request a one-hour penalty on his clock.”

A burst of noise came from the group around the table. Peña was surprised and relieved. Borovek was a better man than he thought, if he could just keep Vermily quiet.

A deeper trouble bothered him. He could feel it, but as yet could not recognize it.

“You’re a lucky bastard, champ,” Larry was saying to him. “Me? I’d have had a fat zero by now.”

“You just don’t live right.”

“That dame almost had your ass in a sling.”

“So don’t shout.”

“Watch out for that O’Donnell. He’s got a crucifix up his sleeve.”

O’Donnell was calling in a booming voice for silence.

“What does Mr. Vermily wish to say?” O’Donnell asked.

“I prefer him not to speak on this subject,” answered Borovek. “The decision is mine to make. He is only my adviser in the chess.”

Vermily responded with a lengthy spasm in Russian and they argued vehemently.

“Mr. O’Donnell,” Borovek said, “I apologize for consuming important time, but we would like some explanation of Mr. Peña’s reason for going into a war zone. Our visa to Ireland does not permit this, and we are questioning this difference.”

“I have been puzzled as well, Mr. Borovek. Well, Mr. Peña?”

Peña felt everyone’s eyes on him. It had never occurred to him that the North was out-of-bounds.

“There’s no such prohibition on me,” Peña said.

“You certainly could not have regarded it as a sensible

procedure, Mr. Peña. The newspapers are filled with the dangers. You jeopardized your life," O'Donnell said. "I have to consider your expedition foolhardy and detrimental not only to yourself but to our country. Ireland did not provide this magnificent prize fund to suffer a loss of revenue or an international incident."

"Look," Peña said, "if Borovek is willing to play, let's do it. I'll take the hour penalty; he deserves that." He knew the hour wouldn't mean much if he could control the opening moves.

O'Donnell appeared not to notice. "What have you to say, Mr. Donegal?" He put the accent strongly on the last syllable.

Donegal squirmed. "There are considerations both ways, sir. The audience has been inconvenienced, for one thing. The match is off schedule and that has to be picked up. The British were damned confused to have a world-famous chess player in their midst, and embarrassed too . . ."

"It wasn't intentional," Peña replied. "I did the best I could to inform you when I was delayed."

O'Donnell looked from face to face. "All right, then . . . Nothing more? The final decision rests with me. There are pros and cons to be considered . . ."

Peña hated the pretension of fairness and logic, the courtroomlike atmosphere of his being on trial as if they knew of a crime. He resented O'Donnell's overbearing manner. *He* was the one who should be on trial.

". . . as a result," O'Donnell went on, "we will conduct the regularly scheduled game tomorrow. The forfeit will stand!"

Peña was stunned. An angry volume of noise shattered around his head. He could have crushed a bone between his teeth. They had their ways, these big men with small minds. They wanted you to know who ran things, to ram it down your

throat when you strayed out of line. They thought you were helpless and unable to strike back. Well, O'Donnell would find out!

"What's the idea, O'Donnell?" he demanded. "Borovek was willing. You and your petty principles! You don't think for a moment I'm going to accept your decision, do you?" The room had emptied.

"You may decide to, Mr. Peña. You were the devil's own device to have been tramping about in Northern Ireland. We know what happened there."

"I told you what happened."

"We recommend the Republic for sightseeing in the future, perhaps Blarney Castle—"

Peña was seeing spots, holding back a string of invectives. "I expected fair treatment and I'll protest this right to the top."

"You may. Whom you travel with is your decision, I suppose."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"The woman, Mr. Peña. The French woman!"

"That's my business."

"Quite a frivolous enterprise, I would say, Mr. Peña. You are here to play chess. Play it, then, and don't indulge in other games."

"You think you can—"

"The British will exploit this opportunity to discredit their enemies. In this case you are but a pawn in the game."

"Pawns can become queens, O'Donnell."

"But not kings, Mr. Peña."

"I don't understand your decision, O'Donnell."

"I saved you a future embarrassment. My personal thought is that Mr. Borovek is only temporarily ignorant of the circum-

stances of your trip into Northern Ireland, and that when he becomes fully cognizant he will know the right decision was made.”

“So you’re doing his thinking in advance . . .”

“The opportunity was yours, Mr. Peña, to accept the loss gracefully. I intended no disparagement. If you need my help in the future, please call on me.”

“You expect me to get into trouble?”

O’Donnell laughed, but it sounded like falling bricks. “Nothing would surprise me about you, Mr. Peña. Nothing.”

“How did you know about the French girl?”

“The British informed us. We agreed to keep the matter quiet for the sake of the girl. And for your sake, Mr. Peña. The newspapers will have it soon enough.”

O’Donnell pulled on a dark, heavy coat and a wide-brimmed hat. Immediately Peña was reminded of a statue in the park. Or was it a person? He knew what the news wires would say and tried to force acceptance on himself, fighting the condemnation and the meddling in his affairs.

O’Donnell strode to the door. *Was* he linked to the IRA? Had Nikki been on the verge of exposing him? The IRA couldn’t know that, could they, unless they saw the photographs? He could see that the article she had written about Kap was reason enough for them to kill her. He had been so sure it had been the soldiers.

The door opened to a smash of sound as the reporters crowded in . . .

## REGROUPING



A storm swept across the city as Peña stomped away from the hotel where the meeting had been held. Pedestrians bent with a slight bow to the wind. Peña was hatless; in a few minutes his hair was pasted over his forehead, the water running in streams down his face.

When he came to the river, he stared down at the patterns on the water. The surface smoothed with each sweeping gust of wind. Pattern replaced pattern. He looked at the river, the walls, the bridge, the quays, the barges. Kap's boat wasn't there.

A man was huddled in a doorway, hat pulled low, apparently asleep. Peña hurried away.

He entered the park and passed over the stone bridge. The scene came back vividly: the same sort of day, the same rotten mood. He glanced around as if the accordion player might be approaching. A few pigeons scratched and pecked near a refreshment stand. He wanted to wring their necks.

The situation was disordered, the elements confused.

What had Nikki found out about the IRA? How was O'Donnell working with them?

Peña left the bridge, his feet slapping on the pavement, an Irish tune in his head, a drummer in his stomach.

He struggled with a desire to punish O'Donnell and overthrow his decision about the chess game, to appeal it and show him who was right. But he knew there was no hope. The rules were clear about forfeits, and he had violated them. He should have confronted O'Donnell immediately with what he knew about him.

Peña moved on, trying to clear his mind. He recalled the moments on Croagh Patrick with Annette when he collected water in his palm and held it to her lips, her hands around his, his hand cupping the water while she drank and smiled at him.

He saw Hennessey's and went in. Old Hennessey looked at him resentfully. Peña picked a newspaper from the counter and strolled around the store, stopping here and there as if considering a selection, knowing that Hennessey watched him. Peña lifted his hand as if to take something from a shelf.

"I see you be in trouble in the North," Hennessey said abruptly.

Peña looked at the newspaper headline. Those goddamned reporters. He put ten pence on the counter and left.

Hennessey came running after him. "Big Yank hero, here's your change," he yelled.

Peña waved him away and walked on, reading. His picture was on page one. It was incredible!

He hurried on to the liquor store, wondering if he would have to face Annette's idiot sister, Christina. He was ready for her now.

The store was closed. He rang the bell. No one answered. Everything was going to pieces! He hailed a taxi and went to the hotel. When he burst into his living room, he found Annette and Larry sitting there, staring at him.

"Well, how did you two find each other?" he asked.

"You been swimming in the sewer?" asked Larry.

Annette came toward him. He felt uncertain for a moment, as if expecting an accusation. Instead, she embraced and kissed him. He looked at Larry.

"Where's Fenley?"

"Aren't you going to say hello?" asked Annette.

"They're going to have every nut in Ireland looking for me." Peña went to the phone.

"I'm starved," Larry said. "I'll see you later, blondie. Peña I'll be in my room when you're ready for work." He slammed the door.

Fenley wasn't in. Peña had him paged. He turned to Annette and showed her the newspaper. She thought he had been in serious trouble and had had a narrow escape.

"Where's Christina? What happened to her?"

"She went home."

He stopped at the chessboard and began to pluck at the pieces.

"Will you stop that!" She pulled at him. "What really happened?"

"They forfeited the game, the bastards. That goddamned O'Donnell. Borovek offered to play it too."

"I don't mean that. What happened in Northern Ireland? Why did you go there?"

"I got hung up. Just because I didn't call they forfeited the game on me." Feeling ashamed he continued to move the pieces.

The door slammed. He looked around in astonishment. And relief.

The chess pieces cast long, drab shadows on the board. The black queen lay carelessly on her side. The white one had fallen off on the floor.

He thought of Nikki's hotel room, empty and cold. Or emptied of her. Impulsively he went into the hall to find it. Her door was locked. He looked up at the transom. Down the hall was a cleaning woman's cart. He found a young woman on her knees in a bathroom, wiping up, her bottom pointed up toward him, heart-shaped and slim. He touched her. It was Maureen.

"Oh! You gave me the shocks, Mr. Peña." Her little scream seemed to be more from excitement than fright.

"Listen, I locked myself out. Can you lend me your keys?"

"I'll come open it for you, sir."

"No, no, just give me the keys." He pulled a bill from his wallet.

She whistled. "Well, thank you, Mr. Peña! Blessings to you!"

He took the key ring and went to Nikki's room. A "Do Not Disturb" sign hung from the knob. He stared at it guiltily, trying to force himself to go through with it, feeling for a minute as if he were heading toward insanity. Suppose someone found him there. A force beyond his control pushed him on.

Several seconds were required to open the door. The room was a complete mess, the mattress torn apart, clothes strewn everywhere, two wardrobe suitcases open and ripped . . . They had scored first.

He had the presence of mind to examine the clothes. There were dresses and pantsuits he had never seen, an evening gown, fancy underwear. He held up the tiny net. Had someone else moved in? He resisted the impulse to leave and poked among the clothes until he found a ragged set of jeans and shirts. More like Nikki. Then he found the luggage airline tags. Nikki's, all right.

He closed the door, wondering what sort of person she really had been.

## DRAW?



Peña's cocky movements at the chessboard were subdued.

He chose a line he knew well and played rapidly through twenty moves, knowing his thoughts were divided. The presence of Harold O'Donnell disturbed him. He imagined his rooms being searched. It was unnerving. . . .

The game progressed quietly. Peña was content with simple development, relieved that Borovek cooperated. Complications were easily avoided.

Borovek played confidently. His persistent optimism was surprising, as if the match were even. He showed none of the signs of a defeated player. Peña knew the man would have to be beaten.

"The bastard keeps coming up with good ideas," he muttered to himself, searching in his hair for a pencil. He couldn't find it there or on the table, and, without thinking about it further, reached over and snatched Borovek's pen, wrote his move, and put the pen behind his ear. Borovek leaned toward the floor and picked up the pencil. Peña reached across to take it, but Borovek held it away and pointed to the pen. Peña finally realized what was expected. They traded writing implements and ended the pantomime.

Play drifted into the middle game. Peña had a moderately energetic plan to hold Borovek at bay and improve his own position by trading off pieces. Once he peered from behind his hand to gauge the Russian's mood. The face revealed little; it was placid, gaunt, and well controlled.

Time dragged. Usually Peña was completely absorbed. He

wanted to attack and end it miraculously, ramming ideas through his head, hoping that a brilliant plan would pop out. None did. He glanced at the clocks for the fortieth time, wrote a move, and withdrew a knight from a center post.

“Draw?” he suggested quietly. He looked straight at Borovek. The man flinched, blinked his eyes, jerked his head slightly, and bent down.

Peña waited. He couldn't stand it. Why didn't the Russian answer? There was no play in the position. The game could drag on for hours while they nibbled cautiously at one another. Peña thought that if he couldn't win he would draw out the match. Just a few more draws and it would be over.

As the silence between them continued, Peña became annoyed. He began to berate himself for the offer. It wasn't his place. The hierarchy was clearly established, like the descendancy of kings. He had fractured protocol and sacrificed his dignity. Embarrassed, he went to the back of the stage, muttering to himself. A glass of water helped. Then another. Still his mouth felt dry. Thirty minutes passed. He looked at the audience, at his watch, at the floor.

Borovek was writing. Peña wanted to hurry over, but he waited. Borovek raised his hand slowly and moved a bishop.

The bastard, Peña thought, determined to show him what happens to those who refuse draws. He returned to the board and eyed the bishop move suspiciously. His brain felt like stone.

Nevertheless he devised an attack against the enemy king and the game took a new turn. Each player took chances now, Peña pushing pawns and pieces, Borovek countering skillfully and creeping into Peña's position on the queenside. Peña sacrificed a piece for two pawns, opening lines of attack, certain he would frighten his opponent into a blunder. Borovek

defended cleverly, exchanging pieces. Peña generated threats and double threats. Borovek found devastating replies, holding the advantage.

The game became dangerous. Breathing space all but vanished. Moves became critical. A mistake by either player would make him lose immediately.

Time was forgotten now. Peña's thoughts raced. His hands jumped at the pieces. His attack stuttered. Stubbornly he regrouped his forces. A devilish swindle had occurred to him. It must succeed or he would face a lost end game. He would set a trap and offer delicious bait—another pawn. If it were taken, he would draw the game by force with intricate maneuvers against the enemy king. It would work. Borovek would succumb to hysteria and bite on anything.

Peña proceeded skillfully. The trap was complex. He set it deftly and waited on the precipice, clinging to hope with his fingertips.

The swindle failed. Borovek either saw through it or missed it completely.

The game moved on. The champion defended against superior forces, unwilling to give in. Either player had the right to adjourn now. Peña decided he might be able to save the game with Larry's help and called for an adjournment.

## THE BLACK PAWN QUEENS



**B**ack in his hotel suite, Peña sat sourly at the chessboard examining the position of the pieces in the adjourned game. He and Larry were looking for a means to

save it, but several hours of study had given no hope.

"It's lost," said Larry, sitting with arms folded on his chest. "Why don't you call him and resign?"

"You make me sick," said Peña.

"I make you sick? You make yourself sick. You're the one who offered the draw! You're the one who played like an ass hole. Not me."

Larry wasn't angry; he was simply right. Peña couldn't stand the idea of resigning another game. He had hoped that together they could find a saving line; one that would draw and save the embarrassment of losing again.

He blamed the interferences which had destroyed his concentration. He was distracted by the need to understand the events of the past two weeks.

On top of Croagh Patrick everything had been perfect: the match well in hand; a beautiful, loving woman by his side; peaceful contentment; a strong conviction of an orderly life.

Now he was only a fool. Nothing had been perfect on top of that rock pile, except the illusion. Competition with a mountain wasn't real. It was easily conquered. One had only to climb it. One had only to stand at the top and look around in a foolish, self-delusioning belief that all was well.

She had that appearance too. He had actually believed she was his and that they were living together in paradise. Another incredible illusion.

When they came back to earth he had awakened quickly enough to reality. But she was the one who had lured him away from chess, then driven him to Nikki. He had to get off the hook.

Why hadn't he thought about it like a sensible person and thrown Annette off?

"Well?" Larry said impatiently. "Are you going to sit there in a trance all night?"

“Shit. Call them up and tell them I resign.”

“If you’re not satisfied, don’t listen to me. I don’t want you blaming me afterward.”

“Do it. Let’s get on to the next one.”

When Peña resigned the adjourned game, the score became five to four, still in his favor, and victory remained only one game away. It seemed impossible that the match had not ended long ago.

They were deep in study when Fenley came in carrying newspaper clippings. He spread them on the table and rearranged them nervously, making a continuous rustle which Peña knew was intended to get his attention. He hated Fenley at that moment and was about to make a caustic remark when he noticed his own picture under a front-page headline.

“Where’d you get that?” he asked in a half growl.

“The Paris newspapers are out. You won’t like it.”

Peña got up to look. The newspaper was in French, of course, but he immediately recognized two words at the head of the article: “Nicole Rennette.”

Speechless, he stared at his picture, at the name, and at the meaning which drifted on the edge of his mind. His picture smirked at him. The print laughed. This was her doing. This was Nikki living again in a new form, coming to life, as she had dreamed, on the front page of a famous daily newspaper. Nikki wasn’t dead. No one could kill a woman like her!

He wanted to. He wanted to rip up the clippings and throw them in the trash. There couldn’t be anything he wanted to hear from her, could there?

But he was morbidly curious. Nikki had wormed her way into his life in a way he had never allowed anyone to do. In her he had recognized a hidden part of himself.

“What does it say?” he asked.

Quite pleasantly, Fenley described the article as the first in

a series that would present different sides of a chess champion.

"Well, what does she say?" he demanded.

"She?" Fenley asked blandly.

"Yes, she!" He pointed to the name. "She's the one who wrote it. Don't you recognize that name?"

"Yes, come to think of it, it looked familiar."

Fenley could be exasperating. He knew damned well who the author was, but he played his scene as if it were a low-key suspense drama, simply placing the blood-stained dagger on the table and letting it speak for itself.

"For Christ's sake, Fenley, what does it say? You didn't come in here to play paper cutouts, did you?"

As if quite unaware of Peña's temper, Fenley interpreted a sentence here and there, mostly summarizing the author's opinion that Peña was sensitive, moody, arrogant, and egotistical. He glanced uncomfortably at Peña for the first time.

"She says you're a tyrant who tolerates others only on your own terms," Fenley finished, speaking as if he might have written the phrase himself.

Peña turned to Larry, thinking he might catch a simpleton grin on his face, but Larry poked at the chess pieces as if quite unconcerned.

He turned back to Fenley, who smiled awkwardly. "That's a rotten thing to put in a newspaper. Doesn't she have anything good to say?" Peña asked, wanting to believe that Fenley was making it up.

"Well, she says that when you're alone with a, uh, woman, you gradually drop your . . . pretentious ways. You have a warmer, uh, loving, sensitive side. You have great energy and wit, and—"

"I've heard enough," Peña said, at a snicker from Larry. "Listen, Fenley, call that newspaper and tell them I'll sue their

asses into the ground if they publish any more of that stuff.”

“I already did, Peña. I didn’t like it any more than you, but it’s too late. All her articles have already been published in Tunisia!”

“Christ, get a lawyer. See if you can’t stop it.”

“Looks like you fucked around with the wrong piece this time, champ,” Larry said, pushing pieces.

Peña looked at each of them angrily and stalked away. Images hammered in his head. Rain splattered on the window, the drops mashing and running away. Nikki’s body was probably in Tunis by now, but mocking him with her memoirs, with her knowledge of him, with her memory of how he had touched her, what he had told her, what they had done.

The rain beat on the window. Larry mumbled on the phone.

“I’ll see what I can do, Peña,” Fenley said, as he left the suite.

Peña went to the table and looked at the article. By tomorrow it would be in all the English-language newspapers. He couldn’t believe this of her.

“Do you read French, Larry?”

“Only if it’s about chess. That Fenley’s a whiz. Ask him to write it out.”

“Hell, I don’t want to hear it from him.”

“Was she a nympho, Peña? . . . Never mind. I was just kidding.” He left the room hurriedly.

Peña stared at the windowpanes. Reality was clear only in the objects around him. He saw edges and planes. Nothing fitted together.

A cart appeared at the door, pulled by Larry, pushed by Maureen, bringing in multiodors of food. The shelves were loaded with plates and metal covers.

Peña closed his eyes in a desperate attempt to control him-

self. No one cared how he felt or what had happened to him. He stood there silently, watching them, feeling inconsequential.

"Shall I set the table, sir?" Maureen glanced at him hesitantly.

Did she see him? He saw her lips moving, her eyes catching his for a moment.

"It looks so wonderful, doesn't it? The chef prepared it himself. I brought extra dishes, not knowing how many guests there were."

Her tongue moved over her lips hungrily. She knelt and bent, lifting the dishes, leaning over the table, her short skirt showing long legs, very long legs, like Nikki's . . .

Larry and Maureen moved about in a greedy pantomime, setting out the plates, the dishes, crowding the table, filling the room with the clatter and ritual, speaking nonsense to one another, lifting each lid in turn, sniffing and grunting like hogs.

A tight, miserable sickness jammed Peña's stomach.

"Better hurry, champ," said Larry, offering a plate to Maureen.

The two of them immersed themselves in the feast. Sounds of eating blotted out the rain whipping against the windows. Damp loneliness saturated Peña. He sat at the table and tried to eat, tried to listen to them, watch them, and drive from his mind the wretched feelings of failure and ridicule.

Maureen had cleared her plate and poured gravy and mashed pats of butter on five large potatoes. Larry's quick hands and boarding-house reach made eating seem like a competitive game of blitz chess. Peña picked at his food, watching and listening dully.

"Sir?" asked Maureen, holding out a cherry pie covered with whipped cream.

He shook his head. She slid half the pie onto her plate and began eating it.

Larry choked and quickly snatched up the other half. "How can you eat all that?" asked Larry.

"We can get another," said Maureen challengingly.

"I'll be damned. Haven't you eaten this month?"

"I didn't know I was so hungry." She smiled and snatched a forkful from Larry's plate.

"You'll get as big as me," Larry muttered, pulling back his plate.

Peña looked from one to the other, remote and disgusted.

"I'm on the way. Look at this." Maureen grabbed the sweater covering her stomach and stretched it out. "See that," she said proudly, returning to her pie.

"Tremendous," Larry said.

"You should see my mother. A real walrus!" She choked back a laugh. "No offense, sir!" She shrieked and pieces of pie flew all over.

Peña groaned and ducked away, hating these two and their heavy comedy. Ideas that had been stewing in his head suddenly jelled.

"Hey, chief, where in hell are you going? Didn't you get enough to eat?" laughed Larry. "Don't be a sorehead."

Peña slammed the door to his bedroom and stood for a moment, clenching his fists. Then he lifted the phone and called the college.

Yes, there was a French professor. Good.

He ordered a taxi to the rear entrance, took Nikki's notebook from the closet, and went out.

## EQUALITY



The next day the news of Nikki's death broke in the newspapers:

### TUNISIAN REPORTER MURDERED

Nicole Rennette, a Tunisian newspaper reporter, was killed in Northern Ireland today.

Manguel Peña, the world's chess champion, was present, making a valiant effort to save Mlle Rennette, risking his life. However, the bullets found their mark and she died later of the wounds.

An official British communiqué claimed that the reporter's death was a deliberate act of violence by the IRA.

Peña read the report with increasing alarm. Already a crowd had gathered in front of the hotel, and Larry's suite became the only usable hideout. At game time a police escort was necessary.

A delirious greeting met Peña as he entered the stage. A packed house yelled his name and applauded gleefully. People waved and shouted as if celebrating a returning war hero. A thin ribbon of space remained in each aisle, and it appeared that two tickets had been sold for each seat. There was considerable pushing and arguing.

Peña was baffled and disturbed. The hubbub was impossible to quell. Silence lights kept flashing and Donegal shouted at the audience. It took O'Donnell to quiet them with threats to move the game elsewhere.

The excitement was soon reflected in the game as the players were caught up in the hysteria. Peña's nerves tingled. He had to win this one and get out of Ireland. Ideas charged in his head, urgent and eager to be executed. Gradually he settled down and got a solid grip on the game.

The play twisted through unexpected channels, inspired and reckless, as if the two opponents were willing to risk everything. Borovek never had been quite so daring.

Unexpectedly, the Russian exchanged his bishop for a rook, which gave him an immediate material advantage but a potentially severe problem in the defense of his king. Peña thought the move a mistake and began to sense victory. He was also puzzled. He recalled the moves which led to this point, staring at the board, trying to make sense of it. Underlying motives of an opponent were always difficult to fathom, but therein lay part of his greatness. At the chessboard he could penetrate the foggiest, most obscure plans of his opponents and prepare a defense before they attacked. But an inaccurate estimate usually led to disaster. Had Borovek done a foolish thing? Or had Peña calculated incorrectly?

For several minutes this problem became Peña's obsession. It must be thoroughly understood. He worked with a vengeance, sorting through variations, imagining trial moves, building his knowledge of the position. He was staggered by the volume of possibilities.

He glanced at the pitchers filled with cold drinks. Then at the clocks. Back to the board. Then at Borovek, taking in the man's quiet features and mood; he especially noticed Borovek's eyes. Nothing remotely anxious or competitive was evident on that face. It seemed quite at ease.

Well, this is it, then, Peña decided. Borovek doesn't know what he's doing, and this will finish him off . . .

However, the game did not proceed as Peña had perceived it. Borovek made unexpected moves, not following lines Peña thought best.

With the advantage of the two bishops he planned to open up the position by clearing out the center pawns. In his mind he laid out future maneuvers clearly, examining them for flaws and opportunities, discovering threats he could make against enemy weaknesses.

Peña could not believe the continuation. The enemy rooks found open files, and the center pawns closed off the bishops. Playing aggressively, Peña broke into the enemy king position, but Borovek was not intimidated as he parried the attack and brought it to a standstill. Peña fought back, continuing to hope for a miracle. He stared at the board with resentment, glued to his own stubbornness, acutely aware of his own inflexibility.

He looked away from the board toward the audience. His gaze drifted to where Larry sat. Beside him was a woman in lavender with blonde hair and a pink scarf around her neck. She leaned forward and he saw who it was.

He felt an unfamiliar sensation of relief. He had a vision of the two of them in a jet, and of Ireland, a tiny island below.

He blinked and focused on the chess pieces. Deep in the complex position, lay a saving plan. He had to find it!

Peña called on the deepest resources of his mind, blanking out the world of sights and sounds. Only this microcosm made sense. He and Borovek battled for control over it like scientists who approached each problem with formal logic. His stake was victory or defeat.

The obvious territory was the chessboard. The awkward pieces were all pawns of his mind locked in a violent struggle to win, to capture, to threaten blows. Obviously Borovek controlled this game.

What were his chances? The sand has run out. The clock cannot run without it. The sand lies at his feet, which were buried. Slowly he was sinking, feeling the sand over his legs, his chest, his arms, headed for his mind, heavy on his body, suffocating. How could he move?

Angrily he dragged himself up, knocked over his king, and left.

## COUNTERATTACK



With a police escort Peña returned to Larry's room to find Annette waiting for him. Newspapers were on the floor beside her chair. A bottle and half-filled glass were on the table.

She looked up quietly. "Are you all right?"

"Yes." He poured a drink. She was not so perfect now, for her face was tear-stained.

"I'm sorry you lost the game. I wish you had won. Then you might clear out of Ireland."

"What's eating you?" he asked.

She picked up the newspaper. "Listen to this: 'I cannot understand the chess player separately from the man, for I see arms and eyes and man combined, rubbing, manipulating, moving the pieces as he does his women . . .' Ah, it's enough to silence me forever. And listen to this: 'He is glorious and exalted, forgetful even of the piece with which he claims the victory!' Lovely, isn't it!"

Annette slammed the paper down and looked away from him. He didn't know what to say. He was afraid she would leave at any moment and end it. Each waited for the other.

"It's not an explanation I desire," she said. "Not about the French girl. Jesus knows, I had no claim on you . . ."

Peña felt rotten from losing the chess game and uncertain of how Annette fitted into his schemes. He thought of leaving. What was the point of talking? He felt empty. The very cells of his body were draining away.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't intend to be mean."

"It's okay." He knew she was forgiving.

"I care for you, you know. I shouldn't have left you the other day. You were so remote and wrapped up in your chess. Can you tell me why I've come to mean nothing to you, Peña?"

"Who said you mean nothing?"

"It's the feeling I get when you don't call and you don't come over, and I read of this other woman in the papers. Can it all be true?"

He forced himself to see her anger and disappointment. In his present mood, and with her drinking, he expected a meaningless argument, wanting only to bypass the problems and return to their former happy state.

"When the match is over, I'll be able to think clearly again," he said.

"Your friend Larry says you're playing like a patzer, whatever that is."

"He's not going through it; I am. What do you think it's like to play all summer and think I've got the match won, then he comes back and ties me?"

"It's your own fault."

"Yes, for screwing around."

"Is that all it's meant to you? And now you're in a public scandal."

"That bitch wormed her way in and lied to me. She was using me all along and I was too stupid to know it."

"But you were not using her?"

"Nobody said I wasn't."

"Tit for tat, then," she said, springing out of her chair. "I suppose we all use one another. It was grand, wasn't it?" she said coldly, turning to the door.

"Look, don't go."

She stopped and looked at him. "Why not?"

"She didn't mean anything to me."

"Is that a backward way of saying that I do?"

"I just want to go back to where we were before. You don't know how these reporters are."

"Or these chess players."

"Did I ever say I was an angel?"

"No, but you might have some consideration for me. It makes me look like a damned fool to think that you ran off with her."

"Who says I did?"

"The papers say so. They say you drove her into Northern Ireland in her car. Do you deny it?"

"No."

"Then it's a feeble lie. There's no need for that. I can't understand you, Peña. It was lovely enough together, on holiday and planning a trip around the world. Are you always so unpredictable?"

He turned away from her, not liking being on the defensive. He knew he had hurt and disappointed her, but he didn't know what to do about it. He groped for an answer.

"I never promised you anything," he began.

"Oh, didn't you, now? I suppose those things we were discussing meant nothing to you. Can you shuck me off so easily?"

"I told you you might get hurt."

"Yes, you did, but you didn't tell me you would run off with

some educated whore who would publish her experiences in the newspapers and make you and her the laughing stock of Ireland." Her voice echoed in the room. She glared at Peña furiously.

"You just don't understand, Annette."

"Don't tell me that. It's only the chess that means anything to you. Oh, you prepared me for the worst as if you knew all along what you would do. And now she's dead, God rest her foolish soul. You have practically thrown away the match, what will you have left?"

"You must be drunk," he said.

"Am I, now? Well, I'm not a fool."

"If you were sober, you wouldn't have the guts to—" He broke off to duck the flying whisky glass. "Don't be a baby," he yelled, wiping whisky from his face.

"You're the baby, taking yourself from breast to breast looking for mother's milk!"

She came at him to beat him with her fists, but her last remark made him so angry that he pushed her across the room. She screamed and crashed into a lamp and fell on the couch. She was up in a second, ready to throw an ashtray, but he pinned her down.

"Go to the whores of the city if I'm not good enough for you."

"Shut up! You don't know what you're saying."

"Let go of me. Jasus, I wish I were stronger"

He thought she might cry then. He felt like crying himself. She struggled to get free, tears in her eyes and a look of pain and frustration on her face. When she lay still, he freed her hands and sat there helplessly. He wanted to tell her he was sorry, that he hadn't meant to hurt her. There was no easy way to say it and, try as he would, he could not. He himself was hurt and angry, but he couldn't grasp the idea of compromise.

What hurt most was that she regarded Nikki's death only in selfish terms, not caring about the pain it caused him.

She didn't understand the pressure he was under to win the match, and how further distractions and arguments were only making it more difficult.

"What's on your mind, Peña? You look so strange."

"Nothing." He turned away. "Come on, you had better go home."

She looked at him with a puzzled, despairing expression. Then silently, she left.

He went to the table and sat down, resting his chin in his hands, barely under control, not wanting to think. He couldn't understand why he had allowed her to go. The room seemed lifeless and empty.

He stared at a newspaper, absentmindedly reading the headlines. They made him feel worse and he threw it down, thinking of Nikki's notebook. It was safely in the hands of the college French professor. Soon he would know exactly what she had written.

He noticed a small headline about a murder in Ballinknock. Recognizing the name, he read the text. A Mrs. Mary McLaughlin had been found beaten and drowned in her tub. Her house had been ransacked. The Garda were uncertain of the motive, but they were questioning her son.

Peña dropped the paper in a frightened rage. Now he was involved in two murders.





THREE

# The End Game



## ZUGZWANG



**T**he sky cleared and brightened the room while Peña sat alone looking at the sharp silhouette of Dublin's skyline. He was lonely. The fight with Annette had left him worried. Why hadn't he been able to explain anything? Why was he so inept, making it worse between them instead of better?

Fights should clear away bad feelings and bring them closer together. Instead, she was gone, leaving him empty.

At the chessboard, the pieces were discarded like a half-consumed meal. He stared at the long shadow of the king and

groped in the confusion of his mind, drained of inspiration and the will to win.

Mrs. McLaughlin's murder depressed him. He was certain the IRA had done it.

The next chess game must be the decider. He couldn't take chances remaining in Ireland beyond that. He would win and leave immediately. The money could be collected later. Annette? Perhaps Annette too.

A second thought occurred. Suppose he drew? The match wouldn't be over. That was unthinkable. He had to win. Waiting in Ireland three additional days was out of the question. He couldn't give them extra time to catch him, or they would kill him as they had killed Mrs. McLaughlin.

He imagined the alarming moment when they had found the evidence in Nikki's room, the negatives, pictures, perhaps other notebooks. After finding them, they had gone to question Mrs. McLaughlin. At first she had told them nothing. Then they had beaten her and she had told them everything, told them about giving *him* the pictures and the notebook. Then they had killed her, pushing her down in the tub. This very likely sequence of events made him sweat, and he took to random pacing.

On an impulse, foreseeing the need for a quick escape, he called Fenley and asked about his rented Corvette. Sure, it was a great car. Did he want to borrow it? The keys were under the front floor mat, the Vette parked in the basement, just opposite the elevator.

Peña returned to pacing, intensely aware that he must unscramble the problems facing him. These Irish games were completely bewildering. The players were two women, two grandmasters, and the IRA. The playing field was Ireland. Before arriving for the chess match, he had never dreamed that such events would take place.

The whisky glass lay at his feet. He held it to the light, turning it slowly to find the print of her lips. He touched it with his.

He went to the bathroom and splashed water on his face. Slowly, he dried himself, watching his face in the mirror. He saw an expression he didn't understand. His eyes looked confused and sad. He snapped off the light and went into the living room. He glanced apprehensively at the door and locked it, wondering if a chair would hold it.

Suddenly an almost forgotten memory returned. He recalled the first rumors of what the Japanese in the northern Philippines were doing. They were coming their way. He stiffened; remembering: A fright had spread through their household, a fear like torture and death. Once again, the Japanese had become a fierce enemy, speeding in trucks toward their town. He remembered watching for them, seeing the first clouds of dust that signalled their approach.

His family hid inside the house. Peña waited at the window, gripping the bamboo sill, watching the patrols, dreading the moment when they would enter his yard. Filipino women were driven like pigs along the manure-laden street, headed their way.

The officers shouted orders and angry soldiers appeared in the doorway. His mother and sisters hid behind the slim partitions; his father was knocked aside while the soldiers smashed their way around the house, breaking and cutting. They hit his father, bloodied his face, then pulled his mother down the stairs. Her tears and cries filled his whole world, but he couldn't move.

Down below, his mother was forced to kneel. Her long hair was stringy with muck; her head bent; the white skin of her neck showed. He was sure they would kill her.

He couldn't face the rest . . .

This time Peña was determined to face the enemy squarely. Peña searched his dark thoughts, both excited and afraid. His family had waited, foolishly expecting to be treated fairly, as they had during the years of the Japanese occupation, not realizing that the Japs were terrified at the thought of the Americans returning; that they had gone crazy with fear. Men, women, even children, had died in that surge of revenge. His mother had been carried away; to die, he had assumed. Only much later had they found her in prison, her mind destroyed.

It could happen to him. He could see himself, mindless, helpless, a human fragment, living out his life pathetically. He imagined that retarded, frightened condition, reducing him to a slow-witted, empty shell, dependent on others, hardly knowing one person from another; losing all chess skill, losing all sense of meaning. He couldn't bear the thought of a life of cries, shrieks, and guttural sounds.

In a half-conscious effort at self-protection, he crossed himself, the religious significance forgotten. A cross lay hidden at his throat, mounted on the crown of the king held inside the locket.

Stiffened and alert, he looked out at the city, over the rooftops, at a tall building. Someone stood at a window, he was sure, focusing a telescope. Cautiously, he pulled the table and chair to a safer spot.

It wasn't death that Peña feared—it was partial destruction. It was helplessness, like his mother's. Intelligence at playing chess and world renown were his only possessions. It was unbearable to consider their loss.

The room was safe and protected, but he bristled at the confinement, feeling a paralysis that he resented but didn't understand. Such defensive positions led to *Zugzwang*, then defeat, unless one took aggressive, preventive steps. The enemy must not be permitted to attack him in a helpless posi-

tion, nor must he wait for them to come. The secret of escaping *Zugzwang* lay in prediction and anticipation. One had to foresee! One had to know the enemy, his weaknesses, and the means to attack him first!

With more confidence, Peña reviewed the situation: The pictures were safe in the bank vault; the police would be greatly interested in them. The completed translation of the notebook would certainly reveal information about O'Donnell and the IRA. All were usable evidence which he possessed, to be used when needed. They were his wall of safety—a barrier against attack.

As long as *he* had this information in safekeeping and *they* knew it, he was safe.

## RACING PAWNS



Larry returned, and with renewed energy they resumed their studies.

Hours passed unnoticed; meals vanished; and Ireland moved into shadow. The guard in the hall changed regularly, dishes disappeared noisily, and the chess pieces clomped over the board.

Like monks they leaned forward, filling sheet after sheet with the language of chess. A constant murmur passed between them, almost a chant—a capella and in two voices. Not always harmonious. An organ accompaniment would have seemed appropriate, with torches burning in the niches and shafts of light streaming through the visible dust.

Outside, a horde of Vikings might have swept through the city; Cromwell's English could have re-entered Ireland and

stormed the gates of Drogheda: the two grandmasters would not have noticed. They worked with religious devotion.

The next game was little more than fifty hours away. It would be the last, Peña told himself again.

The phone rang. He answered, holding it like a firecracker.

"Mr. Peña?" came a female voice.

"Speaking."

"This is the Ministry. Mr. O'Donnell wishes to speak with you . . ."

Peña's heart-thumping silence filled the gap as he waited.

"Mr. Peña? I haven't received a copy of your appeal . . . the forfeited game. Have you changed your mind?"

"I don't know. Maybe."

"You cannot delay too long. The match schedule, you know."

"I'm aware of that, and also very busy."

"I'm certain you are. Is there any assistance I might give?"

"Yes, uh . . ." Peña thought for a moment. "There is something I wanted to discuss with you."

"Yes, Mr. Peña? What is it?"

"Something I want to talk to you about in private."

"About the match?"

"Another matter."

They arranged a meeting at O'Donnell's government building at four o'clock.

When Peña hung up, beads of sweat ran into his eyes. Excited thoughts rattled in his head, as he imagined that O'Donnell would look at the photos with embarrassment, fumble for explanations . . .

It was time for action. Peña found the phone number of Professor Jacques Viende, and dialed. It rang and rang. Peña was sure they were tracing the call. His foot tapped impatiently.

Viende answered.

“This is Peña. Is the translation ready, professor?”

“Yes.”

“Good. I’ll be there soon. Don’t go away.” Immediately he hung up.

“You’ll go where?” asked Larry.

“Don’t be a nursemaid, Larry. I have an errand to run.”

“Where? At a bordello?”

Peña, busy gathering up a hat and coat, ignored the remark.

“You’ve become some kind of nut, Peña. What’s with you, anyway?”

“Nothing.”

“How do you expect to win this match? A circus flea has better concentration than you. Are you in love with that Irish broad? You got some kind of sickness!”

“She’s not a broad. And I’m not in love.”

“Well, something’s eating you. You shouldn’t let that French dame bug you. It wasn’t your fault even if you were dumb.”

“Knock it off, will you, Larry?”

“My ass! Don’t you realize that skinny Russian has tied you and you’re headed for the graveyard of ex-champs if you don’t snap out of it?”

“Tell me something I don’t know.”

“What do you care what that French dame wrote in her goddamn notebook? You can’t get back at her now.”

“If I told you, you wouldn’t believe it anyway.”

“So you are worried. Listen, my mother always told me not to worry about what any dame says about me, just listen to *her*, she always said. You should do the same, Peña; take my advice. Call her. She’ll straighten you out.”

“That’s all I need. Listen, just try to find something new in that line, will you, Larry. I’ll see you later.”

Peña left. The guard in the hall said everything was quiet. Peña took the elevator to the underground parking lot, a nervous sensation in his stomach. When the elevator opened, he looked around, holding the door. An attendant sat near the exit talking to a policeman. The Corvette stood opposite, steel blue and powerful-looking. He walked quickly and got in, running his fingers around the mat until he found the keys.

Hurriedly he examined the controls, inserted the key, and started up. The engine roared like a dragster. The chassis throbbed, shaking him in the seat. He pressed the accelerator and the third carburetor opened up with a violent, prolonged rattle. If only the motorboat at Innisfree had had this engine!

Peña shifted the chrome-plated knob into first and touched the gas pedal to ease the car out. More pressure and it leaped from the parking spot. He wrestled for control. A wrench of the steering wheel spun him toward the exit. He flew up the ramp, whining the tires on the rising turn. At the pedestrian walk he glanced left and right and rushed into the traffic, moving quickly leftward from lane to lane for a turn into the first alley.

The mirror showed a following car, white with a wide silver bumper. They were chasing. He repeated the street-to-alley maneuver, making random turns until he lost them.

Peña drove on, thoroughly enjoying this new game in which the stakes were rising. First prize in the match momentarily paled by comparison. He rushed through the streets, enjoying the power beneath his foot and the obvious astonishment of other drivers.

First stop was the Bank of Ireland for the pictures. The bewildering array of streets led him in circles, one looking like another. He fled with the traffic, making turns, constantly on the lookout, but hopelessly lost. He found a parking building and took a cab.

The cab driver chatted pleasantly about the weather, the city traffic, the horse show, interspersing imaginary conversation with other drivers. Peña listened off and on.

“Hey, look out there, Henry!” The driver was talking to a truck that nearly sideswiped them. “The reckless ones I call for the English, sir. It occupies the time of driving, you know. Now, the smart ones, I call them Mickey Finns. He’s the brainiest, he is, or was until they got him.”

“Got who?” asked Peña.

The driver passed back a newspaper in which a headline declared the capture of the IRA leader Michael Finn in the mountains southwest of Dublin.

“Been after him for years, they have,” continued the driver. “He’ll see little trouble from our government the way they escape nowadays. Look out, Henry!” He cut the wheel sharply. “I’ll be joining Saint Patrick soon enough!”

Peña read the article to the end. The paper expressed a cynical opinion that the government would not consider extradition to England for Finn, but would mete out their own inadequate version of justice.

Finn, he read, was the organizing force behind the IRA’s efforts to dislodge “the oppressor” from Irish soil. His capture might save the country from civil war, since he was so ruthlessly dedicated to IRA objectives. Endless killings and bombings both in England and Northern Ireland were attributed to his leadership. The newspaper expressed a thin hope that Finn’s capture would weaken the IRA, but worried about reprisals and probable efforts to free him.

By some tenuous thread, Peña felt connected to Finn, especially when he read the short biography. Finn’s parents had both been active in the cause of Irish freedom and were killed in the revolt of 1922 when Finn was eleven. Since then, he supported the cause of a united Ireland. He had tolerated no

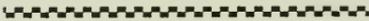
interference from the British or anyone else, carrying his beliefs into action until he became *the* recognized leader of the IRA.

Peña stared at the picture, thinking of the circumstances which had turned him toward chess, Finn toward revolution.

"Here she is," announced the driver.

Peña looked up expectantly. It was only the bank. He picked up the photographs there and went on to the college, where he asked the driver to wait.

## AN ISOLATED PAWN



Monsieur Viende worked on either the top level of hell or the bottom level of the college. The route was down, down. The walls were dripping and the halls cavernous. Peña's footsteps echoed loudly, rapped the far end, and sounded to him like a hollow clatter, pacing his heart.

A creaking, rotting door led to the Frenchman, who was bundled in a blue cardigan, wearing a tam in the French style, and smoking strong tobacco. Several tables along the dank stone wall were piled with books and strewn with loose sheets of paper.

"Ah, come in, come in, Monsieur Peña," he said, offering the one chair. "I have made a beautiful translation. You will admire every word of it. I should love to know this exciting, voluptuous woman. Perhaps soon, eh?" He looked down pleadingly, head cocked to the side, one eyebrow raised, and lips pursed.

"Of course, as soon as possible," Peña swiveled around in the chair. "Let's see it."

Viende gathered the papers, chattering about the joy of lovely thoughts as compared with the drudgery of teaching the vain and frivolous Irish. They evidently compared equally with the dull faculty, the irresponsible government, and the general ugliness of life above ground. Only occasionally was there a creation of beauty. Here, he assured Peña, was one of them.

Peña had his doubts. He knew there was nothing more beautiful than a successful mating attack.

“What makes you think a woman wrote this?” Peña asked.

“Ah, monsieur, there are certain anatomical references . . .” He rushed through the pages. “There, you see, *voilà!* And the gentleman of whom she speaks—may I assume it is you, sir?—is an obsession to her. She must possess him; she must comprehend, you see. Forgive me for interpreting. I know you will see for yourself and must know her in real life, eh, monsieur?”

“I knew her a little,” muttered Peña, surprised at the remark. Had he made *that much* of an impression on her, or was Viende exaggerating? Peña held the sheets of paper with mixed feelings, part revulsion, part tenderness. That she had used him was difficult to tolerate. That she had made a fool of him was disgusting. Yet here were the thoughts she had written and, if he had encouraged her at all, might have spoken.

The translation had a curious, adulatory, yet petulant, tone directed partly toward him and her reactions to their various experiences. There were complaints and disappointments. She often hated his indifference, his cool egotism and refusal to include her as a real person in his life. Their sexual experiences were described poetically, and he found himself associating her feelings with those he had experienced with Annette.

Viende hovered over his shoulder, occasionally reading

passages aloud. "Here she is like the sacrament, monsieur, noble and saintly. But here—please excuse a trouble with the translation—the handwriting . . . Ah, now, you see, 'a man of animal tenderness and sexual power,' that is nice. But now the bitterness: 'like so many modern males, enamored with himself, easily distracted by the cocklebur, or the cool grains of sand beneath the warm surface . . .' Magnificent, yes?"

Viende was not to be repressed, and Peña rather enjoyed his enthusiasm.

"But here," he continued, "here it is most humorous when the gentleman caught her from behind as she bent over a pool of water and they tumbled in together! Can you imagine!"

"Yes, that's really funny." Peña was thinking of how they had crept, soaking wet, through the hallway into their room. She had been a hellion, all right.

"Some brandy, monsieur?" Viende was already tipping the bottle.

Peña sipped slowly and continued to read. What about the IRA? He went back to the beginning and skimmed through the pages. There was nothing. The information must be in other notebooks. How much was about to be published?

He sat back and looked at the Frenchman. "You've finished?"

"Oh, yes. Is there more? I should be happy . . ."

Peña waved his hand and the room fell quiet. The chair swivel creaked. The brandy warmed him and made his eyes water. The Frenchman was puzzled.

"Is something wrong, monsieur?"

Peña was silent, thinking of the room, if it could be called that. It sealed off the world. The appeal was irresistible but repulsive.

"How can you stand this place?" he asked.

"Monsieur?"

"This dungeon?"

"You do not like it?"

"No."

"I am sorry. Out there is nothing for me. I find what peace I can. My protection is these four walls. Without them I would perish. You understand, eh?"

"Yes, I understand. The world's too much for you."

"Please do not judge too harshly, monsieur. The gentleman in the notebook is also transfixed and tortured by life. His breath is shallow and rays of sunshine seldom penetrate the canyon that is his life. You see, I am not alone, monsieur."

"Yes, I see."

"Please, I did not intend to anger you, monsieur."

A long silence followed as Peña watched a spider on the rough stone wall.

## A QUICK EXCHANGE



He circled St. Stephen's Green like a motorcyclist in a global wire cage, repeatedly passing the apartment buildings where he had stood two months before. Reconstruction efforts were underway. Syncopated hammering from the workmen echoed the heart-thumping in his throat.

He parked the Corvette, turned off the key, and listened to it reluctantly die.

The sky had clouded over during his visit with Viende, and rain threatened. On leaving the car, Peña pulled up his collar and crammed his rain hat low on his forehead. The pictures were in a heavy envelope under his arm; the notebook and its

translation hidden in the Vette. Strollers were already breaking out their umbrellas or hurrying toward cover as the rain began. It was almost four o'clock.

A young couple strolled by, talking German and smiling at each other. Rain swept by in light sheets. The park had emptied as if a lion were loose.

The government building loomed ahead. The inside hallway was already tracked with wet footprints. O'Donnell's office was located straight ahead, a wall of glass at the end of the hallway.

The Minister of Recreation sat behind an ancient desk, apparently intrigued by an image fixed on a wall of his office. His right hand held a pencil, and with the point he followed a deep carving on the desk top, emphasizing his somber, distracted mood, as if he awaited a calamity. Peña watched him through a plate-glass window while O'Donnell's secretary talked animatedly on the phone. A moment later she shoved through the heavy door without knocking and talked to O'Donnell in a silent pantomime.

Peña concentrated on her excited facial expressions as she moved about, her lips going constantly.

O'Donnell interrupted and appeared to be giving orders. He noticed Peña and came to the door.

"A crisis has developed, Mr. Peña. Come in, but I can be with you only momentarily."

The secretary passed him in a flurry of perfume and critical missions. Peña entered the office, holding the envelope inside his coat.

"Do you remember the French reporter who was killed, O'Donnell?" Peña began obliquely.

"I'm sorry about the forfeit, Mr. Peña, if that's your complaint."

"No. She was spying on the IRA and I think that's what got her killed. I—"

"Shouldn't you report this to the Garda?" O'Donnell was gathering papers together and stuffing them into a briefcase.

"What's wrong? Are you leaving the country?"

"We have a bomb threat against the building—nothing to be alarmed about at the moment. I have to clear out. The whole area is threatened. There'll be a thorough search."

"What are you talking about?" Peña felt he was being upstaged. "Is someone going to blow this place up? I didn't see anyone else panicking."

"Please, tell me what's on your mind and I'll try to listen."

Peña tried to see his eyes. The blue had turned to slate gray, the lips were a hard line. "The French reporter took several photographs, O'Donnell, and you're in them!"

"In relation to what?"

"I told you she was investigating the IRA."

"So is everyone, Mr. Peña. Every sleuth in the country. Half the population is suspicious of the other half. Now, what is it you have to show me?"

"Don't be stupid, O'Donnell. The French girl took photographs of you with someone in the IRA."

"Are you considering blackmail? Or is this your idea of an American joke, Mr. Peña?" O'Donnell was immediately angry.

"Neither. I only want to know what's going on."

O'Donnell looked as if he would burst as they stared at one another. He gestured impatiently.

"Exactly what are you talking about, Mr. Peña?"

"When is this place supposed to go up?"

"Why? You needn't worry. Our highly efficient bomb

squads will go over the building with a fine-toothed comb, as they are fond of saying.”

“Then why can’t we sit down and talk?”

“If you like. Now . . . what are you concealing so desperately under your arm?”

Peña felt again that he had met his equal. It was difficult to retain the initiative against O’Donnell, so he took out the envelope wrapped in the newspaper.

“I have pictures taken by Nicole Rennette showing men believed to be in the IRA. You are also in them, O’Donnell.” The obvious question as to whether or not O’Donnell was dealing with the IRA now seemed ridiculous if not dangerous, but Peña was determined to push on stubbornly. He disliked O’Donnell’s patronizing smile and impatience.

“Mr. Peña, I don’t know your intentions. Possibly they are reactions to a request from Miss Rennette or, in a more frivolous vein, an attempt at detective work inspired by American television. At any event, neither you nor Miss Rennette appear to have understood the elements with which you are dealing. ‘Hazardous’ would mildly describe them.”

“I wanted to know what your explanation would be.”

“I admire your forthrightness, Mr. Peña. What plans you intended to pursue *were* I involved in this sordid business, I can’t imagine. My work in the government is not necessarily common knowledge, although it presumes to be related to tourism and the recreational facilities of Ireland. I feel obliged to inform you, simply to ease your mind, that I have followed up on certain of Miss Rennette’s ‘discoveries.’ It was quite natural for her to mistake me for one of the guilty ones. And you as well.”

“What the hell does that mean?”

“Its real significance is that she publicized information

which the government was not only aware of, but was interested in using for remedial purposes.”

“What are you talking about, O’Donnell? I think you’re trying to hide something, or throw me off the track.”

O’Donnell gave him an exasperated look. “I am surprised to learn that your mind has drifted so far from the chess match, Mr. Peña. Believe me, we have serious problems.”

“Yes, you’ve captured the IRA chief. I suppose that’s a serious problem for *you!*”

“For *us*, Mr. Peña. Since you require convincing.” O’Donnell picked up a typed sheet from his desk and handed it to Peña. “Read that, please, and you’ll understand that I am not playing games with you.”

Peña read the neatly typed message:

TO: The Government      Dated: August 18  
FROM: The Provisional Irish Republican Army

1. We demand the release of Michael Finn by 1600 of this date.
2. Finn is to be provided motor transportation in a car of common make and model. His release is to take place at the intersections of O’Connell Street and Travaille, with no attempt made to follow his escape route.
3. Unless the above demands are met, the following events will take place: A section of the 16000 block on East O’Connell Street will be destroyed at 1700 hours, this date.
4. If Finn is not released by 0600 August 19, the government building, your address, will be destroyed at 0700 hours, that date.

5. If Finn is not then released, a person of grand importance will be killed and delivered to Dublin Castle at 1100 hours, August 19.

Signed . . .

“Are they talking about this building? Sounds as if they mean business, O’Donnell,” Peña said.

“They want him free and they are prepared for a miniature war if the government refuses.”

“Are you giving in?”

“That is to be decided. They can’t risk losing Finn to the British. We will not give in easily.”

“Well, that’s the government’s problem. What I want to know is . . .” Quickly Peña pulled out the envelope and the pictures. He put the photographs on the desk and spread them out, expecting O’Donnell to dissolve into a blubbering idiot.

O’Donnell burst out laughing.

“What’s so funny?”

“You’ve allowed your imagination to run off, Mr. Peña. As I have hinted, part of my work for the government has required associations which might easily be misinterpreted. It is fortunate that you brought these here first. That’s true, isn’t it?”

“Yes.”

“There might be certain difficulties if they were published—an embarrassment to the government.”

“Are you trying to tell me you’ve had a hand in tracking down these guys?”

“Yes, but you must keep this information confidential, Mr. Peña.”

“But I saw you myself, over on that bridge in the park exchanging something with an old accordion player . . .”

Perhaps he was now being too gullible. He couldn't decide.

"You've already learned more than you should know for your own safety, Mr. Peña. The man you are referring to may have assisted me at one time or another."

Peña laughed self-consciously, knowing he had been outmaneuvered.

"I must hurry," said O'Donnell. "If there are other pictures of this sort in your possession, I suggest you turn them over before an unscrupulous person attempts to use them."

Peña put the envelope on the desk, feeling ridiculous and defeated. "Okay," he said, unable to apologize.

"Good-bye, Mr. Peña. I advise you to stay close to your chess."

## A NEW THREAT



Peña mumbled something about satisfying his curiosity and left in confusion, hating this loss of face, feeling a complete fool. The whole building had been panicked by the bomb threat.

People rushed around with boxes and carts, headed for the exits.

The streets were drying now since the wind had come up. Large puddles lay in the gutters, dirty water in which trash scurried back and forth.

Peña turned and stopped. The building rose above him, a monument to another age. What size bomb would wreck this tomb?

A seemingly endless trail of government workers rushed by, probably secretly pleased at an early dismissal, eager to reach

the pubs and exchange speculations. Peña walked away.

The IRA had wasted no time. It wasn't his affair, but he was curious. Why such advance warning?

Without looking back he rushed past his car and flagged a cab, planning to disappear in the traffic and circle back. The driver was silent and aloof, lost in his own thoughts.

The cabbie sped through the streets, accepting random directions with a solemn nod while Peña wrestled to make plain logic of the events he had been caught up in. The minister's brittle laugh had annoyed him. If he had expected to even the score with O'Donnell, he had failed and only made an ass of himself.

Peña directed the cab driver back to the park, retrieved the Corvette, and returned to the hotel. His living room resembled a party wake. Tables and chairs were strewn with dishes and bits of food. Even the chess pieces were sticky. He wiped them with a damp cloth. The bedroom door was shut. He listened, thinking of Larry and Maureen coupling like a locomotive and toy caboose. The bedroom was empty.

The telephone held a note in the cradle. *Call Annette. Important.*

He fingered the note. Annette wanted to make up. He should go to work. They could have dinner . . . plenty of time left . . . one phone call couldn't hurt.

As the phone rang, he realized how much he wanted to see her.

"Jesus!" she began. "Peña, they're after me, the dirty bastards. I knew they would come sometime. The government called me in . . . How will I survive? . . . You've got to help."

"What? Didn't you pay your taxes?" In the background were sounds of men shouting, bottles clinking, boards ripping. Was the whole city under siege or was she out of her mind?

"They're going to bomb me, Peña. Can't you hear them?"

I don't know what they expect to find. I've been away. I haven't a car . . . don't know what . . ." She broke off in a shout.

"Are you at the government building by the park?" He looked at the number on the note.

"No, for Jesus' sake! I'm home! They're going to blow up my home and store!"

## AN EXPLOSIVE COMBINATION



The Corvette was the perfect car to negotiate a mile of Dublin streets. He concentrated on the traffic, almost missed the turn at Hennessey's, but spun the wheel in time, and sped the half-block to her place, ignoring the policemen who tried to wave him down. Trucks labeled Bomb Detection and Destruction were parked out front, soldiers stood around, and policemen had blocked off traffic.

Her store had been stripped, every bottle removed, the cabinets torn apart, fixtures pulled down, cash register broken, floor boards torn up; and men were still at work.

He found her in the back apartment, distraught and tearful.

"Ah, it's you!" She threw her arms around him. "I'm nearly out of my head. They broke in and forced me to call you. I'm sorry, Peña!"

Only then did he look around at the two uniformed men in the room.

"What's going on?" he demanded, seeing that they were armed and that a pistol was pointed at him.

"Listen carefully," one of the soldiers said. "You're to act perfectly natural. Load your car as if you were clearing out.

Then you and the woman drive to the right and stop at the first intersection. Another team will pick you up there. Unwarranted acts or attempts to call for help or escape will result in her immediate death. Do you understand?"

"Who the hell are you bastards?" Peña looked from face to face.

"Don't fool with them, Peña," begged Annette. "They're not above carrying out the threat."

"Move along, now," came the order.

Peña looked around hopefully, but there was no escape. The entrance was blocked by a heavysset man. The living room was in chaos.

"Where's Colleen?" Annette yelled, pushing furniture about violently. "A moment ago . . ." She found the cat and held her, but continued searching. "Jesus, Jesus, this is a sin on the Lord," she kept muttering, still searching.

"What are you doing, dammit? If you'll tell me what to get, we can take it out to the car." Peña was thinking that, once he got into the car, they'd never catch him.

"It's the Kennedy portraits and my crucifix!" She yelled back, still searching.

"Are they going to bomb this place?" He turned to the soldiers. They said nothing.

"At five o'clock! Didn't I tell you that?"

He pulled her up and shook her. "Don't you realize it's nearly five now? Come on!"

She ran into the bedroom and began to pull clothes from the racks and pile them in his arms. He threaded his way through the store to the car. A soldier warned him that it was time to clear out. No trace of a bomb had been found; that was obvious. He hurried back inside to take the next load, cramming everything into the rear of the Corvette.

"Come on, we've got to get out of here." With the two

soldiers guarding them, he pushed Annette toward the exit. "Why would they pick on you?" he asked.

"It's you they want," she answered.

In the street, running policemen and soldiers shouted. Trucks sped away from the curb. Their two guards watched them closely as they directed them to Peña's car. Colleen clung to Annette with her claws, hanging almost upside down as they got in.

With a turn of the key, the Vette roared. Colleen yowled and leaped out through the window. Annette threw open the door and, before Peña could stop her, she ran after the cat, weaving along the curb. A soldier caught the animal.

Peña's watch read five o'clock. He drove up to Annette and threw open the door. "Come on, let's get out of here."

A thumping sound above made him look. A helicopter came into view over the buildings, roaring toward them, creating a pulsating racket. It had to be carrying the bomb.

"Here it comes," he shouted.

Annette rushed into the seat. The helicopter was almost overhead. Peña yelled to her to get down on the floor, kicked the accelerator, and the Vette screamed up the street. The bomb exploded and a hurricane of sound and wind struck the car. It careened and fishtailed at high speed until Peña lost control of it as a flaming fireball whooshed over them.

He flung himself over Annette and pressed her to the floor as a piercing scream struck his ears and the spinning car slammed him into oblivion.

## CAPTURED PAWNS



A strange dream taunted him into a belief that the gentle rocking motion was due to the clumsiness of the pallbearers. A clear plastic casket surrounded his body, and with a great effort, he tried to see ahead. He listened fearfully, aware of sounds like the blast furnaces in hell.

Peña dreamed he was conscious, growing angry at being carted off in a box while he was alive. To his horror, he envisioned a deep tomb and death beyond. A trumpet sounded rudely.

In the dream, a horse-drawn cart shook and rattled through herds of cattle that threatened to stampede and crush him. A high-pitched squeal ended in an abrupt lurch.

Peña's eyes snapped open wide and he searched the blackness. Fully conscious now, he stared around. A crack of light revealed vertical and cross beams of narrow width. He reached out and touched the wall. It was real enough. A soft pad lay under his head, covering the hard floor. His shoulder ached and he dropped his arm, realizing now that he lay in a truck bed. There were no windows. What had happened?

Traffic moved outside, the truck moving with it, creating a pain that constantly interrupted his efforts to remember. Fragments of images floated in his head, jarred, and were repeatedly lost. He felt he was constructing a difficult jigsaw puzzle. A few pieces fitted—Annette, the cat, the chopper . . . the explosion. Then what? The rest was blank.

He touched his legs, felt the bones in his hips and chest, expecting to find bandages and splints. A bruised area in his

shoulder was swollen and sensitive. His neck had been wrenched, but otherwise he was all right.

He reached around and touched a soft body.

"Don't," Annette said hopelessly.

"We're alive," he whispered. "Are you okay?" He touched her leg and shook it slightly. She groaned.

"Can you move? Where do you hurt?"

"All over."

"Try to move and see if anything's broken." Her form was visible in the dim light. She cursed when he touched certain tender spots.

Peña moved close, putting his hands lightly on her back and drawing her to him.

"Where are we?" she asked.

"We're in a truck. I don't know how we got here."

"Where's Colleen?"

"I don't know. I'll ask them." He got up and grasped the side of the truck. From the cracks of light, he could see that two doors were fastened at the back. He shook them, but they were immovable.

"Jesus, my head is splitting," she called out.

Peña kicked the sides until he hurt his foot. At the front he pounded on the solid wall, holding the rectangular screen to keep his balance. A panel opened slightly and a face confronted him through a tiny window.

"Calm yourself back there." growled a voice.

"Who the hell are you?" demanded Peña. "Where are you taking us?"

The panel closed. Insolent bastard.

This was a physical trap. Opponents had boxed him in on the chessboard, but this was different. At the board, the situation was clear. One could trace back through the moves and

follow the exact course which led to a predicament. In this situation, he felt unfairly abused and quite unable to counter-attack.

Gradually he came to understand that he was the "grand person" who would be killed. He wondered why it didn't frighten him.

Hunched over, he stared at Annette. Her green jacket and yellow scarf were black shadows. He traced the outline of her shoulders, down the slope of her waist, to the rising curve of her hips, down the length of her thighs and calves to her feet, then back up. Her hair lay across her face. He pushed it aside and kissed her cheek. She reached out and held his hand. They remained that way.

#### A SAFE EXCHANGE



The truck bounced and heaved over a rough road. Only the padding protected them from further bruising. They huddled together, lurching miserably, talking spasmodically but with little coherence.

Finally the truck stopped. They could hear another car pull alongside. Doors opened and slammed. Footsteps approached the rear. Peña waited to confront his captors.

"Who are they?"

"I can't see." The light temporarily blinded him.

"Friends of the Republic!" said a voice.

"Murderers! That's your calling," Annette said.

A harsh laugh came in response.

"Don't antagonize them," said Peña.

There were three men, all dressed like Irish farmers in dark

work suits, Wellies, and short peaked caps. They all looked familiar, especially the youngest.

"Aren't you the one they call Kap?" He remembered the craggy face.

"We meet again, Peña. Come down now."

Annette stood up to face them, poised as if she might either kick or leap. "What do you mean by locking us up and hauling us off? Are you jarred out of your heads? You'll be in prison for this!"

"Calm down, miss," Kap answered, backing away from her swinging foot.

Peña jumped down, but Annette wouldn't follow. She stood as if daring them, fists clenched. The idea of her opposing the three men seemed ludicrous, but she held them off with outrage.

"Did you pull us from the car when we crashed?" she demanded.

One of the older men snickered and nodded.

"Then what have you done with Colleen? And my clothes? And what right do you have—"

"That's enough, miss. Annette Maloney, isn't it? We've taken care of everything. Come down, now, or we'll drag you," Kap said.

The other two men advanced on her cautiously, but she backed away. Peña didn't want them to touch her. He moved toward her and held out his hand. "Come on now," he said. "There's nothing we can do." Angrily she took his hand and jumped down.

The sun shone brightly on the barn, the rock walls glaring white except where shadows from nearby trees played over them. In a distant field stood small haystacks in golden-brown rows.

"What are you planning to do, shoot us?"

Kap laughed. "Not unless we have to."

"It's easy to laugh when you've got the gun," Peña answered. Kap didn't seem like a killer, but he wasn't joking. Peña wasn't sure of the others; he'd have to watch and see.

Pressing his memory, he came up with their names. The wiry, little nervous one was Cavanaugh, watchful, but unsure of himself, obviously low man on the totem pole. The other was Fallon, the arm wrestler; crusty and of unknown intelligence.

Annette's arm slipped through his and together they faced the Irishmen.

"There's a good woman, Peña. See that she controls herself," Kap said. "Let's go, boys," he said to the others.

Cavanaugh immediately went toward the car. Fallon approached them, holding the rifle.

"Why have you brought me here?" Annette demanded. "Why did you choose my place to destroy? I've nothing to do with you."

"You should know why," Kap answered.

Fallon began to search Peña until he found the chessboard and handed that to Kap. He looked at Annette and reached for her, but she kicked him in the shin, a blow he ignored as he yanked at her purse.

"You might ask for what you want!" She stared up into his face.

Fallon only grunted, rifling through the purse and removing a nail file and comb.

Cavanaugh had a satchel from which he took a newspaper and two camera cases.

"You had better take it easy," Peña said to Annette.

"He'll not put his hands on me," she snapped.

"Where are the pieces?" Kap asked.

"Inside," answered Peña. He took the chessboard and

moved a side panel so that a tiny drawer was revealed. Pressure on another panel released the drawer so that it could be pulled out, revealing the pieces.

"Hold it then; we want to take your picture. Let's be hurrying. I have to return," Kap said.

Cavanaugh handed the newspaper to Annette. "Please . . . so the headline faces the camera." He made an attempt at smiling. Then he snapped a picture of them with each camera, and the Irishmen gathered around to watch them develop.

"That's good enough," Kap said, taking the pictures. "I'll have this too." He reached out for the chessboard.

"I need that," Peña objected.

"We need it more. Your name is inscribed and the government must be completely convinced."

"What have you done with my cat and my possessions?" Annette demanded again.

"There was hardly time for seeing to those, miss."

"Aren't you going to tell us why you brought us here, what this is all about?" Peña asked, sure he knew the answer.

Kap stopped and rubbed the side of his face, reminding Peña of the toughs in western movies. "You're our guarantee, Peña, unless the government's too stupid to relent."

"Relent about what? Finn?"

Kap looked at him sharply. "A safe and quick exchange is all," he said. "When *he* is released, *you* will be." Kap turned away and walked rapidly down the dirt road where two cars were parked beneath the trees.

Standing close together, Peña watched him go, knowing their fate was in the hands of politicians and Irish kidnapers.

## A DEADLY BIND



They were moved into the barn, a smelly, crowded, dingy building used to store broken-down farm equipment. There were several stalls separated by rough wooden partitions. While Annette sat on a bale of hay, Peña walked around kicking the hay and rotting manure.

He couldn't understand how this had happened. He should never have called her; he should have gotten down to work. Sullenly he walked around blaming himself unmercifully. Annette had made it clear to the Irishmen how she felt. Why couldn't he? He boiled inside but found no escape for his anger. He thought in violent terms, surprised by emotions that usually appeared only in relation to chess.

He blamed himself for straying beyond his usual boundaries. Frivolous behavior had gotten him into deep trouble. This time it wasn't his fault. How could anyone have predicted this kidnapping?

When he thought about Annette, he knew exactly why he was there. Only his feeling for her could explain it.

Why had they taken her? She was not bait for Finn. He'd kill them if they touched her.

He moved to her side. "How do you feel?"

"Well enough. But Peña, I'm afraid."

He held her, feeling he was overmatched and in the wrong game. But if the game were killing, he would learn it. He knew what killing was; more than these farmers knew.

Outside, the two men stood near the doorway, talking. He edged closer to listen, but they muttered in another language.

"I know them," he said, "especially the two big ones. The

leader is Kap. I met him at the docks and he took me and the reporter.”

“You and who?”

“Me and Nikki. The French reporter. Down the river to a place called Murphy’s Pub.” He told her what had happened there.

“How jarred were you?”

“Well, I can remember these guys, which is pretty unusual for me, so I couldn’t have been *that* drunk.”

“And you actually asked them if they were IRA?”

“I didn’t care if they were IRA or IRS—then.”

“And you arm-wrestled with one of them?”

“Yes.”

“And put him down?”

“Do you think I’m a weakling?”

“Well . . .” She smiled for the first time.

“I tricked him. He’s pretty dumb.”

“You’ll need more than tricks to get out of this.”

“Three against one is rough.”

“You’re not counting me?”

“What can you do?”

“You’re forgetting our first encounter?”

“I was plastered.”

“Do you suppose I wasn’t?”

He studied her for a moment, wondering how strong she was. She put her hand on his arm and he leaned over and kissed her, watching her eyes.

“I’m glad they brought me as well,” she said.

“So am I.” He kissed her again.

Cavanaugh entered the barn, carrying blankets. “Be taking yourselves in there.” He nodded toward a stall.

They choose a cell where Annette spread two of the blankets, and they leaned uncomfortably against the rough stone

wall and looked about disgustedly. Cavanaugh brought more blankets, then cheese and bread and two bottles of stout. The smell of mildew gave the cheese a peculiar flavor, but they ate and drank, discouraged and silent. The Irishmen sat in the middle of the barn, drinking and watching them.

The light had dimmed. Cavanaugh, carrying the gun, motioned Peña out.

"What do you want?" Peña asked.

"The toilet," Cavanaugh said, motioning with his head.

Peña looked at Annette, then at Fallon, whose face was a dark shadow. With Cavanaugh following, Peña walked to the crude outhouse behind the barn. Alone with the stench, he propped the fallen door in place. He noticed a long iron spike in the rotting wood and immediately set to work to pry it loose. When it came loose, he hid it beneath his belt.

A shriek came from the barn. Peña cursed and shoved the door aside, ran past the gaping Cavanaugh, and into the barn. Fallon was backing away from Annette, laughing foolishly at the string of invective she hurled at him. He turned to face Peña and a handful of dirt flew into his face.

"What the hell are you doing?" yelled Peña. Fallon wiped his face. He was too big and dangerous to attack head on.

"Hit me, would you?" Annette cried, threatening with another handful.

Fallon backed away, an elbow protecting his face.

"Him and his big hands!" Annette said, holding the side of her face.

"What happened?" Peña asked, going to her.

"He was after me, the dirty bastard."

Cavanaugh stood by the entrance. "Will you be using the, uh . . ." he began.

"Leave us alone," Peña said.

"We're after binding you, then," Cavanaugh said, holding coils of rope.

## CONNECTED PAWNS

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If it had seemed a dream before, the ropes made their imprisonment real enough, Peña was strangely optimistic. During the preceding days he had been out of control; now, although he could hardly move, his thoughts began to settle down.

Perhaps it was knowing the Irishmen that made him less afraid. The one day spent with them in Murphy's Pub made the difference. Another side of them had been apparent, and he remembered it with pleasure, and without great apprehension. It enabled him to face the present danger more calmly.

He told Annette how he felt. It seemed unrealistic to her, especially considering her experience at the death of her fiancé. In a very real sense he was surprised and encouraged by her reaction to these men and the danger they faced. If she was afraid, she didn't show it now.

"This is a terrible thing for you," she said. "Suppose you should miss another game."

He laughed. "What difference does that make if I'm dead?"

"Laughing, are you! I fail to see the humor. Do you picture us in one of your western serials facing death while the mounted troops ride to the rescue?"

"You've seen more of them than I have. What happens then?" He knew she was only pretending anger.

"It was once the Indians were the bad guys, but of course

not anymore; not with the new pronouncements on the equality of man . . .”

“Are you making a speech or imagining our escape?”

“Be ‘holding your horses,’ as the hero would say. He has been taken to a distant hideout by the villains, but has managed to befriend one of them through noble arguments of the evil of his friends, the bad guys, and he helps their escape.”

“Yeah, by trickery, fraud, deceit, and murder,” he said.

“Which is perfectly justifiable.”

“Naturally. But I’m not so sure these Irishmen are bad guys.”

“Would you not fight for your life, then?” she asked indignantly.

“I would for my virginity.”

“Be serious.”

“If I were as good-looking as you.”

“Disgusting man!” she mocked.

“I never could resist you.”

“Couldn’t you, now? Since you came to Ireland you’ve had your nose buried in the chessboard, or in that—” She broke off with annoyance.

“Don’t bring her up.”

“Yes, I’m sorry. We must forget her. It’s the chess that strains my imagination.”

“What you mean is your jealousy.”

“No, it’s more than that. You have found something in life which I find only in you. I realize now that it is presumptuous of me to attempt to replace it. Yet I believe in myself. And I believe in your love of . . . chess.”

He wanted to talk about her, about how he felt about her, but it stuck in his throat.

“Love it?” he said. “I guess you could say that. It’s like a new discovery every instant—a constant surprise—something

new at each move, completely unexpected. You find things inside yourself that you never expected—and in what you do—hardly knowing where they came from.

“I couldn’t do it if I weren’t an optimist,” he went on. “Maybe ‘idealist’ is a better word. At each turn, each change, each moment, I’m expecting something perfect. I don’t like to say ‘beautiful,’ but I guess it is; and I hope that it will be good, a genuine surprise.

“But other times the surprise is in seeing things work out as you expected. Then it’s terrific. Then you say to yourself: You thought that out right.

“Most of the time I believe in myself. I believe I’ll find the answer in the most difficult situations—ones like this—one way or another. There are always ideas as long as you don’t give up hope. What’s bad is when you do. Then you stop thinking; you become pessimistic. You’re looking forward to the end, or an excuse to get out gracefully. Then it’s usually clumsy and inept, like when I ran off into Northern Ireland.

“What a blunder! Unintentional, you tell yourself later. But you’ve lost hope and let it happen, and then, believe me, you’re dead.”

She was silent, but he knew she was listening to every word.

“I guess I never lose hope—the infernal idealist, that’s me. I’m always looking ahead to the next day, Annette, the next minute, hoping to find something there—a thought, a scene, a person like you. But it’s been a constant disappointment. I don’t let it get me down. In chess I’ve gotten the most satisfaction. There I can plan ahead intelligently. I’m seldom disappointed. I know what I want to happen, what will please me, and then I make it happen.”

As he talked, he was thinking of her, thinking that he could count on her, enjoy her as much as chess.

“It’s been your whole life, hasn’t it?” she said.

“More than that, and more than just my lifetime. A game played a hundred years ago, or another guy’s game—it doesn’t matter who or when. What matters is the beauty, like a plan that he conceived and carried out. Maybe you envy him for that, but you see the concept, then the execution—you see the moment the opponent got wise to what was happening—maybe soon enough to counter it, maybe not.

“Of course, you can only play over the game; you can’t imagine how they felt. You can only guess. My own games are different. I can remember too much. A bad game still hurts . . .”

He was circling in on the recent losses and didn’t want to go on.

“I can feel it,” she said softly.

“I’ve been terrible lately. I don’t know what to do about it. Something’s been wrong with me. Too much has happened—destroyed my concentration. I have to break the spell, shake it off . . .

“Wouldn’t I like to, though—pinpoint the exact thing that’s bothering me. I’m only going around in circles. I know exactly how to beat Borovek. I know his weaknesses. I know he’s not as good as I am, but recently I can’t beat him. I can’t believe I’m losing interest; I’m just succumbing . . . to you, I guess.”

“Yes, If only you’ll accept the fact that I’m tied to you,” she said.

“Are you ever!” With his shoulder he pulled at the ropes and then laughed. It felt nice, having her there.

“I intended a different meaning—not being tied together—but I feel closer to you now than ever before—not even in bed, or wherever it was. I never cared where, but a look in your eyes, a way you had of touching me, told me—I’m sounding like my final confessional. Shall we call the priest?”

“Yes, but not for last rites.”

He lay there, staring sightlessly, liking what she had said.

## THE PERFECT COMBINATION

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The night persisted through what seemed like interminable hours, while the wind hurled the rain through the trees and against the metal roof. The familiar motifs of Ireland drifted in and out of Peña’s consciousness, disturbing his sleep. The clatter made him nervous; the blankets knotted and curled; his legs and arms ached from the tight ropes.

There were moments of optimism, but he wasn’t certain if they were dreams or not. Annette’s back was pressed against his, their wrists and ankles fastened tight.

He stared blindly into the darkness. What if the IRA killed them? It had been constantly in the back of his mind since the first moment of their imprisonment.

What would he do if the threat became real and death was imminent? The dream of his life would be smashed in what he supposed would be a red blur. That dream seemed harder to give up than life itself.

The changes in his life mystified him. Ireland was the cause; intriguing, almost enchanting. The match should have been easily won, yet he had been drawn irresistibly into drinking, killings, and even love. It was difficult to believe that such things existed outside chess.

He resented the kidnapping but refused to be afraid. He had seen and faced death before. His mother had been taken away, but he wouldn’t let that same thing happen to him.

A cry of pain brought him wide awake. Annette squirmed in the ropes, waking up.

"Are you all right?" He turned his head so that her hair brushed his face.

"Jesus God, this is the darkest hell . . ."

Lightning flashes were followed a few moments later by thunder. The storm appeared to be moving away. She shivered uncontrollably against him.

"There's an ache in every one of my joints," she muttered through her teeth. "I'll kill them for this, damn them!"

"I have a steel spike," he whispered.

"Sh-sh! They'll hear you."

"Not in this racket. Listen. See if you can't get that little one to untie you. Tell him you have to go to the bathroom, or something."

"Well, I do."

"Then you won't need to fake it. Start groaning."

She did. Peña felt like a mummy, buried alive in pitch. Her moans made it more real.

"Can I help you?" a voice asked. A light shone on them.

"She's about to explode. Can't you take her to the outhouse?" Peña said.

"I have to relieve myself," Annette said.

"The rain will wet you through," Cavanaugh answered.

"Well, get something then, and untie her," Peña demanded.

Cavanaugh could be heard poking among the farm equipment, holding a light that made the walls glow eerily. Shadows moved above them until the Irishman returned with a bucket. He set to work on the knots, tying Peña separately, then undoing those which held Annette.

"Off with you now," she said, sitting up and stretching, rubbing her arms and ankles. "Out with the light as well."

Cavanaugh left them alone and the barn turned black again. Annette struggled with her clothes and she could be heard muttering at the coldness of the bucket rim.

“Be holding your ears, now, Peña.”

“Sure, with my hands tied behind me.” The trickle in the bucket could be faintly distinguished beneath the roar of the rain. “Hurry up, for Christ’s sake. He’ll be coming back.”

“The dawn is beginning,” she said. “I can see across the barn. Where’s the dagger?”

She found it and began to pry into the knots which held Peña, cursing and muttering under her breath as she worked. She got one loose and Peña was able to pry at the other while she tackled those on his ankles.

“See what they’re doing if you can.” He had to see for himself, and they both peered from the stall across the floor of the barn, searching for the Irishmen. They might be hidden in shadow, or in another stall, for they couldn’t be seen.

Peña was free, moving his limbs to restore the circulation. He was excited, anticipating what lay ahead. Annette was visible now, holding the bucket. They looked at each other and he kissed her.

“Good luck,” he said.

“We’ll need it,” she whispered.

On opposite sides of the entrance they crouched and watched for the Irishmen.

Peña heard a noise, a rustling, very close, possibly in the next stall. He looked up and saw Fallon’s face over the partition.

“Well, what—” Fallon began.

Annette was almost under him. She heaved the bucket contents a second before Peña jumped up and swung the spike, catching Fallon in the face. He felt the spike penetrate, and thought it was the man’s mouth he had struck. He wrenched

the spike away. Fallon clutched his eye and fell in a gasping scream. Peña stared for a moment at the eyeball that clung to his hand before he flung it away. Then madly he searched for Cavanaugh, looking over the partition, expecting him to be in the same stall. There was no sign of him . . . only Fallon where he lay. A gun was by his side. Peña clamored over the partition. Annette joined him, and they waited again.

"He must have gone outside," she said. "Is he dead?"

"I think so."

"I'm glad. He was not my kind of Irishman."

Only then did Peña notice that he was panting and sweating. Nothing would stop them now.

"Maybe he's in the outhouse. Let's go." Peña ran to the door of the barn. Cavanaugh was nowhere in sight. The first signs of dawn lighted the countryside. The storm was moving off. Peña tried to ignore the sick feeling in his stomach. It was quiet now. A fog hung over the road. The woods beyond were almost black.

"Let's run. Are you ready?" he whispered.

"Jesus, yes."

"Come on."

Holding her hand and the rifle, he ran across the open area, across the road and toward the woods. The trees were only a single row. Beyond was a fence and a field. He scrambled over and helped Annette, then crouched down to watch the barn, leveling the rifle.

A thick haze hung around the barn. No one was in sight.

"Let's go."

They made off across the field, occasionally looking back, searching ahead, stumbling in the soft turf. In another minute, Peña knew they were free.

They stopped and turned to each other. Her face was

streaked with sweat and dirt. She had never looked more beautiful.

A mist enclosed them on the hilltop and they leaned on each other, catching their breath.

“Thank God!” she said.

“Yes.”

“And you, Peña. You fixed him.”

“I think we’re safe now.” He looked back in the direction of the barn, but the distant trees were barely visible. An incredible feeling of isolation came over him.

“Does this remind you of something?” he asked.

She glanced around. “Yes. The summit of Croagh Patrick. You feel it too?”

“Yes. It was tougher getting here. It seems as if it took all my life.”

“Aren’t you glad you made it?”

“God, yes. And this time, I’m not letting you out of my sight.”

They stood together as one, holding each other. He felt he belonged to a woman at last.

Then, holding hands, they followed the muddy lanes and crossed grassy fields. The sun burned the fog away, and together they returned to the lowlands of Ireland.

## POSTMORTEM



The Garda station stood on the edge of the business district. Peña sat alone on the brick steps in front, waiting. Two policemen talked near the rose garden. They had complaints about the insects, and especially about the

mildew. It seemed ludicrous to Peña that such things mattered.

He glanced at them occasionally, intermittently looking at the police car parked by the curb or at the small boys who played a rag game in the street. The game was great fun for those who were quick. The boys disappeared into an alley, shouting happily.

Annette came out of the station and sat next to him. "My store is in ruins," she said unhappily.

"Who did you talk to?"

"The Garda in Dublin. They made no attempt to assess the damage, but the area is being protected."

"It'll be okay."

She didn't respond. He knew she needed cheering. After the initial exhilaration of escaping she had been morose and frightened, worried about how she could ever live and work safely in Ireland again.

Peña, feeling sorry for her, eyed her cautiously. To him, the money meant little, but he couldn't grasp the reality of her loss. Home or country had always meant little to him.

"It'll be all right," he said, putting his arm around her.

"Thank you, Peña. I hope so." She leaned her head on his shoulder. It would do little good to tell her that it didn't matter where one lived. She had to find that out for herself. It pleased him to realize that being together was more important.

The time crept toward 7 A.M. Although they were far from Dublin, Peña wondered if they might hear the explosion. There was no doubt in his mind that the IRA would continue with their threats. Even sitting out in the open worried him a little, as if their flight through the midlands might be traced to this very town and an attack made on them again.

Girlish screams suddenly filled the air as children emerged from the alley and ran down the street.

“Look,” he said, “we’re both in a mess. We’ll get plenty of protection. Stay with me. At least you’ll be safe.”

“I shall be all right—it’s only a mood—but I *want* to be with you . . . if you’ll have me.”

“Don’t be ridiculous. Of course I want you.” When she looked at him then, he felt better. Her feelings reflected his own. He knew he had a lot to learn about expressing them.

He looked at his watch. “Where the hell are those cops? You’d think they’d have found the barn by now. They didn’t even want to go out until they had their coffee.”

“Yes, we spoiled their routine.”

It was five minutes of seven. He could almost hear the bomb ticking in the Dublin government building.

A burst of noise behind them made them turn around. The two policemen were called inside. Peña was tempted to follow them. A minute later they came out on the run, carrying shotguns.

“What’s happening?” he yelled.

“Another prison break. Finn’s escaped!” The men ran to the police car and drove away.

“They’re off to set up roadblocks again,” Annette said.

They hurried inside the building, where there was considerable activity. The desk girl explained that Michael Finn had escaped while being transferred from one location to another.

“Have they found the barn?”

“What barn, miss?”

“Where the kidnappers held us.”

The girl leafed through a stack of papers. “Sergeant McCrea reported in. Yes. He stated that the area was secure.”

“Did they find anyone?”

“No, sir.”

“Thank you.” They turned away and sat down.

"I doubt if they found anything but blood. You certainly look more cheerful," she said.

"I am. You should be too. If Finn's gotten away, they may not bother us anymore. I wonder how they pulled this off."

"Some believe they have as many men inside the government as outside. The Garda as well."

"Suppose Fallon's dead."

"Then we're still in danger . . ."

"How could I *do* that?" he said, half to himself.

"You wanted to live as much as anyone."

"Yeah, kill or be killed," he said.

"More than that. Is this the first time in your life you found yourself in a similar situation?"

"Hell, I don't know," he replied, and got up to pace the bare wooden floor, puzzled by the images in his mind. "Come on outside a minute," he said, pushing the door open.

Annette caught up with him on the sidewalk. He spoke softly.

"I didn't want to mention this before . . . I read the note the IRA sent to the government, threatening bombings, one on O'Connell Street—naturally I didn't remember the address—and blowing up the government building. That wasn't the worst. They were going to kill someone—a 'grand person,' as they called him, and send the corpse to Dublin Castle if Finn wasn't released."

"That was *you* they intended?"

"Yes."

"Jesus!" she said. "Now I see why you killed him. At first I didn't believe you recognized the danger. But you knew all along."

"That's the worst thing I ever did in my life . . . and I'm glad I did it. I should be disgusted with myself, but I'm not." He stopped abruptly to see how she took that. Her eyes were wide

and as pretty as ever, watching his with concern.

"It happened before, didn't it?" she said more than asked.

Her insight startled him, as if she saw something clearly in his mind that had escaped him. Now it became clear and he thought about those helpless moments when they took his mother away.

"Yes. This time I wasn't going to lose you for anything. Maybe that's why I never forgave my father . . . or myself."

"What are you talking about?"

"He should have fought for her . . . if he cared about her. Do you know *when* I'm talking about?"

"Yes. But you were a *boy*."

"But my father was a *man*. It's a nightmare I've had all my life. They came and I did nothing. I was afraid and a coward. No wonder I did it so easily this time. I've been wanting to do it all my life. It's disgusting to do that and feel pleased about it."

"I believe you did it for us."

He looked at her for a long moment and knew she was right.

## SHOCK!



The auditorium was noisy as Peña came out onto the stage. Hardly aware of what he was doing, he took a seat. It felt strange and uncomfortable, and suddenly, realizing it was Borovek's chair, he rose and moved to his own. The audience loved it, laughed and applauded as Peña self-consciously stared at the chess pieces.

His mind was filled with vivid memories of the day before when he and Annette had fled from the midlands, desperately

afraid they would be caught, only to discover with great relief that Michael Finn had also escaped from his Irish prison. Still, they feared a reprisal for killing Fallon, and had been under close police protection ever since they had told their story.

Now Annette watched from the seats above the stage, and although he knew he would not look her way, there was pleasure in knowing he would soon take her from Ireland.

Game time was almost at hand. He had to concentrate. An uneasy fear surged through him. Ideas were confused by fantasies that battered one another to control his mind. He forced them out and thought about the opening moves, about the specific lines of play for the game ahead.

Gradually he settled into one enduring fantasy. He would crush Borovek in a brilliant game, sacrifice several pieces and finally mate with a pawn. The crowd would cheer. The chess crown would again be his. Annette would hug and admire him. The world's grandmasters would shake his hand in admiration and say it was the greatest game ever played.

He reached out to touch and center the pieces on their squares, to know their feel again. He held the white king almost tenderly, letting his fingertips run over the contours, touching the edges of the cross above the crown. Consciously his other hand went to the locket at his throat where the sole survivor of his miniature set lay hidden.

The audience quieted. Peña looked up expectantly. Donegal approached to adjust the clocks. Then he turned his shiny red face toward the audience.

They were unsettled too. If Peña had successfully blocked out the world since he was a boy, recent events had roughly shaken him and filled him with an uneasiness he did not understand. There had been new chasms of despair and unfamiliar pinnacles of exaltation. It disturbed him that these emotions were related to people and not to chess. Over the years he had

known many tragedies at the chessboard, many moments of pain caused by blunders. Of course there had been great victories, days of real happiness that had come through his own effort. But all that had happened lately had intruded into his habitual way of life. He was shaken to the core.

Peña watched the sweep hand on the large wall clock. Then, dramatically, Donegal lifted his hand and started Peña's clock. Immediately Peña moved a knight, punched the clock, and leaned back. He wanted to surprise Borovek, place him quickly on unfamiliar ground.

Borovek entered the stage and their eyes met. Peña was pleased to see that Borovek looked away first. Peña felt ready to crush his opponent.

Borovek moved and the game became a tense struggle for domination, a nudging of pawns, a maneuvering of knights, a shifting of rooks on the back ranks, as Peña enticed, threatened, searched, and feinted. His plan to control the center, occupy it, and attack as opportunity presented itself remained clear. Slowly, carefully, he built up a threatening position, thoroughly enjoying the full force of his own concentration. He yearned to inflict a crushing defeat on Borovek, to retaliate for the series of gloomy losses he had suffered in recent weeks. All the humiliation of those defeats still churned inside him. This time Borovek would slink away like a defeated animal.

Moment by moment, decisions became more crucial. One mistake could wipe out hours of effort. They moved into the third hour of play, each having made fewer than twenty moves. Peña attacked, making headway slowly, gaining control of the board. He sorted through the moves again and again, rapidly weaving a pattern of destruction, designing beautiful combinations that would enmesh Borovek. He accused himself of dreaming. There were no combinations in sight. They would come as the attack developed and as his

pieces gained mobility, but he was impatient for the end and the victory.

Peña tried to live in Borovek's mind, tried to read his thoughts and picture the plans being laid there. He hoped to anticipate and respond before the moves were actually made. Borovek pretended to attack on the queenside while simultaneously protecting his king, confusing Peña about his real intentions. Peña felt he was in a repetitive dream, mystical almost, in which he thought of a move but, before he could make it, Borovek answered it. He tried to strain beyond his opponent's vision, searching for insight into moves too delicate and complex for that mathematical brain to follow.

Peña tried but he could not. Blank spots existed in his plans. His view was blurred and uncertain. Previous designs became useless as Borovek warded off his attack, changing the balance and flow of the pieces.

Peña began again, searching for a new plan. He had the advantage, the position, the initiative. He thought through new ideas, examined the usefulness of the pieces as they stood, and reconsidered, as if studying a shift of the surface at an earthquake fault.

Fanciful and imaginative ideas flickered in his head. He was discouraged by the failure of his attack, but new resources were apparent. He knew that the enemy was weakest in his exuberance just after staving off defeat. Now was the time for the kill.

Peña found a gauntlet through which to thread his way delicately. He must have courage, for there was danger, giving Borovek counterchances. Again, every move must be calculated, timed to perfection, cunningly executed. . . .

Peña pushed his mind to the limit. Within himself, he felt powerful, as if a stainless-steel plate had slipped into place, blocking off the fear and uncertainty which seethed beneath

the surface. Suddenly he had the winning idea.

The moves appeared in his head, numbered, in order, planned to the end. He studied the images, weighed and judged, supported by surging, certain feelings. He was convinced. Correct, he believed.

He made the move that was etched in his vision. Was it the last move he needed to make? At first he didn't know, thinking that Borovek might resign immediately. Perhaps he didn't see the depth of the plan. Peña waited.

Borovek was ready to move. So soon? The enemy hand, a white thing covered with black hairs, moved over the board and lifted Peña's queen and replaced it with an enemy knight.

Peña's eyes slid out of focus. The images fell away. Panic rushed through him.

A hot flush spread to his skin, through his neck to his face, through his body, becoming lead in his feet. Shame and hatred crept through him, crackling the hairs on his neck, crawling down his spine. Rage and tears blinded him. His queen was gone. The awful blunder was unthinkable.

Immobile as granite, Peña fought the ugly realization of defeat. He fought the flood of tears, his burning face and thumping pulse. Shameful, self-accusing thoughts sputtered in his head, consuming him with a wish to escape, but held in this awful moment by a demanding voice that shouted within him, while wave after wave of bitterness flooded through.

He was the world's worst patzer—he knew that now. With one idiotic move he had thrown away the championship. All the beautiful games had been wasted, dissipated in stupidity.

Every muscle was ready to split with anger. He wanted to smash the pieces to the floor, fling out his arm and scatter them into splinters; pick each one from the board and break it in two. But something held him . . .

His arms stretched out, shoulders hunched, and hands drew

along his thighs to his crotch, where he gripped his hands, restraining them. He opened his eyes.

It was all true. His queen was gone. It stood by the board with the other captured pieces, indifferent, wooden.

Resignation time. The word appalled him. Still, something held him. He became aware of the noise in the auditorium. The vultures perched gleefully, waiting for his fall.

Peña sat at the board like the rock he sometimes was, elbows on the table, hands clawing at his hair, the angry madness gradually subsiding as he struggled to accept his defeat. Panic drifted away and rational thought replaced it slowly.

Defeat? This was *self*-defeat. Borovek had not beaten him; he had beaten himself by leaving his queen in take. How could he have done that? He couldn't believe it. Still he waited, refusing to resign until he had gathered his wits and self-control, fighting off depression and anger. If he had to resign, he would do so graciously.

He risked a glance at Borovek. The Russian sat quietly, fingers touching his lips nervously, eyes intent on the board as if something existed there which was unexplained. Peña looked at the pieces for the first time since losing his queen. Gradually they came into focus. Slowly the forces gathered in him to see and think again.

The enemy knight had deserted the protection of his king. New possibilities for attack might exist for the remaining white pieces. Hope was remote and faint, but Peña would not give up, and he pried at the secret passages which might find their way to the black king.

Minutes passed . . . Peña seemed entombed in thought while a chattering hubbub swirled through the auditorium. Borovek bent in deep concentration. Peña oblivious, fidgeted.

He uncovered an idea—a single, white light that glowed,

illuminating the dark recesses. Gradually he marshaled his reserves, cranking the idea slowly into the future frame by frame, expanding the position move by move. Hope and depression alternated as he found a method, discarded it, found a new sequence, destroyed it. Left behind was the twisted wreckage of scores of futile moves, moves that were faulty and useless.

Again and again he began on a new path, struggling with vaporous ideas, desperately eager to win. He could break open the enemy king position, continue with a series of checks. He pressed on.

Eventually he started with the final position, the one from which the enemy king could not escape, and worked backward, discovering new clues—the bishop and knight; rook holding the file. Optimism and joy flowed through him as his head filled with intricate sets of maneuvers.

Impulsively Peña jerked back in his chair and shook his head to clear it, so complex was the final combination. All sense of time and place had vanished. He glanced at the chess clock, coming alive to the world around him. He pulled at his shirt, tugging it away from his skin where it clung, soaked with perspiration. Unable to believe that he had saved the game and championship, he went over the moves again and again, looking for a flaw, an oversight, an enemy move that he had not foreseen. He found none. A cool, fresh feeling of pleasure filled him.

“Mate in seven,” he said clearly. “After rook takes pawn, check, and . . .” He explained the moves, made the first one, and punched the clock. Borovek looked at him in disbelief.

Peña sat back to wait, enjoying the tumult in the auditorium, knowing that *they* did not know. The audience could not have caught the meaning of the quiet sentences he had spoken

and almost everyone had certainly written him off. A peaceful feeling spread in his body as his muscles relaxed and his thoughts ceased.

Minutes passed in a glow of euphoria as Brovek crouched over the board. Eventually he shook his head in a gesture of despair, and their eyes met.

“Incredible,” said Brovek. “I should have considered.”

“Thank you,” replied Peña, offering his hand. They shook quickly, then spontaneously began to rearrange the pieces in the starting positions. The crowd of reporters had ascended the steps, but hesitated, as if they had missed a cue. The TV camera moved in but also stopped. The two grandmasters moved the pieces rapidly, mumbling to one another as the auditorium grew quiet. With the gravest intent Peña explained his moves, listened to Brovek’s explanations, and stepped through the postmortem as if the world did not exist.

“And here!” said Brovek. “The queen sacrifice! Positively brilliant. Totally unexpected!”

“Yes,” said Peña, glancing up to where Annette sat beside Larry. “Totally unexpected.”

Annette made a gesture of “Let’s go!”

Peña smiled at her, held up his forefinger and turned back to the board.

AN INFORMAL GLOSSARY OF CHESS TERMS  
USED IN **The Dublin Pawn**

**ADJOURNMENT** A predetermined point at which the game may be postponed for later continuation; always (almost) after a time control.

**AIDE** A player in a world's champion match will usually, at his own discretion, have one or more assistants, grandmasters who are expert analysts, to assist in the preparation for play. They may not be consulted during a game (nor may anyone or anything) except during an adjournment.

**BIND** A crowded defensive position.

**CHESS CLOCK** Two clocks are connected mechanically so that only one will run at a time. Buttons at the top are operated by the players. A red flag, located at "12" on each clock, will fall as the minute hand passes this point. Forty moves may be required in two hours (on one clock), which gives each player an average of three minutes a move. Thus, a normal tournament game may last four hours for the first forty moves, and continue beyond that with new clock controls.

**COMBINATION** A coordinated attack in a sequence of usually two to four moves.

**DEVELOPMENT** Getting the pieces into play.

**DOUBLE ATTACK** A simultaneous attack against two separate points or pieces.

**DOUBLE CHECK** A condition in which a king is simultaneously in check from two pieces.

**DRAW** A conclusion in which each player receives half a point (by agreement, usually).

**END GAME** The part of a game when most pieces and some or all pawns have been traded off.

**EN PRISE** When a piece is unprotected and subject to capture.

**GAMBIT** A risk, usually the sacrifice of a pawn in the opening, in exchange for the initiative.

**GIUOCO PIANO** A so-called "quiet" opening in chess.

**GRANDMASTER** High-ranking chess players who have proved their skills internationally.

**IN TAKE** A condition in which a piece or a pawn may be captured.

**J'ADOUBE** “I adjust”—an announcement made before a piece is centered or righted. Normally, without this announcement, a touched piece must be moved.

**KIBITZERS** Those who watch or advise the players “voluntarily.”

**MATE** The mated player, whose king is in check with no means of escape, loses.

**MATING NET** An attacking group of pieces which threaten mate.

**MIDDLE GAME** The part after the opening when most games are won.

**OPENING** The beginning moves of a game.

**PATZER** A derisive term applied to a poor player.

**PAWNS** Eight on each side, they stand initially in front of the pieces; usually considered, in popular parlance, to be weak and easily manipulated.

**PIECES** King, Queen, two rooks, two knights, two bishops on each side, the queen being most powerful.

**POSITION** The arrangement of the pieces and pawns as they oppose each other.

**QUEENSIDE/KINGSIDE** The side of the board on which the queen/king originally resides.

**SCORE SHEET** Each player records the moves of the game in algebraic or language notation. Each piece has a symbol (e.g., K for King, N for Knight), each rank has a number, each row a letter. An accurate, up-to-date score sheet is required before a player can claim a game on “time.”

SHOCK Slang for “check.”

STALEMATE A rare occurrence in which a king is *not* in check, but the player has *no* legal move. It’s a draw.

TIME TROUBLE A situation near the time limit in which a player has many moves to make and very little time in which to make them. Games are frequently blundered away during time trouble.

ZUGZWANG A position in which *any* move will lose.











