

ENEMIES:

Kasparov
and Karpov
Share Two
Passions:
Their Love
of Chess and
Their Hatred
for Each
Other

BY MITCH BERMAN HEN THE KNIGHT sat down across from Death to play a game of chess in Ingmar Bergman's movie classic "The Seventh Seal," their game was not without precedent: Wilhelm Steinitz, the world champion from 1866 to 1894, claimed, near the end of his life, that he had exhausted all potential human opponents and was playing a match against God—giving the Latter pawn odds.

Chess lends itself to such flights of fantasy. There is, in the medieval symbolism of the chess pieces and the way they are moved, in the timeless symbolism of opposite colors, an allegory for conflict and battle. Enmity is in the nature of the game.

The grandmaster sits face to face with a man whose object is to take away his livelihood. His only desire is to find the weakness in each of his opponent's moves, and he crafts each of his own to exploit the other. A championship chess game is like a bitter five-hour argument during which neither party can agree with anything the other says.

Garri Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov have had 120 such arguments in their four championship matches. And tomorrow, at the Macklowe Center in Times Square, in front of television cameras, they will begin another. After a gala dinner on the eve of the match, the two Soviet millionaires will draw colors to determine who will make the opening move of the first championship held on American soil since 1907, a match with a \$3-million prize. Against a backdrop of American corporate logos, they will begin 24 games to decide who can call himself world champion for the

Anatoly Karpov, the challenger (above), and world chess champion Garri Kasparov, right, face off in New York tomorrow.





Karpov, left, defending his title in Moscow, 1984, against Kasparov; the match ended, after six months, without a decision.

next three years.

The two have enjoyed a monopoly on the title for the past 15 years. After Karpov became champion in 1975, nobody mounted a successful challenge until Kasparov took the title a decade later; since then, only Karpov has challenged Kasparov. Their first match, ending without a decision, and their second, which Kasparov won, were played in Moscow in 1984 and 1985. In their third match, divided between London and Leningrad, Kasparov eked out another narrow victory. By virtue of a tie score in their fourth match in Seville in 1987, Kasparov retained his title. No two championship contestants have ever played so often. After 120 games, Kasparov has won only one more than Karpov. They are perhaps the most equally matched—and the most acrimonious-rivals the game has ever seen.

They are a study in opposites: Karpov is pale and slight, Kasparov dark and sturdy. Karpov is so reticent that he only recently began granting interviews; Kas-

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parov is blustery and hyperbolic, a walking sound bite who endorses Schweppes soft drinks and appears on David Letterman. Karpov, at 39, is a cautious reformist who believes in gradual change for the Soviet Union; Kasparov, 12 years younger, is a freewheeling radical who demands complete transformation of the Soviet system. Karpov is a wary chess strategist, Kasparov, a risky tactician. The two unite only in a grand loathing for the other.

"Kasparov," says Karpov, at the first mention of his opponent's name, "brings you one fact which is well-known, but around this fact he gives a lot of lies."

"I don't want to say that Karpov is a liar," charges Kasparov when I say I have spoken with Karpov, "but normally he tells something that's just outside of reality."

Their animosity is not unique in chess. Alekhine and Capabalanca, the great rivals of the 1920s, did not speak and refused even to enter tournaments in which the other played. Bobby Fischer, who once said he enjoyed chess because "I like to watch them squirm," found himself so far ahead of any competitor that he made the entire Soviet chess establishment the target of relentless criticism. Victor

Korchnoi, who lost two championship matches with Karpov, declared, "I must hate my opponent."

PPLAUSE BREAKS OUT as Anatoly Karpov steps into the dry August sunlight on a terrace overlooking San Lorenzo del Escorial, the ancient village outside Madrid that is the traditional burial place of Spanish kings. I am one of 26 players in this exhibition who rise like a receiving line behind a long strand of chessboards to shake hands with the man who inherited the championship from Bobby Fischer. Karpov greets each with a smile and a different chess opening. The bearded young intellectual to my left will defend against the Queen's Gambit, the elderly gentleman to my right faces an English Opening, and I must play against one of the oldest openings in chess, the king-side attack that bears the name of the 16th-Century cleric Ruy Lopez.

Karpov strolls from board to board, pausing to consider each position for a few seconds before making his move, placid, relaxed, slightly removed, a shopper at a flea market who hasn't yet seen anything he wants to buy.

"I like your game," my young neighbor tells me. "You have many plans." I wish I could see them, I say. He laughs. "You don't expect to actually win? Karpov is very astute."

Astute enough to squeeze my position, gently, but constantly, constantly, until I give up a pawn, then another. That is Karpov's way, the accretion of minute advantages, the adding up and adding up of subtleties.

Karpov stands with his head bowed, his longish hair falling forward from behind his ears. He is not a tall man. Although he has a slender frame, in the last few years he has put on a potbelly. In his redstriped white sport shirt, his white slacks

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and his Cartier watch, he looks like a discreetly rich European tourist. He toys idly with captured pieces, his stare politely oblique. His slate-blue eyes are remarkably large and luminous, startling but never startled.

I've curled my pieces into a tight defensive ball around my king, but Karpov methodically trades queens and rooks, clearing the board of distractions and opening me up the way you'd pry open a fist, finger by fin-

ger. Although our game has taken 49 moves, the outcome was never in doubt. It ends as it began, with applause and a handshake.

Afterward, the ex-champion sits with his body at an angle and one arm draped over the back of his chair, as if he is physically reserving some part of himself from public view. Karpov's voice is soft and high-pitched, his skin a taut pink over angular cheekbones. It is hard to reconcile this tranquil collector of stamps, this father who smiles easily as he speaks of his 10-year-old son, this altogether refined and courteous man, with the one that world champion Kasparov hates worse than pestilence and plague.

Anatoly Karpov began playing chess with his father at age 4. "At first I cried when I lost, and at first he pretended not to pay attention. Finally he said, 'If you cry another time, we stop playing.' "Karpov laughs and takes a sip of black coffee. "So I never cried anymore with him."

A native of Zlatoust, a small city in Russia's Ural mountains, Karpov became a national master at 15, and an international grandmaster—then the youngest in the world—at 19. In 1975, the Fédération Internationale des Echecs (FIDE), the governing body of world chess, refused to grant Bobby Fischer's manifold condi-

tions for a match with Karpov, stripped the enormously popular Fischer of his title and declared the 23-year-old Karpov champion by default. The chess world was crestfallen. Karpov went on a crusade to prove he deserved the title that had been given to him by forfeit, playing in virtually every world-class tournament. He has amassed 88 first prizes, more than any player in history. "Karpov has a sterling reputation in the world of chess," says Yasser Seirawan, editor of Inside Chess magazine and one of the strongest players in America.

Although Karpov says Soviet officials

were "very glad they simply got the title without a fight," the champion was less than satisfied and vainly tried to negotiate a match with Fischer. Such is the Byzantine nature of Soviet chess that, according to Karpov. "Alexander Nikitin, the trainer for the Soviet team, collected 'compromising' documents on me and spread the idea that I was trying to sell the title to Fischer." Niki-

tin's plans came to nothing, Karpov says, adding pointedly that Nikitin now works for Garri Kasparov.

Karpov lives in Moscow with his second wife, Natalia. His life changed when he lost the championship. "I have to work harder now," he says. "Before, I just waited for the challenger to emerge. Now I have to play Candidates' Matches," an arduous series of qualifiers that, every three years, yields a challenger to the world champion.

Asked to predict the outcome of the upcoming match, Karpov laughs. "The answer is quite clear."

WIN," predicts Garri Kasparov.

"That's the last thing I haven't done
in chess—to beat Karpov convincingly."

Speaking with Kasparov last fall, I got the feeling that the world champion could not stop playing chess. He parried questions with sharp, logical precision, as if each was a move to which he had to find a refutation. His favorite word was no.

A conversation in his New York hotel room a year later finds Kasparov, an absolutist who views life through chessboard glasses—everything black or white—in a surprisingly generous mood. "Karpov is a

great opponent. The major problem of any world champion was that when you got the title, you lost your goal. I've been lucky. Without Karpov I wouldn't be so strong."

Kasparov, whose curly hair is speckled with gray, is unable to sit still, swiveling his torso from side to side, shifting his legs to new positions and scrunching up his face. Whether in conversation or at the chessboard, his sheer kinetic energy cannot be contained. But the task of summing up Anatoly Karpov's elusive technique leaves him scratching his chin. Finally, the champion says, "The secret of Karpov's style is—"

The doorbell rings, and tea and cookies are served. It is like a movie, Kasparov jokes, in which someone dies just as he is about to reveal the secret of the case.

He pours himself a cup of tea. "The secret of Karpov's style is to achieve maximum effect by minimum effort. In positions he likes," Kasparov continues soberly, "he's extremely dangerous—he plays like a robot."

Kasparov never does. He entered the final game of the second Karpov match in 1985 needing only a draw to take the title. Instead of playing conservatively, he boldly attacked, putting the world championship on the line and confounding his own trainers, who later admitted they had no idea what Kasparov was doing. After a five-hour seesaw struggle, Kasparov won, and spectators leaped to their feet in Moscow's Tchaikovsky's Hall, embracing one another and chanting, "Gar-ri! Gar-ri!"

Kasparov has reeled off an unprecedented 27 straight victories in world-class competitions. His official FIDE rating (based on his success against other grandmasters), higher even than Bobby Fischer's, labels him the strongest who ever played the game.

Kasparov figured out how the chess pieces move simply by watching his parents play; Kim and Klara, both engineers, were astonished when their 5-year-old son offered them a solution to a chess problem published in the local newspaper. Garri's father, who died two years later, did not see his son become the greatest prodigy in chess history.

Three-time world champion Mikhail Botvinnik recognized Kasparov's genius early; as he had done for Karpov a decade before, Botvinnik began to teach Kasparov via correspondence. In 1975, the first western press account of Kasparov pegged the 11-year-old "a very clear favorite for world champion in 1990." Kasparov, who became a grandmaster at 17, would beat that prediction by five

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years. When he qualified for the world championship, Klara quit her job to work with him full time. "My first coach," Kasparov calls her. "You need someone who guarantees you psychological safety." With Masha, Kasparov's wife of 19 months, she is with him in New York.

Though Kasparov says he is "definitely not a millionaire," Yasser Seirawan paints quite a different picture: "He's a multimillionaire. He has a chauffeur-driven Mercedes with tinted windows. In Moscow he's constantly surrounded by seven or eight people, including two or three bodyguards, a translator, a driver, the head of the Soviet chess union and one or two other people who seem to have no other function than to make sure Garri's every whim is satisfied." And what goes for Kasparov, Seirawan underlines, goes equally for Karpov.

Karpov and Kasparov may be the only two men who ever got rich playing chess, but it strains the American imagination that any chess player could command such advantages. Chess in the Soviet Union is nearly as popular as television in America. There are 4 million Soviet tournament competitors-compared to 30,000 in the United States—and a majority of Soviets play the game. In the Soviet Union chess is considered not only a sport but the most important sport, and its champion something like an amalgam of Michael Jordan and Babe Ruth. Kasparov and Karpov have become industries unto themselves. Both have opened chess schools in Europe, and both have western managers. But the roots of their success are in the Soviet Union.

"Chess has been used, like the Olympics, to show the superiority of Communist ideology," Kasparov says. "The world champion is a special person, even among the champions. He is the only one—unlike in track and field or boxing, where you have many champions."

When Kasparov and Karpov play, all of the Soviet Union watches. After their first match stretched to a numbing six months and a record 48 games without either player having won the requisite six games (40 had resulted in draws), it was abruptly halted by Florencio Campomanes, president of FIDE, on the grounds that both players were exhausted. Although Karpov was leading 5-3 when the match was stopped, putting Kasparov on the brink of elimination, Karpov had scored his last victory 21 games before.

But Karpov retained his title, and Kasparov, the youngest player ever to challenge for the world championship, furiously denounced Campomanes' action as "the greatest crime in chess history." Rumors—many of them fueled by his brash young opponent—had Karpov taking stimulants, pleading with Soviet chess authorities to stop the match, even in a clinic being treated for nervous exhaustion.

Karpov hotly denied these stories five years ago, and he denies them today. "I had no medical problems. Kasparov still needed three wins. One wrong move, and that's all. His life was on"—Karpov holds his thumb and forefinger close, groping for the phrase—"very thin paper."

Karpov argues that if his opponent had really wanted the match to continue, Geidar Aliev, a Kasparov ally in the Politburo, could have ordered that it go on. "Nothing could be possible in Soviet sport if Aliev says no. So when Kasparov says that this ending of the match was against his wishes, this is a complete lie."

Kasparov's blood, which has a very low boiling point, turns to steam at this claim: "Are you serious?" he hisses, his vivid features darkening. "What are we talking about? Karpov was close to almost every member of the Politburo!"

Chess may be a slow game, but trying to follow these attacks and counterattacks is like watching table tennis. Did

Kasparov, for example, accuse Karpov of using stimulants? No, according to Kasparov-Karpov accused Kasparov of accusing Karpov. "That's a typical Karpov accusation-he said that I accused him." Kasparov claims he was misquoted, but then mixes his message: "I think that probably Karpov was given these stimulants by the end of the match. I cannot prove it, that's why I never put it in my book."

The galleys of Kasparov's book, "Unlimited Challenge," have just come out the day we meet. As we veer toward the Karpov controversies, Kasparov's hands slice the air as if practicing some kind of martial art, his voice launches into an indignant falsetto, and he begins answering simply by saying, "It's in the book." Finally, glowering, he interrupts a question to point at the galleys and repeat, "Book! Book!"

The strife that started at the chessboard now branches out into dueling autobiographies. Most of "Unlimited Challenge" is devoted to Karpov, with chapters like "War and Peace" and "Stab in the Back." Karpov's rebuttal, due early next year, will include a substantial section on what he demurely calls "the problems with Kasparov."

Even their supporters join the melee. American champion Lev Alburt, a Soviet defector who is close to Kasparov, tells a joke he says was popular among Russian players: "If you ask Karpov what time it is, you may get the correct time—but probably you won't. Karpov will tell you whatever time is best for Karpov."

Roman Toran, deputy president of FIDE and president of the Spanish Chess Federation, says, "I was a very good friend of Karpov's when I wrote an article in 1981 predicting that the next world champion would be Kasparov. Karpov said nothing. But Kasparov is the kind of person who says, 'If you are friends of my enemy, you are my enemy."

As on the chessboard, it is usually Kasparov who attacks. The longer you listen to the young champion, the more Karpov seems the Prince of Darkness and Kasparov an avenging angel. "Karpov isn't the Anti-Christ," laughs Daniel Seirawan, marketing manager of Inside Chess. "He's more like the Anti-Elvis."

WHETHER THEIR DUELING grounds be

chess or politics, it would be difficult to find two men more diametrically opposed. Kasparov founded both the first union of Russian chess professionals and the Grandmasters' Assn., an international body now jousting for control with FIDE. Kasparov spent most of this summer involved in real politics, meeting with democrats such as Czechoslovakian President Vaclav Havel and Nikolai Trarvkin,

chief aide to Russian Republic President Boris Yeltsin.

Along with Trarvkin, Kasparov is a principal founder and deputy chairman of the newly formed Russian Democratic Party, whose membership numbers 80,000 and whose purposes are "to dismantle the empire" and bring full-fledged democracy to the Soviet Union. Kasparov is also president of Democratic Russia, a paper with a circulation of 1 million and, he says, "the first private shareholder company in Russia since 1917."

"I was a founder of each of these organizations," he emphasizes. "I've never taken a position in any group which existed before my involvement."

The acid test of his political success will be how well and how long the opinionated, sometimes bullying Kasparov can work with others. "Even our dissidents are intolerant of other opinions," explains Yevgenia Albats, an analyst for the Moscow News who is now reporting for the Chicago Tribune. "We are all children of a totalitarian system. Kasparov's problem is that he loves himself too much. Everywhere he goes, he always seems to be looking for a mirror."

Karpov lightly dismisses Kasparov's political activities: "A lot of noise but not too many results." Not so. Kasparov has never been afraid to walk on the cutting edge of change in Russia. We are not likely to hear Karpov predict, as Kasparov did to me, "There will be no Soviet Union by the end of the year," or to claim that, "in Baku, the central government's policy was genocide."

Half-Armenian, half-Jewish—"Do not call me a Russian!"—Kasparov grew up and lived in Baku, capital of Muslim Azerbaijan, until this year's anti-Armenian violence. "The government was trying to use the ethnic wars in their favor," Kasparov charges. "It was real blood, and many Armenians were killed." But the

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story of what happened to Kasparov in Baku has not been told in America.

"Kasparov saved the lives of 60 Armenians," says Albats, who attended the press conference where Kasparov became "the first man to publicly speak the truth about what happened in Baku."

Albats tells a frightening tale: "Azerbaijanis went to Kasparov's house to shoot him and the Armenians he was hiding there. Kasparov

had already fled to the airport. He chartered a plane and took 60 Armenians to Moscow. He rented apartments for them and gave them money. He is very courageous."

But because of Soviet anti-Semitism, Albats says, "a lot of people never liked Kasparov. Kasparov is a man who likes scandal. He was unwise to put so much dirty water between himself and Karpov."

Kasparov doesn't believe a word of it. If the Soviet Union holds multiparty elections, he intends to run for a seat in parliament. "I will be elected," he says with characteristic bravado. "I have no

doubt about it."

For now, Kasparov insists, "I have no relations with my state. At all. At all! I still don't have the flat in Moscow. It shows the level of my connection with Soviet officials. It's unusual for the world champion. I live in my wife's very small flat. I don't have the flat in Moscow, I repeat it." In fact, he repeats it six times.

"Kasparov is being two-faced," says Yasser Seirawan. "He can get literally anything he wants in Russia. I was among a group of 110 players going from Moscow to the Grandmasters' Assn. general assembly in Murcia, Spain. Garri just stood at the airport gate and kept saying, 'He's with me, he's with me, he's with me.' Not a single member of the group had his luggage checked, went through the very formal customs process or was subjected to any kind of questioning. His political muscle is unbelievable."

O IS ANATOLY KARPOV'S. As an elected People's Deputy—the nearest Soviet equivalent to a congress-man—and a two-time recipient of the Sportsman of the Year and the Order of Lenin awards, Karpov brings enormous prestige to his recent criticism of the Soviet system. "If they like you, they use one law—if they don't, they use an-

other." Karpov laughs.
"You can be punished for nothing, or have glory for nothing."

Although he retains his Communist Party membership, Anatoly Karpov can now be counted among the ranks of Russia's moderates. Early this year Karpov exposed the fact that the prize from the London-Leningrad match, which the players donated to victims of the Chernobyl disaster, was siphoned off "by

the Ministry of Industry, to recover the losses of factories. We would not have given money for that." Under Karpov's leadership, the quasi-official Soviet Peace Fund sponsored a telethon that raised nearly \$5 million. "This money we shall distribute only to the victims of Chernobyl," he vows.

Kasparov believes Karpov is a political chameleon who dons reformist colors merely because they are in fashion. "Karpov is pro-Gorbachev now," scoffs Kasparov, "but he was also a Brezhnev man when [former leader Leonid I.] Brezhnev was in power. Karpov will al-

ways belong to the ruling party."

To Kasparov, Karpov is "the great symbol of the Communist system" and their match nothing less than "a battle between democracy and totalitarianism."

Karpov, who is not given to such sweeping statements, permits himself a modest sneer. "This is like a game of children, where they say, 'Let's play cops and robbers. I'm a policeman, and you're a robber."

Most American press accounts echo the bad rap Kasparov hangs on Karpov. An ethnic Russian—a Soviet WASP—who might have stepped out of a Socialist Realist poster, Karpov looks every inch the good Soviet apparatchik, and for many journalists that is enough. Sports Illustrated called him a "squeaky-voiced" nerd; the New York Times dubbed him "the consummate bureaucrat."

Yevgenia Albats puts it bluntly: "Karpov was very close to our party leaders, and—pardon me for saying—he liked to kiss their asses."

Midway through his 1978 championship match in the Philippines with Victor Korchnoi, who had defected from the Soviet Union two years before, Karpov abruptly stopped shaking Korchnoi's hand before each game.

"Korchnoi made too many personal accusations," Karpov explains. But he acknowledges, "Official advisors told me before the match, 'You don't shake hands because he is a traitor.' "The handshake is such an ironclad tradition that even Kasparov and Karpov will do it in New York. When Karpov refused to take the hand of the defector across the board—whatever his reason—his message was loud and clear. "Karpov fit the system," says Kasparov disdainfully, "followed the system, accepted the rules of the game."

IKE PRESIDENTS, championship chess players strive to surround themselves with good advisors. Kasparov and Karpov have brought a richly stocked pond of chess ideas to New York for tomorrow's championship match. Though each player employs only five paid trainers, this is, Seirawan explains, a deceptive figure: "Garri or Anatoly will let his coaches know he has a problem in a certain opening variation. Word goes out to highly respected chess clubs in every city across the Soviet Union. These people are not on the payroll—they would gladly give Garri or Anatoly their innermost chess secrets for the chance that he might recognize them."

The outcomes of championship chess

games often turn on the opening moves. For weeks before the championship, both players were sequestered with their trainers—Karpov's team in Odessa, Kasparov's in Martha's Vineyard—feverishly analyzing the probable first few moves of the game. Karpov spent at least 50% of his final training sessions on the openings, Kasparov 80%.

Chess appears to be among the most sedentary of human activities, but the two men who are the best at it do train their bodies. "During a match," says Karpov, "you have to work a minimum of five hours, a maximum of 15 hours or more. You must be well trained." Both players have similar regimens of running, swimming and tennis, though Karpov prefers tennis—"you need to use your brain"—while Kasparov finds the game's competitive element too distracting.

Kasparov believes no other endeavor requires a comparable level of sustained concentration. "The match conquers your mind for three months. You cannot get rid of the tension."

Karpov believes his main problem will be to maintain a consistent level of play. Kasparov agrees. "In all our matches we both had peaks and bad days. My amplitude is bigger than Karpov's. It gets higher but"—a self-deprecating laugh"sometimes lower."

Even before the players sit down, Kasparov has already won a victory—over FIDE. The federation had originally decreed that the match would be held in Lyon, France. But Kasparov, angry that the players hadn't been consulted, persuaded Ted Field, the Hollywood producer and inheritor of the Marshall Field fortune, to make FIDE an extravagant bid. As a result, the first half of the match will be held in New York, the second in Lyon, and the prize fund is twice that of any as big as that of previous matches. The match organizers are putting up Kasparov's team in suites in a Park Avenue hotel and renting out a seven-bedroom townhouse for Karpov on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

Anatoly Karpov is not yet completely happy. "The organizers promised me to be neutral, but till now it's not so because all the staff of official consultants belong to Kasparov's side, directly or indirectly."

This remark shocks Kasparov into a rare state of speechlessness. "Can you translate?" asks the man who throws words like *amplitude* around. "My English is not so good."

Kasparov recovers his vocabulary soon enough. "I understand why he's worried, because in all previous matches the official consultants were on his side, and I suffered a lot. He believes that my friends have to treat him exactly as his friends treated me before." Kasparov pounds the arm of the overstuffed sofa, and dust billows into the shaft of sunlight from the hotel window. "He's got absolutely the same conditions I have!"

FTER ALL the analysis, after all the discussions with trainers and journalists, after all the fencing about the match site and who will sit in which chair, these two men will be on their own, with nothing but 16 wooden pieces to protect one from the other.

Isolated by their talents from all other chess players, Kasparov and Karpov can feed only on each other. Their play is fueled by each other's skill, their desire by each other's enmity; neither could be as he is without the other. Poised across the chessboard like a pair of hostile sculptors, they will hew and carve, chip and chisel, each man the other's masterpiece. Karpov will carp and Kasparov will cavil, and never the twain shall meet.

Never, that is, until they are asked about chess-playing computers. A Carnegie-Mellon program called Deep Thought has started defeating grandmasters, and though Kasparov drubbed the computer last fall, its capacity will soon increase from 800,000 to 1 billion positions per second. No one, it seems, takes exception to the dismal notion that the days of a human world chess champion are numbered.

No one but Anatoly Karpov and Garri Kasparov.

"I don't think the computer will have a chance," Karpov says, a little gruffly.

"The computer will calculate better than any human being in the world," Kasparov admits. "But there is something beyond calculation—it's your understanding of the nature of chess."

Kasparov leans forward, radiant, evangelical, hands working as he speaks. "Chess is an attempt to control chaos. That could be done by Fischer, by Karpov, by Kasparov, but not by other players. Only the great players—the world champions—have a new vision of chess. They open the new pages."

Garri Kasparov leans back against the sofa and takes a sip of tea. "And that is why Karpov and Kasparov gave you the same answer."