# Chapter 3

Problems

This chapter will be quite short, because most of my post-beginner problems have been in variant forms of chess. However, strict orthodoxy also has its appeal.

In the endgame study chapter, I assumed that most readers would wish to read rather than solve. Problems, in contrast, are composed as a challenge. From here on, therefore, positions will normally be presented without solution in the first instance, so that those wishing to solve need not arrange cards or cut-out sheets to avoid seeing the answer prematurely, and the solutions will appear over the page below repeat diagrams.
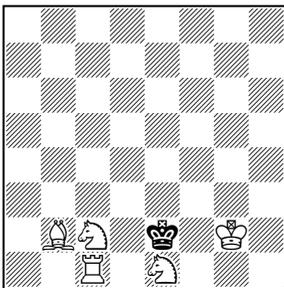
3.1
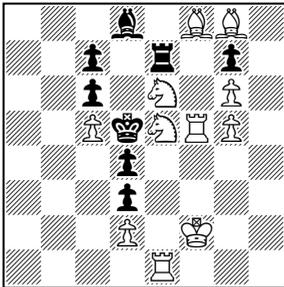
White to play and mate in two

3.2 (after K. Mortsoch)
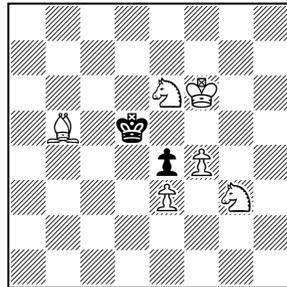
White to play and mate in four

**3.3**

White to play and mate in five

3.2 was used in the French national solving championship in 1993. It may have only six men, but it held up a past and future World Solving Champion for half an hour (I was invigilating, and could see him working on it long after he had filled in the rest of his paper), and defeated another international team solving member altogether. Maybe you will spot the answer straight away, but if you find it difficult you will be in very good company.

3.1
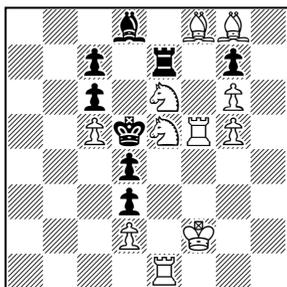
White to play and mate in two

White can discover check by either knight, but the key **1 Rf7** abandons one line of check, blocks the other, makes no threat, gives the Black king a flight square, and exposes White's own king to check :
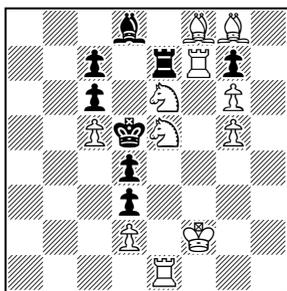
But if Black gives the check, **1...Rxf7+**, the reply **2 Nf4** gives mate because Black's rook is now pinned; if Black takes the knight instead, **1...Rxe6**, **2 Rd7** is mate, Black's rook again being pinned; and if his king takes the knight, **1...Kxe6**, **2 Rf6** is mate.

This would not in fact trouble an experienced solver, who sees at once that 1...Rxe6 is a move that needs

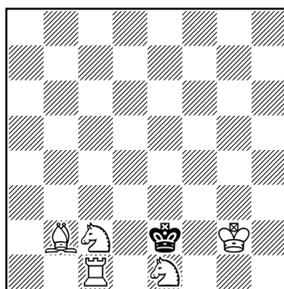attention, and I subsequently produced a version in which the White rook bore on e6 instead of e5 :

3.1a
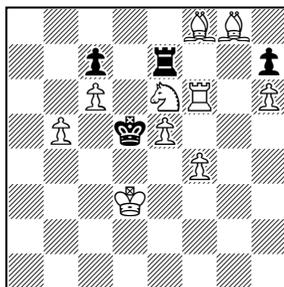
White to play and mate in two

Now every Black move is set with a mate (1...Rxe6 2 Bxe6, 1...R~ 2 Nxc7) and the solver is given no clue.

3.2 (after K. Mortsoch)
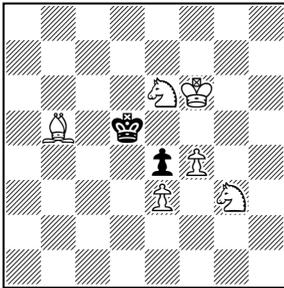
White to play and mate in four

Again there is no clue, and the solver just has to work it out: **1 Rd1 Kxd1 2 Kf3 Kd2 3 Ne3 Kxe1 4 Bc3**. Mortsoch (1859, original source not known to me) had White Kf6, Bc7, Nf8/d7 (4), Black Ke8 (1), mate in

three by 1 Kg6; I merely extended the problem to four moves by putting a rook sacrifice on the front. It is a pity that the rook cannot start in the open at a1, but there would be cooks in three by 1 Ra3/.../Ra8 Kd~ 2 Kf~ and 1 Bc1 Kd1 2 Nd4. As it is, 1 Ra1, threatening these lines, becomes a vicious try.

3.3

White to play and mate in five

1 Kf7 (a waiting move) **Kd6 2 Nf5+ Kd5 3 Kg7** (another waiting move, making space for the Black king to come to the right) **Kxe6 4 Bc6 Kxf5 5 Bd7**. Yet again there is little or nothing by way of a clue.

Not at the time having seen the damage that a problem like **3.2** could do in a solving competition, I sent **3.3** to a newspaper column. It lacks the vicious try 1 Ra1 of **3.2**, but had it been saved up for a medium-level solving tourney it might have proved quite effective. We notice that in **3.2** and **3.3**, each man still on the board takes part in the mate, and each square within the Black king's field is denied to him by a single man.

3.4 (with Michael McDowell)
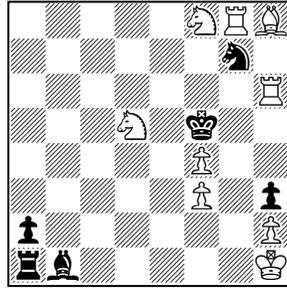
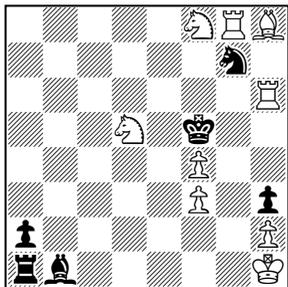White to play and force Black to mate him in three

3.5
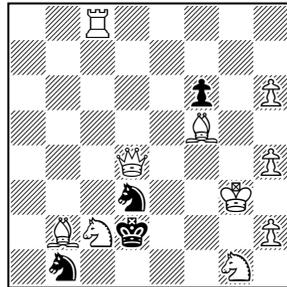
White to play and force Black to mate him in six

Here, play follows the normal rules, but White's objective is to force Black to give mate (so, in **3.4**, Black will not move his bishop unless he has to).

3.5 was composed for the 1994 World Chess Solving Championship, and Jonathan Mestel was one of six competitors to succeed. If you want to see how you might yourself do in similar circumstances, give yourself an hour. The use of board and men is permitted.

3.4 (with Michael McDowell)

White to play and force Black
to mate him in three

Play **1 Rh7**, waiting for Black to move
his knight. If **1...Ne8/Nh5**, follow up
with **2 Rf7+ Nf6 3 Bg7** (Black's knight
having blocked White's bishop,
White's bishop then blocks his rook).
If instead **1...Ne6** then **2 Rh5+ Ng5
3 Rg7** (Black's knight having blocked
White's rook, White's rook blocks his
bishop). The idea was mine, the
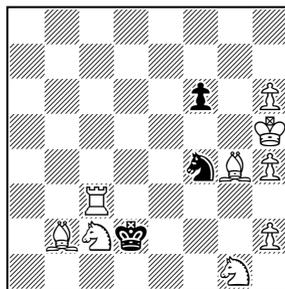polished construction was Michael's.

3.5
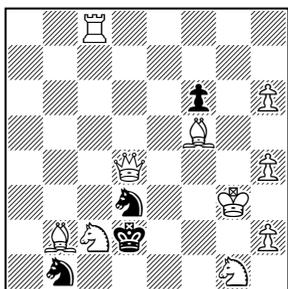
White to play and force Black
to mate him in six

Let's listen to Jonathan, and see how a

leading solver approaches a challenge
of this kind.

*We can't control two knights, so let's
capture one of them. Suppose White
does nothing on his first move, then we
have* **1...Nc3 2 Rxc3 Kd1 3 Kg4 Kd2
4 Kh5 Kd1 5 Bg4+ Kd2 6 Qf4+ Nxf4,**

or **1...Na3 2 Bxa3** *and the same. So to
meet 1...Kd1 we need a move that
doesn't disturb this, and it won't be Rc7
because in that case Rc6 would work
just as well – ah!* **1 h3 Kd1 2 Qxd3+
Nd2 3 Be4 f5 4 Bh1 f4+ 5 Kh2 f3
6 Qf1+ Nxf1** :
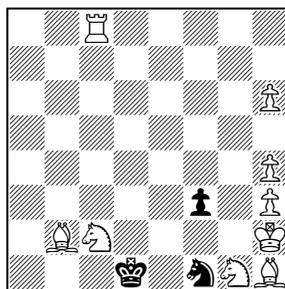
So much for my fond hopes that a
solver who had found the mate on h5
would waste his time looking for a
companion mate on h3!