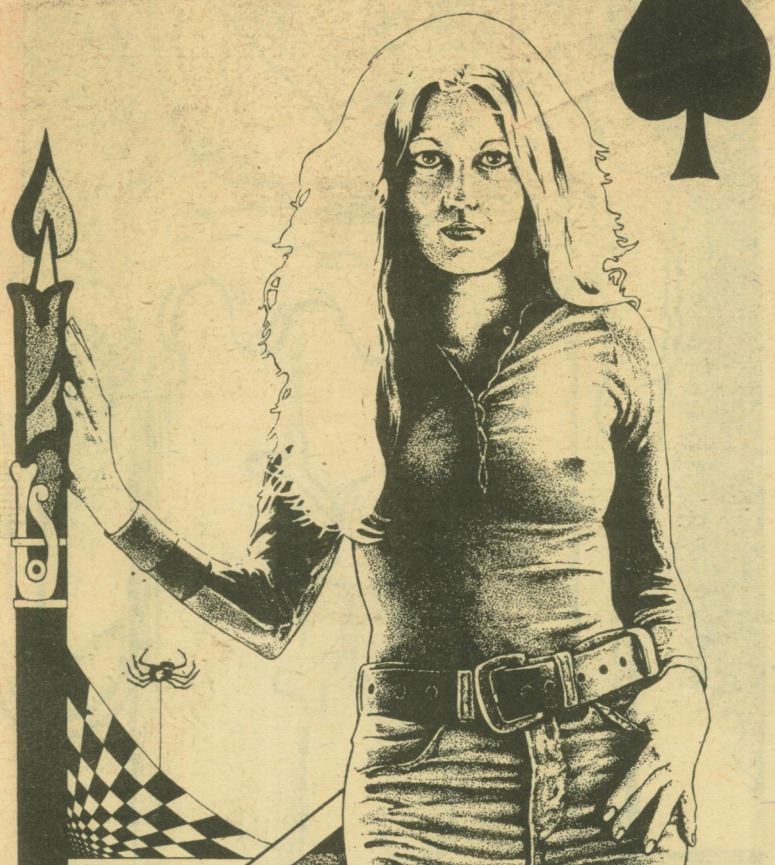


THE PRICE IS AUSTIN

PART ONE

by Jude Acers (US senior master)



Are you a "gas pumper," "fool" or a "player"? It is the 33rd city on the United States chess tour by the greatest chess lecturer and exhibition player who ever lived. What to do, what to do? ... The Rolling Stones and Steppenwolf drop television sets out hotel windows. You settle for smashing telephones against the Holiday Inn wall in Wichita Falls. You think you will never be cheated, spit upon, scorned as Albert Horowitz and George Koltanowski experienced on their murderous bygone tours. Miller and Edmondson had warned you. You think you are getting away with it. Think again, Jude, baby. It is time to pay in your blood. The bill is past due. Pay up.

THE ROAD Part XV

No, it doesn't really matter now. It doesn't matter that I lost more than \$50,000 in cash bookings in Savannah, Georgia that day. It can mean nothing that Savannah's people despise Jude Acers. The very nice lady from the Oglethorpe Mall called Mr. Miller yesterday and politely asked for the return of the \$130 deposit. She does not wish to begin anew. She could not understand or believe what happened. She does not hate Mr. Miller or me. It is all gone now. Remember... Dianne Catterall is a very nice, beautiful woman who tried to kill herself by jumping out of a moving van that was going 40 miles an hour down the road. Her whole face was smashed and bones were busted everywhere. An ex-convict named Michin scraped her up off the road in 1973, and she proved too tough to die. Her father killed himself last year, O.D.-ing on Quaalude tablets and her children were taken away by her husband. All of which is ominous, but Dianne Catterall gets her act together and is on the very heavy, heavy rebound in 1974. She shoots a hundred photographs of that weird Louisiana chess playing boy, and we pump all over Marin in her van to get still shots for her professional artwork and caricature pieces. Dostoevsky was right. Ordeal creates. Dianne is ready for the big time. She is very dramatic. She is also uncannily brilliant. The pace she sets embarrasses even the great me.

Dianne arrives at midnight, badly shaken up, crying. Unusual for somebody who really has her act together. In the middle of San Francisco she has been in a terrific fight with Michin outside the Clement Mixer. He wants her van! He has pulled her, screaming and kicking from her beloved can-go-anywhere-super-whizzer van, about which she feels most deeply. Michin drives away in her van, leaving her completely floored in the street before numerous witnesses. It is the act of a man who is totally insane, of course. Dianne can pick up the phone and call the police, after which Michin will be in prison for three more years. You don't steal a car in front of witnesses when you're an ex-convict, unless you have lost your mind totally.

The situation of the life survivor, one who has been through the mill, is usually one of ruthlessness. You don't put up with any crap, period. I explain to Dianne the kindly of the law. It is a fact that the police do not look kindly on people who yank women into the street and steal their cars, even if victim and attacker know each other. That's against the rules, a no-no. It's a crime, period.

Dianne Catterall has the "Berkeley spirit" or mania, however. She believes that you never call the officers of the law for anything, anytime. So what if her car has been stolen and she has been dragged into the street? That's still no reason to put Michin back in prison instantly. Give him a day to come to his senses. He'll return the van tomorrow or she will take civil action for damages. Michin gets a free pass, a miracle, because he had saved her life by rushing her to the right hospital at the right time.

You sit there and explain to Dianne that there are men in Berkeley, the city of love, who would murder Michin in cold blood if he dragged their old ladies from the family vehicle and drove off with it. It is only a

matter of time before he picks on some long-haired "peaceful" hippie, crook, weirdo and Michin will get himself disassembled. You explain that it is certain to happen. When you look for action, you find it.

Dianne says Michin always picks on the weakies, the little guy. Jude says he knows an awful lot of very tough little guys. Dianne thinks of the police as the bad guys. She doesn't believe that a single one of them really gets shook up, really wants to help in the face of injustice and evil. This is the real world, not fairyland, Jude. Michin gets a free pass and, lo, he returns the van the next day. He remains a free man. He has seen the light, or rather, the bars.

Are policemen necessary to keep the mad dogs and the gorillas in line? Altamont says yes, Dianne and Berkeley say no. To this day I believe that bus drivers, cab drivers, garbage men, firemen, newspaper reporters and policemen are the most important, needed people living in the city. To this day, absolutely nobody in the Jude Acers-in-crowd agrees with me. Nobody. Not Shig. Not Specs. Not "Super-volk". Not Ferlinghetti. Not Burkett. Not Fritzingler. Tarjan, Grefe, Karl Bach, Kent Bach, Caradian, Waterman, Mary Lasher or Browne.

It is last Saturday. Dianne has gotten her van back and time to forget and blast out. She is a very atomic 22-year-old who teaches well. Lesson one was going to a little musicians' jam session in the wee small hours. She is crashing in the house, fresh from the hospital just today. Her face is in a plaster mask and she is dressed in a long dirty burgundy T-shirt on the floor. She is literally in the corner, dirty and talking to nobody. Miserable. The ladies of the party and hangars-on are where the action is. But you are a good guy, Jude. You sit down to talk to little orphan Annie and suddenly notice her burning eyes. She is heavy. Talk on. Tell her about the chess tour. Entertain. She makes tomato soup. You see her crashed out on the couch as you leave with a lady violin player. Her face mask is colored with her own artwork. You say "bye and cancel her."

Four days later she comes into the Clement Mixer. She dances with the magic mask. The management of the Mixer goes the drinks for the rebound kid. You move it in her direction. The mask comes off three days later, and she looks like Helen of Troy. You know, the face that launched a thousand vans. She dismisses the free drinks, sympathy. "They're just trying to get into my pants."

The lessos is that you can't tell a book by its cover or face mask. It's not your equipment but what you do with it when you do it that counts. Oh. Believe it, Jude, believe it.

This evening I am not worried about looking at anything but Dianne's equipment. She is standing there in these blue jean cut-offs and a pink knit top and we're going to see the midnight movie, "a film about Jimi Hendricks." I wonder if it is humanly possible for Miss Dianne's cut-offs to be shorter. She laughs and invites me to take my scrapbook scissors and orbit her in snipping euphoria. Snip-snip I go around and round. By a miracle, I cut at least a half inch off her already scandalous outfit. Ahh... the life of a superstar.

We go down to the Metro Theatre on Union Street, and Dianne is tired, and the week's crime wave has taken its toll. She tries to stay awake as Hendricks is fighting to stay alive. It wasn't heroin but the sheer strain of too many concerts, too much dope, too many hotels, planes, too much travel, too much business that caused Jimi to check out at 28. At least that was what we're told in the film.

Dianne can't stay awake, and we hobble-hobble to the lobby. She is exhausted and sick. She couldn't let the good old Louisiana boy down on Saturday night. She slides slowly to the floor, sitting helplessly in the theater lobby with hundreds of people sweeping past in exit. She is delirious, unconscious. Jude Acers just sits down on the lobby floor and they look at each other. This is maturity? Yes. Nothing matters, that those outside are looking in. She slowly pulls herself off the floor five minutes later and the manager is shook. He thought she was dead, and, after all, it would not be good publicity for the Metro theater chain to have somebody die in the lobby. We walk to my place with staps every half block. She is O.K. after having scared me badly. Very dramatic, Dianne. Next move.

The next move is a monster, Peter Bogdanovich's, "The Last Picture Show." She drags me to see it. I do not expect that it will help me meet the deadline of my publisher. I do not expect anything. I go with her because I promised. Everything's all right on Saturday night. I am scared about writing these words anyway. I have begun and never finished "Austin" six times.

It is necessary to watch Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper get killed by a marvelously cast Louisiana or Georgia redneck in the last two minutes of "Easy Rider." But did they really blow it? Then, the prairie and the wind and the banging door or sign. Suddenly, it was not possible to avoid Wichita Falls, Texas. And it begins. Yes, those buildings are like the ones I passed on the way to the cab stand-telegraph office where Miller wired me \$50. One-storey buildings everywhere. Hot. People looking at you curiously as you passed. I remember Wichita Falls, Texas.

The Greyhound slid out of Little Rock and Russell W. Miller of Yakima, Washington had already messed up the Jude Acers tour badly with his only mistake of the year. Miller routed Jude through Indianapolis and misread the schedule. There was no bus to get out of Indianapolis, period! You have to fly to Memphis and

barely make it to Arkansas on time. You've lost a lot of money and can only break even. This is not important, as Miller has gone to the bank 50 times to save your tour. Miller has at least one hundred free passes. He has personally lost \$4,000 on your tour to date and will stick with you through thick and thin, while the US Chess Federation and Piatigorsky Chess Foundation refuse to even answer your pleading letters. You are chess in America. They are nothing.

It will be Miller who will watch in absolute awe as you move from \$50 an appearance to a \$1,000 per shot attraction. He is a most curious friend, a most curious opposite of a professional chess player. And he is, stated simply, a genius.

Like US senior chessmaster Kenneth R. Smith, Russell Miller cannot spell. He quit school early, voted for Richard Nixon and until recently was quite proud of it. He lives in Yakima, Washington (apple country) and is the Mr. Wizard traffic controller for Valley Evaporating Company, a job passed on to him by his father. Miller thinks very little of his personality, has very little confidence in his promotional ideas, so he tries a lot of them. He plays chess and has won a few small tournaments in Washington. He finds it difficult to believe that anybody really notices him. Organization is not the source of fame in business or chess. Novelty is. Winning is. Slowly, slowly, Miller is becoming famous, noticed.

One person who has noticed is John Grefe, one of the very strongest professional chess players in the world. He sits on my sofa, incredulous at Russell W. Miller. "How did you find him, this person? I am sure you realize I cannot find a person to represent me, answer mail for me, as is required if you're going to do chess touring." Only smile, saying nothing. I found Miller, baby. He is an exclusive booking agent. Nobody, but nobody, gets Miller now.

We are taught that appearances mean nothing. Miller proves it. He wears clothes that the Lion's Club of Yakima finds acceptable, down to the undershirt beneath the white shirt. He sounds corpse-coffin dead on the telephone. He is Mr. Plastic. All he does is everything. White socks. Plumpish build, crew cut that would make George Wallace proud. He honestly believes that the people inside prisons are bad guys, while the people outside prisons are good guys. When he heard that Jude Acers was starting a chess tour, he carefully called people in the four cities to check out exactly how long Jude Acers' hair really was, you know. Scratch John Bradley, Washington chess champion. Hair too long. That's what mattered. That's what everyone saw that Russell Miller cared about. And so several United States chess masters made a significant mistake in the sixties. They encountered toothy, awkwardly worded, thick-rimmed glasses Russell W. Miller and spit upon him, ignored him. It cost them several hundred thousand dollars. I mean honestly, that anybody that Miller promoted as a lifetime project would have to make that much in professional appearances worldwide. Miller is that good.

The first hint for most people in Washington was Russell W. Miller's chess-to-the-people program. It was right out of grass roots Lenin and Che Guevarra ideology, although super square Miller did not even dream of this. He patiently sent letters to banks, schools and amateur chess players throughout the state, urging them to hold a one-day chess tournament, a "county championship" of their area. The idea was to have a chess tourney in every county in the state on the same day. He worked hundreds of hours on his chess-to-the-people program for the blast, to do it to ya. No such project has ever happened in North or South America before Miller. True, many of the mini-tournaments had only four or five players in them. But it was a genuine triumph, which Miller regards as a total failure to this day.

In his early thirties, Miller lives in his own plastic house with his wife, Kathy, and daughter, Eileen. Half the appliances don't work. He does not mow the lawn. Housework piles up.

It would not be possible to pick a human being more opposite in all respects from Jude Acers than Russell Miller. That Miller booked 40 chess exhibitions in 15 states virtually overnight (and saved the 1969-1970 Acers tour from collapse and ridicule) only goes to prove that life, like the SLA, like Patricia Hearst, like the Beatles, is far stranger than all fiction. Neither can explain how they work together or even stand each other. Very strange, folks. Ready for Looney Tunes. And, of course, Miller and Acers rode the Fischer-Spassky tidal wave of chess publicity like the Lone Ranger rode Silver. It was an absolute dream. You had to see us to believe us in 1972. We were a really-smokin'. Thanks B and B.

As the bus is leaving I remember that "Gone with the Wind" was the movie I saw at the Arkansas Theater before leaving Little Rock in 1968. Russell Miller was waiting for me with rolled-up white shirt sleeves and a tape recorder at Marysville, Washington's Strawberry Open chess tournament, just 20 days later, you know. Come here, boy, I'm gonna make you a star. Rockin'-and-a-rolling soon.

It was years before our mercurious promotional team began to click, though. We are committed. We would kill to book a chess exhibition. Bobby Fischer was calling on Marysville, Washington to give him \$2,000 for playing in the Strawberry Open. Yes, phoning again, again. The crazy organizers could not see it. Jesus Christ. It is really true. They could have had Fischer direct from Larry Evan's home in Reno, Nevada for two grand. Leadership is doing what is right and necessary, not following the herd. These

marks are in the spaces between fitting white marks on the highway. The signs say Texas. Russell Miller is typing his horrible mistake to the Dobbie Mall of Austin, as I begin to ride. So, blame it all on Miller. He coined Austin, Texas. You can find other causes for any nightmare. I prefer simply "fate."

I reach in my powerful magic little Samsonite black travel shoulder bag to check the schedule. First I hit Wichita Falls, arriving four days early, before blowing apart their small chess club with my electrifying lecture. People are coming from hundreds of miles around Friday. I will stay as a houseguest with a local club chess player until Friday's exhibition. Then to Austin for a shopping mall lecture and playing 40 chess opponents at one time. Some freebee chess lectures at elementary grade schools, audience restricted solely to children, are scheduled in Austin as well, but no final details on time, place. Find out when I get there. Then to Savannah, Georgia, where 1,000 people are waiting at the Oglethorpe Mall at the height of Fischer craze. A prison then. Next to El Paso, Texas and a prison there. Then to Dallas and Mr. dynamite US senior master Kenneth R. Smith, who is dying slowly. Then New Orleans' French Coffee Market and sweet adorable Suzie Bryan, at last. I will kiss her twice this time. Long smooches.

It read less than one-half a page in Miller's single spaced typing. I was not worried that the schedule was very tight and that I could not miss by much. Only I would wind up broke as usual. Wire Miller for more bread. For ten hours, yes, all night long, I considered Albert Horowitz, as Texas came.

His footsteps came before me everywhere. Like the world blindfold chess champion George Koltanowski, who played 34 chess games at one time blindfolded in Edinburg, Scotland on Sept. 20, 1937. Think about it. He had to remember all the moves of all the games against seeing opponents, good chess club players, including the boy champion of Scotland, whom he crushed ruthlessly in a wild Max Lange attack.

Koltanowski had toured several hundred United States cities and towns in the 30's and 40's. If he wasn't there, it's because it wasn't there when he was on the road. In his fabulous chess book, "Adventures of a Chess Master," he had warned teeniebopper me that money that was "guaranteed" would vanish as the touring master arrived in tow. He warned that you would literally starve at times, but "there is something good about it. It helps your play to be hungry." He warned that you would be cheated, booze or women. He warned that nobody cares about a chess master. He chose tequila in Mexico. I chose coffee and ladies to be different. All through the years he had warned the chess student not to become a professional chess master. You could read his 30-year-old chess column in the San Francisco Chronicle. You could ask for specifics about how he was reduced to hawking chess clocks and opening monographs during the Second World War. Koltanowski and his gutsy wife hung in there like gangbusters, no matter how tough the road was.

Kolly will admit that he tried to quit chess forever after leaving his beloved Belgium on world chess tour and winding up in New Orleans. There, according to architect and veteran chess player Andrew M. Lockett, George Koltanowski went around to all the shipyards, trying to get a job that would employ his diamond cutting mechanical skills, the family trade in Belgium.

Herb Caen, the gossip columnist who coined the word "beatnik," says dues are inevitable. "Everybody starves, Jude." I do not agree. Koltanowski would not be the enormously successful tournament director, T.V. chess personality or chess writer today without pure fortune. He couldn't get a job in New Orleans. And we are talking about one of the three best blindfold players who ever lived -- up there with Harry Nelson Pillsbury and Alexander Alekhine. Koltanowski rode the bus all over Canada, Mexico, the United States to promote chess in small towns in North America. Nobody cared then or cares today. Koltanowski makes Bob Dylan look like George Wallace.

Mr. Albert Horowitz waited two years to die, so that he could see Fischer become world chess champion and finally meet his chess correspondent, Jude Acers. He had a dizzy feeling in the middle of the night in a dark hall of his home. He went to a bathroom mirror and opened his mouth. He reached into his throat and pulled his fingers out, covered with blood. "This is serious," he said to himself. He staggered downstairs and into the street. Cars whizzed past as he fell to the street. He looked up to see a New York Times delivery truck slow for a traffic light. Desperately, he pulled himself to the side door, yanked it open, whispered, "Please, please, please. I work for Times. I will surely die if I don't get to the hospital. Please take me to the hospital." He barely lived once again. In 1941, only one man walked out of a totaled car wreck alive -- Horowitz, on transcontinental chess tour for the umpteenth time. He got out of the hospital and kept on truckin' the tour.

Get the record straight. Horowitz was a grandmaster Not an international master like the books say. Not a chess writer for the masses and multi-million dollar chess publisher and chess editor for the New York Times. He was first and foremost a chess grandmaster. Andrew Soltis, the phenomenal American chess international, and Walter Browne certainly don't think so. All the other young chess professionals don't believe it either. This is because they weren't alive when Horowitz was a member of world chess championship teams from America. He was so tough Reshevsky could beat him only three times in 16 games during their 1941 US champion-

ship match. His winning percentages on US teams were unbeatable for a person scratching for existence in America. He suffered. He was a ferocious fighter.

He lived in dive hotels in New York and Boston during chess tournaments and analyzed with famous theorists like Pinkus and Marshall. He loved chess. He loved chess players. He loved his chess magazine, Chess Review, and lost thousands of dollars on it. He died because of it. He toured to promote chess and to try to save his magazine. You play him in his simultaneous chess exhibition for free if you subscribe to his chess magazine! Buy it? You'd better believe you bought it. It was like god coming to York, Pennsylvania or Omaha, Nebraska or St. Louis or Vancouver. Horowitz was it, only the second professional chess player ever to survive in America.

The first was Frank J. Marshall, the old pro killer. As with Fred Reinfeld, young chess talent often insults Horowitz as he dies. In the last ten years of his life, Fischer, Lombardy, Zukerman, Pandolfini and Acers were the young US masters who believed that Horowitz deserved to be chess editor of the New York Times. We believed that Horowitz deserved "every hoary nickel" when his ship finally came in, as Burt Hochburg, editor of Chess Life & Review, wrote in the obituary. Horowitz was the only New Yorker who could get away with "New York mania," the belief that only New York City chess players are chess players. He could outsmile Addison with "A reader of Shakmaty Bulletin does not a chess player make." And Addison just smiled and crushed Horowitz without emotion in their tournament duels just before Horowitz died. Addison liked Horowitz, a critic.

A critic. That is only one word to use when you describe the man who made more chess tours of the United States than any other. Class. Defects, if any, do not matter. He overcame obstacles to push chess in an anti-cultural land that would have halted Patton. Only poor health destroyed his tours. "The spirit is willing, but the legs are not, Jude," he sighs in 1966.

When nine-year-old "Judee" (as Horowitz called me until the day he died) wrote a dozen famous chess players, only Al Horowitz replied. The youngest correspondent ever listed on the masthead of Chess Review was Judee. The only chess columnists to announce the free nationwide chess tour of prisons, hospitals and orphanages by Judee were Fredrich Chevalier (Christian Science Monitor) and Albert Horowitz in the New York Times. We are not talking about peanuts. Thousands of prisoners and children missed out on the free tour because 15 chess columnists never helped at all, notably Kashdan of the Los Angeles Times and even Koltanowski. And 1969 was a rough year. Judee hit 12 states and lost \$4,000. It took a lot of savvy, intelligence and nerve to announce tours by that weird kid who was scoring against grandmasters. He sure looked shaky and nervous all the time, didn't he? No, just hungry. No one to love.

Because of Horowitz and Koltanowski it is much easier for me. I do not ever have to worry about crooks and idiots. I am the darling of the gods. Ha, ha. Ha. We are in Wichita Falls in hot Texas at 6:10 a.m. Ha. Ha. I pull the demonstration chessboard down from the rack and see him standing inside the bus depot. Mr. Blubber Cadillac. He is not smiling or happy as I step off the bus, despite the fact that he is making possible the greatest chess lecture and exhibition appearance that Wichita Falls will ever witness. He has promised the nationwide tour manager of Jude Acers that Jude will be well taken care of at his beautiful, spacious home and swimming pool. It is in writing. And so, for a measly \$50, I have agreed to travel hundreds of miles and wait four days to perform for the people of Wichita Falls. To do it to ya. You can't give a chess tour without places to tour, right? ...

Mr. Blubber Cadillac has "strict instructions from his wife" that if Jude Acers has long hair over his ears, then Jude Acers is to be dumped somewhere, anywhere. Period. I walk up and do not sense anything. Blubber says, "Son, I have to tell you that you can't stay at the house. My wife won't approve."

Jude Acers stands there cool and groggy. He does not know where he is and what he is doing here. He says, "Well, ah... I guess I'm staying somewhere else, sir? ... There is no time to understand. You can only fumble or react. Fischer would whirl immediately and get back on the bus without one word. At Lugano, Switzerland he flew in for the world team championship in 1968. Things like the air temperature and lighting were not quite up to snuff. Fischer didn't say one word about leaving. He just disappeared and round one saw his clock running and Fischer long gone to Greece and Egypt 12 hours before. Zoom! You don't dare cross Fischer or you're finished. Hi, yo.

Grandmaster Walter Browne would have looked Blubber Cadillac in the eye and said, "Look, mister, your very life is at stake. You'll put me up as agreed in writing as a condition of my appearance or I'll blow your fucking brains out." And mean it. Browne doesn't ever lose money on idiots. Never. He is death in business. Nobody cheats Walter.

Dennis Waterman would give the sign of the eagle. Matulovic would...

Not catching on at all, Jude Acers gets into the shiny new Cadillac and they edge slowly down the highway into town before the bomb goes off. It happens as they swing around the corner in front of the beautiful triple-decker Holiday Inn of Wichita Falls. Blubber Cadillac says, "This is best in town, but I know you don't want to stay there, 'cause that's twenty



a day and you can't afford that."

It is at this precise instant that a light bulb goes on, horns sound and the ticker tape from Jude Acers' brain begins to rat-tat-tat-tick-tick-tick-boom-boom-boom. The message was coming through loud and clear to Jude the moron. It only took 20 minutes to get the machine going.

After lying about all arrangements, after deceiving me to this city, without funds, now this unmitigated bastard, this filth, this nothing-zombie-earth-person was actually going to demand that I pay my motel room, food and all expenses for the privilege of losing money on my chess exhibition this Friday evening. My brain heated up 1,000 degrees. It was mad dogism. Here is how world famous chess master George Koltanowski got the shaft in America on the road 20 years ago. This is how they put it to Mr. Al Horowitz. Ha, ha. It could never happen to me. No, never.

Briefly, Jude Acers considered killing Blubber Cadillac. No, that would seriously interfere with the chess tour, although it would be an open-and-shut case of temporary insanity. What to do. What to do... I do not say a single word as the car eased past the Holiday Inn. Blubber Cadillac could not know that Jude Acers was a member of the Richard Brautigan American Express Company Credit Card Club. Yes, the famous poet and I see each other on buses, in clubs, in restaurants. We both take out Dianne Catterall to dinner. We both were refused American Express Company credit cards in 1970, because "poets and chess players are considered unstable." Then in 1971 the American Express Company, gosh bless them, had mysteriously sent both Brautigan and Acers a credit card. "Read about you in the newspapers, Mr. Acers," the credit officer explained in Phoenix, Oh.

So there Blubber and Jude sit. It's very interesting, even for a person with a thousand degree brain temperature. They think they have the chess master in a cage, trapped like a dog, like they trapped Horowitz, like they creamed Koltanowski. They believe they will get their exhibition for fifty bucks. It's been publicized for months. Last Sunday's paper published the whole Russell Miller press release word for word. If you leave now, you get no money, honey. Well, well, well. Blubber keeps talking away.

"That's a seven dollar room there... eight dollars... another six, but it has rats." We keep passing motels. The feeling of humiliation, horror, anger ruses into Jude Acers. He is helpless. He wants to kill.

The car comes to the end of the main street. Jude Acers has not said even one word since leaving the Greyhound station. You see, a one-thousand degree brain cannot articulate words at all.

So this is how Koltanowski and Horowitz got it. The Royal Shaft Job. All their stories are absolutely true. They tried to tell you, Jude. Now you, too, can learn to burn. Jude Acers has no family, no guidance, no friends. He has no example. He does not know what to do.

Reflection for a full minute, while Blubber looked strangely at me... Time to cool down to a mere 500 degrees. I showed nothing. Slowly I spoke my first words of decision. "Take me to the Holiday Inn." Blubber bolted upright. "Really? ... How... Really?" It had hit Blubber right away. He knew instantly that he had made a terrible mistake. He is not slow to get messages, like stupid Jude. If the kid has money or credit for a \$20 a day room, he probably doesn't need the cash Friday night. He can leave town. He would leave town. Suddenly Blubber realized that he was in scalding hot water. How would he explain this mess to chess club members of Wichita Falls? What would he say to the city jail people, where Jude was supposed to do a freebee? But most horrible of all problems for Blubber Cadillac was the now unavoidable arrival of dozens of irate chess players from out of town for a chess exhibition that isn't. All caused by the fact that in all the great land of Wichita Falls no food, shelter or welcome could be found for Jude Acers by Blubber Cadillac. Still he hesitated. It was a beautiful scene. Blubber vs. his last chance to save everything was being dealt now. Lights... camera... action.