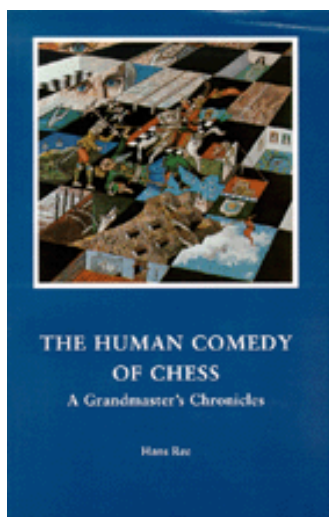




COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree

*The Human Comedy
of Chess*

by Hans Ree

Chess Dreams

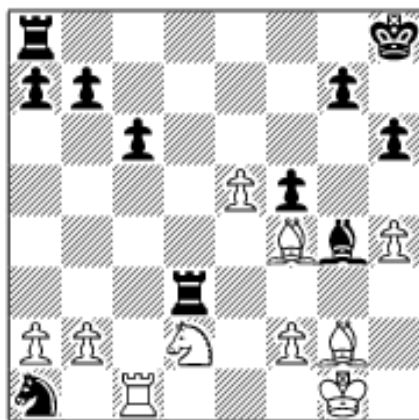
Everybody finds his own dreams interesting, though it's not often that one can learn something useful from them. There are many stories about writers who dreamed an idea for a wonderful story, woke up to write it down and went to bed again to find the following morning a note saying "boy meets girl" or "two squirrels".

There are exceptions. The German scientist Friedrich August Kekule had a dream about two snakes that bit each other's tail and together formed an image of something that Kekule had been trying to find for a long time: the structure of benzene. When he told this at a scientific congress in 1890, he concluded his story saying: "Gentlemen, let's learn to dream, and maybe we will find the truth."

A recent issue of *New in Chess* (2004/3) has an article by Genna Sosonko, *The Morpheus Variation*, about the dreams of chessplayers. He writes about the dark dreams that predict misfortune that cannot be avoided anyway, the frustrating dreams in which a simple task cannot be executed, but also about dreams that provide useful insight, as in the case of Kekule.

At least, if we can believe the dreamer's tales. Vladimir Bagirov got Alekhine's personal blessings when he decided to make the Alekhine Defense his regular opening, but he told the story with a smile that made it doubtful if he really believed it himself.

I do believe Jan Timman, who says that he owed an important victory in his candidate's match against Yusupov in Linares 1992 to a move that had appeared in a dream.

*Timman-Yusupov, Linares 1992*

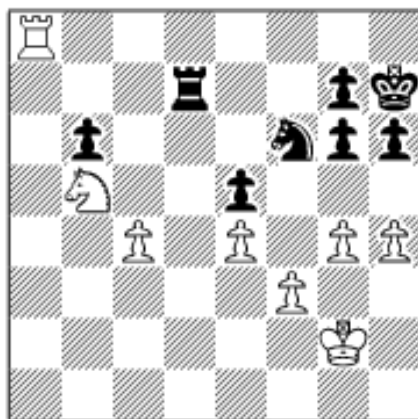
This position was reached in the second match game and after **21. Rc1xa1 g7-g5 22. h4xg5 h6xg5 23. Bf4xg5 Ra8-g8 24. Bg5-f6+ Kh8-h7** Black had enough counterplay and a draw was agreed soon afterwards.

During the evening Timman analysed the game with his second Jeroen Piket, but they couldn't find a way to improve on White's play. But

during the night Timman suddenly woke up because the solution had come to him in a dream. A few days later he had the opportunity to employ it in the sixth game.

From the diagram position he played his dream novelty: **21. Bg2-f1 Rd3-d4 22. Bf4-e3 Rd4-d5 23. Rc1xa1 Rd5xe5 24. Nd2-c4**. White was clearly better and went on to win the game and later the match.

But usually the insight provided by dreams comes too late.



This is *Sosonko-Timman, Tilburg 1983*. It seems that White has a clear advantage and in fact he won the game quickly, but the next day at breakfast Timman told Sosonko that he had dreamed a beautiful way to save the game: **32...h6-h5 33. g4-g5** After other moves Black's counterplay is quite sufficient. **33...Nf6xe4 34. f3xe4 Rd7-d2+** and Blacks draws by a perpetual with his invulnerable rook.

These and other interesting dreams described by Sosonko reminded me of a recent chess

dream of my own, in which I saw my friend Berry Withuis play a tournament game against Bent Larsen.

This was rather surprising, because in the years that I met Withuis regularly he was a chess journalist and organiser who had given up serious chess long ago and only played blitz games or simul.

During the fifties he had been on the staff of the Dutch communist daily newspaper, but as this paper became less and less popular he had to find other work. He became a chess journalist and as he found that there were not enough chess events in the Netherlands to write about, he had to organise them himself.

In real life I had seen Larsen and Withuis together at the chessboard, because Larsen sometimes helped Withuis when he made the bulletins of the Hoogoven tournaments. But now in my dream they were playing a serious tournament game.

Larsen as White had sacrificed a piece for a pawn and was lost, but suddenly in one move he played Na3xc4-e5, picking up a pawn that had been protected, escaping with his knight, that had been awkwardly cornered, and bringing it to an attacking position. He won the game.

The Spanish arbiter Carlos Falcon came to the board and I, as a spectator who sympathised with Withuis, tried to explain that something evil had happened, but to no avail. "We are in Spain here, so don't meddle with it" said Falcon. The deviousness of it! We were not in Spain at all, but at the Dutch Hoogoven tournament in Beverwijk.

Later I tried to check if my dream had some basis in reality. Had Larsen ever

played Na3-c4-e5, not in one move of course, but in two consecutive moves? I tried to find Larsen's manoeuvre in the database, but found nothing.

But a few days ago when I woke up, I suddenly remembered the game. I didn't remember who Larsen's opponent had been, but I knew that it had started with 1. f2-f4 and I also remembered clearly how the pages of the bulletin looked where I had seen that game, with the primitive typewriting of cheaply produced magazines before the computer age.

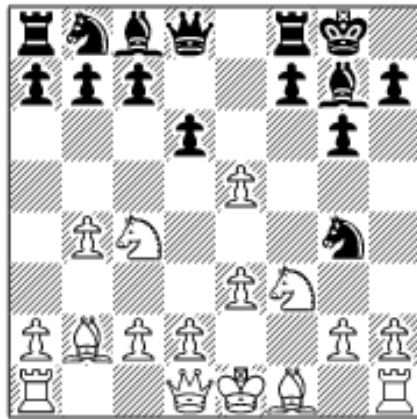
The rest was easy. It had been in Beverwijk 1960. Larsen's opponent was Roman Toran, who in real life I had seen in Spain in the company of his compatriot Carlos Falcon, so it was logical that Falcon had made an appearance in my dream. The notes to the game in the bulletin were written by "The Press Service", which in fact was Berry Withuis. And Na3-c4-e5 had not been played in one move and also not in two consecutive moves, but it was there.

"It all fits," as the paranoiac used to say. Could all these elements really have been combined by the hidden agent that had produced my dream? I don't know. Our minds work in mysterious ways.

Bent Larsen - Roman Toran, 1960

1. f2-f4 Ng8-f6 2. Ng1-f3 g7-g6 3. b2-b4 Bf8-g7 Black could win a pawn with 3...Nd5, when Larsen's intention was 4. Bb2 f6 5. f5

4. Bc1-b2 0-0 5. e2-e3 d7-d6 6. Nb1-a3 e7-e5 7. f4xe5 Nf6-g4 8. Na3-c4



8...Rf8-e8 A not entirely correct pawn sacrifice after an hour's thought. Yes, those were the days when one could spend an hour on move eight. Nowadays one would play quickly 8...Ngxe5, which is much better.

9. e5xd6 Bg7xb2 10. Nc4xb2 Qd8xd6 11. a2-a3 Nb8-c6 12. Bf1-e2 Bc8-f5 13. 0-0 Ra8-d8 14. Nb2-c4 Qd6-e7 15. h2-h3 Ng4-e5 16. Nc4xe5 Nc6xe5 17. Nf3-d4 Bf5-c8 18. Qd1-e1 a7-a6 19. Qe1-g3 b7-b6 20. Rf1-f2 c7-c5 21. b4xc5 Qe7xc5 22. c2-c3 Re8-e7 23. h3-h4 h7-

h5 Black provokes complications that are not advantageous to him, because after quiet play he would have very little for his pawn.

24. Be2xh5 Ne5-d3



25. Bh5xg6 White has three pawns for the exchange and is easily winning.

25...Nd3xf2 26. Bg6-f5+ Kg8-f8 27. Qg3xf2 Rd8xd4 28. Bf5xc8 Rd4-a4 29. Qf2-f6 Qc5-e5 30. Qf6-h6+ Kf8-g8 31. Ra1-f1 Qe5-g3 32. Qh6xb6 Qg3xh4 33. Bc8xa6 Kg8-g7 34. Ba6-b5 Ra4xa3 35. Rf1-f4 Ra3-a1+ 36. Bb5-f1 Qh4-g5 37. c3-c4 Ra1-d1 38. Qb6-b3 Rd1-e1 39. Kg1-f2 f7-f6 40. Qb3-b4 Re7-e5 41. Qb4-b7+ The game was adjourned and later Black resigned.

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