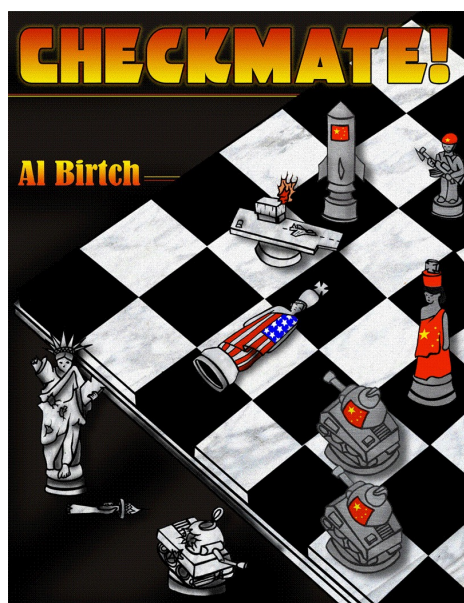




Genre: Action thriller

The ancient Chinese tactician Tsun Tzu had written in *The Art of War* “*never attack an enemy until you know he has already been defeated before a single soldier steps on the battlefield.*” The new scientific advancement perfected by the Chinese gave them that exact opportunity. At precisely 9:30 AM on June 5th, America discovers it has lost operational control over 48 of land and air-launch nuclear missiles and they had no idea how it had happened. Flight-time to targets would be so short that interception would be unlikely and it was more than enough firepower to decimate the entire country. Advance units of the Chinese rapid deployment special forces were already landing on US soil to take control over military bases and round up key political and military leadership. At the same time a massive armada carrying over a million troops are just leaving 5 deep-water ports on the 4-week journey to the west coast of America. Leadership knows that is their only window. They must figure out how they lost control over the nuclear arsenal and regain control over it before the main Chinese force makes landfall. Once a million Chinese soldiers are on American soil, it’s over – Checkmate!

Story opens with a series of seemingly unconnected events. In Canada, a couple of spear-fishermen are diving in Black Lake. They find a decaying body anchored at the bottom.

In Sedalia Missouri, Sheriff Kendrick is at the site of a body discovered by 2 hikers. It is badly burned. Only a small section of the finger-tip survived. With only 8 reference points left, a perfect match isn’t possible, but it did identify one-person with a 60% probability. It belongs to Major Stratton stationed at Whiteman Air Force base. A call to Whiteman eliminates that possibility. Not only was Major Stratton alive, but he and his co-pilot had lifted off 20 minutes earlier flying a B2 Spirit Stealth Bomber with a payload of 16 B61 nuclear gravity bombs. The command is issued for Major Stratton to return to base. There is only one inviolate rule for the 2-man crew piloting a B2. It can never, ever go into stealth mode while over American soil. Within 2 minutes of the command being issued...that rule is violated and the B-2 disappears off

of radar. All attempts to raise the crew fail. Three F15's are scrambled but fail to find any evidence of a crash. Emergency protocols are enacted and within minutes the President is on Air Force One.

In Evanston, Wyoming an ambulance pulls into Wyoming State Psychiatric Hospital, a car close behind. The driver in military uniform exits. A woman in her mid 30's, Mae Jackson, is strapped tightly to the gurney. Her husband, Corporal Munroe Jackson, walks beside the attendants, his hand resting on the woman's restrained arm. Mae is heavily sedated but still able to speak. The words are slurred *"Get him away from me. He's not my husband."*

Two hours after the B2 disappears, a nuclear bomb is dropped in Death Valley. The remoteness and prevailing winds mean the death toll will be minimal. Is it homegrown terrorism? An impending ransom demand to not drop the remaining payload? No one knows. But given the B2 has 7 hours of fuel remaining, they expect to find out soon. Within minutes of the Death Valley explosion, General Hawkins is back inside the situation room. His face is white as he tells the President that the carrier battle group stationed at Yokosuka Japan has just been attacked. The aircraft carrier has been sunk and the 6 support ships either sunk or rendered inoperable. The casualty count so far is over 4,800. The Chinese air force had launched a massive wave of sea-skimming Sunburn missiles. Traveling at 1,700 mph, they had reached the fleet before they could weight-anchor. The CIWS cannons designed to provide close-in protection were overwhelmed by the sheer number of missiles launched. The President immediately moves the country's defenses to Defcon 1. The Chief of Staff steps into the room... *"I'm sorry to interrupt sir, but President Zheng is on the line"*. The call is curt and to the point. Zheng makes it clear that what has just happened is a result of continued, unchecked, American imperialism around the globe. He also makes it clear that it is his forces who are in control of the missing B2. That if America does not surrender within the next 3 hours, that he will instruct the crew to drop their payload on several major cities. Such a unprovoked attack and the ongoing threat posed by the B2 cannot go unanswered. The President and the Joint Chiefs authorize the launch of 2 nuclear missiles from the submarine USS Michigan, on patrol 500 miles off the coast of China, and 2 additional missiles from the underground silos in Wyoming. The target of all 4 is Beijing. The President can issue the 'self-destruct code' at any time until the missiles are 5 minutes from target...after which it is too late. He gives that ultimatum to President Zheng. *"Surrender the B2 bomber and I will issue the abort command...or the blood of 22 million people will be on your hands"*. The orders have been issued but nothing has launched. Calls to the Michigan go unanswered. The Base Commander at Wyoming advises the 2 individuals within the concrete-sealed launch control room were re-programming the targeting sequence for all 24 ICBM's under their control to target American cities. Breaking through the wall would take over an hour and the 2 men inside could launch all 24 missiles within a 10-minute window. Within minutes President Zheng is back on the phone and continues his blunt message *"by now you will have discovered that our control extends beyond the B2. You have just over 2 hours left to surrender unconditionally or be destroyed. Our ambassador has a detailed list of the military assets we demand be surrendered to us. He will also provide a list of people to be collected and turned over to our forces when they land."*

Everyone expects the USS Michigan must have had a saboteur on board and has been lost. No one can fathom how China managed to convince 4 of the most heavily vetted people in the military, 2 aboard the B2 and 2 within the fire-control room, to commit treason. But it didn't matter how...it didn't change the reality of the situation...they must surrender. But that doesn't mean they are going to provide the Chinese with the ships, tanks and aircraft they will need to truly control such a large territory. The President issues the order to scuttle the entire Pacific and Atlantic fleets. To destroy every tank housed on American soil. Within hours America's military might will be less than that of a 3rd world country. The only asset they save are a handful of B2 bombers and a squadron of F35 stealth fighters which are surreptitiously moved to Canada. But they know that despite this action, in 28 days 1 million Chinese soldiers will make landfall. That is their window to discover how they lost control over these nukes and regain it...or devise a counter-measure that will force President Zheng stand down his forces. Knowing that the Chinese will have full dossiers on every top military commander and their families...they decide to put the fate of the country into the hands of an officer that won't be on China's radar. Captain Avery Hogan had never been tested in battle. But she was the highest scoring graduate, male or female, to ever come out of Westpoint. And she held the distinct honor of being the only cadet to have ever led a team to victory in the schools infamous Operation Flytrap. It was designed to see how aspiring officers handled defeat...it was designed to ensure that outcome. But she had beaten it. General Foong, commander of the advance forces, is furious about the destroyed assets and summarily executes the Joint Chiefs on the front lawn of the Whitehouse.

The story follows Captain Avery and her team as they criss-cross the country picking up selected scientists along the way and leads them into Canada. A week passes and they are no closer to finding out why these 4 individuals had turned. Chinese Special Forces are now in control of major bases. 1 million more are just 2 weeks away. They shift their focus to finding ways to bring China to the negotiating table. Dr. Traeger points out that China's main vulnerability is fresh water. China's economy and manufacturing sector has exploded, their demands on fresh water has multiplied a hundred-fold. 6 rivers supply over 80% of China's fresh surface water. That is supplemented by two-dozen major underground aquifers. Demand is far outstripping supply. That is China's Achilles Heel. The team quickly gets to work. Within days they have a solution. But its potential is horrific. By combining ricin with dimethyl sulfoxide it becomes water-soluble and the perfect partner for already water-loving arsenic and the bioaccumulating poison dioxin. Separate each were deadly. But combined - unstoppable. Once an amount as small as a single gallon is dumped in a river or on soil above an aquifer, it would spread throughout the system and be permanent. A microscopic droplet would kill tens-of-thousands. As Dr. Traeger said, *"I hope I'm not remembered as having created this monster."* Making a large supply of this deadly cocktail was not the issue. How to get it undetected to key targets in China...the headwaters of the major rivers in the mountains and above the main aquifers, that was the challenge. The solution was to avoid the mistake of the Japanese's internment camps of WWII. 30 loyal Chinese heritage Americans are selected, smuggled out and with the help of India's special forces, moved across the Himalayan Mountains into China. Many of China's largest rivers have their headwaters in the Himalayas. Each operative would have 1 gallon of the poison. The Chinese armada is now 3 days away from making port. President Zheng receives a call from the Prime Minister of Canada, but is surprised when the phone is handed

over to Captain Hogan. She instructs Zheng to clear off 400 yards of the street in front of Tiananmen Square. That an unarmed F35 stealth fighter will be arriving in 90 minutes. Hogan remains cryptic other than assuring Zheng that on-board that plane is information that is vital to the survival of China. The F35 lands. The pilot explains that in its belly is a container holding 150 gallons of a toxin their scientists can quickly analyse. That people loyal to America have been positioned along thousands of miles of waterways ready to release that toxin “unless” President Zheng orders the armada to turn around. *“You may have 1 million troops on our soil, but the cost will be a billion of your people dead or dying.”* Soon Zheng’s scientists confirm the claim. President Zheng yields and orders his forces back home. But our story is not over. How did China convince 4 career soldiers to turn on their country? They learn the ‘how’. But did President Zheng put all of his doppelgangers into play...or, as a Chess Master often does, did he still have more pieces hidden ready to move? Stay tuned for the sequel to Checkmate!