

CHESS

Script as per performances in the Prince Edward Theatre in June 1986.

*Indicates spoken dialogue

NB: Chess commentaries by William Hartston are not included in this script, neither are counterpoint/backing lyrics in some scenes, e.g. the Prologue.

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PROLOGUE: THE STORY OF CHESS

(NB: The Chorus portray at various times characters in the lyric of the Prologue.)

ARBITER

Each game of chess means there's one less
Variation left to be played
Each day got through means one or two
Less mistakes remain to be made

CHORUS

Each game of chess means there's one less
Variation left to be played
Each day got through means one or two
Less mistakes remain to be made

Not much is known
Of early days of chess beyond a fairly vague report
That fifteen hundred years ago two princes fought
Though brothers, for a Hindu throne

Their mother cried
For no-one really likes their offspring
fighting to the death
She begged them stop the slaughter
with her every breath
But sure enough one brother died

Sad beyond belief
She told her winning son
You have caused such grief
I can't forgive this evil thing you've done

He tried to explain
How things had really been
But he tried in vain
No words of his could mollify the queen

And so he asked the wisest men he knew
The way to lessen her distress
They told him he'd be pretty certain to impress
By using model soldiers on
A chequered board to show it was his brother's fault
They thus invented chess

Chess displayed no inertia
Soon spread to Persia, then west
Next the Arabs refined it,
Thus redesigned, it progressed
Still further yet
And when Constantinople fell in 1453
One would have noticed every other refugee
Included in his bags a set

Once in the hands
And in the minds of leading figures of the Renaissance

The spirit and the speed of chess made swift advance
Through all of Europe's vital lands

Where we must record
The game was further changed
Right across the board
The western touch upon the pieces ranged

King and queen and rook
And bishop, knight and pawn
All took on the look
We know today, the modern game was born

With such success
We see a game that started by mistake in Hindustan
And boosted in the main by what is now Iran
Reach every corner of the globe with nation
Squaring up to nation to determine, no holds barred,
Who owns, who made, who will parade
The champion of chess

ARBITER

*The international chess federation of which I have the honor of being president announces that the next world championship will take place in Merano, Italy.

*The current world champion, Anatoly Sergievsky of the Soviet Union, will defend his title against Frederick Trumper of the United States of America.

*The first player to achieve six victories will be declared champion. The first game will begin on March 27th.

ACT ONE

Scene One : The Main Square of Merano, Italy.

Is this The Sound of Music? Tirolean hats, leather pants, yodels and dancing. Snow-capped mountain peaks and icy rivers. Narrow, crowded, colourful streets of shops. Grapes and the benefits of the spa. The MAYOR and CITIZENS are waiting for an important arrival at the station.

MERANO

CITIZENS OF MERANO (*including MAYOR*)

O light the heart
That lingers in Merano
Merano! The spa no
Connoisseur of spas would miss
So healthy
Highly recommended
Is this sweet metropolis
Mental and physical bliss!

The gods have smiled
And bless-ed is Merano
Merano! There are no
Fitter burghers to be found
Such vigour!
Take the time to taste us
We'll give you a welcome that's typically Tirol
For then we are sure of our ground
Right now we're Italian - we used to be German
The border keeps shifting around

MAYOR (*solo*)

Speaking as one of the patriarchs
I don't mind taking your lira or marks

CITIZENS

Oh I get high when I saunter by
the mountains of Merano
Rosy-cheeked Merano
Flourishing to a fault
The sparkling streams, the bracing air
The therapeutic salt
I'd have to be carried away to call a halt!

Oh I feel great in this bouncing state
O hail to thee Merano
Hearty hale Merano
Any objections? Nein!
Where breathing in will turn you on
Where water tastes like wine
Get out your get up and go and get in line
It's living your life in a show by
Rodgers and Hammerstein!

O sad the soul
Who passes by Merano

Merano! So far no
Soul has ever passed us by
They love us
Why not stay forever?
Oh so many reason why
All those in favour say "Aye"
Aye!

So sing our song
Let's hear it for Merano
Merano! Soprano
Alto, tenor, bass agree
We're wholesome
What a happy haven
This is a place where your arteries soften
Cholesterol hasn't a chance
From mountain to valley the natural goodness
Is fighting pollution's advance

MAYOR (*solo*)
So come to us and feel the force
All major credit cards taken of course

CITIZENS
Oh I get high when I saunter by
The mountains of Merano
Rosy-cheeked Merano
Flourishing to a fault
The sparkling streams, the bracing air
The therapeutic salt
I'd have to be carried away to call a halt!

Once in a while all the gods will smile
On little old Merano
Humble shy Merano
Suddenly hits the press
And I report with all the pride
And joy that I possess
Half of the world and his wife
Has our address
Our little town will be rife
With games of chess!

(A whistling/orchestral interlude during which a train rushes through the station)

Get out your get up and go and get in line
It's living your life in a show by
Rodgers and Hammerstein!

Another train. This one stops. The man more responsible than any other for the enormous interest in a World Chess Championship match, the current world champion, the American FREDERICK TRUMPER, gets off the train and pushes his way through the melee. He brushes aside the official reception. He is flanked by his second/lover FLORENCE VASSY and two or three other members of his delegation (males) one of whom is also the man who is ostensibly head of the American TV production company covering the event, WALTER DE COURCEY.

WHAT A SCENE! WHAT A JOY!

FREDERICK surveys the town, its people and its visitors with patronising amusement.

FREDERICK

What a scene! What a joy!
What a lovely sight
When my game is the big sensation!
Has the mob's sporting taste
Altered overnight?
Have they found new sophistication?

Not yet! They just want to see
If the nice guy beats the bum
If it's East-West
And the money's sky-high
They all come
*Florence!
(*He takes a photograph of FLORENCE*)

You can raise all you want
If you raise the roof
Scream and shout and the gate increases
Break the rules -- break the bank
I'm the living proof
They don't care how I move my pieces

I know I'm the best there is
But all they want is a show
Well that's all right I'll be glad to oblige
S.R.O. S.R.O.

MERANO (continued)

FREDERICK and his entourage leave. Determined to have their welcoming ceremony, the MAYOR & CITIZENS give the full works to a bewildered stranger who happened to be on the same train.

Oh I get high when I saunter by
The mountains of Merano
Rosy-cheeked Merano
Flourishing to a fault
The sparkling streams, the bracing air
The therapeutic salt
I'd have to be carried away to call a halt!

Oh I feel great in this bouncing state
O hail to thee Merano
Hearty hale Merano
Any objections? Nein!
Where breathing in will turn you on
Where water tastes like wine
Get up you get up and go and get in line
It's living your life in a show by
Rodgers and Hammerstein!

Now for the sell
We put the ice into paradise
We are the salt of the earth
Sound as a bell
Check out the waters
And check out the hygiene
At which we excel
Check into an hotel
And schnell
Body and soul get well!

Scene Two : Frederick's Suite/Press Conference

The Palace Hotel, Merano. FREDERICK's (and FLORENCE's) suite. FREDERICK is alone, playing chess against a computer.

COMPUTER

*Knight D 5.

FREDERICK

*Bishop A 5 - check

(FLORENCE enters with a bundle of newspapers)

FLORENCE

Well, we can't complain that you're being ignored
by the press

FREDERICK

*What'd they say? What'd they say?

FLORENCE

They're not too polite

FREDERICK

They say I'm a shit?

FLORENCE

*(Well), yes

*They pulled you to pieces in
Five different languages

(FREDERICK goes up to FLORENCE, kisses her quickly, and starts looking through some papers)

*Here we are - The Times -
You "thrive on unpleasantness"

(FREDERICK finds this amusing, and FLORENCE seems to too)

*Le Monde: "Frederick Trumper La Honte des Echès."
(Frederick Trumper the Shame of chess)

FREDERICK

I don't believe that they can't see my game
I'm like that tennis player, what's his name?
They love to hate me and for us that's dollars!

FLORENCE

*Die Welt: Trumper Der Grössliche Skandal des Schachs!
(*Trumper - the greatest scandal of chess!*)

FREDERICK

Hey, look here's a piece that some idiot's written on you
*"Florence Vassy, petite Hungarian-born Englishwoman
His gentle companion" - huh! If they only knew

FLORENCE (*pushing him onto the bed*)

*What do you mean? I've always been gentle with you Freddie -

BOTH (*reading*)

"She stands by her champion"

FREDERICK

*I like this - "whose
Demands are so infantile - "
I don't like this!

(*he throws the paper away*)

FLORENCE

If you don't like it then it's up to you
They like the Russian - they could like you too

FREDERICK

Commie newspapers!
Of course the bastards all support the Russian

FLORENCE

But Sergievsky seems a sweet opponent -
So why do you abuse him all the time?
Freddie, I love you very much but just for once, don't go on about the Russians at the press
conference, okay?

FREDERICK

All Soviets deserve abuse!

PRESS CONFERENCE

(*Dissolve into one of the hotel's conference rooms. A gaggle of REPORTERS,
PHOTOGRAPHERS, INTERVIEWERS and TV PERSONNEL assembled to speak to
FREDERICK, facing the gathering. FLORENCE not yet there.*)

REPORTER #1

Does your opponent deserve such abuse?

FREDERICK

*All Soviets deserve abuse!

REPORTER #2

But even you must concede he can play

FREDERICK

*Yeah, he's the best Red on the circuit, sure, I'll give him that -

REPORTER #3

He hasn't lost for a long time

He could be a tough nut to crack

FREDERICK

*Listen, if he gets one game off of me it's because I want to keep the press interest going -

REPORTERS

Why do you persist

With vicious attacks,

Ungracious remarks re:

Opponents? It smacks

Of a lack of conviction, admit

You're under duress

And that your only skill left

Is for money not chess

If Soviet life's

As grim as you claim

Then how come their boys are

So good at the game?

Though you swear the American dream

Is clearly the best

You're no advertisement for

Life and times in the West.

(FLORENCE enters)

REPORTER #4

Why did you risk the whole match breaking down?

FREDERICK

I don't know what you're saying. What are you - what are you implying?

REPORTER #1

All your outrageous demands, your conceit -

FREDERICK

*I don't see anything outrageous in demanding what I'm worth.

REPORTER #5

They pay you all that you ask for

And then you demand even more -

FREDERICK

*I'm the reason you're all here - who's ever heard of Sergievsky?

REPORTERS

It's hard to believe what we're reporting

Why so disparaging? Not very sporting

FREDERICK

*Are the Communists sporting? My God -

REPORTERS

Tell all this to the United Nations

Are you an asset to East-West relations?

FREDERICK

*What is this? What have the Russians ever done for East-West relations? Do you guys have any serious questions?

REPORTER #6

What's your impression of our little town?

FREDERICK

*Rather cold and dull. As I expected.

REPORTER #2

Where would you rather have played? Leningrad?

FREDERICK

*Leningrad was an insulting Soviet suggestion -

REPORTER #3

They only tried to be friendly

They would have played in New York

FREDERICK

*Aw - c'mon, you know as well as I do what their motives were.

REPORTERS

You protest too much, we see your ploy, a
Big noise to hide your fears, pure paranoia

FREDERICK

*I'm not paranoid. They're out to get me!

REPORTERS

Tell all this to the United Nations

Are you an asset to East-West relations?

FREDERICK

*Jesus...

REPORTER #7

Will you be quitting for good if you lose?

(FREDERICK stares at the questioner, but makes no reply)

REPORTER #2

How come your second's a girl, lover boy?

FREDERICK

(a double take, then:)

*What'd you say?

REPORTER #2

How come your second's a girl, lover boy?

FREDERICK rushes at the REPORTER and hits him. He storms off. Pandemonium, from which emerges:

REPORTERS

Well, what did I say?

He's out of his tree

He's finally flipped

And between you and me

He's no hope of retaining his crown

In his frame of mind

In fact he shouldn't have come here

He should have resigned

FLORENCE is desperately trying to restore order. As the REPORTERS continue, she dominates their words with a powerful outburst:

FLORENCE

Smile, you got your first exclusive story

Now you can bask in his reflected glory

Naked, unprovoked, Yankee aggression!

Oh what a credit to your great profession!

REPORTERS

Much better to quit

While still number one

Than crash to defeat

Reputation undone

Though he's proved to himself

It's a communist plot

If you ask me it's money that did it

And started the rot

It's sad that the best

His country's produced

Is crumbling in front

Of our eyes and reduced

To a mindless abuse and assault

On all of mankind

In fact he shouldn't have come here

He should have resigned....

The scene changes after FLORENCE's speech, during the REPORTERS' final words.

Scene Three : Anatoly and Molokov/Where I Want to Be

MOLOKOV's suite in Merano. ANATOLY SERGIEVSKY, the Russian challenger to FREDERICK, and the head of his delegation, ALEXANDER MOLOKOV, have been watching the Press Conference on TV. The image of FLORENCE's face during her final speech to the REPORTERS is now on the screen. Newspapers, with all the stories about FREDERICK are lying around.

MOLOKOV

*The man is utterly mad - believe me, Anatoly, you're playing a lunatic.

ANATOLY

*That's the problem. He's a brilliant lunatic and you can't tell which way he'll jump - like his game he's impossible to analyse - you can't dissect him, predict him - which of course means he's not a lunatic at all.

MOLOKOV

What we've just seen's a pathetic display
From a man who's beginning to crack
He's afraid - he knows he isn't the player he was
And he won't get it back

ANATOLY

*Nonsense!
Why do my seconds
Always want to believe
Third-rate propaganda -

MOLOKOV

My friend, please relax
We're all on your side
You know how you need us -

ANATOLY

I don't need my army of so-called 'advisors'
And 'helpers' to tell me
The man who's revitalised chess single-handed
Is more or less out of his brain
When it's very clear he's sane

MOLOKOV

Listen, we don't underestimate Trumper -
We won't get caught in that trap
After all, winning or losing reflects on us all -

ANATOLY

Oh don't give me that crap!
I win - no one else does
And I take the rap if I lose

MOLOKOV

It's not quite that simple
The whole world's tuned in
We're on display
We're not merely sportsmen -

ANATOLY

Oh please don't start spouting that old party line
Yes I know it's your job but
Just get out and get me a chess-playing second
In thirty-six hours we begin
That is if you want to win!

MOLOKOV

*Wanting's not sufficient - we have to know , we must make sure. All men have a weakness, and his is that woman; take her and you win the game!

ANATOLY

*So you think I can't win otherwise?

MOLOKOV

*I'm not saying that - I'm just making certain - and she's attractive...then there's her intriguing family history - Hungary, 1956 and all that -

ANATOLY

*I'm a chess player, Mr. Molokov - you go and play these other games!

WHERE I WANT TO BE

MOLOKOV leaves, displeased. ANATOLY switches off the TV. He wanders over to a chess board and moves some pieces.

Who needs a dream?
Who needs ambition?
Who'd be the fool
In my position?
Once I had dreams
Now they're obsessions
Hopes become needs
Lovers possessions

Then they move in
Oh so discreetly
Slowly at first
Smiling too sweetly
I opened doors
They walked right through them
Called me their friend
I hardly knew them

Now I'm where I want to be and who I want to be
and doing what I always said I would
and yet I feel I haven't won at all
Running for my life and never looking back
in case there's someone right behind
to shoot me down and say he always knew I'd fall

When the crazy wheel slows down
Where will I be? Back where I started

Don't get me wrong
I'm not complaining
Times have been good

Fast, entertaining
But what's the point?
If I'm concealing
Not only love
All common feeling

Now I'm where I want to be and who I want to be
and doing what I always said I would
and yet I feel I haven't won at all
Running for my life and never looking back
in case there's someone right behind
to shoot me down and say he always knew I'd fall

When the crazy wheel slows down
Where will I be? Back where I started.

A RUSSIAN enters

RUSSIAN

*Molokov tells me you want to play chess. I have one hour before delegate's conference.

ANATOLY

*Go to hell!

Scene Four: The Arbiter's Chambers

The ARBITER has summoned the two opposing delegations to his room immediately prior to the first game of the match. The soviet delegation consists of about a dozen people led by MOLOKOV. The American delegation consists of FLORENCE (not yet present), WALTER and two other genuine seconds.

U.S. vs. U.S.S.R.

DELEGATES *(the division of lines between Soviet and U.S.sides is not indicated here)*

No one can deny that these are difficult times

No one can deny that these are difficult times

MOLOKOV

Mr. de Courcey!

WALTER

Mr. Molokov -

DELEGATES

It's the US versus USSR

Yet we more or less are -

No one can deny that these are difficult times

-to our credit putting all that aside

We have swallowed our pride

These are very dangerous and difficult times

It really doesn't matter who comes out on top

Who gets the chop -

No one's way of life is threatened by a flop -

But we're gonna smash their bastard
Make him wanna change his name
Take him to the cleaners and devastate him
Wipe him out, humiliate him
We don't want the whole world saying
They can't even win a game
We have never reckoned
On coming second
There's no use in losing

It's the red flag up against stars and stripes
But we're peace-loving types

No one can deny that these are difficult times...

It's a sweet hail-fellow-well-met affair
For both eagle and bear

These are very dangerous and difficult times

For those that say that this is not a friendly clash
Don't be so rash!
I assure you comrades that is balderdash

What a load of whingeing peasants!
Thinking they can win - they can't!
What an exhibition of self-delusion
This one's a foregone conclusion
But enough of all this beating
Round the bushes of detente
We intend to collar
The Yankee dollar
We shall trash them
Thrash them

The value of events like this need not be stressed
When East and West
Can meet as brothers, ease the tension over drinks
Through sporting links
As long as your man sinks

ARBITER'S SONG

(Enter ARBITER)

ARBITER

I've a duty as the referee
At the start of the match
On behalf of all our sponsors
I must welcome you
Which I do - there's a catch

I don't care if you're a champion
No-one messes with me
I am ruthless in upholding

What I know is right
Black or white - as you'll see

I'm on the case
Can't be fooled
Any objection
Is overruled
Yes I'm the Arbiter and I know best

CHORUS (*of ARBITER acolytes*)
He's impartial, don't push him, he's unimpressed

ARBITER
You got your tricks
Good for you
But there's no gambit
I don't see through
Oh I'm the Arbiter, I know the score

ARBITER + CHORUS
From square one I'll/he'll be watching all 64

ARBITER
If you're thinking of the kind of thing
That we've seen in the past
Chanting gurus, walkie-talkies,
Walkouts, hypnotists,
Tempers, fists - not so fast

This is not the start of World War Three
No political ploys
I think both your constitutions are terrific so
Now you know, be good boys

I'm on the case
Can't be fooled
Any objection
Is overruled
Yes I'm the Arbiter and I know best

CHORUS
He's impartial, don't push him, he's unimpressed.

ARBITER
You got your tricks
Good for you
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Oh I'm the Arbiter, I know the score

ARBITER + CHORUS
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ARBITER
You got your tricks
Good for you
But there's no gambit
I don't see through
Oh I'm the Arbiter, I know the score

ARBITER + CHORUS
From square one I'll be watching all 64

ARBITER
Oh I'm the Arbiter, I know the score

ARBITER + CHORUS
From square one I'll be watching all 64

(FLORENCE enters to take up a central position amid the American delegation)

ARBITER
*If the leaders of both delegations are now present, we are available to consider their pre-match applications, representations or objections. Miss Vassy?

FLORENCE
*Thank you. The American delegation wishes to protest the size of the Soviet delegation which far exceeds the permitted number -

MOLOKOV
*Our delegation consists of just four people, including our champion. Our doctor, PT expert, psychologist, security agents and chef cannot be considered delegates.

ARBITER
*Objection overruled. Mr. Molokov?

MOLOKOV
*The Soviet delegation has reason to believe that the American player's chair could contain communications devices. It objects to the constitution of the chair -

FLORENCE
*That's impossible. Both chairs were made in Sweden. With non-aligned aluminum -

ARBITER
*Objection overruled.

WALTER

*On behalf of the television companies, making such a major financial contribution to this match, I request the Arbiter's permission for an opportunity to be given to a few commercial supporters of chess to set up a discreet display of wares in the arena -

MOLOKOV + SOVIET DELEGATES

*Objection!

ARBITER

*Overruled! Mr. de Courcey, further economic discussion with my office could clear the way to a fresh look at the status of merchandizing and advertising interests. But now let us dedicate ourselves to the spirit of chess!

HYMN TO CHESS

ALL

Don't you find it rather touching to behold
The game that came in from the cold
Seen for what it is - religion plus finesse
Countries, classes, creeds as one, in
Love of chess

MERCHANDISER'S SONG

Suddenly the cathedral-like atmosphere is shattered by the entrance of a garish, colourful, cheer-leading mob of MERCHANDISERS:

MERCHANDISERS

Whether you are pro or anti
Or could not care less
We are here to tell you
We are here to sell you chess
Not a chance of you escaping from our wiles
We've locked the doors, we've blocked the aisles
We've a franchise worth exploiting
And we will - yes we will!
When it comes to merchandising
We could kill

When you get up -
When you get up in the morning
Till you crash at night
You will have to live your life
With bishop, rook and knight
Clean your teeth with chequered toothpaste
Wear our vests
Our kings and queens on bouncing breasts
You could even buy a set
And learn to play
We don't mind we'll sell you something
Anyway

We've done all our market research
And our findings show
That this game of chess could be around
A month or so
Maybe it's a bit confusing

For a game
But Rubik's Cubes were much the same
In the end the whole world bought one
All were gone
By which time we merchandisers
Had moved on

By which time we had moved on!

Scene Five : Chess

The actual arena. We dissolve from the ARBITER's chambers to the spectacular setting for the match. The two players say nothing during this scene. However, their manner at the board becomes more and more agitated during the scene. They both get up from the board and get into a near-fight which ends with FREDERICK pushing ANATOLY into the table, spilling board and pieces over the floor.

Present are FLORENCE, MOLOKOV, the ARBITER and his assistants. Throughout the scene we see and hear commentators and commentaries on the big match on the vidi-walls.

TV PRESENTER #1 *(on screen)*

*The opening match of the World Chess Championships got underway today in the small Tyrolean town of Merano, Italy. The title, which will be contested between the current world champion Frederick Trumper and the Soviet challenger Anatoly Sergievsky, will go to the first man who wins six clear games. Experts are predicting that since many games may be drawn, the contest could last as long as two months. The political overtones of this contest between a Russian and an American has attracted more than usual interest for a match which is increasingly taking on the aspects of a confrontation between East and West.

TV PRESENTER #2 *(on screen)*

*This attack is either brilliant or crazy, I don't know which. Frederick's giving up his bishop just to trap the Russian's king in the center. It's a fantastic idea. If it works. Trumper's won the white queen and I think that spells curtains for Mr. Sergievsky. This is Kurt Johnson reporting for CBN News in Merano, Italy.

TV PRESENTER #3 *(on screen)*

*And now for a further report, we go to our chess expert, Will Hodson [?], here in Merano.

HODSON *(on screen)*

*The world championship match here in Merano has begun with a really dramatic victory for the American champion Frederick Trumper. This same position must be on every chess board in Merano because everybody's talking about this game. Trumper with the white pieces just attacked from the start. All the books say you must defend with black in the early stages but Trumper's always been someone to break the rules. He just attacked from the word go. Sergievsky's never landed a decent punch in the whole game. Trumper sacrificed a pawn, then a bishop, broke through [?] king in position and when Sergievsky resigned in this position in front of me, he was just hopelessly behind on material. That's a drastic defeat for the Russian and a brilliant victory for Trumper.

TV PRESENTER #5 *(on screen)*

*And now from the World Chess Championships in Merano, Italy, at the end of the first week's play, current World Champion Frederick Trumper has taken a commanding lead by two wins to nothing....

At the end, there is pandemonium:

TV PRESENTER #6

*There's been a sensational development here in the very first game of the world Chess Championships here in the snow-covered Tyrolean town of Merano, Italy. The board and the pieces have been thrown to the floor in disgust by one or other or both players, the champion has walked out in a rage....

ARBITER

I'm on the case

Can't be fooled

Any objection

Is overruled

Don't try to tempt me

You've no hope

I don't like women

I don't take dope

I'm the Arbiter, my word is law

From square one I'm watching you

(Lyrics below are as revised and used throughout the run)

(By all the pawns

(On Heaven's board

(Of all officials,

(Why me, oh Lord?

(The greatest insult

(Suffered yet

(By my profession,

(But do not forget

(I'm the Arbiter, my word is law

(From square one I'll be watching you

Scene Seven : Quartet (A Model of Decorum and Tranquility)

QUARTET (A Model of Decorum and Tranquility)

FLORENCE, MOLOKOV ANATOLY and the ARBITER remain in the arena.

MOLOKOV

We wish, no must, make our disgust

For this abuse perfectly clear

We're here for chess - are the US?

If so why foul the atmosphere?

FLORENCE

I must protest - our delegation has a host of valid points to raise

Our player's sporting attitude's beyond all praise

As any neutral would attest

But we concede

The fact his masters bend the rules is not a player's fault

We'll over look their crude political assault

And under protest will proceed

MOLOKOV *(simultaneously with FLORENCE's speech above)*

We wish, no must, make our disgust

At this abuse perfectly clear

We're here for chess - are the US?
If so, why foul the atmosphere?

MOLOKOV (*simultaneously*)

If your man's so sweet
Then why his fighting talk?
If he's not a cheat
Then why on earth
Did he go take a walk?

ARBITER
I call this tune
No-one's immune
To my power
Once in this hall

FLORENCE

Why let him loose?
He'll soon reduce
This great event
To a brawl

I am not surprised
He wanted fresher air
Once he realized
There was no hope

It's very sad
To see the ancient and
Distinguished game
That used to be

Of your lot playing fair
How sad to see
What used to be

MOLOKOV + FLORENCE

A model of decorum and tranquility
Become like any other sport
A battleground for rival ideologies
To slug it out with glee

ANATOLY (*simultaneously*)

Through the elegant yelling
Of this compelling
Dispute
Comes the ghastly suspicion
My opposition's
A fruit

MOLOKOV

We wish, no must
Make our disgust
At this abuse perfectly clear
We're here for chess - are the US?
If so why foul the atmosphere?

FLORENCE (*simultaneously*)

I don't suppose
You understand the strain and
pressure getting where he's got
For then you'd simply call him
highly-strung and not
Imply that he was one of those

ARBITER
I must insist
That you desist
If you value
Your livelihood

ANATOLY

But how can you
Work for one who
Treats you like dirt?
Pay must be good

MOLOKOV

It seems to us
There's little point in waiting
here all night for his return
And since a peaceful match is
our soul concern
We won't make an official fuss

FLORENCE

I'm not getting rich
My only interest
Is in something which
Gives me the chance
Of working with the best

In short we rise
Above your guy's
Tantrums, dramas,
Dirty tricks

ANATOLY

I can only say

I hope your dream comes true

Till that far-off day

I hope you cope

With helping number two

ARBITER

Get this straight, I

Will not stand by

While you play at

Politics

ANATOLY, FLORENCE, ARBITER & MOLOKOV (*together*)

A model of decorum and tranquility

Become like any other sport

A battleground for rival ideologies

To slug it out with glee

ARBITER

*Enough of this piety! If the players do not return to the arena within 24 hours, the match is null and void - the game is greater than its players.

The ARBITER leaves, as does ANATOLY. FLORENCE and MOLOKOV remain to salvage the situation.

MOLOKOV

*The game is greater than its players, Miss Vassy - how true!

I don't know how you can allow this

Harm to be done to chess, and how this

Baby of yours can be persuaded

Back to the game

FLORENCE

*Easy. You stop playing politics and you start playing chess.

I don't know how you have the gall to

Criticise us when it is all too

Obvious this is what you wanted -

We get the blame

*Your man, following orders, was up to some sort of bust-up from the word go...

MOLOKOV

You really are mad! He has no orders!

Now let me put my cards upon your table

If he is aggrieved then who can blame him?

He is up against a man who's less than stable

FLORENCE

*Freddie less than stable? You're goading him -

Who rocked his chair throughout the match then?

Who sniffed and coughed, began to scratch then

Played with his flag and tapped his fingers?

Then took a walk!

Your precious boy!

MOLOKOV

*A piccydillo -

FLORENCE

*Peccadillo.

MOLOKOV

*- peccadillo compared with the neurotic behavior of Trumper -

FLORENCE

Listen, you Plutocratic throwback
You and your cronies want to go back
Home to your dachas, not the saltmines?
We better talk

MOLOKOV

*I wish, Florenz (*he mispronounces her name*) -

FLORENCE

*Florence.

MOLOKOV

*- you would refrain from cheap political jibes at a time when cooperation between us is vital.
Besides, I thought you would be reluctant to criticise fellow Eastern Europeans

FLORENCE

*Fellow Eastern Europeans! I was born a Hungarian. Remember Hungary? I wish I could. I was only five when you bastards moved in. I have no memory of my homeland, my people, my mother and father - all taken from me by you-

And you call yourself a fellow Eastern European!

MOLOKOV

Come now, Miss Vassy, we're digressing
Back to the point, let's start addressing
All our attention to the World Chess Championship -

FLORENCE (*after a long pause in which she wonders whether to contemplate any further dealings with this man. She decides she has to. She takes out a piece of paper from her bag*)

*The Merano Mountain Inn - famous for its peace and tranquility - that's where I want you to deliver me one Soviet Grandmaster...

Scene Eight : Nobody's Side

FLORENCE moves into a TV control room. FREDERICK is there with WALTER.

WALTER

*For God's sake - be reasonable -

FREDERICK

*Twenty thousand dollars!

WALTER

*Why should we pay you to televise tantrums?

*We prefer to see chess being played

(he sees FLORENCE as he prepares to leave)

You can deal with him - he's getting heated -
Now he's claiming that he's underpaid *(exits)*

FREDERICK *(into a microphone)*

*I said, twenty thousand dollars - a game!

(He wheels round to face FLORENCE)

*And as for you -

I shouldn't have to be dealing with Walter
Where were you when the shit hit the fan?

FLORENCE

Saving your income by fixing a meeting
So you better start liking the man!

(she hands him a piece of paper)

FREDERICK *(ignores the paper)*

When the interest is bigger than ever
And my walk-out my smartest move yet
All you say is that I ought to meet him
On the top of a mountain?

FLORENCE

*You bet!

FREDERICK

Can't you see that you're losing your grip, dear
Are the Communists fooling you too?
Why should I be the only one trying -

YOU WANNA LOSE YOUR ONLY FRIEND?

FLORENCE

You wanna lose your only friend?
Well, keep it up you're doing fine
Why this humiliation?
Why treat me like a fool?
I've taken shit for seven years

And I won't take it anymore

FREDERICK

I'm only teasing Soviets
With gentle bonhomie
And you've a better reason to be anti-them than me

FLORENCE

There's a time and there's a place

FREDERICK

Well how about here and now? Are you for me or for them?

FLORENCE

There's a time and there's a place

FREDERICK (*into a mike - his voice is duplicated and re-processed:*)

1956 - Budapest is rising
1956 - Budapest is fighting
1956 - Budapest is falling

I'd have thought you'd support
Any attack on these people
On the people who ran
Mindlessly over your childhood
Don't let them fool you for
Thirty years on they're the same

FLORENCE

1956 - Budapest is fighting
1956 - Budapest is falling
1956 - Budapest is dying

FREDERICK (*simultaneously with FLORENCE's lines above*)

They see chess as a war
Playing with pawns just like Poland
If you walk out on me
You're really betraying your father
Were he alive now
He'd surely be dying of shame

FLORENCE

You know that there's nothing I've done
That he'd be ashamed of in my whole life!
Why'd you have to do this to me?

(*FREDERICK leaves*)

NOBODY'S SIDE

FLORENCE

What's going on around me
Is barely making sense
I need some explanations fast
I see my present partner
In the imperfect tense

And I don't see how we can last
I feel I need a change of cast
Maybe I'm on nobody's side

And when he gives me reasons
To justify each move
They're getting harder to believe
I know this can't continue
I've still a lot to prove
There must be more I could achieve
But I don't have the nerve to leave

Everybody's playing the game
But nobody's rules are the same
Nobody's on nobody's side
Better learn to go it alone
Recognize you're out on your own
Nobody's on nobody's side

The one I should not think of
Keeps rolling through my mind
And I don't want to let that go
No lover's ever faithful
No contract truly signed
There's nothing certain left to know
And how the cracks begin to show!

Never make a promise or plan
Take a little love where you can
Nobody's on nobody's side
Never stay too long in your bed
Never lose your heart, use your head
Nobody's on nobody's side

Never take a stranger's advice
Never let a friend fool you twice
Nobody's on nobody's side
Never be the first to believe
Never be the last to deceive
Nobody's on nobody's side

Never leave a moment too soon
Never waste a hot afternoon
Nobody's on nobody's side
Never stay a minute too long
Don't forget the best will go wrong
Nobody's on nobody's side

Better learn to go it alone
Recognize you're out on your own
Nobody's on nobody's side

The set changes to the Merano Mountain Inn. FLORENCE puts on a coat.

FLORENCE

*OK - now for the Merano Mountain Inn.

Scene Nine : Mountain Duet

A restaurant half-way up a mountain in Merano. It is packed with laughing, noisy, celebrating people, many singing the epic song "Der Kleine Franz." ANATOLY is in the middle of the crowd. FLORENCE enters and fights her way through to ANATOLY. They try to talk but it's impossible. They decide to go outside.

CHORUS (*lyrical accuracy not guaranteed!*)

Der kleine Franz
Er sagt: ein prosit
Meide den Schmerz!
Ich bin wie ein
Tannenbaum so grun im Herz
Bier ist was ich brauche
Wann in Hofbrauhaus
Trinken Bruderlein,
Und lassen die Sorgen aus
Es gibt gemutlichkeit
Und Freude, saubere zunft
Lorelei un Bratwurst
Gute Nacht Zukunft!
Und jetzt
Im tiefen Keller
Sitz Ich hier
Schon am Morgen
Fing' ich an
Und trinke Bier

Der kleine Franz¹
Ist auf de Heide
Ich bin im Wald
Lustig bin ich nicht
Mein Sauerkraut ist kalt!
Drunten in dem grunen Thal
Ein Birnbaum steht
Lieben bringt uns
Grosse Freud' und Zeit
Bald vergeht
Er war in Heidelberg gesoffen
Ein braver Mann!
Hier in Munchen
Niemand das Vertragen kann
Zum wohl!
Da streiten sich
Die Leut herum
Bruderlein und Kummer
Sind ja nicht so dumm

(Note: second verse cut early in the run)

Outside, away from the noise:

¹ The second verse of this song was eliminated after several months.

FLORENCE

This is the one situation
I wanted most to avoid
Nothing I say will convince him this isn't a trick

ANATOLY

A walk on a clear moonlit night - I relax, she smiles
There's something peculiar going on

FLORENCE

So, through my own stupid fault, I'm stuck here to carry the can
Embarrassed, deserted, marooned

ANATOLY

Now she can't be working for them - I mean us -
She seems so very straightforward - but where is he?

FLORENCE

He has to turn up - it's not just for money –
Perhaps it is!

ANATOLY

Maybe he's scared - just as scared as he was in the game

FLORENCE

Oh I just couldn't care less
He can go right ahead, go and wreck his career,
I know I've done my best

ANATOLY

Well at least she's a good-looking spy

FLORENCE

What if my Russian friend thinks that my plans
Have nothing to do with the chess?
If I don't say something and soon
He'll go - Nobody's on nobody's side!

ANATOLY (*for the first time addressing FLORENCE*)

Listen, I hate to break up the mood
Get to the point, begin the beguine
Haven't you noticed we are one character short
In this idyllic, well-produced scene?

FLORENCE

He couldn't wait to join you up here
Maybe he walked, cable cars scare him

ANATOLY

Never mind him - I haven't missed him so far

FLORENCE

Maybe it won't do any harm
To struggle on without his charm

ANATOLY

Funny how all at once I feel that he can go jump off the mountain I won't care

FLORENCE

This is the one situation I wanted most to avoid

ANATOLY

My dear opponent - I really can't imagine why

FLORENCE

So I am not dangerous then? - what a shame!

ANATOLY

Oh you're not dangerous - who could think that of you?

FLORENCE + ANATOLY

You - you are so strange - why can't you be what you ought to be?

You should be scheming, intriguing, too clever by half -

ANATOLY

I have to hand it to you

For you've managed to make me forget why I ever agreed to this farce

FLORENCE + ANATOLY

I don't know why I can't think of anything

I would rather do

Than be wasting my time on mountains with you

Suddenly they are aware that they have been joined by FREDERICK.

FREDERICK

Who'd ever think it?

Such a pretty setting!

Tell me what's the betting

Very pretty plotting too?

No matter - I've done all your work for you.

*What do all Soviets deserve? Have you forgotten? Well you'll soon remember!

Who'd ever guess it?

Daughter in collaboration

With the very nation

Gave her father the third degree!

Where's Daddy? Dead or in the KGB?

(FLORENCE runs off)

FREDERICK *(continued)*

*I've agreed to new terms, which in short means more money. For you too, but that can't be helped. This meeting is therefore unnecessary - the match can continue and we don't have to be friends.

ANATOLY and FREDERICK are left staring at each other. They are already in their positions for the continuation of the match.

Scene Ten : Chess 2

The arena and surrounding areas. The match has been resumed. We see it through the eyes of the world's media. ANATOLY forges ahead to a 5-2 lead.

Scene Eleven : Florence Quits/Pity the Child

FREDERICK/FLORENCE's suite. FREDERICK is there already, FLORENCE enters.

FREDERICK

*Five games to two. It's all over -

FLORENCE QUILTS

So you got what you want
What a nasty ambition!
Set me up, pull me down
Then exploit my condition
I should have guessed, woman
That if pressed, woman
You're on nobody's side but your own
And you're behaving
Like a mere woman
It's so clear woman -
It's your sex!
Once they start getting old and getting worried
They let fly, take it out
On the one who supports them
That's you I'm talking about

FLORENCE

Who'd ever guess it?
Such a squalid little ending
Watching you descending
Just as far as you can go
I'm learning things I didn't want to know

FREDERICK

Who'd ever think it?
This would be the situation -
One more observation -
How'd we ever get this far
Before you showed me what you really are?

FLORENCE

You'll be lost without me
To abuse like you're used to

FREDERICK

Go away! Just get out! Be someone else's parasite!

(But FLORENCE has already gone)

PITY THE CHILD

FREDERICK

When I was nine I learned survival
Taught myself not to care
I was my single good companion
Taking my comfort there
Up in my room I planned my conquests
On my own - never asked for a helping hand
No one would understand
I never asked the pair who fought below
Just in case they said no

Pity the child who has ambition
Knows what he wants to do
Knows that he'll never fit the system
Others expect him to
Pity the child who knew his parents
Saw their faults, saw their love die before his eyes
Pity a child that wise
He never asked did I cause your distress?
Just in case they said yes

When I was twelve my father moved out
Left with a whimper - not with a shout
I didn't miss him - he made it perfectly clear
I was a fool and probably queer
Fool that I was I thought this would bring
Those he had left closer together
She made her move the moment he walked away
I was the last the woman told
She never let her bed get cold
Someone moved in - I shut my door
Someone to treat her just the same way as before

I took the road of least resistance
I had my game to play
I had the skill, and more - the hunger
Easy to get away
Pity the child with no such weapons
No defence, no escape from the ties that bind
Always a step behind
I never called to tell her all I'd done
I was only her son!

Pity the child but not forever
Not if he stays that way
He can get all he ever wanted
If he's prepared to pay
Pity instead the careless mother
What she missed
What she lost when she let me go
And I wonder does she know
I wouldn't call - a crazy thing to do
Just in case she said who?

Back in the Arbiter's chambers the ARBITER opens an envelope before an anxious gathering of all those involved in the championship.

ARBITER

*Frederick Trumper has resigned. Anatoly Sergievsky is the new World Champion.

Sensation. Wild celebrations and back-slapping in the Russian camp. FLORENCE is alone and still on her side of the stage. Suddenly, ANATOLY breaks free of his colleagues and runs to FLORENCE. They both rush off.

TV PRESENTER *(on screen)*

*The drama at the World Chess Championship here in Merano, Italy is now off the board. Barely had Anatoly Sergievsky of the Soviet Union been proclaimed the new World Champion thanks to his crushing of the former champion Freddie Trumper of the United States by six games to two, when he upstaged his own triumph by deserting his Soviet team and supporters. He is now believed to be seeking political asylum in the West...

Scene Twelve : Embassy Lament/Heaven Help My Heart

An unspecified embassy or, more likely, a consulate, in Merano. WALTER leads ANATOLY and FLORENCE into the consulate. CIVIL SERVANTS seem uninterested.

EMBASSY LAMENT

CIVIL SERVANTS *(to each other)*

Oh my dear how boring
He's defecting
Just like all the others
He's expecting
Us to be impressed with what he's done here
But he
Hasn't stopped to think about the paperwork
His gesture causes
We've an embassy to run here
If these people can't strike blows for freedom
With a valid visa
We don't need 'em
(to ANATOLY)
If we seem offhand then please remember
This is nothing very special
He's the fourth we've had since last November
(to each other)
Who do these foreign chappies think they are?

And when he's safely in the West
He'll be the hero to discuss
The media will lionize him
Fame and fortune plus
No one will recall
It's thanks to us.

CIVIL SERVANT # 1

&You have a wife?

ANATOLY

*Yes.

CIVIL SERVANT # 1

*You have two children?

ANATOLY

*Yes.

CIVIL SERVANT # 2

*And they are not coming with you?

(FLORENCE and WALTER both show particular but differing interest in this conversation. Maybe WALTER scribbles something on a pad.)

ANATOLY

*No - not for the moment.

CIVIL SERVANT # 2

*You play chess. You are good at it? Ah yes, it says here you are World Champion.

ANATOLY

*Since yesterday.

CIVIL SERVANT # 1

*That's still good.

WALTER

*Gentlemen, you guys are dealing with a major international figure. May I -

CIVIL SERVANT # 2

*Are you defecting too, sir?

WALTER

*...no, this man is a citizen of the Soviet Union - I am an American citizen and by the authority of this government and this agency *(he shows the CIVIL SERVANTS a card)* I demand that you give this man your immediate attention!

CIVIL SERVANTS

Have you an appointment with the consul?

If you don't we know what his response'll

Be, he will not see you, with respect it

Buggers up his very taxing schedule

Pushing peace and understanding

Let us hope this won't affect it

Far too many jokers cross the border

Not a single document in order

Russia must be empty, though we're all for

Basic human rights, it makes us wonder

What they built the Berlin wall for

Who do these foreign chappies think they are?

And when you've filled in all the forms

And been passed clear of all disease

Debriefed debugged dedrugged disarmed

And disinfected, please
Don't forget the guys who cut your keys

As the paperwork staggers on, FLORENCE moves away from the argument:

HEAVEN HELP MY HEART

FLORENCE

If it were love I would give that love every
second I had
And I do
Do I know where he'll lead me to?
Did I plan
Doing all of this for the love of a man?
Well I let it happen anyhow
And what I'm feeling now
Has no easy explanation, reason plays no part
Heaven help my heart
I love him too much
What if he saw my whole existence
Turning around a word, a smile, a touch?

One of these days, and it won't be long,
he'll know more about me
Than he should
All my dreams will be understood
No surprise
Nothing more to learn from the look in my eyes
Don't you know that time is not my friend?
I'll fight it to the end
Hoping to keep that best of moments
When the passions start
Heaven help my heart
The day that I find
Suddenly I've run out of secrets
Suddenly I'm not always on his mind

Maybe it's best to love a stranger
Well that's what I've done - heaven help my heart
Heaven help my heart

Various documents are stamped and handed to ANATOLY. With great delight he rushes over to FLORENCE and they hurry out. WALTER picks up a phone.

Scene Thirteen : Anthem

WALTER, FLORENCE and ANATOLY arrive at Merano station. As they arrive they are surrounded by pressmen.

REPORTER #1

*Excuse me, Mr. Sergievsky. Why are you leaving Russia?

(ANATOLY tries to brush him off)

*What about your wife and family?

REPORTERS

How long was this planned?
What made you defect?
Did anyone help you?
And do you expect
To be joined in your exile
By loved ones e.g. your wife?
Or are you starting again
In all aspects of life?

ANATOLY

*Walter, you bastard! You never told me you'd fixed all this!

REPORTER # 2

*Why did you leave Russia?

ANATOLY

*I don't leave anything!

ANTHEM

No man, no madness
Though their sad power may prevail
Can possess, conquer, my country's heart
They rise to fail
She is eternal
Long before nations lines were drawn
When no flags flew, when no armies stood
My land was born

And you ask me why I love her
Through wars, death and despair
She is the constant, we who don't care
And you wonder will I leave her - but how?
I cross over borders but I'm still there now

How can I leave her?
Where would I start?
Let man's petty nations tear themselves apart
My land's only borders lie around my heart.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Scene Fourteen : One Night In Bangkok

Bangkok. A year later.

The Act opens with the Golden Ballet leading into "One Night in Bangkok."

ONE NIGHT IN BANGKOK

FREDDIE

Bangkok! Oriental setting
And the city don't know what the city is getting
The creme de la creme of the chess world in a
Show with everything but Yul Brynner

Bangkok, just another stop in
The chess world circus--Masters drop in
Play, checkmate, check out and then you
Move on to another venue.

It's Iceland - or the Philippines - or Hastings - or - or this place!

CHORUS

One night in Bangkok and the world's your oyster
The bars are temples but the pearls ain't free
You'll find a god in every golden cloister
And if you're lucky then the god's a she
I can feel an angel sliding up to me

FREDERICK

One town's very like another
When your head's down over your pieces, brother

CHORUS

It's a drag, it's a bore, it's really such a pity
To be looking at the board, not looking at the city

FREDERICK

Whaddya mean? You've seen one crowded, polluted,
stinking town, you've -

CHORUS

Tea, girls, warm, sweet
Some are set up in the Somerset Maugham Suite

FREDERICK

Get Thai'd! You're taking to a tourist
Whose every move's among the purest
I get my kicks above the waistline, sunshine

CHORUS

One night in Bangkok makes a hard man humble
Not much between despair and ecstasy

One night in Bangkok and the tough guys tumble
Can't be too careful with your company
I can feel the devil walking next to me

FREDERICK

Siam's gonna be a witness
To the ultimate test in cerebral fitness
This grips me more than would a
Muddy old river or reclining Buddha

I don't see you guys rating
The kind of mate I'm contemplating
I'd let you watch, I would invite you
But the queens we use would not excite you

So you better go back to your bars, your temples, your massage parlors

CHORUS

One night in Bangkok makes a hard man humble
Not much between despair and ecstasy

FREDDIE AND CHORUS

One night in Bangkok and the world's your oyster
The bars are temples but the pearls ain't free
You'll find a god in every golden cloister
And if you're lucky then the god's a she
I can feel an angel sliding up to me

One night in Bangkok makes a hard man humble
Not much between despair and ecstasy
One night in Bangkok and the tough guys tumble
Can't be too careful with your company
I can feel the devil walking next to me

The match (ANATOLY v. LEONID VIIGAND, the new Soviet Champion) has already started as FREDERICK argues with the locals in the song.

Scene Fifteen : Florence and Anatoly/You and I

The Oriental Hotel, Bangkok. ANATOLY and FLORENCE in their suite. They are watching FREDERICK on television.

*FREDERICK

This is Frederick Trumper on behalf of International Global Television. The all-Russian struggle for world chess supremacy is well under way here in steamy Bangkok, Thailand. But it's also a titanic battle between East and West, with the current World Champion a stateless person., having defected to the free world when he won his title last year in icy Merano, Italy.

Anatoly clicks channels, gets Abba singing "Money Money Money." Clicks back to FREDERICK:

It's honours even so far with the match only two games old. In the first game Sergievsky was inspired and Viigand played like a man petrified, awestruck -

ANATOLY (*switching TV off*)
But why is he really here?
A whole year of silence
Then suddenly here he is -

*FLORENCE
He's working for the TV company, for a lot of money

ANATOLY
So that's all it is then?
He has no desire to see you anymore?

FLORENCE
Who cares what he's up to?
You're not playing him

ANATOLY
Oh no? I've the feeling I am
*Why is he here?

FLORENCE
Don't talk yourself out of form
Viigand's the one
You have to beat

ANATOLY
And he's a fine player

FLORENCE
Predictable - he's a machine!

*ANATOLY
A very fine machine!

FLORENCE (*light-heartedly, affectionately*)
So are you - so are we!
But there is one other thing

*ANATOLY
What?

FLORENCE
I gather Svetlana is hoping to come out here

*ANATOLY
My wife? In Bangkok? No!

FLORENCE
*You must know about it
It's been in the paper
They may let her out -

ANATOLY
This has to be Molokov - right up his street!

FLORENCE

So now you've got one more opponent to beat
Surely you knew -

ANATOLY (*angry*)
I did not!

(pause)

FLORENCE
Well this is a problem we knew we'd be facing soon

*ANATOLY
But not now. But not now

YOU AND I

FLORENCE
This is an all too familiar scene

ANATOLY
Life imperceptibly coming between

BOTH
Those whose love is as strong as it could or should be

ANATOLY
Nothing has altered -

FLORENCE
- yet everything's changed

ANATOLY
No one stands still -

BOTH
Still I love you completely and hope I always will
Each day we get through means one less mistake left for the making

ANATOLY
And there's no return
As we slowly learn
Of the chance we're taking

FLORENCE
I'd give the world to stay just as we are
It's better by far
Not to be too wise

BOTH
Not to realise
Where there's truth there will be lies

FLORENCE
You and I
We've seen it all
Been down this road before

Yet we go on believing -

BOTH

You and I

We've seen it all

Chasing our hearts desire

Yet I'm even more certain

This time it will be

My happy ending.

The phone rings. ANATOLY answers:

*ANATOLY

(Into the phone) Thank you. *(He hangs up)* The car to take me to the television studio is here.

You know, the interview I promised Walter -

*FLORENCE

Fine - ask Walter what he knows. Maybe they've fixed the result of the match already. We could go home now if you're going to lose.

ANATOLY leaves.

Scene Sixteen : The Soviet Machine

MOLOKOV and his cronies have assembled at their HQ in their Bangkok hotel. Throughout this scene, only VIIGAND, ANATOLY's challenger, seems interested in chess, poring over a board, making moves for both black and white, ignoring most of the discussion around him. They have been bugging ANATOLY and FLORENCE's room. We hear their last speeches from the previous scene again.

MOLOKOV

*Comrades! Why are you looking so worried? We're not dealing with the traitor Sergievsky now. Comrade Viigand here is a disciplined Soviet chess-playing machine!

SOVIET MACHINE

Just in case you feel a trace
Of doubt or even nervous tension
Let me draw the latest score
To your attention

Not the score the witless corps
Of commentators are debating
Come, admit - who gives a shit
For Elo rating?

No, I prefer and I'm sure you concur
To see who's ahead
Psychologically
For example:

We have on tap an inscrutable chap
Whose thoughts never stray

From the state of the play

(He bangs a gong in VIIGAND's ear. No response.)

*Fantastic!

Whereas -

It's so difficult to concentrate if

You have left your native

Country for a woman who has plans of her own

It's not easy for a chap to excel

Feeling guilty as hell

Having left his wife to face the music alone

But even worse, imagine if his ladies met

Well then I bet

The atmosphere round here would be a little strained

As he explained

How he could do what he's done to those two

Most wonderful girls

"Yes I love you both!"

CRONIES

Most amusing!

MOLOKOV

Starting from scratch they'll torpedo his match

His horse-power dead

On the board and in bed

MOLOKOV + CRONIES

Bit by bit the pieces fit

The Soviet Machine advances

Not one move that won't improve

Our nation's chances

We predict a stunning victory

Both on the board and off it

We will show the traitor no-one

Rats with profit

Oh we're gonna smash that bastard

Make him wanna change his name

Take him to the cleaners and devastate him

Wipe him out, humiliate him

We don't want the whole world saying

They can't even win a game

We have never reckoned on coming second

There's no use in losing

We can feel the flame of triumph burning

Our people's pride returning/Bit by bit the pieces fit

The Soviet machine advances

Not one move that won't improve

Our nation's chances

No I prefer and I'm sure you concur

To see who's ahead
Psychologically
For example:
We have on tap an inscrutable chap
Whose thoughts never stray
From the state of the play

La la la....

Bit by bit the pieces fit
The Soviet Machine advances
Not one move that won't improve
Our nation's chances

Hey! Hey!

We predict a stunning victory
Both on the board and off it
We will show the traitor no-one
Rats with profit

La la la...La!

From Moscow to the Baring Straits
Citizens will hail our victory
In Arctic circles frozen states
Will join with warmer climes in revelry
And I can say of this affair
I was there, did my share, played my part

And Russians all will be aware
I was there, from the start
Mmm - mmm

*VIIGAND
Checkmate! Goodnight.

They are all asleep or drunk, or both, save MOLOKOV and a WAITER. MOLOKOV goes to the telephone and makes a call.

*MOLOKOV (*into the phone*)
Mr. de Courcey? ... Good news. We are going to be able to help each other...yes, heart-warming international co-operation. I have the proof that Florence Vassy's father is alive ... you are going to be able to stage a great human rights victory and all we want is a tiny triumph on the chess board ... it's on its way to you now ... what's that? ... thank you - Walter ... goodbye.

(he hands the WAITER an envelope. The WAITER takes this to WALTER as we merge into the next scene - a TV studio)

Scene Seventeen : Interview

The TV studio. WALTER reads the letter. He registers astonishment. FREDERICK arrives.

WALTER
Remember last night I was saying

The interview shouldn't be vicious?

(FREDERICK looks surprised)

Well, times have moved on and
Forget what I told you
You have my permission, no - order
To go for the jugular - just as you wanted

*FREDERICK

Well that's fine by me but why the change?

WALTER

It seems to me on reflection
We don't need to pander to Russians
He may have defected
He may be a good guy
But face it, he's yesterday's issue
*Here are some questions - go for him!

WALTER hands FREDERICK a sheet of questions. FREDERICK exits to get ready for the programme.

WALTER *(to FLOOR MANAGER)*

Whatever, and I mean whatever,
They say or do make sure you stay on the Russian
Don't let your cameras off him for a moment
*And get the Svetlana video lined up!

Is this the tide in my affairs
When I write a little history?
Or just an interview whose wares
Will flood the screens with triviality?

ANATOLY arrives. WALTER greets him with exaggerated warmth.

Ah, Anatoly! - if I may -
Let me say right away
You'll be thrilled
Because the other seat is filled
*By a long standing friend of yours

FREDERICK returns. ANATOLY is amazed and angry when he sees who is to interview him. WALTER steers them both onto the same studio sofa before ANATOLY has time to protest. The cameras spring to life - they are on the air.

*TV PRESENTER

Tonight's final item is a fascinating confrontation in connection with the World Chess Championship. The former World Champion talks to the man who took his title a year ago in Merano, Italy, and who is defending that title right now here in Bangkok.

FREDERICK

Well here we are face to face once again

ANATOLY

By any standards a bizarre reunion

FREDERICK

Is being homeless affecting your game

ANATOLY

I wouldn't know as I've a home in England

FREDERICK

No by a home I mean real home - the place where your family is

ANATOLY

England is my real home!

FREDERICK

What are your latest political aims?

ANATOLY

What are you saying?

FREDERICK

Your anti-Russian crusade - has it worked?

ANATOLY

I'm no crusader -

FREDERICK

What is your true motivation? - that's something we all want to know

*ANATOLY

Listen - you know damn well what my motivation is -

FREDERICK (*to camera*)

Here we see a man under great pressure
Two fights to fight yet he could not look fresher
Chess and politics! I take my hat off
To any champion who can pull that off
(*to Anatoly*)
I hear your second controls everything

ANATOLY

Chess is her passion

FREDERICK

But her obsession is East versus West

ANATOLY

Chess is her passion

FREDERICK

I know a little about her and she's got her own axe to grind

*ANATOLY

That's not true -

FREDERICK

Aren't you concerned that your wife's not here?

ANATOLY

I don't discuss my private life in public -

FREDERICK

But don't you care that she's not by your side?

ANATOLY

I think I've had enough of this discussion -

FREDERICK

Well, we've a little surprise, we have
your wife on the video -

Let her talk to you, give you her version

How married life has changed since your desertion

Hey! Come back my friend, we're only showing

Home movies, nothing more - where are you going?

A video clip of SVETLANA starts rolling. She is appealing to her husband in Russian. ANATOLY pulls off his clip-on microphone (with difficulty) and attempts to leave the set.

*WALTER (to ANATOLY)

A wonderful interview!

ANATOLY barges WALTER aside and exits. The clip changes to the arrival of SVETLANA at Bangkok airport.

Scene Eighteen : The Deal

The foyer of the Oriental hotel which becomes a chessboard.

ARBITER

Isn't it strange the complications

People attach to situations

Almost as if they want to miss

The wood for the trees

Nothing will change my basic feeling

When they've done all their wheeler-dealing

Those in the strongest situations

Do as they please

*You might see all kinds of human emotion here - passion and pain, love and hate-

I see nothing other than a simple board game

*In the Dusit Thani hotel, Bangkok, Alexander Molokov makes his first move.

MOLOKOV

*We did not bring you to Bangkok for a holiday, my dear. You must tell your *husband that he has to come home.

You can have the life you want

And anywhere you want it -

*But if he's going to win, then life is going to be very tough for you - tell *Anatoly that!

Make him think of you not
Narcissistic dreams of glory

*How many times does he want to be champion, anyway?

ARBITER

Two days later the wife makes her move...

SVETLANA

*How many times do you want to be champion anyway?

Who needs a dream? Who needs ambition?
Who'd be the fool in my position?

ANATOLY

Once I had dreams; now they're obsessions
Hopes became needs, lovers possessions

SVETLANA

Now you're where you want to be and who you want to be
and doing what you always said you would
and yet you know you haven't won at all
Running for your life and never looking back
in case there's someone right behind to
shoot you down and say he always knew you'd fall

When the crazy wheel slows down
Where will you be? Back where you started

*ARBITER

Back at the Oriental, Walter de Courcey makes his gambit perfectly clear.

*WALTER

Your father is alive.

*FLORENCE

My father? Alive?

*WALTER

In Russia. Thirty years in prison.

*FLORENCE

And you think I believe you?

WALTER

*The evidence is conclusive. And Anatoly will believe me. Now you get Anatoly *to lose to
Viigand and Molokov assures me he can get your father out - and not *only him -

There are some people to recover
I know that you would simply love a
Chance to make sure your father's name
Is high on our list
We want him back which is to say a

Gesture is needed from your player
We wouldn't mind if he got beaten
In fact we insist

FLORENCE

There must be a lie
You wouldn't tell me
A limit to your devious ambition
But what they could be
I can't imagine
Is there no one here who's not a politician?
There's no deal!

(she hands the document back to WALTER who sidles away)

When I was young I learned survival
Taught myself not to care
Luxuries such as father, mother
Vanished into thin air
How can a half-remembered figure
From a past so remote that it's hardly real
Alter the way I feel?
Pity the child who 35 years on
Finds that confidence gone

*ARBITER

While in subterranean marble surroundings two of the most powerful players make a mid-game assessment....

WALTER

You should have seen how she reacted
I couldn't leave till she'd extracted
Promises she would see her father
Simple I said
Told her the way she could achieve this
Even though you might not believe this
She said that I was not to worry
Go right ahead

MOLOKOV

You don't know her well
She could have fooled you
She could despite herself try to resist us

WALTER

I don't think I'm wrong
But let's be certain
There are others we can call in to assist us...

(WALTER moves over to FREDERICK)

*ARBITER

And who better than the dethroned king?

*WALTER

Remember, Freddie, who's paying for you to be here in Bangkok - not the Chess Federation. Now we've got a deal to get some people out - including Florence's father - provided Anatoly loses, so convince him!

FREDERICK
(on phone to ANATOLY)
Communist, Democrat

ANATOLY
An intriguing collusion

FREDERICK
Fair exchange - tit for tat

ANATOLY
Comradeship in profusion

FREDERICK
And the appeal, partner
Of this deal, partner
Is we all stand to win
You and me, the lady also
Don't break her heart, partner
FREDERICK *(continued)*
(+ WALTER + MOLOKOV: Partner!)
Just be smart, partner
(+ WALTER + MOLOKOV: Partner!)
Throw the match, show your love
Is as pure as snow in Moscow

*ANATOLY
Who put you up to this? There's no deal!

*ARBITER
So Frederick makes a desperate final play for the woman he hasn't seen for a year

FREDERICK
Silly boy, woman who
I should not have let walk out
There's no hitch
That we two
Can't untangle or talk out
And the appeal, partner
Of this deal, partner
Is we both stand to win
We'll bring back the golden era
Stick with me, honey
Leave him be, honey
You don't know what they've planned
For you long ago in Moscow

FLORENCE
Can't you see we've moved on?
Chess has nothing to do with this -
*Freddie - Chess isn't life!

*FREDERICK

But I've changed - I've grown up! He won't help you! He won't throw the match! I'm telling you the truth, Florence!

FLORENCE + FREDERICK

Who'd ever guess it?
This would be the situation
One more complication
Should be neither here nor there
I wish I had it in me not to care

ANATOLY

Let him spill out his hate
Till he knows he's deserted
There's no point wasting time
Preaching to the perverted

FLORENCE + ANATOLY + FREDERICK + SVETLANA

Who'd ever think it?
No-one makes the moves intended
'Til the game has ended
Then they say I told you so
I'm learning things I didn't want to know

*FREDERICK

It can all be different now Florence - I love you!

ARBITER

Everybody's playing the game
But nobody's rules are the same

ALL

Nobody's on nobody's side
Everybody's playing the game
But nobody's rules are the same
Nobody's on nobody's side

Scene Nineteen : I Know Him So Well

After the deal, FLORENCE and SVETLANA are the only two to remain.

*FLORENCE

Svetlana?

*SVETLANA

Florence

*FLORENCE

I don't know what to say

*SVETLANA

There is nothing. I have seen what he really needs and I can't give that to him - you can

FLORENCE

*You don't understand. What he really needs is you and his family -

ENDGAME

Nothing is so good it lasts eternally
Perfect situations must go wrong
But this has never yet prevented me
Wanting far too much for far too long
Looking back I could have played it differently
Won a few more moments, who can tell?
But it took time to understand the man
Now at least I know I know him well
FLORENCE (*continued*)
Wasn't it good?

SVETLANA
Oh so good

FLORENCE
Wasn't he fine?

SVETLANA
Oh so fine

FLORENCE
Isn't it madness?

BOTH
He can't be mine?

FLORENCE
But in the end he needs a little bit more than me
More security

SVETLANA
He needs his fantasy and freedom

FLORENCE
I know him so well

SVETLANA
No one in your life is with you constantly
No one is completely on your side
And though I move my world to be with him
Still the gap between us is too wide
Looking back I could have played it differently

FLORENCE
Looking back I could have played it differently

SVETLANA
Learned about the man before I fell

FLORENCE
I was just a little careless maybe

SVETLANA
But I was ever so much younger then

FLORENCE
Now at least I know him well

SVETLANA
Now at least

BOTH
I know I know him well

SVETLANA
Wasn't it good?

FLORENCE
Oh so good

SVETLANA
Wasn't he fine?

FLORENCE
Oh so fine

SVETLANA
Isn't it madness

BOTH
He won't be mine?
Didn't I know How it would go?
If I knew from the start
Why am I falling apart?

SVETLANA
Wasn't it good?
Wasn't he fine

FLORENCE
Isn't it madness

BOTH
He won't be mine?

FLORENCE
Isn't it madness

BOTH
He won't be mine?

FLORENCE
But in the end he needs a little bit more than me -
More security

SVETLANA
He needs his fantasy and freedom

FLORENCE
I know him so well

SVETLANA
It took time to understand him

BOTH
I know him so well.

Scene Twenty: The Temple

A Buddhist temple. MONKS chanting. ANATOLY enters.

*ANATOLY
(reading note)
Meet me in the temple of the Reclining Buddha? Meet who?

(FREDERICK enters)

Oh it's you!

FREDERICK
This is the one situation
I wanted most to avoid -

ANATOLY
Then what on earth are we doing?
I could be better employed -

FREDERICK
No - please hear me out
I think I can help -

ANATOLY
If it's about Florence
I'm warning you -

FREDERICK
No - it's not about her, your wife or your kids
Or money or Walter, or Molokov

ANATOLY
What the hell is it?

FREDERICK
I want to talk chess!

*ANATOLY
Chess?

FREDERICK
Something I've noticed in Viigand

It's his King's Indian defence -
One of the lines he's been trying
Doesn't completely make sense -

ANATOLY
I - I don't understand -

FREDERICK
I told you - his King's -

ANATOLY
No - I don't understand why
You're helping me

FREDERICK
Because I love chess!
Does nobody else?
Jesus - sometimes I think I'm the only one
How can you let mediocrity win?

ANATOLY
I think I believe you. Show me

(FREDERICK begins to explain with a pocket chess set)

*FREDERICK
You know, in all my dealings with Florence I never once made a good move

*ANATOLY
Me too, Freddie, if I win, it's bad for her father and I can't lose for the wrong reasons -

FREDERICK
How can you let mediocrity win?

(FREDERICK leaves)

Scene Twenty-One : Endgame

The Arena. The final game in the final match between ANATOLY and VIIGAND.

CHOIR
Morphy, Anderssen, Steinitz, Lasker, Capablanca,
Alekhine, Euwe, Botvinnik, Smyslov, Tal, Petrosian,
Spassky, Fischer, Karpov, Kasparov

(NB: this is the chronological order of champions. On the album the names are not sung in this order; neither was current champ Kasparov included)

*ARBITER
Two weeks ago I gave you a limit of six more games to end this sequence of draws. Five of these have now passed. If today's game does not produce a decision, the match is cancelled.

*FREDERICK *(on TV screen)*

All eyes in the world of chess and indeed many eyes outside it are turned towards Bangkok, Thailand, today where the final match in this gripping encounter has just been launched with ceremonial splendor. And all the talk is of the recent and sensational loss of form of the World Champion who seems certain to surrender his title here today.

ENDGAME

MOLOKOV

How straightforward the game
When one has trust in one's player
And how great the relief
Working for one who believes in
Loyalty, heritage, true to his kind come what may

WALTER (*to Molokov*)

Though it gives me no joy
Adding to your satisfaction
You can safely assume
Your late unlamented employee
Knows if he wins then the only thing won is the chess

MOLOKOV

It's the weak who accept
Tawdry untruths about freedom
Prostituting themselves
Chasing a spurious starlight
Trinkets in airports sufficient to lead them astray

FLORENCE

Does the player exist
In any human endeavor
Who's been known to resist
Sirens of fame and possessions?
Nothing can harm the successful except for success

By now the CHOIR has stopped singing names of champions and are instead reprising FREDERICK's lines from Act One:

1956 - Budapest is rising
1956 - Budapest is fighting
1956 - Budapest is falling
1956 - Budapest is dying

ANATOLY

They all think they see a man
Who doesn't know
Which move to make
Which way to go
Whose private life
Caused his decline
Wrecked his grand design
Some are vicious, some are fools
And others blind
To see in me
One of their kind

Anyone can be
A husband, lover
Sooner than me
When they discover
Their domestic bliss is
Shelter for their failing

Nothing could be worse
Than self-denial
Having to rehearse
The endless trial
Of a partner's rather sad
Demands prevailing

SVETLANA

As you watch yourself caring
About a minor sporting triumph, sharing
Your win with esoterics,
Paranoids, hysterics
Who don't pay attention to
What goes on around them
They leave the ones they love the way they found them
A normal person must
Dismiss you with disgust
And weep for those who trusted you

ANATOLY

Nothing you have said
Is revelation
Take my blues as read
My consolation -
Finding out at last my one true obligation!

FLORENCE

Since you seem to have shut out
The world at large then maybe I should cut out
My tiny inessential
World, inconsequential
In the kind of games you're playing
How do you do it?
I tried to be that cynical but blew it
I only changed your life
You left your home, your wife
Or maybe that had slipped your mind

ANATOLY

Nothing you have said
Is revelation
Take my blues as read
My consolation -
Finding out at last my one true obligation!

SVETLANA/FLORENCE/CROWD

Listen to them shout!
They saw you do it
In their minds no doubt

That you've been through it
Suffered for your art but
In the end a winner

We have never heard
Such an ovation
Who could not be stirred?
Such dedication
Skill and guts a model
For the young beginner

They're completely enchanted
But they don't take your qualities for granted
It isn't very often
That the critics soften
Nonetheless you've won their hearts
How can we begin to
Appreciate the work that you've put into
Your calling through the years
The blood and sweat and tears
The late, late nights, the early starts

There they go again!
Your deeds inflame them
Drive them wild, but then
Who wants to tame them?
If they want a part of you
Who'd really blame them?

ANATOLY
And so you're letting me know -

FLORENCE
And you're the only one who's never suffered anything at all

ANATOLY
How you've hated my success -

SVETLANA
Well I won't crawl -
And you can slink back to your pawns and to your tarts

ANATOLY
And every poisoned word shows that you never understood

SVETLANA
Liar!

ANATOLY
Never!

SVETLANA
Liar!

ANATOLY
Never!

FLORENCE
Liar!

ANATOLY
Never!

SVETLANA + FLORENCE
Liar!

ANATOLY
Never! Never!

ANATOLY, FLORENCE, SVETLANA
Nothing you have said
Is revelation
Takes my blues as read
My consolation -

SVETLANA + FLORENCE
Finding out that I'm my only obligation

ANATOLY
Is there no-one in my life
Who will not claim
The right to steal
My work, my name
My success, my fame
And my freedom?

As ANATOLY concludes his words, he sets off on a series of sensational moves that culminate in the checkmate of VIIGAND. Pandemonium.

*ARBITER
Anatoly Sergievsky is the winner.

Scene Twenty-Two : You and I/Florence and Walter/Epilogue

The arena after all the crowds have gone.

*FLORENCE
So - you've done it. You're still the champion.

*ANATOLY
I had to win. If I had lost for Molokov, I would be the same as Molokov. I had to win to be free.

*FLORENCE
Free? For what?

*ANATOLY
Free to decide what we are going to do.

*FLORENCE

No Anatoly. You aren't free - neither am I. You have to go back - your wife and your family -

*ANATOLY

Your father -

YOU AND I (reprise)

FLORENCE

This is an all too familiar scene

ANATOLY

Life imperceptibly coming between

BOTH

Those whose love is as strong as it could or should be

FLORENCE

I'd give the world to stay just as we are
It's better by far

BOTH

Not to be too wise
As we realize
There was truth and there were lies

The arena dissolves into the airport.

ANATOLY

Knowing I want you
Knowing I love you
I can't explain
Why I remain
Careless about you

FLORENCE

I've been a fool to allow
Dreams to become great expectations

ANATOLY

How can I love you so much yet make no move?

BOTH

I pray the days and nights
In their endless weary procession
Soon overwhelm my sad obsession

You and I

We've seen it all
Chasing our hearts' desire
But we go on pretending
Stories like ours
Have happy endings

ANATOLY

You could not give me
More than you gave me

Why should there be something in me
Still discontented?

FLORENCE

I won't look back anymore
And if I do - just for a moment

ANATOLY

I'll soon be happy to say I knew you when

BOTH

But if you hear today
I'm no longer quite so devoted
To this affair, I've been misquoted

You and I

We've seen it all
Chasing our hearts' desire
But we go on pretending
Stories like ours
Have happy endings

They hold each other for the final time, then separate. MOLOKOV, SVETLANA and Russian DELEGATES arrive. Eventually ANATOLY joins them and leaves with them to board a plane. Soon after they are gone, WALTER arrives at the airport.

WALTER

So in the end our hero won
*Brilliantly!
Surprised us all -
He played as well as he has ever done

FLORENCE

No surprise –
*and what's more he's gone back to the Soviet Union.

WALTER

He seems unable to win
Without the added thrill of changing sides

(pause - no response from FLORENCE)

Is there nothing more you have to say?

FLORENCE

No, you wouldn't listen anyhow
And what I'm feeling now
Has no easy explanation
Hasn't this been a great achievement?
Losing your man and nothing in return!

WALTER

*Not my man - your man. Anyway, Anatoly's return to the Soviet bosom is a very decent gesture if I may say so - he has virtually guaranteed us - er, you - your father. He must have done it for you, he wouldn't have done it for me.

(sings)

Don't be so quick to put us down
We'll get your father out soon
That is, as long as he is still alive

*FLORENCE

What - what did you say?

*WALTER (*backing away*)

Well, we can't be sure that he's alive but you couldn't be sure that he was dead, so you're no worse off....

(*WALTER sidles out*)

FLORENCE

*Playing games - using our lives for nothing!

FINALE

(*The COMPANY enters*)

How to survive them?
Where do I start?
Let man's petty nations tear themselves apart
My land's only borders lie around my heart

THE END