

PIECES AND PAWNS

Play
in Two Parts

by

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PERSONAGES

A Player

Thirty-Two Pieces and Pawns

PART I.

(The stage is bare, closed by a curtain at the back. At center front an oriental rug is spread, and a chessboard and a box of chessmen are lying on the rug. The PLAYER, wearing an Oriental costume, enters from the rear, and sits behind the chessboard with his legs crossed. He takes two chessmen out of the box, a white one and a black one, and shakes them, twirls them, jumbles them in his cupped hands, without looking: his arms stretched forward and to the right, his gaze fixed forward and to the left. He grasps one figure in each hand, still without looking, closes each hand, crosses one hand over the other. He looks at his closed hands, and hesitates.)

PLAYER

(at last)

Left! I don't know why I always say left

(He opens his left hand. It contains the black chessman.)

Black. Too bad. Black -- so it is black again. I hate to play black. Of course, I am going to play white too, I am the only one who's playing anyway, but I mean -- well, it's decided that no matter how well I play white, I must feel for black. I must make the most of black.

Make the most of it.

And I really hate black.

White starts. White has always started. White started at the beginning. And it's got a much brighter chance of being there at the end too.

And yet I am to feel black, to live black, to blow up black.

(He begins to take the chessmen out of the box and place them on the board. As he proceeds, he explains.)

PLAYER

The Black King. Poor man. Not really a king at all. Look at him. His steps are shackled -- one helpless halting step at a time. There are other personages in the play who are far more powerful, really able to run the show -- more or less. But then, I guess this is nothing unusual. The King's a symbol, that's all, and when he dies the game is over. That's all. Die he may, die he may; for he happens to be a very very sick man. Well, we'll see.

The Black Queen, his poor wife. Really, she is reaching out much farther. Love has given her wings. Love does that, you know, heedless of age or station. She'll do everything she can to save her husband. But of course she, too, is fettered by the rules of the game, and there are moves she just can't make, simply can't conceive of,...

The Black King's Bishop isn't really a bishop at all, just a parish priest. But very well liked in the community. He's doing a good job; people flock to hear his sermons, and they understand them too. And he's as gentle as he is convincing when it comes to collecting money for the little orphans or the war blind. The poor are generous. Of course, he has his troubles too, with the tightwads, the Little Rich People who hang on to their obol -- we'll come back to them later.... He's getting up in years, poor man. Most of the married couples in the community were married by him; he baptized the

them grow, sicken, die -- always the same, more or less. Well, he can move in only one direction and back again. That's the rule of the game....

The Black Queen's Bishop is a good saintly person too, head nurse over there at the hospital; a nun and, in fact, the Mother Superior. It's strange, though, about women. When they take to religion they are much stronger in their belief than men, far more ardent and tenacious. It makes them rather ruthless, at times. Inhuman. We shall see. Of course she too, the Mother Superior, can move in one direction only, and back again. That's the rule of the game....

The Black Queen's Knight is a doctor; the only one in the community, as a matter of fact. Believe me, he hops around, in his little Volkswagen. I wouldn't call him a great scientist. Okay for routine jobs -- sore throats, fevers, upset stomachs -- and there's a lot of that around. He thumps and auscultates and fills prescriptions the way he learned it at school. But when it comes to rarer diseases, bigger diseases -- well, he lost his own wife, you see. She died of the same disease that's afflicting our King now. And the doctor put up a good struggle then, to save her. He really hopped around: scouting, searching, even experimenting; for love had given him wings too. But she died. Maybe that colored his whole attitude. He doesn't believe you can cure the big diseases. But then, nobody here does. They are the blacks, after all....

And here is the Black King's Knight: She is an insurance-office employee. A spinster. They so often are. Actually, she should hop around a lot more than she does. She should cover a lot more ground. But you see, she is being badly played. Everybody pays a lot

thing out of it. Certainly not the poor devils who need it. And they don't get the kind of stuff they need, not when they need it....

Well, that leaves us with the black rooks. Here. The King's Rook. He's the landlord. A towering figure in this society. He has made a great deal of money: by means of infinitesimal nastiness, committed an infinite number of times. There is no one in this community who hasn't paid him, one time or another; a half dollar more than he ought to have paid; or who hasn't worked for him -- or his wife; here, the Queen's Rook is his thrifty helpmeet -- there is no one in the community who hasn't worked for him or for her a quarter of an hour more than he was paid for. It adds up, you know. Yet people here don't seem to mind. On the contrary, the landlord and the landlady are highly respected people. Very powerful. And the way they ride over their neighbors! -- crisscross all over the board. People are vermin to them: you lick them or they'll lick you, that's their motto. And if you win you lose anyway; but if you lose you are lost. It's a black world, the world of the blacks....

And here, here are the pawns. Relations. Friends. Hangers-on. People of little weight or momentum. Some of them, it's true, begin their careers with a modicum of hope and ambition: they start with a jump: two steps. In fact, anyone is entitled to such a start in life -- that is the rule of the game -- but only a few have the courage to take it. Even these, however, slow down soon enough, and are piddling along like the rest, routine step by routine step. People of little weight or momentum. There is a legend among them --

straight ahead, firm and steady and never mind what's going on right or left, but keep moving straight across the whole board, the whole world, passing the blacks, passing the whites as though they didn't exist, then you will finally come to the kingdom yonder. Time has no weight there. Weariness wears off. They touch you as you touch their ground, and you're transformed. They bestow powers on you you've never dreamed of: royal powers. And you retrace the path that's taken you a lifetime of sweat and tears -- you retrace it in a moment, winged, and return among your dear ones, and live happily ever after. And win the game for your king. That's the rule of the game. But no one really believes it. No one has ever seen a black pawn arrive over there, and come back thus transformed. It's a legend, that's all. A poor people's dream. They all die on their way, trodden under mightier feet. Or they stagnate, cornered and forgotten.

These are the blacks. I am beginning to feel for black. I am going to make the most of black. To blow up black.

(The lights dim. The PLAYER disappears. His image is projected on the rear curtain, enlarged, far greater than life size, occupying nearly the full height of the curtain. The rug, chessboard, and box of chessmen have disappeared. Now the entire stage is a chessboard, marked off in the proper squares. The black chessmen, human personages as described by the PLAYER, occupy their places at the left, as at the start of a game. The ailing KING is slumped in an armchair. The QUEEN, standing on her field to the right, is affectionately bending over him. The KING's BISHOP, dressed in

left and reassuringly holds his hand. The other chessmen all look toward this central group, their attitudes expressing compassionate longing, sorrow, and fear. They remain still as in a tableau. All are dressed in black, and make a rather depressing appearance.)

PLAYER

(His voice heard through a loudspeaker)

And now, ladies and gentlemen, the whites. Here is the king.

(The WHITE KING occupies his place. He is a great scientist. He wears an elegant white suit. All whites, of course, are dressed in white: a white which, under certain conditions of lighting, takes on a metallic luster.)

WHITE KING

Good morning. A fine day. A promising day. And much work to be accomplished. Team work. Coordination. I am not a romantic. I don't believe in genius. That belongs to other times. What we need is team work, coordination, precision. One little step forward, one sideways maybe, perhaps one backward; but then forward again. Little step by little step -- that's my rule. A rule that is support, that is form: not a rule that is limit. Limit, at any rate, only in so far as it expresses self-control, discipline. I recognize no other limit. The realm of science and knowledge is illimited -- there, for us to conquer, step by step.

PLAYER

Step by step. You see? If you look at them from up here, the rules really are the same. For the Black King as for

the White King. And yet -- what a difference! Well, these are the blacks and these are the whites.

WHITE KING

We've conquered misery; we've conquered space; we've conquered the diseases that ravaged people in time past. And now we shall conquer death: for death is a disease we are learning to cure....

(His wife, the WHITE QUEEN, steps forward. Dressed in splendid white, she too is a scientist. She takes up his line of discourse.)

WHITE QUEEN

(speaking quickly)

And pain. Think of it! Pain is immoral. Suffering is sin. Pain is ugly, and beauty is duty. But I've got something, Bill, I've got something: it works on rats and robins, also on dogs and dolphins. You should see, Bill, you should see -- how happy they are. And don't call it a pain-killer. I don't believe in killing, not even in killing pain. It's an anti-pain vaccine we've developed. A pain preventive: pain control, if you wish: a pain contraceptive device. Ch, Bill, I feel like soaring.

(She makes tentative queen moves in several directions, always returning to her place.)

I feel like rushing from pole to pole, round the world, where east meets west. I want to immunize millions, billions; I want to immunize babes unborn. They shall be happy, like the dogs and the dolphins. No more pain. Pain, a thing of the past. Ch, Bill, I feel like embracing the whole world.

WHITE KING

Good girl. Good work. That's the spirit.

(The WHITE KING'S BISHOP steps forward. He is a philosopher, a rather pensive character, with long white hair.)

WHITE KING

Ah, good morning Bertie, good morning. Heard the news? We've got an anti-pain vaccine! What about that? Not that it doesn't create as many problems as it solves. But it's a step forward. A solid step forward.

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

Pain, of course, had its function: its phase in the evolutionary process: its limited function in a limited time. It was a signal, shall we say? A warning signal...

WHITE KING

What we'll have to do is to keep the message but change the code. Simple, isn't it? Take an example. A man has a toothache. Well, the tooth aches. The man feels acute pain. The pain signals to him that there's something wrong. The tooth is decayed. So the man goes to the dentist and has his tooth fixed. If he didn't feel the pain, he wouldn't know he had to go to the dentist. But now we can re-string his nerves, re-condition his reflexes, in such a way that instead of feeling pain he will -- let us say -- see green and red spots. That is the signal. If he is an educated man, he will go to the dentist when he sees green and red spots. What could be simpler? Of course if he is not an educated man, he may go on seeing green and red spots for the rest of his days, and have his teeth fall to pieces.

WHITE QUEEN

Everyone will have to be educated, that goes without

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

Palliatives, palliatives. You cancel the symptom, but the cause remains. You cancel the cause, but the cause of the cause remains. Every epoch has its disease. And it's curious how an epoch's disease reveals an epoch's character.

As long as people believe that sin must be punished, and as long as they believe that "that" is sin -- you'll know what disease you have to cope with. Nobody would ever come up with a real remedy. Remedy is ruin as long as people want to be punished for what they think is sin....Syphilis is the malady of puritans.

T.B. -- oh my god: the libidinous self-gratification of the Romantics. What a kick they got out of it!

As for heart trouble: well, we're still close to that. It's very bourgeois. A bourgeois anxiety, the *idée fixe*: hang onto that little old pump come hell or high water, you can't replace it. That's very bourgeois. But we're getting over that: the heart bank, and so on. A heart, after all, is a machine: a means of production. It should not be considered private property: get over this bourgeois prejudice, and you'll live longer...

But today, today everything grows. Everything is as if it were alive and monstrous and insatiable. Everything.

Cities grow, sprawl out, busting belt after belt,
with limbs like tentacles
choking, strangling
and in their growing shadow, life withers.

Populations grow,
species and races grow,
the state grows

taxes grow, the mobs grow,
controls grow
science grows,
production grows
destruction grows
even the universe grows.

Everything grows in accordance with its own laws,
which grow out of it as it grows.

What are you waiting for? Grow! GROW!

That's all you can do today.

But of course there may be something growing inside you too. Something that isn't you. Something that obeys its own laws. Something that eats up your entrails, your liver, your heart, your blood, your brain. And it grows and grows. Cut off its head, and hydralike it will grow new heads, more horrible....Well you know what I mean. Call it whatever you like. That's the disease of our epoch. That's the disease we have to cope with.

WHITE KING

We'll lick that one too. We've all but conquered it.
Only a question of time. Step by step...

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

Granted. That's what I say. It is a question of time.
And as we go along changing time, changing our ways,
we'll get rid of this one too, get rid of it so utterly
and completely that our descendants will marvel how
we could have let so many people die of this disease
of our epoch. Such beastly deaths too...

(The WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP enters. She is a statistician.)

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

Good morning, everyone. I've come at just the right time, it seems. I heard what you said, I heard you. But I've brought my tables along, and here is the chart, here is the graph. Now let's have no nonsense here. Facts are facts. Numbers speak louder than philosophy. Question of time indeed! What do you mean? Time is just a coordinate. There, you can put it this way or that way. Depends on how you want to plot your graph. No monkey business. There, today a number N of people die of a disease A. There. A dot on this graph. Now, moving up a bit on that time coordinate, you say you've licked disease A. But what do you think you've been doing? When you move up a bit on that time coordinate, you find that N' people must die. Must. No matter what you say....If you've licked disease A, disease B or C will make its entry. You get rid of them too, and people will undoubtedly blow themselves to smithereens. That's right, individual death exits just behind individual man. Enter Megadeath, after Megaman.

For the cause of the cause of the cause is a curve.

WHITE QUEEN

Now, listen, miss, if you will permit me: who are we, after all? Are we the blacks or are we the whites? This sounds to me like fatalism, black fatalism.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

(chart in one hand, graph in the other, shaking them angrily)

No fiddling with figures.

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

(soothingly)

It all depends on how you plot the graph, the way, the tao....I think hers is all right. She sounds more impassioned than she really means to....We won't monkey with your figures, dear.

(The two WHITE KNIGHTS enter, hopping. They are specialists in public relations. The WHITE KING'S KNIGHT is an advertising man, the WHITE QUEEN'S KNIGHT is a fund raiser.)

WHITE KING'S KNIGHT

(making a few knight moves, but returning to his starting position)

We are specialists, you see. And specialization, you see, if carried beyond a certain degree, occasionally warps a person's personality, you see. We have developed our own special gait, you see, our very own way of proceeding.

WHITE QUEEN'S KNIGHT

(hopping about)

But we are really very very useful members of this community. We are public relations men.

WHITE KING'S KNIGHT

We find our way into places no one else can get into: into the hearts of Megaman

WHITE QUEEN'S KNIGHT

We know his secrets -- because we make them

WHITE KING'S KNIGHT

We learn them as we make them
We make them as we learn them.
Without us, no commerce;

without industry, no life.
We are the life of the party
I am an advertiser.

WHITE QUEEN'S KNIGHT

Without us, no political campaigns;
without political campaigns, no elections.
I am a fund raiser. Let's get down to business.

(The two WHITE ROCKS occupy their places. The
WHITE KING'S ROCK is a philanthropist, president
of The Foundation. The WHITE QUEEN'S ROCK
is his wife, a clubwoman. The WHITE KING'S
ROCK moves, in rookly fashion, one field forward
and three to the left, occupying the field.
directly in front of the WHITE KING.)

WHITE KING'S ROCK

(speaking in a well-schooled, musical, pleasing
voice)

Yes, doc, yes, I heard about it. I think it's great.
No more pain, eh? I think it's absolutely great.

WHITE QUEEN

It's a vast project, you see, a real project. It's
the kind of project foundations really need. It's
the kind of project that really needs a grant from
The Foundation. You see what I mean.

WHITE KING

The first step would be to apply for a grant from
The Foundation

WHITE KING'S ROCK

Well, I think you should go ahead, doc. Take a
chance. I'll back you up. I really believe in your pro-

Wait till I get my young lady on the phone. Wait till I get her reaction. She better be in on this from the beginning. That's fair, too; you know, her mother -- she was a commercial artist -- great -- she really kicked in a lot of the money...

(He picks up a phone)

Hello, Grace! Is that you? Hi! Have I got news for you! How are you, honey!....Listen, great news... a real project... they've invented a vaccine against pain. Can you beat it?... Of course it's been tested. But now, you know, to expand it, promote it, develop it on a large scale, a worldwide basis...I've told the doctor to apply for a grant from The Foundation. What do you think!

QUEEN'S ROCK

(speaks into her phone with an expression always between boredom and nausea, except for occasional flashes of childish joy.)

But Richard, you are bound by the terms of the by-laws. I don't see how this project fits in.

WHITE KING'S ROCK

Of course it fits. Hand and glove. Perfectly consistent with the by-laws.

WHITE QUEEN'S ROCK

The by-laws specify that grants are to be used exclusively for the advancement of post-neo-figurative abstract painting. That's what mother was interested in. What do you mean -- immunization against pain? With a little good will pain doesn't exist anyhow. So what's the use of abolishing it!

WHITE KING'S ROOK

Look, Grace, if people suffer less pain, they'll buy more post-neo-figurative abstract art. See what I mean?

WHITE QUEEN'S ROOK

That's stretching it a bit far. Anyway, we'll have to call a board meeting.

(The WHITE ROOKS hang up their receivers, the telephones disappear. The WHITE KING'S ROOK returns to his place in two moves, the way he came. The WHITE PAWNS enter, advancing to their places, each one passing between two of the pieces. A long, thin table is dropped from the ceiling, and all the white chessmen seat themselves around it, as at a board meeting.)

WHITE KING'S ROOK

(presiding)

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the last meeting of the board before the closing of the fiscal year. The financial report, please.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

(acting as comptroller)

The Comptroller desires to bring to the attention of this meeting the fact that there is a certain amount of money which must be spent before the closing of the fiscal year. Otherwise there'll be trouble with the tax collector.

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

A great deal more could be spent on advertising the Foundation's policy. It's not clear to the man in the street; it's not clear to Megaman; far from it...

WHITE KING'S ROOK

The point is we have to agree on another grant. A good fat one. Before we wind up this fiscal year. We have to -- that's all there is to it.

FIRST PAWN

Here is an application for a grant to aid in the preparation of a memorandum on the reasons for building a museum to house post-neo-figurative abstract art.

SECOND PAWN

A painsworthy project

WHITE QUEEN'S ROOK

That may be construed to exceed the terms of the by-laws. That's stretching it a bit far.

THIRD PAWN

Here is a prospectus for a study on the admixture of infra-red and ultra-violet color tones in post-neo-figurative abstract painting, and their psychological shock effect.

FOURTH AND FIFTH PAWNS

A paintaking painstaking task.

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

It has tremendous commercial possibilities.

WHITE KNIG'S ROOK

Then it needs no Foundation support

SIXTH PAWN

Here is a scheme for teaching teaching machines painlessly to teach the values of post-neo-figurative abstract art.

SEVENTH AND EIGHTH PAWNS

In with the breakfast

Painted turtle terrapin...

WHITE QUEEN'S ROCK

Mother would turn over in her grave.

WHITE KING'S ROCK

Listen, ladies and gentlemen, I've got here the project of all projects. The project we've been waiting for. The project the whole world has been waiting for. A system, mind you: a system for immunization against pain. No panic, please, in this panel discussion. But think of it: painless people buy paintings: plenty of paintings...

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

That remains to be ascertained on a statistical basis.

WHITE KING'S KNIGHT

It's pointless to be painless when you're painless
It's painless to be pointless when you're painless
(He jumps with joy over his discovery.)

WHITE KING'S ROCK

I move we approve. Anyone willing to second?

WHITE QUEEN'S ROCK

I move the question be referred to the next meeting.

SEVERAL PAWNS

Hear, hear.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

Resolved that the funds to be expended under the by-laws within this fiscal year be devolved unto a Committee of Experts (to be duly stipended for a period of one year), to investigate the results of the investigation by the Committee of Experts appointed last year to investigate the results of the investigation by the

WHITE KING'S ROCK

The meeting is adjourned.

(The table disappears.)

WHITE KING'S ROCK

(addressing the KING)

Hello, doc. Yes, it went fine. Just the way I expected. Foundations are slow, you know. It takes time. Everything takes time. But don't worry, just go ahead and spend the money. Just spend it. You'll get it eventually. Never fear. Nobody would ever get anywhere in this world that didn't have the gumption to spend a little money he hasn't got. I've always gone by this theory, and believe me, it's paid off well in the end. Always. Yours is a splendid cause, old chap. Just go ahead and spend the money.

(The WHITE KING'S ROCK pats the KING on the shoulder, rather hard, with a gesture intended to mean good-natured encouragement but scarcely falling short of a real beating; then he slides back to his place.)

PLAYER

Well, at last the chessmen are set up. I guess we are ready to begin the game.

(All chessmen, black and white, stand on their places, looking straight forward, standing at attention.)

PLAYER

(continuing)

White starts. White has always started. White started at the beginning.

Game I

- 1 w (The WHITE QUEEN'S PAWN moves from d2 to d4. He is a young man, attractive, probably a student.
- 1 b The BLACK QUEEN'S PAWN moves from d7 to d5, confronting the WHITE PAWN. He too is a young man, but drab and dispirited.)

WHITE PAWN

Good morning, friend, nice day, good morning.
Can you show me the way to power and success?

BLACK PAWN

Oh, I wish I could help you! But I have so many other things on my mind just now. The sun is burning. I've been running around frightfully. The doctor, you know -- the priest, the insurance people, the medicines. My father is terribly, terribly ill. He's in pain. And everyone is thinking only of himself; when you need help, there is none.

- (The BLACK PAWN grasps the shoulders of the WHITE PAWN, as though imploring him for help. In turn, the WHITE PAWN places his hands, reassuringly, encouragingly, on the BLACK PAWN'S shoulders, and they remain locked in this position. Meanwhile,
- 2 w the SECOND WHITE PAWN moves from e2 to e3, the
- 2 b SECOND BLACK PAWN moves from e7 to e6,
- 3 w THIRD WHITE PAWN moves from c2 to c3
- 3 b THIRD BLACK PAWN moves from c7 to c6.
- These silent moves are accompanied by voices.)

BLACK VOICES

(subdued, mournful, coming through the row of pawns like a wave.)

Did you hear --

He's lost

He's got the Disease
which no surgeon's knife can erase
There is no herb, no tea, no pill
that can heal it,
there's no deal against death

WHITE VOICES

(brighter, more musical, but still muted)

Where there's life there's hope,
where there's hope there's life.

Who knows
what science
will contrive
tomorrow?

One
must be first
to be saved.

Maybe
it's he

Who knows?

(As the black chessmen begin to speak, their
voices grow somewhat more distinct, but still
in keeping with the generic blackness of which
they are personifications.)

BLACK KING'S ROOK

(from his place)

He's no longer up to the job.

BLACK QUEEN'S ROOK

We ought to get rid of him

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

(rubber-stamping sheets in a portfolio)

He's had his legal allowance of care and assistance.
Now he is free to die. You don't have to pay for that.

BLACK QUEEN'S KNIGHT

I've seen it happen so many times,
so many times,
There's nothing you can do,
Nothing
I lost my wife two years ago
that way

BLACK PAWNS

(They speak as a chorus, almost in a whisper.)

I lost my father,
I lost my mother,
my cousin was killed in a car wreck
My brother died in the mines,
in the flood, in the war, in the earthquake
from radioactivity,
I lost my father,
I lost my mother!!!

4 w (The WHITE QUEEN, suddenly and sharply illumined,
reels from her field, dl, to g4.)

WHITE QUEEN

(speaking in grim humor)

My mother died of laughing. Laughing at the thought that
she had outlived the predicted hour of her death.
But those were other times... Will you please step
ouf of my way, young fellow, so I can see what is to
be done here?

4 b (The BLACK PAWN on e6 moves to e5, thus exposing
the WHITE QUEEN to attack by the BLACK QUEEN'S
BISHOP. Lights focus on a scene comprising the
BLACK KING, BLACK QUEEN, and BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP.
This is followed instantly by a black-out and
transformation, so that when the lights come up
the three fields occupied by the black figures

Diagram
A

are enlarged, forming the BLACK KING'S sickroom.
He lies on his bed. The BLACK QUEEN is at his side,
comforting him. The BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP --
head nurse, Mother Superior -- is seen entering
a door at the left. The WHITE QUEEN observes the
scene from a distance, center rear. All other
chessmen are dimmed out.)

BLACK QUEEN

(singing softly)

I am a poor suffering stranger,
a-traveling through this world of woe,
yet there's no sickness, toil or danger
in that bright world to which I go.
I'm going home to see my mother
I'm going there no more to roam,
I'm just a-going over Jordan,
I'm just a-going over home...
You slept while I was singing, you slept. I am glad you
slept. You look rested, you look better...

BLACK KING

It hurts.

BLACK QUEEN

The landlord was here to ask how you are getting
on. How kind of him. Don't you think? He left a note
for you -- here. Oh, dear -- it's a bill. We'll pay it
later, never fear; he'll wait. Turn over this way now.
Maybe it won't hurt so much.

BLACK KING

I am cold

BLACK QUEEN

The oak was hit by lightning. The sturdy oak. The
lightning tore it asunder, split it straight through the

middle. Did you hear the thunder? We'll have wood for the fire next winter. Here, take my shawl to warm yourself.

BLACK KING

It hurts.

BLACK QUEEN

Mother Superior will be here soon. She'll give you something to stop the pain.

BLACK KING

I am thirsty.

BLACK QUEEN

The weather has been splendid, mercilessly splendid. No rain for weeks. The wine is scarce, but it is fiery. I'll get you some. Tomorrow.

Here, have a lemon drop. It will quench your thirst.

BLACK KING

I can bear it no longer

BLACK QUEEN

The doctor, our good friend, has gone out to seek help, advice. He said he was going to see the greatest scientists. He said he'd return soon. He will be glad that your slept.

BLACK KING

The pain is breaking me.

BLACK QUEEN

(to the BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP, who enters through the door.)

Oh, Mother, Mother Superior, how good of you to look in at this hour! I know you are busy. Won't you come in for a moment. The king is in pain. I'm at my wit's end. Mother, won't you give him a shot of something

-- to put him to sleep again for a couple of hours?

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP

(remaining in the doorway)

You have hard times behind you, both of you, poor people. You have harder times before you. Heaven have mercy upon you.

BLACK QUEEN

(in a tone of fading brightness)

He slept, Mother, he slept. He had a good hour. But now he's in terrible shape. Can't you give him something to relieve his pain?

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP

Holy service will begin in a few minutes. You'd better come down. It will be good for you.

BLACK KING

Don't leave me alone.

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP

The priest will be here. He will pray with you. He will talk with you. He will prepare you.

BLACK KING

It's kind of the priest to call on me, I'm sure. But I don't know that I have much of a mind to listen to him. I'm in agony.

BLACK QUEEN

(singing softly)

...yet there's no sickness, toil or danger
in that bright world to which I go,
I'm just a-going over Jordan...

(She turns imploringly to the BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP)

You'll give him his needle, won't you, before you go?

(The BLACK QUEEN'S BISHCP steps firmly to the bedside, grasps her holy symbol, hanging from her neck chain, with both hands.)

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHCP

Your mother gave birth to you in pain. And your father and his father and his father ate their bread in the sweat of their brow. And thorns and thistles and stones and dust have been our portion since time immemorial. This is a valley of tears. Don't you know, son, you were born into it to suffer? Be brave, bear your lot, your little share of this great suffering. Those in heaven suffered for you. Here, kiss this holy symbol: it will help you accept your pain.

(She proffers the holy symbol. The room has grown dimmer. Outside there are flashes of light, which gleam intermittently: on the WHITE QUEEN with a metallic luster. She looks irate, menacing. All other figures, seen in the dim and many-shadowed light, appear transformed into old contorted trees, writhing in the storm. Snow falls. There is a moment of ominous silence.)

WHITE QUEEN

Come out, black mother of pain. Come out here.
I've news for you.

5 w (She moves one step aside, to h4. The BLACK QUEEN'S BISHCP, abandoning the sickbed, returns to her starting place at c6.)

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP

Who is calling in the night?

WHITE QUEEN

You have been unspeakably cruel to a sick man. Who

first commandment should be love and mercy? Come out and defend yourself!

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHCP

5 b (reeling to f5)

I am doing my duty. I am preparing him to die well.
There is nothing else I can do

WHITE QUEEN

6 w (moving up to g5, menacingly)

You -- even you -- could have eased his pain.
Why did you refuse him the needle?
Why didn't you grant him the sleep he needs?

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHCP

6 b (fleeing to e4)

But he must think of his soul, his soul. Not of his pain.

WHITE QUEEN

7 w (She occupies e5. As she steps into the new field, there is a faint clash of cymbals and a moaning sound. A BLACK PAWN falls. The WHITE QUEEN now stands facing the BLACK KING. She makes a trying-to-be-helpful gesture. The BLACK QUEEN'S BISHCP, as though blinded, shields her eyes with her forearm.)

I've come to rid him of his pain. It will raise his spirits, prolong his life. We may even cure him.

(The BLACK QUEEN steps protectively in front of the BLACK KING, occupying e7. The WHITE QUEEN backs to f4.)

7 b

8 w

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHCP

(defensive-offensive)

If you abolish pain, you abolish fear.

If you abolish fear, you abolish piety.

If you abolish piety, you abolish religion.
Indeed it would be an evil world without pain.

8 b (She moves to d3)

WHITE QUEEN

9 w (moving to g3)

Stop! Vicious woman, I'll get you, I'll stop you.

Listen.

Religion,

real religion,

is not a thing of pain and fear,

but of love and hope

and mutual aid

and cooperation.

You are blasphemous,

wicked woman.

If there is anything sinful

in this good, beautiful world

it is you, it is your

glorification of pain and fear.

You are devilish,

but there shall be no devils

in this good and beautiful world.

(A wild chase has begun: the BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP
fleeing among the writhing trees, running slantwise
in bishop fashion; the WHITE QUEEN following with
long, sweeping, flashy queen's movements, meeting
her straight, from front, side, rear. The storm
is growing. Meaning is heard in the trees. Snow
scuds through the dark. Owl calls and other
dreary animal noises are heard. Echoes of the
WHITE QUEEN'S words resound hoarsely: "Love,"
"Hope," "Cooperation," "Good," "Beautiful,"
"Good, beautiful world." After a few minutes there

9 b
through

13 w

Diagram
3

is silence, and the impression of a haunted forest
recedes; the figures are again merely figures,
black and white. The WHITE QUEEN is on e5, holding
the BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP, dead, on her lap. She is
weeping. Silently, two WHITE PAWNS step forward
to pick up and carry away the dead. Then they
return to their places.)

WHITE QUEEN

(addressing the BLACK QUEEN with reviving confidence)

Don't tell him it's only the pain we are getting rid
of, tell him he is improving. It's so important for
him to believe he's improving. We may really do something
for him. You see, there are new discoveries every day.
We have had remarkable success, in some cases.

BLACK QUEEN

I'm all confused. And so scared. It has been too horrible
what we've been through. He isn't old, you know -- and
it came so suddenly. And to see someone suffer, someone
like him -- there's nothing worse in the world. But
now, you know, I've almost resigned myself to the fact
that he must...I think he understands too; he is serene,
you see....Of course I'd do anything, anything, to
save him. To keep him with us, another month, another
Christmas, another year. He isn't old...

(The WHITE QUEEN stands motionless in a white
metallic glow.)

BLACK QUEEN

(continues)

But you know, we were born and raised with these con-
victions. And with little hope and little courage.
I know, it's a fault. I've seen somewhat more of the
world than the rest, I realize the world is different
today. But -- would you mind if I talked it over with

the priest? Just in case? If the worst should happen, after all, it would be best to be...prepared...

(The WHITE QUEEN blacks out. A village street is formed along e8, f8, g8, h8. A transparent curtain behind f8 reveals the facade of the priest's home. The priest -- BLACK KING'S BISHCP -- is sitting on a bench in front of his home, reading a book. The BLACK QUEEN turns toward him.)

BLACK QUEEN

Good morning, sir, Am I disturbing you? I guess I am

BLACK KING'S BISHCP

No, no. I was only reading. Reading about Job, and how the Lord tried him so hard, and how he suffered but did not lose his faith.

BLACK QUEEN

Sir, that's just what I came to ask you about: because my husband too is suffering. Suffering atrociously. Nevertheless, he is serene. That's just it: he has given up hope, given up struggling. And now they come and tell me there are new ways, new means. They say he may live yet. They may stop his pain -- now, at once, forever. But is it right, sir? In his condition, is it the right thing to do...

BLACK KING'S BISHCP

A land of darkness as darkness itself
and of the shadow of death
Without any order
and where the light is as darkness.

But Job, you know, at last was saved.

How shall we know?

We are but things of yesterday, unknowing,

because our days on earth are a shadow...

BLACK QUEEN

But would it be right to try the new means, the new ways. I...I would do anything to save him, to spare him. But look at the prescription: would it be right?

BLACK KING'S BISHOP

Do not fill him with false hopes.
For those who have hope are confounded.
Tell him to make ready, accept the will of God.
But if you can ease his pain, with your love
and your faith --
even with the new means --
I find nothing wrong in that, nothing wrong.
Go, you are a good woman, do what you can
to help him bear his affliction.
And may heaven assist you.

BLACK QUEEN

Thank you, sir, thank you. You have taken a great burden off my shoulders. Thank you.

(She moves on. A transparent curtain behind g⁸ reveals the insurance office building. There is a façade with a window, behind which the insurance office employee -- BLACK KING'S NIGHT -- is seen rubber-stamping sheets in a portfolio.)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

(busily rubber-stamping)

This window closes at twelve o'clock.

BLACK QUEEN

It's only ten

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

We close at twelve. Who's next?

BLACK QUEEN

I. Here, I have a prescription. For my husband --
you'll find him in your records. He's been ill for months.
I've been here before, you know -- many, many times.

(The tone of the following dialogue is between
automatic and ritual -- very rapid. The BLACK
QUEEN'S answers are unintelligible.)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

The patient's name. We close at twelve o'clock

BLACK QUEEN

(mumbles)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

What relation is patient to you?

BLACK QUEEN

(mumbles)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Patient's birthday?

BLACK QUEEN

(mumbles)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Where was patient born?

BLACK QUEEN

(mumbles)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Has patient had medical treatment before?

BLACK QUEEN

(mumbles)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Patient will have to present himself at this window.
Between ten and twelve. We close at twelve o'clock.
Every day. We are closed all day Sunday.

BLACK QUEEN

But my husband is...

(The phone rings.)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

(into phone)

You have called a number which is not a working number.
Will you please hang up and dial your number again
slowly.

(She hangs up the receiver.)

BLACK QUEEN

He's very ill...he's in agony...he can't possibly come.
It is quite impossible.

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Patient unable to present himself at this window.

(She tears off the sheet on which she has been
writing, throws it away, and takes a new sheet.)

In this case we need a different blank. In duplicate.
Patient's name? We close at twelve o'clock.

BLACK QUEEN

You have it in your records.

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

What relation is patient to you?

BLACK QUEEN

(mumbles)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Patient's birthday?

BLACK QUEEN

(mumbles)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Where was patient born?

BLACK QUEEN

(mumbles)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Has patient had medical treatment before?

BLACK QUEEN

(mumbles)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Is the medicine in your prescription listed as authorized by the Mutual, the Casual, or the Trivial?

BLACK QUEEN

It is a quite new medicine.

(The phone rings.)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

(into phone)

The number you are calling has been changed. This is the wrong office. At the tone the time will be exactly eleven o'clock, ten minutes, and nine seconds. Bing...We close at twelve o'clock.

(She hangs up.)

Application is being made for a drug not listed as authorized by the Mutual, the Casual, or the Trivial.

(She tears off the sheets on which she has been writing, throws them away, and takes a new set of sheets.)

In this case we have to use a different blank. In triplicate. Patient's name? We close at twelve o'clock.

BLACK QUEEN

(with growing exasperation. Mumbles)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

What relation is patient to you?

BLACK QUEEN

(mumbles)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Patient's birthday?

BLACK QUEEN

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Where was patient born?

BLACK QUEEN

(mumbles)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Has patient had medical treatment before?

BLACK QUEEN

(mumbles)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Has patient drawn insurance benefits during this year over a period in excess of three months?

BLACK QUEEN

He's been ill for five months.

(The phone rings.)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

(into phone)

You are connected with a person that is not a working person. Will you please hang up your receiver and never dial this number again...

(She hangs up.)

BLACK QUEEN

He's been very, very ill for five months.

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Patient has drawn insurance benefits for a period in excess of three months.

(She tears off the sheets on which she has been writing and throws them away.)

You will have to apply for this medicine next January. We close at twelve o'clock. Any day in January, between ten and twelve. We are closed all day Sunday. We are closing.

(She pulls down her window. The BLACK QUEEN heaves a sigh. She moves on. A transparent curtain behind her reveals the mansion of the BLACK

ROCK, a swanky but somewhat dilapidated country house. The entrance is through a garden. The BLACK KING'S ROCK is leaving the house, rather in a hurry.)

BLACK QUEEN

Good day, sir.

BLACK KING'S ROCK

(in a hurry)

Oh, good morning.

(At the opposite side of the stage the whites are beginning to show signs of unrest.)

WHITE PAWNS

It's the blacks' turn.

Move black

They're thinking it over too long

BLACK QUEEN

We received your note this morning.

BLACK KING'S ROCK

Payment was due ten days ago. I am rather in a hurry.

WHITE PAWNS

Let's get going!

BLACK QUEEN

Our insurance has run out and there's no further coverage this year. Not for anything. And the new medicine is very expensive. So I was wondering...

BLACK KING'S ROCK

Well, there's nothing I can do about it. The law is the law, after all, the public law. Think what would happen if everyone were to be cared for all year round with public funds. These are public funds, you know. We'd go bankrupt. Public bankrupt.

BLACK QUEEN

It wouldn't work out that way, I'm sure. Not every-

one is sick all year round.

BLACK KING'S ROCK

You can't reason that way. That's not the way to make your accounts. That's why you people never get anywhere. You have to figure on the possibility that everyone will be sick all year round. Or at least pretend to be. Just imagine what would happen to the public funds.

BLACK QUEEN

And to the private funds. And to the public works, and to the private works. Why, we'd go bankrupt anyway if everyone was sick all year round. But I was just wondering whether, in view of the fact, you see, that, as things are now, I have to buy, you see, this new medicine, which is very, very expensive -- I was wondering whether you could be so kind as to -- wait for the payment.

BLACK KING'S ROCK

Charity, you mean

BLACK QUEEN

A loan. I am willing to incur a debt...

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

(from his place, far away)

Money grows bigger all the time. Gigantic. But if you haven't got any, debts grow bigger all the time too. From playful little innocents they change into nasty niggers, harrassing, humiliating. See how their smiles change from obsequious to heinous as they push you, corner you, conquer you. Hideous monsters. Growing, growing...

BLACK QUEEN

Charity

BLACK KING'S ROCK

(contrite)

I can't afford charity. You don't understand that.

BLACK QUEEN'S ROOK

(from her place, mournfully)

I lost my mother

BLACK KING'S ROOK

It cost a fortune

BLACK QUEEN'S ROOK

My cousin killed someone

in a car wreck

BLACK KING'S ROOK

Think of the expenses involved.

He had to be bailed out, the poor man.

BLACK QUEEN'S ROOK

My brother is suing the coalminers

BLACK KING'S ROOK

Lawyers, accountants, taxes

BOTH BLACK ROCKS

(resolutely)

We've never given

a penny

to any

of them

So why should we give it to charity?

(The BLACK QUEEN returns to e7, facing the WHITE

QUEEN, and throws up her arms in despair. A

13 b

BLACK PAWN, timidly, moves from h7 to h6,

just to be doing something.)

WHITE KING'S KNIGHT

14 w (moving from g1 to f3)

Trouble is, they don't know what they want to buy.

There's a job of motivation analysis for you. That's what's needed.

(Pieces and pawns now move as directed -- or in any other order which is convenient from the

14 b
through
25 w
to
diagram
c

choreographical point of view. It is sufficient that they move in accordance with the rules of the game, but that they put themselves into a terrible jam. Moves become increasingly difficult, the board seems hopelessly blocked.

During the course of this episode, the first moves are rapid and silent. The following moves are commented by a WHITE PAWN on d4. She is an elderly lady with well-groomed curls and a lorgnette. She scrutinizes the BLACK PAWN on g5, facing her, through her lorgnette. The BLACK PAWN looks tattered and way-weary.)

WHITE PAWN

Just look at his clothes. What a disorderly appearance. It's bad manners to be so poor.

(She examines a BLACK PAWN arriving on f5, a stocky man in his fifties with a big, fleshy nose.)

That's a sexy-looking little fellow!

(more severe)

What manners to look so sexy!

(She looks carefully at a BLACK PAWN arriving at c5.)

He must be sick. So droopy! It's bad manners to be sick.

(She addresses a BLACK PAWN, a hunchback, arriving on a5.)

It's extremely bad manners to be deformed...

(As movement becomes more difficult, the noises of a traffic jam are heard: soft and remote at first, then increasingly intense. Big horns, little horns, motors, motor scooters, streetcars, streetcar bells, bicycle bells, sirens, voices, clatter, and horns, and ever more horns. And whistles.)

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

(above the noise)

Everything grows, grows GROWS --
The traffic too is growing...

PLAYER

(through loudspeaker)

When matters get stuck and fouled up like that...

(The noise becomes more frantic.)

WHITE KING'S KNIGHT

(hopping up and down in his place)

We sell power, more power, for that extra measure of
safety in an emergency

PLAYER

(through loudspeaker)

...And every move you make is a wrong move...

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

Six hundred eighty casualties. Six hundred eighty
dead, on this one day, victims of this mad traffic

(the noise grows.)

PLAYER

...When every plan of action gets foiled and bogged
down like that...

SEVERAL BLACK PAWNS

I lost my father,

I lost my mother

My cousin was killed in a car wreck

My brother died

in a mining accident

in the flood,

in the war,

from ra-di-o-ac-tiv-i-ty

I lost my mother

I lost my father

(The noise grows.)

PLAYER

...When I just don't feel up to the situation and
the situation is not up to my standards...

(The noise is now absolutely horrible.)

WHITE KING

Death is a sickness we are learning to cure

PLAYER

...And every move I make is a wrong move -- I just
feel tempted

BLACK KING'S BISHOP

There's no deal against death

PLAYER

....irresistibly tempted to KNOCK DOWN THE WHOLE GAME;
It's a mess, it's frightful -- just knock it down...

(With two large sweeping motions of his colossal
arms, the PLAYER knocks down all the pieces and
pawns, black and white. They fall in confusion.
The board is strewn with their dead bodies. The
scene resembles a battlefield after the battle
has ended. In the background a mushroom-shaped
cloud is seen rising slowly, gradually covering
the gigantic figure of the PLAYER. There is
silence, and the curtain falls.)

PART II

(The stage is set as at the beginning of Part I, except that the chessboard, lying on the rug at center front, is strewn with toppled chessmen, recalling the finale of Part I. The PLAYER enters from the rear, as before, and sits down behind the chessboard with his legs crossed.)

PLAYER

I'm sorry. Terribly sorry. I made a mess of it. I guess I really did feel black. And that was one way to have black win. There are many ways to have black win, of course, but I should have stayed within the rules of the game. The rules of that game. All I can say is I'm sorry.

(He looks at the board.)

What a mess. What a terrible mess. Well, let's go back, undoing what was done, redoing what was undone. You see, you can do that -- in games. And in dreams. In dreams.

(Transformation: the stage appears as at the end of Part I. The mushroom cloud is reabsorbed -- by running the film backward. The traffic noise is heard briefly and then fades. The chessmen rise, as in a film run backward. There is silence. The chessmen now stand as they stood when the jam was thickest.)

PLAYER

But we must go back, farther back. Otherwise we will dream the same thing over again, and history will repeat itself.

(Transformation: the PLAYER returns to normal size and resumes his seat behind the chessboard, as at the opening of the scene.)

PLAYER

Just look at that poor little fellow. He doesn't move like a pawn any more.

(He takes up a white pawn, holding it in his hand.)

What have you been up to? Stealing? Why, he's got the biggest fattest decoration on his chest! You know, this is the guy who...

(He points to the disappearing mushroom cloud in the rear.)

They sent the poor pawn ahead to reconnoitre. He bravely did his duty, and got his duty's wages -- all of them. There he goes, the innocent pawn: pawn of blood that taketh away the -- mushroom of the world. Out of his mind. Poor pawn. Poor world... And where was the mistake? Whose fault was it? How far back must we go? And how far back can we go? What "Polish Opening" or "Sicilian Defense"! Sicilian Defense -- in a world like ours! Brazilian peanuts!

(He moves the chessmen back to their starting positions.)

And yet: you change a few moves, here and there, and everything changes. The whole perspective changes: from bright to dark. Or from dark to bright...

You can play this game -- shall we say, esthetically. The rules -- are taken for granted. The moves are so firmly bound by the rules, which everyone accepts, that the game itself is no problem. Then the moves become light, conventional, beautiful.

(Transformation: the whole scene reverts to a chessboard again, and the figures move as in a

...)

Game III
Moves 1 w
through & b

(Lights play on kaleidoscopic symmetries)

PLAYER

(through loudspeaker)

All men are dancers.

(Rhythmic drumming is heard.)

Beautiful, just beautiful... What could be more perfect?
But then some joker eats from the tree of knowledge --
though this is according to the rules too -- or kills
his brother or something, and...

9 w (A WHITE PAWN on e4 kills a BLACK PAWN on d5.

Transformation: the PLAYER, once more natural size,
sits behind the chessboard, as at the opening of
the scene. The chessmen are set up on the board
just as they had been on the big board after
the BLACK PAWN had been eliminated.)

Diagram
D

PLAYER

(continuing)

And now they are playing quite another kind of game.
Now they mean it -- even though they sometimes don't
know what they mean. Now they are playing for keeps.
Budapest Defense! Ch, the Budapest Defense...

Game IV (Transformation: the big board again. The figures
moves silently enact the moves of the game called the
1-9 "Budapest Defense.")

Diagram
E

(A long, thin conference table is dropped between
the two rows of white figures. The BLACK KING'S
KNIGHT -- the country doctor -- occupies a field
attacking the WHITE KING and waits there as
though seeking admittance. The three squares
marking the BLACK KING'S KNIGHT'S path of attack
are suddenly illuminated from below: d3, e1, and

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT'S path of attack

- 5 -

(lightning. Column e, from the BLACK QUEEN to the WHITE KING is faintly illuminated from below. Then the underground lights fade. The scene around the conference table is like a dream-memory of Part I. The BLACK KING'S KNIGHT has a submissive yet menacing and deathly quality about him. In fact, the entire scene takes place in an atmosphere of nightmare.)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

I've traveled a long way to find you, White King. I am weary.

WHITE KING

I'm glad to see you. You are the doctor who is treating the Black King, aren't you? What can I do for you?

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

The Black King is no longer in pain.

(On the black side, the BLACK KING is seen relaxing comfortably on his square. The BLACK QUEEN is bending tenderly over him from her square; and the BLACK KING'S BISHOP is seen waiting on his square, as though he expected to be called to administer extreme unction.)

WHITE KING'S ROOK

(His voice is distorted, echoing, suggesting reminiscence.)

Painless people buy paintings, plenty of paintings.

WHITE QUEEN'S KNIGHT

(facing the BLACK KNIGHT. Voice distorted.)

It's pointless to be painless when you're painless.
It's painless to be painless when...

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

It's the beginning of the end.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

(voice distorted)

The man feels an acute pain

WHITE QUEEN

(voice distorted)

But now we can restring his nerves.

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

He's going to die. You know it, we know it. Then why do you cheat him? Why don't you let him die well?

The disease is incurable, you know the disease is incurable. My wife died of it. Two years ago.

WHITE KING

My dear doctor, I respect you, I feel sorry for you, but you don't know what you're talking about. There simply is no such thing as an incurable disease. What you call an incurable disease is only one about which our knowledge is deficient.

WHITE QUEEN

(voice distorted)

Death is a sickness we are learning to cure

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

(in a very deep basso. Voice distorted)

Enter Megadeath. After Megaman.

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Tell me, professor, tell me honestly -- what do you want to do? This is what I've come to find out. What do you want me to do?

WHITE KING

I am no charlatan, my friend. I have no cure-all. All we can do is try.

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

(Voice distorted)

You cancel the symptom, but the cause remains...

WHITE KING

We've had remarkable success in some cases, mind you.
And where there's life there's hope...

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

But there is nothing you can do. There isn't anything
anybody can ever do. Can't you see? We don't know the
cause. We don't know what brings it on, this disease.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

(Voice distorted)

The cause of the cause of the cause is a curve.

(From this point on, the BLACK KING'S KNIGHT
warms to his topic. His discourse assumes the
character of a harangue, and at the points of
greatest intensity flashes of light from below
illuminate the fields signifying checkmate --
d3 and e1 to e7.)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

There's no begging the question. This disease brings
us face-to-face with the very roots, the secret roots,
of life and growth.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

(voice distorted)

What are you waiting for: Grow! GROW!

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Nature will never yield her secret, never. Nature is
jealous. Nature is terrible. We may learn to blow up
this planet, blow it to smithereens, finish off all
life on this earth. But we shall never learn to re-

life. Never. The Black King must die. The way my wife died...

(He begins screaming.)

Because this disease is incurable, INCURABLE, do you hear me?

WHITE KING

Now can you tell me what makes you so sure? We are never so sure -- of anything. To us, anything is possible, the future is always open. After all, we know so little..

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Don't tell me now that my wife died because we knew so little. Don't tell me now that she died because we didn't do everything that could have been done. My wife died because she was struck by an incurable disease. A disease that will be as incurable in ten years, a hundred years, a thousand years, as it is today. And as it was two years ago, when my wife died.

WHITE KING

It's a bit hard to argue with you, old man. What it boils down to, after all, is a question of faith. You have faith in the power of evil; we don't. We have faith in the power of progress; you don't.

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

With you people the sense of tragedy has dried up, that's all. Haven't you ever seen anybody die. Die while you stood there and couldn't do a blessed thing? She went, I tell you -- she slipped away just like that -- and you couldn't have done a thing. Do you know what that means? And when she went, everything went with her, everything.

WHITE QUEEN

We understand. But for us, you see, that is a reason

for working all the harder -- to see if we can keep it from happening again.

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

You're too rich. You no longer know what to do with yourselves. And so you get fancy ideas in your heads. You've lost the sense of tragedy. You've lost the sense of reality.

Tell me: what are you going to do?

Tell me: how are you going to save him?

Tell me: how should I have saved my poor wife?

TELL ME

WHITE KING

I'm no charlatan, I have no cure-all. All I can say is, let's try. The untried ways are still far more than the tried ones. Their number is infinite. We make new discoveries every day.

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

Don't you see that you are hemmed in, blocked, locked, by your own wealth, by your own shallow optimism, by your own refusal to see the world as it is?

(He screams.)

By your own white chessmen!

(Squares d3 and e1 to e7 are suddenly and sharply illuminated. The BLACK QUEEN and BLACK KING'S KNIGHT strike triumphantly defiant attitudes, as in a "Triumph of Evil." There is silence. The whites make gestures of momentary discomfort.)

BLACK KING'S KNIGHT

(continuing)

Don't you see that you are in checkmate?

(After a moment of silence, the voice of the BLACK KING is heard from the opposite side of the board.)

BLACK KING

(The BLACK QUEEN)

I feel so much better, my dear, so much better. I don't understand why...But I see I dropped my handkerchief. Would you pick it up for me, my dear?

b (The BLACK QUEEN withdraws from e7 to f8 to pick up the handkerchief, and the checkmate is broken. The lights under column e go out.)

PLAYER

So it goes. I was supposed to play black. And I played it pretty damned brilliantly too. But a handkerchief -- a handkerchief! -- can make or unmake the play. See what I mean?

SEVERAL OF THE WHITES

Come on, let's get back to work. We've no time to waste.

(A WHITE PAWN on e2, now free to attack, shoves the BLACK KING'S KNIGHT off d3. Then all pieces and pawns, including those previously eliminated, return to their starting positions.)

PLAYER

What are they up to now? The Berlin Game? By heaven, that's it -- no kidding! It really is the Berlin Game. But what it's all about, who knows? Certainly not the blacks. Nor the whites either, it would seem to me. But there they go.

V (The figures begin to move silently through the opening moves of the Berlin Game (Taylor Amatore). There is a short, intense, metallic glow on e4 as the WHITE PAWN is eliminated.)

PLAYER

gh The blacks are ruthless. Butchers. What an insensate slaughter! The individual means nothing to them. But

the whites, I see, proceed more cautiously. Every pawn, after all, is a potential queen. Of course sometimes things go wrong, even there. But there's more meaning to it, more sadness. Remember the Ballad of the White Pawn?

(The WHITE PAWN eliminated on e4 in the third move of the Berlin Game is back on his starting position. He is wearing a pilot's or spaceman's outfit. The whole white camp takes on suddenly, though temporarily, the aspect of an airbase, though all chessmen remain in the positions they occupied after the fourth move of the Berlin Game. The black side is slowly covered over by clouds. The WHITE PAWN looks through a telescope, then reports his observations by means of a microphone.)

WHITE PAWN

Hello, hello, this is e2-P2K reporting from altitude 9,000 feet. I see a shiny object moving rapidly in direction east-south-east, rising at 65 degrees, estimated velocity eleven hundred miles per hour. Object seems round or oval, all of shiny metal, with intensely bright rims...

HUSHED CHORUS OF
WHITES

A flying saucer. He's sighted a flying saucer.

WHITE QUEEN'S ROOK

He's a judicious man, not given to hallucinations.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

He doesn't drink.

WHITE KING'S ROOK

His pulse was normal when he took off.

CHORUS OF WHITE
PAWNS

(excited)

The flying saucer, the flying saucer!

(As the WHITE PAWN moves slowly toward e4, he is engulfed by glistening fog which renders him invisible except for the shine of his white overalls.)

WHITE KING

(firmly)

Pursue the object. Identify it if you can.

VOICES OF BLACKS

(heard through clouds)

An optical illusion. The man is mad. There are no flying saucers. There are no other worlds. An optical illusion. There are no other words. There are no flying saucers. The man is mad.

WHITE PAWN

(reporting)

Hello, hello, this is e2-P2K. I am flying at an altitude of thirty thousand feet, pursuing the object, which is now moving south. It looks metallic, and of tremendous size. It looks like the flared end of a great trumpet, maybe one of those that will blow on Judgment Day.

WHITE KING

(into microphone)

Try to identify the object and then return to your base; Do you hear me? Return to your base.

WHITE QUEEN'S ROOK

It couldn't have been the blacks, could it? -- letting loose this gadget right in our own sky?

WHITE KING' ROOK

We are on the track of new life, new worlds, new hope.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

The world is growing, growing

VOICES OF THE BLACKS

(through clouds)

They are trying to cheat us. They are bluffing.

BLACK QUEEN'S ROOK

They are speed-crazy

BLACK QUEEN'S KNIGHT

They are space-crazy

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP

They are time-crazy.

WHITE PAWN

(scarcely visible)

Hello, hello, this is e2 P2K. I am flying at altitude hundred thousand feet, velocity twenty-five thousand miles per hour. My direction is southwest.

(He gasps)

The object I am pursuing -- I see it distinctly -- it is enormous! The object I am pursuing . . . is . . . the planet . . . VENUS!!

(There is silence. The whites, by pose and gesture, express attitudes of awe and anxious expectation. After a moment the scene is transformed again, and the PLAYER, once more normal size, sits behind the chessboard, as in the opening scene.)

PLAYER

That, unfortunately, was the last we heard of him. Icarus, Icarus! Bits of his plane were found, scattered in nearby fields. The craft had disintegrated. quite

There was no trace of the body.

It's true, you know, it's a true story. I read it in the papers.

Of course, what really happened -- nobody knows. The planet Venus? I doubt it.

Icarus, Icarus!

But there will be others after him, whole generations: pawns become queens. His life is not lost. At any rate, not stupidly lost.

(His tone of voice changes)

To me it looks as though the Black King's Knight got him. Simply that. In any event, the Black King's Knight is occupying his place now. You see? Well, the world grows and grows, gets bigger and bigger; yet it shrinks too, at the same time and perhaps by the same means -- it gets smaller and smaller.

(The PLAYER clasps the little chessboard. Transformation: big chessboard again, and the game resumes at the fourth move of the Berlin Game.)

PLAYER

(speaking now through the loudspeaker)

There were, of course, other losses.

4 b (The BLACK KING'S KNIGHT kills the WHITE KING'S

5 w KNIGHT, and is in turn slaughtered by a WHITE PAWN.)

PLAYER

(continuing)

What a foolish slaughter! Black is not developing it's ideas, that's clear. Black ideas are not capable
5 b of development. . .

through

7 w

You'd think they'd been hit over the head with their own future, and their past was gushing out of their cracked skulls.

(The BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP (g4) is now facing the WHITE QUEEN (d1). The WHITE QUEEN is sitting behind a table with a huge apparatus on it, a test-tube and incubator.)

WHITE QUEEN

This is number forty, isn't it?

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

Yes.

WHITE QUEEN

(wearily)

The fortieth attempt

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

But this one is growing. Growing!

(The WHITE QUEEN blows a little oxygen into the test-tube. Then she looks at the label.)

WHITE QUEEN

(reading aloud)

Human ovum. Fertilized externally. In the test-tube.
November 15, 1961.

WHITE KING'S ROOK

It has tremendous commercial possibilities.

WHITE QUEEN

Far more than that; far more. This is the threshold.
Beyond it -- a new species, a species of white reason
and white serenity, whose children will be born without
passion and without pain.

(She raises her head and turns to the BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP, who is regarding her menacingly.)

WHITE QUEEN

(continuing)

Without sin, if you wish: without original sin. . .

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP

~~You mean to say I must kill the embryo? Abort it!~~
~~You will have to destroy this monstrosity.~~

WHITE QUEEN

You mean to say I must kill the embryo? Abort it!

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP

What you have created is not an embryo. It is a monstrosity.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

Call it what you like. It's growing. Growing! What's more, it has been growing for twenty-nine days!

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP.

It was not generated of man, nor conceived by woman; nor can it be born in labor and in pain.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP.

So much the better. Besides, if it is what you say, then it's not in your sphere of influence -- why don't you leave it alone?

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP

I have my orders. This monstrosity -- this frightful thing -- must be destroyed.

WHITE QUEEN

(cooperatively)

Don't worry, it may not live nine months. That is to say, this one may not. But you've no idea how useful it is. We are learning, learning; every minute of its life is a lesson to us. Do me a favor, will you? Let me work. While it lives, I have no time to waste.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

We are learning good and friendly things here, things that can never harm you. About the way cells grow and multiply, for instance. And we shall use this know-

ledge to cure diseases, to cure The Disease. We shall reduce the burden of pain and sorrow on this earth. Is that something to be afraid of?

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP

(in growing horror)

The thing has no soul. Kill it. Kill it at once.
Or else. . .

WHITE QUEEN

Rock-a-bye, baby. . . this is a fascinating way to be a mother, you know. A human way, a white way. No passion, no pain. No birth, no death.

CHORUS OF WHITE

PAWNS

(subdued)

Megaman. Megadeath. Megalife.

BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP

A world without horror: What a horror! A world without fright: Frightful! A world without death: deadly, deadly!

WHITE KING'S ROOK

Look, you can shove him off! It's useless to argue, they'll never understand.

(The scene is growing dimmer. The WHITE QUEEN lowers her eyes. Her attitude suggests melancholy.)

WHITE QUEEN

It's never useless to argue, it's never useless to try. But I stick to the rules of the game, and it's their turn. She is covered, covered by thousands of years. . .

(There is a moment of dreamlike remembrance. The stage darkens, and for a moment the white pieces and pawns resemble writhing trees. Snow falls. Voices echo "Love," "Hope," "Cooperation," "Good,

7 b Beautiful World. As in a bad dream, the BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP, like a bird of prey with wide black wings, swoops on the WHITE QUEEN and stabs her. Then the scene returns to normal, except that now the BLACK QUEEN'S BISHOP occupies the WHITE QUEEN'S field, as after the seventh move of the Berlin Game.)

PLAYER

(through loudspeaker)

This, too, is a true story, you know. I read it in the papers. . .

But look at them. They are biting and pawing blindly, like wounded animals. They are bloodthirsty. They are insensitive to their own bleeding. They throw themselves into furious attack, without thinking of their defense. Black ideas are incapable of development. Black ideas have a past but no future.

BLACK KING

(Looking at his watch)

It's five o'clock, near dawn, near dusk, when people die. It's five again. Five. Five. Five. That silly thing. As though five were five, and five were five. But the last five, I assure you, is quite a different thing from the next-to-last five: much shorter, oh very much shorter; and also much longer. It's a different five altogether. And this dull object just says "five." I'd want a watch whose hands grew shorter with each round, so that the round wasn't a round but a spiral; and finally perhaps only the hands' shadows would point; and after that perhaps you could only tell by the ticking what kind of five o'clock it was; a rasp, maybe, a gasp, and then... These watches don't make sense. Foolish white contraptions.

(The BLACK KING throws the watch away. It falls on d6, a square occupied by a BLACK PAWN, who is a seven-year-old boy. The boy joyously picks up the watch. He is studiously regarded by a WHITE KNIGHT on e5.)

BLACK PAWN

(to WHITE KNIGHT)

Hey, you look funny. You're so -- so white!

WHITE KNIGHT

All of us look like that. Haven't you ever seen a white, dear?

BLACK PAWN

(terribly amused, laughing and jumping)

A white? Of course I've never seen a white! Now that's a funny idea!

WHITE KNIGHT

You'll see more now. Many whites are coming.

BLACK PAWN

(suddenly serious)

What are you doing here?

WHITE KNIGHT

We've come to save the Black King. He's very ill, you know. We've come to take him away and care for him, and when he gets back, he'll be fit as a fiddle again.

BLACK PAWN

No, you can't do that, you can't take him away. He's going to stay right here, at home.

WHITE KNIGHT

But sick people can't get well when they stay home. Just like people can't learn anything if they don't go to school.

BLACK PAWN

You think he should go to school and learn to get well?

WHITE KNIGHT

He'll learn to get well. We all will -- before long.

BLACK PAWN

But there isn't any such school, that would be a funny school. . . What time is it?

WHITE KNIGHT

Five-thirty.

BLACK PAWN

This watch is broken. It stopped at five.

WHITE KNIGHT

Go and get it fixed. It's a nice old watch.

BLACK PAWN

The glass is cracked and --and--and I guess the spring is busted.

(He shakes it)

It won't tick.

WHITE KNIGHT

Someone must have dropped it. People are so careless these days. Never mind, we'll get a new spring and change the glass, we'll get the dust out of the works. The face needs freshening up too -- it's murky -- and if I were you I'd modernize the numbers. And look at the hands -- they're rusty too. Tell your mommy to bring it in to Taylor and Taylor. We'll fix it up for you.

BLACK PAWN

(shaking the watch)

Oh, you just want to take it to a get-well school!

WHITE KNIGHT

Come on, we'll make it all shiny and new.

BLACK PAWN

But I want it the way it is.

WHITE KNIGHT

It's no good the way it is.

BLACK PAWN

But I like it.

WHITE KNIGHT

All right. Why don't you keep it as a souvenir, a keepsake. A piece for the museum. A relic

BLACK PAWN

I like old things.

WHITE KNIGHT

Well, everything in its time and place. Fellow like you really needs a functional timepiece: a chronoscope that marks fast time. Sideral time. A chronopher.

BLACK PAWN

What???

WHITE KNIGHT

Tell your mommy to take you in to Taylor and Taylor. We'll have gifts for you too -- space kits and a magic-ray gun. Bring your mommy in to buy a new watch.

BLACK PAWN

I'm going to kill you. I really can, you know. I really can kill you. You're a slob.

WHITE KNIGHT

(singing)

A fellow like you
needs a functional timepiece,
A chronoscope marking fast time.

Solar time,

Sideral time,

A watch from Taylor and Taylor.

A watch from Taylor and Taylor.

BLACK PAWN

(repeating)

. . .so-lar time si-der-al time a watch from Taylor
and Tay-ler.

WHITE KNIGHT

(pleased)

Children are living, talking records of what we tell
them every day. There's a market for you. A big market.
And it's so easy. Everything is so easy.

BLACK PAWN

(suddenly aggressive, or pretend-aggressive, again)

I'll take my magic-ray gun and I'll shoot you; and then
I'll take the broom and sweep away the crumbs. Into the
garbage.

WHITE KNIGHT

I bet you would, too. But it's not your turn, my dear
boy. Remember: time, time.

(Pensively, he quotes a text.)

"Think of what it can mean to your firm in profits if
you can condition a million or ten million children
who will grow up into adults trained to buy your product,
as soldiers are trained to advance when they hear the
trigger words 'forward, march!'"

(The WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP arrives on f7, shakes
the BLACK PAWN'S hand, pats his shoulder, and in
a friendly way shoves him out of his square.)

8 w

BLACK PAWN

(on e6, impressed, uncertain, addressing the
WHITE KNIGHT)

Now I can't kill you any more.

Give me a magic-ray gun,

Then I'll kill you.

Give me a watch from Taylor and Taylor

For solar time,

for sidereal time...

(He falls asleep, dropping the old watch on the pavement. It breaks to pieces.)

(The dying BLACK KING is in his armchair. The BLACK QUEEN is to his right, the BLACK KING'S BISHOP to his left. The BLACK QUEEN'S KNIGHT (doctor) takes a helplessly deferential attitude at a little distance (on b8). The BLACK ROOKS (Landlord and Landlady) stand at their places, looking hard and selfish. The BLACK PAWNS are all turned toward the KING, their gestures expressing certainty of the worst.)

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

(to the BLACK KING)

Well, well. That was a poor game -- from the black point of view. Yet you had a fifty-fifty chance, or almost, of winning.

BLACK KING

It's five o'clock. Near dusk, near dawn. When people die. It's five o'clock again.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

Too many people have died here of this disease. The people who have died here recently of this disease are too numerous. We can't explain it -- statistically. It's not a contagious disease. And yet here it is, like an epidemic.

BLACK KING'S BISHOP

I think it's your experiments. Mankind is becoming too bold. Heaven is punishing us.

BLACK QUEEN

There's no longer any hope.

BLACK QUEEN'S KNIGHT

The disease is incurable. I told you so. My wife died two years ago. . . .

WHITE KNIGHT

A stubborn lot, aren't they. Heaven only knows what's underneath it all. They need some depth-probing, that's certain.

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

It is statistically impossible for a death to occur here in the near future, caused by this disease. We've figured it out. Your quota is full. You will live.

CHORUS OF BLACK PAWNS

(subdued)

I lost my father,
I lost my mother,
My cousin was killed in a crash. . . .

WHITE KNIGHT

I've brought you The New Drug. See? Easy to use.
Tastes nice. Feels nice. Handsomely packaged, too.

CHORUS OF BLACK PAWNS

(subdued)

My brother died in the mine,
in the flood, in the war,
in the earthquake. . . .

WHITE KNIGHT

It's the latest, it's the safest,
It's a triumph
Of science.

CHORUS OF BLACK PAWNS

(subdued)

Of ra-di-o-ac-ti-vi-ty. . .

WHITE KNIGHT

(drily)

No one dies any longer of This Disease.

BLACK QUEEN'S ROOK

They're going to poison him; the crooks. Terrible people, show them away.

WHITE KNIGHT

What can you do with people who are scared? Be reasonable: if you know he's going to die anyway, why are you so afraid of us? He has nothing to lose, everything to gain.

BLACK KING'S BISHOP

Each of us dies when it has been decided that we should die. We die in accordance with a divine will. Each of us.

BLACK QUEEN'S KNIGHT

We die of god-given diseases here, we don't die of hiatrogenic diseases. That much is sure. My wife died two years ago. . .

CHORUS OF WHITE PAWNS

(electronically distorted)

Easy to use. Tastes nice. Feels nice. Handsomely packaged too.

BLACK KING

(in delirium)

They are the Angels of Death,
The White Angels of Death. . .

ALL WHITES

Did you hear that?

(They laugh.)

Angels of Death

(They laugh.)

Did you hear that

(The words and laughter of the whites are repeated
in an echo chamber until they fade out.)

WHITE KING

(aloud)

With our angels around, a man may die four, five times: ,
which means he may not die at all.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

Individual death walks out

Just after individual man.

Enter Megadeath, on the heels of Megaman.

ALL WHITES

Megadeath. Megalife. Megaman. Megalife

(The words echo and fade.)

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

(on f7)

The cause of the cause of the cause is a curve. You are
not going to die of This Disease. We have arrived in
time. Step forward, as you must, and take your Drug.

BLACK KING'S ROCK

God-given diseases are less expensive than hiatrogenic
ones. They make him spend a fortune, and he's going to
die anyway.

BLACK QUEEN

I'd do anything to save him, anything. But there's no
longer any hope.

WHITE BISHOP

Step forward, as you must -- it's the rule of the game.
You are not going to die of This Disease.

8 b (The BLACK QUEEN and BLACK KING'S BISHOP support
the BLACK KING on either side, and gently push
him forward to e7. In doing so, however, they
remain on their original squares d8 and f8.)

BLACK KING

It's five o'clock. I feel faint around this hour.
Each time this hour comes around I feel fainter.

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

We've arrived in time. You are not going to die of
This Disease.

(She looks at him with pity.)

If you are going to die, it will be of cowardice.

BLACK QUEEN

We'll do everything we can, but . . .

(All blacks move in gestures of fear and despair.)

BLACK KING

I am glad to have you all together here. Or almost all.
And almost together. We've shared so many things, so
many -- ugly-- things. And so it's good to be together,
together. Life has been hard. We've hated one another,
we've cheated one another. And so it is good to be
together. Dying is so much easier than living. It always
was, at least for us. And now there are the whites,
they make it even easier to die. They perfect everything.
They have perfected Death. They are brave and bright,
the angels of death.

ALL WHITES

This is outrageous. This is unspeakable.

WHITE KNIGHT

We are selling life, and he is buying death.

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

He is ranting, he is delirious.

WHITE KING'S ROCK

They all are. Cut of their minds. Cut of this world.
Cut of this time.

BLACK KING

I am grateful to each one of you, each one of my blacks.
To those who exploited me. Those who betrayed me. Those
who enslaved me and trod on me. Those who failed to
make me out. Those who groped in the dark and bungled.
And stumbled and fumbled. And hurt. It was so human to
hurt -- so warm and dark.

(The blacks are whimpering and wiping their tears.)

BLACK KING

(continuing)

I am grateful, too, to the whites, who eased my pain.
It's good to suffer, but it's also good to stop suffering.
And secrets hurt
And beauty hurts
and the past hurts.
And this is the transit.
They gently took
One foot of mine
and put it in the
Hard-earned realm yonder.

BLACK KING'S ROCK

They're killing him. I told you. They're killing him

BLACK QUEEN'S ROCK

They're killing him the costly way.

BLACK KING

I see the world differently now. It's a friendly, open world; without contrasts; everything blending into white; everyone cooperating with everyone in order to die better.

WHITE KING'S BISHOP

He doesn't want to part with his disease; it's the blackest part of him.

ALL WHITES

(immobile, shining with metallic luster)

An outrage. An outrage. They're living out of their world. Out of their time. Megaman. Megadeath. Megalife

(The words echo electronically and fade.)

ALL BLACKS

They are killing him. Move, white -- it's your turn. They are killing him.

WHITE KING

Every death is a suicide.

WHITE QUEEN'S BISHOP

9 w (moving from e1 to g5)

Diagram F Everything is growing, growing. Insanity is growing. Day is night and night is day. Panic is growing. Death is life and life is death. Guilt is growing. Guilt is progress and progress is guilt. . .

(The BLACK KING is checkmated. All the squares around him -- d7, e6, e8, f6 -- as well as the square on which he is standing, are lit up from below with menacing flashes. The KING dies.)

THE BLACKS

The king has died.

WHITE KING

(reading a telegram)

The Black King has died.

(He looks up.)

He died even though he had received treatment in time.
He was given The New Drug. He didn't die of The Disease,
he died of pusillanimity. He died like a man in a life-
boat: out of fear. He need not have died. What a waste.

WHITE PAWN

(looking through lorgnette, as in Part I)

It's bad manners to die.

(A tape plays back, distorted, "It's bad manners
to be poor," "It's bad manners to be ugly,"
"It's bad manners to be sick.")

WHITE PAWN

(repeating)

It's very bad manners to die. Poor manners.

THE BLACKS

The king has died.

(angrily)

They killed him!

BLACK QUEEN

We really did all we could, but. . .

BLACK KING'S BISHOP

He's in heaven now.

BLACK ROCKS

To die without the whites is cheaper. And godlier.

ALL BLACKS

They killed him. They are ungodly. And inhuman. Unnatural.
Keep away from the whites.

(All blacks turn away from the whites, and without
leaving their places make mimic gestures of flight.)

The lights fade out very slowly.

Transformation: the PLAYER, in natural size, sits behind his chessboard. Fawns and pieces are set up as at the conclusion of the Berlin Game, with the BLACK KING checkmated. The PLAYER rises.)

PLAYER

(holding a black pawn in his hand)

I was supposed to play black, to feel black. To make the most of black. And there, you'll say, I played black very poorly, very poorly indeed. Black lost. But you see, the fact is I really did feel for black -- though undoubtedly I hated black too; but hate is part of love. Anyway. I had black lose because black wanted to lose. And if you get what you want, you win. By losing, black really won; which means that white lost. When the day comes when black wins, when the black king has the courage to live -- well, then white will really have won. Because this is the kind of world we are living in. . . But as long as black is black, black always loses.

And white loses too.

White began. White began at the beginning, and white was there in the end.

Black, you see -- well, I am black, you are black: the Budapest Defense, the Berlin Game: black was a phase, no more no less. But white was there at the beginning, and white will be there at the end.

ELECTRONIC VOICES

(softly)

Megaman. Megadeath. Megalife. Megalife. Megalife.

PLAYER

And this does not imply any judgment of value. Just a statement of fact. It's a friendly, open world. Without contrasts. Everything blending into white.

(He is fading into the background.)

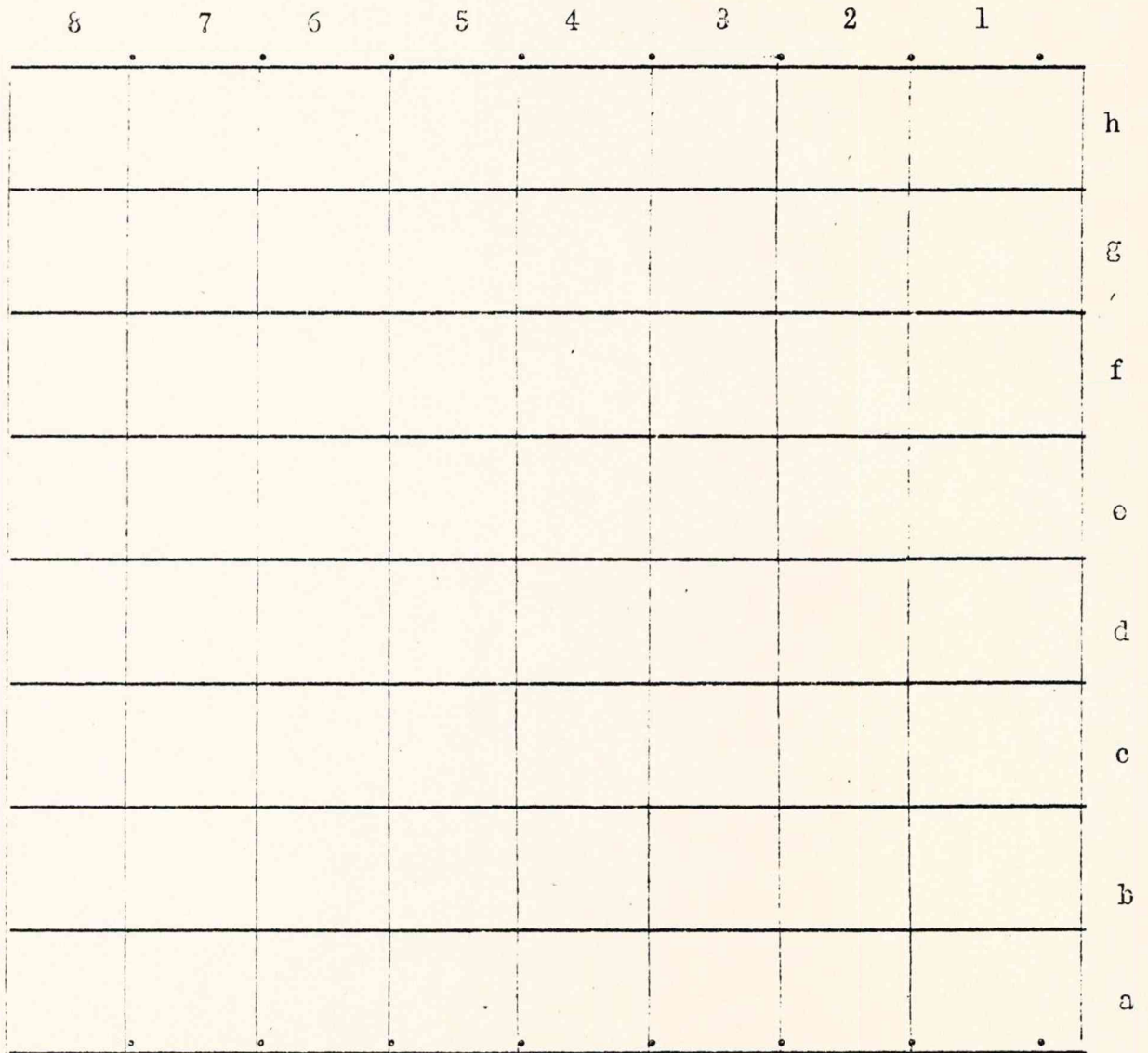
White will be there . . . Well, good night, good night.
A good white night . . .

(Light for a moment concentrates on the white chessmen -- pieces and pawns. Then: fade-out and curtain.)

++++

APPENDIX

In order to facilitate directions, the movements of the chessmen will be indicated by reference to the numbered squares of a chessboard laid out as follows:



The Blacks

The Whites

Audience

Game I

<u>White</u>		<u>Black</u>
1. d2- d4		d5 - d7
2. e2- e3		e7 - e6
3. e2- e3		e7 - e6
4. Q d1- g4		e6 - e5
5. Q g4- h4	B	e8 - f8
6. Q h4- g5	B	f8 - e4
7. Q g5x e5	Q	d8 - e7
8. Q e5- f4	B	e4 - d3
9. Q f4- g3	B	according to choreogr. instr.
10. Q likewise	Q	" " " "
11. Q "	B	" " " "
12. Q "	B	" " " "
13. Q x e5		h7 - h6
14. Kn g1-f3		g7 - g5
15. g2-g3		e6 - e5
16. b2-b3		b7 - b6
17. a2-a4		a7 - a5
18. h2-h4	R	a8 - a6
19. R a1-a3	Kn	g8 - f6
20. R h1-h3	B	f8 - g7
21. B f1-d3	Kn	b8 - d7
22. Q e5-e7	R	h8 - f6
23. B c1-d2		b7 - b6
24. b2-b3		h6 - h5
25. Q c7-e6		

Game II

	White		BLACK
1.	Q c6 - c7		h5 - h6
2.	b8 - b2		b6 - b7
3.	B d2 - e1		f8 - h8
4.	Q c7 - e5	Kn	d7 - b8
5.	B d8 - f1	B	g7 - f8
6.	R h8 - h1	Kn	f6 - g6
7.	R a8 - a1	R	a6 - a8
8.	h4 - h2		a5 - a7

Game III

1.	e2 - c4		e7 - e5
2.	Kn b1 - c3	Kn	b8 - c6
3.	Kn g1 - f3	Kn	g8 - f6
4.	d2 - d4		d7 - d5
5.	B f1 - b5	B	f8 - b4
6.	a2 - a3		a7 - a6
7.	B c1 - g5	B	c8 - g4
8.	g2 - g3		g7 - g6
9.	e4 x d5		

Game IV

1.	d2 - d4	Kn	g8 - f6
2.	e2 - c4		e7 - e5
3.	d4 x e5	Kn	f6 - g4
4.	B e1 - f4	Kn	b8 - c6
5.	Kn g1 - f3	B	f8 - b4 +
6.	Kn b1 - d2	Q	d8 - e7
7.	a2 - a3	Kn	g4 x e5
8.	Kn f3 x e5	Kn	c6 x e5
9.	a3 x b4??	Kn	e5 - d8 ⁺
		Q	e7 - f8

Game V

1.	e2 - e4		e7 - e5
2.	B f1 - c4	Kn	g8 - f6
3.	Kn g1 - f3	Kn	f6 x e4
4.	Kn b1 - c3	kn	e4 x c3
5.	d2 x c3		d7 - d6
6.	C - C	B	c8 - g4
7.	Kn f3 x e5	B	g4 x d1??
8.	B c4 x f7	K	e8 - e7
9.	B c1 - g5 ⁺		

DIAGRAM 1.

	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
	b R	b P					w P	w R	h
	b Kn	b P			w Q		w P	w Kn	g
	b E		b P				w P	w E	f
	b K			b P		w P		w K	e
	b Q			b P	w P				d
	b E		b P			w P		w E	c
	b Kn	b P					w P	w Kn	b
	b R	b P					w P	w R	a

Diagram B - C (Traffic jam)

	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
			b P	w P	w R			h
	b P		b P		w P			e
b R	b P	w Kn			w Kn	w P		f
b K	b Q				w P		w K	e
	b Kn		b P	w P	w P	w B		d
		w Q	b P		w P			c
		b P			w P		w Kn	b
		b R	b P	w P	w R			a

Diagram D -- Symmetries --

	h	g	f	e	d	c	b	a	
	b R	b p					w p	w R	h
			b p	w p	b p	w p			g
		b p	b Kn			w Kn	w p		f
	b K			b p				w K	e
	b Q			w p	w p			w Q	d
		b p	b Kn			w Kn	w p		c
			b p	w p	b p	w p			b
	b R	b p					w p	w R	a

Diagram E -- Budapest Defense

8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
b R	b P					w F	w R	h
	b P					b P		g
	b P		w D			w P	w D	f
b K	b Q					w F	w K	e
	b P				b Kn	w Kn	w Q	d
b D	b P		w P					c
	b P		w P			w P		b
b R	b P						w R	a

DIAGRAM F -- The Berlin Game

8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
b R	b P					w P		h
	b P		w B			w P	w K	g
b B	w B					w P	w R	f
	b K		w Kn					e
b Q		b P					b B	d
	b P				w P	w P		c
b Kn	b P					w P		b
b R	b P					w P	w R	a